

**Contextualizing Gender**  
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**Lecture - 08**  
**Intersectionality**

Good morning and welcome dear friends to this module of the week. In the previous modules, we have looked at the media representations about which black feminism has taught, as well as black women's attempts towards resistance to the dominant concepts of feminism; whether it is in the way of developing their own perceptions of collectivity in terms of music or it has been their understanding and development of Womanism, a term which Alice Walker had developed.

So, all these movements and efforts gradually lead us towards what is known as intersectionality; a word which has been used for the first time by Crenshaw. Intersectionality is being widely taken up by scholars in order to understand diverse intellectual and political projects as well as it is being applied at the grass root level.


This is considered to be a heuristic approach as it provides us an immediacy towards the solution of problems and to make judgments in a quick and efficient manner. It also helps us to understand the complexities of variegated structures of the world.

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### Intersectionality

- Intersectionality is a framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by several discriminations and disadvantages.
- It considers people's imbrication of identities and experiences to understand the complexity of prejudices they face.
- In other words, the intersectional theory asserts that people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression - their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and other identity markers – which result in interdependent systems of impairment.
- Intersections can be varied and multiple.

Source: <https://www.bentley.edu/academics/research-centers/intersectionality-business-school-experience-research-study>



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As this particular diagram helps us to understand, intersectionality is a framework for conceptualizing either a person or a group of people or for that matter a social problem, which is affected by several discriminations or disadvantages. It also considers the overlapping of these identities and experiences to understand the complexities of prejudices, which such people have to face.

We can say that the intersectional theory asserts that people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of operation. For example, their differences in terms of race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion as well as other identity markers often result in independent systems of impairment. Taken together we can say that, these intersections often result in variegated means of operation. And therefore, this approach helps us to understand the peculiarities of difficulties and problems faced by these individuals or segments of society.

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- Intersectionality, as a qualitative analytic framework, it recognizes that identity markers (e.g. "woman" and "black") do not exist independently of each other and that each informs the others, often creating a complex convergence of oppression.
- The term was coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in a 1989 paper "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics".
- The theory had emerged earlier. In the 1960s and 1970s, African-American women activists confronted how their needs fell through the cracks of anti-racist social movements, feminism, and unions organizing for workers' rights.
- These social movements elevated one category of analysis and action above others:
  - Race within the civil rights movement, gender within feminism or class within the union movement.



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So, we can say that as a qualitative analytic framework, intersectionality recognizes that the identity markers do not exist independently of each other. For example, the identity markers of being a woman or a black or a minority or having a particular sexual orientation etc.

So, these identity markers inform each other and therefore, they result in a convergence of operation. For the first time this term was coined by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw in a

1989 paper “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex; A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics”.

Kimberle Crenshaw was a trained lawyer. And as a practitioner of law, she realized that often the same law is able to marginalize black women as it is understood differently in the context of different races. Still as we have discussed earlier in the previous modules, the approach had emerged earlier. During the 1960s and 70s, various African-American women activists as well as theorists realized that most of their needs fall through the cracks of anti racist social movements, feminisms as well as unions which are being organized for workers’ right.


And the reason was that all these social movements were upholding only a single category of analysis at the expense of others. For example, the anti racist social movements were against the racial discrimination only, not per se the combination of a woman and race.

Similarly, the feminist movement was only against a gender-based discrimination, but it overlooked the intersections of the race. So, you would find that the same strategy was being adopted by the union movements, which were against the exploitation of the labour. So, various feminist theorists had started to feel that the existing social protest movements are unable to represent their requirements adequately.

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- As African-American women were simultaneously black and female and workers, these single-focus lenses on social inequality left little space to address the complex social problems they faced.
- Their intersectional experiences of repressive marginalization encouraged them to frame a theoretical perspective that could reflect their lived experiences.
- The Combahee River Collective, a black feminist lesbian organization, released the Combahee River Collective Statement in 1978 to define and encourage black feminism. In the introduction it states that “The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face.”
  - They fought not only for representation in both the Civil Rights and feminist movements, but also for recognition as black women, rather than just black or just women.

\*<https://www.yaboston.org/2017/01/what-is-intersectionality-and-what-does-it-have-to-do-with-me/>



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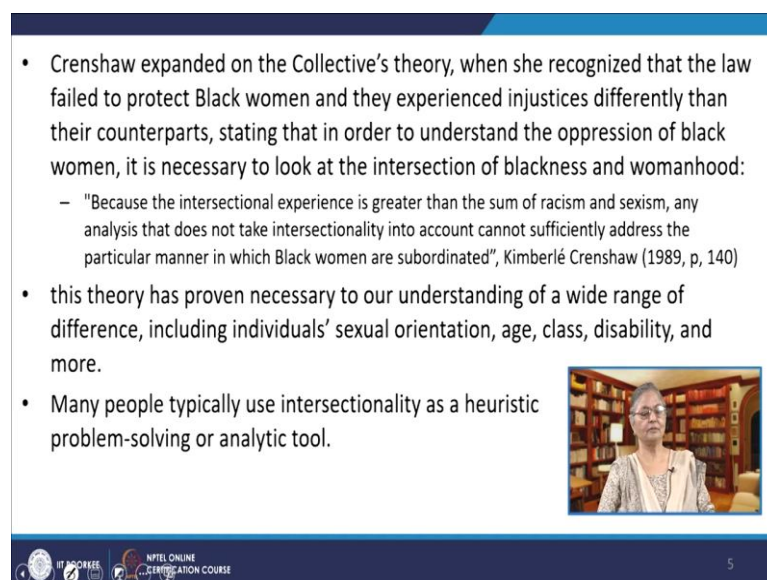
So, we can say that during the second wave of feminism, the participation of black women was rather less. So, they felt that the African-American women are doubly marginalized and a single focus lens or social inequality leaves hardly any space for them to address the complexity of social problems they have to face.

So, they were encouraged towards the development of a theoretical perspective that would be able to accommodate their experiences as they are going through. Even before this term was coined, there were theorists as we have discussed in the previous two modules and we would also discuss in the next two modules of this week.

At the same time, there were certain collectives and I would refer to here the Combahee River Collective, a black feminist lesbian organization, which had released this statement in 1978. It defined and encouraged black feminism and, in the introduction, it is stated that and I quote “the synthesis of these operations creates the conditions of our lives. As black women we see black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous operations that all women of color face” unquote.

So, these women were fighting for representation, whether it was the civil right movements or the feminist movement or the labour unions.

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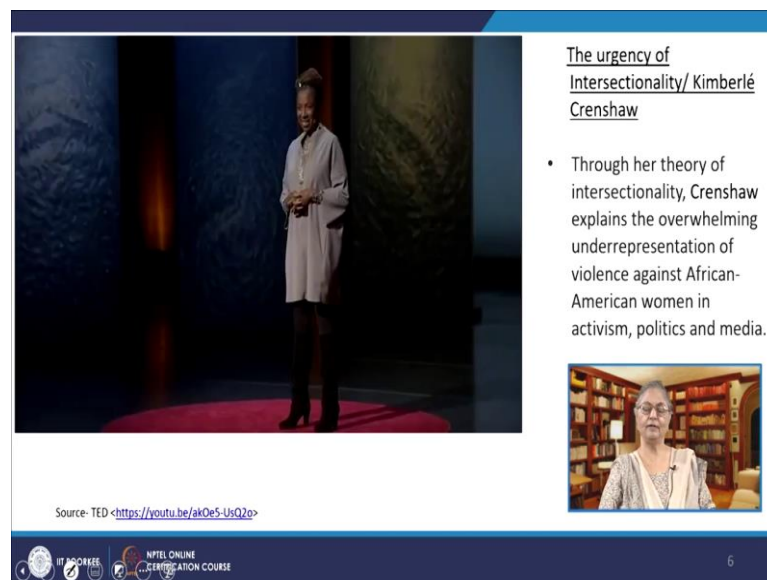
- Crenshaw expanded on the Collective’s theory, when she recognized that the law failed to protect Black women and they experienced injustices differently than their counterparts, stating that in order to understand the oppression of black women, it is necessary to look at the intersection of blackness and womanhood:
  - "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated", Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, p, 140)
- this theory has proven necessary to our understanding of a wide range of difference, including individuals’ sexual orientation, age, class, disability, and more.
- Many people typically use intersectionality as a heuristic problem-solving or analytic tool.

So, when Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, she expanded on what was felt by the previous thinkers as well as the theoretical statements of various organizations like

the Collective's theory and the statement which we have referred to just now. And she recognized that the legal system, the existing laws fail to protect black women and that the black women experience injustices differently from the white women.

And that in order to understand the typical nature of the operation and exploitation of black women, it is necessary to look at the intersecting statements of blackness as well as womanhood. So, this theory has become necessary now to understand a wide range of differences, including individual sexual orientation, age, disability, class etc. Now, we find that even in environmental studies this approach is being taken up. So, many people have started to use intersectionality as a heuristic problem solving or analytical tool.

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The urgency of Intersectionality/ Kimberlé Crenshaw

- Through her theory of intersectionality, Crenshaw explains the overwhelming underrepresentation of violence against African-American women in activism, politics and media.

Source- TED <<https://youtu.be/jakDe5-UuQ2o>>

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When Crenshaw coined this term, she wanted to explain the overwhelming under representation of violence against African-American women in activism, politics and media. In this interview, we have referred to certain pertinent sections of her interview. The complete interview is rather quite detailed and it is available at the link which is pasted below.

So, those of you who recognize the first group of names know that these were African-Americans who have been killed by the police over the last two and a half years. What you may not know is that the other list is also African-Americans, who have been killed within the last two years. Only one thing distinguishes the names that you know, from the names that you do not know, gender.

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The urgency of Intersectionality/ Kimberlé Crenshaw

Through her theory of intersectionality, Crenshaw explains the overwhelming underrepresentation of violence against African-American women in activism, politics and media.

Source- TED <<https://youtu.be/akDe5-UsQ2o>>

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So, let me first let you know that there is nothing at all distinct about this audience that explains the pattern of recognition that we have just seen. I have done this exercise dozens of times around the country; I have done it to women's rights organizations, I have done it with civil rights groups, I have done it with professors, I have done it with students, I have done it with psychologists, I have done it with sociologists, I have done it even with progressive members of congress. And everywhere the awareness of the level of police violence, the black women experience is exceedingly low.

Now, it is surprising is not it that this would be the case; I mean there are two issues involved here, there is police violence against African-Americans and there is violence against women, two issues that we have been talked about a lot lately. But when we think about who is implicated by these problems; when we think about who is victimized by these problems, the names of these black women never come to mind.

Now, communications experts tell us that, when facts do not fit with the available frames, people have a difficult time incorporating new facts into their way of thinking about a problem. These women's names have slipped through our consciousness; because there are no frames for us to see them, no frames for us to remember them, no frames for us to hold them. As a consequence, reporters do not lead with them; policymakers do not think about them and politicians are not encouraged or demanded that they speak to them.




Now, you might ask well why does a frame matter; I mean after all an issue that affects black people and an issue that affects women would not that necessarily include black people who are women and women, who are black people. Well, the simple answer is that, this is a trickle-down approach to social justice and many times it just does not work. Without frames that allow us to see how social problems impact, all the members of a targeted group, many will fall through the cracks of our movements left to suffer in virtual isolation.

But it does not have to be this way, many years ago I began to use the term intersectionality to deal with the fact that many of our social justice problems like racism and sexism are often overlapping, creating multiple levels of social injustice.

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### Gender, Race, Class and Sexuality

- During the 1980s, there was much controversy about the best way to theorize the relationship between the above dimensions.
- The main differences in feminist approaches tended to be understood broadly in terms of socialist, liberal and radical feminisms, with the question of racism forming a point of conflict across all three.
  - Also, social class remains a contested category with its meaning varying with different theoretical and political perspectives.
- Intersectional approach shifted the focus to encompass other dimensions.
  - Anne McClintock (1995) uses an intersectional analysis to argue that to understand colonialism and postcolonialism, one must first recognize that race, gender and class are not distinct and isolated realms of experience. Instead, they come into existence in and through contradictory and conflictual relations to each other. In keeping with Catherine Hall's (1992, 2002) argument, McClintock shows that the Victorians connected 'race', class, and gender in ways that promoted imperialism abroad and class distinction in Britain.  
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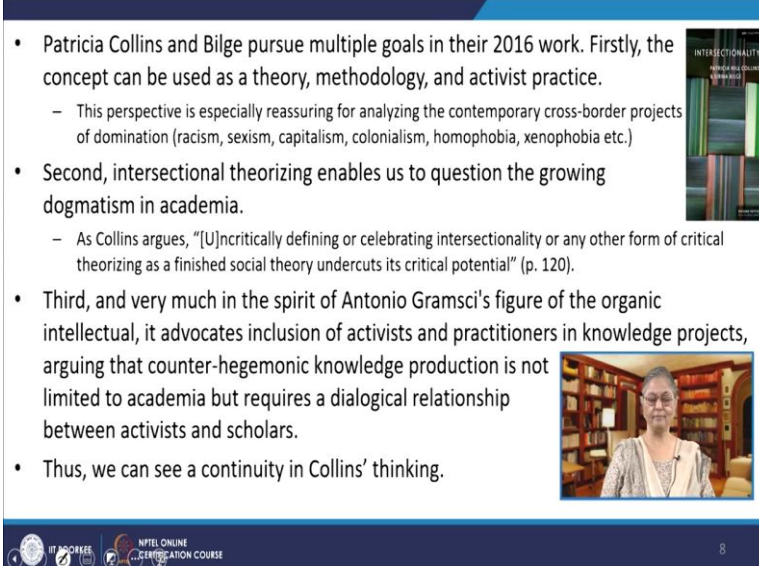
So, when the third wave feminists started to produce their work, they found that they were struggling to look at the best way to theorize the relationship between different dimensions of gender, race, class and sexuality. Now, the main differences in feminist approach are tended to be understood broadly in terms of socialist, liberal or radical feminists. And in all these three approaches, we find that the question of racism forms a point of conflict, also the understanding of the social class remains a contested category in all these different approaches of feminist theory.

So, intersectional approach shifted the focus to encompass several dimensions simultaneously under study. Here I would like to quote Anne McClintock, who has used

this intersectional analysis to suggest that in order to understand colonialism and postcolonialism; we must first recognize that race, gender and class are not distinct or isolated realms of experience. In a state, they come into existence in and through contradictory and conflictual relations to each other.

She has perpetuated the argument which was propounded by Catherine Hall and shows that the Victorians connected race, class and gender in ways that promoted imperialism abroad and class distinctions in Britain. This reference to McClintock suggests the struggle which the feminist thinkers were going through in order to theorize the best approach towards these dimensions in a simultaneous manner.

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- Patricia Collins and Bilge pursue multiple goals in their 2016 work. Firstly, the concept can be used as a theory, methodology, and activist practice.
  - This perspective is especially reassuring for analyzing the contemporary cross-border projects of domination (racism, sexism, capitalism, colonialism, homophobia, xenophobia etc.)
- Second, intersectional theorizing enables us to question the growing dogmatism in academia.
  - As Collins argues, “[U]ncritically defining or celebrating intersectionality or any other form of critical theorizing as a finished social theory undercuts its critical potential” (p. 120).
- Third, and very much in the spirit of Antonio Gramsci’s figure of the organic intellectual, it advocates inclusion of activists and practitioners in knowledge projects, arguing that counter-hegemonic knowledge production is not limited to academia but requires a dialogical relationship between activists and scholars.
- Thus, we can see a continuity in Collins’ thinking.

I would also refer to the work of Patricia Collins and Bilge, who in their 2016 work titled *Intersectionality* have tried to pursue multiple goals. Firstly, they suggest that this concept can be used as a theory or a methodology and also as an activist practice. For example, this perspective is reassuring for analyzing contemporary cross border projects related with different types of domination. It may be related with racism, sexism, capitalism, homophobia or xenophobia, etc.

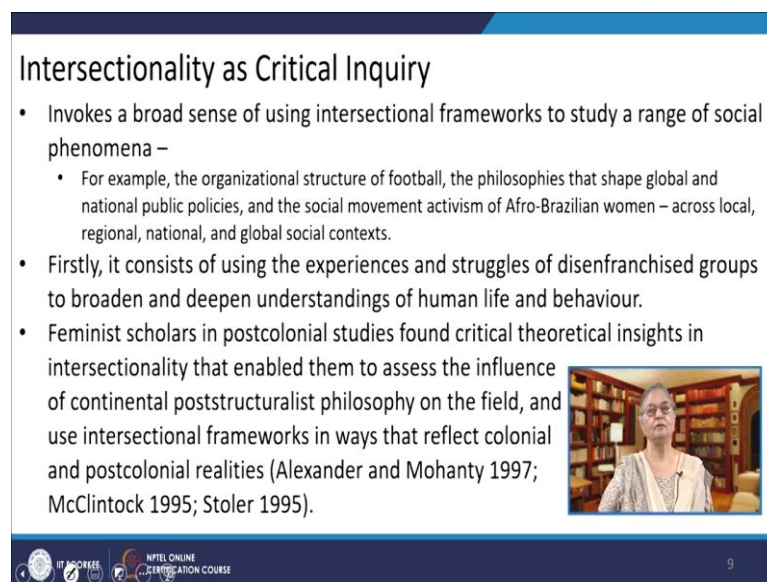
Secondly, they suggest that intersectional theorizing enables us to question the growing dogmatism in academia. And as Collins is argued and I quote “uncritically defining or celebrating intersectionality or any other form of critical theorizing as a finished social theory undercuts its critical potential”.



Thirdly, echoing the sentiments of Antonio Gramsci, when he refers to the organic intellectual; it advocates the inclusion of activists and practitioners in different knowledge projects. And they argue that counter hegemonic knowledge production is not limited to academia only, but it requires a dialogic relationship between activists and scholars.


So, we find that in this approach, which has been taken up by Collins and Bilge in this work; there is a particular continuity of applying this theory in practical ways too, instead of isolating theory and practice.


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**Intersectionality as Critical Inquiry**

- Invokes a broad sense of using intersectional frameworks to study a range of social phenomena –
  - For example, the organizational structure of football, the philosophies that shape global and national public policies, and the social movement activism of Afro-Brazilian women – across local, regional, national, and global social contexts.
- Firstly, it consists of using the experiences and struggles of disenfranchised groups to broaden and deepen understandings of human life and behaviour.
- Feminist scholars in postcolonial studies found critical theoretical insights in intersectionality that enabled them to assess the influence of continental poststructuralist philosophy on the field, and use intersectional frameworks in ways that reflect colonial and postcolonial realities (Alexander and Mohanty 1997; McClintock 1995; Stoler 1995).





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So, when we look at intersectionality as a critical inquiry, we find that invokes a broad sense of using intersectional frameworks to study a range of social phenomena. For example, it can be the organizational structure of a sports activity or a philosophical approach that wants to shape or reshape global or national public policies or different type of social movements.


So, across local, regional, national or global social context, we find that it becomes a framework to study them. It consists of using the experiences of disenfranchised groups to deepen our understanding of human life and behaviour to understand the nature of a peculiar operation.

Feminist scholars in post colonial studies found critical theoretical insights in the framework of intersectionality. And they felt that it has enabled them to assess the influence of continental post structuralist philosophy on the field and use intersectional frameworks in ways that reflect colonial as well as post colonial realities.

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More importantly, they did so by highlighting perceived privileges and imbalances of power and oppression among the experiences of blacks, women, Latinas, poor, and other groups who had been neglected within existing scholarship.

- Intersectionality is not simply a method for doing research, but is also a tool for empowering people.
- To varying degrees, scholars and practitioners in social work, criminology, public health, law, and education recognize that knowledge production in their respective fields cannot be separated from professional practices.
- Intersectionality has been taken up within fields that already see theory and practice as interconnected.
- Theologians, however, do not always find intersectionality to be compatible with Christianity, as it offers a different view of sin and salvation. <https://www.mwonline.com/news/2020/may/09/modern-ideas-of-intersectionality-ctfbl/>



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At the same time, they felt that it enabled them to perceive privileges as well as imbalances of power and oppression among the experiences of the marginalized sections of different societies. So, intersectionality is not simply a method for doing research in an academic environment, but it also becomes a tool for empowering people.


In different degrees, we find that scholars and practitioners in different areas related with social work or criminology or public health or law, education or environment recognize the knowledge production in their respective fields and think that this production of knowledge cannot be separated from professional practices.

So, intersectionality is trying to interconnect theory and practice in a closer fashion. However, I would also like to quote here certain scholars, who find that the concept of intersectionality is not compatible with the idea of Christianity, as it offers a different view in terms of sin and individual salvation. The reference which is cited here would be able to provide a more detailed analysis of this point.

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### Intersectionality as Critical Praxis

- Praxis understands thinking and doing, theory and action, as intimately linked and mutually informing each other.
- Intersectionality as critical praxis requires using the knowledge gained through practice to guide subsequent actions in everyday life.
- Problem-solving lies at the heart of intersectionality's praxis, and the kinds of social problems generated by intersecting systems of power lend themselves to knowledge developed via praxis.
- It rejects a binary conception that sees scholarship as providing theories and frameworks, and relegates practice to people who apply those ideas in real-life settings or to real-life problems.



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So, as we have seen, intersectionality as a critical praxis as well as a critical theory rejects the binary conception that sees that scholarship is to provide theoretical strands only and practice is more related with the translation of these theories into real life settings. So, we find that as critical praxis, it requires using the knowledge which has been gained through practice to guide subsequent actions in our everyday situations.

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### Intersectionality and Social Movement Activism

- The 1960s and the 1970s constitute essential decades for the elaboration of core ideas of intersectionality.
- In the late 1960s, women of colour engaged with the ideas and practices of the civil rights, Black Power, Chicano liberation, Red Power, and Asian American movements from within racially and ethnically segregated neighbourhoods.
  - Within these movements, women of colour were typically subordinated to men, despite their titular equality, which constituted problems differently.
- During this period, Black feminists of the US created their own political organizations, using the epithet "black feminist"; and Mexican American feminists articulated a political subjectivity as Chicana and formed an autonomous Chicana feminist movement (Arredondo et al. 2003; Garcia 1997a, 1997b).



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If we look at the core ideas of intersectionality, we also understand that it was during the academic debates and movements, during the 1960s and 70s that most of the elaboration

of them was done. During this time, we find that women of colour engaged themselves with the ideas and practices of not only civil rights and black power, but also Chicano liberation, Red power and Asian-American movements from within racially and ethnically segregated neighbourhoods.

So, within these movements, we find that to begin with women was typically subordinated to men despite having a titular equality and therefore, different problems started to emerge. During this time the concept or rather the epithet of black feminism started to become popular. Mexican American feminists also articulated a political subjectivity as Chicana and formed an autonomous Chicana feminist movement.

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- They realized the importance of testing ideas within political contexts.
- Conversely, they used what they learned in social movements to frame analyses of social inequality.
  - For example, although separated from Afro-Brazilian women by geography, linguistic difference, and different national histories, African American women understood that addressing the oppression they faced could not be solved by race-only, or class-only, or gender-only or sexuality-only frameworks (Collins 2000).
- Kimberlé Crenshaw's ground-breaking article, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color" (1991), argues that intersectional inquiry and praxis are both needed to address the social problem of violence against women of colour.
  - Crenshaw's article tapped into a more profound sensibility about the need for new explanations about the shape and effects of violence against women of colour that reached out to scholars and practitioners alike.
  - Based on her experiences as a lawyer and a civil rights activist.



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They realized the importance of testing ideas within political context and conversely they used what they had learnt in social movements to frame analysis of social inequality. For example, although separated from Afro Brazilian women by geography, linguistic differences, and different nationalistic histories, African-American women understood their difficulties that in order to challenge the operation they have to face cannot be solved only by race only, gender only or class only perspective for example.

So, Kimberle Crenshaw's article "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color" argues that intersectional inquiry as well as praxis are both needed to address the social problem of violence against women of colour. Being a practitioner of law, she was particularly conscious of the existence of

violence in different way as far as women of color are concerned. So, Crenshaw's experiences as a lawyer and civil right activists made her profoundly sensitive about the shape and effects of violence against women of color, which was very different from what was faced by white women.

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- A close reading of the article serves to bridge understandings of intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and praxis honed within social movement settings; and intersectionality as a legitimate field of academic inquiry.
- Crenshaw focuses on the experiences of women of colour, a devalued group from the perspective of academia, as well as within broader US society.
- Argues that the experiences of women of colour are essential in, and of themselves but become especially significant in understanding and remedying critical social issues.
- Also recognizes that the term "women of color" rests on solidarity that has to be constructed and not assumed.
- Distinctive angles of vision and challenges accompany differential social locations, a theme developed via Crenshaw's attention to the different experiences that women of colour have with domestic violence.



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A close reading of this article helps us to understand intersectionality as a legitimate field of academic inquiry as well as a form of praxis, which has been honed within social movement settings. So, Crenshaw has focused on the experiences of women of colour, a group which is devalued from the perspective of academia as well as within broader dominant US society. She argues that the experiences of women of color are essential in as well as of themselves; but become especially significant in understanding their social issues as well as remedying them.

She also recognizes that the term women of color risks on an understanding of solidarity that has to be constructed and not assumed. So, this idea of Crenshaw that solidarity has to be constructed and not assumed has also been investigated into by several black feminist scholars before and after her.

So, distinctive angles of visions and challenges accompany differential social locations. So, this is a theme which has been developed via her attention to different experiences of women as far as domestic violence is concerned.

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- All discourses come from a particular standpoint, yet those of women of colour are often obscured.
- Crenshaw places herself within her narrative, where she self-identifies as a "black feminist." Via this move, she signals a particular epistemological stance for scholars, especially scholars of colour, who engage in black feminism, race/class/gender studies, and/or intersectional knowledge projects.
- Experience and embodied knowledge are valorised, as is the theme of responsibility and accountability accompanying such knowledge.
- Her innovation lies in building her argument from the ground up from the experiences of women of colour and then showing how multiple systems of power are inseparable in the ways they impact their lives.
- She argues that women of colour's needs cannot be met by looking at any single category of analysis.



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Crenshaw perceives those discourses in the context of violence against women come from a particular standpoint. However, the standpoint or the perspective of women of colour about this issue is often obscured. She places herself within her narrative, where she self identifies as a black feminist. And thus, she is able to signal a particularly epistemological stance for scholars who are engaged with such issues. This is also able to valorise experience and embodied knowledge, as it is able to valorise the theme of responsibility and accountability accompanying such knowledge.

So, her innovation lies in building her argument from the ground up from the experiences of women of colour and then showing how multiple systems of power are inseparable in the ways they impact their lives. So, she argues that women of colours needs cannot be met by looking at any single category of analysis.



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- Mutually constructing systems of power produce distinctive social locations for individuals and groups among them.
- The article identifies related issues and separates them in three categories\*:
  - (1) Structural Intersectionality: ways in which the location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender, makes their actual experiences of domestic violence, rape and remedial reform qualitatively different from that of white women.
  - (2) Political Intersectionality: how both feminist and antiracist politics have paradoxically often helped to marginalize the issue of violence for women of color.
  - (3) Representational Intersectionality: how the cultural construction of women of color, can elide the particular location of women of color and be a source of intersectional disempowerment.

\*<[https://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039?seq=5#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039?seq=5#metadata_info_tab_contents)>



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In this article, Crenshaw identifies related issues and separates them into three categories of mutually constructing systems of power. So, they are structural intersectionality, political intersectionality, and representational intersectionality. Structural intersectionality talks about the ways in which the location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender marks their actual experiences of different types of violence, domestic violence, rape and also the remedial action the reformative action which can be taken in this context qualitatively different from that of white women.

Political intersectionality is related with how the feminist as well as the anti racist politics have often helped to marginalize the issue of violence for women of color. It sounds ironical to begin with, but Kimberle Crenshaw has been able to support this argument with a detailed analysis.

Representational intersectionality is about the cultural construction of women of color, which can elide the particular location of women of color and can also be a source of intersectional disempowerment. Later on, we would find that representational intersectionality impacts not only the women of color, but also the men of colour.


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(1) Structural Intersectionality: quotes examples of immigrant women vulnerable to spousal violence for fear of deportation. Language and cultural barriers add to their difficulties.

- Women of color are differently situated in economic, social and political worlds. Their multiple subordination is coupled with institutional expectations which are based on inappropriate non-intersectional contexts, shapes, limiting opportunities for meaningful intervention on their behalf.
- For example, such women need more money for shelter and housing, yet this is not adequately covered for them, often resulting in burnout cases among counsellors.

(2) Political Intersectionality: Illustrating various incidents and inadequacy of legal support for women of color, Crenshaw documents gender biases often compounding in the marginalization of rape in their cases (Madonna/whore syndrome vs. racial identity).

(3) Representational Intersectionality: Their devaluation is implicit in the ways they are represented in cultural imagery. Representations occur within specific social contexts and often reinforce patterns of social power.



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To further detail her understanding of structural intersectionality, Kimberle Crenshaw quotes examples of immigrant women who are vulnerable to spousal violence for fear of being deported. At the same time their lack of understanding of the language of the land as well as cultural barriers and pressures of their own societies within a different land add to their difficulties.

She suggests that women of color are differently situated in social, economic and political worlds. So, their subordination is coupled with the institutional expectations, which are based on non intersectional contexts and therefore, are inappropriate for them. It also limits opportunities for meaningful intervention on their behalf.


She gives a particular example of how women of color need more money for shelter and housing in comparison to white women. However, this is not adequately covered for them, yet we find that this particular necessity is not addressed properly. It also creates certain difficulties for their counsellors often resulting in burn out cases among them.

As far as the political intersectionality is concerned, she is able to illustrate various incidents to illustrate the inadequacy of legal support for women of color. She documents gender biases often compounding in the marginalization of rape in their cases. For example, if a black woman is raped, we find that the level of seriousness is different and similarly if the perpetrator of crime happens to be a black man, we find that the social stigma is more.

Similarly in representational intersectionality, we find that the devaluation of women of color is implicit in different ways of cultural imagery.

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- Crenshaw remarks that women face routine violence and it shapes their life.
- Their shared experiences convince them that political demands of millions speak more powerfully than the pleas of a few isolated voice.
- This politicization in turn transformed the way we understand violence against them.
- For eg., battering and rape once seen as private family matters and aberrational, are now largely recognized as part of a broad-scale system of domination that affects women as a class.
- This process of recognizing as social and systematic what was formerly perceived as isolated and individual has also characterized the identity politics of people of color – for whom “identity-based politics has been a source of strength, community and intellectual development”.



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Crenshaw suggests the idea that women not only women of color, but women in general face routine violence and these experiences shape their life. They have also learned that the political demands of millions are normally addressed more powerfully than the pleas of few isolated voices.

So, this politicization also transforms the ways in which society has started to understand violence against women. For example, there was a time when domestic violence, marital rape, battering etc. were seen as private family matters and they were considered as aberrational not as norms and still we find that over a passage of time they have come to be understood as a part of a broad scale system of domination that affects women as a class and not an isolated woman for example.

This process of recognizing as social and systematic what was earlier perceived is isolated and individual has characterized the identity politics of people of color. And for people of color identity-based politics has always been a source of strength, community understanding and development, and intellectual upgradations.

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- Intersectionality would be useful as a way of mediating the tensions between assertions of multiple identities.
- Categories such as gender and race have their significance, esp. for clustering of power and understanding subordination
- However, they fail us in developing any meaningful identity.
  - Not because they are socially constructed categories, but because the descriptive content of these categories and the narratives on which they are based have privileged some experiences and excluded others.
  - Narratives of race based on Black Man, and of gender on white middle-class women.
- Solution lies in asserting those crucial aspects of location and/or multiple dimensions of identity that have been erased.
- Understanding intersectionality will better acknowledge differences and negotiate the means to express them constructively.



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So, intersectionality would be useful as a way of mediating the tensions between assertions of multiple identities. So, there are categories such as gender and race which have their significance in isolation; but for clustering of power and understanding subordination, we have to ground our arguments on an intersectional approach.

If we take these categories in isolation, we fail in developing any meaningful identity or solution. Not because these categories are socially constructed, but because the descriptive content of these categories and narratives on which they are based have privileged some experiences and excluded others.

So, this tendency of including some arguments and excluding others, creates a social imbalance. For example, narratives of race are based on black men and narratives of gender are based on white middle class women. So, the solution lies in asserting those crucial aspects of location and/or multiple dimensions of identity that have been erased. Understanding intersectionality will better acknowledge differences and negotiate the means to express them in a constructive manner.

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- Crenshaw thus spoke to two primary audiences within academia. First, her work spoke to activists and scholars whose social movement sensibilities embraced the *social justice ethos* of intersectionality, for example, race/class/gender scholars and those in the emerging field of critical race studies.
- Second, the poststructuralist narrative dimension of her analysis was also well received by scholars who saw the *value of narrative traditions* and truth-telling. Crenshaw's piece thus aimed to challenge academic norms.
- The ideas of intersectionality have been taken up within several important global projects as an analytical and also as a political tool.
- Intersectionality is increasingly deployed within a broad-based, heterogeneous constellation of global environmental justice projects, as well as in the growing body of research on climate change and environmental issues.



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Crenshaw in a work speaks to two primary audiences within academia. Firstly, she looks at people who work in the area of social justice and secondly, she looks at those people who try to look at the value of narrative traditions. Her work speaks to activist and scholars, whose social movement sensibilities have embraced the social justice ethos of intersectionality.

For example, race, class, gender, scholars and those in the emerging fields of critical race studies. Secondly, the post structuralist narrative dimension of our analysis was also well received by scholars who saw the value of narrative traditions and truth telling. So, Crenshaw aims to challenge academic norms. Similarly, we find that the idea of intersectionality has become important in different global projects, not only as an analytical tool, but also as a political tool.

It is being increasingly deployed within a broad-based heterogeneous constellation of global environmental justice projects as well as in the growing body of research on climate change and other environmental issues.

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### Intersectionality and Human Rights

- The preparations for the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa, played an essential role in intersectionality's engagement with human rights venues.
- The full title of the conference, The United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, was itself historic. The term "related intolerance" linked racism to its intersections with poverty, gender discrimination, immigration, and homophobia.
- In May 2000, the first UN Preparatory Committee, in Geneva, included representatives from Brazil, India, Portugal, the UK, Israel, Guatemala, the Philippines, Mali, and Uganda. They brought multi-issue frameworks, reflecting the complexity of their lived experiences and political struggles.
- Following this meeting, references to intersectionality in the international arena became increasingly common (Yuval-Davis 2006).



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The conceptualization and preparations for the 2001 UN World Conference against racism which took place in Durban, South Africa, played an essential role in intersectionality's engagement with human right issues. The title of the conference in itself was historic. The term related intolerance linked racism to its intersections with for example, poverty, gender discrimination, immigration and homophobia, etc.

In may 2000, the first UN preparatory committee in Geneva included representatives from different countries like Brazil, India, Portugal, UK, Israel, Guatemala, Mali, Philippines and Uganda. These countries brought multi-issue frameworks and they reflected on the complexities of their lived experiences and political struggles. Following this meeting references to intersectionality in the international arena have become increasingly common.



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- Intersectionality has also fostered a complex understanding of individual identities.
- The extensive body of scholarship within intersectionality that engages themes of individual identities as intersecting and performative has changed the meaning of identity from something *one has* to something *one does*.
  - Rather than a fixed essence that a person carries from one situation to the next, individual identities are now seen as differentially performed from one social context to the next.
- And those social contexts are shaped by intersecting power relations.
- The work of Stuart Hall encapsulates this tension between the performative nature of identity as well as the significance of social structures.
- Identity is not a set of fixed attributes, the unchanging essence of the inner self, but a constantly shifting process of positioning.
- Intersectionality has made essential contributions to reconceptualizing individual identity and subjectivity. For many, it has been a space of individual empowerment.



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Intersectionality has facilitated a complex understanding of individual identities and has given us a word to understand its necessity. The extensive body of scholarship in this area engages themes of individual identities as intersecting as well as performative and this approach has changed the meaning of identity from something which one has to something one does.

For example, instead of being a fixed essence that a person is able to carry from one situation to the other, individual identities are now seen as differentially performed from one social context to the other. And these social contexts in turn are shaped by intersecting power relations.

Stuart Hall has been able to encapsulate this tension between the performative nature of identity as well as the significance of social structures. Identity is not a set of fixed attributes as he had alerted us earlier the unchanging essence of the inner self, but a constantly shifting process of positioning.

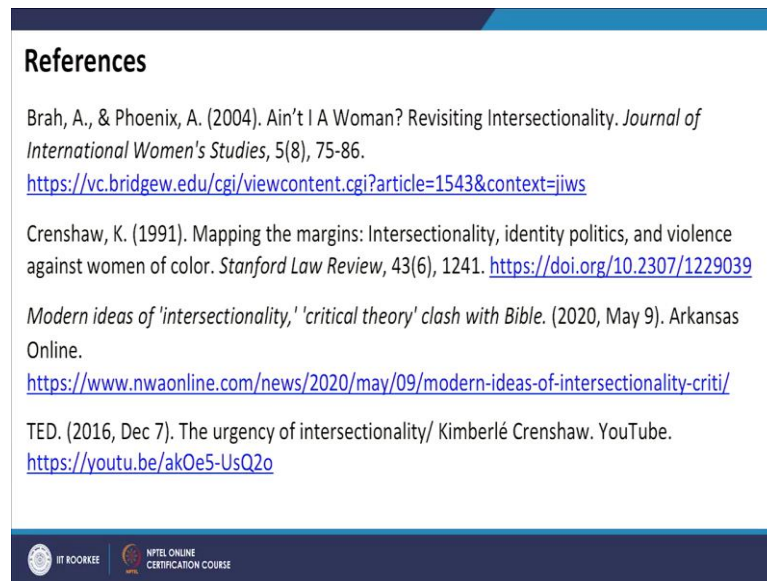
Crenshaw's contributions in the development of this approach as well as in naming this particular approach has made essential contributions to reconceptualizing individual identity and subjectivity. For many, it has become a space of individual empowerment.

To conclude we can say that, intersectional prisms excavate and expose multi layered structures of power and domination by adopting a praxis approach.

It is also able to engage those conditions that shape and influence the interpretive lenses through which knowledge is produced and disseminated. One must take into account the links which exist between various x's that intersectionality highlights to fully grasp, how power and knowledge is dispersed. We would continue our discussion of intersectionality in the works of bell hooks in the next module.

Thank you.

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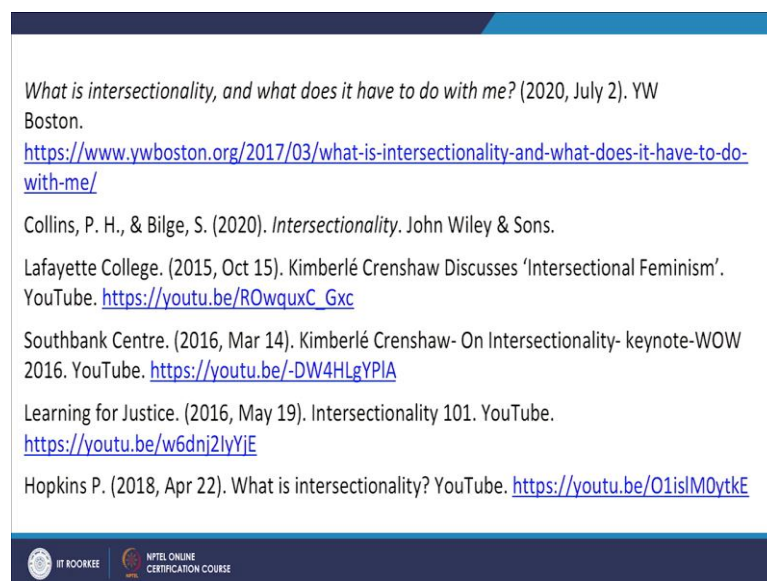
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