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Researching Ethnic Relations as the Outcome of Political Processes

GIGA Working Papers, No. 251

Provided in Cooperation with:
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Suggested Citation: Flesken, Anaïd (2014) : Researching Ethnic Relations as the Outcome of Political Processes, GIGA Working Papers, No. 251, German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg

This Version is available at:
https://hdl.handle.net/10419/100085

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GIGA Working Papers

German Institute of Global and Area Studies
Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien

GIGA Research Programme:
Violence and Security

Researching Ethnic Relations as the Outcome of Political Processes

Anaïd Flesken

No 251 **August 2014**

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GIGA Working Papers **251/2014**

Edited by the
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Researching Ethnic Relations as the Outcome of Political Processes

Abstract

Ethnic diversity is often seen to be detrimental to peace and stability, particularly if ethnicity is the basis for political mobilization. Mobilization is assumed to increase the salience of ethnicity, and with it in-group cohesion, out-group animosity, and national instability; yet the mechanisms have rarely been studied empirically. This article argues that we need to study ethnicity as the outcome of political processes, focus on the attitudinal mechanisms underlying ethnic relation; and examine this phenomenon at the individual level. To this end, the article first disaggregates the term "ethnicity" into attributes, meanings, and actions. Referring to constructivism, it then argues that political science should focus on meanings. Building on the theory and findings of social psychology, this paper shows that political science must distinguish analytically between meanings regarding different in- and out-group processes. Doing so can help advance the study of ethnic relations and conflict-management practices.

Keywords: ethnic relations, ethnic conflict, institutional engineering, constructivism

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Researching Ethnic Relations as the Outcome of Political Processes

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Article Outline

1 Introduction
2 Disaggregating the Term "Ethnicity"
3 Why Focus on Meaning?: An Ontological Justification
4 How to Analyze Meaning: The Cognitive Approach
5 What to Focus On: Groupness versus Otherness
6 Conclusion: A Framework for the Analysis of Ethnic Change

1 Introduction

Ethnic diversity is often seen as being detrimental to ethnic peace and national unity, particularly if ethnicity is the basis for political mobilization. The events in Northern Ireland, Rwanda, or Ukraine are but three examples of this supposed detrimental effect, with such circumstances having motivated policymakers and academics alike to seek ways to end – or at least manage – ethnic conflict. Several states today – ranging from Afghanistan and Bulgaria to Kenya and Spain – continue to ban ethnic and religious parties for fear of polarization (Bogaards et al. 2010; Ishiyama and Breuning 1998). Papua New Guinea, for example, has witnessed the recent

reform of its electoral system so as to encourage the election of moderate politicians over radical ones (Reilly 2001). For other states – ranging from India to Iraq to Sweden – decentralization measures have been discussed or implemented so as to assuage radicalization through greater self-determination (Adeney 2007; Anderson and Stansfield 2010).

In the academic literature on this topic, however, the effectiveness of these different conflict-management tools remains hotly debated. For example, some agree that the emergence of ethnic parties inevitably leads to a polarization of ethnic relations, and thus to political instability (Horowitz 2000; Lake and Rothchild 1997; Rabushka and Shepsle 1972). Others, in contrast, have argued that the existence of ethnic parties may contribute to the articulation of minority interests and thus prevent ethnic minorities from exiting the political arena and entering into violent conflict instead (Birnir 2007; Chandra 2004; Ishiyama 2009; Lijphart 1977). Depending on which side of the debate one stands on, ethnic party bans are thus either an effective or a counterproductive tool for conflict management.

The effectiveness of different electoral systems is also still debated. While most scholars in the field agree that plurality electoral rules are detrimental for conflict management and that no single perfect electoral system exists for all contexts (e.g. Diamond 1999; Reynolds 2002), opinions differ widely on which kind of electoral system is the most promising. For example, Lijphart asserts that proportional representation (PR) is "undoubtedly the optimal way" (2004: 100) to ensure broad representation in divided societies – because it facilitates inclusion, cooperation, and moderation, and hence increases political legitimacy and stability. Yet the evidence for PR's ability to promote political legitimacy is surprisingly scarce and, moreover, conflicting (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Farrell and McAllister 2006; Norris 1999). Opponents of PR argue that it in fact reinforces ethnic fragmentation, and thus undermines support for the overall political community and the cohesion of the state (Horowitz 2000; Reilly 2001; Taagepera 1998). Similar inconsistencies can be found in the study of decentralization as a conflict-management tool (Brancati 2006; Miodownik and Cartrite 2010), or, indeed, of the link between ethnic diversity and conflict per se (Chandra 2009; Fearon and Laitin 1996, 2000).

Why do these discrepancies exist? They may be partly linked back to methodological issues in empirical analyses, such as a lack of data or a selection bias in cases where relevant data does exist (Birnir et al. nd; Brubaker 2002; Hug 2003). They may be partly linked to a certain imprecision in the definition and operationalization of key concepts, such as "political mobilization" (Chandra 2011). Or they may be linked to ontologically and methodologically problematic approaches to ethnicity; it is the latter that are the specific focus of this paper.

In the aforementioned debates, much of the earlier literature has been criticized for regarding ethnicity as primordial and fixed and ethnic relations as zero-sum processes. Today, there is virtually universal scholarly agreement that ethnic identities – and thus relations – are indeed constructed, situational, and malleable (e.g. Chandra 2012; Eriksen 1993; Gil-White 1999; Hale 2004). However, it is my contention that even studies that do take the con-

structed nature of ethnicity into account are not free of assumptions about its inner workings. In fact, much of the literature, from all sides of the different debates, is based on a similar assumption, equating the salience of ethnic boundaries with in-group cohesion and out-group rivalry – forces that are seen to sooner or later lead to conflict (see also Lieberman and Singh 2012). Any academic differences lie rather in the approach proposed to offset this mechanism. One side, usually associated with Donald Horowitz's (2000) centripetal approach to conflict management, argues that it is best to provide incentives to decrease the political salience of ethnic boundaries or at least to work together despite the existence of such boundaries (Chandra 2004; Horowitz 2000, 2002; Reilly 2001). The other side, usually associated with Arend Lijphart's (1977) consociational approach, holds that it is best to ensure the fair inclusion of group representatives in the political decision-making process – if not to give them sole decision-making power over internal group issues altogether – in order to avoid any intergroup rivalry (Lijphart 1977, 1991, 2004; e.g. Birnir 2007; Cederman et al. 2010).

However, the underlying mechanism between salience and ethnic relations remains unobserved. Indeed, despite the widespread acceptance of the constructivist view, only a few studies have looked at the causal effect of politics on ethnicity, and thus at whether – and if yes, how – political processes affect ethnic relations and may be deployed for conflict management. Where this has been done, the focus has been on the meso level – that is, on the group or the presumed representatives of the group (e.g. Birnir 2007; Chandra 2012; Ishiyama 2009; see also Cooney 2009; Green and Seher 2003). Ethnic loyalties or rivalries are assumed, and attention is rarely paid to the individuals who make up these ethnic groups. Such a focus leads to what Rogers Brubaker and his colleagues refer to as "groupism": the tendency to see ethnic identities as ontologically real, "to treat ethnic groups as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed" (Brubaker et al. 2004: 31–32). The study of ethnic processes at the aggregate level may thus obscure our understanding of the processes occurring at the individual level.

Where data is actually gathered and analyzed at the individual level, the focus is on behavioral outcomes such as one's electoral choice or use of violence.[1] Yet again, the study of behavior may be misleading as regards the underlying processes. Violence, for example, may be episodic, rare, and instrumental, and its perpetrators may not be representative of other members of the same social category (Elkins and Sides 2007; see also Eifert et al. 2010). It may indeed not even be ethnicity-related violence.

Thus, while the above literature has made great strides toward a more nuanced understanding of ethnic conflict, this paper argues that if we want to resolve the debate on conflict management we need to expand its study in three specific directions by (1) looking at ethnicity as the outcome of political processes, (2) scrutinizing the attitudinal mechanisms underlying ethnic relations, and (3) focusing on the individual level. Such an expansion requires,

1 Notable exceptions here include Martínez-Herrera (2002), Elkins and Sides (2007), and Ishiyama and Breuning (2011), though they do all focus on the national political community.

first, the disaggregation of the term "ethnicity" and, second, a look at the insights of other disciplines, beyond those of political science. This paper makes a first step toward the necessary disaggregation by synthesizing the vast conceptual, multidisciplinary literature on the topic of ethnic relations. First, it argues that despite the abundance of scholarship, most researchers agree that ethnicity has some fundamental characteristics: that it is based on a certain set of attributes common to an aggregation of individuals; that this commonality is infused with deeper meaning; and that this meaning may give rise to both individual and collective courses of action. Second, referring to constructivist ontology, it argues that political science should focus on the meaning attributed to ethnicity. Third, building on the theory and findings of social psychology, the paper shows that political science must distinguish analytically between different meanings regarding internal group processes (groupness) and those occurring between groups (otherness) and thereby challenge the notion that one's attachment to an in-group implies one's inevitable rejection of an out-group. Disaggregating ethnicity in these ways contributes not only to the analysis of the effect of political processes on ethnicity but also to the analysis of mechanisms of change in ethnic identity.

2 Disaggregating the Term "Ethnicity"

The vast – and rapidly growing – amount of literature on "ethnicity" bears testimony to the still-contested nature of this concept. Most scholars agree that every ethnic category was created at some discernible point in time (see also Eriksen 1993). They do not agree, however, on the potential for change of these categories and, by implication, of ethnic relations (see also Hale 2004). Some argue that once ethnic categories are created they continue to be relatively stable; for the individual, then – and for analytical purposes in the research of ethnic relations – this ethnic identity may, according to this logic, be treated as if it is always steady (e.g. Horowitz 2000; van Evera 2001). Others assert, meanwhile, that both ethnic attachments and categories are relatively flexible and can thus change in the short term.[2] The propensity for ethnic change has, however, rarely been studied within political science.

The scrutiny of processes of ethnic change requires a clear understanding of the object of analysis – that is, of what it is that is changing. So, what actually is ethnicity? In both the media and in academic journals the term has become ubiquitous, being used in a variety of contexts for a number of different purposes. It is thus at risk of being too crude a term, particularly for comparative analyses across time and space. Indeed, Weber remarked almost a century ago that ethnicity is not an accurate analytical concept; it is, he argued, "entirely unusable [for any] truly rigorous investigation" (Weber 1978: 394–395, as cited in Brubaker

2 This potential for change is qualified, as it is constrained by a set of fixed attributes such as skin color, language, or religious denomination (e.g. Chandra 2006; Okamura 1981). Yet again, though, it is debatable to what extent these attributes are constructed.

et al. 2006: 357). In response, calls for the disaggregation of the term have gradually emerged and grown louder in recent years (e.g. Brubaker 2009; Chandra 2012; Wimmer 2008b). Ethnicity is indeed not one but rather an amalgamation of several different concepts that, when precisely defined, may be used to describe and operationalize mechanisms of identity change.

The following thus attempts to disaggregate this term; instead, however, of adding to the already-vast conceptual literature on it from across a number of different disciplines, I begin with a synthesis.[3] Despite the expansiveness of the literature, most scholars agree on some fundamental characteristics of ethnicity: First, they agree on its description (Gil-White 1999; Scott 1990). An ethnic category is frequently defined as an aggregation of individuals sharing the perception of a common origin based on a set of shared attributes such as language, culture, history, locality, and/or physical appearance (e.g. Connor 1978; Cornell 1996; Geertz 1996; Horowitz 2000; Weber 1996). Note that the specific nature of the attributes is not important here, only that they are seen to be markers of shared origins. Second, most scholars agree that this perceived commonality may, to a greater or lesser extent, develop into a sense of community or solidarity, and that ethnic categories thus transform into ethnic groups (e.g. Chandra and Wilkinson 2008; Jenkins 1994). Deeper meaning is attached to these common attributes. Third, this sense of community – or "groupness" (Brubaker 2002: 167) – may offer a basis for collective action (e.g. Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Smith 1991). Such action may range from collective mobilization in the pursuit of common interests to the creation of a nation-state. Overall then, scholars in the field agree that ethnicity has at least three interdependent though analytically distinct characteristics: that it is based on a certain set of attributes common to an aggregation of individuals, that this commonality is infused with deeper meaning, and that this meaning may give rise to both individual and collective courses of action. Note that action is not a necessary ingredient for the existence of an ethnic group, but rather may arise out of it.

Political analyses tend to assume the simultaneous and interdependent existence of all three of these characteristics. However, to date knowledge of how and why they relate to each other remains scarce. It is thus possible that, for instance, the attributes of an ethnic category change over time, while the meaning attached to it remains the same – or vice versa. Similarly, action should be distinguished from both attributes and meanings. Not only is it difficult to distinguish methodologically between ethnic and nonethnic behavior; there are doubts about whether identification as such actually even causes the behavior in question in the first place (Ashmore et al. 2004; Jenkins 2008).

Giving examples may help clarify the distinction: Protestant and Catholic exist as categories in most Christian societies today, but while one's denomination does not seem to make a difference for social interactions in, say, France, it does in, say, Northern Ireland (Reicher

3 Note that there is little overlap between the conceptual and the empirical literature on ethnic conflict and its management.

2004). While the relationship between members of the Chewas and Tumbukas is characterized by antagonism in Malawi, it is amicable in Zambia (Posner 2004). Hence, although two ethnic categories may certainly be related in many cases, deeper meaning or action should not be assumed to follow necessarily from their attributes – and vice versa.[4] While a change in meaning may go hand in hand with a change in attributes, it is nevertheless helpful to distinguish between both mechanisms – since the latter only captures whether ethnic boundaries are relevant, but not the extent to which they are. The example of Catholics and Protestants can illustrate this as well: whereas the difference between them is virtually irrelevant for social relations in today's France, it was the basis of a civil war there in the sixteenth century (Reicher 2004).

Thus if we examine ethnicity as an outcome that may be subject to change, we should distinguish – at a minimum – between three characteristics. Changes in attributes have recently been examined in an excellent edited volume by Chandra (2012), and thus are not discussed here (see also Horowitz 2000; Tilly 2004; Wimmer 2008a; Zolberg and Long 1999). Action, as stated above, is not a necessary precondition for an ethnic group's existence, but rather a possible consequence thereof. Meaning, on the other hand, is of central importance to the analysis of ethnic change. Not only is it at least the implicit basis of many existing theories on ethnic conflict and management, but its centrality also follows directly from the constructivist viewpoint that is adopted and agreed upon in the literature. Based on literature from philosophy, sociology, and international relations, the following provides a justification for this statement.

3 Why Focus on Meaning?: An Ontological Justification

Constructivism holds, in short, that social reality does not exist independently of our experience of it; it is not ontologically objective, but rather subjective. The focus herein is on social facts, which include concepts such as marriage and sovereignty, nation and ethnicity. These social facts – in contrast to "brute," observable ones – exist only in the way they do because there is a collective human agreement that they do exist (Searle 1995; see also Durkheim 1938).

From this short definition follow several points about the nature of social facts within constructivist ontology: they are constituted, contingent, intersubjective, and reified. First, social facts are constituted, not simply caused, by ideational structures.[5] Ideas, norms, or cul-

4 Cornell and Hartmann (2007: 77) call the "degree to which [ethnic and racial identities] organize social life and collective action" their "comprehensiveness," or "thickness". They ascertain comprehensiveness from the identity's significance or importance to the holder. Chandra and Wilkinson (2008) refer to this distinction as "ethnic structure" and "ethnic practice," respectively.

5 Constructivists hold different opinions as to whether or not ideas cause and/or constitute social facts and behavior. See, for example, Searle (1995), Ruggie (1998), and Parsons (2010).

ture are not usually independent and found temporally prior to social facts, but rather define how we perceive the latter. Those factors constituting, for example, a Cold War neither precede nor exist apart from a Cold War (Wendt 1998).[6] Similarly, one might argue that the factors constituting ethnic identities do not exist independently of the concept of specific ethnic identities in themselves – that is, the attributes that form the basis of a given ethnic category only do so because there is agreement that they do (e.g. Brubaker and Cooper 2000; McMillan and Chavis 1986; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Tönnies 1971; Weber 1947).

Second, social facts are contingent. They are not determined by a structure internal or essential to them; they are not inevitable (Hacking 1999; Parsons 2010). Ethnic categories and the groups growing out of these are not primordial, but rather are collectively produced and subject to change. From this it follows that, third, social facts are intersubjective. They come into being in social interaction as individual facts that are combined to add up to something greater than their sum of their parts (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Durkheim 1938; Searle 1995). Fourth, social facts are reified structures. Although they are contingent they still appear to be inevitable; the institutional reality is experienced as the objective reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Hacking 1999). Ethnic categories are thus perceived to be objective ones.

In political science, only two of these four characteristics are normally taken into consideration. Most scholars subscribe to the view that ethnic categories are contingent but reified. The latter is taken as justification for treating them as if they were stable (Horowitz 2000; van Evera 2001). However, the causes of the process of reification itself are not examined (see also Smith 2004). But why and how does the idea of the ethnic category become constituted, intersubjective, and reified? Can the process be stopped? Can it be reversed? How do attributes become the basis for a certain ethnic category? How do these become imbued with deeper meaning? These are the core questions that need to be addressed if we are to make headway in the study of ethnic mobilization, as well as of ethnic conflict management. One possible way to approach these questions is to look at advances in the literature of social psychology, which I do in the subsequent section.

4 How to Analyze Meaning: The Cognitive Approach

Based on social psychology theories, cognitive approaches to intergroup relations support the constructivist ontology with a theorization about the causal mechanisms at work (see al-

6 To compare this with nonconstructivist perspectives: while these also concede a role to ideas, this role is limited to the representation of the "real" world. Ideas do not constitute anything in themselves, being only by-products of social and political action (Parsons 2010). However, this does not mean that constructivism ignores the role of material factors in social interaction. On the contrary, one of the biggest advances of constructivism is its combination of material and ideational factors. For example, Alexander Wendt (2000) sees material factors as enabling or constraining the constitution of social facts.

so Brubaker et al. 2004). The underlying cognitive process herein is thought to be the phenomenon of "social categorization" (e.g. Brewer 2001; Turner 1982). In this process, the human brain is considered to simplify the complex social world that surrounds it by, first, classifying specific objects and events together as functional equivalents and, second, by developing schemas that serve to distinguish one category from another. In other words, social categories develop into stereotypes as a tool for discernment between different peoples. In a further process, these categorizations are gradually accentuated.

These theories are backed by empirical findings: both laboratory experiments and sociological studies have shown that people are more likely to perceive information that is relevant to existing categories as well as to recall such information more quickly and accurately (DiMaggio 1997). In effect, people tend to play down within-category differences and emphasize between-category ones (Park and Judd 2005). Moreover, members of the perceived "other" category are seen to be more homogenous than members of one's own (Park and Judd 2005; Turner 1982; Turner et al. 1994). In short, once stereotypic social facts are in place, they may work to reproduce or recombine themselves; boundaries between categories may also become thicker.

It is theorized not only that cognitive self-categorization leads to the classification of social information into distinct categories based on specific attributes, but also that this social information is viewed through the eyes of a cognitive model shared with other members of one's own social category. These models act as lens through which to see the world, as a "group's ontology and epistemology" (Abdelal et al. 2006: 699; see also Cornell 1996). People do not perceive their surroundings as independent or universal actors but as members of a thought community, of a specific social context (Brekhus et al. 2010). This, in turn, may further the perceptions about a particular group itself, or of groupness.

Further, using such cognitive lenses may have behavioral consequences. They may, for example, bias one's choices through a logic of appropriateness, common sense, or habituation (Abdelal et al. 2006), or they may increase cooperative behavior within one category and reduce it with those categories across the divide (Barth 1969). The distinctiveness of boundaries may thus increase, leading to the further perpetuation of the cognitive frameworks in question (Brubaker et al. 2004; DiMaggio 1997).

Social psychology thus theorizes the same mechanisms described above as being in place, from attributes via meaning to action. Indeed, these insights have been used in some political science literature to justify the assumptions made therein with regard to the workings of ethnicity (e.g. Birnir 2007; Horowitz 2000). However, what social psychological literature has also shown is that the links making up this mechanism are not deterministic but actually conditional. The conditions furthering or inhibiting the causal processes need to be empirically examined, and the individual links thus kept apart from each other in political analysis. The following provides an example of the importance of the distinction between in- and outgroup processes.

5 What to Focus On: Groupness versus Otherness

The concept "meaning" can, of course, be further disaggregated. A concise and detailed overview from a psychological perspective is given by Richard Ashmore et al. (2004). Here, I would like to focus on the distinction between meaning regarding the in-group and regarding the out-group. To this end, it is useful to refer to a fourth point of agreement in the conceptual literature on ethnicity – one that has been implicitly assumed so far. Following Barth's influential observation that it is "the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (Barth 1969: 15; emphasis in original), it is widely accepted that ethnic categories are not based on commonalities in themselves but on a shared difference to others (e.g. Brass 1996; Eriksen 1993; Gil-White 1999).

While Barth's and subsequent work have led to the generation of important insights into the topic of ethnic relations, there has been therein too large a focus on boundaries (see also Adams 2009). Consequently, many scholars conflate in-group processes with out-group ones: an increase in in-group identification is thus seen to simultaneously represent an increase in out-group antagonism as well. For example, much of the literature on ethnic parties assumes that the championing of in-group interests not only serves the emancipation of the potentially marginalized in-group but also the (intentional) exclusion of the out-group (e.g. Chandra 2005). This may indeed be the case in some polities, yet whether it is so is something that has to be empirically established each time rather than just inherently presumed.

First, there are differences in the type and strength of in-group processes; attributes are not always imbued with deeper meaning. Once the attributes of an ethnic category are defined – that is, once the category exists – it may be linked to varying levels of groupness, based on the meaning attached to the category and the actions arising from it. The meaning ascribed to the category is situated and may be observed at the individual level, often studied in social psychology under the auspices of the term "social identity." Although the literature on social identity is about as vast as that on ethnicity, virtually every social psychologist agrees with the "founding father" of social identity theory, Henri Tajfel, that it is "that part of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their *knowledge of their membership* of a social group (or groups) together with the *value and emotional significance* attached to that membership" (Tajfel 1982: 2, emphases added).[7] That is, when looking at degrees of groupness, a distinction needs to be made between cognitive self-categorization on the one hand and affective attachment to the category on the other – or, as Jack Citrin et al. (2001) phrase it, between "identification as" and "identification with." Individuals may recognize themselves as a member of a specific category without attaching any value to this particular self-categorization. Conversely, it may be possible to feel attached to a specific category without being a member of it oneself.

7 Social identity theory has also been interpreted differently; see, for example, Huddy (2001); Oakes (2002); Reicher (2004).

A category may, furthermore, be defined and individuals may recognize themselves as belonging to it, yet they nevertheless still may or may not act on the basis of this categorization. Individuals may have different degrees of social embeddedness – representing the extent to which a particular collective identity affects their social relationships. They may also differ in their behavioral involvement, in their participation in the collective's cultural practices, in their display of membership through the wearing of specific clothes or a flag, or in their participation in social activities furthering the definition of collective content or boundaries (Ashmore et al. 2004). In the political realm, such involvement may be expressed in terms of support for a political agenda benefitting members of the category – such as collective land or language rights. Thus, with regard to in-group processes alone, the link between attributes, meaning, and action are conditional, not inevitable.

Second, the link between in- and out-group processes is conditional, too. If the construction of an ethnic category requires an "other," as is agreed upon in the constructivist literature, the construction of an ethnic group with positive in-group biases and solidary actions may necessitate the negative portrayal of a particular out-group. High levels of groupness would thus mean high levels of otherness, with a propensity for violence across ethnic boundaries. As mentioned earlier, this assumption is widespread in the constructivist literature on ethnic conflict (see also Fearon and Laitin 2000). However, there is mounting empirical evidence that otherness does not necessarily follow from groupness. For example, both Marylinn Brewer (2001) and Stephen Reicher (2004) conclude from their comprehensive review of the social psychological literature that social categorization and in-group positivity may be necessary but, importantly, not sufficient for the development of out-group antagonism. The link is contingent on a number of factors such as, for example, the cultures, interests, or power politics of those involved. Bernadette Park and Charles Judd (2005) lend support to this conclusion through their experiments, in which they find that factors that moderate category strength do not have a consistent effect on the other measure. They conclude that no unequivocal empirical evidence exists for a causal link between the strength of categorization and intergroup bias. In the field, Darren Davis and Ronald Brown (2002) have shown that African-Americans with a strong black social identity do not automatically harbor a greater antipathy toward whites than those with weaker black social identity. James Gibson's (2006) study on South Africa, meanwhile, found no evidence that strong in-group identities lead to political or racial intolerance.[8]

Thus, discrimination may not be the result of negative attitudes towards out-group members per se, but instead of the reserving of positive attitudes such as trust and sympathy for in-group members alone. For example, prejudice research in Europe and the United States has shown that so-called "subtle racism" is characterized by the absence of positive –

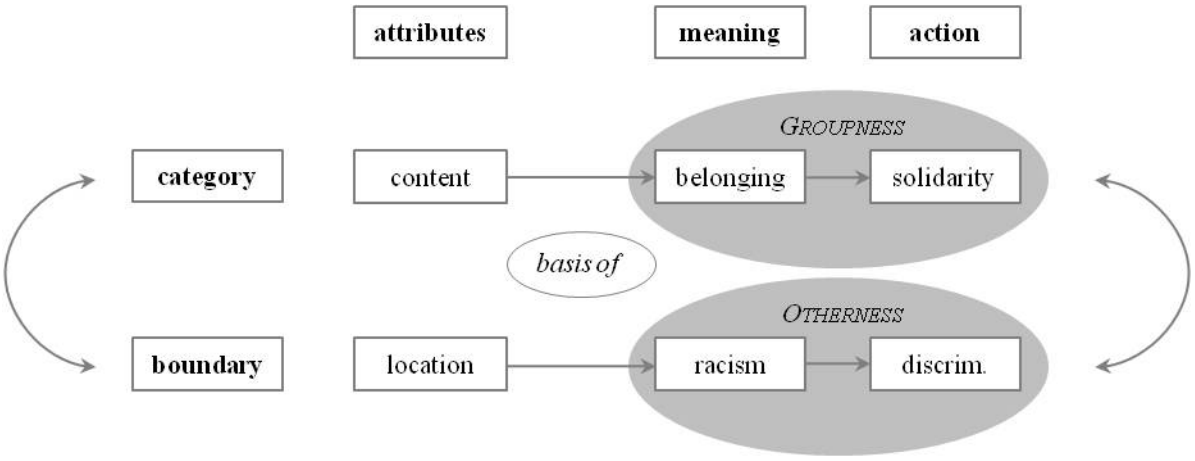
8 For a review of studies done on the micro level, see, for example, Donald Green and Rachel Seher (2003) and James Gibson (2006). Most studies in this field are limited to the United States and/or do not take into account the potential effects of political processes.

rather than, as often assumed, the presence of negative – attitudes toward the respective out-group (Brewer 2001; Hewstone et al. 2002). Such a distinction may seem like splitting hairs to some political analysts, given that the outcome is ultimately the same: worsening intergroup relations, to the point of interethnic violence. However, this distinction is still worth noting as it may indicate that interethnic tensions in fact exist to differing degrees. On the one hand, out-group derogation and even aggression may be a means of protecting or enhancing the in-group; on the other, it may be an end in itself (Brewer 2001). To justify such denigration of, or aggression against, out-groups, their very existence, values, and goals must be seen as posing a threat to the in-group – regardless of whether that danger is defined in realistic or symbolic terms (Hewstone et al. 2002).

6 Conclusion: A Framework for the Analysis of Ethnic Change

In lieu of a conclusion, I draw up instead a framework for the analysis of ethnic change (see Figure 1). From the preceding discussion, we can identify two dimensions of ethnicity as worthy objects of analysis: first, the components of ethnicity (represented in Figure 1 by columns) and, second, the perspective taken, whether on intra- or intergroup processes (represented therein by rows). The arrows signify a conditional link between the dimensions and different components.

Figure 1: Framework for the Analysis of Ethnic Change



Source: Author's depiction.

With regard to the components of ethnicity, three distinctive concepts have repeatedly emerged in the definition thereof as well as in the discussions of constructivism and of the cognitive approach: first, the existence of a certain set of "objective" attributes common to an aggregation of individuals; second, the "subjective" meaning attached to this set of attrib-

utes; and third, individual and collective courses of action structured by this meaning. I argue that any analysis of ethnic change needs to consider the three parts separately in the analytical realm, while realizing that they are interdependent in the social one.

The second dimension of analysis identified here is based on perspective – that is, on whether the ethnic category as such or rather the boundary between categories is examined. Following Barth's (1969) concern with boundaries, the fourth point of agreement in the conceptual literature on ethnicity set out in the beginning, I argue that we should distinguish between what happens inside of the boundary – that is, within the category – and what happens across the divide. Meaning and action vis-à-vis the in-group, or groupness, may be distinct from meaning and action vis-à-vis the out-group, or otherness. There may be a clear association between groupness and otherness, but whether that is the case and, if so, what this association looks like should always be observed rather than just presumed.

On the basis of this framework, we can examine ethnic change in response to political processes: which matrix box is affected, and how? In this paper, I have argued for a greater focus on the meanings attributed to categories and boundaries, as meaning underlies the constructivist approach to ethnicity. A greater collaboration between political-institutionalist and social psychological approaches may provide us with further insights into the effectiveness of conflict-management tools and institutions.

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