

Floya Anthias

# Identity and Belonging: conceptualisations and political framings

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Floya Anthias

## Abstract

*In this paper, I engage critically with the notions of belonging and identity, both as conceptual tools and how they are embedded in political discourses, particularly those concerning integration and diversity in the current period, with a focus on Britain. Belonging and identity both raise questions about boundaries of 'difference', inclusion and exclusion. I subsequently turn to the issue of integration and diversity and the dependency of the discourses on notions of identity and belonging that are infused with assumptions about essentialisation, culturalisation and hierarchisation. I will then argue for a different approach to the issues of belonging and incorporation, and towards a recognition of the importance of location and intersectional forms of dialogue and positionality which rely much more on notions of solidarity building. An intersectional and cosmopolitan imaginary is able to recognise diversities on the basis of shifting combinatories of location and positionality within a time and space framework. This involves the recognition of the global and intersectional nature of social bonds and interests and the need to move away from ethnocentric and national based lens for achieving inclusion and social justice.*

## Biographical Notes

Floya Anthias is Professor of Sociology, University of East London, Visiting Professor of Sociology at City University, London, and Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Social Justice at Roehampton University. She has explored the connections between different forms of social hierarchy and inequality (often referred to as intersectionality), migration, social stratification, social capital, and multiculturalism and gender. She has also published on Cyprus. Her most recent work has been developing the concept of translocational positionality as a way of addressing some of the difficulties identified with concepts of hybridity, diversity, identity and intersectionality.

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## Introduction

Issues of identity, belonging, integration and the unacceptable faces of difference were raised prominently on November 13th 2013 again by some of the statements made by the ex Home secretary David Blunkett. Talking to BBC Radio Sheffield he said that the arrival of a large number of Slova Roma migrants would lead to rioting and that their behaviour was 'aggravating' to local people. He said

You've got to adhere to our standards and to our way of behaving and if you do this you'll get welcome. We have got to change the behaviour and the culture of the incoming community, the Roma community, because there's going to be an explosion otherwise (The Guardian Nov 14<sup>th</sup> 2013).

Nick Clegg the Deputy Prime-minister followed this by saying

We have every right to say if you are in Britain and are coming to live here ... you have got to be sensitive to the way of life in this country. (The Guardian Nov 14<sup>th</sup> 2013)

Jack Straw, another former home secretary then intervened by calling the opening up of Britain's borders to eastern European migrants a 'spectacular mistake'. David Cameron, the prime minister, followed this up by saying that we welcomed the right kinds of migrants like businessmen and medical personnel who contributed to British society.

In this discussion, and the commentaries that have followed, the boundaries of belonging and conceptions about the undesirable elements in society were flagged again, with the targets being the Roma and East Europeans rather than Muslims or Black Commonwealth migrants, both targets in the past and continuing ones. Issues of integration premised on following the way of life of the country you migrate to come to the fore here and now sit alongside the much discussed citizenship tests, skilled migration regime and securitisation discourse that are essential parts of the managed migration and integration policies of recent years in the UK and other European countries. These raise the issue of the political as well as analytical importance of the ways we theorise and understand belonging and identity in the modern world.

In this paper, I engage critically with the notions of belonging and identity, both as conceptual tools and how they are embedded in political discourses, particularly those concerning integration and diversity in the current period, with a focus on Britain. Belonging and identity simultaneously raise the question about boundaries of 'difference', the differences that count, their normative and political evaluation, the boundaries of collectivities and social bonds, and how they are struggled over.

Increasingly, in much current research and writing, we find attempts to map out the conceptual parameters of identity and belonging (e.g. see the writings of Anthias 2002, 2006, An-

tonsich 2010, Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013, Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011) which in part have been concerned with delineating the distinctions between these terms and their use as research concepts. For example Pfaff-Czarnecka states that "'Identity' is a categorical concept while belonging combines categorisation with social relating" (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013: 6).

Some writers have also asked about the extent to which we can continue using the concept of identity given its theoretical baggage (e.g. Brubaker & Cooper 2000, Anthias 2002). The impossibility of the identity term is seen as deriving not only from the fact that it is a slippery and overburdened concept attempting to do too much (Brubaker & Cooper 2000) but also that it combines this by saying too little (Anthias 2002). For example I have argued before that "identity has a tendency to function as a disabling concept that limits the focus and moves the analyst away from context, meaning and practice" (Anthias 2002: 493).

Moreover the term tends to suggest mutually exclusive identities, and that identity is a possessive property of individuals. Indeed it is equated with being an individual: not to have an identity or for it to be ambiguous is regarded as a problem. Can the notion of belonging therefore avoid some of the potential essentialising and other problems identified with 'identity'?

Sometimes the question about delineating the differences assumes that it is possible to fill identity and belonging concepts with particular elements which they are then seen to possess, i.e. it treats them in definitional terms (e.g. see the attempts at definitions in Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013). However, the view I take is that their use must be heuristic. In and of themselves, they do not necessary carry any given analytical worth for it is in the ways that we use them that this worth is given. So at this level, it is not possible to make a definitional distinction between them as though this resolves any question about their analytical or political use. On the other hand, it is possible to see, in the ways they have been used and continue being used, some general patterns which point to a burdensome theoretical baggage. There is always the need for concepts, however. We need to distinguish between heuristic concepts and definitional concepts which assume a static and given meaning to the terms we use.

Whilst identity can be criticised, it is important to remember that it remains an everyday concept with meaning to actors. It's infiltration into our common understandings in the Western world, particularly with the rise of possessive individualism (MacPherson 1962), makes its deployment a powerful tool in political claims making and contestation. This points to how identity permeates everyday understandings of the social world and therefore needs to be engaged with rather than ruled completely out of court. This can be seen as a similar argument to that concerning race made for example by Gilroy (2004). The argument is that race is a meaningful concept not because there is actually such a thing as race but that without it the modern world would not have been possible, i.e. it has been an essential discursive ontology which has informed social relations in the modern period. Merely to say

that we refuse to engage with it, or use it, therefore means that the social relations it constructs and is embedded in become invisible or marginalised.

It is useful to reiterate here some of the complex elements that the notion of identity is asked to deliver. These include notions of the self, i.e. identity as denoting 'the core self' and as the aspirational self (e.g. see Erikson 1968), and notions of primary identity, identity as a form of categorisation we claim (e.g. linked to authenticity but also in relation to resources, both symbolic and material) or attributed by others. It also encompasses the idea of identity as a form of practice, as a performance (e.g. as in lived everyday performativities or as impression management). Underpinning the notion is the idea of shared spheres of being with similar others (found particularly in the related and perhaps less problematic notion of identification) such as shared emotions (towards for example a 'group' or homeland), and shared values and beliefs (e.g. religious, political, cultural) or a shared gender, ethnic origin or class. All these latter formulations cannot be understood, of course, without treating Identity as a site of struggle, relating to strategies of power, recognition, representation and redistribution. However, as all these elements actually raise potentially a range of issues which are analytically distinct from each other, it is clear that using the term identity to encompass them all acts to confuse, muddying our analysis.

Another form of critique is to argue that identity assumes a static 'being' which fails to signal the processes involved i.e. the processes of becoming. It is therefore linked to the kind of positivistic framing that 'being' potentially hails. Becoming is a process and this opens up the potential for change and transformation as well as the recognition of practice and agency, although this too has its provocations. For we could ask: Who is the subject who is able 'to become' and under what conditions? What are the processes at a number of different levels involved in this becoming? For the subject is at the nodes of a number of different constraining environments or spaces. For example, the narrational delimits what and how she can do so. There are the constraints imposed by societal repertoires as well as given public discourses, both hegemonic and particular but also marginal ones that may be accessed or embraced by the subject. The narrational provides the social observer with accounts of experience with access to the framings of the social, alongside access to broader narratives. Not only is narration a means, albeit flawed, to finding the lived experiences of subjects i.e. it can yield the level of the experiential with the proviso that the account is always partial and intersubjectively constituted, but it extends beyond this. It is never free from the societal framing as well as the intersubjective field in which it is narrated, relating therefore to broader power relations.

Other additional intersubjective constraints exist, particularly in terms of the delimitations of every day interaction with multiple others, some of whom are more powerful others. These narrations and intersubjectivities have their rules on the one hand, as well as involving points at which the rules are emergent, reinforced or transformed, on the other, depending on the social forces at work. These exist within organisational contexts of different kinds and inten-

sities, of different scales, larger or smaller: such as the family, the school, the workplace, the health system, the state, the legal system, the neighbourhood, the home, the city, the country, the global and the world.

For our second concept, we can turn to belonging. Here we can discern a move, in much recent writing, towards using this term, rather than that of identity. Is this because it moves away from the individual as a unitary subject? Or is it better able to grasp the multiple elements which individuals use in order to make their claims and which are reflective of their affective lives? It is important to note in this context that belonging too can be used in a unitary way and is not necessarily freer of those essentialising and totalising concerns found in identity. This can be found for example in the idea that you can only belong to one nationality or you can only belong and have allegiance to one country (as in the idea of the Cricket test posed by Norman Tebbit under Margaret Thatcher's government that saw who you supported in the cricket match as the acid test of where you belonged – by implication if you supported the Pakistani team you did not belong to Britain).

There is also the distinction between belonging and the politics of belonging (for example see Antonsich 2010, Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011) which at first glance seems eminently necessary. Antonsich argues

belonging should be analyzed both as a personal, intimate feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and as a discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging). (Antonsich 2010: 644)

He draws on Fenster (2005) and Yuval-Davis (2006) for this. Yuval-Davis (2011) argues:

It is important to differentiate between belonging and the politics of belonging. Belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home' [...] The politics of belonging comprise of specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging to particular collectivities. (ibid.: 4)

In these formulations, belonging denotes what people feel and their orientations, the politics of belonging denoting those contestations and struggles around who does and who doesn't belong. But the picture becomes more complicated when we pause to think further about this distinction. This is because the arenas of the social and the political infiltrate all social life, including our feelings, values and orientations. Belonging can involve shared values, networks and resources with others but need not do so. Its technology is multiple and its operations wide-ranging. We can ask about the politics of shared values, networks, practices, resources. As soon as we open up these questions we can then see that struggle and negotiation as well as contestation inform all claims and attributions of belonging, including our affective placement in terms of what we share with others and to what this sharing relates to. Feelings or emotions are not innocent of social structures, as Sara Ahmed (2004) has argued. If this is the case then a clear-cut distinction between belonging and the politics



of belonging cannot be convincing any more. For there is politics in the bigger sense: political organisations and contestations about who belongs and who doesn't or to what degree they do and don't (i.e. in determining differential belonging). There is also the micropolitics of everyday life where we forge our sense of belonging too; this is as much political although using the term in a different sense here. This relates to the issue of the agonistic nature of all social life.

Nor is it possible to argue that shared values are a prerequisite to belonging. Neither are they a necessary or sufficient condition. There are shared values of different kinds. One can share with others values of democratisation or gender equality whilst neither identifying with them, having access to membership in their 'club', nor indeed having affective links with them. On the other hand one can be accepted as a member and therefore in this sense 'belong' whilst having very different political or cultural values: how and the extent to which shared values count in the yielding of belonging is contextual and situational. To share values might take us some way in the direction of belonging but other aspects need to be in place also to yield belonging either in the formal juridical sense or in the more informal sense as well as the affective sense.

Belonging is a concept that can be used at a number of different levels (as has been suggested for identity also). Belonging as an analytical term can enable us to ask questions about belonging to 'what' rather than, as with identity, who an individual 'is' or who and what they 'identify with' (which are in fact two different questions). Certainly the use of identification may be entailed in the notion of belonging as well as in the notion of identity. But more than identification, belonging actually entails not only issues about attributions and claims (as does identity) but also allows more clearly questions about the actual spaces and places to which people are accepted as members or feel that they are members and broader questions about social inclusion as well as forms of violence and subordination entailed in processes of boundary making. In this sense the place-making elements of belonging stressed for example by Antonsich 2010 as well as in my work on social locations (Anthias 2002, 2008) seem relevant. Belonging itself can be variable and is of-course contextual and temporal. Belonging can be applied to questions about formal membership (which entails meeting criteria imposed for example by states, ethnies or nations), as well as less formal but equally powerful ones, such as belonging to families or social networks. There is also the affective dimension which links to feeling of cultural competence and of safety (see Anthias 2006, Antonsich 2010) as well as practices of inclusion.

Of course at this and every level what characterises the belonging notion is that it doesn't have the same theoretical baggage as that of identity which turns us always back to the self. Belonging is always in relation to something outside the self (a place- in the social as well as geographical sense -and is therefore always 'located'), whilst identity has been used more as a possessive characteristic of the individual, as that which defines 'who they are' or 'who they think they are' as well as entailing the construction of bonds with 'similar' others. Be-

longing may also be forged in relation to 'belonging with' (for example others) but this is not always premised on similarity but can be forged in relation to solidarity and values of dialogue and engagement (although the delivery of the politics of this has been little and far between). This is the point I believe where identity stops for if nothing else it constructs boundaries that cannot be crossed. Boundary crossing is a crucial potential found more in the notion of belonging, but it is not one that is always upheld as there is always seepage from the notion of identity to the notion of belonging. Moreover belonging 'to' something is always linked to belonging 'with' particular others who also occupy the realm of belonging to that something. And here it becomes akin to although, arguably, more malleable than the idea of collective identity.

It would be therefore wrong to argue that belonging does not involve boundary making but it also involves potentially at least boundary breaking if it moves beyond the originary essentialism characterised by ethnicised notions of identity. We should not look to belonging or to the distinction between belonging and the politics of belonging to serve us analytically in ways that identity so miserably fails to do. For belonging also wears different hats and these hats serve different questions which are related but not mutually distinctive and it is how these questions are framed that is important. For example we can treat the issue of belonging as inclusion (formal and informal), within the polity, within networks, within the state or intersubjectively. This includes belonging in terms of the status given by national identity, by a passport or by formal rights of citizenship but goes beyond this because even where there are formal rights there can be exclusion through gender, class or ethnic/racial categorisations (involving ideas of non belonging to the social fabric). But this question of inclusion can also be premised on criteria given by a 'shared way of life' that is actually seen as generic to a particular nation and as representing the gold standard of social inclusion (as in the quotes by British politicians at the beginning of this paper). To say that belonging is about inclusion still begs questions about what the criteria are for this and how subjects, both individual and collective, are to meet these criteria and who decides what the criteria are. In other words the analytical notion of belonging cannot be framed outside the issues raised in the political arena that provide the underpinning to how the terms are to be understood in any particular instance.

Belonging can also be addressed in terms of experience (in every day practices and emotions). Belonging here might be about sharing or commonalities: values, culture, language, ethnicity, nationhood. Or it may be about sharing a social class position or being a woman or through a projected common future. This often has a strong intersubjective component entailing bonds, friendships and community at local levels but also transnational ones. Like identity politics, it can also be treated in terms of claims and struggles (contestations): this is what constitutes the politics of belonging in its clearest sense. Belonging can be about attributions, those you are designated by others formally or informally, some of which might not tally with your lived experiences (such as particular attributions about being a Muslim, a

Jew, a Black, a woman or a Romani person which misrecognise you). These discursive and practice based attributions may not fall clearly into the politics of belonging category mentioned earlier but are nonetheless deeply political as well as personally effective.

What is clear is that belonging, potentially, given that it doesn't have the same theoretical baggage, references the issue of 'what' one belongs to much more clearly than identity. However, as I suggested earlier, I do not think that it is possible to think of belonging 'to' without also involving the practices and orientation of belonging 'with'. Belonging 'to' in the sense of formal membership or being accepted within a nation, a neighbourhood, grouping, a club, or a social category, doesn't mean you can't belong to something else also, unlike identity which suggests much more a mutual exclusivity of identifications. The proviso here of course is that adherents of 'identity' have argued that the idea of multiple identities or multilayered identities has shifted the emphasis away from such unitary formulations. However, it is possible to argue that the idea of multiple or multi-layered does not resolve some of the issues relating to 'identity'; rather that such prefixes put into question what is being retained through its continuing use (for this argument see Anthias 2002).

If belonging asks about 'to what' and 'with whom' you are a member, 'where' and 'by whom' you are accepted and you feel attached to, rather than who you are, it is not a totalising concept. However, it faces the same difficulties as identity, identified by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) in terms of asking too much. It is useful to break down the different components in terms of formal membership (juridico-legal as in nationality), informal membership (being accepted and participating within), and being attached to (feeling belonging and a sense of a shared set of values, origins, feelings and so on) and about claims and attributions which are political in different ways (as within political mobilisations of different types or in more subject centred politics relating to resource and representational arenas as well as impression management). This involves a much more complex delineation of questions and issues than the distinctions drawn between belonging and the politics of belonging noted earlier.

However, the critique I made of identity, that it asks too little, does not apply so much, as belonging is by its very linguistic force about place, about context and about location. Belonging relates to place/location both in the geographical sense but also the symbolic figurations around it. Amongst other things, and as an elaboration of the components mentioned above, belonging can include an attachment (to place, community), claims (for place, community), attributions (of place, community), formal membership to places through meeting criteria of such membership, as a commitment or practices of consensus to a state/social system.

As such belonging ties in much better than identity to a focus on social location and positionality which I have stressed in some of my own work (e.g. see Anthias 2002, 2013). This is because of its relationality to place both physical and symbolic and because it denotes spatial and temporal contexts. There are a multiplicity of locations relating to gender, race and

class, locality etc. and specific situational and conjunctural spheres which affect our positions and therefore belongings in time and place. Moreover the struggles around belonging in terms of who belongs and the criteria used become much more embedded in struggles concerning national and territorial resources rather than being posed, if not actually constituted, by struggles over representation and culture (which have been tied to identity politics). For example struggles around membership, nationality and citizenship much more clearly entail struggles of belonging even where they may be couched in terms of the issue of identity. This includes those struggles which focus on cultural criteria, legal entitlement (as in nationality), religious faith or others such as behaving in appropriate ways (e.g. women within ethnic groups) and racialised and gendered criteria (e.g. through the points system in Britain for migrant entry).

Access to material resources is central in belonging in as much as such access is an important part of living with a sense of safety and participation. There is some evidence that those who are professionally active have a greater sense of belonging to society than those who are excluded or involved in casual work (e.g. see Yuval-Davis & Kaptani 2008, Chow 2007), also contributing to providing a sense of a stake in the future of the community (Anthias 2006, Sporton & Valentine 2007). Juridical belonging, such as citizenship, is fundamental also to the sense of safety that many writers see as an important element in forging a sense of belonging (Loader 2006, Anthias 2006, Alexander 2008). Legal status or formal membership and formal belonging constitute a condition for effective participation also (see Anthias & Pacnik 2014).

Having discussed the concepts of identity and belonging I want to turn to the issue of integration and diversity and the dependency of the discourses on notions of identity and belonging that are infused with assumptions about essentialisation, culturalisation and hierarchisation. I will then argue for a different approach to the issues of belonging and incorporation in these debates, and towards a recognition of the importance of location and intersectional forms of dialogue and positionality which rely much more on notions of solidarity building. The term location flags the importance of spatial and temporal contexts. It also denotes differential positionings and belongings across intersecting locations and that these are not static. For example an individual may be positioned higher in one social place than another (e.g. migrants returning to their homelands may achieve class benefits as they display relative wealth to poorer villagers). A man may be subordinated in class terms, but is positioned advantageously in relation to his female partner and may exercise patriarchal forms of power over her. A migrant woman may be subordinated as a cleaner, but has a degree which gives her good life chances potentially for the future and with changing circumstances. Location is nuanced and prone to different placing in terms of different 'gazes', different societal contexts and different parameters of social inequality. This does not refuse the existence of unequal power but rather locates the belonging processes as part of larger hierarchical and stratifying processes and as complexly interwoven with the different opera-

tions of power. It also denotes the importance of struggle and agency: and a more agonistic approach to social relations more generally.

## **Integrating the diverse and notions of identity and belonging**

Integration is concerned with the governance of diversity. We hear continuously that diversity is everywhere. Sometimes it is regarded as a bad thing, for example, in more right wing newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* in the UK and some contributions in *Prospect* magazine. Sometimes it is regarded as a good thing, as for example in the framing of the London Olympics. However in whatever way we use it, it is highly normative and differently interpreted. I have argued that as a boundary maker, it functions as undermining the very intent it seems to activate (Anthias 2013a). If its intent is to demarcate or to include then it registers the difference that can be bridged. On the other hand, if its intent is to exclude then it constructs the demarcation and difference as alien or 'other', occupying a terrain that cannot be crossed. Simmel (1994 [1908]), to some extent illustrates the conundrum, the contradiction or paradox that I have been referring to. He refers to the bridge as both connecting spaces but also demarcating a boundary. Diversity functions a bit like the notion of the bridge. The metaphor of the bridge demarcates boundaries from edge to edge. So the contemporary discourses of diversity are boundary and hierarchy making. Diversity occupies a paradoxical place in discussions of social welfare and enablement. Firstly it signifies the other, as that which needs to be embraced and which is what makes our cities (e.g. London, Paris) uniquely fascinating as in the idea of multicultural conviviality used by Gilroy (2004) or everyday multiculturalism where people live side by side, go to the same schools and share tastes in property or design and fashion. On the other hand diversity stands for danger, which elicits what I call the notion of the perverse diverse

### **The perverse diverse**

Who is the figure of the diverse? Where is the boundary? Who determines the boundary? All these questions raise the spectre of 'difference', the differences that count, and their normative and political evaluation. As such they raise the issue of the boundaries of belonging. In other words if the vocabulary of diversity is a boundary making vocabulary then it is one that not only hails difference but it constructs it and by doing so it discriminates amongst differences, sorting some as good and some as bad (therefore also hierarchising difference). Some diversity as long as it is not regarded as too different becomes a matter of praise and embracement.

There are two ways in which the 'perverse diverse' are constructed both within migration policy and discourse but also in terms of the discourse of diversity. The first, denoting the

unacceptable face of diversity is found in the trope of the 'unwilling to integrate'. The concern here is with those who are regarded as not willing to belong and there is an attempt to force them to accept the dominant values and way of life and to extract from them a show of loyalty, a demonstration that in fact they are willing to integrate in a range of ways. Migrants' unwillingness to integrate, treated as *deviant*, is to be corrected by requiring a demonstration through sitting citizenship or integration tests. Here the concern is to put in place certain requirements which will enforce the 'integration' of the 'other' and as proof of willingness. Their own cultural and social resources are thereby treated as *deficient* for the purposes of participating in society. Where difference persists it must be relegated to the private sphere and not denote a strong communal character, unless it can be used to police those within its boundaries (Department of Communities and Local Government 2012).

The second trope we find is that of 'unable to integrate'. Some are regarded as therefore unable to belong. This posits the *impossibility* of some undesirable differences being eliminated, and that these constitute a threat to Western values and society. This treats difference as *dangerous* or *deviant* and relates to the securitisation agenda. Here not only is there an unwillingness to integrate but a threat to society itself. Related is that 'they' are incapable of becoming 'one of us' i.e. adapting to the society and adopting 'our' values. This is found in the securitisation discourse on Muslims, new laws and their modes of operation, and in debates on the body covering of women and on honour based violence including forced marriages.

Elements of deviance, deficit and danger come into play in demarcating the categories of the 'desirable' versus the 'perverse diverse'. Whilst the former are constructed as having deficits that can be corrected, the latter become constructed as dangerous and deviant and as largely uncorrectable. A deficit approach to minorities and newcomers is found in the fact that there is no validation of their own language; there is a concern to incorporate them but in assimilationist ways. Other aspects of who they are, or of their social position, of their class and their gender, are ruled out of court. The 'unable to integrate', are signposted also through the securitisation discourse which focuses particularly on Muslims as potential terrorists. They are the epitome of the perverse diverse, and here we have anxiety about the dangers they pose eliciting forms of state violence and control, from strengthening laws, changing laws, and giving integration and policing roles to religious leaders in policing their own categories or groups. And the Roma are being targeted, not so much through a securitisation discourse but for their unwillingness to live in ways that tally with the British qua civilised way of life found in the quotes I started this paper with.

## Essentialisation, culturalisation and hierarchical difference

As 'diversity' under-emphasises commonalities and structural contexts, denoting static, a-historical and essentialist units of 'culture' with fixed boundaries (Modood 2007), this means that the boundaries of belonging are defined in essentialist and culturalist ways. The cultural is divorced from the structural and material, and 'othered' populations are endowed with culture seen as a thing which people carry with them. This treats culture as a baggage we carry with us rather than as a process or a tool-kit we use to make sense of the world. Nor does it pay attention to its contextual operations or its material underpinnings.

The focus on culture is also found in the claims that minorities make. However, claims and contestations, organised in the name of cultural identities, may also be about resources (economic, cultural, educational and other resources) or about rights, respect/representation and redistribution (Fraser 1997), and linked to the political economy of power. As recent publications by Joseph Rowntree (see Hickman et al 2008) have shown, people in localities are more concerned with safety and convenience and issues of age, locality and class rather than ethnic/religious diversity. In other studies, also, (Rogaly & Taylor 2007, Vertovec & Wessendorf 2006), issues of culture were not as important as other problems in local neighbourhoods to do with housing, public policy, local governance and safety.

A particular example of culturalisation is found in discourses relating to the veil, honour-based violence and forced marriages, which raise gendered issues in particular. Concerns with so-called honour-based violence (see Gill 2010), articulate the need to protect women who are seen as victims, from their ethnic or Muslim culture in particular. Such framings tend to divest it of its gendered aspects, viewing such crimes as the result of cultural values rather than practices of gender-based violence more widely (e.g. see Begikhani et al 2010). The problematisation of difference and diversity is especially clear here, where there exists a through culturalisation of the social issues involved and their depiction as only related to the 'other'. To critique such culturalisation is not to endorse such gendered crimes or issues they raise about gender equality, however.

This discourse shows how gender is often at the heart of culturalist constructions of collectivities (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992). Indeed the culturalisation of violence against women means that individual cases are seen as representing collective patterns and leads to demonisation of the whole culture (Grillo 2008, Gill 2010), fueling Islamophobia in particular. Often arguments about the oppression of women within multicultural societies (e.g. see Okin 1999) are used to critique migration, Islam or the incorporation of such groups in society; they are judged to be non-assimilable because they are not willing to conform to the supposed universalist principles of western democracies. Such culturalisations, drawing often on stereotypical versions of religious faith or 'ways of life' of the 'other' are prominent not only within debates on honour based crimes, but also debates on forced marriages and genital mutilation.

## Diversity and belonging

Current uses of diversity have in common with particular understandings of belonging the demarcating of sharp boundaries between self and other. Some 'others' are seen as so diverse that they become unacceptable to the social world that the self inhabits. It is these diverse that Blunkett, Clegg, Straw and Cameron are concerned with. For diversity identifies those differences that are regarded as salient and ignores others. Indeed, we cannot use the term 'diversity' without first denoting and marking difference from something or someone.

The contemporary figuration of the 'diverse' focuses on the 'other' as a social collective, marked by ways of life, alien, frightening, deficient, or in some cases exotic. Some of this diversity can be assimilable as long as the diverse jump ship, i.e. they abandon some of the aspects that make them so but some are regarded as incapable because the space between the ships is far too wide. The acceptable phase of diversity is that which is regarded as a less dangerous and objectionable expression of cultural difference. So when the term diversity is used in policy documents – for example in a recent document from the Department of Communities and Local Government (2012) – the form it takes is to construct the diverse in neutral ways and as not really different. When diversity is treated as acceptable it erases difference, it constructs sameness out of difference if you like and as such it allows for belonging in terms of membership as well as potential inclusion and feelings of attachment.

The focus on such aspects of the diversity and integration agenda point to some of the ways in which belonging and identity are conceived. Firstly, there is a culturalisation of difference and identity. Difference is seen as primarily cultural and identificational. Minorities are being required to shed their culture which is seen as inimical to a British or Western way of life and embrace the culture and values of the society of migration. This is a prime requisite for belonging in terms of membership although passing tests such as the Life in the UK test does not automatically give rights of citizenship and full membership such as nationality. Those outside the supposed taken for granted boundaries of belonging, i.e. those who migrate, particularly from third world, eastern European and Muslim countries are being asked to identify with the British nation, even though many do not have full legal status in the UK and despite continuing racialisation and minoritisation as well as differential treatment in the labour market.

Part of the boundary making involved in diversity and integration practices and discourses relates to the construction of hierarchical difference and therefore differential and hierarchical belonging. Some are deemed to be able to belong in the fullest sense, as full members, with full legal and social entitlement and as taken for granted members of the nation and others have a partial membership bestowed upon them with residence rights but no entitlement to nationality and yet others are policed at the borders and if they enter required to adopt and to clearly demonstrate their allegiance to 'British values'.



## Towards a framing for belonging and social location

I want to try and point to some ways in which we can build on any positive aspects of the recognition of diversity and the ways belonging is constructed. Firstly, we need a more intersectional approach which does not treat people purely in ethnic, migrant or racial terms but considers the different facets of people's social locations. This involves a rejection of the culturalisation and hierarchisation found in the particular construction of belonging within diversity and integration discourse and practice. In order to do this I argue that we need an intersectional and translocational lens for understanding people's incorporation.

Secondly, we also need a more transnational lens because both diversity discourse and the accompanying integration discourse that is current in most European societies do not actually take on board the kind of transnational links people have, the flows of communication between different spaces, including places of residence, countries of origin, local and trans-local links as well as translocational positionalities (noting not only the crisscrossing connections in peoples' lives but also some of the contradictions this creates at a number of different levels). This means that belonging has become a term that can no longer be linked to a fixed place or location but to a range of different locales in different ways. This also means that people might occupy different and contradictory positions and have different belongings globally. For example, a migrant who has lived and worked in Britain may not feel a sense of belonging to British life, feeling for example that they are not full members or accepted as such. Their social position in their own homeland may be advanced when they return if they have been able to save and display relative wealth on their visits. However, on such return they may not necessarily gain full belonging in their country of origin as they may be regarded as outsiders (e.g. this is the case for many ex Commonwealth migrants such as Indians or Cypriots). A transnational lens enables us to see that fixity of belonging is not possible. A translocational lens, which attends to the intersectional, the transnational and the recognition of different localities and spaces can help us to deal with some of the problems of a 'diversity' which assumes and essentialises categories, which defines the boundaries, which asks for bridges. But those bridges at the same time construct boundaries themselves, construct the 'perverse diverse' versus the 'good diverse'.

I argued earlier that integration and related notions of diversity suffer from a focus on the cultural and identificational, essentialise the 'other', and hold assumptions about good and bad difference. I also argued that they are at times construct populations as dangerous, deviant and/or deficient from the point of view of hegemonic white European agendas. In order to think in fresh ways about the difficulties I have noted, I want to develop a little bit further the contribution that a framing using a transnational intersectional lens can make and how a notion of solidarity can help us rethink some of the issues involved.

## A transnational intersectional lens and solidarity

Broadly speaking, intersectionality posits that different social divisions inter-relate in terms of the production of social relations and in terms of people's lives and they are seen as 'mutually constitutive' in terms of experience and practice. The triad of gender, race and class has been added to by intersectional frameworks which have insisted on the need to look at other social categories such as sexuality, faith and disability amongst others (e.g. see Taylor et al 2011, Meekosha & Shuttleworth 2009). It is important to locate such a framing in terms of structures on the one hand (broader economic and political institutional frameworks) and processes on the other (broader social relations in all their complexity including discourses and representations). This broadens the concept of intersectionality, away from merely a focus on the interplay of peoples group identities in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, racialisation and so on.

The focus of intersectionality has often used, however, a nation based lens. A transnational perspective to issues of migration has provided an important corrective to a nation based approach which has little concern or acknowledgment of multiple and translocational locations and allegiances. A transnational intersectional lens can also broaden the scope of analysis of 'othering' processes illuminating both the differential placing of actors within and across national borders and the often contradictory and complex processes involved. In fact, some writers have begun to use intersectionality within a transnational frame (e.g. see Radhakrishnan 2008). It is important to attend to the transnational dimensions of context and time, including the realities of multicultural and cosmopolitan spaces, digitalised communities, relating to virtual space and time and post coloniality. For example, a Ghanaian migrant worker can inhabit a position of subordination in the UK but a position of class mobility in Ghana. It has also been argued that

there is diversity across countries in their national-level gender inequalities based on intersecting axes of transnational, regional, cross-cutting, and unique national issues that structure gendered differences and concerns (Bose 2012: 71).

In focusing on social divisions, as boundaries, hierarchies and ontological spaces (see Anthias 1998 in particular), and using the notion of translocational positionality (2002, 2008, 2009, 2013b), I have tried to work towards a complex recognition of hierarchical relations which has a wider theoretical resonance in terms of social stratification. This potentially enables a more integrated framing to issues of social inequality compared to traditional approaches to stratification, on the one hand, and to approaches that focus on the intersections of social categories as groups, or in relation to social categories and divisions alone, on the other. A *translocational* lens is a tool for analysing positions and outcomes produced through the intersections of different social structures and processes, including transnational ones, giving importance to the broader social context and to temporality.

Firstly, with the idea of translocations, there is a focus on *social locations*, rather than a focus on cultural difference and boundaries. Our 'location' is embedded in relations of hierarchy within a multiplicity of specific situational and conjunctural spheres. Therefore the lens is turned towards the broader landscape of power which is productive of social divisions. This recognizes the importance of context, the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales.

Within this framework, identity and belonging are conceptualized as a set of processes (therefore there is a need to attend to historicity), and not possessive characteristics of individuals. This relates to one of the problems of integration regarding the positing of 'difference' and 'diversity'. It suggests that we shouldn't talk about differences as empirically given but as part of a process relating to boundary-making and hierarchies in social life which might take different forms in different times and contexts and should be treated therefore as emergent rather than pre-given.

Just as a translocational lens moves away analytically from the focus on difference, politically it moves away from the governmentality of difference. Recognising that there are new emerging constellations of invisible intersections, corrects the tendency to single out some at the potential expense of erasing other boundaries and inequalities which might exist but have not been articulated or claimed. A temporal and contextual analysis shifts attention away from fixities of social position (usually underpinned by assumptions about the primacy of the nation-state boundary), and enables a more *transnational* as well as more *local-based* lens. The idea of 'translocation' thereby treats lives as being located across multiple but also fractured and inter-related social spaces of different types.

The term translocational denotes the ways in which social locations are products of particular constellations of social relations, and in terms of relationality, at determinate points in time; it locates them within a spatial and temporal context. The notion of 'translocation' does not treat social locations as static in time or place. Moreover, social locations intersect to transcend rather than merely to intertwine, therefore there is an emphasis on a dialogical and dialectical relationship. Such an approach recognises the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales as well as the contradictory processes in play.

Another set of insights comes from a notion of solidarity which pertains to all societal members. Although used more in class politics than ethnic politics, solidarity can also be applied to political struggles which construct bonds across difference (in the case of class struggle, for example, despite differences of ethnicity, country, region or sector). In addition, one of the central problems with current approaches to integration and diversity is that only the 'other' such as the migrant is targeted (and more generally non-European migrants). Solidarity on the other hand relates to general societal processes and includes concerns with class and gender. For the purposes of this argument, solidarity entails a concern with building a common future, irrespective of differences in beliefs, values or ways of life. Solidarity is

forged agonistically and in relation to a common enemy. This builds on the notion of *identities of action* rather than identities of common origin or culture, unlike the focus of integration and diversity discourses. One can draw a distinction between identities as practices, in terms of legitimation and exclusion on the one hand, and usurpation and resistance on the other (see also Gimenez 2001). Solidarity relates to the latter i.e. to identities forged for different struggles; these need not be seen as purely single struggle forms of organising. Such forms of solidarity have become more evident in transnational campaigns on the environment and anti-capitalist campaigns as well as anti-racisms (as well their opposite, for example in new right-wing racist organisation).

## Forging belonging: Participation, access, parity

We can now reframe some of the issues discussed under the umbrella categories of identity and belonging. We can move away from a focus on the cultural difference of the 'other' and towards a concern with erasing forms of marginality and exclusion more broadly, and socially, conceived.

A focus on access, participation and parity as pre-requisites to belonging can make advances in delivering some of the more positive aspects of 'integration', and 'diversity'. Firstly, in relation to access, it is necessary to focus on dismantling those social conditions that exclude people from social resources on the basis of 'differences' of class, gender, ethnicity, race and other categories. This means attacking barriers which link to differential inclusions and exclusions that are intersectional and complex, such as those against migrant women or visibly different religious and racial categories. As such, it involves not only education and promotion of best practices of co-operation but making sure that other parts of policy do not undermine those of the integration agenda. I am thinking particularly about migration controls, policing and the implementation of law and order which can produce criminalisation of some social groups. It requires not only a system of enforcing violations relating to active discriminations but also a duty that organisations and institutions have robust systems which actively encourage the inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

Secondly, with regards to participation, it is vital that diversity recognition does not make a bright distinction between the so called diverse (often regarded as migrants and their descendants) and the 'normal' population which is then treated as homogeneous. Diversity is endemic to society. As George Herbert Mead (1929), the famous sociologist wrote, 'society is unity in diversity'. There is a need to frame goals and central values in terms of a two way dialogue of negotiation, rather than requiring the 'other', the 'diverse' to adopt the values of the 'normal' population (the homogeneity of values here is in fact more mythical than real). This requires not only involving the representatives of minorities in decision making (in fact it raises the issue of who 'represents' them). It also involves the formulation of the societal values of Europe in a more multiple and heterogeneous way – as long as there is a basic set

of over-riding principles relating to human rights and the social rights of citizenship. In other words, the idea of a European-wide set of values that migrants and minorities need to embrace in order to be regarded as citizens needs to be seen in a more multiple and embracing way – of shared sets of values across European and other social contexts. Focusing on what we share and on our commonalities becomes more important than focusing on the management and governmentality of difference.

Participation involves not just openings for people to get involved at national, local and transnational levels of governance, but also providing enabling conditions for them to be able to do this effectively. Education, antiracist and antisexist policies at all social levels is important here as well as vigilance over the ways in which discourses of racism and sexism creep into the means of mass communication.

The third dimension, of parity, involves providing not only an equal space from which to speak, but that all people in a society should be treated equally irrespective of country of birth, gender, age and so on. Anti-discrimination measures are important but as much research has shown, on their own, are inadequate. Legal equality is important for minorities as well as provisions which make sure that in employment for example they are treated equally and that the jobs that they do are not poorly paid and valued (as is the case for many migrants in domestic care, cleaning, agricultural work and so on).

Such a reframing, through the lens of participation, access and parity as well as with a focus on transnational and locational/spatial dimensions to social processes of belonging requires a robust notion of citizenship. Having a stake in the society in which you live is vital for the development of identification with its future (usually ethnic and national belonging has been seen more as an identification with its past or with some essentialising 'origin'). The modes by which people achieve nationality and citizenship are important here. A more inclusive notion of who belongs is vital in generating feelings of belonging. If you are accepted in society you are more likely to develop feelings of belonging as I have reworked it in this paper.

An intersectional and cosmopolitan imaginary is able to recognise diversities on the basis of shifting combinatories of location and positionality within a time and space framework. This involves the recognition of the global and intersectional nature of social bonds and interests and the need to move away from ethnocentric and national based lens for achieving inclusion and social justice. Such an approach is not focused on cultural difference but on inequalities and subordinations that are produced intersectionally; it therefore moves beyond culture and ethnicity, and considers material struggles over resources of different types.

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