Evaluating Sources

Deconstruct an article together: Read “Feminism Through the Life Cycle” by Nicole M. King at http://familyinamerica.org/journals/winter-2013/feminism-through-life-cycle/#.VxEfZHER9N

1. First, acknowledge any biases you have, whether at first glance you are supportive or against this topic. Write your thoughts here or just think to yourself so you are aware.

2. At first glance, is this article “authoritative?” Why?

3. Can you find any loaded language or tone in this article? (e.g., “no-fault divorce and abortion on demand”)

4. What are the author’s education/experience/credentials? Google her and find out her background.

5. Look at the author’s evidence. Is it legitimate? Is data current and used in context? What kinds of studies is she referring to and do they have conclusive evidence?

6. Now look at the publication and sponsoring organization. Find and read the Howard Center’s mission statement: http://worldcongress.org/. How does the publication itself help to predict the intended audience or bias?

7. What information is omitted?
8. What other explanations exist; what other causes are there in opposition?

Other Tips

Determine author expertise; look at:

- Knowledge (education, vocabulary, previous publications)
- Experience (where have they worked, volunteered, done research)
- Evidence (what evidence is proposed? How current is the data? Who published the data and does the publisher or originator reveal any bias?)

Clues for evaluating research studies

- What is the quality of the source?
- Are there other clues included in the communication suggesting the research was well done?
- Has the study been replicated? (Has more than one study reached the same conclusion?)
- How selective has the communicator been in choosing studies included in the article? What has been omitted?
- Is there any evidence of strong-sense critical thinking?
- Is there any reason for someone to have distorted the research?
- How far can we generalize given the research sample?