

Intersectional Oral Histories: Method and Praxis in Environmental Justice Research

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Research Aims



Link frameworks of intersectionality and hegemonic femininity to women's community-based EJ practice to examine:

1. How are hegemonic femininity and masculinity operating at the local level?
2. How do these cultural expectations shape women's strategies?
3. How does compliance/contestation of these norms impact the distribution of resources to EJ actors and their communities?

Intersectional Identities and EJ Research

- Qs:
 - How do intersectional identities inform community-level EJ claims?
 - How does the congruence/contestation of local hegemonic norms impact resource access at the organizational level?
- Gaps addressed:
 - Heterogeneity of communities, how *environment/justice* is operationalized, and potential for empowerment.
 - Examining ‘if’ and ‘how’ the feminization of EJ impacts organizations.
 - Frameworks that can examine the sociality of modern EJ issues.

Oral History as Method and Praxis

- Increased length of time with respondent; opportunity to expand breadth and depth of content
- A tool for eliciting everyday experiences 
socially constructed experience  meaning-
making and reflection
- Congruence with feminist epistemologies, and feminist research practice
- Intersectionality: Multiple Identities: Multiple Vocabularies
 - Self-definition and self-validation
 - Addressing the mutedness of women

Case Study

Denver, Colorado

- 8 Latina women: *promotoras*
- Primary focus: new immigrant and monolingual Spanish communities
- Issue areas: Food security, nutrition, resource access, healthy communities.
- N = 7



PC: MLL



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Case Study

Albuquerque, New Mexico

- 6 women: 5 white, 1 African American
- Primary focus: Central ABQ, and rural East Mountains.
- Issue Areas: food redistribution, rural access, guerilla gardening, community gardening for low SES, taste education.
- N = 3

Findings

1. Communitarian vs. Recognition justice and empowerment claims.
2. Emergent meanings: place as exclusionary
3. Embracing hegemonic femininity in New Mexico.
 - a. “If we were men, would people have taken us more seriously, sooner?” (Elizabeth)
4. Failing to meet the mark: insider/outsider dynamics in Colorado.
 - a. “There was no winning the battle, no matter how we set it up.” (Mona)

Contributions to EJ Research Practice

- Operationalizing intersectionality
 - “If you cannot handle my truth, then you don’t belong with me” (Lisa)
- Weaving praxis throughout
 - Dealing with the unexpected
 - Creating space for potential empowerment
 - Citizen Science engagement

Conclusion

- Intersectionalist approaches are needed in EJ and sustainability research to understand the diversity of experience *and* to establish locally relevant praxis.
- The feminization of EJ actors and platforms has significant repercussions in communities examining (and disrupting) hegemonic norms is of theoretical and practical consequence.

Citations

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