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## **Intersectionality and identity: shared tenets and future research agendas for gender and identity studies**

### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This commentary introduces the Special Issue developed from a joint research seminar of the Gender in Management and Identity Special Interest Groups of the British Academy of Management, entitled 'Exploring the intersectionality of gender and identity'. It also presents an introductory literature review of intersectionality for gender in management and identity/identity work researchers. We highlight the similarities and differences of intersectionality and identity approaches, and introduce critiques of intersectional research. We then introduce the three papers in this Special Issue.

**Design/methodology/approach:** We review the intersectionality literature within and outside Management and Organization Studies, and focus attention on three intersectionality Special Issues (Sex Roles, 2008; 2013, and the European Journal of Women's Studies, 2006).

**Findings:** We outline the ongoing debates relating to intersectionality research, including as a framework and/or theory for identity/work, and explore the shared tenets of theories of intersectionality and identity. We highlight critiques of intersectionality research in practice, and consider areas for future research for gender in management and identity researchers.

**Research limitations/implications:** We provide an architecture for researchers to explore intersectionality and to consider issues before embarking on intersectional research. We also highlight areas for future research, including social-identities of disability, class and religion.

**Originality/Value:** Gender in Management: An International Journal invited this Special Issue to make a significant contribution to an under-researched area by reviewing the shared and different languages, and importantly the shared key tenets, of intersectionality, gender, identity and identity work from a multidisciplinary perspective.

**Key words:** intersectionality, gender, identity, identity work

**Paper type:** Research paper

## Introduction

In May 2012, the Gender in Management and Identity Special Interest Groups (SiGs) of the British Academy of Management (BAM) organized a joint research seminar entitled '*Exploring the Intersectionality of Gender and Identity*'. This third annual joint SIG research seminar aimed to explore intersecting interests and theoretical positions and to identify current debates and common themes connecting the two fields of interest. Researchers and doctoral students from 11 UK universities attended the seminar, which included four presentations. Gender in management researchers have only recently come to intersectionality, progressing explorations into the interdependence of gender with other identity dimensions. This Special Issue commentary extends the seminar's original aims by offering an introductory literature review of intersectionality for gender in management and identity researchers. We began the literature review by analyzing intersectionality research in the *Gender in Management: An International Journal* and *Gender, Work and Organization Journal*. We also went to contemporary intersectionality research in the *Journal of Sex Roles*. We then focused on three intersectionality special issues, two published in *Sex Roles* (2008, 2013) and one in the *European Journal of Women's Studies* (2006). From this, we outline intersectionality's key tenets, its connections with identity and with gender, and present critiques of the concept.

The seminar presentations illustrated different intersections, for instance of sexuality, race, ethnicity, class and occupation, with gender. All discussed processes of identity relating to the inequalities and power relations associated with different multiple intersections. During the presentations, and on reviewing intersectionality literature, we were struck by the similarities of the key tenets of intersectionality, gender and identity studies (as the presenters and we understand them) and by the shared and different languages across the disciplines, for instance of psychology, sociology, management and organization studies. A seminar attendee commented on the advantages of interdisciplinary approaches to intersectionality, gender and identity:

"It's been great coming because I've come in to some different languages and I've learnt about some different literatures that talk about the same things that I research but in a different way because it's a slightly different discipline area. So for me it's been a very rich source of inspiration for new areas that I can look at."

However, there is also divergence in the knowledge in that whilst extant intersectionality literature discusses the implications of intersections for self-identity processes (and for society-level identity politics), few (Bowleg, 2012 is an exception) draw upon the concept of identity work. Therefore, we see this Special Issue as an opportunity to bring together and review the shared and different languages, and importantly the shared key tenets, of intersectionality, gender, identity and identity work so that it might inspire researchers and future research.

This Special Issue includes two papers, based on the SiG seminar presentations, by Doyin Atewologun (Queen Mary, University of London) and Ruth Simpson (Brunel University, UK). We do not include the other two seminar presentations, by Gina Grandy (Allison University, Canada) and Sharon Mavin (Northumbria University, UK), and by Rosalind Gill (King's College

London), due to prior publication (see respectively, Mavin and Grandy, 2012 in this journal, and Banks, Gill and Taylor, 2013), but have summarized them. In addition, having reviewed Carol Woodhams, Ben Lupton and Marc Cowling's (2013) work on multiple disadvantage and pay from an intersectionality approach, we commissioned Carol and Ben to write a reflective research note to inform researchers 'doing intersectionality'.

We structure our commentary as follows. We begin by outlining intersectionality. We then review the key, shared tenets of theories of intersectionality, identity and identity work, drawing upon psychological, sociological, management and organization perspectives. Next, we summarize the presentations given at the seminar and the papers published here and observe how they illustrate intersections of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and occupation. We then consider critiques of intersectionality in practice and introduce Carol Woodhams and Ben Lupton's research note. This short essay reflects on the emancipatory potential of 'intersectional' research methodologies. The call is for plurality in research methods to allow for all contributions toward social change to emerge. After proposing areas for future research we conclude with a series of questions to prompt reader interpretations of processes of identity work in the papers published here and elsewhere, from our position of intersectionality as a generalized theory of identity (Nash, 2008; Warner and Shields, 2013).

### **What is Intersectionality?**

McCall (2005), Prins (2006), Hancock (2007) and Davis (2008) provide historical reviews highlighting the diverse theoretical drivers of current conceptualizations of intersectionality, and the variations in operationalising understandings of intersectionality in extant theorising and empirical research. Doyin Atewologun (2014), in this Special Issue, notes how intersectionality emerged from a desire to make visible the experiences of African-American women whose voices had been subsumed in women's studies (due to their minority ethnicity) and race studies (due to their minority gender status). Crenshaw (1991) originally proposed intersectionality as a way of changing policies and activist practices to address black women's unique needs. Woodhams and Lupton (2014, in this Special Issue) outline how Crenshaw (1991) proposed the overlapping of inequalities where the intersection of two minority categories (black and woman) constitute a distinct social position (black woman) that produces unique forms of disadvantage which cannot be accounted for by adding together the single categories. Collins (1990) understood categories as historically contingent modes of exercising power. She proposed the notion of interlocking oppressions organised through a 'matrix of domination' (Collins, 1990, p. 276) comprising structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal power relations. Building upon this work, authors including West and Fenstermaker (1995, 2002) and more recently Holvino (2010) argue that an inclusive exploration of women's experiences should acknowledge the intersections of gender with other identities, particularly where social positions frame how individuals experience their subjectivities.

Perspectives on multiple minority identities include additive, multiplicative or interactionist, and intersectionality (Parent et al., 2013). "[A]dditive perspectives reflect the notion that minority identity statuses (e.g., race and gender) act independently and combine additively to shape people's experiences", with researchers from this perspective using the term

“double jeopardy” to explain the additive effect (Parent et al., 2013, p. 640). Like the additive perspectives, multiplicative or interactionalist perspectives assume that the various identities can be conceptualized and operationalized, in study terms, as separate dimensions that, in this case, function multiplicatively, for instance with one minority identity exacerbating the effect of another (Parent et al., 2013). The additive and multiplicative perspectives tend to be pursued via quantitative research studies. By contrast, qualitative studies tend to be central to the intersectionality perspective, which assumes that multiple identities are not divisible as separate dimensions so that interlocking identities, which are unique for each individual, construct novel and distinctive experiences (Parent et al., 2013).

Brah and Phoenix (2013, p. 82) argue that intersectionality has impelled new ways of thinking about multiplicity in power relations:

recognition that ‘race’, social class and sexuality differentiated women’s experiences has disrupted notions of a homogeneous category ‘woman’ with its attendant assumptions of universality that served to maintain the status quo in relation to ‘race’, social class and sexuality, while challenging gendered assumptions.

Thus, intersectionality as a theory explores how social identities are mutually constitutive (Shields, 2008) and how different dimensions of social life are inseparable (Brah and Phoenix, 2013) at individual, interpersonal and structural levels. As a social movement, socialist feminism understands multiple social identities as “interlocking roots of inequality” (Holvino, 2010, p. 257): a perspective we discuss under the section ‘Power and Privilege’ below. Styhre and Eriksson-Zetterquist (2008) draw on Crenshaw’s (1991) point that intersectionality accounts for “multiple grounds of identity” to conceive it as a meta-concept, a framework for analysis, and we now discuss this and other conceptualizations.

#### *Intersectionality as a framework or theory for identity/identity work*

Davis (2008) discusses the ambiguities and controversies surrounding intersectionality, as a framework, theory, concept or heuristic device, and about whether it should be conceptualized as a crossroad (Crenshaw, 1991), as ‘axes’ of difference (Yuval-Davis, 2006) or as a dynamic process (Staunæs, 2003) that illuminates individual experiences or social structures and cultural discourses or both (McCall, 2005). Indeed, “paradoxically, precisely the vagueness and open-endedness of ‘intersectionality’ may be the very secret of its success” (Davis, 2008, p. 69).

As a framework, intersectionality reminds researchers that “any consideration of a single identity, such as gender, must incorporate an analysis of the ways that other identities interact with, and therefore qualitatively change, the experience of gender” (Warner and Shields, 2013, pp. 804-5). Therefore, intersectionality-as-framework is a strategy for studying identity (Syed, 2010; Warner and Shields, 2013). Syed (2010) asserts that researchers need to advance from using intersectionality as a framework to develop intersectionality-based theories capable of offering insights into identity (work) processes. Studies that utilize intersectionality-as-framework and intersectionality-as-theory explore how multiple interlocking identities are constructed by relative sociocultural power and

privilege (Parent et al., 2013). Studies examine how multiple social identities (such as race, gender, disability) intersect at the micro level of individual experience to reveal multiple interlocking social inequality (i.e., racism, sexism, ableism) at the macro social-structural level (Bowleg, 2012). Atewologun (2014), in this Special Issue, achieves this by employing intersectionality-as-framework to reveal the dynamics, at intrapersonal, interpersonal and organisational levels, of individuals' salience of their intersecting gender, ethnic and senior organizational identities.

Nash (2008) cites McCall's (2005, p. 1771) claim that intersectionality is "the most important" theoretical contribution made by women's and related studies and further asserts it is "the 'gold standard' multidisciplinary approach for analysing subjects' experiences of both identity and oppression" (Nash, 2008, p. 2). However, Nash (2008) contends that, because of intersectionality theory's emphasis on black women's experiences, the question of whether all or only multiply marginalized identities are intersectional is ambiguous: "This unresolved theoretical dispute makes it unclear whether intersectionality is a theory of marginalized subjectivity or a generalized theory of identity" (Nash, 2008, pp. 9-10). Our personal standpoint on this dispute is clear and we agree with Warner and Shields' (2013, p. 804) proposal that intersectionality applies to all identities and that "no single intersectional position experiences only privilege or only oppression". Thus, intersectionality is a useful heuristic for illuminating the complexities of the lived experience and for exploring the relationships between identity categories, individual differences, social structures and systems of inequality (Jones, 2009).

### **Identity/Identity work: social categories and social-identities**

From a psychological perspective, identity is understood as an individual's claims of membership of, and meanings associated with, particular social categories (Shields, 2008). Jones (2009) and Bowleg (2012) distinguish between 'visible' social categories or social identities (such as race and ethnicity) and 'invisible' ones (such as sexual orientation, social class, religion, and disability). From our own sociological perspective on identity/identity work research, we understand self- and social-identities (hyphenated) slightly differently. Specifically, we follow Watson's (2008, p. 131) theory of self-identities as the individual's own notion of who s/he is becoming and social-identities as "cultural phenomena [which] relate to various social categories existing societally and are, in effect, 'inputs' into self-identities (mediated by identity work) rather than elements of self-identities as such". Social-identities consist of the self's projections towards others, others' projections towards the self, and reactions to received projections (Beech, 2008, 2011) and are "'sites' in which people draw upon and are imposed upon by external discourses" (Beech, 2011, p. 286). As Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) found, individuals may draw on distinct social groups or 'conventional' social categories (such as black, white, man, woman, etc), and other meaning-making devices, such as metaphors, in constructing their self-identities.

We agree with Shields (2008, p. 302) that social-identities "mutually constitute, reinforce and naturalize one another":

By *mutually constitute* I mean that one category of identity, such as gender, takes its meaning as a category in relation to another category. By *reinforce* I mean that the

formation and maintenance of identity categories is a dynamic process in which the individual ... is actively engaged. ... By *naturalize* I mean that identities in one category come to be seen as self-evident or “basic” through the lens of another category. (Shields, 2008, p. 302, emphasis in original).

We now explore how these key tenets of identity/identity work are common to theories of intersectionality.

### **Shared tenets of theories of intersectionality and identity/identity work**

#### *The starting point of intersectionality theory: Multiple and mutually constitutive identities*

The Identity/identity work literature within Organization Studies recognizes the notion that multiple and mutually constitutive social-identities (e.g. gender, ethnicity, nationality, family status, occupation, age) intersect in complex ways and that individuals construct multiple and co-existing self-identities (see Alvesson et al., 2008; Beech, 2008; Collinson, 2003; Kondo, 1990). For instance, Kondo’s (1990) study interweaves analysis of gender with other social-identities such as class, ethnicity, nationality and age to illustrate the multiple, shifting, complicated and sometimes contradictory nature of self-identities. Diamond and Butterworth (2008, p. 366) explain that “[h]istorically, intersectionality has been articulated as a framework for analyzing the way in which multiple social locations and identities mutually inform and constitute one another”. Thus intersectionality is derived from a theoretical interest in how multiple identities are experienced (Shields, 2008), with the starting point of intersectionality theory being recognition of the intersections of gender with other social-identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Styhre and Eriksson-Zetterquist (2008, p. 567) use the analogy of ‘shifting planes’ to explain this experience of multiplicity:

Rather than reducing all sorts of identities or subject-positions to a single plane, intersectionality perspectives conceive of identity as being derived from different registers functioning as shifting planes, at times operating detachedly from one another; in other cases directly overlapping and even clashing.

Intersecting social-identities interact to “form qualitatively different meanings and experiences” (Warner, 2008, p. 454). For instance, “‘black women’ cannot be understood as the mere addition of ‘women’ and ‘black’, but is rather a distinctive category” (Walby et al., 2012, p. 234). Shields (2008, p. 305) concurs and describes how identities are experienced as a “uniquely hybrid creation”, that is a unique self-identity is temporarily and emergently created out of multiple and dynamic intersecting social-identities.

#### *Dynamic processes of intersectionality and identity/identity work*

Like intersectionality researchers (such as Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013; Jones, 2009; Shields, 2008; Styhre and Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2008) and identity/identity work studies researchers (such as Bryans and Mavin, 2003; Grandy, 2008; Harding, 2008; Watson, 2008, Watson and Harris, 1999), we understand identity as a dynamic, emergent and ongoing process of becoming. This process perspective recognizes both the dynamism “in and between and within identity categories” (Shields, 2008, p. 308) and of self- and social-identities as they

change over time (Shields, 2008). For instance, Diamond and Butterworth (2008) use their respondents' descriptions of transgendered experiences to illustrate dynamism and multiplicity across self-identities (e.g. gender, race, etc) but also within social-identities, in this case, female and male. They discuss how the respondents' experiences of gender identity involved "continued movement between, around, and within gender polarities" (Diamond and Butterworth, 2008, p. 369). Although their conclusion relates to understandings of transgendered experience, it is relevant to all intersectional research:

Theories of intersectionality help to make sense of this experience by emphasizing how all subjective experiences of selfhood are continually transformed, reenacted, and renegotiated as a function of shifting landscapes of social context. From an intersectionality perspective, ... we should treat ... each [individual's] (fluid) social locations ... as continually interacting ... to produce multiple, dynamic senses of self over time (Diamond and Butterworth, 2008, p. 375)

A process perspective on identities and intersectionality, then, enables researchers to explore how identity alters (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013; Warner, 2008) within particular social contexts. Ruth Simpson's paper (2014 in this Special Issue) illustrates effectively how different social contexts, and more specifically space, offer dynamic resources for identity work. Doyin Atewologun's paper (2014 in this Special Issue) highlights how gender ethnic senior organizational identities shift meaning in relation to each other at the intrapersonal, interpersonal and meso levels, infusing each other with significance and meaning simultaneously and consecutively, in complement and in opposition to each other dependent upon context.

Whilst appreciating that social constructions of self- and social-identities are the outcome of interactions and changes over time, Walby et al. (2012, p. 236) propose that "the concepts capturing the sets of social relations ... need to have their meaning temporarily stabilized at the point of analysis". Therefore, it is important to be mindful of the specific temporal, historical and contextual features (Shields, 2008; Walby et al., 2012) and meanings of particular social-identities. For instance, Bowleg (2012, p. 755) discusses the "temporal chasm" in meanings of being a black man in the United States during slavery and now, but concludes that this historical legacy shapes and reinforces their self-identities. She proposes that men born and raised in majority black regions outside the United States "may have a different awareness of Blackness and what it means to identify as Black" (Bowleg, 2012, p. 764).

The dynamic process of intersectionality and identity work also acknowledges an individual's active engagement in "mak[ing] inputs into social-identities or even modify[ing] the role given to them in the 'script' of any given social-identity" (Watson, 2008, p. 129). This reflects a key concept within Organization and Identity Studies, namely identity work (Alvesson et al., 2008; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008). Again, we draw on Watson (2008, p. 129) who highlights the dynamic nature of identity work:

the mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to



terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social-identities which pertain to them in the various milieux in which they live their lives.

In 'doing' identity work, people make connections 'inwards' towards the self and 'outwards' to social others (Watson, 2008). Similarly, Jones' (2009, p. 298) intersectional study discussed "two identity processes at work"; one focused from the outside in and the other from the inside out. Identity work encompasses how people categorize themselves and are categorized by others (Beech, 2008) and "how the images and representations (physical, symbolic, verbal, textual and behavioural) [of categories] become imbued with meaning and are taken as being part of one's identity" (Beech, 2008, p. 52). In other words, identity work is concerned with the social meanings attached to categories (Shields, 2008), including their relative sociocultural power and privilege (Parent et al., 2013).

### **Power and privilege**

Intersectionality considers how multiple identities are constituted in the context of power relations (Brah and Phoenix, 2013; Warner and Shields, 2013). Thus, identity work may involve "social maneuvering and power games ... [and] attempts to establish, legitimate or challenge the prevailing relationships of power and status" (Ball & Wilson, 2000, cited by Ybema et al, 2009, p. 307). Furthermore, identity work is performed in a discursive context of "official" or "dominant" discourses (Ybema et al, 2009: 307), and these political and historic discourses and related practices form the means through which self- and social-identities are constructed (Ford, 2006; Kondo, 1990).

Styhre and Eriksson-Zetterquist (2008, p. 573) provide an illustrative example of how an individual is exposed constantly to a series of dominant discourses, which they refer to as "regimes of discipline and oppression":

being a female African-American manager at a company implies that at least three regimes will be in operation: the race and ethnicity regime emphasizing certain historical and social conditions pertaining to the individual's biography; the gender regime underlining the fact that organizations and society are gendered ...; the management regime locating the individual in a position where he/she is expected to comply with organizational beliefs and managerial ideologies prioritizing qualities ... The female African-American manager has the capacity to navigate in-between such regimes of discipline and oppression and to form an identity based on the ideologies and beliefs provided. ... in everyday working life, the skilled agent manages to function within such a domain, saturated with interests and taken-for-granted beliefs. But occasionally, there will be situations where the individual becomes aware of the assumptions and beliefs that are only articulated from time to time. ... when applying for a new position, the individual may be subject to an analysis whereby he or she represents a number of different social categories derived from race, ethnicity, gender, social class, religious beliefs, or sexuality. (Styhre and Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2008, p. 573)

This illustrative example highlights Shields' (2008) naturalizing tenet of intersectionality in that identities in one category can come to be seen as self-evident through the lens of another category.

Jones (2009, p. 287) claims that emphasis on multiple social-identities (such as race, gender, social class, and sexual orientation) accentuates "the dynamics of power, privilege, and sociocultural contexts" and the influence on self-identity constructions of "structures of domination and subordination ... tied to sociocultural histories of particular groups". In other words, social-identities "play out in different forms in different discursive domains and temporal spaces" (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 303). Shields (2008) illustrates these dynamics by giving the example of a White lesbian whose intersectional position may be disadvantaged relative to one group (that is the heterosexual norm), but advantaged relative to another (that is she enjoys racial privilege relative to other lesbians).

Debates of the ranking (Bowleg, 2012) of intersectional social identities (for instance that a particular individual 'sees' herself as Black first, and lesbian/woman/middle-class etc second) are prevalent in the intersectionality literature (for further discussion, see Bowleg, 2008, 2012; Diamond and Butterworth, 2008; McCall, 2005; Walby et al., 2012.) Indeed, a central tenet of intersectionality is that "social identities are intersectional, not additive and thus cannot be ranked" (Bowleg, 2012, p. 759), thereby challenging "categorical modes of thinking in which certain loci of identity ... are granted 'primary' status" (Diamond and Butterworth, 2008, p. 366). However, in her study of Black gay and bisexual men's experiences, Bowleg (2012) found that participants both ranked their identities in terms of primary importance and constructed them by identifying with all social-identity intersections. She drew on Deaux's (1993) theory of "identity work" to illustrate how participants react to power dynamics in particular social situations by variously constructing their self-identities, for instance as "I'm Black first" or "I can't just be Black and then just be gay" (Bowleg, 2012, p. 764).

### **Gender: the starting point of intersectionality in this Special Issue**

Having presented a brief introductory review of intersectionality and identity/identity work literature, we now move to introduce the papers in this Special Issue. Like other Special Issues focused on intersectionality (see Shields', 2008, editorial of the *Journal Sex Roles* Special Issue and Phoenix and Pattynama's, 2006, editorial in the *European Journal of Women's Studies*), gender was the starting point, at the BAM SiG seminar which initiated this Special Issue, of our analysis of intersectionality. The papers by Doyin Atewolugun, and Ruth Simpson published here and the other presentations (Gina Grandy and Sharon Mavin, and Ros Gill), which are summarized for prior publication reasons, offer the potential to consider the intersectionality of gender in terms of both 'gender and', and 'gender with', (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011) other social-identities. This is discussed further in this Special Issue (Simpson, 2014). The intersections discussed include race/ethnicity (Doyin Atewolugun), sexuality (Gina Grandy and Sharon Mavin, and Ruth Simpson) and occupation (Doyin Atewolugun, Ros Gill, Gina Grandy and Sharon Mavin, and Ruth Simpson). The papers and summaries illustrate how, by taking an intersectionality approach, we can highlight how one's experiences of gender are profoundly shaped by one's social-identities and how an

individual's "social location" is reflected in intersecting identities (Shields, 2008, p. 301). As a BAM SiG seminar participant observed, across the presentations, questions and discussions:

Context is very central to the way we experience and can understand intersections ... context and the way we experience intersectionality differently in different contexts has been something interesting that really came out today.

### **Summary of seminar presentations and of papers published in this Special Issue**

Related to their recent research on doing gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013) **Gina Grandy and Sharon Mavin's** presentation highlighted the intersections of gender, dirty work occupations and identity. Based on data from Grandy's doctoral research (see Grandy, 2008), Gina and Sharon explored how exotic dancers 'do' gender and manage stigma associated with their work and identities. Drawing upon Hughes' (1958), and Ashforth and Kreiner's (1999), notion of dirty work, in conjunction with Goffman's (1963) notion of spoiled identities, identity work is understood as problematic for dirty workers. For instance, how do individuals manage the stigma associated with their work and, therefore, themselves because they perform dirty work? Transferring this challenge to the theoretical notion of doing gender well and/or differently, Gina and Sharon discussed how doing gender well against sex category can serve as a resource for positive identity construction for dirty workers. For instance, a butcher may emphasize aspects of the work associated with masculinity as an identity work strategy for dealing with or managing the stigma associated with the work (Simpson et al., 2011). However, "[i]n circumstances where there is incongruence between sex category and gender, identity construction is problematic and the construction of positive identities may be threatened" Mavin and Grandy, 2012, p. 220). More specifically, "sex workers face a precarious situation where doing gender accountable to sex category is expected but they are 'punished' for doing gender well. Undoubtedly, identity work will be difficult and complex for these workers." (Mavin and Grandy, 2013, p. 237). They illustrated how exotic dancers, as a particular form of sex and dirty workers, manage the stigma of dirty work, and do identity work to construct a positive self-identity through doing gender well. However, they argued that this was not enough "to reposition bad girls (bad, dirty work) into good girls (good, clean work)" (Mavin and Grandy, 2013, p. 232). They illustrated how the exotic dancers engaged in doing gender well but at the same time engaged in simultaneous expressions of masculinity, that is doing gender differently against sex category, in managing the stigma associated with their work and identities. The "exotic dancers enact a number of fluid and contradictory identity roles simultaneously, some of which are more aligned with femininity and others masculinity ... While they do gender well, their efforts to legitimize and professionalize the work can be viewed as attempts, albeit those more aligned with masculinity, to also do gender differently" (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, p. 221). Therefore, multiplicity and dynamism (key tenets of intersectionality and identity/identity work theories) was emphasized through their research which highlighted that, at the intersection of doing gender and dirty work, identity/identity work processes are " complex, contradictory, fluid and indefinite" (Mavin and Grandy, 2013, p. 248).

In their paper, Mavin and Grandy (2013, p. 244) discuss how their research participants reflect upon their own and others' sexuality and how such reflections "complicate an

already messy process of identity construction. The dancers do gender well through exaggerated femininity and sexuality ...”.

The intersections of gender, sexuality and occupation were also a focus of **Ruth Simpson’s** (2013, in this Special Issue) paper. Ruth analyzes how male cabin crew utilise and mobilise space as they construct their identity and manage the potential mismatch between (masculine) gender and (feminized) occupational identity. Ruth illustrates effectively the specific temporal, historical and contextual features (Shields, 2008; Walby et al., 2012) and meanings of particular social-identities, in this case occupational identities, by discussing the gendered nature of service work and its cultural connections with femininity and domesticity. For men in non-traditional occupations, such as cabin crew service work, the tensions between the ‘feminine’ nature of the service and care and dominant discourses of masculinity create particular identity challenges.

Viewing identity as positional, relational and temporal, Ruth argues that time-space relations can form the basis of power opposition and control (Goffman, 1980) and that place and space offer dynamic resources for identity work (Halford and Leonard, 2006). Ruth discusses how space is gendered through the embodied performances of those moving and acting within it. She draws on research by Halford and Leonard (2006) to highlight different embodied performances, and therefore different articulations of power and identities, of doctors and nurses in hospital wards. From her own research, she discusses the gendered and gendering (i.e. ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’) spaces of the flight deck and cabin and the spatial hierarchies and power relations implicated by and within them. For instance, the flight deck, with its high technology and militaristic symbolism of pilots’ uniforms is a profoundly ‘masculine’ space, in contrast to the ‘feminine’ space of the cabin where service and consumption occur. Spaces are also gendering in that male cabin crew become marked by the femininity of the cabin and associated with a denigrated (homo)sexuality. Therefore, through its discussion of how discourses of gender and sexuality are constructed within space, this paper reinforces the dynamic processes of intersectionality and identity/identity work, and of the structures of power and privilege within particular sociocultural contexts.

Ruth illustrates how space, in reflecting and constituting structures of power, is drawn upon as a resource for identity work, in that it provides sites of resistance. For example, the galley space acts as a site of retreat and identity repair work, and irony, humour and play in the aisle space are employed to subvert its dominant (e.g. feminized and sexualised) meanings. Therefore, the paper extends Beech’s (2008) consideration of the mobilizing of discursive resources to resist subordinated identities by highlighting how space is mobilized in creative ways. The specific spatial characteristics of the work of cabin crew, with its gendered and sexualised meanings, and the mobilizing of space to challenge prevailing power relationships have implications for identity work and, more generally, for intersectionality research.

The specific characteristics, in her case of cultural and creative work and workers, were the focus of **Rosalind Gill’s** presentation. Drawing on her sociological research interests in gender and media (Gill, 2010), the presentation explored the experience of cultural and creative work, the relationship of new forms and practices of work to questions of equality, and the impact of changes in work on people’s identity. More specifically, she discussed the

precariousness, intensification and extensification of cultural and creative work over time, place and space, and the blurring of boundaries of work and non-work. (For further consideration of cultural work as a historically and geographically situated process, see Banks, Gill and Taylor, 2013.)

In exploding the myth of cultural and creative industries as egalitarian and presenting the reality of inequalities in relation to gender, race, ethnicity and class, her research aligns with the social activism approach of intersectionality (Fielden and Davidson, 2012; Warner and Shields, 2013). For instance, Ros drew attention to the 'family unfriendly' realities of long hours and bulimic patterns of working, which created stark inequalities between male and female cultural workers and those with and without caring responsibilities. She drew on Jones et al.'s (2010) notion of 'unmanageable inequalities,' that is inequalities that cannot be managed because they fall outwith equal opportunities legislation, such as appointment of contracts on the basis of informal contacts. Ros extended the notion of unmanageable inequalities to unspeakable inequalities. She explained that a striking feature of her research was that people did not speak about workplace inequalities of gender, race and ethnicity. For example, in relation to gender, she considered why inequality was unspeakable. Was it because gender was no longer salient, in that, as a post-feminist problem, it is assumed to have been dealt with? Alternatively, were participants giving an instrumental response? - 'you don't talk about this if you want to get on. If you want to get on, you buy into the myth of meritocracy and egalitarianism'.

In contrast to the myths of creative workers in relaxed, informal and undisciplined workplaces, Ros discussed the intensification and extensification of work and related self-discipline and self-management (Foucault, 1988) required to survive in cultural and creative industries. For instance, intensification of work involves keeping up to date with technological advances, constantly networking, and managing one's own 'personal brand' and reputation. Extensification acknowledges the way that work spreads out over time and place, and blurs the boundaries of work and non-work. Ros remarked on the intense exhaustion workers experienced in doing this Foucauldian-style work on the self, even though the participants rarely presented it as 'labour' (or identity work) but rather as 'just something that you did'. She also considered the implications for self-identity of the impossibility for workers in cultural and creative industries to imagine their futures.

**Doyin Atewologun's** paper (2014, in this Special Issue) explores experiences relating to, and the nature of the episodes that raise, individuals' salience of their intersecting gender ethnic and senior organizational identities. In a study of black, Asian and minority ethnic women and men in senior positions, Doyin takes an individual level lens to explore subjective identity positions reported as salient via journal self-reports and interviews. In discussing intersectionality, identity salience, threat and construction, Doyin focuses upon identity salience when an individual is prompted to categorise him or herself along identity-oriented criteria. Doyin adopts an intersectionality-as-framework approach and multi-level relational perspective to demonstrate, through self-report of identity-heightening episodes, the dynamism of gender ethnic and senior identities within everyday experiences. In particular, Doyin illuminates the contextual and social nature of identity salience through material sites, as everyday physical locations and actual encounters, and metaphorical sites, relating to intrapersonal, interpersonal, organisational and socio-cultural factors. She offers insights

into how these multi-level factors raise intersectional identity salience through the different constructions of meaning, value and enactment of gender, ethnicity and senior organizational identities. Doyin argues that the meaning and value of each identity facet in isolation or in combination are influenced by factors at multiple levels including self-concept, cultural stereotypes, organizational policies, and demographic distribution.

Doyin also explores how ethnic women and men in senior organizational positions experience privilege as contextual, conferred and contested, and how gender plays out differently (Ybema et al., 2009) for UK black men compared to Asian men. She explains how privilege is manifested in terms of challenges to participants' competence e.g. the Asian men participants were not challenged whereas black men participants experienced challenge to competence. Further, organizational context is surfaced in the research as critically influential on intersectional identity salience for Doyin's participants because the organization mediates the relationship between social circumstances, individual perceptions and motivations.

Doyin considers reflexively her own personal intersectional subjectivities - gender, ethnicity, class and profession - and their impact on engaging with her participants. Doyin's Nigerian identity is seen as becoming salient in respect of four Nigerian participants and she reflects on the challenge to her own assumptions about ethnicity when reflexively outlining how she responded to a question about mixed ethnicity and whether a potential research participant was 'black enough'. She also reflects on how she was flattered when two Asian men counted her as 'one of us' when she had perceived herself as an outgroup member.

To summarize, the seminar presentations and Special Issue papers provide rich accounts of the historically- and contextually-contingent nature of diverse occupations (sex work, service work, creative and cultural work). They consider how power and inequality within particular contexts are played out variously through the intersections of gender, sexuality, race and class and illustrate how individuals engage in identity work in an attempt to manage self-identity conflicts and social-identity equalities.

### **Critiques of intersectionality in practice**

Those wishing to engage in future research should be aware of the critiques of intersectionality research in practice. Special Issues on intersectionality, in the *European Journal of Women's Studies* (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006) and in the *Journal of Sex Roles* (Warner and Shields, 2013) highlight the danger of intersectionality treating all differences equally. For instance, Yuval-Davis (2006) and Verloo (2006) point out the distinctiveness of differences while simultaneously noting their interdependence.

The additive, multiplicative or interactionist, and intersectionality perspectives to intersectionality remain contested. Ludvig, in the 2006 Special Issue, argues for the impossibility of dealing with all the complexities that result from infinite lists of differences. Rather than attempting this, she demonstrates how the particularities of gender can only be understood by considering the specificity of time and place in constructions of structural differences between women (Ludvig, 2006). Thus, her research addresses in part the critique that applications of intersectionality insufficiently address the social construction of

the identity categories themselves (Warner and Shields, 2013). There are also critiques of the systematic approach to intersectionality (mostly US based) in limiting possibilities for complexity versus constructionist intersectionality (mostly UK based) which is argued as offering more nuanced complexity and contradiction (Prins, in the 2006 Special Issue). Bowleg (2008, p. 317) effectively summarizes our key assumption as researchers: “there is no single reality about the experience of one’s intersecting identities, only multiple constructed realities about one’s own experience of intersectionality”.

The act of using categories, within applications of intersectionality, is itself problematic (Warner and Shields, 2013) and debates continue concerning the categorical implications of intersectionality which we do not have space to cover here. However, we commissioned **Carol Woodhams and Ben Lupton** to write a research note, reflecting on their approach to studying intersectionality where they examined the impact on pay, using pre-existing categories (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age and disability), analysing single identity variables separately and then in combination, using a critical realist quantitative approach. Carol and Ben’s paper furthers the debate, raised by McCall (2005), about the categorical implications of intersectionality research, namely anticategorical complexity, intercategory complexity and intracategory complexity. Anticategorical approaches reject the utility and simplistic fixed notions of categories as “social fictions that produce inequalities in the process of producing differences” (McCall, 2005, p. 1773). Therefore, such approaches are inadequate and misleading in exploring the complex interplay of multiplicity and dynamism of both identities and structures of power. Intercategory approaches are in the ‘middle’ of the debate and use existing social categories provisionally and strategically for analytical purposes to understand and explicate changes in power structures and equality for different social groups along multiple and conflicting dimensions. Intracategory approaches recognise the analytical utility of categories representing enduring relationships whilst adopting a critical perspective to the processes of category construction.

McCall (2005, p. 1783) states that categories have an “ambivalent” status, simultaneously defining the subjects of analysis and articulating the broader structures that frame their everyday social relations. Working from the broader structures, Carol and Ben work from the “top down”, conducting macro-level analysis of pay gap data to identify the patterns and extent of disadvantage by particular groups, pointing to underlying processes and structures and then identifying categories that need special attention (Bagilhole, 2010). To support the radicalising impact of collective experiences, Carol and Ben’s research combines anticategorical and intercategory approaches, to draw attention to the political and emancipatory potential of the method. An emic anticategorical approach used in isolation, whilst achieving many emancipatory research objectives, maintains the status quo at the policy level (Woodhams and Lupton, 2014, in this Special Issue). Carol and Ben recognise that their analysis cannot substitute for studies that explore the detailed social processes by which identities and employment disadvantage relate in particular contexts. However, in looking at the broader picture, they argue that the results are instructive, and that approaching intersectionality, in an intercategory way, remains a useful approach for researchers.

While it may not be able to explain all intersections that need to be understood (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006), intersectionality research is sustaining and growing in its

attractiveness to researchers from disciplines beyond feminist and women's studies. The many social-identities that can be explored within intersectionality research mean that researchers have to make informed decisions (Warner and Shields, 2013), about who, how and why, before data collection takes place. Otherwise intersectional research's promises of 'digging deeper' to make visible the intersections of identities (Warner et al., 2013) may be difficult to achieve. For instance, McCall (2005) concludes that personal narratives situate individuals from the partial perspective of the particular social group under study, that is, if intersectional analysis focuses on the narrated experiences of Arab women, it ignores the experiences of Arab men.

### **Areas for future research**

In the final section of this commentary, we consider areas for future research.

#### *Crafting a more nuanced theory of simultaneous privilege and oppression in intersectionality-as-theory studies*

Calls for further advances in intersectionality-as-theory were made by Nash (2008, p. 9) who challenged researchers to attend to the processes and strategies by which subjects mobilize (or choose not to mobilize) particular aspects of their identities in particular circumstances. Warner and Shields (2013) claim that Bowleg's (2012) study addresses questions posed by Nash (2008, p. 11), such as "Do black women use their multiple identities to interpret the social world or do they deploy one at a time? What determines which identity is foregrounded in a particular moment, or are both always simultaneously engaged?". We contend that Atewologun's (2014, in this Special Issue) paper also elaborates on these identity processes and strategies. However, future research might develop a more nuanced theory that recognizes the ways in which intersecting social-identities (e.g. of race, gender, sexuality, and class) intersect in complex ways to construct simultaneous positions of dominance and subordination, and of privilege and oppression.

#### *Class, religion and disability as social-identities in intersectional studies*

When considering areas for future research in the SiG seminar plenary, a participant observed that we had given limited attention to the intersection of class with other categories. Such limited attention is reflected in the extant literature. For instance, Walby et al. (2012, p. 231) highlight the "ambivalence as to the location of class" in relation to other social-identities. Notwithstanding differences in the ontological construction of class and gender, Walby et al. (2012, p. 236) call for the "reinsertion of class" in intersectional analyses of gender with other social-identities.

Arifeen and Gatrell (2013) argue the case for an intersectional approach of gender with race/ethnicity, religion and nationality. Atewologun (2014, in this Special Issue) illustrates these intersections and comments on how religion featured strongly in Indian participants' experiences but was relatively absent for black and mixed ethnicity participants. Although Williams and Mavin (2012) state that the intersectionality perspective argues for a multiple lens through which we may analyse different points of social location, including for example



sexuality, nationality and disability, Doyin observes how sexual orientation and disability were invisible (and class was less prevalent) in her data.

### *Broadening the subjects of intersectionality research*

A further consideration for future research concerns the subjects of intersectionality research. Nash (2008, p. 10) contends that, because of an investment in “‘recovering’ marginalized subjects’ voices and experiences”, intersectional studies tend to exclude subjects who might be considered as “wholly or even partially privileged”. Therefore, researchers need to broaden their research subjects in order to develop theories of identity from an array of subject experiences (Nash, 2008). However, this offers opportunities for gender in management researchers. Our focus on managers, leaders and professionals, that is those perceived to be ‘privileged’ in terms of education, organizational hierarchy, and economic status, does not mean that such individuals’ experiences of their subjectivities are not gendered, marginalized or discriminated against. For us, awareness of the intersection of privilege and exploration of individual social-identities is of importance in terms of positioning of the research. Therefore, researchers should place emphasis not only on *who* but also *how* intersectionality is studied (Warner and Shields, 2013).

### **Concluding remarks**

In summary, the papers in this Special Issue advance gender in management and identity research into intersectional perspectives, whilst revealing the challenges of researching intersectionality. The Special Issue is important in that it: offers research into different multiple intersections; highlights the similarities and differences of intersectionality and identity research; provides an architecture for researchers to explore intersectionality; and introduces the critiques of approaches to intersectional research. Significantly, the Special Issue highlights future research avenues for gender in management and identity researchers.

The Special Issue also highlights the numerous issues to consider when doing intersectionality research. One further consideration, discussed in the plenary of the Gender in Management and Identity SiG joint seminar, focused on the need for researcher reflexivity, for instance in acknowledging how the intersections of our own social-identities as researchers impact on our relations with participants and constructions of ‘otherness’, raising potential ethical issues of power.

In progressing our social constructionist approach to intersectionality, and in support of researcher reflexivity, we propose that, when reading and reflecting upon the papers in this Special Issue, and/or when embarking upon future intersectional research, readers might use Jones’ (2009, p. 289) and Bowleg’s (2012) guiding research questions:

1. How do individuals experience and describe intersections, e.g. of gender, race, and sexuality? What are the challenges and benefits of these intersections?
2. How do individuals experience identity at the intersections? How do individuals construct and negotiate self-identity at the intersections of multiple social-identities?

3. What are the sociocultural contexts and structures of power and privilege that influence and shape identity/identity work? How do social processes shape identity/identity work?
4. What are the implications for understanding identity work in an intersectional analysis of multiple identities?

We hope readers enjoy the papers included in the Special Issue which make a significant contribution to studying intersectionality. We would like to thank Dr Gina Grandy, Professor Ruth Simpson, Professor Rosalind Gill, Dr Doyin Atewologun, Professor Carol Woodhams and Dr Ben Lupton for their thought-provoking research, and all participants at the joint seminar.

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