



# Intersectionality & Higher Education

THEORY, RESEARCH, & PRAXIS,  
THIRD EDITION

**Donald “DJ” Mitchell, Jr., Editor**

**with Jakia Marie and Patricia P. Carver, Associate Editors**

**Foreword by Jessica C. Harris**

Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw, a scholar of law, critical race theory, and Black feminist legal theory, uses intersectionality to explain the experiences of Black women who—because of the intersection of their race, gender, and class—are exposed to exponential and interlocking forms of marginalization and oppression, often rendering them invisible. The third edition of *Intersectionality & Higher Education: Theory, Research, & Praxis* further documents and expands upon Crenshaw's articulation of intersectionality within the context of higher education. The text includes (a) theoretical and conceptual chapters on intersectionality; (b) empirical research and research-based chapters using intersectionality as a framework; and (c) chapters focusing on intersectional practices, all within higher education settings. The volume may prove beneficial for graduate programs in ethnic studies, higher education, sociology, student affairs, women and gender studies, and programs alike.

This is a vibrant and rigorous collection of essays that think about intersectionality in practice and as a practice. The essays think about intersectionality in the context of higher education, and imagine what it might mean to take seriously intersectionality's call to enact practices of inclusion and equity.

—Jennifer Nash, Jean Fox O'Barr Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies, Duke University

In times like these when the freedom to learn about truth and justice is under assault, this collection of essays is more important than ever. It illuminates the essential building blocks of intersectionality with care and insight, extends intersectionality into new and urgent territory given the changing landscape of higher education in the United States, and provides successful examples of how to put intersectionality into practice throughout the university.

—Leslie McCall, Presidential Professor of Sociology and Political Science, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

**Donald Mitchell, Jr.**, received his Ph.D. in educational policy and administration with a concentration in higher education from the University of Minnesota—Twin Cities. Mitchell's scholarship explores race and racism, gender and sexism, and identity intersections and intersectionality in higher education contexts.

**Jakia Marie** earned a Ph.D. in Pan-African studies from the University of Louisville in Kentucky. Marie's scholarship explores race and ethnicity with an emphasis in cultural identity, immigration, and international education and identity development and experiences of minoritized students in higher education.

**Patricia P. Carver** received her Ph.D. in leadership in higher education from Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. Carver's scholarship explores Women of Color in university and business settings.

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR

*Intersectionality & Higher Education:  
Theory, Research, & Praxis,  
Third Edition*

“This book illuminates theoretical, methodological, and practical applications of intersectionality in relation to diverse identities, institutional contexts, and disciplines. It serves as an essential resource to any reader seeking to be a good intellectual steward of intersectionality in research and practice.”

—Anne-Marie Núñez, Executive Director, Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success, The University of Texas, El Paso

“The most common question I hear from students and colleagues is how to use intersectionality in research and practice. These essays provide many answers, addressing the specific needs of diverse groups across the academy with wisdom and reflexivity. The book is a welcome resource for faculty, professional staff, and administrators.”

—Elizabeth R. Cole, University Diversity and Social Transformation Professor of Women’s Studies and Psychology, University of Michigan



# Intersectionality & Higher Education



# Intersectionality & Higher Education

Theory, Research, & Praxis,  
Third Edition

Donald “DJ” Mitchell, Jr., Editor  
with Jakia Marie and Patricia P. Carver, Associate Editors  
Foreword by Jessica C. Harris



PETER LANG

New York - Berlin - Bruxelles - Chennai - Lausanne - Oxford

## Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Mitchell, Donald, Jr., editor. | Marie, Jakia, editor. | Carver, Patricia P., editor.

Title: Intersectionality & higher education: theory, research, & praxis, third edition / edited by Donald “DJ” Mitchell, Jr., Jakia Marie, Patricia P. Carver.

Other titles: Intersectionality and higher education

Description: Third edition. | New York: Peter Lang, [2024] | Second edition published in 2019. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024000931 (print) | LCCN 2024000932 (ebook) | ISBN 9781636678764 (paperback: alk. paper) | ISBN 9781636678771 (pdf) | ISBN 9781636678788 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Minorities—Education (Higher)—United States. | Education, Higher—Social aspects—United States. | Multicultural education—United States. | Identity (Psychology) | Racism in education—United States. | Educational equalization—United States.

Classification: LCC LC3731. I566 2024 (print) | LCC LC3731 (ebook) | DDC 378.1/9820973—dc23/eng/20240215

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024000931>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024000932>

DOI 10.3726/b21687

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek.

The German National Library lists this publication in the German National Bibliography; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Cover design by Peter Lang Group AG

ISBN 9781636678764 (paperback)

ISBN 9781636678771 (ebook)

ISBN 9781636678788 (epub)

DOI 10.3726/b21687

© 2024 Peter Lang Group AG, Lausanne

Published by Peter Lang Publishing Inc., New York, USA

[info@peterlang.com](mailto:info@peterlang.com) - [www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com)

All rights reserved.

All parts of this publication are protected by copyright.

Any utilization outside the strict limits of the copyright law, without the permission of the publisher, is forbidden and liable to prosecution.

This applies in particular to reproductions, translations, microfilming, and storage and processing in electronic retrieval systems.

This publication has been peer reviewed.



---



## *Contents*

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
<i>Foreword</i>	xiii
JESSICA C. HARRIS	
<i>Preface</i>	xvii
DONALD “DJ” MITCHELL, JR.	
<b>Part I: Theory</b>	<b>1</b>
1. <i>Intersectionality, Identity, and Systems of Power and Inequality</i>	3
CHARMAINE L. WIJEYESINGHE AND SUSAN R. JONES	
2. <i>Intersectionality: A Legacy from Critical Legal Studies and Critical Race Theory</i>	17
ALLISON DANIEL ANDERS AND JAMES M. DeVITA	
3. <i>Intersectional Embodiments in Higher Education</i>	33
BRIANNA R. RAMIREZ	
4. <i>Living Liminal: Conceptualizing Liminality for Undocumented Students of Color</i>	47
ROSE ANN E. GUTIERREZ	
5. <i>Thinking Theoretically with and Beyond Intersectionality: Frameworks to Center Queer and Trans People of Color Experiences</i>	59
ANTONIO DURAN AND ROMEO JACKSON	

<b>Part II: Research</b>	<b>71</b>
6. <i>Metaphorically Speaking: Being a Black Woman in the Academy is Like...</i>	73
CHRISTA J. PORTER	
7. <i>Queer Women and Femme Students of Color Seeking Help After Surviving Dating Violence in College</i>	87
NADEEKA KARUNARATNE	
8. <i>Navigating Multiple Oppressions: The Intersectional Experiences of a Chinese American College Student with Dis/abilities</i>	101
YAN WANG AND BETH L. GOLDSTEIN	
9. <i>Latina/x Identities and Oppression in Higher Education: A Case in a Hispanic-Serving Institution</i>	121
HILDA CECILIA CONTRERAS AGUIRRE	
10. <i>Liminality as a Necessary Companion to Intersectionality</i>	135
LISA DELACRUZ COMBS AND RENEE L. BOWLING	
11. <i>Backward Thinking: Exploring the Relationship Among Intersectionality, Epistemology, and Research Design</i>	149
DANIEL TILLPAUGH AND Z NICOLAZZO	
<b>Part III: Praxis</b>	<b>163</b>
12. <i>The Unlikely Allies Conference: An Intersectional Approach to Diversity Training Between White and Black Women in Academia</i>	165
NICOLE M. WEST	
13. <i>Intersectionality as Praxis for Equity in Medicine: Developing the LMSA Premedical Program</i>	185
KATHERINE ARIAS GARCIA AND MARIA ROSARIO G. ARANETA	
14. <i>From Kitchen Tables to Black Spaces: Where Black Women Graduate Students Work Against Intersectionality Crisis</i>	197
MARQUITA D. FOSTER, BELINDA COLEMAN, INDIA COOLEY, AMANI FRANCIS, JACQUELINE STEVENS, JANA BROWN, ANDREA PICKENS, ALYSIA HUNT WILLIAMS, AND SHANNIKA BACCHUS	
15. <i>No Longer Cast Aside: A Critical Approach to Serving Queer and Trans Students of Color in Higher Education</i>	211
MEG E. EVANS AND JASON K. WALLACE	

---

<i>16. Hitting the Books: Partnering for Intersectional Leadership Education</i>	221
S. GAVIN WEISER, TASHAY DENNIE, AND MALLORY JALLAS	
<i>17. Weaving In and Out of Ourselves: Syllabus Formation and Assignment Development Through the Centering of Intersectionality</i>	231
RUBY OSORIA	
<i>Editor Biographies</i>	241
<i>Author Biographies</i>	245





## *List of Figures and Tables*

### **Figures**

Figure 4.1.	Conceiving a Frame of Liminality Interlaced in Racism, Nativism, and Xenophobia	52
Figure 9.1.	Representation of Latina Undergraduates and Graduate Students at HSIs and All Institutions–Latinas’ Representation as Faculty	122
Figure 14.1.	Intersecting Identities with an Emphasis on Black Women’s Linguistic Authority	201

### **Tables**

Table 9.1.	Participant Demographics	127
Table 10.1.	Participant Identities and Characteristics	140
Table 12.1.	Composition of UAC Dyads and Triads	176
Table 14.1.	Observed Participants’ Linguistic Repertoire	207





## *Acknowledgments*

We would like to thank those who made the publication of the third edition of *Intersectionality & Higher Education: Theory, Research, & Praxis* possible. First, we thank all the chapter authors who helped shape this volume through their contributions and blind peer reviews. Second, we thank Dr. Jessica C. Harris for contributing the Foreword. Third, we thank Allison Jefferson, Joshua Charles, and Charmitha Ashok—at Peter Lang—for all that they brought to the production of this volume. Finally, we thank a host of family, friends, and colleagues, whose love and support keep us going each day.





---



## *Foreword*

JESSICA C. HARRIS

I have immersed myself in intersectional scholarship and practice for some time now. And throughout the years, I have been consistently humbled and constantly reminded of how little I know about intersectionality. Recently, while working on a writing project grounded in intersectionality, I engaged with several contemporary scholarly articles, books, and YouTube videos that explored intersectionality.

One specific YouTube video stuck with me. In the video, Kimberlé Crenshaw delivered a 15-minute speech to participants of the 2020 MAKERS Conference. The MAKERS Conference “is a global leadership event that convenes the most powerful names in business, entertainment, tech and finance to explore ways to advance equality in the workplace” (Coburn & Forgione, 2020, para. 2). The 2020 Conference adopted the theme, “Not Done,” to represent where we are in the women’s movement—we exist in a world in which more work must be done to achieve gender equity.

With this theme in mind, Crenshaw opened her speech by exploring what intersectionality is and how it can help us understand why we are not yet done. She also explained how intersectionality might help us get this work done. She stated:

What intersectionality is, is a prism, it’s a framework. It’s a template for seeing and telling different kinds of stories about what happens in our workplaces, what happens in society, and to whom it happens. Now, some part of why we’re not done is predicated on what we haven’t been able to see, what’s not remembered, the stories that are not told. So, intersectionality is like training wheels to get us to where we need to go. It’s glasses, high index glasses, to help us see the things we need to see. (MAKERS, 2020)

Crenshaw suggested that intersectional failure is the reason we are not yet done. Intersectional failure occurs when intersectionality is absent, denied, forgotten, or intentionally distorted within spaces and places where the effects of multiple systems of oppression are present (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Southbank Center, 2016). Intersectionality challenges intersectional failure by centering stories that have been silenced and forgotten. Intersectionality allows us to work toward intersectional repair, or what is right, inclusive, and more effective (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Southbank Center, 2016). Crenshaw closed out her 2020 MAKERS speech with the memorable statement that intersectionality “can inspire us to get shit done” (MAKERS, 2020).

Although Crenshaw referenced the women’s movement in her speech, we can, and should, apply her message to higher education contexts. Intersectional failure has influenced our inability to substantively engage equity, inclusion, and radical social justice in postsecondary education. The chapters in this book demonstrate many of these intersectional failings. But the chapters also allow us to think about intersectional repair. Chapter authors explore these ruptures and repairs as it relates to methodology, everyday experiences of students, faculty, and staff, and praxis.

Methodologically, some chapter authors encourage us to engage with the intellectual genealogy of intersectionality prior to employing the framework in our research. This includes (re)reading foundational work on intersectionality, sitting with how intersectionality relates to one’s epistemology and research design, and exploring other intersectional frameworks that might better serve the populations and issues at hand. Through these chapters, authors call out the intersectional failure that occurs when intersectionality is mis/used; when it is employed as a buzzword, as an additive framework, and/or is not grounded in the Black feminist knowledge from which it developed (Harris & Patton, 2019). The chapters also encourage intersectional repair, suggesting how we might move forward by substantively engaging with intersectionality in ways that further, rather than hinder, radical social justice and institutional transformations.

Through this book, we also explore the everyday experiences of Black women faculty at a historically White institution, Latinx students navigating a Hispanic-Serving Institution, Queer Women and Femme Students of Color survivors of dating violence, undocumented Students of Color, and a Chinese American college student with dis/abilities, to name a few. These chapters explore individual and community-level stories that are often silenced and invisibilized within and by postsecondary institutions. The stories contained in these chapters demonstrate not only the ways that multiple intersecting systems of oppression influence the everyday experiences of multiply minoritized

individuals, but they also offer stories of resilience, survival, and meaning making.

Several of the final chapters in this book focus on intersectional repair through praxis. We learn how a premedical program for underrepresented medical students can take an intersectional approach to address systems of oppression students face in medical school. We also explore the Leadership for Liberation Pop-Up Library, a leadership education program aimed at engaging students in dialogue about intersectionality and liberation. These chapters, alongside others, show how intersectionality (theory) can be realized in action (practice) to work toward intersectional repair.

Through each book chapter authors use intersectionality as a “prism” to seek out and tell different kinds of stories. These stories, and the authors use of intersectionality, continue to inspire me to “get shit done” (MAKERS, 2020). My hope is that they also inspire you, your colleagues, your institutions, and beyond to work toward justice, equity, intersectional repair, and, to “get shit done” (MAKERS, 2020).

Jessica C. Harris  
University of California, Los Angeles  
Los Angeles, California

## References

- Coburn, C., & Forgione, B. (2020). *MAKERS announces speakers for the 2020 MAKERS Conference, Feb 10-12 in Los Angeles*. Verizon. <https://www.verizon.com/about/news/makers-announces-speakers-2020>
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(8), 139–167.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.
- Harris, J. C., & Patton, L. D. (2019). Un/Doing intersectionality through higher education research. *Journal of Higher Education*, 90(3) 347–372.
- MAKERS. (2020, February 14). *Kimberlé Crenshaw. The 2020 MAKERS Conference* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSTf89pLcl0>
- Southbank Center. (2016, March 14). *Kimberlé Crenshaw—On Intersectionality—Keynote—WOW 2016* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DW4HLgYPIA&t=245s>



---



## *Preface*

DONALD “DJ” MITCHELL, JR.

This is my third time writing the preface for an edition of *Intersectionality & Higher Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis*, but this time feels different. The first two times, I felt like I was helping advance the understanding of intersectionality within higher education contexts, but now, I am helping protect intersectionality. I do not mean this in a patriarchal or parental sense; I understand my positionality and my personal connection to a framework primarily advanced by Black women for decades, even centuries, so I hope my words are not misinterpreted. When I say “protect,” I mean it literally, considering the recent attacks on intersectionality and critical race theory, particularly in higher education, over the past few years. I realize why we are here, but I question how we are here simultaneously. How could intersectionality—the recognition of interlocking systems of oppression and how the most marginalized are rendered invisible through single-axis analyses (e.g., exploring *just* racism or *just* homophobia; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991)—be under attack? As Crenshaw (2023) so powerfully articulated, “*Intersectionality is a uniting framework*” [emphasis added]. Crenshaw went on to note:

People see common cause with each other. So, the reality is that Black people are not just straight; they’re not just men; they’re not just middle class. When we expand our understanding of Black reality to include the way that patriarchy, homophobia, [and] class shapes our reality, so we can better transform it. It means that we have connections with other movements and other people. And that is exactly why they’re trying to force us to give up intersectionality.

Why are so many against the liberation and inclusion of all? Why are so many against justice? While society continues to wrestle with these questions,

I do know that intersectionality is a framework that propels us toward inclusion, liberation, and justice. As I have noted before (see Mitchell, 2019), I contend higher education is an ideal place to incubate the liberatory ideals countless individuals constantly strive for across the globe. This is why my colleagues and I persist in editing this critical text—we believe understanding intersectionality and acting based on this understanding help us realize these ideals.

*“Intersectionality is a uniting framework”* (Crenshaw, 2023)—a framework that has been primarily advanced by Black women and Women of Color for centuries. I pay homage to Frances Beal, Lisa Bowleg, Sumi Cho, The Combahee River Collective, Patricia Hill Collins, Elizabeth Cole, Anna Julia Cooper, Natasha Croom, Angela Davis, Lori Patton Davis, Bonnie Thornton Dill, Ange-Marie Hancock, Jessica Harris, bell hooks, Deborah King, Audre Lorde, Jennifer Nash, Anne-Marie Núñez, Christa Porter, Sojourner Truth, Alice Walker, Nicole West, Charmaine Wijeyesinghe, and Nira Yuval-Davis, among several others. I honor them for helping us understand intersectionality, and as Lila Watson has articulated, I realize my liberation is bound in theirs.

Like the first and second editions, this text is organized into three sections: theory, research, and praxis. While some of the pieces from the first two editions of the volume are included in the present edition, new chapters have been added articulating, applying, and advancing intersectionality within higher education settings. *“Intersectionality is a uniting framework”* (Crenshaw, 2023), and without it, we will never achieve the higher education students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members deserve to inhabit; we will never see the world many of us hope to see. This time feels different, but what remains unwavering is my belief in the power of understanding intersectionality. Together with Dr. Marie, Dr. Carver, and the authors of this text, we present to you the third edition of *Intersectionality & Higher Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis*.

## **References**

- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(8), 139–167.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.
- Crenshaw, K. [@sandylocks]. (2023, February 13). Intersectionality is a uniting framework...Black people are not just straight. They're not just men. They're not just

middle class. [Tweet] <https://twitter.com/sandylocks/status/1625255118693101600?s=20>

Mitchell, D., Jr. (2019). Preface. In D. Mitchell, Jr., J. Marie, & T. Steele (Eds.), *Intersectionality & higher education: Theory, research, and praxis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. xv–xix). Peter Lang.







## ***Part I: Theory***





# ***1. Intersectionality, Identity, and Systems of Power and Inequality***

CHARMAINE L. WIJEYESINGHE AND SUSAN R. JONES

The concept of identity has received attention in many facets of higher education, including teaching (Goodman & Jackson, 2012; Jones & Wijeyesinghe 2011, Mohajeri et al., 2019), research (Museus & Griffin, 2011; Torres et al., 2009; Stewart, 2009, Sullivan & Cross, 2016) and student affairs practice (Abes, 2016; Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones & Stewart, 2016; Wijeyesinghe, 2017). Knepfelpamp and colleagues (1978) noted that the developmental orientation of the college student personnel field, in particular, emphasized “the importance of responding to the whole person, attending to individual differences, and working with the student at his or her developmental level” (p. viii). Over the years, the ways in which the “whole person” has been conceptualized have shifted, with varying emphases on the parts and the whole (Torres et al., 2009), and although the social world and its contexts have always been considered in identity theories, exactly what constitutes context has evolved to also include larger structures of inequality (Duran & Jones, 2019).

In this chapter, we focus on two areas increasingly linked in theory, research, and practice in higher education: models of social identity development (the parts) and the framework of intersectionality (the whole). We begin by exploring how intersectionality addresses themes often seen in the study and representations of identity. Next, we focus more specifically on the implications of applying an intersectional lens to models grounded in individual identity narratives. We conclude the chapter by identifying several issues and questions, referred to as tension points, that have arisen in our work related to identity and intersectionality.

### ***Intersectionality and Psychosocial Perspectives on Identity***

The question of “Who Am I?” has been the bedrock of identity research and models for decades. The study of identity in higher education emerged primarily from the psychological tradition of Erik Erikson (1959/1994), who described the psychosocial nature of identity development. From this perspective, identity evolves through a complex pattern of interaction between internal stages of growth and external social forces. Reflecting the sociocultural norms of his time, Erikson’s conceptualization of these social forces or contexts led to very narrow views of individuals from nondominant groups. This realization led subsequent scholars in student development, racial identity development, and other fields to investigate social identities as significant contributors to understanding the whole person.

The term *social identity* has its roots in social psychology and the work of Tajfel (1982), who highlighted the role of intergroup dynamics and perceptions of group membership in understanding identity. Tajfel defined social identity as “that part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 2). Understanding identities as socially constructed means that “their significance stems not from some ‘natural’ state, but from what they have become as the result of social and historical processes” (Andersen & Collins, 2007, p. 62). Contemporary understandings of psychosocial identity, or how individuals see and understand their experiences in relation to various groups or roles they inhabit, incorporate specific attention to socially constructed groups that are tied to larger systems of power, privilege, and inequality (Abes et al., 2019). As Weber (2010) noted, “[A]t the individual level, race, class, gender, and sexuality are fundamental sources of identity for all of us: how we see ourselves, who we think we are. They are, in fact, so fundamental that to be without them would be like being without an identity at all” (p. 119).

Intersectionality is a meaningful and relevant framework for higher education scholars and practitioners because it acknowledges an individual’s multiple social identities, thus creating a more complete portrayal of the whole person. While Dill and colleagues (2007) noted that “to a large extent, intersectional work is about identity” (p. 630), it is not *only* about identity (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Jones & Abes, 2013). Although Nash (2008) referred to “intersectionality’s theoretical dominance as a way of conceptualizing identity” (p. 3), the framework does not seek to unveil how each person within a marginalized group or many groups develops their own sense of self under systems of oppression. It also does not foreground individual