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Published online: 07 Dec 2010.

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New hybridities, old concepts: the limits of 'culture'

Floya Anthias

Abstract

Approaches that find hybrid social forms to be results of interculturality and diasporic relations claim that these are able to transcend "old ethnicities" and that they constitute transgressive cultural formations. I shall argue that the concept of hybridity, although denoting important developments and challenges to static and essentialist notions of ethnicity and identity, presents both conceptual and substantive difficulties. In addition, approaches to "hybridity" may unintentionally provide a gloss over existing cultural hierarchies and hegemonic practices. I shall reformulate the basis for treating "identities" outside the parameters of the old ethnicities, by developing the concept of "translocational" positionality. It is argued that this is a more adequate means for addressing the range of issues relating to belonging hailed by the notion of hybridity.

Introduction

The stories we tell ourselves that we are all becoming global, hybrid and diasporic can only be told by those who occupy, as Robert Young (1996, p. 4) so persuasively argues, a space of 'new stability and self-assurance'. Such stories are therefore also political interventions and constructions of social reality. Although explicitly claiming the political space of contestation over the fixities of identity and culture that are so prominent in racialized discourse, they may function, unintentionally, to provide a gloss over existing cultural hierarchies and hegemonic practices. Young goes on to say: 'heterogeneity, cultural interchange and diversity have now become the self-conscious identity of modern society' (p. 4). In this article I want to explore some of the ways in which notions of 'belonging' are constructed within arguments about the increasing synthesis of cultural elements between minority and majority 'cultures'.[1]

Approaches that find hybrid social forms to be results of interculturality and diasporic relations, or what Hall (1990) calls cultural diasporization, also claim that these signify new forms of identity. Through a declaration of 'hybridities', they postulate the transcendence of 'old ethnicities' (cf. Hall 1988) and the formation of transgressive cultural formations which *in and of themselves* function to dispel the certainties of fixed location. Contestations over culture are important focuses of struggle as they are part of the exercise of power (Bourdieu 1990). If hybrid social identities are now the characteristic identities of the modern world, then struggles over cultural hegemony and the underlying mechanisms that support it, become increasingly empty signifiers; merely to occupy the space of the 'hybrid' constitutes an emancipatory human condition.[2]

A critical evaluation of hybridity may also be an important frame for evaluating the degree to which change has occurred in the paradigms used to understand forms of migration and settlement in the modern era. The terms hybridity and diaspora open up spaces hitherto foreclosed by traditional approaches to ethnicity and migration, and involve anti-essentialist projects and critiques of static notions of ethnicity and culture. They are terms that seek to overcome the victimology of transnational migrants, empowering them, linking the past and the present.

There has, in fact, been a growing literature critiquing the notion of hybridity (see Solomos and Back 1996; Young 1996; Ahmed 1997; Werbner and Modood 1997) on a number of counts. This article is a contribution to this debate. I shall argue that diasporic hybridity, although denoting important developments and challenges to static and essentialist notions of ethnicity, culture and identity, presents important conceptual and substantive difficulties. One key problem relates to the location of culture as the core element for defining identity and belonging. I will also reformulate the basis for treating 'identities' outside the parameters of the old ethnicities, by developing the concept of 'translocational' positionality. Issues of exclusion, political mobilization on the basis of collective identity, and narrations of belonging and otherness cannot be addressed adequately unless they are located within other constructions of difference and identity, particularly around gender and class (see Anthias 1998a). I shall therefore propose that the idea of 'translocational' positionality is a more adequate means for addressing the range of issues relating to belonging hailed by the notion of hybridity.

Clearly, the examination of new forms of identification, and the construction of more synthetic cultures, is an important focus of study in contemporary Europe. For example, Britain has witnessed the growth of permanent settlers, with most of the children of new Commonwealth immigrants who came over in the post-war period now reaching middle age. Successive generations of British-born youngsters, from a range of transnational population movements, are now a permanent feature of

British society. Much of the literature on issues of migration and ethnicity has tended to see them as being 'between two cultures' or they have been researched in terms of their assimilation or integration within mainstream society and the extent to which they retain the culture of their parents. There now exists a growth of interest in the ways in which young people's identities emerge in specific locales (Back 1996, Hewitt 1996). Those who write within the new tradition reject the old paradigms for understanding the social relations and the lived experiences of this new generation, and may deploy the term 'hybridity'.

Hybridity is a central term in post-structuralist cultural theory and in some variants of globalization theory. It is, in fact, difficult to understand the importance given to notions of hybridity outside the debate on cultural globalization. Currently debated issues include questions such as: whether it is a new process or an old one, whether it exists or not (Hirst and Thompson 1995), whether its character is imperialistic or democratizing and the extent of hybridization (Pieterse 1995). Hybridity (and diaspora) has been central to the debate about cultural globalization, and has functioned to celebrate it. Such a cultural globalization has been seen as a challenge to ethnic essentialisms and absolutisms. This has occurred at a time when the contradictory nature of globalization vis-à-vis ethnicity, localism, fundamentalism and nationalism has been recognized and explored. Globalization has been seen as a challenge to the nation-state, while concomitantly generating ethnic and cultural parochialisms and localisms, or '**glocalisation**' in Roland Robertson's own 'hybrid' term (Robertson 1995). It has been argued that the boundary of the nation-state is traversed in the multiple ways identified by the movement of capital; the growing penetration over the globe of transnational financial capital; by the growth and penetration of new technologies; by the export and movement of communication modes including media forms and images; by the growth of transnational political and juridical groups (for example, the EU and its potential); by growing international resistance and action groups (for example, the Beijing Conference of Women); by penetration of ideologies producing a 'world system' (Wallerstein 1990) or Global Village (McLuhan 1964). Diasporic and hybridization processes have been related to this.

Hybridity is tied to the idea of cultural syncretism, rather than the cultural difference solidified by multiculturalism, in terms of the interpenetration of elements. In some versions hybridity is depicted as transgressive, or as enabling a privileged access to knowledge (for example, Bhabha 1990, 1994; Rassool 1997). The argument about multiple belongings in the modern state rests largely on the dismantling of the notion of a unitary identity, partly through a critique of unitary notions of the self and partly through a critique of unitary notions of cultural identity. However, ironically, hybridity arguments need to stress the retention of part of a cultural heritage (that is, the continuities involved), if they are

able to identify the cultural identity which is then merged with other aspects to form an organic whole. They thereby share the concern of the old ethnicities with the role of culture in constituting ethnic belonging (for example, Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Shibutani and Khan 1965).

There is a need to desegregate the problematic of culture and that of collective identity and the formation of solidary projects. Identity formation and re-iteration involves the use of narratives of belongingness, but these do not depend solely on cultural practices or beliefs. Hybridization as 'the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms of new practices '(Rowe and Schelling 1991, p. 231) may be seen as a depiction of all culture and therefore neither new nor essentially related to diasporic experience or diasporic space (Brah 1996). The forms of 'belonging' hailed by the notion of hybridity therefore require delineating: to what extent does hybridity signal the end of ethnicity, in the sense of struggle and contestation around the ethnic boundary?

Cultural interpenetration and epistemological effects: the 'stranger'

It is worth noting that hybridity in the sense of interculturality, is not a new phenomenon; it is intrinsic to the process of migration and dislocation as Simmel (1908) and Schutz (1950), among others, have shown. Nor does it necessarily lead to transgressivity or empowerment: even where individuals adopt some of the cultural traits of the new society, they may remain marginalized and be seen as 'strangers'. An earlier sociological discourse was more concerned with specifying some of the epistemological aspects of culture contact but is clearly related to the role of border crossings in dismantling the 'barbed wire' of monolithically constituted ethnic absolutisms. The approaches developed by Simmel and Schutz focus on the stranger as immigrant or sojourner, and are concerned with the individual condition created by the crossing of cultural and social borders, rather than on wider social outcomes. While not attending to the cultural heteroglossia which have historically produced all societies, both Simmel and Schutz attend to the process of distantiation, objectification and the acquisition of translation skills by strangers or travellers from one society to the other, as a form of skilled management of the condition of marginality.

Simmel, in his little essay, an appendage to his *Sociology* of 1908, defines the stranger as

the wanderer who comes today and **stays** tomorrow . . . (whose) position in the group is determined essentially by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it which do not and cannot stem from the group itself (1950, p. 402) . . . (this) does not simply involve passivity and detachment; it is a

particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement (1960, p. 404). Objectivity means that he is bound by no commitments which could prejudice his perceptions, understanding and valuation of the given (1960, p. 405) (which makes him) contain many dangerous possibilities.

Here we have a precursor to the idea found in the work of writers like Bhabha about the potential transgressivity of inhabiting a liminal space (1994). The stranger is often accused of inviting transgression, for as an observer of culture, he (Simmel uses the masculine form) possesses a dual and contradictory character being 'close to us, in so far as we feel between him and ourselves common features of a national, social or generally **human** nature' (p. 406). But Simmel uses the example of Greeks and Barbarians to argue that he may be disallowed this last feature (that is, the commonality of 'the human') if he is seen as a member of a group of strangers, rather than as an individual. He thereby distinguishes the occasional stranger from group migration and identification. Simmel underplays the potential culture conflict and the diverse ways in which strangers are received and relate. However, asymmetry is a key area (this becomes complex when the stranger is the **dominant** stranger-as the colonizer or the foreign capitalist).

Schutz (1950/1996), on the other hand, sees the 'Stranger' as having the intention to 'interpret cultural patterns of a social group which he approaches to orient himself' (Anthias and Kelly 1996, p. 339). He is defined as 'an adult of our times and civilization who tries to be permanently accepted or at least tolerated by the group' (Anthias and Kelly 1996, p. 339). The prototype is the immigrant who has to adapt to a new world, and learn its world view, namely that of the hegemonic culture. Crossing cultural boundaries involves a cultural disabling; to become enabled, the stranger must learn to see the world through the indigene's eyes. The stranger needs to learn new recipes, not yet tested by experience, and must be involved in a continuous process of translation. The conflict of universes of meaning is resolved by cultural adaptation and assimilation. In this sense the contemplation of the original homeland, and its sets of meanings in Schutz, the taken-for-granted typifications or sets of recipes for making sense of the world, become displaced and their relativization becomes possible. The past of one place can then be interrogated by crossing the border, to use Gloria Anzaldua's (1987) term, showing it to be constructed as opposed to being essentialized, and open to change.

In Schutz, there is an epistemological privilege given to this process of displacement and replacement. Unlike the epistemological privilege of the 'free-floating intellectual' in Mannheim's work (1929), which derives from being able to see all points of view because s/he lacks a fixed class location, it is precisely the experience of dislocation and

relocation that enables privileged knowledge production. Schutz recognizes that there are differential opportunities to use cultural understandings, and that they can be used for differentiated individual and collective ends. In the process, Schutz notes two aspects: the development of objectivity, and the stranger's neutral positioning in terms of loyalty to the group, which he calls 'doubtful loyalty'. The objectivity derives from the stranger's 'bitter' experience of 'the limits of thinking as usual' (Schutz in Anthias and Kelly 1996, p. 347). Schutz comments on his doubtful loyalty:

> this is especially true when the stranger proves unwilling or unable to substitute the new cultural pattern entirely for that of the home group . . . Then the stranger remains . . . a cultural hybrid on the verge of two different patterns of group life, not knowing to which he belongs (p. 347).

Schutz focuses on the incommensurability of two cultures, which are seen as closed universes. The experience of the stranger involves a crisis of orientation. This may be related to Park's notion of marginal man (in Stonequist 1937), who is on the border of two cultures. This conflict is resolved by cultural innovation possibly embodied most by Weber's notion of a pariah population, and middle men minorities (see Bonacich 1973; Stone 1985).

Stranger, in the sense of *xenos* in Greek, means both stranger and outsider/guest. In the latter sense, hospitality is due to the stranger, and there is honour in this without an expectation of reciprocity, but there is the expectation that the stranger will leave. There are a diverse number of ways in which strangers are received, however, which relate partly to their mode of arrival, their relative temporality and the degree to which they are seen to be part of an Othered group. Asymmetry is a key area, particularly where the stranger is the dominant stranger (as a colonizer), or alternatively where the stranger is here to stay.

The ideas of Schutz and Simmel are interesting in suggesting reactions and responses to individuals who cross borders. However, the relations between strangers, either from the same origin or group or from others, is neglected. The importance of negotiation and the existence of different cultural rules for family/kin, and for outsiders (recognized in the Greek sense of '*xenos*'), is also relevant. In the modern period, it is difficult to use the insights of Schutz and Simmel when explaining group movement and settlement. Indeed, globalization involves a growth in the numbers of movement, which both intensifies strangeness, and normalizes it. The condition of 'overall strangeness', becomes the condition par excellence of global society. However, the stress by both Schutz and Simmel, on the incommensurable facets of culture, is an important constrainer of the optimism found in 'hybrid' models of culture, and lead us

to return to the idea of culture as patterned within structures of dominance. The importance of 'asymmetry', and hegemonic cultural discourses in this process, needs to be considered by the new approaches to the issue of interculturality found in the idea of cultural hybridity which will now be looked at more closely.

Modern hybridities: new identities

Hybridity is a key term within mixed race debates, where it may appear as postulating that the 'races' which become mixed are themselves constituted as essential and non-hybrid. It has been pointed out (Young 1996) that hybridity retains a cultural discourse of racial purity. The new use of the term hybridity implicitly rejects the idea of pre-existing pure categories. Those who object to the use of the term hybrid for making assumptions about the purity of the elements from which it derives are, however, employing semantic rather than substantive objections. On the other hand, if all cultures are by definition hybrid, the term loses its specific analytic usefulness.

It is important to note that 'hybridity' is used in different ways and constitutes for each writer a way of challenging existing paradigms of 'identity'. For Hall, hybridity is particularly linked to the idea of 'new ethnicities' (Hall 1988), which attempts to provide a non-static and non-essentialized approach to ethnic culture. Stuart Hall has been concerned, over the years, to develop an analysis which is non-essentialist, and which validates the search for identity. This is linked to experiences of racialization and posits the importance of narratives of identity for resisting racist exclusions. For Hall (1990), 'histories have their real, material and symbolic effects' (Hall 1990, p. 226). These histories relate to 'the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity' and 'identity lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity' (Hall 1990, p. 235). In Hall's work, the black subject emerges through history as differently constructed and yet still identifiable on the margins, in the periphery, largely because of racialized experience and subjectivity.

While the 'new ethnicities', it is argued, involve a search for roots and grounding, they are not stymied by a search for identity on the basis of origin. Ethnicity, in this sense, relates both to the homeland, and to the society of settlement and is reconfigured within a diasporic space. It has been argued that this can produce a more effective cultural intervention in racialized discourse (Hall 1990). From this position, it is a small step to argue that such a re-arrangement of identities and cultures opens up a space for interpenetration and translation; this is depicted through the concept of hybridity. Such identities are never complete and are being continuously made and remade. The term hybridity also designates the formation of new identities that may have a more transethnic, and transnational character. For example,

new British Muslim identity is not confined to an ethnic group, but is an amalgam, neither purely religious nor specifically ethnic, that may be linked to forging identity as a culture of resistance. Being black, or part of the African diaspora, stresses experience, rather than origins, and constructs a transnational identity (Gilroy 1993). Young white adolescents (Hewitt 1986, Back 1996), have been seen as synthesizing the culture of their white English backgrounds, with the new cultures of the minorities, to forge new cultural forms in music, and inter-racial friendship networks and movements. Young Asians are producing new forms of Anglo-Indian music. Young Greek Cypriots in Britain are keener to abandon the ethnocentricity of their parents, and are forging links with young Turkish Cypriots, and with other marginalized and ethnicized youth (Anthias, forthcoming).

Gilroy (1993) uses DuBois's notion of 'double consciousness' to denote the hybrid and diasporic condition relating to the African diaspora through the historical re-enactment of different forms of racialization. He contrasts it to prevailing ethnic absolutism and sees it as the theorization of 'creolization, metissage, mestisaje and hybridity (p. 2). Bhabha (1994), on the other hand, sees the transgression of national or ethnic borders as the key to the condition of hybridity; a double perspective becomes possible and signals the migrant artist/poet/intellectual as the voice that speaks from two places at once, and inhabits neither. This is the space of liminality, of 'no place' or of the buffer zone of 'no man's land'. For Bhabha (1994, p. 38) the space of the 'inter' is 'the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in between* space'. This always produces a counter-narrative or 'Third Space' to 'elude the politics of polarity and emerge as others of ourselves'. Bhabha therefore sees hybrids as cultural brokers. It is clear that this does not occur out of a simple process of accretion nor is it ever complete; it is full of discontinuities and ruptures.

It is ironic that while distancing themselves from the ethnicity paradigm, the notions of hybridization and hybridity retain a concern with cultural contents and style (such as art, music and language), rather than the ethnic boundary. In the concern with cultural interpenetration, the role of asymmetry finds expression in terms of hybridity as a challenge to dominant homogeneous cultural forms: however, the West, as the rest, to use Hall's term (Hall *et al.* 1992) is an amalgam from a position of dominance of the opportunistic pillage of other cultural forms that may be put to new ends. Asymmetric social relations produce particular configurations of cultural elements, not merely the form of the hybrid but particular constellations of the hybrid. Exploring the different forms of the hybrid, produced within different positionalities in relation to unequal resources and power, would turn our attention to different class and gender groupings as well as those of race, migration and ethnicity. It is the missing elements here that then require us to look

further into the ways in which the term culture is deployed within the hybridity framework.

Hybridity and culture

There are at least three main ways in which the term 'culture' has been used in Sociology. Firstly, it denotes a set of cultural attributes or arte-facts, of a locality or a particular group, denoting its symbols and prac-tices. Here there may be a distinction between high culture (music, literature, art, poetry), expressing the production of universalizable meanings in local form and low culture (that of the masses): **culture as content or product.** The second way in which the term may be used is that of culture as a world-view, involving an orientation to the world (Mannheim 1929), perhaps depicted as ways of being and doing or what Banuri (1990, p. 77) calls 'software'. A culture is the pool of components from which forms of culture or cultural products/ resources is drawn but is not co-terminous with these products: **culture here is a process or mechanism**. Thirdly, culture is defined as patterned ways of knowing and doing. These are institutionalized within hegemonic processes and struc-tures. Transgression of the central core elements leads to forms of social regulation, prohibition, exclusion, or banishment. This may be linked to Durkheim's (1966) notion of social facts: **culture as form or structure**.

In addition there are notions of culture as emergent (see Bourdieu on 'habitus' (1990) which links it with agency), culture as a set of typifica-tions or recipes (in Schutz 1932), culture as 'performative' (Butler 1990). This schematic delineation, therefore, only constitutes a few of the ways in which the notion of culture may be used in Sociology. Given the range of different meanings that can be legitimately attached to the notion of 'culture', the object of reference in debates on global culture needs differentiating and specifying. These are far from clear, with different writers using the term in different ways (for example, see Hall 1990; Gilroy 1993 and Bhabha 1994).

Moreover, the **meanings and uses** of the cultural elements as well as the particular combinatory of elements point us in the direction of reject-ing a view that cultural artefacts **or** practices have singular or fixed meanings. Hybridity is often examined in terms of the intermingling of cultural components, without considering the question of how they are used and in what contexts (see the critique in Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma 1996). For example, the hybrid nature of pop music cannot be discussed outside the question of agency and outcome. Such hybridities cannot be judged as either transgressive or progressive, without paying attention to their deployment (for example, see Hebdidge 1979, who argues for the cooptation role of new youth styles relating to music).

Furthermore, there occurs a conflation between recognizing the syn-cretic character of cultural discourse and practice, and its positive

evaluation (Friedman 1997). Hybrid cultural forms are not necessarily more desirable or progressive than others. As noted earlier, a number of writers have noted the 'progressive transgressive' and countering tendencies of border crossings. Others, however, have pointed out that this is not a necessary adjunct of border crossings (Solomos and Back 1996), nor is hybridity necessarily progressive. For example, racism too may be ambivalent or hybrid (Rattansi 1992) and fascism may be a reactionary version of hybridity. Ahmed (1997) argues that being positioned as hybrid produces the effect of being inadequate to any available cultural identity. Rassool (1997) adopts Giddens (1991) use of reflexivity; hybridity is seen as the 'key variable within this process of redefinition' which challenges the idea of the homogeneity of dominant cultures. However, she rightly says that this process cannot be thought outside the context of racist exclusions. Hybrids are not always the 'new world of bricoloeurs' that Cornel West (1992, p. 36) talks about and may be tied to violence and alienation, as receivers or producers.

It is also possible to distinguish between the problematic of culture, and that of identity and the formation of solidary projects. For example, young white adolescents have been seen as synthesizing the culture of their white English backgrounds with the new cultures of minorities. It has been argued that new cultural forms are forged in music and that there are inter-racial friendship networks and movements (Hewitt 1986, Back 1996) among adolescents but that these do no necessarily produce significant changes of identity or undermine racialized relations. The pick and mix of cultural elements does not necessarily signify therefore a shift in identity, or indeed the demise of identity politics of the racist or anti-racist kind. The whole area of the link between culture in terms of patterns and products, and the issue of identity and boundaries of belongingness, requires much more systematic analysis.

Bhabha's idea of the 'in between space' (1990, 1994) constructs a 'third space' inhabited by the cosmopolitan who lacks a central cultural narrative. However, cosmopolitanism may not be the primary condition produced through transnational movements. Through migration and diasporization, the opposite to hybridity can occur: a ghettoization and enclavization process, a living in a 'time warp', a mythologizing of tradition (Shukla 1997). Hall, following Robins (1991), acknowledges that this may be the alternative adaptation to that of translation (where new more transgressive forms emerge). In addition, a concern with homeland and its national project, or what Anderson (1995) calls long-distance nationalism, is found in the political projects of the Irish, the Jews, and the Greeks among other. Such concerns are not confined to traditionalists but may also mark cosmopolitans: the space of cultural sophistication and urbanity does not preclude nationalistic fervour or identification, although it is more likely to. Moreover, the concept of hybridity assumes a free-floating person (as in Mannheim's free-floating intellectual). It is

important to recognize the role of agency, on the one hand, but explore also how it is exercised within a system of social constraints, linked to the positionality of actors (both individual and collective) within specific social contexts.

Hybridity and 'ethnicity'

How does the discussion of hybridity relate to the notion of ethnicity? Ethnicity is a contested term, open to a range of definitions, but I have argued that it involves deploying the boundary of the ethnic category, as a central arena for struggle vis-à-vis resources of different types (Anthias 1992a, 1992b). This distinguishes the concept of ethnicity from the broader concept of culture. Ethnicity cannot be confined to questions of culture and identity, since it is evident that culture and identity need not take an ethnic form. The relational aspect of ethnicity is increasingly recognized in a literature that has now, not before time, largely abandoned the idea of ethnicity as primordial, fixed or just a question of culture and subjective identification. The idea of ethnicity as a boundary marker, found in the work of Barth (1969) and others (for example, Wallman 1979), treats 'the cultural stuff' as its signifier but not its chief project (Anthias 1992a, 1992b). Ethnicity may be political (Cohen 1974; Rex 1986; Hechter 1987), drawing on cultural as well as other identity narratives and resources, such as economic niches and social networks, to pursue diverse political projects (Anthias 1990, 1992a). Cultural resources are only one of a set of resources used by ethnic groups.

A particular problem in the study of collective identity is the relationship between having a sense of cultural identity (whether it is actually defined as ethnic, racial or national), and being placed within the social relations of an attributed 'ethnic' group which has particular practices and which is subjected to societal practices, that is, as a lived experience. This raises the important issue of placement. A useful way of thinking about this is in terms of the distinction between collective identities as structuring life conditions, and as involving political mobilization on the basis of belonging (that is, as the active, participatory element).

It is now acknowledged that ethnicity is not the reserve of subordinate groups (Anthias 1992a), and that those who are represented as the majority in the state have a hidden ethnicity that is naturalized. For example, the English are an ethnic group whose 'culture' is most fully represented in the British State. The relational identification of such ethnic majorities or dominant ethnic groups is in juxtaposition to the 'others' who are in a subordinate position. The term 'ethnic' group is always constructed relationally as it only makes sense in the context of the ethnicization of another population and involves a process of differentiation. It could be argued that all individuals have an ethnicity. If this is the case, 'hybrids' also possess an ethnicity. If there are hybrid cultural

forms then these hybrid social forms may or may not have a singular effect on the ethnic boundary: the case must rest with the investigation. Moreover, it may be that the hybrid condition is a transitory one and like all forms of ethnic identity, situational and contextual. Hybridity and cosmopolitanism, in this sense, may be just particular configurations of the shifting and dynamic nature of the cultural narrative contained in ethnic phenomena. However, some aspects of culture may be **incommensurable**; translation may not always be possible, a point noted by Schutz discussed earlier. Spivak (1993), makes a similar point when she points to the impossibility of translation between dominant and subaltern cultures: for the subaltern cannot speak. Moreover, if hybridity is a product of a mix and a dialogue, under what conditions does it take place and what are those features of culture that can 'travel best' and for whom?

Not all aspects of culture have been equally malleable to globalization (if that, as it often does, implies homogenization, particularly around Western values and actions). Nor is the recognition of the influence of 'subaltern' cultures in the domain of music for example, enough to hang the notion of a two-way dialogue. The mixed cultural patterns of second- and third-generation diasporic actors underplay the ways in which gender and religion, for example, serve different ends in different contexts (for example, see Afshar 1994). The bringing together of different cultural elements syncretically transforms their meaning, but need not mean that dialogue between cultural givens is necessarily taking place. Moreover, it could be argued that the acid test of hybridity lies in the response of **culturally dominant groups**, not only in terms of incorporating (or coopting) cultural products of marginal or subordinate groups, but in being open to **transforming and abandoning some of their own central cultural symbols** and practices of hegemony. Until there is evidence of this, it seems somewhat over-enthusiastic to denote contemporary cultural forms as hybrid. This is particularly the case when the dimension of power over the deployment of different cultural symbols is rendered visible. Although there are hybridities to be found in the realm of music, art, fashion and food, among other cultural products, there is very little evidence of dominant white culture seceding its role in defining the cultural domain. This is precisely the critique made of muticulturalism as a theory and a practice; that not only does it reify cultural difference but that it treats hegemonic culture as natural.

I do not have the space to address these problems in detail but I want to summarize two central problems of the debate on cultural hybridity here. Firstly, it privileges the domain of the cultural as opposed to the material or the political (restricting its sense to that of cultural products) and therefore depoliticizes culture. It loses sight of cultural domination; power, as embodied in culture, disappears. Hybridity may not be possible in the colonial encounter (see Spivak 1993). Secondly, it focuses

too much on transgressive elements and underplays alienation, exclusion, violence and fundamentalism as part of cultural encounters, particularly where there is social asymmetry as in colonialism.

Given these difficulties, a range of questions needs to be substantively researched: Under what conditions is a synthesis of cultural elements possible? Which elements of culture become destabilized? To what extent do groups assert identity in the face of threat? Which social groups within are most reluctant to negotiate cultural rules and around which aspects of culture? Are some aspects of culture more difficult to mix? How important is the institution of family and kinship, the position of women and religious and moral rules, particularly around sexuality? What are the difficulties of translation? What is implied by the notion of transgressivity? What is the potential for new forms of democracy and citizenship?

A comment on diaspora

Having explored some of the difficulties and contradictions found in the notion of hybridity, I now want to turn to its sister concept, that of diaspora. Despite the different genealogies of the concepts of hybridity and diaspora (see Young 1996), both denote an important reconfiguration of 'ethnic' boundaries and bonds and posit the growth of transnationalism. Diaspora is an old term, but has been rediscovered in order to be made to do theoretical work, in relation to the growth of new identities and experiences (eg Bhabha 1990, 1994; Hall 1990; Gilroy 1993; Clifford 1994; Brah 1996; Cohen 1997). It may be seen as providing a less essentialized approach to 'ethnic' allegiances, than those found within mainstream ethnic and race paradigms. Its contemporary revival can be largely attributed to the influential work of black writers like Stuart Hall (1990) and Paul Gilroy (1993, 1997), writing within a cultural studies tradition and using a post-modern frame. 'Diaspora' has also been used as a descriptive typological tool for understanding migration and settlement in the global era (Cohen 1997), and to denote a social condition and a societal process (Clifford 1994: for an extensive discussion see Anthias 1998b). The old usage of diaspora restricted it to population categories which have experienced 'forceful or violent expulsion' processes (classically used about the Jews), but in the modern usage it refers to a **population category** or a **social condition** entailing a particular form of 'consciousness' which is particularly compatible with postmodernity and globalization, and like hybridity, embodies the globalizing principle of transnationalism (Waters 1995).

The notion of diaspora is placed centrally in many of the arguments about the connection between the local and the global, and the development of cultural globalization, or glocalisation as Robertson (1995) calls it. One of the main ways in which the term has been used

is as a celebration of the implications of diasporic models of consciousness and action. For example, Winant (1994, p.273) notes 'the rise of diasporic models of blackness, the creation of pan-ethnic communities of Latinos and Asians all seem to be hybridizing and racializing previously national politics, cultures and identities'. Hall's idea of the role of the diaspora in 'translation' and Cohen's (1997) view that the diaspora can supersede the nation-state, as a form of social organization, impute a radicalizing and destabilizing character to the diaspora as a social force, and see it as a challenge to the nation-state. Cohen (1993, 1997), sees a fit between diasporic processes and globalization and notes 'the development of new creative energy in a challenging, pluralistic context outside the natal homeland' (Cohen 1993, p. 5). He suggests (Cohen 1993, p. 22) that the old diasporic practice of sojourning has become a feature of the new global economy. Cohen paints a fairly optimistic picture drawing also on Hall's depiction of the African Caribbean diaspora as undergoing a process of hybridization 'through transformation and difference' (Hall 1990, p. 235). Clifford's (1994) view is that one way of conceptualizing diaspora is to note what it defines itself against: the norms of the nation-state and the claims of indigenous tribal peoples. The nation-state is subverted by diasporic attachments which involve forms of hybridization, and cultural change, but without cultural assimilation. Contestation generally is over the rights to culture, to roots rather than for political representation. Such roots, Clifford claims, are not conceived as static. A degree of accommodation is achieved in as much as the permanent locale now becomes the place of settlement, rather than the homeland and identity becomes more syncretic. Clifford refers to this as selective accommodation: the desire to stay and be different. The claims of belonging are a challenge to essentialist claims of the authentic ties to the land made by 'natives'.

I argued earlier that hybridity deploys a particular notion of 'culture' (as content or product). Diaspora also deploys a notion of ethnic bonds as primarily revolving around the centrality of 'origin', seeing these being played out in a transnational arena. Therefore, there is a subtext which involves privileging the point of 'origin' in constructing identity and solidarity. If this is the case, then it sits uneasily with the view that diasporas can transcend the orientation to homelands. I have argued elsewhere (Anthias 1998b), that the concept of diaspora fails to pay adequate attention to transethnic, as opposed to transnational, processes. The concept of diaspora also neglects the aspects of ethnicity that are exclusionary, for the commonality constructed by racism is different, and indeed may be transethnic rather than transnational. Transethnic, as opposed to transnational, commonalities and processes are pushed to the background and therefore, in a curious way this sits uneasily with the idea of hybridization as transethnicity. So while hybridity and diaspora

are often conjoined within approaches, the connection and tension between them is ignored.

Translocational positionality

While the notion of hybridity focuses on issues of cultural 'cut and mix' and deploys a notion of identity, however multi-layered or fragmented (Anthias 1999), I would like to suggest the continuing importance of the social relations of 'othering' on the one hand, and resource struggles on the other or what I would like to call 'translocational' positionality. These may take particular forms in the period of 'high modernity'. Some of these may yield reflexivity in recognizing multiple selves and others (hybrid/diasporic), but even here there are potentially contradictory processes in terms of struggles around resource allocation; such struggles may take place along the lines of the relations of gender, 'race' and class.

Collective identities involve forms of social organization postulating boundaries with identity markers that denote essential elements of membership (which act to 'code' people), as well as claims that are articulated for specific purposes. The identity markers (culture, origin, language, colour and physiognomy etc) may themselves function as resources that are deployed contextually and situationally. They function both as sets of self-attributions and attributions by others. By focusing on location/dislocation and on positionality, it is possible to pay attention to spatial and contextual dimensions, treating the issues involved in terms of processes rather than possessive properties of individuals (for example, see Mouffe 1994).

The focus on location and positionality (and translocational positionality) avoids assumptions about subjective processes on the one hand and culturalist forms of determinism on the other. Moreover, it acknowledges that identification is an enactment that does not entail fixity or permanence, as well as the role of the local and the contextual in the processes involved. Narratives of belonging (and its disclaimers) may then be seen as forms of social action, that is, as actively participating in the very construction of subject positionalities. They are also narratives of dislocation, relocation and alterity at multiple levels – structural, cultural and personal. They relate (or more accurately construct) a history and interpellate location and position (social place and hierarchy). Narratives of location/dislocation (and translocation) are produced in interplay with the available narratives that characterize the cultural milieu both in terms of local contexts and the larger epistemological and ontological contexts of a particular Weltanschauung. Such narratives are not given or static, but are emergent, produced interactionally and contain elements of contradiction and struggle that is, they are not unitary (Bakhtin 1986). The construction of difference and identity (as boundaries of difference and sameness), on the one hand,

and the construction of hierarchical social positions, on the other, are produced and reproduced in interplay with the narrative structures.

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). The centrality of process involves displacing the binary of agency (thought of as related to human volition) and structure (thought of as a set of determinancies outside individuals), with the specification of sociological relations in terms of practices and outcomes (rather than mechanisms/causes implied by the binary of agency/structure). The focus on location (and translocation), recognizes the importance of context, the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales. It also recognizes variability with some processes leading to more complex, contradictory and, at times, dialogical positionalities than others: this is what is meant by the term 'translocational'. The latter 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 racialization (see Anthias 1998a). It is therefore able to move more effectively away from the residual elements of essentialization and culturalism retained within the concept of 'hybridities'.

What has usually been thought about as a question of identity (collective identity) can be understood as relating to *boundaries* on the one hand and *hierarchies* on the other. Not only do 'identities' such as ethnicity/'race' (as well as gender and class) entail categories of difference and identity (*boundaries*), they also construct social positions (*hierarchies*), and involve the allocation of power and other resources. What characterizes such categories as boundaries is *relationality, naturalization and collectivization* (for an extended discussion see Anthias 1998a). Relationality involves the construction of categories that involve dichotomy and function as mutually exclusive; to identify is to differentiate from and vice versa. Cultural constructs around these categories tend to use binaries, common in Western thought (self/other, male/female, black/white). Naturalization involves the formation of categories which are taken as indisputable and given. The construction of collective attributions and the production of unitary categories is a particularly salient aspect of ethnic and gender divisions and construct those inside (and often outside) in unitary terms. Constructions of sexual or 'racial' difference in terms of a biological or somatic difference come to signify or postulate necessary social effects, to produce gendered or racialized depictions and dispositions.

What characterizes social identities at the level of positions is *hierarchical difference* (a pecking order of places, symbolically and materially) and *unequal resource allocation* (concrete access to economic, political, symbolic and cultural resources). Hierarchical difference (or hierarchization) relates to the ways in collective identities construct **places** or

positions in the social order of things. The hierarchization is a complex one because it is not just a matter of a hierarchy of places (and specification of which types of individuals may or may not fill them) within what may be called an ethnic or racialized space. For example, in the category of 'race', there exist class and gender differences that interplay with those of race to produce complex forms of hierarchy. Unequal resource allocation not only references economic resources but also the allocation of power, authority and legitimacy in relation to political, cultural and representational levels, as well as the validation of different kinds of social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1990). The boundaries relating to relationality, naturalization and collective attributions are brought into play in a dialogical sense with social position leading to naturalized, collectivized and relational hierarchization and unequal resource allocation.

Positionality relates therefore to the space at the intersection of structure (as social position/social effects) and agency (as social positioning/meaning and practice). The concept involves processes of identification but is not reducible to these, for what is also signalled are the lived practices in which identification is practised/performed as well as the intersubjective, organizational and representational conditions for their existence (Anthias 1998a).

Cultural interpenetration and the boundaries of the nation

I would like finally to comment on some of the implications of hybridity and diaspora notions for conceptions of the nation. The narration of the demise of the 'nation' is a central claim of the cultural globalization approach which deploys notions of hybrid and travelling cultures. The symbol of the nation or ethnos, the 'imagined community' as well as 'the imagined other/stranger' is not to be conflated with the nation-state boundary which is essentially a political boundary. However, as the political and economic borders are being re-defined, so the borders of the '*nation*' as both 'a community of strangers' (Us), juxtaposed to a 'strange community' (Others), also become re-defined. Increasing internationalism and supranational state forms or new forms of global communication between states and territories are certainly important. However, there is little evidence that the 'nation' as a central boundary making category for group consciousness, solidarity and allegiance has been abandoned (Featherstone *et al.* 1995, Hirst and Thompson 1995). Nationalist projects retain a concern with the political representation of the group and its irreducibility.

Moreover, *nation-states* are still with us in terms of juridical, social citizenship and cultural citizenship (Turner 1990), despite the increasing global flow of trade and communication, as well as the growth of certain forms of transnationality. The nation state still determines citizenship, in

large part, entailing individual and group rights and entitlements, at political, juridical and social levels (an exception may be found with regard to the European Court of Human Rights). The borders of the nation-state are still policed against undesirable others, in formal and informal ways, through migration controls and racism. The desire for the integration and management of minorities within, exists in the present phase of multiculturalism. At the same time there is a desire to exclude others, on the outside and the inside (such as Gypsies). Many nation-states also stress the ethnic absolutist (to use Gilroy's (1993) phrase) project, of retaining the ethnic identity of their diaspora populations, and encouraging their reproduction, as well as their return to the homeland. Such a homeland may be unrecognizable for those born outside it, a home no longer 'a home' or a place where they may feel 'at home'.

Taking all these problems into account might urge us to identify a more fragmented and discontinuous picture of 'cultural globalization' (Featherstone 1990, Featherstone *et al*. 1995), than that presented within some versions of globalization theory. It also presents a much more discontinuous notion of the self and identity in high modernity than the one espoused by Giddens (1991). A large number of the diaspora are not exposed to the self reflexivity that Giddens identifies with modernity, or alternatively, the hybridization which is seen to characterize the globalization process by other writers. This applies particularly to certain categories of the excluded, subordinated and disadvantaged: to women, especially working-class and racialized women; to those who live within ethnic niches or economies; older migrants; and those transnationals who are not cosmopolitans (cf. Werbner 1999), some of whom may be ethnic chauvinists. We may have global imagery, but these global images are read through local eyes. Not all those eyes are self-reflexive or would recognize Giddens' risk society!!

Although interpenetration is a feature of social relations, the combinatory of different elements produces new but highly heterogeneous effects. However, this does not only mean that a homogeneous culture does not exist, as Pieterse (1995) rightly claims. Neither does it mean that hybridization, in the sense of interpenetration, can be read into processes of cultural spread, without paying attention to the array of social places, political projects and social divisions that will encounter them and imbue them with local and particular meanings. Also, if as Pieterse says, the one distinguishing feature of the present phase of globalization is that no single mode has overall priority, is this not to deny the forms of cultural and ideological hegemony (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) structured in and through capitalist penetration; of the dominance of the West?

A singular absence within this literature is the discussion of the shaping of patriarchy by the hybridizations of globalized capital. Feminism has not dealt with globalization either, largely because of its retreat from ideas of a common sisterhood. However, there is a trend to

'hybridities' in the recent debate on transversal or dialogical feminist politics (see Hill Collins 1990), as espoused by Italian feminists and others (eg Yuval-Davis 1997). However, global images of women (as represented by a recent issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, on its twentieth anniversary, reprinting covers of worldwide Cosmopolitan issues including India, Russia, Japan and Greece), show how homogeneous the images of women are, despite subtle differences in nuance. Woman, as sex-goddess, is clearly a globalized image that can only be accessed by a select few. This reminds us that we need to distinguish between the existence of the global image, and its differential transmission, availability and relevance in a world dominated by illiteracy, poverty and disease.

Conclusion

As I have suggested, the notion of hybridity has been an important challenge to extant arguments about identity and culture and has worked as an important corrective, substantially shifting the debate forward. However, this has encouraged the debate to be 'stuck in culture' by substituting a focus on hierarchy and relationality (found in arguments about 'old ethnicities' whatever their other shortcomings), with the idea of hybrid formation around *culture and identity*. Hybridity as a description of mixed cultural elements is incontestable and tells us perhaps little that is new in terms of the sociological approach to migration and settlement which has been concerned with both interculturality and cultural assimilation.[3] Moreover, this focus fails to adequately attend to the forms of othering and incommensurability that are prominent facets of experience for those constructed as minorities in modern society.

At the level of the construction of new forms of collective identity, the term hybridity merely denotes another, possibly more 'open' and 'in between' cultural configuration, but this third space is also located rather than 'free-floating': it must be seen in the context of fluidity, diversity and situational context, as well as the political nature of identities in general. A view of hybridized diasporas, which neglects the political and power dimensions of social relations, falls into the same culturalist essentialist traps as earlier notions of ethnicity.

If, within nation-states, localisms are emerging as the embodiment of universal or global particularisms, how might hybridity be seen to involve border crossings and the 'in between function'? I have argued that while being anti-essentialist, it has not been able convincingly to move away from old notions of culture and ethnicity which still lie at its heart. The need to investigate more substantively these processes, while not idealizing and mythologizing them, is urgent. While movement across cultures may empower, and enable a more global world-view, distanced from ethnic insularities and fundamentalisms, this needs to be explored in the light of specific and contextual relations.

I have maintained that the problematic of hybridity is inadequate in addressing the issue of the multifarious nature of identifications, since it constructs identity in a singular, albeit synthetic form. It does not acknowledge that the acid test of hybridity might be the extent to which the dominant culture is open to elements that may challenge its hegemony. The political projects to which so-called hybrid social forms are harnessed need much more exploration and analysis and the potentially violent and dislocating aspects of the hybrid or diasporic condition also charted (see Ahmed 1997). But more importantly, the concerns of hybridity and diaspora are essentially those of culture and consciousness, rather than social inequality and exclusion. The focus on the latter has been displaced by the post-modern emphasis on difference and identity, on hybridity and diaspora. The materialist, as opposed to culturalist, bases of racist subordinations, inequalities and exclusions have been marginalized through the new hegemony of this post-modern discourse within the social sciences. A refocus on these requires specific and local analyses of differentiated social outcomes, looked at through the complex interweaving of the social relations related to different forms of hierarchical and translocational positionality, and not just a through focus on culture and identity.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. This article is not concerned with discussions of 'mixed race' identities(Wilson 1987; Tizard and Phoenix 1993; Root 1996) which are often also depicted using the term 'hybrid' (see Young 1996 for a history of hybridity). Such identities may be seen as problematic, particularly where the idea of essentialized 'races' is used. These tend to work with the binary distinction between black and white races, and may suggest that those of 'mixed race' are 'in between', thereby pathologizing their subjects.

2. The term 'hybridized' as Young points out (1996, p. 25), can be treated in two ways: as a description of a combinatory of elements and as a process whereby (through dialogical means) a permanent space of discontinuities is constructed. It is in the latter sense that the arguments are particularly important. However, such arguments are based on the postulate found in the first definition, that there really is such a mixing and that it is possible to identify its elements.

3. For example, see the work of Glazer and Moynihan (1963, 1975) for classic positions relating to 'old ethnicities'.

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