

Nidhi Chawla

Intersectionality, Access, and Women's Health:
Engaging and Enacting a Feminist Model of Health
Care

Physiology and Neurobiology & Women's Studies

"Intersectionality, Access, and Women's Health: Engaging and Enacting a Feminist Model of Health Care" takes analytically the potential role feminist theory can play in the making of a more accessible and effective model of medical care. In terms of theory and methodology, this thesis draws upon Kimberlé Crenshaw's influential notion of "intersectionality" as a means of mapping multiple identities and subjectivities; as an additional lens, the thesis accesses Audre Lorde's insistence that one cannot rely on established systems as the basis for progressive politics. Consistent with the reflexive dynamics of intersectional feminism, and guided by the notion that the personal is indeed political, this thesis utilizes autobiographical reflection, familial history, and on-site ethnography to establish a distinct academic and professional trajectory. The thesis focuses on the experiences I had interning at St Francis Hospital's OBGYN clinic where I was able to develop a resource guide that highlighted the main programs that were offered free of charge at the clinic. The demographic of the women who utilized this clinic for pre and post pregnancy needs were mainly of Black and Latina decent. This trajectory indicates an intersectional analysis of women's health and contextualizes my use of feminist practice in a medical setting. While this thesis engages an intersectional analysis to promote a more holistic approach to women's health, its focus is very much connected to past/present gender politics; this work is likewise framed by the larger interdiscipline of gender/sexuality studies and emblematic of my own location as a woman of color and feminist thinker.