

Introduction

Standing at the Intersections of Feminisms, Intersectionality, and Communication Studies

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Despite the widespread belief that intersectionality has arrived, I think that it is important to stop and recognize that this way of looking at and living within the world constitutes a new area of inquiry that is still in its infancy.

—Patricia Hill Collins¹

For decades, feminist scholars in communication studies have urged, pushed, and even invited the field of communication to consider the problems inherent in some of its foundational assumptions, values, theories, and methods.² As feminist scholars generally have challenged disciplinary norms, critical race, queer, and postcolonial feminists continually critiqued feminist scholarship itself for its assumptions and values, especially as they pertain to thinking of gender in isolation from other systems of power such as race, class, nation, and sexuality.³ These challenges to the foundations of our discipline, and to feminism, remain necessary: they represent some of our discipline's most important conversations, dilemmas, and struggles. The challenges, and the responses to them, ask scholars to clarify and alter the values and norms of our profession, and they reflect the ever-contested nature of communication scholarship. Both authors of this introduction have stimulated some of those challenges, participated in them, received them, and listened to others engage them, and we are continually reminded that many of our discipline's most venerated assumptions about how communication and rhetoric work, and how they are at work in the world, reflect a

particular set of ethics, values, preferences, and assumptions about our world and the roles of humans in it. We have a canon, a foundation, and a long-standing tradition of communication research, but these have for too long been built around and informed by singular, monolithic, and homogenous views of identity and subjectivity. As a handful of persistent voices have continued to argue, those views are not, nor have they ever been, sustainable or even productive for communication and rhetorical scholarship. Indeed, as Lisa A. Flores suggests, when individuals live in the borders, they “find themselves with a foot in both worlds.” The result is “the sense of being neither” exclusively one identity nor another.⁴ Although our extensive body of scholarship tells us a great deal about some people, some places, and some positions of power, it neglects (and even refuses) to tell us much about many other people, and places, with complex identities, subjectivities, and relationships to power. Nearly two decades ago, Marsha Houston wrote specifically about feminist communication theory, articulating that it “has not yet adequately accounted for the different worldviews, different life-changes, and differential treatment of women from nondominant U.S. social groups.”⁵ And a decade later, in the introduction to their path-breaking collection, *Centering Ourselves*, Houston and Olga Idriss Davis remarked, “placing the traditions of African American women *at the center* of our analyses . . . produces an angle of vision on Black women’s communication that is rare.”⁶ Despite the intellectual labor of feminist communication scholars who challenge both the discipline at large and feminist scholarship specifically, today, such a dearth persists.

Through our own individual experiences in the academy, and through our experiences as colleagues, friends, and allies in that same system, we have become increasingly committed to understanding the ways identities and subjectivities can be theorized productively through feminist lenses. Our commitment as feminist scholars of communication and rhetoric is to create new frameworks for understanding the rich and complex facets of identity and subjectivity and to explore the overt and covert uses and manifestations of power and privilege. Our goal is to build upon and help lay a foundation for productive conversations around power, identities, and subjectivities that have been erased, ignored, and under- and inappropriately theorized. Without these conversations, and this theorizing, we argue that communication scholarship moves ever closer to irrelevance. To turn away from exploring them is to deny the complexity of our lives and the communicative exchanges we live by and in; indeed, it is to deny the intersectional and interlocking

conditions of our world. This book, then, responds to these ongoing and pressing intellectual concerns and maintains that theories of “intersectionality” are vital to the continued viability of feminist communication scholarship. We further maintain that feminist communication scholars have much to contribute to ongoing conversations about intersectionality. *Standing in the Intersection* attends to the contours of intersectional thought, theoretically and methodologically, in order to evidence what rigorous engagement between feminist communication studies, particularly feminist rhetorical studies, and intersectionality can look like.

This introduction will explore the definitions of and metaphors for intersectionality and what those definitions and metaphors tell us about intersectional scholarship and the difficult work scholars must do. We then provide an overview of key moments in the past fifty years of communication and rhetorical scholarship—moments that represent foundational attempts to attend to race, gender, class, or sexuality—in order to call attention to the ways these first attempts to address identities other than the heterosexual, white, middle-class male, moved our thinking about intersectionality forward, stalled that thinking, or perhaps offered some of both. Finally, we turn this discussion toward suggesting what intersectional scholarship might look like in the work of scholars interested in studying symbolic exchanges and some of the difficulties inherent to intersectional approaches. With these sections, we hope to stimulate the thinking of those interested in intersectional work in communication and rhetorical studies, and beyond, to tease out the nuances and difficulties of that work and to contribute to the lively and productive conversations that are just now reaching the pages of our scholarship regarding intersectionality.

INTERSECTIONALITY: CONSIDERATIONS, DEFINITIONS, METAPHORS

During the midst of multiple, interwoven struggles for liberation catalyzed in the middle of the 20th century in the United States, U.S. third world feminists began to theorize the “multiple displacements” that shaped U.S. women of color identities.⁷ These feminists of color, working-class feminists, and lesbians articulated the “interlocking” nature, as well as the “double” or “multiple jeopardy”⁸ of having several oppressed identities.⁹ From writings and speeches such as these, Black¹⁰ feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw named and derived a theory of intersectionality. Crenshaw’s early work articulated the ways in which the experiences of women of

color, poor, and immigrant women are subsumed and erased in legal practices, political decisions, and social norms. This erasure occurs, according to Crenshaw, because in fundamental ways, all women are assumed to be white, and all Blacks are assumed to be men within arenas such as law, politics, and media representation.¹¹ Crenshaw explains how an inability to think outside of singular axes of identity has detrimental effects for women of color. Through examining how both feminist and antiracist identity discourse elide the problem of difference, and how race and gender (as well as class and sexuality) interact in the lives of women of color, Crenshaw evidences the need to prioritize the multiple factors that constitute the lives of women of color, as opposed to attending only to issues of gender or race. For example, focusing only on a single axis of identity, such as gender, when constructing policies and offering services designed to help rape survivors ignores the many resources that may not be available to women of color due to race, class, and culture. Because all women can become victims of rape, it might seem as if any policy or service provision designed to help women as a general category should be sufficient; however, race, gender, and class interact to construct different experiences for women of color and poor women as compared to white and middle-class women. White, middle-class women, for instance, are more likely to be financially secure than working-class women of color. White, middle-class women rarely are oppressed because of their race, thus their needs after a rape may be very different when compared to working-class women of color, who may have needs that extend beyond recovering from the violent act (e.g., finding and affording safe shelter, accessing health care, confronting institutionalized racism, and gaining assistance with language barriers, are a few of the differences in possible needs). If service providers are equipped only to help white middle-class women recover from a rape and do not account for the other social and economic conditions that may be present for poor women and women of color, this service effectively favors the needs of white or middle-class women. This absence of attention to the needs of poor and working-class women of color is but one example that speaks to the necessity of thinking more complexly about identity politics and difference in order to adequately theorize and account for the lives of poor women and women of color.

To be sure, as Lester C. Olson notes in this volume, the idea of intersectionality as Crenshaw conceives it bears its own erasures, particularly of sexuality and class, since Crenshaw primarily emphasizes race and gender. Still, the term possesses significant staying power and traction for both concretely describing how interlocking

oppressions manifest in relation to various structures, and in providing a metaphorical resource with which to engage in theory construction, as many of the authors in this collection do. As Olson also notes in an earlier published work on Audre Lorde, no metaphor for describing the condition of being multiply oppressed is perfectly adequate.¹² The premises put forth in Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality have been articulated variously as "interlocking oppressions,"¹³ "theory in the flesh,"¹⁴ avoiding "pop-bead metaphysics" or "additive identity politics,"¹⁵ "seriality,"¹⁶ "intermeshing oppressions" and "curdling vs. separation,"¹⁷ "matrix of domination,"¹⁸ and "coalitional subjectivity,"¹⁹ with each metaphor or perspective offering something slightly different. These articulations have, indeed, helped scholars work with intersectional theories, yet, as feminist scholars from various disciplines attempted to name, describe, and access women's multifaceted identities, points of contention emerged. We suggest that these points of contention speak not only to the complexities of intersectional identities, politics, and theories but also to the role of and utility for intersectional theories and practices for feminist communication studies. Although intersectionality remains the most flexible and useful term for our purposes, we realize that in deciding upon this term as opposed to other options, we enact our own erasures. This is a risk that we believe is worth taking in order to advance the kind of work we have included in this collection. We hope readers will allow us some flexibility and understanding given the limits of language to always adequately convey meaning. What follows is a review of some of the most poignant of these metaphors, descriptions, and contentions.

Interlocking Oppressions

Writing in the 1970s, the Combahee River Collective, a radical collective of Black lesbian feminists, articulates its politics as follows: "we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking."²⁰ An example of what Moraga and Anzaldúa later termed a "theory in the flesh," members of the Collective utilize their multiply-oppressed identities to derive a theory of identity and a feminist politics. As the now familiar story goes, during the second wave of the U.S. feminist movement, many white, heterosexual, middle-class feminists talked only of oppression against a seemingly unified category of women—white, heterosexual, middle-class women. Women of

color, third world women, working-class and poor women, and lesbians challenged this politics as myopic, racist, homophobic, classist, and imperialistic. Born of Black women's identities, the Combahee River Collective's "A Black Feminist Statement" is one of the (if not the) foundational statements that names and advocates an intersectional approach to feminism. The authors note that there is no "racial" or "sexual" oppression; rather, a "racial-sexual oppression" always occurs because *both racism and sexism exist*. Thinking in terms of racial-sexual oppression, the Combahee River Collective argues, necessitates recognition of, and explanation for, the configurations of racial privilege (or oppression) and sexual oppression (or privilege), which are central to intersectionality.

Theory in the Flesh

In 1981, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa published *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. This anthology gave birth to the label "theory in the flesh" and helped scholars begin to articulate theories of intersectionality that address class inequities, racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Moraga explains:

When I lifted the lid to my lesbianism, a profound connection with my mother reawakened in me. It wasn't until I acknowledged and confronted my own lesbianism in the flesh, that my heartfelt identification with and empathy for my mother's oppression—due to being poor, uneducated, and Chicana—was realized. My lesbianism is the avenue through which I have learned the most about silence and oppression, and it continues to be the most tactile reminder to me that we are not free human beings.²¹

Moraga suggests that "silence is like starvation" and that from one starvation "other starvations can be recognized, if one is willing to take the risk of making the connection."²² Intersectionality, as a theory in the flesh, then, recognizes that "looking like a white girl ain't so great," since women can be beaten "on the street for being a dyke." And, if "my sister's being beaten because she's Black, it's pretty much the same principle. . . . In this country, lesbianism is a poverty—as is being brown, as is being a woman, as is being just plain poor." Moraga, and the other writers in *This Bridge*, urge feminists to move beyond dealing with oppression on a purely theoretical basis: "The danger lies in ranking the oppression. *The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression.*"

Theorizing from and in the flesh, in sum, involves working with emotion and from the heart, “grappling with the source of our own oppression” because, “without naming the enemy within ourselves and outside of us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place.”²³ As an important piece of intersectional history, this theory requires that scholars identify, and give voice to, the interconnected nature of being silenced, in multiple ways, and the lived (bodily) manifestations of those silencings.

Pop-Bead Metaphysics

It is no secret that many white, middle-class, heterosexual feminists largely ignored queer, working-class or poor women of color’s insistence that a singular focus on gender oppression was highly problematic. Recognizing that this ignorance erased the many privileges that such women held on account of race, class, and sexual orientation, some privileged feminists did work with queer, working-class women of color as allies, in order to help convey the necessity of understanding interlocking oppressions *and* privileges.²⁴ Describing her concern for what she sees as a metaphysical “sleight of hand,” Elizabeth Spelman, in *Inessential Woman*, suggests that she cannot talk about the “woman” part of herself without also talking about the “white” part of herself: identity is not analogous to a Tootsie Roll or a necklace made of pop beads. Citing Beverly Smith, Spelman argues for the impossibility of this pop-bead metaphysics because “Women don’t lead their lives like, ‘Well this part is race, and this is class, and this part has to do with women’s identities’ so it’s confusing.”²⁵ Contrary to this additive, pop-bead sleight of hand, there never are situations in which one woman’s whiteness and another woman’s Blackness or brownness do not profoundly affect or inform what it means to be a woman.

For Spelman, attempts at this type of conceptual tidiness—the claim that there is some category “woman” and some category “man,” distinct from a separate category “white” and yet another “Black”—only results in linguistic and epistemic failure. An additive, pop-bead mentality can only lead to the erasure of profound historical and contemporary inequities, oppressions, privileges, and opportunities. In order to even talk about the identities of “woman,” “of color,” or “white,” and whether there are similarities or differences, Spelman claims we must first ask “Who is doing the investigating? Whose views are heard and accepted? Why? What criteria are used for similarity and difference? Finally, and most important, what is said to follow from the exposed similarity or difference?

Have those under investigation been asked what they think?"²⁶ For Spelman, the authors of *This Bridge*, and the Combahee River Collective, theories of intersectionality, then, must make use of "conceptual messiness," rather than tidiness, and epistemic fluidity, rather than separation.

Curdling versus Separation

As evidenced by Spelman, theories of intersectionality are often centrally concerned with the politics of coalition and alliance building. This concern means that feminists must also think complexly about oppressions and identity outside the specific context of feminist movements and in relation to feminist goals and the experiences of women and queer people in other movement contexts. Feminist concerns thus intersect with alliance building among and within movements such as those for racial, class, or sexual liberation. In gesturing toward the difficulty of both building alliance and adopting an intersectional approach within nationalistic politics, Maria Lugones uses the specific case of Latino/a nationalisms and notions of home therein in order to uncover how logics of oppression work to prevent an intersectional analysis and the possibility of coalition building. To demonstrate these logics, Lugones begins with a discussion of "curdling-separation" as a "metaphor for both impurity and resistance."²⁷ When something curdles, rather than completely separating, the parts actually "coalesce toward" one another. The parts are interlocked and intermeshed, rather than distinct. On the other hand, splitting or separating something "impure," into its "pure" elements, is an act of power, a colonial logic. Separation/purity are conceptually at odds with intersectional thinking and coalition. As a logic of curdling, Lugones offers the notion of "*mestizaje*," which she defines as "*in the middle of either/or, ambiguity, and thinking of acts that belong in lives lived in mestizo ways*," and explains, "*Mestizaje* defies control through simultaneously asserting the impure, curdled multiple state and rejecting fragmentation into pure parts."²⁸ *Mestizaje* involves "breaching and abandoning dichotomies," resisting notions of purity, of control over possibilities, and of domination.

Curdling implies multiplicity rather than fragmentation. It operates through a logic of complexity, heterogeneity, and one in which "each person is multiple, nonfragmented, embodied." Curdling calls attention to interlocking and intermeshing oppressions and stands opposed to "split-separation," which is the logic of the oppressor. "According to [split-separation,] the logic of purity, the

social world is both unified and fragmented, homogenous, hierarchically ordered."²⁹ Lugones sees that both logics exist simultaneously, but the curdling metaphor offers a useful conceptual framework for understanding intersectionality, while the metaphor of separation is conceptually useful for understanding the operation of oppression.

Though split-separation and fragmentation are logics of white domination and colonial oppression, within oppressed communities, people of color often resort to homespaces (nations) as resources of resistance. Within these homespaces, however, the split-separation logic of the oppressor often reigns. Those Lugones describes as the "culturally homeless" are subject to "authenticity tests" that challenge whether they truly "belong" to the home. Some, often queers and women, who challenge sexism are considered "fakes." As Lugones explains, one's "body, its color, features, its movement, and the culture expressed in its movements and clothes, [are] all up for mistrust and inspection. One's voice, the accent in one's voice, the culture in one's speech, deeds, ways inspected, over and over by those one would like to call one's own."³⁰ When the split-separation paradigm reigns within oppressed communities, it tries to purify the oppressed group and erase or negate those who would pollute the purity. In this way, those who belong are "transparent," which means that these individuals understand a group's ways, needs, and interests as their own. Other individuals, however, who are "thick," are aware of their otherness to the group.³¹ As "transparents," individuals within groups fail to recognize their own differences from other individuals within that group. When groups assume "solidness" of the group, which means solidness of the transparents, they deny the possibilities of building coalitions and of curdling, or engaging in an intersectional understanding of the group, because the needs of the "thicks" aren't seen or considered valid. And in some cases, when those thicks are "culturally homeless," they are considered inauthentic and thus split off from the purity of the group.

Transparency is also part of the power of what Spelman has deemed "boomerang perception," whereby whites see people of color as the same as, and different from, the self at the same time.³² Within boomerang perception, the person of color is only an image, as in both a reflection and an imitation, in the eyes of whites, and this perception always comes back to whiteness as origin. As Spelman argues: "I look at you and come right back to myself."³³ A similar logic operates within "homespaces" between individuals possessing the logic of transparents and their perceptions of individuals who are thicks, those "relegated to the margins in the politics of intragroup contestation,"³⁴ specifically those who are queer. And

this test of authenticity/purity is a manifestation of internalizing the colonial gaze. Lugones writes:

The idea of nation brings the logic of the colonizer inside Latino life. The logic of modernity that “unifies” the disparate elements that face the colonizer oppositionally prevents them from creating disruptions of traditions in their encounters with domination. A unified front is itself a commitment to a logic of self-destruction: nationalism leaves colonialism undisturbed when it places different Latino practices, values, traditions and limits outside of critique and recreations. . . . Nationalism leaves colonialism undisturbed when it affirms a line of connection between the colonizer and the colonized in their weddedness to heterosexuality.³⁵

As a form of nationalistic identification, it is worth questioning under what conditions the identification is created, and who is left outside of the nation’s borders. Nearly every nationalistic movement in U.S. history has explicitly or implicitly denounced queer sexualities and genders in order to preserve patriarchy and ensure women’s role in the reproduction of that nation. The logic of purity, maintaining a proper gender/sexuality for all members of the nation, and clear gender roles for men and for women, is a colonial logic, and one that ignores the intermeshing of oppressions. Assuming that belonging is only transparent, Lugones argues, forecloses genuine possibilities for coalition and alliance building and, we argue, for understanding the complex role communication plays in maintaining hegemonic structures and practices.

Coalitional Subjectivity and Differential Belonging

Within the field of communication studies, Aimee Carrillo Rowe successfully utilizes and extends feminist intersectional theories to help scholars understand the possibilities for, and failure of, feminist alliances. Her work moves scholars toward theorizing intersectionality because, as seen above, the failure to consider oppression and privilege as interlocking or intermeshing often prevents alliances. Moreover, Carrillo Rowe’s notions both emerge from, and provide a mechanism for, understanding identity and power as intermeshing. Carrillo Rowe extends Chela Sandoval’s notion of “differential consciousness,” which refers to the mode of consciousness utilized by third world feminists who must shift “between and among”

different positions “like the clutch of an automobile, the mechanism that permits the driver to select, engage, and disengage gears in a system for the transmission of power.”³⁶ Carrillo Rowe offers “differential belonging,” which is “a politics of relation,”³⁷ that contends who we love and relate to is political. Building feminist alliances across racial (and other) difference helps people to create what Carrillo Rowe names “coalitional subjectivities.” One achieves a coalitional subjectivity when she sees her oppression and privilege as inextricably bound to others and when she cannot envision her existence and politics as separate from others’ existence and politics. Developing a coalitional subjectivity can only occur when alliances and belongings are built across power lines so that privileged and oppressed people learn to long to belong to one another and to learn from one another about the nature of power and the possibility for social change. These concepts advance theories of intersectionality because the multiply displaced location from which Sandoval and Carrillo Rowe write is that which authorizes the differential movement.

Coalitional subjectivity, power lines, and differential belonging insist that scholars theorize the intersections of belonging as dynamic and shifting. The point of what Carrillo Rowe calls transracial belonging is to understand these multiplicities and how they can, do, and must shift for feminist politics. The transracial feminist alliances across power lines that Carrillo Rowe theorizes illuminate the necessity of developing a feminist coalitional subjectivity that accounts for the multiplicity of identity, positionality, *and* relationality in order to build effective alliances. Carrillo Rowe sheds light upon historical reasons why some white feminists have had difficulty accepting intersectionality and the importance of interlocking oppressions. Since intersections have been articulated as issues of oppression, talking about intersectionality seems to exclude white women. However, theorizing transracial belonging emphasizes the intersections between feminist allies, evidences the dynamic nature of oppression *and* privilege, and through transracial belonging, white, straight, middle-class feminists can develop a subjectivity that does and must account for interlocking oppression and privilege.

Intersectional Metaphors: Multiplicity, Power, Privilege, and Politics

These powerful and different metaphors for and theories of what we are organizing under the name, intersectionality, help point to the

myriad ways feminist scholars have conceptualized the question of multiplicity in relation to power, oppression, and privilege. As we have shown here, some of these approaches focus on having multiply oppressed identities, others emphasize the logics of oppression and critique singular approaches to identity, and still others examine the important interplay between privilege and oppression within individual subjects. Though the approaches here differ in both obvious and nuanced ways, what they share and call attention to is a commitment to challenging simplistic thinking in terms of only one axis of identity, form of oppression, or manifestation of power. These differences in approach are also important because they identify the various routes one might take in theorizing the complexity of intersectionality and help scholars highlight the political agendas and practices within these routes. Placing these approaches in conversation, as we have done here, provides feminists with an array of resources from which to theorize how oppression and resistance work without having to rely on pure or singular theories, and with our political, social, and emotional frameworks clearly in focus.

Though exceptions exist, much of the early work of our discipline that wrestles with questions of the politics of identity and subjectivity considers identities as singular, pure, and separate from one another. Important complexities have been lost as we have tried to narrow experiences and identities into singular and homogenous nouns or monolithic, all-encompassing adjectives. In the next section, we offer a brief exploration of early communication scholarship on identity, and then gesture toward a vision of what intersectional scholarship does and might look like in the future.³⁸

APPROACHES TO COMMUNICATION SCHOLARSHIP: BEYOND A POP-BEAD EPISTEMOLOGY

In one of her many essays on difference, Houston opens with the following observation: "Ever since Sojourner Truth asked her famous question, 'Ain't I a woman?' during a speech at an 1851 women's rights meeting, feminist women from nondominant social groups (Folb 1985) have openly challenged the exclusion of their experiences from the public discourse about women."³⁹ Despite this seemingly evident point, for the most part, the earliest essays in communication journals that acknowledged nondominant perspectives come from a pop-bead metaphysical perspective, an attempt at conceptual neatness, and ignore the interlocking impacts of gender and race, sexuality, and class.⁴⁰ We demonstrate this by examining early communication scholarship on race, we then move to discuss

LGBTQ issues, we briefly address class and disability before ending on feminist and gender scholarship.

Examining early scholarship that took up the issue of "race" reveals the pop-bead perspective. Franklyn S. Haiman's, "The Rhetoric of the Streets: Some Legal and Ethical Considerations"; Herbert W. Simons, "Patterns of Persuasion in the Civil Rights Struggle"; Parke G. Burgess, "The Rhetoric of Black Power: A Moral Demand?" and Mary G. McEdwards, "Agitative Rhetoric: Its Nature and Effect" are among the first essays in our communication journals that attempt an explanation of civil rights discourses and a centering of Black perspectives.⁴¹ Although these are foundational and honest attempts to understand civil rights rhetoric within the traditional neo-Aristotelian paradigm, each takes an approach that argues that there is "white" and "Black," "white" has power, while "Black" does not, and "Black" is making a good deal of "noise" that makes "white" uncomfortable and uncertain.

Philip C. Wander's "The Savage Child: The Image of the Negro in the ProSlavery Movement" prompted scholars to begin to examine not just the individual "beads" but their relationship to power in more nuanced ways.⁴² In this essay, Wander names the bead "racism" and asks communication scholars to consider what it is, and how it works, on its own terms. Wander is joined by Francis S. Dubner's "Nonverbal Aspects of Black English" and Jack L. Whitehead and Leslie Miller's "Correspondence between Evaluations of Children's Speech and Speech Anticipated upon the Basis of Stereotype," scholars who begin to attempt to identify and explain the relationship of power and racism to Black individuals.⁴³ Other scholars begin to take up these questions of race, power, and racism, including Jack L. Daniel's "Black Folk and Speech Education"⁴⁴; W. A. D. Riach's "'Telling It Like It Is': An Examination of Black Theatre as Rhetoric"⁴⁵; Arthur L. Smith's "Some Characteristics of the Black Religious Audience"⁴⁶; Lloyd D. Powers's "Chicano Rhetoric: Some Basic Concepts"⁴⁷; Michael Victor Sedano's, "Chicanismo: A Rhetorical Analysis of Themes and Images of Selected Poetry from the Chicano Movement"⁴⁸; and Alberto Gonzalez's "Mexican 'Otherness' in the Rhetoric of Mexican Americans."⁴⁹ Daniel makes a logical and impassioned argument for the importance of speech education to Black people. Riach argues that Black discourse is "real," while white discourse is "escapist," a Western aesthetic that has run its course, and that it is now impossible to construct anything meaningful within its decaying structure. Powers, Sedano, and Gonzalez disrupt the logic that individuals can be "studied" from outside and argue instead that any legitimate understanding of the discourse of

a group necessitates understanding the norms, practices, beliefs, angst, talents, and inner workings of that community.⁵⁰ Early scholarship on racial identities, though often engaging with questions of power and racism, generally approached race as isolated from most other facets of identity and power.

Significantly, few essays address gay and lesbian communication prior to the edited collection *Gayspeak*.⁵¹ These essays include Julia P. Stanley's "Homosexual Slang"; James W. Chesebro, John F. Cragan, and Patricia McCullough's "The Small Group Technique of the Radical Revolutionary"; Joseph Hayes's "Gayspeak"; and Barry Brummett's "A Pentadic Analysis of Ideologies in Two Gay Rights Controversies."⁵² These essays each approach gay people and gay rhetoric as monolithic and male, and distinct from other minority groups, though Hayes does question whether the characteristics of gay speech are also impacted by factors such as race and class. Other essays on gay and lesbian people are scarce within the communication discipline until 2004, and, for the most part, it is only after this time that bisexual, transgender, or queer perspectives are introduced to the discipline.⁵³ Discussions of disability, outside of a few scant articles on speech impediments, only recently entered scholarly conversations in communication.⁵⁴

Although related fields of sociology, linguistics, and political science regularly talked of social class, communication scholars rarely addressed social class. This scholarship, however, offers some of the most significant nods in the direction of intersectional analysis. Frederick Williams and Rita C. Naremore's essay "On the Functional Analysis of Social Class Differences in Modes of Speech," which, though published in a communication journal, largely takes a sociolinguistic approach to the research.⁵⁵ Still, the essay accounts for race and sex in relation to social class as relevant variables. Jack Daniel's essay, "The Poor," argues that the poor are "aliens in an affluent society," and understanding the problem of communication across the poor/affluent divide should be approached as a cross-cultural dilemma.⁵⁶ Importantly, Daniel also mentions the intersection between race and class, as he notes that a number of people in the poor class are also members of minority groups, though this fact does not feature in the analysis he offers. The early work of Gerry Philipsen, including, "Speaking 'Like a Man' in Teamsterville: Culture Patterns of Role Enactment in an Urban Neighborhood" and "Places for Speaking in Teamsterville," offers interesting intersectional discussions of how location, class, gender, and race manifest in how people speak to one another and develop social roles.⁵⁷ Although these early essays on class approach intersectionality, few such essays exist.⁵⁸

We suggest that the power dynamics at play here are several: nonintersectional scholarship helps preserve a specific understanding of who can speak and how that person or those people should speak. Nonintersectional approaches also sanction speaking about Others as a legitimate practice (Spelman's question "have those under investigation been asked what they think?" is important here). Nonintersectional approaches embrace Lugones's description of fragmentation, which divides aspects of a self into discrete and clearly defined categories and posits that those aspects be theorized in monolithic ways. Generally, race, as a label, applies to those who are not white, sex or gender to those who are not male, sexuality to those who are not straight, and the like. Scholarship is produced in ways that erase or minimize the damages inflicted (structurally or personally) by those with power and privilege. And, finally, the communication of those with power and privilege need not be called into question.

Not surprisingly, early feminist communication studies disrupted the monolithic view of "male" but followed a similar trajectory to that of scholarship on "race" and "sexuality" as singular or isolated categories. Although foundational to bringing "women" into the conversation, essays such as Brenda Robinson Hancock's "Affirmation by Negation in the Women's Liberation Movement"; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron"; and Cheri Kramer's (now Kramarae's), "Women's Speech: Separate but Unequal?" reinscribe the category of "woman" as occupied by a monolithic group of white, middle-class, heterosexual females.⁵⁹ And, while several essays on African American women bring Black women into the analysis in a pop-bead fashion, it is not until Houston's "What Makes Scholarship About Black Women and Communication Feminist Communication Scholarship?"; "Feminist Theory and Black Women's Talk"; and "The Politics of Difference: Race, Class, and Women's Communication" that theories and ideas of intersectionality really come into play.⁶⁰ Since Houston's essays and her persistent work within the field to call attention to the necessity of an intersectional approach to scholarship, several feminist communication scholars have introduced intersectional perspectives or called for their importance. Brenda J. Allen, Karen Ascraft, Bernadette Marie Calafell, Aimee Carrillo Rowe, Karma R. Chávez, Carrie Crenshaw, Olga Idriss Davis, Lisa A. Flores, Michelle A. Holling, Sara L. McKinnon, Aysel Morin, Shane T. Moreman, Dawn Marie McIntosh, Lester C. Olson, Patricia S. Parker, Karla D. Scott, and others⁶¹ have dealt with the conceptual messiness, the slipperiness of identities (ascribed or avowed),

the embodied experiences of oppressions and their material implications, and what standing at those intersections means not only for individuals but for communication theories and scholarship.⁶² Such approaches are especially needed in communication studies, which is historically a field that produces theories designed to maintain and enhance the status quo. Even in those examples of communication theories designed to rupture or challenge the establishment, many of our discipline's familiar norms and logics are often repeated—identities are cast as unified and as transparent rather than thick, for example, while singular aspects of oppression and one-directional analyses of power are offered so that we learn of pop-bead epistemologies and metaphysics rather than curdling and coalitional ones. Still, without these foundational approaches to feminist intersectional communication scholarship, we would not be as informed as we are, or as able to offer this volume of intersectional work.

These key works are significant, and their messages, important, yet we believe that, in large part, the call to intersectionality has not had a widespread impact on the field. This, in part, stems from the way communication, subjectivity, and identity have been approached in rhetorical and social-scientific scholarship. For example, even our most complicated communication models, such as the transactional model, assume stable subjects who communicate in a particular communicative environment. These models often fail to take up questions of power and difference between communicators and also in how communicators are constituted as individuals. Moreover, as Stanley Deetz and others have argued, communication is often theorized as the transmission of information and not the creation of reality.⁶³ Such a conception of communication suggests fixed identities and a stable role for communication as a mediator, and not a creator, of subjectivity, identity, and reality.

Social-scientific approaches to communication also have long invited marking identities such as race, class, or gender as unique variables that can be tested independently and in relation to one another. Even though interpretive and critical scholars, including feminists, have denounced the reductionism implied by thinking these facets of identity as unique variables, such simplicity continues to pervade communication scholarship more generally by emphasizing only one "dimension" of identity and neglecting others: as if race isn't always classed, always gendered, always sexualized, always differently abled, and produced in and by (trans)national contexts. The rhetorical tradition is equally notorious for such reductionism as a brief glance at the field beyond what we offer here suggests a focus on "feminine style,"⁶⁴ "Black Nationalism,"⁶⁵ "gay liberation,"⁶⁶

"Chicano rhetoric,"⁶⁷ "Japanese Culture,"⁶⁸ and the "American Indian Movement."⁶⁹ The overemphasis on identity-based rhetoric and social movements, while important in suggesting that marginalized voices are central to rhetorical study and challenging the status quo, is equally responsible for promoting a singular perspective on identity and, hence, reproducing normative logics for understanding subjectivities, identities, and communicative behavior. In the next section, we question what these moments of thinking about diverse groups outside of white, property-owning men could look like if they were to incorporate an intersectional analysis.

ALL OF US ARE INTERSECTIONAL AND SOME OF US ARE BRAVE⁷⁰

As scholars study any form of communication, an intersectional approach offers several foundational principles that could and should guide research. These foundations are naming, power, and epistemic frameworks. To begin, when scholars select a communicative moment or series of moments to study, they might reflect on who is being named, what name is being given or offered, who has the power to do so, and what privileges exist that sanction this naming. Additionally, as Sara L. McKinnon's chapter in this collection demonstrates through her analysis of audiencing in the immigration courtroom, scholars should reflect on how that naming circumscribes or opens up what is possible and "real" as well as what can be known or understood. Scholars could consider what abuses and uses of power inform that naming and how they, as scholars, are connected to that naming. As scholars confront discourses deemed unsettling or angry or even irrational, they might consider what epistemic frameworks are at play, what valuable ways of knowing are embedded in those discourses, and how that adds to our body of knowledge about communication. So, for example, as we explore civil rights discourses, in the broadest or most focused sense of civil rights and discourse, intersectional scholars might attend not only to the confusing and disparate group of individuals who are calling themselves "a group," but also to the diversity that exists in the group and who is left out of "the group" (Lugones's "transparents," and "thicks," for example). Leslie A. Hahner's chapter raises precisely such questions in her examination of how "feminist" gets constituted during "feminist coming out day." Scholars also might productively attend to how those inside and outside the discourse of civil rights are positioned in the larger culture, what kinds of requests for rights are being made, who is making those requests

and of whom, and who decides that the thing being requested is, in fact, "a right" (whose epistemology is being privileged, for example). They might also take up how those who are being denied rights are being talked about; the myriad ways those rights are withheld; and the logics that enable the withholding of rights (questions of power and its distribution, for example). Finally, scholars could consider "theories in the flesh" in terms of how those who are oppressed and those who are doing/enabling the oppressing experience, express, and understand that oppression. Were scholars to apply these questions to discourses such as "Black power," "women's rights," "immigration," "gay marriage," "transgender politics," or "disability," we suggest, an understanding of communication, and how it functions, would expand considerably.

Additionally, as scholars explore unsettling discourses, whether they are positioned within the unsettled discourse or outside of it, an intersectional approach could help them articulate the ways that politics, social norms, and personal histories lay the foundation for that discourse, which is what Carly Woods's chapter on Barbara Jordan in this volume attempts to do. As Shanara Rose Reid-Brinkley shows in her chapter critiquing the narrowness of *feminine style*, scholars could begin to embrace conceptual messiness and give voice to the nuances of identities, the ways that identities can be both stable and organic, and the roles that communication plays in that stability and fluidity. So, for example, as scholars explore single communicators, historical or contemporary texts, and even the collective actions of rhetors, an intersectional approach would prompt them to attend to the many aspects of power and privilege—their presence and absence—and how communication fostered, created, organized, helped maneuver through, silenced, and gave voice to that presence or absence. Much like Jennifer Keohane's chapter in this volume questions how communist belonging was constructed during the 1940s, and in the same vein as the past scholarship of Houston, intersectional scholars could attend to which identities are said to "belong"—in an organization, public space, or nation—why, and how what is said comes to be "true." Scholars could consider which identities are said to have a "right" to marry and why and how that saying comes to be "legal." Scholars might address which identities must negotiate second or third "homes" within a society, culture, or nation, and why and how that negotiation is or is not accomplished. Scholars might even question which identities are safe on our streets, in our cars, in public, and in our homes, why that safety is present, or not, the discourses that sustain this safety

or lack of it, and why *safety, home, legal, right, true, and belong* are even states of being that can be granted and withdrawn.

Finally, integrating an intersectional approach to the study of communication requires that scholars recognize that each individual stands and swims in the intersections of race/gender/sex/sexuality/ability/economic means and more. No individual is outside this paradigm, however much our scholarship has tried to deny this or to suggest that only some are “intersectional bodies.” So, for example, intersectionality requires that we ask when is a “man” never *also* raced, classed, sexed, gendered, and the like? Sara Hayden and D. Lynn O’Brien Hallstein in this volume attempt to sort out this kind of question. Moreover, it requires that we ask when is “a race” not *also* comprised of family histories and genealogies, political differences, varying social norms and expectations, individuals with personal quirks, as well as being gendered, sexed, classed, and the like? And, it requires that we ask when the amount of money available to a family over time or an individual at any point in time has not *also* influenced the amount of access, comfort, and resources available to that person or family, and also been raced, sexed, gendered, and the like. And, finally, as Kate Zittlow Rogness’s development of intersectional style through the rhetoric of free lovers so aptly demonstrates in her chapter, taking up an intersectional approach requires that we ask why would, and when have, any of these factors not *also* affected, constrained, opened up, or even forced an individual’s or group’s styles, strategies, or choices of communication?

An intersectional approach to scholarship insists that we expand our research protocols, revisit our impressive storehouse of methodologies, refresh our understandings of how communication operates, and explain more comprehensively how communication and rhetoric work, and are at work, in the world.

DOING INTERSECTIONAL SCHOLARSHIP: THE DIFFICULT TASK OF RIGOROUS WORK

Intersectional work can feel difficult because at its center it requires that scholars interact with their own privilege (or lack of it) and theoretical blind spots. These are not always comfortable moments, but they are usually informative ones, to be sure. Intersectional work often challenges many of our basic assumptions about communication: those assumptions include the scope of communication—what it can or should do for people; the practice of communication—how communication is used effectively and how effective it actually is;

and the theorizing of communication—at what moments do we call a theory a “good” one, or even a “theory” at all. It also challenges who has the power to name, whose discourses can be heard, whose ways of knowing are valid, and whose approach to communication scholarship is rewarded.

We suggest that our discipline’s push for conceptual neatness, its veneration of individual communicators, and the communication of homogenous groups do not serve us well. We can no longer pretend that we exist outside the web of complexity that makes us all raced, classed, gendered, sexed, and differently abled individuals who belong or don’t belong to particular nation-states. We can no longer speak of “women” and “men” as if those categories, often assumed to be attached to cisgendered bodies, make any sense outside of complex relationships of identity, power, and privilege. We can only speak of individuals and groups as they exist in and in relationship to these ever-present aspects of self and society. If Althusser is correct, we always are hailed, and hail others, as curdled, and not fragmented, intersectional human beings.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS IN *STANDING IN THE INTERSECTION*

As Houston notes in the preface to this volume, our audience today is perhaps more progressive and willing to listen than the audience she faced after completing her Ph.D. three decades ago. Certainly, as the identities of the authors in this collection evidence, many white women are eager to engage and extend intersectional theories in their work. It is also necessary to note that the makeup of this collection lacks significant representation of women of color. All of our authors are also cisgendered and from the United States.⁷¹ We think it is important to call attention to these factors because of ongoing absences of marginalized scholars in the pages of our books and journals. At the 2009 National Communication Association preconference seminar we organized in order to gather authors for this collection, the racial makeup of the group was quite diverse. Through the process of calling for complete essays, revisions, and the normal back and forth that goes into creating a book such as this, our makeup has drastically changed. As editors, we have reflected on why we have ended up with few authors of color: could it reveal the uneven demands for the time and energies of people of color, which lead them to have to be very selective in what they end up being able to complete? Could the dearth reflect some manner of editing in which we have engaged that worked against our