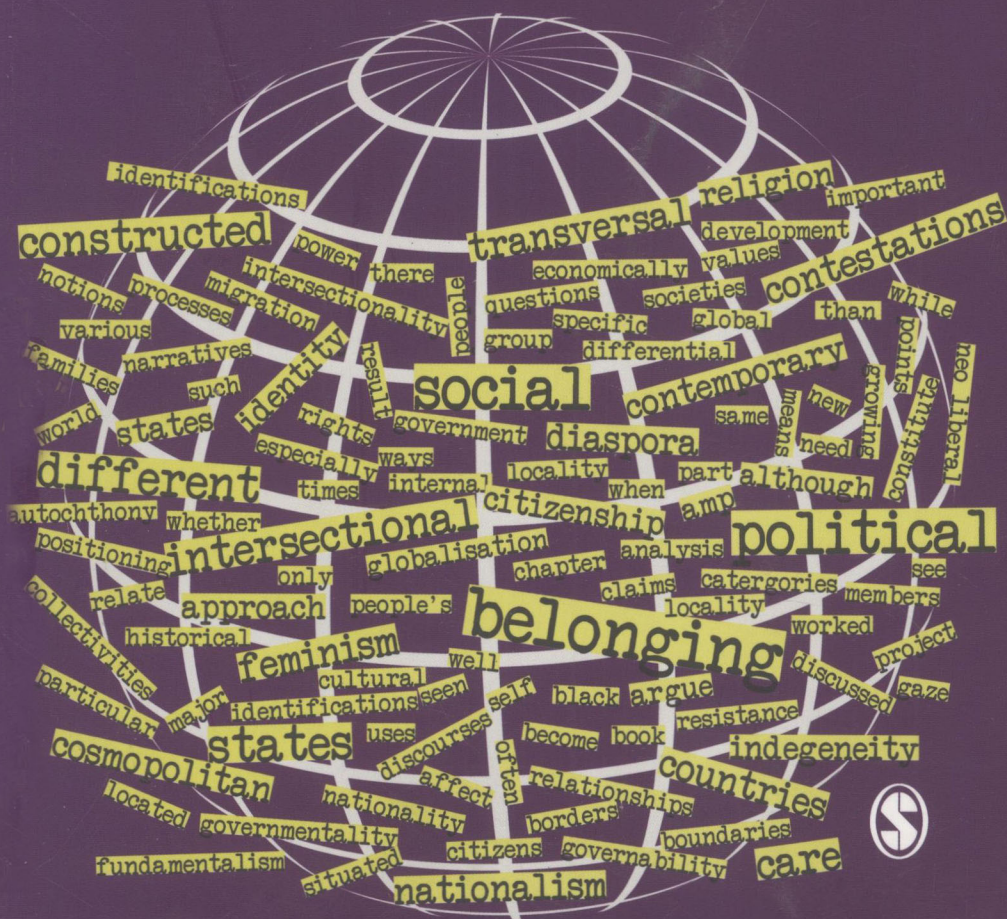


DECONSTRUCT

INTERSECTIONAL CONTESTATIONS

KEVIN DAVIS

NIRA YUVAL-DAVIS



DELEGATIONS
INTERSECTIONAL CONTESTATIONS
NIRA YUVAL-DAVIS



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THE POLITICS OF BELONGING

Preface

The project behind this book started shortly after *Gender and Nation* (1997, Sage) was published, although it took quite a few years before it was crystallized into this format. In a way it is both a continuation and a transformation of the project for that book. I have always approached the issues of gender and gender relations intersectionally (e.g. Yuval-Davis, 1980; Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983), given my anti-racist, socialist version of feminist political commitment. More recently, however, it became clear to me that the intersectional approach needs to be adopted in much wider circles than those of Women's and Gender Studies alone. In the introduction to this book I quote Lesley McCall's (2005) assertion that to date intersectionality has been feminist theory's most important theoretical contribution to related fields. I recently published an article on intersectionality and stratification (Yuval-Davis, 2011a), arguing that sociological stratification theory should adopt intersectionality as its major theoretical/methodological perspective in the ways that other disciplines, like critical legal theory and social policy, have started to do. In this book, therefore, gendered analysis is only one of the major axes of its intersectional approach (although feminism as a political project is highlighted throughout).¹

Similarly, nationalisms and nations. Growing up in Israel and coming to oppose the Zionist political project and its (anti-)humanitarian effects, I realized early on how central nationalist thinking is in various local and global social orders. However, I came early on in my development as a social scientist to denaturalize and deconstruct nationalisms and to examine their links with racisms, imperialisms and, more recently, neo-liberal globalization. This was deeply affected by my growing understanding of the nature of the links between the so-called 'Jewish problem' in Europe, which gave the impetus for the Zionist project in the first place, and its global support in the post-Second World War Holocaust. But this chain of events has also brought about,

¹Given the importance I assign to intersectional analysis it is not surprising that I agreed to become a co-editor (with Ange-Marie Hancock) of a Palgrave (NY) book series on 'the Politics of Intersectionality'

at the same time, the Naqba, the Catastrophe, for the Palestinian people as a result of the establishment of a Jewish settler society, and especially a warfare ethnocratic state. The links between nationalism and religion have also been very explicit in the Zionist project and more and more so in the Palestinian nationalist project as well.

In this book, therefore, the focus widens from an examination of different aspects of nationalist projects to an exploration of different contested contemporary political projects of belonging, with stronger or weaker links with nationalism.

Contemporary political projects of belonging, whether formal state citizenships, memberships in nations and/or religious, ethnic, indigenous and diasporic communities, but also cosmopolitan and transversal ones, are always situated and always multi-layered, which serves to contextualize them both locally and globally, and affect different members of these collectivities and communities differentially. This is where the importance of intersectionality lies.

This situatedness, as illustrated above when discussing what led me to be interested in these topics in the first place, also applies to my own gaze and has obviously affected the many generalizations made in this book. Although I have tried to decentre my perspective and to use illustrative examples from all over the globe, obviously I have been especially informed by debates and developments in Britain, as well as in my various global virtual communities. As Donna Haraway (1988), with her usual wisdom, stated, there is no view from nowhere. So I apologize for the limitations of the perspective of the book and the unevenness of its illustrative examples, but hope that even when it is misguided it will still trigger thoughts on the matter in hand.

I am also very aware that every intellectual product is an outcome of an accumulation of various collective dialogical narratives. In thinking about and writing this book and related papers, I have been very fortunate to be part of local and global networks of friends and colleagues, activists and scholars, who greatly stimulated my thoughts on these issues as well as informing me of developments and debates in other places. I am greatly indebted to them all, while, of course, I take full responsibility for the final product.

Some of these networks are continuous, although new (usually younger) people have joined them in the years since I started to be associated with them. Among my anti-Zionist Israeli Leftist friends I want to thank especially Avishai Ehrlich, Ruchama Marton,

Moshik and Ilana Machover, Haim Bresheeth, Susie Barry and Oren Yiftachel. Women Against Fundamentalism is now celebrating its twentieth anniversary. It was established around the time of the 'Rushdie Affair'. After several years 'on remission' it came back to life when it was greatly needed (the monthly vegetarian soups that helped its resuscitation were a lovely challenge!). As always I'm greatly indebted to them all, but especially to Gita Sahgal, Pragna Patel and Julia Bard, as well as Cass Balchin, Nadjie Al-Ali and Sukhwant Dhaliwal (and the honorary member of WAF and WLUML, Chetan Bhatt).

Raya Feldman, another old friend and a WAF member, has been central in establishing the Hackney Migrant Centre where I spend a little time every month (cooking again!). However, the most formative learning experience that I've had in working with refugees in East London has been in the ESRC research project: 'Identity, performance and social action: community theatre among refugees'. I'm greatly indebted to Erene Kaptani who originally approached me with the idea and then became the project's Research Fellow. In addition to proving to be a wonderful communication tool and great fun, the participatory theatre techniques that we used (Playback and Forum) were also found to be a different and complementary sociological data collection tool (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008a and b) and these greatly helped me in reconfiguring my ideas on identity (e.g. Yuval-Davis & Kaptani, 2009; Yuval-Davis, 2010). They also taught me much about the politics of belonging within the four refugee communities we worked with in East London and their social and political environments. My ideas on spatial security rights have largely developed while working with them. This project was part of the ESRC research programme on 'Identities and Social Action' and I'm grateful to my colleagues there, especially to Margie Whetherell for her inspirational leadership of that programme as well as for her warmth and support.

This research project was taking place in my new academic 'home', the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of East London, which offered me a refuge since 2003 after I (and some other colleagues, especially my long-standing friend and collaborator Floya Anthias) resigned in protest from the University of Greenwich, when they carelessly and short-sightedly destroyed the cutting-edge academic centre within Gender and Ethnic Studies, which we had built up there for more than twenty-five years under

difficult 'polytechnic' conditions, under the excuse of 'restructuring'.² Gavin Poynter and Haim Bresheeth not only offered me office facilities as a Visiting Professor, they also allowed me to transfer my post-graduate programme in Gender, Sexuality and Ethnic Studies, which worked very well, at least for a few years.

It worked so well because the programme attracted so many wonderful students, both MA and PhD, from all over the world, from Zimbabwe to Australia, from Iran to Bangladesh. I cannot name them all, but some of my students have become such first-rate scholars and activists that I must mention them here, together with my love and gratitude for all that I've learned from them while they've been learning themselves. In no particular order: Amira Ahmed, Bahar Taseli, Cass Balchin, Christian Klesse, Christine Achinger, Diana Yeh, Henriette Gunkel, Hoda Rouhana, Jin Haritaworn, Lejla Somun-Krupalija, Liliana Elena, Manar Hassan, Marcel Stotzler, Mastoureh Fathi, Michaela Told, Nicola Samson, Nicos Trimikliniotis, Niloufar Pourzand, Samia Bano, Rumana Hashem, Tijen Uguris, Ulrike Vieten, Umut Erel.

The inspiration and knowledge that these students have brought to me with their situated gazes have enriched my world, as have many colleagues in the School. Again, I cannot mention them all but (again in no particular order), Abel Ugba, Anat Pick, Corrine Squire, Eva Turner, Haim Bresheeth, Maggie Humm, Mica Nava, Molly Andrews, Phil Cohen, Roshini Kampado and Yosefa Loshitzky have been special friends and colleagues. Special thanks are also due to Phil Marfleet, my co-director of the CMRB, the UEL Research Centre on Migration, Refugees and Belonging, in which we have been able to develop, investigate and organize events which interrogate some of the relationships between new and old forms of racism with migration, religion and citizenship, especially within our East London context. Some of this work has been carried out in common projects with the Runnymede Trust and its director Rob Berkeley and the Migrant Rights Network and its director Don Flynn.

I also want to thank my colleagues in international research networks, especially WICZNET, which focuses on research on women in militarized conflict zones (including Audrey Macklin, Cynthia Cockburn, Cynthia Enloe, Lepa Mladjenovic, Malathi de Alwis,

²A process which now takes place in many British universities, including UEL, given the barbaric government cuts to higher education and especially Social Sciences and Humanities.

Nadera Kevorkian, Nadjé Al-Ali and, of course, Wenona Giles), as well as the ISA Research Committee (RC)05 on Racism, Nationalism and Ethnic Relations, of which I was President during 2002–06 (including Ann Denis, Avishai Ehrlich, Kogila Moodley, Michael Banton, Natividad Guitierrez, Peter Radcliffe and Zlatko Skrbis).

The 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism (WCAR), which took place a few days before 9/11, in which ISA RC05 organized an interim conference, was a very important and formative (as well as depressing) experience, as has been my membership of the international women's delegation to the Gujarat in 2002, after the pogroms against the Muslims there. It was in Gujarat that I was exposed to some of the nastiest and most violent aspects of intersectional contemporary politics of belonging. I could not have asked for better guidance and sisterhood than from the local feminist and human rights activists who invited us there as well as from the other members of the delegation, including Anissa Helie, Gaby Mishkovsky, Sunila Abeysekara and the late wonderful Rhonda Kopelon.

There were many other specific forums, places and times which have given me new insights concerning the subjects discussed in this book. These included international feminist and human rights forums, especially Amnesty International, the UNDP and the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, and the various academic institutions in which I have spent shorter or longer periods as a Visiting Professor during the time I was thinking about and writing this book. They have all offered me warmth, support and new insights, including Aalborg, Ben-Gurion, Bristol, Roskilde, Tel-Aviv, Wisconsin, my Rockefeller Fellowship on women, human security and globalization in CUNY and NCRW, and my three years part-time visiting professorship at the Centre for Gender Studies in Umea University in Sweden, which offered me sufficient space in which to write much of the final draft of this book. Special thanks for the friendship, warmth and support they have all offered me. Here I can mention just a couple of names, the Centre's Director, Professor Ann Ohman, and its Administrator, Monica Forsell-Allergen.

There is no way I can do justice to all the friends who have inspired me all these years but I want to mention here also Alison Assiter, Avtar Brah, Ann Phoenix, Birte Siim, Gina Vargas, Helma Lutz, Helen Meekosha, Jindi Pettman, Marie deLepervanche, Martha Ackelsberg, Nora Ratzel, Paula Rayman, Peter Waterman, Pnina Werbner, Ronit Lentin, Shula Ramon and Spike Peterson.

Cass Balchin, Avishai Ehrlich, Gita Sahgal, Ann Phoenix and Mastoureh Fathi have, in addition, also read smaller or larger parts of the manuscript and given me invaluable feedback. However, I have learned about belonging and the politics of belonging not just from my friends but also from their families, especially their children, among them Benjo, Kabir, Zum, Pikel, Luz and Aisha.

I also want to thank here Karen Phillips and the other editors from Sage, as well as the anonymous readers of the first draft of the manuscript who gave me such generous and insightful feedback on the draft.

Last but not least, I want to thank my family. Alain, for his continuous support, warmth, knowledge and love, and Gul who, in addition to being my wonderful son, has also taught me more than anyone else in the world about love, pain and what life is actually all about.

And Ora, my sister, who – in her mid-seventies – rediscovered dancing.

I can't end this preface without confessing a certain reluctance to let the manuscript, the project of the book, go. Any ending is artificial, as the subject matter of this book is dynamic, processual and contested while the written word (or any medium of expression) is necessarily static. These are days of major global crises and transformation, in which new political projects of belonging are going to emerge, at least in the Middle East, the region I come from, but most probably much more widely. Since continuing to amend/add to/revise the manuscript will never be complete or fully satisfactory, I would ask the reader to see in this book just an interim account and analysis, to be revisited, in one form or another, at a future date.

London, March 2011

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1

Introduction: Framing the Questions

In the aftermath of the 7/7 bombings in London during the summer of 2005, one question seems to have bothered many of the journalists who wrote about this – how is it possible that ‘British’ people were able to carry out such atrocities in Britain? The reasons why these particular people became suicide bombers are no doubt complex and could be found in the particular biographies of these people as well as in some more general micro and macro social and political factors. I shall try and relate to some of these in Chapter 4 which looks at issues concerning religion, fundamentalism and contemporary politics of belonging. However, the theoretical question which is at the heart of the project of this book as a whole concerns the assumptions which led these journalists – and so many others in the general public in Britain and outside it – to feel that carrying a British passport, or even being born and educated in Britain, should have automatically made them belong with other British citizens and ‘immune’ from taking part in such an attack. In other words, why would people’s nationality be more important to them than their religious and political beliefs, and why should they feel more loyal to the British nation than to other political and religious collectivities? Are nationalist politics of belonging still the hegemonic model of belonging at the beginning of the twenty-first century? And if so, what kind of nationalism is this? And if not, what other political projects of belonging are now competing with nationalism? Mohammad Sidique Khan, one of the 7/7 bombers who made a videotape that was shown by *Al Jazeera* (September 1, 2005), does talk about ‘my people’ in his statement, but he meant Muslims ‘all over the world’ and definitely not the British people.

The questions of belonging and the politics of belonging constitute some of the most difficult issues that are confronting all of us these days and this book hopes to contribute to the understanding of some of them. In these post 9/11 (and 7/7) times, ‘strangers’ are seen not only as a threat to the cohesion of the political and cultural community, but

also as potential terrorists, especially the younger men among them. The question of who is 'a stranger' and who 'does not belong', however, is also continuously being modified and contested, with growing ethnic, cultural and religious tensions within as well as between societies and states. Politics of belonging have come to occupy the heart of the political agenda almost everywhere in the world, even when reified assumptions about 'the clash of civilizations' (Huntington, 1993) are not necessarily applied. As Francis B. Nyamnjoh points out (2005: 18), 'in Africa, as elsewhere, there is a growing obsession with belonging, along with new questions concerning conventional assumptions about nationality and citizenship'. And Hedetoff and Hjort (2002: x) point out in the introduction to their edited book that 'today belonging constitutes a political and cultural field of global contestation, anywhere between ascriptions of belonging and self-constructed definitions of new spaces of culture, freedom and identity'.

The aim of this chapter is to frame, both theoretically and contextually, the questions which are going to be explored elsewhere in this book. I aim to outline some of the main debates that have emerged both in academia and in the political arena around various major political projects of belonging. Alongside the hegemonic forms of citizenship and nationalism which have tended to dominate the twentieth century, the book also investigates alternative contemporary political projects of belonging that are constructed around the notions of religion, cosmopolitanism and the feminist 'ethics of care'. Constructions and contestations of multiculturalism, multi-faithism, indigenous and diasporic political projects of belonging constitute only some of these debates. The effects of globalization, mass migration, the rise of both fundamentalist and human rights movements on such politics of belonging, as well as some of its racialized and gendered dimensions will also be investigated. A special place will also be given to the various feminist political movements that have been engaged as part of or in resistance to the political projects of belonging discussed in the book.

The analytical perspective which is used is intersectional, deconstructing simplistic notions of national and ethnic collectivities and their boundaries and interrogating some of the differential effects that different political projects of belonging have on different members of these collectivities who are differentially located socially, economically and politically. It is for this reason that the first part of this introductory chapter examines the notion of intersectionality.

Once this theoretical framework has been clarified, the chapter introduces the notions of belonging and the politics of belonging, the subject matter of the book, and the notions of social locations, identifications and values which are central for their understanding. It also illustrates some of the different relationships between different constructions of belonging and different political projects of belonging, using examples from related discourses in the UK.

This introduction then moves on to outline some of the general features of the contemporary globalization context, within which the various intersectional political projects of belonging discussed in this book operate. It discusses globalization, how states have been reconfigured under neo-liberal globalization and the ways in which mass migration and the discourse of securitization can affect and are affected by these processes.

The following chapters, a brief description of which ends this chapter, then explore some of the major contemporary political projects of belonging constructed around citizenship, nationalism, religion, cosmopolitanism and the feminist project of 'ethics of care'. Given the limitations of space in this book, these chapters will mainly focus on various theoretical and political issues relating to these projects and their differential intersectional effects can only be pointed to rather than explored in detail. The final concluding chapter briefly sums up the subjects discussed in the book and highlights their normative, as well as emotional and analytical facets. The book ends with a short meditation on the notion of hope and the role it plays in transversal feminist politics.

Intersectionality

Lesley McCall (2005: 1771) and others would argue that intersectionality is 'the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far'. Indeed, the imprint of intersectional analysis can be easily traced to innovations in equality legislation, human rights and development discourses. Amazingly enough, however, in spite of the term's 'brilliant career' (Lutz, 2002), intersectionality hardly appears in sociological stratification theories (a notable exception is Anthias, 2005; see also Yuval-Davis, 2011a). So what is intersectionality?

Epistemologically, intersectionality can be described as a development of feminist standpoint theory which claims, in somewhat different ways, that it is vital to account for the social positioning of the

social agent and challenge 'the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere' (Haraway, 1991: 189) as a cover for and a legitimization of a hegemonic masculinist 'positivistic' positioning. Situated gaze, situated knowledge and situated imagination (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002), construct how we see the world in different ways. However, intersectionality theory was even more interested in how the differential situatedness of different social agents affects the ways they affect and are affected by different social, economic and political projects. In this way it can no doubt be considered as one of the outcomes of the mobilization and proliferation of different identity groups' struggles for recognition (Taylor, 1992; Fraser, 1995).

The history of what is currently called 'intersectional thinking' is long, and many pinpoint the famous speech of the emancipated slave Sojourner Truth (Brah & Phoenix, 2004) during the first wave of feminism as one early illustration of it. Sojourner Truth was speaking at an abolitionist convention and argued that, given her position in society, although she worked hard and carried heavy loads, etc., this did not make her less of a woman and a mother than women of a privileged background who were constructed as weak and in need of constant help and protection as a result of what society considered to be 'feminine' ways.

Indeed, intersectional analysis, before becoming 'mainstreamed', was carried out for many years mainly by black and other racialized women who, from their situated gaze, perceived as absurd, and not just misleading, any attempt by feminists and others, since the start of the second wave of feminism, to homogenize women's situation and especially to find it analogous to that of blacks. As bell hooks, who chose Truth's *crie du coeur* 'Ain't I a Woman' as the title of her first book (hooks, 1981), mockingly remarked in the introduction to that book: 'This implies that all women are White and all Blacks are men'.

As Brah and Phoenix (2004: 80) point out, other black feminists fulfilled significant roles in the development of intersectional analysis, such as the Combahee River Collective, the black lesbian feminist organization from Boston, who as early as 1977 pointed to the need to develop an integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression were interlocking. Angela Davis, who has come to symbolize for many the spirit of revolutionary black feminism, published her book *Women, Race and Class* in 1981. However, the term 'intersectionality' was itself introduced in 1989 by another American black feminist, the legal and critical race theorist

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), when she discussed the issues surrounding black women's employment in the USA and the intersection of gender, race and class matters in their exploitation and exclusion.

However, what can be called intersectional analysis was developed roughly at the same time by several European and post-colonial feminists (e.g. Bryan et al., 1985; James, 1986; Essed, 1991; Lutz, 1991) as well. As Sandra Harding claimed, when she examined the parallel development of feminist standpoint theory:

...[F]eminist standpoint theory was evidently an idea whose time had come, since most of these authors worked independently and were unaware of each other's work. (Standpoint theory would itself call for such a social history of ideas, would it not?) (Harding, 1997: 389)

This was obviously the case also with the development of intersectionality theory.

My own work in the field of intersectionality (although back then we called it 'social divisions') started in the early 1980s when, in collaboration with Floya Anthias (e.g. Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983, 1992), we started to study gender and ethnic divisions in South East London and at the same time became engaged in a debate with British black feminists, organized then as OWAAD¹, on the right way to theorize what would now be called an intersectional approach.

As argued in my (2006b) article, some of the basic debates we had with them then still continue to occupy those who are engaged in intersectional analysis today, after it became 'mainstreamed' and came to be accepted by the United Nations, the European Union and other equality and equity policy organizations in many countries. Part of the differences among those who use intersectionality have resulted from the different disciplines and purposes for which it is being used: others differences have not.

Rather than engage in describing some of the historical debates around intersectionality, whether in Britain or in the UN (as I did in my (2006b) article, but see also Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Nash, 2008), I am going to outline below the main characteristics of the constitutive intersectional approach which is applied throughout this book. While doing so, however, I would also recognize the sense of discomfort that many feminists (including myself) share regarding the term 'intersectionality' itself.

¹Organization of Women of African and Asian Descent

Intersectionality is a metaphorical term, aimed at evoking images of a road intersection, with an indeterminate or contested number of intersecting roads, depending on the various users of the terms and how many social divisions are considered in the particular intersectional analysis. As will be developed a bit further below, this can change considerably from two to infinity. In a lecture in 2008, Kum-Kum Bhavnani used the term 'configurations' as an alternative metaphor, wanting to emphasize the flowing interweaving threads which constitute intersectionality, which she found a much too rigid and fixed metaphor. Davina Cooper (2004: 12) also explains that she used the term 'social dynamics' rather than intersectionality, because she wanted her terminology to trace the shifting ways relations of inequality become attached to various aspects of social life. While agreeing with all these reservations, which are important for the theorization of intersectionality in this book, I do retain the term as being so widespread it evokes an intuitive understanding of the subject matter discussed in spite of all the reservations.

Three main positions in relation to the intersectionality approach used in this book need to be clarified here. The first relates to the division McCall (2005) makes between those approaches to intersectionality which she calls 'inter-categorical' and 'intra-categorical'; the second relates to the relationships which should be understood as existing between the various intersectional categories; and the third relates to the boundaries of the intersectional approach and thus the number of as well as which social categories should be included in intersectional analysis inter- or intra-categories?

According to McCall, studies that have used an intersectional approach differ as to whether they have used an inter- or intra-categorical approach. By an inter-categorical approach she means focusing on the way the intersection of different social categories, such as race, gender, class, etc., affects particular social behaviours or the distribution of resources. Intra-categorical studies, on the other hand, are less occupied with the relationships among various social categories and instead problematize the meaning and boundaries of the categories themselves, such as whether black women were included in the category 'women' or what are the shifting boundaries of who is considered to be 'black' in a particular place and time.

Unlike McCall, I do not see these two approaches as mutually exclusive and instead would ask for an intersectionality approach which combines the sensitivity and dynamism of the intra-categorical approach with the more macro socio-economic perspective of the inter-categorical approach.