As for the statistical tools that we use to analyze quantitative intersectionality data, Audre Lorde's (1984) famous quote, the "Master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 111) seems apt here. That is, the statistical methods, even those that test interactions, were not designed with the study of intersectionality in mind. Rather, statisticians rooted in positivistic paradigms developed statistical assumptions of linearity, unidimensionality of measures, uncorrelated error components and the like (McGrath and Johnson 2003) that do not reflect the real world complexities of intersections of race, sex/gender and sexual orientation. In short, we need new analytical tools and strategies to assist us in understanding the complexities of intersectionality.

Examining intersectionality from multidisciplinary perspectives is a signature strength of scholarship on intersectionality. Scholars from disciplines as varied as women's studies, Black feminist studies, social epidemiology, sociology, critical theory, legal studies, and psychology have all made important contributions to advancing knowledge about the experience of intersectionality. Nonetheless, this disciplinary dispersion also reflects a "balkanization of research on social inequality . . . that has precluded integrated knowledge across systems of oppression" (Reskin 2002 as cited in Weber and Parra-Medina 2003, p. 200). An essential response to this balkanization of research is multidisciplinary teams of researchers composed of qualitative analysts and statisticians to develop and advance methodological knowledge about interdisciplinary research. At issue is not just an expansion of methodological expertise; multidisciplinary teams challenge the predominant post-positivist paradigm in which most traditionally trained researchers are steeped by "incorporating more dimensions, situationally specific interpretations, group dynamics and an explicit emphasis on social change" (Weber and Parra-Medina 2003, p. 222).

Elizabeth R. Cole

The publication of University of Michigan psychology, African American studies, and women's studies professor Elizabeth Cole's essay on intersectionality in the flagship journal of the American Psychological Association (APA) was a watershed moment for intersectionality in quantitative social science. Every member of the APA receives a subscription to *American Psychologist,* and I was thoroughly surprised when I saw the word "Intersectionality" on the cover of that issue in April 2009, because as Shields (2008, Unit III, reading 13) and Bowleg (2008, reading 40) have already explained, psychology has been particularly recalcitrant in embracing intersectional ideas. In this work, Cole addresses a diverse audience of psychologists from across the discipline, many who are likely quite skeptical of the ideas she is advocating. Her writing suggests that she anticipated questions such as: "What makes this more than a buzzword? How is this relevant to my work? How will this advance the science? Isn't this sociology? I already study race—how can I study gender, too? Shouldn't we leave this to the folks in women's studies?" This essay is, among other things, a carefully executed argument in which Cole does the work of convincing her readers to keep listening to what she has to say.

Cole takes a markedly more moderate approach than Lisa Bowleg does in the previous essay. Though she does suggest interdisciplinary collaboration, Cole explicitly writes that psychologists need not *necessarily* learn new methods to develop intersectional research projects. Instead, Cole offers three guiding questions that psychologists should ask themselves throughout the research process (e.g., design, data collection, analysis and interpretation, reporting, etc.). These questions are broad enough to apply to most kinds of social research and specific enough to catalyze intersectional analyses by rethinking the relationships between research questions and research methods. She follows up each question with examples from the literature that demonstrate the potency and rigor of intersectional research design and methods. Ultimately, I read Cole as encouraging us to consider what additional questions beyond these three we might pose for our own research.

41. Intersectional Psychology: (At Least) Three Questions*

Psychologists are increasingly concerned with the effects of race/ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexuality on outcomes such as health and well-being, personal and social identities, and political views and participation. However, little work has considered how these categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage are jointly associated with outcomes.

Such questions may be understood within the rubric of *intersectionality,* which feminist and critical race theorists developed to describe analytic approaches that consider the meaning and consequences of multiple categories of social group membership. However, psychologists have been slow to incorporate this concept into their work because there are no established guidelines for empirically addressing research questions informed by an intersectional

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* Excerpted from E. R. Cole, "Intersectionality and Research in Psychology," *American Psychologist* 64 (2009): 170–180.

framework (McCall, 2005). Given this gap, some psychologists might imagine that to address intersectional questions, it is necessary to develop complex designs involving prohibitively large samples or to enlist the cooperation of an interdisciplinary team to triangulate the problem. Although this is not the case, an intersectionality framework does ask researchers to examine categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage with a new lens.

I propose three questions psychologists might ask as a strategy for addressing intersectional questions in psychology research: First, who is included within this category? Second, what role does inequality play? Third, where are there similarities? These questions are not mutually exclusive; in fact, each question builds on insights generated by the previous one.

1. Who Is Included Within This Category?

At the simplest level, psychologists can begin to consider the intersectional nature of the social categories they study by reflecting on who is included within a category. This question draws researchers' attention to diversity within categories. Because certain groups have been systematically underrepresented in psychology research (e.g., people of color, S. Sue, 1999; poor women, Reid, 1993), subcategories that only partially represent a larger category have often been taken as representative of the whole category. For example, because of the use of student samples (S. Sue, 1999), much of what is known about women in psychology is based on responses from women who are White and often middle class. An intersectional approach is an antidote to this erasure.

Moreover, the question may also encourage researchers to study groups belonging to multiple subordinated categories, such as women from racial/ethnic minority groups. This attention to those who have traditionally been excluded, perhaps the oldest approach within intersectionality studies, thwarts any tendency to view a category in essentialist terms, both by illuminating what is overlooked when a social category is assumed to include only certain (usually privileged) subgroups of that category and by representing diverse experiences contained within categories defined by multiple identities (e.g., the category of Black women includes women of different social classes and sexualities). Asking who is included within a category can facilitate representation of those who have been overlooked and the repair of misconceptions in the extant literature. The need for representation was well illustrated by early work on intersectionality showing that a single-axis framework that defines disadvantage only in terms of group members who are otherwise privileged systematically excludes members of multiply subordinated groups (Crenshaw, 1989/1993; King, 1988).

However, turning scholarly attention to groups who experience disadvantage based on membership in multiple categories is more than a matter of equity or inclusiveness. Such inclusion transcends representation, offering

the possibility to repair misconceptions engendered by the erasure of minority groups and the marginal subgroups within them. First, by focusing on groups that have been neglected, researchers are better able to arrive at a contextualized understanding of the groups' experiences, rather than viewing them in terms of the way they depart from norms based on dominant groups (Weber & Parra-Medina, 2003). Second, analyses that presume to focus on, say, gender, without consideration of other category memberships, implicitly assume a host of other social statuses that usually go unnamed in American culture: middle-class standing, heterosexuality, able-bodiedness, and White race (D. W. Sue, 2004). Scholars who attend to which groups are represented and which tend to be excluded—either by focusing their work on members of subordinate groups (hooks, 1984) or, conversely, by explicitly identifying and investigating the multiple identities that define privilege (see, e.g., Farough, 2006; Kuriloff & Reichert, 2003)—disrupt these assumptions by identifying the ways that race, class, or other identities shape the meaning of gender (Higginbotham, 1992).

Considering who is included within a category accomplishes more than mere inclusion; it improves psychologists' ability to theorize and empirically investigate the ways social categories structure individual and social life across the board. Thus, intersectionality is not only a tool to understand the experiences of minority group members. Nevertheless, increasing attention to diversity within social groups is not sufficient to address the psychological meaning of race, gender, and other social categories. Sociologists remind researchers that the social practices that construct race and gender involve hierarchy and inequality (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Risman, 2004). Yet, when researchers attend to who is included within the social categories they study, with particular attention to groups that have been traditionally overlooked, social and material inequality between groups may be treated only implicitly (why, after all, have some groups been studied to the exclusion of others?). These concerns are addressed by the second question.

2. What Role Does Inequality Play?

Categories such as race, gender, social class, and sexuality do not simply describe groups that may be different or similar; they encapsulate historical and continuing relations of political, material, and social inequality and stigma. Mahalingam (2007) characterized intersectionality in terms of the "interplay between person and social location, with particular emphasis on power relations among various social locations" (p. 45). Asking what role inequality plays draws attention to the ways that multiple category memberships position individuals and groups in asymmetrical relation to one another, affecting their perceptions, experiences, and outcomes. This question helps psychologists to view constructs such as race and gender as structural categories and social processes

rather than primarily as characteristics of individuals, a move consistent with recent methodological critiques (Helms, Jernigan, & Mascher, 2005) and social constructionist approaches within psychology (e.g., Jost & Kruglanski, 2002). Moreover, sociologists argue that constructs like race (Bonilla-Silva, 1997) and gender (Risman, 2004) affect beliefs about what is possible or desirable and define the contours of individuals' opportunities and life chances through social and institutional practices. Considering the role of inequality helps psychologists see individuals as embedded in cultural and historical contexts, a tradition that has deep roots within the discipline but one that has languished recently.

Femininity, long conceptualized within psychology in terms of traits and/or behavior, provides a rich test case for such an analysis. Girls and women are pressured to conform to feminine norms, including beauty, cultivation of feminine traits, performance of normative heterosexuality including motherhood, development of domestic skills, and sexual restraint. For much of U.S. history, however, economic exploitation, stereotyping, and lack of legal protection (Collins, 1990) served to deny Black women (and other women of color; see, e.g., Espiritu, 2001) the protections femininity is purported to afford. This history led Collins (2004) to argue that these benchmarks of femininity "become a normative yardstick for all femininities in which Black women [and other women of color] are relegated to the bottom of the gender hierarchy" (p. 193; Higginbotham, 1992). In response, Black women activists have long asserted their femininity, and accordingly their respectability, as a means to claim entitlement to legal protection and civil rights (Giddings, 1985).

Cole and Zucker (2007) explored Black and White women's perceptions of femininity in light of this history. Confirmatory factor analysis of national survey data showed both groups used the same dimensions to conceptualize femininity: feminine traits, appearance, and traditional gender beliefs. However, for White women, traditional gender ideology was negatively related to feminist identification. Among Black women, those who placed a high value on wearing feminine clothing were more likely to identify as feminist, and Black women rated appearance items as more important to them. Black women were also more likely than White women to identify as feminists, arguably because the experience of racial oppression sensitizes Black women to issues of sexism. Craig's (2002) historical research can help explain why these aspects of femininity have different political meaning for Black and White women: Black women have traditionally used a strategy of scrupulous attention to appearance to challenge stereotypes of Blacks as uncivilized and sexually immoral. Thus, Black and White women's social locations, defined by structural relations of inequality rooted in history and culture, explained patterns of similarity and difference in the findings: Black and White women had similar views about

the components of normative femininity; Black women reported higher levels of feminist identification because of double discrimination; and structural relations between White and Black women explain why feminine appearance bears a different association with feminism for each group. These findings address all three permutations of intersectionality as theorized by Crenshaw (1989/1993).

Weber and Parra-Medina (2003) have made a useful distinction between looking "downstream" for causes (i.e., in individual behavior that might be associated with social category membership) and "upstream" at "the group processes that define systems of social inequality" (p. 190), such as laws, institutional practices, and public policies. Consideration of the role of inequality can help psychologists look upstream by drawing attention to how groups stand in relation to each other and to public and private institutions, including families, schools, workplaces, and the law, and, correspondingly, how political, material, and social inequality lead to class, race, and gender differences in outcomes (see, e.g., Eagly & Wood, 1999; Glick et al., 2004; Lott, 2002; Reid, 1993). Asking this second question helps avoid the risk of treating socially constructed categories as though they refer to static and ahistorical constructs. However, to deeply engage this question, psychologists would be well served to supplement their training with interdisciplinary study in history, sociology, or other social sciences and/or to pursue collaborative relationships with scholars in other disciplines.

3. Where Are There Similarities?

The third way to reconceptualize social categories to address intersectional research questions entails seeking sites of commonality across difference. Asking where there are similarities encourages researchers to reassess any presumption that categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage define homogeneous groups as they look for similarities that cut across categories. Looking for commonality across difference entails viewing social categories as reflecting what individuals, institutions, and cultures do, rather than simply as characteristics of individuals. This shift opens up the possibility to recognize common ground between groups, even those deemed fundamentally different by conventional categories.

This way of approaching intersectional research questions is grounded in the work of authors who have used the concept as a tool for political organizing. Urging intersectional analysis to address important differences within groups, Crenshaw (1994) criticized agencies serving women who had experienced intimate partner violence for overlooking how statuses such as poverty and immigration status fundamentally shape certain women's specific needs; if these needs were not addressed, the agencies were not meeting the needs of some women. Unfortunately, this key insight of intersectionality—the

heterogeneity of groups—is easily misconstrued to suggest that identity groups can effectively organize around only the most specific, and thus the most limited, constituencies. Cohen (1997) exploded this misreading, advocating that social change organizations should not mobilize on the basis of shared identities (which inevitably exclude some people). Instead, she noted that oppression operates through a series of interlocking systems that cut across conventional identity categories. Specifically, she suggested that lesbian and gay political activists have a limited constituency if their organizing is based only on identity. However, many of the political issues that concern activists offer opportunities to build coalitions among diverse groups who are disadvantaged by public policies that attempt to regulate sexuality or that confer resources and privileges on the basis of sexual behavior. When seen through this lens, women on welfare targeted by marriage incentive policies have important shared interests with gay men and lesbians whose sexuality and intimate partnerships are also stigmatized and proscribed (Cohen, 1997).

Cohen's (1997) argument is groundbreaking because psychologists tend to see certain identities as totalizing and determinative, as trumping all others. For example, Higginbotham (1992) argued,

> Race not only tends to subsume other sets of social relations, namely, gender and class, but it blurs and disguises, suppresses and negates its own complex interplay with the very social relations it envelops. *It precludes unity with the same gender group, but often appears to solidify people of opposing economic classes* [italics added]. (p. 255)

Such insights can be powerful in research related to social issues and public policy, as these examples show. Although grounded in insights from political organizing, looking for commonality across difference suggests how an intersectional analysis can generate innovative research questions. The activists who developed coalition-building strategies recognized that the diversity within a group (e.g., the racial diversity among women or the class diversity among Blacks) provides opportunities to reach across perceived boundaries to identify common ground with other communities. Dworkin's (2005) work makes clear how failing to see these commonalities raises the likelihood that researchers may misunderstand how multiple social structures—gender, race, sexuality—shape sexual behavior with potentially tragic consequences. In this, she implicitly made an argument about gender that is analogous to Helms, Jemigan, and Mascher's (2005) rethinking of psychologists' methodologies for studying race; they recommended that psychologists move away from viewing race as an independent variable and instead operationalize specific mechanisms through conceptual variables. The examples I have described suggest that some

research related to social issues, public policy, and practice engages these principles of coalition in an untheorized way. The concept of intersectionality offers a way to bring this insight to bear in future research.

Implications for Research

To translate the theoretical insights of intersectionality into psychological research does not require the adoption of a new set of methods; rather, it requires a reconceptualization of the meaning and consequences of social categories.

These conceptual questions have implications for each stage of the research process. When researchers ask who is included within a category, it encourages them to understand all their participants in terms of the multiple social categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage they represent and to attend to groups that are often overlooked in psychology. This question does not imply that any given study ought to include individuals representing every permutation of race, gender, class, or other social identity; not only is this practically impossible, it is properly the cooperative work of a field. Rather, attention to who is included within any category of interest, with particular attention to groups that have often been excluded, is meant to encourage psychologists to view all samples in terms of their particularity and to attend to diversity within samples. Psychologists who ask this question may also be more likely to consider studying groups that have been overlooked by researchers. Reading the literature in psychology with this question in mind can make systematic omissions in sampling obvious.

The question of what role inequality plays makes the greatest demands at the level of hypothesis generation and interpretation of findings. This question helps researchers view the participants and phenomena they study as grounded in social and historical contexts: Race, gender, sexuality, and class, as well as other social categories, structure groups' access to social, economic, and political resources and privileges. Jackson and Williams's (2006) work on public health crises among the Black middle class illustrates the insights resulting from this question. They noted that although higher social class is related to decreased rates of suicide for Whites, the association is positive for Black American men. To understand this finding, they pointed to three sources of psychological stress related to this group's structural position in terms of race, class, and gender: stressors of racist experiences, the recency and fragility of middle-class status for many Blacks, and disappointment that occupational advancement has not been commensurate with educational achievement for many Black men. By conceptualizing race, gender, sexuality, and class as simultaneously shaping this group's experience, Jackson and Williams looked for explanations in terms of structural inequality upstream, rather than primarily at the level of individual differences.

Asking what role inequality plays may lead researchers to look for both similarities and differences across groups. This leads to the third question, Where are the similarities? This question represents the greatest departure from viewing social categories as defining fundamentally different types of people. Often researchers use social categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage primarily to define groups whose difference is a testable hypothesis, which, if not supported, defaults to similarity. Testing these differences rarely provides insight into the psychological experience implicit in the categories or the practices that create and maintain them. If psychologists conceptualize social categories as defining structural relations with implications for individual, social, and institutional practices, they must attend to both differences and similarities, even among groups that appear to be disparate. Because these similarities may not be obvious, addressing the question of commonalities across difference may entail conducting exploratory analyses or using interpretive qualitative methods. At the level of sampling, this question encourages researchers to include diverse groups within their studies, groups chosen not only in terms of group membership, but also in terms of shared relations to power.

What I am suggesting here is distinct from Hyde's (2005) gender similarities hypothesis. Hyde argued that meta-analytic review of the gender difference literature finds many more similarities between women and men than differences; much of what might appear to be gender differences can be shown to be a function of the different contexts that men and women typically find themselves in by virtue of their social roles. In contrast, looking for commonality across differences does not suggest researchers should reexamine the magnitude or extent to which there are differences between groups defined on one social category (e.g., gender). It is critically important from an intersectional standpoint that in recognizing similarities, researchers remain sensitive to nuanced differences across groups, even when similarities are found. For example, although middle-class Black men and working-class White men might experience some of the stressors they face in similar ways, their experiences are not equivalent or identical.

What then are the implications of an intersectional analysis for research methods? Certainly the first tool that many research psychologists would reach for to address questions of how outcomes are related to multiple group memberships is a research design in which social categories are treated as independent variables with main effects and interactions. Despite the power of this method to address certain intersectional research questions, it would be a mistake to reduce the nuanced theoretical concept of intersectionality to include only the type of associations that can be modeled through the use of interaction effects. One limitation to this approach arises from the fact that social categories, such as race and gender, are confounded in individuals; this means

that any survey question that asks participants to report whether their experiences were a function of one category membership rather than another may be eliciting flawed data.

Testing intersectional research questions by looking at interactions between categories can undertheorize the processes that create the categories represented as independent variables. Put another way, treating race and gender as independent variables suggests that these social categories are primarily properties of individuals rather than reflections of macrolevel social practices linked to inequality (Weber & Parra-Medina, 2003). These observations suggest that the inclusion of statistical interactions among race, gender, and other social categories in multivariate analyses is not, in and of itself, sufficient to develop what Smith and Stewart (1983) called a "truly interactive model of racism and sexism" (p. 6) without reconceptualizing the ways researchers use race, gender, and other social categories.

The skeptical reader may ask what the critical lens of intersectionality can add to his or her research program, particularly if the work is not focused on members of subordinated groups. Although grounded in the lived experience and critique of those at the convergence of multiple stigmatized identities, the implications of the concept of intersectionality are more expansive. As Hancock (2007b) has argued, intersectionality does not simply describe a content specialization addressing issues germane to specific populations. Rather, it also is a paradigm for theory and research offering new ways of understanding the complex causality that characterizes social phenomena.

Jasbir K. Puar

Over the past several years, Jasbir Puar's work has become synonymous with criticisms of intersectionality. Her trailblazing book *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007) has experienced tremendous uptake in scholarship on inequalities, and a close read of that text reveals a protracted thesis on the limitations of intersectionality as a lens or method. In the excerpt below, Puar suggests the weaknesses of intersectionality (as a research paradigm) to do the radical work she thinks necessary for transformational social theory and politics. Puar is an associate professor of women's studies at Rutgers University, and her work engages the fields of critical ethnic studies, cultural studies, feminist globalization studies, queer theory, and sexuality studies; her major contribution to social theory so far has been the concept of "homonationalism," which denotes the nexus of sexual politics and American discourses on terrorism in the twenty-first century. As she explains, "At this historical juncture, the invocation of the

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