

# Intersectionality and Age

Microtalk at the 2019 CCCC Meeting of the  
Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition

Heather Brook Adams, Assistant Professor, English  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
hbadams@uncg.edu @HeatherBAN

*We are able to be in this space doing feminist work in part because of our own relationships—direct and indirect—to systems of power and oppression including settler colonialism, enslavement, and transhistorical practices of exploitation and erasure. In acknowledging our gathering on land that for most of us is not our own, let us conjure not only past violences but also put in the work of situating ourselves in relation to injustices and identifying our subsequent responsibilities.*

*My remarks are offered in the spirit of collaboration; it is my hope that they open a space for listening and discussion that will extend beyond my contributions this evening.*

**Goal: Let's strive for what Leena Alanen refers to as a more "entangle[d]" approach to exploring experiences of privilege, subordination, and inequality (158).**

*"Intersectionality itself is constantly under construction" (Collins and Bilge 31).*

Alanen, Leena. "'Intersectionality' and Other Challenges to Theorizing Childhood." *Childhood*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2016, pp. 157-61.

Collins, Patricia Hill and Sirma Bilge. *Intersectionality*. Polity, 2016.

Russo, Ann. "Epilogue: The Future of Intersectionality: What's at Stake." *The Intersectional Approach: Transforming the Academy through Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by Michele Tracy Berger and Kathleen Guidroz, U of North Carolina P, 2009, pp. 309-18.

**Invitation 1: Let's imagine our intersectional work more fully accounting for youth and childhood perspectives.**

*"Even as our field has embraced theories of agency that include objects, environments, and nonhuman animals, we still have difficulty perceiving children as rhetorical agents" (Applegarth 52).*

Applegarth, Risa. "Children Speaking: Agency and Public Memory in the Children's Peace Statue Project." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2017, pp. 49-73.

Clark, Natalie. "Red Intersectionality and Violence-Informed Witnessing Praxis with Indigenous Girls." *Girlhood Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2016, pp. 46-64.

Pough, Gwendolyn D. *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*. Northeastern UP, 2014.

Reddington, Sarah and Deborah Price. "Pedagogy of New Materialism: Advancing the Educational Inclusion Agenda for Children and Youth with Disabilities." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2018, n.p.

Wood, Henrietta Rix. *Praising Girls: The Rhetoric of Young Women, 1895-1930*. Southern Illinois UP, 2016.

## **Invitation 2: Let's imagine our intersectional work accounting for more than youth, and let's do so with critical awareness.**

*The CIA should hire as spies  
only women over fifty, because  
we are the truly invisible.*

Marge Piercy  
"I met a woman who wasn't there"

Glenn, Cheryl. *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope*. Southern Illinois UP, 2018.  
Marshall, Leni. "Aging: A Feminist Issue." *NWSA Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2006, pp. vii-xiii.  
Ontario Human Rights Commission. "Age and Intersectionality." Ontario Human Rights Commission, [www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca).  
Swain, Gloria. "The Healing Power of Art in Intergenerational Trauma: Race, Sex, Age and Disability." *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2019, pp. 15-31.  
Thorne, Barrie. "Theorizing Age and Other Differences." *Childhood*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2004, pp. 403-08.

## **Invitation 3: Let's more fully explore age's discursive and ideological implications.**

*"The denial of numerical age enforced the racist ideology that bolstered slavery. Not only were enslaved people typically deprived of knowing their birthdays, but they were also trapped in a developmental purgatory" (Edelstein 125).*

Cushman, Ellen, Rachel Jackson, Annie Laurie Nichols, Courtney Rivard, Amanda Moulder, Chelsea Murdock, David M. Grant, and Heather Brook Adams. "Decolonizing Projects: Creating Pluriversal Possibilities in Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 38, no 1, 2019, pp. 1-22.  
Edelstein, Sari. "Reading Age Beyond Childhood." *ESQ*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2016, pp. 122-27.  
Hancock, Ange-Marie. *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History*. Oxford UP, 2016.  
Smith, Andrea. "Indigenous Feminism without Apology." *Unsettling Ourselves: Reflections and Resources for Deconstructing Colonial Mentality*, edited by the Unsettling Minnesota collective, *Unsettling Minnesota*, n.d., pp. 159-61. ([unsettlingminnesota.org](http://unsettlingminnesota.org); Also see Smith's article at [newsocialist.org](http://newsocialist.org))

### **Note of Appreciation.**

Special thanks to Tarez Graban, Kathleen Welch, and Sarah Singer for their thoughtful feedback as I prepared these remarks.

