



ethnic groups, and has little support from any religion; indeed, religious condemnation may be the most effective way of eliminating it. So to favour ethnicity and problematise religion is a reflection of a secularist bias that has alienated many religionists, especially Muslims.

Taken as a whole, the interculturalism versus multiculturalism debate is one strand of wider discussion on the proper ways of reconciling cultural diversity with enduring forms of social unity. Interculturalism, and other concepts such as cohesion and indeed integration, need to be allied to multiculturalism rather than presented as an alternative.

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## Intersectionality

*The concept of intersectionality has emerged from a tradition of black feminist critique. In important respects it has been taken up across the social sciences to help theorise an understanding of simultaneously held subject positions, and how these relate to social cleavages and identity categories.*





The *term* intersectional refers to something which cuts into something else. The *concept* of intersectionality describes a cluster of theoretical positions which seek to revise the view that identity categories, and the web of social relations in which they are located, are experienced as ‘separate roads’ (Roth, 2004). While this necessarily takes in more than ethnicity or gender therefore, the provenance of the concept may be traced to a particular black feminist critique of the ways in which mainstream (white) feminism had historically ignored the intersections of race and patriarchy (hooks, 1984; Crenshaw, 1988, 1991). In one reading, intersectionality has compelled feminist researchers to explore how their ‘moral positions as survivors of one expression of systemic violence become eroded in the absence of accepting responsibility of other expressions of systemic violence’ (Collins, 2000: 247). Such critique has made conventional the view that women experience discrimination ‘in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity’ (Ritzer, 2007: 204).

From its origins in this critical mode, and despite the suggestion that ‘it has not become a key concern for the many sociologists not directly working on gender issues’ (Choo and Ferree, 2010: 129), important features of intersectionalist thought have been ‘mainstreamed’, such as being incorporated into equality agendas and research questionnaires. This is especially the case in the design of anti-discrimination policies that can simultaneously tackle more than gender and race intersections on their own, but include categories of age, disability, sexuality and religion as well (Meer, 2010). Resting at the centre of contemporary debates about intersectionality, however, as Yuval-Davis (2006: 195) reminds us, ‘is conflation or separation of the different analytic levels in which intersectionality is located, rather than just a debate on the relationship of the divisions themselves’. It is to these delineations that we now turn.

### STRUCTURAL OR POLITICAL INTERSECTIONALITY?

Some of the broad theoretical contours of intersectionality have been shaped by a relatively small number of authors who seek to bring different dynamics into focus (cf. Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1983). From a perspective of Critical Race Theory in particular, Crenshaw (1988, 1991) initially proposed the concept of intersectionality ‘to grasp the ways in which the interactions of gender and race limit black women’s access to the US labour market, and how a lack of understanding of this intersection marginalizes black women and black women’s experiences’ (Walby et al., 2012: 227). In her own words, Crenshaw describes how intersectionality

grew out of trying to conceptualize the way the law responded to issues where both race and gender discrimination were involved. What happened was like an accident, a collision. Intersectionality simply came from the idea that if you’re standing in the path of multiple forms of exclusion, you are likely to get hit by both. (Crenshaw, 2004: 2)





Such discrimination, she maintained, could not be explained in terms of ‘the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood’, because ‘women of color can be erased by the strategic silences of anti-racism and feminism’ (Crenshaw, 1991: 1244, 1253). So neither the category of ‘black’ nor the category of ‘woman’ is sufficiently capable of speaking to and redressing the discriminatory experiences of *black women*. To Crenshaw (1991: 1252), ‘The failure of feminism to interrogate race means that resistance strategies of feminism will replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women.’ Of course Crenshaw was writing from the North American perspective which, as illustrated with the case of **whiteness**, has its own historical dynamics. The following passage is worth quoting at length for it captures a parallel set of complicated dynamics from a British perspective:

In arguing that most contemporary feminist theory does not begin to adequately account for the experience of black women we also have to acknowledge that it is not a simple question of their absence, consequently the task is not one of rendering their visibility. On the contrary, we will have to argue that the process of accounting for their historical and contemporary position does, in itself, challenge the use of some of the central categories and assumptions of recent mainstream feminist thought. We can point to no single source for our oppression. When white feminists emphasize patriarchy alone, we want to redefine the term and make it more complex. (Carby, 1982: 213)

The first half of this passage advances a debate about **recognition**: as something distinct that can play a central role in a conception of equality. What is pioneering in Carby is that while this includes the issue of subjectivities, it also focuses attention on articulations of political relationships and not just matters of individual esteem or psychology, but in ways that link up with Crenshaw’s argument. The latter therefore sought to eschew the conflation of *structural* intersectionality (which in her view focuses on inequality of social groups) and *political* intersectionality (which focuses on political agendas and projects). As an illustration of this, Walby et al. (2012: 227) describe how Crenshaw critiqued ‘the invisibility of domestic violence against black women [which] focuses on two main actors – white women and black men’.

### **INTRA-CATEGORICAL, ANTI-CATEGORICAL AND INTER-CATEGORICAL**

In some respects the approach of Crenshaw retains something of what Harding has termed the *additive approach* which promotes “‘add women and stir” approaches to gender issues’ (Harding, 1991: 212). In contrast, Yuval-Davis (2006: 200) encourages us to pursue what she terms a ‘transversal politics’.





She elaborates: ‘One cannot assume the same effect or constellation each time and, hence, the investigation of the specific social, political and economic processes involved in each historical instance is important’ (2006: 200). What then are the analytical paths through which we can pursue this transversal?

With one innovation in conceptualising the category of intersectionality, McCall (2005: 1773–4) seeks to distinguish between three related strands. The first she describes as ‘intra-categorical’ which centres on ‘particular social groups at neglected points of intersection ... in order to reveal the complexity of lived experience within such groups’. The objective here is to make group dynamics *visible* that were previously invisible. The second strand, ‘anti-categorical’, is ‘based on a methodology that deconstructs analytical categories’ (ibid.). This critiques the idea of internal coherence in a manner that seeks to challenge and guard against notions of identity as unchanging. Her final, ‘inter-categorical’ reading of intersectionality ‘provisionally adopt[s] existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality among multiple and conflicting dimensions’ (ibid.). This latter formulation is her preferred means of reconciling identity and social structures. This, according to Choo and Ferree (2010: 134), allows McCall to stress the

dynamic forces more than categories – racialisation rather than races, economic exploitation rather than classes, gendering and gender performance rather than genders – and recognize the distinctiveness of how power operates across particular institutional fields. Because of its interest in mutually transformative processes, this approach emphasizes change over time as well as between sites and institutions.

The *inter-categorical* approach thus is a means of accepting categories almost ‘under erasure’, in a manner that can harness their utility in knowledge of their limitations. This is not radically different to Iris Marion Young’s (2000: 89) aspiration to ‘retain a description of social group differentiation, but without fixing or reifying groups’.

### UNITARY, MULTIPLE AND INTERSECTIONAL

The third cluster of theoretical readings of intersectionality find expression in Hancock (2007: 64, 67) who distinguishes intersectionality from ‘unitary’ and ‘multiple’ forms of social categories. In the first approach, ‘only one category is examined, and it is presumed to be primary and stable’. In contrast, in the ‘multiple’ approach ‘the categories are presumed to be stable and to have stable relationships with each other’ (Walby et al., 2012: 228). In the ‘intersectional’ approach, meanwhile, ‘more than one category is addressed; the categories matter equally; the relationship between the categories is open; the categories are fluid not stable; and mutually constitute each other’ (ibid.). To some extent then, in this last





usage, intersectionality is returned to its origins in so far as it corresponds to the argument that ‘systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization’ (Collins, 2000: 299). To avoid the additive tendency, however, we need to remind ourselves that different identity categories have a different ontological basis (Yuval-Davis, 2006). For example, in Werbner’s (2013: 410) reading, ‘identities of gender and race imply an essentialising definitional move on the part of wider, dominant society that subordinates and excludes’. In contrast, **ethnicity** is deemed to be ‘an expression of multiple identities’ which are ‘positive, creative and dialogical’.

This reminds us of why the question of methodology cuts across empirical work on intersectionality. As Chang and Culp (2002: 485) ask, empirically ‘how does one pay attention to the points of intersection?’ Hitherto these questions have almost exclusively been pursued through qualitative and interpretive approaches, which identify future directions in lending the concept to comparative analyses yet to be undertaken (Nash, 2008). Equally interesting is the answer to Yuval-Davis’s (2006: 202) question ‘Do we have to be concerned that the list is limitless?’ must surely be ‘no’. This is because intersectionality has become ‘both a normative theoretical argument and an approach to conducting empirical research that emphasises the interaction of categories of difference’ (Hancock, 2007: 63–4).

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## Islamophobia

*Islamophobia is the suspicion, dislike or hatred of Muslim individuals or groups, viewing their real or assumed 'Islamicness' as a negative trait. It therefore reflects a racial and not just a theological logic, and can take a number of forms including attitudes, behaviours, discourse and imagery.*

The origins of the term Islamophobia have been variously traced to an essay by two French Orientalists (Dinet and Baamer, 1918), 'a neologism of the 1970s' (Rana, 2007: 148), an early 1990s American periodical (Sherridan, 2006), and, indeed, to a British political-sociologist (see Modood, 1991, quoted in Birt, 2006). What is less disputed is that the term received its public policy prominence with the Runnymede Trust's Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (CBMI) (1997) *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*. Defined as 'an unfounded hostility towards Islam, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims' (ibid.: 4), the report conceived of eight argumentative positions to encapsulate its meaning, and through which the members of the commission sought to draw attention to their assessment that 'anti-Muslim prejudice has grown so considerably and so rapidly in recent years that a new item in the vocabulary is needed' (CBMI, 1997: 4).

These comprise: (1) Islam is seen as a monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to change; (2) Islam is seen as separate and 'other' – it does not have values

