



Libraries

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Empowering Students through a Feminist Framework: Intersectionality and Primary Source Literacy

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Session Outcomes

- Participants will gain and share strategies for exploring intersectionality in their instruction sessions.
- Participants will articulate the benefits of using such strategies to facilitate student learning.



Intersectionality: Key Elements

- ❑ Theoretical framework for illustrating how the overlap of multiple areas of identity (such as race, class, gender, and sexuality) shape individual experiences and reflect structural inequality (Launius and Hassel, 2015)
- ❑ Multidimensional approach for recognizing and raising awareness about inequality
- ❑ Analytical tool for understanding “the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences” (Collins and Blige, 2016)

Intersectionality and Historical Narratives

“Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman?”

(Sojourner Truth, 1851)



Intersectionality and Social Activism

“We are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking.”

(Combahee River Collective, 1977)



Naming Intersectionality

- ❑ Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced a name for the concept in 1991
- ❑ Focused on violence against women of color: not all women have access to the same resources or face the same challenges

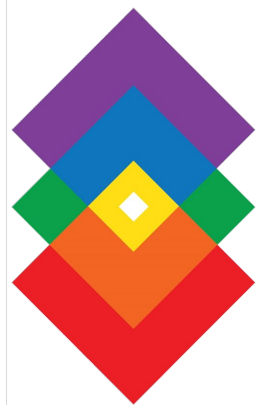


*Kimberlé Crenshaw on the Laura Flanders Show, 2017. CC BY-SA 3.0
Accessed 1 May 2019.*

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kimberl%C3%A9_Crenshaw_Laura_Flanders_2017.png#file

Questions for Colleagues

- ❑ How does intersectionality shape your own identity and experiences?
- ❑ In what areas do you see intersectionality applied more broadly in everyday life?



Primary Sources and Primary Source Literacy

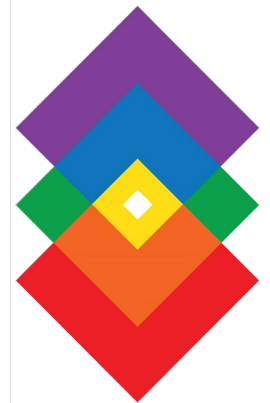
- “Primary sources are materials in a variety of formats that serve as original evidence documenting a time period, an event, a work, people, or ideas.”
- “Primary source literacy is the combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to effectively find, interpret, evaluate, and ethically use primary sources within specific disciplinary contexts, **in order to create new knowledge or to revise existing understandings.**”

Primary Source Literacy and Critical Inquiry

“The nature of primary sources requires researchers to **engage with them analytically**. Users activate primary sources through hypothesis, analysis, synthesis, interpretation, **critical thinking**, and evaluation; **they use sources to develop both questions and arguments**.”



Photo credit: Louis Villafranca, Michigan State University Libraries



Primary Source Literacy and Critical Inquiry

“As part of the analysis of available resources, identify, interrogate, and consider the **reasons for silences, gaps, contradictions, or evidence of power relationships** in the documentary record and how they impact the research process.”



Photo credit: Louis Villafranca, Michigan State University Libraries



Feminist Framework for Critical Inquiry

- Consciousness-raising about inequality
- Empowering students by building on their knowledge and experiences
- Cultivating a participatory environment



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Intersectionality and Primary Source Literacy

- ❑ Raising critical questions about an author's overlapping areas of identity
- ❑ Exploring how overlapping areas of identity can shape how information is conveyed
- ❑ Raising questions about whose voices are included/excluded from the historical record



Intersectionality and Women's History

- History of feminist activism: critical analysis of the *Declaration of Sentiments*
- Whose voices and experiences are represented?
- Whose voices and experiences are marginalized and/or excluded?



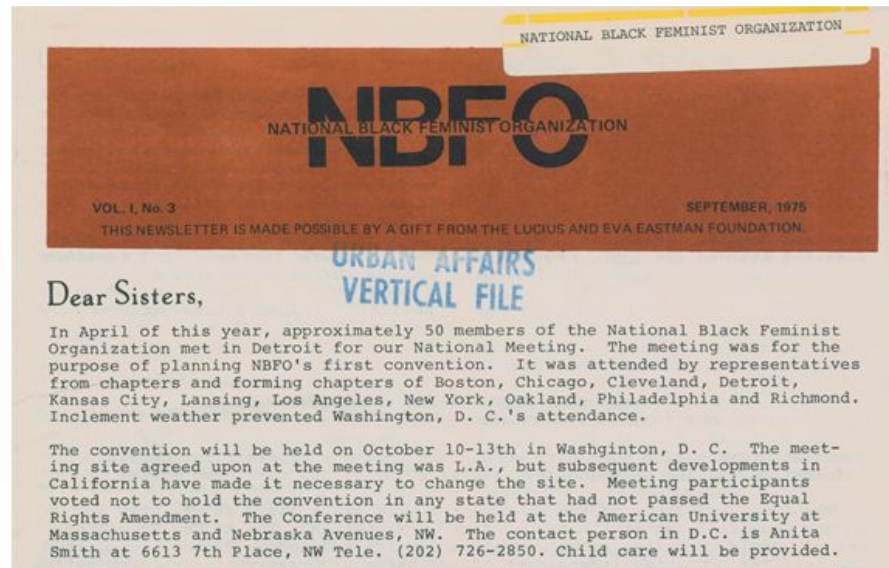
Questions for Colleagues

- What are benefits of exploring the concept of intersectionality during instruction?
- What strategies would you consider using (and/or have used) for exploring intersectionality during your instruction sessions?



Intersectionality and Women's History

- Using primary source documents from organizations of women of color to raise awareness about racism in dominant grassroots organizations
- Raising critical questions about racism in social movements



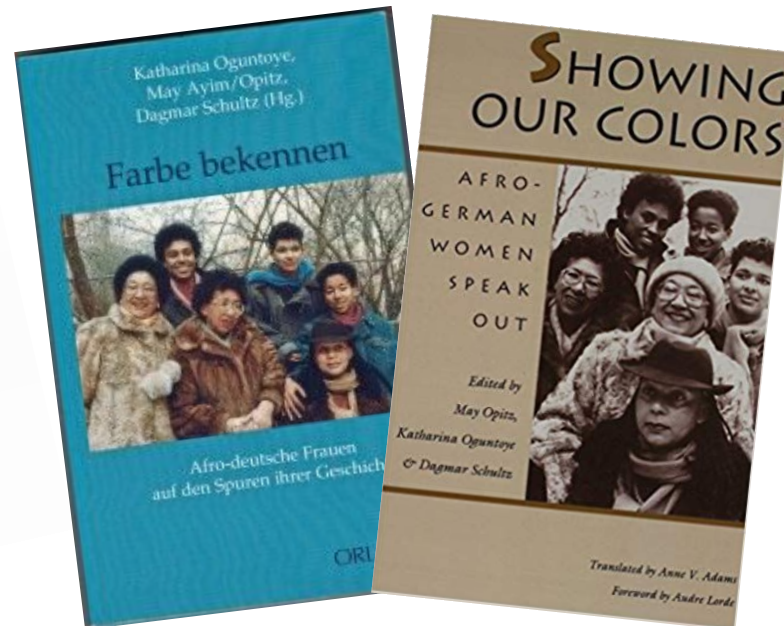
Intersectionality and Rhetorical Analysis

- Using zines to explore individual struggles with overlapping areas of identity
- Raising critical questions about intersections of race, religion, gender, and sexuality



Intersectionality and International Perspectives

- Using personal narratives to explore overlapping areas of identity and structural inequality
- Raising critical questions about racial identity and racism in Europe



Benefits and Lessons Learned

- ❑ Raising awareness about issues and concepts that shape the lives of our students beyond the university setting is valuable for life-long learning
- ❑ Covering other concepts (such as advanced search strategies) via an online tutorial can help with providing additional class time for discussion-based activities
- ❑ Clarifying the purpose and benefits of such activities is important for students

References and Further Reading

- ❑ ACRL RBMS-SAA Joint Task Force on the Development of Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy. (2017). *Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy* [PDF file]. Retrieved from https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/Guidelines%20for%20Primary%20Souce%20Literacy%20-%20FinalVersion%20-%20Summer2017_0.pdf.
- ❑ Collins, Patricia Hill, and Sirma Bilge. *Intersectionality*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2016.
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- ❑ Combahee River Collective. "Combahee River Collective Statement." *Combahee River Collective Statement: Black Feminist Organizing in the Seventies and Eighties*. New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1986.
- ❑ Launius, Christine, and Holly Hassel. "Intersectionality." *Threshold Concepts in Women's and Gender Studies: Ways of Seeing, Thinking, Knowing*. New York: Routledge, 2015. 112-152.
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Questions?



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Thank you for your interest and participation!