

Intersecting intersectionality and multilingual academic and professional communication in a networked world

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Abstract

Some three decades ago, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term 'intersectionality' as a way to explore 'the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experience' (Crenshaw, 1991: 1241). Or so the story goes. While Crenshaw did in fact put the term 'intersectionality' at the centre of her discussion of inequality before the law in late 20th century American society, she was drawing on previous scholarship going back to the 19th century: the accounts of slavery provided by authors such as Harriet Jacob (1861) and Anna Julia Cooper (1892); the work of early twentieth-century figures such as Mary Church Terrel (1940) and Pauli Murray (1987); and the work of late twenty-first-century figures such as the Combahee River Collective (1977), bell hooks (1981) and Angela Davis (1983). From these beginnings in American Black feminism, intersectionality and what it means (and/or indexes) has evolved considerably and there is now a moving, multi-cited space in which scholars today discuss a series of existential issues related to the term, not least who 'owns' it and can gatekeep how it is employed in inquiry. Indeed, there has been a proliferation of articles on the topic and at least four key monographs that have come out recently (Hancock, 2016; Hill-Collins, 2019; Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016; Nash, 2019). In this paper, I will draw on a wide range of sources as I discuss issues arising in intersectional inquiry and how they might relate to the conference theme, multilingual academic and professional communication in a networked world. I will focus especially on the internationalization of higher education and the kinds of activities that go with it (e.g. increasing student and staff mobility and the Englishisation of a range of academic activities, including teaching and publishing).