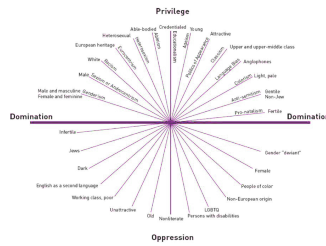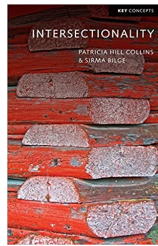# Collaborative Reflections - <u>Intersectionality</u> (<u>Patricia Hill Collins</u>)

EDUC 723 Multicultural Issues in Education, Fall 2021

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Preface   Getting fluent in each other's language of intersectionality, in each other's ways of putting things together, perspective and perception. Also need to speak several languages, because intersectionality is everywhere and it is polyglot: it speaks the language of activism; it speaks to young people through social media and popular culture and to established scholars through journals and conferences. This book is **an invitation for entering the complexities of intersectionality**. It is a "roadmap for discovery" and not a portrait of a finished product.

Ch. 1 - What is Intersectionality?

Definitions

- *Intersectionality* is a way of understanding, as well as analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences.

Main Arguments + Evidence

- It (intersectionality) can seldom be understood or shaped by a single, stand-alone factor. Instead, events in social/political life are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways.
- In regards to inequality, lives and organization's power are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division (race, gender, or class) but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality is exactly such a tool to help us better access the complexity of the world.

Quotes

1.1 Using intersectionality as an analytic tool (p.2)

American schools are facing the challenge of building more inclusive and fair campus communities. Now colleges include more students who formerly had no way to pay for college (class), or those who historically faced discriminatory barriers to enrollment (race, gender, ethnicity or citizenship status, religion), or distinctive barriers and discrimination (sexuality and ability).

African-American women were simultaneously black and female and workers. Their specific issues remained subordinated within each movement, because no social movement by itself would/could address the entirety of discriminations they faced. So, black women leverage intersectionality as a tool to respond to these challenges.

It (intersectionality) is not confined to North America and Europe. It is not a new phenomenon either. People in Global South have used it a lot without naming it --- an unexpected example from 19th-century colonial India (Savitribai Phule, 1831-1897, regarded as an important first-generation moder Indian feminist).

It (intersectionality) is typically used by many as a *heuristic* [enabling someone to discover or learn something for themselves], one that can assume many different forms.

Several/three examples of usage of intersectionality:

- **Example #1, FIFA World Cup**: As *the* biggest football powerhouse, hosting the FIFA World Cup would enable Brazil to "shed vestiges [trace of something that is disappearing]" its history of military dictatorship (1964-1985), being a <u>major economic player</u>, reaching a massive global market (<u>policy makers and financiers</u>). FIFA cost overruns [continue

beyond or above an expected or allowed time or cost] are against the increase in <u>public transportation fares</u> and political corruption.

Description of the Organization or Power--4 Distinctive-yet-Interconnected <u>Domains of Power</u>:

(1) Interpersonal (domain of power) --- Relations are about *people's lives*, as to who is advantaged or disadvantaged within social interactions. Athletes. "Football can be played almost anywhere by almost anyone."
(2) Disciplinary --- Different treatments regarding which rules apply to people. Within football's disciplinary domain, some people are told that they "lack talent" and are discouraged from playing, or "out of luck" because they are the wrong gender, whereas others may receive extra coaching. ... When the France national team won 1998 title, defeating Brazil 3-0, some fans saw it as non-representative because most of the players weren't white.
(3) Cultural --- Mass media has increased in significance for the cultural domain of power.
(4) Structural --- Fair play == echos of football. Structural == how FIFA itself is organized or structured (class, gender, race, nation).

- **Example #2, Social inequality--a new global crisis**: Economic inequality is "the root of social evil" (Pope Francis, the first pope from the Global South).

Intersectionality as an analytic tool to better understand the growth of global inequality --

(1) Economic inequality does not fall equally on everyone; (those) social divisions of race, gender, age, and citizenship status, among others, position people differently in the world. Differences in wealth reflect *structures intersecting power relations*.
(2) (the usage of) intersectionality *complicates class-only explanations* for global economic inequality;
(3) It highlights the **significance of social institutions**, in shaping and solving social problems.

Neoliberalism -- as a philosophy -- is grounded in the belief that markets are better able than governments to produce economic outcomes that are *fair, sensible, and good for all*.

(1) Neoliberalism fosters the increased privatization of government programs and institutions like public schools, prisons, health care, transportation, and the military.
(2) The logic of neoliberalism *argues for the scaling back*, and in some cases *elimination* of the social welfare state.
(3) Neolibera logic claims that *fewer economic regulations* and *more trade* that is free of government constraints protects jobs.

- **Example #3, Latinidades: the black women's movement in Brazil**: Not only was Latinidades a success, its very existence constituted one highly visible moment of an Afro-Brazilian women's movement that took several decades to build. …. Category of black women did not exist as an officially recognized population.

Intersectionality can be applied here in the following "dimensions":

(1) Black women challenged Brazil's **national identity narrative**, concerning racial democracy.
(2) It sheds light on how women of African descent or Afro-Brazilian women are **situated within gendered and sexualized** understandings of Brazilian history and national identity.
(3) Mutually constructing identity categories enabled Afro-Brazilian women to **develop a collective identity politics**.

1.2 Core ideas of intersectional frameworks

Social Inequality: (intersectionality) encourages us to move beyond seeing inequality through race-only or class-only lenses -- instead, to be based on interactions among various categories.

Power:

(1) (intersectionality) frameworks understand power relations through a lens of *mutual construction*. In other words, people's lives and identities are generally shaped by *many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways*. (race, class, gender, sexuality, age, disability, ethnicity, nation, religion).
(2) power relations are to be analyzed both <u>via their intersections</u> (racism and sexism) as well as <u>across domains of power</u> (structural, disciplinary, cultural, interpersonal).

Relationality: Relational thinking rejects "either/or" binary thinking, and instead embraces the "both/and" frame. The focus (of intersectionality) shifts from analyzing what distinguished entities (difference between race and gender) to **examining their interconnections**.

Social Context: "Contextualize" == impetus to think about social inequality, relationality, and power relations in a social context; contextualizing one's arguments, primarily by being aware that particular historical, intellectual, and political contexts shape what we think and do.

Complexity: It complicates things and can be a source of frustration for scholars, practitioners, and activists alike (intersectionality "itself is complex").

Social Justice: Competition is not inherently bad. Legitimacy of pursuing a social justice agenda is not self-evident. 'Social justice' might be the *most contentious* core idea, but which expands the circle of intersectionality to include people who use it as an analytic tool for social justice.

Goal (of this book) is to democratize [make accessible to everyone] the rich-and-growing literature of intersectionality: not to assume that only African-American students will be interested in black history.

Ch. 2 - Intersectionality as Critical Inquiry and Praxis

Definitions

- The term "intersectionality" seemed to be a *good fit for scholarship and teaching* that were already underway. It, as a form of **critical praxis**, refers to the *ways in which people (individuals or part of groups) draw upon or use its frameworks in their daily lives -- as citizens with jobs and families.

Main Arguments + Evidence

- Far too much intersectional scholarship starts w the *assumption that it is a finished framework* that can simply be applied to a given research project or political program.
- It itself is constantly under construction & these cases illustrate different ways of using it as an analytic tool.
- Critical thinking is certainly not confined to the academy, nor is political engagement found solely in social movements or community organizing.
- A *synergetic relationship* is a special kind of relationality, one where the interaction or cooperation of two or more entities produce a combined effect, which is greater than the sum of their separate parts.
- Criminal Justice (as a field) incorporates a practice component, holding complicated and contradictory relationships with many stakeholders. Education; Public Health.
- To be "critical" is important to the ways in which we understand intersectionality as a form of critical *inquiry*.
- Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA), a progressive community organization in Oakland and San Jose, CA; vibrant illustration of how women in the social movement use intersectional frameworks to grapple with **interlocking forms of oppression**.
- Excessive disciplinary actions, against young black girls, including the controversial 2014 case of a 12-year-old in Georgia who faced expulsion and criminal charges for writing the word "hi" on a locker-room wall.
- "*Can I make myself useful to one person, even for a day?*" (Yunus)

Quotes

2.0 (Introduction) Rejecting the "scholar-activist divide" suggests that intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and praxis can occur anywhere.

2.1 (Being/as a form of) Critical Inquiry Generally speaking, intersectionality invokes a broad sense of using intersectional frameworks to study a range of social phenomena. In particular, it **challenges the status quo** and aims to transform power relations.

Intersectionality with academia: actions and ideas of scholars/activists who were involved in bringing race/class/gender studies **into the academy**. E.g. Bonnie Thornton Dill's career -- synergy of critical inquiry and praxis (on women of color and their families).

2.2 Critical Praxis Such a praxis perspective does not just apply knowledge to a social problem or experience, but rather uses the knowledge **learned within everyday life to reflect** on those experiences as well as on scholarly knowledge.

2.3 Synergy of Inquiry & Praxis "Relationality" uses many such as: coalition, dialog, conversation, interaction ,and transaction -- central to this chapter, when referring to a synergistic relationship joining critical inquiry & praxis.

Broader conception of how heterogeneous forms of violence contribute to social inequality and social injustice.

- Violence as a Social Problem -- Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies, Columbia University (https://intersectionality.law.columbia.edu)
- Finding Intersectionality "in Unlikely Places" -- Yunus' (2016 Nobel Peace Prize) idea of **microcredit**, giving tiny loans to poor people as a way of helping them. Alternative banking system providing a critique of specific aspects of capitalism, a "serious crisis". Grameen Bank project, which resembles some of the classic dimensions of PAR and differs from others.

Ch. 3 - Getting the History of Intersectionality Straight

Quotes

It itself is an idea that contradicts how knowledge is predicted in academia / "embodied knowledge", that people had gone through them, etc. Specifically, it should also focus on the way social constructs take place; the strongest way is to focus on how it makes way to academia.

E.g. over the years, the authoritative narrative of US history focused on *propertied white men*, leaving out everyone else (people of color, women, LGBT people, poor, and undocumented).

Crenshaw (1991) -- power & relationality, "coining" of the term as a foundational moment for intersectionality. It was during 1990s when intersectionality **became institutionalized** within higher education, neither smooth nor straight, often conceived within some narratives as the seeming advent of intersectionality.

3.1 Intersectionality and Social Movement Activism (1960s and 1970s)

Important decades for the elaboration of the core ideas of intersectionality. In the *confines* of racially/ethnically segregated neighborhoods and communities in the late 1960s, women of color were in conversation/tension with the civil rights, Black Power, Chicano liberation, Red Power, and Asian-American movements.

3.2 What's in a Name? Intersectionality's Institutional Incorporation (1980s and 1990s)

80s-90s: (social movements) seemingly disappeared. In contrast, social institutions responded to criticisms of exclusion **by recruiting formerly excluded people**. One outcome was that political activists "move *inside*" those same institutions, recruited by the same businesses, schools, and government agencies...

Coining the term: "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color", *Stanford Law Review* (Crenshaw, 1991).

Ch. 4 - Intersectionality's *[Global Dispersion]*

Quotes

2000: important milestone for the global dispersal of intersectionality. => digital media, new info/communication technologies (ICTs) changed the terrain of intellectual production and political actions for individuals.

4.1 Intersectionality and Human Rights

Preparations for 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism (WCAR): important role in intersectionality's dispersal in human rights venues (Durban, South Africa).

By 2000, core elements of intersectionality were already present within the international human rights arena.

Feminist activism for women's rights + feminist preparations for the 2001 WCAR and activities ofthe conference itself, were important in **heightening interest in intersectionality** within UN circles.

4.2 Intersectionality's Dispersal in Scholarship

Its presence in academia is "everywhere": interest in intersectionality has grown exponentially and expanded in so many directions, many scholars and practitioners are **unaware of the breadth** of intersectional scholarship. Forms of intersectional scholarship:

- Books, dissertations that cover a broad range of themes;
- Anthologies and edited volumes, for undergraduate courses and the general public;
- Peer-reviewed, scholarly journal articles;
- Special editions of scholarly journals, across various academic disciplines.

The term "intersectionality" is certainly being **dispersed** [distribute or spread over]; how this "dispersal" influences the scholarship in the academy? -- one important issue concerns how scholars across academic disciplines and interdisciplinary fields use intersectionality as an analytic tool to re-think important social issues and institutions.

4.3 Digital Debates: Intersectionality and Digital Media

New *information and communication technologies* ("ICTs") => a game changer for both individuals and social movements. In particular, the development of Web 2.0 + spread of applications that **go beyond the display of static content** => foster interactive communities of users who can add, edit, and update content.

Cyberfeminism [the work of feminists interested in theorizing, critiquing, and exploiting the Internet, cyberspace, and new-media technologies in general - Sadie Plant, 1994, University of Warwick, UK]

Seduced & Abandoned: The Body in the Virtual World
The Feminine Cyberspace

Institute of Contemporary Arts, London

12 March 1994

ICA

(Plant, Seduced & Abandoned: The Body in the Virtual World - The Feminine Cyberspace, March, 1994 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doL9mRMEUGw)

- Digital controversy (one site) -- digital media, esp. social media platforms that create web-based communities have changed the face and the average age of feminism.
- Feminism is taking on new forms that have a **strong digital presence**.
- Until early 2000s, cyber-feminism was largely perceived as a set of practices launched by an "educated, white, upper-middle-class, English-speaking, culturally sophisticated readership" within digital media, referencing to the intersection of gender/race "exceedingly rare within both cyberfeminist practices and critiques of them".
- Because being viewed as a gender homogeneous category (implicitly) => cyberfeminist debates assumed that **techs had to mean the same thing to all women** across differences of race, class, and sexuality (Daniels, 2009).

Ch. 5 - Intersectionality and Identity

Definitions

The **extensive body of scholarship within intersectionality**, one that engages themes of individual identities as interesting and performative, has changed the meaning of identity from something one *has* to something one *does*.

- *Identity Politics* ==
  - a political approach, wherein people of a particular gender, religion, race, social background, class or other identifying factors, **develop political agendas** that are based upon these identities.
  - a **tendency** for people of a particular religion, race, social background, etc., to **form exclusive political alliances**, moving away from traditional broad-based party politics.

Main Arguments + Evidence

- (Increasingly,) many people understand intersectionality as a *theory of identity* (e.g. introduction to the special issue of 'Race, Class, and Gender' summarizes this perspective as 'Another attribute of this special issue is the extent to which it expresses intersectionality--a multifaceted perspective acknowledging the richness of the **multiple social-constructed identities** that combine to create each of us as a **unique individual**'). It (intersectionality) values the richness of multiple identities that make each individual unique.
- Identity Debates in the Academy -- Because intersectionality has long been associated with *identity politics*, and "shunned within" some academic circles by the same token => intersectionality, as a form of critical analysis/praxis, has much at stake in getting this question of identity right.

- Overuse of personal identity (as a category of analysis) is also a criticism.
- Essentialism (p. 124) conceptualizes individuals as having unchanged, fixed, or "essential" identities that they carry around with them, from one situation to the next. ⇔ in contrast, individuals can be seen as **having multiple "subjectivities"** that they *construct* from one situation to the next.
- On essentialism, critics claim that collective identity can also have a **negative effect on group politics**, when it **suppress differences within a group** (e.g. If hip hop elevates African-American men as the essential identity for this form of cultural politics, it limits its political horizons because it ignores women…).

Part 1:

Main Argument: The now commonsense idea that individual identity is shaped by multiple factors whose saliency changes from one social context to the next owes much to intersectionality's premise of intersecting identities.

Evidence: "Am I a Chicana, or am I a woman, or am I a lesbian first?" The answer of being *simultaneously* Chicana and a woman and a lesbian expands this space of subjectivity to encompass multiple aspects of individual identity.

Part 2:

Main Argument: the idea of hip-hop has similarities with coming up the theme of identity and intersectionality.

- Hip hop, as is everything else, is a contested site of politics, which has its own specific **form of identity politics**.

Key words: Hip-hop, identity debates, ...

Ch. 6 - Intersectionality, Social Protest, and Neoliberalism

(Directly from afterward notes:)

1. In September 2012, over 300 workers died in a fire in a garment factory in Karachi, Pakistan; in November 2012, another 112 workers died in a factory fire in Dhaka (Bangladesh); and, more recently, a fire at a Manila (Philippines) slipper factory killed at least 72 workers on May 13, 2015.

2. Starting in New Caledonia and going around the world, actions too place between 12 noon and 1pm in time zones around the world to underscore the ongoing struggles of **women factory workers**. Their testimonials, photographs, and videos were put online to constitute a digital archive of **transnational feminist solidarities for workers** -- in the hyper-globalized apparel industry.

(The New York Times, More Than 300 Killed in Pakistani Factory Fires, Sept. 12, 2012)

Ch. 7 - Intersectionality and Critical Education

Critical education has long been important for intersectionality. Across
- Classroom
- Religious communities
- Mass media venues
- Village schools
- Living rooms
- Street corners

=> education has the potential to **oppress** or **liberate**.

Intersectionality & Education == a critical convergence

Multicultural education, diversity, and urban public schools

Intersectionality + critical education (+ social justice): How might intersectionality, as a form of critical inquiry, contribute to critical education? Conversely, how might critical education contribute to intersectionality?

- First -- using intersectionality as an analytic tool may provide a more expansive lens for addressing the complexities of educational equity.
- Second -- intersectionality's emphasis on intersecting **power relations**, esp. as refracted through the domains of power argument of structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal domains, refocuses attention on the structural organization of schooling.

- Finally -- struggles within education => if intersectionality abandons its focus on **critical praxis**, it compromises its own ideals.

Critical ed. brings an important lesson to social justice --- diversity initiatives have often struggled to switch gears to respond to populations who have also experienced discrimination, e.g. undocumented immigrants, people living with idsabilities, transgender people, and returning students.

The distinctive, institutional trajectories that intersectionality and diversity initiatives take within colleges and universities result in a shrinking intellectual space to engage in questions, despite the shared concerns.

(Directly from afterward notes:)

1. As a research and advocacy organization, the Center <u>evaluates trends</u> in college access, criminal justice, immigration, K-12 education, and metropolitan and regional **educational inequalities**. The Center documents and analyzes not only problems, but also projects of success.

   Resembling the synergy between intersectionality's critical inquiry and praxis, the *Civil Rights Project* models this same orientation in its design and dissemination of materials (https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu).

The Civil Rights Project
Proyecto Derechos Civiles
Renewing the civil rights movement by bridging the worlds of ideas and action

2. "Multiculturalism" has a different history in other national contexts; for an over of these issues, see Kivisto 2010.

Kivisto, P. (2010). Multiculturalism and racial democracy: state policies and social practices. In P. H. Collins, & J. Solomos The SAGE handbook of race and ethnic studies (pp. 253-274). SAGE Publications Ltd, https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781446200902.n13 [PDF]

Ch. 8 - Intersectionality Revisited The concluding chapter gives a discussion on relationality, on its various forms in scholarship and constitution of major contribution of intersectionality, social context, and complexity, the last of which the major challenge is pointed out as the ways moving into the politics of the "not-yet", namely beyond its self-sustaining intellectual and political dynamism and heterogeneity.

Gibson, M. A. (1976). "*Approaches to Multicultural Education in the United States: Some Concepts and Assumptions*"
from Anthropological Perspectives on Multicultural Education

(Retrieved from https://education.ucsc.edu/news-events/greta-article.html)

Five approaches to multicultural education. four programmatic + fifth conceptualization (which stems from an anthropological perspective):

(1) Education of the **Culturally Different or Benevolent Multiculturalism** – Purpose of multicultural education is to equalize educational opportunities for culturally different students.
(2) Education about **Cultural Differences or Cultural Understanding** – Purpose is to understand the meaning of the culture concept, and to accept others' right to be different.
(3) Education for **Cultural Pluralism** -- Purpose is to preserve and to extend cultural pluralism in American society.
(4) **Bicultural Education** -- Purpose is to produce learners who have competencies in and can operate successfully in two different cultures.
(5) (multicultural education) **as *Normal Human Experience*** -- Anthropological view of education, as a culture process, -- they see education as part of the general human process of socialization whereby young people are prepared to fit successfully into the internal environment of the community of their upbringing.

Assignment-1 -- Independent Reflection: Alongside Gibson's article, "Approaches to Multiethnic Education in the United States", read the selected book and write a two-page independent book reflection – **personal reactions** to the text; **discussion of specific issues** the text raised for you. It is a space for you to connect historical and contemporary issues presented in the text with readings throughout the semester, and prepare for group's presentation.

Assignment 2 -- Group Presentation: Aim at a synthesis of understanding and interpretation of perspectives offered by these various historical narratives in relation to Gibson's discussion on multiethnic education. Interested in:
- How the book informs your views on multiculturalism and multicultural education within and outside classrooms.
- Critiques of the author's main points.
- Ways in which the narratives in the text speak to social contexts in which schooling takes place, and structural barriers that students and families must overcome in order to succeed.
- Highlight ways in which individuals succeed despite the barriers.

(*Notes from General Discussion, 11/9/2021:*)

A brief summary of the book includes:

- Understandings of the book's perspective in relation to your group's/team's interests—i.e. How this book informs your group's/team's perspectives on multiethnic education;
- Critique of the book and Gibson article in relation to multiculturalism and multicultural education, race, culture, and difference; and
- The ways in which issues of comfort and discomfort are experienced, implicated, and/or addressed.

Your presentation should reflect your group's understanding, interpretation, and possible critique of the authors' main points. It should also focus on the ways in which the narratives in the texts speak to the social contexts in which schooling takes place and the structural barriers that students and families must overcome in order to succeed. It should also highlight the ways in which individuals succeed despite the barriers and the implications for multiculturalism and multicultural practices within and outside of classrooms.

Guidelines from Syllabus for Group Presentation:

- A brief summary of the book;
- Understandings of the book's perspective in relation to your group's/team's interests—i.e. How this book informs your group's/team's perspectives on multiethnic education;
- Critique of the book and Gibson article in relation to multiculturalism and multicultural education, race, culture, and difference; and
- The ways in which issues of comfort and discomfort are experienced, implicated, and/or addressed.

**Each group member takes 1 slide to talk about how you want to *practice* ("trunk"/tree approach -- in the trunk you can put in one; you're not just "one thing" but have multiple different parts which impact us differently.) "Positionality". What attended to our lens.

- Each group member selects a topic of interest, why are we drawn into this?
- Being attentive to our positionality and our lens--why have we been drawn to a particular segment of the text?

Someone brought up a question that does "ability" (capability, as opposed to disability) count as part of connection to identity / multicultural education.

Presentation Breakdown

[Presentation link](#):

Opening Activity (**Piper**)

- E.g. the World Cup example -- break it down, making it more tangible
- How can we ground intersectionality?

(Brief) Summary **(Dachao)**

-
- History of intersectionality
- How intersectionality is becoming understood in academia (embodied knowledge vs. academic knowledge)
- How has the idea has preceded the terminology or *indoctrination* [process of teaching a person or group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically] in academia

Group Interests and Understandings of Multicultural Education **(ALL, x5)**

~ each group member will have one slide ~

- Positionality and influence of the text and resonance (attention to lens)
- Bring in references,quotes from a specific part of the text (preferably without too much overlap)
- Demonstrate your interpretation of a part of the text, how will that impact your practice/teaching?

Critiques (not necessarily 100% comprehensive?)

- Gibson, "Approaches to Multi-cultural Education" Critique (**Hannah**)
- Collins, "Intersectionality" Critiques (**Zoe**)
  - Ability (as compared to 'disability') and Identity (how might we expand on what the text currently offers)
    - Being critical and identifying flaws so that we can reimagine something better--how do we expand upon what is written?

Comfort & Discomfort **(Justina)**

- Comfort - embodied knowledge and / discomfort - responsibility and accountability

Connection to Gibson, "Approaches to Multi-cultural Education in the United States: Some Concepts and Assumptions" - (**Hannah**)

- Fifth conceptualization, pg. 15-16
- Multicultural Education as the Normal Human Experience