

The sociology of ethnic relations

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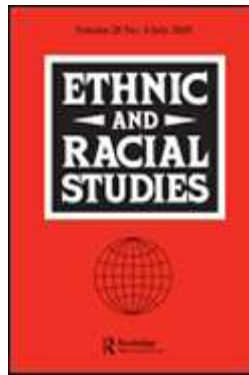
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The Sociology of Ethnic Relations

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The Sociology of Ethnic Relations

Michael Banton

Abstract

The sociological problems presented by ethnic relations should be distinguished from problems of social policy. The foundations for a micro-sociology of ethnic relations laid by Max Weber in 1906-11 have to be inter-related with the macro-sociological contexts within which ethnic groups are constructed by collective action. When ethnic relations have their origin in trans-national migration, much depends on the immigrants' points of entry into the receiving society's scale of socio-economic status, and, thereafter, on transmitted inequalities. While the nature and causes of social differences associated with ethnic origin have been illuminated by quantitative and qualitative studies, new styles of research are needed to bridge these modes of analysis, such as the measurement of relative preferences for association with co-ethnics.

Keywords

Assimilation; collective action; ethnic group; ethnic relations; immigration; Max Weber.

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3 Over the last one hundred years academics in the West have given much attention to the
4 study of ethnic and racial relations. While one of their priorities has been to correct
5 popular misconceptions about race, they have also, more positively, built up a substantial
6 body of knowledge about inter-group relations. That this knowledge is not currently well
7 organized can be seen from the textbooks produced for students. Few of them review the
8 whole field. Most are concerned with particular countries and are either of an
9 introductory character or assemble selected extracts from the literature. One reason why
10 the knowledge is not better organised is that so many of the contributors have been more
11 interested in policy questions, including the political dimensions, than in purely
12 sociological questions. Their concern with matters of policy has led them to concentrate
13 on ethnic and racial relations in their own countries and to rely on ordinary language
14 concepts because these structure the ways those they wish to influence think about such
15 matters. Sociology, by contrast, attempts to *explain* features of ethnic and racial relations,
16 subsuming observations about particular countries within a larger body of knowledge. It
17 seeks transcultural concepts, such that the findings of research in one country can
18 illuminate observations about ethnic relations in other countries. While sociology and the
19 study of social policy are rarely far apart, the pursuit of policy questions will benefit in
20 the long term if accumulated sociological knowledge is organised more systematically.

21
22 In the aftermath of World War II the focus was on race, and more particularly upon
23 finding better explanations of behaviour that some observers, scientists as well as
24 members of the general public, believed to be biologically determined. The search for
25 better explanations led to a spreading of the explanatory net to cover ethnic relations,
26 because much that was thought to be racial also characterised ethnic relations. In *Racial
27 and Ethnic Competition* (1983) I offered a synoptic view of this body of knowledge as it
28 was at that time. Political changes reinforced the academic reorientation that was under
29 way. More sociologists now conceptualise ethnic relations as comprehending racial
30 relations, a move that helps supersede some of the misconceptions fathered by ideas of
31 race.

32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 **The characteristics of groups**

42
43 When they review the scope of ethnic relations, many sociologists assess what authors,
44 editors and publishers have represented as belonging in that field. This leads them to
45 accept the underlying assumptions of those whose work they discuss and the vocabulary
46 they employ. Few contemporary sociologists, apart from the Marxists, start from an
47 original theoretical position, as Max Weber did. Marxists and Weberians can agree that
48 any approach from sociological theory should first examine the main social relationships
49 and identify the intellectual problems they pose; it has then to consider what concepts
50 best help resolve those problems.

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53 Weber's project was more ambitious than the elaboration of concepts of status to correct
54 and supplement those of class. Between 1906 and 1911 he started to work out his
55 thoughts on concepts applicable in all kinds of society. He began by describing a
56 sequence of six 'universal types of groups'. It ran: household, neighbourhood, kin group,
57 ethnic group, religious group, and then political group (Weber 1968: *lxxiii*; 356-398). To
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3 judge from the text, Weber was trying to decide which of these groups were 'natural'
4 rather than *kunstlich* ('artificial', or 'synthetic', being of human manufacture).
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7 Of the household he wrote: 'The relationships between father, mother and children,
8 established by a stable sexual union, appear to us today as particularly "natural"
9 relationships' but 'only the mother-child relationship is "natural", because it is a
10 biologically based household unit that lasts until the child is able to search for means of
11 subsistence on his own'. Being 'natural' the mother-child relationship is universal. All
12 the other relationships that constitute a household vary from one society to another. 'The
13 concept of marriage can be defined only with reference to other groups' and the concept
14 of the family is variable.
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17 In opposition to those of his contemporaries who believed that race created natural
18 groups, Weber insisted that biological traits could not be the basis for group formation
19 unless they were perceived as shared characteristics. Whereas the conventional concepts
20 of the tribe and the people implied that blood relationships were a natural basis for social
21 relationships, Weber argued that in the creation of groups, differences of physical type
22 and differences of tradition operated in basically the same way; ethnic groups were
23 distinguished by their customs, even if economic influences underlay the forms they
24 assumed. He declared that 'Ethnic membership differs from the kinship group precisely
25 by being a presumed identity'; it was *kunstlich*. A shared ethnic origin 'does not
26 constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation... particularly in the political
27 sphere'.
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31 Weber's treatment of the topic is such that the editors of the standard English language
32 translation inserted a caption that reads 'The Disutility of the Notion of "Ethnic Group"
33 to introduce the following section. This is misleading. Weber did not deny that the notion
34 of an ethnic group could be useful in some contexts (e.g., for administrative purposes).
35 He denied that it could be a *theoretical* concept. Yet the grounds for his denial were
36 specious. He contended that everything attributed to membership in an ethnic group
37 could be accounted for by other factors (including language, religion, politics, and the
38 feelings of attraction and repulsion generated by beliefs about blood relationships).
39 Therefore, he wrote, the concept of an ethnic group 'dissolves if we define our terms
40 exactly'. Weber insisted that the same considerations applied with at least equal force to
41 any suggestion that the word 'nation' could be used as a sociological concept.
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45 Two difficulties with this passage should be noted. First, *all* classes of social group can
46 be dissolved into their constituent elements. If concepts are to be defined, it is important
47 to be clear about the purposes for which they are to be employed. What is it that has to be
48 explained? That a concept can be broken down into constituent elements may be
49 irrelevant. It does not 'dissolve' in all contexts. Second, while for some purposes politics
50 can be treated as a separate sphere, they can also penetrate all forms of social life. The
51 household, the neighbourhood and the kin group can all be highly political. All groups
52 have a political dimension even though it is not always important. Many groups have an
53 ethnic dimension.
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In everyday language, groups of the kinds in question are identified by proper names. The classification of groups, and the names given to the resulting classes, flows from the purpose of the classification. For political and administrative purposes, such as the conduct of a census, the Smiths at number ten in the street and the Robertsons at number fourteen may be classed as households; for urban planning the inhabitants of a given area may be classed as a neighbourhood. Degrees of kinship have been drawn up for determining rights (such as who may inherit an estate) or obligations (who should care for an elderly relative), and for the regulation of marriage. The purpose of classification in science is different: it is to aid the search for causal relationships. Classifications of natural phenomena, whether inanimate, like chemicals, or animate, like plants and animals, aim to promote discovery of the causes that underlie the differences between things classified separately. The classifications are of a technical character, reflecting knowledge about the nature of these phenomena, so they need technical names. If groups are to be classified for sociological purposes, the purpose of the exercise must be equally explicit.

It is important to recognize that the manuscript of Weber's that has been presented as a chapter on ethnic groups was only a draft, for in it there was much that he might have improved had he not died an early and unexpected death (Banton, 2007). He looked forward to the prospect of 'a rigorous sociological analysis' that 'we do not attempt here'. His line of thought can be better appreciated if a distinction is drawn between a category and a group. A category is objective, a set of things or persons possessing one or more common characteristics. A social group may be an objective reality, but it is constituted by the subjective feeling of its members that they belong together. Weber acknowledged that membership of a race was thought to be decided by the possession of similar inherited or inheritable characteristics resulting from actual common descent (i.e., a category), but he insisted that only when the individuals concerned had a subjective feeling of shared identity did they become a group. That feeling might arise from the experience of being treated as a category.

By starting from the concept of *membership* in a group, Weber limited his vision. When asked by an interviewer about their voting intentions, or their opinions about some social problem, members of the public are ready to align themselves with one or other of the alternatives presented to them. Important decisions are based on the findings of such polls. The social processes that underlie ethnic and racial relations, and many other kinds of relation, begin with individual alignment and identification and may not be very different from an answer to a pollster's question. This offers a broader starting point than that of group, as can be seen from the readiness of humans to align themselves on a basis of gender. Gender does not constitute a group of the kind Weber had in mind. Sometimes an alignment translates into the formation of a single-issue association; sometimes it translates into the formation of a community, i.e., a group serving a multitude of interests shared by the members, usually to different degrees, for some community members are activists while others support collective action only occasionally.

Instead of a sequence of different kinds of group there is a medley. Categories may be uni-dimensional, but groups are multidimensional. Jews are both a religious group and an

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3 ethnic group; so are Sikhs. Persons who do not practice the religion by which their group
4 is identified sometimes count themselves as ethnic Jews, ethnic Muslims or ethnic
5 Catholics. Where there is a difference of skin colour, categories and groups are
6 conventionally described as racial, but they are ethnic also. It is an error to treat one as a
7 subdivision of the other. Social alignment may be a mixture of self-identification (e.g., by
8 ethnic or national origin) or a response to others (e.g., how they react to a person's
9 appearance). Ethnic and racial identification is rarely separate from considerations of
10 socio-economic status, for being in a particular social category usually has status
11 connotations.
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15 The multidimensionality of actual groups creates problems for the classifier, as has been
16 illustrated by the difficulties at the United Nations in defining who may count as
17 indigenous peoples. It can also be important to the analysis of relations between groups.
18 Commentators on current affairs often write about ethnic conflicts as if they were a
19 special class of conflicts. This may be acceptable for non-scientific purposes, but
20 presenting them as a special class distracts attention from the many elements in ethnic
21 conflicts which are also found in conflicts between religious groups, language groups,
22 caste groups, and other kinds of groups. It hampers the generalized analysis of group
23 formation and maintenance. Just as groups are never uni-dimensional, neither are the
24 relations between persons regarded as members of groups.
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29 **Differences between societies**

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31 Weber noted that 'clear-cut linguistic boundaries and sharply demarcated political or
32 religious communities ... are lacking in wide areas of the African and South American
33 continents'. He would have been aware that there are some world regions, such as the
34 Indian subcontinent, where, in his day, there were no social formations corresponding to
35 the North American notion of an ethnic group. An explanation for their absence is not far
36 to seek.
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40 Most Indians grow up in the knowledge that they belong in a caste. The purposes that
41 elsewhere are served by the formation of ethnic groups in India are served by the caste
42 system. Its assumptions permeate all spheres of social life, affecting even groups
43 practicing religions which deny caste distinction. Thus in practice there is a caste
44 dimension to some Muslim groups, as there was to the life of the Bene Israel, the so-
45 called 'black Jews of Cochin'. The one sub-continental group which does correspond to
46 the North American conception of an ethnic group is that constituted by the Mohajirs in
47 Karachi. They cannot be differentiated from other Pakistanis by religion or national
48 aspiration. Their group consists of refugees who fled from India at the time of partition in
49 1948, and their descendants. They have organized as a group because of shared
50 grievances and are recognized as having a distinctive identity. They fit Weber's
51 proposition about migration as a stimulus to the formation of ethnic groups.
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55 Such examples demonstrate the duality in the formation of groups based upon the
56 recognition of a common ethnic origin. On the one hand, such groups enable their
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3 members to combine in the pursuit of shared ends. On the other hand, societies and
4 cultures differ in their institutional structure and some present each new generation with a
5 range of means alternative to ethnic identification as a basis for combining with others.
6 Each new generation modifies an inherited structure, sometimes radically - as by the
7 campaigning of the 1960s black consciousness movement in the USA – and sometimes
8 slowly and incrementally.
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11 If sociological knowledge about ethnic relations is to be better systematized, it will have
12 to include a review of the differences in group formation in the various world regions. It
13 will also have to extend Weber's discussion of the ethnic group and the nation to include
14 subsequent developments, such as the way that in international law the two categories
15 have been coupled in the standard reference to 'ethnic or national origin', and the way
16 that Arabs claim to be one nation although distributed among a variety of states. The
17 word 'nationalism' is mostly used to designate the sentiments and activities of persons
18 who wish to establish a nation-state. These sentiments have to be distinguished from
19 those encouraged by governments which seek to cultivate national unity in an established
20 state, though they too are often called nationalist.
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24 Likewise, the significance attributed to shared ethnic origin among those who are content
25 to be citizens of a state that includes many other such groups (like German-Americans in
26 the USA) is to be distinguished from the significance attributed to it by those dissatisfied
27 with the way a state boundary has been drawn (like some ethnic Hungarians in Romania
28 and Slovakia, and republicans in Northern Ireland). In Weber's sociology, an ethnic
29 group formed when the significance that individuals ascribed to their shared ethnic origin
30 enabled them to form a group. His reference to German-Americans strengthens the
31 impression that he thought of an ethnic group as a minority within a state. Persons
32 dissatisfied with the drawing of a state boundary ascribe significance to the origin they
33 share with the citizens of *another* state so they may be better accounted a national
34 minority. A possible clarification is to count self-identification with shared ethnic origin
35 at the state level as primary ethnicity, and self-identification with shared ethnic origin at
36 the sub-state level as secondary ethnicity.
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41 A different usage featured in the statement on race sponsored by UNESCO in 1950;
42 referring to popular parlance, it concluded that 'it would be better when speaking of
43 human races to drop the term 'race' altogether and speak of ethnic groups.' This was a
44 statement about how populations should be identified by a classifier according to the
45 characteristics they shared. It used *ethnic group* as the name for a category.
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48 Weber's scheme did not allow for disagreement about whether persons were entitled to
49 form a minority within a state or for the actions of majorities when they assign minority
50 members to some particular kind of category. In Turkey in 1915 Turkish nationalists
51 could not agree that Armenians might constitute a minority within the new state they
52 planned to establish. In Germany, the Nazis would not accept that Jews could be a
53 minority within a state serving the German *Volk*. On one view, such cases are better
54 considered within the politics of ethnic relations rather than within the sociology of
55 ethnic relations.
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Microfoundations

Part One of *Economy and Society*, written about 1919, was to have introduced a much longer work. Its account of the fundamental concepts of sociology opened with a reference to a conceptually pure type of rational action. This ideal type was to provide a standard against which actual actions could be assessed, clarifying the nature and strength of miscalculations, emotional influences and unanticipated circumstances. Weber started from the individual actor in his attempt to lay microfoundations for a general theory comprehending economic and political institutions. He got as far as a preliminary discussion of class and status but did not live long enough to complete his task; to do so he would have had to reconsider his earlier thoughts on ethnic group and nation.

How might Weber's line of reasoning be updated and extended? On one reading, the core assertion in Weber's 1911 draft was his proposition that a belief in shared ethnic origin facilitates group formation. Recognizing that not all groups last long, his objective could be reformulated as the explanation of how shared ethnic origin can contribute to collective action. The actor can be represented as a person seeking to maximize his or her satisfactions in respect of a multitude of short and long term ends, some hedonistic, some in conformity with civic, kin, class and religious norms. In some situations the actor himself or herself initiates the action, exercising a freedom of choice. In other situations the actor has to respond to a challenge in which he or she has to choose within a limited range of alternatives. Sometimes the actor feels that he or she has no choice, but is obliged to follow a particular course; there are degrees of freedom. In any event the actor may pursue his or her goals either individually or by associating himself or herself with an ethnic, class, religious, or other kind of group.

Individuals seek to maximize their satisfactions, and though they are not always efficient or rational in the way they go about this, in the long run they generally learn from the mistakes that they make and employ more effectively the available means for attaining their ends. To do so they will at times be obliged to join with others in collective action or to follow strategies that assume that others will engage in such action. They create social institutions. At other times they may be able to attain their ends by individual action, as when they go to buy goods in the market. This is not to suggest that all actions in a market are individual, for the producers of goods often combine to support the prices they set or to create monopolies, while consumers may also combine to further their interests.

Collective action results in the formation of a series of groups, ranging from single-purpose associations to communities that provide for, and regulate, every aspiration of the individuals who constitute their membership. Trade unions illustrate the variability. Some are single-purpose associations; others have provided a variety of benefits and have aimed to act as solidary political groups. The proportion of employees belonging to a union varies with the character of the relations between employer and employee and varies over time. The proportion of persons taking part in political activity or seeing

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3 themselves as members of a class varies likewise. Ethnic group formation shows some
4 resemblance; it has an origin in the encounters of persons from different societies (often
5 resulting from migration). Ethnic groups (like other groups) are identified by proper
6 names ('We are Jews, Sikhs', etc.) and are multidimensional¹. Social relations have an
7 ethnic dimension whenever one of the parties, consciously or unconsciously, regards any
8 difference in ethnic origin (real or assumed) as a sign that the other person is to be treated
9 differently. Group dimensions (cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, religious, status, etc.,)
10 are of different significance for different persons; the significance varies over time and
11 from situation to situation². Circumstances determine the extent to which an individual
12 feels free to disidentify with such a group or feels obliged to show solidarity with co-
13 ethnics. Political considerations may decide which dimensions affect the parties'
14 definition of a social situation, but there is no separate political dimension.
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19 Members of any society tend in some degree to see their social world in terms of their
20 shared values, a form of bias named ethnocentrism. Members of both majorities and
21 minorities display ethnocentric attitudes; it is a normal feature of social life. If individuals
22 value their membership in an ethnic group, they will, in certain circumstances at least,
23 display a preference for association with co-ethnics. The strength of this preference is
24 likely to vary from one individual to another and to be influenced by experience of
25 interaction with members of other groups. It reflects shared experience and anticipated
26 fellowship. One of the reasons for association with co-ethnics is the desire for friendship,
27 for contact with persons who provide emotional support to a person's feelings about
28 himself or herself. It is sometimes expressed as a desire for community. This desire helps
29 explain the formation and maintenance of many social bonds and can contribute to
30 political movements. Individuals are apt to assume that they hold more in common with
31 co-ethnics and that they are therefore more likely to be able to establish psychologically
32 satisfying relationships with them. This is one important factor explaining the formation
33 of social clubs and similar associations based upon ethnic origin.
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38 Existing studies fail to identify the sociological problems associated with the recognition
39 of shared ethnic origin. How do two people learn that they share an ethnic origin? In what
40 circumstances does shared ethnic origin influence conduct? Are the signs of ethnic origin
41 compounded with signs of other differences? What do they signify to outsiders?
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44 One sign of ethnic origin is a personal name. In the western highlands of Scotland, the
45 Campbells and Macdonalds at one time regarded one another as hereditary enemies, but
46 if today a Campbell and a Macdonald were to meet in a foreign country they might treat
47 their names as signs of a shared national identity. Back in Scotland, their names might be
48 a basis for joking about the historical grounds they have for mistrusting one another. In
49 some parts of Africa facial scarification serves as a sign of ethnic identity. Similarity of
50 skin colour has a similar significance and is often taken to indicate shared racial identity.
51 When there is no outward sign it is often only in personal conversation that two people
52 discover that they share an ethnic origin, and only occasionally do people explore such
53 possibilities. What influence shared origin has upon conduct depends upon how unusual
54 it is, upon the parties' other relations, and upon whether it is seen as a basis for
55 cooperation.
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Costume also serves as a social sign. The Sikh turban and the Jewish *yarmulka* are signs both of ethnic origin and of faith. When Muslims and Christians display symbols of their faith these may have ethnic as well as religious significance. Skin colour, and other phenotypical differences like crinkly hair and eye colour, may lead persons to be assigned to racial categories by outsiders and be a basis for the forming of bonds among those who are affected by such assignments. These are the considerations which structure everyday interaction. It is the attempt to account for them that has led to the invention of the concept of ethnic relations.

A prime stimulus to collective action is the sense of opposition to another group. Humans grow up in groups without being conscious of this until they come into contact with members of other groups. The nature of the contact influences the kinds of category and group that result. These processes were first analyzed in studies of migration to employment in the copper-mining towns of Zambia conducted by social anthropologists (summarized in Banton, 1967: 236-240). Their arguments have been generalized to show how identity construction is influenced by whether the opposed reference group is positive or negative, and internal or external to the political unit (Petersoo, 2007). Sentiments of opposition to another set of persons can inspire the recognition of shared interests and aspirations, resulting in a process of ethnogenesis.

Such a set of assumptions would form part of the core theory. However, much of the sociology of ethnic relations (and even more of the politics of ethnic relations) is concerned with particular societies and with variations between societies. Just as different individuals have different motivations for joining in collective action, so societies differ in the degree to which they inculcate desires for individual achievement and for group approval. Life is organized around different institutions.

The core theory and the regional studies can be inter-related in the course of research. It is important to be able to explain why, in particular settings, individuals align themselves with co-ethnics rather than with persons with whom they share some other characteristic, and how co-ethnics are identified. A study of relations in a region of the Russian Federation, Bashkortostan, has provided a striking example of how ethnic identifications can respond to circumstances. In the Czarist era it was to a person's advantage to be counted as a Bashkir. This changed with the Communist revolution and the introduction of a system of ethnic republics with privileges for the members of the titular ethnic group and internal passports that registered membership of an ethnic group chosen from a list of recognised groups. In the part of Bashkortostan adjacent to Tatarstan the percentage of persons recorded as Bashkirs fell substantially after the revolution and the percentage recorded as Tatars rose until the 1970s when Tatar-speakers came under pressure to identify as Bashkir. In 1989 the Gorbachov reforms eliminated ethnic privileges. Tatars who had identified as Bashkirs switched back. Most of the changes were in public ethnic labels rather than in behaviour or social relations (Gorenburg, 1999). In neighbouring Tatarstan there has been, since the early 1990s, an ethnic mobilization movement manifested in the establishment of elite schools that use Tatar as the medium for teaching and cultivate a Tatar identity and culture (Alvarez Veinguer and Davis, 2007). These

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3 examples show how alignments can change when ethnic groups control particular
4 institutions and influence the alternatives made available in governmentally administered
5 structures.
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8 In Western industrial cities the alternatives are different. A prime objective of public
9 policy in European and North American countries in recent times has been the reduction
10 of inequalities associated with social categories. The measures adopted have been only
11 partially successful because some economic and political forces have exerted a contrary
12 effect. One of these is the intensification of competition between and within countries.
13 Competition can change categories into groups, making individuals more conscious of
14 whatever differentiates them. In the longer term, competition on an individual basis
15 reduces the salience of the signs of category membership by increasing the attention paid
16 to the other attributes of competitors.
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20 It is not difficult to interpret social alignments after the event and easy to overlook the
21 circumstances in which individuals fail to combine in the pursuit of shared interests. For
22 example, it is often observed that although humans have a shared interest in the
23 protection of their environment, it can be difficult to mobilize them to organise for
24 effective environmental protection. One of the central tasks of the social sciences is to
25 account for the occurrence and absence of collective action.
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29 **Migration**

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31 Weber's association of the formation of ethnic groups with 'memories of colonization
32 and migration' was a recognition that it is within the Western experience of transnational
33 migration – particularly of migration to the USA – that the concepts of an ethnic group
34 and of secondary ethnicity were created.
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38 Much knowledge has been built up about who migrates, why, to which destinations, and
39 how. Much depends upon the point of entry into the receiving society's scale of socio-
40 economic status. In the days of the European empires, the colonial administrator entered
41 a receiving society near the top of the scale. He (for they were mostly male) was expected
42 to change only enough to do the job for which he had been sent. The same applies to the
43 representative of the transnational enterprise. Those who enter at the bottom of the
44 receiving society's socio-economic structure have to change most if they are to progress
45 towards their objectives. Immigrants have to observe the laws of the receiving society,
46 and these may be very different from those of the society from which they have come.
47 They may have to master sufficient of the receiving society's language to obtain
48 employment or to qualify for a driving license. These are changes in the direction
49 towards conformity with majority ways and the speed of change is greatest in the spheres
50 important to making a living.
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54 Socio-economic status is represented spatially as well as by statistics of occupation and
55 wealth. Within industrial societies there are almost always distinctive localities where the
56 rich, the middle-income earners, and the poor form distinct communities. Children attend
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neighbourhood schools together with other pupils from social backgrounds similar to their own. Most of their parents' contacts, in both their workplaces and their neighbourhoods, are with people similar to themselves in status. If immigrants enter near the bottom of the scale, this, and any concentration of residence in particular localities, decides whom they meet among the native population and their children's chances of social advancement. The sociology of ethnic relations then overlaps with the geography of ethnic relations.

The changes in relations between the generations of settlement in the USA prior to World War II were analyzed in a classic series of studies. Most of the immigrants into that country in the nineteenth and early twentieth century brought with them the norms of a patriarchal family structure adapted to life in a relatively simple agrarian economy. They came to a society in which family groups were no longer self-sufficient, co-operative, production units. The children no longer worked with their parents; they went off to school where they were taught in a new language how they should behave in the United States. They were taught, by their peer groups if not by their teachers, norms of conduct incompatible with those cherished by their parents. Indeed, their parents might have to consult them about the American way of doing things. The authority structure of the family was turned upside-down. The children often felt that they had to combat parental expectations. This generated emotional stresses encapsulated in the proposition, known as Hansen's law, that what the second generation wishes to forget, the third generation wishes to remember.

Immigrant settlement in European countries after World War II has contrasted with that in the USA prior to World War I with respect to the power relations between the sending and receiving societies. Improvements in communication mean that potential migrants learn more about opportunities for employment in different countries and can choose between potential destinations. Improved transport and new technology has made it much easier for immigrants to remain in touch with their countries of origin. They may watch television transmissions from these countries, pay return visits, play a part in homeland politics, and influence their new country's policies in respect of their homelands. For the earlier immigrants to the USA there was no alternative future as attractive as that of Americanization, but for many groups in the new century there is the possibility of belonging to a transnational community, and being part of a diaspora. In these new circumstances, immigrants and their descendants are under less pressure to adopt the customs of members of the majority population.

Power relations have also changed in that the governments of sending countries have an interest in migrant remittances and through their consular and diplomatic services are able to help their nationals much more than in the earlier period. Political disputes in other parts of the world sometimes influence elections in the receiving societies. The rights of minorities and non-citizens have been specified in international law and institutions have been created, on both the international and regional levels, to monitor the protection of these rights. The UN human rights treaties are complemented by the European Convention on Human Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights, the

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3 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and plans for a comparable convention
4 for the Asia-Pacific region.
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7 Most studies prior to World War II showed how minorities came to conform to the norms
8 of the ethnic majority. The change in the power relations between sending and receiving
9 societies has meant that more minority individuals in European countries now either
10 persist in reconstructing homeland institutions or react against pressure from the majority
11 by increasing their distinctiveness, notably by emphasizing distinctive religious beliefs
12 and practices. The existence of an alternative future given substance by distinctive
13 institutions increases tensions within immigrant families. In Britain these have been most
14 serious within families of South Asian origin (e.g., those from Mirpur in northern
15 Pakistan) when young women have adopted some of the gender norms of the receiving
16 society. Some bridegrooms brought from the homeland, themselves faced with major
17 strains of readjustment, have insisted on homeland norms and the conflicts have often
18 been acute.
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22 Reacting to immigration, ethnic majorities also change, with variations from one sphere
23 to another, in both direction and speed. Reactions in the political sphere can decide what
24 happens in other spheres. The entry of immigrant workers is perceived as advantageous
25 by employers and as a source of illegitimate competition by workers in the occupations
26 most affected. It is easiest for immigrants to obtain work in those sectors in which the
27 native workers have least power to exclude them, and in those in which individual talent
28 is most evident, as in entertainment, sports, catering, etc.
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32 The ability of the natives to restrict the immigration of competitors or, if they have been
33 admitted, their employment, can depend upon the strength of any feeling that the
34 immigrants are 'other', 'not our kind'; this is sometimes called alterity. Ethnocentrism,
35 which is commonly measured by scales of social distance, is one form of it. Discourse
36 analysis has shown how sentiments of alterity can be sustained and transmitted by the use
37 of distinctive expressions to refer to those assigned to other social categories.
38 Comparative studies usually demonstrate diminutions over time in the distance expressed
39 by members of the ethnic majority towards members of different minorities. The use of
40 distance scales and other measures of attitudes has uncovered variations in hostility
41 associated with downward mobility and personality characteristics. The reduction in
42 social distance is exemplified in rates of intermarriage, while the opposition between
43 ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority is blunted by the growth in the number of
44 persons who have parents or ancestors both in the ethnic majority and in one or more
45 minorities. They may exercise any freedom to choose with which line of descent to
46 identify themselves, or they may insist on acknowledging more than one line of ancestry.
47 They may also reconcile any differences in the gender norms of the majority and a
48 minority.
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53 Ethnocentrism can take various forms. Hostility towards others is strongest when it draws
54 upon racist or nationalist doctrines or imagery. In the mid-nineteenth century some
55 anthropologists maintained that the unequal economic development of the peoples of the
56 world was caused by differences in their biological inheritance: the differences between
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3 the populations originating in different world regions were thought to demonstrate the
4 permanence of racial types. To some, 'race' appeared to be the key to human history so
5 they classified ethnic groups as races. There was a process of racialization that magnified
6 the differences and provided an excuse for policies of repression and extermination. After
7 World War II an international counter movement (exemplified in the UNESCO
8 statements of 1950 and subsequent years) inspired an effective political and educational
9 campaign that stigmatized as 'racist' any expressions of such doctrines. Displays of
10 ethnocentrism have often been described as expressions of racism, and in this way an
11 important distinction has been elided. Sociological usage should be stricter than popular
12 parlance and should stipulate that only when there is an explicit reliance upon a doctrine
13 of racial difference does ethnocentrism become racism.
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18 In several countries research has been undertaken to measure and account for variations
19 between ethnic categories in educational attainment, employment and income. Research
20 has demonstrated that social advancement in both the sending and the receiving societies
21 is characterized by the transmission of inequalities from one generation to the next; social
22 mobility has therefore been likened to an inter-generational relay race. There may be
23 relevant differences between sets of immigrants originating in the same country. Those
24 from agricultural regions have usually had less human capital invested in their education
25 and training. They may have been brought up in a culture with relatively low
26 achievement motivation and their occupational skills will probably be less valued in the
27 receiving societies than those of immigrants coming from cities. Some variations in
28 attainment derive from the collective strategies unconsciously adopted by groups. Others
29 are attributable to discriminatory practices on the part of the ethnic majority.
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33 Because of policy concerns, sociologists have continued to focus on changes in ethnic
34 minority populations (as helpfully reviewed in Brubaker, 2001). Roger Waldinger (2007)
35 has maintained that for US researchers the explanation of changes displayed by Mexican-
36 Americans is of central importance. He discusses three hypotheses: segmented
37 assimilation, predicting downward assimilation into an underclass (a hypothesis
38 developed by Alejandro Portes); conventional assimilation, forecasting individualistic
39 mobility into the mainstream (a hypothesis advanced by Richard Alba); and incorporation
40 into the working class (which he considers the most realistic). The challenge to
41 sociologists is to explain differences in attainment within ethnic minorities *and majorities*
42 within the *same* conceptual framework. This must call into question the use of the
43 metaphor of 'integration' as a policy objective. When the governments of receiving
44 societies perceive immigration as occasioning problems of national integration they often
45 imply that it is the immigrant-descended population that has to change. This may be
46 effective as political rhetoric, but before integration can ever become a viable
47 sociological concept it will have to be possible to measure the degree to which *all*
48 individuals, whatever their ethnic origin, are integrated. Emile Durkheim's famous study,
49 measuring the degrees to which various forms of integration protected men and women
50 against suicide, still serves to indicate the magnitude and difficulties of such a task. (It is
51 also a classical example of a study in sociology as distinct from social policy.)
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Quantitative studies based upon national censuses and on large-scale surveys in which interviewees assign themselves to categories similar to those used in a census, are an important source of information. Such studies have identified a variety of factors responsible for differential rates of status attainment, both intra- and internationally (e.g., Loury, Modood & Telles, 2005; Selberman, Alba & Fournier, 2007). The focus on comparative attainment conveys an image of sections of the population engaged in a continuing competition for material success, as if everyone were dissatisfied not to have done better. This gives a special slant to the argument, for there are other values in life. It can be as important to account for equilibrium as for change.

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The value of most quantitative studies is limited in so far as individuals identify themselves socially in more complex ways than can be comprehended in census-style classifications, even though these are altered from time to time to take account of changes in popular identification. While sociographic studies of the kind carried out by social anthropologists (e.g., Ballard, 1994) are a necessary complement, this does not exhaust the sociological field. The further development of the sociology of ethnic relations will require more studies which bridge the quantitative-qualitative distinction by addressing to samples drawn from the population standardized questions that separate the different dimensions underlying self-assignment to large-scale ethnic categories. Only in this way will it be possible explain why actors sometimes identify socially with those seen as co-ethnics and at other times with class allies or co-religionists.

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How people align themselves depends upon their values and the ways in which they interpret the situations with which they are faced. The complexity of values can be illustrated by considering the preferences for skin colour which often enter into conceptions of ethnicity. Some men and women prefer a light complexion, some a dark one. Some may want their children to have a similar colour to their own, whatever that may be. Some may hope that their children will be neither too fair nor too dark, especially in societies where an intermediate complexion is the norm. Some individuals may prize a particular shade; others may give it a zero score. In similar fashion, individuals vary in the significance they attach to their ethnic, status, and other identifications.

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Ethnic identification can be important to individuals in some settings (e.g., in political conflicts) and unimportant in others (e.g., those governed by bureaucratic or technical norms). A study of ethnic identification on the part of Creoles, Muslims and Hindus in Mauritius found that it varied between groups, between settings and on the basis of socio-demographic variables (sex, age, education, income). Ethnic identification with respect to political resources (representation, influence) was significant for Hindus but not for Creoles and Muslims. Ethnic identification with respect to economic resources (jobs, housing) was significant for Creoles and Muslims but not for Hindus. One factor affecting the political setting is the 'winner takes all' character of many appointments, so that political resources may be less divisible than economic resources (Hemple & Costello, *forthcoming*).

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3 Because the alternatives with which individuals are faced are so varied, the research
4 worker does well to devise imaginary situations in which values are likely to conflict, and
5 to invent ways of measuring the extent to which individuals trade off the satisfaction
6 gained by realizing one value (e.g., ethnic identification) against that obtained by
7 realizing another (e.g., personal advantage). Thus a study of Malay attitudes towards
8 association with Chinese-Malaysians concluded that inter-group contacts in a suburb of
9 the capital city had reduced the value that metropolitan Malays placed upon own-group
10 association. Research workers have compared the value that Malays and Chinese-
11 Malaysians placed upon association with co-ethnics compared with financial gain, status
12 gain, and personal obligation towards neighbours and workmates (Banton, 2000).
13 Research that measures the relative values attaching to alternative identifications can
14 bridge the gap between the findings of quantitative and qualitative research.
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19 Interaction between ethnic minorities and majorities changes both parties. Some groups
20 coalesce, others divide. The speed and direction of change reflects changes in values.
21 Some of these may be the result of legislative action (exemplified by the effectiveness of
22 the legislation against racial discrimination). Some may be due to shared experience and
23 greater personal acquaintance with persons of different background (and here social
24 psychologists have stressed the significance of equal-status contacts and the disposition
25 of individuals to conform to what they believe to be the norms of their peers). Some may
26 stem from changes within families (as parents learn from their children's experience and
27 conclude that norms have changed). The influence of the mass media can also account for
28 the reinforcement or change of social norms. Such possibilities constitute an agenda for
29 new research.
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33 Much has been learned about the rates at which inequalities between ethnic categories
34 within states are reduced, and there are some data enabling comparisons between the
35 relative attainments in different states of migrants from the same region of origin.
36 Sociologists have a rough understanding of the causal connections, but much remains to
37 be discovered about them. More systematic knowledge about the ways in which mutually
38 reinforcing values underlie social institutions might help explain why some relations
39 (such as those between blacks and whites in the USA, between the ethnic majority in
40 Japan and the Burakumin, and between Roma and non-Roma in parts of Europe) change
41 more slowly than the relations between some other majorities and minorities.
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46 **Conclusion**

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48 The growth of knowledge is facilitated if research workers have a conception of their
49 field of study such that they can spot gaps, weak connections, and questionable
50 explanations. If new findings can be fitted into an overall scheme, it becomes easier to
51 assess their significance. This essay has claimed that Weber's analysis of the use of
52 available means to attain changing ends can still inspire the construction of such a
53 scheme, indicating what remains to be done if it is to be filled out, and helping to locate
54 the sociology of ethnic relations within the wider sociological enterprise.
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Suitably extended, Weber's approach provides the microfoundations constituting the core theory of the sociology of ethnic relations. Major difficulties are posed by the variations in the form that ethnic relations take in different world regions, but if these forms are analysed in the terms of the core theory, lessons learned in one locality may be applied in other localities.

Note

1. Colours (like black and white) may be used as proper names for social categories that can, in some circumstances, become groups.
2. In some world regions (parts of Africa, India and Russia) the linguistic and religious dimensions may be more important than they have been in European and North American cities. How the sociology of ethnic relations will develop in China cannot yet be foreseen. Globally, the sociology of ethnic relations may be absorbed into a broader sociology of collective action.

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