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# Intersectionality

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Patricia Hill Collins  
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polity

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# 1

## What is Intersectionality?

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In the early twenty-first century, the term "intersectionality" has been widely taken up by scholars, policy advocates, practitioners, and activists in many places and locations. College students and faculty in interdisciplinary fields such as women's studies, ethnic studies, cultural studies, American studies, and media studies, as well as those within sociology, political science, and history and other traditional disciplines, encounter intersectionality in courses, books, and scholarly articles. Human rights activists and government officials have also made intersectionality part of ongoing global public policy discussions. Grassroots organizers look to varying dimensions of intersectionality to inform their work on reproductive rights, anti-violence initiatives, workers' rights, and similar social issues. Bloggers use digital and social media to debate hot topics. Teachers, social workers, high-school students, parents, university support staff, and school personnel have taken up the ideas of intersectionality with an eye toward transforming schools of all sorts. Across these different venues, people increasingly claim and use the term "intersectionality" for their diverse intellectual and political projects.

If we were to ask them, "What is intersectionality?" we would get varied and sometimes contradictory answers. Most, however, would probably accept the following general description:

Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves.

We begin this book by recognizing the tremendous heterogeneity that currently characterizes how people understand and use intersectionality. Despite debates about the meaning of this term, or even whether it is the right term to use at all, intersectionality is the term that has stuck. It is the term that is increasingly used by stakeholders who put their understandings of intersectionality to a variety of uses. Despite these differences, this general description points toward a general consensus about how people understand intersectionality.

### Using intersectionality as an analytic tool

People generally use intersectionality as an analytic tool to solve problems that they or others around them face. Most US colleges and universities, for example, face the challenge of building more inclusive and fair campus communities. The social divisions of class, race, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, sexuality, and ability are especially evident within higher education. Colleges and universities now include more college students who formerly had no way to pay for college (class), or students who historically faced discriminatory barriers to enrollment (race, gender, ethnicity or citizenship status, religion), or students who experience distinctive barriers and discrimination (sexuality and ability) on college campuses. Colleges and universities find themselves confronted with students who want fairness, yet who bring very different

experiences and needs to campus. Initially, colleges recruited and served groups one at a time, offering, for example, special programs for African Americans, Latinos, women, gays and lesbians, veterans, returning students, and persons with disabilities. As the list grew, it became clearer that this one-at-a-time approach not only was slow, but that most students fit into more than one category. First-generation college students could include Latinos, women, poor whites, returning veterans, grandparents, and transgender individuals. In this context, intersectionality can be a useful analytic tool for thinking about and developing strategies to achieve campus equity.

Ordinary people can draw upon intersectionality as an analytic tool when they recognize that they need better frameworks to grapple with the complex discriminations that they face. In the 1960s and 1970s, African-American women activists confronted the puzzle of how their needs simply fell through the cracks of anti-racist social movements, feminism, and unions organizing for workers' rights. Each of these social movements elevated one category of analysis and action above others, for example, race within the civil rights movement, or gender within feminism or class within the union movement. Because African-American women were simultaneously black *and* female *and* workers, these single-focus lenses on social inequality left little space to address the complex social problems that they face. Black women's specific issues remained subordinated within each movement because no social movement by itself would, nor could, address the entirety of discriminations they faced. Black women's use of intersectionality as an analytic tool emerged in response to these challenges.

Intersectionality as an analytic tool is neither confined to nations of North America and Europe nor is it a new phenomenon. People in the Global South have used intersectionality as an analytic tool, often without naming it as such. Consider an unexpected example from nineteenth-century colonial India in the work of Savitribai Phule (1831–1897), regarded as an important first-generation modern Indian feminist. In an online article titled “Six Reasons Every Indian Feminist Must Remember Savitribai Phule,” published in January 2015, Deepika Sarma suggests:

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Here's why you should know more about her. *She got intersectionality.* Savitribai along with her husband Jyotirao was a staunch advocate of anti-caste ideology and women's rights. The Phules' vision of social equality included fighting against the subjugation of women, and they also stood for Adivasis and Muslims. She organized a barbers' strike against shaving the heads of Hindu widows, fought for widow remarriage and in 1853, started a shelter for pregnant widows. Other welfare programmes she was involved with alongside Jyotirao include opening schools for workers and rural people, and providing famine relief through 52 food centers that also operated as boarding schools. She also cared for those affected by famine and plague, and died in 1897 after contracting plague from her patients. (Sarma 2015)

Phule confronted several axes of social division, namely caste, gender, religion, and economic disadvantage or class. Her political activism encompassed intersecting categories of social division – she didn't just pick one.

These examples suggest that people use intersectionality as an analytic tool in many different ways to address a range of issues and social problems. They find intersectionality's core insight to be useful: namely, that major axes of social divisions in a given society at a given time, for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and age operate not as discrete and mutually exclusive entities, but build on each other and work together. Many people typically use intersectionality as a *heuristic*, a problem-solving or analytic tool, much in the way that students on college campuses developed a shared interest in diversity, or African-American women used it to address their status within social movement politics, or Savitribai Phule advanced women's rights. Even though those who use intersectional frameworks all seem to be situated under the same big umbrella, using intersectionality as a heuristic device means that intersectionality can assume many different forms.

In this book, we examine the perspectives, definitions, and controversies that characterize intersectionality but, for now, we want to show three uses of intersectionality as an analytic tool. As Cho et al. point out (2013: 795), "what makes an analysis intersectional is not its use of the term 'intersectionality,' nor its being situated in a familiar genealogy, nor its

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drawing on lists of standard citations." Instead, they argue, "what intersectionality *does* rather than what intersectionality *is*" lies at the heart of intersectionality (ibid.; our italics). In the remainder of this section, we demonstrate three uses of intersectionality as an analytic tool that were inspired by important global events that took place in 2014.

#### Power plays: the FIFA World Cup

Brazil's international reputation as a football (soccer) powerhouse raised high hopes for its winning the 2014 FIFA World Cup. As one of the most successful national teams in the history of the World Cup, Brazil was the only country whose teams had qualified for and attended every World Cup tournament. Brazil had also produced some of the greatest players in the history of world football. The legendary Pelé remains Brazil's highest goal-scorer of all time. Italy, Germany, and Argentina are all football powerhouses, yet, in terms of star power and status, they were no match for Brazil.

Because the 2014 tournament was held in Brazil, the stakes were especially high. The potential payoff for a winning Brazilian team in Brazil could be huge. Hosting the FIFA World Cup would enable Brazil to shed vestiges of its troubled history of being ruled by a military dictatorship (1964–1985), as well as signal its arrival as a major economic player. Brazil's victory, both on the field and via its hosting, would attract global attention. The World Cup was the most widely watched and followed sporting event in the world, exceeding even the Olympic Games. From the perspective of Brazil's policy makers and financiers, the possibilities of reaching a massive global market were endless. For example, the cumulative audience for all matches during the 2006 World Cup was estimated to be 26.29 billion people, with an estimated 715.1 million people watching the final match in Berlin, an astonishing one-ninth of the entire population of the planet.

So how did the 2014 FIFA World Cup games go? The challenges associated with hosting the games began well before the athletes arrived on the playing fields. Brazil estimated a figure of US\$11.3 billion in public works-spending for the event. The initial plan presented to the public

emphasized that the majority of the spending on infrastructure for the World Cup would highlight general transportation, security, and communications. Less than 25 percent of total spending would go toward the twelve new or refurbished stadiums. Yet, as the games grew nearer, cost overruns increased stadium costs by at least 75 percent, with public resources reallocated from general infrastructure projects. The FIFA cost overruns aggravated ongoing public demonstrations in several Brazilian cities against the increase in public transportation fares and political corruption. For example, on June 20, 2013, one and a half million people demonstrated in São Paulo, Brazil's largest metropolitan area with a population of 18 million people. In this context, the exorbitant cost of stadiums, the displacement of urban dwellers for construction, and the embezzlement of public funds became a new theme at the forefront of public protests (Castells 2015: 232). As the countdown to the kickoff began, Brazilians took to the streets with banners against the World Cup. "FIFA go home!" and "We want hospitals up to FIFA's standards!" were common slogans in protests throughout more than a hundred cities. "The World Cup steals money from healthcare, education and the poor. The homeless are being forced from the streets. This is not for Brazil, it's for the tourists," reported a *Guardian* article (Watts 2014).

The games began as this social unrest intensified. Of the thirty-two teams that qualified for the World Cup, Brazil was one of four that reached the semifinals, facing an undefeated Germany. The match wasn't even close. Germany led 5-0 at half time, scoring an unheard of four goals in a span of six minutes, and went on to win the World Cup. For its stunned fans in the stadium, as well as for the massive global audience, Brazil's loss was shocking. The media depicted the match as a national disgrace, with Brazilian newspapers carrying headlines such as "The Biggest Shame in History," "A Historical Humiliation!," and "Brazil is Slain." Global media joined in with headlines that described the defeat as the "ultimate embarrassment" and the "most humiliating World Cup host nation defeat of all time."

On the surface, intersectionality seems far removed from Brazil's 2014 FIFA World Cup experience. Because many people enjoy sporting events or play sports themselves, sports

seem distant from intersectionality's concern with social inequality. Yet using intersectionality as an analytic tool to examine the FIFA World Cup sheds light on the organization of power. Intersectionality as an analytic tool examines how power relations are intertwined and mutually constructing. Race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, ethnicity, nation, religion, and age are categories of analysis, terms that reference important social divisions. But they are also categories that gain meaning from power relations of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class exploitation.

One way of describing the organization of power identifies four distinctive yet interconnected domains of power: interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural. These four dimensions of the organization of power provide opportunities for using intersectionality as an analytic tool to better understand the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

**The interpersonal domain of power** First, power relations are about people's lives, how people relate to one another, and who is advantaged or disadvantaged within social interactions. Without the athletes, there would be no World Cup. The athletes are individuals and, whether famous or not, their actions shape power relations just as much as the policy makers who bid on the games, the media that covered the Brazilian national team's defeat, or the activists who took to the street to protest cost overruns.

As a people's sport, football can be played almost anywhere by almost anyone. Each team is composed of a constellation of individuals who, on some level, love football and have chosen to play. One does not need expensive lessons, or a carefully manicured playing field, or even shoes. It requires no special equipment or training, only a ball and enough players to field two teams. Compared with ice skating, tennis, skiing, or American football, soccer has far fewer barriers between athletic talent and the means to develop that talent. Across the globe, there is no way of knowing exactly how many people play football. Yet FIFA's surveys provide a good guess: an estimated 270 million people are involved in football as professional soccer players, recreational players, registered players both over and under age 18, futsal and beach football players, referees, and officials. This is a vast pool of

potential elite athletes and a massive audience reaching across categories of social class, age, gender, ethnicity, and nation. When one adds the children and youth who play football but who are not involved in any kind of organized activity detectable by FIFA, the number swells greatly.

The fanfare granted to the World Cup is a small tip of the iceberg of the everyday social interactions that shape people's relationships with one another in regard to football. From elite athletes to poor kids, football players want to play on a fair playing field. It doesn't matter how you got to the field: all that matters once you are on the field is what you do on the field. The sports metaphor of a *level playing field* speaks to the desire for fairness. Whether winners or losers, this team sport rewards individual talent yet also highlights the collective team nature of achievement. When played well and unimpeded by suspect officiating, football rewards individual talent. In a world that is characterized by so much unfairness, competitive sports such as football become important venues for seeing how things should be. The backgrounds of the players should not matter when they hit the playing field. What matters is how well they play. The cries of anguish from the losing 2014 Brazil team may have made the news, but few people questioned the outcome of the game. Fair play ruled.

Football is a people's sport, but not all people get to play. One important rule of football, and of most sports for that matter, is that men and women do not compete directly against one another. The rules of fair play may apply *within* gender categories, yet how fair are those categories? Sports generally, and professional sports in particular, routinely provide opportunities for men that are denied to women. By this rule of gender segregation, the 2014 World Cup showed that the kind of football that counts for FIFA and fans alike is played by men.

Using intersectionality as an analytic lens highlights the multiple nature of individual identities and how varying combinations of class, gender, race, sexuality, and citizenship categories differentially position each individual. Regardless of the love of soccer, these axes of social division work together and influence one another to shape each individual biography.

**The disciplinary domain of power** When it comes to the organization of power, different people find themselves encountering different treatment regarding which rules apply to them and how those rules will be implemented. Within football's disciplinary domain, some people are told they lack talent and are discouraged from playing, whereas others may receive extra coaching to cultivate the talent they have. Many are simply told that they are out of luck because they are the wrong gender or age to play at all. In essence, power operates by disciplining people in ways that put people's lives on paths that make some options seem viable and others out of reach.

For example, South Africa's 2010 hosting of the World Cup helped highlight the disciplinary practices that African boys faced who wanted to play football in Europe. European football clubs offer salaries on a par with those offered within US professional football, basketball, and baseball to play for teams in the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Spain. The surge in the number of Africans playing at big European clubs reflects the dreams of young African football players to make it big. Yet these practices also makes them vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous recruiters. Filmmaker Mariana van Zeller's 2010 documentary *Football's Lost Boys* details how thousands of young players are lured away from their homelands, with their families giving up their savings to predatory agents, and how they are often left abandoned, broke, and alone. Some refer to the treatment of young African players as human trafficking.

The increasing racial/ethnic diversity on elite European teams who recruit African players, other players of color from poorer nations, and racialized immigrant minorities may help teams to win. But this racial/ethnic/national diversity of elite football teams has also highlighted the problem of racism in European football. The visible diversity among team players upends long-standing assumptions about race, ethnicity, and national identity. When the national team of France won the 1998 World Cup, defeating Brazil 3-0, some fans saw the team as non-representative of France because most of the players weren't white. Moreover, white European fans may love their teams, yet many feel free to engage in racist behavior, such as calling African players monkeys, chanting racial slurs, and carrying signs with

racially derogatory language. In one case, Polish fans threw bananas at a Nigerian football player. The fans aren't the only problem – racial slurs among players are also an issue. For example, at the 2006 World Cup, France's Zinedine Zidane, a three-time winner of FIFA's world player of the year violated a rule of fair play by headbutting Italy's Marco Materazzi in the chest. Zidane, the son of Algerian immigrants, said he was goaded by Materazzi's racist and sexist slurs against his mother and sister. Materazzi was kept in play while Zidane was ejected from what was to be his last ever World Cup match.

**The cultural domain of power** When it comes to the organization of power, ideas matter in providing explanations for social inequality and fair play. Televised across the globe, the World Cup sends out important ideas about competition and fair play. Sports contests send an influential message: not everyone can win. On the surface, this makes sense. But why do some people win and other people lose? More importantly, why do some people consistently win and others consistently lose? FIFA football has ready-made answers. Winners have talent, discipline, and luck, and losers suffer from lack of talent, inferior self-discipline, and/or bad luck. This view suggests that fair competition produces just results. Armed with this worldview concerning winners and losers, it's a small step to using this frame to explain social inequality itself.

What conditions are needed for this frame to remain plausible? This is where the idea of a level or flat playing field becomes crucial. Imagine a tilted football field that was installed on the side of a gently sloped hill with the red team's goal on top of the hill and the blue team's goal in the valley. The red team has a clear advantage: when they try to score, gravity propels the ball toward their opponent's goal. No matter how gifted, their team players need not work as hard to score. In contrast, the blue team has an uphill battle to score a goal. The blue team members may need to be especially gifted to continue playing the game. They may have talent and self-discipline but they have the bad luck of playing on a tilted playing field.

Football fans would be outraged if the actual playing field were tilted in this way. Yet this is what social divisions of

class, gender, and race do – we all think we are playing on a level playing field when we are not. The cultural domain of power helps manufacture messages that playing fields are level, that all competitions are fair, and that any resulting patterns of winners and losers have been fairly accomplished.

With the advent of new communications technologies, mass media has increased in significance for the cultural domain of power. Via contests between nations, cities, regions, and all sorts of things, mass media stages entertainment that reinforces the myth of a level playing field where one doesn't actually exist. For FIFA, 195 or so nation-states theoretically can compete in the World Cup as long as they play by the rules and their teams are good enough. This is the myth of equal opportunity to compete. When national teams compete, nations themselves compete. Yet because rich nations have far more resources than poor ones, few nation-states can field teams.

The message of mass-media spectacles goes beyond any one event. The competitive and repetitive nature of contests – such as the World Cup and the Olympics – reflects intersecting power relations of capitalism and nationalism. Competing mass-media spectacles reiterate the belief that unequal outcomes of winners and losers are normal outcomes of marketplace competition. In other words, social inequalities that are fairly produced are socially just. The repetitive nature of sporting events, beauty pageants, reality television, and the like provide a useful interpretive context for viewing the marketplace relations of capitalism as being similarly organized. These mass media spectacles and associated events also present important scripts of gender, race, and nation that work together and influence one another. The bravery of male athletes on national teams makes them akin to war heroes on battlefields, while the beauty, grace, and virtue of national beauty pageants are thought to represent the beauty, grace, and virtue of the nation. Mass-media spectacles may appear to be mere entertainment, yet they serve political ends.

**The structural domain of power** Fair play on a level playing field may be the ethos of football, yet how much of this fair play characterizes the organization of FIFA football itself? The structural domain of power here refers to how

FIFA itself is organized or structured. Because intersectionality embraces complexity, it questions how intersecting power relations of class, gender, race, and nation shape the institutionalization and organization of the World Cup. As a global industry, FIFA has organized the populist sensibility of football into a highly profitable global network. With an executive committee of 25 businessmen, FIFA's headquarters are located in Switzerland, where the government provides it legal protection as an international NGO. Its legal status has allowed FIFA to control billions of euros without substantial government oversight. As big business, FIFA has managed to organize football into a global industry with tremendous reach and considerable influence with governments. For example, in 2012 FIFA succeeded in having the Brazilian parliament adopt a General World Cup Law that imposed bank holidays on host cities on the days of the Brazilian team's matches, cut the number of places in the stadiums, and increased prices for ordinary spectators. The law also allowed alcoholic drinks to be taken into the stadiums, a change in the law which was of special benefit to Anheuser-Busch, the makers of Budweiser beer and one of FIFA's main sponsors. The bill also exempted companies working for FIFA from taxes and fiscal charges, banned the sale of any goods in official competition spaces, their immediate surroundings and their principal access routes, and penalized bars who tried to schedule showings of the matches or promote certain brands. Finally, the bill defined any attack on the image of FIFA or its sponsors as a federal crime.

Given FIFA's global reach and largely unchecked powers, it should come as no surprise that, because FIFA is unregulated, it has for years come under suspicion of corruption. In June 2015, the US Department of Justice issued indictments against top FIFA officials and others involved in FIFA, bringing FIFA's corruption allegations into public purview. At the request of the United States, Interpol issued six alerts for two former senior FIFA officials and four corporate executives. They were a former FIFA vice-president from Trinidad and Tobago who was accused of accepting bribes in connection with the awarding of the 2010 World Cup to South Africa; a Paraguayan citizen and former FIFA executive committee member; three business persons who control two

sports-marketing business based in Argentina; and a Brazilian citizen who owns broadcasting businesses. Accused of rigging the bidding process for awarding the games, the indictments traced financial payoffs to key FIFA figures in exchange for FIFA's endorsements. At the heart of the corruption were charges of "pay to play," rather than fair play.<sup>1</sup>

### *Social inequality: a new global crisis?*

Drawing more than 6,000 participants from all over the world, the Eighteenth International Sociological Association (ISA) World Congress of Sociology convened in Yokohama, Japan on July 13–19, 2014. In his presidential address, Michael Burawoy, a distinguished Marxist scholar, argued that inequality was the most pressing issue of our time. Burawoy suggested that growing global inequality had spurred new thinking not only in sociology but also in economics and related social sciences. Burawoy had long been a proponent of public sociology, the perspective that the tools of sociology should be brought to bear on social issues of great significance to the public (Burawoy 2005). Interestingly, Burawoy also stressed the significance of the 2013 election of Pope Francis. As the first pope from the Global South, Pope Francis is unusually committed to tackling the questions of social inequality, poverty, and environmental justice: he did not hesitate to describe economic inequality as "the root of social evil." It is not every day that a Marxist scholar quotes the Pope before an international gathering of social scientists.

That same year, more than 220 business leaders and investors from 27 countries assembled in London at the May 2014 Conference on Inclusive Capitalism. As Nafeez Ahmed reported in a May 28, 2014 article in the *Guardian*, the attendees gathered to discuss "the need for a more socially responsible form of capitalism that benefits everyone, not just a wealthy minority." Representing the most powerful financial and business elites who control approximately US\$30 trillion worth of liquid assets, or one-third of the global total, this group was concerned about, as the CEO of Unilever put it, "the capitalist threat to capitalism." The stellar guest list for the conference included Prince Charles, Bill Clinton, a

Bank of England governor, the executive chairman of Google, the co-founder and CEO of Blackstone, and the CEOs of UBS, GlaxoSmithKline, Dow Chemical, and Honeywell. Most attendees were handpicked by wealthy philanthropist Lady de Rothschild, reports the *Telegraph's* Brooks-Pollock (July 24, 2014), to discuss one of the "fashionable issues of the day – rising inequality in capitalist societies and how to make the system work for everyone." Among the guests, Christine Lagarde, the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), invoked in her keynote speech the same reference to Pope Francis's description of increasing inequality as "the root of social evil," as well as Marx's insight that capitalism "carried the seeds of its own destruction." Something needed to be done, argued Lagarde. Here again, it is not every day that the head of the International Monetary Fund quotes both the Pope and Marx before the global financial elite.

The fact that a Marxist sociologist like Burawoy referenced the Pope, and that the IMF head cited both the Pope and Marx suggests the state of global inequality is serious enough to make people who are typically on opposite sides of many issues take notice. The International Monetary Fund offers a mainstream view of the causes and solutions to social inequality, one that resembles the winners and losers in FIFA's analysis of fair play. Many sociologists have long offered a critical assessment of this mainstream view, pointing instead to structural power relations. Yet growing global social inequality is so significant that both mainstream and critical groups are taking notice. What is happening?

Over the last thirty years, inequality in income and wealth has grown exponentially, both within individual nation-states and across an overwhelming majority of countries. Seventy percent of the world's population lives in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last three decades. Nearly half of the world's wealth, some US\$110 trillion, is owned by only 1 percent of the world's population. If trends continue, by 2016, 1 percent is expected to own more than the other 99 percent together (Oxfam 2015). Despite the 2008 global financial crisis, the richest 1 percent constantly increased its share of the world's wealth between 1980 and 2014 – from 44 percent in 2009 to 48 percent in 2014.<sup>2</sup> The combined wealth of the world's richest 85 people equals the

total wealth of the poorest half of the world's population, which accounts for 3.5 billion people (Oxfam 2014).

Using intersectionality as an analytic tool can foster a better understanding of growing global inequality. First, economic inequality does not fall equally on everyone. Rather than seeing people as a homogeneous, undifferentiated mass, intersectionality provides a framework for explaining how social divisions of race, gender, age, and citizenship status, among others, positions people differently in the world, especially in relation to global social inequality.

Some people are far more vulnerable to changes in the global economy, whereas others benefit disproportionately from them. For example, income differences that accompany labor market practices of hiring, job security, retirement benefits, health benefits, and pay scales do not fall equally on everyone. Labor market discrimination that pushes some people into part-time jobs with low pay, irregular hours, and no benefits, or that renders them structurally unemployed, does not fall equally across social groups. Similarly, intersectionality also fosters a rethinking of the concept of the wealth gap. Rather than seeing the wealth gap as unconnected to categories such as race, gender, age, and citizenship, differences in wealth reflect structures intersecting power relations. The racialized structure of the wealth gap has been well documented in the United States where disparities between whites, blacks, and Latinos have reached record highs (Chang 2010; Pew Research Center 2011).<sup>3</sup> Yet the wealth gap is not only racialized but also simultaneously gendered. The wealth gap is generally analyzed through an *either/or* lens, race or gender, but with noteworthy exceptions (see, e.g., Oliver and Shapiro 1995), less often through an intersectional *both/and* lens. Measuring economic inequality through data on households, rather than on individuals, helps document the wealth gap between racially differentiated households and sheds light on the situation of households headed by single women across races. Intersectional analyses demonstrate how the structure of the inequality gap is simultaneously racialized and gendered for women of color.<sup>4</sup>

Second, using intersectionality as an analytic tool complicates class-only explanations for global economic inequality. Intersectionality proposes a more sophisticated map of social

inequality that goes beyond class-only accounts. Both the neoclassical economics accepted in US venues and Marxist social thought more often found in European settings foreground class. Both of these class-only explanations for social inequality treat race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity as add-ons. Yet intersectional frameworks suggest that economic inequality can neither be assessed nor effectively addressed through class alone. As Zillah Eisenstein argues in a *Feminist Wire* article:

When civil rights activists speak about race they are told they need to think about class as well. When anti-racist feminists focus on the problems of gendered racism they are also told to include class. So [...] when formulating class inequality one should have race and gender in view as well. *Capital is intersectional*. It always intersects with the bodies that produce the labor. Therefore, the accumulation of wealth is embedded in the racialized and engendered structures that enhance it. (Eisenstein 2014: our italics)

Positing that contemporary configurations of global capital that fuel and sustain growing social inequalities are about class exploitation, racism, sexism, and other systems of power fosters a rethinking of the categories used to understand economic inequality. Intersectional frameworks reveal how race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and citizenship relate in complex and intersecting ways to produce economic inequality.

Third, using intersectionality as an analytic tool highlights the significance of social institutions in shaping and solving social problems. Many factors contribute to this widening economic gap, but one seems paramount: the rise in economic inequality grew during the same forty-year period that nation-state policies shifted from governmental philosophies of social welfare to neoliberalism.

Drawing on philosophies of representative and participatory democracy, social welfare states had long concerned themselves with protecting the interests of the public, grounded in a belief that democratic institutions could flourish only with a strong citizenry. Unemployment, poverty, racial and gender discrimination, homelessness, illiteracy, poor health, and similar social problems within a nation-state

constituted threats to the public good that were just as prominent as external enemies beyond its national borders. To confront these domestic challenges, social welfare states aimed to promote public well-being via various combinations of establishing regulatory agencies for electricity, water, and similar entities, investments in public infrastructure and basic services, and providing direct state services. For example, in the United States, environmental safety and food security have long been the purview of the federal government in the belief that, in order to protect everyone, industrial polluters of water and air, as well as the meat-packing industry, require a fair yet vigilant regulatory climate. Social welfare policies provide for a range of projects, including highway funding, school funding, and public transportation, as well as programs that care for the elderly, children, poor people, the disabled, the unemployed, and other people who need assistance. Overall, the basic idea was that, by protecting its citizens and acting on behalf of the public good, social welfare states could maintain strong democratic institutions.

In contrast, as a philosophy, neoliberalism is grounded in the belief that markets, in and of themselves, are better able than governments to produce economic outcomes that are fair, sensible, and good for all. The state practices associated with neoliberalism differ dramatically from those of social welfare states. First, neoliberalism fosters the increased privatization of government programs and institutions like public schools, prisons, health care, transportation, and the military. Under the logic of neoliberalism, private firms that are accountable to market forces rather than democratic oversight of citizens can potentially provide less costly and more efficient services than government workers. Second, the logic of neoliberalism argues for the scaling back, and in some cases elimination of, the social welfare state. The safety net of government assistance to the poor, the unemployed, the disabled, the elderly, and the young is recast as wasteful spending characteristic of irresponsible government. Third, neoliberal logic claims that fewer economic regulations and more trade that is free of government constraints protects jobs. This freedom from environmental regulation and entities such as unions should produce greater profitability for some companies which should lead to more jobs. Finally,

neoliberalism posits a form of individualism that rejects the notion of the public good. By neoliberal logic, people have only themselves to blame for their problems: solving social problems comes down to the self-reliance of individuals (Cohen 2010; Harvey 2005).

Citizens within democratic nation-states with strong social welfare traditions find themselves facing a dilemma: in what ways will their respective nation-states continue to endorse social welfare policies and in what ways will they embrace social policies informed by neoliberalism? On the one hand, refusing to implement policies that are informed by neoliberalism can make a state less competitive in the global marketplace. Making industries more competitive in the global marketplace via automation, deskilling, and job export increases the profitability of companies. Yet, on the other hand, neoliberalism can foster social unrest. Those same strategies eliminate jobs and suppress wages, leaving closed factories, unemployed workers, and the potential for social unrest in their wake. Brazil's experience with FIFA captures the tensions that distinguish a nation-state that aimed for a balance between social welfare policies and neoliberal aspirations. The money spent on FIFA may have raised Brazil's profile in the global arena, yet it simultaneously sparked massive social protest about cost overruns and corruption.

Intersectionality certainly has many conceptual tools to analyze state power and how it articulates with global capitalism. Yet intersectionality's focus on people's lives provides space for alternative analyses of these same phenomena. As opposed to their leaders, the people who bear the brunt of neoliberalism may be more hopeful about reclaiming participatory democracy. Without hope of change, there would be no social protest. Drawing inspiration from Pope Francis, they may also view growing economic inequality, as well as the social forces that cause it, as "the root of social evil," yet refuse to sit passively watching it destroy their lives.

### *Latinidades: the black women's movement in Brazil*

Two weeks after the raucous fans departed from Brazil's 2014 World Cup spectacle, more than a thousand women of African descent, their friends, family members, colleagues,

and allies travelled to Brasilia, the national capital. They arrived at the iconic National Museum of the Republic, several blocks away from the refurbished but now empty World Cup stadium, to attend the seventh meeting of *Latinidades*, the Afro-Latin and Afro-Caribbean women's festival. As the largest festival for black women in Latin America, the event was scheduled to coincide with the annual International Day of Black Latin American and Caribbean Women. *Latinidades*'s seasoned event organizers had recruited an impressive list of main sponsors: the State Secretary of Culture, the Office of Racial Equality, the Funarte Palmares Cultural Foundation and Petrobras, Brazil's multinational energy corporation. Unlike the goals of FIFA, *Latinidades*'s success would not be judged by corporate profits or the success of mass-media spectacle. Unlike the hefty ticket prices for the World Cup, the six-day *Latinidades* festival was free and housed in public space.

*Latinidades* was no ordinary festival: its expressed purpose lay in promoting "racial equality and tackling racism and sexism." The festival drew mostly women of African descent but also many men and members of diverse racial/ethnic groups from all areas of Brazil's states and regions, as well as from Costa Rica, Ecuador, and other Latin American and Caribbean nations. This geographic heterogeneity reflected the many different ways participants were connected to promoting racial equality and tackling how racism and sexism affected Afro-Latin women. Community organizers, professors, graduate students, parents, artists, schoolteachers, high-school students, representatives of samba schools, government officials, and music lovers, among others, made the journey to Brasilia to attend *Latinidades*.

The festival's programming was inclusive, with something for all attendees, even the youngest ones. *Latinidades* had elements of an academic symposium, a political organizing event, an African cultural heritage event, and a mass-music festival rolled into one. *Latinidades*'s academic component resembled a standard academic conference, complete with plenary sessions and an array of panels on issues as varied as health, psychology, literature from the African diaspora, and a session devoted to new books by and about black women. Important Afro-Brazilian feminist intellectuals attended. Some sessions examined community-organizing initiatives in

favelas (low-income urban communities), as well as forms of wisdom associated with land, sustainability, and the environment.

The festival's strong activist orientation permeated both its sessions and its special events. For example, Angela Davis's keynote address got the audience on its feet, many with fists raised in the Black Power salute. The festival also set aside time for a planning meeting to educate attendees about the upcoming Black Women's March for a National Day of Denouncing Racism. Community organizers rubbed shoulders with academics, as did young people with revered elders.

Another programming strand throughout the festival's many activities emphasized the significance of African diasporic cultural traditions, especially in Brazil. Writers and artists were well represented. Conceição Evaristo, Afro-Brazilian author and professor of Brazilian literature, attended the festival. Her novel *Ponciá Vicêncio*, a story of a young Afro-Brazilian woman's journey from the land of her enslaved ancestors to the emptiness of urban life, was a landmark in black Brazilian women's literature (Evaristo 2007). From the content of sessions, to a workshop for girls on black aesthetics and beauty, a session on the art of turbans and their connections to black beauty, a capoeira workshop, and a tree-planting ceremony of the seedlings of sacred baobab trees, Latinidades saw culture as an important dimension of Afro-Latin and Afro-Caribbean women's lives. After two days of intensive workshops, talks, and films, festival participants spilled outside the museum into its expansive plaza to enjoy two nights of music concerts. Latinidades was a festival where serious work and play coincided.

Not only was Latinidades a success, its very existence constituted one highly visible moment of an Afro-Brazilian women's movement that took several decades to build. Holding a festival that was devoted to the issues and needs of black women in Brazil specifically, as well as Afro-Latin and Afro-Caribbean women more generally, would have been impossible several decades earlier. Since the 1930s, when Brazil adopted an ideology of racial democracy, Brazil officially claimed not to have "races." The Brazilian government collected no racial statistics and, without racial categories, Brazil officially had neither race nor black people. Within this

social context, women of African descent may have constituted a visible and sizable segment of Brazilian society, yet in a Brazil that ostensibly lacked race, the category of black women did not exist as an officially recognized population.

How might using intersectionality as an analytic tool shed light on Latinidades's commitment to challenging racism and sexism against a group that officially did not exist? For one, black women challenged Brazil's national identity narrative concerning racial democracy. They saw the historical interconnections between ideas about race and Brazil's nation-building project as setting the stage for the erasure of Afro-Brazilian women. Brazil's cultivated image of national identity posited that racism did not exist and that color lacks meaning, other than celebrating it as a dimension of national pride. This national identity neither came about by accident nor meant that people of African descent believed it. By erasing the political category of race, Brazil's national discourse of racial democracy effectively eliminated language that might describe the racial inequalities that affected black Brazilian people's lives. This erasure of "blackness" as a political category allowed discriminatory practices to occur against people of visible African descent in education and employment because there were neither officially recognized terms for describing racial discrimination nor official remedies for it (Twine 1998). Brazil's military government (1964–1985) upheld this national ideology of racial democracy and also suppressed social protest in general. The end of the dictatorship in 1985 created new opportunities for seeing the connections between racism and Brazilian nationalism, as well as for social movements.

Second, using intersectionality as an analytic tool also sheds light on how women of African descent or Afro-Brazilian women are situated within gendered and sexualized understandings of Brazilian history and national identity. Brazil's specific history of slavery, colonialism, pre-dictatorship democracy, dictatorship and post-dictatorship democracy framed distinctive patterns of intersecting power relations of gender and sexuality. Sexual engagements, both consensual and forced, among African-, indigenous- and European-descended populations created a Brazilian population with varying hair textures, skin colors, body shapes, and eye

colors, as well as a complex and historically shifting series of terms to describe them. Claims of Brazil's racial democracy notwithstanding, Brazil, like other Latin American countries, developed a carefully calibrated lexicon of ethnoracial classification. Skin color, hair texture, facial features, and other aspects of appearance became *de facto* racial markers for distributing education, jobs, and other social goods. As Caldwell points out, "popular images of Brazil as a carnivalesque, tropical paradise have played a central role in contemporary constructions of mulata women's social identities. Brazil's international reputation as a racial democracy is closely tied to the sexual objectification of women of mixed racial ancestry as the essence of Brazilianness" (Caldwell 2007: 58). For Afro-Brazilian women, those of mixed ancestry or with more European physical features are typically considered to be more attractive. Moreover, women of visible African ancestry are typically constructed as non-sexualized, and often as asexual laborers or conversely as prostitutes (Caldwell 2007: 51). Appearance not only carries differential weight for women and men, but different stereotypes of black women rest on beliefs about their sexuality. These ideas feed back into notions of national identity, using race, gender, sexuality, and color as intersecting phenomena.

A third dimension of using intersectionality as an analytic tool concerns how intersectionality's framework of mutually constructing identity categories enabled Afro-Brazilian women to develop a collective identity politics. In this case, they cultivated a political black feminist identity at the intersections of racism, sexism, class exploitation, national history, and sexuality. The political space created by reinstalling democracy in the late 1980s benefited both women and blacks. Yet there was one significant difference between the two groups. In a climate where women's rights encompassed only the needs of white women and where blacks were not politically recognized, Afro-Brazilian women were differentially treated within both the feminist movement and the Black Movement. Clearly, women and men had different experiences within Brazilian society – there was no need to advocate for the integrity of the categories themselves. Yet the framing of the women's movement, even around such a firm subject as "woman," was inflected through other

categories. Because upper-class and middle-class women were central to the movement, their status as marked by class yet unmarked by race (most were white) shaped political demands. Brazil's success in electing women to political office reflected alliances among women across categories of social class. With the noteworthy exception of Benedita da Silva, the first black woman to serve in the Brazilian Congress in 1986 and the Senate in 1994, feminism raised issues of gender and sexuality, but did so in ways that did not engage issues of anti-black racism that were so important to Afro-Brazilian women.

Unlike white Brazilian women, black Brazilians of all sexes and genders had to create the collective political identity of "black" in order to build an anti-racist social movement that highlighted the effects of anti-black racism. Brazil's history with transatlantic slavery left it with a large population of African descent – by some estimates, 50 percent of the Brazilian population. Claiming an identity as "black" seemed to contradict the national identity of racial democracy, and thus ran the risk of being accused of disloyalty and not being fully Brazilian. In this sense, the Black Movement that emerged in the 1990s did not call for equal treatment within the democratic state for an already recognized group. Rather, recognition meant both naming a sizable segment of the population and acknowledging that it experienced anti-black racial discrimination (Hanchard 1994).

Neither Brazilian feminism led by women who were primarily well off and white, nor a Black Movement that was actively engaged in claiming a collective black identity that identified racism as a social force could by itself adequately address Afro-Brazilian women's issues. Black women who participated in the Black Movement found willing allies when it came to anti-racist black activism but much less understanding of how the issues faced by black people took gender-specific forms. Indeed, they found little recognition of the special issues of living lives as black women in Brazil at the intersections of areas of racism, sexism, class exploitation, second-class citizenship, and heterosexism. Brazil's history of class analysis that saw capitalism and workers' rights as major forces in shaping inequality made space for exceptional individuals such as Benedita da Silva. Yet when it came to

race, class politics asked them to see both gender and race as secondary. Black women faced similar pressures to subordinate their special concerns under the banner of class solidarity. These separate social movements of feminism, anti-racism, and workers' movements were important, and many black women continued to participate in them. Yet because no one social movement alone could adequately address Afro-Brazilian women's issues, they formed their own.

Taking a step back to view the issues that shaped the lived experiences of black Brazilian women illustrates how a collective identity politics emerged around a politicized understanding of a collective black women's identity based on common experiences of domination, exploitation, and marginalization (Caldwell 2007). For example, when black domestic workers organized, it was clear that women of African descent were disproportionately represented in this occupational category. Not all domestic workers were "black" but the job category was certainly closely associated with black women. Afro-Brazilian women were more vulnerable to violence, especially those living in favelas and who did domestic work. Drawing on cultural ties to the African diaspora, black women activists also saw their roles as mothers and othermothers as important for political action.

In brief, Latinidades thus marked the celebration of a long struggle to build a complex social movement that acknowledged race, gender, class, nation and sexuality as mutually constructing and multidimensional aspects of Afro-Brazilian women's lives. Women of African descent in Brazil knew on one level, through personal experience, that they were part of a group that shared certain collective experiences. They were disproportionately found in domestic work. Their images were maligned in popular culture. They were disproportionately targets of violence against women. They were mothers who lacked the means to care for their children as they would have liked, but had ties to the value placed on mothering across the African diaspora. Yet because they lacked a political identity and accompanying analysis to attach to these experiences, they couldn't articulate a collective identity politics to raise their concerns. None of their closest allies – black men in the Black Movement, or white women in the feminist movement, or socialists in

organizations that advocated for workers' rights – would have their own best interests at heart as fervently as they did. Lacking a language that spoke directly to their experiences, black women such as Léila Gonzalez, Sueli Carneiro and a long list of activist/scholars painstakingly organized the various constituencies of black women that were needed to address black women's concerns (Carneiro 1995, 2014).

## Core ideas of intersectional frameworks

Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experience. The previous section showed three different uses of intersectionality as an analytic tool that sheds light on the complexity of people's lives within an equally complex social context. Each case illustrates how the events and conditions of social and political life at play were not shaped by any one factor. Rather, the dynamics in each case reflected many factors that worked together in diverse and mutually influencing ways.

The FIFA World Cup, the global social inequality social problem, and the black Brazilian feminist social movement also help clarify six core ideas that appear and reappear when people use intersectionality as an analytic tool: inequality, relationality, power, social context, complexity, and social justice. These ideas are neither always present in a particular project, nor do they appear in projects in the same way. Instead, they provide guideposts for thinking through intersectionality. Just as these themes reappear, albeit in different forms, within intersectionality itself, they show up in different ways throughout the book. We briefly introduce them here, develop them throughout this text, and return to them in chapter 8.

1. *Social inequality*: All three cases grapple with social inequality, albeit from very different vantage points. The case of social inequality within World Cup football juxtaposes the search for fairness on the playing field with the unfairness of FIFA's global organization. The case of how growing global social inequality came to the attention of ISA and

the Conference on Inclusive Capitalism emphasizes different perspectives on social inequality that flow from intersectional analyses of capitalism and neoliberalism. Latinidades illustrates how the Afro-Brazilian women's movement responded intellectually and politically to historical and contemporary forms of social inequality, especially the intersections of racism and sexism, in shaping social class differences within the particular history of the Brazilian nation-state.

Many contemporary definitions of intersectionality emphasize social inequality, but not all do. Intersectionality exists because many people were deeply concerned by the forms of social inequality they either experienced themselves or saw around them. Intersectionality adds additional layers of complexity to understandings of social inequality, recognizing that social inequality is rarely caused by a single factor. Using intersectionality as an analytic tool encourages us to move beyond seeing social inequality through race-only or class-only lenses. Instead, intersectionality encourages understandings of social inequality based on interactions among various categories.

2. *Power*: All three cases highlight different dimensions of the organization of power relations. The case study of the World Cup examines the multi-faceted power relations of FIFA World Cup football. The case of global social inequality shows how intersectional frameworks that take power relations into account, especially those that emphasize intersections of neoliberalism, nationalism, and capitalism, provide more robust interpretations of global social inequality. In contrast, the Latinidades case shows how power relations operate within political projects and social movements. By examining how black women in Brazil organized to resist multiple forms of social inequality, the Latinidades case illustrates political activism not only from top-down policy endeavors or global social movements, but rather from the space of community organizing and grassroots coalition politics.

These cases raise two important points about power relations. First, intersectional frameworks understand power relations through a lens of mutual construction. In other words, people's lives and identities are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. Moreover, race, class, gender, sexuality, age, disability, ethnicity,

nation, and religion, among others, constitute interlocking, mutually constructing or intersecting systems of power. Within intersectional frameworks, there is no pure racism or sexism. Rather, power relations of racism and sexism gain meaning in relation to one another.

Second, power relations are to be analyzed both *via their intersections*, for example, of racism and sexism, as well as *across domains of power*, namely structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal. The framework of domains of power provides a heuristic device or thinking tool for examining power relations. The World Cup case introduced this heuristic by analyzing each domain of power separately. It broke them down into the kinds of power relations that are solidified in social structures (e.g., organizations like FIFA and institutions like national governments) that are shared through ideas and media, or culture broadly speaking, that appear over and over again in the ways that informal social rewards and punishments get distributed in everyday interactions, and that play out in everyday interactions among people. These are the structural, cultural, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains of power, respectively. Looking at how power works in *each* domain can shed light on the dynamics of a larger social phenomenon, like the social unrest around the 2014 World Cup. Yet, in actual social practice, the domains overlap, and no one domain is any more important than another.

3. *Relationality*: The Latinidades case of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement illustrates a historical and contemporary commitment to develop coalitions or relationships across social divisions. Whether the relationality of multiple identities within the interpersonal domain of power or the relationality of analysis required to understand how class, race, and gender collectively shape global social inequality, this idea of connectedness or relationality is important.

Relational thinking rejects *either/or* binary thinking, for example, opposing theory to practice, scholarship to activism, or blacks to whites. Instead, relationality embraces a *both/and* frame. The focus of relationality shifts from analyzing what distinguishes entities, for example, the differences between race and gender, to examining their interconnections. This shift in perspective opens up intellectual and

political possibilities. The global inequality case illustrates how class-only arguments may be insufficient to explain global social inequality, and that intersectional arguments that examine the relationships between class, race, gender, and age might be more valuable. Relationality takes various forms within intersectionality and is found in terms such as "coalition," "dialog," "conversation," "interaction," and "transaction." Because this core idea of relationality traverses much intersectional inquiry and practice, it is also central to this book. Power is better conceptualized as a relationship, as in *power relations*, than as a static entity. Power is not a thing to be gained or lost as in the zero-sum conceptions of winners and losers on the football playing field. Rather, power constitutes a relationship.

4. *Social context*: All three cases also provide opportunities for examining intersecting power relations *in context*. While both the World Cup and the black women's movement involve Brazil, the latter case highlights the significance of specific historical contexts in the production of intersectional knowledge and action, even in the absence of the term itself. The case of the black women's movement in Brazil shows how intellectual and political activism work by growing from a specific set of concerns in a specific social location, in this case the identity politics of Afro-Brazilian women.

The term "contextualize" comes from this impetus to think about social inequality, relationality, and power relations in a social context. Using intersectionality as an analytic tool means contextualizing one's arguments, primarily by being aware that particular historical, intellectual, and political contexts shape what we think and do. The cases of FIFA and Latinidades contextualize the main arguments in a Brazilian context. Moreover, presenting two different views of Brazil shows how different people can be in the same general social context yet hold different interpretations of it. This theme of different perspectives that can arise in different social contexts is important for understanding differences within intersectionality itself. Contextualization is especially important for intersectional projects produced in the Global South because scholars and activists working in Brazil, South Africa, Trinidad, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria,

and other nation-states of the Global South face specific sets of difficulties in reaching wider audiences.

To understand increasing global social inequalities, relationality sheds light on how intersections of racism, class exploitation, sexism, nationalism, and heterosexism work together to shape social inequality. These systems operate relationally across structural, cultural, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains. Attending to social context grounds intersectional analysis.

5. *Complexity*: These core themes of social inequality, power, relationality, and social context are intertwined, introducing an element of complexity into intersectional analysis. Intersectionality itself is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world. Using intersectionality as an analytic tool is difficult, precisely because intersectionality itself is complex. This level of complexity is not easy for anyone to handle. It complicates things and can be a source of frustration for scholars, practitioners, and activists alike, who are looking for a neat tool to apply: a tidy methodology for intersectional research (the dream of some students perhaps); or a crisp instruction manual for applying intersectionality to various fields of practice (how to make an intersectional social work intervention; how to make intersectional policy analysis; how to use intersectionality for fostering coalitions in social movement politics). These are perfectly legitimate and undoubtedly useful expectations that scholars, practitioners, and activists engaged in intersectionality all have to address seriously and collaboratively.

6. *Social justice*: These cases engage varying angles of vision on social justice. The World Cup case suggests that competition is not inherently bad. People accept the concept of winners and losers if the game itself is fair. Yet fairness is elusive in unequal societies where the rules may seem fair, yet differentially enforced through discriminatory practices. Fairness is also elusive where the rules themselves may appear to be equally applied to everyone yet still produce unequal and unfair outcomes: in democratic societies, everyone has the "right" to vote, but not everyone has equal access to do so.

The case of global social inequality illustrates how complex the solutions to global economic inequality need to be in order to foster social justice. For one, the legitimacy of

pursuing a social justice agenda is not self-evident. Many people believe that social ideals, such as the belief in meritocracy, fairness, and the reality of democracy, have already been achieved. For them, there is no global crisis of legitimacy: global social inequality is the outcome of fair competition, and democratic institutions work just fine. Yet by challenging myths that racial democracy had been achieved, or that the Black Movement could handle the gendered concerns of women, or that Brazilian feminism was adequate for all women, the social justice activism of the black women's movement in Brazil provides a different angle of vision on social justice.

Social justice may be intersectionality's most contentious core idea, but it is one that expands the circle of intersectionality to include people who use intersectionality as an analytic tool for social justice. Working for social justice is not a requirement for intersectionality. Yet people who are engaged in using intersectionality as an analytic tool and people who see social justice as central rather than as peripheral to their lives are often one and the same. These people are typically critical of, rather than accepting of, the status quo.

Our goal in this book is to democratize the rich and growing literature of intersectionality – not to assume that only African-American students will be interested in black history, or that LGBTQ youth will be the only ones interested in queer studies, or that intersectionality is for any one segment of the population. Rather, the task is to use intersectionality as an analytic tool to examine a range of topics such as those introduced here. In the following chapters, we explore various dimensions of intersectionality, especially the use of intersectionality as an analytic tool, as well as the varying forms that its core themes of social inequality, relationality, power, social context, complexity, and social justice assume.

## 2

# Intersectionality as Critical Inquiry and Praxis

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Far too much intersectional scholarship starts with the assumption that intersectionality is a finished framework that can simply be applied to a given research project or political program. Yet, as the cases of the FIFA World Cup, the ISA/World Conference on Inclusive Capitalism, and Latinidades suggest, the use of intersectionality can take many forms. Generalizing about intersectionality based on a particular case or one group's experiences in a particular social context risks missing the process of discovery that underlies how people actually use intersectional frameworks. Intersectionality itself is constantly under construction and these cases illustrate different ways of using intersectionality as an analytic tool. Yet how is intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and praxis organized to do this analytic work? This chapter investigates intersectionality's two organizational focal points, namely, *critical inquiry* and *critical praxis*.

Intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry gained visibility in the academy when the term "intersectionality" seemed to be a good fit for scholarship and teaching that were already underway. In the 1990s, the term "intersectionality" came into use both inside and outside traditional disciplines, as well as inside and outside the academy. Initially, intersectional inquiry was inherently critical because it criticized existing bodies of knowledge, theories, methodologies, and classroom practices, especially in relation to social inequality. While

social justice. Our history of intersectionality has emphasized praxis, a dimension of intersectionality that does not routinely appear in these legitimated histories, although a critical praxis does permeate intersectionality.

As we wrap up this book we ask: what ideas and experiences are *not* here? In what ways is our interpretation of intersectionality limited by these omissions? More importantly, how might we go about expanding the breadth of intersectionality to encompass the heterogeneity of ideas and experiences that are global without flattening their differences? Intersectionality can't engage these expansive questions if it chooses the narrow pathway of defining itself as a "feminist theory of identity," or, worse yet, if it severs its critical inquiry from its critical praxis. These questions have no straightforward answers, certainly none that can easily be resolved. Rather, they call out for more people working on them, in essence, an expansion of global conversations.

The central challenge facing intersectionality is to move into the politics of the not-yet. Thus far, intersectionality has managed to sustain intellectual and political dynamism that grows from its heterogeneity. This is immensely difficult to achieve when faced with the kinds of intellectual and political challenges that we have explored in this book. But just because something is difficult does not mean that it's not worth doing. We see intersectionality's heterogeneity not as a weakness but rather as a source of tremendous potential. Intersectionality is a tool that we can all use in moving toward a more just future.

## Notes

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### Chapter 1 What is Intersectionality?

- 1 FIFA's legal troubles aside, the business of the World Cup goes far beyond the games themselves. Rather, as the scope of people who were indicted indicates, the World Cup is situated at the convergence of increasingly important global industries: sports and entertainment, global telecommunications and tourism, and the globalized World Cup paraphernalia industry. For example, the FIFA-approved official ball of the 2014 World Cup, Adidas Brazuca, at a price tag of US\$160, was manufactured in The Forward Sports factory at Sialkot (Pakistan) by Pakistani women (90 percent of the workforce) who each made barely US\$100 per month. After selling 13 million official World Cup match balls in 2010, Adidas made hundreds of millions of dollars. In 2014, it expected to sell more than 14 million of them.
- 2 In the United States, the wealthiest 1 percent captured 95 percent of post-financial crisis growth since 2009, while the remaining 90 percent became poorer.
- 3 In 2015, the median wealth (assets minus debts) of white households is 20 times that of black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households.
- 4 Black women fare worst according to a 2010 research report on wealth disparities between different racial groups in the United States. Median wealth of single black women (including household-head single mothers) in the prime of their working years (ages 36 to 49) is only US\$5, compared to US\$42,600 for single white women of the same age – which is 61 percent of their single white male counterparts (Chang 2010).