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Thinking through the lens of translocational positionality: an intersectionality frame for understanding identity and belonging

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Abstract

This paper reflects on the understanding of contemporary forms of identity construction within the fields of ethnicity, migration and transnational population movements. It casts a critical eye on new forms of identity hailed by the related notions of diaspora, hybridity and cosmopolitanism. The paper also reflects on the concept of intersectionality which provides a more integrated analysis of identity formation by arguing for the inter-connections between social divisions, such as those of gender, ethnicity and class. The paper argues that the concept 'translocational positionality' (see Anthias 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2006, 2007) is a useful means of addressing some of the difficulties identified within these approaches. This concept addresses issues of identity in terms of locations which are not fixed but are context, meaning and time related and which therefore involve shifts and contradictions. It thereby provides an intersectional framing for the understanding of belonging. As an intersectional frame it moves away from the idea of given 'groups' or 'categories' of gender, ethnicity and class, which then intersect (a particular concern of some intersectionality frameworks), and instead pays much more attention to *social locations and processes* which are broader than those signalled by this.

Keywords: belonging, transnational, intersectionality, translocational positionality

Introduction

In this paper I will reflect on the concepts of identity and belonging which inform understandings of ethnicity and migration in the modern era. I will do this through the lens of 'translocational positionality' (see Anthias 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2006, 2007). This attempts to provide a way of thinking about issues of identity that avoids some of the problems identified with the concept (see Brubaker and Cooper 2000 and Anthias 2002), particularly in terms of treating identity as a possessive attribute of individuals or groups (for a critique of groupism see Brubaker 2004). The concept of translocational positionality addresses issues of identity in terms of locations which are not fixed but are context, meaning and time related and which therefore involve shifts and contradictions. As an intersectional frame it moves away from the idea of given 'groups' or 'categories' of gender, ethnicity and class, which then intersect (a particular concern of some intersectionality frameworks), and instead pays much more attention to *social locations and processes* which are broader than those signalled by this. As such, the notion of translocational positionality attempts to address some of the difficulties found within intersectionality approaches and attempts to push the debate forward on theorising identity and belonging.

In brief, I will focus in this paper on the field of transnational population movements which brings into focus contemporary forms of identity construction. I will cast a critical eye on new forms of identity hailed by the related notions of diaspora, hybridity and cosmopolitanism. I will also reflect on the concept of intersectionality which provides a more integrated analysis of identity formation by arguing for the theoretical and political links between social divisions, such as those of gender, ethnicity and class. As already noted, the notion of translocational positionality attempts to address some of the difficulties found within intersectionality approaches. This moves radically away from essentialised notions of belonging and also avoids the rabid deconstructionism of some post-modern approaches to belonging and identity.

There is no doubt that ethnic and cultural ties are increasingly operating at a transnational rather than merely national level. The critique of methodological nationalism (Beck 2002; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) has further indicated the problem of 'naturalising' the nation and seeing it as the main analytical category for exploring a range of inter-related issues in modern society around boundaries and hierarchies of belonging. This position also mirrors developments in more intersectional forms of social analysis (see Collins 1993, 1998; Anthias and Yuval Davis 1992; Anthias 1998a, 2005), calling for a new paradigm for understanding social boundaries and divisions.

Not only does migration itself challenge national borders but increasing flows of people, commodities, cultures and economic and political interests turn our attention to a range of social processes broadly identifiable as 'translocational'. These not only affect people who are themselves directly 'on the move' but also the locales in which they settle, converting them to translocational spaces, thereby affecting in different ways all who live within these spaces.

The old distinctions which constructed migrants as going from one place to another to search for better economic opportunities, or as travellers wanting to taste and enjoy the fruits of other lands or to plunder the exotic goods of empire, no longer characterise our modern times. Today, there are a range of possible categories of population involved: they include refugees and asylum seekers; new commuter migrants; professional and skilled migrants; and undocumented migrants. These all present us with a multiplex reality and a shifting landscape of belonging and identity. There exist complex relations to different locales; these include networks involving social, symbolic and material ties between homelands, destinations, and relations between destinations. A key question is how to think of belonging and identity within a transnational and what I have called 'translocational' frame which recognises that people have multiple locations, positions and belongings, in a situated and contextual way, but which does not end up as a thoroughgoing reification or deconstruction of difference.

Notions of identity and belonging

Identity is a key concept in contemporary discussions of migration. This is not only linked to the role of ethnic markers which become both visible and challenging in a globalising world, but also to the regulatory regimes of modern states and coalitions

of power among states. These set up new frontiers and borders which depend on categorising desirable and undesirable persons and groupings. The impetus lies in the threat from what are seen as 'hostile' identities, embodied both in the 'war against terror' but also in fears of dependent migrants ('sponging off the state'), asylum seekers and refugees whose 'culture' and 'ways of life' are seen to be incompatible or undesirable within Western societies, and the fear of social breakdown and unrest attached to these. Current debates on multiculturalism and social cohesion (for example in the UK: see Yuval Davis, Anthias and Kofman 1996) are linked to this.

Given these tendencies, how do we begin to rethink the issue of our 'identities': both in terms of our individual sense of who we are but also in terms of our sense of social place and belonging since these two are symbiotically connected? Identity is a slippery concept, and not only contested but contestable. It may be that it has over-run its limits not only in terms of it being over-inflated to incorporate too much - an argument made by Brubaker and Cooper very convincingly (2000) - but it has come to say 'both too much and too little' (for a development of this argument see Anthias 2002b). It says too much in the sense that there are a range of different elements of focus that are incorporated, often rather carelessly, under its ambit. The concept of identity can cover on the one side notions of the 'core self' (see for example Erikson 1968) and on the other side notions of how people are identified by objective measures relating, for example, to country of birth or primary language. The notion also covers identification processes (with 'others' or 'groupings of others') and relates to the construction of collectivities and identity politics (both of which insert the political into the arena of identity formation). From another point of view identity can be seen as a question of claims on the one hand and attributions on the other. It can be related to a number of dimensions which are narrational and performative (Anthias 2002b) as well as experiential, representational and organisational (for a more developed analysis of the latter formulation relating to social categories/divisions of identity see Anthias 1998a).

On the other hand the concept of identity can tell us too little because it does not flag central questions of structure, context and meaning and therefore cannot fully attend to the conditions of existence of the production of the different component elements under examination (assuming that they have been unpacked effectively). It also ASKS too much: that individuals are able to demonstrate in some form 'who they are' and 'who or what they identify with' in a coherent and stable manner. The decentring of subjectivity via postructuralist theory has provided a challenge to such projects. Indeed research on a variety of youngsters has also shown some of the problems of attempting to find 'who people say they are' (Back 1996; Rattansi and Phoenix 1997; Anthias 2002b). Part of my argument is that the emphasis on identity sets us on a false trail. The focus on identity has involved a retreat from issues of structure and there is a tendency to treat it as a possessive attribute of individuals or groups rather than a process.

It is also perhaps necessary to disentangle the notion of identity from the related one of belonging, although they are symbiotically connected. 'Where do I belong' is certainly a question that is posed by (and for) many people who have undergone migration or translocations of different types, whether of national movement or class movement, and is especially true for the children of such people. It is also a question that emerges out of attributions by others and concerns by others (including institutions and public bodies) with sorting populations for the purposes of regulation and control. It is represented in intersubjective relations by that question so many visible 'outsiders' face (visible either

through skin colour, language, accent or name) about 'where are you really from' and 'where do you really belong'.

The issue of belonging emerges in relational terms: both in terms of the construction of we-ness - i.e. those who can stand as selves - and the construction of 'otherness' - i.e. in the construction of those that cannot stand as selves, or where we are not able to enter the boundary of the 'other' however much we identify. This is a key issue relating to the distinction between identity and belonging notions. Arguably the key aspect of the former is found in articulations and stories about who we think we are (however contextual, situational, temporal or fractured these may be) as well as associated strategies and identifications. Arguably a key facet of belonging notions (a question of emphasis more than analytical distinction) is found in the notions of exclusion, inclusion, access and participation. Belonging questions often emerge because we feel that there are a range of spaces, places, locales and identities that we feel we do not and cannot belong to, in the sense that we cannot gain access, participate or be included within. Collective places constructed by imaginings of belonging, however, are constructions that disguise the fissures, the losses, the absences, the borders within them. The imagining also refers to their role in naturalising socially produced, situational and contextual relations, converting them to taken for granted, absolute and fixed structures of social and personal life. They produce a 'natural' community of people and function as exclusionary borders of otherness. Belonging therefore tends to become 'naturalised' and thus invisible in hegemonic formulations.

Belonging has a number of dimensions. There is the dimension of how subjects feel about their location in the social world which is generated partly through experiences of exclusion rather than being about inclusion per se. That is a notion of belonging becomes activated when there is a sense of exclusion. The relational nature of belonging is important here. Belonging is about both formal and informal *experiences* of belonging. Belonging is not just about membership, rights and duties, as in the case of citizenship, or just about forms of identification with groups or others, but it is also about the social places constructed by such identifications and memberships and the ways in which social place has resonances on stability of the self, on feelings of being part of a larger whole and the emotional and social bonds that are related to such places.

The two terms of identity and belonging live together but involve a different emphasis. One could sum up the difference **in emphasis** of the two terms in the following way. Identity involves individual and collective narratives of self and other, presentation and labelling, myths of origin and myths of destiny with associated strategies and identifications. Belonging on the other hand is more about experiences of being part of the social fabric and the ways in which social bonds and ties are manifested in practices, experiences and emotions of inclusion. Ethnic ties cannot be considered in isolation as delivering 'belonging' given that they are intersected with social relations of different types (such as those hailed by gender, generational and class categories). For example, you cannot belong to the collectivity if you don't conform to the gender norms of this collectivity (Anthias and Yuval Davis 1989). Here to belong is to be accepted as part of a community, to feel safe within it and to have a stake in the future of such a community of membership. To belong is to share values, networks and practices and not just a question of identification. It is important to relate the notion of belonging to the different locations and contexts from which belongings are imagined and narrated: these locations are *trans*-locations in terms of a

range of social positions and social divisions and identities such as gender, class, stage in the life cycle and so on.

Belonging, although more than, is also about rights and obligations related to citizenship. However, as we know such rights and obligations are about meeting the criteria of inclusion and there is differential inclusion and exclusion of so-called citizens along the lines of gender, ethnicity, class, age and so on. Belonging is about boundaries but it is also about hierarchies which exist both within but across boundaries. Boundaries are shifting and changing; some are more a product of external constraints, like political, legal, national rules relating to membership. Others are inscribed in the body through the stigmata of absence and notions of incapacity/deformity via gender or disability. They may also be inscribed through body style (such as in class relations) or through colour physiognomy and the bodily and personal style/gait associated with ethnic difference.

But boundaries are never fixed and they are forms of political practice. Constructions of ethnic difference for example homogenise those within and bracket off differences of class, gender, age, political persuasion, and region. Such identities always crosscut each other and people simultaneously hold different ones and belong therefore to different categorisations depending on context, situation and meaning. The constructed, rather than essential or fixed nature of the boundaries is important to note. Boundaries are imposed and also taken up by subjects themselves. These may not necessarily coincide. Different markers may be used to define the boundaries. This is raised, for example, by the debate on the category Black, and the shift from seeing it as incorporating both Asians and Afro-Caribbeans, to seeing it as describing only Afro-Caribbeans (on this point see for example Modood 1988; Anthias and Yuval Davis 1992; Brah 1996). Alternatively, it may be used as a form of self identification, and not dependent necessarily on ascriptive criteria, or may be used as a political identity. A group may be defined, at different times, in terms of culture, place of origin or religion. For example. Jews may be seen as a cultural group, as a diaspora with a reclaimed homeland (Israel), or as a religious community. Greek Cypriots may be seen as either Cypriot or Greek. These are labels, as well as claims, that are produced socially and enter into the realm of assertion, contestation and negotiation over resource allocation, social positioning and political identity.

Transcending ethnic and national belongings

Bearing these problems in mind, I will now focus on a number of different ways that identity and belonging can be understood in relation to the increasing importance of 'translocations'. These are not merely about movement of people from one location to another in the spatial or cultural sense. They also denote the increasing fragmentation of social life and the crisscrossing of borders and boundaries involved. The notion of translocation references the idea of 'location' as a social space which is produced within contextual, spatial, temporal and hierarchical relations around the 'intersections' of social divisions and identities of class, ethnicity and gender (amongst others). I will develop this concept further towards the latter part of the paper.

In this section I want to look at the complexities relating to hybridity, diaspora and cosmopolitanism; three versions of transnational belonging that are current in the literature on migration and population movements. These provide different ways by

which culture and ethnic identity are seen to be affected by population movements and set out a challenge to national exclusivity and particularisms. Partially, critiques of notions of ethnicity and identity that are fixed, stable, monolithic and exclusionary have led scholars and activists to embrace such terms. Cosmopolitanism, despite the difficulties, or indeed the refusal of precise definition, is also a claim towards a broader cultural and justice related framework, beyond national exclusivity, and a more global liberal understanding of difference and cultural values. Cosmopolitanism has been more an outcome recently of debates on globalisation and citizenship (e.g. Held *et al* 1999) whilst debates on hybridity and diaspora have been more tied to transnational flows of people and cultures. I will begin by commenting on hybridity and diaspora and then turn to examining cosmopolitanism.

Hybridity and diaspora (for critiques of these concepts see also Anthias 1998b and Anthias 2001) are used to counter the essentialism found in many traditional approaches to ethnicity and racism. They both postulate shifting and potentially transnational and transethnic cultural formations and identities. These new identities are seen to be tied to a globalised and transnational social fabric rather than one bounded by the nation-state form. They are seen as forms of cultural identity that are more fluid and synthetic. Similarly cosmopolitanism paints a world where ethnic and national spectacles are abandoned in favour of 'one-world' ones. In the following sections I will focus on each of these in turn in order to show some of the difficulties they face in providing a worked through alternative to the notion of 'ethnic' identity. I will consider hybridity and diaspora briefly, partly because I have written on these before (Anthias 2001, 1998b)

Hybridity

The modern use of the concept of hybridity seeks to argue against a mono-culturalist view of identity, depicting identity as syncretic and changeable rather than static and essentialised (Bhabha 1994). It is often used alongside what may be regarded as its sister notion, that of diaspora. Hybridity is often linked to globalisation processes (see for example the discussion by Pieterse 1994 on how increasing globalisation leads to greater hybridisation). These have been characterised as political, economic and cultural. It is the latter that is most relevant to the arguments found in current formulations of diaspora and hybridity (although diaspora has been used to denote political economy and political processes) in the work of Cohen (1997) and others, from both a traditional sociological and political economy framework.

The notion of hybridity emphasises the ways in which transnational processes have involved the development of intercultural and cross-cultural life styles and practices. This suggests a move away from static and rigid forms of ethnicity and potentially may herald some breaking with ethnocentrism and racism. It may be the case that there is an intermingling of cultural styles and values, producing new and innovative forms, but this need not necessarily lead, however, to changing ethnic solidarities or the diminution of ethnocentrism and racism. For example young white adolescents have been seen as synthesising the culture of their white English backgrounds with the new cultures of minorities. New cultural forms are forged in music and inter-racial friendship networks and movements (Hewitt 1986, Back 1996). The pick and mix of cultural elements, denoted by the term hybridity, does not necessarily signify, however, a shift in identity or indeed the demise of identity politics of the racist or anti-racist kind. Moreover, the mixed cultural patterns of second and third generations underplays the ways in which gender and religion, serve different ends in different contexts. One example is found in the uses and meanings of the hijab for the young women who wear it with pride but also

as a form of agency both vis a vis their parents and inferiorisation/racism (see for example Afshar 1994). In other words the bringing together of different cultural elements syncretically may transform their meaning. However,this need not always mean the breakdown of the central or core cultural values espoused.

Therefore the term hybridity has not only tended to be over-celebratory but it has not paid adequate attention to crosscutting differences and locations in terms of gender and class (relying on so-called ethnic/cultural practices and their intermingling). The use of the term hybridity has not always paid enough attention to context, meaning and temporal dimensions and how cultural practices may be 'resources' to be used strategically and whose meaning is therefore never given.

Diaspora

The popularity of notions of diaspora (Hall 1990, Gilroy 1993, Cohen 1997, Clifford 1994, Brah 1996) can be related to the attempt to overcome some of the criticisms made of the 'race and ethnic relations' tradition (Miles 1993, Anthias and Yuval Davis 1992, Hall 1990, Gilroy 1993, Brah 1996) as well as recognising certain empirical features relating to population movements and settlements. However, I have argued before that such depictions rely on a *national* imaginary of social location (Anthias 1998b). When people construct themselves as a diaspora this involves a particular form of mobilisation around national and ethnic symbols which are used as resources. Despite this, it is difficult to overcome the tendency in most of the literature to locate diaspora as a grouping in terms of national boundaries, i.e. from whence the people came and to where they have settled. Although the term is often limited to population categories which have experienced 'forceful or violent expulsion' processes (classically used about the Jews), it may also denote a **social condition** entailing a particular form of **'consciousness'** which is particularly compatible with globalisation (see Anthias 1998b). However, one danger of using the concept too uncritically is that this may overemphasise transnational as opposed to trans-ethnic processes (i.e. not focus enough on common experiences amongst different ethnic groups).

It is equally important to attend to differentiations within 'diasporic' groups, such as those of gender and class, as well as differences between different 'diasporas', thereby treating them situationally and contextually. Whilst diasporic groups have been thought of as particularly adaptable to a globalised economic system (Cohen 1997) it is important not to think that they are essentially constituted in this way. It is also important to continue examining the more violent, dislocating and 'othering' practices that they are subjected to. The existence of group boundaries and the ways we think about our belonging are crucial elements in these practices but the forms they take are products of positionalities and contexts that do not themselves originate from these identity formations. We must be careful that the focus on belongings in terms of diasporic attachments does not foreclose a concern with differences of gender, class and generation within diasporic groups in all their complex interlockings.

Globalisation involves a growth in the amount of movement, which both intensifies strangeness and normalises it. The condition of 'overall strangeness' becomes the condition par excellence of global society. The importance of 'asymmetry', together with hegemonic cultural discourses in this process, needs to be considered by the new approaches to interculturality found in the idea of cultural hybridities and diasporic imaginations. We must be careful, therefore, not to treat hybridity and diasporic formations outside the parameters of unequal power relations that exist between and

within cultures. I would propose, therefore, that it is difficult to encapsulate the processes relating to translocation, which involves processes of crisscrossing borders and boundaries *of different types* (not only those related to ethnic or national borders), through the terms of diaspora and hybridity.

Cosmopolitanism

Like diaspora the term 'cosmopolitan' sees people as belonging to a range of social relations and political and cultural communities across nation states. There are a range of approaches to cosmopolitanism, however, from the idea that it is the consciousness of frequent travellers (Calhoun 2003) to the idea that it is the refusal to be rooted within an ethnic or nationalist space (e.g. Nussbaum 1998). The role of local attachments extending beyond the local is found in the work of Held (2000). For Beck "The central defining characteristic of a cosmopolitan perspective is the '*dialogic* imagination'. By this I mean the clash of cultures and rationalities within one's own life, the '*internalized* other" (2002: 18).

Cosmopolitanism is antithetical to local cultures and traditions and particularly to forms of ethnoculturalism. Cultural cosmopolitanism is associated with the middle class urban intellectual/ business elite familiar with a range of cultures, who travel frequently and who feel 'at home' everywhere. Normative cosmopolitanism additionally questions the value and meaning of national identity and belonging and longs for a wider social space to imagine belonging to. The citizenship or transnational citizenship strand of this is concerned with the formation of new forms of governance and political arrangements that diminish the importance of national borders and is dedicated to a world political system. As Held says with regard to the notion of cosmopolitan citizenship, "people would come, thus, to enjoy multiple citizenships-political membership in the diverse political communities which significantly affected them" (1995: 233).

Kofman (2005) rightly notes that the positive conception of the moving subject who is at home everywhere and belongs to nowhere becomes negative for particular categories of persons, depending on their ethnic origin. One could argue that it is not just a question of ethnic origin but that whether it is imbued with positive or negative value depends on social location within the world. Western individuals are regarded positively (on the whole, although it is also a question of social class) and yet migrants who travel and are involved in multiple sites of destination over time are regarded as problematic, even though they may have acquired some of the cultural baggage of the cosmopolitan ideal: many languages, extensive travel, familiarity with a range of cultural norms and values and being able to negotiate these. Eurocentric views of cosmopolitanism, therefore, exclude the transnationalism of migrants, particularly economic and poor migrants. For example, there is the issue of the class nature of the concept as the term cosmopolitan is often not seen as appropriate for describing the global pathways of working class migrants (Werbner 1999). Cosmopolitanism (like transnationalism, diaspora or hybridity) does not attend to asymmetry or inequality. However, the idea of a 'free floating' cosmopolitan without a social base is problematic. Even free floating intellectuals (to coin Mannheim's term (1929/36)) have a social base. Similarly there are no classless cosmopolitans.

Cosmopolitanism could involve the formation of new forms of citizenship, away from national democracy. However, there is an assumption that globalised or cosmopolitan citizenship is consensual when in fact there is no singular cosmopolitan politics or

social and cultural system of values. Indeed cosmopolitanism is merely itself: an empty glass waiting to be filled. It could potentially involve a fascist system as much as participatory democracy. Laying claims to a cosmopolitan politics doesn't give us the detail of social arrangements necessary. It is better at being set as an opposition to forms of ethnic or national boundaries at a number of different levels, depending on its object of reference, rather than as a specific political alternative.

The debates around different forms of transnational identity (for example, hybridity, diaspora and cosmopolitanism) all point to the difficulties of thinking about the contemporary world as bounded by national boundaries alone. However, none of these positions focus on social locations in their broader sense and this constitutes a significant shortcoming. Both local and less local forms of belonging and position cannot be disassociated from a range of bounded social relations through the other categorical formations of gender and class (for example), their processes and their effects. This brings me to the debate on intersectionality which I will address briefly as a preliminary to focussing on 'translocational positionality'.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality argues that it is important to look at the way in which different social divisions inter-relate in terms of the production of social relations and in terms of peoples lives. In the earlier debates, particularly in the Marxist feminist concern with gender, one way in which different social divisions were connected was to argue that one of them was most determining (for a review see Anthias and Yuval Davis 1992). This found its currency in debates on 'race' and class, and gender and class, where the tendency was to use a reductionist model, whereby gender and 'race' were determined by class. A further (and opposite) formulation was in terms of ideas about a triple burden faced by ethnic minority women. Here class, gender and 'race' inequalities were treated as separate but as being experienced simultaneously. This position can be criticised as being too mechanistic and entailing an additive model of the oppression of gender, race and class. Intersectional approaches have tried to move away from this additive model by treating each division as constituted via an intersection with the others (Collins 1993, 1998, Anthias and Yuval Davis 1992, Crenshaw 1994, McCall 2001, Anthias 2002a, 2005 to name a few). In this way classes are always gendered and racialised and gender is always classed and racialised and so on.

There are clearly rather different foci within the 'intersectionality' framework but there is not enough space to consider these in all their complexity here (for one discussion of this complexity see McCall 2001). However a brief note of some tendencies may be useful to note. Gender, race and class may be treated as different ideological (see for example Collins 1993) or discursive practices that emerge in the process of power production and enablement (as would be suggested in the work of Foucault 1972). On the other hand, gender, race and class can be regarded as distinctive systems of subordination (Weber 2001) with their own range of specific social relations and intersectionality refers to how these systems interact. A position developed by Anthias and Yuval Davis is that social divisions refer to social ontologies around different material processes in social life, all linked to sociality and to the social organisation of sexuality, production and collective bonds; features which arguably all societies entail (Anthias and Yuval Davis 1992, Anthias 1998a, 2005).

The political and policy dimensions raised by intersectionality are important also. A particularly influential account of intersectionality in the United States (for example

around human rights) is that categories of discrimination overlap and individuals suffer exclusions on the basis of race and gender, or any other combination (Crenshaw 1994). Clearly important is that this approach leads to an interest in the production of data or policy research and practice that recognise specific problems of social categories like racialised women and which cross reference the divisions within formulated groups.

Arguably, one danger with the notion of intersections is found in constructing people as belonging to fixed and permanent **groups** (e.g. ethnic, gender and class groups) which then all enter, in a pluralist fashion, into their determination. This undermines the focus on **social processes, practices and outcomes** as they impact on social categories, social structures and individuals. This is further complicated by the fact that, despite the danger of seeing people as belonging to fixed groups, groups exist at the imaginary or ideational level as well as at the juridical and legal level. Therefore, the membership of people in groups is important in two ways. One is in terms of attributions of membership and the consequences that flow from these attributions. For example, being labelled as a member of a national or racialised group may affect how one sees oneself and ideas of belonging and otherness. Secondly, this may have an important role in determining forms of social engagement and participation, such as those found in identity politics.

One could argue that the intersectionality focus doesn't go far enough in its deconstructionist project. Looking at the concrete experiences and positions of subjects in terms of a multiplicity of identities (for example, of black working class women or white middle class men) is important. However, this cannot pay attention to the range of social processes; i.e. the multiple situational elements that produce social outcomes. These cannot be encapsulated by sex/gender, race/ethnicity and class and their intersections and raises broader issues of social organisation and representation.

It could also be argued that it can go too far, thereby leading to the failure to identify systematic forms of oppression. In the attempt to say that each individual has a unique position in terms of the triad of gender, race and class (Collins 1993: 28) and that each person is simultaneously oppressor and oppressed (ibid) the danger is the steady disappearance of systematic forms of subordination and oppression in terms of people who suffer them.

Despite the difficulty of the notion of intersections, partly linked to the variety of meanings it has taken on, there is a core which I believe is central to theorising identities. Ethnicity/nation, gender and class involve processes relating to a range of economic, political and social interests and projects and to distinctive (and variable) forms of social allegiance and identifications which are played out in a nuanced and highly context related fashion. These may construct multiple, uneven and contradictory social patterns of identity and belonging (as well as domination and subordination). This is because in terms of social hierarchy, a person may be placed in a different position depending on the saliency of a particular category or hybrid category (for example, as black working class woman) in terms of context, meaning and time and in relation to different regulatory practices of the state, as well as in terms of the individuals own understanding of their social location. The political questions opened up here have direct relevance in terms of how inequalities, identities and political strategies are conceptualised and assessed. Such implications undermine identity politics on the one hand since the intersectionality framework refuses the notion of given political positions tied to singular forms of identity (for example, gender OR ethnicity Or class) and instead recognises a multiplicity of potential

subcategories and crosscutting forms. Indeed one problem is the potential of an endless array of synthetic identity constructions (such as black unemployed middle class men). Nonetheless, this approach both problematises identity politics and raises the political potential of organising on the basis of *specific issues* rather than identities. At a different level, it raises more general questions about wider frameworks for integrating approaches to inequality. I have introduced the terms 'translocation' and 'translocational positionality' to aid in addressing some of these issues within intersectionality frameworks.

Translocations and translocational Positionality

In this section I want to note some of the potential uses of the notion of 'translocational' as an heuristic device and not just as a neologism.

Firstly the term signals a refusal to think of issues of population movement and settlement in terms of dislocation as this assumes a fixed and given location from which we become dislodged. Although this may appear in our imaginations to be the case, our locations are multiple and span a number of terrains such as those of gender and class as well as ethnicity and nation, political and value systems. To be dislocated at the level of nation is not necessarily a dislocation in other terms, if we find we still exist within the boundaries of our social class and our gender. However, although we may move across national borders and remain middle class or women (for example) the movement will transform our social place and the way we experience this at all social levels and in different ways. Hence the interconnections and intersections involved here are important. From this point of view, to think of *trans*locations opens up not only thinking of relocations but also of the multiplicity of locations involved in time and space, and in terms of connections between the past, the present and the future.

Secondly, the term helps us to think of lives as located across multiple but also fractured and inter-related social spaces. Narratives and strategies of identity and belonging are constructs which are produced relationally (in terms of both commitment and struggle - i.e. agonistically). They are also situational, temporal and subject to different meanings and inflections. 'Translocations' also reference the intersections of gender, ethnicity and class and other important social boundaries and hierarchies. They can be thought of as social spaces defined by boundaries on the one hand and hierarchies on the other hand. The concern with boundaries AND hierarchies lies at the heart of the concept. It moves away particularly from the idea of cross cutting groups which characterises much of the discussion of intersectionality.

A **translocational positionality** is one structured by the interplay of different locations relating to gender, ethnicity, race and class (amongst others), and their at times *contradictory* effects. Positionality combines a reference to social position (as a set of effectivities: as outcome) and social positioning (as a set of practices, actions and meanings: as process). That is, positionality is the space at the intersection of structure (social position/social effects) and agency (social positioning/meaning and practice). The notion of 'location' recognises the importance of context, the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales. It also recognises variability with some processes leading to more complex, contradictory and at times dialogical positionalities than others. The term 'translocational' references the complex nature of positionality faced by those who

are at the interplay of a range of locations and dislocations in relation to gender, ethnicity, national belonging, class and racialisation. Positionality takes place in the context of the lived practices in which identification is practised/performed as well as the intersubjective, organisational and representational conditions for their existence (Anthias 2002a).

Using this conceptual framework may aid in moving the discussion of identity and belonging forward in a number of ways in order to resolve some of the impasses associated with the idea of 'multiple identities' on the one hand and intersections of identities on the other. It may be able to do this in three interrelated ways. First, difference and identity are conceptualised as a set of processes, and not possessive characteristics of individuals, and as both material and cultural. Moreover, people produce identity in interplay with regulatory regimes, via hegemonic and agonistic narratives and practices and as resources for social action of different types, either exclusionary or usurpationary. This also enables looking outside the sphere of human experience and interrogating discourses, practices, and structures at the more 'macro' level of analysis. In other words it shifts away from the idea of crosscutting social groups or categories and enables a focus on wider social processes in a space and time framework. Moreover, it flags much more some of the potentially contradictory social locations that are brought to play than either hybridity or intersectional frameworks have done so far. There may be amplifications of disadvantage via the interplay between the different discourses, practices and regulatory regimes relating to the categories of gender and ethnicity (for example). On the other hand these may produce highly contradictory and uneven processes of advantage and disadvantage, or exclusion and inclusion (found for many women for example). This may help in the understanding of how the intersections of social relations can be both mutually reinforcing (as is the case for those subject to a range of class, gender and racialisation subordinations such as some migrant working class women) and contradictory (for example, racialised men may be in a position of dominance within some of their own forms of ethnic organisation particularly in relation to women or the young). In the first case, social divisions articulate to produce an amplification in practices of subordination, while in the second, social divisions lead to highly contradictory processes. Both, however, have implications for the production of forms of positionality and identity (Anthias 1998a). An important research agenda is to chart how systematic amplifications of disadvantage, on the one hand, and more uneven and contradictory ones affect people's positionality and social engagement.

Concluding remarks

I have attempted to show the problems with the identity framework and explored various types of transnational belonging which act as challenges to the paradigm of 'the national' and 'national belonging' in our increasingly global yet divided world. I then briefly reviewed the intersectionality framework and argued that it is vital to consider the links amongst social relations and particularly those that produce structures of differentiation and identification and structures of exclusion and inclusion.

I have also argued that the challenges coming from transnational forms of solidarity that link 'home and away' (diaspora), mixed cultural forms (hybridity), and cosmopolitanism are themselves problematised by persisting ethnocentric and ethnic based power structures. There has been a failure to fully consider the role of asymmetries of power and differentiations in terms of the experience of these

transnational processes by actors in different social locations. A promising perspective, found in intersectionality approaches, requires even further the development of more integrated social theorisations of unequal power relations within our globalising world.

I have presented the concept of 'translocational positionality' both as an adjunct to intersectionality and as an alternative means for thinking through some of the issues raised by the concepts of identity and belonging that are tied too much to a centred notion of individuals and suffer from what Brubaker has termed 'groupism' (Brubaker 2004). The notion of translocational positionality not only focuses on the crisscrossing of different social locations, but also relates to the shifting locales of peoples lives in terms of movements and flows. It relates to the importance of context, meaning and time in the construction of positionalities. Positionalities themselves are socially produced through the interplay of processes and outcomes of social relations. This turns our attention to experiential, representational and organisational features of social life (Anthias 1998a) as opposed to groupings of people around gender, ethnicity and class (which is one of the limitations noted earlier of some intersectional frameworks).

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