



## **Thematic issue of RELA: Intersectionality and adult education**

Submission deadline: December 31, 2016

**Lead editors for this issue: Andreas Fejes and Barbara Merrill**

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The concept of intersectionality emerged in the 1980s and has its origins in feminist theory and anti-racist theory and has since gained in popularity. The term was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). For black feminists such as Crenshaw feminism and feminist theory did not relate to the experiences of black women as it reflected only the lives of white women. Instead black feminists argued that black women's lives and identities are shaped by both gender and race. For Crenshaw intersectionality 'is a tool particularly adept at capturing and theorising the simultaneity of race and gender as social processes' (1992: 403). Since then the concept has been extended to include interaction between other forms of inequality such as class so that as Anthias states the intersectionality of inequalities means that 'classes are always gendered and racialised and gender is always classed and racialised and so on' (2005: 33). The focus has, therefore, moved away from just looking at one form of inequality to recognising that people experience multiple forms of inequality in society.

Intersectionality addresses the inequalities, disadvantaged position and oppression of particular groups so this has relevance for adult education and adult students. Historically radical adult education has given voice to working class women and men and has focused on 'really useful knowledge' to highlight inequalities of class and challenge this. Feminist adult educators went further and looked at the interaction of class and gender in the lives of women adult education students (see the work of Thompson, Skeggs, Merrill). More recently adult education research has looked at the intersectionality of class, gender and race and other forms of inequality such as age and disability (Finnegan et al, 2014) and how this has impacted upon the experiences of adult learners.

Intersectionality also places the concepts of identity (Zachs, 2005), changing identities and power central to understanding people's lives. Identity is also something which has concerned adult education researchers (Reay, 2003, West, 2014) in researching how working class women and men and working class black women and men perceive their identity in middle class educational institutions such as universities.

In this thematic issue we wish to direct attention at how intersectionality can be useful in understanding adult students' experiences and participation in adult education. We invite papers that critically assess the role of intersectionality within adult education. How does the intersections of inequality such as class, gender, ethnicity, age, race and disability etc impact upon the learning experiences of adults? How do adult students experience multiple identities, what is the potential for changing identities? How do adult education institutions address (or not) issues of inequalities and diversity amongst its students?

We invite paper on any of the above topics. Papers should be submitted to [andreas.fejes@liu.se](mailto:andreas.fejes@liu.se) and [barbara.merrill@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:barbara.merrill@warwick.ac.uk) no later than December 31,



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