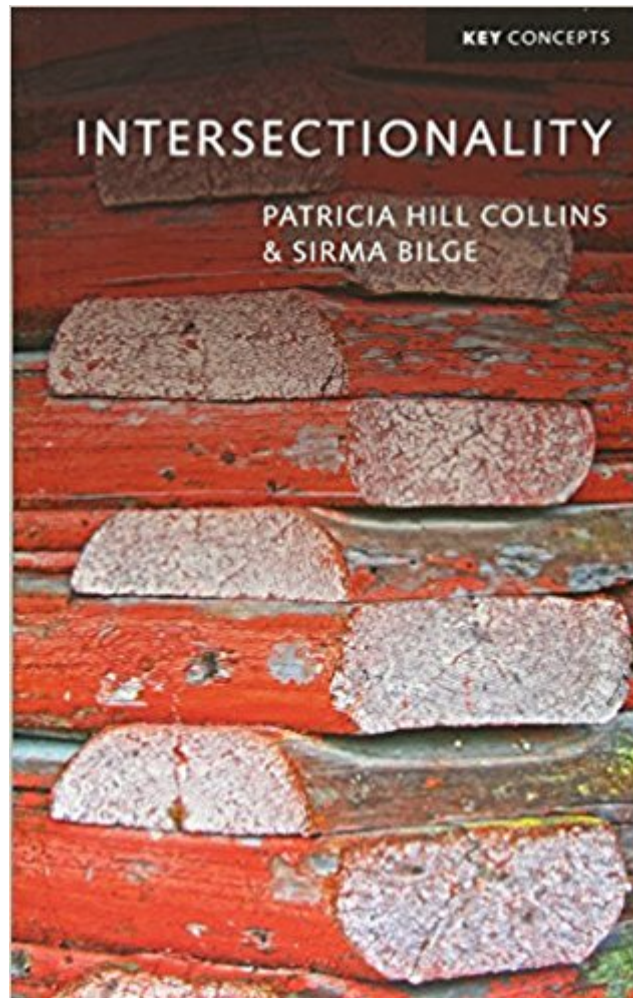




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# Intersectionality (Key Concepts)



## Synopsis

The concept of intersectionality has become a hot topic in academic and activist circles alike. But what exactly does it mean, and why has it emerged as such a vital lens through which to explore how social inequalities of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability and ethnicity shape one another? In this new book Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge provide a much-needed, introduction to the field of intersectional knowledge and praxis. They analyze the emergence, growth and contours of the concept and show how intersectional frameworks speak to topics as diverse as human rights, neoliberalism, identity politics, immigration, hip hop, global social protest, diversity, digital media, Black feminism in Brazil, violence and World Cup soccer. Accessibly written and drawing on a plethora of lively examples to illustrate its arguments, the book highlights intersectionality's potential for understanding inequality and bringing about social justice oriented change. Intersectionality will be an invaluable resource for anyone grappling with the main ideas, debates and new directions in this field.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Comprehensive and highly accessible, Intersectionality is set to become the go-to book for students, activists, policy makers, and teachers looking for an analytic tool to help identify and challenge social inequalities and achieve social justice.”  
—Nancy Naples, University of Connecticut  
“Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge shed new light on intersectionality by showing how people across the globe use it as an analytical and organizing tool for protesting

against social injustices and solving social problems. Their clear explanations and real-world examples covering a wide range of issues make intersectionality highly accessible and practicable to scholars, students, and activists alike. This book will be essential reading for understanding how power operates and is contested in our neoliberal age.

—Dorothy Roberts, University of Pennsylvania

Patricia Hill Collins is Distinguished University Professor of Sociology at the University of Maryland  
Sirma Bilge is Associate Professor of Sociology at the Université de Montréal

Dr. Gladys Smith  
This book is a must read for everyone. The authors define, discuss, and give examples of intersectionality like no one ever has. Students will enjoy reading it because of its relevance today. A great read to add to your library.

This book provides knowledge to understand intersectionality and how to implement this critical tool in social science research.

Very interesting but hard to read. Definitely needed a dictionary. But I liked

Anyone who closely follows academic innovations or social activism has probably heard the term “intersectionality” thrown around recently. But like many authors writing for the already well-informed, these sources generally don’t define that term. That leaves us uninitiated, merely interested audiences struggling to derive its meaning, usually from context or etymology. This has created no shortage of confusion and flagrant misuse of the term. Or is that just me? Professors Collins and Bilge, of the University of Maryland and the Université de Montréal respectively, strive to overcome this neglect. They define intersectionality as a heuristic (another term scholars toss around indiscriminately) linking different influences that shape individuals and communities. This may include geography, religion, and learning. For our purposes, however, Collins and Bilge focus on the most readily quantifiable: the classic race/gender/class triad. As an introduction to a philosophical concept, this book rapidly telescopes between global discussion on (putatively) universal notions, and narrow, applied examples. In the first chapter, for instance, after laying out the terms of discussion, our authors address the multiple layers of social inequality exposed by the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. How do we discuss racism, for instance, in a country that doesn’t track race, where race officially no

longer exists? How do we discuss working-class issues in a country with widespread poverty, where Pope Francis's influences have recently muddled the Catholic Church's historical anti-communism? The overlap of issues creates a massive intersectional maze that makes discussion more complex, but more meaningful. (I think the authors miss a wonderful opportunity. As Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto writes, the notorious Brazilian favelas host a vast off-the-books parallel economy that in some ways mirrors, and in other ways remedies, the inequalities of the official economy. But authors, of course, have to make choices.) Our authors often use terms in a very self-reflective or "meta" manner that readers will absorb more through osmosis than reason. "Intersectionality as a form of critical praxis," they write, "refers to the ways in which people, either as individuals or as part of groups, produce, draw upon, or use intersectional frameworks in their daily lives." Notice how the definition contains the word it seeks to define? Your Freshman Comp professor would've graded you down for this, but it's common in scholarly writing. Therefore, once Collins and Bilge establish the terms, their reasoning may seem superficially circular. One doesn't so much receive their writing like information, as contemplate it like a Zen koan. As a heuristic, that is, as a semi-guided experimental approach to learning, intersectionality invites us to perceive a world outside our usual individual experience. It's not a research method, so much as an invitation to get lost in someone else's world. Who could resist? Like most scholarly writing, this book makes its most important points in the early chapters, then spends the remaining pages explaining, clarifying, and sharpening how those points apply. Less committed readers could dip casually into the first sixty or so pages, get the general thesis, and move on. Admittedly, after that range, the writing gets somewhat abstruse and pointy-headed. Though I consider myself a minor scholar, I found the latter chapters rather slow, difficult reading. However, that doesn't mean the later chapters aren't worth reading. As Collins and Bilge consider the applications of intersectionality to education or public protest, not exactly fun bedtime reading, I felt the discussion challenging my outlook on areas I assumed I understood pretty well. As a sometime educator, I've struggled with how race, sex, and economic standing have influenced my students' learning capabilities. The intersections of these forces, though, often remain invisible until someone calls our attention to them. Thus, these authors have a somewhat self-selecting audience. Readers who embrace difficult reading, hoping to see their worldview changed, will find plenty to love between these covers. Running barely 200 pages plus back matter, this book's fairly standard length for academic writing. Though readers should

expect to make slow progress, that progress remains consistently meaningful and transformative. This book is part of the "Key Concepts" series from Polity Books. Over the last few years, I've reviewed several Polity titles, in categories ranging from politics and current events, to history, to philosophy. Polity may be the best, most influential publisher you've never heard of. I have not agreed with every Polity title I've reviewed, and a few have pushed me into awkward positions as a critic. But they've always pushed me. Polity titles always leave me a better, quicker, more refined thinker.

gripping terms in the life of the intellect take hold over time, existentialism, deconstructionism, outlier. class hours, seminars, papers and conferences become devoted to meaning even while the term of the moment finds entry into everyday usage, seldom with accuracy, but always with purported understanding. *INTERSECTIONALITY* arrives at a moment the term intersectionality is moving from academia to ordinary language. the authors, patricia hill collins and sirma bilge, both noted scholars, practitioners and arbiters of intersectionality, have taken time from their busy schedules to provide some clarity for students, scholars, activists, and the interested reader who likes to keep up with what's going on by turning to the current literature available from booksellers and libraries. instead of offering up a rigid definition, the authors provide examples from engagement by various oppressed people around the globe for social justice how intersectionality is used. the authors structure description of intersectionality from use to what they label as a creative tension, and for them this creative tension links use, praxis, with critical inquiry. students of marx are familiar with praxis, though the authors' referent, quoted throughout their book, is paolo frieri. in his *PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED*, he defines praxis as "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed." frieri wrote that the oppressed could achieve critical awareness of their condition in their struggle; for collins and bilge, critical awareness as part of critical inquiry situated within the academic domain. praxis is confrontational and shares solidarity among groups struggling for social justice. the examples of social injustices, involving intersectionality, racism, sexism, poverty which the authors choose, brazil and sweat shops, are highly interesting and motivational in the remedial tactics and strategies employed, through planning or on the spot, such as spontaneous social protests. applying critique to events provokes thinking about and theory building. addressing the historicity of oppression of youth, poverty, sex, race, the authors locate different sites, hip-hop, identity, question situation within power with intersectionality used by those

in power and those who power is used against, address the arguments from a feminism which sees no reason for intersectionality and discuss the uses of intersectionality in global politics where, for example, how a country's laws against color or class prohibit access to national courts for persons and groups harmed can be circumvented by appeal to international law. the authors do credit kimberle crenshaw for the word's entry into the lexicon in a chapter which provides a history of a coalition building and how intersectionality is rooted in social movements and the participation of black women in social movements pre-1960s-70s manifesting in group activities, sit-ins, demonstrations, marches, etc, of the decade and shifting to later decades to inclusion within the academy bringing new programs, departments and syllabi. unfortunately, the author's informative and explanatory of intersectionality is a tangled arrangement of material with sections the common reader will find difficult understanding; the academic double speak requiring much unraveling. the tone of the thesis is that the democracy of intersectionality as far its use by people on the front lines, is inclusive praxis, and the relationship of a creative tension with critical analysis exists within the university. the message is: don't look down your noses, literacy is an exclusionary skill of many people, and while the literate is making sense, or no sense, of this book, the real dialogue is praxis among the people, and whether or not they know the academic meanings of praxis and intersectionality, intersectionality persists. intersectionality has its own literature, history, and practitioners and detractors. intersectionality isn't going away any time soon. INTERSECTIONALITY will find a way to several seminars and classrooms, and be shelved in individual libraries as a reference tool. readers interested in historical and contemporary overview of black feminist theory and intersectionality should read INTERSECTIONALITY: AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY by ange-marie hancock, also published in 2016.

This is an excellent book for upper level undergraduates or early graduate students, as well of those who are outside this area of study but want a primer/introduction to this concept that is central to much work in feminist, queer, and African American studies. I always think that these sorts of introduction books assume too much prior knowledge and this book is not an exception to that. It will be difficult for anyone who has doesn't already have some fluency with these topics. Nonetheless, it can still be helpful if this is your first exposure and helpful clarify things for those who need a refresher.

Just what I was looking for! Timely arrival!

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