



ethnicity

without

groups

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*For Benjamin and Daniel*

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For this volume, I have taken the opportunity to make a number of minor changes to the essays, eliminating some repetition, updating some information, and correcting some errors and infelicities. Given the burgeoning literatures on the subjects addressed here, it has not been possible to engage in a serious way studies that have appeared since the essays were written, though I have added some references to new work. References have been consolidated into a single integrated bibliography.

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*Ethnicity without Groups*

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## *Introduction*

The essays collected in this volume address a cluster of closely related themes: ethnicity, race, nationalism, ethnic violence, identity, collective memory, migration, assimilation, and the nation-state. These are issues that, in one form or another, have preoccupied me for nearly two decades. Yet the present essays—written in analytical counterpoint to sustained ethnographic research, and in critical engagement with contemporary theoretical debates—mark a new direction in my work.

My earlier work on immigration, citizenship, and the nation-state in France and Germany (1992) and on the interplay between nationalizing states, national minorities, and external national homelands in eastern Europe (1996) involved what Charles Tilly (1984) has called “big structures, large processes, [and] huge comparisons.” The latter project, for example, embraced three sprawling multinational empires—Habsburg, Ottoman, and Romanov—and their successor states, two of which—the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia—were themselves multinational (and on some accounts imperial) states, whose disintegration yielded another score of successor states. In the course of this work, I began to experience a tension between my emerging theoretical commitments, which pointed increasingly in a microanalytic direction, and the scale and scope of my empirical work.

In response to this tension, I began in the summer of 1995 to conduct fieldwork in the ethnically mixed Transylvanian town of Cluj,

whose flamboyantly nationalist Romanian mayor had earned considerable notoriety for his anti-Hungarian pronouncements and his unflagging crusade to nationalize the town's public space. Together with Jon Fox, Margit Feischmidt, and Liana Grancea, I have been studying the meanings, workings, and variable salience of ethnicity (or "nationality," as it is called in the region) in everyday life, and the ways in which such everyday ethnicity is both affected by and insulated from nationalist politics on local, statewide, and interstate levels (Brubaker et al. 2004).

Working in Cluj, I have come to appreciate the force of Eric Hobsbawm's (1990: 10) dictum that nationhood and nationalism, while constructed from above, "cannot be understood unless also analysed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist." Studying the everyday preoccupations of ordinary Clujeni—to which ethnicity is indeed largely irrelevant—helped make sense of certain puzzles: in particular the lack of popular mobilization in response to, and the considerable popular indifference in the face of, intense and intractable elite-level nationalist conflict.

Yet this nonresponsiveness to the appeals of ethnonational entrepreneurs does not mean that ethnicity is experientially insignificant in Cluj. Social life is pervasively, though unevenly, structured along ethnic lines, and ethnicity "happens" in a variety of everyday settings. Ethnicity is embodied and expressed not only in political projects and nationalist rhetoric but in everyday encounters, practical categories, commonsense knowledge, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, interactional cues, discursive frames, organizational routines, social networks, and institutional forms. Such everyday ethnicity—like what Michael Billig (1995) has called "banal nationalism"—may be invisible to the student of collective action or ethnic violence, but it merits study in its own right.

Although they do not, with one exception, directly engage my work in Cluj,<sup>1</sup> the essays in this volume were prompted in part by this shift to a smaller scale of empirical research and the concomitant concern with everyday ethnicity. They were also occasioned by dissatisfaction with prevailing analytical idioms. As critical contributions, the essays share two main targets. The first is what I call "groupism": the tendency to take bounded groups as fundamental units of analysis (and basic constituents of the social world). Grounded in what Pierre Bourdieu called "our primary inclination to think the social world in a

substantialist manner" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 228), this tendency has proved surprisingly robust. It has managed to withstand a quarter century of constructivist theorizing in the social sciences, a sustained critique of reification in anthropology and other disciplines, the influential and destabilizing contributions of feminist, post-structuralist, post-modernist, and other theories, and even the widespread acknowledgment, in principle, that "cultures," "communities," "tribes," "races," "nations," and "ethnic groups" are not bounded wholes. Despite these and other developments, ethnic and other groups continue to be conceived as entities and cast as actors.

The second target is complacent and clichéd constructivism. Social construction has been a fertile metaphor in recent decades, inspiring a large body of work that has enriched and transformed our understanding of ethnicity (and of many other phenomena). Yet by virtue of its very success, the constructivist idiom has grown "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable." Once an insurgent undertaking, a bracing challenge to entrenched ways of seeing, constructivism has become the epitome of academic respectability, even orthodoxy. It is not that the notion of social construction is wrong; it is rather that it is today too obviously right, too familiar, too readily taken for granted, to generate the friction, force, and freshness needed to push arguments further and generate new insights. One symptom of this intellectual slackness is that one often finds constructivist and groupist language casually conjoined.

The essays seek to develop ways of analyzing ethnicity without invoking bounded groups, and to do so in a manner that gives the constructivist project renewed analytical purchase. They share a commitment to disaggregated modes of analysis, but this does not entail an ontological or methodological individualism.<sup>2</sup> The alternative to the substantialist idiom of bounded groups is not an idiom of individual choice, but rather (as Bourdieu never tired of emphasizing) a relational, processual, and dynamic analytical language.

The eponymous Chapter 1 sets the agenda for the book by developing the critique of groupism and proposing ways of studying "ethnicity without groups." The title should not be taken too literally. The book does not seek to banish "groups" from the study of ethnicity; it seeks, rather, to open up that study to other ways in which ethnicity "works." Bounded and solidary groups are one modality of ethnicity (and of social organization more generally). But they are only one modality.

“Groupness” is a variable, not a constant; it cannot be presupposed. It varies not only across putative groups, but within them; it may wax and wane over time, peaking during exceptional—but unsustainable—moments of collective effervescence. Ethnicity does not require such groupness. It works not only, or even especially, in and through bounded groups, but in and through categories, schemas, encounters, identifications, languages, stories, institutions, organizations, networks, and events. The study of ethnicity—even the study of ethnic conflict—should not, in short, be reduced to, or even centered on, the study of ethnic groups. Notwithstanding the title of Horowitz’s magisterial (and still indispensable) book, ethnic conflict is not always a matter of “ethnic groups in conflict.”

Chapter 2, written with Frederick Cooper, takes on that central, indeed inescapable term in the social sciences and humanities: identity. This is a term that has been asked to do a great deal of analytical work, and much of that work is legitimate and important. But it is also a deeply ambiguous term, divided between “hard” and “soft” meanings, between groupist assumptions and constructivist qualifiers, between connotations of unity and multiplicity, sameness and difference, permanence and change. Understood in a strong sense—as implying a singular, abiding, foundational sameness—“identity” tends to mean too much; understood in a weak sense—as multiple, fluid, fragmented, negotiated, and so on—it tends to mean too little. This essay argues that the work done by “identity” might better be done by several clusters of less congested terms: identification and categorization, self-understanding and social location, commonality and connectedness.

One of the most significant intellectual developments of the latter part of the twentieth century in the human sciences was the “cognitive turn,” which revolutionized psychology, recast debates in linguistics, created a new subdiscipline in anthropology, and founded entirely new fields such as artificial intelligence and cognitive science. In sociology, too, cognitive perspectives have opened up new lines of analysis. In the study of ethnicity, however, the cognitive turn has remained incipient and largely implicit. Chapter 3, written with Mara Loveman and Peter Stamatov, suggests ways of consolidating and extending this incipient cognitive turn by drawing on cognitive research in social psychology and anthropology. Cognitive perspectives provide resources for conceptualizing ethnicity, race, and nation in a non-groupist manner, as perspectives on the world rather than entities in the world, while at

the same time helping to explain the tenacious hold of groupist ways of thinking in practice.

Ethnic and nationalist violence has become a major focus of public and scholarly concern since the end of the Cold War. Yet what is often rather too casually called “ethnic violence” is not a unitary phenomenon; and any attempt to construct a unitary theory of ethnic violence would be vitiated by its lack of a meaningful explanandum. Chapter 4, written with David Laitin, reviews the burgeoning literature on the subject and proposes to take account of the composite and causally heterogeneous texture of the phenomenon through a strategy of analytical disaggregation.

The last third of the twentieth century witnessed a massive differentialist turn in ways of conceptualizing and responding politically to cultural heterogeneity in Western democracies. This movement of social thought and public policy resulted in greatly increased sensitivity to, appreciation for, and encouragement of “difference” in a variety of domains. Chapter 5 suggests that this movement may have reached its peak, and that, in the domain of immigration at least, prevailing understandings of a linear move “beyond assimilation” require rethinking. Examining public discourse in France, public policy in Germany, and scholarly research in the United States, I find evidence of a modest “return of assimilation” in recent years. Yet what has “returned,” I emphasize, is not the old, analytically discredited and politically disreputable “assimilationist” understanding of assimilation, but a more analytically complex and normatively defensible understanding.

For more than a century, scholars and public figures have distinguished “civic” and “ethnic,” western and eastern, liberal and illiberal forms of nationalism. These and similar distinctions have provided a way of coming to terms with the empirically unruly and morally and politically Janus-faced phenomena of nationhood and nationalism. But nationalism resists easy parsing into types with clearly contrasting and neatly correlated empirical and moral profiles. The distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism, I argue in Chapter 6, is conceptually ambiguous, empirically misleading, and normatively problematic.

Chapter 7 examines the politically charged questions of ethnicity, migration, and statehood in post-Cold War Europe. In Western Europe, ethnic heterogeneity generated by immigration is often seen as one of many expressions of a fundamental move “beyond the nation-state” or, alternatively, as a catalyst of reactive, exclusionary

nationalism. In Eastern Europe, ethnicity, migration, and statehood are seen as linked in a more ominous way, through violent conflict and ethnic cleansing. This chapter seeks to provide a more nuanced account of these closely intertwined issues, sensitive to persisting regional differences yet avoiding an oversimplified East-West contrast.

The volume concludes with a comparative study of the sesquicentennial commemoration of the revolutions of 1848 in Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia, written with Margit Feischmidt. Constructivist studies of collective memory emphasize the malleability and manipulability of the past at the hands of contemporary cultural and political entrepreneurs. This essay too finds ample evidence of the ways in which the politics of the present shape the representation of the past. Yet at the same time, the differential resonance of official commemorative efforts in the three countries underscores the point that the past is also refractory to presentist reconstruction.

## *Ethnicity without Groups*

### Commonsense Groupism

Few social science concepts would seem as basic, even indispensable, as that of group. In disciplinary terms, “group” would appear to be a core concept for sociology, political science, anthropology, demography, and social psychology. In substantive terms, it would seem to be fundamental to the study of political mobilization, cultural identity, economic interests, social class, status groups, collective action, kinship, gender, religion, ethnicity, race, multiculturalism, and minorities of every kind.

Yet despite this seeming centrality, the concept “group” has remained curiously unscrutinized in recent years. There is, to be sure, a substantial social psychological literature addressing the concept (Hamilton et al. 1998; McGrath 1984), but this has had little resonance outside that subdiscipline. Elsewhere in the social sciences, the recent literature addressing the concept “group” is sparse, especially by comparison with the immense literature on such concepts as class, identity, gender, ethnicity, or multiculturalism—topics in which the concept “group” is implicated, yet seldom analyzed on its own terms.<sup>1</sup> “Group” functions as a seemingly unproblematic, taken-for-granted concept, apparently in no need of particular scrutiny or explication. As a result, we tend to take for granted not only the concept “group,” but also “groups”—the putative things-in-the-world to which the concept refers.

My aim here is not to enter into conceptual or definitional casuistry. It is rather to address one problematic consequence of the tendency to

take groups for granted in the study of ethnicity, race, and nationhood, and in the study of ethnic, racial, and national conflict in particular. This is what I will call “groupism,” by which I mean the tendency to take discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis.<sup>2</sup> I mean the tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations, and races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed. I mean the tendency to reify such groups, speaking of Serbs, Croats, Muslims, and Albanians in the former Yugoslavia, of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, of Jews and Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories, of Turks and Kurds in Turkey, or of Blacks, Whites, Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans in the United States as if they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes. I mean the tendency to represent the social and cultural world as a multichrome mosaic of monochrome ethnic, racial, or cultural blocs.

From the perspective of broader developments in social theory, the persisting strength of such groupism is surprising. After all, several distinct traditions of social analysis have challenged the treatment of groups as real, substantial things-in-the-world. These include not only individualistic approaches such as rational choice, game theory, and agent-based modeling, but also network theory, cognitive theory, feminist theory, and densely relational micro-interactionist approaches such as ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. More generally, many constructivist stances treat groups as constructed, contingent, and fluctuating, while a diffuse post-modernist sensibility emphasizes the fragmentary, the ephemeral, and the erosion of fixed forms and clear boundaries. These developments are disparate, even contradictory in analytical style, methodological orientation, and epistemological commitments. Network theory, with its methodological (and sometimes ontological) relationalism (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Wellman 1988) is opposed to rational choice theory, with its methodological (and sometimes ontological) individualism; both are sharply and similarly opposed, in analytical style and epistemological commitments, to post-modernist approaches. Yet these and other developments have converged in problematizing groupness and undermining axioms of stable group being.

Challenges to “groupism,” however, have been uneven. They have been striking—to take just one example—in the study of class,

especially in the study of the working class, a term that is hard to use today without quotation marks or some other distancing device. Yet ethnic groups continue to be understood as entities and cast as actors. To be sure, constructivist approaches of one kind or another are now dominant in academic discussions of ethnicity. Yet everyday talk, policy analysis, media reports, and even much ostensibly constructivist academic writing routinely frame accounts of ethnic, racial, and national conflict in groupist terms as the struggles “of” ethnic groups, races, and nations.<sup>3</sup> Somehow, when we talk about ethnicity, and even more when we talk about ethnic conflict, we almost automatically find ourselves talking about ethnic groups.

Now it might be asked: “What’s wrong with this?” After all, it seems to be mere common sense to treat ethnic struggles as the struggles of ethnic groups, and ethnic conflict as conflict between such groups. I agree that this is the—or at least *a*—commonsense view of the matter. But we cannot rely on common sense here. Ethnic common sense—the tendency to partition the social world into putatively deeply constituted, quasi-natural intrinsic kinds (Hirschfeld 1996)—is a key part of what we want to explain, not what we want to explain things *with*; it belongs to our empirical data, not to our analytical toolkit.<sup>4</sup> Cognitive anthropologists and social psychologists have accumulated a good deal of evidence about commonsense ways of carving up the social world—about what Lawrence Hirschfeld (1996) has called “folk sociologies.” The evidence suggests that some commonsense social categories—and notably commonsense ethnic and racial categories—tend to be essentializing and naturalizing (Rothbart and Taylor 1992; Hirschfeld 1996; Gil-White 1999). They are the vehicles of what has been called a “participants’ primordialism” (Smith 1998: 158) or a “psychological essentialism” (Medin 1989). We obviously cannot ignore such commonsense primordialism. But that does not mean we should simply replicate it in our scholarly analyses or policy assessments. As “analysts of naturalizers,” we need not be “analytic naturalizers” (Gil-White 1999: 803).

Instead, we need to break with vernacular categories and commonsense understandings. We need to break, for example, with the seemingly obvious and uncontroversial point that ethnic conflict involves conflict between ethnic groups. I want to suggest that ethnic conflict—or what might better be called ethnicized or ethnically framed conflict—need not, and should not, be understood as conflict *between*

*ethnic groups*, just as racial or racially framed conflict need not be understood as conflict between *rac*es, or nationally framed conflict as conflict between *n*ations.

Participants, of course, regularly do represent ethnic, racial, and national conflict in such groupist, even primordialist terms. They often cast ethnic groups, races, or nations as the protagonists—the heroes and martyrs—of such struggles. This is entirely understandable, and doing so can provide an important resource in social and political struggles. But this does not mean analysts should do the same. We must, of course, take vernacular categories and participants' understandings seriously, for they are partly constitutive of our objects of study. But we should not uncritically adopt *categories of ethnopolitical practice* as our *categories of social analysis*. Apart from the general unreliability of ethnic common sense as a guide for social analysis, we should remember that participants' accounts—especially those of specialists in ethnicity such as ethnopolitical entrepreneurs, who, unlike nonspecialists, may live “off” as well as “for” ethnicity—often have what Pierre Bourdieu has called a *performative* character. By *invoking* groups, they seek to *evoke* them, summon them, call them into being. Their categories are *for doing*—designed to stir, summon, justify, mobilize, kindle, and energize. By reifying groups, by treating them as substantial things-in-the-world, ethnopolitical entrepreneurs can, as Bourdieu notes, “contribute to producing what they apparently describe or designate” (1991c: 220).<sup>5</sup>

Reification is a social process, not simply an intellectual bad habit.<sup>6</sup> As a social process, it is central to the *practice* of politicized ethnicity. And appropriately so. To criticize ethnopolitical entrepreneurs for reifying ethnic groups would be a kind of category mistake. Reifying groups is precisely what ethnopolitical entrepreneurs are in the business of doing. When they are successful, the political fiction of the unified group can be momentarily yet powerfully realized in practice. As analysts, we should certainly try to *account* for the ways in which—and conditions under which—this practice of reification, this powerful crystallization of group feeling, can work. But we should avoid unintentionally *doubling* or *reinforcing* the reification of ethnic groups in ethnopolitical practice with a reification of such groups in social analysis.<sup>7</sup>

## Beyond Groupism

How, then, are we to understand ethnic conflict, if not in commonsense terms as conflict between ethnic groups? And how can we go beyond groupism? Here I sketch eight basic points and then, in the next section, draw out some of their implications. In the final section, I illustrate the argument by considering one empirical case.

*Rethinking Ethnicity.* We need to rethink not only ethnic conflict, but also what we mean by ethnicity itself. This is not a matter of seeking agreement on a definition. The intricate and ever-recommencing definitional casuistry in studies of ethnicity, race, and nationalism has done little to advance the discussion, and indeed can be viewed as a symptom of the noncumulative nature of research in the field. It is rather a matter of critically scrutinizing our conceptual tools. Ethnicity, race, and nation should be conceptualized not as substances or things or entities or organisms or collective individuals—as the imagery of discrete, concrete, tangible, bounded, and enduring “groups” encourages us to do—but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and disaggregated terms. This means thinking of ethnicity, race, and nation not in terms of substantial groups or entities but in terms of practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects, and contingent events. It means thinking of ethnicization, racialization, and nationalization as political, social, cultural, and psychological processes. And it means taking as a basic analytical category not the “group” as an entity but groupness as a contextually fluctuating conceptual variable. Stated baldly in this fashion, these are of course mere slogans; I will try to develop them somewhat more fully in what follows.

*The Reality of Ethnicity.* To rethink ethnicity, race, and nationhood along these lines is in no way to dispute their reality, minimize their power, or discount their significance; it is to construe their reality, power, and significance in a different way. Understanding the reality of race, for example, does not require us to posit the existence of races. Racial idioms, ideologies, narratives, categories, and systems of classification, and racialized ways of seeing, thinking, talking, and framing claims, are real and consequential, especially when they are embedded in powerful organizations. But the reality of race—and even its overwhelming coercive power in some settings—does not depend on the existence of “races.” Similarly, the reality of ethnicity and

nationhood—and the overriding power of ethnic and national identifications in some settings—does not depend on the existence of ethnic groups or nations as substantial groups or entities.

*Groupness as Event.* Shifting attention from groups to groupness, and treating groupness as variable and contingent rather than fixed and given,<sup>8</sup> allows us to take account of—and, potentially, to account for—phases of extraordinary cohesion and moments of intensely felt collective solidarity, without implicitly treating high levels of groupness as constant, enduring, or definitionally present. It allows us to treat groupness as an *event*, as something that “happens,” as E. P. Thompson (1963: 9) famously said about class. At the same time, it keeps us alert to the possibility that groupness may *not* happen, that high levels of groupness may *fail* to crystallize, despite the group-making efforts of ethnopolitical entrepreneurs, and even in situations of intense elite-level ethnopolitical conflict. Being analytically attuned to “negative” instances in this way enlarges the domain of relevant cases, and helps correct for the bias in the literature toward the study of striking instances of high groupness, successful mobilization, or conspicuous violence—a bias that can engender an “overethnicized” view of the social world, a distorted representation of whole world regions as “seething cauldrons” of ethnic tension (Brubaker 1998b), and an overestimation of the incidence of ethnic violence (Fearon and Laitin 1996; this volume, Chapter 4). Sensitivity to such negative instances can also direct potentially fruitful analytical attention toward the problem of explaining failed efforts at ethnopolitical mobilization.

*Groups and Categories.* Much talk about ethnic, racial, or national groups is obscured by the failure to distinguish between groups and categories. If by “group” we mean a mutually interacting, mutually recognizing, mutually oriented, effectively communicating, bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity, and capacity for concerted action, or even if we adopt a less exigent understanding of “group,” it should be clear that a category is not a group.<sup>9</sup> It is at best a potential basis for group-formation or “groupness.”<sup>10</sup>

By distinguishing consistently between categories and groups, we can problematize—rather than presume—the relation between them. We can ask about the degree of groupness associated with a particular category in a particular setting, and about the political, social, cultural, and psychological processes through which categories get invested with groupness (Petersen 1987). We can ask how people—and

organizations—*do things* with categories. This includes limiting access to scarce resources or particular domains of activity by excluding categorically distinguished outsiders,<sup>11</sup> but it also includes more mundane actions such as identifying or characterizing oneself or others (Levine 1999; Brubaker et al. 2004) or simply “doing being ethnic” in an ethnomethodological sense (Moerman 1974). We can analyze the organizational and discursive careers of categories—the processes through which they become institutionalized and entrenched in administrative routines (Tilly 1998) and embedded in culturally powerful and symbolically resonant myths, memories, and narratives (Armstrong 1982; Smith 1986). We can study the politics of categories, both from above and from below. From above, we can focus on the ways in which categories are proposed, propagated, imposed, institutionalized, discursively articulated, organizationally entrenched, and generally embedded in multifarious forms of “governmentality.”<sup>12</sup> From below, we can study the “micropolitics” of categories, the ways in which the categorized appropriate, internalize, subvert, evade, or transform the categories that are imposed on them (Domínguez 1986). And drawing on advances in cognitive research, ethnomethodology, and conversation analysis,<sup>13</sup> we can study the sociocognitive and interactional processes through which categories are used by individuals to make sense of the social world, linked to stereotypical beliefs and expectations about category members,<sup>14</sup> invested with emotional associations and evaluative judgments, deployed as resources in specific interactional contexts, and activated by situational triggers or cues. A focus on categories, in short, can illuminate the multifarious ways in which ethnicity, race, and nationhood can exist and “work” without the existence of ethnic groups as substantial entities. It can help us envision ethnicity without groups.

*Group-Making as Project.* If we treat groupness as a variable and distinguish between groups and categories, we can attend to the dynamics of *group-making* as a social, cultural, and political project, aimed at transforming categories into groups or increasing levels of groupness (Bourdieu 1991c, 1991d). Sometimes this is done in quite a cynical fashion. Ethnic and other insurgencies, for example, often adopt what is called in French a *politique du pire*, a politics of seeking the worst outcome in the short run so as to bolster their legitimacy or improve their prospects in the longer run. When the small, ill-equipped, ragtag Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) stepped up its attacks



on Serb policemen and other targets in early 1998, for example, this was done as a deliberate—and successful—strategy of provoking massive regime reprisals. As in many such situations, the brunt of the reprisals was borne by civilians. The cycle of attacks and counterattacks sharply increased groupness among both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs, generated greater support for the KLA among both Kosovo and diaspora Albanians, and bolstered KLA recruitment and funding. This enabled the KLA to mount a more serious challenge to the regime, which in turn generated more brutal regime reprisals, and so on. In this sense, group crystallization and polarization were the result of violence, not the cause (Brubaker 1999). The same can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, about the dynamics of the second intifada in Israel and the occupied territories.

Of course, the KLA was not starting from scratch in the late 1990s. It began already with relatively high levels of groupness, a legacy of earlier phases of conflict. The propitious “raw materials” the KLA had to work with no doubt help explain the success of its strategy. Not all group-making projects succeed, and those that do succeed (more or less) do so in part as a result of the cultural and psychological materials they have to work with. These materials include not only, or especially, “deep,” *longue-durée* cultural structures such as the *mythomoteurs* highlighted by Armstrong (1982) and Smith (1986), but also the moderately durable ways of thinking and feeling that represent “middle-range” legacies of historical experience and political action. Yet while such raw materials—themselves the product and precipitate of past struggles and predicaments—constrain and condition the possibilities for group-making in the present, there remains considerable scope for deliberate group-making strategies. Certain dramatic events, in particular, can galvanize group feeling, and ratchet up pre-existing levels of groupness (Laitin 1995b). This is why deliberate violence, undertaken as a strategy of provocation, often by a very small number of persons, can sometimes be an exceptionally effective strategy of group-making.

*Groups and Organizations.* Although participants’ rhetoric and commonsense accounts treat ethnic groups as the protagonists of ethnic conflict, in fact the chief protagonists of most ethnic conflict—and a fortiori of most ethnic violence—are not ethnic groups as such but various kinds of organizations, broadly understood, and their empowered and authorized incumbents. These include states (or more

broadly autonomous polities) and their organizational components such as particular ministries, offices, law enforcement agencies, and armed forces units; they include terrorist groups, paramilitary organizations, armed bands, and loosely structured gangs; and they include political parties, ethnic associations, social movement organizations, churches, newspapers, radio and television stations, and so on. Some of these organizations may represent themselves, or may be seen by others, as organizations of and for particular ethnic groups.<sup>15</sup> But even when this is the case, organizations cannot be equated with ethnic groups. It is because and insofar as they are organizations, and possess certain material and organizational resources, that they (or more precisely their incumbents) are capable of organized action, and thereby of acting as more or less coherent protagonists in ethnic conflict.<sup>16</sup> Although common sense and participants’ rhetoric attribute discrete existence, boundedness, coherence, identity, interest, and agency to ethnic groups, these attributes are in fact characteristic of organizations. The IRA, KLA, and Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) claim to speak and act in the name of the (Catholic) Irish, the Kosovo Albanians, and the Kurds of Turkey respectively; but surely analysts must differentiate between such organizations and the putatively homogeneous and bounded groups in whose name they claim to act. The point applies not only to military, paramilitary, and terrorist organizations, of course, but to all organizations that claim to speak and act in the name of ethnic, racial, or national groups—or indeed in the name of any other kind of group (Heisler 1990).

A fuller and more rounded treatment of this theme, to be sure, would require several qualifications that I can only gesture at here. Conflict and violence vary in the degree to which, as well as the manner in which, organizations are involved. What Donald Horowitz (2001) has called the deadly ethnic riot, for example, differs sharply from organized ethnic insurgencies or terrorist campaigns. Although organizations (sometimes ephemeral ones) may play an important role in preparing, provoking, and permitting such riots, much of the actual violence is committed by broader sets of participants acting in relatively spontaneous fashion, and in starkly polarized situations characterized by high levels of groupness. Moreover, even where organizations are the core protagonists, they may depend on a penumbra of ancillary or supportive action on the part of sympathetic nonmembers. The “representativeness” of organizations—the degree

to which an organization can justifiably claim to represent the will, express the interests, and enjoy the active or passive support of its constituents—is enormously variable, not only among organizations, but also over time and across domains. In addition, while organizations are ordinarily the *protagonists* of conflict and violence, they are not always the *objects* or *targets* of conflict and violence. Entire population categories—or putative groups—can be the objects of organized action, even if they cannot easily be the subjects or undertakers of such action.<sup>17</sup> Finally, even apart from situations of violence, ethnic conflict may be at least partly amorphous, carried out not by organizations as such but spontaneously by individuals through such everyday actions as shunning, insults, demands for deference or conformity, or withholdings of routine interactional tokens of acknowledgment or respect (Bailey 1997). Still, despite these qualifications, it is clear that organizations, not ethnic groups as such, are the chief protagonists of ethnic conflict and ethnic violence, and that the relationship between organizations and the groups they claim to represent is often deeply ambiguous.

*Framing and Coding.* If the protagonists of ethnic conflict cannot, in general, be considered ethnic groups, then what makes such conflict count as *ethnic* conflict? And what makes violence count as ethnic violence? The answer cannot be found in the intrinsic properties of behavior. Violence becomes “ethnic” (or “racial” or “nationalist”) through the meanings attributed to it by perpetrators, victims, politicians, officials, journalists, researchers, relief workers, and others. Such acts of framing and narrative encoding do not simply *interpret* the violence; they *constitute it as ethnic*.<sup>18</sup>

When an ethnic frame is established, we “see” conflict and violence not only in ethnic, but in groupist terms. Although such perceived groupness does not necessarily reflect what is felt and experienced by participants in an event, a compelling *ex post* framing can exercise a powerful feedback effect, shaping subsequent experience and increasing levels of groupness. A great deal is at stake, then, in struggles over the interpretive framing and narrative encoding of conflict and violence.

Interpretive framing, of course, is often contested. Violence—and more generally, conflict—regularly occasions social struggles to label, interpret, and explain it. Such “metaconflicts” or “conflict[s] over the nature of the conflict,” as Donald Horowitz has called them (1991a: 2), do not simply shadow conflicts from the outside, but are integral parts

of them. To impose a label or prevailing interpretive frame—to cause an event to be seen as a “pogrom” or a “riot” or a “rebellion”—is no mere matter of external interpretation, but a constitutive and often consequential act of social definition (Brass 1996b). Interpretive struggles over the naming and framing of violence therefore merit study in their own right (Brass 1996a, 1997; Abelmann and Lie 1995).

How conflict and violence are seen, interpreted, and represented depends significantly on prevailing interpretive frames. Today, ethnic and national frames are readily accessible, powerfully resonant, and widely understood as legitimate. This encourages actors and analysts alike to interpret conflict and violence in ethnic rather than other terms. Analysts are thereby prone to overestimate the incidence of ethnic conflict and violence by “coding” as ethnic instances of conflict or violence that might have been coded in other terms (Bowen 1996; this volume, Chapter 4). Actors, in turn, can take advantage of this coding bias, and of the generalized legitimacy of ethnic and national frames, by strategically using ethnic framing to mask the pursuit of clan, clique, or class interests. The point here is not to suggest that clans, cliques, or classes are somehow more real than ethnic groups, but simply to note the existence of structural and cultural incentives for strategic framing.

*Ethnicity as Cognition.* These observations about the constitutive significance of coding and framing suggest a final point about the cognitive dimension of ethnicity. Ethnicity, race, and nationhood are fundamentally ways of perceiving, interpreting, and representing the social world. They are not things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world.<sup>19</sup> These include ethnicized ways of seeing (and ignoring), of construing (and misconstruing), of inferring (and misinferring), of remembering (and forgetting). They include ethnically oriented frames, schemas, and narratives, and the situational cues—not least those provided by the media—that activate them. They include systems of classification, categorization, and identification, formal and informal. And they include the tacit, taken-for-granted background knowledge, embodied in persons and embedded in institutionalized routines and practices, through which people recognize and experience objects, places, persons, actions, or situations as ethnically, racially, or nationally marked or meaningful.

Cognitive perspectives, broadly understood,<sup>20</sup> can help advance constructivist research on ethnicity, race, and nationhood, which has stalled in recent years as it has grown complacent with success. Instead

of simply asserting *that* ethnicity, race, and nationhood are constructed, they can help specify *how* they are constructed. They can help specify how—and when—people identify themselves, perceive others, experience the world, and interpret their predicaments in racial, ethnic, or national rather than other terms. They can help specify how “groupness” can “crystallize” in some situations while remaining latent and merely potential in others. And they can help link macrolevel outcomes with microlevel processes (Hirschfeld 1996).

### Implications

At this point a critic might interject: “What is the point of all this? Even if we can study ‘ethnicity without groups,’ why should we? Concepts invariably simplify the world; that the concept of discrete and bounded ethnic groups does so, suggesting something more substantial and clear-cut than really exists, cannot be held against it. The concept of ethnic group may be a blunt instrument, but it’s good enough as a first approximation. This talk about groupness and framing and practical categories and cognitive schemas is all well and good, but meanwhile the killing goes on. Does the critique matter in the real world, or—if at all—only in the ivory tower? What practical difference does it make?”

I believe the critique of groupism does have implications, albeit rather general ones, for the ways in which researchers, journalists, policy-makers, NGOs, and others come to terms, analytically and practically, with what we ordinarily—though perhaps too readily—call ethnic conflict and ethnic violence. Here I would like to enumerate five of these, before proceeding in the final section to discuss an empirical case.

First, sensitivity to framing dynamics, to the generalized coding bias in favor of ethnicity, and to the sometimes strategic or even cynical use of ethnic framing to mask the pursuit of clan, clique, or class interests can alert us to the risk of overethnicized or overly groupist interpretations of (and interventions in) situations of conflict and violence (Bowen 1996). One need not subscribe to a reductionist “elite manipulation” view of politicized ethnicity (Brubaker 1998b) to acknowledge that the “spin” put on conflicts by participants may conceal as much as it reveals, and that the representation of conflicts as conflicts between ethnic or national groups may obscure the interests at stake and the dynamics involved. What is represented as ethnic conflict or

ethnic war—such as the violence in the former Yugoslavia—may have as much or more to do with thuggery, warlordship, opportunistic looting, and black-market profiteering than with ethnicity (Mueller 2000; cf. Kaldor 1999; Collier 2000).

Second, recognition of the centrality of organizations in ethnic conflict and ethnic violence, of the often equivocal character of their leaders’ claims to speak and act in the name of ethnic groups, and of the performative nature of ethnopolitical rhetoric, enlisted in the service of group-making projects, can remind us not to mistake groupist rhetoric for real groupness, the putative groups of ethnopolitical rhetoric for substantial things-in-the-world.

Third, awareness of the interest that ethnic and nationalist leaders may have in living *off* politics, as well as *for* politics (to borrow the classic distinction of Max Weber [1946: 84]), and awareness of the possible divergence between the interests of leaders and those of their putative constituents, can keep us from accepting at face value leaders’ claims about the beliefs, desires, and interests of their constituents.

Fourth, sensitivity to the variable and contingent, waxing and waning nature of groupness, and to the fact that high levels of groupness may be more the result of conflict (especially violent conflict) than its underlying cause, can focus our analytical attention and policy interventions on the processes through which groupness tends to develop and crystallize, and those through which it may subside. Some attention has been given recently to the former, including tipping and cascade mechanisms (Laitin 1995b; Kuran 1998b; this volume, Chapter 4: 107) and mechanisms governing the activation and diffusion of schemas and the “epidemiology of representations” (Sperber 1985; this volume, Chapter 3). But declining curves of groupness have not been studied systematically, although they are just as important, theoretically and practically. Once ratcheted up to a high level, groupness does not remain there out of inertia. If not sustained at high levels through specific social and cognitive mechanisms, it will tend to decline, as everyday interests reassert themselves, through a process of what Weber (in a different but apposite context [1968 (1922):246–54]) called “routinization” (*Veralltäglichsung*, literally “towards everydayness”).

Lastly, a disaggregating, non-groupist approach can bring into analytical and policy focus the critical importance of intra-ethnic mechanisms in generating and sustaining putatively interethnic conflict (this volume, Chapter 4: 98–101). These include in-group “policing,” monitoring, or

sanctioning processes (Laitin 1995b); the “ethnic outbidding” through which electoral competition can foster extreme ethnicization (Rothschild 1981; Horowitz 1985); the calculated instigation or provocation of conflict with outsiders by vulnerable incumbents seeking to deflect in-group challenges to their positions; and in-group processes bearing on the dynamics of recruitment into gangs, militias, terrorist groups, or guerrilla armies, including honoring, shaming, and shunning practices, rituals of manhood, intergenerational tensions, and the promising and provision of material and symbolic rewards for martyrs.

### Ethnicity at Work in a Transylvanian Town

At this point, I would like to add some flesh to the bare-bones analytical argument sketched above. It is tempting to comment on the United States. It would be easy to score rhetorical points by emphasizing that the “groups” taken to constitute the canonical “ethnoracial pentagon” (Hollinger 1995)—African Americans, Asian Americans, Whites, Native Americans, and Latinos—are (with the partial exception of African Americans) not groups at all but categories, backed by political entrepreneurs and entrenched in governmental and other organizational routines of social counting and accounting (Office of Management and Budget 1994). It would be easy to highlight the enormous cultural heterogeneity within these and other putative “groups,” and the minimal degree of groupness associated with many ethnic categories in the United States (Gans 1979; Heisler 1990).<sup>21</sup>

But rather than take this tack, I will try to address a harder case, drawn from a region that, for a century and a half, has been the locus classicus of ethnic and nationalist conflict. I want to consider briefly how ethnicity works in an East Central European town characterized by continuous and often intense elite-level ethnonational conflict since the fall of communism (and, of course, by a much longer history of ethnonational tension). Here too, I want to suggest, we can fruitfully analyze ethnicity without groups.<sup>22</sup>

The setting is the city of Cluj, the main administrative, economic, and cultural center of the Transylvanian region of Romania. Of the approximately 320,000 residents, a substantial minority—just under 20 percent, according to the 2002 Census—identify themselves as Hungarian by ethnocultural nationality.<sup>23</sup> The city has been the site of protracted and seemingly intractable ethnonational conflict since the

collapse of the Ceaușescu regime in December 1989. But this is not, I will argue, best understood as a conflict between ethnic or national groups. To think of it as a conflict between groups is to conflate categories (“Hungarian” and “Romanian”) with groups (“the Hungarians,” “the Romanians”); to obscure the generally low, though fluctuating, degree of groupness in this setting; to mistake the putative groups invoked by ethnonational rhetoric for substantial things-in-the-world; to accept, at least tacitly, that nationalist organizations speak for the “groups” they claim to represent; and to neglect the everyday contexts in which ethnic and national categories take on meaning and the processes through which ethnicity actually “works” in everyday life.

Here, as elsewhere, the protagonists of the conflict have been organizations, not groups. The conflict has pitted the town’s three-term mayor—the flamboyant Romanian nationalist Gheorghe Funar—and the statewide Romanian nationalist parties against the Cluj-based Democratic Alliance of Hungarians of Romania (DAHR), at once a statewide political party with its electoral base in Transylvania and an organization claiming to represent and further the interests of the Hungarian minority in Romania. Rhetoric has been heated on both sides. Mayor Funar has accused Hungary of harboring irredentist designs on Transylvania;<sup>24</sup> he has called the DAHR a “terrorist organization”; and he has accused Transylvanian Hungarians of secretly collecting weapons, forming paramilitary detachments, and planning an attack on Romanians. Funar has ordered bilingual signs removed from the few buildings that had them; banned proposed celebrations of the Hungarian national holiday; called for the suspending of Hungarian-language broadcasts on Romanian state television; called for punishment of citizens for displaying the Hungarian flag or singing the Hungarian anthem; and proposed to rename after Romanian personages the few Cluj streets that bear the names of Hungarians.

The DAHR, for its part, is committed to a number of goals that outrage Romanian nationalists.<sup>25</sup> It characterizes Hungarians in Romania as an “indigenous community” entitled to an equal partnership with the Romanian nation as a constituent element of the Romanian state—thereby directly challenging the prevailing (and constitutionally enshrined) Romanian understanding of the state as a unitary nation-state such as France. At the same time, it characterizes Transylvanian Hungarians as an “organic part of the Hungarian nation,” and

as such claims the right to cultivate relations with the “mother country” across the border, which leads Romanian nationalists to call into question their loyalty to the Romanian state. It demands collective rights for Hungarians as a national minority, and it demands autonomy, including territorial autonomy, for areas in which Hungarians live as a local majority, thereby raising the specter of separatism in the minds of Romanian nationalists. It demands that Hungarians have their own institutional system in the domain of education and culture—yet that this institutional system should be financed by the Romanian state. It demands the right to public, state-funded education in Hungarian at every level and in every branch of the educational system. It demands the right to take entrance exams to every school and university in Hungarian, even if the school or department to which the student is applying carries out instruction in Romanian. And it demands the reestablishment of an independent Hungarian university in Cluj.

Like ethnic and nationalist organizations everywhere, the DAHR claims to speak for the Hungarian minority in Romania, often characterizing it as a singular entity, “the Hungariandom of Romania” (*a româniilor magyarság*). But no such entity exists.<sup>26</sup> The many Cluj residents who self-identify as Hungarian are often sharply critical of the DAHR, and there is no evidence that the demands of the DAHR are the demands of “the Hungarians.” On the question of a Hungarian university—the most contentious political issue of the last few years—a survey conducted by a Hungarian sociologist found that a plurality of Hungarian university students in Cluj preferred an autonomous system of Hungarian-language education within the existing university to the DAHR goal of reestablishment of a separate Hungarian university (Magyari-Nándor and Péter 1997). Most Hungarians, like most Romanians, are largely indifferent to politics, and preoccupied with problems of everyday life—problems that are not interpreted in ethnic terms. Although survey data and election results indicate that they vote en bloc for the DAHR, most Hungarians are familiar only in a vague way with the DAHR program. Similarly, there is no evidence that Mayor Funar’s anti-Hungarian views are widely shared by the town’s Romanian residents. When Funar is praised, it is typically as a “good housekeeper” (*bun gospodar*); he is given credit for sprucing up the town’s appearance and for providing comparatively good municipal services. Almost everyone—Romanian and

Hungarian alike—talks about ethnic conflict as something that “comes from above” and is stirred up by politicians pursuing their own interests. The near-universal refrain is that ethnicity is “not a problem.” To be sure, a similar idiom—or perhaps ideology—of everyday interethnic harmony can be found in many other settings, including some deeply divided, violence-plagued ones. So the idiom cannot be taken as evidence of the irrelevance of ethnicity. The point here is simply to underscore the gap between nationalist organizations and the putative “groups” in whose names they claim to speak.

Despite the continuous elite-level ethnopolitical conflict in Cluj since the fall of Ceaușescu, levels of “groupness” have remained low. At no time did Hungarians and Romanians crystallize as distinct, solidary, bounded groups. The contrast with Târgu Mureș, a few hours’ drive to the east, is instructive. In Târgu Mureș, ethnically framed conflict over the control of a high school and over the control of local government in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Ceaușescu intensified and broadened into a generalized conflict over the “ownership” and control of the ethnodemographically evenly divided city. The conflict culminated in mass assemblies and two days of street fighting that left at least six dead and 200 injured. In the days leading up to the violent denouement, categories had become palpable, sharply bounded groups, united by intensely felt collective solidarity and animated by a single overriding distinction between “us” and “them.” The violence itself reinforced this sense of groupness, which then subsided gradually as life returned to normal, and no further Hungarian-Romanian violence occurred, here or elsewhere in Transylvania.

No such crystallization occurred in Cluj. There were, to be sure, a few moments of moderately heightened groupness. One such moment—among Hungarians—occurred when Mayor Funar ordered a new plaque installed on the base of a monumental equestrian statue of Matthias Corvinus, celebrated king of Hungary during the late fifteenth century, in the town’s main square. The statue, erected at the turn of the last century at a moment of, and as a monument to, triumphant Hungarian nationalism, is perceived by many Hungarians as “their own,” and the new plaque deliberately affronted Hungarian national sensibilities by emphasizing the (partly) Romanian origin of Matthias Corvinus and representing him—contrary to the triumphalist image projected by the statue—as having been defeated in battle by “his own nation,” Moldavia (Feischmidt 2001). Another moment

occurred when archeological excavations were begun in front of the statue, again in a manner calculated to affront Hungarian national sensibilities by highlighting the earlier Roman—and by extension, Romanian—presence on the site. A third moment occurred in March 1998, when Mayor Funar tried to bar Hungarians from carrying out their annual 15 March celebration commemorating the revolution of 1848, this year's celebration, in the sesquicentennial year, having special significance.<sup>27</sup> A final moment occurred in June 1999 at the time of a much-hyped soccer match in Bucharest between the national teams of Romania and Hungary. In Cluj, the match was televised on a huge outdoor screen in the main square; some fans chanted "*Afară, afară, cu Ungurii din țară!*" (out, out, Hungarians out of the country!) and vandalized cars with Hungarian license plates.<sup>28</sup>

In each of these cases, groupness—especially among Hungarians, though in the final case among Romanians as well—was heightened, but only to a modest degree, and only for a passing moment. The first event occasioned a substantial but isolated Hungarian protest, the second a smaller protest, the third some concern that the commemoration might be broken up (in the event it proceeded without serious incident), and the last some moments of concern for those who happened to be in the town center during and immediately after the soccer match. But even at these maximally grouplike moments, there was no overriding sense of bounded and solidary groupness for those not immediately involved in the events.<sup>29</sup> What is striking about Cluj in the 1990s, in short, is that groupness failed to happen.

To note the relatively low degree of groupness in Cluj, and the gap between organizations and the putative groups they claim to represent, is not to suggest that ethnicity is somehow not "real" in this setting, or that it is purely an elite phenomenon. Yet to understand how ethnicity works, it may help to begin not with "the Romanians" and "the Hungarians" as groups, but with "Romanian" and "Hungarian" as categories. Doing so suggests a different set of questions than those that come to mind when we begin with "groups." Starting with groups, one is led to ask what groups want, demand, or aspire towards; how they think of themselves and others; and how they act in relation to other groups. One is led almost automatically by the substantialist language to attribute identity, agency, interests, and will to groups. Starting with categories, by contrast, invites us to focus on processes and relations rather than substances. It invites us to specify how people

and organizations do things with, and to, ethnic and national categories; how such categories are used to channel and organize processes and relations; and how categories get institutionalized, and with what consequences. It invites us to ask how, why, and in what contexts ethnic categories are used—or not used—to make sense of problems and predicaments, to articulate affinities and affiliations, to identify commonalities and connections, to frame stories and self-understandings.

Consider here just two of the many ways of pursuing a category-centered rather than a group-centered approach to ethnicity in Cluj. First, a good deal of commonsense cultural knowledge about the social world and one's place in it, here as in other settings, is organized around ethnonational categories.<sup>30</sup> This includes knowledge of one's own and others' ethnocultural nationality, and the ability to assign unknown others to ethnonational categories on the basis of cues such as language, accent, name, and sometimes appearance. It includes knowledge of what incumbents of such categories are like,<sup>31</sup> how they typically behave, and how ethnonational category membership matters in various spheres of life. Such commonsense category-based knowledge shapes everyday interaction, figures in stories people tell about themselves and others, and provides ready-made explanations for certain events or states of affairs. For Hungarians, for example, categorizing an unknown person as Hungarian or Romanian may govern how one interacts with him or her, determining not only the language but also the manner in which one will speak, a more personal and confidential (*bizalmas*) style often being employed with fellow Hungarians. Or for Romanians, categorizing two persons speaking Hungarian in a mixed-language setting as Hungarian (rather than, for example, as friends who happen to be speaking Hungarian) provides a ready-made explanation for their conduct, it being commonsense knowledge about Hungarians that they will form a *bisericuța* (clique, literally: small church) with others of their kind, excluding co-present Romanians, whenever they have the chance. Or again for Hungarians, categorically organized commonsense knowledge provides a ready-made framework for perceiving differential educational and economic opportunities as structured along ethnic lines, explaining such differentials in terms of what they know about the bearing of ethnic nationality on grading, admissions, hiring, promotion, and firing decisions, and justifying the commonly voiced opinion that "we [Hungarians] have to work twice as hard" to

get ahead. These and many other examples suggest that ethnicity is, in important part, a cognitive phenomenon, a way of seeing and interpreting the world, and that, as such, it works in and through categories and category-based commonsense knowledge.

Ethnic categories shape institutional as well as informal cognition and recognition. They not only structure perception and interpretation in the ebb and flow of everyday interaction but channel conduct through official classifications and organizational routines. Thus ethnic (and other) categories may be used to allocate rights, regulate actions, distribute benefits and burdens, construct category-specific institutions, identify particular persons as bearers of categorical attributes, “cultivate” populations, or, at the extreme, “eradicate” unwanted “elements.”<sup>32</sup>

In Cluj—as in Romania generally—ethnic categories are not institutionalized in dramatic ways. Yet there is one important set of institutions built, in part, around ethnic categories. This is the school system.<sup>33</sup> In Cluj, as in other Transylvanian cities, there is a separate Hungarian-language school system paralleling the mainstream system, and running from preschool through high school. These are not private schools, but part of the state school system. Not all persons identifying themselves as Hungarian attend Hungarian schools, but most do (85 to 90 percent in grades 1 through 4, smaller proportions, though still substantial majorities, in later grades).<sup>34</sup> In Cluj, moreover, there are also parallel tracks at the university level in many fields of study.

Categories need ecological niches in which to survive and flourish; the parallel school system provides such a niche for “Hungarian” as an ethnonational category. It is a strategically positioned niche. Hungarian schools provide a legitimate institutional home and a protected public space for the category; they also generate the social structural foundations for a small Hungarian world within the larger Romanian one. Since the schools shape opportunity structures and contact probabilities, and thereby influence friendship patterns (and, at the high school and university level, marriage patterns as well), this world is to a considerable extent self-reproducing. Note that the (partial) reproduction of this social world—an interlocking set of social relationships linking school, friendship circles, and family—does not require strong nationalist commitments or group loyalties. Ethnic networks can be reproduced without high degrees of groupness, largely through the logic of contact probabilities and opportunity structures and the resulting moderately high degrees of ethnic endogamy.<sup>35</sup>

This brief case study has sought to suggest that even in a setting of intense elite-level ethnic conflict and (by comparison to the United States) deeply rooted and stable ethnic identifications, one can analyze the workings of ethnicity without employing the language of bounded groups.

## Conclusion

What are we studying when we study ethnicity and ethnic conflict? I have suggested that we need not frame our analyses in terms of ethnic groups, and that it may be more productive to focus on practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, commonsense knowledge, organizational routines and resources, discursive frames, institutionalized forms, political projects, contingent events, and variable groupness. It should be noted in closing, however, that by framing our inquiry in this way, and by bringing to bear a set of analytical perspectives not ordinarily associated with the study of ethnicity—cognitive theory, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, network analysis, organizational analysis, and institutional theory, for example—we may end up not studying ethnicity at all. It may be that “ethnicity” is simply a convenient—though in certain respects misleading—rubric under which to group phenomena that, on the one hand, are highly disparate, and, on the other, have a great deal in common with phenomena that are not ordinarily subsumed under the rubric of ethnicity.<sup>36</sup> In other words, by raising questions about the *unit* of analysis—the ethnic group—we may end up questioning the *domain* of analysis: ethnicity itself. But that is an argument for another occasion.



∞ CHAPTER TWO

*Beyond "Identity"*

"The worst thing one can do with words," wrote George Orwell (1953: 169–70) a half a century ago, "is to surrender to them." If language is to be "an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought," he continued, one must "let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way about." The argument of this essay is that the social sciences and humanities have surrendered to the word "identity"; that this has both intellectual and political costs; and that we can do better. "Identity," we will argue, tends to mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense), or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity). We take stock of the conceptual and theoretical work "identity" is supposed to do, and suggest that this work might be done by other terms, less ambiguous, and unencumbered by the reifying connotations of "identity."

We argue that the prevailing constructivist stance on identity—the attempt to "soften" the term, to acquit it of the charge of "essentialism" by stipulating that identities are constructed, fluid, and multiple—leaves us without a rationale for talking about "identities" at all and ill equipped to examine the "hard" dynamics and essentialist claims of contemporary identity politics. "Soft" constructivism allows putative "identities" to proliferate. But as they proliferate, the term loses its

analytical purchase. If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere. If it is fluid, how can we understand the ways in which self-understandings may harden, congeal, and crystallize? If it is constructed, how can we understand the sometimes coercive force of external identifications? If it is multiple, how do we understand the terrible singularity that is often striven for—and sometimes realized—by politicians seeking to transform mere categories into unitary and exclusive groups? How can we understand the power and pathos of identity politics?

"Identity" is a key term in the vernacular idiom of contemporary politics, and social analysis must take account of this fact. But this does not require us to use "identity" as a category of analysis or to conceptualize "identities" as something that all people have, seek, construct, or negotiate. Conceptualizing all affinities and affiliations, all forms of belonging, all experiences of commonality, connectedness, and cohesion, all self-understandings and self-identifications in the idiom of "identity" saddles us with a blunt, flat, undifferentiated vocabulary.

We do not aim here to contribute to the ongoing debate on identity politics.<sup>1</sup> We focus instead on identity as an analytical category. This is not a "merely semantic" or terminological issue. The use and abuse of "identity," we suggest, affects not only the language of social analysis but also—inseparably—its substance. Social analysis—including the analysis of identity politics—requires relatively unambiguous analytical categories. Whatever its suggestiveness, whatever its indispensability in certain practical contexts, "identity" is too ambiguous, too torn between "hard" and "soft" meanings, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers, to serve well the demands of social analysis.

The "Identity" Crisis in the Social Sciences

"Identity" and cognate terms in other languages have a long history as technical terms in Western philosophy, from the ancient Greeks through contemporary analytical philosophy. They have been used to address the perennial philosophical problems of permanence amidst manifest change and of unity amidst manifest diversity (Stroll 1967: 121).<sup>2</sup> Widespread vernacular and social-analytical use of "identity" and its cognates, however, is of much more recent vintage and more localized provenance.<sup>3</sup>

The introduction of "identity" into social analysis and its initial diffusion in the social sciences and public discourse occurred in the



United States in the 1960s (with some anticipations in the second half of the 1950s).<sup>4</sup> The most important and best-known trajectory involved the appropriation and popularization of the work of Erik Erikson (who was responsible, among other things, for coining the term "identity crisis").<sup>5</sup> But there were other paths of diffusion as well. The notion of identification was pried from its original, specifically psychoanalytic context (where the term had been initially introduced by Freud) and linked to ethnicity on the one hand (through Gordon Allport's influential 1954 book *The Nature of Prejudice*) and to sociological role theory and reference group theory on the other (through figures such as Nelson Foote and Robert Merton). Symbolic interactionist sociology, concerned from the outset with "the self," came increasingly to speak of "identity," in part through the influence of Anselm Strauss (1959). More influential in popularizing the notion of identity, however, were Erving Goffman (1963), working on the periphery of the symbolic interactionist tradition, and Peter Berger (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Berger et al. 1973; Berger 1974), working in social constructionist and phenomenological traditions.

For a variety of reasons, the term identity proved highly resonant in the 1960s,<sup>6</sup> diffusing quickly across disciplinary and national boundaries, establishing itself in the journalistic as well as the academic lexicon, and permeating the language of social and political practice as well as that of social and political analysis. In the American context, the prevalent individualist ethos and idiom gave a particular salience and resonance to "identity" concerns, particularly in the contexts of the 1950s thematization of the "mass society" problem and the 1960s generational rebellions. And from the late 1960s on, with the rise of the Black Power movement, and subsequently other ethnic movements for which it served as a template, concerns with and assertions of individual identity, already linked by Erikson to "communal culture,"<sup>7</sup> were readily, if facilely, transposed to the group level. The proliferation of identitarian claim-making was facilitated by the comparative institutional weakness of leftist politics in the United States and by the concomitant weakness of class-based idioms of social and political analysis. As numerous analysts (e.g., Calhoun 1993b) have observed, class can itself be understood as an identity. Our point here is simply that the weakness of class politics in the United States (*vis-à-vis* Western Europe) helps explain the profusion of identity claims.

Already in the mid-1970s, W. J. M. Mackenzie could characterize identity as a word "driven out of its wits by overuse," and Robert Coles could remark that the notions of identity and identity crisis had become "the purest of clichés."<sup>8</sup> But that was only the beginning. In the 1980s, with the rise of race, class, and gender as the "holy trinity" of literary criticism and cultural studies (Appiah and Gates 1995: 1), the humanities joined the fray in full force. And "identity talk"—inside and outside academia—continued to proliferate in the 1990s.<sup>9</sup> The "identity" crisis—a crisis of overproduction and consequent devaluation of meaning—shows no sign of abating.<sup>10</sup>

Qualitative as well as quantitative indicators signal the centrality—indeed the inescapability—of "identity" as a topos. Two new interdisciplinary journals devoted to the subject, complete with star-studded editorial boards, were launched in the mid-1990s.<sup>11</sup> And quite apart from the pervasive concern with "identity" in work on gender, sexuality, race, religion, ethnicity, nationalism, immigration, new social movements, culture, and "identity politics," even those whose work has *not* been concerned primarily with these topics have felt obliged to address the question of identity.<sup>12</sup>

### Categories of Practice and Categories of Analysis

Many key terms in the interpretative social sciences and history—"race," "nation," "ethnicity," "citizenship," "democracy," "class," "community," and "tradition," for example—are at once categories of social and political *practice* and categories of social and political *analysis*. By "categories of practice," following Bourdieu, we mean something akin to what others have called "native" or "folk" or "lay" categories. These are categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, as distinguished from the experience-distant categories used by social analysts.<sup>13</sup> We prefer the expression "category of practice" to the alternatives, for while the latter imply a relatively sharp distinction between "native" or "folk" or "lay" categories on the one hand and "scientific" categories on the other, such concepts as "race," "ethnicity," or "nation" are marked by close reciprocal connection and mutual influence between their practical and analytical uses.<sup>14</sup>

"Identity," too, is both a category of practice and a category of analysis. As a category of practice, it is used by "lay" actors in some

(not all!) everyday settings to make sense of themselves, of their activities, of what they share with, and how they differ from, others. It is also used by political entrepreneurs to persuade people to understand themselves, their interests, and their predicaments in a certain way, to persuade certain people that they are (for certain purposes) "identical" with one another and at the same time different from others, and to organize and justify collective action along certain lines.<sup>15</sup> In these ways the term "identity" is implicated both in everyday life and in "identity politics" in its various forms.

Everyday "identity talk" and "identity politics" are real and important phenomena. But the contemporary salience of "identity" as a category of practice does not require its use as a category of analysis. Consider an analogy. "Nation" is a widely used category of social and political practice. Appeals and claims made in the name of putative "nations"—for example, claims to self-determination—have been central to politics for 150 years. But one does not have to use "nation" as an analytical category designating an entity in the world in order to understand and analyze such appeals and claims. One does not have to take a category inherent in the *practice* of nationalism—the realist, reifying conception of nations as real communities—and make this category central to the *theory* of nationalism.<sup>16</sup> Nor does one have to use "race" as a category of analysis—which risks taking for granted that "races" exist—in order to understand and analyze social and political practices oriented to the presumed existence of putative "races" (Loveman 1999).<sup>17</sup> Just as one can analyze "nation-talk" and nationalist politics without positing the existence of "nations," or "race-talk" and "race"-oriented politics without positing the existence of "races," so one can analyze "identity-talk" and identity politics without, as analysts, positing the existence of "identities."

The mere use of a term as a category of practice, to be sure, does not disqualify it as a category of analysis.<sup>18</sup> If it did, the vocabulary of social analysis would be a great deal poorer, and more artificial, than it is. What is problematic is not *that* a particular term is used, but *how* it is used. The problem, as Wacquant (1997: 222) has argued with respect to "race," lies in the "uncontrolled conflation of social and sociological . . . [or] folk and analytic understandings."<sup>19</sup> The problem is that "nation," "race," and "identity" are used analytically a good deal of the time more or less as they are used in practice, in an implicitly or explicitly reifying manner, in a manner that implies or asserts that "nations," "races," and "identities" "exist" as

substantial entities and that people "have" a "nationality," a "race," an "identity."

It may be objected that this overlooks recent efforts to avoid reifying "identity" by theorizing identities as multiple, fragmented, and fluid.<sup>20</sup> "Essentialism" has indeed been vigorously criticized, and constructivist gestures now accompany most discussions of "identity."<sup>21</sup> Yet we often find an uneasy amalgam of constructivist language and essentialist argumentation.<sup>22</sup> This is not a matter of intellectual sloppiness. Rather, it reflects the dual orientation of many academic identitarians as both *analysts* and *protagonists* of identity politics. It reflects the tension between the constructivist language that is required by academic correctness and the foundationalist or essentialist message that may be required if appeals to "identity" are to be effective in practice.<sup>23</sup> Nor is the solution to be found in a more consistent constructivism: for it is not clear why that which is routinely characterized as "multiple, fragmented, and fluid" should be conceptualized as "identity" at all.

### The Uses of "Identity"

What do scholars mean when they talk about "identity"?<sup>24</sup> What conceptual and explanatory work is the term supposed to do? This depends on the context of its use and the theoretical tradition from which the use in question derives. The term is richly—indeed for an analytical concept, hopelessly—ambiguous. But one can identify a few key uses:

1. Understood as a ground or basis of social or political action, "identity" is often opposed to "interest" in an effort to highlight and conceptualize *noninstrumental* modes of social and political action.<sup>25</sup> With a slightly different analytical emphasis, it is used to underscore the manner in which action—individual or collective—may be governed by *particularistic self-understandings* rather than by *putatively universal self-interest* (Somers 1994). This is probably the most general use of the term; it is frequently found in combination with other uses. It involves three related but distinct contrasts in ways of conceptualizing and explaining action. The first is between self-understanding and (narrowly understood) self-interest.<sup>26</sup> The second is between particularity and (putative) universality. The third is between two ways of construing social location. Many (though not all) strands of identitarian

theorizing see social and political action as powerfully shaped by position in social space.<sup>27</sup> In this they agree with many (though not all) strands of universalist, instrumentalist theorizing. But "social location" means something quite different in the two cases. For identitarian theorizing, it means position in a multidimensional space defined by *particularistic categorical attributes* (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation). For instrumentalist theorizing, it means position in a *universalistically conceived social structure* (for example, position in the market, the occupational structure, or the mode of production).<sup>28</sup>

2. Understood as a specifically *collective* phenomenon, "identity" denotes a fundamental and consequential "*sameness*" among members of a group or category. This may be understood objectively (as a sameness "in itself") or subjectively (as an experienced, felt, or perceived sameness). This sameness is expected to manifest itself in solidarity, in shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective action. This usage is found especially in the literature on social movements (Melucci 1995); on gender;<sup>29</sup> and on race, ethnicity, and nationalism (e.g., Isaacs 1975; Connor 1994). In this usage, the line between "identity" as a category of analysis and as a category of practice is often blurred.
3. Understood as a core aspect of (individual or collective) selfhood or as a fundamental condition of social being, "identity" is invoked to point to something allegedly *deep, basic, abiding, or foundational*. This is distinguished from more superficial, accidental, fleeting, or contingent aspects or attributes of the self, and is understood as something to be valued, cultivated, supported, recognized, and preserved.<sup>30</sup> This usage is characteristic of certain strands of the psychological (or psychologizing) literature, especially as influenced by Erikson,<sup>31</sup> though it also appears in the literature on race, ethnicity, and nationalism. Here too the practical and analytical uses of "identity" are frequently conflated.
4. Understood as a product of social or political action, "identity" is invoked to highlight the *processual, interactive* development of the kind of collective self-understanding, solidarity, or "groupness" that can make collective action possible. In this

usage, found in certain strands of the "new social movement" literature, "identity" is understood both as a contingent product of social or political action and as a ground or basis of further action (e.g., Calhoun 1991; Melucci 1995; Gould 1995).

5. Understood as the evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses, "identity" is invoked to highlight the *unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented* nature of the contemporary self. This usage is found especially in the literature influenced by Foucault, post-structuralism, and post-modernism (e.g., Hall 1996). In somewhat different form, without the post-structuralist trappings, it is also found in certain strands of the literature on ethnicity—notably in "situationalist" or "contextualist" accounts of ethnicity (e.g., Werbner 1996).

Clearly, the term "identity" is made to do a great deal of work. It is used to highlight noninstrumental modes of action; to focus on self-understanding rather than self-interest; to designate sameness across persons or sameness over time; to capture allegedly core, foundational aspects of selfhood; to deny that such core, foundational aspects exist; to highlight the processual, interactive development of solidarity and collective self-understanding; and to stress the fragmented quality of the contemporary experience of self, a self unstably patched together through shards of discourse that are contingently activated in differing contexts.

These usages are not simply heterogeneous; they point in sharply differing directions. To be sure, there are affinities between certain of them, notably between the second and third, and between the fourth and fifth. And the first usage is general enough to be compatible with all of the others. But there are strong tensions as well. The second and third uses both highlight *fundamental sameness*—across persons and over time—while the fourth and fifth uses both *reject* notions of fundamental or abiding sameness.<sup>32</sup>

"Identity," then, bears a multivalent, even contradictory theoretical burden. Do we really need this heavily burdened, deeply ambiguous term? The overwhelming weight of scholarly opinion suggests that we do.<sup>33</sup> Even the most sophisticated theorists, while readily acknowledging the elusive and problematic nature of "identity," have argued that it remains indispensable. Critical discussion of "identity" has thus sought not to jettison but to save the term by reformulating it so as to

make it immune from certain objections, especially from the charge of "essentialism." Thus Stuart Hall (1996: 2) characterizes identity as "an idea which cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all." What these key questions are, and why they cannot be addressed without "identity," remain obscure in Hall's sophisticated but opaque discussion.<sup>34</sup> Hall's comment echoes an earlier formulation of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1977: 332), characterizing identity as "a sort of virtual center (*foyer virtuel*) to which we must refer to explain certain things, but without it ever having a real existence." Lawrence Grossberg (1996: 87–88), concerned by the narrowing preoccupation of cultural studies with the "theory and politics of identity," nonetheless repeatedly assures the reader that he does "not mean to reject the concept of identity or its political importance in certain struggles" and that his "project is not to escape the discourse of identity but to relocate it, to rearticulate it." Alberto Melucci (1995: 46), a leading exponent of identity-oriented analyses of social movements, acknowledges that "the word *identity* . . . is semantically inseparable from the idea of permanence and is perhaps, for this very reason, ill-suited to the processual analysis for which I am arguing." Ill suited or not, "identity" continues to find a central place in Melucci's writing.

We are not persuaded that "identity" is indispensable. We will sketch below some alternative analytical idioms that can do the necessary work without the attendant confusion. Suffice it to say for the moment that if one wants to argue that particularistic self-understandings shape social and political action in a noninstrumental manner, one can simply say so. If one wants to trace the processes through which persons sharing some categorical attribute come to share definitions of their predicament, understandings of their interest, and a readiness to undertake collective action, it is best to do so in a manner that highlights the contingent and variable relationship between mere categories and bounded, solidary groups. If one wants to examine the meanings and significance people give to constructs such as "race," "ethnicity," and "nationality," one already has to thread through conceptual thickets, and it is not clear what one gains by subsuming them under the flattening rubric of identity. And if one wants to convey the late modern sense of a self that is constructed and continuously reconstructed out of a variety of competing discourses, while remaining fragile, fluctuating and fragmented, it is not obvious how the word "identity" can help.

### "Strong" and "Weak" Understandings of "Identity"

We suggested at the outset that "identity" tends to mean either too much or too little. This point can now be elaborated. Our inventory of the uses of "identity" has revealed not only great heterogeneity but a strong antithesis between positions that highlight fundamental or abiding sameness and stances that expressly reject notions of basic sameness. The former can be called strong or hard conceptions of identity, the latter weak or soft conceptions.

Strong conceptions of "identity" preserve the commonsense meaning of the term—the emphasis on sameness over time or across persons. And they accord well with the way the term is used in most forms of identity politics. But precisely because they adopt for analytical purposes a category of everyday experience and political practice, they entail a series of deeply problematic assumptions:

1. Identity is something all people have, or ought to have, or are searching for.
2. Identity is something all groups (at least groups of a certain kind—e.g., ethnic, racial, or national) have, or ought to have.
3. Identity is something people (and groups) can have without being aware of it. In this perspective, identity is something to be *discovered*, and something about which one can be *mistaken*. The strong conception of identity thus replicates the Marxian epistemology of class.
4. Strong notions of collective identity imply strong notions of group boundedness and homogeneity. They imply high degrees of groupness, an "identity" or sameness between group members, a clear boundary between inside and outside.<sup>35</sup>

Given the powerful challenges from many quarters to substantialist understandings of groups and essentialist understandings of identity, one might think we have sketched a "straw man" here. Yet in fact strong conceptions of "identity" continue to inform important strands of the literature on gender, race, ethnicity, and nationalism (e.g., Isaacs 1975; Connor 1994).

Weak understandings of "identity," by contrast, break consciously with the everyday meaning of the term. It is such weak or "soft"

conceptions that have been heavily favored in theoretical discussions of "identity" in recent years, as theorists have become increasingly aware of and uncomfortable with the strong or "hard" implications of everyday meanings of "identity." Yet this new theoretical "common sense" has problems of its own. We sketch three of these.

The first is what we call "clichéd constructivism." Weak or soft conceptions of identity are routinely packaged with standard qualifiers indicating that identity is multiple, unstable, in flux, contingent, fragmented, constructed, negotiated, and so on. These qualifiers have become so familiar—indeed obligatory—in recent years that one reads (and writes) them virtually automatically. They risk becoming mere placeholders, gestures signaling a stance rather than words conveying a meaning.<sup>36</sup>

Second, it is not clear why weak conceptions of "identity" are conceptions of *identity*. The everyday sense of "identity" strongly suggests at least some self-sameness over time, some persistence, something that remains identical, the same, while other things are changing. What is the point of using the term "identity" if this core meaning is expressly repudiated?

Third, and most important, weak conceptions of identity may be *too* weak to do useful theoretical work. In their concern to cleanse the term of its theoretically disreputable "hard" connotations, in their insistence that identities are multiple, malleable, fluid, and so on, soft identitarians leave us with a term so infinitely elastic as to be incapable of performing serious analytical work.

We are not claiming that the strong and weak versions sketched here jointly exhaust the possible meanings and uses of "identity." Nor are we claiming that sophisticated constructivist theorists have not done interesting and important work using "soft" understandings of identity. We will argue, however, that what is interesting and important in this work often does not depend on the use of "identity" as an analytical category. Consider three examples.

Margaret Somers (1994), criticizing scholarly discussions of identity for focusing on categorical commonality rather than on historically variable relational embeddedness, proposes to "reconfigur[e] the study of identity formation through the concept of narrative" (605), to "incorporate into the core conception of identity the categorically destabilizing dimensions of time, space, and relationality" (606). Somers makes a compelling case for the importance of narrative to social life and social analysis, and argues persuasively for situating social

narratives in historically specific relational settings. She focuses on the ontological dimension of narratives, on the way in which narratives not only represent but, in an important sense, constitute social actors and the social world in which they act. What remains unclear from her account is why—and in what sense—it is *identities* that are constituted through narratives and formed in particular relational settings. Social life is indeed pervasively "storied" (614); but it is not clear why this "storiedness" should be axiomatically linked to identity. People everywhere and always tell stories about themselves and others, and locate themselves within culturally available repertoires of stories. But in what sense does it follow that "narrative location endows social actors with identities—however multiple, ambiguous, ephemeral, or conflicting they may be" (618)? What does this soft, flexible notion of identity add to the argument about narrativity? The major analytical work in Somers's article is done by the concept of narrativity, supplemented by that of relational setting; the work done by the concept of identity is much less clear.<sup>37</sup>

Introducing a collection on *Citizenship, Identity, and Social History*, Charles Tilly (1996: 7) characterizes identity as a "blurred but indispensable" concept and defines it as "an actor's experience of a category, tie, role, network, group or organization, coupled with a public representation of that experience; the public representation often takes the form of a shared story, a narrative." But what is the relationship between this encompassing, open-ended definition and the work Tilly wants the concept to do? What is gained, analytically, by labeling *any* experience and public representation of *any* tie, role, network, etc., as an *identity*? When it comes to examples, Tilly rounds up the usual suspects: race, gender, class, job, religious affiliation, national origin. But it is not clear what analytical leverage on these phenomena can be provided by the exceptionally capacious, flexible concept of identity he proposes. Highlighting "identity" in the title of the volume signals an openness to the cultural turn in the social history and historical sociology of citizenship; beyond this, it is not clear what work the concept does. Justly well known for fashioning sharply focused, "hardworking" concepts, Tilly here faces the difficulty that confronts most social scientists writing about identity today: that of devising a concept "soft" and flexible enough to satisfy the requirements of relational, constructivist social theory, yet robust enough to have purchase on the phenomena that cry out for explanation, some of which are quite "hard."

Craig Calhoun (1991) uses the Chinese student movement of 1989 as a vehicle for a subtle and illuminating discussion of the concepts of identity, interest, and collective action. Calhoun explains students' readiness to "knowingly risk death" (53) in Tiananmen Square on the night of 3 June 1989, in terms of an honor-bound identity or sense of self, forged in the course of the movement, to which students became increasingly and, in the end, irrevocably committed. His account of the shifts in the students' lived sense of self during the weeks of their protest—as they were drawn, in and through the dynamics of their struggle, from an originally "positional" (67), class-based self-understanding as students and intellectuals to a broader, emotionally charged identification with national and even universal ideals—is a compelling one. Here too, however, the crucial analytical work appears to be done by a concept other than identity—in this case, that of honor. Honor, Calhoun observes, "is imperative in a way interest is not" (64). But it is also imperative in a way *identity*, in the weak sense, is not. Calhoun subsumes honor under the rubric of identity, and presents his argument as a general one about the "constitution and transformation of identity." Yet his fundamental argument in this paper, it would seem, is not about identity in general, but about the way in which a compelling sense of honor can, in extraordinary circumstances, lead people to undertake extraordinary actions, lest their core sense of self be radically undermined.

Identity in this exceptionally strong sense—as a sense of self that can imperatively require interest-threatening or even life-threatening action—has little to do with identity in the weak or soft sense. Calhoun himself underscores the incommensurability between "ordinary identity—self-conceptions, the way people reconcile interests in everyday life" and the imperative, honor-driven sense of self that can enable or even require "bravery to the point of apparent foolishness" (Calhoun 1991: 68, 51). Calhoun provides a powerful characterization of the latter; but it is not clear what analytical work is done by the former, more general conception of identity.

Introducing his edited volume on *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, Calhoun works with this more general understanding of identity. "Concerns with individual and collective identity," he observes, "are ubiquitous." It is certainly true that "we know of no people without names, no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinctions between self and other, we and they are not made" (Calhoun

1994: 9). But it is not clear why this implies the ubiquity of identity, unless we dilute "identity" to the point of designating *all* practices involving naming and self-other distinctions. Calhoun—like Somers and Tilly—goes on to make illuminating arguments on a range of issues concerning claims of commonality and difference in contemporary social movements. Yet while such claims are indeed often framed today in an idiom of "identity," it is not clear that adopting that idiom for *analytical* purposes is necessary or even helpful.

### In Other Words

What alternative terms might stand in for "identity," doing the theoretical work "identity" is supposed to do without its confusing, contradictory connotations? Given the great range and heterogeneity of the work done by "identity," it would be fruitless to look for a *single* substitute, for such a term would be as overburdened as "identity" itself. Our strategy has been rather to unbundle the thick tangle of meanings that have accumulated around the term "identity," and to parcel out the work to a number of less congested terms. We sketch three clusters of terms here.

*Identification and Categorization.* As a processual, active term, derived from a verb, "identification" lacks the reifying connotations of "identity."<sup>38</sup> It invites us to specify the agents that do the identifying. And it does not presuppose that such identifying (even by powerful agents, such as the state) will necessarily result in the internal sameness, the distinctiveness, the bounded groupness that political entrepreneurs may seek to achieve. Identification—of oneself and of others—is intrinsic to social life; "identity" in the strong sense is not.

One may be called upon to identify oneself—to characterize oneself, to locate oneself vis-à-vis known others, to situate oneself in a narrative, to place oneself in a category—in any number of different contexts. In modern settings, which multiply interactions with others not personally known, such occasions for identification are particularly abundant. They include innumerable situations of everyday life as well as more formal and official contexts. How one identifies oneself—and how one is identified by others—may vary greatly from context to context; self- and other-identification are fundamentally situational and contextual.

One key distinction is between *relational* and *categorical* modes of identification. One may identify oneself (or another person) by position

in a relational web (a web of kinship, for example, or of friendship, patron-client ties, or teacher-student relations). On the other hand, one may identify oneself (or another person) by membership in a class of persons sharing some categorical attribute (such as race, ethnicity, language, nationality, citizenship, gender, sexual orientation, etc.). Calhoun (1997: 36 ff.) has argued that, while relational modes of identification remain important in many contexts, categorical identification has assumed ever greater importance in modern settings.

Another basic distinction is between self-identification and the identification and categorization of oneself by others.<sup>39</sup> Self-identification takes place in dialectical interplay with external identification, and the two need not converge.<sup>40</sup> External identification is itself a varied process. In the ordinary ebb and flow of social life, people identify and categorize others, just as they identify and categorize themselves. But there is another key type of external identification that has no counterpart in the domain of self-identification: the formalized, codified, objectified systems of categorization developed by powerful, authoritative institutions.

The modern state has been one of the most important agents of identification and categorization in this latter sense. In culturalist extensions of the Weberian sociology of the state, notably those influenced by Bourdieu and Foucault, the state monopolizes, or seeks to monopolize, not only legitimate physical force but also legitimate symbolic force, as Bourdieu puts it. This includes the power to name, to identify, to categorize, to state what is what and who is who. There is a burgeoning sociological and historical literature on such subjects. Some scholars have looked at "identification" quite literally: as the attachment of definitive markers to an individual via passport, fingerprint, photograph, and signature, and the amassing of such identifying documents in state repositories (Noiriel 1991, 1993, 1998; Fraenkel 1992; Torpey 2000; Caplan and Torpey 2001). Other scholars emphasize the modern state's efforts to inscribe its subjects onto a classificatory grid (Scott 1998: 76–83), to identify and categorize people in relation to gender, religion, occupation, property ownership, ethnicity, literacy, criminality, health, or sanity. Censuses apportion people across these categories,<sup>41</sup> and institutions—from schools to prisons—sort out individuals in relation to them. To Foucauldians in particular, these individualizing and aggregating modes of identification and classification are at the core of what defines "governmentality" in a modern state (Foucault 1991).<sup>42</sup>

The state is thus a powerful "identifier," not because it can create "identities" in the strong sense—in general, it cannot—but because it has the material and symbolic resources to impose the categories, classificatory schemes, and modes of social counting and accounting with which bureaucrats, judges, teachers, and doctors must work and to which nonstate actors must refer.<sup>43</sup> But the state is not the only "identifier" that matters. As Tilly (1998) has shown, categorization does crucial "organizational work" in all kinds of social settings, including families, firms, schools, social movements, and bureaucracies of all kinds. Even the most powerful state does not monopolize the production and diffusion of identifications and categories; and those that it does produce may be contested. The literature on social movements—"old" as well as "new"—is rich in evidence on how movement leaders challenge official identifications and propose alternative ones. It highlights leaders' efforts to get members of putative constituencies to identify themselves in a certain way, to see themselves—for a certain range of purposes—as "identical" with one another, to identify emotionally as well as cognitively with one another (e.g., Melucci 1995; Martin 1995).

The social movement literature has valuably emphasized the interactive, discursively mediated processes through which collective solidarities and self-understandings develop. Our reservations concern the move from discussing the work of identification—the efforts to build a collective self-understanding—to positing "identity" as their necessary result. By considering authoritative, institutionalized modes of identification together with alternative modes involved in the practices of everyday life and the projects of social movements, one can emphasize the hard work and long struggles over identification as well as the uncertain outcomes of such struggles. However, if the outcome is always presumed to be an "identity"—however provisional, fragmented, multiple, contested, and fluid—one loses the capacity to make key distinctions.

"Identification," we noted above, invites specification of the agents that do the identifying. Yet identification does not *require* a specifiable "identifier"; it can be pervasive and influential without being accomplished by discrete, specified persons or institutions. Identification can be carried more or less anonymously by discourses or public narratives (Hall 1996; Somers 1994). Although close analysis of such discourses or narratives might well focus on their instantiations in particular



discursive or narrative utterances, their force may depend not on any particular instantiation but on their anonymous, unnoticed permeation of our ways of thinking and talking and making sense of the social world.

There is one further meaning of "identification," alluded to above, that is largely independent of the cognitive, characterizing, classificatory meanings discussed so far. This is the psychodynamic meaning, derived originally from Freud.<sup>44</sup> While the classificatory meanings involve identifying oneself (or someone else) *as* someone who fits a certain description or belongs to a certain category, the psychodynamic meaning involves identifying oneself emotionally *with* another person, category, or collectivity. Here again, "identification" calls attention to complex (and often ambivalent) *processes*, while the term "identity," designating a *condition* rather than a *process*, implies too easy a fit between the individual and the social.

*Self-Understanding and Social Location.* "Identification" and "categorization" are active, processual terms, derived from verbs, and calling to mind particular acts of identification and categorization performed by particular identifiers and categorizers. But we need other kinds of terms as well to do the varied work done by "identity." Recall that one key use of "identity" is to conceptualize and explain action in a noninstrumental, nonmechanical manner. In this sense, the term suggests ways in which individual and collective action can be governed by particularistic understandings of self and social location rather than by putatively universal, structurally determined interests. "Self-understanding" is therefore the second term we would propose as an alternative to "identity." It is a dispositional term that designates what might be called "situated subjectivity": one's sense of who one is, of one's social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act. As a dispositional term, it belongs to the realm of what Pierre Bourdieu (1990a) has called *sens pratique*, the practical sense—at once cognitive and emotional—that persons have of themselves and their social world.

The term "self-understanding," it is important to emphasize, does not imply a distinctively modern or Western understanding of the "self" as a homogeneous, bounded, unitary entity. A sense of who one is can take many forms. The social processes through which persons understand and locate themselves may in some instances involve the psychoanalyst's couch and in others participation in spirit possession

cults.<sup>45</sup> In some settings, people may understand and experience themselves in terms of a grid of intersecting categories; in others, in terms of a web of connections of differential proximity and intensity. Hence the importance of seeing self-understanding and social locatedness in relation to each other, and of emphasizing that both the bounded self and the bounded group are culturally specific rather than universal forms.

Like the term "identification," "self-understanding" lacks the reifying connotations of "identity." Yet it is not restricted to situations of flux and instability. Self-understandings may be variable across time and across persons, but they may be stable. Semantically, "identity" implies sameness across time or persons; hence the awkwardness of continuing to speak of "identity" while repudiating the implication of sameness. "Self-understanding," by contrast, has no privileged semantic connection with sameness or difference.

Two closely related terms are "self-representation" and "self-identification." Having discussed "identification" above, we simply observe here that, while the distinction is not sharp, "self-understandings" may be tacit; even when they are formed, as they ordinarily are, in and through prevailing discourses, they may exist, and inform action, without themselves being discursively articulated. "Self-representation" and "self-identification," on the other hand, suggest at least some degree of explicit discursive articulation.

"Self-understanding" cannot, of course, do *all* the work done by "identity." We note here three limitations of the term. First, it is a subjective, autoreferential term. As such, it designates *one's own* understanding of who one is. It cannot capture *others'* understandings, even though external categorizations, identifications, and representations may be decisive in determining how one is regarded and treated by others, indeed in shaping one's own understanding of oneself. At the limit, self-understandings may be overridden by overwhelmingly coercive external categorizations.<sup>46</sup>

Second, "self-understanding" would seem to privilege cognitive awareness. As a result, it would seem not to capture—or at least not to highlight—the affective or cathectic processes suggested by some uses of "identity." Yet self-understanding is never purely cognitive; it is always affectively tinged or charged, and the term can certainly accommodate this affective dimension. However, it is true that the emotional *dynamics* are better captured by the term "identification" (in its psychodynamic meaning).



Finally, as a term that emphasizes situated subjectivity, "self-understanding" does not capture the objectivity claimed by strong understandings of identity. Strong, objectivist conceptions of identity permit one to distinguish "true" identity (characterized as deep, abiding, and objective) from "mere" self-understanding (superficial, fluctuating, and subjective). If identity is something to be discovered, and something about which one can be mistaken, then one's momentary self-understanding may not correspond to one's abiding, underlying identity. However analytically problematic these notions of depth, constancy, and objectivity may be, they do at least provide a reason for using the language of identity rather than that of self-understanding.

Weak conceptions of identity provide no such reason. It is clear from the constructivist literature why weak understandings of identity are *weak*; but it is not clear why they are conceptions of *identity*. In this literature, it is the various *soft predicates* of identity—constructedness, contestedness, contingency, instability, multiplicity, fluidity—that are emphasized and elaborated, while that which they are predicated of—identity itself—is taken for granted and seldom explicated. When identity itself is elucidated, it is often represented as a sense of who one is (Berger 1974: 162), or a self-conception (Calhoun 1991: 68), that is, as something that can be captured in a straightforward way by "self-understanding." This term lacks the theoretical pretensions of "identity," but this should count as an asset, not a liability.

*Commonality, Connectedness, Groupness.* One particular form of affectively charged self-understanding that is often designated by "identity"—especially in discussions of race, religion, ethnicity, nationalism, gender, sexuality, social movements, and other phenomena conceptualized as involving *collective* identities—deserves separate mention here. This is the emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity or oneness with fellow group members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders.

The problem is that "identity" is used to designate *both* such strongly groupist, exclusive, affectively charged self-understandings *and* much looser, more open self-understandings, involving some sense of affinity or affiliation, commonality or connectedness to particular others, but lacking a sense of overriding oneness vis-à-vis some constitutive "other."<sup>47</sup> Both the tightly groupist and the more loosely affiliative forms of self-understanding—as well as the transitional

forms between these polar types—are important, but they shape personal experience and condition social and political action in sharply differing ways.

Rather than stirring all self-understandings based on race, religion, ethnicity, and so on into the great conceptual melting pot of "identity," we would do better to use a more differentiated analytical language. Terms such as commonality, connectedness, and groupness could be usefully employed here in place of the all-purpose "identity." This is the third cluster of terms we propose. "Commonality" denotes the sharing of some common attribute, "connectedness" the relational ties that link people. Neither commonality nor connectedness alone engenders "groupness"—the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidary group. But commonality and connectedness together may indeed do so. This was the argument Tilly (1978: 62 ff.) put forward some time ago, building on Harrison White's idea of the "catnet," a set of persons comprising both a *category*, sharing some common attribute, and a *network*. Tilly's suggestion that groupness is a joint product of the "catness" and "netness"—categorical commonality and relational connectedness—is suggestive. But we would propose two emendations.

First, categorical commonality and relational connectedness need to be supplemented by a third element, what Max Weber called a *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl*, a feeling of belonging together. Such a feeling may indeed depend in part on the degrees and forms of commonality and connectedness, but it will also depend on other factors such as particular events, their encoding in compelling public narratives, prevailing discursive frames, and so on. Second, relational connectedness, or what Tilly calls "netness," while crucial in facilitating the sort of collective action Tilly was interested in, is not always necessary for "groupness." A strongly bounded sense of groupness may rest on categorical commonality and an associated feeling of belonging together with minimal or no relational connectedness. This is typically the case for large-scale collectivities such as "nations": when a diffuse self-understanding as a member of a particular nation crystallizes into a strongly bounded sense of groupness, this is likely to depend not on relational connectedness, but rather on a powerfully imagined and strongly felt commonality.<sup>48</sup>

The point is not, as some partisans of network theory have suggested, to turn from commonality to connectedness, from categories to networks, from shared attributes to social relations.<sup>49</sup> Nor is it to

celebrate fluidity and hybridity over belonging and solidarity. The point in suggesting this last set of terms is rather to develop an analytical idiom sensitive to the multiple forms and degrees of commonality and connectedness, and to the widely varying ways in which actors (and the cultural idioms, public narratives, and prevailing discourses on which they draw) attribute meaning and significance to them. This will enable us to distinguish instances of strongly binding, vehemently felt groupness from more loosely structured, weakly constraining forms of affinity and affiliation.

### Three Cases: "Identity" and Its Alternatives in Context

Having surveyed the work done by "identity," indicated some limitations and liabilities of the term, and suggested a range of alternatives, we seek now to illustrate our argument—both the critical claims about "identity" and the constructive suggestions regarding alternative idioms—through a consideration of three cases. In each case, we suggest, the identitarian focus on bounded groupness limits the sociological—and the political—imagination, while alternative analytical idioms can help open up both.

#### A Case from Africanist Anthropology: "The" Nuer

Identitarian thinking in African studies is most extreme, and most problematic, in journalistic accounts that see primordial "tribal identities" as the main cause of Africa's woes. Africanist scholars have long been troubled by this reductive vision and, influenced by Barth (1969), developed a constructivist alternative well before such an approach had a name (Cohen 1969; Lonsdale 1977).<sup>50</sup> The argument that ethnic groups are not primordial but the products of history—including the reifying of cultural difference through imposed colonial identifications—became a staple of African studies. Even so, scholars have tended to emphasize boundary formation rather than boundary crossing, the constitution of groups rather than the development of networks. And while Africanists have been critical of the concepts of "tribe," "race," and "ethnicity," they often still use "identity" in an unexamined way (e.g., Dubow et al. 1994). Acknowledgment that identity is multiple is rarely followed by explanation of why that

which is multiple should be considered identity.<sup>51</sup> In this context, it is worth going back to a classic of African ethnology: E. E. Evans-Pritchard's (1940) book *The Nuer*.

Based on research in Northeast Africa in the 1930s, *The Nuer* describes a distinctively relational mode of identification, self-understanding, and social location, one that construes the social world in terms of the degree and quality of connection among people rather than in terms of categories, groups, or boundaries. Social location is defined in the first instance in terms of lineage, consisting of the descendants of one ancestor reckoned through a socially conventional line: patrilineal, via males in the case of the Nuer, via females or more rarely via double descent systems in some other parts of Africa. Children belong to the lineage of their fathers, and while relationships with the mother's kin are not ignored, they are not part of the descent system. A segmentary lineage can be diagrammed as shown in Figure 1.

Everybody in this diagram is related to everybody else, but in different ways and to different degrees. One might be tempted to say that the people marked in circle A constitute a group, with an "identity" of A, as distinct from those in circle B, with an "identity" of B. Yet the very move which distinguishes A and B also shows their relatedness, as one moves back two generations and finds a common ancestor. If someone in

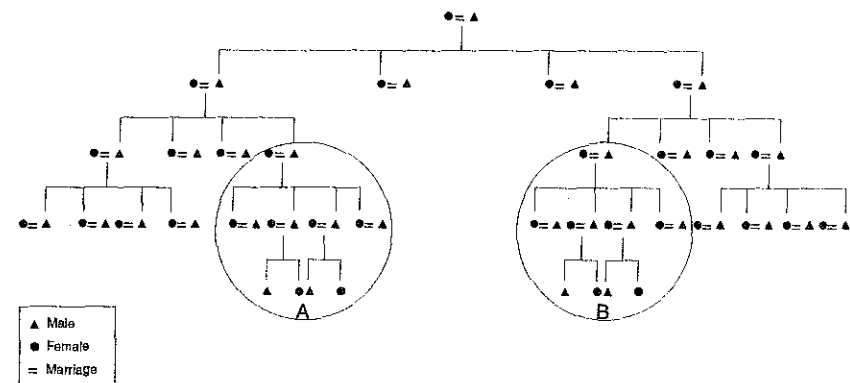


Figure 1. A segmentary patrilineage. Lines represent descent; marriage partners come from another lineage; children of daughters belong to the lineage of the husband and are not shown; children of sons belong to this lineage and are represented here.

set A gets into a conflict with someone in set B, such a person may well try to invoke the commonality of "A-ness" to mobilize people against B. But someone genealogically older than these parties can invoke the linking ancestors to cool things off. This practice—and the ever-present possibility of construing relatedness on different levels—fosters relational rather than categorical understandings of social location.

One could argue that this patrilineage as a whole constitutes an identity, distinct from other lineages. But Evans-Pritchard's point is that segmentation characterizes an entire social order, and that lineages themselves are related to one another as male and female lineage members are to each other. Virtually all segmentary societies insist on exogamy; in evolutionary perspective, this may reflect the advantages of cross-lineage connectedness. The male-centered lineage diagram presumes another set of relationships, through women who are born into the lineage of their fathers but whose sons and daughters belong to the lineage they married into.

One could then argue that all the lineages connected through intermarriage constitute the "Nuer" as an identity distinct from "Dinka" or any of the other groups in the region. But recent work in African history offers a more nuanced perspective. The genealogical construction of relationality offers possibilities for extension that are obscured by the contemporary scholar's tendency to look for a neat boundary between inside and outside. Marriage relations could be extended beyond the Nuer (both via reciprocal arrangements and by forcing captive women into marriage). Strangers—encountered via trade, migration, or other form of movement—could be incorporated as fictive kin or more loosely linked to a patrilineage via blood brotherhood. The people of northeastern Africa migrated extensively, as they tried to find better ecological niches or as lineage segments moved in and out of relations with each other. Traders stretched their kinship relations over space, formed a variety of relationships at the interfaces with agricultural communities, and sometimes developed a lingua franca to foster communication across extended networks.<sup>52</sup> In many parts of Africa, one finds certain organizations—religious shrines, initiation societies—that cross linguistic and cultural boundaries, offering what Paul Richards (1996) calls a "common 'grammar'" of social experience within regions, for all the cultural variation and political differentiation that they contain.

The problem with subsuming these forms of relational connectedness under the "social construction of identity" is that linking and separating

get called by the same name, making it harder to grasp the processes, causes, and consequences of differing patterns of crystallizing difference and forging connections. Africa was far from a paradise of sociability, but both war and peace involved flexible patterns of affiliation as well as differentiation.

Sliding scales of genealogical connection are not unique to small-scale "tribal" society. Kinship networks structure larger-scale political organizations as well, with authoritative rulers and elaborate hierarchies of command. African kings asserted their authority by developing patrimonial relations with people from different lineages, creating a core of support that cut across lineage affiliations, but they also used lineage principles to consolidate their own power, contracting marriage alliances and expanding the royal lineage (Lonsdale 1981). In almost all societies, kinship concepts serve as symbolic and ideological resources, yet while they shape norms, self-understandings and perceptions of affinity, they do not necessarily produce kinship "groups" (Guyer 1981; Amselle 1990).

To a greater extent than earlier forms of domination, colonial rule sought to map people with putatively common characteristics onto territories. These imposed identifications could be powerful, but their effects depended on the actual relationships and symbolic systems that colonial officials—and indigenous cultural entrepreneurs—had to work with, and on the countervailing efforts of others to develop, articulate, and maintain different sorts of affinities and self-understandings. The colonial era did indeed witness complex struggles over identification, but it flattens our understanding of these struggles to see them as producing "identities." People could live with shadings—and continued to do so in everyday undertakings even when political lines were sharply drawn.

Sharon Hutchinson's (1995) remarkable reanalysis of Evans-Pritchard's "tribe" takes such an argument into a contemporary, conflict-ridden situation. Her aim is "to call into question the very idea of 'the Nuer' as a unified ethnic identity" (29). She points to the fuzziness of the boundaries of people now called Nuer: culture and history do not follow such lines. And she suggests that Evans-Pritchard's segmentary schema gives excessive attention to the dominant male elders of the 1930s, and not enough to women, men in less powerful lineages, or younger men and women. In this analysis, it not only becomes difficult to see Nuerness as an identity, but imperative to examine with precision how people tried both to extend and to consolidate connections.

Bringing the story up to the era of civil war in the southern Sudan in the 1990s, Hutchinson refuses to reduce the conflict to one of cultural or religious difference between the warring parties and insists instead on a deep analysis of political relationships, struggles for economic resources, and spatial connections.

In much of modern Africa, indeed, some of the most bitter conflicts have taken place within collectivities that are relatively uniform culturally and linguistically (Rwanda, Somalia) and between loose economic and social networks based more on patron-client relations than ethnic affiliation (Angola, Sierra Leone), as well as in situations where cultural distinction has been made into a political weapon (Kwa Zulu in South Africa).<sup>53</sup> To explain present or past conflict in terms of how people construct and fight for their "identities" risks providing a pre-fabricated, presentist, teleological explanation that diverts attention from questions such as those addressed by Hutchinson.<sup>54</sup>

#### *East European Nationalism*

We have argued that the language of identity, with its connotations of boundedness, groupness, and sameness, is conspicuously ill suited to the analysis of segmentary lineage societies—or of present-day conflicts in Africa. One might accept this point yet argue that identitarian language is well suited to the analysis of other social settings, including our own, where public and private "identity talk" is widely current. But we are *not* arguing *only* that the concept of identity does not "travel" well, that it cannot be universally applied to all social settings. We want to make a stronger argument: that "identity" is neither necessary nor helpful as a category of analysis even where it *is* widely used as a category of practice. To this end, we briefly consider East European nationalism and identity politics in the United States.

Historical and social scientific writing on nationalism in Eastern Europe—to a much greater extent than writing on social movements or ethnicity in North America—has been characterized by relatively strong or hard understandings of group identity. Many commentators have seen the postcommunist resurgence of ethnic nationalism in the region as springing from robust and deeply rooted national identities—from identities strong and resilient enough to have survived decades of repression by ruthlessly antinational communist regimes. But this "return-of-the-repressed" view is problematic.<sup>55</sup>

Consider the former Soviet Union. To see national conflicts as

struggles to validate and express identities that had somehow survived the regime's attempts to crush them is unwarranted. Although *antinationalist*, and of course brutally repressive in all kinds of ways, the Soviet regime was anything but *antinational*.<sup>56</sup> Far from ruthlessly suppressing nationhood, the regime went to unprecedented lengths in institutionalizing and codifying it. It carved up Soviet territory into more than fifty putatively autonomous national "homelands," each "belonging" to a particular ethnonational group; and it assigned each citizen an ethnic "nationality," which was ascribed at birth on the basis of descent, registered in personal identity documents, recorded in bureaucratic encounters, and used to control access to higher education and employment. In doing so, the regime was not simply *recognizing* or *ratifying* a preexisting state of affairs; it was *newly constituting* both persons and places *as national*.<sup>57</sup> In this context, strong understandings of national identity as deeply rooted in the precommunist history of the region, frozen or repressed by a ruthlessly antinational regime, and returning with the collapse of communism are at best anachronistic, at worst simply scholarly rationalizations of nationalist rhetoric.

What about weak, constructivist understandings of identity? Constructivists might concede the importance of the Soviet system of institutionalized multinationality, and interpret this as the institutional means through which national identities were constructed. But why should we assume it is "identity" that is constructed in this fashion? To assume that it is risks conflating a system of *identification* or *categorization* with its presumed result, *identity*. Categorical group denominations—however authoritative, however pervasively institutionalized—cannot serve as indicators of real "groups" or robust "identities."

Consider for example the case of "Russians" in Ukraine. At the time of the 1989 census, some 11.4 million residents of Ukraine identified their "nationality" as Russian. But the precision suggested by this census data, even when rounded to the nearest hundred thousand, is entirely spurious. The very categories "Russian" and "Ukrainian," as designators of putatively distinct ethnocultural nationalities, or distinct "identities," are deeply problematic in the Ukrainian context, where rates of intermarriage have been high, and where millions of nominal Ukrainians speak only or primarily Russian. One should be skeptical of the illusion of "identity" or bounded groupness created by the census, with its exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories. One can imagine circumstances in which "groupness" might emerge

among nominal Russians in Ukraine, but such groupness cannot be taken as given.<sup>58</sup>

The formal institutionalization and codification of ethnic and national categories implies nothing about the *depth*, *resonance*, or *power* of such categories in the lived experience of the persons so categorized. A strongly institutionalized ethnonational classificatory system makes certain categories readily and legitimately available for the representation of social reality, the framing of political claims, and the organization of political action. This is itself a fact of great significance, and the breakup of the Soviet Union cannot be understood without reference to it. But it does not entail that these categories will have a significant role in framing perception, orienting action, or shaping self-understanding in everyday life—a role that is implied by even constructivist accounts of "identity."

The extent to which official categorizations shape self-understandings, and the extent to which the population categories constituted by states or political entrepreneurs approximate real "groups," are open questions that can only be addressed empirically. The language of "identity" is more likely to hinder than to help the posing of such questions, for it blurs what needs to be kept distinct: external categorization and self-understanding, objective commonality and subjective groupness.

Consider one final, non-Soviet example. The boundary between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania is certainly sharper than that between Russians and Ukrainians in Ukraine. Here too, however, group boundaries are considerably more porous and ambiguous than is widely assumed. The language of both politics and everyday life, to be sure, is rigorously categorical, dividing the population into mutually exclusive ethnonational categories, and making no allowance for mixed or ambiguous forms. But this categorical code, important though it is as a *constituent element* of social relations, should not be taken for a *faithful description* of them. Reinforced by identitarian entrepreneurs on both sides, the categorical code obscures as much as it reveals about self-understandings, masking the fluidity and ambiguity that arise from mixed marriages, from bilingualism, from migration, from Hungarian children attending Romanian-language schools, from intergenerational assimilation, and—perhaps most important—from sheer indifference to the claims of ethnocultural nationality.<sup>59</sup>

Even in its constructivist guise, the language of "identity" disposes

us to think in terms of bounded groupness. It does so because even constructivist thinking on identity takes the existence of identity as axiomatic. Identity is always already "there," as something that individuals and groups "have," even if the content of particular identities, and the boundaries that mark groups off from one another, are conceptualized as always in flux. Even constructivist language tends therefore to objectify "identity," to treat it as a "thing," albeit a malleable one, that people "have," "forge," and "construct." This tendency to objectify "identity" deprives us of analytical leverage and constricts political possibilities. It makes it more difficult for us to treat "groupness" and "boundedness" as emergent properties of particular structural or conjunctural settings rather than as always already there in some form.

#### *Identity Claims and the Enduring Dilemmas of "Race" in the United States*

The language of identity has been particularly prominent in the United States in recent decades. It has served both as an idiom of analysis in the social sciences and humanities and as an idiom in which to articulate experience, mobilize loyalty, and advance claims in everyday social and political practice.

The pathos and resonance of identity claims in the contemporary United States have many sources, but one of the most profound is that central problem of American history—the importation of enslaved Africans, the persistence of racial oppression, and the range of African-American responses to it. The African-American experience of "race" as both imposed categorization and self-identification has been important not only in its own terms, but also—from the late 1960s on—as a template for other identity claims, including those based on gender and sexual orientation as well as those formulated in terms of ethnicity or race (Gitlin 1995: 134).

In response to the cascading identitarian claims of the last three decades, public discourse, political argument, and scholarship in nearly every field of the social sciences and humanities have been transformed. There is much that is valuable in this process. History textbooks and prevailing public narratives tell a much richer and more inclusive story than those of a generation ago. Specious forms of universalism—the Marxist category of "worker" who always appears in the guise of a male, the liberal category of "citizen" who turns out to

be white—have been powerfully exposed. “First-generation” identitarian claims themselves—and scholarly literatures informed by them—have been criticized for their blindness to cross-cutting particularities: African-American movements for acting as if African-American women did not have gender-specific concerns, feminists for focusing on white, middle-class women.

Constructivist arguments have had a particular influence in Americanist circles, allowing scholars to stress the contemporary importance of imposed identifications and the self-understandings that have evolved in dialectical interplay with them, while emphasizing that such self- and other-identified “groups” are not primordial but historically produced. The treatment of race in the historiography of the United States is an excellent example.<sup>60</sup> Well before “social construction” became a fashionable term, scholars were showing that far from being a given dimension of America’s past, race as a political category originated in the same moment as America’s republican and populist impulses. Edmund Morgan (1975) argued that in early eighteenth-century Virginia, white indentured servants and black slaves shared a subordination that was not sharply differentiated; they sometimes acted together. It was when Virginian planter elites started to mobilize against the British that they needed to draw a sharp boundary between the politically included and the excluded, and the fact that black slaves were more numerous and replaceable as laborers and less plausible as political supporters led to a marking of distinction, which poor whites could in turn use to make claims.<sup>61</sup> Subsequent historical work has identified key moments of redefinition of racial boundaries in the United States, as well as moments in which other sorts of ties and affiliation became salient. Whiteness (Roediger 1991) and blackness were both historically created and variably salient categories. Comparative historians, meanwhile, have shown that the construction of race can take still more varied forms, and have highlighted the peculiarity of the American system of racial classification, based on the “one-drop” rule.<sup>62</sup>

American history thus reveals the power of imposed identifications, but it also reveals the complexity of the self-understandings of people defined by circumstances they did not control. Pre-Civil War collective self-definitions situated black Americans in particular ways in regard to Africa—often seeing an African (or an “Ethiopian”) origin as placing them close to the heartlands of Christian civilization. Yet early back-to-Africa movements often treated Africa as a cultural *tabula rasa* or as a

fallen civilization to be redeemed by African-American Christians.<sup>63</sup> Self-identification as a diasporic “people” did not necessarily imply claiming cultural commonality. One can write the history of African-American self-understanding as the development of a black nationality, or one can explore the interplay of such a sense of collectivity with the efforts of African-American activists to articulate different kinds of political ideologies and to develop connections with other radicals. The important point is to keep in mind the range of possibilities and the seriousness with which they were debated.

It is not the historical analysis of social construction as such that is problematic, but the presumptions about what it is that is constructed. Scholars have been more inclined to focus on the construction of racial (or other) “identities” than on that of other, looser forms of affinity and commonality. Setting out to write about “identifications” as they emerge, crystallize, and fade away in particular social and political circumstances may well inspire a rather different history than setting out to write of an “identity,” which links past, present, and future in a single word.

Cosmopolitan interpretations of American history have been criticized for taking the pain out of the distinctive ways in which that history has been experienced by African Americans: above all the pain of enslavement and discrimination, and of struggle against them. This has indeed been distinctive to African Americans (Lott 1996). Calls to understand the particularity of experience therefore resonate powerfully. Yet there are risks of flattening a complex history through a focus on a singular “identity,” though there may be gains as well as losses in such a focus, as thoughtful participants in debates over the politics of race have made clear.<sup>64</sup>

Yet to subsume further under the generic category of “identity” the historical experiences and allegedly common cultures of other “groups” as disparate as women and the elderly, Native Americans and gay men, poor people and the disabled is not in any obvious way more respectful of the pain of particular histories than are the universalist rhetorics of justice or human rights. And the assignment of individuals to such “identities” leaves many people—who have experienced the uneven trajectories of ancestry and the variety of innovations and adaptations that constitute culture—caught between a hard identity that does not quite fit and a soft rhetoric of hybridity, multiplicity, and fluidity that offers neither understanding nor solace.

This conceptually impoverished identitarian sociology, in which the "intersection" of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and perhaps one or two other categories generates a set of all-purpose conceptual boxes, has become powerfully entrenched in American academia in the 1990s—not only in the social sciences, cultural studies, and ethnic studies, but also in literature and political philosophy. In the remainder of this section, we shift our angle of vision and consider the implications of the use of this identitarian sociology in the latter domain.

"A moral philosophy," wrote Alisdair MacIntyre (1981: 22), "presupposes a sociology"; the same holds a fortiori of political theory. A weakness of much contemporary political theory is that it is built on a dubious sociology—indeed precisely on the reductively groupist representation of the social world just mentioned. We are not taking the side of "universality" against "particularity" here. Rather, we are suggesting that the identitarian language and groupist social ontology that informs much contemporary political theory occludes the problematic nature of "groupness" itself and forecloses other ways of conceptualizing particular affiliations and affinities.

There is a considerable literature now that is critical of the idea of universal citizenship. Iris Marion Young, one of the most influential of such critics, proposes instead an ideal of group-differentiated citizenship, built on group representation and group rights. The notion of an "impartial general perspective," she argues, is a myth, since "different social groups have different needs, cultures, histories, experiences, and perceptions of social relations." Citizenship should not seek to transcend such differences, but should recognize and acknowledge them as "irreducible" (Young 1989: 257, 258; 1990).

What sorts of differences should be ratified with special representation and rights? The differences in question are those associated with "social groups," defined as "comprehensive identities and ways of life," and distinguished from mere aggregates on the one hand—arbitrary classifications of persons according to some attribute—and from voluntary associations on the other. Special rights and representation would be accorded not to all social groups, but to those who suffer from at least one of five forms of oppression. In practice, this means "women, blacks, Native Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and other Spanish-speaking Americans, Asian Americans, gay men, lesbians, working-class people, poor people, old people, and mentally and physically disabled people" (Young 1989: 267, 261).

What constitutes the "groupness" of these "groups"? What makes them groups rather than categories around which self- and other-identifications may, but need not necessarily, crystallize? This is not addressed by Young. She assumes that distinctive histories, experiences, and social locations endow these "groups" with different "capacities, needs, culture, and cognitive styles" and with "distinctive understandings of all aspects of the society and unique perspectives on social issues" (Young 1989: 267, 268). Social and cultural heterogeneity is construed here as a juxtaposition of internally homogeneous, externally bounded blocs. The "principles of unity" that Young repudiates at the level of the polity as a whole—because they "hide difference"—are reintroduced, and continue to hide difference, at the level of the constituent "groups."

At stake in arguments about group-differentiated or "multicultural" citizenship are important issues that have been long debated outside as well as inside the academy, all having to do in one way or another with the relative weight and merits of universalist and particularist claims.<sup>65</sup> Sociological analysis cannot and should not seek to resolve this robust debate, but it can seek to shore up its often shaky sociological foundations. It can offer a richer vocabulary for conceptualizing social and cultural heterogeneity and particularity. Moving beyond identitarian language opens up possibilities for specifying other kinds of connectedness, other idioms of identification, other styles of self-understanding, other ways of reckoning social location. To paraphrase what Adam Przeworski (1977) said long ago about class, cultural struggle is a struggle about culture, not a struggle between cultures. Activists of identity politics deploy the language of bounded groupness not because it reflects social reality, but precisely because groupness is ambiguous and contested. Their groupist rhetoric has a performative, constitutive dimension, contributing, when it is successful, to the making of the groups it invokes (Bourdieu 1991b, 1991c).

Here there is a gap between normative arguments and activist idioms that take bounded groupness as axiomatic and historical and sociological analyses that emphasize contingency, fluidity, and variability. At one level there is a real-life dilemma: preserving cultural distinctiveness depends at least in part on maintaining bounded groupness and hence on policing the "exit option," and accusations of "passing" and of betraying one's roots serve as modes of discipline (Laitin 1995a). Critics of such policing, however, would argue that a



liberal polity should protect individuals from the oppressiveness of social groups as well as that of the state. At the level of social analysis, though, the dilemma is not a necessary one. We are not faced with a stark choice between a universalist, individualist analytical idiom and one that is identitarian and groupist. Framing the options in this way misses the variety of forms (other than bounded groups) which affinity, commonality, and connectedness can take—hence our emphasis on the need for a more supple vocabulary. We are not arguing for any specific stance on the politics of cultural distinction and individual choice, but rather for a vocabulary of social analysis that helps open up and illuminate the range of options. The politics of group "coalition" that is celebrated by Young and others, for example, certainly has its place, but the groupist sociology that underlies this particular form of coalition politics—with its assumption that bounded groups are the basic building blocks of political alliances—is unduly constraining.<sup>66</sup>

None of this belies the importance of current debates over "universalistic" and "particularistic" conceptions of social justice. Our point is that the identitarian focus on bounded groupness does not help in posing these questions. We need not in fact choose between an American history flattened into the experiences and "cultures" of bounded groups and one equally flattened into a single "national" story. Reducing the complex and dynamic heterogeneity of American society and history to a formulaic pluralism of identity groups hinders rather than helps the work of understanding the past and pursuing social justice in the present.

### Conclusion: Particularity and the Politics of "Identity"

We have not made an argument about identity politics. Nonetheless, the argument does have political as well as intellectual implications. Some will think these regressive, and will worry that the argument undermines the basis for making particularistic claims. That is neither our intention nor a valid inference from what we have written.

To persuade people that they are one; that they comprise a bounded, distinctive, solidary group; that their internal differences do not matter, at least for the purpose at hand—this is a normal and necessary part of politics, and not only of what is ordinarily characterized as "identity

politics." It is not all of politics; and we do indeed have reservations about the way in which the routine recourse to identitarian framing may foreclose other equally important ways of framing political claims. But we do not seek to deprive anyone of "identity" as a political tool, or to undermine the legitimacy of making political appeals in identitarian terms.

Our argument has focused, rather, on the use of "identity" as an *analytical* concept. Throughout the essay, we have asked what work the concept is supposed to do, and how well it does it. We have argued that the concept is deployed to do a great deal of analytical work—much of it legitimate and important. "Identity," however, is ill suited to perform this work, for it is riddled with ambiguity, riven with contradictory meanings, and encumbered by reifying connotations. Qualifying the noun with strings of adjectives—specifying that identity is multiple, fluid, constantly renegotiated, and so on—does not solve the problem. It yields little more than a suggestive oxymoron—a multiple singularity, a fluid crystallization—and begs the question of why one should use the same term to designate all this and more. Alternative analytical idioms, we have argued, can do the necessary work without the attendant confusion.

At issue here is not the legitimacy or importance of particularistic claims, but how best to conceptualize them. People everywhere and always have particular ties, self-understandings, stories, trajectories, histories, predicaments. And these inform the sorts of claims they make. To subsume such pervasive particularity under the flat, undifferentiated rubric of "identity," however, does nearly as much violence to its unruly and multifarious forms as would an attempt to subsume it under "universalist" categories such as "interest."

Construing particularity in identitarian terms, moreover, constricts the political as well as the analytical imagination. It points away from a range of possibilities for political action other than those rooted in putatively shared identity—and not only those that are praised or damned as "universalist." Identitarian political advocates, for example, construe political cooperation in terms of the building of coalitions between bounded identity groups. This is one mode of political cooperation, but not the only one.

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998), for example, have drawn attention to the importance of "transnational issue networks," from the antislavery movement of the early nineteenth century to



international campaigns about human rights, ecology, and women's rights in recent years. Such networks necessarily cross cultural as well as state boundaries and link particular places and particularistic claims to wider concerns. To take one instance, the antiapartheid movement brought together South African political organizations that were themselves far from united—some sharing "universalist" ideologies, some calling themselves "Africanist," some asserting a quite local, culturally defined "identity"—with international church groups, labor unions, pan-African movements for racial solidarity, human rights groups, and so on. Particular groups moved in and out of cooperative arrangements within an overall network; conflict among opponents of the apartheid state was sometimes bitter, even deadly. As the actors in the network shifted, the issues at stake were reframed. At certain moments, for example, issues amenable to international mobilization were highlighted, while others—of great concern to some would-be participants—were marginalized (Klotz 1995).<sup>67</sup>

Our point is not to celebrate such networks over identitarian social movements or group-based claims. Networks are no more intrinsically virtuous than identitarian movements and groups are intrinsically suspect. Politics—in southern Africa or elsewhere—is hardly a confrontation of good universalists or good networks versus bad tribalists. Much havoc has been done by flexible networks built on clientage and focused on pillage and smuggling; such networks have sometimes been linked to "principled" political organizations; and they have often been connected to arms and illegal merchandise brokers in Europe, Asia, and North America. Multifarious particularities are in play, and one needs to distinguish between situations where they cohere around particular cultural symbols and situations where they are flexible, pragmatic, readily extendable. It does not contribute to precision of analysis to use the same words for the extremes of reification and fluidity, and everything in between.

To criticize the use of "identity" in social analysis is not to blind ourselves to particularity. It is rather to conceive of the claims and possibilities that arise from particular affinities and affiliations, from particular commonalities and connections, from particular stories and self-understandings, from particular problems and predicaments in a more differentiated manner. Social analysis has become massively, and

durably, sensitized to particularity in recent decades; and the literature on identity has contributed valuably to this enterprise. It is time now to go beyond "identity"—not in the name of an imagined universalism, but in the name of the conceptual clarity required for social analysis and political understanding alike.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Ethnicity as Cognition*

In recent years, categorization has emerged as a major focus of research in the study of ethnicity, as it has in many other domains. As long as ethnic groups were conceived as substantial, objectively definable entities, there was no reason to focus on categorization or classification. As constructivist stances have gained ground in the last quarter century, however, objectivist understandings of ethnicity (a term we use broadly here to include race and nationhood as well)<sup>1</sup> have been displaced by subjectivist approaches. The latter define ethnicity not in terms of objective commonalities but in terms of participants' beliefs, perceptions, understandings, and identifications. One consequence of this shift has been an increasing concern with categorization and classification.

We see the emergent concern with categorization as an incipient, and still implicit, cognitive turn in the study of ethnicity.<sup>2</sup> We argue that the understanding of ethnicity can be enriched by making explicit this heretofore implicit cognitive reorientation, and by engaging research in cognitive psychology and cognitive anthropology.<sup>3</sup> Doing so, we suggest, has far-reaching implications for how ethnicity should be conceived as both object and field of study. Cognitive perspectives provide resources for avoiding analytical "groupism"—the tendency to treat ethnic groups as substantial entities to which interests and

agency can be attributed—while helping to explain the tenacious hold of groupism in practice. They suggest strong reasons for treating race, ethnicity, and nationalism together rather than as separate subfields. And they afford new purchase on the old debate between primordialist and circumstantialist approaches to ethnicity.

We begin by reviewing historical, political, institutional, ethnographic, and microinteractional work on classification and categorization in the study of ethnicity, and by suggesting why cognitive perspectives have remained implicit in such work. We next consider expressly cognitive work on stereotypes, social categorization, and schemas, and we suggest ways in which the latter concept, in particular—designating more complex knowledge structures than categories—might be used in research on ethnicity. Finally, we consider the broader implications of cognitive perspectives, which suggest that ethnicity is fundamentally not a thing *in* the world, but a perspective *on* the world. Our aim is not to advance specific hypotheses, but to sensitize students of ethnicity to cognitive dimensions of the phenomenon, and to point to ways in which attention to these dimensions can fruitfully inform research in the field.

#### Categories and Categorization: An Incipient Cognitive Turn

Anthropology has a long-standing interest in classification and categorization (Durkheim and Mauss, 1963 [1903]; Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Needham 1979), so it is not surprising that anthropologists took the lead in highlighting the centrality of classification and categorization to ethnicity. The key work here is that of Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1969). Ethnicity, Barth argued, is not a matter of shared traits or cultural commonalities, but rather of practices of classification and categorization, including both self-classification and the classification of (and by) others. Richard Jenkins (1997) and others have developed this idea further, emphasizing the interplay between self-identification and external categorization, and drawing attention to the various levels (individual, interactional, and institutional) and contexts (informal and formal) in which categorization occurs.<sup>4</sup>

While Barth formulated his argument with respect to ethnicity, it applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to race and nation as well. As its biological underpinning came to seem increasingly dubious, race came to be

reconceptualized as “a manner of dividing and ranking human beings by reference to selected embodied properties (real or imputed) so as to subordinate, exclude and exploit them . . .” (Wacquant 1997: 229). The introduction to a recent anthology on *Race and Racism* (Boxill 2001: 1) begins as follows: “Racial classification today is commonplace; people routinely catalogue each other as members of this or that race, and seem to assume that everyone can be thus classified.” The American Anthropological Association has issued an official “Statement on ‘Race’” that refers to race as “a mode of classification,” a “worldview,” and an “ideology” that employs socially exclusive categories to naturalize status differences.<sup>5</sup> In sociology, too, the ascendancy of social constructivist perspectives has led analysts to emphasize “the absence of any essential racial characteristics” and “the historical flexibility of racial meanings and categories” (Omi and Winant 1994: 4).<sup>6</sup>

A general retreat from objectivism has been apparent in the study of nationhood as well: a shift from definitions of nationhood in terms of common language, culture, territory, history, economic life, political arrangements, and so on to definitions that emphasize the subjective sense of or claim to nationhood, as in Hugh Seton-Watson’s interestingly circular suggestion that “a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one” (1977: 5). Like ethnicity and race, nation too has been expressly conceptualized as “a basic operator in a widespread system of social classification” (Verdery 1993: 37) and as a “practical category” (Brubaker 1996: Chapter 1).

Empirical work influenced by this new understanding of the centrality—indeed the constitutive significance—of categorization and classification for ethnicity, race, and nation clusters in two broad areas.<sup>7</sup> One cluster comprises historical, political, and institutional studies of official, codified, formalized categorization practices employed by powerful and authoritative institutions—above all, the state. Foucault’s notion of governmentality has been an important point of reference here (Burchell et al. 1991), as has Bourdieu’s (1994) account of symbolic power as the power to state what is what and who is who, and thereby to impose legitimate principles of vision and division of the social world. The second, smaller, cluster comprises ethnographic and microinteractionist studies of the unofficial, informal, “everyday” classification and categorization practices of ordinary people.

Research on official practices of ethnic, racial, and national categorization began with studies of colonial and postcolonial societies. Without dwelling on categorization per se, several now classic works pointed out how colonial rule transformed antecedent patterns of social identification and shaped patterns of ethnic mobilization through the identification, labeling, and differential treatment of ethnic groups (e.g., Young 1976; Geertz 1963; Horowitz 1985). More recent studies, giving more sustained attention to systems of classification and practices of categorization themselves, have shown how rulers’ practices of naming, counting, and classifying affected the self-understandings, social organization, and political claims of indigenous populations (Anderson 1991, Chapter 10; Appadurai 1996; Dirks 1992; Hirschman 1986; Jackson 1999; Jackson and Maddox 1993).

A growing literature addresses official categorization practices in noncolonial settings as well. Much of this literature has focused on censuses. Drawing inspiration from Bourdieu’s work on the symbolic power of modern states, recent works have examined how censuses inculcate the idea that national societies are bounded wholes, composed of discrete, mutually exclusive ethnic, racial, or cultural groups (Patriarca 1996; Kertzer and Arel 2002: 5–6; Nobles 2000; Loveman 2001, forthcoming). Even when census categories are initially remote from prevailing self-understandings, they may be taken up by cultural and political entrepreneurs and eventually reshape lines of identification (Starr 1987; Nagel 1995; Petersen 1987, 1997). Especially when they are linked through public policy to tangible benefits, official census categories can have the effect of “making up people” (Hacking 1986), or “nominating into existence” (Goldberg 1997: 29–30) new kinds of persons for individuals to be. Such categories, Goldberg argues from a Foucauldian perspective, are central to the state’s exercise of “racial governmentality”: censuses have comprised a “formative governmental technology in the service of the state to fashion racialized knowledge—to articulate categories, to gather data, and to put them to work” (Goldberg 1997: 30).

Censuses classify people anonymously and fleetingly; they do not permanently assign individuals to categories, or attach enduring, legally consequential identities to specific persons. Other forms of state categorization, however, do just this, imposing ethnic or racial categories on persons, inscribing them in documents, and attaching consequences—sometimes fateful ones—to these official identities

(Jenkins 1997: 69). The most notorious cases are the official schemes of racial classification and identification employed by Nazi Germany (Burleigh and Wippermann 1991) and South Africa (Bowker & Star 1999, Chapter 6). More recently, attention has been called to the uses made of official ethnic identities, specified in formal identity documents, in the Rwandan genocide (Fussell 2001; Longman 2001).<sup>8</sup> In the Soviet Union, too, ethnic nationality was not only a statistical category, a fundamental unit of social counting and accounting, but a legal category that was inscribed in personal documents, transmitted by descent, recorded in bureaucratic encounters and official transactions, and used in certain contexts to govern admission to higher education and access to certain types of jobs (Vujacic and Zaslavsky 1991; Roeder 1991; Slezkine 1994; Brubaker 1994; Martin 2001).

Studies of official categorization practices generally argue or imply that the ways in which states and other organizations count, classify, and identify their subjects, citizens, and clients have profound consequences for the self-understandings of the classified. This is no doubt often the case, but the connection between official categories and popular self-understandings is seldom demonstrated in detail. And the literature on classification and categorization in everyday life shows that the categories used by ordinary people in everyday interaction often differ substantially from official categories. The categorized are themselves chronic categorizers; the categories they deploy to make sense of themselves and others need not match those employed by states, no matter how powerful.

Research on the production and reproduction of racial, ethnic, and national distinctions and boundaries in everyday life demonstrates great complexity and variability in the categories actually used. An extreme example is the very large number of race and color categories used in Brazil (Harris 1970; Sanjek 1971), but complex and variable categorization practices have been documented in many other settings (see e.g., Sanjek 1981; Leach 1954; Kunstatter 1979; Moerman 1965). A common thread in studies of everyday classification is the recognition that ordinary actors usually have considerable room for maneuver in the ways in which they use even highly institutionalized and powerfully sanctioned categories (Baumann 1996; Sökefeld 1999; Alexander 1977; Levine 1987; Berreman 1972; Domínguez 1986; Kay 1978; Sanjek 1981; Starr 1978). They are often able to deploy such categories strategically, bending them to their own purposes; or they

may adhere nominally to official classificatory schemes while infusing official categories with alternative, unofficial meanings.<sup>9</sup>

Although most work on everyday categorization is ethnographic, a few works derive inspiration from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, and notably from the pioneering work of Harvey Sacks. These works treat ethnicity as a skilled practical accomplishment, as something that “happens” when ethnic categories are made relevant to participants in the course of a particular interactional trajectory (Moerman 1974; Day 1998; Schegloff 2002; Brubaker et al. 2004). Such research sees ethnic and other category memberships as “ascribed (and rejected), avowed (and disavowed), displayed (and ignored) in local places and at certain times . . . as part of the interactional work that constitutes people’s lives” (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998: 2).<sup>10</sup>

In its concern with the social organization and interactional deployment of knowledge, the literature on official and everyday categorization represents an incipient cognitive turn in the study of ethnicity. The scope of this cognitive turn, however, has been limited by the lack of engagement with expressly cognitive research in psychology and cognitive anthropology. Indeed most discussions of categorization and classification proceed without any explicit reference to cognition.<sup>11</sup>

Two reasons for the reluctance to engage expressly cognitive research can be identified. First, to extend a point DiMaggio (1997: 264–66) made about the sociology of culture, the humanistic, interpretive, holistic, and antireductionist commitments that inform most sociological, anthropological, and historical work on ethnicity clash with the positivist, experimentalist, individualist, and reductionist commitments of cognitive science. Yet as DiMaggio goes on to argue, there has been a certain rapprochement in recent years. On the one hand, holistic understandings of culture—and, one might add, of ethnicity—have come to seem increasingly problematic; on the other, cognitive research has paid increasing attention to more complex, culturally and historically specific mental structures and processes—to the “sociomental” domain, as Zerubavel calls it (1997: 5).

Second, advocates of ethnographic and especially interactionally oriented research have drawn a sharp distinction between cognitive and discursive approaches. The cognitive approach takes “discourse as a realization of . . . underlying processes and structures of knowledge,” and “culture itself . . . as a kind of socially shared cognitive

organization” (Edwards 1991: 517). The discursive approach, in contrast,

treats talk and texts . . . as forms of social action. Categorization is *something we do*, in talk, in order to accomplish social actions (persuasion, blaming, denials, refutations, accusations, etc.). From this perspective, we would expect language’s “resources” not to come ready-made from a process in which people are trying their best to understand the world [as in the cognitive approach] . . . but rather, or at least additionally, to be shaped for their functions in talk, for the business of doing situated social actions (*ibid.*).<sup>12</sup>

This is a valid—and important—criticism of some strands of cognitive research. Yet it overstates the opposition by relying on a narrow understanding of cognitive research as premised on an “individualistic, mentalistic, computational, and culture-minimal” notion of mind and as seeking to reduce “all of psychological life, including discourse and social interaction, to the workings of cognitive, or even computational, mental processes” (Edwards 1997: 32, 19). As DiMaggio (1997) has pointed out, and as Edwards and Potter (1992: 14–15, 21, 23) themselves acknowledge, there is much recent cognitive research that cannot be characterized in this way.

The incipient cognitive turn in the study of ethnicity could be extended in fruitful ways by drawing on the empirical findings and analytical tools of cognitive research. Strong cognitive assumptions—though generally unacknowledged and therefore unanalyzed ones—inform almost all accounts of the ways in which race, ethnicity, and nation “work” in practice. When we characterize an act of violence as racial, ethnic, or nationalist; when we analyze the workings of racially, ethnically, or nationally charged symbols; when we characterize police practices as involving “racial profiling”; when we explain voting patterns in terms of racial or ethnic loyalties; when we impute identities or interests to racial, ethnic, or national groups; when we analyze nationalist collective action; when we characterize an action as meaningfully oriented to the race, ethnicity or nationality of another person; when we identify an expression as an ethnic slur—in these and innumerable other situations, we make cognitive assumptions about the ways in which people parse, frame, and interpret their experience. At a minimum, we assume that they are identifying persons, actions, threats, problems, opportunities, obligations, loyalties, interests, and so on in racial, ethnic,

or national terms rather than in terms of some other interpretive scheme. Engaging cognitive anthropology and cognitive psychology would help specify—rather than simply presuppose—the cognitive mechanisms and processes involved in the workings of ethnicity, and would strengthen the microfoundations of macroanalytic work in the field. Towards this end, the next section reviews cognitive work on stereotyping, social categorization, and schemas.

### Cognitive Perspectives: From Categories to Schemas

We have considered categorization as a political project and as an everyday social practice. But categorization is also a fundamental and ubiquitous mental process. As George Lakoff put it, “There is nothing more basic than categorization to our thought, perception, action, and speech.” We employ categories whenever we “see something as a *kind* of thing . . . [or] reason about *kinds* of things”; we do so equally, it should be emphasized, whenever we—persons, organizations, or states—*talk* about kinds of things, or *treat* something as a kind of thing (or as a kind of person, a kind of action, or a kind of situation). Categories are utterly central to seeing and thinking, but they are equally central to talking and acting. “Without the ability to categorize, we could not function at all, either in the physical world or in our social and intellectual lives” (Lakoff 1987: 5–6).

Categories structure and order the world for us. We use categories to parse the flow of experience into discriminable and interpretable objects, attributes, and events. Categories permit—indeed entail—massive cognitive, social, and political simplification. Following a principle of “cognitive economy,” they “provide maximum information with the least cognitive effort” (Rosch 1978: 28). They allow us to see different things—and treat different cases—as the same. They focus our attention and channel our limited energies, leaving us—individuals and organizations alike—free to disattend to “irrelevant” stimuli. They thereby make the natural and social worlds intelligible, interpretable, communicable, and transformable. Without categories, the world would be a “blooming, buzzing confusion”; experience and action as we know them would be impossible. Thus categories underlie not only seeing and thinking but the most basic forms of “doing” as well, including both everyday action and more complex, institutionalized patterns of action.

When we make sense of our experience by seeing objects, persons, actions, or situations as instances of categories, this always involves more than mere sorting. It always carries with it expectations and “knowledge”—sometimes rather elaborate knowledge (Medin 1989)—about how members of those categories characteristically behave. Such beliefs and expectations are embodied in persons, encoded in myths, memories, narratives, and discourses, and embedded in institutions and organizational routines. Even when we are not consciously aware of them, they can subtly (or not so subtly) influence our judgments, and even our very perceptions, of the objects or persons so categorized, and thereby the way we behave toward them. This holds true not only in laboratory settings, but also in everyday interactional contexts and in the workings of organizations and institutions.

### *Stereotypes*

Recent work on stereotypes emphasizes the continuities between stereotypical thinking and categorical thinking in general.<sup>13</sup> Stereotypes are no longer defined in terms of cognitive deficiencies—in terms of false or exaggerated or unwarranted belief—but more neutrally as cognitive structures that contain knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about social groups (Hamilton and Sherman 1994: 2–3). Nor are stereotypes seen as the distinctive and pathological propensity of particular kinds of personalities (the “authoritarian personality” or “high-prejudice” individual, for example), but rather as rooted in normal and ubiquitous cognitive processes. There is no need to postulate special “needs”—for example the alleged need to feel superior to others—to explain stereotypes; they are more parsimoniously explained as an outgrowth of ordinary cognitive processes.

On this understanding, which has antecedents in the work of Gordon Allport (1954), stereotypes are simply categories of social groups, and their structure and workings mirror those of categories in general. Like other categories, stereotypes are represented in the mind through some combination of prototypical features, concrete exemplars, behavioral expectations, and theory-like causal knowledge. Like other categories, stereotypes obey the principle of cognitive economy, generating inferences and expectations that go “beyond the information given” (Bruner 1973 [1957]) with minimal cognitive processing. Like other categories, stereotypes work largely automatically. They can be primed or cued subliminally, and can influence subjects’

judgments without their awareness. This does not mean that stereotypes are wholly beyond conscious control, but it does mean that stereotyping is deeply rooted in ordinary cognitive processes and that countering or correcting stereotypes is effortful and costly (Devine 1989).

The content of stereotypes—and therefore their substantive social significance and in particular their perniciousness—is of course highly variable across cultural settings, over time, and across target groups. Clearly, cognitive research cannot explain such variations in content. But it can help explain the universality of stereotyping, based as it is in categorical thinking in general; the resistance of stereotypes to disconfirming information; the dynamics of activation of stereotypes; the ways in which stereotypes, once activated, can subtly influence subsequent perception and judgment without any awareness on the part of the perceiver; and the extent to which and manner in which deliberate and controlled processes may be able to override the automatic and largely unconscious processes through which stereotypes are activated.

Because they are not the products of individual pathology but of cognitive regularities and shared culture, stereotypes—like social categories more generally—are not individual attitudinal predilections, but deeply embedded, shared mental representations of social objects. As a consequence, macro- and mesolevel research cannot dismiss research on stereotypes as “individualistic” or “psychologically reductionist.” Research on stereotypes clarifies the relationship between the individual and the social in the production and operation of standardized templates for making sense of social objects. Among these templates are those that frame social objects and social experience in racial, ethnic, or national terms and are activated by particular, culturally specific cues. Cognitive research on stereotypes can thus illuminate the sociocognitive underpinnings of the variable resonance and salience of racial, ethnic, and national ways of seeing, interpreting and reacting to social experience.

### *Social Categorization*

Stereotyping is of course one key aspect of social categorization, but it is by no means the only one. Other aspects have been explored by the largely European tradition of research known as “social identity theory” (or in some later variants as “self-categorization theory”) that grew out of the work of social psychologist Henri Tajfel. Arguing

against the paradigm of “realistic group conflict theory,” according to which intergroup conflicts are grounded in accurate perceptions of underlying conflicts of interest, Tajfel demonstrated the autonomous significance of categorization. His “minimal group” experiments revealed a robust tendency toward in-group bias—the tendency to favor members of one’s own category—even in the absence of any intergroup conflict or hostility, indeed even when the “groups” or categories were constructed along purely arbitrary lines (for example, through random experimental assignment of subjects to artificial categories of “reds” and “blues”). In other words, “the mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups—that is, social categorization *per se*—is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination favoring the in-group” (Tajfel and Turner 1986: 13).<sup>14</sup>

A second aspect of social categorization (indeed of categorization in general) documented by Tajfel and associates is the tendency of categorization to produce “accentuation effects.” People tend to exaggerate both the similarity of objects within a category and the differences between objects in different categories (Hogg and Abrams 1988: 19). When the categories at hand are categories of “human kinds,” the overestimation of intercategory differences and of intracategory (especially out-group) homogeneity<sup>15</sup> facilitates the reification of groups. Ethnic classification depersonalizes individuals by transforming them “from unique persons to exemplars of named groups” (Levine 1999: 169). Together with more recent research on the causes and consequences of perceptions of the “entitativity”—that is, the unity and coherence—of social categories or groups, these findings can help explain the resilience of “groupist” representations of the social world.<sup>16</sup>

### *Schemas*

Schemas (and related concepts such as scripts and cultural models) became a central focus of research in cognitive psychology and cognitive anthropology in the 1970s as researchers developed more complex models of cognition than had characterized earlier phases of cognitive research (for overviews see Rumelhart 1980; Casson 1983; Markus and Zajonc 1985; D’Andrade 1995: Chapter 6; Strauss and Quinn 1997: Chapter 3). Recent sociological theory has also invoked the notion of schema (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984; Sewell 1992; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; DiMaggio 1997), while the related concept of frame, originally given sociological formulation by Goffman (1974), has been

adapted by the cognitively oriented literature on social movements (Gamson 1992; Johnston 1995).

Schemas are mental structures in which knowledge is represented. They range from the universal to the idiosyncratic (Casson 1983: 440). Most sociologically interesting schemas, however, are neither universal nor idiosyncratic but “culturally [more or less widely] shared mental constructs” (D’Andrade 1995: 132; cf. D’Andrade 1981; Zerubavel 1997). As mental structures, schemas are of course not directly observable. Rather, they are posited to account for evidence—experimental, observational, and historical—about how people perceive and interpret the world and how knowledge is acquired, stored, recalled, activated, and extended to new domains.

Schemas are not simply representations but also “processors” of information (Rumelhart 1980: 39; Casson 1983: 438; D’Andrade 1995: 122, 136). They guide perception and recall, interpret experience, generate inferences and expectations, and organize action. In this way they function as “a kind of mental recognition ‘device’ which creates a complex interpretation from minimal inputs; [they are] not just a ‘picture’ in the mind” (D’Andrade 1995: 136). In contrast to piecemeal processing, which “relies only on the information given and combines the available features without reference to an overall organizing structure,” schematic processing treats each “new person, event, or issue as an instance of an already familiar category or schema” (Fiske 1986). As processors, schemas function automatically, outside of conscious awareness. They process knowledge in an “implicit, un verbalized, rapid, and automatic” manner, unlike modes of controlled cognition, which process knowledge in an “explicit, verbalized, slow, and deliberate” manner (D’Andrade 1995: 180). In this respect they are congruent with, and indeed the means of specifying further, sociological constructs such as Bourdieu’s notion of *sens pratique*, the “regulated improvisation” of practical action governed by the habitus (Bourdieu 1977, 1990a; Wimmer 1995: 62 ff.; Strauss and Quinn 1997: 44–47).<sup>17</sup>

Schemas are organized hierarchically. The top levels, representing core, invariant aspects of concepts, are fixed, but lower levels have “slots” that need to be filled in by contextual cues, by information revealed in the course of interaction, or by “default values” (Casson 1983: 431–32; D’Andrade 1995: 123, 136, 139 ff.). In this respect the concept resonates with the core ethnomethodological idea that all



mundane interaction requires participants to “fill in” unspecified information from their stocks of tacit background knowledge.

Schemas must be activated by some stimulus or cue. Activation depends on proximate, situationally specific cues and triggers, not directly on large-scale structural or cultural contexts, though structural and cultural changes can affect the distribution of such proximate cues and thereby the probabilities of activation of schemas. An important limitation of existing research is that activation of schemas, as of stereotypes, has been studied chiefly in experimental settings that cannot capture the enormous complexity of the actual interactional contexts in which schemas are activated. As DiMaggio points out, a central challenge for cognitively minded sociologists is to understand the interaction between the distribution of schemas across persons and the distribution of the “external cultural primers” that evoke them (DiMaggio 1997: 274).<sup>18</sup> To the extent that progress is made in this respect, the schema concept has the potential to bridge private and public, mental and social, the individual mind and the supra-individual world of public representations.

Surprisingly, given its application in many other social and cultural domains (for reviews see Casson 1983; D’Andrade 1995; Quinn and Holland 1987), the schema concept has not been used systematically in the study of ethnicity.<sup>19</sup> There has of course been a great deal of work on ethnic and racial (and to a lesser extent national) *categories*. And there is certainly some overlap between the notion of categories and that of schemas. Both concern the organization and representation of knowledge and the ways in which knowledge structures permit us to go beyond immediately given information, make inferences, and interpret the world. Yet the schema concept allows consideration of more complex knowledge structures. The recent literature on categories, to be sure, stresses the complexity of category-based knowledge. It suggests, for example, that categories are “theory-like,” in that causal knowledge—not simply prototypical attributes or characteristic exemplars—is built into categories themselves (Medin 1989). Nonetheless, the issue of categories and categorization has been interpreted relatively narrowly in studies of ethnicity.

When we think of categorization in connection with ethnicity, we tend to think of categories of people. We don’t think of categories of situations, events, actions, stories, theories, and so on. Yet as Lakoff observes, most categories “are not categories of things; they are

categories of abstract entities. We categorize events, actions, emotions, spatial relationships, social relationships, and abstract entities of an enormous range” (1987: 6).

A cognitive perspective focuses our analytical lens on how people see the world, parse their experience, and interpret events. This raises a different and broader set of questions about racial, ethnic, and national categorization. The relevant questions are not only about how people get classified, but about how gestures, utterances, situations, events, states of affairs, actions, and sequences of actions get classified (and thereby interpreted and experienced). The questions, in short, are about seeing the social world and interpreting social experience, not simply about classifying social actors, in ethnic terms. The schema concept can help elucidate and concretize this notion of ethnic “ways of seeing.”

Consider for example schemas for events and for standardized sequences of events. In the cognitive literature, these are sometimes called scripts (Schank and Abelson 1977). A standard example is the “restaurant” schema or script for the stereotypical sequence of events involved in ordering, being served, eating, and paying for food at a restaurant. Much knowledge (in the broadest sense) that is relevant to—indeed partly constitutive of—race, ethnicity, and nationhood is embedded in such event schemas. For example, a significant part of the knowledge that many African Americans have about race may be contained in schemas for recurrent events or stereotypical sequences of events. These might include the “being stopped by the police for DWB [‘driving while black’]” schema or the “being-watched-in-the-store-as-if-one-were-considered-a-potential-shoplifter” schema. Like all schemas, event schemas such as these can be activated and generate interpretations with minimal or ambiguous inputs. There is no doubt—there is indeed abundant evidence—that conscious and unconscious “racial profiling” exists; but it may also be that event schemas such as these can generate the interpretation and experience of racial profiling even in marginal or ambiguous situations, thereby further “racializing” social experience.

Or consider social interpretation schemas—a loose and heterogeneous class of schemas that includes all kinds of templates for making sense of the social world. Ethnicity can be slotted into many of these so as to generate ethnic variants or subtypes of the schemas. Consider for example a generic social competition schema, an abstract



representation of two or more parties competing over some scarce good or resource. In the generic schema, there is no restriction on the object of competition (which might be money, prestige, love, market share, power, etc.) or on the parties (which might be persons, families, cliques, factions, teams, coalitions, firms, occupational groups, organizations, states, and so on). In addition to this generic social competition schema, however, there may be a variety of more specific social competition schemas, defined by specific sorts of objects or by specific sorts of parties. One of these might be an ethnic competition schema, perhaps informed by a strong normative “sense of group position” (Blumer 1958: 3–7; Bobo 1999), in which the parties would be ethnic (or racial or national) groups. If this ethnic competition schema is easily activated, people may be more prone to see and experience competition in ethnic rather than other terms. This is part of what is meant by ethnicization. Given the pervasive ambiguity of the social world, there is always a great deal of room for interpretation, and schemas are the mechanisms through which interpretation is constructed. One key aspect of processes of ethnicization is that ethnic schemas can become hyperaccessible and in effect crowd out other interpretive schemas.

### Broader Implications

Apart from their direct applications to the study of ethnicity, the cognitive perspectives we have reviewed challenge us to revisit foundational issues and recast certain fundamental debates in the field. In this final section, we consider the implications of cognitive perspectives for (1) the conceptualization of the domain of study; (2) the question whether race, ethnicity, and nation require separate or integrated analytical treatment; and (3) the perennial debate between “primordialist” and “circumstantialist” approaches.

#### *Conceptualizing the Domain: From Things in the World to Ways of Seeing*

Despite the constructivist stance that has come to prevail among sophisticated analysts, the study of ethnicity remains informed by “groupism”: by the tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations, and even races as things-in-the-world, as real, substantial entities with their own cultures, identities, and interests. In accordance with what

Hollinger (1995) has called pluralist rather than cosmopolitan understandings of diversity and multiculturalism, the social and cultural world is represented as an assemblage of self-enclosed, homogeneous racial, ethnic, or cultural groups.<sup>20</sup>

Cognitively oriented work offers resources for avoiding such groupism, while at the same time helping account for its tenacious hold on our social imagination. Cognitive perspectives suggest treating racial, ethnic, and national groups not as substantial entities but as collective cultural representations, as widely shared ways of seeing, thinking, parsing social experience, and interpreting the social world. Instead of conceptualizing the social world in substantialist terms as a composite of racial, ethnic, and national groups—instead, that is, of uncritically adopting the folk sociological ontology that is central to racial, ethnic, and national movements—cognitive perspectives address the social and mental processes that sustain the vision and division of the social world in racial, ethnic, or national terms. Rather than take “groups” as basic units of analysis, cognitive perspectives shift analytical attention to “group-making” and “grouping” activities such as classification, categorization, and identification. By its very nature, categorization creates “groups” and assigns members to them; but the groups thus created do not exist independently of the myriad acts of categorization, public and private, through which they are sustained from day to day. Race, ethnicity, and nationality exist only in and through our perceptions, interpretations, representations, classifications, categorizations, and identifications. They are not things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world—not ontological but epistemological realities.<sup>21</sup>

To say this is not to espouse a radical subjectivism or psychologism.<sup>22</sup> It is not to privilege what goes on in people’s heads over what goes on in public. The promise of cognitive approaches is precisely that they may help connect our analyses of what goes on in people’s heads with our analyses of what goes on in public. Dan Sperber (1985), for example, has proposed an “epidemiological” perspective on the distribution and diffusion of representations within a population. Representations, according to Sperber, are of two kinds: public representations<sup>23</sup> (embodied in texts, talk, monuments, etc.) and mental representations. Representations of either kind may be idiosyncratic, or they may be more or less widely shared. Some representations are “easier to think” than others. Lawrence Hirschfeld (1996)

and Francisco Gil-White (2001) have argued that representations of the social world in terms of putative intrinsic kinds (including ethnic “kinds”) may be easy to think because of our cognitive architecture. Representations that are easy to think will be more easily communicated, transmitted, and remembered, and as a result more widely shared, than others. When more or less similar versions of a representation are widely (but not universally) shared, we may speak of a cultural (rather than an idiosyncratic personal) representation. If Hirschfeld, Gil-White, and others are right about racial, ethnic, and national categories being easy to think—easier to think than, say, class—this would help explain in part why they tend to be widely shared and powerfully entrenched cultural representations.<sup>24</sup>

If racial, ethnic, and national categories are easy to think, this does not, of course, mean that they, or the various schemas in which they may be embedded, are universally active or salient. Indeed a concern with the diffusion, distribution, accessibility, and salience of schemas can help us avoid taking for granted the centrality and salience of race, ethnicity, and nation. Instead of speaking routinely of racial, ethnic, or national “groups,” for example, which carries with it the usual implications of boundedness and homogeneity, and biases the discussion by *presuming* the relevance of a racial, ethnic, or national frame or self-understanding, a cognitive perspective suggests speaking of *groupness* as a variable.<sup>25</sup> Here cognitive perspectives complement other attempts to think relationally rather than substantially and to problematize groupness rather than taking it for granted (Tilly 1978: 62 ff.). In its cognitive dimensions, groupness can be understood as depending not simply on the *content* of representations (i.e., on the extent to which the representations highlight the “entitativity,”<sup>26</sup> the internal homogeneity and external boundedness of the “group”) but on the *distribution* of such representations within a population,<sup>27</sup> on their accessibility or ease of activation, on their relative salience once activated, and—not least—on the relative ease with which they “slot” into or “interlock” with other key cultural representations. This last might be understood as the cognitive counterpart to the notion of “resonance,” central to the social movement literature on framing and frame alignment. Changes in groupness—short-term fluctuations as well as long-term developments—are cognitively mediated, depending on changes in the distribution or propagation of groupist representations, or on changes in their accessibility, activation, salience,

or resonance. Clearly, social structural, cultural, and situational factors will be key determinants of such changes; but we will understand them better when we understand the cognitive micromechanisms through which such macrolevel determinants are mediated (cf. DiMaggio 1997: 280).

What cognitive perspectives suggest, in short, is that race, ethnicity, and nation are not entities in the world but ways of seeing the world. They are ways of understanding and identifying oneself, making sense of one’s problems and predicaments, identifying one’s interests, and orienting one’s action. They are ways of recognizing, identifying, and classifying other people, of construing sameness and difference, and of “coding” and making sense of their actions. They are templates for representing and organizing social knowledge, frames for articulating social comparisons and explanations, and filters that shape what is noticed or unnoticed, relevant or irrelevant, remembered or forgotten.

#### *One Domain or Several?*

Race, ethnicity, and nationalism were long considered separate analytical domains, with largely nonoverlapping literatures. In the last two decades, as the literature has become more comparative and less parochial, the boundaries have blurred.<sup>28</sup> The wider spectrum of cases has undermined neat distinctions that might have worked in some limited settings—for example, in the United States, between “race” (conceptualized in strictly black-white terms mirroring the one-drop rule), ethnicity (seen as generated by immigration), and nationalism (understood as something that happens elsewhere, and as definitionally linked to state formation).

Still, much ink continues to be spilled in an effort to draw analytical distinctions between race, ethnicity, and nation. In our view, this conceptual casuistry—sometimes informed by political concerns—is misplaced. It is not that we wish to treat race, ethnicity, and nation as one undifferentiated domain. Clearly, the domain is highly differentiated. But it does not parse into three clearly bounded subdomains. Rather, there are many dimensions of differentiation, none of them coinciding precisely with conventional definitions of domain. An abbreviated list of these would include:

- criteria and indicia of membership
- transmission: manner in which membership is acquired

- fixedness versus fluidity of membership
- degree and form of naturalization, that is, degree and form of appeal to natural grounding for community
- degree and form of embodiment; importance attributed to phenotypic and other visible markers
- importance attributed to distinctive language, religion, customs, and other elements of culture
- degree and nature of territorialization; importance of territorial organization and symbolism
- nature of claims, if any, to autonomy and self-sufficiency

These multiple dimensions of differentiation do not map neatly onto any conventional distinction between race, ethnicity, and nation.

Cognitive perspectives suggest further reasons for treating race, ethnicity, and nation together, as one integrated domain rather than several distinct domains of study. As we suggested above, race, ethnicity, and nation are fundamentally ways of seeing. The cognitive processes and mechanisms underlying these ways of seeing are identical throughout the larger domain. If nation, for example, is famously treated as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991 [1983]) or a “conceived order” (Lepsius 1985), this is no less true of ethnicity or race. If race, according to Hirschfeld, involves folk sociologies that divide people into intrinsic, putatively natural human kinds, this is no less true for ethnicity and nation. If ethnic boundaries, as Barth says, are sustained by processes of categorical self- and other-ascription, this is no less true for racial and national boundaries. The processes of classification and categorization, formal and informal, that divide “us” from “them”; the forms of social closure that depend on categorizing and excluding certain potential competitors as “outsiders”; the categories and frames in terms of which social comparison and social explanation are organized; the schemas, scripts, and cultural models that allow one to perceive, experience, or interpret situations and sequences of action in standardized racial, ethnic, or national terms; the cognitive biases in the retrieval and processing of information that lead us to evaluate evidence in selective ways that tend to confirm prior expectations and strengthen stereotypes—all of these and many more cognitive and sociocognitive mechanisms and processes are involved in essentially similar forms in phenomena conventionally coded as belonging to distinct domains of race, ethnicity,

and nationalism. Of course there are great variations in the content of patterns of classification and closure, social comparison and explanation, schemas and cultural models, but these cut across conventional distinctions of domain.

#### *Primordialism and Circumstantialism*

Cognitive research also invites us to revisit and reframe the classic, though too often hackneyed, debate between primordialist and circumstantialist or instrumentalist approaches.<sup>29</sup> This debate pits an understanding of ethnicity as rooted in deep-seated or “primordial” attachments and sentiments<sup>30</sup> against an understanding of it as an instrumental adaptation to shifting economic and political circumstances. Cognitive perspectives allow us to recast both positions and to see them as complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

With the ascent of the social constructionist paradigm, serious engagement of primordialist positions has given way to dismissive references to “naturalizing” and “essentializing” perspectives. But primordialism is more subtle and interesting than this. In the oft-cited but seldom closely analyzed formulation of Clifford Geertz (1963: 109), primordial attachments stem “from the ‘givens’—or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed ‘givens’—of social existence,” including blood ties, religion, shared language, and customs. In most discussions, this crucial distinction between *perceived* “givens” and *actual* “givens” is elided. Primordialists are depicted as “analytical naturalizers” rather than “analysts of naturalizers” (Gil-White 1999: 803). In fact, on the primordialist account, it is participants, not the analysts, who are the real primordialists, treating ethnicity as naturally given and immutable.

Thus clarified, the primordialist position cannot be so easily dismissed. And cognitive research can give it a stronger empirical foundation, by specifying the natural foundations of the often observed tendency to naturalize ethnicity. Research on “psychological essentialism” (Medin 1989: 1476–77) suggests that “people act as if things . . . have essences or underlying natures that make them the things they are,” and that even if this is “bad metaphysics,” it may in many circumstances serve as “good epistemology.” Even young children, traditionally understood to attend primarily to external, visible features of things, in fact have a firm grasp of notions of “insides” and essences (Gelman and Wellman 1991). Social categories, in particular,

are often (incorrectly) perceived as if they were natural kinds; as a result, people often infer “deep essential qualities on the basis of surface appearance” and “imbue even arbitrary categorizations with deep meaning” (Rothbart and Taylor 1992: 12).

Hirschfeld (1996) and Gil-White (2001) extend this line of analysis to race and ethnicity, positing a deep-seated cognitive disposition to perceive human beings as members of “natural kinds” with inherited and immutable “essences.” Drawing on experiments with three- and four-year-olds, Hirschfeld (1996) argues that humans have a special-purpose cognitive device<sup>31</sup> for partitioning the social world into what he calls “intrinsic kinds” based on “shared essences.”<sup>32</sup> This provides the cognitive foundations for what Hirschfeld calls “folk sociology,” by which he means the “commonsense partitive logic or social ontology that picks out the ‘natural’ kinds of people that exist in the world” (1996: 20). Hirschfeld emphasizes the presence worldwide of a similar deep classificatory logic—one that naturalizes social difference by dividing the social world into putatively deeply constituted groups seen as based on some shared intrinsic essence—underlying what seem at first glance to be strikingly different systems of racial, ethnic, and national classification. Gil-White (2001) argues that essentialist reasoning about ethnicity is derived by analogical transfer from reasoning about biological species. He speculates that this occurs through the adaptation of an existing special-purpose cognitive module—a “living-kinds” module evolutionarily tailored to perception of and reasoning about species—to perception of and reasoning about ethnic groups.

Although Hirschfeld and Gil-White disagree about the particular nature of the cognitive mechanism at work, both suggest that the extremely widespread tendency to “naturalize” and “essentialize” racial, ethnic, and national categories may be grounded in the human cognitive apparatus. Cognitive perspectives enable us to analyze “participants’ primordialism” (Smith 1998: 158) without endorsing analytical primordialism. And rather than attribute the naturalization of social differences to vaguely conceived emotional commitments (Connor 1994), to an irreducible sense of “identity,”<sup>33</sup> or to “a certain ineffable significance . . . attributed to the tie of blood” (Shils 1957: 142), cognitive perspectives provide potentially powerful explanations for this tendency.

Cognitive perspectives can help respecify and strengthen the

circumstantialist position as well.<sup>34</sup> Circumstantialists have characterized ethnicity as situationally malleable and context-dependent. But how does this work? Accounts have been implicitly cognitive. Okamura (1981: 454), for example, has suggested that ethnic identities are activated depending on “the actor’s subjective perception of the situation in which he finds himself” and “the salience he attributes to ethnicity as a relevant factor in that situation.” But what governs the perception of the situation and the perceived salience of ethnicity? Most accounts are rather narrowly instrumentalist at this point, suggesting that individuals strategically manipulate, deploy, mobilize, or downplay ethnicity to suit their interests. Such deliberate and calculated manipulation of ethnicity certainly occurs, but circumstantialist perspectives would be strengthened by a less restrictive account of the micromechanisms that enable and prompt situational shifts in identification.

As we observed above, cognitive research indicates that much cognition (and schema-governed cognition in particular) is unselfconscious and quasi-automatic rather than deliberate and controlled. This suggests that the explicit, deliberate, and calculated deployment of an ethnic frame of reference in pursuit of instrumental advantage may be less important, in explaining the situational variability of ethnicity, than the ways in which ethnic—and nonethnic—ways of seeing, interpreting, and experiencing social relations are unselfconsciously “triggered” or activated by proximate situational cues.<sup>35</sup> Attention to framing processes, too, can help explain the variable salience of ethnicity and variable resonance of ethnicized discourse.<sup>36</sup> By illuminating the cognitive processes that underlie ethnic ways of seeing and talking, cognitive perspectives can provide a firmer microfoundation for accounts of “situational ethnicity.”

Once each position is respecified in cognitive terms, it becomes apparent that primordialist and circumstantialist accounts need not be mutually exclusive. The former can help explain the seemingly universal tendency to naturalize and essentialize real or imputed human differences, while the latter can help explain how ethnicity becomes relevant or salient in particular contexts. Rather than contradicting one another, they can be seen as directed largely to different questions: on the one hand, how groups are conceived, and folk sociologies constructed and sustained; on the other hand, how ethnicity works in interactional practice.

## Conclusion

Cognitive perspectives, we have argued, suggest new ways of conceptualizing ethnicity as a domain of study. By treating ethnicity as a way of understanding, interpreting, and framing experience, these perspectives provide an alternative to substantialist or groupist ontologies. They afford strong reasons for treating ethnicity, race, and nationalism as one domain rather than several. And they suggest a fresh and fruitful way of recasting the perennial debate between primordialist and circumstantialist accounts of ethnicity. In addition, the empirical findings and conceptual tools of cognitive research can help illuminate the mechanisms that link the microdynamics of race, ethnicity, and nationalism to macrolevel structures and processes.

The skeptic may counter that attending seriously to cognitive research risks abandoning the social constructionist agenda for a psychologistic and individualistic approach. We thus conclude with a reminder that there is nothing intrinsically individualistic about the study of cognition. The domain of the “mental” is not identical with the domain of the individual. Indeed the kind of knowledge in which we are interested—the schemes of perception and interpretation through which the social world is experienced in racial, ethnic, or national terms—is social in a double sense: it is *socially shared knowledge of social objects*. A cognitive approach to the study of ethnicity directs our attention not to individual psychology but to “sociomental” (Zerubavel 1997) phenomena that link culture and cognition, macro- and microlevel concerns (DiMaggio 1997, Straus and Quinn 1997). Cognitive construction, in short, *is* social construction. It is only in and through cognitive processes and mechanisms that the social construction of race, ethnicity, and nation can plausibly be understood to occur.

Cognitive perspectives can also advance the constructivist agenda by correcting for the elite bias of much constructivist research. By this we mean the tendency to focus on conspicuously visible constructions, such as those of political entrepreneurs, high-level state bureaucrats, or public intellectuals, to the neglect of the less visible (but no less “constructive”) activities of common people in their everyday lives. In his “insider’s critique” of the framing perspective in social movement literature, Benford (1997) points to the need for studies of “rank-and-file” framing. Similarly, social constructivism needs studies of the “rank-and-file” construction of racial, ethnic and national “realities.”

Cognitive research provides the conceptual vocabulary and analytical tools for such an enterprise.

Finally, cognitive perspectives can help realize the constructivist aspiration to capture the relational and dynamic nature of race, ethnicity, and nation by treating them as products of reiterative and cumulative processes of categorizing, coding, framing, and interpreting. Instead of asking “what is race?”, “what is an ethnic group?”, “what is a nation?”, a cognitive approach encourages us to ask how, when, and why people interpret social experience in racial, ethnic, or national terms.

The phenomena we call race, ethnicity, and nation surely count among the most significant social and cultural structures—and among the most significant social and political movements—of modern times. Yet they continue to exist only by virtue of being reproduced daily in and through the quotidian ways of thinking, talking, and acting of countless anonymous individuals. Although this is widely recognized in principle, the mechanisms of this daily reproduction remain little known. The promise of a cognitive perspective is that it can help us understand the ways in which these great principles of vision and division of the social world work in the world at large by specifying the way they work in ordinary minds and seemingly insignificant everyday practices.

## ∞ CHAPTER FOUR

### *Ethnic and Nationalist Violence*

The bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia, intermittently violent ethnonational conflicts on the southern periphery of the former Soviet Union, the ghastly butchery in Rwanda, and Hindu-Muslim riots in parts of India, among other dispiriting events, focused renewed public attention on ethnic and nationalist violence in the 1990s as a striking symptom of the “new world disorder.”<sup>1</sup>

To be sure, measured against the universe of possible instances, actual instances of ethnic and nationalist violence remain rare. This crucial point is obscured in the literature, much of which samples on the dependent variable (Fearon and Laitin 1996), or metaphorically mischaracterizes vast regions (such as post-Communist Eastern Europe and Eurasia in its entirety or all of sub-Saharan Africa) as a “seething cauldron” on the verge of boiling over, or as a “tinderbox” that a single careless spark could ignite into an inferno of ethnonational violence (Bowen 1996; Brubaker 1998b). Ethnic violence demands our attention because it is appalling, not because it is ubiquitous.

Nonetheless, although measurement and coding problems prevent confident calculations, two general features of the “late modern,” post-Cold War world—in addition to the particular traumas of state collapse in the Soviet and Yugoslav cases—have probably contributed to an increase in the incidence of ethnic and nationalist violence, and

have almost certainly contributed to an increase in the share of ethnic and nationalist violence in all political violence, that is, to what might be called the ethnicization of political violence. The first could be called “the decay of the Weberian state”: the decline (uneven, to be sure) in states’ capacities to maintain order by monopolizing the legitimate use of violence in their territories, and the emergence in some regions—most strikingly in sub-Saharan Africa—of so-called quasi-states (Jackson 1990; Jackson and Rosberg 1982), organizations formally acknowledged and recognized as “states” yet lacking (or possessing only in small degree) the empirical attributes of stateness. The end of the Cold War has further weakened many third world states: superpowers have curtailed their commitments of military and other state-strengthening resources, and the citizenries (and neighbors) of some Soviet successor states are more threatened by state weakness than by state strength (Holmes 1997). Such “weakly Weberian” states or quasi-states are more susceptible to—and are by definition less capable of repressing, though not, alas, of committing—violence of all kinds, including ethnic violence (Desjarlais and Kleinman 1994). Meanwhile, the stronger states of the West remain reluctant to use military force—especially unilaterally, without a broad consensus among allied states—to intervene in conflicts outside their boundaries (Haas 1997). As a result, “weakly Weberian” third world states can no longer rely on an external patron to maintain peace as they could during the Cold War era.

The second contextual aspect of the post-Cold War world to highlight is the eclipse of the left-right ideological axis that has defined the grand lines of much political conflict—and many civil wars—since the French Revolution. From the 1950s through the early 1980s, violence-wielding opponents of existing regimes could best mobilize resources—money, weapons, and political and logistical support—by framing their opposition to incumbents in the language of the grand ideological confrontation between capitalism and communism. Incumbents mobilized resources in the same way. Today, these incentives to frame conflicts in grand ideological terms have disappeared. Even without direct positive incentives to frame conflicts in ethnic terms, this has led to a marked “ethnicization” of violent challenger-incumbent contests, as the major nonethnic framing for such contests has become less plausible and profitable.

<sup>1</sup>This chapter was coauthored with David Laitin.

Moreover, there may be positive incentives to frame such contests in ethnic terms. With the increasing significance worldwide of “diasporic” social formations (Clifford 1994; Appadurai 1996; Cohen 1997; Sheffer 2003), for example, both challengers and incumbents may increasingly seek resources from dispersed transborder ethnic kin (Tambiah 1986; Anderson 1992). And a thickening web of international and nongovernmental organizations has provided greater international legitimacy, visibility, and support for ethnic group claims (normatively buttressed by “culturalist” extensions and transformations of the initially strongly individualist human rights language that prevailed in the decades immediately following World War II). This institutional and normative transformation at the level of what Meyer (1987) calls the “world polity” provides a further incentive for the ethnic framing of challenges to incumbent regimes. To foreshadow a theme we underscore later: “ethnicity” is not the ultimate, irreducible “source” of violent conflict in such cases. Rather, conflicts driven by struggles for power between challengers and incumbents are newly ethnicized, newly framed in ethnic terms.

### *Ethnicity, Violence, and Ethnic Violence*

Attempts to theorize ethnic and nationalist violence have grown from the soil of two largely nonintersecting literatures: studies of ethnicity, ethnic conflict, and nationalism on the one hand, and of collective or political violence on the other. Within each of these large and loosely integrated literatures, ethnic and nationalist violence has only recently become a distinct subject of inquiry in its own right.

In the study of ethnicity, ethnic conflict, and nationalism, accounts of *conflict* have not been distinguished sharply from accounts of *violence*. Violence has generally been conceptualized—if only tacitly—as a *degree* of conflict, rather than as a *form* of conflict, or indeed as a form of social or political action in its own right. Most discussions of violence in the former Yugoslavia, for example, are embedded in richly contextual narratives of the breakup of the state (Glenny 1992; Cohen 1993; Woodward 1995). Violence as such has seldom been made an explicit and sustained theoretical or analytical focus in studies of ethnic conflict (though this has begun to change with work by Lemarchand [1996] on Burundi and by Tambiah [1996], Brass [1997], and Horowitz [2001] on ethnic riots).

In the study of collective or political violence, on the other hand, ethnicity figured (until recently) only incidentally and peripherally. In a number of influential studies (e.g., Gurr 1970; Tilly 1978) ethnicity figured scarcely at all. Revealingly, Gurr used the general term “dissidents” to describe nongovernmental participants in civil strife. Although the *empirical* significance of ethnicity was recognized, its *theoretical* significance was seldom addressed explicitly; it was as if there was nothing *analytically* distinctive about ethnic (or ethnically conditioned or framed) violence. Ethnicity thus remained theoretically exogenous, rather than being integrated into key analytical or theoretical concepts.

In recent years, to be sure, a pronounced “ethnic turn” has occurred in the study of political violence, paralleling the “ethnic turn” in international relations, security studies, and other precincts of the post-Cold War academic world. But this sudden turn to ethnicity and nationality has too often been external and mechanical (Brubaker 1998b). Although ethnicity now occupies a central place in the study of collective and political violence, it remains a “foreign body” deriving from other theoretical traditions; it has yet to be theoretically “digested,” or theorized in a subtle or sophisticated manner.

This suggests two opportunities for theoretical advance—and in fact significant work is beginning to emerge in these areas. On the one hand, it is important to *take violence as such more seriously* in studies of ethnic and nationalist conflict. It is important, that is, to ask specific questions about, and seek specific explanations for, the occurrence—and nonoccurrence (Fearon and Laitin 1996)—of violence in conflictual situations. These questions and explanations should be distinguished from questions and explanations of the existence, and even the intensity, of conflict. We lack strong evidence showing that higher levels of conflict (measured independently of violence) lead to higher levels of violence. Even where violence is clearly rooted in preexisting conflict, it should not be treated as a “natural,” self-explanatory outgrowth of such conflict, something that occurs automatically when the conflict reaches a certain intensity, a certain “temperature.” Violence is not a quantitative *degree* of conflict, but a qualitative *form* of conflict, with its own dynamics. The shift from nonviolent to violent modes of conflict is a “phase shift” (Williams 1994: 62; Tambiah 1996: 292) that requires particular theoretical attention.

The study of violence should be emancipated from the study of conflict, and treated as an autonomous phenomenon in its own right. For



example, to the extent that ethnic entrepreneurs recruit young men who are already inclined toward or practiced in other forms of violence, and help bestow meaning on that violence and honor and social status on its perpetrators, we may have as much to learn about the sources and dynamics of ethnic violence from the literature on criminology (Katz 1988) as from the literature on ethnicity or ethnic conflict.

At the same time, the strand of the literature that grows out of work on political violence and collective violence should *take ethnicity and nationality more seriously*. This does not mean paying more attention to them; as noted above, there has already been a pronounced “ethnic turn” in the study of political violence and collective violence. *That* political violence can be “ethnic” is well established, indeed *too* well established; *how* it is ethnic remains obscure. The most fundamental questions—for example, how the adjective “ethnic” modifies the noun “violence”—remain unclear and largely unexamined. Sustained attention needs to be paid to the forms and dynamics of ethnicization, to the many and subtle ways in which violence—and conditions, processes, activities, and narratives linked to violence—can take on ethnic hues.

### *Defining the Domain*

Notwithstanding the increasing scholarly interest in ethnic and nationalist violence, there is no clearly demarcated field of social scientific inquiry addressing the subject, no well-defined body of literature, no agreed-upon set of key questions or problems. It is not simply that there is no agreement on *how* things are to be explained; more fundamentally, there is no agreement on *what* is to be explained, or *whether* there is a unitary phenomenon (or a coherently related body of phenomena) to be explained. Rather than confronting competing theories or explanations, we confront alternative ways of posing questions, alternative approaches to or “takes” on ethnic and nationalist violence, alternative ways of conceptualizing the phenomenon and situating it in the context of wider theoretical debates.

What are we talking about when we talk about ethnic or nationalist violence? The answer is by no means obvious. First, despite its seemingly palpable core, violence is itself an ambiguous and elastic concept (Tilly 1978: 174), shading over from the direct use of force to cause bodily harm through the compelling or inducing of actions by direct threat of such force to partly or fully metaphorical notions of cultural or symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 167–74). But the

difficulties and ambiguities involved in characterizing or classifying violence (which we shall understand here in a narrow sense) as “ethnic” or “nationalist”<sup>2</sup> are even greater. Although these difficulties have yet to receive—and cannot receive here—the full exploration they deserve, a few summary points can be made:

1. The “coding” of past, present, or feared future violence as “ethnic” is not only an analytical but a practical matter. Violence is often accompanied by social struggles to define its meaning and specify its causes. The outcome of such interpretive contests—for example, the labeling of an event as a “pogrom,” a “riot,” or a “rebellion”—can have important consequences (Brass 1996b).
2. Coding practices are influenced heavily by prevailing interpretive frames. The contemporary pervasiveness, resonance, and legitimacy of ethnic and national frames generate a “coding bias” in the “ethnic” direction. A generation ago, the coding bias was in the opposite direction. Today, we—actors and analysts alike—are no longer blind to ethnicity, but we may be blinded by it. Our ethnic bias in framing may lead us to overestimate the incidence of ethnic violence by unjustifiably seeing ethnicity at work everywhere and thereby artifactually multiplying instances of “ethnic violence” (Bowen 1996).<sup>3</sup> More soberingly, since coding or framing is partly constitutive of the phenomenon of ethnic violence, not simply an external way of registering and coming to terms with it intellectually, our coding bias may actually increase the incidence (and not simply the perceived incidence) of ethnic violence.
3. With these caveats in mind, we define ethnic violence on first approximation as violence perpetrated across ethnic lines, in which at least one party is not a state (or a representative of a state), and in which the putative ethnic difference is coded—by perpetrators, targets, influential third parties, or analysts—as having been integral rather than incidental to the violence, that is, in which the violence is coded as having been meaningfully oriented in some way to the different ethnicity of the target.

This preliminary definition allows us to exclude the violence between Germans and Frenchmen on the Marne in 1914. Similarly, it



allows us to exclude the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, since the shooting was not interpreted in ethnoreligious terms as a Catholic being shot by a Muslim. But the definition hardly allows us to define a focused domain of research. A great profusion of work—only a small fraction of which is engaged by most contemporary analysts of ethnic violence—is related in one way or another to ethnic violence. The range and heterogeneity of this work compel us to be highly selective in our review. We have had to exclude many pertinent literatures, or at best touch on them in passing. These include literatures on pogroms (Klier and Lambroza 1992) and genocides (Dobkowski and Wallimann 1992); on anti-Semitism (Langmuir 1990), Nazism (Burleigh and Wippermann 1991), Fascism, and the radical right (Rogger and Weber 1965); on racial violence (Horowitz 1983), race riots (Grimshaw 1969), and policing in racially or ethnically mixed settings (Keith 1993); on slavery (Blackburn 1997), colonialism (Cooper and Stoler 1997), third world nationalist revolutions (Chaliand 1977, Goldstone et al 1991), and state formation (especially in contexts of encounters with aboriginal populations [Bodley 1982, Ferguson and Whitehead 1992]); on separatism (Heraclides 1990), irredentism (Horowitz 1991b), and the formation of new nation-states (Brubaker 1996); on xenophobia and anti-immigrant violence (Björge and Witte 1993), “ethnic un-mixing” (Brubaker 1995, Hayden 1996), forced migration (Marrus 1985), and refugee flows (Zolberg et al 1989); on religious violence (Davis 1973); on terrorism (Stohl 1983; Waldmann 1992), paramilitary formations (Fairbanks 1995), warlordism (Reno 1998), and state violence (van den Berghe 1990; Nagengast 1994); on conflict management (Azar and Burton 1986) and peace studies (Väyrynen et al. 1987); on the phenomenology or experiential dimensions of violence (Nordstrom and Martin 1992); and on rage (Scheff and Retzinger 1991), humiliation (Miller 1993), fear (Green 1994), and other emotions and psychological mechanisms (projection, displacement, identification, etc.) implicated in ethnic and nationalist violence (Volkan 1991; Kakar 1990).<sup>4</sup> Clearly, this would be an unmanageable set of literatures to survey. Moreover, most of these are well-established, specialized literatures addressing particular historical forms and settings of ethnic or nationalist violence, whereas we have interpreted our task as that of bringing into focus a newly emerging literature addressing ethnic violence as such. For different reasons, we neglect the theoretically impoverished policy-oriented literature on conflict management.

And for lack of professional competence, we neglect the psychological literature.

Since the emerging literature we survey is not structured around clearly defined theoretical oppositions, we organize our review not by theoretical position but by broad similarities of “approach.” We begin by considering a variety of “inductive” analyses of ethnic and nationalist violence that build on statistical analysis of large data sets, on the extraction of patterns from sets of broadly similar cases, on controlled comparisons, and on case studies. We next consider clusters of theory-driven work on ethnic violence deriving from the realist tradition in international relations, from game theory, and from rational choice theory. We conclude by examining culturalist analyses of ethnic violence.

We recognize the awkwardness of this organizing scheme. It is logically unsatisfactory, combining methodological and substantive criteria. It lumps theoretically and methodologically heterogeneous work under the loose rubric “inductive.” It risks implying, incorrectly, that inductive work is not theoretically informed, and that culturalist approaches are neither inductive nor theory-driven. We nonetheless adopt this scheme in an effort to mirror as best we can the emerging clusters of work.

### Inductive Approaches

Without questioning the truism that all research—and all phases of research (including data collection)—is theoretically informed, we can characterize the work we have grouped under this heading as primarily data-driven rather than theory-driven. This work seeks to identify the regularities, patterns, mechanisms, and recurrent processes comprising the structure and texture of ethnic violence in inductive fashion through the systematic analysis of empirical data. The data in question range from large sets of highly aggregated data through “small-N” comparisons to single case studies; methods of analysis range from statistical analysis and causal modeling to qualitative interpretation. We organize our discussion by level of aggregation.

#### *Large Data Sets*

Gurr has been a leading figure in the study of political violence for three decades, and a pioneer in the statistical analysis of large data sets in this

domain (1968). His first major work (1970) outlined an “integrated theory of political violence” as the product of the politicization and activation of discontent arising from relative deprivation. Although ethnicity played no role in his early work, it has become central to his recent work (1993a, 1993b, 1994; Harff and Gurr 1989; Gurr and Harff 1994). This work has been built on a large-scale data set surveying 233 “minorities at risk” that have (1) suffered (or benefitted from) economic or political discrimination and/or (2) mobilized politically in defense of collective interests since 1945. For each of these “nonstate communal groups”—classified as ethnonationalists, indigenous peoples, ethnoclasses, militant sects, and communal contenders—Gurr and associates have assembled and coded on ordinal scales a wide array of data on background characteristics (such as group coherence and concentration), intergroup differentials and discrimination, and group grievances and collective action. They then seek to explain forms and magnitudes of nonviolent protest, violent protest, and rebellion through an eclectic synthesis of grievance and mobilization variables.

This work sensitizes us to the sharply differing dynamics, configurations, and magnitudes of ethnic violence across regions. The comparative perspective is crucial, since violence in Northern Ireland or in the Basque region, while unsettling in the context of post-World War II Europe, can be placed in more benign perspective when compared to Burundi, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, or post-Cold War Bosnia, where killing is measured not in the hundreds and thousands but in the tens or even hundreds of thousands (Heisler 1990). The standardized data set built by Gurr and associates gives us little reason to believe that the processes and mechanisms generating violence in Northern Ireland are the same as those that drive the violence in Sri Lanka; it is not even clear, as we shall suggest in the conclusion, that these are both instances of the same “thing” (i.e., ethnic violence).

If for Gurr, the unit of analysis is the group, for Olzak (1992), Tarrow (1994), and Beissinger (2002), the unit is the event. Assembling data on ethnic and racial confrontations and protests in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Olzak uses event history analysis and ecological theories of competition and niche overlap to show that the breakdown of ethnic and racial segregation, by increasing economic and political competition, triggers exclusionary collective action, including ethnic and racial violence. Beissinger, constructing a database on violent collective events in the disintegrating

Soviet Union and its incipient successor states, analyzes the highly clustered incidence of nationalist violence in the context of a larger cycle of nationalist contention. He shows that nationalist struggles turned increasingly violent (and increasingly assumed the form of sustained armed conflict) late in the mobilizational cycle, in connection with the contestation of republican (and incipient state) borders at a moment when effective authority (to the extent it existed at all) was passing from the collapsing center to the incipient successor states. In part, Beissinger echoes the findings of Tarrow (1994; Della Porta and Tarrow 1986) concerning the tendency for violence in Italy to occur towards the end of a mobilizational cycle. Although not directly concerned with ethnicity, Tarrow’s work—notably his finding that violence does not map directly onto protest—has implications for the study of ethnic violence. In Italy, violence appears to increase when organized protest weakens. As mobilization wanes, violence is practiced by splinter groups as the only way to cause disruption. Although the dynamics of the two cases differ, both Beissinger and Tarrow analyze violence as a phase in a mobilizational cycle rather than as a natural expression of social conflict or social protest.

#### *Case-Based Pattern Finding*

For the analysis of ethnic conflict and violence in postcolonial Africa and Asia, Horowitz (1985) remains the classic text. Seeking to extract patterns from sets of broadly comparable cases, he stresses the social psychological and cognitive underpinnings as well as the richly elaborated symbolic dimensions of violent ethnic conflict, giving particular emphasis to comparative, anxiety-laden judgments of group worth and competing claims to group legitimacy.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Horowitz has given systematic attention to the effects of institutions—notably electoral systems, armed forces, and federalist arrangements—in fostering or preventing violent ethnic conflict (1985: Parts 3–5; 1991c). His arguments concerning institutional design—notably the design of electoral systems—in the context of postapartheid South Africa (1991a), led to a lively debate with Lijphart (Lijphart 1990). This debate has also been joined, on a more general level, in Horowitz (2002) and Lijphart (2002), with Lijphart defending, and Horowitz criticizing, consociational arrangements.

More recently, Horowitz (2001) has returned to an earlier (1973, 1983) concern with ethnic riots. The new book analyzes the

morphology and dynamics of the “deadly ethnic riot,” building inductively from detailed reports on 100 riots, mainly since 1965, in some 40 postcolonial countries. Arguing for a disaggregated approach to ethnic violence, Horowitz distinguishes the deadly ethnic riot—defined as mass civilian intergroup violence in which victims are chosen by their group membership—from other forms of ethnic (or more or less ethnicized) violence such as genocide, lynchings, gang assault, violent protest, feuds, terrorism, and internal warfare. The deadly ethnic riot is marked by its relatively spontaneous character (though it is not without elements of organization and planning), careful selection of victims by their categorical identity, passionate expression of intergroup antipathies, and seemingly gratuitous mutilation of victims.

Using broadly similar inductive approaches, other scholars have addressed ethnic riots in recent years, chiefly in the South Asian context (Freitag 1989; Das 1990b; Spencer 1990; Pandey 1992; Jaffrelot 1994; Brass 1996a, 1997). The most sustained contribution in this genre is Tambiah’s (1996) richly textured, multilayered account. While distancing himself from a simplistic instrumentalist interpretation of ethnic riots as the joint product of political manipulation and organized thuggery, Tambiah devotes considerable attention to the “routinization” and “ritualization” of violence, to the “organized, anticipated, programmed, and recurring features and phases of seemingly spontaneous, chaotic, and orgiastic actions” (230), to the cultural repertory and social infrastructure (what Brass [1996b: 12] calls the “institutionalized riot systems”) through which riots are accomplished. At the same time, however, reworking Le Bon, Canetti, and Durkheim, Tambiah seeks to theorize the social psychological dynamics of volatile crowd behavior.

Other works in the “pattern-finding” mode address not particular forms of ethnic violence (such as the deadly ethnic riot) in their entirety but rather (like Horowitz 1985) general mechanisms and processes that are implicated in ethnic violence. As Blalock (1989) notes in a different context, such mechanisms and processes, although not the immediate or underlying cause of violent conflicts, do causally shape their incidence and modalities. Here we restrict our attention to one class of such mechanisms and processes (albeit a large and important one): to the ways in which *inter*-ethnic violence is conditioned and fostered by *intra*-ethnic processes.<sup>6</sup>

One such mechanism involves in-group policing. As analyzed by Laitin (1995a), this involves the formal or informal administration of sanctions, even violent sanctions, within a group so as to enforce a certain line of action vis-à-vis outsiders (who may be defined not only in ethnic terms but in religious, ideological, class, or any other terms). Practices such as “necklacing” in South African townships, “kneecapping” by the IRA, the execution of Palestinians alleged to have sold land to Israelis, and the killing of alleged “collaborators” in many other settings have attracted notoriety as techniques used by ethnonationalist radicals to maintain control over in-group followers. Pfaffenberger (1994), for example, shows how members of the dominant Tamil separatist group in Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers, have prevented young male Tamils from leaving Jaffna and murdered leaders of rival Tamil groups, dissidents within their own ranks, and civilian Tamils suspected of helping the Sinhalese.

A second intragroup mechanism—and a classical theme in the sociology of conflict (Simmel 1955; Coser 1956)—involves the deliberate staging, instigation, provocation, dramatization or intensification of violent or potentially violent confrontations with outsiders. Such instigative and provocative actions are ordinarily undertaken by vulnerable incumbents seeking to deflect within-group challenges to their position by redefining the fundamental lines of conflict as inter- rather than (as challengers would have it) intragroup; but they may also be undertaken by challengers seeking to discredit incumbents. Gagnon’s (1994–1995) analysis of the role of intra-Serbian struggles in driving the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia is the most theoretically explicit recent contribution along these lines. Gagnon argues that a conservative coalition of party leaders, local and regional elites, nationalist intellectuals, and segments of the military leadership, threatened in the mid-1980s by economic crisis and strong demands for market-oriented and democratic reforms, provoked violent ethnic confrontation—first in Kosovo and then, more fatefully, in the Serb-inhabited borderland regions of Croatia—in a successful attempt to define ethnicity (specifically the alleged threat to Serb ethnicity) as the most pressing political issue and thereby to defeat reformist challengers and retain their grip on power. Although Gagnon’s empirical analysis is one-sided in its exclusive focus on the Serbian leadership (partially similar points could be made about the Croatian leadership), his theoretical argument on the within-group sources of intergroup conflict is valuable. In

a broader study of nationalism and democratization, Snyder (2000) argues that such strategies of provocation are particularly likely to occur, and to succeed, in newly democratizing but institutionally weak regimes. Other instances of such cultivated confrontations arising from intragroup dynamics are found in studies of the Sudan (Deng 1995) and Rwanda (Prunier 1997).

A third important intragroup mechanism is ethnic outbidding (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; Rothschild 1981; Horowitz 1985: Chapter 8; Kaufman 1996). This can occur in a context of competitive electoral politics when two or more parties identified with the same ethnic group compete for support, neither (in particular electoral configurations) having an incentive to cultivate voters of other ethnicities, each seeking to demonstrate to their constituencies that it is more nationalistic than the other, and each seeking to protect itself from the other's charges that it is "soft" on ethnic issues. This is a powerful mechanism (and a general one, not confined to *ethnic* outbidding). *How* it works is theoretically clear, and *that* it sometimes works to intensify conflict and generate violence was classically, and tragically, illustrated in Sri Lanka (Horowitz 1991c; Pfaffenberger 1994).

Yet outbidding does not always occur, and it does not always "pay off" as a political strategy when it is attempted. For the Indian case, Chandra (2002) argues that the institutionalization of multiple dimensions of ethnic identification limits outbidding. And contrary to many interpretations, Gagnon (1996) argues that the violent collapse of Yugoslavia had nothing to do with ethnic outbidding. On his account, Serbian elites instigated violent conflict, and framed it in terms of ethnic antagonism, not to mobilize but to demobilize the population, to forestall challenges to the regime. When they needed to appeal for public support during election campaigns, elites engaged not in ethnic outbidding but in "ethnic underbidding," striving to appear more moderate rather than more radical than their opponents on ethnic issues. Further work needs to be done (following Horowitz 1985) in specifying the conditions (e.g., different types of electoral systems) in which such outbidding is more or less likely to occur, and more or less likely to pay off.

A fourth intragroup mechanism concerns the dynamics of recruitment into gangs, terrorist groups, or guerrilla armies. Although most ethnic leaders are well-educated and from middle-class backgrounds, the rank-and-file members of such organizations are more often poorly

educated and from lower or working-class backgrounds (Waldmann 1985, 1989; Clark 1984). Considerable attention has been focused on the intergroup dynamics that favor recruitment into such organizations. Interviewing IRA members, for example, White (1993: Chapter 4) finds that many working-class Catholics joined the IRA after experiencing violence in their neighborhoods at the hands of British security forces and loyalist paramilitaries. We have little systematic knowledge, however, about the social and psychological processes *within* groups that govern the recruitment of young men (and much more rarely, women) into disciplined, ethnically organized violence-wielding groups. These include the distribution of honor, the promising and provision of material and symbolic rewards for "martyrs," rituals of manhood, the shaming of those who would shun violence, intergenerational tensions that may lead the impetuous young to challenge overcautious elders, and so on.

#### *"Small-N" Comparisons*

Controlled comparisons have been relatively few, especially those comparing regions suffering from ethnic violence with those in which similar ethnic conflicts have not issued in violence. The Basque-Catalan comparison is a natural in this respect; it has been explored by Laitin (1995b), who focuses on linguistic tipping phenomena and the differential availability of recruits for guerrilla activity, and by Díez Medrano (1995), who focuses on the social bases of the nationalist movements. Varshney (1997; 2002) compares Indian cities that have similar proportions of Muslim and Hindu inhabitants, and that share other background variables, yet have strikingly divergent outcomes in terms of communal violence; he argues that high levels of "civic engagement" between communal groups explain low levels of violence between Muslims and Hindus. Waldmann (1985, 1989) compares the violent ethnic conflicts in the Basque region and Northern Ireland to the (largely) non-violent conflicts in Catalonia and Quebec, and explains the transition from nonviolent nationalist protest to violent conflict in the former cases in terms of the loss of middle-class control over the nationalist movement. Friedland and Hecht (1998) compare the violent conflicts for control of sacred places in Jerusalem and the Indian city of Ayodhya. In both cases, they show, struggles over religious rights at sacred centers claimed by two religions—Jews and Muslims in Jerusalem, Hindus and Muslims in Ayodhya—have been closely bound up with

struggles to establish, extend, or reconfigure nation-states. The comparison of Rwanda and Burundi is compelling because of stunning violence in both cases despite quite different historical conditions. This comparison has not been analyzed systematically, but Lemarchand (1996) suggestively discusses the multiple ways in which the two cases have become intertwined. Ron (2003) compares Serbian ethnic cleansing in Bosnia in 1992 with Israeli repressive policing in the occupied territories in response to the first intifada in the late 1980s. He does not attribute the difference to differences in nationalist ideology, but to differing territorial and institutional regimes: while Bosnia constituted a “frontier” region in which Serbia had a free hand without formal responsibility, the occupied territories were a “ghetto” that was fully and openly under Israeli rule, subjecting the state to greater constraint. The harsher Israeli response to the second intifada, Ron argues, reflects the fact that the occupied territories, now under nominal Palestinian control, have become increasingly peripheral to the Israeli state.

To be sure, the idea of controlling all relevant variables through a “natural experiment” is illusory. But Laitin (1995b) defends the exercise as worthwhile because it compels us to focus on specific processes under differing conditions, setting limits to overgeneralized theory.

### *Case Studies*

In this domain as in others, “cases” continue to be identified generally with “countries.” Thus substantial literatures (of which we cite only a few exemplary works here) have formed around key cases such as Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka, and on Rwanda and Burundi.<sup>7</sup> The identification of case with country, however, is a matter of convention, not logic. Ethnic or nationalist violence in a country is treated as a “case” when the violence is portrayed as a single processual whole. If the violence is instead construed as a set of separate (though perhaps interdependent) instances, then it becomes a case set, suitable for controlled comparison or even for a large-N study. In Olzak’s (1992) study of confrontations and protests, for example, the United States is not a case but the location for a large-N study of events. The breakup of Yugoslavia has most often been treated as a single complex interconnected case, but if we had adequately disaggregated data, it could be studied as a set of cases (for example of recruitment to unofficial or quasi-official violence-wielding nationalist militias or gangs).

Most case studies are organized around a core argumentative line. In Woodward’s 1995 analysis of Yugoslavia, for example, the cumulative effect of economic crisis, a weakening central state, and external powers’ recognition of constituent “nations” that were incapable of acting like “states” created a security dilemma for minorities in the newly recognized states. For Deng (1995), the attempt by the north to identify the Sudanese nation as an Arab one could lead only to rebellion from the South, which had been enslaved by Arabs, but never assimilated into an Arab culture. For Kapferer, Sinhalese Buddhist myths and rituals—rooted in an embracing cosmology and “ingrained in the practices of everyday life” (1988: 34)—provided a crucial cultural underpinning for a radically nationalizing Sinhalese political agenda and for anti-Tamil violence in Sri Lanka. In Prunier’s 1997 analysis of Rwanda, an externally imposed ideology of sharp difference between Hutus and Tutsis, and postcolonial claims to exclusive control of the state on both sides of this colonially reified group difference, created a security dilemma favoring preemptive violence.

At the same time, authors of these and other case studies recognize that the explanatory lines they highlight are partial, and they consequently embed these arguments in richly contextualized narratives specifying a web of intertwined supporting, subsidiary, or qualifying arguments. As a result, one cannot evaluate these works on the same metric as one would the statistical or even the small-N studies. The rhetorical weight in case studies tends to be carried by richness and density of texture; although a major argumentative line is almost always identifiable, the argument takes the form of a seamless web rather than a distinct set of explanatory propositions. Attempts to extract precise propositions from such case studies often reduce the original argument to the point of caricature.<sup>8</sup> However, close reading of such works can yield rich material on microsocial processes at low levels of aggregation that macro theories miss.

### *Theory-Driven Rational Action Approaches*

The main clusters of theory-driven work on ethnic violence have employed models of rational action, drawing in particular from the realist tradition in international relations, from game theory, and from rational choice theory in general.<sup>9</sup> “Rational action” (or “strategy,” the preferred term of international relations and game theory) is understood

somewhat differently in these traditions, referring in international relations to the grand designs of states engaged in power politics, in game theory to the fully specified plan for playing a particular “game,” and in rational choice theory in general to individual action oriented to the maximization of subjective expected utility. Yet ethnic violence in all three traditions is seen as a product of rational action, rather than emotion or irrationality (though structural background conditions are seen as crucially shaping the contexts of choice).

### *International Relations Approaches*

International relations scholars of the realist school (Jervis 1978) posit the existence of a “security dilemma” under conditions of anarchy in which even nonaggressive moves to enhance one’s security, perceived as threatening by others, trigger countermoves that ultimately reduce one’s own security. While formulated to explain interstate wars, the security dilemma has been applied to intrastate ethnic violence as well.

A line of argument initiated by Posen (1993) focuses on the windows of opportunity—and vulnerability—occasioned by the collapse of central authority in multiethnic empires (see also Carment et al. 1997). In such circumstances, especially given a historical record of serious intergroup hostilities (amplified and distorted, of course, in the retelling), groups are likely to view one another’s nationalist mobilization as threatening. These perceived threats may create incentives for preemptive attack (or at least for countermobilization that will in turn be perceived as threatening by the other group, engendering a mobilization spiral that can lead to violence, especially since violent action can be undertaken autonomously, under conditions of state breakdown, by small bands of radicals outside the control of the weak, fledgling successor states).

To be sure, the international relations perspective on ethnic violence has its weaknesses. Ethnic conflict differs sharply from interstate conflict (Laitin 1995c). States are distinct and sharply bounded entities (though to treat them as “unitary actors,” as international relations scholars commonly do [van Evera 1994], is problematic [Mann 1993: Chapters 3, 21]). In contrast, ethnic groups are not “given” entities with unambiguous rules of membership, as is well known from a generation of research (Barth 1969; Young 1965). Rarely is a single “leader” recognized as authoritatively entitled to speak in the name of the group. As a result, ethnic groups generally lack what states ordinarily possess,

namely a leader or leaders capable of negotiating and enforcing settlements (Paden 1990; Podolefsky 1990). Moreover, ethnic group membership is fluid and context-dependent. Relatively high rates of intermarriage (as in the former Yugoslavia) mean that many people, faced with interethnic violence, are not sure where they belong. Boundary-strengthening, group-making projects *within* ethnic groups are almost always central to violent conflicts *between* groups, but these crucial intragroup processes are obscured by international relations-inspired approaches that treat ethnic groups as unitary actors.

### *Game-Theoretic Approaches*

In examining ethnic violence, game theorists subsume the issue as part of a general theory of “social order” (Kandori 1992; Landa 1994). With specific reference to ethnic violence, however, game theorists seek to understand the rationale for the choice to use violence, assuming that violence will be costly to both sides in any conflict (Fearon 1995). They are not satisfied with theories, especially psychological ones (Tajfel 1978), that can account for conflict or mistrust, but not for violence. Game theorists seek to provide a specific account of violence, rather than accept it as an unexplained and unintended byproduct of tense ethnic conflicts.

There is no unitary or complete “game theory” of ethnic violence. Rather, game theorists have identified certain general mechanisms that help account for particular aspects of the problem of ethnic violence. Here we review game-theoretic accounts of three such mechanisms, associated with problems of credible commitments, asymmetric information, and intragroup dynamics respectively.

Fearon (1994) has developed a model of the problem of credible commitments and ethnic violence. In this model, the problem arises in a newly independent state dominated by one ethnic group but containing at least one powerful minority group as well. The model focuses on the inability of an ethnicized state leadership to “credibly commit” itself to protect the lives and property of subordinate ethnic groups, who, as a result, have an interest in fighting for independence immediately rather than waiting to see if the leadership honors its commitment to protect them. Once a war breaks out, as Walter (1994) shows, settlement is extremely difficult, because neither side will want to disarm without full confidence that the agreement will be adhered to; but no one will have such confidence unless the other side disarms.



Weingast (1998) shows that individuals who are told by their group leaders that they are targets for extermination would rationally take up arms even if the probability is negligible that their leaders' prognostications are accurate, since a low probability event with drastic consequences has a high expected disutility. Therefore ethnic war can emerge from a commitment problem even if only vague suggestions of repression exist, or if only a maniacal wing of the ruling group has genocidal intentions. Weingast's work is sensitive to the importance of institutions such as the consociational ones described by Lijphart (1977) that enhance the credibility of commitments. In the absence of such institutions, ethnic violence is more likely to occur.

Some scholars discount the credible commitments problem, arguing that many states do not even seek to make such commitments to protect their minorities. Rothchild (1991) shows that ethnic violence in Africa is associated strongly with regimes that show no interest in bargaining with disaffected groups. In many cases violence results neither from fear nor from failed coordination but from deliberate policy. However, if violence of this type were not reciprocated, and carried few costs for its perpetrators, it would be, in game-theoretic terms, a dominant strategy for leaders of ethnocratic regimes; and researchers must then explain why this sort of violence is not more common than it is.

Concerning the problem of information asymmetry, Fearon and Laitin (1996) suggest, with Deutsch (1954), that ethnic solidarity results from high levels of communication. As a result, in everyday interaction within an ethnic group, if someone takes advantage of someone else, the victim will be able to identify the malfasant, and to refuse future cooperation with him or her. High levels of interaction and of information about past interaction make possible the "evolution of cooperation" (Axelrod 1984) within a community. Interethnic relations, however, are characterized by low levels of information; the past conduct of members of the other ethnic group, as individuals, is not known. Under such conditions, an ethnic incident can more easily "spiral" into sustained violence, if members of each group, not being able to identify particular culprits, punish any or all members of the other group. This unfortunate equilibrium, Fearon and Laitin show, is not unique. They describe an alternate equilibrium, one which helps explain why violent spiraling, although gruesome, is rare. They find that even under conditions of state weakness or breakdown, ethnic

cooperation can be maintained by local institutions of in-group policing—where leaders of one group help identify and punish the instigators of the violence against members of the other group—and intergroup mediation. The in-group policing equilibrium is one in which interethnic violence can be effectively contained.

Concerning in-group dynamics, game theory can help to clarify the microfoundations for the intragroup processes discussed previously in the section on "Case-Based Pattern Finding." Game theoretic approaches, attuned to the individual level of analysis, do not assume—as do many theorists of ethnic conflict—that members of ethnic groups share a common vision or common interests. Kuran (1998a, 1998b) assumes that people have distinct preferences for some combination of ethnically marked and generic, ethnically indifferent "consumption" (including not only goods but activities, modes of association, policies, etc.). Ethnic entrepreneurs, who will be more successful to the extent that their constituents favor ethnic over generic consumption, try to induce the former at the expense of the latter. Such pressures, and constituents' interdependent responses to them, can trigger ethnification cascades—sharp and self-sustaining shifts from ethnically neutral to ethnically marked activities that divide once-integrated societies into separate and polarized ethnic segments. Laitin (1995b) uses a cascade model similar to that of Kuran. He assumes that ethnic activists, in the context of a national revival, will use tactics of humiliation to induce conationals to invest in the cultural repertoires of the dormant nation. But when humiliation fails, and when activists fear that no cascade toward the national revival is possible, they will consider the possibility of encouraging or committing both intra- and interethnic violence.

### *Rational Action Theory*

Rational action perspectives on ethnicity and nationalism have proliferated in recent years (Rogowski 1985; Meadwell 1989; Banton 1994). Yet despite an abundance of informal observations concerning the strategic, calculated, or otherwise instrumental dimensions of ethnic or nationalist violence, few systematic attempts have been made (apart from the international relations and game-theoretic traditions mentioned above) to analyze ethnic and nationalist violence as such from a rational action perspective. One exception is Hechter (1995), who claims that "nationalist violence can best be explained instrumentally." Hechter argues that while the dispositions linked to emotional or

expressive violence are distributed randomly in a population, and thus have no effect at the aggregate level, the dispositions underlying instrumental violence are clustered systematically and thus are decisive at the aggregate level. This argument presupposes that the dispositions underlying emotional or expressive violence are idiosyncratic individual characteristics, yet surely such powerful violence-fostering emotions as rage or panic-like fear may be clustered systematically at particular places and times and thus may be significant at the aggregate level. But Hechter does stake claim to territory into which rationalists—for all their expansionist inclinations—have so far hesitated to tread. He also clearly states a series of propositions about the relation between group solidarity, state strength and autonomy, and oppositional nationalist violence. Another exception is Hardin (1995), who applies broadly rational choice perspectives (following Olson 1975) to the formation of ethnic groups and their development of exclusionary norms, and then relies on an informal game model to explain how groups with such norms can “tip” toward violence.

Blalock’s general theory of power and conflict (1989) is not specifically addressed to ethnic or nationalist violence, but it analyzes structures, mechanisms, and processes that are often implicated in such violence. These include the small, disciplined “conflict groups” specifically organized to carry out violence and the mechanisms through which protracted conflicts are sustained or terminated. He adopts a modified rational-actor perspective—modified in emphasizing structures of power and dependency, allowing for noneconomic goals, and noting the role of misperception, deception, and ideological bias in shaping means-ends calculations.

### Culturalist Approaches

Culturalist analyses of ethnic and nationalist violence reflect the broader “cultural turn” the social sciences have taken since the 1980s. Although such analyses are extremely heterogeneous, they generally characterize ethnic violence as meaningful, culturally constructed, discursively mediated, symbolically saturated and ritually regulated. Some culturalist analyses expressly reject causal analysis in favor of interpretive understanding (Zulaika 1988) or adopt a stance of epistemological skepticism (Pandey 1992; Brass 1997). Yet for the most part, culturalist accounts do advance explanatory claims, although the

status and precise nature of the claims are not always clear. Here we sketch a few clusters of recurring themes in culturalist analyses.

### *The Cultural Construction of Fear*

Like the rational action approaches just considered, culturalist approaches seek to show that even apparently “senseless” ethnic violence “makes sense” (Kapferer 1988) in certain contexts. Yet while they claim to discover a “logic” to ethnic and ethnoreligious violence (Spencer 1990; Zulaika 1988; Juergensmeyer 1988) and reject representations of it as chaotic, random, meaningless, irrational, or purely emotive, culturalists claim that such violence makes sense not in instrumental terms but in terms of its meaningful relation to or resonance with other elements of the culturally defined context.

Culturalist analyses construe the relevant context in different ways. One major focus of attention has been on the cultural construction of fear: the rhetorical processes, symbolic resources, and representational forms through which a demonized, dehumanized, or otherwise threatening ethnically defined “other” has been constructed. The social construction of fear, to be sure, is not a new theme in analyses of ethnic violence; it was central to Horowitz (1985: 175–84), who in turn drew on a generation of work in social psychology. Yet while Horowitz sought to elaborate a universal “positional group psychology” to account for cross-cultural regularities in patterns of ethnic antipathy and anxiety, recent culturalist accounts have tended to emphasize particular features of individual cultural contexts; they have emphasized the cultural and historical rather than social psychological grounding of ethnic fear. A literature has emerged on the construction of fearful Hindu beliefs about Muslims in India (in the context of opposed ethnoreligious idioms and practices, religiously justified social segregation, and the rise of militant Hindu nationalism [Gaborieau 1985; Pandey 1992; Hansen 1996]); Sinhalese beliefs about Tamils in Sri Lanka (in the context of an ethnocentric Sinhalese state, Tamil terrorism, state repression, and unchecked rumor [Spencer 1990]); and Serbian beliefs about Croats in disintegrating Yugoslavia (in the context of a nationalizing Croatian successor state symbolically linked to, and triggering memories of, the murderous wartime Ustasha regime [Glenny 1992; Denich 1994]). Once such ethnically focused fear is in place, ethnic violence no longer seems random or meaningless, but all too horrifyingly “meaningful.”



Without using the term, culturalist analyses have thus been concerned with what we discussed above as the “security dilemma”—with the conditions under which preemptive attacks against an ethnically defined other may “make sense.” Unlike the international relations approaches to the security dilemma, however—and unlike political and economic approaches to ethnic violence in general—culturalist approaches seek to specify the manner in which fears and threats are constructed through narratives, myths, rituals, commemorations, and other cultural representations (Atran 1990). Culturalist analyses thus see security dilemmas as subjective, not objective, and as located in the realm of meaning and discourse, not in the “external world.” Many cultural analyses (e.g., Tambiah 1996; Bowman 1994) acknowledge the crucial role of ethnic elites in engendering ethnic insecurity through highly selective and often distorted narratives and representations, the deliberate planting of rumors, and so on. But the success of such entrepreneurs of fear is seen as contingent on the historically conditioned cultural resonance of their inflammatory appeals; cultural “materials” are seen as having an inner logic or connectedness that makes them at least moderately refractory to willful manipulation by cynical politicians.

Although such accounts may be plausible, even compelling “on the level of meaning” (Weber 1968: 11), they have two weaknesses. The first is evidentiary: it is difficult to know whether, when, where, to what extent, and in what manner the posited beliefs and fears were actually held. How do we know that, in India, the most “rabid and senseless Hindu propaganda,” “the most outrageous suggestions” about the allegedly evil, dangerous, and threatening Muslim “other,” have come to be “widely believed,” and to constitute “a whole new ‘common sense’” (Pandey 1992: 42–43; Hansen 1996)? How do we know that, in Sri Lanka in 1983, Tamils were believed to be “superhumanly cruel and cunning and, like demons, ubiquitous” (Spencer 1990: 619) or “agents of evil,” to be rooted out through a kind of “gigantic exorcism” (Kapferer 1988: 101)? How do we know that, in the Serb-populated borderlands of Croatia, Serbs really feared Croats as latter-day Ustashas? Lacking direct evidence (or possessing at best anecdotal evidence) of beliefs and fears, culturalist accounts often rely on nationalist propaganda tracts (Pandey 1992: 43; Lemarchand 1996: Chapter 2), but are unable to gauge the extent to which or the manner in which such fearful propaganda has been internalized by its addressees. (Malkki [1995] has attempted to document the extent of such

internalization in her fieldwork among Hutu refugees from Burundi, but because this work concerns the victims of near-genocidal violence, not the perpetrators, it speaks most directly to the consequences, rather than to the causes, of ethnic violence—although consequences of past violence can become causes of future violence in the course of a long-term cycle of intractable violent conflict [Lemarchand 1996; Atran 1990]). The second problem is that such accounts (though culturalist accounts are not alone in this respect) tend to explain too much and to overpredict ethnic violence. They can’t explain why violence occurs only at particular times and places, and why, even at such times and places, only some persons participate in it. Cultural contextualizations of ethnic violence, however vivid, are not themselves explanations of it.

#### *Framing Conflict as Ethnic*

In southern Slovakia in 1995, a pair of Hungarian youths were pushed from a train by Slovak youths after a soccer match. Although one of the youths was seriously injured, and although the incident occurred after the Hungarians had been singing Hungarian nationalist songs, the violence was interpreted as drunken behavior by unruly soccer fans rather than as “ethnic violence,” and even the nationalist press in Hungary made no attempt to mobilize around the incident (Brubaker field notes). Similarly, the burning down of an Estonian secondary school in a predominantly Russian region of Estonia in 1995 was interpreted as a mafia hit, even on the Estonian side, and no mobilization occurred, even though no one could suggest why the mafia might have been interested in a secondary school (Laitin field notes). These incidents illustrate what we alluded to above as the constitutive significance of coding or framing processes in ethnic violence. The “ethnic” quality of “ethnic violence” is not intrinsic to the act itself; it emerges through after-the-fact interpretive claims. Such claims are often contested, generating what Horowitz (1991a: 2) has called a “metaconflict”—a “conflict over the nature of the conflict.” This, in turn, can feed back into the conflict by providing a rationale for further violence (Lemarchand 1996: Chapter 2; McGarry and O’Leary 1995). The constitutive acts of social definition through which violence is interpreted—and the social struggles over such interpretation—are increasingly recognized as an important aspect of the phenomenon of ethnic violence (Brass 1996a, 1997; Abelman and Lie 1995).

*Gender*

Like other forms of violence and war, and like the phenomena of ethnicity and nationhood in general (Verdery 1994), ethnic and nationalist violence is strongly gendered. The Basque ETA and the Irish Republican Army (IRA), for example, are overwhelmingly male (Waldmann 1989: 154; Zulaika 1988: 182), although Aretxaga (1995: 138) discusses women's efforts to be recognized as full members of the IRA rather than of its women's counterpart. As victims of ethnic violence, women are sometimes deliberately spared, at other times deliberately targeted (for example, in the notorious mass rapes of Bosnian Muslim women by Bosnian Serbs [Korać 1994]). More research is needed on the specific roles that women may play in certain ethnic riots, not necessarily as direct perpetrators but, for example, in shaming men into participating (Hansen 1996: 153). Katz (1988) argues that while women as well as men are susceptible to the "seductions of crime," the characteristic modalities of women's criminal activities are different; we might expect the same to be true of ethnic violence.

Representations of ethnic violence are also strongly gendered. Recent research on nationalism shows that in many settings, prospective threats to (as well as actual attacks on) "the nation" are construed as a feared or actual "violation" or "rape" of an "innocent, female nation" by a brutal male aggressor (Harris 1993: 170; Verdery 1994: 248–49). To defend or retaliate against such threats or attacks, conspicuously masculinist virtues may be asserted in compensatory or overcompensatory fashion. In India, for example, Hindu nationalist organizations offer a "way of recuperating masculinity" to their recruits, enabling them to "overcome the [stereotypically] 'effeminate' Hindu man and emulate the demonized enemy, the allegedly strong, aggressive, militarized, potent and masculine Muslim" (Hansen 1996: 148, 153).

*Ritual, Symbolism, Performance*

A number of analysts—echoing themes from the Manchester school of social anthropology (Gluckman 1954; Turner 1969)—have underscored the ritualized aspects of ethnic violence. Gaborieau (1985) highlights "rituals of provocation," which he describes as "codified procedures" of deliberate disrespect, desecration, or violation of sacred or symbolically charged spaces, times, or objects—in India, for

example, the killing of cows by Muslims, or the disturbance of Muslim worship by noisy Hindu processions (on noise as a cultural weapon in ethnoreligious struggles, see Roberts 1990). Marches and processions through space "owned" by another group have triggered violence in Northern Ireland and India with sufficient regularity and predictability to warrant calling these, too, rituals of provocation (Feldman 1991: 29–30; Jaffrelot 1994; Tambiah 1996: 240). Even without deliberate provocation, conflicting claims to the same sacred spaces (Ayodhya, Jerusalem) or sacred times (when ritual calendars overlap) may provide the occasion for ethnic violence (van der Veer 1994; Tambiah 1996: Chapter 9; Das 1990a: 9 ff.; Friedland and Hecht 1991, 1996). Freitag (1989) and Tambiah (1985: Chapter 4; 1996: Chapter 8) have applied what the latter calls a "semiotic and performative" perspective to ethnic confrontations, disturbances, and riots in South Asia. Performance and ritual are also emphasized in Zulaika's (1988) study of the cultural context of violence in a Basque village. Van der Veer (1996) sees riots as a form of "ritual antagonism" expressing an opposition between the self and an impure, alien, or demonic "other." Following Davis' (1973) analysis of the "rites of violence" in the religious riots of sixteenth-century France, analysts of ethnic riots have called attention to the ritualized nature and symbolic resonance of the seemingly gratuitous forms of mutilation often involved (hacking off of body parts, desecration of corpses, etc.).

Feldman's (1991) study of Northern Ireland is the most sustained discussion of the symbolic dimension of ethnic violence. Feldman focuses on the ethnically charged symbolism of urban space in Belfast, the increasing ethnic partitioning of which is both a consequence of ethnic violence and a reinforcing cause of future violence. He also analyzes the equally charged symbolism of the body. Ironically, given his critique of instrumental analyses of ethnic violence, Feldman devotes a great deal of attention to the body as an instrument, as a weapon deployed by those (in his case IRA prisoners) for whom it is the only resource. Of course, as he shows in rich detail, this instrumentalization of the body through the "dirty protest" (in which prisoners denied special political status refused to wear prison clothing and smeared feces on the walls) and the subsequent hunger strike (in which ten prisoners died) was achieved in symbolically resonant form (analyzed also by Aretxaga [1993, 1995], the latter piece focusing on female prisoners' own "dirty protest," centered on the display of menstrual blood).

It should be emphasized that no serious culturalist theory today argues that violence flows directly from deeply encoded cultural propensities to violence or from the sheer fact of cultural difference. In this salutary sense, there are no purely culturalist explanations of ethnic violence; and it is difficult to simply classify as “culturalist” a work such as Tambiah (1996), in which cultural, economic, political, and psychological considerations are deftly interwoven. By considering separately “culturalist” approaches, we do not imply that they are or ought to be segregated from other approaches. We suggest, rather, that such approaches highlight aspects of ethnic violence—discursive, symbolic, and ritualistic—that should ideally be addressed by other approaches as well.

### Conclusion: A Plea for Disaggregation

The temptation to adopt currently fashionable terms of practice as terms of analysis is endemic to sociology and kindred disciplines. But it ought to be resisted. The notion of “ethnic violence” is a case in point—a category of practice, produced and reproduced by social actors such as journalists, politicians, foundation officers, and NGO representatives, that should not be (but often is) taken over uncritically as a category of analysis by social scientists. Despite sage counsel urging disaggregation (Snyder 1978; Williams 1994; Horowitz 2001), too much social scientific work in this domain (as in others) involves highly aggregated explananda, as if “ethnic violence” were a homogeneous substance varying only in magnitude. To build a research program around an aggregated notion of “ethnic violence” is to let public coding—often highly questionable, as when the Somali and Tadjikistani civil wars are coded as “ethnic”—drive sociological analysis.

The paradigmatic instances of ethnic and nationalist violence are large events, extended in space and time. Moreover, they are composite and causally heterogeneous, consisting not of an assemblage of causally identical “unit instances” of ethnic violence, but of a number of different types of actions, processes, occurrences, and events. For example, it is evident from the case literature that in Sri Lanka “ethnic violence” consists of episodic riots on the one hand and more continuous low-level terrorism (and state violence in response to the terrorism) on the other, all occurring against the background of the “cultural violence” perpetrated by a series of ethnocratic Sinhalese governments. Not only

do the riots, terrorism, and state violence involve sharply opposed mechanisms and dynamics (in terms of degree and mode of organization, mode of recruitment and involvement of participants, affective “tone,” symbolic significance, contagiousness, degree and modality of purposeful rationality, and so on), but within each category there is also a great deal of causal heterogeneity. Thus an “ethnic riot” typically involves at one level deliberate manipulation and organization by a small number of instigators but also, at other levels, turbulent currents of crowd behavior governed by powerful emotions and compelling collective representations requiring social psychological and cultural modes of analysis.

There is no reason to believe that these heterogeneous components of large-scale ethnic violence can be understood or explained through a single theoretical lens. Rather than aspire to construct “a theory” of ethnic and nationalist violence—a theory that would be vitiated by its lack of a meaningful explanandum—we should seek to identify, analyze, and explain the heterogeneous processes and mechanisms involved in generating the varied instances of what we all too casually lump together—given our prevailing ethnicizing interpretive frames—as “ethnic violence.” This can be accomplished only through a research strategy firmly committed to disaggregation in both data collection and theory-building.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *The Return of Assimilation?*

#### The Differentialist Turn

“The point about the melting pot,” wrote Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan in the preface to their influential *Beyond the Melting Pot*, “is that it did not happen.” This “failure to melt” thesis was iconoclastic when the book was published in 1963. But it had become widely accepted already by the end of the decade—well before the post-1965 revival of mass immigration began to transform the American urban landscape. By the 1980s, when the effects of the “new ‘new immigration’” had become unmistakable, earlier conceptions of assimilation seemed to many to have lost all relevance. When Glazer published *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* in 1997, he was writing as *éminence grise*, not as iconoclastic intellectual.<sup>1</sup> Pluralistic understandings of persisting diversity, once a challenge to the conventional wisdom, had become the conventional wisdom, not only in the United States and other classic countries of immigration such as Canada and Australia, but also in much of northern and western Europe.

There is obviously a good deal of truth to this conventional wisdom. Public discourse and public policies bearing on the integration of immigrants are indeed vastly more “differentialist”—vastly more sensitive to and supportive of “difference”—today than they were, say, in the period between the two world wars in France or the United States, or in the early postwar decades in the United States. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed an unprecedented efflorescence of differentialist

discourse—and differentialist integration policies—in all Western countries of immigration.

This differentialist turn has not been restricted to, or even centered on, immigration. Especially in the United States, but in a more limited sense in Western Europe as well, it has been a much broader and more general movement of thought and opinion. It has found expression in movements to preserve or strengthen regional languages and cultures in Europe (Keating 1996); in demands for, and greater recognition of, the autonomy of indigenous peoples in the United States, Canada, Australia, Russia, Latin America, and elsewhere (Brøsted et al. 1985; Kymlicka 1995); in Black Power, Afrocentrist, and other antiassimilationist movements involving African Americans (Howe 1998); in the shift from an individualist, opportunity-oriented, and color-blind to a collectivist, results-oriented, and color-conscious interpretation of civil rights legislation in the United States (Glazer 1978); in multiculturalist revisions of school and university curricula (Nash et al. 1997; Glazer 1997); in gynocentric or “difference” feminism (Irigaray 1993); in gay pride and other movements based on the public affirmation of alternative sexualities (Johnston 1973); in claims by other putative cultural communities—including for example the deaf (Lane 1992)—for autonomy; in generalized opposition to the homogenizing, centralizing claims of the modern nation-state; in antifoundationalist understandings of the production of knowledge in historically and socially situated epistemic communities (Hollinger 1997); in other poststructuralist and postmodernist critiques of the universalist premises of Enlightenment thought; and in the shift from an understanding of politics emphasizing the pursuit of putatively universal interests to one emphasizing the recognition of avowedly particularist identities (Young 1990).

Today, however, this massive differentialist turn in social thought, public discourse, and public policy shows signs of having exhausted itself. Differentialist stances have long been a lightning rod for criticism from cultural conservatives (D’Souza 1991) and from the economic, resolutely anti-identitarian left. More recently, criticism has come increasingly “from within,” that is from the “cultural left” itself, from persons sympathetic to the claims of cultural difference, yet uncomfortable with their absolutization and with the pervasive “culturalization” of political rhetoric.<sup>2</sup> Opposition to the relativistic and ultimately solipsistic implications of epistemological insiderism; concern over the

fragmenting and in certain respects disabling consequences of identity politics; resurgent interest in forms of civic commonality; rethinking of the modalities of and rationale for affirmative action, not only on the part of its longstanding critics on the right, but on the part of its longstanding defenders on the left—these and other developments suggest that, in some respects at least, the maximally differentialist moment may have passed.<sup>3</sup>

In the domain of immigration, too, there are signs that the differentialist tide may have begun to ebb. Instead of a definitive, unidirectional shift from assimilation to multiculturalism, there is evidence of an incipient shift in the opposite direction. To call this the “return of assimilation” is undoubtedly too grand a label for the relatively modest and uneven shift I will describe; hence the question mark in my title. But it may usefully caution us against overhastily consigning assimilation to the dustbin of history.

### Two Meanings of “Assimilation”

By the “return of assimilation,” I do *not* mean a return to the normative expectations, analytical models, public policies, or informal practices associated with the ideal of Anglo-conformity or the increasingly nativist Americanization movement after the First World War (Gleason 1980); or to those associated with the schoolteachers of the French Third Republic, notorious for shaming and humiliating those who spoke languages or dialects other than standard French (Weber 1976: 313); or to those associated with the harsh Imperial German effort to “Germanize” its largely Polish-speaking eastern borderlands (Broszat 1972: 129–72);<sup>4</sup> or to any of the many other lamentable instances of harshly homogenizing state projects.

This should go without saying, but assimilation has acquired such a bad name among American differentialists that it has come to be associated almost automatically with narrow Anglo-conformity or aggressive Americanization. In Germany, the word “assimilation” has been even more strongly “contaminated” and disqualified by its association with forcible Germanization. In France, by contrast, the word itself was never so thoroughly discredited. But in France, too, it was tainted by association with the sometimes brutally homogenizing aspirations and practices of Jacobin Republicanism.

So what are we talking about when we talk about “assimilation”?

What is it that is “returning,” if it is not these normatively and analytically discredited models? To address this question, we must distinguish between two basic meanings of “assimilation.” One is general and abstract; the other is specific and organic. The two meanings are related, but they differ sharply in their affective overtones, moral and political connotations, and intellectual respectability.

In the general and abstract sense, the core meaning is increasing similarity or likeness. Not identity, but similarity. To assimilate means to *become* similar (when the word is used *intransitively*) or to *make* similar or *treat* as similar (when it is used *transitively*). Assimilation is thus the process of becoming similar, or of making similar or treating as similar.

In the specific and organic sense, the root meaning is transitive. To assimilate something is to “convert [it] into a substance of its own nature, as the bodily organs convert food into blood, and thence into animal tissue . . . to absorb into the system, [to] incorporate” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Assimilation in this sense implies complete absorption.

In the general, abstract sense, the accent is on the process, not on some final state, and assimilation is a matter of degree. Assimilation designates a *direction of change*, not a particular *degree of similarity*. In the specific, organic sense, by contrast, the accent is on the end state, and assimilation is an either-or matter, not a matter of degree.

It is the connotations of this organic meaning, with its biological metaphor of incorporation, that have discredited the term, making it seem normatively retrograde (given our contemporary appreciation of difference and diversity), analytically disreputable (given its superannuated organismic understanding of society), and empirically wrong (with its implication of complete absorption).

In addition, one aspect of the general, abstract meaning has stood out as normatively and analytically problematic. This is the *transitive* use of “assimilate” to mean “make similar,” which suggests state policies and programs of “forced assimilation,” or at least policies and programs that seek to assimilate people against their will. Such policies and programs have rightly come to be seen as morally and politically repugnant. Abundant historical and comparative evidence, moreover, suggests that they rarely work, and that they are indeed more likely to strengthen than to erode differences, by provoking a reactive mobilization against such assimilatory pressures. Analytically, we may have

good reason to speak of assimilationist *policies*; but such policies need not have assimilationist *outcomes*.<sup>5</sup>

Yet when used *intransitively* in the general, abstract sense of becoming similar—becoming similar *in certain respects*, that obviously have to be specified—assimilation does *not* seem to be morally objectionable, analytically useless, or empirically wrong as a conceptual instrument for studying populations of immigrant origin. Indeed the use of *some* such notion—if only to pose certain questions about patterns of “integration,” “adaptation,” or “incorporation,” terms that have been preferred to “assimilation” in many recent discussions<sup>6</sup>—would seem to be analytically indispensable. I return to this point in the conclusion. Here I simply wish to underscore that it is this intransitive understanding of “assimilation,” this normative and analytical concern with the nature and extent of emerging similarities in particular domains between populations of immigrant origin and “host” populations, that I see “returning” in recent years.

### Three Cases

I sketch in the following sections three illustrative vignettes, drawn from different countries and from different domains. I discuss the return of assimilation in public discourse in France, in public policy in Germany, and in scholarly research in the United States. It might be argued that whatever “return of assimilation” I find is largely an artifact of the cases I have chosen: the United States is historically the paradigmatic country of immigrant assimilation, while France is the European country with the longest, strongest, and most ideologically elaborated tradition of assimilation. There is something to this: had I chosen different cases—for example the U.K., Sweden, the Netherlands, and Germany—the trend would have been less clear-cut.

Yet the trend does not simply reflect the cases chosen. In the first place, the return of assimilation in France and the United States involves a marked *return*, not simply the persistence of something always present. I want to stress this reactive moment of return, and to situate it in the context of a preceding “differentialist” turn in both France and the United States. Moreover, there has been a modest assimilationist turn in Germany as well, and in the Netherlands (Koopmans and Statham 2000; Thränhardt 2000) and Sweden (Soininen 1999: 689–91), two other countries with relatively “differentialist” incorporation regimes.

Over the longer term, as a third generation of immigrant origin emerges, it is likely that a concern with at least some dimensions of assimilation will become increasingly salient throughout Europe.<sup>7</sup>

### France: From *droit à la différence* to *droit à la ressemblance*

One might think there was not much of a story to be told about France. Why talk of a return of assimilation in a country that has a long tradition of assimilation, transforming peasants—and immigrants—into Frenchmen, in what Gérard Noiriel has called *le creuset français*, the French melting pot (Weber 1976; Noiriel 1988)? But to frame the issue in this way—to focus only on the Jacobin-Republican assimilationist tradition, or myth—is to forget the strong differentialist turn that occurred in French public discussion of immigration and other issues in the 1970s and early 1980s, precisely in reaction *against* the Jacobin and assimilationist tradition. Indeed differentialist discourse received one of its sharpest and most lapidary, if ambiguous, formulations in the characteristic French slogan of those years: the *droit à la différence*. True, the differentialist turn was much stronger in rhetoric than in reality: differentialism remained largely symbolic (Schnapper 1992: 119) and was embedded only relatively weakly in policies and institutionalized practices—for example in the program in which foreign instructors, selected and paid by foreign governments as a result of bilateral agreements concluded with the French state, were recruited to offer instruction in so-called “languages and cultures of origin” in French public schools (Boyzon-Fradet 1992: 155 ff.).<sup>8</sup> But at the level of public discussion, differentialism was clearly ascendant in the early 1980s, during the early years of the Socialist government.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that differentialism was gaining ground on the French right as well as the left. The historian and philosopher Pierre-André Taguieff has analyzed the rise of a differentialist—one could even say multiculturalist—“new right” in France in the 1970s and 1980s, clustered around the enigmatic figure of Alain de Benoist. No longer xenophobic but formally “heterophile,” antiracist, and egalitarian, the new differentialists of the right emphasized, indeed absolutized, cultural difference, seeking to “preserve at any price collective identities, and thus differences between communities, haunted by the danger of their destruction through mixing, physical and cultural” (Taguieff 1994: 66–67).

What happened to the ascendant differentialism? In two words: Le Pen. Although Le Pen and the intellectuals associated with him actually belonged to a different segment of the right than the small circle of principled differentialists analyzed by Taguieff, they too adopted a differentialist idiom, adroitly turning it to their own purposes. *Droit à la différence? Mais oui, bien sur, chez vous.* But here, in France—so went the argument—it's we, the “real” French, who have our own right to be different, our own right to preserve our own “identity” from unwanted admixture. As a result, the moral and political ambiguity—and the exclusionary potential—of culturalist differentialism were brought into sharp focus.

It was this political and ideological conjuncture that set the stage for the return of assimilation. The much-vaunted *droit à la différence* ceased to be invoked; by the late 1980s, one was more likely to hear of the *droit à la ressemblance*, to which Harlem Désir himself appealed in a widely watched TV appearance in 1987—or of the *droit à l'indifférence*, in effect the right to be treated like everyone else. In the wake of the differentialist collapse, there was a resurgence of neorepublican, neouniversalist, and at least hesitatingly neoassimilationist discourse, elaborated by such public intellectuals as Alain Finkielkraut (1987), Taguieff (1996), and especially Emmanuel Todd (1994). Their views do not go unchallenged, of course; there are sophisticated analysts such as Michel Wieviorka (1996) who continue to defend a moderately differentialist position. Yet the sudden collapse of simplistic, sloganeering differentialism and the equally sudden resurgence of universalist, assimilationist discourse about immigration is striking. Certainly, no equally sharp shift in the center of gravity of public discourse has occurred elsewhere.

### Germany: Rethinking Institutionalized Separateness

While my French vignette concerned public discourse, my German story is about public policy. German policy vis-à-vis immigrants and their descendants has been strongly differentialist—much more so than French policy even during the years of ascendant differentialist rhetoric in France.<sup>10</sup>

Consider three indicators of differentialist policy in Germany. First, instruction in languages and cultures of origin has been much more widespread in Germany than in France, and indeed has been part of

the obligatory curriculum in some *Länder* (Castles et al. 1984: 175). (Since education is the responsibility of the individual *Länder*, this has varied a good deal from state to state; Bavaria, in particular, was long notorious for educating foreigners in segregated, homeland-oriented classes.)

Second, there is the peculiar German system of social service provision to populations of immigrant origin. Responsibility for such provision was farmed out by the state to the three major nonstate charitable organizations—one affiliated with the Catholic Church, a second with the Evangelical Church, the third with the Social Democratic Party. Jurisdiction was apportioned in such a way that foreigners were allocated to a particular charitable organization on the basis of their national origin, so that all Turks were the responsibility of one organization, all Italians of a second, and so on. As critics have observed (Puskeppeleit and Thränhardt 1990; cf. Ålund & Schierup 1991 on the somewhat similar Swedish case), this system not only treats immigrants as passive clients of the charitable organizations, but also tends to reinforce and perpetuate national origin distinctions.

The third policy I want to discuss is citizenship. Until its recent liberalization, German citizenship law was well known for its restrictiveness vis-à-vis non-German immigrants. What was and remains less well known is that except for political rights, long-settled noncitizen immigrants have possessed rights virtually identical to those of German citizens. Of course, as immigrant populations became more settled, and as a second and an incipient third generation population developed, the lack of political rights became increasingly anomalous. What was distinctive about the response to this anomaly, and indicative of deep-rooted German differentialism, was that the solution was long seen on the left not in terms of incorporating immigrants and their descendant as full citizens, but rather in terms of extending even political rights—along with social, civil, and economic rights—to resident foreigners. Until the early 1990s, there was little interest in the anomalous formal citizenship status of immigrants, but considerable interest in extending voting rights to foreigners in local elections, and a large literature addressing this possibility. This was seen as the “progressive” solution—one that would extend the substantive rights of citizenship to immigrants without questioning their “differentness,” their foreignness, their otherness.<sup>11</sup>



These policies, and the idioms in which they were rationalized and justified, were indicative of a kind of benevolent, paternalistic, and egalitarian (or pseudoegalitarian) “apartheid” or institutionalized separateness. As suggested in the oxymoronic phrase “*unsere ausländische Mitbürger*” (“our foreign fellow citizens”), this has been a leitmotif of well-meaning public discussions of what continues to be called *Ausländerpolitik*—politics or policies regarding foreigners—in Germany. Left differentialists of course criticized existing policies on various counts; but they too endorsed this separate-but-equal logic.

It is against this background of deep differentialism that signs of a modest assimilationist turn can be discerned in the manner in which citizenship has been legally redefined and politically reconceived in recent years (Joppke 1999: 202–208). Naturalization rules were substantially eased in the early 1990s, and naturalization rates of Turks—extraordinarily low until the late 1980s—have soared. In 1999, naturalization rules were further liberalized. More importantly, the rules for the attribution of citizenship at birth were changed as well, supplementing the previously exclusively descent-based law, founded on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, with the territorial principle of *jus soli*.<sup>12</sup> Henceforth, citizenship will be attributed at birth to children born in Germany to foreign parents, one of whom has resided legally in Germany at least eight years. (This citizenship will, however, be provisional; in most cases, the child will have to choose either the German or the foreign citizenship at maturity, and renounce the other.)

The legal changes, increasing naturalization rates, and new ways of thinking and talking about citizenship on the part of Germans and foreigners alike are indicative of a limited but significant assimilationist turn. *Not* in the sense that full assimilation is required as a prerequisite for citizenship. To the contrary: the liberalization of naturalization law broke expressly with this principle, previously enshrined in the regulations governing naturalization. The new practices, policies, and discourses surrounding citizenship are assimilationist, rather, in the sense of politically recognizing, legally constituting, and symbolically emphasizing *commonality* rather than difference. Assimilation, it is worth remembering, means becoming similar, or treating as similar, and this new inflection in the policies and practices of citizenship in the 1990s has involved a modest but significant assimilationist turn in both senses.

### The United States: Assimilation without “Assimilationism”

Having discussed public discourse in France and public policy in Germany, I turn to a third domain in which one can discern a return of assimilation in recent years: scholarly research. Here I will focus on the United States, though I should note that in France, too, researchers have shown a renewed interest in assimilation (Tribalat 1996; Todd 1994). In Germany, by contrast, most scholarly research on immigrant integration continues scrupulously to avoid at least the *term* assimilation, even when it addresses questions that could be seen as falling under this rubric (exceptions include Esser 1980 and Nauck et al. 1997).

In the United States, research on immigrant integration was dominated from its beginnings in the 1920s through the mid-1960s by assimilationist perspectives of one kind or another. Then, from about 1965 to 1985, largely under the impact of external events, the historical and sociological literature—at least the more theoretically ambitious strands of that literature—was characterized mainly by pluralist perspectives, emphasizing and documenting ethnic persistence in a variety of ways.<sup>13</sup> Since about 1985, however, one can discern a renewed theoretical concern with assimilation in the scholarly literature (see for example Gans 1992, Glazer 1993, Portes and Zhou 1993, Morawska 1994, Kazal 1995, Barkan 1995, Alba and Nee 1997 and 2003, Rumbaut 1997, Alba 1999).

The ethnic persistence literature has made and continues to make valuable contributions. But “a way of seeing,” as Kenneth Burke observed, “is also a way of not seeing” (Burke 1954: 40). Focusing on ethnic communities, on ethnically marked places or ethnic organizations rather than on persons or wider social processes, this literature has missed those who moved out of such ethnically marked places, who “disappeared,” as Ewa Morawska put it (1994: 83). With its “unexamined assumptions that cultural maintenance is always a good thing, that immigrants as a rule tried to preserve as much of their traditional culture as possible, [and] that ethnocentric Anglo-America equally reflexively resisted both cultural transplantations and assimilation,” it has

tended to take ethnic communities—places—as opposed to individually experienced adaptation—immigrant lifecourses—as its object of inquiry,



and . . . has tended to focus precisely on those kinds of places—areas of concentrated first-generation settlement—where the odds of finding evidence for ethnic maintenance are greatest. It has sought to restore agency to the immigrant actor, but has not always followed that agency into all the varied paths that it could take. In particular, . . . by confining its focus to ethnic maintenance it neglects to extend its concern for the immigrant as historical actor to the assessment of the immigrant's impact upon society as a whole. We have constructed an oppositional history of virtuous, autonomous, ethnic outsiders interacting minimally with others except in the workplace, outsiders who thereby bear, to be sure, little moral responsibility for the sins of the broader nation, but also, by implication, little significance in its broader history (Conzen 1996: 21).

Inwardly focused, the ethnic persistence literature has neglected wider social and cultural processes such as the formation of transethnic (but often racially closed) working-class communities in the early part of the century (Kazal 1995); the spatial dispersion that has accompanied post-World War II suburbanization, in which even recent immigrants have been participating (Alba and Nee 1997: 836–37, 857–62); increasing rates of ethnic intermarriage (Spickard 1989; Alba 1999; Qian 1997); and the dynamic renegotiation of ethnic and racial categories and identifications (Roediger 1991; Ignatiev 1995; Perlmann and Waldinger 1997). All of these processes have led to the blurring or shifting of some ethnic boundaries (Zolberg and Long 1999) in ways that undermine stable ethnic enclosures (Hollinger 1999).

The new theorists of assimilation do not simply replicate the old, pre-1965 approaches. The older work—even work as sophisticated as Gordon's—was analytically and normatively Anglo-conformist. It posited, endorsed, and expected assimilation towards an unproblematically conceived white Protestant “core culture.” Recent work on assimilation, by contrast, is agnostic about its directions, degrees, and modalities, and ambivalent about its desirability. There is nothing today comparable to the complacent empirical and normative expectancies of midcentury. Of course, this is partly because the notion of a universally acknowledged “core culture” has lost all its plausibility since the late 1960s. This, in turn, has raised the question of the reference population toward which assimilation is said to occur. Characteristic of the newer literature on assimilation is its willingness to consider multiple reference

populations and correspondingly segmented forms of assimilation (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997; Waters 1994; Neckerman et al. 1999).<sup>14</sup> It is no longer true that assimilation (or integration, a term that often, especially in the European context, refers to much the same thing) is “inevitably” conceptualized as occurring “into one, single, indivisible (national) ‘state,’ and one, simple, unitary (national) ‘society’” (Favell 2000).

Today, concern with assimilation is not necessarily “assimilationist.” It implies no global belief in the inevitability or desirability of assimilation. This does not mean that the newer literature on assimilation has no normative thrust. Normative concerns about civic commonality do underlie and inform much work on assimilation today (Alba 1999). But they do not entail any blanket endorsement of assimilation. Some forms of assimilation are indeed widely thought to be desirable. One aspect of linguistic assimilation, for example—the intergenerational acquisition of English at levels sufficient to permit success in schooling, occupational mobility, and full participation in public life—is clearly desirable. But note that this in no way entails the desirability of what Portes and Rumbaut (1990: 209–21) call “subtractive” linguistic assimilation—the intergenerational loss of competence in the language of origin.

Some aspects of socioeconomic assimilation are also clearly desirable (Hirschman 1983: 403 ff.; Alba and Nee 1997). Consider, for example, a population with mean income and education levels well below the respective means for the population at large. Surely, assimilation in these domains—in the sense of a shift in the direction of convergence with the income and educational distributions of the wider society—would be desirable for this population, and it is important to know whether and to what extent this is occurring. But the desirability of assimilation in these respects does not imply its desirability in other respects. It does not imply the desirability of complete acculturation, for example; or of full “identificational assimilation” (the “development of a sense of peoplehood based *exclusively* on the host society” [Gordon 1964: 71, emphasis added]); or of spatial assimilation through suburbanization and the concomitant decline of ethnic neighborhoods; or of full occupational assimilation and the concomitant decline of ethnic niches, enclaves, and professional specializations; or of the erosion of group boundaries through high rates of intermarriage or what Gordon called structural assimilation (participation in

the “social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society at the primary group level” [Gordon 1964: 80]). My point is not that assimilation in these respects is necessarily undesirable, though evidence—for example, about better health outcomes of infants born to immigrants than to United States-born mothers, even after controlling for ethnicity and a variety of socioeconomic factors (Rumbaut 1997)—suggests that certain forms of assimilation may indeed be undesirable. This point is forcefully developed in the segmented assimilation literature, which argues that socioeconomic success, for second generation immigrants in predominantly minority inner-city neighborhoods, may depend on resisting assimilation to the surrounding youth milieu, with its adversarial stance toward mainstream culture (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997). The broader point is that one can study assimilation in its various domains and directions without being an “assimilationist”; one may be agnostic about its destinations and ambivalent or even skeptical about its desirability.

Assimilation is not a single process of the sort envisioned by “straight-line” accounts. Already by Gordon’s time, a picture had emerged of assimilation as a complex and only partially interlocking set of processes (see also Yinger 1981). Some of these (notably structural assimilation on Gordon’s account and spatial assimilation on some recent accounts [Massey and Denton 1993: 149 ff.]) bear significantly on processes in other domains by shaping opportunity structures and contact probabilities. But other domains are at most loosely coupled with one another. Recent accounts are sensitive to the possibilities of different rhythms and trajectories of assimilation—or disassimilation—in different domains (Banton 1983: 144–46). On current understandings, assimilation is always domain-specific and relative to a particular reference population; and the normative stance one takes toward it will also depend on the particular domain and reference population.

### Conclusion: A Concept Transformed

In all three countries, what I have called “the return of assimilation” has involved a subtle but significant change in perspective. Analytically, this has involved a shift from an overwhelming focus on persisting difference—and on the mechanisms through which such cultural maintenance occurs—to a broader focus that encompasses

emerging commonalities as well. Normatively, it has involved a shift from the automatic valorization of cultural differences to a renewed concern with civic integration.

This shift in analytical and normative emphasis does not presage a radical reversal. It does not amount to a return to the bad old days of arrogant assimilationism. For while the *term* “assimilation” has returned, the *concept* has been transformed. I sketch in conclusion the main elements of this transformation:

1. A shift from *organic* understandings of assimilation, focusing on an end state of complete absorption, to *abstract* understandings, focusing on a process of becoming similar (in some respect, to some reference population).
2. A shift from *transitive* to *intransitive* understandings of assimilation. The former see populations of immigrant origin as moldable, meltable *objects*; the latter see persons comprising such populations as active *subjects*. As such, to be sure, they are not busy consciously “assimilating.” Assimilating can, of course, be a deliberate, self-conscious activity, and the poignant—and sometimes tragic—ambiguities and ambivalences bound up with it have been movingly explored by novelists, memoirists, essayists, historians, and even a few sociologists (Bauman 1988; Laitin 1995a). Yet for most historians and social scientists, assimilation is an emergent property of social processes at an aggregate level, rather than something that happens (consciously or unconsciously) at the level of individual persons. As an emergent tendency at the aggregate level, assimilation is largely unintended and often invisible; and when made visible, it may be lamented. Yet even when it is lamented, the processual tendency we call “assimilation” is not something done *to* persons, but rather something accomplished *by* them, not intentionally, but as an unintended consequence of myriad individual actions and choices in particular social, cultural, economic, and political contexts (cf. Alba 1995: 4).
3. The unit within which change occurs—the unit that undergoes assimilation—is not the person but a *multigenerational population*. Population-level assimilation can occur without *any* individual-level assimilation. Linguistic assimilation at the

population level, for example, can occur without any adult learning a new language, simply through the acquisition of the language of the reference population by children. Of course this is not what ordinarily happens; we do observe some language shift at the level of individual persons. But key changes (in language and in other domains) occur intergenerationally; they occur not within persons but within abstractly constructed multigenerational populations, as new (genealogical) “members” of the population turn out to be different—that is, they *dissimilate*—from other, older members of the source population, in ways that make them more similar to members of some reference population.

4. A shift from thinking in terms of *homogeneous* units to thinking in terms of *heterogeneous* units. Assimilation does not involve a shift from one homogeneous unit to another. It involves, rather, a shift from one mode of heterogeneity—one distribution of properties—to another mode of heterogeneity, that is, to a distribution of properties more similar to the distribution prevailing in some reference population.
5. A shift in the focus of normative concern informing research on assimilation from *cultural* to *socioeconomic* matters. A general openness to cultural diversity, coupled with confidence among specialists—if not always among the wider public—in the continuing robustness of processes of linguistic acculturation (Portes and Schauflyer 1994) has alleviated anxieties about cultural dimensions of assimilation. Yet the bifurcation of recent immigrants into high-skill and low-skill segments—at a moment when macroeconomic changes associated with the “hourglass economy” have decreased the rewards to low-skill, uneducated labor—has generated concerns about long-term structural marginalization (Gans 1992; Portes and Zhou 1993; somewhat more optimistic: Waldinger 1996; Perlmann and Waldinger 1997). As a normatively charged concept, assimilation, in this sense, is opposed not to *difference* but to *segregation*, *ghettoization*, and *marginalization*.
6. A shift from a *holistic* approach that conceptualized assimilation towards a taken-for-granted reference population—the “core culture” or “national society” as a whole—to a

*disaggregated* approach that discards the notion of assimilation as a single process, considers multiple reference populations, and envisions distinct processes occurring in different domains. This has entailed a shift from the *monodimensional* question, “how much assimilation?” to the *multidimensional* question, “assimilation in what respect, over what period of time, and to what reference population?” It has also entailed a shift from an *assimilationist* understanding of assimilation—a global empirical expectation and normative endorsement of assimilation—to an *agnostic* stance, varying by domain and reference population, concerning both the likelihood and the desirability of assimilation.

Reformulated in this manner, and divested of its “assimilationist” connotations, the concept of assimilation—if not the term itself—seems not only useful but indispensable. It enables us to ask questions about the domains and degrees of emergent similarities, *and* persisting differences between multigenerational populations of immigrant origin and particular reference populations. There are good reasons for us to want to ask such questions, regardless of whether we applaud or lament such emerging similarities. Naturally, to pose such questions is only a beginning. Assimilation is not a theory; it is simply a concept. But it is a concept we can ill do without.

☞ CHAPTER SIX

"Civic" and "Ethnic" Nationalism

From its late nineteenth-century beginnings to the present, the study of nationhood and nationalism has been marked by deep ambivalence and intractable ambiguity. On the one side, nationalism has been associated with militarism, war, irrationalism, chauvinism, intolerance, homogenization, forced assimilation, authoritarianism, parochialism, xenophobia, ethnocentrism, ethnic cleansing, even genocide; it has been characterized as the "starkest political shame of the twentieth century" (Dunn 1979: 55). On the other side, nationhood and nationalism have been linked to democracy, self-determination, political legitimacy, social integration, civil religion, solidarity, dignity, identity, cultural survival, citizenship, patriotism, and liberation from alien rule.

One reason for the ambivalence, of course, is that "nation" and "nationalism" designate a whole world of different things. To a great extent, the ambivalence reflects not so much competing understandings and evaluations of the same thing, as alternative uses of the same term. Much of the ambivalence, that is, has been rooted in ambiguity. How people have evaluated nationalism has depended on what they have understood it to be.

Recognition of the protean quality of "nation" and "nationalism"—and of the normative ambivalence and conceptual ambiguity surrounding the subject—has engendered innumerable attempts at classification. Some typologies have been elaborate. In his early book *Theories of Nationalism*, for example, Anthony Smith classified national

movements by the "formal" criteria of "intensity" and "achievement" and by the "substantive" criteria of "independence" and "distinctiveness." The former yielded six types, the latter 12; cross-classifying them, with some simplification, yielded no fewer than 39 types for which Smith found corresponding historical or contemporary instances (Smith 1983 [1971]: 211–29). Most classifications, however, have been quite simple, often founded on a single dichotomous distinction. And such distinctions have often been intended to do both normative and analytical work.

The most well known distinctions—between voluntaristic and organic, political and cultural, subjective and objective, liberal and illiberal, and civic and ethnic forms of nationalism—overlap to a great extent. They have an illustrious pedigree, going back to Friedrich Meinecke's (1919 [1907]) distinction between *Staatsnation* and *Kulturnation* at the beginning of the century and, more immediately, to Hans Kohn's (1944) influential midcentury work, usually glossed as distinguishing between "Western" and "Eastern" forms of nationalism.<sup>1</sup>

Of these overlapping distinctions, the one with the greatest resonance today, especially outside the narrow circle of researchers working primarily on nationalism, is the distinction between civic and ethnic understandings of nationhood and forms of nationalism. This has been used to suggest that there are, fundamentally, only two kinds of nationalism: civic nationalism, characterized as liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive; and ethnic nationalism, glossed as illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive. These are seen as resting on two corresponding understandings of nationhood, based on common citizenship in the first case, common ethnicity in the second.

Sometimes, as in Kohn's work, this distinction is projected in space, and used to contrast the civic nationalism of Western Europe, or of "the West" in general, with the ethnic nationalism of Eastern Europe or other world regions. Such grand contrasts of world regions easily acquire a neo-orientalist flavor and lend themselves to the invocation of a dubious series of linked oppositions—between universalism and particularism, inclusion and exclusion, civility and violence, reason and passion, modern tolerance and ancient hatreds, transnational integration and nationalist disintegration, civic nationhood and ethnic nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

But this is not the prevalent use of the distinction today. The triumphalist—or, at best, complacent—account of Western civic

nationalism is too obviously problematic for this view to be seriously entertained. The unexpected (and partly nationalist) resistance to the Maastricht treaty, the longstanding violent conflicts in northern Ireland and the Basque country, the intensifying ethnopolitical conflict in Belgium, and the electoral successes of xenophobic parties in many countries—all these have made it impossible to hold such an uncritical view of the essentially "civic" quality of West European nationalism.

More common is the use of the civic-ethnic opposition to make distinctions between states—or between national movements—rather than between whole world regions. This is often done in an ideological mode, to distinguish one's own good, legitimate civic nationalism from the illegitimate ethnic nationalism found elsewhere. The leaders of postindependence Ukraine and Kazakhstan, for example, have self-consciously used the language of civic nationhood to present their states to domestic and especially international audiences as paragons of civic inclusiveness and tolerance, as states of and for all their citizens, rather than as states of and for a single ethnocultural group. They—and scholars sympathetic to their cause—have pointed to inclusive citizenship legislation, liberal language laws, and rhetoric of civic inclusiveness to mark a contrast with Estonia and Latvia, with their restrictive citizenship legislation, tough language laws, and rhetorical emphasis on ethnocultural survival.

Many separatist movements, too, use this self-legitimizing language of civic nationalism. The general election manifesto of the Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru, for example, proclaims its commitment to a "civic nationalism [that] welcomes all those living in Wales to join us in finding the solutions to [social and environmental] challenges and in restoring the equilibrium of social justice and environmental sustainability in Wales and Europe."<sup>3</sup> Scottish National Party (SNP) leaders emphasize even more strongly the party's civic nationalism, especially its inclusive, residentially based definition of Scottishness. So pronounced is this emphasis that a fringe nationalist group opposed to the SNP's rhetoric of civic nationalism has caustically criticized the "hogwash about being Scottish just because you happen to live in Scotland . . . it is to be hoped that Scottishness will, through means of education and restored ethnic consciousness, cease to be the sad joke which in many cases it has become."<sup>4</sup>

Scottish nationalist leaders generally like to align themselves with the Catalan, Québécois and other regional nationalisms. Yet they are

willing to distance themselves from these movements to underscore their own commitment to civic nationalism. For example, after the narrow defeat of the Quebec sovereignty referendum in 1995, notoriously blamed by Québécois separatist leader Jacques Parizeau on the "ethnic vote," SNP leader Alex Salmond said that "Quebec is not Scotland and Scotland is not Quebec. . . . The linguistic and ethnic basis of their nationalism is a two-edged sword. . . . we follow the path of civic nationalism."<sup>5</sup> For their part, Quebec nationalists have sought in recent years to project a more "modern," unifying image of civic nationalism. But Parizeau's gaffe, together with a remark a few weeks earlier by separatist leader Lucien Bouchard about the low birth rate of Québécois, allowed critics of Québécois nationalism to turn the civic-ethnic distinction back against their opponents. To cite but one of many examples, the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, Canada's leading Anglophone newspaper, characterized Québécois separatism as "rooted in ethnic rather than civic nationalism. Blood is more important than citizenship."<sup>6</sup>

Paralleling this frankly political use of the civic-ethnic distinction to legitimize or discredit particular state policies or nationalist movements is its use in a scholarly mode to draw distinctions between different instances of nationalism and different modes of national self-understanding. Often this scholarly accounting of nationalism—bestowing the imprimatur of the civic on some states or movements, denying it to others—itself belongs to the sphere of nationalist politics in a broad sense. There is nothing new about this; for a century and a half, scholars have been participants in, as well as observers of, nationalist politics. But the work done by the notion "civic," with its normative prestige, in such accounts may be more political than analytical: it may speak more to the putative international respectability and legitimacy of the state or movement in question than to its empirical characteristics.

In recent years, many scholars of nationalism have grown uncomfortable with the unequivocal sorting of cases into "civic" and "ethnic" categories. From a detached, analytical point of view, as numerous commentators have pointed out, it is often impossible, or at best problematic, to characterize an entire state, or an entire national movement, simply as civic or ethnic. As a result, efforts have been made to use the distinction in a more abstract manner. Instead of being used to characterize concrete cases, it is now most often used to characterize

opposed analytical "elements" or tendencies and to show how they are mixed in different manners and proportions in concrete cases. Indeed so prevalent in the literature is this notion that individual states or national movements display a mixture of civic and ethnic elements or tendencies that it can be said to constitute a kind of theoretical "common sense."

In the hands of sophisticated observers such as Anthony Smith, whose *Ethnic Origins of Nations* was particularly influential in promoting it, this use of the civic-ethnic distinction to designate analytical elements that are found in concrete cases "in varying proportions at particular moments of their history" (Smith 1986: 149) is certainly an improvement over the unequivocal sorting of states and nationalist movements as a whole—to say nothing of entire regions—into "civic" or "ethnic" categories.<sup>7</sup> Yet even in this more abstract and analytical mode, I want to argue, the civic-ethnic distinction remains both analytically and normatively problematic.<sup>8</sup>

### Analytical Ambiguities

Let me begin with what I see as the analytical weaknesses of the civic-ethnic distinction. Both terms are deeply ambiguous. Their ambiguity can be highlighted by asking how culture fits in to the civic-ethnic scheme. There are in fact two very different ways of mapping culture onto the civic-ethnic distinction, but I will argue that neither is fully satisfactory.

What is "ethnic" about ethnic nationalism? Advocates of the civic-ethnic distinction have a ready answer: nation-membership is understood to be based on ethnicity. But this simply pushes the question one step back. What is "ethnicity"? As analysts going back to Max Weber have emphasized, "ethnicity" is an exceedingly ambiguous notion.<sup>9</sup> Consider here just one aspect of that ambiguity, involving the relation between "ethnicity" and culture.

On the one hand, ethnic nationalism may be interpreted narrowly, as involving an emphasis on descent, and, ultimately, on biology. "Strictly speaking," as Anthony Smith noted in his first book on nationalism, "ethnicity refers to common descent" (Smith 1983 [1971]: 180). Yet construing ethnicity narrowly in this manner severely constricts the domain of ethnic nationalism. For as Smith himself went on to observe, many "commonly accepted 'nations' . . . do not invoke a common

ancestor," and even when nationalist argumentation does involve "imputed common descent," this is "usually a minor claim" (*ibid.*, 180–81).<sup>10</sup> On the strict understanding of ethnicity, nationalist rhetoric that emphasizes common culture, but not common descent,<sup>11</sup> has to be coded as a kind of civic nationalism.<sup>12</sup> But then the category of civic nationalism becomes too heterogeneous to be useful, while that of ethnic nationalism is severely underpopulated.

On the other hand, "ethnic" may be construed broadly, as *ethno-cultural*. This is the path Smith chose in *Theories of Nationalism*, treating "'ethnic' [as] identical with the term 'cultural,' without further specification" (1983 [1971]: 180). In this case, the problem is just the opposite: virtually all nationalisms would have to be coded as ethnic. Thus for Eric Hobsbawm, "Every separatist movement in Europe . . . bases itself on 'ethnicity,' linguistic or not, that is to say on the assumption that 'we'—the Basques, Catalans, Scots, Croats, or Georgians are a different people from the Spaniards, the English, the Serbs or the Russians" (Hobsbawm 1996b: 256). By defining "ethnicity" so expansively that it is coextensive with a sense of separate "peoplehood," however that sense of peoplehood is grounded, Hobsbawm codes as "ethnic" what others often classify as "civic"—Catalan and Scottish nationalism, for example. Civic nationalism is thereby reduced to an empty set or, as on Hobsbawm's account, relegated to an earlier phase of historical development.

Nor is ambiguity limited to the term "ethnic." The category "civic" is equally ambiguous. On the one hand, civic nationalism may be interpreted strictly, as involving an acultural, ahistorical, universalist, voluntarist, rationalist understanding of nationhood. "The nation" is then construed as a voluntary association of culturally unmarked individuals. Nation-membership is understood as chosen rather than given, as a "daily plebiscite," in Renan's celebrated metaphor.

Yet construing civic nationalism strictly in this fashion risks defining the phenomenon out of existence. Even the cases most often cited as paradigmatic of civic nationalism—France and America—involve a crucial cultural component or, in Hobsbawm's terms, a strong sense of separate peoplehood.<sup>13</sup> A purely acultural understanding of nationhood has never been widely held. It is a model of nationhood that has never been instantiated, existing only as a conceptual ideal type. Even as an ideal type, it is problematic. Although Ernest Renan is often cited

as the locus classicus for this model, this reflects a one-sided reading of his famous lecture. His characterization of the existence of a nation as a "daily plebiscite"—a self-conscious rhetorical flourish which Renan prefaced by asking his audience to "pardon the metaphor"—does indeed underscore the importance, for Renan, of subjective self-understanding in constituting nationhood (Renan 1996 [1882]: 53). But Renan's understanding of nationhood is far from acultural or purely voluntaristic. It is a "thick," not a "thin" understanding. Renan stresses the constitutive significance of the "possession in common of a rich legacy of memories"; he characterizes the nation as "the culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice, and devotion" (*ibid.*, 52). In this sense, the nation is "given" as well as "chosen."<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, civic nationalism may be defined broadly. The definition offered by Michael Keating, a sympathetic yet sophisticated analyst of Scottish, Catalan, and Québécois nationalisms, is worth quoting at length. Keating defines civic nationalism as a collective enterprise

rooted in individual assent rather than ascriptive identity. It is based on common values and institutions, and patterns of social interaction. The bearers of national identity are institutions, customs, historical memories and rational secular values. Anyone can join the nation irrespective of birth or ethnic origins, though the cost of adaptation varies. There is no myth of common ancestry . . . [Nationhood is] based on territorially defined community, not upon a social boundary among groups within a territory. This is not to say that any piece of real estate can form the basis for a nationalism. There needs to be a structured set of political and social interactions guided by common values and a sense of common identity (Keating 1996: 5–6).

Keating wants to have it both ways. He retains the rationalist, universalist emphasis on choice characteristic of "thin" understandings of civic nationalism. At the same time his more sociologically realistic understanding of nationhood pushes him to acknowledge the importance of "common values," "customs," "historical memories," and a "sense of common identity." Yet these are just the sort of particularist, thick, given factors highlighted by broad, culturalist understandings of ethnicity. The factors highlighted by Keating are not all that different, for example, from the quartet of "myths, memories, values, and symbols" emphasized by Anthony Smith in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*.

To sum up the argument so far: A narrow understanding of ethnicity severely constricts the domain of ethnic nationalism and leaves the residually defined civic category too large and heterogeneous to be useful. Conversely, a narrow understanding of "civic" severely constricts the domain of civic nationalism and leaves the residually defined ethnic category too large and heterogeneous to be useful. If one combines a strict understanding of civic and a strict understanding of ethnic nationalism, then one is left with few instances of either one and a large middle ground that counts as neither, and one can no longer think of the civic-ethnic distinction as an *exhaustive* way of classifying types or manifestations of nationalism. If one combines, finally, a broad understanding of civic and a broad understanding of ethnic nationalism, one confronts a large middle ground that could be classified either way, and one can no longer think of the civic-ethnic distinction as *mutually exclusive*.

Advocates of the civic-ethnic distinction would argue that this large middle group consists of cases that combine civic and ethnic elements in varying ways. But the problem is not that it is difficult to know, on balance, how to classify a "case." The problem is rather that the deep ambiguity of the terms "civic" and "ethnic," and in particular the uncertain place of culture in the civic-ethnic scheme, calls into question the usefulness of the distinction itself. It can be just as difficult to classify an "element" as it is to classify an entire "case."

How, for example, are we to classify policies designed to promote a particular language at the state or provincial level? From the point of view lyrically articulated by Benedict Anderson, for whom nations are "conceived in language, not in blood," and are therefore "joinable in time" (Anderson 1991: 145), there can be nothing "ethnic" about such policies, even if they might be judged restrictive, illiberal, or even chauvinistic. Indeed, from another point of view one could go further and characterize such policies as positively civic, that is, as indispensable for the promotion of republican citizenship. The assimilationist language policies of the French Revolution were justified in just such a civic idiom in Abbé Grégoire's report "On the necessity and means of abolishing the patois and universalizing the use of the French language." Only when all citizens speak the same language, the report argued, can all citizens "communicate their thoughts without hindrance" and enjoy equal access to state offices (de Certeau et al. 1975: 302).<sup>15</sup> And as John Stuart Mill put it in *Considerations on*



*Representative Government*, "Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist" (Mill 1975 [1861]: 382).

From another point of view, however, linguistic nationalism is simply a particular expression of ethnic nationalism. When "ethnic" is understood broadly as ethnocultural, or simply as cultural without qualification, then conceptualizing the nation as a community of language, demanding autonomy or independence in the name of such a community, limiting access to citizenship to persons knowing the language, and promoting or requiring teaching, publishing, broadcasting, administering, or advertising in that language must be considered central, indeed paradigmatic manifestations of ethnic nationalism.

### Normative Ambiguities

The distinction between civic and ethnic understandings of nationhood and forms of nationalism is not only, or even primarily, an analytical distinction. It is also, at the same time, a normative one. This fusion of analytical and normative criteria was characteristic already of Hans Kohn's work. Kohn's portrayal of pioneering Western nationalisms joined neutral analytical observations about their "predominantly political" character, reflecting the fact that national consciousness developed within the framework of existing states, to a normative celebration of the spirit of "individual liberty and rational cosmopolitanism" that he saw as informing such nationalisms. Similarly, his portrayal of the later nationalisms of Germany and central and Eastern Europe joined neutral analytical observations about their initially cultural character, reflecting the fact that national consciousness developed outside of and in opposition to the framework of existing states, to a normatively charged evocation of the illiberal tendencies that he saw as inherent in those nationalisms (Kohn 1944: 329–31).

Even as the distinction has been stripped, in most uses, of the concrete spatial reference given to it by Kohn, it has retained the same normative valence. Civic nationalism is generally glossed as liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive, ethnic nationalism as illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive. Except for the opposition between universalism and particularism, which finds contemporary

partisans on both sides, it is hard to imagine a more normatively loaded, one-sided characterization. Who could have a good word for a form of nationalism routinely glossed as illiberal, ascriptive, and exclusive? How could one criticize a form of nationalism understood to be liberal, voluntarist, and inclusive? When civic and ethnic nationalism are paired, the former is invariably a term of praise, the latter of abuse.

Yet although the normative opposition seems unambiguous, matters are in fact more complicated. Take for example the characterization of civic nationalism as inclusive and of ethnic nationalism as exclusive.<sup>16</sup> In fact all understandings of nationhood and all forms of nationalism are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive. What varies is not the fact or even the degree of inclusiveness or exclusiveness, but the bases or criteria of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>17</sup>

Civic understandings of nationhood are glossed as inclusive for one of two reasons. The most common is that the civic nation is based on citizenship, and therefore includes all citizens, regardless of their particularistic traits. But citizenship itself, by its very nature, is an exclusive as well as an inclusive status. On a global scale, citizenship is an immensely powerful instrument of social closure (Brubaker 1992). It shields prosperous and peaceful states from the great majority of those who—in a world without borders and exclusive citizenries—would seek to flee war, civil strife, famine, joblessness, or environmental degradation, or who would move in the hope of securing greater opportunities for their children. Access to citizenship is everywhere limited; and even if it is open, in principle, to persons regardless of ethnicity, this is small consolation to those excluded from citizenship, and even from the possibility of applying for citizenship, by being excluded from the territory of the state. This "civic" mode of exclusion is exceptionally powerful. On a global scale, it is probably far more important, in shaping life chances and sustaining massive and morally arbitrary inequalities, than is any kind of exclusion based on putative ethnicity. But it is largely invisible, because we take it for granted. Only among philosophers and political theorists, in recent years, has there been some attention to issues such as open borders, or some moves to recast Rawlsian accounts of justice on a global scale.<sup>18</sup> In wider spheres of public debate, this kind of closure and exclusion is simply never questioned.

Civic understandings of nationhood have also been characterized as

inclusive because they comprise "all those—regardless of race, color, creed, gender, language, or ethnicity—who subscribe to the nation's political creed" (Ignatieff 1993: 6). The emphasis on a constitutive political creed echoes an older literature on American nationalism, according to which American national identity was essentially ideological and therefore uniquely open.<sup>19</sup> That view has been much criticized in the last two decades, notably by Rogers Smith, who sees American understandings of nationhood as pervasively informed, for much of the country's history, by an ethnocultural or "inegalitarian ascriptive" strand of thinking as well as by liberal and republican strands (Smith 1997: 2 ff., 14 ff.). But even apart from its historical accuracy in the American context, the creedal model of membership has its own logic of exclusion. The French Revolution provides the paradigmatic examples of such exclusions—of emigrés, refractory priests, noblemen, rebels, and other presumed political opponents. At the opposite end of the political spectrum, McCarthyism provides the paradigmatic example in the American context. But it is worth remembering that even in Germany—often treated as the key exemplar of ethnic nationalism—Catholics and Social Democrats were excluded from the moral community of the nation and characterized as internal "enemies of the Reich" in Bismarck's time not by virtue of ethnicity, but by virtue of their imputed lack of loyalty to the national state.

Understandings of nationhood as based on citizenship or political creed, then, are not *more* inclusive than those that emphasize cultural community or common descent; they are *differently* inclusive (and exclusive). And not only are the *exclusions* on which they are premised normatively problematic, but so too, in certain contexts, is their very *inclusiveness*. Transylvanian Hungarians, for example, resent and resist the putatively inclusive, citizenship-based rhetoric of nationhood which construes them as members of the Romanian nation. On their own self-understanding, they are citizens of the Romanian state, but members of a Hungarian cultural nation that cuts across the boundaries of state and citizenship.

In the early 1980s—to take another example—some second generation Algerian immigrants protested against the French nationality that had been attributed to them automatically at birth. For reasons having to do with a technicality of French citizenship law, they had been unaware of this attribution until, upon reaching age 16 and applying for residence permits as foreigners, they were stupefied to be told by

officials that they were French. While some welcomed this news—French nationality, after all, would protect them against expulsion—others "experienced the attribution of French nationality as a violation of their personality, their familial attachments, and their membership of a newly emancipated [Algerian] nation" (GISTI 1983: 6), and several thousand formally requested—in vain—to be released from the nationality that had been attributed to them without their knowledge, against their will, and in violation of their self-understanding as Algerians. The Algerian government too objected to the unilateral imposition of citizenship on "its" emigrants; after "the years of murderous conflict aimed precisely at giving them their own nationality," this was regarded as a neocolonial affront to Algerian sovereignty (Mangin 1981: 23).

The conventional gloss of civic and ethnic understandings of nationhood as voluntaristic and ascriptive, respectively, is also problematic. In the first place, it is greatly overdrawn. Only on implausibly acultural and ahistorical construals of civic nationalism can nation-membership be understood as entirely voluntary; on richer and more realistic accounts, including Renan's own account, as we have already seen, the nation is understood as given as well as chosen. On the other hand, choice is far from irrelevant in settings where nationhood is understood to be based on ethnocultural commonality, such as Central and Eastern Europe, usually considered the locus classicus of ethnic nationalism. As Hobsbawm observed, commenting on the "paradoxes of primordial ethnicity," "early twentieth century Europe was full of men and women who, as their very names indicate, had *chosen* to be Germans or Magyars or French or Finns" (Hobsbawm 1996b: 260, 259; emphasis in the original).

Moreover, the normative valence of the opposition between chosenness and givenness is more complex than the loaded contrast between voluntary and ascriptive suggests. Liberal moral and political theory have indeed celebrated voluntary engagements, commitments, and affiliations over ascribed statuses. But the communitarian critique of liberalism (Sandel 1982) and the development of a variant of liberalism more sensitive to the cultural contexts of choice (Kymlicka 1989) have led to an enhanced appreciation of the ways in which choices are meaningful only against the horizon of unchosen cultural contexts. And this in turn has led to a tempering and relativization of the opposition between chosenness and givenness.

I have mentioned Kymlicka in connection with newly "culturalist"

accounts of liberalism. But he has also, of course, been a central figure in recent discussions of multiculturalism (Kymlicka 1995). These discussions, too, have problematized the normative opposition between civic and ethnic nationalism. By valorizing particular cultural attachments and identities—including ethnic or ethnocultural ones—and by seeing the public recognition of such particularistic attachments as central to and supportive of rather than antithetical to citizenship (even to *liberal* citizenship, on Kymlicka's account), multiculturalism destabilizes and relativizes the normative contrast between civic and ethnic nationalism.

### A Modest Alternative

From an analytical point of view, a less ambiguous distinction than that between civic and ethnic nationalism can be drawn between *state-framed* and *counter-state* understandings of nationhood and forms of nationalism. In the former, "nation" is conceived as congruent with the state, and as institutionally and territorially framed by it. In the latter, "nation" is imagined as distinct from, and often in opposition to, the territorial and institutional frame of an existing state or states. The former is equivalent to Meinecke's notion of the *Staatsnation*; the latter, however, is a wider category than Meinecke's *Kulturnation*.

There is not necessarily anything "civic"—in the normatively robust sense of that term—about state-framed nationhood or nationalism. It is the state—not citizenship—that is the cardinal point of reference; and the state that frames the nation need not be democratic, let alone robustly so.<sup>20</sup> The sense of "nation" that developed gradually in ancien régime France was framed by the state from the beginning, but it became linked to ideas of citizenship only during the Revolution. To take another example, when Prussian reformers sought to transform Prussia into a "nation" in the early nineteenth century, to "do from above what the French had done from below," as one of the leading reformers put it, the "nation" they envisaged—Prussian, not German!—was conceived as framed by the state, yet one could not characterize it as based on citizenship. The same is true of the nationalisms of many authoritarian contemporary states.

Moreover, the notion of state-framed nationhood or nationalism enables us to talk about the way in which linguistic, cultural, and even

(narrowly) ethnic aspects of nationhood and nationalism may be framed, mediated, and shaped by the state. For while there is a definitional antithesis between *civic* nationhood and ethnicity—and in some interpretations between civic nationhood and culture—there is no such antithesis between *state-framed* nationhood and ethnicity or culture. State-framed nationalisms are often imbued with a strong cultural content.<sup>21</sup> France, for example, is a paradigmatic instance of state-framed nationhood. At the same time, culture is understood as constitutive of French nationhood.<sup>22</sup> There is no contradiction here. The culture that is understood to be constitutive of nationhood is a pervasively state-framed, and, in modern times, state-propagated one; it is not conceived as prior to and independent of the territorial and institutional frame of the state.

Counter-state nationalisms, on the other hand, need not be specifically ethnic; nationhood conceived as distinct from or in opposition to an existing state need not be conceived in ethnic terms, or even, more loosely, in ethnocultural terms. Quite apart from the difference, discussed above, between narrowly ethnic and broadly ethnocultural understandings of nationhood, counter-state definitions of nation may be based on territory, on historic provincial privileges, or on the possession of a distinct political history prior to incorporation into a larger state. Early anti-Habsburg Hungarian nationalism, for example, was couched in the idiom of historic constitutional privileges until the end of the eighteenth century, when increasing emphasis began to be placed on protecting and developing the Magyar language. An intriguing contemporary example is furnished by Northern Italian regional nationalism, in which "Padania" (the term refers to the Po river valley) is conceptualized not simply as a "region" but as a north Italian "nation" entitled to national self-determination.

Moreover, even when the nation in question is defined in cultural or ethnic terms, counter-state nationalisms may partake of "civic" qualities. This is most evident in cases such as Catalonia, Scotland, or Quebec where there is an institutionally defined sphere within which a substantial degree of self-government is possible (Keating 1996). But even counter-state nationalist movements without a formally secured sphere of institutionalized autonomy within the larger state can provide settings for the cultivation and exercise of "civic" virtues—for example by organizing and running schools, credit associations, cooperative enterprises, and welfare organizations.

## Conclusion

The civic-ethnic distinction addresses important analytical and normative issues, but it does not do so in a satisfactory fashion. It can be seen as a routinization and codification of the various efforts scholars have made to come to terms with the normative ambivalence and empirical ambiguity surrounding the protean phenomena grouped under the umbrella term "nationalism." It represents an effort to domesticate these normatively and empirically unruly phenomena, to impose conceptual and moral order on them, to subsume them under a convenient formula, to render them suitable grist for academic mills.

Yet nationalism resists neat parsing into types with clearly contrasting empirical and moral profiles. Distinctions are of course unavoidable in analytical and normative inquiry alike, but we should not expect too much of a single distinction. The civic-ethnic distinction is overburdened; it is expected to do too much work. We would do better to disentangle the work of analytical ordering from that of normative appraisal. The distinction between state-framed and counter-state understandings of nationhood is offered as one modest way of doing some of the analytical work done by the civic-ethnic distinction without the attendant confusion. The inexhaustible moral and political ambiguities and dilemmas generated by nationalism can then be addressed on their own terms.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Ethnicity, Migration, and Statehood in Post-Cold War Europe*

Among the most salient and politically charged issues of the last two decades in Europe have been questions of ethnicity, migration, and statehood. These closely interlinked issues have figured centrally in political, cultural, and social transformations throughout the continent. In eastern Europe, they are often understood to be linked in a vicious circle. States founded on ethnicity—and understood as the states *of* and *for* particular ethnocultural nations—are seen as engendering violent conflict and forced migration. Ethnic cleansing has come to epitomize this diabolical intertwining of ethnicity, migration, and statehood. In western Europe, by contrast, some observers have seen a more benign intertwining. The postnational erosion of sovereign statehood, on this view, has produced a continent-wide space for free migration, and has allowed previously suppressed ethnoregional cultures—and even autonomous ethnonational polities like Catalonia and Scotland—to flourish. Ethnicity, on this account, has been uncoupled from statehood. Darker accounts, to be sure, stress migration from outside Europe, which is seen as generating unwanted ethnic pluralism, newly ethnicized or re-ethnicized understandings of nationhood, and pressures for a renationalization of the state (or for a statelike—and perhaps nationlike—"fortress Europe" that would keep outsiders at bay). While none of these accounts is particularly nuanced, each points to the importance of the intertwined themes of ethnicity, migration, and statehood, and together they suggest that these issues can

be configured in quite different ways. In this essay, I seek to specify persisting differences in the way these questions are posed in different parts of Europe, yet to avoid the often caricaturally oversimplified east-west contrasts that inform many accounts of contemporary Europe.

## Ethnicity

Almost all European societies, like almost all societies worldwide, are ethnically heterogeneous, but that heterogeneity takes sharply differing forms. In order to highlight crucial differences in the configuration—the genesis, form, and political consequences—of ethnic heterogeneity in Europe, I distinguish two ways in which ethnic heterogeneity can be socially organized and politically expressed. The first I call “immigrant ethnicity,” and the second, “territorial nationality.”<sup>1</sup>

On the first model, characteristic mainly of western Europe, ethnic groups arise through migration and are generally territorially dispersed.<sup>2</sup> On the second model, characteristic of east central and eastern Europe, ethnic groups are indigenous (or at least make claims to be so); they are in many cases generated by the movement of borders across people, rather than that of people across borders; and they are generally territorially concentrated. Their members are ordinarily citizens of the country in which they reside, yet they often identify culturally and sometimes politically with a neighboring “kin” or “homeland” state, to which they see themselves as “belonging” by shared ethnicity or culture, though not by legal citizenship (Brubaker 1996). Lastly, and crucially, they define themselves in national terms. They see themselves as belonging not simply to a distinct ethnic group, but to a distinct nation or nationality that differs from the nation or nationality of their fellow-citizens. In this second model, then, ethnicity takes the form of nationality, and ethnic heterogeneity is coded as national heterogeneity. This territorial ethnicity-as-nationality is very different from immigration-engendered polyethnicity. Using the same term—“ethnicity” or “ethnic minorities”—to designate both can be misleading.

The political claims that can be made in the name of ethnicity differ sharply in the two cases. Immigrant ethnicity evokes a politics of antidiscrimination, civic inclusion, and “soft multiculturalism” (claims to recognition, resources, and sometimes immunities and exemptions).

Territorial nationality involves claims for national self-determination, for symbolic recognition as a state-bearing nation rather than as a mere “minority,” for extensive language rights, for territorial autonomy or even full independence, and sometimes for rapprochement with a neighboring “kin” or “homeland” state.

Clearly, the claims of territorial nationality can threaten the basic nature of the state in a way that the claims of immigrant ethnicity generally do not. When ethnic claims become national claims, based on putative territorial nationhood and nationality, they become more fundamental, and potentially more threatening, precisely because they raise what Linz and Stepan (1996) have called the “stateness” problem—the problem of the integrity and boundaries of the state.<sup>3</sup>

In east central Europe, ethnicity speaks this potentially explosive language of nationality. Nationality or nationhood, in turn, is understood as based on ethnicity (language, culture, a vague sense of shared descent, and so on), rather than on citizenship or state frontiers. One might say that ethnicity is nationalized, while nationality and nationhood are ethnicized. In western Europe, in contrast, after decades of heavy labor migration and subsequent family reunification, public attention has focused on immigrant ethnicity, while ethnic claims have not generally been framed as national claims.

There are, of course, important exceptions to this pattern on both sides. In much of east central Europe, there are fundamental issues associated with the large, socially stigmatized, spatially segregated, and in large part economically marginalized Gypsy or Roma population (Barany 2002). These issues are *sui generis* and cannot be neatly subsumed under our usual conceptual rubrics. Depending on how Roma are represented by others, and how they represent themselves, they can be conceived as an ethnic group, a national group, a caste, or a social underclass (Vermeersch 2003).<sup>4</sup>

In western Europe, on the other hand, ethnicity sometimes involves claims to territorial nationality or nationhood, and the politics of ethnicity then becomes a politics of national autonomy and self-determination. This is true above all in Spain, Belgium, and Britain, all of them multinational (and not simply multiethnic) polities. There is also the interestingly ambiguous case of Italy, where the Northern League sometimes claims that northern Italy, or Padania, is a distinct nation. Only in the case of Northern Ireland—the western European case most similar to the classic national conflicts of central and eastern

Europe—is a cross-border “kin” state or ethnic homeland involved in any significant way. As a result—and notwithstanding the political violence associated with Irish, Basque, and Corsican nationalist movements—this type of ethnonationalist politics is less threatening to states than the characteristic eastern European configuration.

A further crossover, blurring the sharp outlines of the east-west distinction, is that just as ethnicity is nationalized—understood as nationality—in some western European as well as in most east central European cases, so too nationality and nationhood may be ethnicized in western as well as in eastern Europe. And this is true not only for ethnoregional nationalisms. In response to growing Muslim and non-European immigrant populations, national self-understandings have also been ethnicized, to some degree, even in the so-called state-nations of northern and western Europe, in countries with traditionally state-framed understandings of nationhood.

Ethnicity in east central Europe, I have suggested, often takes a specifically national—and nationalist—form. Yet despite this potentially explosive configuration, and despite the resurgence of nationalism that accompanied the collapse of communist regimes, ethnic violence has been less widespread, ethnic mobilization less strong, and ethnic identity less pervasively significant than is ordinarily assumed. Having made a good part of my professional living recently off ethnicity and nationalism in eastern Europe, I have no interest in minimizing their significance. In general, however, I think that discussions of the region are overly ethnicized and that an exaggerated focus on ethnicity and nationalism risks crowding out other, often more important theoretical and practical perspectives.

Of the ghastly violence in Yugoslavia and parts of the former Soviet Union since the end of the Cold War we need no reminder. But as Tom Nairn (1995: 91–92) put it, even though one would certainly not want to make light of these terrible conflicts, one should also beware of “making dark” of them. Ethnonationalist violence has been limited to a relatively small part of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union—overwhelmingly concentrated in Yugoslavia, Transcaucasia, and the North Caucasus; elsewhere, what is striking is the absence of violence, and the relatively peaceful character of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Consider, for example, the 25 million Russians stranded as minorities in nationalizing successor states by the breakup of the Soviet Union. Many analysts—myself included, in

the early 1990s—thought that at least some of these Russians might well be the flashpoints of ethnonational conflict and violence. Yet outside the self-proclaimed “Dniester Republic” in Moldova, successor state Russians have been neither the objects nor the perpetrators of nationalist violence (Laitin 1998: Chapter 12; Melvin 1998; Braun 2000).

What about ethnic and nationalist mobilization? Here too there is a case-selection bias at work. We pay attention to the spectacular moments of high mobilization—the human chain across the Baltic republics in 1989, the great crowds that filled the main squares of Yerevan, Tbilisi, Berlin, Prague, and other cities in 1988–1990. But these have been the exception, not the rule. Moments of high mobilization have been few and ephemeral. Even where “nation” was a galvanizing category at one moment, it was not at the next. On the whole, especially since 1990, people have remained in their homes, not taken to the streets. In conspicuous contrast to east central Europe in the interwar period, demobilization and political passivity, rather than fevered mobilization, have prevailed. Much has been written on the strength of nationalist movements in the former Soviet Union, not enough on their comparative weakness.<sup>5</sup>

There is, moreover, a kind of optical illusion involved in the view from afar. From a distance, one risks taking at face value the claims of ethnonational entrepreneurs, and forgetting that people do not necessarily respond particularly energetically or warmly to the nationalist utterances of politicians who claim to speak in their name.

In the Transylvanian town of Cluj, where I conducted fieldwork in the second half of the 1990s, a bitterly nationalist local politics pits majority Romanian against minority Hungarian claims.<sup>6</sup> Yet there has been virtually no nationalist mobilization by ordinary people, and most remain indifferent to the endless cycles of nationalist talk. This has made palpable for me the loose coupling, or lack of congruence, between nationalist politics—which seems to run in a sphere of its own, unmoored from its putative constituencies—and everyday life. And there are many parallels elsewhere in the region. The general political passivity of Russians in Soviet successor states, for example, has been striking, despite various attempts to mobilize them.

Forty years ago, sociologist Dennis Wrong (1961) criticized Parsonian functionalism for its “oversocialized conception of man.” Much social analysis today is informed by what might be called an

*overethnicized* conception of history, politics, and social interaction. The ethnic categories deployed by political and cultural entrepreneurs are often uncritically adopted by social analysts. As a result, the salience of ethnicity tends to be assumed rather than demonstrated; ethnic identities are ascribed to persons who may define themselves in other terms. Ethnicity and nationalism need to be understood as particular ways of talking about and experiencing the social world and as particular ways of framing political claims, not as real boundaries inscribed in the nature of things.<sup>7</sup> At some places and times, these ways of talking about the social world and of making political claims have deep resonance and powerfully shape how people think and talk and act in everyday life, as well as how they understand and act on their political interests. At other times and places, the language of ethnicity and nationalism deployed by political entrepreneurs falls on deaf or simply indifferent ears.

### Migration

Like ethnicity—and in part, of course, in connection with ethnicity—migration too has become a central issue throughout Europe. But just as patterns and perceptions of ethnicity differ, so too do patterns and perceptions of migration. First, and most obviously, the problematics of migration in western Europe have focused on immigration, especially from outside the region,<sup>8</sup> seen both as a problem (in political terms) and as a solution (in economic and, increasingly, demographic perspectives). In eastern Europe, questions of migration have been, in the first instance, about emigration—seen again both as a problem and as a solution. Emigration is seen as a problem insofar as it involves the disproportionate outmigration of highly educated or skilled younger people, or even a declining overall population (the population of Romania declined by nearly 5 percent in the 1990s, in considerable part because of emigration). But emigration is also seen as a solution: by ordinary citizens, insofar as getting out offers a means of getting by or getting ahead; by the state, insofar as it generates remittances; and by some nationalists, insofar as it removes or weakens “unwanted elements.”

As a corollary of this basic difference, migration has been experientially marginal in western Europe. After long years of invisibility, migrants—and their distinctive cultural practices—have become

conspicuously visible and central to everyday experience in many western European cities and towns. But migration itself—even in former countries of emigration such as Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain—is something that *others* do. In eastern Europe, by contrast, migration has become experientially central, figuring pervasively in the way ordinary people think and talk about their plans, strategies, and aspirations.

Within the European Union (EU)—and within the Schengen zone in particular—migration has of course become more free through the creation and enlargement of a space of borderless free movement. In much of eastern Europe, migration has become less free, in certain respects, as political space has contracted; as borders, visas, and new citizenships have proliferated; and as the initially open door with which Western countries welcomed migrants fleeing collapsing communist regimes quickly closed. In other respects, to be sure, migration possibilities in eastern Europe have expanded. For several years now, citizens of most east central European countries have not required visas to travel to E.U. countries. This does not, of course, grant them the right to work, and even after the eastward enlargement of the E.U. in 2004, existing member states will be permitted to limit labor migration from new member states for a transitional period of up to seven years. But the ability to travel without the hurdles and indignities of having to seek a visa nonetheless marks a significant improvement for citizens of these countries (and also, of course, makes it easier to work without documents).

In western Europe—to highlight a final stark dimension of difference—migration involves mixing, and generates new forms and degrees of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious heterogeneity, together with the new challenges to national self-understandings and new forms of politicized ethnicity sketched above. In eastern Europe, much migration—not only in the last fifteen years, but over the last century—has involved *unmixing*, reducing rather than increasing heterogeneity (Brubaker 1995). This is notoriously the case, of course, for the infamous instances of forced migration—starting with the Balkan Wars at the beginning of the twentieth century, via the massive displacements during and after the Second World War, to the “Balkan Wars” at the century’s close—that have come to be known as “ethnic cleansing” (Naimark 2001; Mann 2004). But it is also the case for quieter, less dramatic forms of ethnic unmixing, involving, for example,



the migration of Germans from Poland, Russia, and the former Soviet Union to Germany; of Hungarians from Romania, Yugoslavia, Ukraine, and Slovakia to Hungary; of Russians from various Soviet successor states to Russia; and of Jews from the former Soviet Union to Israel (Brubaker 1998a; Joppke 2004).<sup>9</sup>

Of course, patterns of migration are a great deal more complicated than this. “Western Europe” and “Eastern Europe” are not single places but differentiated series of places, differently positioned—for economic, political, and geographic reasons—with respect to migration flows. Consider just one example. In the more prosperous east central European countries—especially Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia<sup>10</sup>—emigration pressures are weaker, while labor migration from points further east, and requests for political asylum from Asian and African as well as eastern European countries, have emerged as significant issues. In this respect, these countries seem to be following in the path of Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece, which made the transition from emigration to immigration countries during the last quarter century.

A decade and a half after the end of the Cold War, it is worth keeping in mind the migration that has *not* occurred from—and within—eastern Europe. In 1990, experts warned of an “exodus,” a “human deluge,”<sup>11</sup> an “invasion” of “hungry hordes,” a “mass migration on a scale unseen since World War II,”<sup>12</sup> a “flood of desperate people,” amounting to a modern-day *Völkerwanderung* akin, in the words of Peter Jankowitsch, chair of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Austrian parliament, to that in which “the Germanic people[s] moved west and destroyed the Roman Empire.” “How many Poles will stay in Poland?” Jankowitsch asked rhetorically. “How many Romanians will stay in Romania?”<sup>13</sup> Plenty, it turned out. Sizeable though westward migration has been in the experience and—even more so—in the social imagination of ordinary citizens of eastern Europe, its magnitude, for western countries, has remained modest. In the “frontline” states of Germany and Austria, such migration has been much more significant, but even there its rhythms have been measured, not cataclysmic.

Around the same time, haunted by the Yugoslav refugee crisis, analysts envisioned convulsive episodes of forced or politically induced migration, pointing with special concern, in this context too, to the 25 million Russians outside Russia. Yet while many Russians have left Central Asia and Kazakhstan, the migration has been comparatively

orderly, and the large majority of Kazakhstani Russians have chosen so far to remain in Kazakhstan.

Yet while vast east–west migrations have not occurred, this is not for the reasons suggested by the widespread imagery of Fortress Europe. Migration policy has indeed been subordinated to security concerns in certain ways, and this trend is likely to intensify after the Madrid bombings. Yet as Favell and Hansen (2002) have argued, the imagery of Fortress Europe overstates the restrictiveness of European migration policies. Even in the domain of asylum, where policies are indeed very restrictive, only a small minority of those whose claims to asylum have been rejected are ever deported. And the Fortress Europe model neglects the market-driven dynamics that have generated new labor migration flows even in ostensibly zero-immigration countries like Germany and Britain. It also neglects the fact that the eastward enlargement of the EU, like the earlier deepening of European integration through the creation of the Schengen zone, involves both inclusion and exclusion, both liberalizing and restrictive aspects.

What, then, does EU enlargement mean for migration patterns? It already has entailed the development of stricter controls along the external frontiers of the enlarged union (and along those anticipated after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007); this has disrupted cross-border flows in the border regions (*ibid*). Will the eastward enlargement generate a substantial increase in east–west migration within the EU? Not necessarily. Restrictions on labor migration can remain in place for up to seven years. And even after free movement is introduced, there may be no huge increase in east–west migration. To be sure, many citizens of central European countries, Poland especially, have already been working in EU member states, legally and illegally, and their numbers may well increase in response to economic and demographic pressures. But just as the southern enlargement of what was then the European Community to include Greece, Spain, and Portugal in the 1980s did not lead to dramatically new migration from those countries, so the eastern enlargement may not generate dramatically new east–west migration.

## Statehood

My final cluster of themes concerns the state. The restructuring of the state has been a central issue throughout Europe. But in this domain,

too, questions have been posed in very different ways in different parts of Europe.

The most striking difference would seem to be this: while the reorganization of political space in western Europe has pointed—at least in anticipation—*beyond* the nation-state, the spectacular post-Cold War reconfiguration of central and eastern Europe has involved a move *back to* the nation-state. Apart from unified Germany, nineteen of the twenty-two successor states to the multinational Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and binational Czechoslovakia are generally understood as nation-states, that is, as the states of and for the particular nations whose names they bear (and the three exceptions—the Russian Federation, rump Yugoslavia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina—are themselves closely linked to particular nations). If western Europe is entering a postnational age, the political context for much of eastern Europe might be more aptly described as *post-multinational*. Just as the great Habsburg, Romanov, and Ottoman empires crumbled at the beginning of the “short twentieth century,” leaving an array of nationally defined successor states in their stead, so too, at the close of the century, multinational states have again fragmented into sets of *soi-disant* nation-states.

Yet this view requires qualification, and not only because the massive eastward enlargement of the EU in May 2004 blurs the east-west distinction. More fundamentally, the EU does not represent a linear or unambiguous move “beyond the nation-state” to a supranational form of political authority. As Milward (1992) argues, the initially limited moves towards supranational authority worked—and were intended—to restore and strengthen the authority of the nation-state. What has been occurring is a complex unbundling and redistribution—upwards, downwards, and in various oblique directions—of previously tightly bundled powers and competencies. The resultant “multilevel” or even “neomedieval” polity does not look much like a supranational superstate: an oft-quoted remark describes the EU as an “economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm.”<sup>14</sup> Events of the last decade, notwithstanding the Treaty of Maastricht and the announced formation of a common security and defense policy, have done little to undermine that view.<sup>15</sup>

Yet while there has been no clear move beyond the nation-state, the classical model of unitary, centralized, sovereign statehood, in which all authority derives from a single central point, no longer describes

political reality. Authority has been reconfigured, and competencies unbundled and redistributed, not only to the EU (itself a set of institutions and authorities, not a single entity) but also to other international organizations, and to subnational polities and jurisdictions. This raises fundamental questions about the changing nature of statehood and political authority.

Granted that the EU is not very statelike at present, how might it become more statelike in the future? What attributes historically associated with statehood might it come to acquire? What does its development imply about the statehood—or, following J. P. Nettl (1968), the “stateness”—of existing states? Are they becoming less statelike as they give up conventional sovereign powers, such as control over borders and over monetary and fiscal policy?

Once we revise our understanding of statehood to allow for the unbundling and sharing of powers and competencies previously monopolized by a single sovereign center, then questions of stateness also arise for lower-level polities emerging within federalizing or otherwise decentralizing states. To what extent do more or less autonomous but nonsovereign polities such as Catalonia, Flanders, and Scotland take on attributes of stateness as they gain new and often quite considerable powers and competencies,<sup>16</sup> even while remaining parts of larger, more embracing states? This is a familiar issue in the literature on federalism, but that literature has been quite separate from the historical and political sociological literature on the development of the modern state. The latter has defined the modern state as centralized and sovereign—as monopolizing the means of coercion within a particular territory, in Weber’s classic formulation—and has cast the story of its development in teleological form, involving the progressive appropriation of previously dispersed powers by a single center. This perspective has marginalized the experience of federal states. Their very existence is something of an anomaly; they are by definition not very statelike.

The complex unbundling and redistribution of powers and competencies, in short, are forcing a fundamental rethinking of the very notion of “the state.” The notion may prove too heavily encumbered by the political theory of sovereignty and its monist, unitarist connotations to be of much analytical use in conceptualizing the complex multilevel polity that is emerging.

In eastern Europe, questions of statehood and stateness are posed in

quite different terms. There is, in the first place, the sheer proliferation of new states. Almost all of them, as noted above, have defined and constituted themselves as sovereign nation-states, drawing on highly institutionalized—if outdated—rhetorics and models of sovereignty and nationhood (Meyer 1987). These institutionalized “performances” of sovereign nation-statehood do not represent an unambiguous move “back to the nation-state.” Almost all the new states are involved, in one way or another, in processes of regional integration, notably as members or candidate members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and/or the EU on the one hand and the Commonwealth of Independent States on the other. Yet the invocations of sovereignty and nationhood are not mere rhetoric. There is a real tension between the model of sovereign nation-statehood and that of supranational integration; the latter does not automatically trump the former. The model of sovereign nation-statehood remains normatively more robust in eastern than in western Europe and has its attractions not only for newly constituted states but also for those newly freed from the Soviet economic and security embrace.

Second, there are the special “stateness” problems—in the Linz and Stepan’s sense, not Nettl’s—posed by politicized ethnicity in eastern Europe. As I indicated above, the ethnically framed challenges—or perceived challenges<sup>17</sup>—to the territorial integrity and boundaries of existing states are particularly delicate in eastern Europe because they often involve cross-border links connecting ethnonational claimants within particular states and a patron state abroad that represents the same ethnocultural nationality.

Third, and most important, although the initially prevailing understanding of postcommunist “transition” posited the need to liberate economy and society from the grip of an overly strong state, more recent analyses have made almost the opposite argument.<sup>18</sup> The post-Cold War moment of triumphant anti-statism has passed. As Stephen Holmes and others have argued with respect to Russia—although the point has broader relevance for the region—it is not the strength of the state, but its weakness, that threatens the basic rights and well-being of citizens.<sup>19</sup> The “withering away of the state” that occurred in Russia and elsewhere in the 1990s destroyed the capacity to provide the most elementary public goods and services. Neoliberals increasingly concede what paleoliberals knew all along: a strong, even powerful state is a precondition for everything that they hold

dear, including the orderly workings of markets, the protection of citizens against violence, and the enforcement of human rights. Hence the calls to strengthen and build up the state, to liberate what are in theory the distinctively public powers of the state from the clutches of those who have expropriated and in effect privatized them.

The force of renewed calls for a “strong” or “powerful” state depends of course on how we understand these terms. Here Michael Mann’s (1993: 59–60) distinction between “despotic” and “infrastructural” power is helpful, the former denoting arbitrary power *over* civil society, the latter the power of state institutions to coordinate and regulate social life by penetrating and working *through* civil society. Despotically “strong” states may be infrastructurally “weak,” and vice versa. What is urgently needed in much of eastern Europe—and throughout the Third World—is an infrastructurally strong state, one that can keep the peace, punish force and fraud, enforce contracts, collect taxes, provide basic services, protect public health, implement legislation, and prevent wholesale plundering by criminal and quasi-criminal networks.

State-building, then, is still very much on the agenda in eastern Europe. While western and parts of east central Europe move towards the unbundling and redistribution of previously concentrated powers, in much of eastern Europe we see (or at least hear about the need for) moves in the opposite direction, toward the rebundling and reconcentration of previously dispersed—and in considerable part privately appropriated—powers.<sup>20</sup> Whether such changes will succeed—whether an effective, infrastructurally strong state can be built—is by no means certain. Over the long sweep of European history in the last millennium, sustained military competition eventually led to the weeding out of the most blatant forms of patrimonial administration.<sup>21</sup> Today, however, pressures to reform conspicuously corrupt, grossly inefficient state administrations are much weaker. States (and non-state actors) continue to make war, but war no longer makes states the way it used to.<sup>22</sup> The worldwide club of states includes a large and perhaps increasing number of “quasi-states” (Jackson 1990)—organizations that are officially recognized and certified internationally as “states” yet fail to do the most elementary things that states are supposed to do, such as maintaining order throughout a given territory. Today, thanks to the reification and sacralization of existing state borders in prevailing international discourse and practice,<sup>23</sup> such quasi-states can continue to

exist, irrespective of their abysmal performance, with little threat that they will go out of business. Eastern Europe may not harbor the worst specimens of this lamentable genre, and of course there are great differences within the region. In much of the region, however, the making of the modern state, far from being a completed chapter of history, remains a matter of great contemporary urgency.

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∞ CHAPTER EIGHT

*1848 in 1998: The Politics  
of Commemoration in Hungary,  
Romania, and Slovakia*

The year 1998 marked the 150th anniversary of the cascading wave of revolution that swept across Europe in the spring of 1848. Like all great upheavals (indeed like all great events, personalities, or works of art), the revolutions of 1848 do not contain their own meaning. Powerful cultural objects—whether events, persons, or cultural creations—are always ambiguous: indeed that ambiguity, according to Griswold (1987a), is a key part of what constitutes their power. Such objects always offer rich and varied, though not unlimited, interpretive possibilities. It is now widely agreed that the meanings of such cultural objects are not fixed, given, or uniquely ascertainable, but instead are created and recreated in different times, places, and settings through a series of “interactions” or “negotiations” between the objects and their socially situated, culturally equipped, and often politically engaged interpreters (Hall 1980; Griswold 1987a, 1987b; Liebes and Katz 1996).

In the last fifteen years, commemorations—and social memory generally—have emerged as a fruitful site for studying this interactive production of meaning. That the past is constructed and reconstructed to suit the needs and purposes of each succeeding generation; that even personal memory is a thoroughly social and cultural construct; that collective or social memory is not only constructed but chronically

contested; that the “search for a usable past” (Commager 1967) involves not only highly selective memory and a good deal of forgetting (Renan 1996 [1882]) but even outright “invention” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983); that the politics of the present therefore not only shape the representation, but often entail the misrepresentation, of the past—these have emerged as consensual, and richly explored, themes in the social study of memory and commemoration.

Yet while the burgeoning field of social memory studies has opened up a rich variety of perspectives on commemorative practices,<sup>1</sup> the literature does have certain weaknesses. In the first place, there has been very little sustained comparative work (exceptions include Buruma [1994] and Spillman [1997]). As Olick (1998) notes, the literature on memory, and particularly on “the memory-nation connection,” has consisted largely of “epochal generalizations . . . that move in the rarified atmosphere of general theory and macrohistory; or parochial case studies that may appreciate the uniqueness of particular moments in particular places but often miss what is general or comparable in the cases” (380–81).

Second, the constructivist tenor of the literature and the emphasis on the shaping of the past to meet present needs, while undeniably fruitful, risk sliding into a voluntaristic overemphasis on the malleability and manipulability of the past in the hands of contemporary cultural and political entrepreneurs. Although the more sophisticated studies have highlighted this danger, and are careful to avoid it (Schudson 1989, 1992; Schwartz 1996; Olick and Robbins 1998; Olick 1999; Spillman 1998), much constructivist work gives inadequate recognition to the constraints that set limits on memory entrepreneurship in the present. As Schudson (1989: 107) has put it, “the past is in some respects, and under some circumstances, highly resistant to efforts to make it over.”

Third, and relatedly, the literature on commemoration may risk overstating the salience and centrality of historical memory—or at least certain modalities of historical memory—to ordinary people. By focusing for the most part on construction rather than reception, on key protagonists in memory struggles rather than popular responses, the literature may overestimate the resonance and importance of historical memory to those not actively involved in producing and reproducing it. References to contemporary “mnemonic convulsions,” to an alleged public “obsession” with memory, or to a putative “crisis”

of memory (Huysen 1995: 1–7; Lipsitz 1990: 6, 12) do seem overdrawn. That public contests over the past have multiplied and intensified in recent decades is clear. But many such contests are not particularly significant for the wider public. The Enola Gay affair,<sup>2</sup> for example, stirred up a storm of commentary and occasioned a book entitled *The History Wars* (Linenthal and Engelhardt [1996]; see also Zolberg [1998]). But the wider public scarcely took notice. Just as the “culture wars,” in the American context, are largely an elite construct, involving the polarization of “institutionalized and articulated moral visions” (Hunter 1994: vii [quoted in DiMaggio et al. 1996: 740]) rather than a deep attitudinal schism among the public at large (DiMaggio et al. 1996), we may suspect that the same holds for many “memory wars.”

In this essay, we seek to build on the insights of the social memory literature—and more broadly on constructivist work on culture and politics—while avoiding these characteristic weaknesses. We take as our object the commemorative talk, practices, and celebrations occasioned by the 150th anniversary of the revolutions of 1848 in Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania. Our perspective is doubly comparative, involving comparisons across national traditions and, within the Hungarian tradition, between majority and minority contexts. We compare the sharply differing salience and significance of 1848 in contemporary Hungarian, Slovak, and Romanian public discourse; we also compare the very different mood and meaning of commemorative practices and discourses in Hungary on the one hand and among ethnic Hungarian minority communities in Slovakia and Romania on the other.<sup>3</sup>

We are sensitive to the ways in which political actors in various contexts have sought to mobilize memories of 1848. This effort to appropriate the legacy of 1848, and to enlist it in the service of present political aims, itself has a long history. In the case of Hungary (the country, of our triplet, in which 1848 is by far the most central to national self-understanding), this goes back to the late nineteenth century (Gerő 1995; Niedermüller 1998). Yet while the “search for a usable past” is chronic, as the constructivist literature on memory has richly demonstrated, “usable pasts” are not all that easily found or invented, and not all pasts are equally “usable” for present purposes. The commemorations of 1848 in Central and Eastern Europe amply illustrate the ways in which the politics of the present shapes the

representation of the past. Yet at the same time, the lack of resonance of official Romanian commemorative efforts, and the virtually complete Slovak public indifference to the 1848 sesquicentennial, underscore the point—articulated in sophisticated work in the constructivist tradition but deserving of greater emphasis—that the past is refractory to presentist reconstruction.

While chronicling the public contests and memory projects concerning the legacy of 1848—and seeking to explain the different forms these have taken at different times, in different national traditions, and in majority and minority settings—we have not limited our analysis to the discourse of memory entrepreneurs. We also collected participant observation data on public commemorations, attending to the manner and mood of the celebrations, not only to the rhetoric in which they were framed. In this way—and without claiming to have systematically studied the “reception” side—we have tried to consider not only memory projects and “memory talk” but also their resonance, or lack of resonance, with wider publics, and thereby to avoid conflating elite memory projects, some of which vanished without a trace, and popular collective memory.<sup>4</sup>

## Background

The 1848 revolutions were staggeringly complex, and we cannot pretend to review their course here even in highly simplified form.<sup>5</sup> However, certain minimal historical background information must be sketched. To begin with, it must be emphasized that the countries we are concerned with—Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia—did not exist in 1848 in anything like their present form. Their present territories were then divided between two great multinational empires. Most of the region—all of present-day Hungary and Slovakia, together with the Transylvanian region of Romania—belonged to the Habsburg empire, and within that Empire, to the Kingdom of Hungary. Slovakia had no distinct administrative existence; the present-day territory of Slovakia was an integral part of Hungary. Transylvania, by contrast, did have a separate historical tradition as an autonomous principality and a separate administrative status within the Empire; it had long been governed from Vienna, separately from the other lands of the “Crown of St. Stephen,” as the Hungarian lands were known. The territorial and administrative status of Transylvania was to become one of the most

contentious, and bloodily contested, points of the 1848 revolutions.<sup>6</sup> The remainder of what is today Romania—mainly the autonomous principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia—belonged nominally to the Ottoman Empire, though in fact the principalities comprised a Russian protectorate. Thus the events of 1848 with which we are concerned occurred primarily in what was then the Kingdom of Hungary and secondarily in the principality of Wallachia (revolutionary agitation was minimal and quickly suppressed in Moldavia).

It is important to underscore that the Kingdom of Hungary bore little resemblance, in territory or population, to today's Hungary (Macartney 1937: 1 ff.). It was more than three times as large, including Slovakia, Transylvania, and Croatia (the latter two enjoying, however, separate administrative status) as well as other territories now belonging to Romania, Serbia, Austria, Ukraine, even Italy. More significantly, unlike contemporary Hungary, historic Hungary was a multiethnic state. As ethnic differences came to be interpreted as national differences during the nineteenth century, Hungary became a multinational state, in which Hungarians, although the largest national group, comprised only a minority of the population.

Throughout Europe, but especially in the region that concerns us, constitutional, social, and national issues were entwined in complex ways in the revolutions of 1848. In the first place, there were constitutional, political, and legal questions concerning the granting of constitutions; the demand for responsible, representative, and in some cases republican government; the broadening of the suffrage; the securing of basic political and civil liberties; the abolition (in Eastern Europe) of the remnants of hereditary subjection and manorial obligations; and the establishment (where they did not already exist) of basic principles and forms of legal equality. Second, there were social and economic questions. The most important of these—involving the liquidation of feudal and manorial obligations—were simultaneously legal and, in the broad sense, constitutional questions. Other key social and economic issues concerned what could be done to relieve urban unemployment, protect craft labor from the encroachment of machines, and alleviate rural misery by securing access to land and affordable credit; the structure of taxation (and in particular the extent to which the nobility, previously exempt from taxation in much of the region, should be subjected to it now); and the nature and amount of compensation, if any, to be paid in return for the abolition of feudal dues.

Constitutional and socioeconomic issues were overlaid and intertwined (except in France) with a third set of issues, having to do with the “national” question. At stake, as Hobsbawm (1996a [1975]: 12) has written, “was not merely the political and social content of states, but their very form or even existence.” In Central and Eastern Europe, in the mid-nineteenth century, political units were either much smaller (in much of present-day Germany and Italy) or much larger (in the territories of the vast multinational Habsburg, Romanov, and Ottoman empires) than the imagined “nations” with which, according to the increasingly widely accepted “principle of nationality,” they were supposed to be congruent. Amidst the turmoil of the Revolution, this situation occasioned a great welter of nationalist claims and counterclaims.

National problems and conflicts, intimately intertwined with political and social conflicts, were especially acute in Hungary (Deák 1979; Miskolczy 1994). Here it was not a matter of nationalist intellectuals’ schemes for political reorganization, as was the case in Germany (where such schemes were debated in the so-called *Professorenparlament* at Frankfurt) and in the Habsburg empire outside Hungary (Kann 1950: II, 3–39). It was a matter, rather, of the conflicting national claims generated by what was de facto if not de jure a newly independent revolutionary state. This state asserted its sovereignty not only externally, vis-à-vis Vienna, but internally, vis-à-vis the heterogeneous territories and complex ethnic mosaic of historic Hungary, which it sought to transform into a modern, unitary, centralized Hungarian nation-state; in so doing, it provoked nationalist counterclaims in the name of Romanian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovak, and Transylvanian Saxon nations.

On both fronts, external and internal, revolutionary Hungary soon found itself embroiled in war, against the imperial army on the one hand, and against Serbian and Romanian rebels in the Banat and Transylvania on the other. The complexities of the armed struggle cannot be addressed here. These were sometimes incongruous, as when two armies, flying the same flag, asserting loyalty to the same ruler, and both led by Habsburg officers, confronted one another in battle,<sup>7</sup> and sometimes tragic, as in the case of the numerous atrocities committed against civilian populations. Suffice it to note that after initially agreeing to all Hungarian demands during the astonishing spring collapse, the dynasty eventually recovered its nerve and backed its

generals’ plans to “restore order” and subjugate Hungary. In this it found ready allies—of convenience, if not of principle—among Croatian, Serbian, Romanian, and Slovak nationalists and the disaffected, fearful peasant populations that the latter were able to mobilize. As a result, in some regions, including Transylvania, relatively well-ordered conventional war shaded over into a more intimate, turbulent, popular struggle that united social grievances and fears, political demands, and amorphous but powerful ethnic sentiments. In Transylvania, this war within the war took on an ethnonational coloration, pitting—at least in collective memory and nationalist historiography, though the reality was more complex—Romanians against Hungarians and leading to atrocities on both sides, memories of which continue to be evoked by political leaders today. No similar ethnic or ethnicized warfare, it should be emphasized, set Slovaks against Hungarians in 1848–1849; the attempts of Slovak nationalist leaders to instigate a general armed uprising against the Hungarians were not successful.

The Romanian revolutionary regime in Wallachia lasted three months before being crushed by Ottoman troops, at Russian urging, in September 1848. The revolutionary Hungarian regime, mobilizing considerable popular support and displaying surprising military strength, held out for another year. Defeat came in the end from the hand of Russian, not Austrian troops, but not before Hungary, embittered by the war with Austria and by the neocentralist constitution that had been imposed by the dynasty in March 1849, had taken the symbolically pregnant step of declaring full independence in April 1849.

In short, the events of 1848–1849 were experienced very differently—and generated very different sets of possible and actual memories—for Hungarians, Slovaks, and Romanians.<sup>8</sup> For Hungarians, the Revolution and subsequent military “struggle for independence” (*szabad-ságharc*) have been central to national self-understanding and to national myths for a century and a half. Despite the eventual defeat of the Revolution, 15 March 1848—the date of the popular uprising in Budapest that has come to symbolize the Revolution as a whole, as 14 July has come to symbolize the French Revolution—has become an important national holiday, indeed, for minority Hungarians in Transylvania, Hungary’s “most national” (*legnemzetibb*) holiday. A number of figures from the Revolution and war are commemorated not only in public, official memory but in vernacular forms such as folk songs and



tales as well: the fiery political leader Kossuth; the great poet Petőfi, who gave poetic voice to patriotic fervor and died a martyr's death on the battlefield in 1849; the generals Klapka and Bem, celebrated for their daring military exploits; and the 13 generals revengefully executed by the Austrians in Arad in October 1849 after the Hungarian surrender.

For Romanians and Slovaks today, 1848 has neither the symbolic resonance nor the (occasional) mobilizatory power it has had for Hungarians. The events of 1848–1849 have not been central to national self-understanding or core national myths, vernacular or official. This is especially true in the Slovak case. 1848 does figure significantly (though not centrally) in Slovak nationalist historiography; it marks the transition from purely cultural to the beginnings of political nationalism. But there has been little in the way of corresponding popular memory, and neither nationalists nor their liberal opponents sought to organize popular commemorative celebrations in 1998. Romania is an intermediate case. The Revolution in Transylvania, and the guerrilla struggle against the Hungarians, were considerably more significant for popular memory and historiography than the Slovak experience of 1848–1849. Guerrilla leader Avram Iancu became a folk hero in Transylvania, commemorated in song and story. Still, for Romanians, neither this struggle nor the Revolution in Wallachia ever acquired the mythic significance or vernacular resonance that 1848–1849 has had in Hungarian collective memory.

### Mood and Framing

Commemorative practices and discourses on this occasion were structured around two linked oppositions. These define alternative cultural models for representing and commemorating great events. The first opposition concerns the *manner and mood* in which the past is represented, the second the *narrative framing* of the commemoration.

Concerning manner and mood, commemorations are undertaken, in the first model, in an elevated tone, evoking pathos through mythopoeic narrative forms and heroic language and imagery. They proceed in a quasi-religious mood of high seriousness. They are moments of collective effervescence, in Durkheimian terms,<sup>9</sup> partaking of the sacred or (in Weberian terms) of the charismatic, that is, the specifically extraordinary.<sup>10</sup> In the second model, commemorations are understood

and experienced not as holy days but as holidays, involving not sacred communion but spectacle and entertainment. The mood is not quasi-religious but carnivalesque. The language and imagery are less exalted, making room for humor, and—in a different direction—for a detached, reflective, self-critical attitude toward the past. The shift from the first to the second mode of commemoration involves the *desacralization* of history and historical memory or, in Weberian terms, the *routinization—Veralltäglichung—*of historical charisma.<sup>11</sup>

Analytically distinct from this opposition in manner and mood, though in the case in point paralleling it to a considerable extent in practice, is an opposition in narrative framing—in the manner in which themes are selected and organized on commemorative occasions. In the first model, commemorations are framed in spatially, temporally, and socially or culturally *particularizing* terms. The commemorative lens is focused narrowly on local events themselves or on their meaning for a particular socially or culturally defined group of commemorators (for example, members of a particular ethnic or national group, veterans of a particular war, or victims of a particular accident). In the second model, commemoration is framed in *generalizing* or *universalizing* terms, through narrative frames that situate local events in the context of wider and longer-term processes that are claimed to have significance not only, or even especially, for local commemorators themselves, but for others as well.

In the case at hand—to make this second, rather abstract opposition more concrete—the particularizing narrative frame focused on the specifically and distinctively *national* meanings of the 1848 revolutions. Emphasis was placed on the particular events, conflicts, and battles (in the literal as well as the figurative sense) through which national aims—national awakening, national mobilization, national independence—were furthered, or national setbacks occurred. The generalizing narrative frame, by contrast, situated the 1848 events in the context of processes of pan-European or even (putatively) universal significance. The particular events—especially the violent struggles—of 1848–1849 were passed over in silence or at least de-emphasized. Focus was shifted from particular ethnic or national claims or grievances to more general and universal processes in which 1848 could be seen as a symbolic milestone: liberalization, democratization, modernization, Westernization, the development of civil society, even supra-national integration.

These oppositions, then, define the analytical space within which we will situate our concrete analyses. The manner and mood of commemorative practices and discourses can be characterized along a continuum ranging from the sacred and mythopoetic to the carnivalesque, reflexive, and self-critical, while the narrative framing of commemorations can be placed along a continuum ranging from the particularizing to the generalizing. The oppositions, we should emphasize, are ideal types in the Weberian sense. We have constructed them by deliberately accentuating empirically observable patterns so as to form a conceptually consistent whole. The cases we examine do not correspond precisely to these pure types, but they can usefully be characterized in terms of their varying degrees of approximation to them. The conceptual space can thus be characterized as shown in the accompanying table.

To anticipate our findings, although Hungarians in Hungary and those in Romania and Slovakia were celebrating the same holiday, the same heroes, and the same symbolically resonant dates, we observed a major difference in the mood and framing of the commemoration in majority and minority contexts. The celebrations in Hungary were, on

	<i>Particularizing Narrative Frame</i>	<i>Generalizing Narrative Frame</i>
<i>Sacralized Mood</i>	Sesquicentennial commemoration of 1848 among Hungarian minorities  Romanian sesquicentennial commemoration of 1848 in Transylvania	Some elements of commemoration of French and American revolutions
<i>Desacralized Mood</i>	St. Patrick's Day celebrations	Sesquicentennial commemoration of 1848 in Hungary  Romanian plans for sesquicentennial commemoration of Wallachian revolution of 1848

the whole, markedly less sacralized, and framed in more universalistic terms, than those among minority Hungarian communities in neighboring states. In the Romanian case, we observed a tension between two commemorative strategies, one more dispassionate and universalistic, focused on the Wallachian revolution, the other—which came to predominate—more pathos-laden and particularizing, focused on the national conflict in Transylvania. In the Slovak case, both particularizing and universalizing narrative representations of 1848 can be found in historiography and public discourse, but the sesquicentennial went largely uncommemorated.<sup>12</sup>

We take up these three national contexts of commemoration in succession. We give most sustained attention to the Hungarian case, for two reasons. First, 1848 is central to Hungarian national mythology, and firmly lodged in vernacular as well as elite memory, both in Hungary, and, to an even greater extent, among transborder Hungarians in neighboring states. It is less central to Romanian—and still less to Slovak—national mythology and vernacular memory. Second, a key aim in the Hungarian case is to explore and explain the differences in mood and framing between commemorations in Hungary and those among transborder minority Hungarians—an issue that does not arise in the Romanian or Slovak cases. In discussing the latter cases, our aims are somewhat different. In the Romanian case, we focus on the shift from a generalizing commemorative strategy, situating the Wallachian revolution in its broader European context, to a particularizing strategy, focusing on the national conflict in Transylvania. In the Slovak case, we seek to account for the *absence* of any significant sesquicentennial commemoration.

Olick and Robbins (1998: 128) note the powerful “presentist” current that informs social scientific work on memory, highlighting how the past is enlisted to serve the needs and interests of the present. They distinguish between “instrumental” and “cultural” aspects of presentism, the former emphasizing deliberate and often manipulative “memory entrepreneurship,” the latter the inevitable selectivity of memory, since memory is always retrieved and invoked in the context of contemporary frameworks of meaning and interest. Our cases provide rich evidence of both sorts of processes—of deliberate attempts to mobilize the past for present purposes, and of the less deliberative processes and mechanisms that govern the selectivity of memory. At the same time, our cases afford evidence of the *limits* of “instrumental

presentism.” By this we mean both the limits of an analytical perspective that emphasizes the deliberate manipulation of the past through the invention of “factitious” traditions (Hobsbawm 1983: 2) and the limits of such instrumental efforts themselves. The possibilities of memory entrepreneurship, we shall argue, are conditioned and constrained by the nature and structure of “available pasts” (Schudson 1989: 107 ff.; cf. Schudson 1992: 205 ff.)—pasts made “available” for present-day use not only by the events themselves, to be sure, but also by their subsequent incorporation into commemorative traditions. As Olick (1999: 383) remarks, the past “includes not only the history being commemorated but also the accumulated succession of commemorations.”

### Commemorations in Hungary and among Transborder Hungarian Minorities

#### *The Desacralization of the Past*

The events of 1848 have long been a cornerstone of Hungarian political culture and a cardinal point of reference for Hungarian national self-understanding, both official and vernacular. Even regimes that sought to neutralize the revolutionary imagery of 1848 (notably the authoritarian conservative regime of Miklos Horthy between the two world wars and, ironically, the communist regime) could not avoid commemorating 1848 in some form (Gerő 1995). And 1848 has been central to vernacular memory as well; references to its great events and to its heroes, martyrs, traitors, and villains permeate Hungarian folklore and national mythology.

The sesquicentennial celebrations in Hungary and among transborder Hungarians focused on 15 March. But this date had not always been privileged in official commemorations.<sup>13</sup> Indeed the potential explosiveness of 15 March, commemorating as it did a symbolically resonant popular uprising, meant that governments have often looked askance on this date. When the Hungarian government established a holiday commemorating 1848 as the 50th anniversary of the revolution approached, it rejected 15 March in favor of the “safer” date of 11 April on which, in 1848, the Hungarian legislation codifying the basic constitutional and legal principles of the new order was given official royal sanction (Gerő 1995: 242). Except during the brief revolutionary interlude of 1918–1919, 15 March was not

publicly celebrated until 1928. In the interwar period, the conservative-nationalist Horthy regime cultivated the nationalist and military rather than the revolutionary traditions of 1848. For the 80th anniversary of the revolution, in 1928, the regime did replace 11 April with 15 March as the official national holiday. But in this and succeeding years, it staged 15 March commemorations so as to emphasize militarist themes and irredentist commitments (Gerő 1995: 243–45).

Revolutionary and democratic themes came to the fore again in official postwar commemorations of 15 March, but not for long (Gerő 1998). The commemoration of a popular democratic uprising soon became dangerous for the increasingly dictatorial regime. Already in 1951, a government decree proclaimed 15 March a regular work day. After the crushing of the 1956 uprising, in which the ideals and symbols of 1848 had figured prominently, the authorities discouraged any kind of spontaneous celebration of 15 March. Official celebrations were observed each year, but without real popular participation, in large part because 15 March was not a work holiday. It was, however, a school holiday, so children were mobilized into participating in the newly established “revolutionary youth days.” These bundled together 15 March, 21 March (on which the Hungarian Soviet Republic had been proclaimed in 1919), and 4 April (on which the Second World War had ended, for Hungary, in 1945) into a single invented tradition (Hofer 1992: 35; Gerő 1995: 247).

Beginning intermittently in the early 1970s, and then more continuously from the early 1980s on, the lackluster official commemorations of 15 March were shadowed by spontaneous, unofficial countercommemorations, some of them forcibly broken up by the police. These afforded opportunities for initially tentative and ambiguous, later more forceful oppositional gestures. By the late 1980s, as the numbers of participants grew from hundreds, to thousands, to tens of thousands, these had become occasions on which the “state and the nascent civil society struggled over the ‘ownership’ of the holiday and of national symbols” (Hofer 1992: 35). This struggle culminated on 15 March 1989, when a massive opposition-organized commemorative procession completely upstaged the official celebration, powerfully linking memories of 1848 with those of 1956, and invoking both—as struggles for freedom crushed by reactionary regimes—to support the intensifying demand for democratization. Along with a few other symbolically powerful moments—notably the reburial of martyred 1956

Prime Minister Imre Nagy three months later—this dramatic moment of collective effervescence represented a turning point in Hungary's peaceful transition to democracy.<sup>14</sup>

Nine years later, the sesquicentennial in Budapest<sup>15</sup> had nothing like this solemn and dramatic quality; it did not mobilize masses or inspire enthusiasm. It had little palpable political weight or significance, and no feeling of ritual gravity. Instead of a solemn, Durkheimian collective ritual, the official commemoration was organized as a mediated spectacle.<sup>16</sup> Planned by well-known film director Miklós Jancsó in quasi-cinematographic fashion, it was designed to be enjoyed equally well *sur place* and at home in front of the television screen. The main commemorative event was staged in front of the National Museum, where, on 15 March 1848, the young poet Petőfi had declaimed his newly composed "National Song," a stirring call for national liberation, later celebrated as epitomizing the spirit of resistance to oppression. The museum building was draped in national colors, and the slogan inscribed on banners on the pediment—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—firmly placed the Hungarian revolution in the wider European tradition. Following speeches, including one by Hungarian President Árpád Göncz, was a choreographed performance designed to evoke the events and the mood of the revolutionary days.

In addition to the official ceremony, the municipality organized a parade of *huszars* in traditional regalia, a re-creation of a nineteenth-century street market, and an evening reenactment of the events of the revolutionary days in period costume, in which monumentality was leavened with scenes from the everyday life of the period. The mood of these events was relaxed and cheerful rather than ceremonious and elevated. Despite the inclement weather, the events succeeded in attracting many people, especially families with small children. Children wore paper hats modeled on the traditional headgear of *huszars* and carried small flags and balloons in the national colors. Many people wore the tricolor "cocarde"—for some a symbol of the nation, for others of freedom and revolution, for still others simply the thing to wear on 15 March. Younger people, most of them indifferent to the commemorative occasion and drawn by the prospect of entertainment, filled Kossuth Square in front of the Parliament, where a popular music concert was organized for the afternoon. As an organizer of the nineteenth-century street market put it, emphasis had been placed on the "everyday and more humorous side" of the events so as to

allow people to celebrate the revolution in their own way, "without false pathos,"<sup>17</sup> and without all participating in a single mass ritual. The result was that the national holiday moved away from the model of a solemn, sacred collective ritual, and was instead assimilated to entertainment and to "ordinary" private sphere holiday practices of families and youth.

The desacralization and displacement of pathos in commemorative celebrations were accompanied by a critical and reflexive posture in commemorative speeches and in journalistic and essayistic accounts of the anniversary. Press accounts focused less on what happened in 1848 and more, in a reflexive manner, on changing perceptions of and ways of talking about the 1848 events in the subsequent century and a half. Celebratory or denunciatory accounts yielded to an acknowledgment of ambiguity; "in history unambiguous situations and unambiguous answers emerging from them are extraordinarily rare," as it was put in the columns of a popular history review.<sup>18</sup> In general, press commentary broke with the model of larger-than-life national heroes and demonized national traitors, and with the debates that had raged since 1849 about the relative merits of the radical Kossuth and the moderate Széchenyi, or about whether General Görgey was to be considered a traitor for surrendering to the Russians in August 1849. In 1998, it became almost a fashion to speak dispassionately of these figures, most notably of long-demonized Görgey. Commentators emphasized that Görgey "does not fit into the black-white scheme of evaluation."<sup>19</sup> This critical and ambivalent stance, in the face of the ambiguities of 1848–1849, extended to prominent public figures as well. Even President Göncz, in his official commemorative speech, called attention to changes over time in official understandings and appraisals of the revolution, and defended Görgey, saying he had been unjustly scapegoated for the Hungarian defeat. This self-reflective stance, however, did not lead to critical reflections on the arrogant and insensitive policies of the leaders of the Hungarian revolution vis-à-vis Romanian, Serb, Slovak, and other national minorities.

#### *1848 in 1998: Between European Integration and Nationalist Disintegration*

It has long been a central theme in the study of memory that historical memory, like memory in general and indeed all cognitive processes, works in a selective manner. Social memory is doubly selective, both

positively and negatively. From the inexhaustible multiplicity of the past, particular events, persons, and themes are singled out as worthy of commemoration, while others are condemned to oblivion—not simply by default, or passively, by virtue of escaping notice, but actively, by virtue of being deliberately ignored, downplayed, or repressed. The Hungarian sesquicentennial was an exercise in such active forgetting as much as it was in selective remembering. As Ernest Renan put it in a celebrated lecture, “forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for nationality. Indeed, historical inquiry brings to light deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations” (Renan 1996 [1882]: 45).

The dual selectivity governing the official commemorative celebrations in Hungary—and the way 1848 was discussed by state and government elites and the mainstream media—reflected more than anything else the delicate international political conjuncture of the late 1990s. Poised between zones of supranational integration to its north and west and of nationalist disintegration to its south and east, Hungary was at the time of the anniversary a candidate for membership of both NATO and the European Union. Integration into these institutions had been the top foreign policy priority of both postcommunist governments. It was also the top priority of the Young Democrats (*Fidesz–Magyar Polgári Párt*), the chief and, as it turned out, victorious opponents of the governing socialist-liberal coalition in the electoral campaign that was underway in the spring of 1998. Hungarian elites, even those with diametrically opposed views on many other issues, were thus united in seeking to demonstrate that the country could satisfy the political as well as the economic conditions of European integration.

In this context, the sesquicentennial represented both an opportunity and a danger. As an instance of European integration *avant la lettre*, a pan-European uprising against feudalism and autocracy, a symbol of progress, modernity, democracy, and civil society, 1848—and Hungary’s prominent role in the revolutions—seemed perfectly suited for celebration in 1998. Commemorations could emphasize the long-standing Hungarian commitment to civil liberties, constitutionalism, the rule of law, and representative government, all dramatically highlighted in the spring of 1848.

At the same time, the anniversary represented a danger. Here we come back to the complex intertwining of political, socioeconomic, and national strands in the 1848 revolutions, and to the consequent ambivalence bound up with their commemoration. After all, 1848 was by no means an unambiguously progressive chapter in European history. It could scarcely be overlooked, least of all in the 1990s, that it was also a key chapter in the history of European nationalism, the moment when nationalist claims first crystallized throughout Central and Eastern Europe, and when the irreconcilability, and explosiveness, of such claims first became sharply apparent. In this respect, 1848 seemed particularly *ill*-suited for commemoration in 1998. For it could be seen to symbolize the “other Europe,” the Europe associated with nationalism and ethnic violence—precisely the Europe that postwar supranational integration was designed to bury forever. This “other Europe” had returned with a vengeance in the 1990s, immediately on Hungary’s southern border, indeed partly in areas that had belonged, albeit loosely, to the historic Kingdom of Hungary. It was therefore particularly urgent for integration-oriented elites to avoid having Hungary’s “good European” claims and credentials compromised by association with the noxious “Balkan” mixture of nationalism, ethnic homogenization and war, especially since European institutions—not only the European Union but the Council of Europe, NATO, and the OSCE—placed particular emphasis on transcending ethnic conflicts and ensuring the rights of minorities.

This, then, was the dilemma facing Hungarian elites in the spring of 1998: how to selectively emphasize the “good European” dimensions of 1848 while downplaying the ethnic and national grievances, conflicts, and violence that were then unleashed, and in so doing to demonstrate the country’s civic, modern, and “Western” credentials.

This was done, or at least attempted, in three ways. First, a strongly generalizing narrative frame was adopted. Commemorative attention was not directed toward the revolutionary events themselves, or to the military triumphs and defeats of 1848–1849. The very term “revolution” was avoided, or qualified in expressions such as “peaceful revolutionary transformation.”<sup>20</sup> Instead, attention was focused on the longer-term historical process of which 1848 was said to mark a symbolic beginning. The term most often used to designate this process—*polgárosodás*—means the development of civil or civic society on the one hand and of bourgeois or middle-class society on the other.<sup>21</sup> In his

commemorative speech on 15 March, President Göncz emphasized that 1848 initiated, or at least gave decisive impetus to, a long process of *polgárosodás*, a process interrupted by the defeat of the revolution in 1849 and the subsequent period of neo-absolutist rule, but revived after the Compromise of 1867.<sup>22</sup> The historical parallel was clear: after another, longer interruption in the twentieth century—a partial interruption during the conservative, Christian, nationalist Horthy regime of the interwar period, and then a more complete one under the communist regime—*polgárosodás* had once again resumed in Hungary, tentatively at first, under Kádár, then in full force after 1989. The contemporary meaning of 1848 was that the process of *polgárosodás*, initiated in 1848, was alive and well in 1998, providing a secure basis for Hungary's integration into European structures.<sup>23</sup>

Second, the Hungarian process of *polgárosodás* was itself framed in generalizing rather than nationally particularizing terms. Unlike the process of nation-state building—another long-term process in the region that received decisive impetus in 1848—*polgárosodás* could be represented as a universal, and universalizable, development, as a positive-sum rather than a zero-sum process. Moreover, it could be represented as quintessentially European. In the words of Ferenc Glatz, President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, “The revolution not only brought us closer to Europe, but was itself a European phenomenon . . . the demands collected in the revolutionary [Twelve] Points—naturally with the exception of the point that urged the union with Transylvania—are similar to the demands of other European revolutions.”<sup>24</sup> Glatz cast the whole course of Hungarian history as a process of catching up (*felzárkózás*) with the happier and richer half of the continent. In this strikingly but interestingly anachronistic perspective, European integration was already the goal of St. Stephen, Hungary's first Christian monarch, a thousand years ago.<sup>25</sup> It was furthered by nineteenth-century industrialization and urbanization, and in a symbolic sense the revolution of 1848–1849 was one of its most important moments.

Third, while the national conflicts, ethnic violence, and military campaigns of 1848–1849 could not be ignored altogether, they were de-emphasized, and the national myths that had grown up around them were deconstructed. The legendary national confrontations of 1848, it was argued, were an exaggerated and anachronistic construction of later times. National consciousness was not so firmly established or

hegemonic as would appear from retrospective accounts in a heroic or mythical mode, and economic and status group cleavages divided the “nation.” 1848–1849 therefore involved not mass national conflict but rather a conflict of elites representing competing national programs, and seeking, with variable success, to mobilize their putative constituencies.<sup>26</sup>

The ethnic and national conflicts of 1848–1849 were also “de-individualized.” Instead of focusing on particular conflicts, still less on particular (especially violent) episodes from these conflicts, the conflicts and antagonisms were referred to in terms that were generalizing, de-individualizing, abstract, and dispassionate, drained of their galvanizing particularity, cathartic power, and symbolic resonance. Public commemorative discussions did not celebrate the feats of Hungarian generals or the *honvéd* troops who fought against the Romanian guerrilla leader Avram Iancu or the Croatian General Jelačić. Pushing this generalizing framing to its limits, President Göncz characterized 1848 as a “multiethnic struggle for freedom” (*soknemzetiségű szabadságharc*) and therefore as a holiday not only for Hungary but for the entire Carpathian basin.<sup>27</sup> *Szabadságharc* is the standard Hungarian term for the Hungarian struggle for freedom or, less euphemistically, the war of independence in 1848. Applying the adjective “multiethnic” to this noun de-individualizes the conflict, and suggests, comfortingly but misleadingly, a multiethnic common front of the people against dynastic neoabsolutism. It was in fact a confused and by no means fraternal struggle that often pitted members of one putative nation against those of another. Through this linguistic sleight of hand, the very events that, from another perspective, are adduced as evidence of enduring antagonisms were transmuted into a symbol of a fraternal multiculturalism *avant la lettre*.

The final move was to suggest that these generic conflicts and struggles, stripped of passion and particularity, could be resolved precisely through the completion of the process of European integration. As President Göncz again put it, this time in his speech at the official state celebration, the idea of Europe transcends local conflicts:

It is the lesson of two crushed struggles for freedom [i.e. 1848 and 1956] and two lost world wars, that the equal peoples of the fractured area of historic Hungary can once again be frank with one another in a Europe in which borders exist only on the map, in which—as has been the case for centuries—they have enriched each other's culture. They can

be themselves, but good friends, as members of the great territory that embraces them, the common Europe. Hungary is striving for this today. For this would solve, peacefully, the contradictions of the revolutionary period that have survived to this day.<sup>28</sup>

In this way, refractory ethnic conflict in the region was converted from an argument *against* EU enlargement to an argument *for* enlargement, which, it was suggested, would definitively put such conflict to rest.

Of course, not all Hungarian commemorative speech and commentary sought to de-individualize or desacralize the ethnic and national conflicts of 1848–1849. Nor did all situate 1848 in a generalizing, optimistic narrative of *polgárosodás*, rather than in a particularizing, pessimistic story of the often-crushed, still-unfinished struggle for national unity and independence. Our characterization applies to the mainstream political, journalistic, and cultural elite in Hungary. As we will show in the following sections, the prevailing commemorative mood and narrative framing were quite different among minority Hungarians in Slovakia and especially Romania. Even in Hungary proper, there were some conspicuous exceptions to the prevailing dispassionate mood and universalizing, “Westernizing” framing. István Csurka, head of the extreme right Hungarian Truth and Life Party (MIÉP), emphasized the national aspects of the revolution at the commemorative celebration-cum-political demonstration his party organized on Heroes Square. He also called attention to the historical and contemporary enemies of the nation: foreigners, the financial oligarchy, liberalism, social democracy, Europe, NATO, and so on. Some black-clad participants in this MIÉP-sponsored event wore badges with maps of greater Hungary.<sup>29</sup> Yet while the number of participants was substantial—perhaps 2000—this provocatively particularizing stance was exceptional. The leading mainstream right oppositional figure, Young Democrat leader Viktor Orbán, adopted an intermediate stance.<sup>30</sup> Implicitly challenging the up-beat official framing in his commemorative speech, he interpreted twentieth-century history as a series of tragedies for the Hungarian nation, as a result of which the goals of 1848 remained unrealized.

#### *The Transborder Dimension: The View from Hungary*

Thus far we have neglected an important, distinctive, and delicate element of the sesquicentennial for Hungarians: its transborder dimension.

There are two aspects to this, both arising from the discrepancy between the borders of historic and contemporary Hungary. First, there are large Hungarian minority communities in Slovakia and Romania,<sup>31</sup> who see themselves as part of a border-spanning Hungarian ethnocultural nation, and for whom the commemoration of 1848 therefore posed delicate problems of national identity and political loyalty, problems we take up in the next section. Second, some of the most important commemorative sites—what Pierre Nora (1996) calls *lieux de mémoire*—are today in Slovakia and Romania. Thus not only the commemorators, but also the commemorated are today spread across three states. This posed a problem not only for Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania but also for commemorators in Hungary. How could they take account of this transborder dimension without jeopardizing the universalizing, “Westernizing” narrative frame described in the previous section? The conspicuous lack of congruence between ethnocultural and political boundaries served as a reminder of precisely what the “Westernizing” commemorative strategy sought to “forget”: the explosive link between national claims and zero-sum territorial struggles in the region, spectacularly inaugurated in 1848, especially in Transylvania, and still being played out in Kosovo 150 years later.

After nearly 40 years of invisibility, transborder Hungarian minorities came to occupy a significant place in public discussion in Hungary in the 1990s. The status of Hungarian minorities in neighboring states had been a taboo subject under communist rule, but began to reemerge in the 1980s as concern mounted about the increasingly repressive Romanian regime, and as many Hungarians from incipient civil society oppositional circles traveled to Transylvania to demonstrate solidarity with Transylvanian Hungarians. Since 1989, the political class has been united across party lines in accepting, indeed asserting, the responsibility of the Hungarian state for monitoring the condition, protecting the rights, and promoting the welfare of Hungarian minorities in neighboring states,<sup>32</sup> although there have been sharp and ideologically polarized differences about how this should be done. Ties to transborder Hungarians were institutionalized in a state Office of Transborder Hungarians, in cross-border subsidies in a variety of domains, and in Duna TV, a well-funded state television channel established to provide Hungarian-language broadcasting for and about Hungarians in neighboring states. As a result, the transborder dimension of the sesquicentennial was too salient to ignore. As one indicator



of the inescapability of the transborder dimension, Duna TV provided extensive coverage of transborder Hungarian commemorative celebrations. Hungarian newspapers also highlighted the transborder dimension, juxtaposing accounts of commemorations in Hungary and in transborder Hungarian communities.<sup>33</sup>

Here, too, the key to negotiating potentially hazardous commemorative waters lay in selectivity regarding what was emphasized, and what was ignored or minimized. In the prevailing Westernizing commemorative frame, the transborder dimension was interpreted as a matter of geographic commonality rather than ethnic particularity. The best illustration of this was President Göncz's characterization of 1848, quoted above, as a "multiethnic struggle for freedom" belonging not only to Hungarians but to all peoples of the Carpathian basin. Insofar as ethnic Hungarian elements were highlighted in the commemorations, these tended to be purely cultural or folkloristic, such as folk costumes or folk music. While transborder Hungarians connected the 1848 struggle for liberation to Hungarians' current struggles for autonomy and minority rights in Slovakia and Romania, this was not a central theme of official commemorative discourse in Hungary. Instead, the transborder dimension was represented in Hungary in more depoliticized and estheticized fashion as part of the overall commemorative choreography. During his 15 March speech, for example, President Göncz was flanked by four young girls wearing traditional costumes of the Szék (a Hungarian village in Romania well-known for preserving traditional Hungarian folk dress); photographs of this were carried on the front pages of the next day's papers.

In 1998, as in every year since 1990, Hungarian state and government officials participated in transborder commemorative festivities. In this respect, too, a tacit selection guided their choices of *which* transborder commemorations to participate in, and *how* to participate. Hungarian officials selected transborder sites that were politically or culturally important but at the same time acceptable from the standpoint of contemporary foreign policy concerns. One of the most important transborder commemorative sites was Bratislava (German: Pressburg; Hungarian: Pozsony), today capital of Slovakia, in 1848 seat of the Hungarian Diet in the early phase of the Revolution. It was here that the constitutional and legal framework of the new order was worked out in late March and early April 1848. Bratislava was not only an important site, but a "safely" commemorable one in 1998. What

could be commemorated there was precisely what the Westernizing narrative frame emphasized: the constitutional enactment of personal freedom, legal equality, and representative government, as yet unshadowed by the dark clouds of ethnic conflict and war. Perhaps for this reason, a higher-ranking Hungarian government official participated in the commemoration there than in other transborder commemorations. At all transborder sites, Hungarian officials were careful to keep their rhetoric measured, their tone matter-of-fact, and their feelings muted.

The measured stance and muted tone of the official discourse, however, were not universally shared. For the conservative press in Hungary, the transborder dimension of the sesquicentennial elicited a strongly emotional tone and a stance that emphasized the tragic course of the nation's history and highlighted its historical and contemporary losses and grievances. Referring to a memorial tablet placed in the wall of the fortress at Aiud (Nagyenyed), near the site of an important battle of the Revolutionary period, the mainstream conservative newspaper *Magyar Nemzet* reminded its readers that "beneath [the tablet] are buried those 800 Hungarians, whom Axente Sever, one of the leaders of the enemy Romanian irregular troops, had massacred on 8 January 1849." The paper also lamented the ruined or truncated condition of Hungarian memorials in the neighboring states, decrying the disappearance of the memorial tablet commemorating Pál Vasvári and the 200 Hungarians who "died with him a heroic death."<sup>34</sup> In a similar manner, some well-known performers from Hungary, appearing at transborder commemorative ceremonies (the singers József Dinnyés in Cluj and Lajos Illés in Oradea) articulated the suffering of transborder Hungarians, and their "heroism" in the face of national oppression, in highly emotional terms.<sup>35</sup>

A similarly pathos-laden and particularizing stance was adopted later in the sesquicentennial period by the conservative and nationally oriented Fidesz-MPP government, headed by Viktor Orbán, that replaced the socialist-liberal government in July 1998. As noted above, Orbán had already emphasized Hungary's succession of national tragedies in his 15 March sesquicentennial speech, when he was still in opposition. A year and a half later, as Prime Minister, he presided over the sesquicentennial commemoration of another key event: the execution by the Austrian authorities, in the town of Arad, on 6 October 1849, after the final defeat of the Hungarian forces, of 13 leading Hungarian generals, known to Hungarians as the "Arad martyrs" or simply as the

“Arad 13.” The commemoration was intertwined with a conflict about a late nineteenth-century statue commemorating the generals, which had been removed in 1925 by the Romanian government, kept in a warehouse for three decades, and moved to the Arad fortress in the 1950s. Now, on the occasion of the sesquicentennial, it was to be placed, along with other monuments, in a new Memorial Park dedicated to Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation. But this plan became embroiled in a sharp dispute, with opinion polarizing along national lines; Romanian nationalists objected that the generals were “the murderers of many Romanians.” As a result, the statue was erected instead in the courtyard of a Franciscan monastery, and Orbán spoke at the 5 October ceremony of the statue’s “liberation.”<sup>36</sup> At this event, and at the commemoration of the executions the following day, higher-ranking Hungarian officials were present, and in larger numbers, than at any of the 15 March transborder commemorations. This clearly marked a greater, and more particularizing, emphasis on the transborder dimension of the sesquicentennial than that of the socialist-liberal government. While the previous government had sought to avoid conflict in framing the commemoration, the Orbán government adopted a more combative stance. To this nationally minded government—and to nationally minded Romanian critics of the event—the 6 October sesquicentennial could be seen to be commemorating a double tragedy: not only the executions of 1849, but also the loss of massive Hungarian territory in 1920. This duality added to the pathos, particularizing frame, and conflictual nature of the commemorative celebration.<sup>37</sup>

*The Transborder Dimension: The View from Slovakia and Romania*

“The real Hungarian celebration,” observed one participant in the 15 March commemoration in Budapest, “is across the border.” According to this view, widely shared on both sides of the border, certain national values, symbols, idioms, and practices find their most authentic and resonant expression in Hungarian minority communities. And indeed, on this occasion, specifically *national* values, symbols, idioms, and practices were articulated by minority Hungarians in Slovakia and especially Romania with greater pathos, power, and political weight than in Hungary.<sup>38</sup>

In Romania, commemorations were undertaken in an elevated, grave, and sacred mood, with little of the carnivalesque, “profane”

holiday spirit observed in Hungary, and equally little of the detached, critical, reflexive attitude towards the past that characterized the commemorative discourse of state and government officials and the liberal press there.<sup>39</sup> The narrative frame was particularizing rather than generalizing, and emphasized the specifically national character of the events. Thus minority leaders spoke not so much of revolution or of a process of modernization or *polgárosodás*, but rather in the first place of a struggle for freedom (*szabadságharc*). And this was not the “multiethnic struggle for freedom” to which President Göncz of Hungary had referred, but rather the *Hungarian* struggle for freedom or—as the term *szabadságharc* is better translated in certain contexts—fight for independence. In this way, the commemorations linked past and present as parts of the same unfinished story. Past and present were of course linked in Hungary as well. But there the prevailing unfinished story was one of modernization, Westernization, and *polgárosodás*, teleologically framed to culminate in the integration of Hungary into the European Union. In Transylvania, by contrast, it was in the first instance a story of the unfinished, pathos-laden struggle against national oppression. In Hungary, commentators emphasized that the “revolution is over,” and that what required commemoration was not so much the revolution as such as the long-term political, social, and economic processes in which the 1848 revolutions marked a key moment, not only in Hungary but throughout Europe. In Transylvania, by contrast, Hungarian commentators emphasized that the Hungarian struggle for freedom or fight for independence was *not* over, but continued in the form of the Hungarian minority’s ongoing struggle for rights and recognition.

Thus at Miercurea-Ciuc (Csíkszereda)—where the “central” celebration for Transylvanian Hungarians was organized—the president of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians of Romania (DAHR) linked the 1848 revolutionary idea of freedom to the struggle of contemporary Hungarians in Romania for their rights, and more specifically, as another speaker emphasized, to the contemporary Hungarian demand for communal [*közösségi*] and territorial autonomy. The main Transylvanian Hungarian weekly summarized in twelve points—evoking the famous twelve points formulated by the Budapest revolutionaries on 15 March 1848—the “demands of the Hungarian national community of Romania.” These included an autonomous Hungarian language educational system, the reestablishment of an autonomous Hungarian

language university, the use of bilingual signs and inscriptions, the use of minority language in public administration, and the right to use and display Hungarian national symbols.<sup>40</sup> The ironic reversal involved in casting the events of 1848 as precedents for contemporary Hungarian struggles for minority rights—when, in 1848, it had in fact been Romanians and Slovaks who were struggling for minority rights, indeed specifically for communal and territorial autonomy, against the incipient Hungarian “nationalizing state”—seems to have been lost on the Hungarian leaders.

Where nationalist conflict dominated local politics in 1998, debates about 1848 were intense and embittered. Commemorative practices and historical discussions in such settings were burdened by tensions and passions that deeply divided elites, even when they did not much exercise the wider public. This was most noticeable in Transylvania, particularly in its largest city and cultural capital, Cluj. There, political conflicts since the fall of Ceaușescu have focused on struggles over historical symbols (Feischmidt 2001), and tensions concerning 15 March were heightened by an attempt by the town’s notorious Romanian nationalist mayor to forbid the Hungarian commemorative celebrations.<sup>41</sup> Hungarians defied the ban on celebrating this “most important holiday of united Hungariandom (*összmagyarság*),”<sup>42</sup> and the mayor’s stance simply reinforced the prevailing particularizing, embattled narrative frame. The mayor’s office then organized a noisy counterdemonstration, joined by perhaps 200 people, including the mayor himself, dressed in national colors, to coincide with and protest against the Hungarian commemorative procession. It was also in Cluj that still-unresolved questions about the armed conflicts of 1848–1849 were discussed in highly politicized fashion: the mayor and his associates charged the Hungarian revolution with 40,000 Romanian victims, while the local DAHR leaders branded Romanian national hero Avram Iancu the “initiator of massacres.”<sup>43</sup>

Elsewhere in Transylvania, Hungarian commemorative speeches did not dwell on the violent conflicts of 150 years earlier. Indeed, they sought to avoid discussing the events themselves, preferring the rhetorical high ground of abstract references to the “struggle for freedom.” But no such scruples prevailed in the Hungarian-language media in Romania. Several Hungarian daily and weekly papers published accounts of events of 1848–1849 in Transylvania, including violent clashes, that had previously been passed over in silence.<sup>44</sup> These accounts portrayed

Magyar heroes in a struggle against armed Romanian rebels, and held the latter responsible for the bloodshed.<sup>45</sup> In general, the reports suggested, it was still not possible to transcend the enmities of that period: “the tragic mistakes and cruel events of the time inflicted such deep and painful wounds in the souls and consciousness of the peoples of the region that . . . time has not yet been able to heal them.”<sup>46</sup>

In Slovakia, too, connections between 1848 and present political aims were drawn.<sup>47</sup> László Dobos, vice-chair of the World Federation of Hungarians, and himself from Slovakia, remarked in Pered (site of an 1849 battle) on 15 March, that the “struggle for liberation [of 1848–1849] finds its continuation in today’s struggle of Slovakia’s Hungarians for administrative autonomy, for the free use of our language, for integration of all Hungarians in Hungary and abroad, for the united Hungarian nation, and for social justice.”<sup>48</sup> In the context of approaching parliamentary elections, in which the three Hungarian parties had agreed to cooperate and run on a common platform, minority leaders placed great rhetorical emphasis on “Hungarian unity.” Through this stress on unity they sought historical legitimacy for contemporary electoral strategies, and they sought to represent it concretely by traveling on 15 March to the larger or more symbolically important southern Slovakian localities, giving speeches at every stop.<sup>49</sup> To a greater extent than in Transylvania, however, these invocations of 1848 to legitimize present political aims and claims were complemented by more detached and critical historical reflections like those we observed in Hungary.<sup>50</sup>

#### *Rites of Affiliation and Separation*

The transborder 15 March commemorations can be analyzed not only in terms of their mood and narrative framing, but also as a form of symbolic action, as rituals of affiliation and separation. The commemorations effected a symbolic reconfiguration of social relations, symbolically erasing one border and drawing another in its place. They linked minority Hungarians across the boundaries of state and citizenship to their coethnics in Hungary and, at the same time, marked them off from their Romanian and Slovak neighbors and fellow citizens.

This symbolic drama of affiliation and separation occurred through the medium of what Pierre Nora has called *lieux de mémoire*,<sup>51</sup> the symbols “in which collective heritage . . . is crystallized” (1996: xv). These include historically significant events, illustrious dates, and

symbolically charged objects such as statues, commemorative plaques, flags, and anthems. Although such objects are always polysemic and subject to reinterpretation as circumstances change, they symbolize and embody a sense of collective continuity.<sup>52</sup>

But whose sense of continuity? And what collectivity? In Romania and Slovakia, the *lieux de mémoire* are strikingly ethnicized; collective memory—at least in connection with 1848—has been prevailingly, indeed almost exclusively defined in ethnonational terms. Statues commemorating 1848, for example, were torn down or moved in Transylvania and southern Slovakia after each change of regime: after 1918 those of Kossuth, Bem, Petőfi, and Klapka; after 1938–1940 (when Hungary temporarily regained control of southern Slovakia and northern Transylvania) those of L'udovít Štúr, Avram Iancu, and Alexander Papiu Ilarian.<sup>53</sup> There are few “civic” memory sites connected with 1848 that embody memories common to all Romanian or Slovak citizens, independently of ethnicity. Instead, the memory sites we consider in this section are understood—not only by ethnic Hungarians but by Romanians and Slovaks as well—to “belong” to Hungarians, and they have no meaning, or negative meaning, in the Romanian and Slovak public spheres; while the memory sites we consider in the next section are understood to belong to Romanians, and to have no meaning or negative meaning for Hungarians.

Although some liberal, Westernizing rhetoric in Hungary sought to frame the sesquicentennial in inclusive, “civic” terms, this was not even attempted in Slovakia or Romania.<sup>54</sup> Representations and commemorations of the past remained, on this occasion, strongly ethnicized. Romanians who were questioned in the streets of Oradea on 15 March knew only that “the Hungarians are celebrating.” It was also in Oradea that a Hungarian man, asked about the possibility of a common celebration, replied that “we don’t bother one another, but we don’t mix much either.”<sup>55</sup>

In Slovakia and Romania, the 15 March celebrations functioned as a ritual occasion for the manifestation of ethnic solidarity. Commemorations were organized around particular Hungarian sites of memory, especially statues, memorial plaques, and tombs. Everywhere the central commemorative event involved laying a wreath at such a site. Where multiple memory sites existed, as for example in Cluj and Oradea, the commemoration took the form of a procession from one to the other. By thus taking symbolic possession of key sites of

remembrance, minority Hungarians marked space and time as “their own.”<sup>56</sup> They designated the territory to which the Hungarian nation—understood as a cultural and historical entity transcending present-day state frontiers—symbolically laid claim. “In celebrating the struggle for liberation and the revolution,” said László Dobos in the speech quoted above, “we are re-appropriating the sites of our history [and thereby] reclaiming our history.”<sup>57</sup>

In Romania, 15 March was a particularly powerful symbol of such transborder ethnic solidarity. For here the so-called “Twelfth Point”—the last of the twelve demands formulated by Budapest revolutionaries on 15 March 1848, calling for the union of Transylvania with Hungary—was powerfully, although tacitly, resonant. In 1998, this was of course an embarrassment to the Westernizing narrative frame that prevailed in Hungary. To Romanian nationalists, it was an outrage (and a sufficient reason for regarding Transylvanian Hungarians’ commemorations of 15 March as illegitimate, a sign of latent if not manifest irredentism). To Transylvanian Hungarians, however, the Twelfth Point—and by extension 15 March—evoked historic Hungary during its golden age, the half century after 1867, when the revolutionary Twelfth Point had become reality. By publicly enacting and displaying the unity of *magyarság* (Hungariandom), and taking symbolic possession of memory sites considered sacred to national history, the 15 March commemorations did not simply discursively lament the tragedy of Trianon that ended this golden age and ordained the dismemberment of the country, but symbolically canceled that tragedy and restored the links with fellow Hungarians that Trianon had severed. At the commemoration in the overwhelmingly Hungarian town of Miercurea Ciuc (Csíkszereda), a participant remarked that “1848 is the Szeklers’ last connection to Greater Hungary.”<sup>58</sup> The Catholic priest celebrating the ecumenical memorial religious service in Cluj characterized 15 March as the “most national [*legnemzetibb*] holiday of Hungariandom.”<sup>59</sup> This understanding of the special position of 15 March is widely resonant among transborder, and especially Transylvanian, Hungarians, for the commemorations on this date embody and enact the unity of Hungariandom—a unity otherwise, of course, notable only for its absence. The Twelfth Point had no bearing on Slovakia, the present-day territory of which was, in 1848, an integral part of Hungary, and would remain so until it was awarded by the Treaty of Trianon to the new state of Czechoslovakia. (In part for

this reason, the legitimacy of Hungarian commemorations of 15 March was not contested in Slovakia as it was in Romania.) But in Slovakia, too, 15 March commemorations symbolized the historical unity of the Hungarian nation, regardless of political frontiers. And as in Romania, commemorations in Slovakia too signified a claim that Hungarian minorities “belonged,” in an indefinite yet powerful sense, to Hungary. The presence of state and government representatives from Hungary at 15 March celebrations in Slovakia and Romania in the 1990s was particularly important in this connection, for it ratified this claim to “belonging.” This represented a crucial symbolic break with the state socialist period, when the symbolic “membership” claims of transborder Hungarians were not publicly acknowledged by Hungarian officials.

#### Romania: Whose 1848? Which Revolution?

As in Hungary, so too in Romania has 1848 taken on different meanings in different political contexts. And in Romania as well, two broadly different interpretations of 1848 can be identified in sesquicentennial discussions: one particularizing and pathos-laden, the other more universalizing and dispassionate. The former, focusing on the conflict in Transylvania, sees 1848 as a key moment in a narrative of national oppression and liberation; the latter, focusing on the revolutionary upheavals in Wallachia, sees 1848 as a key moment when Romania “joined Europe” by participating in European-wide democratic revolutions.

Here a brief historical digression is necessary. For the differing commemorative possibilities afforded by the revolutions in Transylvania and Wallachia in 1998 did not simply reflect recent “invented traditions,” but emerged as differentiated commemorative traditions over a much longer time span. They are grounded, moreover, in the sharply differing course of events in 1848–1849 in the two settings; and these, in turn, reflected very different political and ethnodemographic situations.

Transylvania belonged to the lands of the Crown of St. Stephen that had comprised the historic Kingdom of Hungary, but it had long been administratively separate from Hungary proper. Although Romanians were in the majority, political life was monopolized by the Magyar, Saxon, and Szekler “nations”—not nations in the modern sense but legally and politically privileged estates or orders. Landowners were Hungarian, and towns were dominated by Hungarians and Germans.

The Romanian majority was overwhelmingly comprised of peasants, but a nationally conscious secular intellectual elite had recently emerged alongside the traditional clerical elite and had begun to articulate nationalist goals.

The status of Transylvania was fiercely contested in 1848. Hungarian revolutionaries demanded that Transylvania become an integral part of Hungary. Attracted by the liberal ideals of the Hungarian revolution, many Transylvanian Romanian intellectuals, led by philologist and editor Timotei Cipariu and journalist George Barițiu, were initially willing to accept the union with Hungary. They hoped that the new liberal and democratic regime would benefit Transylvanian Romanians and further their economic, social, and national development. But disenchantment with intransigent Hungarian nationalism—particularly with the Hungarian refusal to recognize Romanian nationhood—soon generated opposition to the union. This was led by philosopher Simion Bărnuțiu, who argued that union would gravely threaten Romanian nationhood. On this view, which came to prevail among Romanian intellectuals as tensions with Hungarians intensified, the Romanians in Transylvania and other parts of the Habsburg empire (principally the Banat and Bukovina) should be united into a single province as part of a far-reaching ethnofederal reorganization of the Empire (Hitchins 1969: 181 ff.; 1996: 219, 249 ff.).

The political and ethnodemographic situation in Wallachia was quite different. Wallachia (with its sister province Moldavia) belonged formally to the Ottoman Empire but was in fact a Russian protectorate. Here the landowning boyar elite, Orthodox clergy, peasants, and even the incipient urban middle classes were predominantly Romanian. The Romanians, led by liberal intellectuals, made “their own” revolution in June 1848, which lasted three months before being crushed by Ottoman troops at Russian behest.

In Transylvania, where Romanian peasants were subordinated to Hungarian landowners, social and ethnonational issues were intimately intertwined.<sup>60</sup> In Wallachia, where both landlords and peasants were predominantly Romanian, social conflicts were not coded or framed in ethnic or national terms. In Wallachia too, to be sure, national themes were centrally important in 1848. But they focused on external independence rather than internal ethnic conflict. And independence here meant independence vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire and Russia, not vis-à-vis Hungary. Hungary and Hungarians were seen not as internal

ethnic enemies but as potential external political allies in the struggle against the great reactionary powers—hence the tragic quality, from the Wallachian revolutionary perspective, of the conflict between Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania (Hitchins 1996: 265).

A strongly nationalist interpretive line and commemorative tradition has characterized the historiography of the 1848 revolution in Transylvania from its inception. The note sounded by Alexandru Papiu-Ilarian, a leading participant in the events, in his contemporary history—“only nationality can save the Romanians”—set the tone for subsequent accounts. The popular assemblies in Blaj on 30 April and from 13–15 May have been interpreted in teleological perspective as moments at which the Romanian nation awoke to consciousness of itself and embarked on its historical mission of achieving national unity and independence. Like nationalist historiography elsewhere, this attributes greater national self-consciousness and unity to Romanians than they in fact possessed in 1848.<sup>61</sup> The events of 1848–1849 did not so much express a preexisting national consciousness as stimulate the subsequent development of one, with military confrontations and atrocities in particular providing abundant grist for nationalist mills and a resonant popular basis for a sense of shared nationhood.

Historiography and popular memory have been strongly ethnicized, with a powerful anti-Hungarian current. Popular memory and literature have commemorated not the intellectual and political leaders among the Romanians but the romantic rebel Avram Iancu, leader of the Romanian guerrilla troops who successfully held out against the Hungarians in the mountains southwest of Cluj. Since the end of the nineteenth century, the story of the “king of the mountains” (*craiuul munților*), fighting the Hungarians, and fighting also (in more literary versions) for social justice and national unity, has been preserved in songs, legends, and folk tales. As the chief symbol of Transylvanian Romanian nationalism, Iancu took his place in the pantheon of the united Romanian nation-state after the First World War.

The communist regime initially ignored Avram Iancu and the Transylvanian national struggle in favor of the Wallachian revolution, which was better suited for the internationalist revolutionary pedigree it sought to construct. From the mid-1970s on, however, the newly nationalist political line reintroduced Iancu into the pantheon of national heroes. Monumental statues of him were erected in many cities, mainly in Transylvania.

With the fall of the communist regime, the Avram Iancu cult did not fade away, but gained new momentum, especially in Transylvania. Never before had the figure of Avram Iancu been as important for Romanian politics as during the 1990s, when he was central to symbolic struggles between Romanians and Hungarians (Boia 1997: 278). An Avram Iancu Association was founded in Cluj, and he became the main symbol of the Transylvanian Romanian nationalist parties. On their initiative, an enormous statue, with Avram Iancu set high on a column, sword in hand, was erected in a central square in Cluj. In 1998, these parties and affiliated organizations made Avram Iancu central to the sesquicentennial commemorations. But the official state celebrations did not give special weight to Avram Iancu. His mythos is largely restricted to Transylvania, and many in the Bucharest-centered political class are indifferent to him. Moreover, the government, which had been cultivating good relations with Hungary, and in which the Hungarian party was a coalition partner, no doubt wished to avoid identifying the official commemorations with the anti-Hungarian sentiment that had come to be associated with Avram Iancu.<sup>62</sup>

A very different way of construing the link between past and present was afforded by the June democratic revolution in Wallachia. Its leaders included young boyars who had been educated in Western Europe, mainly in France. Their ideal was an independent liberal state on the Western model, and they rejected everything that Wallachia stood for at the time: economic and social backwardness, Ottoman and Russian dependency, and cultural “orientalism.” The symbolic high points of the revolution were the proclamation read to a popular assembly in Islaz on 21 June, the triumph of the revolution in Bucharest on 23 June, and the festive celebration at the “Fields of Liberty” on the outskirts of Bucharest a few days later, where the crowd acclaimed the Islaz program. The program embodied the classic liberal demands that came to the fore in 1848 throughout Europe: civil equality, enlarged franchise, equitable taxation, freedom of press and assembly, abolition of titles of nobility, and an end to the hated labor services (*clacă*) owed by peasants to their landlords. It also embodied a demand for national autonomy under Ottoman suzerainty (Hitchins 1996: 240 ff.).

The revolutionary regime lasted only three months, but the liberal ideals of 1848 survived in the discourse of the Romanian intellectual and political elite. Leading political figures of the United Principalities (the union of Moldavia and Wallachia that came into being in 1861)



were “Forty-eighters” (*pașoptiști*), as were major figures of the liberal party throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. During the interwar period, the liberal ideals of 1848 were overshadowed by the dominant nationalist political mythology. Under communism, the 1848 revolution in Wallachia was initially given pride of place among national traditions. During the early cosmopolitan and class-struggle-oriented period of communism, Nicolae Bălcescu was celebrated as the leader of the radical faction of revolutionaries, who had advocated universal suffrage, equality for Gypsies and Jews, reconciliation with leaders of the Hungarian revolution, and radical agrarian reform. In the 1950s, Bălcescu figured as the protagonist of a number of novels and dramas; his portrait graced the hundred lei banknote; and schools were named after him in all Romanian cities and towns. Yet by the 1980s, and especially after 1989, Bălcescu was almost completely forgotten, overshadowed, in Transylvania, by Avram Iancu.

In the 1970s, the revolution, along with many other significant events from Romanian history, was integrated into and subordinated to the mythology of national unity. The revolutions in Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia, it was argued, were parts of a single movement seeking unification into one nation-state. Yet as critical Romanian historians have argued, this obscures the different aims and understandings of Romanian revolutionaries in the different settings. In Transylvania, national concerns—the struggle for national recognition and autonomy—were indeed paramount, though it is anachronistic to see the Transylvanian national movement as a struggle for the establishment of an independent nation-state (Boia 1997). In Wallachia, by contrast, projects of social, economic, and political modernization were more significant than national questions. These, in turn, were not only less salient than but qualitatively different from national concerns in Transylvania, focusing on external independence vis-à-vis Russian and Ottoman influences rather than, as in Transylvania, on internal ethnonational conflict with Hungarians.

The approaching sesquicentennial prompted a reconsideration of 1848 and its contemporary significance. In January 1998, the leading liberal journal of opinion published an article by historian Adrian Niculescu emphasizing the important role of the 1848 revolution and the preceding democratic movement in the political and ideological formation of the Romanian nation. Today, Niculescu argued, it was time to return to 1848, “our sole successful model of Westernization

and European integration.”<sup>63</sup> He went on to propose the creation of a new national holiday, “Tricolor Day,” on 24 February, commemorating the date in 1848 on which the Romanian national flag was displayed for the first time, at the Paris Hôtel de Ville, the headquarters of the revolution in France. This plan would have placed the 1848 commemoration firmly in a universal, European, Westernizing context, and would have emphasized democracy and civil society rather than national liberation. Niculescu’s programmatic article proposed further that new memorials, statues, and plaques be dedicated throughout the year, so as to strengthen, concretize, and naturalize this new historical tradition. Finally, the article specified the dates and events from 1848 that ought to be commemorated, highlighting the key events of the Wallachian revolution of June, and emphasizing that this was the only modern liberal democratic revolution in Romanian history. Conspicuously downplayed in this proposal, on the other hand, were the events of the Transylvanian revolution, which, with their strong nationalist overtones, fit much less well into this universalizing commemorative strategy.

Taking its cue from this article, the government duly proclaimed 24 February “Tricolor Day” a few weeks later, and called on Romanians to celebrate the events of 1848. These pronouncements, however, were met with general indifference, and with the exception of a few radio and television broadcasts, the “holiday” passed uncelebrated and unnoticed. After the failure of this feeble attempt to commemorate the democratic revolution of Wallachia, and a discussion in the press in March about whether the Transylvanian or Wallachian revolution was more worthy of commemoration,<sup>64</sup> the government abruptly shifted course and designated 15 May in the Transylvanian town of Blaj as the site of the major official sesquicentennial commemoration.

It is possible that a more energetic government effort to commemorate the Wallachian revolution could have been more successful. However, it is also possible that even a more energetic effort would have failed, given the lack of any strong commemorative tradition emphasizing the Wallachian revolution except for the self-discrediting tradition sponsored by the communist regime. New commemorative traditions, to be sure, can indeed emerge (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), and energetic governmental sponsorship has often been central to their emergence. But state sponsorship and cultural entrepreneurship are not sufficient; resonance, and time, are required as well.<sup>65</sup> The



weakness of democratic traditions in twentieth-century Romania, and their “contamination” by communist efforts to appropriate them, constrained Romanian possibilities for commemorating the Wallachian democratic revolution in 1998 and limited in advance the resonance of any such commemorative efforts.

The shift from Wallachia to Transylvania represented a shift from a universalizing to a more particularizing commemorative strategy, and from an emphasis on a liberal democratic revolution on the Western model to one on the Romanian national movement. Blaj is one of the most important Romanian national *lieux de mémoire* in Transylvania; it was the site, in 1848, of the popular assembly that demanded the recognition of Romanians as a nation. According to nationalist tradition, it was also where the slogan demanding unification with Moldavia and Wallachia was first formulated: “We want to unite with the motherland” (*Vrem să ne unim cu țara!*). The commemoration was given some prominence by the participation of the highest state and church (Orthodox and Greek Catholic) leaders. President Constantinescu emphasized in his speech both the national and the civic-democratic aspects of 1848. The speech was followed by a folk music show which was designed, without any special celebratory staging, to display the cultural unity and the traditions of the Transylvanian Romanians. A light rain fell throughout the day, the crowd was modest in size, and the mood was restrained.

Much more significant in the Transylvanian Romanian media than the Blaj event were reports and commentary on the 15 March celebrations of Transylvanian Hungarians. Judging simply from the number and length of articles, the media were more concerned to react to the Hungarian sesquicentennial than to help construct a distinctively Romanian commemorative tradition. Already in the week or two preceding 15 March, some Transylvanian Romanian newspapers began to warn of the dangers of the commemoration, going so far as to invoke the specter of Kosovo.<sup>66</sup> The Hungarian celebrations were criticized, and had been criticized throughout the 1990s, as commemorations of the national holiday of another country. Reports highlighted the use of Hungarian flags in the commemorative celebrations, seeing these as evidence of revisionist intentions and lack of loyalty to the Romanian state.<sup>67</sup> DAHR leaders were criticized for inciting interethnic conflicts by voicing radical political demands in commemorative speeches.<sup>68</sup> The Revolution in Transylvania, it was emphasized, had cost tens of

thousands of Romanian lives;<sup>69</sup> 15 March therefore evoked in Transylvanian Romanians not the memory of triumphant civic ideals but that of national oppression and ethnic violence.<sup>70</sup> In one representative statement: “. . . the implementation of the Twelfth Point—the union of Transylvania with Hungary—unleashed a wave of anti-Romanian terror. It was accompanied by the destruction of whole villages and the martyrdom of tens of thousands of Romanians.”<sup>71</sup> Accounts such as these appeared mainly in the local newspapers of Transylvanian cities.<sup>72</sup> Similar accounts were given by nationalist politicians. For Transylvanian Romanians, the memory of 1848 cannot be detached from the union with Hungary, and this sustains the collective fear of once again losing Transylvania.

### Slovakia: The Uncelebrated Sesquicentennial

As in Hungary and Romania, 1848 has been interpreted in two broadly differing ways in Slovakia: as an episode in a nationalist narrative leading from national oppression through national awakening to national independence; and as an episode in a general European story of progress, modernization, and democratization. In 1998, however, 1848 was conspicuous mainly for its absence: outside Hungarian minority circles, the sesquicentennial was largely invisible.

What accounts for this comparative invisibility, and for the feebleness and lack of resonance of attempts to harness the past for present political purposes in 1998? On a purely constructivist understanding, one that emphasizes memory entrepreneurship and the manipulation of the past for present purposes, this is a puzzle. Since it became independent in 1993, Slovakia had been ruled (with one brief interruption) by the nationalist party of Vladimír Mečiar, for whom nationalism had proved a successful electoral strategy. In part because of Mečiar’s nationalist stance, however, Slovakia had slipped off the “fast track” towards European integration. In this political conjuncture, the sesquicentennial would seem to have afforded both nationalists and their liberal opponents opportunities to harness the past for their (very different) political purposes—especially in the context of an electoral campaign leading up to parliamentary elections scheduled for September 1998. If suitable traditions were not readily available, one might have expected efforts to invent them. Yet neither nationalists nor their liberal opponents made much of 1848 in 1998.

Slovakia, then, is a “negative” case; the sesquicentennial went largely unmarked. This, we suggest, reflects constraints deriving from the nature of the “available pasts” (Schudson 1989: 107 ff.). For historical reasons, reflecting both the course of events in 1848 and patterns of historiographic tradition and social memory in the intervening century and a half, the commemorative opportunities afforded by the sesquicentennial in Slovakia were in fact quite meager, both for the liberals and for their nationalist opponents.

Comparison with Romania is instructive in this respect. The 1848 revolution in Wallachia provided richer historical “raw materials” for a “Europe”-oriented commemoration emphasizing modernization, Westernization, and democratization than were available in Slovakia, though in Romania too the “usability” of this past was limited by the lack of a viable twentieth-century commemorative tradition. Unlike their Romanian (and Hungarian) counterparts, it was difficult for Slovak liberals to claim an 1848 revolution of “their own.” In 1848, Romanians lived in Hungary proper, in Transylvania, and in the Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, and they experienced 1848 in very different ways in these different settings. By contrast, Slovaks lived only in Hungary, with no separate administrative territory or institutional framework of “their own” in which they could have established a revolutionary regime like the one established in Wallachia. Even with a somewhat more favorable “available past,” Romanian liberals’ efforts to commemorate the Wallachian democratic revolution in 1998 were feeble and ultimately unsuccessful. With much more meager historical raw materials and no significant commemorative tradition to work with, Slovak liberals’ commemorative opportunities in 1998 were still more narrowly circumscribed.

Important revolutionary events—including the drafting by the Hungarian Diet and ratification by the King of the “April Laws,” amounting to a constitutional blueprint for a modern liberal state—did unfold in what is today the capital of Slovakia in late March and early April of 1848. But these events have been coded as part of Hungarian national tradition, and not seen as “commemorable” in Slovakia, even by liberals. Slovaks were not involved in the work of the Diet, which, like other premodern, estate-style representative assemblies, was dominated by aristocrats, almost all of whom were Hungarian. Thus while these legislative events were part of a revolution *in*

(what would later become) Slovakia, they did not count as part of a revolution *of or for* Slovaks.

Some liberal Slovak intellectuals, to be sure, have sought in recent years to challenge nationalist readings of 1848, and to pry the revolution, and the history of the region more generally, from the grip of nationalist historiography and nationally bound commemorative traditions (Elias 1990; Chmel 1992; Kováč 1996). They have pointed out that many Slovaks sympathized with the general revolutionary spirit of the time and participated in the revolutionary ferment. More concretely, many sympathized with the ideals and liberal legislation of the “Hungarian” revolution, in its early phases at least, and more Slovaks probably fought *for* the revolution, in the Hungarian army, than *against* it in the volunteer legions organized by the uncompromisingly nationalist Slovak National Council. By emphasizing this broad Slovak support and participation, liberals challenged Hungarian claims to exclusive “ownership” of the revolution. At the same time, they challenged the Slovak nationalist tradition, with its “debilitating myth of a thousand years of oppression,” that rendered invisible Slovak support for the revolution, thus depriving Slovaks “of the history of which we, too, were the makers” (Kováč 1996: 530). But these arguments remained confined to a small circle of liberal intellectuals, with no wider public resonance. For commemorative purposes, moreover, these various forms of participation in and support for the revolution could not plausibly be assembled into something that could be celebrated as a specifically Slovak revolution.

Nationalists seeking to turn 1848 to political advantage in 1998 faced difficulties of their own. For although 1848 has been seen primarily through a nationalist (rather than a liberal or democratic) prism in Slovak historiography, it has not occupied a central place in the nationalist imagination. The Slovak national movement in 1848 was an affair primarily of a relatively small group of intellectuals. Its chief text was the 14-point program adopted at Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš on 10 May, under the heading “Demands of the Slovak Nation.”<sup>73</sup> The Hungarian government responded repressively to this petition, seeking to arrest the organizers, who fled to Prague and later to Vienna. There they formed the Slovak National Council and recruited volunteers to fight against the Hungarians. The invasion of this force in September 1848, however, was easily turned back, and attempts to instigate a general anti-Hungarian uprising among Slovak peasants were conspicuously

unsuccessful. Subsequent military activities by Slovak volunteers were not undertaken independently but were coordinated with and subordinated to the now determinedly counterrevolutionary imperial forces, with whom Slovak national leaders had reluctantly decided to ally themselves, thereby elevating their national goals (which they mistakenly believed would be supported by the court) over the revolutionary goals of political liberty and social reform.

For Slovaks, 1848 involved no galvanizing events, no great mass meetings or mobilizations, no heroic military exploits, no tragic martyrdoms, no bitter fighting between Slovaks and Hungarians, no larger-than-life figures that fired popular memory as much as Avram Iancu or Lajos Kossuth<sup>74</sup>—none of the stuff of which myths are easily made. In Hungary and Transylvania, a deeply rooted, resonant national mythology has grown up around 1848; there has been nothing comparable in Slovakia. Repressed by the Hungarian authorities, distrusted and ultimately dismissed by the Austrians, and lacking a mobilized mass following, the Slovak national movement of 1848 left no strong traces in Slovak collective memory. The events of 1848 have never counted among the most important symbols of Slovak national mythology, and have never been commemorated by a national holiday. National mythology has centered on the question of statehood, and 1848–1849 contained no breakthroughs, indeed no progress, in this respect. Independent statehood was simply not plausible for the Slovaks at the time; no Slovak leader demanded independent statehood or a complete break with Hungary or with the Habsburg empire in 1848. Slovak national leaders did demand the federal reorganization of the empire along ethnic lines, which would have involved the creation of an autonomous Slovak province, but these hopes were, in the end, disappointed by their Austrian allies.

Given this limited range of “available pasts,” is not surprising that a mere handful of articles addressed 1848 in the sesquicentennial year, nor that only two feeble commemorative gestures were made in 1998. Significantly, neither involved any popular dimension or public participation. On 10 May, political leaders assembled in Liptovský Mikuláš to commemorate the adoption of a petition articulating both democratic and Slovak national demands on 10 May 1848. The oppositional Slovak Democratic Coalition chose this occasion to sign its founding documents. And on 25 August, at the initiative of the nationalist ruling parties, the Parliament officially commemorated the Slovak National

Council. The Council has been the focal point of discussions of 1848 in nationalist historiography, celebrated for its romantic, if quixotic, campaign to incite a general uprising against the Hungarians. But unlike the Romanian folk hero Avram Iancu, celebrated in popular as well as official memory for his daring guerrilla exploits against the Hungarians in 1848–1849, the Slovak National Council and its abortive attempt to provoke a general Slovak uprising in 1848 have little popular resonance. The commemoration, to be sure, was reported in the nationalist press, but it involved no public celebration or popular participation of any kind.<sup>75</sup>

The Slovak media, unlike the Romanian media in Transylvania, largely ignored the Hungarian commemorations of 15 March.<sup>76</sup> For Romanian nationalists, the Twelfth Point of the Budapest uprising of 15 March 1848 (demanding the union of Transylvania and Hungary) is itself sufficient to render illegitimate, indeed disloyal, the commemoration of 15 March by Transylvanian Hungarians. For Slovak nationalists, 15 March is a more neutral occasion, overshadowed by the 14 March anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak state in 1939.<sup>77</sup> For Transylvanian Romanians, more generally, 1848 is bound up with the image of the Hungarian “enemy,” not only in national ideology but also in folklore; for Slovaks, 1848 has no such meaning. In 1998 elite-level national conflict was actually more intense in Slovakia than in Romania, for Slovak nationalists were in power in Bratislava, while Romanian nationalists were in opposition in Bucharest. Yet like their liberal counterparts, Slovak nationalists were neither capable of exploiting, nor even inclined to exploit, 1848 for present political purposes. The sesquicentennial, for Slovaks, remained uncelebrated; the Hungarian minority had the commemorative field to itself.

## Conclusion

Like all great events, the revolutions of 1848 can be construed in multiple, sometimes mutually exclusive ways, and offer multiple, competing lessons for the present. On the occasion of the sesquicentennial, two competing narrative framings can be identified in each country. In one framing, 1848 stands for a civic, democratic, modernizing Eastern Europe, casting off the vestiges of feudalism, autocracy, and empire, and joining the West on a progressive developmental trajectory leading to the

modern market economy and liberal democratic polity. The national experience of 1848 is seen as part of wider and more general processes: European, Western, even universal. In the alternative, particularizing, framing, 1848 stands for national liberation, for an Eastern Europe "awakening" to the call of nationality, revolting against national oppression, seeking national recognition and autonomy, and embarking on a nationalizing developmental trajectory leading to the creation and consolidation of independent nation-states in place of multinational empires. The national experience is celebrated for its distinctiveness, not subsumed under a universal perspective.

These alternative framings of 1848 echo a more general cultural pattern characteristic of the European periphery. The opposition between a generalizing, universalizing discourse of Europe, modernity, progress, and "the West" on the one hand and a particularizing discourse of national distinctiveness, tradition, indigeneity, and authenticity, sometimes identified with "the East," on the other, is a familiar one that goes back to the nineteenth century. In Hungary, claims to Western, European modernity confront counterclaims to "Eastern" authenticity (Gal 1991; Hofer 1991). In Romania, there are contending myths of origin and national self-definitions: one (Roman and Latin) has been "Western" and generalizing, the other (Dacian) indigenist and particularizing (Verdery 1991). In Russia, the opposition between Westernizers on the one hand and Slavophiles and Eurasianists on the other has structured debate about Russian identity and about Russia's place in Europe and the world for a century and a half (Walicki 1989 [1975]; Riasanovsky 1952). And in Greece, the "Westernizing" idealization of classical Greek culture is countered by an appreciation of "Eastern" (Balkan and Turkish) influences on everyday practices (Herzfeld 1987).

Yet despite these formally parallel oppositions in ways of representing the past and understanding the present, there were striking differences in resonance and meaningfulness of 1848 in 1998, and in the manner and mood in which the events of 1848 were commemorated.

The sesquicentennial in Hungary and among transborder Hungarian minority communities could draw on a rich and living commemorative tradition. March 15th has long been an important national holiday for Hungarians on both sides of the border, even when forbidden by the regime (that it was forbidden was a powerful tribute to its symbolic and mobilizational power). In Hungary itself, the generalizing frame prevailed despite attempts to challenge it by conservative and nationalist

opposition parties. The commemorations were used by incumbent elites to represent Hungary as a reliable European country, facing west and looking forward, as it were, with a firm and stable commitment to the progressive, modern, Western values and institutions it had dramatically embraced in the spring of 1848. For the purpose of demonstrating Hungary's suitability for membership in the European club, high pathos and mass mobilization, heroes and martyrs, were neither necessary nor desirable. The tone of the celebrations, carefully choreographed for television audiences, was light, accessible, and easy-going, rather than sacred or solemn.

Quite different were the mood and narrative framing among minority Hungarians in Southern Slovakia and especially in Transylvania. Here the commemoration was more salient, and more "sacred" in tone, than in Hungary. In ethnically mixed areas, solemn commemorative rituals dramatized and concretized the separateness of ethnic Hungarians and their cultural and emotional identification with the transborder Hungarian "nation." The commemorative choreography suggested dignity and grandeur: there was no hint of the ethos of entertainment that prevailed in Hungary.

In Transylvania, Romanian and Hungarian elites battled over representations of the past and its implications for the present, their struggles nourished by competing national mythologies and demonologies. Slovak public opinion, in contrast, took no notice of minority Hungarians' commemorations. The commemoration of 1848 was in effect "surrendered" to the Hungarians; its meaning was not publicly contested, and apart from a few feeble gestures, the Slovak political class did not seek to appropriate 1848 for its own presentist purposes. Because ethnic Hungarians' commemorations were not contested, and because the "national question," though burdened in the present, was not as heavily burdened by 1848 itself in Slovak areas as in Transylvania, the commemorations had less political weight and drama in Slovakia.

In the Romanian public sphere (outside of Transylvania), and especially in Slovakia, the outstanding feature of 1848 in 1998 was its invisibility. The sesquicentennial was not put to effective political use. In the Slovak case, the simplest explanation, borrowed from Gertrude Stein, may be the best: there was just not enough "there" there, not enough "material" suited for myth-making today, and no previous commemorative traditions to build on. Romania disposed of richer historical "raw material," but this material was not readily "available" in

1998, for it had not been incorporated into a vibrant commemorative tradition like that of Hungary. Indeed the heavy-handed attempts of the state socialist regime to use the Wallachian revolution to legitimate its rule only succeeded in discrediting appeals to the Romanian revolutionary tradition. The only 1848 figure firmly ingrained in Romanian popular memory was Avram Iancu. But he fit only the particularizing, mythologizing, narrative frame, not the generalizing, antiheroic frame that might have underscored Romania's European connections and fragile but nonetheless significant democratic traditions. And even in the mythologizing, particularizing frame, the commemorations had little popular resonance.

While the Hungarian cases illustrate, in two strikingly different ways, the mobilization of the past for present political purposes, the Slovak and Romanian cases reveal the way in which the nature and structure of "available pasts" constrain commemorative opportunities in the present. What makes a past "available," to be sure, is governed not only by the "events themselves" or the ways in which they were experienced and interpreted at the time but also, and crucially, by the ways in which the events were—or were not—incorporated into commemorative traditions (Schudson 1989: 108; Olick 1999). In 1998, in considerable part because of a vibrant, living commemorative tradition, 1848 was "available" for present-oriented projects in Hungary, and especially among Hungarian minority communities, in ways that it was not to Romanians outside Transylvania or to Slovaks. The literature on commemorations and the invention of tradition has neglected "negative" or failed cases of memory entrepreneurship,<sup>78</sup> focusing instead on conspicuous commemorations and successfully invented traditions. Considering the absence of Slovak and the weakness of Romanian attempts to deploy a "usable" 1848 in 1998 alongside the more robust Hungarian sesquicentennial commemorations serves as a useful reminder that memory entrepreneurship in the present is both enabled and constrained by the past.

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## Notes

### *Introduction*

1. The exception is the concluding section of Chapter 1.
2. Although the language of bounded groups and that of individual choice seem poles apart, groupism is in fact itself a kind of individualism, in a double sense, treating groups as collective individuals, and as collections of individuals (Dumont 1970: 33; Handler 1988: 32, 39–47; Calhoun 1997: 42 ff.).

### *1. Ethnicity without Groups*

1. Foundational discussions include Cooley (1962 [1909]: Chapter 3) and Homans (1950) in sociology; Nadel (1957: Chapter 7) in anthropology; and Bentley (1908: Chapter 7) and Truman (1951) in political science. More recent discussions include Olson (1965), Tilly (1978), and Hechter (1987).
2. In this very general sense, groupism extends well beyond the domain of ethnicity, race, and nationalism to include accounts of putative groups based on gender, sexuality, age, class, abledness, religion, minority status, and any kind of "culture," as well as putative groups based on combinations of these categorical attributes. Yet while recognizing that it is a wider tendency in social analysis, I limit my discussion here to groupism in the study of ethnicity, race, and nationalism.
3. For critical analyses of media representations of ethnic violence, see the collection of essays in Allen and Seaton (1999), as well as Seaton (1999).
4. This is perhaps too sharply put. To the extent that such intrinsic-kind categories are indeed constitutive of commonsense understandings of the social world, to the extent that such categories are used as a resource by participants in interaction, and are demonstrably deployed, or oriented to, by participants,

they can also serve as a resource for analysts. But as Emanuel Schegloff notes in another context, with respect to the category “interruption,” the fact that this is a vernacular, commonsense category for participants “does not make it a first-order category usable for professional analysis. Rather than being employed *in* professional analysis, it is better treated as a target category *for* professional analysis” (2001: 307, italics added). The same might well be said of commonsense ethnic categories.

5. Such performative, group-making practices, of course, are not specific to ethnic entrepreneurs, but generic to political mobilization and representation (Bourdieu 1991b; 1991d: 248–51).
6. On reification, see Berger and Luckmann (1967: 88–92) and Baumann (1996), especially Chapters 1 and 2.
7. As a European observer has remarked, “the widespread but uncritical use of the term ‘ethnicity’ in social science and its subsequent integration into political, administrative and popular common sense discourses [have] been far more effective in *creating reality* than . . . in actually describing it” (Schierup 1992: 5 [italics in the original]; see also Dittrich and Radtke 1990).
8. For accounts (not focused specifically on ethnicity) that treat groupness as variable, see Tilly (1978: 62 ff.), Hechter (1987: 8), and Hamilton et al. (1998). These accounts, very different from one another, focus on variability in groupness across cases; my concern is primarily with variability in groupness over time.
9. See inter alia Sacks (1995, I: 41, 401), Handelman (1977), McKay and Lewins (1978), and Jenkins (1997: 53 ff.). Fredrik Barth’s introductory essay to the collection *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) was extraordinarily influential in directing attention to the workings of categories of self- and other-ascription and in undermining the unproblematic equation of ethnic group and bounded cultural unit. But Barth did not distinguish sharply or consistently between categories and groups, and his central metaphor of “boundary”—at least in the work of many of his followers—carries with it connotations of boundedness, entitativity, and groupness (on this point, see Cohen 1978: 386; Jenkins 1997: 21, 50, 165). See also Vincent (1974: 376), which criticized in passing the “too solid perception of ethnic groups as permanent component units of society” and the tendency “to seek the embodiment of ethnicity in overly corporate forms.”
10. This point was already made by Max Weber, albeit in somewhat different terms. As Weber argued—in a passage obscured in the English translation—ethnic commonality, based on belief in common descent, is “in itself mere (putative) commonality [(*geglaubte*) *Gemeinsamkeit*], not community [*Gemeinschaft*] . . . but only a factor facilitating communal action [*Vergemeinschaftung*]” (1964: 307; cf. 1968: 389). Ethnic commonality means more than mere category membership for Weber. It is—or rather involves—a category that is employed by members themselves. But this shows that even self-categorization does not create a “group.”
11. From the large literature on this theme, see for example Weber (1968 [1922]: 43 ff., 341 ff.), Barth (1969), Brubaker (1992), Marx (1998), Tilly (1998), Wimmer (2002: Chapter 4), and Chandra (2004).
12. On governmentality, see Burchell et al. (1991). On categorization from above, see Noiriel (1991), Slezkine (1994), Brubaker (1994), Torpey (2000), and Martin (2001). See also this volume, Chapter 3.
13. Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis have not focused on the use of ethnic categories as such, but Sacks, Schegloff and others have addressed the problem of situated categorization in general, notably the question of the procedures through which participants in interaction, in deploying categories, choose among alternative sets of categories (since there is always more than one set of categories in terms of which any person can be correctly described). The import of this problem has been formulated as follows by Schegloff (2001: 309, emphasis added): “Given the centrality of . . . categories in organizing vernacular cultural ‘knowledge,’ this equivocality can be profoundly consequential, for *which* category is employed will carry with it the invocation of commonsense knowledge about *that* category of person and bring it to bear on the person referred to on some occasion, rather than bringing to bear the knowledge implicated with *another* category of which the person being referred to is equally a member.” For Sacks on categories, see Sacks (1995: I, 40–48, 333–40, 396–403, 578–96; II, 184–87).
14. The language of “stereotypes” is, of course, that of cognitive social psychology (for a review of work in this tradition, see Hamilton and Sherman (1994); see also this volume, Chapter 3. But the general ethnomethodological emphasis on the crucial importance of the rich though tacit background knowledge that participants bring to interaction, and—more specifically—Harvey Sacks’s discussion of the “inference-rich” categories in terms of which much everyday social knowledge is stored (1995: I, 40 ff. et passim; cf. Schegloff 2001: 308 ff.) and of the way in which the knowledge thus organized is “protected against induction” (Sacks 1995: I, 336 ff.), suggest a domain of potentially converging concern between cognitive work on the one hand and ethnomethodological and conversation-analytic work on the other—however different their analytic stances and methodologies.
15. One should remember, though, that organizations often compete with one another for the monopolization of the right to represent the same (putative) group.
16. In this respect the resource mobilization perspective on social movements, eclipsed in recent years by identity-oriented new social movement theory, has much to offer students of ethnicity. For an integrated statement, see McCarthy and Zald (1977).
17. Genocide, as Bauman observes, “differs from other murders in having a *category* for its object” (2000: 227, italics in original). The same could be said for ethnic cleansing and what Horowitz (2001) calls the “deadly ethnic riot.”
18. The metaphor of framing was popularized by Goffman (1974), drawing on

- Bateson (1985 [1955]). The notion has been elaborated chiefly in the social movement literature (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gamson 1992; uniting rational choice and framing approaches, Esser 1999). On the ethnic framing of violence, see this volume, Chapter 4: 118.
19. For a development of this line of argument, see Chapter 3.
  20. Cognitive perspectives, in this broad sense, include not only those developed in cognitive psychology and cognitive anthropology but also those developed in the post- (and anti-) Parsonian “cognitive turn” (DiMaggio and Powell 1991) in sociological and (more broadly) social theory, especially in response to the influence of phenomenological and ethnomethodological work (Schutz 1962; Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984). Cognitive perspectives are central to the influential syntheses of Bourdieu and Giddens and—in a very different form—to the enterprise of conversation analysis.
  21. For the American case, see also this volume, Chapter 2: 57–60.
  22. This section is based on field research conducted between 1995 and 2001, and analyzed in detail in Brubaker et al. (2004).
  23. In the United States and much of northern and western Europe, “nationality” ordinarily means “citizenship,” that is, membership of the state; and “nation” and “state” are often used interchangeably. In central and eastern Europe, by contrast, “nation” and “nationality” do not refer in the first instance to the state, but ordinarily invoke an ethnocultural frame of reference independent of—and often cutting across the boundaries of—statehood and citizenship. To identify oneself as Hungarian by nationality in Transylvania is to invoke a state-transcending Hungarian ethnocultural “nation.”
  24. Transylvania had belonged to Hungary for half a century before the First World War, and again for four years during the Second World War.
  25. The DAHR program and other documents, some in English, can be found at <http://www.rmdsz.ro/> and <http://www.hhrf.org/rmdsz/>.
  26. Of course this point holds not only, or especially, of the Hungarian minority, or of minorities generally. In Romania as elsewhere, those who claim to speak for dominant nations—nations that are closely identified with the states that bear their names, referred to in German as *Staatsvölker* or “state peoples”—also routinely reify those “nations” and characterize them as singular entities with a common will and common interests, where in fact no such entity exists. And indeed the latter form of reification, supported by the material infrastructure and symbolic power of the modern state, tends to be at once more pervasive and less visible—and hence more successful, more widely accepted as “natural.”
  27. See Chapter 8. To Romanian nationalists, Hungarians’ commemoration of 1848 is illegitimate, for it celebrates a regime that was as much nationalist as revolutionary, aspiring to—and briefly securing—the union of Hungary and Transylvania.
  28. “Confruntarea dintre România și Ungaria a continuat și după meci.” *Adevărul de Cluj*, 7 June 1999.
  29. Even for those who were involved in the events, one should be cautious about inferring an overriding sense of groupness. I was in Cluj in the summer of 1994, when excavations in the main “Hungarian” square were about to begin. I was staying with the family of a DAHR politician. At one point, he proposed: “*Menjünk ásni?* [Shall we go dig?]” At a moment of overriding groupness, such a joke would be unthinkable; here, the nationalist projects of Mayor Funar were—at least for some—a joking matter. One further incident is worth mentioning in this connection. In 1997, a long-closed Hungarian consulate reopened in Cluj, reflecting a warming of relations between Budapest and the newly elected pro-western government in Bucharest. Funar protested—in vain—against its opening, and when it opened, tried to fine it for flying the Hungarian flag. A few weeks after its opening, five men pulled up in a pickup truck, placed an extendable ladder against the side of the building, and removed the flag, in broad daylight, as a small crowd looked on. The next day, they were apprehended by the police; Funar characterized them as “Romanian heroes.” Elsewhere, this sort of incident—which could easily be construed as involving the desecration of a sacred national symbol—has been enough to trigger a riot. Here, nobody paid much attention; the incident was coded as farce, not as sacred drama.
  30. On categories as “repositor[ies] for common sense knowledge” generally, see Schegloff (2001: 308) and Sacks (1995, I, 40–48, 333–40). For cognitive perspectives on social categories as structures of knowledge, with special regard to ethnic, racial, and other “natural kind”-like categories, see Rothbart and Taylor (1992), Hamilton and Sherman (1994), and Hirschfeld (1996).
  31. Even when such commonsense category-based stereotypical knowledge is overridden, the very manner of overriding may testify to the existence (and the content) of the category-based knowledge that is being overridden. On the general phenomenon of “modifiers” that work by asserting that what is generally known about members of a category is not applicable to some particular member, see Sacks (1995: I, 44–45). Among Hungarians—even liberal, cosmopolitan Hungarians—I have on several occasions heard someone referred to as “*Román, de rendes*” (Romanian, but quite all right) or something to that effect.
  32. On “population politics” and the metaphor of the gardening state, see Holquist (1997: 131), Bauman (2000), and Weiner (2001).
  33. Traditional churches, too, are built around ethnic categories, with two “Hungarian” churches (Roman Catholic and Calvinist) and two “Romanian” churches (Orthodox and Greek-Catholic or Uniate). With aging congregations, dwindling influence, and increased competition from less ethnically marked neo-Protestant denominations, the traditional churches are less significant than schools as institutional loci of ethnic categories.



34. Data are drawn from figures provided by the School Inspectorate of Cluj County.
35. Of the Hungarians who married in Cluj in 1999, nearly 75 percent married other Hungarians, while about 25 percent married Romanians. This suggests a moderately high degree of ethnic endogamy, but only moderately high, for about 40 percent of all marriages involving Hungarians were mixed marriages. Data were compiled from forms filled out by couples, consulted at the Cluj branch of the National Commission for Statistics.
36. As Weber put it nearly a century ago (1964 [1922]: 313; cf. 1968 [1922]: 394–95), a precise and differentiated analysis would “surely throw out the umbrella term ‘ethnic’ altogether,” for it is “entirely unusable” for any “truly rigorous investigation.”

## 2. Beyond “Identity”

1. For a tempered critique of identity politics, see Gitlin (1995); for a sophisticated defense, Kelley (1997). For a suggestion that the high noon of identity politics may have passed, see Posnock (1995), Hollinger (1998), and this volume, Chapter 5.
2. For a contemporary philosophical treatment, see Böhm (1989). On the history and vicissitudes of “identity” and cognate terms, see Mackenzie (1978: 19–27), and Ely (1997: 76 ff.).
3. The 1930s *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* contains no entry on identity, but it does have one on “identification,” largely focused on fingerprinting and other modes of judicial marking of individuals (Sellin 1930). The 1968 *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* contains an article on “identification, political” by Buchanan (1968), which focuses on a “person’s identification with a group”—including class, party, and religion—and another on “identity, psychosocial,” by Erikson (1968a), which focuses on the individual’s “role integration in his group.”
4. This paragraph relies primarily on Gleason’s (1983) excellent “semantic history” of the term.
5. For the appropriation of Erikson’s work in political science, see Mackenzie (1978).
6. The popularization of the term began well before the turbulence of the mid- and late 1960s. Gleason (1983: 922 ff.) attributes this initial popularization to the midcentury prestige and cognitive authority of the social sciences, the wartime and postwar vogue of national character studies, and the postwar critique of mass society, which newly problematized the “relationship of the individual to society.”
7. Erikson (1968b: 22) characterized identity as “a process ‘located’ in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture, a process which establishes . . . the identity of those two identities” (italics in the

original). Although this is a relatively late formulation, the link was already established in Erikson’s immediately postwar writings.

8. Mackenzie (1978: 11), reporting a seminar paper of 1974; Coles is quoted in Gleason (1983: 913). Gleason (1983: 915) notes that the problem was remarked even earlier: “by the late 1960s the terminological situation had gotten completely out of hand.” Erikson (1968b: 16) himself lamented the “indiscriminate” use of “identity” and “identity crisis.”
9. Between 1990 and 1997 alone, for example, the number of journal articles in the Current Contents database with “identity” or “identities” in the title more than doubled, while the total number of articles increased by about 20 percent. Fearon (1999: 1) found a similar increase in the number of dissertation abstracts containing “identity,” even after controlling for the increase in the total number of dissertations abstracted.
10. One might also speak of a narrower “‘identity crisis’ crisis.” Coined and popularized by Erikson, and applied to social and political collectivities by Lucian Pye and others, the notion of “identity crisis” took off in the 1960s. (For Erikson’s own retrospective reflections on the origins and vicissitudes of the expression, see the prologue to Erikson [1968b: 16 ff.]) Crises have become (oxymoronically) chronic; and putative crises of identity have proliferated to the point of destroying whatever meaning the concept may once have had. Already in 1968, Erikson (1968b: 16) could lament that the expression was being used in a “ritualized” fashion. A bibliographical sampling revealed that “identity crises” have been predicated not only of the usual suspects—above all ethnic, racial, national, gender, and sexual identities—but also of such heterogeneous subjects as fifth-century Gaul, the forestry profession, histologists, the French medical corps during the First World War, the Internet, the Sonowal Kacharis, technical education in India, early childhood special education, French hospital nurses, kindergarten teachers, television, sociology, Japan’s consumer groups, the European Space Agency, Japan’s MITI, the National Association of Broadcasting, Cathay Pacific Airways, Presbyterians, the CIA, universities, Clorox, Chevrolet, lawyers, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, black theology, eighteenth-century Scottish literature, and, our favorite, dermopterous fossils.
11. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, inaugurated in 1994, “explores the relationship of racial, ethnic and national identities and power hierarchies within national and global arenas. . . . [It] responds to the paradox of our time: the growth of a global economy and transnational movements of populations produce or perpetuate distinctive cultural practices and differentiated identities” (Statement of “aims and scope” printed on inside front cover). *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, whose first issue appeared in 1995, is concerned with “the formations of, and transformations in, socially significant identities, their attendant forms of material exclusion and power, as well as the political and cultural possibilities

- open[ed] up by these identifications” (statement printed on inside front cover).
12. Social theorists and social scientists whose main work lies *outside* the traditional “homelands” of identity theorizing yet who have written explicitly on “identity” include Bauman (1992), Bourdieu (1991c), Braudel (1988–1990), Castells (1997), Eisenstadt and Giesen (1995), Giddens (1991), Habermas (1991), Lévi-Strauss (1977), Ricoeur (1992), Sen (1985), Taylor (1992), Tilly (1996), and White (1992).
  13. On experience-near and experience-distant concepts—the terms are derived from Heinz Kohut—see Geertz (1983: 57). The basic contrast goes back at least to Durkheim’s *Rules of Sociological Method* (1938: Chapter 2), which criticized the sociological use of “pre-notions” or lay concepts that have been “created by experience and for it.”
  14. As Wacquant (1997: 222–23) notes of race, the “continual barter between folk and analytical notions, the uncontrolled conflation of social and sociological understandings of ‘race’” is “intrinsic to the category. From its inception, the collective fiction labeled ‘race’ . . . has always mixed science with common sense and traded on the complicity between them.”
  15. On “ethnic identity entrepreneurs,” see Lal (1997).
  16. This argument is developed further in Brubaker (1996: Chapter 1).
  17. See also Wacquant (1997) and Taylor (manuscript: 7). Weber (1968: 385 ff.) provides a strikingly modern argument questioning the analytical utility of the notions of “race,” “ethnic group,” and “nation.”
  18. Even Durkheim’s (1938) uncompromisingly objectivist sociological manifesto shies away from this extreme position; see Chapter 2.
  19. See also Wacquant’s (1996) criticism of the concept of “underclass.”
  20. For a sustained and influential example, see Butler (1990).
  21. For a nuanced review of the debate, which appreciates that there may be good reasons for the strategic use of essentialist arguments, see Calhoun (1994: 12–20). See also Cerulo (1997: 387 ff.) for a review of constructivist work on identity.
  22. Bonilla-Silva (1997: 469–70), for example, slides from an impeccably constructivist characterization of “racialized social systems” as “societies . . . partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories” to the claim that such placement “produces definite social relations between the races,” where “the races” are characterized as real social groups with differing objective interests. In their influential *Racial Formation in the United States* (1994), Omi and Winant strive to be more consistently constructivist. But they too fail to remain faithful to their constructivist definition of “race” as an “unstable and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle . . . [and as] a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of social bodies” (55). The historical experiences of “white European” immigrants, they argue, were and remain fundamentally different from those of “racial minority groups” (including Latinos and Asian Americans as well as African Americans and Native Americans); the “ethnicity paradigm” is applicable to the former but not—because of its “neglect of race per se”—to the latter (14–23). This sharp distinction between “ethnic” and “racial” groups neglects the fact—now well established in the historical literature—that the “whiteness” of several European immigrant groups was “achieved” after an initial period in which they were often categorized in racial or racelike terms as nonwhite; it also neglects what might be called “de-racialization” processes among some groups they consider fundamentally “racial.” On the former, see Barrett and Roediger (1997); on the latter, see Perlmann and Waldinger (1997: 903 ff.).
  23. Michaels (1992: 61n) has argued that ostensibly constructivist notions of cultural identity, insofar as they are advanced—as they often are in practice, especially in connection with race, ethnicity, and nationality—as reasons for our holding, or valuing, a set of beliefs or practices, cannot avoid essentialist appeals to who we *are*. “There are no anti-essentialist accounts of identity. . . . [T]he essentialism inheres not in the description of the identity but in the attempt to derive the practices from the identity—we *do* this because we *are* this. Hence anti-essentialism . . . must take the form not of producing more sophisticated accounts of identity (that is, more sophisticated essentialisms) but of ceasing to explain what people do or should do by reference to who they are and/or what culture they belong to.” Note, however, the crucial elision at the end of the quoted passage between “do” and “should do.” Essentialism inheres, *pace* Michaels, less in the “attempt to derive [in an explanatory mode] the practice from the identity” than in the attempt to *prescribe* the practices on the basis of an *ascribed* identity: you *ought to do* this because you *are* this.
  24. For a different approach to this question, see Fearon (1999).
  25. See for example Cohen (1985).
  26. This opposition depends on a narrow conceptualization of the category “interest,” one restricted to interests understood to be directly derivable from social structure (see for example Somers [1994: 624]). If interest is instead understood to be culturally or discursively constituted, to be dependent on the discursive *identification* of interests and (more fundamentally) interest-bearing units, to be “constituted and reconstituted *in* time and *over* time,” like narrative identities in Somers’s account, then the opposition loses much of its force.
  27. Some strands of identitarian theorizing emphasize the relative autonomy of self-understanding vis-à-vis social location. The tendency is most pronounced in the fourth and the fifth uses sketched in the text.
  28. The contemporary conceptualization of identity as unmoored from social structure is foreign to most premodern social settings, where self- and other-identifications are generally understood as following directly from social structure. See for example Berger (1983).

29. Much recent work on gender, to be sure, has criticized as “essentialist” the idea that women share a fundamental sameness. Yet certain strands of recent work nonetheless predicate such sameness of some “group” defined by the *intersection* of gender with other categorical attributes (race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation). See for example Collins (1991).
30. For a sophisticated historical and philosophical account, see Taylor (1989).
31. For a key statement by Erikson himself, see Erikson (1968b: 22).
32. On the shift from an emphasis on sameness and unity to an emphasis on difference and plurality, see Sökefeld 1999: 417.
33. Two important, although partial, exceptions deserve note. Literary scholar Walter Benn Michaels (1992) has formulated a brilliant and provocative critique of the concept of “cultural identity” in “Race into Culture.” But that essay focuses less on analytical uses of the notion of “identity” than on the difficulty of specifying what makes “our” culture or “our” past count as “our own”—when the reference is not to one’s *actual* cultural practices or one’s *actual* personal past but to some putative group culture or group past—without implicitly invoking the notion of “race.” He concludes that “our sense of culture is characteristically meant to displace race, but . . . culture has turned out to be a way of continuing rather than repudiating racial thought. It is only the appeal to race that . . . gives notions like losing our culture, preserving it, [or] . . . restoring people’s culture to them . . . their pathos” (61–62). Anthropologist Richard Handler (1994; see also 1988) argues that “we should be as suspicious of ‘identity’ as we have learned to be of ‘culture,’ ‘tradition,’ ‘nation,’ and ‘ethnic group’” (27), but then pulls his critical punches. His central argument—that the salience of “identity” in contemporary Western, especially American, society “does not mean that the concept can be applied unthinkingly to other places and times” (27)—is certainly true, but it implies that the concept *can* be fruitfully applied in contemporary Western settings, something that other passages in the same article and his own work on Québécois nationalism tend to call into question. Also registering anthropological skepticism about the concept of identity, from a point of view in some respects similar to our own, is the brief statement by van Beek (1999), which came to our attention only after the article was published.
34. “I use ‘identity’ to refer to the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate,’ speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us” (Hall 1996: 5–6).
35. Here the blurring between categories of analysis and categories of practice is particularly striking. As Handler (1988) has argued, scholarly conceptions of “nation” and “national identity” have tended to replicate key features of nationalist ideology, notably the axiomatic understanding of boundedness and homogeneity in the putative “nation.” The same argument could be made about “race” or “ethnicity.”
36. This point has been nicely formulated by Driessen (1999: 432), in a passage that came to our attention after our article was published: “‘Identity’ has become a shibboleth, too frequently part of an academic litany that presents it as relational, shifting, mixed, constructed, (re-)invented, negotiated, processual, and conjunctural. The repetition of such qualifications has become part of an academic identification ritual.”
37. See also Somers 1992. Martin (1994, 1995) has also argued for seeing identity in terms of narrative.
38. On the merits of “identification,” see Hall (1996). Although Hall’s is a Foucauldian and post-Freudian understanding of “identification,” drawing on the “discursive and psychoanalytic repertoire,” and quite different from that proposed here, he does usefully warn that identification is “almost as tricky as, though preferable to, ‘identity’ itself; and certainly no guarantee against the conceptual difficulties which have beset the latter” (2). See also Glaeser (2000, esp. Chapter 1).
39. For an anthropological perspective, usefully extending the Barthian model, see Jenkins (1994 and 1996).
40. Berger (1974: 163–64), makes a similar point, though he phrases it in terms of a dialectic—and possible conflict—between subjective and objective identity.
41. See Chapter 3: 67.
42. Similar conceptions have been applied to colonial societies, especially in regard to the way colonizers’ schemes for classification and enumeration shape and indeed constitute the social phenomena (such as “tribe” and “caste” in India) being classified. See in particular Cohn (1996).
43. On the dilemmas, difficulties, and ironies involved in “administering identity,” in authoritatively determining who belongs to what category in the implementation of race-conscious law, see Ford (1994).
44. See Hall (1996: 2 ff.) and Finlayson (1998: 157 ff.).
45. An extensive anthropological literature on African and other societies, for example, describes healing cults, spirit possession cults, witchcraft eradication movements, and other collective phenomena that help to constitute particular forms of self-understanding, particular ways in which individuals situate themselves socially. See studies ranging from Turner (1957) and Lewis (1971) to more recent work by Stoller (1989) and Boddy (1989).
46. For a poignant example, see Drakulic’s (1993: 50–52) account of being “overcome by nationhood” as a result of the war in the former Yugoslavia.
47. For a good example of the latter, see Mary Waters’ (1990) analysis of the optional, exceptionally unconstraining ethnic “identities”—or what Herbert Gans has called the “symbolic ethnicity”—of third and fourth generation descendants of European Catholic immigrants to the United States.
48. On the centrality of categorical commonality to modern nationalism, see Handler (1988: Chapter 2).

49. See for example the discussion of the “anti-categorical imperative” in Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994: 1414).
50. More recent and systematic constructivist accounts include Amselle and M'Bokolo (1985), Vail (1988), and Ranger (1983).
51. For a case in point, see Werbner (1996). A more reflective approach—deploying a range of terms to indicate different forms of affiliation and examining what “identical” actually means in particular contexts—can be found in Fay (1995). Identitarian positions are severely criticized by Bayart (1996).
52. See Cohen's (1971) pioneering study.
53. On Rwanda see Prunier (1997) and Chrétien (1997). In his account of conflict in Sierra Leone, Richards (1996) stresses networks over groups, creolization over differentiation, and overlapping moral visions over conflicts of “cultures.”
54. For further discussion of the Nuer, and of the broader issues raised in this article, see Calhoun (2003).
55. For an elaboration of this argument, see Brubaker (1998b).
56. For a fuller version of this argument, see Brubaker (1996: Chapter 2). For a parallel argument about Yugoslavia, see Vujacic and Zaslavsky (1991).
57. Some peripheral Soviet regions, to be sure, had already experienced national movements in the last years of the Russian empire (and during the ensuing civil war), but even in those regions, the social basis of such movements was weak, and identification with “the nation” was limited to a relatively small part of the population. Elsewhere, the significance of the regime in constituting national divisions was even more prominent. On Soviet “nation-making” in the 1920s, see Slezkine (1994) and Martin (2001).
58. For data on nationality and language, see Gosudarstvennyi Komitet SSSR po Statistike (1991: 78–79).
59. For a more sustained discussion of this case, see the final section of Chapter 1.
60. One of the best introductions to constructivist analysis in American history is Lewis (1996). See also Fields (1990).
61. More recent works on this formative period include Berlin (1998) and a special issue of *William and Mary Quarterly* on “Constructing Race” (3rd series, vol. 54, no. 1, 1997).
62. The different ways in which race has been configured in the Americas has been an important theme in the development of comparative history, beginning with Tannenbaum (1946). An influential short statement is Wagley (1965).
63. One of the foundational texts of what is sometimes considered black nationalism, Martin Delany's account of his voyage to Africa, is notable for its lack of interest in the cultural practices of the Africans he encountered. What counted for him was that a Christian of African origin would find his destiny in ridding himself of oppression in the United States and bringing Christian civilization to Africa. See Delany and Campbell (1969). For an illuminating recent book on African-American connections with Africa—and the differing

ways in which linkages were made at the same time that cultural distinctions were emphasized—see Campbell (1995).

64. For one such contribution, see Appiah (1992).
65. See especially the lucid and influential books by Kymlicka (1989, 1995).
66. In a debate with Young (1997), the philosopher Nancy Fraser (1995) has juxtaposed a politics of “recognition” to one of “redistribution,” arguing that both are needed, since some groups are exploited as well as stigmatized or un-recognized. Strikingly, both parties to the debate treat group boundaries as clear-cut, and both therefore conceive of progressive politics as involving intergroup coalitions. Both neglect other forms of political action that do not presuppose commonality or “groupness.”
67. See also Boissevain's (1974) classic study.

### 3. *Ethnicity as Cognition*

1. This is in part simply an effort to avoid the cumbersome repetition of “ethnicity, race, and nationhood.” But it also reflects our belief that ethnicity, race, and nation are best treated together as one rather than three distinct domains. We return to this issue in the final section of the chapter.
2. For a broad overview of the cognitive turn, see Gardner (1987). For the cognitive revolution in psychology, see Baars (1986); for linguistics, Chomsky (1964 [1959]); for philosophy, Fodor (1983); and for the development of cognitive anthropology, D'Andrade (1995). In sociology and related disciplines, the cognitive turn has informed work on organizations, boundaries, risk, and the sociology of knowledge. See DiMaggio and Powell (1991), DiMaggio (1997), Zerubavel (1991, 1997), Cerulo (2002), Lamont and Molnár (2002), Heimer (1988), and Swidler and Arditi (1994). Via Goffman's (1974) work on framing, the cognitive turn has also informed work on social movements; see Snow et al. (1986), Snow and Benford (1988), Gamson and Modigliani (1989), Gamson (1992), and Johnston (1995). For cognitively oriented work in political science, see Herrmann (1988); for economics, Simon et al. (1992); for the history of science, Nersessian (1995); and for history, Gouwens (1998).
3. In this respect we follow the lead of DiMaggio (1997), which specifies lessons of cognitive research for the study of culture; see also DiMaggio (2002).
4. Classification and categorization figure centrally in several recent overviews of the field (Banks 1996; Cornell and Hartmann 1998; Eriksen 1993; Fenton 1999). See also Washington (2002), which treats race, ethnicity, and nationality (along with gender, age, class, caste, and sexuality) as “elementary forms of social classification.”
5. See <http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>.
6. In much work on race, to be sure—and in some work on ethnic, national and other identities—constructivist language masks essentialist or at least substantialist assumptions (Loveman 1999; see also this volume, Chapter 2).

7. This shift in focus towards boundaries, categories, and classification is also evident in recent works whose central focus is not ethnicity per se, but broader, more general social processes such as social exclusion and inequality (which of course are centrally relevant to race, ethnicity, and nationhood). See for example Tilly (1998), which makes “categorical inequality” central to a theoretical argument about the structure and dynamics of “durable inequality.”
8. For country-by-country reports on the recording of ethnicity in official identity documents, see <http://www.preventgenocide.org/prevent/removing-facilitating-factors/IDcards/survey/index.htm>.
9. The variability and context dependency of practical categorization is not limited to the domain of ethnicity. In modern societies, officially sanctioned classificatory schemes are available for numerous organizational fields. Yet practitioners within these fields develop their own practical, “folk” taxonomies that guide them in performing their everyday tasks, as in the case of emergency physicians (Dingwall 1983) or U.S. immigration inspectors (Gilboy 1991). Similarly, although modern states have highly developed and codified schemes for the classification of occupations and social classes (Szreter 1993), everyday occupational and class categorizations are variable and context-dependent (Boltanski and Thévenot 1983).
10. For the treatment of categorization in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, see also notes 13 and 14 to Chapter 1 (p. 207).
11. A notable exception is Horowitz’s classic *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (1985), which draws on accounts of assimilation and contrast effects in social judgment theory to help explain shifts in the scale of ethnic identities as politics expand and contract. More recent exceptions include Levine (1999) and Gil-White (2001).
12. For the discursive critique of cognitivism, see also Billig (1985), Potter and Wetherell (1987), Edwards and Potter (1992), and Edwards (1997).
13. For an overview of the large social psychological literature on stereotypes, see Hamilton and Sherman (1994).
14. Studies using a modified research design have subsequently shown that something more than “mere categorization” is likely to be at work in the production of in-group bias. The combination of a “group schema” with additional information regarding the appropriateness of competition appears to be the cognitive mechanism that produces in-group bias (Insko and Schopler 1987).
15. For a review of studies showing that people judge out-groups to be more homogeneous than in-groups, see Messick and Mackie (1989: 55–59).
16. On “entitativity,” see Campbell (1958), Hamilton and Sherman (1996), Hamilton et al. (1998), and Sherman et al. (1999).
17. The schema concept also resonates strongly with the metaphor of culture as a “toolkit,” and is a way of specifying how cultural “tools” are actually used (Swidler 1986; cf. DiMaggio 1997, 2002). While influential ways of analyzing culture in recent years have privileged semantic relations between symbols (see Biernacki [1999] for an analysis and critique), the schema concept directs our attention to the pragmatics of symbols, to the ways in which symbols and ideas are represented, recalled, transmitted, diffused, activated, overridden, or ignored.
18. Schemas differ in their availability and in their salience. Schemas that are chronically available or easily and frequently activated, as well as those that are highly salient once activated, will be more important in organizing experience and structuring the interpretation of the world than will schemas that are only rarely activated or nonsalient. Even when activated and salient, however, specific schemas do not ordinarily directly govern specific overt behavior (Markus and Zajonc 1985: 162–63). Rather, schemas shape behavior in more indirect and interactive ways, in part by activating goals (D’Andrade 1990: 115–18).
19. An important exception is Wimmer’s (2004) study of group formation in immigrant neighborhoods in three Swiss cities.
20. For an analysis and critique of groupism, see this volume, Chapter 1. For a critique of the prevailing “ethnic reductionism” in British public discourse, likewise involving the reification of putatively bounded ethnoreligious and ethnocultural groups, see Baumann (1996), especially Chapters 1 and 2. Ironically, reified and groupist understandings of culture as a bounded and integral whole have been institutionalized in the ideology and practice of multiculturalism (Schierup 1992; Vertovec 1996) just as such notions of culture have been subjected to strong anthropological and sociological criticism (Abu-Lughod 1991; Strauss and Quinn 1997).
21. Of course, as Emanuel Schegloff reminded us, perspectives *on* the world are themselves *in* the world, and are every bit as real and consequential as other sorts of things. As every Sociology 1 student is taught, “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas and Thomas 1928: 572). Our point here is that race, ethnicity, and nation are in the world, in the first instance, *as* perspectives on the world, not as substantial entities.
22. Bourdieu’s critique of substantialist conceptions of groups and of the false opposition between objectivist and subjectivist understandings of groups and classes is pertinent here (see e.g., Bourdieu 1990b, 1991d). Although he did not write specifically on ethnicity, his essay on regionalism (1991c) is richly suggestive for the study of ethnicity.
23. Note that, for Sperber, what makes a representation “public” is not the size or nature of its audience but its externality, its embodiment in a form that is, in principle, accessible to others.
24. Without drawing on expressly cognitive research, Kanchan Chandra (2004: Chapters 2 and 3) has argued that ethnicity, being readily and costlessly ascertainable in contexts of limited information, is in effect easy to see. This, in her view, helps explain the prevalence of a politics of ethnic favoritism in patronage democracies.
25. For an elaboration of this point, see this volume, Chapter 1.
26. See the works cited in n. 16.

27. A concern with the distribution of representations, rather than simply with their content, can help correct for one very common bias in the study of race, ethnicity, and nation. This results from deriving characterizations of groups' interests, desires, beliefs, etc., from the content of the public representations of a few (often self-appointed) representatives of the group in question. The bias arises not only from privileging public over mental representations, but from privileging, within the class of public representations, those that leave relatively accessible material traces in the form of texts, communiqués, press reports, interviews, and so on over the less easily accessible public representations produced in the course of ordinary interaction.
28. For works indicative of this broadening of horizons and blurring of boundaries, see Rothschild (1981), Eriksen (1993), Calhoun (1993a), Banks (1996), Jenkins (1997), and Cornell and Hartmann (1998).
29. For reviews of the debate, see McKay (1982), Scott (1990), Eller and Coughlan (1993), Smith (1998), and Gil-White (1999).
30. As an analytic term, "primordial" was introduced—though not in connection with ethnicity—by Edward Shils (1957). It was extended to ethnicity by Geertz (1963).
31. Hirschfeld belongs to a group of cognitive researchers who view the mind as a collection of dedicated, special-purpose devices rather than a single, general-purpose, cognitive instrument. On this view, which traces its antecedents to the Chomskian revolution in linguistics, there are distinct, dedicated, and evolutionarily adapted cognitive mechanisms and devices associated with language learning, color perception, edge detection, facial recognition, and many other domains of cognitive function (Hirschfeld and Gelman 1994; Cosmides and Tooby 1994).
32. Hirschfeld rejects the prevailing view that racial categories are first developed by children through naive, as it were "inductive," observation of conspicuous physical differences or simply through socialization into prevailing classificatory codes and practices. Neither conspicuous visual evidence nor cultural socialization, he argues, is crucial to young children's attempts to make sense of human diversity. Rather than simply "seeing" or "learning about" race, he suggests, drawing on experimental evidence, children are cognitively equipped and disposed to construe the social world—largely independently of variations in what they see or what they are told—in terms of "race"-like intrinsic kinds.
33. For a critical analysis of the concept of identity, see this volume, Chapter 2.
34. For an account that makes this point in different terms, see Gil-White (1999: 804 ff.).
35. The distribution of such cues in the immediate situation, of course, will be shaped in varying ways by broader levels of context such as institutional setting, cultural or social milieu, and political moment.
36. Here circumstantialists might usefully draw on the social movement literature.

For an attempt to link discussions of framing in that literature to cognitive research, see Johnston (1995).

#### 4. *Ethnic and Nationalist Violence*

1. This essay was originally published in 1998, and we have not sought to re-contextualize the analysis to take account of September 11 and its aftermath. We have, however, made reference to some more recent work in the text and notes.
2. To avoid having to repeat "ethnic or nationalist," we will generally use "ethnic" as an umbrella term in this chapter, as in Chapters 1 and 3.
3. Since this article was published, a number of studies have downplayed the significance of ethnicity in civil wars. Mueller (2000) attributes greater significance to thuggery, looting, and profiteering than to ethnicity in the Yugoslav violence. Ellis (2001) highlights the religious dimension of the Liberian Civil War, but ethnic identities play only a minor role in his account, and he suggests elsewhere (Ellis 2003: 35 ff.) that characterizing most African conflicts as "ethnic" is misleading. Kalyvas (2004), studying the Greek civil war of 1943–49, finds little difference in patterns of violence between homogeneously Greek areas and ethnically mixed regions. In a broad study of the mass killing of noncombatants, Valentino (2004) uses statistical data to show that ethnicity is less significant than often assumed, and that most mass killings are set in motion by elites and are often carried out without broad popular support. Fearon and Laitin (2003) make the case that violent insurgencies are no more likely in ethnically divided states than in homogeneous ones. In a similar vein, older work on Latin American insurgencies and state terror (e.g. Wickham-Crowley 1990) analyzes fundamental processes of civil war violence that do not require ethnic difference. Against the grain of this research, Kaufman (2001) emphasizes the importance of myths and symbols that mobilize ethnic hatred in explaining violent conflict in the Caucasus and southeastern Europe. Laitin (2001) disputes this claim with data purporting to show that nationalist conflict that led to large scale violence (in Azerbaijan and Moldova) involved no more hatred *ex ante* than cases of nationalist conflict that did not turn violent (Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan). Another exception to the line of research sketched here is Mamdani (2001), which asserts that the social construction of race by the Belgians played a key role in turning everyday violence into genocide. But Strauss (2001) and Davenport (2004), both working on day-to-day and district-by-district variation in Rwandan genocidal violence, report on underlying processes that do not require, in the end, ethnic hatred.
4. Citations here are merely illustrative; we have tried to cite relatively recent, wide-ranging, or otherwise exemplary works, in which ample citations to further pertinent literature can be found.



5. Working within a broadly similar theoretical tradition, Petersen (2002) argues that structurally induced resentment, linking individual emotion and group status, best accounts for ethnic violence in a broad range of East European cases.
6. General mechanisms may, of course, be specified in a deductive as well as an inductive manner. Although most of the work cited in the rest of this subsection is broadly inductive, we also cite here for reasons of convenience a few deductive works. Deductive theorizing about general mechanisms implicated in ethnic violence is considered in more sustained fashion in the next section.
7. On Northern Ireland, see McGarry and O'Leary (1995), Feldman (1991), Bruce (1992), Bell (1993), White (1993), Aretxaga (1993, 1995); on Yugoslavia, see Woodward (1995), Cohen (1993), Glenny (1992), Denich (1994), Gagnon (1994–1995); on Sri Lanka, see Kapferer (1988), Tambiah (1986), Kemper (1991), Pfaffenberger (1991, 1994), Spencer (1990), Sabaratnam (1990); and on Rwanda and Burundi see Lemarchand (1996), Prunier (1997), Malkki (1995).
8. Blalock (1989: 14) notes the degradation of propositional content that typically occurs once case studies get taken up in the literature and involved in theoretical controversy.
9. These clusters are not, of course, mutually exclusive. For example, Lake and Rothchild (1996) draw on elements from all three. Since this article was published, a number of works have emphasized strategic aspects of ethnic violence. Kalyvas (1999) shows that what appears as senseless killing in a religious war is really carefully calculated to punish defectors. This argument is more fully elaborated in Kalyvas (2004), where levels of violence are shown to change depending on the conditions that support defection. Gulden (2002) also shows violence to be governed by strategic considerations on the ground. Ron (2000) shows vast differences in levels of Serb killing of Muslims depending on which side of the border the Muslims were living on. Strategic geography, not ethnic hatreds, explains the differences. Weinstein (2003) develops an “industrial organization” model of civil war violence based on field work in Uganda, Mozambique, and Peru. Violence, he argues, will increase with levels of foreign support; the more rebels need to rely on local resources, the more careful they will be in training cadres, and the less they will loot and kill. A different game model proposed by Azam and Hoeffler (2002), and supported by statistical data from Africa, shows that state armies fighting insurgencies will select an equilibrium that terrorizes the civilian population.

##### 5. *The Return of Assimilation?*

1. Glazer's title, to be sure, was wry, not celebratory; it was intended to acknowledge, not to endorse, the current ascendancy of multiculturalism.
2. For American perspectives, see Hollinger (1995), Gitlin (1995), and this

- volume, Chapter Two. For European perspectives, see Dittrich and Radtke (1990), Schierup (1992), and Vertovec (1996).
3. Work published since this essay was written provides further support for this observation. See among others the major new books on diversity (Shuck 2003), assimilation (Alba and Nee 2003), and the “minority rights revolution” (Skrentny 2002).
4. I refer to Imperial Germany rather than Nazi Germany because Nazi policies were, of course, murderously dissimilationist rather than assimilationist.
5. There is another transitive use of “assimilate” that is less problematic, normatively and analytically. This is the use of “assimilate” to mean *treat similarly* rather than *make similar*. To assimilate X's to Y's in one's dealings with them is to treat them similarly rather than differently. From a differentialist normative perspective, to be sure, such similarity of treatment can be problematic. But in general “treating similarly” is a transitive meaning of “assimilate” quite distinct from, and normatively and analytically less suspect than, “making similar.”
6. For sophisticated discussions of the idea of integration, see Favell (2000) and Bauböck (2001).
7. This essay was published in the summer of 2001. Since September 11, the incipient pendulum swing away from differentialism appears to have gathered momentum in Europe. Alongside an integrative concern with assimilation, to be sure, the aftermath of September 11 also occasioned strict new measures against asylum-seekers and harsh anti-immigrant (and in particular anti-Muslim) rhetoric. See for example Bawer (2002); “Forget asylum-seekers: it's the people inside who count,” *The Economist*, 10 May 2003.
8. Although this program, committed to cultural maintenance in the interest of keeping the option of “return” open to immigrants, is strongly differentialist in orientation, it has not been very popular. Even at the peak differentialist moment, in the early 1980s, only about 20 percent of eligible students participated (Boyzon-Fradet 1992: 158); by 1992–1993, only 12 percent of Algerian citizens enrolled in French primary schools—and a considerably smaller proportion of students of Algerian origin—participated (Vermès 1997).
9. Differentialist discourse concerned not only populations of immigrant origin but also regional minority cultures; on the latter see Giordan (1982).
10. German discourse on immigration and its sequels, too, has been strongly differentialist. On the historical roots of this differentialist discursive tradition, see Brubaker (1992: 3–17); for contemporary manifestations, see Joppke (1999: 188–89).
11. On the still more “progressive” differentialist solution—the proposed *Niederlassungsgesetz* or settlement law that would grant *all* citizenship rights, including the right to vote in national elections, on the basis of residence rather than formal citizenship—see Joppke (1999: 192–93).
12. “Geburtsprinzip und Optionsregelung.” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 May 1999.



13. A considerable amount of mainstream sociological research, to be sure, continued throughout this period to study processes of assimilation; for reviews see Price (1969), Hirschman (1983).
14. Some earlier literature, while positing acculturation to a single core culture, can be said to have anticipated the notion of segmented assimilation by conceptualizing structural assimilation and intermarriage among European immigrants as occurring within confessional boundaries (Kennedy 1944 [but see also the critique of Peach 1980]; Gordon 1964).

#### 6. "Civic" and "Ethnic" Nationalism

1. Kohn himself did not actually speak of "Eastern nationalism"; but his principal distinction was indeed between "the West" and "the rest," between the original forms of nationalism that developed in the "Western world"—in England, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United States—and those that later developed elsewhere, in the first instance in Germany and Central Europe, later in Eastern Europe and Asia.
2. While Kohn has been justly criticized for overgeneralizing about Western and non-Western forms of nationalism, and for downplaying differences among Western European and among Central and Eastern European forms of nationalism, it is important to underscore that *The Idea of Nationalism* is a vastly more nuanced and sophisticated book than most contemporary critics acknowledge.
3. General Election Manifesto, cited from <http://plaid-cymru.wales.com/policy/manifesto.htm>.
4. Siol nan Gaidheal, Scottish Cultural and Fraternal Organisation, Statement on "Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality" (<http://www.siol-nan-gaidheal.com/raetna.htm>).
5. *The Scotsman*, 1 November 1995.
6. Reported in *Washington Post*, 18 October 1995. On media overreaction to Parizeau's gaffe, see Seymour et al. (1998: 29–36).
7. This approach informs Zubrzycki's (2001) interesting case study of debates over the framing of the preamble to the Polish Constitution.
8. The argument that follows is similar in certain respects to those of Yack (1996) and Seymour et al. (1998), though they examine the civic-ethnic distinction primarily from the point of view of normative political philosophy. For related arguments in political theory, see also Fine (1994), Nielsen (1996), and Xenos (1996). Schnapper (1998) provides a sociological account, but her argument is quite different from mine. As Seymour et al. point out (1998: 25), Schnapper claims to be problematizing the civic-ethnic distinction, but in effect does so by endorsing and restating the civic account. For a qualified sociological defense of the distinction, see Zubrzycki (2002).
9. The term "ethnic," Weber observed, lumps together "phenomena that a rigorous sociological analysis . . . would have to distinguish carefully: the actual

- subjective effect of those customs conditioned by heredity on the one hand and by tradition on the other; the differential impact of the varying content of custom; the reciprocal working of linguistic, religious, and political community, past and present, on the formation of customs; the extent to which such factors create attraction and repulsion, and especially the extent to which they foster the belief in affinity or disaffinity of blood; the consequences of all of the above for social action in general, for sexual relations of various sorts, and for the various types of social action developing on the basis of shared custom or the belief in shared blood—all this would have to be analyzed separately. In the course of such an analysis, the lumping concept 'ethnic' would surely have to be thrown out altogether. For it is entirely useless . . . for any truly exact investigation" (Weber 1964 [1922]: 313; cf. 1968 [1922]: 394–95).
10. In later work, Smith revised this view, and came to attribute greater importance to imputed common descent. In *The Ethnic Revival*, Smith argues—implausibly, in my view—that a "myth of common and unique origin in time and place" is "essential for the sense of ethnic community," and notes that "cultural dimensions remain secondary . . . to the sense of common origins and history of the group. This constitutes the core of the group's identity, and of its sense of uniqueness" (Smith 1981: 66–67). *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, in turn, qualifies this view: "if one cannot point to alleged filiation and imputed common ancestry for all citizens, one can at least trace one's cultural pedigree back to some antique exemplars which, allegedly, embodied the same qualities, values and ideals that are being sought by the 'nation-to-be' today" (Smith 1986: 147).
  11. A further difficulty is that the notion of "common descent" is itself ambiguous. It too can be interpreted strictly or loosely. Strictly speaking, common descent implies descent from a single common ancestor. Loosely interpreted, common descent involves some rhetorical emphasis on common ancestry or common "blood," without the implausible specification of a single common ancestor. (Still more loosely interpreted, as in Anthony Smith's recent work, it shades over into a rhetorical emphasis on common "ideological" rather than "genealogical" descent; see Smith [1986: 147–48].) How do we know whether there is a significant emphasis on common descent? Germany, for example, is often treated as a paradigmatic case of ethnic nationalism. Yet can one seriously maintain that there was a strong emphasis on common descent at Bismarck's time? Surely it is not enough to quote Bismarck's urging Germans to "think with your blood," as Walker Connor (1994: 198) does, especially when Bismarck's consistently statist orientation, and his distance from all manifestations of *völkisch* nationalism, is well documented in the literature. Nor is it enough to point to the exclusive reliance on *jus sanguinis* in German citizenship law. *Jus sanguinis* is a legal technique that is the foundation of citizenship law throughout continental Europe, France included. The distinctive consistency with which the principle has been carried through in German law indeed requires explanation, and I tried to provide

- one (Brubaker 1992). But one cannot take a legal principle for regulating membership of the state as a direct indicator of widely shared social understandings of what constitutes membership in the nation.
12. This assumes, of course, that the civic-ethnic distinction is understood to be exhaustive, which is how it is usually treated: understandings of nationhood are said to be *either* civic *or* ethnic.
  13. Against the “exceptionalist” view that sees American nationhood as uniquely and purely political, as founded on an idea, Hollinger (1995) and Lind (1995) see America as a nation-state founded on a common, and distinctive, American culture.
  14. The argument here parallels Yack (1996: 197–98).
  15. On language policies in the French Revolution and their antecedents in the sphere of religion, see Bell (1995).
  16. For recent examples, see Ignatieff (1993), Kupchan (1995), and Khazanov (1997).
  17. For a treatment of the civic-ethnic distinction that recognizes this point, see Breton (1988).
  18. On open borders, Carens (1987) is a pioneering statement. For the more general argument that the Rawlsian “original position” should be interpreted on a global scale, see Beitz (1979).
  19. Drawing on Hans Kohn’s influential account (Kohn 1957), Philip Gleason argues that “To be or become an American, a person did not have to be of any particular national, linguistic, religious, or ethnic background. All he had to do was to commit himself to the political ideology centered on the abstract ideals of liberty, equality, and republicanism. Thus the universalist ideological character of American nationality meant that it was open to anyone who willed to become an American” (Gleason 1980: 32). To be sure, the overwhelming British stock of white American settlers at the end of the eighteenth century meant there was a “latent predisposition toward an ethnically defined concept of nationality. . . . [But] such exclusiveness ran contrary to the logic of the defining principles, and the official commitment to those principles has worked historically to overcome exclusions and to make the practical boundaries of American identity more congruent with its theoretical universalism” (ibid., 33).
  20. In the notion of civic nationalism, the reference to citizenship is ambiguous. What does it mean for nation-membership to be based on citizenship? In a thin sense, it means only that nationhood is framed by the state, and that the nation is understood to comprise all citizens—or subjects—of the state. In a thicker sense, it implies some connection to active citizenship, to civic participation, to democracy. It is these latter connotations that give the notion of civic nationalism its normative prestige. Once again, the conflation of analytical and normative criteria engenders ambiguity, which the normatively neutral notion of state-framed nationalism permits us to avoid.
  21. As Anthony Smith (1986: 136) puts it, albeit in language too functionalist for

- my taste, “territorial nations must also be cultural communities. The solidarity of citizenship required a common ‘civil religion’ formed out of shared myths and memories and symbols, and communicated in a standard language through educational institutions. So the territorial nation becomes a mass educational enterprise. [Its] aim is cultural homogeneity. Men and women must be socialized into a uniform and shared way of life and belief-system, one that . . . marks them off from outsiders.”
22. I believe now that I was mistaken when I argued in earlier work that “political unity has been understood as constitutive, cultural unity as expressive of nationhood” (Brubaker 1992: 10).

### 7. *Ethnicity, Migration, and Statehood in Post-Cold War Europe*

1. As the rich comparative literature on ethnicity makes clear (Akzin 1966; Schermerhorn 1970; Francis 1976; Rothschild 1981; van den Berghe 1981; Horowitz 1985), these are not the only ways in which ethnic heterogeneity can be socially organized and politically expressed. But this distinction does capture a key dimension of variation in the organization and expression of ethnicity in Europe. A broadly similar distinction has been introduced into political theory—especially into discussions of multiculturalism—by Kymlicka (1995). For an attempt to bring Western political theory to bear on ethnicity in eastern Europe, see Kymlicka and Opalski (2001).
2. Even when ethnic groups are concentrated in immigrant neighborhoods or enclaves, the nature and consequences of such territorial concentration are quite different for immigrant ethnicity and for territorial nationality.
3. Some ethnopolitical or ethnoreligious claims—radical Islamist claims, for example—can threaten the state even without involving claims to territorial nationhood.
4. Just as Gypsies straddle conceptual borders, they cross state boundaries as well. Some of the ugliest episodes of immigration control in the 1990s were driven by efforts to control their unwanted movement.
5. A similar point could be made about western Europe. Substantial literatures address the rise of xenophobic, radical-right, or national-populist parties (for overviews, see Betz [1994]; Betz and Immerfall [1998]) and of anti-immigrant violence (Björge and Witte 1993). Again, without minimizing the significance of the new right parties, or still less that of the appalling attacks on asylum-seekers and other foreigners in Germany and elsewhere, one should not overestimate the strength of xenophobic nationalism in western Europe.
6. For a description of the setting, see the concluding section of Chapter 1.
7. For elaborations of this argument, see this volume, Chapters 1 and 3.
8. There has been a good deal of concern with intra-European Union (EU) migration, but mainly in terms of how it articulates with immigration from outside the region, given the need—since abolition of internal frontiers within the Schengen zone—for EU states to harmonize external admissions policies.

9. Even as it involves a reduction in ethnic heterogeneity in the countries of origin, such migrations of ethnic unmixing generate new forms of ethnic or quasi-ethnic heterogeneity in the putative national homelands: ethnic Hungarians from Romania are treated as “Romanians” in Hungary, while Germans and Jews from the former Soviet Union are treated as “Russians” in Germany and Israel. On the ambiguous and contested national identity of ethnic Hungarian migrants to Hungary, see Fox (2003).
10. These are the main “buffer” or “transit” countries between eastern and western Europe.
11. *Independent*, 29 November 1990.
12. *Los Angeles Times*, 3 December 1990.
13. *Boston Globe*, 1 November 1990.
14. Mark Eyskens, former Belgian foreign minister, quoted in William Drozdiak, “Once Again, Europe Follows American Lead,” *Washington Post*, 26 March 1999.
15. Leading European intellectuals critical of the war in Iraq have called for a “core Europe” capable of serving as a counterweight to American hegemony (Derrida and Habermas 2003), but as Paul Kennedy (2003) pointed out in reply, there are substantial political and institutional obstacles to this occurring.
16. In certain respects these powers and competencies may be more substantial, and more statelike, than those of the EU.
17. What constitutes a challenge to the territorial integrity of a state is open to dispute. In Romania, for example, the demands made by the ethnic Hungarian party for autonomy are perceived (or at least publicly represented) by much of the Romanian political elite as a threat to the territorial integrity of the state, even though Hungarian minority politicians insist that, while they are challenging the internal structure of the Romanian state (and its constitutional definition as a unitary nation-state), they pose no threat to its territorial integrity.
18. See Stark and Bruszt (1998: Chapter 4) for an analysis and critique of this swing in the intellectual pendulum.
19. Holmes (1997) was writing before Putin’s accession to the presidency in 2000. Putin has sought to strengthen and recentralize the state, notably by recovering powers previously appropriated by regions (Orttung 2001).
20. Note that powers may be dispersed in two senses: through the formally acknowledged decentralization of power (as in the various agreements that ethnofederal polities within Russia made with Moscow during the 1990s), and through the de facto appropriation by regional or local officials (or even by persons with no official standing, such as some warlords and criminal bosses) of powers formally held by the central state. On the concept of appropriation, Weber’s discussion of patrimonial authority remains pertinent and richly suggestive (1968: 231 ff.).
21. For the most recent and comprehensive treatment of this theme, see Ertman (1997).

22. Much warfare in the ex-Second and Third Worlds is carried out not by states, but by an array of quasi- and nonstate forces (Fairbanks 1995; Kaldor 1999). Another, more fundamental reason, as Tilly notes, is that, with the gradual “filling-in of the state system,” states have increasingly been made—literally created, and allowed to exist, regardless of their infrastructural strength—chiefly by other states (1975a: 46; 1975b: 636; 1990: Chapter 7).
23. Much has been made, in the last decade, about the weakening of this tendency; but this confuses the weakening of the model of sovereignty (which has indeed occurred) with the desacralization and dereification of state borders, which has not. Borders are normatively more permeable, but they remain, in principle, “inviolable,” in the sense of unalterable. Thus in Kosovo, the United States and NATO could claim to be respecting the borders of Yugoslavia even when they challenged Yugoslav sovereignty within those borders. Note that the new states that did emerge from the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia already existed as states within formally federal states and already possessed their own borders, territories, and even (in principle) the right to secede from the wider federal state.

#### 8. 1848 in 1998

1. For useful overviews, see Zelizer (1995), Kammen (1995), and Olick and Robbins (1998).
2. The Enola Gay was the aircraft that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945. It was to have been the centerpiece of an exhibit planned by the Smithsonian Institution’s Air and Space Museum for the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II—an exhibit that was intended, among other things, to examine critically the decision to drop the bomb. After an intense lobbying and media campaign organized by military and veterans’ groups, the museum was eventually forced to abandon its plans for the exhibit.
3. The sesquicentennial commemorations of 1848 elsewhere in Europe are beyond the scope of this essay. For a comparative discussion of the changing meanings of 1848 in European collective memory, considering the 50th, 100th, and 150th anniversaries, and focusing on France and Germany, see Gildea (2000). For an exceptionally thorough review article on the historiography of 1848, including some interesting comparative observations about the much greater resonance of sesquicentennial commemorations in Germany than in Austria or Switzerland, see Hachtmann (1999, 2000), especially Hachtmann (2000: 390–96).
4. Our analysis rests on discussions of 1848 in daily newspapers, cultural and political weeklies, and specialized and scholarly periodicals and books in Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia, including Hungarian language publications in the latter two countries; on speeches given during public commemorations; and on observation of commemorative ceremonies and rituals. The following periodicals were consulted throughout 1998. In Hungary: *Magyar Hírlap*,

*Magyar Nemzet*, *Mai Nap*, *Napi Magyarország*, *Népszabadság* (dailies); *Heti Világgazdaság*, *Magyar Fórum*, *Beszélő*, *História*, *Kortárs*, *Kritika*, *Rubikon*, *Tiszatáj*, *Vigila* (weeklies and monthlies). In Romania: *România Liberă*, *Adevărul*, *Național*, *Dimineața*, *Jurnalul Național*, *Evenimentul zilei*, *Azi* (statewide dailies); *Știrea*, *Adevărul de Cluj*, *Ziua de Nord-Vest*, *Transilvania Jurnal* (Cluj and Transylvanian dailies); *România Mare*, *Magazinul Istoric*, “22” and *Dilema* (weeklies); *Româniul Magyar Szó*, *Hargita Népe*, *Szabadság*, *Szabad Újság*, *Bihari Napló* (Hungarian language dailies, the first a statewide paper, the others regional and local papers); *Erdélyi Napló*, *Brassói Lapok*, *Korunk*, *Látó* (Hungarian language weeklies and monthlies). In Slovakia: *Slovenská Republika*, *Sme*, *Národná Obroda*, *Pravda*, *Práca*, *OS*, *Domino Efekt*, *Slovenské pohľady*, *Historická revue* (Slovak papers); and *Új Szó*, *Szabad Újság*, *IFI*, *Csallóköz*, *Katedra*, and *Kalligram* (Hungarian papers). Television and radio broadcasts were monitored on the days of major commemorative celebrations, and the immediately preceding and following days. The collection of press materials was complemented by observation of the major public holidays and commemorative practices. In the latter, the authors were assisted by students from the Department of Communications of the University of Pécs, whom we would like to thank for their help.

5. For the Habsburg domains as a whole, a pithy and characteristically acidic account can be found in Taylor (1976 [1948]: 57–82). For Hungary, Deák (1979) is by far the best account—lucid, balanced, and eloquent (a shorter version is Deák [1990]). On the Slovak experience, Rapant (1948–1949), though far from nonpartisan, is one of the few detailed accounts available in English. (Rapant was an influential Slovak historian, best known as the author of a monumental five-volume documentary history of the Slovak experience of 1848–1849). See also the discussion of 1848 in Kirschbaum (1995). On the Romanian experience in Transylvania and the Romanian revolution in Wallachia, the works of Hitchins (1969, 1996) are authoritative and nonpartisan. On the cultural, symbolic, and more specifically festive dimensions of the Wallachian revolution, see also Antohi (1999: 79–93). On the complexities of the 1848 events on the local level in Transylvania, see Verdery (1983: 184 ff.).
6. Croatia, too, belonged formally to the Crown of St. Stephen, but had a strong tradition of administrative autonomy. Its status, too, was fiercely contested in 1848 (Deák 1979: 79 ff., 119 ff., 129 ff., 157 ff.).
7. Deák provides a splendid example:

In the summer of 1848 a Habsburg army colonel named Blomberg—a German national at the head of a regiment of Polish lancers—was in charge of the defense of a district in southern Hungary inhabited mainly by Germans. Confronted by an attack of Serbian rebels, Blomberg turned to his commander for instructions. The commander, a Habsburg general of Croatian nationality, instructed the colonel to fight the Serbs, and so did the local Hungarian government commissioner, who happened

to be a Serb. But the leader of the Serbian rebels, a Habsburg army colonel of Austro-German nationality, begged Blomberg to think of his duty to the emperor and not of his duty to the king (the two were the same person), whereupon Blomberg, easily persuaded, ordered his Poles out of the region, leaving his German co-nationals to the tender mercies of the Serbs (Deák 1979: xvii–xviii; see also 1990: 220).

8. We do not mean, of course, to imply that all Hungarians (or all Romanians or Slovaks) had similar experiences and memories of 1848–1849. We do argue, however, that differences in the salience, style, and substance of sesquicentennial commemorations do not merely reflect different contemporary constructions of an originally shared and undifferentiated past. The “raw materials” out of which memories of 1848–1849 were constructed—the events themselves and the way they were experienced and interpreted at the time—were already sharply, though not homogeneously, differentiated by nationality.
9. Durkheim 1965 [1912]: 345 ff., 389 ff., 427, 432, 475.
10. On the sacred or charismatic aspects of commemoration, see also Shils (1975: 198); Schwartz (1982).
11. Weber’s notion of *Veralltäglicdung*, usually translated as routinization, literally means “towards everydayness”; it denotes the integration of the extraordinary into the ordinary routines of life. On desacralization and the emergence of critical history, see Nora (1996: 3–7), Olick and Robbins (1998: 108), and Gillis (1994: 19).
12. We suggested above that the two axes are conceptually independent. A sacralized mood can be combined with a particularizing or a generalizing narrative frame, and the same holds for a desacralized mood. As indicated in the text, however, two of the four combinations are of particular interest here: sacralized mood and particularizing frame, and desacralized mood and universalizing frame. This is why we indicate that the two oppositions, although independent in principle, overlap in practice in this case. In other contexts, however, other combinations may be found. St. Patrick’s Day celebrations, for example, generally involve a desacralized mood and a particularizing narrative frame, while some (though not all) elements of the commemoration of the French and American revolutions combine a sacralizing mood with a universalizing narrative frame.
13. The historical sketch in the following paragraphs draws on Gerő (1995), Hofer (1992), and Gyarmati (1998).
14. Drawing on the anthropological theory of ritual, Hofer (1992) provides a rich and stimulating analysis of the 15 March commemoration of 1989. On the role of this commemoration in the Hungarian transition, see also Stark and Bruszt (1998: 30–31), and Kis (1999).
15. Since the sesquicentennial commemoration was centrally planned and staged chiefly in Budapest, we do not concern ourselves here with commemorative celebrations in the provinces. However, it is important to note that in addition

- to the central commemorative celebrations, organized “from above,” there is also in provincial and small-town Hungary a robust tradition of locally organized commemorations of 1848, not only in the sesquicentennial year or on otherwise marked occasions, but in “ordinary” years as well. The specific forms of these local celebrations fall outside the scope of our study; but the existence of continuous local as well as central commemorative traditions distinguishes Hungary from Romania and Slovakia in a manner that will be important for our comparative analysis.
16. In this respect, the commemoration followed the model of the French bicentennial celebration of 1789 (Kaplan 1995), albeit on a much smaller scale.
  17. Field notes.
  18. Gergely 1998.
  19. *Magyar Hírlap*, 14 March 1998.
  20. The head of the Hungarian millennial commemoration committee, which supervised the commemorations, wrote of a “peaceful revolutionary transformation” that gave birth to “Hungarian civil [*polgári*] society and the modern nation state” (Gábor Erdődy, *Magyar Nemzet*, 14 March 1998). And as Bálint Magyar, then Minister of Culture, put it in his commemorative speech: “In Hungary, since 15 March 1848, there has been no place for any other kind of revolution—only the kind that, through the instrument of laws, creates a new and better order for citizens . . . it was not weapons that dictated the April Laws, not despotism that established responsible and representative government, press freedom, and the liberation of the serfs, but the demand for and logic of lawfulness” (*Magyar Hírlap*, 16 March 1998).
  21. *Polgárosodás* is a processual, developmental term derived from the word *polgár*, which, like its German counterpart *Bürger*, unites two concepts rendered separately in French and English: *citoyen* and *bourgeois*, the citizen and the bourgeois.
  22. As a result of the *Ausgleich* or Compromise of 1867, Hungary became, in most respects, a quasi-independent state within the Habsburg empire.
  23. See *Magyar Hírlap*, 16 March 1998. On the tension between national and European perspectives in commemorations of 1848 elsewhere in Europe, see Körner (2000).
  24. Interview with Ferenc Glatz, *Népszabadság*, 14 March 1998. The “Twelve Points” were the demands formulated by Budapest revolutionaries on 15 March 1848.
  25. This perspective on Stephen as “a modernizer who ‘chose Europe’” was much in evidence a decade earlier, in 1988, when the 950th anniversary of Stephen’s death was celebrated (Hann 1990: 17). On the semiotics and pragmatics of invocations of “Europe” in Hungarian history, in the context of a persisting awareness of Hungary’s relative “backwardness” and of its problematic and contested relation to “Europe,” see Gal (1991).
  26. See, for an elaboration of this argument, the special thematic issue of the review *Historia* 3 (1998).
  27. *Népszabadság*, 14 March 1998, reporting the President’s speech at the opening of a thematic exhibit on 1848 at the Military History Museum.
  28. This passage, printed on a widely distributed brochure containing the program of the official commemorative celebration, served as a motto for the entire commemoration. Ferenc Glatz, interviewed in *Népszabadság* of 14 March 1998, also drew the lesson of the “necessity for regional unity in Central and Eastern Europe.”
  29. “Greater Hungary” means Hungary before its post–World War I territorial dismemberment, including Transylvania, Slovakia, the Serbian province of Voivodina, and some other, smaller territories.
  30. Later, during his four years as Prime Minister, Orbán would adopt a more strongly nationalist stance on a variety of issues, including a later phase of the commemoration that we address below.
  31. We neglect here the smaller Hungarian minority communities in the former Yugoslavia and southwestern Ukraine.
  32. Along with integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions and maintaining good relations with neighboring states, this has been one of the three foreign policy priorities highlighted by all postcommunist governments in Hungary.
  33. *Magyar Nemzet*, 16 March 1998, reported on transborder commemorations under the headline “Hungarians commemorate the 150th anniversary of the revolution and war of independence in several thousand settlements in the Carpathian basin.” Even the liberal daily *Magyar Hírlap*, generally less concerned with Hungarians in neighboring states, reported, although less extensively, on the transborder commemorations.
  34. *Magyar Nemzet*, 14 March 1998.
  35. Field notes.
  36. Esti Híradó [Evening News]. *Magyar Televízió* 1, 5 October 1999.
  37. *Népszabadság*, 7 October 1999.
  38. Commemorations were organized by the major Hungarian umbrella-organizations-cum-political-parties in Romania and Slovakia. In Transylvania, the main “Hungarian” churches (Catholic and Calvinist) played an important role as well (during much of the Ceaușescu era, when Hungarians could not openly celebrate 15 March, these churches had provided the key institutional space for national commemorations). In areas where Hungarians comprised local majorities—in the Szekler region of Transylvania and parts of southern Slovakia—local authorities were also involved, and sought to give the commemorations a local as well as a national character.
  39. Elements of the carnivalesque were found only in the overwhelmingly Hungarian Szekler region of Transylvania.
  40. *Erdelyi Napló*, 18 March 1998.
  41. Although state-level politics, in the spring of 1998, were more nationalist in Slovakia under Vladimír Mečiar than in Romania, local politics were more nationalist in Cluj than in any Slovak city.
  42. Statement by the Cluj county DAHR, *Szabadság*, 10 March 2001.

43. *Szabadság*, 18 March 1998.
44. *Brassói Lapok*, 13–19 March 1998; *Hargita Népe*, 14 March 1998; *Szabadság*, 14 March 1998.
45. Among key Romanian figures of 1848–1849, only Nicolae Bălcescu, a leader of the Wallachian revolution of 1848 who sought reconciliation in the spring of 1849 between Hungarians and Romanians, was consistently portrayed in a favorable light in the Hungarian press.
46. *Szabadság*, 14 March 1998.
47. The linking of past and present drew additional power by embracing other events as well. Just as in Budapest the commemoration of 1848 in 1989 gained powerful resonance from its highly topical and timely references to the crushed uprising of 1956, subsuming both 1848 and 1956 under the rubric of struggle for liberation (*szabadságharc*), and linking both to the struggle for liberation then going on against the remnants of communist rule, so in Slovakia in 1998 commemorations of 1848 drew at the same time on memories of 1948, when large numbers of Hungarians were expelled from Slovakia (as part of an official “exchange of populations” in which smaller numbers of ethnic Slovaks from Hungary were resettled in Slovakia). In Hetény (Slovak Chotín), for example, expellees from 1948, now living in Hungary, were invited to participate in the 15 March commemorations, at which the heads of the ethnic Hungarian parties gave speeches (field notes).
48. *Uj Szó*, 16 March 1998.
49. *Ibid.*
50. In the Hungarian language youth monthly, for example, and in a periodical directed at Hungarian teachers, there were articles on 1848 that emphasized the modernization of the country and the “catching up” to Europe (*Ifi*, March 1998) and that critically analyzed the nationalist endeavors of Hungary in 1848 (*Katedra*, March 1998). And a local leader of the Hungarian Civic Party—the most liberal of the three Hungarian parties in Slovakia—reflected critically on the ethnic exclusivity of national traditions: “In the present political atmosphere, this is only our own [Hungarian] holiday, but the time will come when we—Slovaks and Hungarians—will celebrate together. For the time being, Slovak historians do not consider it [1848] their own holiday . . . Unfortunately, in central Europe, holidays have been expropriated. . . . The significance of [18]48 is that it marked the beginning of *polgárosodás*, and that [18]67 arrived, the Compromise, with which we gained much more than with the Revolution, which was bloody, and resulted in casualties” (field notes, 15 March 1998).
51. *Lieux de mémoire* can be translated as “places of remembrance” or simply “memory sites,” although the term refers not only to physical places or material objects but to any objects around which collective memory and collective representations crystallize.
52. Nora argues that given the eradication of organic *milieux de mémoire*, as repositories of a self-conscious, undifferentiated, living collective memory,

- and their replacement by specialized, differentiated *lieux de mémoire*, this sense of continuity is only a relative and residual one (Nora 1996: 1–2).
53. On the vicissitudes of nationally marked statues in east central Europe, see King (2001) and Feischmidt (2001). For a related work on the “political lives of dead bodies,” attending mainly to nationally marked rituals of reburial, see Verdery (1999).
  54. The one exception—the 1999 attempt, discussed above, to establish a memorial park dedicated to Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation—foundered on Romanian nationalist opposition to including a late nineteenth-century statue commemorating Hungarian generals executed in 1849.
  55. Field notes. In everyday life, to be sure, there is a great deal of mixing. Our point about the ethnicization of the transborder sesquicentennial commemorations should not, of course, be taken to imply that “the Hungarians” and “the Romanians” (or “the Slovaks”) confront one another as bounded and unitary groups in the ordinary course of social life. For a critique of such “groupist” analyses, see this volume, Chapter 1. See also the extended discussion of the relation between nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in Brubaker et al. (2004).
  56. Although such open and organized public appropriation of memory sites in Romania and Slovakia was impossible before 1990, local Hungarians knew of the sites and kept them alive in collective memory through informal commemorative practices and what Zerubavel (1996) calls mnemonic socialization. The best example of these unofficial commemoration practices concerns the site of Nyergestető in the Szekler region, where 200 Szeklers died in 1849 in a last-ditch struggle against the overwhelmingly superior Russian forces that had been called in by Vienna to crush the Hungarians. On the site of the mass grave are thousands of small crosses, most of them fashioned out of branches from trees in the surrounding forest. Before 1989, it was customary for visiting Hungarians from the region to set up another small cross or—on All Souls’ Day, 1 November—to light candles at the grave. After 1990, when open commemoration became possible, the commemoration at Nyergestető became more organized and shifted to 15 March, involving Hungarian politicians and public officials, yet still in an unofficial, purely Hungarian setting, allowing the commemoration to proceed entirely in Hungarian and among Hungarians, without the obligatory gestures towards the wider Romanian public sphere—Romanian flags, speeches in Romanian as well as Hungarian—that characterized official commemorations.
  57. *Uj Szó*, 16 March 1998.
  58. Szeklers are an originally distinct people, long assimilated to Hungarians, living as a compactly settled majority in the mountainous eastern part of Transylvania.
  59. Quoted in *Szabadság*, 24 March 1998.
  60. On the complexity of this intertwining on the local level, see Verdery (1983).
  61. Transylvania Romanians were represented not only in the unofficial Romanian

- troops that fought the Hungarians but also in the Hungarian army itself; similarly, some Hungarian peasants participated in the great Romanian national assembly at Blaj.
62. Ironically, Iancu was in fact a more complex figure than the fanatical ultranationalist and military hero/villain he is made out to be by Romanian and Hungarian nationalists alike. Not only had he initially favored union with Hungary (Hitchins 1969: 189) but, in the closing days of the war in 1849, he responded favorably to the conciliatory gesture that the Hungarians, facing imminent defeat, had finally made to Romanian national claims. Writing to Kossuth, Iancu expressed his “keen regret that present circumstances do not permit us to negotiate on re-establishment of peace with our Hungarian brothers. Our position is far too critical. Hungarian forces are far removed and Russian armies are advancing; moreover, it would require much time and effort to reawaken in our people a friendly feeling toward you. However, . . . to prove the genuineness of our sentiments for the Hungarian nation we have decided to remain neutral toward Hungarian troops. We shall not attack them unless they attack us” (quoted in Hitchins 1969: 273).
63. Adrian Niculescu, “Revoluția Română de la 1848—150 de ani,” 22, 1–7 January 1998. Other Romanian intellectuals emphasizing the importance of the Wallachian revolution as a useful contemporary model included literary theorist Adrian Marino, historian Sorin Antohi, and liberal political thinker Stelian Tănase. For Marino and Antohi, the Wallachian revolution is an important model because it “translated” universal ideals into an appropriate and resonant local idiom, transforming Europe “into a local reality” (Marino and Antohi 2001: 158).
64. 22, 1–7 January 1998, and 24 February–2 March 1998.
65. Hobsbawm himself concedes the importance of resonance: “conscious invention succeeded mainly in proportion to its success in broadcasting on a wavelength to which the public was ready to tune in. Official new public holidays, ceremonies, heroes or symbols . . . might still fail to mobilize the [citizenry] if they lacked genuine popular resonance” (1983: 263–64). The importance of resonance—and the corresponding limits to manipulation, invention, construction, and so on—has been stressed by Smith (1986; 1991: 356–59; 1998: 129–31).
66. *Adevărul de Cluj*, 5, 9, and 10 March 1998; and, for the reference to Kosovo, 12 March 1998.
67. *Știrea*, 16 and 18 March 1998.
68. *Știrea*, 16 March 1998; *Adevărul de Cluj*, 16 March 1998; *Jurnalul Național*, 16 March 1998; *Adevărul*, 16 March 1998.
69. The actual numbers given varied between 40,000 and 200,000.
70. Declaration of the Party for Romanian National Unity in *Știrea*, 13 March 1998.
71. *Cuvântul liber*, 13–15 March 1998.

72. The statewide Romanian press was less centrally concerned with the Hungarians’ 15 March commemorations. The more nationalist papers criticized the use of Hungarian national symbols but discussed historical conflicts with much less intensity, and without the sense, characteristic of Transylvanian discussions, that the burdens of past conflicts continue to weigh heavily on the present. The pro-government *Curierul Național* emphasized the peaceful quality of the commemorations and reported on President Constantinescu’s letter to his Hungarian counterpart, emphasizing the possibility of transcending the conflicts of the past (*Curierul Național*, 16 March 1998).
73. Demands included radical agrarian reform with universal peasant land ownership; the reorganization of the Hungarian part of the Habsburg empire along ethnofederal lines, with a Parliament, elected by universal suffrage, for each national group; a Slovak national militia; the official use of the Slovak language in Slovak territories; and an autonomous Slovak school system, including a university. The text of the petition is printed in Hungarian in Steier (1937, I: 75–78); and in Slovak in Steier (1937, II: 48–52).
74. L’udovit Štúr, one of the key Slovak leaders of 1848, is indeed a central figure in the Slovak national pantheon, but not because of his role in 1848: Štúr is celebrated, rather, for successfully codifying the Slovak literary language and thereby laying the foundation for the Slovak national movement.
75. The petition adopted at Liptovský Mikuláš included radical socioeconomic and political demands along with national demands, and is therefore looked on favorably by liberals as well as nationalists. The Slovak National Congress, on the other hand, having cast its lot with the counterrevolutionary forces of the imperial court and taken up arms against the Hungarians, had clearly put national goals ahead of political and socioeconomic ones. Support for the Congress in 1998 clearly marked one as a nationalist.
76. The pro-government *Slovenská Republika* reported critically on the Hungarian 15 March commemoration in its issue of 17 March 1998; but in comparison to the Romanian press in Transylvania, the Slovak press devoted almost no attention to it.
77. *Slovenská Republika*, 16 March 1998.
78. An interesting exception is Confino’s (1997) study of the failure of Sedan Day to take root as a national holiday in Imperial Germany.



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