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**COLLAGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**SOCIAL IDENTITIES: CLASS, ETHNICITY AND  
NATIONALISM**  
**HANDOUT TO UNDERGRADUATE SOCIOLOGY  
STUDENTS**

## Chapter one: introducing social identity

### 1. 1. Background

#### 1.1.1. Meaning and definition

In principle, the notion of identity applies to the entire universe of creatures, things and substances, as well as to humans. Its general, non-sociological, meanings are worth considering. The Oxford English Dictionary offers a Latin root – *identitas*, from *idem*, ‘the same’ – and two basic meanings:

- the sameness of objects, as in A1 is identical to A2 but not to B1;
- the consistency or continuity over time that is the basis for establishing and grasping the definiteness and distinctiveness of something.

From either angle, the notion of identity involves two criteria of comparison between persons or things: *similarity* and *difference*.

Exploring further, the verb ‘to identify’ is a necessary accompaniment of identity. There is something active about identity that cannot be ignored:

it isn’t ‘just there’, it’s not a ‘thing’, it must *always* be established. This adds two further items to our starter pack:

- to classify things or persons;
- to associate oneself with, or attach oneself to, something or someone else (such as a friend, a sports team or an ideology).

Jenkin argued that all human identities are, by definition, social identities. Identifying ourselves, or others, is a matter of meaning, and meaning always involves interaction: agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation. To add the ‘social’ in this context is somewhat redundant (cf. Ashton et al. 2004: 81).

**Jenkin offers us a minimal sociological definition as follows:** • ‘Identity’ denotes the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their relations with other individuals and collectivities.

- ‘Identification’ is the systematic establishment and signification, between individuals, between collectivities, and between individuals and collectivities, of relationships of similarity and difference.

- Taken – as they can only be – together, similarity and difference are the dynamic principles of identification, and are at the heart of the human world.

The notion that similarity and difference play off each other is not new. In 1844 Karl Marx wrote the following, in a letter to Feuerbach:

The unity of man with man, which is based on real differences between men . . . what is this but the concept of society!(Marx, quoted in Wheen 1999: 55)

More than seventy years later, in a similar vein, Simmel argued that

The practical significance of men for one another . . . is determined by both similarities and differences among them. Similarity as fact or tendency is no less important than difference. In the most varied forms, both are the great principles of all internal and external development. In fact the cultural history of mankind can be conceived as the history of the struggles and conciliatory attempts between the two. (Simmel 1950: 30)

While Erikson (psychologist, 1968) associates identity as a definition of personhood, that is with sameness or continuity of the self across time and space, other authors also emphasize uniqueness, that is those characteristics that differentiate a person from other people or the whole of human kind.

Erikson uses the term identity crises to refer to individuals who have lost a sense of sameness or continuity.

Even if Erikson theorizes on identity from psychoanalytic point of view, he also uses the term psychosocial identity that denotes the awareness of who a person is, both as individual and as a member of a family, various social groups and a particular society to address the role of the environment, particularly the social one in the development of identity.

Tajfel emphasized the prominent role of social groups and holds that membership of social groups is internalized as part of the self concept and as such forms an integral part of the identity of the individual.

Brewer typifies social identification as a compromise to solve the internal conflict between two contradictory needs. These needs are on the one hand the need of an individual to be unique and on the other hand the need for security and assimilation.

Identification with social groups fulfils the need for differentiation by emphasizing the unique characteristics of the own group as well as the difference between own groups and other groups. The need for assimilation is fulfilled by the feeling of solidarity between members of a particular group.

Whereas cultural identity could be interpreted in two ways as:

Firstly it is associated with a shared culture a collective "true self" that is shared among people with a common history and ancestry. Thus cultural identity reflects common historical experiences and shared cultural codes that serve to unify and provide stable, continuous and unchanging frame of reference of meaning amidst social and political changes.

This conceptualization of identity lies at the root of struggle to reveal the true essence of a particular identity. For example the search for the essence of being British, American, African or Ethiopian, etc. It is also associated with the exploration of history in order to reveal "hidden continuities" and "hidden roots".

The second view emphasizes similarity and it recognizes points of difference in the course of history in "What we are" and "What we have become". Thus the second conceptualization emphasizes cultural identity as an interactive process that involves "becoming" as well as "being" and belongs to the future as well as to the past.

The changing nature of identity, and cultural identity specifically is also emphasized by Barth (1969)

Barth defined identity in terms of Boundaries. Boundaries can be psychologically, culturally, socially or politically defined and include some members as a group, while others are simultaneously excluded.

According to this perspective Social or cultural identity cannot be understood in terms of fixed categories or unchanging phenotypical or other characteristics and/or cultural practices. He perceived identity as a dynamic process in which the characteristics, cultural practices, symbols and traditions of a group might change due to interaction with physical, social, cultural, economic and political environment.

According to Barth what is important is not the content of a particular identity (characteristics & practice) but rather the existence of between the own group and other groups.

However the discourse on identity is not restricted to academia. From academic circles it has spread to centers of social and political events where it is strongly associated with social struggle of various dominated or repressed groups such as people of colour, racial, ethnic, and religious minorities and or feminist groups. These pursuits often labelled "identity politics" are collective not merely individual and public, not only private.

The discourse of identity has become the primary medium for not only understanding and explaining the relationship between the personal (subjective) and the social, but also for discourses on the relationship between the individual and the group, the cultural and the political as well as the group and the state.

### 1.1.2. Defining social identity and social identification:

The term “social identity” refers specifically to those aspects of a person that are defined in terms of his or her group memberships. Although most people are members of many different groups, only some of those groups are meaningful interns of how we define ourselves .In these cases, our self-definition is shared with other people who also claim that categorical membership, for example, as a woman, as a Muslim, as a marathon runner, or as a Democrat .To share a social identity with others does not necessarily mean that we know or interact with every other member of the designated category.

It does mean, however, that we believe that we share numerous features with other members of the category and that, to some degree; events that are relevant to the group as a whole also have significance for the individual member.

**SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION:** is the process by which we define ourselves in terms and categories that we share with other people. In contrast to characterization of personal identity, which may be highly idiosyncratic, social identities assume some commonalities with others .Many forms of social identity exist, reflecting the many ways in which people connect to other groups and social categories. Here it is possible to point out some such distinct types of social identification as: ethnic and religious identities, political identities, vocations and avocations, personal relationships, and stigmatized groups, gender, class, nationalism etc.

### 1.1.3. Different types of identity

#### a. Individual or personal identity/core identity

Woodward (2000) suggests that individual identity is concerned with the question ‘Who am I?’ – How individuals define themselves, what is important and matters to them, how they see themselves as individuals different from other people, and the things that give them their own unique personal or individual characteristics. Their name, their passport, their National Insurance number, their fingerprints, their DNA, their birth certificate and their signature are some obvious examples of these, as well as people’s personal histories, friends and relationships and their own understanding of who they really are as individuals: their own self-concept of the ‘inner me’, or ‘I’ as Mead referred to it.

#### b. Social identity

Social identity defines individuals in relation to the social groups with which they identify and to which they belong, and how they differ from other social groups and individuals. Such groups might include men and women, ethnic groups, or national groups like the English, Scots or Welsh. The formation of social identities

may also arise from the characteristics associated with the social roles that people play. For example, the identities they adopt, the behavior they show and the behavior that might be expected of them when playing their social roles as mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, students or workers, or as members of social groups like students, males or females, Muslims or Sikhs, gays, lesbians or heterosexuals, or Welsh or Scottish.

### **c. Collective identity**

A collective identity is an identity shared by a social group, and involves elements of both personal and social identities, but differs from both as it involves considerable elements of choice by individuals in that they actively choose to identify with a group and adopt the identity associated with it. For example, while social identities like gender, ethnicity or nationality are largely defined by others and individuals have only limited choice in whether or not to adopt them, being identified as a football or rock music fan, a Goth, a gang member, a Hell's Angel, a feminist, an eco-warrior protecting the environment, an anti-war, animal rights or Labour Party activist is almost completely a matter of personal choice.

### **d. Multiple identities**

The idea of multiple identities simply means that people have several identities, rather than just one. Individuals may draw on more than one source of identity, such as identities formed around their social class, and/or their ethnicity, their sexuality, their gender, their nationality and/or their age etc., or a combination of all of them. Individuals may assert different 'selves' in different circumstances. For example, at home they may assert the identity of a good son or daughter or a good Muslim, at school or college they may assert their identity as a good student, in their personal relations as gay, in their peer group as a Goth, in their leisure activities as a sporty type or drinker, in their workplace as a good worker, or as primarily having an Asian Muslim identity in Britain, but a British identity while travelling abroad.

Turner has pointed out that the "self" is composed of four fundamental identities, although people can probably have an identity about almost anything. For example, recently, there has been great interest in people's moral identities or the extent to which, and the arenas into which, people see themselves as moral.

Still, the most central identities are

- core identity, or the fundamental cognitions and feelings that people have about themselves that are generally salient in almost all situations (some have termed this person identity);
- social identities, or the cognitions and feelings that people have of themselves as members of social categories (for example, gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, class, or any social category) that define

people as distinctive and that generally lead to differential evaluation of memberships in social categories;

- group identities, or cognitions and feelings about self that stem from membership in, or identification with, corporate units revealing divisions of labor (groups, communities, and organizations being the most likely sources of a group identity); and
- role identities, or the roles that people play in any social context, but particularly the roles associated with membership in the divisions of labor in corporate units and, at times, memberships in social categories or what he term categoric units.

## 1.2. The notions of social and individual identities

Human behavior is different to non-human behavior (animals) because it is guided by reference to values (ideas, beliefs, principles and so forth). In turn, the development of values that have meaning to people is dependent upon two ideas: consciousness and self-consciousness. Consciousness refers to things like the ability to think and an awareness of the world around us, and, self-consciousness involves an awareness of ourselves as unique individuals. These ideas are crucial for the understanding of the basis of human social behavior since it is only because we possess conscious and self-conscious abilities that we develop values that, in turn, provide us with a sense of culture that guides our behavior.

Part of the human story lies in our ability to think about and reflect upon the nature of the social world and our position in that world. This ability allows us to develop values and norms that characterize the culture of a society. In a sense, this emphasizes the creative dimension of human consciousness as we are able to impose meaning and purpose on events.

However, the fact that we are able to do this means that the cultural values and norms we create reflect back upon us, i.e. we are forced to recognize their existence and this, in turn, shapes the way we think and act (through the general socialization process in society).

The scenario just illustrated produces a major theoretical dilemma for all social sciences. On the one hand, our consciousness gives us the ability to create societies and, theoretically at least, to shape them in any way that we choose. In this respect, people clearly create society. On the other hand, the societies we create take on a life of their own that is separate from each individual (i.e., we experience society as a force acting on our range and choice of behavior). If we have to be socialized into becoming a recognizable human being and this socialization process reflects the values and norms of cultures and subcultures, then society is effectively creating us, not the other way around. In a simple sense, therefore, we are all products of our social environment (perhaps more than we think or may care to believe).

However, this simple statement hides a multitude of controversies and interpretations over the precise relationship between us as individuals and the social groups to which we belong. This perhaps illustrates the tension between thinking, conscious, individuals and the society in which we live.

### 1.3. Main Foundations of Social Identity

Here, we will explore in more detail the various ways that certain conceptions about individual and group identities are socially constructed, i.e. created against a social background that tries to make social interaction meaningful, understandable and ordered by categorizing people in various ways. Naturally, as sociologists we are interested in identifying and explaining the nature of identity as a social phenomenon, i.e. we aim at elucidating the relationship between social categories such as age and gender and how these affect people's perception of both themselves and their relationship to others.

In this respect, we are particularly interested in the various ways that different cultures develop and use biological categories (age, sex, race and so forth) and physical categories (residence, region and so forth) as props around which individual and group identities are built. In this introductory section, we will be looking at five basic sources of identity, namely: (1) gender; (2) social class; (3) age; (4) region; and (5) ethnicity. These are not the only sources of identity, nor do they necessarily appear in all known societies, but they are a significant selection of the main sources of identity in contemporary societies. We can identify additional possible sources of identity such as religion, status, nationalism, etc.

Here, the idea that "Who we are is socially constructed" is stressed because it allows us to account for the fact that how we see ourselves or how others see us is not fixed and unchanging (socially static). On the contrary, identity is a dynamic feature of social life, i.e. it is something that is constantly evolving and changing. For some people, identity can change rapidly and dramatically, of course, but for most of us our identities evolve slowly and imperceptibly. This is perhaps one of the reasons as to why we tend to think of our personality as being relatively fixed and unchanging; but we only have to compare our behavior and attitudes overtime to appreciate just how much we do change.

If we keep in mind the categories identified above, the first thing we should note is that they are all examples of labels, i.e. they are names that society gives to a variety of different social categories. As we will see in a moment, one of the most significant things about each of these labels is that they are associated with a set of social characteristics that tell us something about the meaning of each category.

The social categories noted above (age, gender, etc.) exist because they represent attempts to understand and explain the differences that exist between people. For example, the category gender relates to observed biological differences (males and females, for example). The significance of the characteristics people in different societies assign to the type of categories lies in that they represent the general rules of expected behavior (in sociological terms, the normative expectations associated with social roles). Put differently, they prescribe the various ways people are expected to behave in terms of the social roles they have achieved such as teacher, student, etc or given (ascribed) such as male, female, etc.

In this respect, it is possible to see how the roles we play are an integral part of our social identity, since they represent ways people expect us to behave. When this happens, we start to define “who we are” in terms of the general characteristics associated with the roles we have chosen or are made to play. It is through role play that we:

- Learn how people sees us and expect us to behave;
- Project an image of ourselves to others;
- Assume different levels of social status; and
- Exercise different levels of power.

As we will see, the concepts of social status (loosely defined as the level of respect that people give to us) and power (loosely defined as the ability to make others do things, irrespective of their willingness) are very important in relation to the development and maintenance of our social identity.

On the other hand, we need to be aware of the fact that at different stages in the biological life-cycle, different aspects of our identity achieve more prominence in our lives. For example, when we are young, gender and age are likely to be the most prominent aspects of our identity, whereas when we are older social class may assume more importance.

Overall, however, it is important to keep in mind the idea that our identity is created out of a combination of different aspects (gender, age, ethnicity, class and so forth), since it is unlikely that we either define ourselves or are defined by others totally in terms of one or other of these aspects (although this does raise the related question of stereotyping which we will discuss at a later point).

What we can do next, therefore, is to look in more detail at various aspects of our social identity, beginning with gender.

**a. Gendered identities**

Gender is defined in terms of the particular cultural characteristics that people give to different sexes. In our society, for example, we recognize only two sexes (male and female) defined by the physiological and anatomical differences between the two. Although some societies recognize a third sex (hermaphrodites - people born with various combinations of male and female sexual organs), for our purpose here it is enough that we simply recognize biological differences as the basis of sex labeling.

Some (e.g. Robert Stoller) argues that if the proper names for biological differences in our society are “male” and “female,” gender differences should be represented by labels such as “masculine” and “feminine.” In effect, gender refers to the various ways that cultures confer (or ascribe) all kinds of behavioral differences to males and females.

At the moment of birth, therefore, perhaps the first conscious label applied to human infants is that of sex, followed closely and intimately by that of gender. These labels are significant because they will be used to tell people such things as:

- How to raise a child appropriately in terms of its gender;
- The types of behavior that a culture expects from different genders; and
- The types of roles different genders will be expected to fulfill.

In this respect, gender is a very significant source of identity in our society, mainly because of the social characteristics we give to children of different genders. If we have different perceptions of people based on, in part, their gender, then this will clearly affect (a) the various ways that we behave towards them, and (b) the way they see themselves through our behavior. In basic terms, what we are referring to here are the rules that apparently govern (or structure if you prefer) the roles that we play in life. Thus, to be male or female in our society means conforming to various cultural rules and expectations around what it means to be male or female.

The first thing we need to do, therefore, is to identify the rules of gender in our society. When we have done this we can then think about how and why these rules develop, are maintained and can be changed.

### Masculinity and femininity

As should be apparent by now, thinking about any form of social identity is thinking about the way we see ourselves and the way others see us. As suggested throughout this introductory section, these are not separate features of social life but rather they are wholly interdependent. In this respect, we can look generally at various types of gender expectations (or gender appropriate norms) in a variety of ways.

In a patriarchal society, aspects of masculinity, reflecting the kinds of assumptions we make about how men should behave, include:

- Leadership;
- Taking control of situations;
- Making decisions; and
- Being active, worldly and aggressive.

Furthermore, men are not supposed to be particularly emotional (crying, for example, is generally not considered a permissible male action – except perhaps in certain clearly-defined situations). Men are allowed, by and large, to be blunt, loud, and sloppy in their behavior and dress. In sexual relationships, men are expected to openly take the initiative and they are allowed much greater scope in their sexuality (sexual promiscuity).

Aspects of femininity, on the other hand, again reflecting the kinds of assumptions we make about how women should behave, include:

- Physical dependence (especially during pregnancy);
- Emotional behavior;
- Lack of control; and
- Being passive, motherly and family oriented.

Furthermore, women are encouraged to take more care with their appearance (how they dress, use of makeup and so forth). Femininity involves caring for others, especially children, and this is related to one of the primary roles associated with women in most traditional societies i.e. motherhood.

On the other hand, just other forms of social identities, we become aware of having a particular identity when we look at opposite identities, i.e. when we mix with people of the opposite sex, although clearly we do behave in ways, with our own gender, that reinforce gender norms, experiences and beliefs (“male bonding” being a particularly recent rationalization for men behaving badly).

**b. Age and social identity**

A flying note above reports the concept of age as rooted in biological development. In this respect, we clearly all pass through various phases of physical development, although once again this fact is probably less important to sociologists than the various norms of behavior that are associated with age/physical development. As with the concept of gender, age group has clear cultural connotations with regard to identity i.e. people are socialized into normative associations between age and behavior. Accordingly, we can identify four broad cultural groupings based around age, namely:

Childhood;

Youth;

Adulthood; and

Old Age

Each of these groups reflects certain cultural assumptions (connotations) about how it is appropriate and/or inappropriate for people of a certain age to behave. In many ways, these assumptions about behavior are related to things like lifestyle, and people are generally encouraged to identify themselves with different kinds of behavior based around their age. Accordingly:

Childhood... During this phase, children are encouraged to see themselves as largely dependent on adults. Much of their behavior is closely controlled and little independent behavior is seen as possible or desirable;

Youth... This is a period between childhood and adulthood where the young person is being prepared for full acceptance into adulthood. Youth are increasingly given independence from adults, although much of their behavior is still fairly tightly controlled (sexual activity, for example, is frequently encouraged or discouraged on the basis of gender);

Adult... Full adulthood brings with it full legal rights and independence as an individual. It also brings with it a range of responsibilities, depending on the choices that people make (family responsibilities, work commitments, etc.). In many ways, this is probably the least distinctive and most general of the age groups and it is usual to sub-divide this group into multiplicities of categories.

Old Age... One of the most important rites of passage is that undergone between adulthood and old age. The most frequent rite is official retirement from work which has the effect of literally and symbolically marking-off the elderly as different from the rest of society.

Each cultural group confers a sense of identity on people i.e. a sense of belonging to a specific grouping with its own values, norms and forms of behavior. But, of the four, youth and old age are probably the most individually meaningful to people as sources of identity, mainly because children are probably too young to appreciate the significance of their age group as a source of identity and adulthood is too wide a category for this purpose (adults may see themselves as having very little in common in terms of age, for example).

Having said this, adulthood as a source of identity does assume significance for people in terms of its relationship to these other categories (adults, for example, may see themselves as having more status and power than teenagers).

This leads us to a second interpretation of the relationship between age and identity in terms of the concept of sub-culture. The youth and the elderly are much more likely to think of themselves in sub-cultural terms, i.e. as an identifiable social grouping where people have important things in common that they do not share with other groups. Youth sub-cultures, for example, tend to be based around fairly unique lifestyles involving symbolic forms of dissent (music, dress, attitudes, behavior and so forth). Most people will be familiar with such sub-cultural styles as skinheads, punks, and so forth.

### **c. Regional identities**

Region (or geographic location) is a further example of the way we use our perception of physical objects (in this case, places where one is born or now lives) as a means of constructing a sense of identity (both personal and group). To begin with, we can focus on two main aspects of region: (a) the concepts of nation and nationality; and (b) the idea of regional variations within a nation.

The concept of a nation (and, as a consequence, the concept of nationality) relates, geographically, to the idea of dividing the world into various States (hence the concept of Nation-State). Sociologically, nonetheless, Nation-States are also what Anderson has termed an “imagined community,” i.e. the people who are born and live within certain geographic boundaries with a sense of belonging to, or being a part of, a particular Nation. Put differently, people of Nation imagine themselves (for a number of reasons) to have a specific nationality. The idea of nationality (related to concepts of patriotism and national identity) has been – and continue to be – a powerfully emotive cultural form in modern societies.

The idea of nationality as an imagined community is significant because it illustrates the way that various national characteristics – and by extension, national identity – are developed around the idea of physical region. It is, for example, reasonably clear that when people talk about “being Nigerian” or “being Ethiopian,” they are saying that each nationality can be uniquely defined in terms of various social (and perhaps biological) characteristics.

In significant respects, therefore, national identity is something that is created in relation to perceived differences with other nationalities, i.e. a Chinese defines his sense of “being Chinese” against his sense of what he believe “being American” or “being Russian” means. Thus, a sense of nationality may involve less an understanding of what it actually means to be Chinese and more what it means to be some other nationality, i.e. his sense of national identity evolves more from what he is not (American, Russian, Japanese and so forth) than from what he actually is.

We also need to note a further dimension of nationality since it also involves idea of claim to loyalty (to a country, to a people and so forth). Thus, by identifying myself as being of a particular nationality I am, in effect, saying that I have something in common with one group of people. When I start to think in these terms, it is evident that these people can be considered to have some sort of claim to my loyalty. The most

obvious example here might be wars, where people of one proclaimed nationality fight against people of another proclaimed nationality. Fighting for one's country, therefore, is a powerful expression of identity.

Turning briefly to the second aspect of region noted above (i.e. the idea of regional variations within a Nation), it is clear that within a particular nationality, people can develop a more specific and personal sense of regional identity, i.e. the idea that being born and raised within a particular geographic area within a Nation-state also has some significance for our sense of identity. This is because regional cultural variations (dress, accent, language-use and the like) create social characteristics that can be used to impose or develop a sense of local identity.

#### **d. Ethnic identities**

There tends, in everyday language, to be some confusion over the use of the terms ethnicity and race and we need, initially, to resolve any possible sociological confusion. The term race refers to the idea that human beings can be classified in different ways on the basis of various supposed racial types – European, Nordic, Aborigine, African or whatever. At various times this idea has been popular in both the biological sciences and everyday language. And as long as biological analogy (or even sociobiology) dominated sociological theory and method, it influenced our understanding in the area. A major problem with this type of usage is not simply the question of whether or not distinctive racial types actually exist, but rather that the concept of race is frequently used to justify the alleged superiority or inferiority of one race over another. Sociologists recognize that the term race is frequently used in everyday language even though its academic use (especially in the biological sciences where it was once popular) is increasingly rare.

On the other hand, the concept of ethnicity refers to the recognition that different people develop different forms of culture. Thus, whereas race has frequently been used to denote supposed biological or genetic differences between human beings (usually based around things such as skin color), ethnicity is now more often used to denote cultural differences between different peoples.

One advantage of the concept of ethnicity – aside from the fact that we can talk about cultural differences free from the stigma of doctrines relating to racial superiority – is that it forces us to focus on the different ways of life that human beings develop. In addition, we can also focus on the concept of ethnicity in terms of cultural identities. On the flipside, there are issues of ethnocentrism and cultural xenocentrism that contradict the assertion that the concept of ethnic differences as opposed to the concept of racial differences is conceptually cogent and academically neutral. There are instances of ethnic cleansing in Africa, Europe and elsewhere whereby ethnic differences were used to define ethnic relations and charter new roads for different ethnic groups.

Regardless, it is clear that people draw a sense of identity from the fact of belonging to this or that ethnic group and culture. This sense of belonging is particularly evident when we look at relationships between ethnic minorities and the wider cultures within which they reside.

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In very general terms, ethnic group identity can be based around a number of different areas, singularly or, more usually, in combination. For example:

- Cultural traditions;
- Biology;
- Religious beliefs;
- Common language;
- Territorial Origin;
- Lifestyle and so forth

The most important point to note, however, is that people see both themselves and others as belonging to different cultural groups which, in turn, provide a sense of belonging and identity – key concepts that run through this course.

e. Class identity Social class is an important concept in sociology and it usually refers to the various ways that people can be classified on the basis of their occupation. Thus, within sociology, class tends to be used as an economic or occupational classification system. Nonetheless, as we will see, the concept of class is frequently a difficult one to come to terms with, mainly because (a) it can be defined in many different ways; (b) there are frequent disagreements (in society as well as sociology) as to the significance of social class.

Some sociologists, for example, use the concept as a convenient way of classifying different occupational groups in society (managers, supervisors, employees and so forth). In this respect social class is seen to be a statistical category that does not have much significance outside the fact that it allows us to conveniently group people of similar occupations. This usage is probably closest to the functionalist perspective in sociology.

Other sociologists, however, view social class as far more than a convenient classification of related occupations. Marxist sociologists, for example, see social class as a much more active concept, i.e. social class is seen to influence people's experiences in the social world and, most importantly, how they see the nature of their world.

For the moment, we will assume that a simple definition of social class involves identifying three major social classes:

- Upper class: owners of businesses and large estates;
- Middle class: non-owning managers charged with the day-to-day running of these enterprises; and
- Lower [working] class: workers for wage who lack both ownership and control.

Although this is a very simplistic view of social class, it will suffice for our purposes for the moment, since it conveys the main idea of people experiencing the world differently based upon their working situation. In terms of culture and identity, the basic idea here is that different classes develop different ways of life based on their different experiences. Values and norms frequently develop in different ways for different social classes, such that the culture of an upper class male or female will appear very different to that of a working class male or female.

One way that social class can be used to provide people with a sense of identity is through their work/occupation. In this sense, where people work together, doing the same kinds of job they develop something in common with each other – in effect, they identify themselves through what they do. For example, when we meet people for the first time, we tend to ask them “what they do”. There are a number of reasons for this (knowing someone’s occupation gives us a number of clues about that person – their job status, approximate level of income, future prospects and so forth), but we are simply interested in the idea of occupation as a source of social status, i.e. the work that we do has a certain status in society and, from this status we develop a sense of who we are in relation to other people (in a very broad sense).

The other way that social class relates to identity – although perhaps one that may be rapidly declining in significance in modern societies – is through the idea of community, i.e. the idea that people of a similar social class tend to live and work in the same area and develop common bonds through sharing similar experiences in the social world. For example, traditional mining villages consisted of people who shared roughly the same type of employment and experiences – and this fact gave them a sense of common identity.

Finally, perhaps, the third area related to class and identity is class consciousness, i.e. an awareness of belonging to a particular social class with its own way of life, traditions and interests. Many people, for example, are keenly aware that they are working class or upper class and this awareness helps to create a sense of social identity, i.e. the idea that you can broadly define both yourself and others in class terms. This idea has further significance if we see social classes as having different interests in society (a Marxist view of class). If this is the case, we can talk about things like class solidarity (an awareness of the idea that people of a particular class should stick together, help each other and so forth).

### **Summary**

We have looked – briefly and in general terms – at a variety of sources of identity. In particular, we took issue with the various ways that certain conceptions about individual and group identities are socially constructed, i.e. how individual and social identities are created against a social background that tries to make social interaction meaningful, understandable and ordered by categorizing people in various ways.

We have focused on a number of major sources of social identity, mainly to give the reader an idea about how these social categories can be and are used for the purpose of creating and maintaining individual and group identities.

In all of these cases, the basic concern has been to show some of the ways that membership of social groups (such as those based around categories such as class, age and ethnicity) helps to create a sense of belonging among human beings. This sense of belongingness – of having certain things in common with people – is important to us, as social animals, mainly because we can use it as a source of telling us who and what we are.

The sociological concept most often used in the context of identity is that of social integration (which simply means a “sense of belongingness”). Thus, as social beings we need to feel that we belong to various groups (the biggest of these being humanity). This need to “feel we belong” is significant because we draw from these groups a sense of identity, i.e. by becoming integrated into a social group we feel we belong to it and, by extension, we are able to define ourselves in terms of the groups to which we belong. Group membership gives us not just a sense of identity, but also a sense of purpose to life.

Finally, we have noted the idea that beliefs about “who we are” are created in a social context. This reflects the basic sociological idea that human beings are socially created, not prisoners of instincts. Evidence of this is all around us, not just in terms of differences within our society but also, perhaps more clearly, in terms of differences between societies. Although, genetically, everyone in the world belongs to the same biological class, behavioral differences are everywhere in evidence and we can start to explain these differences in attitudes and behavior through an examination of various social sources of identity.

## **1.4. Perspectives on Social Identity**

There are several sociological perspectives on social identity and how it is constituted. A review of all would be beyond the scope of this course and unnecessary. In light of this, two major sociological perspectives that occupied ample pages in studies of social identity will be discussed briefly to introduce students to their main tenets and implications to the study of social identity. The choice has been made for they also represent the two extreme ways of understanding and interpreting social identity whereby most others fall either in between or are attempts to synthesize the two into a coherent (or new) perspective to the understanding of issues related to social identity.

### **1.4.1. Structural approaches**

Structuralists, like functionalists and some Marxists, adopt a macro approach, seeing culture and individual identities created by the wider social forces making up the social structure of society. Individuals are seen like puppets or programmed robots, who are socialized and manipulated by social institutions like the agencies of socialization mentioned above. Wider social forces, with culturally defined norms and values, form and limit the identities that are adopted, and individuals have little choice or control over their identity formation. Their identities are handed down to them by the socialization process, based on sources like social class, ethnicity, gender and age, and to which they are compelled to conform by various positive and negative sanctions. It is therefore wider social forces – rather than individual choice – that shapes the identities of individuals.

### **Criticisms of structural approaches**

Criticisms of these approaches are that individuals are seen simply as puppets, what Garfinkel (1984) called ‘cultural dopes’, simply controlled by the social structure with little input from the individual. Structural approaches don’t recognize that individuals have free will, and can take initiatives, make choices, challenge and disobey social rules, and have a role in carving out their own identities in interaction with others.

### **1.4.2. Social action/interactionist approaches**

Social action or interpretivist theories adopt a micro approach, focusing much more on the individual and everyday behaviour rather than the overall structure of society. This micro approach places much more emphasis on the role of individuals in creating culture and defining their identities, and is concerned with the meanings and interpretations individuals give to situations as they interact with other individuals and groups in the socialization process. Such theories suggest that identity is something individuals can create rather than simply having imposed on them. Norms, values and roles are not orders but guidelines that individuals can interpret, and they provide flexibility for individuals to manoeuvre within – they may alter some rules, ignore others, or can, of course, reject them all together.

These approaches suggest individual and social identities are produced by the interaction between individuals and the culture and society to which they belong. The way that interaction between individuals can form and change identities is illustrated in works by Goffman, Mead and Cooley.

#### **a. The ‘looking-glass self’**

Mead argues that as children grow up, they learn to develop a sense of themselves – their self-concept – and the qualities they have that make them different from others. As they relate to (or interact with) other people, they begin to develop ideas about how others see them and, by seeing how people respond to them, they may

modify their self-concept and sense of identity and begin to see themselves as others see them. This means the self-concepts and identities of individuals are changing and developing all the time as they go through daily life in society. Cooley used the concept of the 'looking-glass self' to explain this. The 'looking-glass self' is the idea that our image of ourselves is reflected back to us (like a mirror) in the views of others. As we consider the image of ourselves reflected in the reactions of other people to us, we may modify and change our view of ourselves and our behaviour. An individual, for example, might see her or himself as outgoing, friendly and sociable, but if others see them as introverted, unfriendly and stand-offish, then they might adopt a new self-identity in accordance with how others see them, or modify their behaviour and try and change people's views of them. Our self-concept or our individual identity is therefore a social construction, and not a purely individual one.

### **b. Goffman: the presentation of self and impression management**

Goffman: the presentation of self and impression management Goffman (1990) sees society like a stage, with people acting out performances like actors do in a play or TV drama. Good actors are able to persuade audiences or viewers that they really are the characters they are playing. Similarly, in society people try to project particular impressions of themselves – what Goffman calls 'the presentation of self' – by putting on dramatic performances or a 'show' to try to influence or manipulate how others see them. By managing the impressions they give to other people – Goffman calls this impression management – individuals try to convince them of the identities they wish to assert. This is often achieved by the use of symbols of various kinds to show off the kind of person they want to be seen as, such as the way they speak and the words they use (like using a lot of swear or 'trendy' words), wearing certain types of clothing and jewellery, having tattoos, their body language, following certain leisure activities, buying particular consumer goods, reading particular newspapers or listening to particular types of music. Such symbols try to present a particular impression to others. Everyone is engaged in this process of manipulating others and being manipulated by them to give the best possible impression of themselves. Through adopting social roles, like those of actors in a play who put on costumes and speak from scripts to convince audiences that they really are who they seem to be, and by responding to the reactions of others, individuals therefore develop their individual and social identities.

While the individual may try to present a certain impression to others, there is no certainty that their impression management will always succeed. This is particularly the case for those with stigmatized identities. For example, someone with a physical impairment – like being confined to a wheelchair, for example – may not wish to give the impression that they are primarily a disabled person, but rather a black person, a Muslim, a

woman, a news reporter or a doctor, but other people may continue to define them in terms of their disabilities. People's failure to establish their chosen identity through such impression management then 'spoils' their preferred identity.

### **Criticisms of social action/intereractinalists approaches**

Critics of the social action approach suggest that individuals are seen as having too much control over their identity formation, and not enough emphasis is given to the importance of power inequalities in society and the role of social institutions in limiting and controlling the identities that individuals can adopt. While individuals might be able to choose some aspects of their identity, they are limited in their choices by factors such as the social disapproval that may arise if values and norms are not complied with, by the need to work and earn money to feed themselves or their families, or to purchase the consumer goods necessary to assert an alternative identity. A roadsweeper for a local council cannot simply choose to adopt the identity of a council manager, or a horse-riding, fox-hunting, shooting member of the upper class, because he probably lacks the financial means, social background, educational qualifications or skills to do so.

### **1.4.3. Structuration theory**

Giddens (2006) argues that there is a middle way between these structure and action approaches, which he calls 'structuration'. He accepts that social structures limit how people may act and the identities they may adopt, but they also make it possible for people to act and form identities in the first place. The culture and structure of society provides people with the means of establishing their identities, the tools necessary to make sense of society, and provide some degree of predictability in social life through an understanding and agreement on basic social norms and values and a common language. Without these, it would be very difficult for individuals to establish their identities. While people can make choices and have opportunities to form and change their identities, they can only make choices within the cultural framework of the society in which they live. Social structure and social action are therefore interdependent. IN short structuration sees the social structure and society's culture making it possible for individuals to form their identities. It recognizes that while identities are partly formed by individual choice, that choice is limited by the social structure and the culture in which people live.

## **Chapter two: class**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Conventionally, class refers to the hierarchical distinctions between individuals or groups in societies or cultures. Nonetheless, as we have noted in the section on the introduction, sociologists differ in how they conceptualize class. A distinction can be drawn between analytical concepts of social class, such as the Marxian and Weberian traditions, and the more empirical traditions such as socioeconomic status approach, which duly notes the correlation of income, education and wealth with social outcomes without necessarily implying a particular theory of social structure. The Weberian tradition can also be considered empirical in the sense that it is more descriptive than analytical.

Traditions differ about which social traits are significant enough to define a class, although when sociologists speak of 'classes in modern society they usually mean economically based groups. The relative importance and definition of membership in a particular class differs greatly overtime and between societies, particularly in societies that have a legal differentiation of groups of people by birth or occupation.

Weber defined social class as a segment of a population whose members share relatively similar lifestyles and levels of wealth, power and prestige. Lenin writes, Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labor, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labor of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy [A Great Beginning, July 1913, Collected Works, Vol. 29: 42].

The following traits are used to define social class:

1. Profession:

A profession is an occupation that requires extensive training and the mastery of specialized knowledge, and usually has a professional association, ethical code and process of certification or licensing (examples are law, medicine, finance, military and the clergy).

In classical times, there were only three professions: ministry, medicine and law. These three professions each hold to a specific code of ethics, members are almost universally required to swear some form of oath to uphold those ethics, therefore 'professing' to a higher standard of accountability. Each of these professions

also provides and requires extensive training in the meaning, value and importance of its particular oath in the practice of that profession.

Sociologists have been known to define professionalism as self-defined power elitism or as organized exclusivity along guild lines much in the sense that George Bernard Shaw characterized all professions as 'conspiracies against the laity.' Sociological definitions of professionalism involving checklists of perceived or claimed characteristics (self-governance, esoteric knowledge, special skills, ethical behavior, etc.) become less fashionable in the late 20th century.

A member of a profession is termed a professional. However, professional is also used for the acceptance of payment for an activity, in contrast to amateur. A professional sportsperson, for example, is one who receives payment for participating in sport, but sport is not generally considered a profession.

## 2. Income or Net-Worth

Income, generally defined, is the money that is received as a result of the normal business activities of an individual or a business. For example, for individuals income usually means the gross amount on their pay-check before any tax and other deductions has been made by their employer. Internationally, the accounting term income is synonymous to term revenue. A related economic concept used to classify people into different class bars is what is called Net-Worth. Net worth (sometimes 'net assets') is the total assets minus total liabilities of an individual or company. For a company, this is called net assets.

## 3. Life-Style and Cultural Refinements

For example, Bourdieu suggests a notion of high and low classes with a distinction between tastes and sensitivities of bourgeois and working classes. Bourdieu shared Weber's view that society, contrary to traditional Marxism, cannot be analyzed simply in terms of economic classes and ideologies. Much of his work concerns the independent role of educational and cultural factors. Instead of analyzing societies in terms of classes, Bourdieu uses the concept of field: a social arena in which people maneuver and struggle in pursuit of desirable resources. A field is a system of social positions (e.g. a profession such as the law) structured internally in terms of power relationships (e.g. consider the power differential between judges and lawyers). Different fields can be either autonomous or interrelated (e.g. consider the separation and relations of power between judiciary and legislature) and more complex societies have more fields.

Here, Bourdieu identifies symbolic capital (e.g. prestige, honor, and the right to be listened to) as a crucial source of power. When a holder of symbolic capital uses the power this confers against an agent who holds less, and seeks thereby to alter their actions, they exercise symbolic violence. We might see this when a

daughter brings home a boyfriend considered 'unsuitable' by her parents. She is met with disapproving looks and gestures, symbols which serve to convey the message that she will not be permitted this relationship, but which never make this coercive fact explicit. People come to experience symbolic power and systems of meaning (culture) as legitimate. Hence, the daughter will often feel a duty to obey her parents' unspoken demand, whether or not her boyfriend is truly objectionable. If he is indeed unobjectionable, she has been made to misunderstand or misrecognise his nature. Moreover, by perceiving her parents' symbolic violence as legitimate, she is complicit in her own subordination.

For Bourdieu, education represents the key example of this process. Educational success, according to Bourdieu, entails a whole range of cultural behaviors, extending to ostensibly non-academic features like gait or accent. Privileged children have learned this behavior, as have their teachers while children of unprivileged background have not. The children of privilege fit into the world of educational expectations with apparent 'ease.' The unprivileged are found to be 'difficult,' to present 'challenges.' Yet both behave as their upbringing dictates. Bourdieu regards this 'ease' or 'natural' ability as in fact the product of a great social labor, largely on the part of the parents. It equips their children with the dispositions of manner as well as thought which ensure they are able to succeed within the educational system and can then reproduce their parents' class position in the wider social system.

Cultural capital (e.g. competencies, skills, qualifications) can also be a source of misrecognition and symbolic violence. Therefore, working children can come to see the educational success of their middle class peers as always legitimate, seeing what is often class-based inequality as instead the result of hard work or even 'natural' ability. A key part of this process is the transformation of people's symbolic or economic inheritance (e.g. accent or property) into cultural capital (e.g. university qualifications) – a process which the logic of the cultural field impedes but cannot prevent.

#### 4. Power

Many sociologists, following Max Weber, usually define power as the ability to impose one's own will on others even if they resist in some way. Specifically, by power is meant that opportunity existing within a social [relationship] which permits one to carry out one's own will even against resistance and regardless of the basis on which this opportunity rests. The imposition need not involve coercion (force or threat of force). Thus, 'power' in the sociological sense subsumes both physical power and political power.

Class relations are often viewed as hierarchical relations where one group of people are powerful and hence exert some domination or influence upon others. Marx has fascinatingly argued how power relations between two classes are like when stating:

Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of laborers are crowded in to the factory are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois state; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the over-looker, and above all by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. The more openly this despotism proclaims gain to be its end and aim, the pettier, the more hateful and the more embittering it is” [Karl Marx (1963) *The Economic and philosophical Manuscripts* in Karl Marx: *Early Writings*].

### **Stratum Model of Class**

Sociologists generally identify different classes as social strata in higher or lower order based on a class's measurable position on a dimensional scale. The number of models possible is dependent up on the analytical and statistical framework used in particular sociological studies. Some typical models include the following.

#### 1. Dual-Class Model:

This model divides societies between the powerful and weak; the Marxian conception of classes is archetypal in this particular case. He once stated, The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman in a word oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes (Marx (1848) *The Communist Manifesto*).

#### 2. Three-Class Model:

This model develops a two class model with a postulated middle class. In today's common uneducated usage, the term is often incorrectly applied to people who have a degree of economic independence, but not a great deal of social influence or power in their society. Not everyone will accept the introductory example given above, for the term 'middle class' has a long history and has had many, sometimes contradictory, meanings. It was once defined by exception as an intermediate social class between the nobility and the peasantry of Europe.

On the other hand, while the nobility owned the country side and the peasantry worked the countryside, a new bourgeoisie (literally 'town-dwellers') arose around mercantile functions in the city. This had the result

that the middle class were often the wealthiest stratum of society (whereas today many take the term to refer by definition to the only-moderately wealthy). Descending from this distinction, the phrase 'middle class' came to be used in the United Kingdom during the 18th century to describe the professional and business class, as distinct from both the titled nobility and the landed gentry, on the one hand, and the agricultural and increasingly industrial laborers, on the other.

The following factors are often ascribed in modern usage to a 'middle class':

- Achievement of tertiary education, including all financiers, lawyers, doctors and clergymen regardless of their leisure or wealth.
- Belief in bourgeois values, such as high rates of house or long-term lease ownership and jobs which are perceived to be 'secure.' In the US and the UK, politicians typically target the votes of the middle classes.
- Lifestyle: in the UK, social status has been less directly linked to wealth than in the US, and has also been judged by pointers such as accent, manners, place of education and the class of a person's circle of friends and acquaintances.
- A net-worth, which represents a person's total material assets worth, minus his debt. Most economists define 'middle class' citizens as those with net-worth between \$125,000 and \$250,000. Those with net-worth between \$250,000 and \$500,000 are categorized as upper middle class. Those with net worth's below \$125,000 can be further broken down into working or lower class.

### ***3. Multi-Stratum Model***

Sociologists who seek fine-grained connections between class and life-outcomes often develop precisely defined social strata, like historian Paul Fussell's nine-tier stratification of American society.

Fussell’s model classifies Americans according to the following classes:

Rank	Class	Members
1	Top out-of-sight	The super-rich, heirs to huge fortunes
2	Upper class	Rich celebrities and people who can afford full-time domestic staff
3	Upper-middle class	Self-made, well-educated professional
4	Middle class	Office workers
5	High prole	Skilled blue-collar workers
6	Mid prole	Workers in factories and the service industry
7	Low prole	Manual laborers
8	Destitute	The homeless
9	Bottom out-of-sight	Those incarcerated in prisons and institutions

The traditional pigeon-holing mainstay of much of the advertising industry used to be that of social class. This, although it revolves around occupation (usually of the head of the household) is based on more than just income groups alone. In this way, it used to be assumed that the upper classes were the first to try new products, which then ‘trickled down’ (the name of the theory) to the lower classes. Historically, there may have been some justification for this. The refrigerator, the washing machine, the car and the telephone were all adopted first by the higher social classes. Recently, however, as affluence has become more widespread, the process has become much less clear. Hence, increased affluence has meant that consumers have developed tastes that are based on other aspects of their life styles, and class-related behavior appears to have decreased in terms of purchasing patterns.

#### **Warnerian Social Class Model**

Another example of a stratum class model was developed by the sociologist William Warner in his 1949 book “Social Class in America.” For many decades, the Warnerian theory was dominant in US sociological theory on class. Based on his anthropological studies, Warner divided Americans into three classes (Upper, Middle and Lower), and then further subdivided each of these into an “Upper” and “Lower” segment, with the following postulates:

Rank	Class	Members
1	Upper-Upper class	'Old money': people who have been born into and raise with wealth
2	Lower-Upper class	'New money': individuals who have become rich within their own lifetimes
3	Upper-Middle class	High-salaried professional (e.g. doctors, lawyers, corporate executives).
4	True-Middle class	Professional with salaries and educational attainment higher than those found among lower-middle class workers (e.g. professors, managerial office workers, architects)
5	Lower-Middle class	Low-paid professionals, but not manual laborers (e.g. police officers, non-management office workers, small business owners)
6	Upper-Lower class	Blue-collar workers and manual laborers (also known as the 'working class')
7	Lower-Lower class	The homeless and permanently unemployed

### Theoretical Perspectives on the 'Class' Issue

This section highlights the contributions of giant social philosophers to the issue of class and its relation with different aspects of the modern society and the individual contained in it. We begin with the Greek social philosopher Plato.

#### 1. Plato's Defense of Class Society

The Republic, Plato's major political work, is concerned with the question of justice and therefore with the questions "what is a just state" and "who is a just individual?"

The ideal state, according to Plato, is composed of three classes. The economic structure of the state is maintained by the merchant class. Security needs are met by the military class, and political leadership is provided by the philosopher-kings. A particular person's class is determined by an educational process that begins at birth and proceeds until that person the threefold class structure of the state, in which the enlightened philosopher-kings, supported by the soldiers, govern the rest of society.

#### 2. Karl Marx on Capitalism and its Contradictions

Saint Simon rather than Comte should have been credited as the most proper father of sociology, even through the latter author gave the discipline its name. In one of his various treatises on society, Saint Simon writes society passes through stages of growth, maturity and decline; each successive type of society has the 'germs of its own destruction' which is generated by its own internal contradictions and hence development. He added that the modern age is one in which class conflict rife, because it is an era of transition; decayed feudalism is not yet fully destroyed and the newly emergent industrial society is only partially formed. It is clear that many of the principal elements of Marx's conception of classes and class conflict were articulated by Saint Simon.

In a similar vein, Marx asserted that the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles where each society sows the seeds of its own destruction. Capitalism is that highest stage of development where class contradictions are highly sharpened and culminate in a socialist revolution. He also drew the orthodox political economy of Smith and Ricardo to explain capitalism's class contradictions arguing that it is in the control of the means of production and the expropriation of surplus labor value that class exploitation lies. According to Marx, capitalism is a transitory stage between feudalism and the more stable and classless society of the future. But it is not merely a phase of 'disorder' or anomie whose contradictions would disappear when the transition is complete. Instead, it is a genuinely new form of society, with its own characteristic structure and its own internal class dynamic.

- **Karl Marx on Class**

According to Giddens, there are two conceptual constructions which may be discerned in Marx's writings as regards to the notions of class: an abstract or pure model of class domination and the more concrete or specific descriptions of the specific characteristics of classes.

**Class relations: An abstract model:**

According to Marx, each historical type of society is structured around a dichotomous division of classes with respect to property relations (represented most simply in each case as a division between a patrician and plebeian, lord and vassal, capitalist and wage laborer).

Property relations constitute the axis of this dichotomous system. Here, a minority of non-producers who control the means of production are able to use this position of control to extract from the majority of

producers the surplus product, class is therefore defined in terms of the relationship of groupings of individuals to the means of production.

He argued that class should not be identified with source or amount of income people earn in the division of labor. Moreover, modes of consumption are primarily determined by relations of production. It is possible for two individuals to have identical incomes, and even the same occupation, and yet belong to different classes, with two brick layers, one of whom owns his own business, while other works as the employee of a large firm.

Marx's class analysis also has it that economic domination is also tied to political domination. Control of the means of productions yields political control. Thus classes express a relation not only between the exploiters and exploited but between 'oppressor and oppressed'. Accordingly the fundamental relations established between classes are relations of opposition which are asymmetrical. The classes do not confront each other on an equal plane.

Class relations are politically unstable but the dominant class seeks to stabilize its domination over the oppressed by advancing a legitimating ideology, which 'rationalizes' and explains to the subordinate class why the latter should accept its rule. Hence he argued "The ideas of the ruling class – are in every epoch the ruling ideas; that is, the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force." Hence, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack control over means of production are subject to the class which has the means of mental production."

Classes are conceived to be founded upon relations of mutual dependence and conflict. Dependence here means more than the sheer material dependence which is presupposed by the division of labor between the classes. In Marx's conception, classes in the dichotomous system are placed in a situation of reciprocity such that neither class can escape from the relationship without there by losing its identity as a class. This theorem is heavily influenced by the Hegelian dialectic and clearly binds the theory of classes to the transformation of society. When a class succeeds in elevating itself from a position of subordination to one of dominations, it consequently effects an overall reorganization of the social structure.

This far we have seen that social classes are complementary but exploitative and antagonistic in their relationship, class opposition, for Marx, is not simply an academic matter but an issue of political struggle classes not only constitute structural elements of society, but also specific politico economic interest groups

which under special economic circumstances acquire consciousness of themselves, their interests and organize themselves for political action. Class consciousness is the link that allows the transformation of a class 'in itself', a grouping with objective 'latent' interests into a class 'for itself', a group organizes itself for political conflict and whose interests at some point become 'manifest'.

**Class relation: A concrete model:**

The dichotomous model of class relations espoused at a more abstract level becomes problematic when it is applied to specific historical forms of society. While each type of society is structured around two major classes, the picture becomes blurred as other groups come into the picture.

For instance, the existence of transitional classes which are in the process of formation within a society based up on a class system. This was the case with the rise of the bourgeoisie and the 'free' urban proletariat within feudalism. On the other hand, there are also transitional classes that represent elements of a superseded set of relations of production but still linger in a new form society. For instance, the feudal class remained significant in the 19th century capitalist societies of Europe. These developments represent the fact the radical social change is not accomplished overnight, but constitutes an extended process of development, such that there is a massive overlap between types of dichotomous class systems.

In specific historic instances, therefore, the abstract dual system of class classification gives way to recognizing that there will be transitional 'middle' classes at each stage of societal development. Thus, the bourgeoisie are the middle class in feudalism, prior to their ascent to power, while the petty-bourgeoisie, small property owners, whose interests are partly divergent from large capital, are for Marx, the 'middle class' under capitalism.

**3. Weber on Social Stratification**

Unlike Marx who regarded class as a purely economical and class conflict as the ultimate contradiction of capitalism, Weber asserted that class cleavages based on economic interests do not necessarily correspond to sentiments of community identity which constitute differential status. Thus, 'status' is a separate dimension of social stratification other than 'class'. Weber argues, Man does not strive to enrich for power only in order to enrich himself economically. Very frequently the striving for power is also conditioned by the social 'honor' it entails. Quite generally, 'mere economic' power, and especially 'naked' economic power, is by no means a recognized basis of social honor.

Social honor, for Weber, is distributed in a community differentially and different 'status groups' command different social honor and prestige within society.

According to Weber, status honor "need not necessarily be linked with a 'class situation'. On the contrary, it normally stands in sharp contrast to the pretensions of sheer property." Status honor, according to Weber is normally expressed by a specific style of life that is expected from all those who wish to belong to the circle. Linked with this expectation are restrictions on 'social intercourse.' These restrictions may confine normal marriages to within the status circle and may lead to endogamous closure. As soon as there is not a mere individual and socially irrelevant imitation of another style of life, but an agreed upon communal action of this closing character, the 'status' development is underway.

According to Weber, members of a higher status group always enjoy various status privileges. Such honorific preferences may include "the privilege of Wearing special costumes, of eating special dishes taboo to others, of carrying arms, the right to pursue certain non-professional dilettante practices, e.g. to play certain musical instruments." These privileges are important for status group because these groups of people are specific bearers of 'conventions.' In whatever way, it may be manifest; all 'stylization' of life either originates in status groups or is at least conserved by them.

According to Weber, while the genuine place of classes is within economic order and the place of 'status groups' is within the social order,

'parties' serves as instruments of social stratification in the political realm. In his words,

'Parties' live in the house of 'power'.

They may represent interests determined through 'class situation' or 'status situation'. In most cases, they are partly class parties and partly status parties, but sometimes they are neither. It all depends on whether or not is the community stratified by status or by classes. Their means of attaining power, to Weber, "may be quite varied ranging from naked violence of any sort to canvassing for votes with coarse or subtle means: money, social influence, the force of speech, suggestion, clumsy hoax and so on.

### **Weber on Social Class**

Weber advances a pluralistic conception of class. He, for instance, distinguished between what he calls 'ownership classes' and 'acquisition classes.' While the former class have properties that are usable for market returns, the latter have services that could be offered on the market. Dominant classes could, therefore, be further divided into ownership [rentier] classes and acquisition [entrepreneurial] classes. The propertied

classes for Weber may (a) monopolize the purchase of high-priced consumer goods; (b) pursue a systematic monopoly policy in the sale of goods; (c) accumulate property especially unconsumed surplus; (d) accumulate capital by saving; and (e) monopolize the privileges of socially advantageous kinds of education so far as these involve expenditures.

According to Weber, the class situations of the dominated are also differentiated. They include people who are (a) themselves objects of ownership, which is they are un-free; (b) outcasts and the proletariat; (c) the debtor classes; and (d) the poor. In between the positively privileged (the propertied) classes and the negatively privileged classes (those who possess neither skill nor marketable skills) are various types of 'middle classes'. According to Weber, the term 'middle class,' "includes groups of all sorts of property, or of marketable abilities through training, who are in a position to draw support from these sources. Entrepreneurs are in this category by virtue of essentially positive privileges."

Weber refutes the Marxist distinction of a class "in itself" and a class "for itself." Class, he argues, is an objective characteristic that refers to market interests and exist whether people are aware of them or not. He argues, "The class situation and other circumstances being the same, the direction in which the individual worker is likely to pursue his interests vary widely, for instance, according to whether he is constitutionally qualified for the task at hand to high, average, or to a low degree." Hence, he criticizes the Marxist stance which posits a direct and immediate connection between class and consciousness.

The internal differentiation of classes and the difficulties to readily mobilize class consciousness (what Weber calls 'communal action') undermine class antagonism. Weber states, "It is not uncommon for very strongly privileged property classes. Such as slave owners, to exist side by side with such far less privileged groups without any class struggle." He continues, "A classic example of the lack of class antagonism has been the relation of the 'poor white trash,' originally those not owning slaves, to the planters in southern states of the

US. The 'poor whites' have often been much more hostile to the Negro than the planters who have frequently had a large element of patriarchal sentiment." This way he implies that other identity concepts like 'race' undercut class alignments and the sharpening of class antagonism between the propertied and the propertyless.

According to Giddens, Weber's analysis is not that class and status constitute two dimensions of stratification,' but that class and status represent two possible and competing modes of group formation in relation to the distribution of power. Power is not for Weber a third dimension in some comparable sense to the first two. He is quite explicit about saying that classes, status group and parties are all 'phenomena of the distribution of power.'

Power is, therefore, a pivotal concept in the Weberian thesis as well. It is 'the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action.'

#### 4. Ralf Dahrendorf on Class in Post-Capitalist Societies

Ralf Dahrendorf is another sociologist who developed an alternative conception of classes in what he calls 'post capitalist' societies. His was also a body of theory which first emerged as a critique of the Marxian analysis of class. Here are the major arguments of Dahrendorf. According to Dahrendorf, Marx's works are based up on an illegitimate fusion of 'sociological' and 'philosophical' elements. The sociological statements are 'empirical and falsifiable' whereas the philosophical arguments are speculations that are neither verifiable nor falsifiable. Statements like 'class conflict generates social change' are of the first type whereas statements like "socialism leads to a complete realization of human freedom' are of the second type.

Dahrendorf argues that Marx's writings about capitalist exploitation and its root cause in private property ownership are somewhat incomplete. Dahrendorf argued that the concept 'property' could be understood in two major ways: in a broad sense, as control over the means of production regardless of the way this control is exercised; or more narrowly, as the legally recognized right of ownership. In this sense, the manager of an industrial enterprise in a socialist society (where the legal private ownership of capital is abolished) may enjoy 'property rights' so long as he has direct control over the enterprise. According to Dahrendorf, it is simply because Marx limited the notion of property rights to the legal realm that he managed to fuse the sociological and philosophical dimensions. In other words, the narrow definition of property rights in Marxist rendering enabled him to relate private ownership with the history of class struggles and forecast about the demise of capitalism.

According to Dahrendorf, capitalism was that form of industrial society where the legal ownership of private property by the bourgeoisie actually coincided with the actual control of the means of production by the same person. Today, what we have is industrial but post-capitalist societies where these two notions of property rights do not necessarily coincide. According to him, four major processes are underway in contemporary industrialized societies that ensured the transfer from capitalism to post-capitalism.

##### a) Decomposition of Capital:

Dahrendorf discusses the rise of joint stock companies as that process of role differentiation, whereby the capitalism has split in two categories: 'the shareholder' and 'manager.' According to Dahrendorf, "by separating ownership and control, the joint stock reduces the distance between manager and worker while at

the same time removing the owners altogether from the sphere of production thereby isolating their function as exploiters of others.” Capitalists without function (akin to absentee landlords) will yield to functionaries without capital (managers). These two groups of capitalists for Dahrendorf are far from identical in their positions, roles and outlooks. Capital and thereby capitalism has dissolved or decomposed giving way to a plurality of partly agreed, partly competing, and partly simply different groups.

b) Decomposition of Labor:

Marx held that the mechanization entailed by the growing maturity of capitalist production leads to the elimination of skilled labor, and thus to the increasing internal homogeneity of the working class. He stated, “owing to the extensive use of machinery and to the division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost [or shall lose] all individual character.” Marx even stated that those who belong to the “middle class” – small trade people, shopkeepers – shall all “sink into the proletariat.” These predictions however did not come true. What actually happened was intensive differentiation of the working class itself. According to Dahrendorf, “analysis of industrial conditions suggests quite clearly that within the labor force of advanced industry we have to distinguish at least three skill groups: highly skilled workmen, semiskilled workmen, totally unskilled laborers.

c) Increase in Rates of Social Mobility: Increased social mobility is, for Dahrendorf, one of the principle characteristics of industrial society. The effects of widespread inter- and intra-generational mobility are twofold. Firstly, these act to diminish the boundaries between classes and thus to corrode any rigid barriers which might otherwise up between them. Secondly, the existence of high rates of mobility serves to ‘translate’ group conflict into individual competition. Group antagonisms – class conflicts – become dissolved into competitive struggle between individuals for valued positions within the occupational system.

d) Institutionalization of Class Conflict: There is one line of social development in individual societies which has both originated and spread since about the time of Marx’s death, and which is directly relevant to our problem. Geiger, who has described this change as the “institutionalization of class conflict” says:

The tension between capital and labor is recognized as a principle of the structure of the labor market and has become a legal institution of society. The methods, weapons and techniques of the class struggle are recognized and are thereby brought under control. The struggle evolves according to certain rules of the game. Thereby the struggle has lost its worst sting.

### **Identity in Ethiopia**

Class as a source of identity formation and political and community mobilization has played significant roles in shaping the various aspects of the modern world's landscape. Though its significance in instigating social change in various parts of the world since the full-blown development of capitalist societies is beyond doubt, its significance in Ethiopian politics has been minimal apart from certain instances of historical accidents.

Ethiopia, largely unaffected by the modernizing effects of colonial rule, was in many ways the most traditional of African societies. Yet, African socialism, which purportedly tried to inject traditional African values into the post-colonial process of nation-building and economic development, had little resonance in Ethiopia. On the contrary, by a twist of historical irony, it represented a situation where Marxism-Leninism gained perhaps the highest degree of ideological ascendancy. It, with its class orientations, was the predominant ideology of the student movement since about 1968 and became the official creed of the state for about a decade and half (1976-91). In effect, the country made a spectacular leap from imperial autocracy to Marxism-Leninism, without the intervening experience of bourgeois liberalism.

In this spectacular leap, Bahiru Zewde (2008) documents, the students played a pivotal role. In pre-1974 Ethiopia there were no political parties, let alone a communist party that could explain the extraordinary predominance of the socialist creed in the 1970s and 1980s. Originating in 1964 in the campus of the University College of Addis Ababa, a small determined proto-communist cell worked steadily and implacably to swell its ranks and radicalized its ideas within the student movement which culminated in the establishment of the militant University Students' Union of Addis Ababa. A parallel process of radicalization among the student unions abroad ensured that by 1970, Marxism-Leninism has come to hold unrivaled sway in the student movement. In effect, it was the only ideology. Both the diagnosis of the malaise of Ethiopian society and the prescription for its remedy were drawn for that ideology. This included not only the class analysis and the advocacy of the violent overthrow of the regime but also the modality for solving what was known as the problem of nationalities.

On the other hand, class interest and its inspiration to organize people along class lines had a pronounced manifestation during the coming into power of the Dergue military junta in the 1974 Ethiopian Peoples' Revolution. In December 1979, the then President of the State Mengistu Hailemariam, under the pressure of the Soviet Union to create a civilian-based vanguard party, announced the creation of the Commission to Organize the Party of the Workers of Ethiopia (COPWE). The establishment of mass

organizations, such as the All Ethiopia Trade Union, the All-Ethiopia Urban Dwellers' Association, and the All- Ethiopia Peasants' Association, preceded the creation of COPWE. The Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association, the Revolutionary Ethiopia Women's Association, the Working People's Control Committees, and various professional associations were instituted after COPWE's establishment. The idea behind the proliferation of mass organizations was to create a party that would neutralize "narrow nationalism," or sectarianism, and that would be based on broad, yet clearly defined, class interests.

Mass organizations not only represented their membership at party congresses but also guarded their interests on an everyday basis. The mass organizations had educational and developmental roles. The basic units of political consciousness and involvement, then, would be party cells at work sites or in mass organizations. Individuals could belong to more than one mass organization at a time. Nonetheless, the Workers' Party of Ethiopia was finally established on September 12, 1984, to mark the 10th anniversary of the revolution, upon the dissolution of the COPWE.

The relevance of class and class relations to the nature of social identities Ethiopians formed were highly pronounced during this period of Marxist-Leninist ideological domination and its propagation by the State. The much-undesirable bloodshed and structural transformation in the aftermath of the 1974 Revolution were instigated along class lines. Ethiopians were prompted to develop class awareness and align their allegiance with the community vanguard party and wage wars against those who are enemies of the revolution. However, sooner true class consciousness and knowledge of the Marxist-Leninist ideology became secondary to demonstrations party loyalty in the race against time to save the revolution from proliferating enemies in the midst of withdrawing support from the communist countries.

After the downfall of the military government in 1991, class lost its already diluted political potency and was replaced by ethnicity and nationalism. Thence, class as one foundation of social identities among Ethiopians was rather short-lived; and when it was significant, it was related to the feudal system rather than capitalist social formation.

## **Chapter three: Ethnicity**

### **3.1. The Notion of Ethnicity**

While ethnic groups have been one of the oldest forms of social groupings, researches on ethnicity and ethnic groups have been a comparatively recent phenomenon. The reasons behind this relative indifference are not far to seek. First, the ancient Greeks, and subsequently the Romans, who looked upon themselves as the sole custodians of a superior culture and civilization and the rest as the ethnic or the ‘barbarians’ effectively curbed any interest in studying the people living beyond the orbit of the so-called culture and civilization. Second, the 17th century great intellectual revolution of Europe described as the Enlightenment that believed in the all-powerful nature of modernity with a strong conviction that those who were outside its orbits not only had the potential for becoming modern but would gradually become one of its integral parts. Ethnicity accordingly was regarded as a transient phenomenon, only a ‘moment’ in ethnic groups becoming ‘modern’ in the full sense of the term. Sociologists were so engrossed in this promise of modernity that the study of such transient and temporary phenomena as ethnicity and ethnic groups was ignored.

Hence, ethnicity seems to be a new term according to Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan (1975) who point to the fact that the word’s earliest dictionary appearance is in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1972. Its first usage is attributed to the American sociologist David Riesman in 1953. The word ‘ethnic’ however, is much older. It is derived from the Greek ‘ethnos’ (which in turn derived from the word ‘ethnikos’), which originally meant heathen or pagan. It was used in this sense in English from the mid fourteenth century until the mid nineteenth century, when it gradually began to refer to ‘racial’ characteristics. In the United States ‘ethnics’ came to be used around the Second World War as a polite term referring to Jews, Italians, Irish and other people considered inferior to the dominant group of largely Anglo-Saxon descent. None of the founding fathers of sociology and social anthropology – with the partial exception of Max Weber – granted ethnicity much attention.

#### **Definitions of Ethnic Group**

Before we proceed further, what distinguishes the concepts of ethnic identity and ethnicity needs some consideration. Ethnic identity is the basis for ethnic group membership or the aspects that differentiate one cultural group from another, while ethnicity is fundamentally the “very act of communicating and

maintaining cultural differences.” In other words, “ethnicity is consciousness of difference and the subjective salience of that difference” (Eller 1999:9)

Let us first concentrate on the factors that are believed to constitute ethnic identity. Ethnic communities may be defined as named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity. The effort to determine what constitutes an ethnic group is a difficult task.

I. In many of the definitions however common or shared descent is considered to be the roots of ethnic identity, which is a direct manifestation of a genetic predisposition. Ethnic identity (or ethnicity) is regularly linked to kinship “as a kind of kinship writ large” (Eller 1999:9) based on the primacy of birth and shared origin. Horowitz writes, “Ethnicity and kinship are alike.... The language of ethnicity is the language of kinship” (cited in Eller, 1999:9). In this sense, “all societies ground kinship to some extent on a biologically given [as a network of genetic connections and relations]. But what makes them societies is the way in which they move away from this given, interpreting it and modifying it. And not the biological residue which remains in all their constructions” (Dumont cited in Parkin 1997:137).

**II. Kinship is not the only factor** that is considered relevant in identity formation. In general, ethnic identity markers are assumed to have objective characteristics. The objective characteristics include racial, territorial, economic, linguistic, religious and cultural separateness.

III. However, ethnic identity also remains a subjective sense of social belonging and ultimate loyalty related to parentage. Weber stands out in arguing this point. He argues, for instance, ethnic identity could feed on ‘race identity’ which essentially is about ‘inheritable traits’ but “race creates a ‘group’ only when it is subjectively perceived as a common trait. This happens only when a neighborhood or the mere proximity of racially different persons is the basis of joint (mostly political) action, or conversely, when some common experiences of members of the same race are linked to some antagonism against members of an obviously’ different group.” In fact, Weber argues that ethnic groups should be seen separate from kinship groups because membership in an ethnic group requires an intersubjective interpretation. In his words, “Ethnic membership differs from the kinship [group precisely by being a presumed identity, not a group with concrete social action, like the latter.

IV. According to Weber, the subject of one’s belongingness to an ethnic group is not primarily governed by members’ similarities along kinship or racial lines. Instead “their similarity rests on the belief in a specific ‘honor’ of their members, not shared by the outsiders, that is the sense of ‘ethnic honor’ (a

phenomenon closely related to status honor).” According to Weber, “the sense of ethnic honor is a specific honor of the masses, for it is accessible to anybody who belongs to the subjectively believed community of descent. The ‘poor white trash,’ i.e. the propertyless and, in the absence of job opportunities, very often destitute white inhabitants of the southern states of the united states of American in the period of slavery, were the actual bearers of racial antipathy, which was quite foreign to the planters. This was so because the social honor of the ‘poor whites’ was dependent up on the social declassment of the Negroes.”

It was however, Fredrick Barth (1969) who identified four items in the definition of ethnic groups. Barth stated that an ethnic group is understood in anthropological literature to designate a population which (1) is largely biologically self-perpetuating; (2) shares fundamental cultural values, realized in cultural forms; (3) makes up a field of communication and interaction; and (4) as a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. In most of these definitions, ‘ethnic groups’ are equated with ‘cultural groups’; and, “any category of people who had ‘a shared culture’ was considered an ethnic group” but the problem with such definition is that “the sharing of cultural traits frequently crosses group boundaries.”

### **Understanding Ethnicity: Essence and Factors that Shape Ethnicity**

For ethnic identity to come about the groups must have a minimum of contact with each other and they must entertain the ideas of each other being culturally different from others. If these conditions are not fulfilled, there is no ethnicity, for ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group. This is a key point. Ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. Ethnicity can, thus, also be defined as a social identity (vis-à-vis others) characterized by metaphoric or fictive kinship.

### **Theories of Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity**

#### **Primordialism**

The Primordialist School on Ethnicity has got its name from its definition of an ethnic group as a collectivity of people based on “givens of social existence” (to use Geertz’s words). Specifically, sometime in the mid-1960s, Clifford Geertz presented a classification of the objective factors of ethnicity under six broad heads: (a) perceived blood ties, (b) race, (c) language, (d) region, (e) religion, (f) established practices. In sum, the

concept of primordial means two things: “it can mean ‘first created or developed’ but it can also be taken to mean ‘primeval’ which suggests something that has persisted from the beginning” (Eller and Cough Wan 1993: 186).

According to Eller and Cough Wan, primordialists “emphasizing the apparent antiquity, intractability and irrationality of much of ethnic phenomena, come to see ethnicity as a primordial phenomenon, a singular form of sociality or solidarity, based on emotional connection to long standing objective, and fixed social characteristics.” He further argued that primordialism attributes three features to ethnicity, i.e. apriority, ineffability, and affectivity. Eller elaborated that apriority suggests that ethnicity is just there, ascribed or founded up on ascribed characteristics that individuals are born into and can not deny. They are perceived as the givens of social life. Ineffability “means that primordial ethnic givens are inexperience, inexplicable, overpowering and coercive in their social force and follows logically from the priority of ethnicity. Affectivity, in this perspective on ethnic identity, is essentially linked to the emotional nature of ethnicity. Besides, for primordialists, ethnicity differs from other forms of social organization and identity by its relative disengagement from economic interest; ethnicity may persist even when economic interests may not be best served by it (Eller 1999:79),

Nevertheless, critics argued against the position of the primordialists which they thought deemphasized the instrumental aspects or the economic (or material) self interest of group members in ethnicity. Eller identified two “dangers” of the primordialist approach to ethnicity and ethnic identity. He argued that has a possible tendency of aborting analysis altogether by “positing that ethnicity is natural and ineffable and that’s that”. The primordial argument also tends to “freeze both culture and boundaries of ethnic groups” by characterizing ethnicity as an ascribed feature. The limitations and the sharp criticisms of primordialism resulted to the emergency of a new theoretical explanation of ethnicity, i.e. instrumentalism.

### **Instrumentalism/Constructivism**

Instrumentalism offers a different and diversified picture of ethnicity. In view of instrumentalists, ethnic identity is a result of objective inter- group differences in the distribution of economic resources and authority (Hechter cited in Nagi 1992:308). Barth also suggested that “ethnic self affirmation or the ignoring or minimalization of ethnic identity is always related in one or another way to the defense of social or economic interests. Many people change their ethnic identity only if they can profit by doing so” (cited in Roosens

1989:13). Cohen's definition asserts this line of argument since his main thesis is based on the instrumentality of ethnicity; "that is, there are reasons for a group asserting and maintaining an ethnic identity and these reasons are economic and political rather than psychological" (cited in Banks 1996:33). In other words, theories that emerged as the early shift of approach away from primordialism were essentially "associated with other mundane forces: social conditions and interests" (Eller 1999:80). This approach, of which the work of Barth and others (1969) is the beginning, is considered as a shift of focus of ethnic studies from group characteristics to properties of social process (Eriksen 1991:128)

From the point of view of Barth, the critical focus of investigation "becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses; the boundaries to which we must give our attention are, of course, social boundaries, though they may have territorial counterparts" (Barth 1969:15). This shows that, unlike the primordialists, the instrumentalists put less emphasis on the cultural nature of ethnicity. According to Eller, the position of instrumentalists, regarding the cultural nature of ethnicity can be summed up into three main points. Firstly, cultural distinctions of ethnic groups, although considered as critical element in the "language of ethnicity," are not even a necessary condition of ethnicity. Secondly, which results from the first one is that the essence and "function" of an ethnic group is often not cultural but rather interest. What is important about ethnicity today is that it is increasingly used for some purpose that is not entirely cultural. Thirdly, they criticized the primordialists' attribution of primitive nature to ethnicity and forwarded an argument against this view. The instrumentalists view is that "many movements or even ethnic cultures are not old at all; many of the groups that have engaged in primordial conflicts themselves are recent historical creations."

In other words, ethnicity is not at all primitive but positively modern (Eller 1999:81). The advantages of this approach over the primordial theorizing about ethnicity are: (1) it helped "shift the attention away from the 'contents' that is, the list of traits of ethnic group to their 'boundaries' and relations"; (2) consequently, it showed "the possibility, or even more so the necessity, to consider how ethnic distinctions emerge" (Eller 1999:77); and (3) it has, according to Eriksen, the simplicity which makes comparative analysis possible. Scholars commented that the instrumentalist view better accounts for empirical processes related to ethnic and ethnic identity formation, and suggested that "they have great explanatory power regarding the reproduction of social and cultural discreteness" (Eriksen 1991:131).

However, many authors disagree with several of the arguments forwarded by instrumentalists. Kivisto, for instance, commented that a theory, such as instrumentalism, which is "divorced from a primordial

interpretation of ethnicity did not contain a coherent explanation for change and continuity (1989:15). Eriksen also pointed out two important limitations which presumably prevent a satisfactory comparative understanding of ethnicity of the instrumentalist approach. First, it is “in principle ahistorical.” The approach has very useful, highly abstract comparative concepts which are indispensable in accounting of ethnicity on the interpersonal level. However, it “diverts analytical attention from the wider social and historical contexts and thus implicitly disregard process taking place beyond the grasp of the individual agent. “The second limitation is the consideration of ethnicity as an ‘empty vessel.’ Thus, “the cultural differences referred to in ethnic interaction can not always be reduced to its form – the vessel – without a loss of analytical comprehension” (Eriksen 1991: 128-129). Eriksen further noted that lack of due consideration for substantial features of social, cultural and historical contexts the instrumental approach “may miss the point not only because it leaves out aspects of ethnicity which are important to the agents, but also it disregards the potentially varying importance of cultural differences in the articulation of ethnicity.” The third critique comes from authors who state that even though ethnic identity is “subjective and fluid,” it is not “infinitely elastic” since some aspects of ethnicity remain relatively less open to change. In this regard, Campbell questioned that, “if ethnicity is really so fluid, how can cultural diversity be maintained over time?” He, then, argued that if cultures are compatible and can flow into each other, then diversity must eventually be abolished. In reality, however, “ethnic identity is naturally conservative.”

In effect, ethnicity is perceived as social phenomena enacted in the present social conditions with reference to the past. Both the synchronic and diachronic aspects of ethnicity are pertinent to understand the nature and practice of ethnicity. It is also important to note that the paradox of ethnicity is its mutability in persistence, and its persistence through change. What can be explained, through the factors outlined above and no doubt others is the extraordinary persistence and resilience of ethnic ties and sentiments, once formed, as well as the change processes by which ‘ethnic categories’ become crystallized and integrated as genuine ethnic communities.

### **The Resurgence and Politicization of Ethnic identities**

The most appropriate definition to understand the politicization of ethnicity is one that begins with objective cultural markers but which also recognizes that they are susceptible to change and variation. The objective cultural markers may be a language or dialects, distinctive dress or diet or customs, religion or race. Ethnic membership is, then, used to emphasize the cultural basis of ethnicity and to distinguish ethnic categories from other social categories based on class or gender or age grades. Ethnicity or ethnic identity also involves, in addition to subjective, self-consciousness, a claim to status and recognition either

as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups. It is this particular natural nature of ethnicity that makes it particularly political or politicized.

### **Ethnicity and Elite Competition**

The movement from ethnic group to community is a transition that some groups never make, that others make initially in modern times, and that still others undergo repeatedly at different points in time. Ethnic communities are created and transformed by particular elites in modernizing and in postindustrial societies undergoing dramatic social change. This process invariably involves competition and conflict for political power, economic benefits, and social status between competing elites.

The process of creating communities from ethnic groups involves the selection of particular dialects or religious practices or styles of dress or historical symbols from a variety of available alternatives. It is also important to note that ethnic self-consciousness, ethnic-based demands and ethnic conflict can occur only if there is some conflict either between indigenous and external elites and authorities or between indigenous elites. Four sources of elite conflict that may spur the development of ethnic communities are competitions between:

- a. A local aristocracy attempting to maintain its privileges against an alien conqueror;
- b. Competing religious elites from different ethnic groups;
- c. Religious elites and the native aristocracy within a ethnic group; and
- d. Native religious elites and an alien aristocracy.

This instrumentalist rendering of understanding ethnicity as a “political conflict” should, however, be taken with a pinch of salt. Professor Merera (2003), for instance, cautions that “the masses to be mobilized and to be ready to pay the necessary sacrifices for given cause, there should be separate material or other interests of their own, the cause to be promoted.” This implies the possibility of both convergence and divergence of the interests of the elite and the masses in any nationalist movement. Moreover, ethnicity and nationalism will arouse stronger popular sentiment turn into a formidable material force if the interests of the leaders and that the masses have found a meeting ground.... Herein lays the relationship between the role of elite and the dynamics of ethnicity and nationalism as an ideology of political mobilization.

### **Ethnic Parties**

According to Horowitz, in societies where ethnic divisions must compete for attention, the tension produces party systems that sometimes exacerbate or moderate ethnic conflict. By appealing to power in ethnic terms, by making ethnic demands on government, and bolstering the influence of ethnically chauvinist elements within people, parties that begin by merely mirroring ethnic division may help and extend them. Essentially, therefore, ethnic parties are system where their boundaries stop at an ethnic group's boundary. According to Horowitz, the experience of many countries somehow testifies the role of the elite in establishing ethnic parties. He argues, "In countries like India, Sri Lanka and Nigeria, ethnic parties emerged early usually over the desirability, nature or timing of independence." Horowitz also adds that to be an ethnic party, a party does not have to command an exclusive allegiance of group members. It is how the party's support is distributed and not how the ethnic group's support is distributed that is decisive.

### **Explanations for the Politicization of Ethnicity**

The possible explanations for the politicization of ethnicity are presented below:

a. According to primordialist, no explanation is needed for why ethnicity often forms the basis for political mobilization or discrimination. Ethnic groups are naturally political, either because they have biological roots or because they are so deeply set in history and culture as to be unchangeable "givens" of social and political life. In other words, primordialists assume that certain ethnic categories are always socially relevant, and that political relevance follows automatically from social relevance. The main objection to primordialist arguments is that they cannot make sense of variation in the politicization of ethnicity over time and space.

b. In political economy works, ethnic groups are sometimes treated as an extreme form of interest group whose members share enduring common preferences over all public policies. Rabushka and Shepsle (1972) pioneered this approach by arguing that democracy is infeasible in ethnically divided society because polarized ethnic preferences will lead to "ethnic outbidding" and polarized policies, which in turn makes ethnic groups unwilling to share power through elections. Alesina, Baqir and Easterly (1999) argue that ethnic groups have different preferences over types of public goods and that such diversity leads to lower aggregate provision. In such models, ethnic politicization follows in part from an assumption about the polarization and stability of ethnic preferences. It is, however, questionable whether, in many cases, ethnic groups disagree that much about the types of public goods that should be provided. In multiethnic Africa, for instance, schools, roads, healthcare, and access to government jobs are universally desired. Ethnic conflict

rather arises when ethnic coalitions form to gain a greater share of commonly desired goods.

c. The most influential of these arguments propose to explain why ethnicity and nationality were a-political in the pre-modern world, but became the foundation for much domestic political contention by the late 19th century. Deutsch (1953), Gellner (1983), and Anderson (1983) all find the root cause in economic modernization. Economic modernization increased social mobility and created political economies in which advancement depended increasingly on one's cultural capital. When Magyar or Czech speaking young men from the countryside found themselves disadvantaged in the German – using Hapsburg bureaucracy or in the new industrial labor markets of Bohemia on account of their first language – they become receptive to political mobilization along ethnic (national) lines (Deutsch 1953; Gellner 1983). The central idea is that ascriptive barriers to upwards mobility – that is, discrimination according to a criterion that an individual acquires more or less at birth, such as ethnicity – gives political entrepreneurs an eager constituency.

Why did states and societies increasingly discriminate along cultural lines in polity and economy, especially if this would provoke separatist nationalisms? Gellner sees cultural discrimination arising from the nature of modern economies. Because these require literate workers able to interpret and manipulate culturally-specific symbols, culture matters in the modern world in a way it never did in the pre-modern agrarian age. So why not just learn the language and culture of those who control the state or the factories? Gellner, Deutsch and Anderson all suggest that such assimilation may be possible, but only when pre-existing cultural differences are not too great. France, where various regional dialects were mutually intelligible into the 19th century (Weber 1979) is the leading example, where the differences were greater, as in Austria-Hungary, the pace of assimilation may be too slow relative to economic modernization (Deutsch), or psychological biases may lead advanced groups to attribute backwardness to the ethnic differences of less modernized groups (Gellner). Anderson also suggests that the development of biological theories of race contributed to acceptance of ethnicity as a natural criterion for political and economic discrimination.

In sum, such arguments need to explain when and why political coalitions form along ethnic rather than some other lines, such as class, religion, district, or political ideology. Bates (1983) made two suggestions. First, shared language and culture make it easier for political entrepreneurs to mobilize 'intra-group' rather than across ethnic groups. Second, ethnic and colonial administrative boundaries tend to coincide and modern goods like schools, electricity, and water projects tend to benefit people in a particular location. Lobbying for these goods along ethnic lines was, thus, natural.

### **Ethnic-based Federalism in Ethiopia**

The stark contrast with Western style of federalism made many to argue that the EPRDF took its ideas of ethnic federalism from the decisively repudiated socialist theory of nationalities. On this view, the EPRDF's commitment to ethnic federalism could only be an anachronism, a throwback to a model of interethnic relations that had proved to be a failure in the Socialist bloc. However, it may be misleading to dismiss the idea of ethnic federalism as a relic of an obsolete Soviet ideology. "Many aspects of the Ethiopian constitution can be seen as consistent with the most progressive developments within Western democracies."

Of course, there are many important respects in which Ethiopian federalism differs from typical western multination federations. The most striking of these are

The explicitness with which the Ethiopian constitution affirms the principle of ethno-national self-government and the logical consistency with which it attempts to institutionalize that principle – that is, it accords all national groups the right to self-determination, and envisages procedures for redrawing internal boundaries accordingly.

The paradigm of this extreme logic is often said to be the constitutional recognition of a right to secession, which has been described as 'fundamentally suicidal' (Ehrlich, 199: 62) and as a 'recipe for disaster' (Brietzke, 1995: 35). Kymlicka commented that it is true that no Western country formally enshrines a right of secession, though, de facto, "such a right has been acknowledged in Canada (in relation to Quebec); Britain (in relation to Scotland); and in the United States (in relation to Puerto Rico). Nonetheless, in no western country is there a general statement that all ethno-national groups have a right of self-determination, or that multination federalism has been adopted in order to recognize such a right, let alone that "all sovereign power resides in the "Nation, Nationalities and Peoples" of the country. In the west, the decision to accord federal or quasi-federal forms of autonomy to national minorities was the gradual result of democratic mobilizations by specific national groups. Western states agreed to negotiate the reform of state institutions if and when there was clear evidence that most members of a particular national minority democratically endorsed these claims through, for example, consistent support over several years for political parties advancing these claims. Consequently, the resulting "reforms tend to be group-specific, and are often grafted onto a pre-existing constitution that still bears the traces of earlier models of the (unitary) nation-state".

In Ethiopia, in contrast, the federal constitution emerged out of revolution, not peaceful and piecemeal democratic mobilization. This revolutionary context created the possibility for a complete restructuring of the state based on the principle of national self-determination. One result of this is that federal autonomy has been accorded to ethnic groups that had not in fact mobilized politically for it, and in deed may not have identified themselves as 'nations' at all. Another result is the decision to ensure that each major national group is dominant in one and only one state. This is unlike most western multination federations, where at least the largest national group, and often the smaller ones as well, dominate two or more subunits.

Another result of this ideological rigor is the decision to name each state after its dominant ethno-national group. This contrasts, Rotimi Suberu (2006) argues, with Nigeria, where it was decided that, even when state boundaries have been drawn to reflect ethno-linguistic criteria, the states should nonetheless have ethnically neutral topographical names; and with other federal states where subunits use historical names for the region.

It is an interesting question, Kymlicka comments, why EPRDF chose to accord autonomy rights to all territorially concentrated groups listed in an ethno-linguistic census, rather than only to those groups that had actually shown a clear desire for it. Whatever the explanation, it has generated an important difference with western multination states. In the west, multination federation has been adopted in those circumstances where most members of particular groups have clearly identified themselves as 'nations,' and have consistently and democratically supported nationalist claims. Multination federation is an attempt to accommodate that politically mobilized sense of national identity and national aspirations. In Ethiopia, in contrast, multination federation was adopted for groups that had not yet expressed a democratic desire for it.

Obviously, a successful operation of multination federation depends on the existence of some match between group identities and political institutions – members of groups have to see themselves reflected in political institutions in a form that they have to see themselves approved and endorsed. This suggests that it is important that there be democratic mechanisms for enabling citizens to debate, and then either affirm or reject, the assumption that their ethno-linguistic census category is also their political national identity. Yet, the government is trying to persuade these groups that they should identify themselves as 'nations' or 'peoples,' with rights of self-determination (rather than, say, as branches of a larger groups, or as a loose confederation of clans, or as communal contenders, or as transborder pastoralists). It must be possible for citizens to debate alternative formulations of their political identity, and then adjust federal arrangements accordingly.

In fact, David Turton commented that the idea of ethno-national self-determination “is a relatively recent European export to Africa, and is seen as alien to African cultural traditions as the 19th century liberal version of nationalism which was taken up by founders of the post-colonial states.”

There is a more general critique of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. It is often said that ethnic federalism in Ethiopia has served to essentialise ethnic identities, to privilege and reinforce these identities over other non-ethnic identities to sharpen feelings of difference between groups, and thereby to increase tension about cultural and geographic boundaries between groups. Ethnic identities that used to be weak, contextual and overlapping are being restructured as primary and sharply bounded.

The general concern that ethnic federalism heightens the salience of ethnic identity and strengthens perspectives of boundaries between groups can equally be raised about multinational federalisms in the west. It is, in fact, part and parcel of multinational federalism that it institutionalizes national identities and the result of this institutionalization is typically to reinforce these identities and to designate borders for them. If these consequences are inherently wrong or unacceptable, then no multinational federalism in the world could be judged a success. The institutionalization of ethno-linguistic identities (and hence, ethno-national boundaries) is not, in and of itself, either good or bad. What matters is that this process of institutionalization is done in a peaceful and democratic way, consistent with human rights and liberal freedoms. And this is what we see in the western multinational federations where the evolution of federal and quasi-federal autonomies has been in response to peaceful democratic mobilization, creating new political arrangements that better reflect the actual identities and aspirations of citizens.

Under these conditions, the institutionalization of ethno-national identities in new arrangements operates in such a way as to fully protect the human rights and democratic freedoms of all citizens.

Hence, the view that ethnic federalism in Ethiopia should be rejected for its tendency to sharpen and institutionalize what were previously more diffuse ethnic identities is not a decisive objective. “The problem, rather, is that this process of institutionalization has not always been the outcome of peaceful democratic mobilization, but rather has been imposed from above and/or captured by local elites who do not represent the interests of the wider group”. Moreover, this process is unable to ensure the protection of human rights and democratic freedoms of all citizens within the federal autonomies, leading, for example, to discrimination against people who belong to the ‘wrong group and to violent clashes over land ownership or residence

rights. It follows that ethnic federalism in Ethiopia is likely to remain a fragile experiment for some time to come.

Exercise 2. **Discuss the nature of ethnicity in Ethiopia and its significance for identity formation both at micro and macro level.**

## Chapter Four

### CAUSES OF ETHNIC CONFLICT and Violence

It is usually impossible to assert that a single factor is responsible for the emergence of ethnic conflict. By the same token one can't find an all-encompassing or comprehensive perspective/approach that helps to understand the causes and implications of ethnic conflicts. It is therefore fair to argue that one should take and seek a combined perspective to explain and understand the issue of ethnic conflict.

ethnic conflict may occur when a particular set of factors and conditions converge: a major structural crisis; presence of historical memories of inter-ethnic grievances; institutional factors that promote ethnic intolerance; manipulation of historical memories by political entrepreneurs to evoke emotions such as fear, resentment and hate toward the "other"; and an inter-ethnic competition over resources and rights.

As James Fearon and David Laitin argue, "a good theory of ethnic conflict should be able to explain why, despite the greater tensions, peaceful and cooperative [ethnic] relations are by far more typical outcome than is large scale violence." According to them, because of the benefits of peace and the costs of inter-ethnic violence, "decentralized institutional arrangements are likely to arise to moderate problems of interethnic opportunism." Although peaceful resolution of inter-ethnic tensions should always prevail as a rational, more beneficial approach, violent ethnic conflicts continue to occur across the world. The global community is haunted by physical and emotional consequences of recent ethnic violence such as the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, genocide in Rwanda and Darfur, and sectarian violence in Iraq. Continuous examination of the causes of ethnic conflict is necessary, so that we may develop a better understanding of what causes the breakdown of peace in various multi-ethnic contexts and create a more comprehensive basis for peace building and post-conflict development in ethnically divided societies. Literature on causes of ethnic conflict covers a number of competing theories. Some of the major explanations include: primordialist, institutional, political entrepreneurs, and competition over resources theories. But, as Jalali and Lipset argue, "Given the variety of ethnic conflicts and their dynamic and fluid qualities, no one factor can provide a comprehensive explanation."

The danger of attempting to develop a comprehensive approach for understanding a phenomenon that manifests in various contexts, across the globe, is simply the one of trying to do "too much." Rather than offering a comprehensive theory of ethnic conflict, discussion will be made on some of the existing

explanations and the ways and extent to which these approaches are complementary in helping us construct a broader conceptual framework for understanding the complexities of violent inter-group conflict.

Scholars argue that ethnic conflict occurs when a particular set of factors and conditions converge: a major structural crisis; presence of historical memories of inter-ethnic grievances; institutional factors that promote ethnic intolerance; manipulation of historical memories by political entrepreneurs to evoke emotions such as fear, resentment, and hate toward the “other”; and an inter-ethnic competition over resources and rights.

Each ethnic conflict has its own unique characteristics and, in different contexts, some of these elements will be more prominent than the others, but all of them are the “common denominators” necessary for ethnic conflict to occur. The primordialist approach helps explain the role of emotions and the conflict potential of ethnicity. The institutional, political entrepreneurs and competition over resources approaches explain how the interaction of institutional and political factors with ethnic emotions brings ethnic conflict.

Ethnically diverse societies carry various degrees of conflict potential. Ethnic emotions, rooted in historical memories of grievances, are at the core of conflict potential. Ethnicity, as Donald Horowitz argues, “Embodies an element of emotional intensity that can be readily aroused when the group’s interests are thought to be at stake.” leads to ethnification, ethnic intolerance, competition, and eventually – violent conflict.

A sudden, major structural change (such as the collapse of communism in Bosnia and decolonization in Rwanda and Sri Lanka) upsets previous political and institutional arrangements. When these institutional mechanisms are no longer in place, countries face a period of political and economic transition “in which the old no longer works while the new will not yet function and the social costs grow.”<sup>8</sup> This creates a context of instability and uncertainty about the political, social, and economic future of the communities, or – to use Lake and Rothchild’s term – “collective fears of the future.”<sup>9</sup> Such a situation facilitates a manifestation of emotional antagonisms among ethnic groups. Political entrepreneurs, in their quest for power, mobilize ethnic constituencies by promoting inter-ethnic animosities using the rhetorical weapons of blame, fear, and hate. This results in an inter-ethnic competition over resources and rights, which is accompanied by a reconstruction of social categories of “inclusion” and “exclusion,” ethnification and ethnic intolerance. Ethnification is defined as a situation in which “the social, psychological, and political importance of ethnic identities rise relative to other identities,” and ethnic intolerance refers to a denial of access to resources and rights to other ethnic groups. In this discussion, the terms “ethnic group” and a “nation” will be used interchangeably to refer

to: “a body of individuals who purportedly share cultural or racial characteristics, especially common ancestry or territorial origin, which distinguish them from members of other groups.”

## **Primordialist Approach**

The primordialist approach asserts the existence of “ancient hatreds” among ethnic and cultural groups: “the urge to define and reject the other goes back to our remotest human ancestors, and indeed beyond them to our animal predecessors.” According to this view, “tendencies toward xenophobia and intolerance are more natural to human societies than liberal politics of interest.”

The primordialist approach helps explain the role of emotions in socially constructed sense of “primordial” group history and animosity based on historical memories of grievances/injustice.

While ethnic emotions appear to be primordial, they are a socially and politically constructed reality – drawn from the historical memories of past injustices and grievances. Suny illustrates this by stating that,

National identities are saturated with emotions that have been created through teaching, repetition, and daily reproduction until they become common sense.(...) These tropes – betrayal, treachery, threats from others, and survival – are embedded in familiar emotions – anxiety, fear, insecurity, and pride.

Group history is socially constructed. As Suny argues, “Nations are particular forms of collectivity that are constituted by a process of creating histories.”

National history, he further explains, is constructed so that it consists of “continuity, antiquity of origins, heroism and past greatness, martyrdom and sacrifice, victimization and overcoming of trauma.” Also, “the past(...)gives this particular form of imagined community a potent claim to territory, the ‘homeland.

We cannot prove that ethnic animosities are primordial, but we can establish their historical roots in collective memory. Prazauskas defines a historical memory of an ethnic group as a “set of ideas about the past history of the group, its historical relations with other groups, ethnic images and self-images.”

History is employed to buttress ethnic and religious polemics and, more importantly, to reclaim and reconstruct ethnic identity .Honour, identity and the media, the past and the future, the rise of what is called fundamentalism or revivalism all relate to the historical reference points. Ethnic communities use historical memories of past grievances as a point of reference – a source of ethnic animosities and a justification for discriminatory actions against other ethnic groups. Rothschild argues that, under the contemporary conditions

of rapid change, “people often cleave to, or rediscover, or even invent, their ethnicity – putatively rooted in ‘primordial’ bonds – for personal identification, emotional security, and communal anchorage.”

In its “pure” form, the primordialist view implies a sense of hopelessness. If “one is invariably and always a Serb, a Zulu, or Chechen” and if “ethnic divisions and tensions are ‘natural,’ then little or nothing can be done to prevent or resolve ethnic conflict. Understanding ethnic hatred as something that is ingrained in ethnic groups and cannot be changed is a simplified view of a complex problem. It prevents those who build peace to see that ethnic animosities exist in combination with other factors and that addressing each dimension of the problem is necessary to resolve conflict. Confining explanations of ethnic conflict solely to primordial causes also implies a degree of ignorance and prejudice towards the societies affected by conflict. As Akbar describes, “Ideas and arguments about ethnicity are usually based on the assumption that ethnic identity is a characteristic of primordial and tribal societies...Only backward societies cling to the past.”

All multi-ethnic societies, when subject to a convergence of a particular set of factors and conditions, carry the potential of ethnic conflict. Under the stress of a major structural change that brings a sense of chaos and uncertainty, the consciousness of historically rooted ethnic identities and emotions are employed as vehicles to ethnic violence for political purposes. Viewing historically rooted ethnic animosities as the only cause of conflict is insufficient. As Ganguly argues, “A proper understanding of the causes of ethnic political mobilization and conflict is crucial, and we must move beyond simplistic discussions of ‘ancient hatreds’ to search for more systematic explanations.”

Also, if we view groups’ historical and current realities as a result of pre-determined or “primordial” factors, then, “The road is open to exclusivist, homogeneous nations that in our ethnically mixed, fluid, changing world re-quire desperate policies of deportation and ethnic cleansing to secure.” On the other hand, as Suny argues, if we view our realities as socially constructed, the possibilities for cooperation and peaceful cohabitation are greater.

## **Institutional Approach**

Institutions play an important role in regulating the level of the conflict potential of ethnicity. They define inter-ethnic relationships by either facilitating or obstructing inter-group cooperation. Crawford notes that institutions “both constrain behavior and provide incentives for cooperation and compliance in norms, rules, and procedures for allocation, participation, representation, and accountability.” According to her, whether or not identity politics turns into violent conflict depends on the functioning of state institutions: “Where identity politics is practiced, states can channel it in peaceful political competition as long as they can make credible

commitments to shape and uphold agreements made among culturally defined political actors.” The proponents of the institutional approach would argue, for example, that the nineteenth century tensions among the three ethnic groups in Switzerland are now managed by the current political system (consociational democracy) by institutionalizing ethnic pluralism and giving the three groups equivalent power-sharing. On the other hand, as Enloe and Nagel argue, if the state’s administrative structures and legal institutions distribute resources based on ethnicity, this encourages political mobilization along ethnic lines. In sum, “Countries whose political institutions politicize cultural [ethnic] identity are more vulnerable to cultural [ethnic] conflict than countries whose political institutions promote social integration of diverse cultural groups.”

Communist, colonial and democratic political arrangements have various institutional effects on inter-ethnic relations and thus on conflict potential. For example, communism is sometimes blamed for creating or reinforcing ethnic/national divisions but suppressing the expression of ethnic conflicts, and consequently, for recent outbursts of ethnic violence in the post-communist regions of the world following the system collapse. In the words of Georg Brunner, in the communist systems, “nationality [ethnicity] conflicts were suppressed, compulsorily canalized or even consciously instrumentalized.”

Colonial political systems used the “divide and rule” strategy to create and/or separate groups along ethnic lines in order to strengthen the power of the colonial system. Once decolonization took place, the absence of old institutional mechanisms of group control allowed for ethnic emotions to surface and ethnic intolerance to take place. Such a situation, exploited by political entrepreneurs, leads to inter-ethnic competition and conflict.

Democratic institutions are considered to promote inter-ethnic cooperation and thus mitigate the conflict potential of ethnicity. According to Prazauskas, “In a democratic multinational state, stability is generally maintained by means of political bargaining and compromise between ethnic subgroups.” Dixon similarly argues that “democratic states...are better equipped than others with the means for diffusing conflict situations at an early stage before they have an opportunity to escalate to military violence.”

The transition from authoritarianism to democracy in multinational states means first of all the disintegration of the coercive system of checks and controls. This inevitably leads to ethnic flare-ups as ethnic communities begin to organize, to mobilize their members, and to voice their grievances and demands upon the state and each other. However, while conflict may not happen in or among established democracies, conflict often does happen in democratizing states. In Prazauskas’ words, furthermore, introduction of the majority democracy rule in ethnically divided societies in the context of a major structural change promotes fear of domination and marginalization by other groups. As Lijphart argues, “Majority rule spells majority dictatorship and civil strife

rather than democracy...What such societies need is a democratic regime that emphasizes consensus instead of opposition that includes rather than excludes.”

### **Political Entrepreneurs Approach**

The instability and uncertainty that result from a major structural change and the institutional inability to regulate inter-ethnic relations provides a “perfect” condition in which political entrepreneurs can manipulate ethnic emotions in order to mobilize groups for their own political purposes. Politicians exploit ethnic differences by drawing upon historical memories of grievances and “whip up” hatred in order to gain or strengthen their power. The dynamic that develops between political entrepreneurs and their followers causes an inter-ethnic security dilemma. As Stuart Kaufman explains, “belligerent leaders stoke mass hostility; hostile masses support belligerent leaders, and both together threaten other groups, creating a security dilemma which in turn encourages even more mass hostility and leadership belligerence.”

Political entrepreneurs manipulate fears and uncertainties of ethnic groups they represent and are able to “awaken a consciousness of common grievances and a desire to rectify these wrongs.”

They help create and reinforce ethnic polarization in the society. Furthermore, “Ethnic cleavages allow political entrepreneurs to mobilize grievances against distributions of benefits that are perceived to be unfavorable to the group. Rhetoric of fear, blame, and hate are used by political entrepreneurs as a tool of division and control. According to Zupanov and his co-authors, “Politicians whose goal is that of exploiting and/or provoking ethnic/national hatred are in control of media production which is controlled and directed by hate-prone politicians that provokes national intolerance and hatred in the population leading to violence.”

The disposition towards national [ethnic] intolerance can be strengthened by new [or old] political leadership if the leaders do not have the necessary political sense of responsibility and do not resist the temptation to avert attention from the acute socio-economic problems by creating national concepts of enemies. This is the big chance for the forces of the old regimes who either lost, or are afraid of losing, their power. Therefore, the politicians’ manipulation of ethnic emotions leads to particular actions – such as intolerance. As Brunner argues, the political entrepreneurs approach to explaining the causes of ethnic conflict is closely related to the institutional approach. Politicians who use ethnicity to their advantage can successfully operate only within those institutional arrangements that support/allow such practice or are unable to prevent it. The success of political entrepreneurs in mobilizing ethnic groups into violent conflict depends on the strength of the existing state institutions: “If states provide a legitimate arena for entrepreneurs to compete and if resources available for allocation are abundant, identity politics, like other kinds of political competition, will be legitimate and stable.”

However, if state institutions fail, “previous incentives promoting social and political divisions along cultural [ethnic] lines are likely to persist and ethnic and sectarian political entrepreneurs may have a stash of resources to distribute in exchange for support.” Morris similarly illustrates the connection between political leadership and institutions. According to her, the two are “the filter through which all other causes of conflict have to pass.” She also notes that “institutions can fuel grievances through political exclusion or inefficiency.”

### **Competition over Resources Approach**

Political mobilization of ethnic identities results in ethnic intolerance and competition over resources and rights – which, if unresolved, can lead to a violent conflict. When resources are scarce, it is easier for political entrepreneurs to capitalize on the conflict potential of ethnicity. As described by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), “These groups are all the more likely to be vulnerable to such maneuvering when they find themselves in situations characterized by a lack of opportunities.

Property rights, jobs, scholarships, educational admissions, language rights, government contracts, and development allocations all confer particular benefits on individuals and groups. Whether finite in supply or not, all such resources are scarce and, thus, objects of competition and occasionally struggle between individuals and, when organized, groups. When scholars discuss competition over resources, they often refer to the economic competition over resources. The argument is that: under difficult economic conditions, high unemployment and poor prospects for the future, people feel victimized and blame their misfortune on other ethnic group(s). This leads to inter-ethnic competition. here, I expand the concept of resources to include not only economic, but also political, social, and cultural “goods” that not only include material security but also encompass individual and group rights. As Lake and Rothchild note, the likelihood of conflict is higher when disagreement and opposition concern collective goods, e.g. language rights, religious beliefs and symbols, civil and political. In his analysis of peace accords and ethnic conflicts, de Varennes (2003) found that in almost all conflicts, ethnic groups’ demands focused on securing basic rights for their group. For example, they demanded more effective political participation, a fairer share and distribution of education, employment opportunities, etc.

The more nearly indivisible the goods and the less the access of the ‘disadvantaged,’ the greater is the resentment and the more likely is ethnic mobilization, followed by overt conflict. In the literature, there are various notions on what mechanisms may facilitate ethnic competition. These mechanisms include economic and political processes such as: racially split labor markets, employment segregation, the cultural division of labor, the replacement of local control with more inclusive domains of control and sovereignty, and expansion of state systems. According to Kposowa and Jenkins, all of these developments increase the likelihood of

ethnic competition over resources. In the past two decades, the concept of “internal colonialism” has been used extensively to account for economic and political differences along ethnic lines.<sup>55</sup> According to the internal colony theory, when a group establishes its dominance within the society, it is able to maintain “a cultural division of labor: a system of stratification where objective cultural distinctions are superimposed upon class lines.”

When ethnic groups find themselves victimized and/or threatened by other groups, identification in terms of their ethnicity becomes particularly important, because their ethnic group is seen as the source of protection from other groups and a possible provider of a secure environment. Inter-ethnic competition can lead to “the silencing of divergent opinions, in the context of a major structural change within an ethnically diverse society, political entrepreneurs attribute their ethnic group’s have-nots to the exploitation and denial of access to resources and rights by the other “groups.” Advantaged groups, on the other hand, begin to see the “others” as those who will take away their “haves” should they gain a position of power within the society. Institutional factors fuel inter-ethnic competition by facilitating politics of exclusion, increases in adherence to group symbols, and intolerance for out-groups and dissenters.”

Example. Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Chapter Five: Nationalism

### 5.1. Notion of Nation and Nationalism

The emergence of the notion of nationalism is often connected with the French Revolution of 1789, when the first “nation-state” is said to have been created. Although states where the boundaries of the state and the nation coincide have existed earlier, before 1789 states had not used the situation to their advantage to the extent that France was able to. It is here that nationalism entered as such a powerful idea.

The phenomenon of modern nationalism is cemented by commonalities in cultural and national characteristics, guided by a common ideology and driven by a national destiny. When examining nations and nationalism, it is very important to separate the more physical characteristics that unify nations from the spiritual aspects, which guide and drive nations. One cannot ignore that factors such as a common language, territory, culture, economic interest and shared history have united communities of interest creating nations. However, a nation develops nationalism when the nation evolves a national character and ideology creating for itself a national destiny.

For one to understand the phenomenon of nationalism, first it is necessary to define what a nation is. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a nation as “a community of people composed of one or more nationalities and possessing a more or less defined territory and government” (Merriam-Webster online). This definition of a nation poses a good description of what a nation is but it doesn’t help one grasp the concept of “nationalism.” The Merriam- Webster definition of a nation conjures up ideas of a nation being a physical and material object, without addressing the mental and psychological aspects associated with being a member of a nation. These mental and psychological aspects create an ethereal ideology, which forms the root of nationalism.

Ernest Renan is one political scientist to fully recognize the spiritual component necessary in the recipe for a nation. In his piece, “What is a Nation?” Ernest Renan states, “No, it is not the soil any more than the race which makes a nation. The soil provides the substratum, the field for struggle and labor: Man provides the soul.” In addition, Renan goes on to affirm that, “A nation is a soul, a spiritual principal.” Although Renan recognizes the spiritual component necessary in making a nation, ultimately he is flawed in believing that “soil” (territory) and other physical characteristics have little weight in unifying a nation. In fact, common

national traits play a large role in determining national identity and character, which form the basis for a national ideology and, in turn, nationalism. Besides, Renan's contributions involve identifying an objective criterion – that was established early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for defining nations – in terms of Renan's "threshold principle," which stated that peoples had to be large enough before they could be thought of as nations.

In particular, Stalin is one politician who clearly identifies the national factors for establishing a nation while emphasizing national character as the most important unifying national trait. In his essay "Marxism and the National Colonial Question," Stalin writes, "A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture." In addition to providing this comprehensive definition of what a nation is, Stalin goes on to explain that "national character" is the only essential characteristic necessary for a nation. Consequently, the necessity of national character for the development of nationalism cannot be down played because as Stalin sees it, national character leads to a national ideology.

Since the political ideas of Stalin have provided the connections between national character and national ideology, the connection between national character and national destiny must be made. The ideas of Otto Bauer in his essay "The Nationalities Question and Social Democracy" establish this connection. Otto Bauer claims, "The nation is the totality of man bound together through a common destiny into a community of character." Although Bauer claims that common destiny creates the "community of character," it seems obvious that the present values and ideals of a nation (character) will dictate that country's vision of the future (destiny).

Considering the ideas of Renan, Stalin, and Bauer, the connections between nationalism, national character, common ideology and national destiny are evident. On one hand, for nationalism to materialize there must be a concrete element of national identity, which is dictated by national characteristics including national character. On the other hand, nationalism is given life through national ideology and destiny, which are constructs of national identity.

### Benedict Anderson: Imagined Communities

The imagined community is a concept coined by Benedict Anderson which states that a nation is a community socially constructed, which is to say imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. Anderson's book, *Imagined Communities*, in which he explains the concept in depth, was published in 1983. Overview

Benedict Anderson defined a nation as "an imagined political community [that is] imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." An imagined community is different from an actual community because it is not (and cannot be) based on everyday face-to-face interaction between its members. Instead, members hold in their minds a mental image of their affinity – for example, the nationhood you feel with other members of your nation when your "imagined community" participates in a larger event such as the Olympics. As Anderson puts it, a nation "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." Members of the community probably will never know one another face to face; however, they may have similar interests or identify as part of the same nation. The media also create imagined communities, through targeting a mass audience or generalizing and addressing citizens as the public.

These communities are imagined as both limited and sovereign. They are limited in that nations have "finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations." They are sovereign insofar as no dynastic monarchy can claim authority over them in the modern period.

[T]he concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the [direct relationship] between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.

Even though we may never see anyone in our imagined community, we still know they are there through communication.

Finally, a nation is an imagined community because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings."

According to Anderson, creation of imagined communities became possible because of "print-capitalism". Capitalist entrepreneurs printed their books and media in the vernacular (instead of exclusive script languages, such as Latin) in order to maximize circulation. As a result, readers speaking various local dialects became able to understand each other, and a common discourse emerged. Anderson argued that the first European nation-states were thus formed around their "national print-languages."

Benedict Anderson arrived at his theory because he felt that neither Marxist nor liberal theory adequately explained nationalism.

Anderson falls into the "historicist" or "modernist" school of nationalism along with Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm in that he posits that nations and nationalism are products of modernity and have been created as means to political and economic ends. This school stands in opposition to the primordialists, who believe that nations, if not nationalism, have existed since early human history. Imagined communities can be seen as a form of social constructionism on a par with Edward Said's concept of imagined geographies.

In contrast to Gellner and Hobsbawm, Anderson is not hostile to the idea of nationalism nor does he think that nationalism is obsolete in a globalizing world. Anderson values the utopian element in nationalism. According to his theory of imagined communities, the main causes of the nationalism are the declining importance of privileged access to particular script languages (such as Latin) because of mass vernacular literacy; the movement to abolish the ideas of rule by divine right

and hereditary monarchy; and the emergence of printing press capitalism— all phenomena occurring with the start of the Industrial Revolution.

Anthony D. Smith states that even when nations are the product of modernity, it is possible to find ethnic elements that survive in modern nations. Ethnic groups are different from nations. Nations are the result of a triple revolution that begins with the development of capitalism and leads to a bureaucratic and cultural centralization along with a loss of power by the Catholic Church. Smith, however, maintains that there are also many cases of ancient nations and therefore cannot be considered a modernist.

## **5.2. The Nature of Nationalism**

“Nationalism is in itself neither good nor bad, as little as capitalism, socialism or imperialism is.” But several authors distinguish between two kinds of nationalism, which in fact are “good” and “bad.” The “good” kind is confined, meaning that nationalists are merely striving to create, or maintain their own nation, and “the world had room for as many nationalisms as there were nations.” It was this kind of nationalism that overwhelmed Europe in the 19th century, and conflicts arising from it were either “between a nationality and an alien master [or] conflicts between nations over the delimitation of their respective boundaries.”

The ‘bad’ kind of nationalism pitted one own’s “superior” nation or race against all others in a struggle for survival of the fittest. It is this kind of nationalism that gave nationalism its bad name in Europe through the actions of men like Adolf Hitler and Slobodan Milosevic in the 20th century, but it emerged outside of Europe already in the 19th century, when Europeans’ applied it in their attitudes towards peoples living in their colonies.

Related to this differentiation of nationalism is its two-sided characteristic of being both a unifying as well as a disintegrating force. Originally, nationalism was used only to unite, as in when used in France to rally the entire nation to fight its enemies in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Afterwards, depending on the circumstances, it became either unifying, as in Italy and Germany, or disintegrating, as in the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. But there was still no doubt that its unifying principle was the more valid one, and “Balkanization” clearly gained a negative connotation.

### **5.3. Language, Nationism and Nationalism**

It is presumed among sociolinguists that language displays at least two socially important facts. Firstly, language varies – that is, speakers have more than one way to say more or less the same thing. Secondly, language is supposed to be used for transmitting information and thoughts from one person to another. At the same time, however, the speaker is using language to make statements about who he is, what his group loyalties are, how he perceives his relationship to his hearer, and what sort of speech event he considers himself to be engaged in. The two tasks (of communicating information and defining the social situation) can be carried out simultaneously precisely because language varies – speakers can choose among alternative linguistic means, any of which would satisfactorily communicate the propositional information. It is the selection among these alternatives that defines the social situation.

Note here the importance of the distinction between nationalism, feelings that develop from and support nationalities, and nationism, or the more pragmatic problems of governing. Before proceeding to a discussion on the contentious role of language in nationism and nationalism, let us define these terminologies. Nationalities are sociocultural units that have developed beyond primarily local self-concepts, concerns and integrative bonds; a group of people who think of themselves as a social unit different from other groups, but not just on purely local scale. It is different from closely related notion – ethnic group, which is just like a nationality except that it is a level of socio cultural organization that is simpler, smaller, more particularistic, and more localistic.

Hence, nationality and ethnic group are points on a continuum rather than discrete distinctions. Furthermore, nationality does not necessarily have an autonomous territory. It is neutral with respect to the existence or nonexistence of a corresponding political unit or polity.

Nation, on the other hand, is any political- territorial unit which is largely or increasingly under the control of a particular nationality. It is a discrete entity from a state, polity or country in that the latter may not be independent of external control, whereas a nation is. A state, unlike a nation, does not always have a single predominant nationality – hence, we can speak of multinational states, but not multinational nations. A nation may, furthermore, contain a variety of ethnic groups. Combining the distinction between nationality and ethnic group with the distinction between nation and state, we get a new continuum: on the one end, we have multinational states and, on the other, multiethnic nations. Politically, multinational states are less stable than multiethnic nations. Politically, multinational

states are less stable than multiethnic nations. To the extent that sociocultural groups in a country feel that they are a nationality who merely happen to live under someone else's governing control, to that extent the country is a (possibly unstable) multinational state. If members of the sociocultural groups in a country feel that they are simultaneously citizens of the nation they live in and members of their particular group at the same, then the country is close to being a multiethnic nation.

Hence, the requirements of nationalism and nationism can be in conflict where language is concerned. The role of language in nationism is fairly straightforward. There are two large arenas in which language becomes a problem for nationism: general government administration and education. As far as nationism is concerned, whatever language does the job best [effectively and efficiently] is the best choice.

The role of language in nationalism is more subtle. Language, together with culture, religion and history, is a major component of nationalism. Language serves as a link with the glorious past and with authenticity. As far as these are concerned, it is a great advantage to a nationality if it can claim a language of its own.

Another role that language plays in nationalism is what Fishman calls 'contrastive self-identification' and Garvin and Mathiot call the 'unifying and separatist functions.' These terms refer to the feeling of the members of a nationality that they are united and identified with others who speak the same language, and contrast with and are separated from those who do not. The notions of unification and separation go deeper than the simple that it is difficult to communicate with people who speak a different language. A person can be bilingual and have a good command of a second language and still feel 'unified' with speakers of his first language and 'separated' from speakers of his second language.

Given the powerful symbolic importance of language for nationalism, it is possible that we may have an indicator that we can use to decide whether a given sociocultural group is more a nationality or more an ethnic group: a useful indicator of nationality versus simple ethnicity might be the degree to which a group maintains and advocates the use of its language versus the degree to which it is prepared to abandon it.

The Ethiopian highest binding document – the Constitution – does not make a distinction between nation and nationality: A "Nation, Nationality or People" for the purpose of this Constitution, is a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory (Article 39(5)).

#### **5.4. Multilingualism as a Problem and a Resource**

The two main categories of multilingualism as a problem and resource [for nationalism and nationism] are presented below.

##### **5.4.1 Multilingualism as a Problem:**

Problems for Nationalism: Multilingual states have problems that more nearly monolingual ones do not. Given that nation-states are more likely to be stable than multinational states, and given the importance of language for nationalism, the development of a sense of nation is more difficult for a multilingual state than for a monolingual ones. Multilingual states can approach the problem in one of the two ways: they can either attempt to develop a national language, or they can try to develop nationalism on grounds other than language.

Problem for Nationism: Since the problems language presents for nationism are pragmatic rather than symbolic, a solution to a nationalist problem often creates a nationalist problem. On a strictly practical level, difficulty in communication within a country can act as an impediment to commerce and industry and be socially disruptive. But more seriously, multilingualism works against nationism.

##### **5.4.2 .Multilingualism as a Resource:**

Some administrators suggested a temporary pragmatic solution to nationalist-nationalist conflicts in language policy. For instance, in societies with colonial history, the use of both languages of the colonial powers (for nationalist reasons) and a national language (for nationalist reasons) as official government languages can be one solution to nationalist-nationalist conflict at that level. If such could be attained, it might have the following benefits:

1. At the individual level, multilingualism serves as an interactional resource for the multilingual speaker. Typically, multilingual societies tend to assign different tasks to different

languages or language varieties (dialects). One language, for example, might normally be used as the home language and with close friends, whereas another is used for doing business with government agencies or formal organizations. In other words, bilinguals develop functions of linguistic heterogeneity which (potentially at least) go beyond the expressive possibilities available in a single code.

2. Multilingualism contributes to a creation of a more dynamic society. A multiethnic society is arguably a richer society than a nation with only one dominant ethnic group. The multiplicity of lifestyles and world views can make such a nation a more exciting and stimulating place to live.

### **5.5. How Do Multilingual Nations Develop?**

Fasold identified four historic patterns that he thought to have contributed to the development of multilingual nations.

1. Migration: Two broad types of migration are identified here: (1) a large group expands its territory by moving into contiguous areas, simultaneously taking control over smaller sociocultural groups who are already there – whereby some get assimilated but some maintain their own nationality; (2) a small number of members of an ethnic group move into the territory already under the control of another nationality. Both of these processes contribute to the formation of multinational – multilingual states.

2. Imperialism: There are three types of imperialism whose influence to the development of multilingual nations could be documented: colonization, annexation and economic imperialism. Colonization and annexation differ only by whether or not people have to cross an ocean to do it. Another difference might be that in annexation, but not frequently in colonization, the subjugated populations are supposed to become part of the mother country. Under economic imperialism, a foreign language makes inroads into a country without the actual presence nationality associated with it. All the three varieties of imperialism have the effect of introducing the language of the imperialist countries into other societies. In annexation and colonization, the imperialist language is likely to be used in government and education; in economic imperialism, the imperialist language becomes necessary for international commerce and diplomacy. Annexation and especially colonization have a further effect on multilingualism – through forced federation.

3. Federation: Federation, forced or voluntary, is the union of diverse ethnic groups or nationalities under the political control of one state. Forced federation is primarily the effect of European colonization in Africa and Asia and, to a lesser extent, in the western hemisphere. The boundaries of European colonies were established largely on grounds other than the ethnic affinities of the subjugated peoples. As a result, many colonies brought together sociocultural and linguistic groups under a single administration that had never had a common government before and may never have become part of the same nation if left for their own devices. The result is a de facto federation of numerous sociocultural groups who never had much say in the matter. When former colonies become independent, the new state remains a federation. It then becomes a task for the new nation to develop a society that is more a multiethnic nation than a multinational state. This necessity is reflected in language policy. Most former European colonies are examples of both imperialism and forced federation.

4. Border Areas: Border areas between many countries enable the residence of people who are citizens of one country but members of a sociocultural group based in the other. Specifically, in what is called 'spoils of war' a nation that loses a war is often forced to give up territory to neighboring victorious countries. Sometimes these are

multiethnic or multinational areas that have been contended for by neighboring countries for long periods of time and end up as part of whichever country was on winning side in the most recent war.

The four historical patterns are not to be taken as hard and fast categories, such that every multilingual society is an example of one and not the other. Rather, they are historical strands, some of which, like annexation and large group migration, are not clearly distinguished from each other. Furthermore, two or more of these strands often converge in the history of some particular society or country.

### **5.6. Ethnic Diversity and Development**

The relationship between ethnicity, economic transformation has been duly noted by many in relation to societal development, as we have already discussed. For instance, the transformation of a barter economy, where goods are exchanged for goods, into a modern economy that introduced a generalized means of exchange referred to as money, has brought about the rationalization and

calculation of every aspect of social life besides its immediate application, i.e., the economy. In addition to simplifying economic transactions, exchanges based on monetary systems produce certain noneconomic values, ethos and relationships (Simmel, 1900).

Underscored by this transformation, the modern spirits of calculation, abstraction and impersonality have prevailed over an older worldview that accorded primacy to feelings, group allegiance and imaginations. Such a theory argues that the social changes associated with money economy serve to generate ethnic and/or cultural homogeneity. This brought about the perception whereby primordial sentiments of ethnic identification were seen as being incompatible with the 'rational' orientation of industrial society. Hence, ethnic ties tend to be perceived as a threat to nation-building (understood from a "nationalist" point of view), which is a precondition for proliferation of commerce and trade in a territorial area. Economic development was understood as having a requirement of replacing the primordial sentiments of ethnic identification by attachments among individuals having similar functional positions under the pressure of modern economy (Foster, 1978).

Evidence in this area has not been lacking, though not conclusive. For instance, Jonathan Pool attempted to calculate the effect of societal multilingualism (which is a major defining feature of multiethnicity) on economic development (measured in per capita income) in

133 countries around the world. However, he hastened to emphasize that any such endeavor to untangle a clear causal relationship between the degree of ethnic heterogeneity, primarily defined in terms of language, and the level of development could not be straightforward due to certain difficulties. However, with cautious in mind, he summarized his empirical evidence as follows:

A country can have any degree of language uniformity or fragmentation and still be underdeveloped; and a country whose entire population, more or less, speaks the same language can be anywhere from very rich to very poor. But, a country that is linguistically highly heterogeneous is always underdeveloped or semi-developed, and a country that is highly developed always has considerable language uniformity.