Ain’t I A Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality

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Abstract
In the context of the second Gulf war and US and the British occupation of Iraq, many ‘old’ debates about the category ‘woman’ have assumed a new critical urgency. This paper revisits debates on intersectionality in order to show that they can shed new light on how we might approach some current issues. It first discusses the 19th century contestations among feminists involved in anti-slavery struggles and campaigns for women’s suffrage. The second part of the paper uses autobiography and empirical studies to demonstrate that social class (and its intersections with gender and ‘race’ or sexuality) are simultaneously subjective, structural and about social positioning and everyday practices. It argues that studying these intersections allows a more complex and dynamic understanding than a focus on social class alone. The conclusion to the paper considers the potential contributions to intersectional analysis of theoretical and political approaches such as those associated with post-structuralism, post-colonial feminist analysis, and diaspora studies.

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