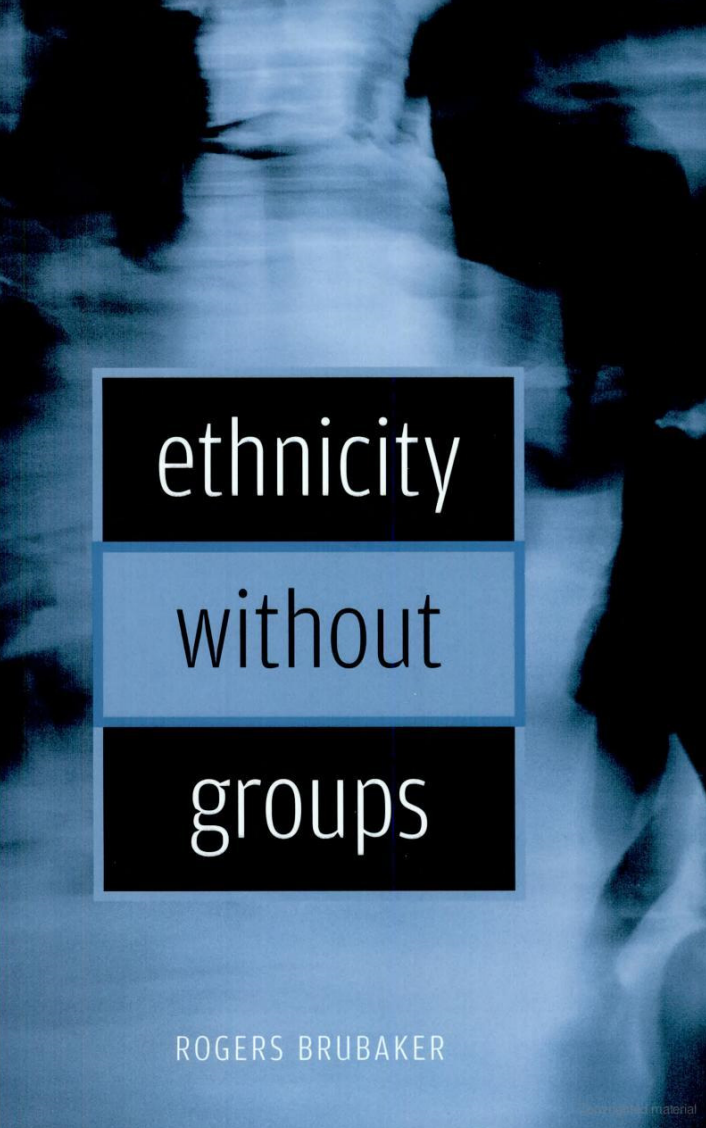

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For Benjamin and Daniel

Contents

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

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

CHAPTER ONE

Ethnicity without Groups

Commonsense Groupism

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

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

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

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

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

Challenges to "groupism," however, have been uneven. They have been striking—to take just one example—in the study of class, especially in the study of the working class, a term that is hard to use today without quotation marks or some other distancing device. Yet ethnic groups continue to be understood as entities and cast as actors. To be sure, constructivist approaches of one kind or another are now dominant in academic discussions of ethnicity. Yet everyday talk, policy analysis, media reports, and even much ostensibly constructivist academic writing routinely frame accounts of ethnic, racial, and national conflict in groupist terms as the struggles "of" ethnic groups, races, and nations.[3] Somehow, when we talk about ethnicity, and even more when we talk about ethnic conflict, we almost automatically find ourselves talking about ethnic groups.

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

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

ethnic groups, just as racial or racially framed conflict need not be understood as conflict between *races*, or nationally framed conflict as conflict between *nations*.

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

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

Beyond Groupism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Implications

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

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

First, sensitivity to framing dynamics, to the generalized coding bias in favor of ethnicity, and to the sometimes strategic or even cynical use of ethnic framing to mask the pursuit of clan, clique, or class interests can alert us to the risk of overethnicized or overly groupist interpretations of (and interventions in) situations of conflict and violence (Bowen 1996). One need not subscribe to a reductionist "elite manipulation" view of politicized ethnicity (Brubaker 1998b) to acknowledge that the "spin" put on conflicts by participants may conceal as much as it reveals, and that the representation of conflicts as conflicts between ethnic or national groups may obscure the interests at stake and the dynamics involved. What is represented as ethnic conflict or ethnic war—such as the violence in the former Yugoslavia—may have as much or more to do with thuggery, warlordship, opportunistic looting, and black-market profiteering than with ethnicity (Mueller 2000; cf. Kaldor 1999; Collier 2000).

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

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

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

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

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

Ethnicity at Work in a Transylvanian Town

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

CHAPTER TWO

Beyond "Identity"

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

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

This chapter was coauthored with Frederick Cooper.

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

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

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

The "Identity" Crisis in the Social Sciences

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

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

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

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

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

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

Categories of Practice and Categories of Analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Uses of "Identity"

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

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

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

2. Understood as a specifically *collective* phenomenon, "identity" denotes a fundamental and consequential "*sameness*" among members of a group or category. This may be understood objectively (as a sameness "in itself") or subjectively (as an experienced, felt, or perceived sameness). This sameness is expected to manifest itself in solidarity, in shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective action. This usage is found especially in the literature on social movements (Melucci 1995); on gender;[29] and on race, ethnicity, and nationalism (e.g., Isaacs 1975; Connor 1994). In this usage, the line between "identity" as a category of analysis and as a category of practice is often blurred.
3. Understood as a core aspect of (individual or collective) selfhood or as a fundamental condition of social being, "identity" is invoked to point to something allegedly *deep, basic, abiding, or foundational.* This is distinguished from more superficial, accidental, fleeting, or contingent aspects or attributes of the self, and is understood as something to be valued, cultivated, supported, recognized, and preserved.[30] This usage is characteristic of certain strands of the psychological (or psychologizing) literature, especially as influenced by Erikson,[31] though it also appears in the literature on race, ethnicity, and nationalism. Here too the practical and analytical uses of "identity" are frequently conflated.
4. Understood as a product of social or political action, "identity" is invoked to highlight the *processual, interactive* development of the kind of collective self-understanding, solidarity, or "groupness" that can make collective action possible. In this usage, found in certain strands of the "new social movement" literature, "identity" is understood both as a contingent product of social or political action and as a ground or basis of further action (e.g., Calhoun 1991; Melucci 1995; Gould 1995).
5. Understood as the evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses, "identity" is invoked to highlight the *unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented* nature of the contemporary self. This usage is found especially in the literature influenced by Foucault, post-structuralism, and post-modernism (e.g., Hall 1996). In somewhat different form, without the post-structuralist trappings, it is also found in certain strands of the literature on ethnicity—notably in "situationalist" or "contextualist" accounts of ethnicity (e.g., Werbner 1996).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introducing his edited volume on *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, Calhoun works with this more general understanding of identity. "Concerns with individual and collective identity," he observes, "are ubiquitous." It is certainly true that "we know of no people without names, no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinctions between self and other, we and they are not made" (Calhoun 1994: 9). But it is not clear why this implies the ubiquity of identity, unless we dilute "identity" to the point of designating *all* practices involving naming and self-other distinctions. Calhoun—like Somers and Tilly—goes on to make illuminating arguments on a range of issues concerning claims of commonality and difference in contemporary social movements. Yet while such claims are indeed often framed today in an idiom of "identity," it is not clear that adopting that idiom for *analytical* purposes is necessary or even helpful.

In Other Words

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The term "self-understanding," it is important to emphasize, does not imply a distinctively modern or Western understanding of the "self" as a homogeneous, bounded, unitary entity. A sense of who one is can take many forms. The social processes through which persons understand and locate themselves may in some instances involve the psychoanalyst's couch and in others participation in spirit possession cults.[45] In some settings, people may understand and experience themselves in terms of a grid of intersecting categories; in others, in terms of a web of connections of differential proximity and intensity. Hence the importance of seeing self-understanding and social locatedness in relation to each other, and of emphasizing that both the bounded self and the bounded group are culturally specific rather than universal forms.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The problem is that "identity" is used to designate *both* such strongly groupist, exclusive, affectively charged self-understandings *and* much looser, more open self-understandings, involving some sense of affinity or affiliation, commonality or connectedness to particular others, but lacking a sense of overriding oneness vis-à-vis some constitutive "other."[47] Both the tightly groupist and the more loosely affiliative forms of self-understanding—as well as the transitional forms between these polar types—are important, but they shape personal experience and condition social and political action in sharply differing ways.

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

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

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

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

Three Cases: "Identity" and Its Alternatives in Context

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

A Case from Africanist Anthropology: "The" Nuer

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

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

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

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

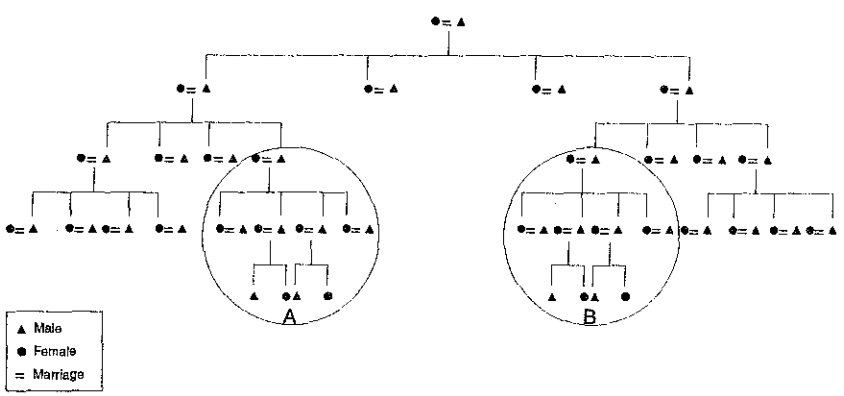

Figure 1. A segmentary patrilineage. Lines represent descent; marriage partners come from another lineage; children of daughters belong to the lineage of the husband and are not shown; children of sons belong to this lineage and are represented here.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

East European Nationalism

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

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

Consider the former Soviet Union. To see national conflicts as

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

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

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

among nominal Russians in Ukraine, but such groupness cannot be taken as given.[58]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion: Particularity and the Politics of "Identity"

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

To persuade people that they are one; that they comprise a bounded, distinctive, solidary group; that their internal differences do not matter, at least for the purpose at hand—this is a normal and necessary part of politics, and not only of what is ordinarily characterized as "identity politics." It is not all of politics; and we do indeed have reservations about the way in which the routine recourse to identitarian framing may foreclose other equally important ways of framing political claims. But we do not seek to deprive anyone of "identity" as a political tool, or to undermine the legitimacy of making political appeals in identitarian terms.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

Introduction

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

1. Ethnicity without Groups

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

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

5. Such performative, group-making practices, of course, are not specific to ethnic entrepreneurs, but generic to political mobilization and representation (Bourdieu 1991b; 1991d: 248–51).
6. On reification, see Berger and Luckmann (1967: 88–92) and Baumann (1996), especially Chapters 1 and 2.
7. As a European observer has remarked, "the widespread but uncritical use of the term 'ethnicity' in social science and its subsequent integration into political, administrative and popular common sense discourses [have] been far more effective in *creating reality* than . . . in actually describing it" (Schierup 1992: 5 [italics in the original]; see also Dittrich and Radtke 1990).
8. For accounts (not focused specifically on ethnicity) that treat groupness as variable, see Tilly (1978: 62ff), Hechter (1987: 8), and Hamilton et al. (1998). These accounts, very different from one another, focus on variability in groupness across cases; my concern is primarily with variability in groupness over time.
9. See inter alia Sacks (1995, I: 41, 401), Handelman (1977), McKay and Lewins (1978), and Jenkins (1997: 53ff). Fredrik Barth's introductory essay to the collection *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) was extraordinarily influential in directing attention to the workings of categories of self- and other-ascription and in undermining the unproblematic equation of ethnic group and bounded cultural unit. But Barth did not distinguish sharply or consistently between categories and groups, and his central metaphor of "boundary"—at least in the work of many of his followers—carries with it connotations of boundedness, entitativity, and groupness (on this point, see Cohen 1978: 386; Jenkins 1997: 21, 50, 165). See also Vincent (1974: 376), which criticized in passing the "too solid perception of ethnic groups as permanent component units of society" and the tendency "to seek the embodiment of ethnicity in overly corporate forms."
10. This point was already made by Max Weber, albeit in somewhat different terms. As Weber argued—in a passage obscured in the English translation—ethnic commonality, based on belief in common descent, is "in itself mere (putative) commonality [(*geglaubte*) *Gemeinsamkeit*], not community [*Gemeinschaft*] . . . but only a factor facilitating communal action [*Vergemeinschaftung*]" (1964: 307; cf. 1968: 389). Ethnic commonality means more than mere category membership for Weber. It is—or rather involves—a category that is employed by members themselves. But this shows that even self-categorization does not create a "group."

11. From the large literature on this theme, see for example Weber (1968 [1922]: 43ff., 341ff.), Barth (1969), Brubaker (1992), Marx (1998), Tilly (1998), Wimmer (2002: Chapter 4), and Chandra (2004).
12. On governmentality, see Burchell et al. (1991). On categorization from above, see Noiriel (1991), Slezkine (1994), Brubaker (1994), Torpey (2000), and Martin (2001). See also this volume, Chapter 3.
13. Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis have not focused on the use of ethnic categories as such, but Sacks, Schegloff and others have addressed the problem of situated categorization in general, notably the question of the procedures through which participants in interaction, in deploying categories, choose among alternative sets of categories (since there is always more than one set of categories in terms of which any person can be correctly described). The import of this problem has been formulated as follows by Schegloff (2001: 309, emphasis added): "Given the centrality of . . . categories in organizing vernacular cultural 'knowledge,' this equivocality can be profoundly consequential, for *which* category is employed will carry with it the invocation of commonsense knowledge about *that* category of person and bring it to bear on the person referred to on some occasion, rather than bringing to bear the knowledge implicated with *another* category of which the person being referred to is equally a member." For Sacks on categories, see Sacks (1995: I, 40–48, 333–40, 396–403, 578–96; II, 184–87).
14. The language of "stereotypes" is, of course, that of cognitive social psychology (for a review of work in this tradition, see Hamilton and Sherman (1994); see also this volume, Chapter 3. But the general ethnomethodological emphasis on the crucial importance of the rich though tacit background knowledge that participants bring to interaction, and—more specifically—Harvey Sacks's discussion of the "inference-rich" categories in terms of which much everyday social knowledge is stored (1995: I, 40ff. et passim; cf. Schegloff 2001: 308ff.) and of the way in which the knowledge thus organized is "protected against induction" (Sacks 1995: I, 336ff.), suggest a domain of potentially converging concern between cognitive work on the one hand and ethnomethodological and conversation-analytic work on the other—however different their analytic stances and methodologies.
15. One should remember, though, that organizations often compete with one another for the monopolization of the right to represent the same (putative) group.
16. In this respect the resource mobilization perspective on social movements, eclipsed in recent years by identity-oriented new social movement theory, has much to offer students of ethnicity. For an integrated statement, see McCarthy and Zald (1977).
17. Genocide, as Bauman observes, "differs from other murders in having a *category* for its object" (2000: 227, italics in original). The same could be said for ethnic cleansing and what Horowitz (2001) calls the "deadly ethnic riot."
18. The metaphor of framing was popularized by Goffman (1974), drawing on

Bateson (1985 [1955]). The notion has been elaborated chiefly in the social movement literature (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gamson 1992; uniting rational choice and framing approaches, Esser 1999). On the ethnic framing of violence, see this volume, Chapter 4: 118.

19. For a development of this line of argument, see Chapter 3.
20. Cognitive perspectives, in this broad sense, include not only those developed in cognitive psychology and cognitive anthropology but also those developed in the post- (and anti-) Parsonian "cognitive turn" (DiMaggio and Powell 1991) in sociological and (more broadly) social theory, especially in response to the influence of phenomenological and ethnomethodological work (Schutz 1962; Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984). Cognitive perspectives are central to the influential syntheses of Bourdieu and Giddens and—in a very different form—to the enterprise of conversation analysis.
21. For the American case, see also this volume, Chapter 2: 57–60.
22. This section is based on field research conducted between 1995 and 2001, and analyzed in detail in Brubaker et al. (2004).
23. In the United States and much of northern and western Europe, "nationality" ordinarily means "citizenship," that is, membership of the state; and "nation" and "state" are often used interchangeably. In central and eastern Europe, by contrast, "nation" and "nationality" do not refer in the first instance to the state, but ordinarily invoke an ethnocultural frame of reference independent of—and often cutting across the boundaries of—statehood and citizenship. To identify oneself as Hungarian by nationality in Transylvania is to a invoke a state-transcending Hungarian ethnocultural "nation."
24. Transylvania had belonged to Hungary for half a century before the First World War, and again for four years during the Second World War.
25. The DAHR program and other documents, some in English, can be found at http://www.rmdsz.ro/ and http://www.hhrf.org/rmdsz/.
26. Of course this point holds not only, or especially, of the Hungarian minority, or of minorities generally. In Romania as elsewhere, those who claim to speak for dominant nations—nations that are closely identified with the states that bear their names, referred to in German as *Staatsvölker* or "state peoples"—also routinely reify those "nations" and characterize them as singular entities with a common will and common interests, where in fact no such entity exists. And indeed the latter form of reification, supported by the material infrastructure and symbolic power of the modern state, tends to be at once more pervasive and less visible—and hence more successful, more widely accepted as "natural."
27. See Chapter 8. To Romanian nationalists, Hungarians' commemoration of 1848 is illegitimate, for it celebrates a regime that was as much nationalist as revolutionary, aspiring to—and briefly securing—the union of Hungary and Transylvania.

28. "Confruntarea dintre România şi Ungaria a continuat şi după meci." *Adevărul de Cluj*, 7 June 1999.
29. Even for those who were involved in the events, one should be cautious about inferring an overriding sense of groupness. I was in Cluj in the summer of 1994, when excavations in the main "Hungarian" square were about to begin. I was staying with the family of a DAHR politician. At one point, he proposed: "*Menjünk ásni*? [Shall we go dig?]" At a moment of overriding groupness, such a joke would be unthinkable; here, the nationalist projects of Mayor Funar were—at least for some—a joking matter. One further incident is worth mentioning in this connection. In 1997, a long-closed Hungarian consulate reopened in Cluj, reflecting a warming of relations between Budapest and the newly elected pro-western government in Bucharest. Funar protested—in vain—against its opening, and when it opened, tried to fine it for flying the Hungarian flag. A few weeks after its opening, five men pulled up in a pickup truck, placed an extendable ladder against the side of the building, and removed the flag, in broad daylight, as a small crowd looked on. The next day, they were apprehended by the police; Funar characterized them as "Romanian heroes." Elsewhere, this sort of incident—which could easily be construed as involving the desecration of a sacred national symbol—has been enough to trigger a riot. Here, nobody paid much attention; the incident was coded as farce, not as sacred drama.
30. On categories as "repositor[ies] for common sense knowledge" generally, see Schegloff (2001: 308) and Sacks (1995, I, 40–48, 333–40). For cognitive perspectives on social categories as structures of knowledge, with special regard to ethnic, racial, and other "natural kind"-like categories, see Rothbart and Taylor (1992), Hamilton and Sherman (1994), and Hirschfeld (1996).
31. Even when such commonsense category-based stereotypical knowledge is overridden, the very manner of overriding may testify to the existence (and the content) of the category-based knowledge that is being overridden. On the general phenomenon of "modifiers" that work by asserting that what is generally known about members of a category is not applicable to some particular member, see Sacks (1995: I, 44–45). Among Hungarians—even liberal, cosmopolitan Hungarians—I have on several occasions heard someone referred to as "*Román, de rendes*" (Romanian, but quite all right) or something to that effect.
32. On "population politics" and the metaphor of the gardening state, see Holquist (1997: 131), Bauman (2000), and Weiner (2001).
33. Traditional churches, too, are built around ethnic categories, with two "Hungarian" churches (Roman Catholic and Calvinist) and two "Romanian" churches (Orthodox and Greek-Catholic or Uniate). With aging congregations, dwindling influence, and increased competition from less ethnically marked neo-Protestant denominations, the traditional churches are less significant than schools as institutional loci of ethnic categories.

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

2. Beyond "Identity"

1. For a tempered critique of identity politics, see Gitlin (1995); for a sophisticated defense, Kelley (1997). For a suggestion that the high noon of identity politics may have passed, see Posnock (1995), Hollinger (1998), and this volume, Chapter 5.
2. For a contemporary philosophical treatment, see Böhm (1989). On the history and vicissitudes of "identity" and cognate terms, see Mackenzie (1978: 19–27), and Ely (1997: 76 ff).
3. The 1930s *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* contains no entry on identity, but it does have one on "identification," largely focused on fingerprinting and other modes of judicial marking of individuals (Sellin 1930). The 1968 *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* contains an article on "identification, political" by Buchanan (1968), which focuses on a "person's identification with a group"—including class, party, and religion—and another on "identity, psychosocial," by Erikson (1968a), which focuses on the individual's "role integration in his group."
4. This paragraph relies primarily on Gleason's (1983) excellent "semantic history" of the term.
5. For the appropriation of Erikson's work in political science, see Mackenzie (1978).
6. The popularization of the term began well before the turbulence of the mid- and late 1960s. Gleason (1983: 922 ff.) attributes this initial popularization to the midcentury prestige and cognitive authority of the social sciences, the wartime and postwar vogue of national character studies, and the postwar critique of mass society, which newly problematized the "relationship of the individual to society."
7. Erikson (1968b: 22) characterized identity as "a process 'located' *in the core of the individual* and yet also *in the core of his communal culture*, a process which establishes . . . the identity of those two identities" (italics in the original). Although this is a relatively late formulation, the link was already established in Erikson's immediately postwar writings.
8. Mackenzie (1978: 11), reporting a seminar paper of 1974; Coles is quoted in Gleason (1983: 913). Gleason (1983: 915) notes that the problem was remarked even earlier: "by the late 1960s the terminological situation had gotten completely out of hand." Erikson (1968b: 16) himself lamented the "indiscriminate" use of "identity" and "identity crisis."
9. Between 1990 and 1997 alone, for example, the number of journal articles in the Current Contents database with "identity" or "identities" in the title more than doubled, while the total number of articles increased by about 20 percent. Fearon (1999: 1) found a similar increase in the number of dissertation abstracts containing "identity," even after controlling for the increase in the total number of dissertations abstracted.
10. One might also speak of a narrower "'identity crisis' crisis." Coined and popularized by Erikson, and applied to social and political collectivities by Lucian Pye and others, the notion of "identity crisis" took off in the 1960s. (For Erikson's own retrospective reflections on the origins and vicissitudes of the expression, see the prologue to Erikson [1968b: 16 ff.]) Crises have become (oxymoronically) chronic; and putative crises of identity have proliferated to the point of destroying whatever meaning the concept may once have had. Already in 1968, Erikson (1968b: 16) could lament that the expression was being used in a "ritualized" fashion. A bibliographical sampling revealed that "identity crises" have been predicated not only of the usual suspects—above all ethnic, racial, national, gender, and sexual identities—but also of such heterogeneous subjects as fifth-century Gaul, the forestry profession, histologists, the French medical corps during the First World War, the Internet, the Sonowal Kacharis, technical education in India, early childhood special education, French hospital nurses, kindergarten teachers, television, sociology, Japan's consumer groups, the European Space Agency, Japan's MITI, the National Association of Broadcasting, Cathay Pacific Airways, Presbyterians, the CIA, universities, Clorox, Chevrolet, lawyers, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, black theology, eighteenth-century Scottish literature, and, our favorite, dermopterous fossils.
11. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, inaugurated in 1994, "explores the relationship of racial, ethnic and national identities and power hierarchies within national and global arenas. . . . [It] responds to the paradox of our time: the growth of a global economy and transnational movements of populations produce or perpetuate distinctive cultural practices and differentiated identities" (Statement of "aims and scope" printed on inside front cover). *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, whose first issue appeared in 1995, is concerned with "the formations of, and transformations in, socially significant identities, their attendant forms of material exclusion and power, as well as the political and cultural possibilities

open[ed] up by these identifications" (statement printed on inside front cover).

12. Social theorists and social scientists whose main work lies *outside* the traditional "homelands" of identity theorizing yet who have written explicitly on "identity" include Bauman (1992), Bourdieu (1991c), Braudel (1988–1990), Castells (1997), Eisenstadt and Giesen (1995), Giddens (1991), Habermas (1991), Lévi-Strauss (1977), Ricoeur (1992), Sen (1985), Taylor (1992), Tilly (1996), and White (1992).
13. On experience-near and experience-distant concepts—the terms are derived from Heinz Kohut—see Geertz (1983: 57). The basic contrast goes back at least to Durkheim's *Rules of Sociological Method* (1938: Chapter 2), which criticized the sociological use of "pre-notions" or lay concepts that have been "created by experience and for it."
14. As Wacquant (1997: 222–23) notes of race, the "continual barter between folk and analytical notions, the uncontrolled conflation of social and sociological understandings of 'race'" is "intrinsic to the category. From its inception, the collective fiction labeled 'race' . . . has always mixed science with common sense and traded on the complicity between them."
15. On "ethnic identity entrepreneurs," see Lal (1997).
16. This argument is developed further in Brubaker (1996: Chapter 1).
17. See also Wacquant (1997) and Taylor (manuscript: 7). Weber (1968: 385 ff.) provides a strikingly modern argument questioning the analytical utility of the notions of "race," "ethnic group," and "nation."
18. Even Durkheim's (1938) uncompromisingly objectivist sociological manifesto shies away from this extreme position; see Chapter 2.
19. See also Wacquant's (1996) criticism of the concept of "underclass."
20. For a sustained and influential example, see Butler (1990).
21. For a nuanced review of the debate, which appreciates that there may be good reasons for the strategic use of essentialist arguments, see Calhoun (1994: 12–20). See also Cerulo (1997: 387 ff.) for a review of constructivist work on identity.
22. Bonilla-Silva (1997: 469–70), for example, slides from an impeccably constructivist characterization of "racialized social systems" as "societies . . . partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories" to the claim that such placement "produces definite social relations between the races," where "the races" are characterized as real social groups with differing objective interests. In their influential *Racial Formation in the United States* (1994), Omi and Winant strive to be more consistently constructivist. But they too fail to remain faithful to their constructivist definition of "race" as an "unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle . . . [and as] a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of social bodies" (55). The historical experiences of "white European" immigrants, they argue, were and remain fundamentally different from those of

"racial minority groups" (including Latinos and Asian Americans as well as African Americans and Native Americans); the "ethnicity paradigm" is applicable to the former but not—because of its "neglect of race per se"—to the latter (14–23). This sharp distinction between "ethnic" and "racial" groups neglects the fact—now well established in the historical literature—that the "whiteness" of several European immigrant groups was "achieved" after an initial period in which they were often categorized in racial or racelike terms as nonwhite; it also neglects what might be called "de-racialization" processes among some groups they consider fundamentally "racial." On the former, see Barrett and Roediger (1997); on the latter, see Perlmann and Waldinger (1997: 903 ff.).

23. Michaels (1992: 61n) has argued that ostensibly constructivist notions of cultural identity, insofar as they are advanced—as they often are in practice, especially in connection with race, ethnicity, and nationality—as reasons for our holding, or valuing, a set of beliefs or practices, cannot avoid essentialist appeals to who we *are*. "There are no anti-essentialist accounts of identity. . . . [T]he essentialism inheres not in the description of the identity but in the attempt to derive the practices from the identity—we *do* this because we *are* this. Hence anti-essentialism . . . must take the form not of producing more sophisticated accounts of identity (that is, more sophisticated essentialisms) but of ceasing to explain what people do or should do by reference to who they are and/or what culture they belong to." Note, however, the crucial elision at the end of the quoted passage between "do" and "should do." Essentialism inheres, *pace* Michaels, less in the "attempt to derive [in an explanatory mode] the practice from the identity" than in the attempt to *prescribe* the practices on the basis of an *ascribed* identity: you *ought to do* this because you *are* this.
24. For a different approach to this question, see Fearon (1999).
25. See for example Cohen (1985).
26. This opposition depends on a narrow conceptualization of the category "interest," one restricted to interests understood to be directly derivable from social structure (see for example Somers [1994: 624]). If interest is instead understood to be culturally or discursively constituted, to be dependent on the discursive *identification* of interests and (more fundamentally) interest-bearing units, to be "constituted and reconstituted *in* time and *over* time," like narrative identities in Somers's account, then the opposition loses much of its force.
27. Some strands of identitarian theorizing emphasize the relative autonomy of self-understanding vis-à-vis social location. The tendency is most pronounced in the fourth and the fifth uses sketched in the text.
28. The contemporary conceptualization of identity as unmoored from social structure is foreign to most premodern social settings, where self- and other-identifications are generally understood as following directly from social structure. See for example Berger (1983).

29. Much recent work on gender, to be sure, has criticized as "essentialist" the idea that women share a fundamental sameness. Yet certain strands of recent work nonetheless predicate such sameness of some "group" defined by the *intersection* of gender with other categorical attributes (race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation). See for example Collins (1991).
30. For a sophisticated historical and philosophical account, see Taylor (1989).
31. For a key statement by Erikson himself, see Erikson (1968b: 22).
32. On the shift from an emphasis on sameness and unity to an emphasis on difference and plurality, see Sökefeld 1999: 417.
33. Two important, although partial, exceptions deserve note. Literary scholar Walter Benn Michaels (1992) has formulated a brilliant and provocative critique of the concept of "cultural identity" in "Race into Culture." But that essay focuses less on analytical uses of the notion of "identity" than on the difficulty of specifying what makes "our" culture or "our" past count as "our own"—when the reference is not to one's *actual* cultural practices or one's *actual* personal past but to some putative group culture or group past—without implicitly invoking the notion of "race." He concludes that "our sense of culture is characteristically meant to displace race, but . . . culture has turned out to be a way of continuing rather than repudiating racial thought. It is only the appeal to race that . . . gives notions like losing our culture, preserving it, [or] . . . restoring people's culture to them . . . their pathos" (61–62). Anthropologist Richard Handler (1994; see also 1988) argues that "we should be as suspicious of 'identity' as we have learned to be of 'culture,' 'tradition,' 'nation,' and 'ethnic group' " (27), but then pulls his critical punches. His central argument—that the salience of "identity" in contemporary Western, especially American, society "does not mean that the concept can be applied unthinkingly to other places and times" (27)—is certainly true, but it implies that the concept *can* be fruitfully applied in contemporary Western settings, something that other passages in the same article and his own work on Québécois nationalism tend to call into question. Also registering anthropological skepticism about the concept of identity, from a point of view in some respects similar to our own, is the brief statement by van Beek (1999), which came to our attention only after the article was published.
34. "I use 'identity' to refer to the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate,' speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (Hall 1996: 5–6).
35. Here the blurring between categories of analysis and categories of practice is particularly striking. As Handler (1988) has argued, scholarly conceptions of "nation" and "national identity" have tended to replicate key features of nationalist ideology, notably the axiomatic understanding of boundedness and homogeneity in the putative "nation." The same argument could be made about "race" or "ethnicity."

36. This point has been nicely formulated by Driessen (1999: 432), in a passage that came to our attention after our article was published: "'Identity' has become a shibboleth, too frequently part of an academic litany that presents it as relational, shifting, mixed, constructed, (re-)invented, negotiated, processual, and conjunctural. The repetition of such qualifications has become part of an academic identification ritual."
37. See also Somers 1992. Martin (1994, 1995) has also argued for seeing identity in terms of narrative.
38. On the merits of "identification," see Hall (1996). Although Hall's is a Foucauldian and post-Freudian understanding of "identification," drawing on the "discursive and psychoanalytic repertoire," and quite different from that proposed here, he does usefully warn that identification is "almost as tricky as, though preferable to, 'identity' itself; and certainly no guarantee against the conceptual difficulties which have beset the latter" (2). See also Glaeser (2000, esp. Chapter 1).
39. For an anthropological perspective, usefully extending the Barthian model, see Jenkins (1994 and 1996).
40. Berger (1974: 163–64), makes a similar point, though he phrases it in terms of a dialectic—and possible conflict—between subjective and objective identity.
41. See Chapter 3: 67.
42. Similar conceptions have been applied to colonial societies, especially in regard to the way colonizers' schemes for classification and enumeration shape and indeed constitute the social phenomena (such as "tribe" and "caste" in India) being classified. See in particular Cohn (1996).
43. On the dilemmas, difficulties, and ironies involved in "administering identity," in authoritatively determining who belongs to what category in the implementation of race-conscious law, see Ford (1994).
44. See Hall (1996: 2 ff.) and Finlayson (1998: 157 ff.).
45. An extensive anthropological literature on African and other societies, for example, describes healing cults, spirit possession cults, witchcraft eradication movements, and other collective phenomena that help to constitute particular forms of self-understanding, particular ways in which individuals situate themselves socially. See studies ranging from classics by Turner (1957) and Lewis (1971) to more recent work by Stoller (1989) and Boddy (1989).
46. For a poignant example, see Drakulic's (1993: 50–52) account of being "overcome by nationhood" as a result of the war in the former Yugoslavia.
47. For a good example of the latter, see Mary Waters' (1990) analysis of the optional, exceptionally unconstraining ethnic "identities"—or what Herbert Gans has called the "symbolic ethnicity"—of third and fourth generation descendants of European Catholic immigrants to the United States.
48. On the centrality of categorical commonality to modern nationalism, see Handler (1988: Chapter 2).

49. See for example the discussion of the "anti-categorical imperative" in Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994: 1414).
50. More recent and systematic constructivist accounts include Amselle and M'Bokolo (1985), Vail (1988), and Ranger (1983).
51. For a case in point, see Werbner (1996). A more reflective approach—deploying a range of terms to indicate different forms of affiliation and examining what "identical" actually means in particular contexts—can be found in Fay (1995). Identitarian positions are severely criticized by Bayart (1996).
52. See Cohen's (1971) pioneering study.
53. On Rwanda see Prunier (1997) and Chrétien (1997). In his account of conflict in Sierra Leone, Richards (1996) stresses networks over groups, creolization over differentiation, and overlapping moral visions over conflicts of "cultures."
54. For further discussion of the Nuer, and of the broader issues raised in this article, see Calhoun (2003).
55. For an elaboration of this argument, see Brubaker (1998b).
56. For a fuller version of this argument, see Brubaker (1996: Chapter 2). For a parallel argument about Yugoslavia, see Vujacic and Zaslavsky (1991).
57. Some peripheral Soviet regions, to be sure, had already experienced national movements in the last years of the Russian empire (and during the ensuing civil war), but even in those regions, the social basis of such movements was weak, and identification with "the nation" was limited to a relatively small part of the population. Elsewhere, the significance of the regime in constituting national divisions was even more prominent. On Soviet "nation-making" in the 1920s, see Slezkine (1994) and Martin (2001).
58. For data on nationality and language, see Gosudarstvennyi Komitet SSSR po Statistike (1991: 78–79).
59. For a more sustained discussion of this case, see the final section of Chapter 1.
60. One of the best introductions to constructivist analysis in American history is Lewis (1996). See also Fields (1990).
61. More recent works on this formative period include Berlin (1998) and a special issue of *William and Mary Quarterly* on "Constructing Race" (3rd series, vol. 54, no. 1, 1997).
62. The different ways in which race has been configured in the Americas has been an important theme in the development of comparative history, beginning with Tannenbaum (1946). An influential short statement is Wagley (1965).
63. One of the foundational texts of what is sometimes considered black nationalism, Martin Delany's account of his voyage to Africa, is notable for its lack of interest in the cultural practices of the Africans he encountered. What counted for him was that a Christian of African origin would find his destiny in ridding himself of oppression in the United States and bringing Christian civilization to Africa. See Delany and Campbell (1969). For an illuminating recent book on African-American connections with Africa—and the differing ways in which linkages were made at the same time that cultural distinctions were emphasized—see Campbell (1995).
64. For one such contribution, see Appiah (1992).
65. See especially the lucid and influential books by Kymlicka (1989, 1995).
66. In a debate with Young (1997), the philosopher Nancy Fraser (1995) has juxtaposed a politics of "recognition" to one of "redistribution," arguing that both are needed, since some groups are exploited as well as stigmatized or unrecognized. Strikingly, both parties to the debate treat group boundaries as clear-cut, and both therefore conceive of progressive politics as involving intergroup coalitions. Both neglect other forms of political action that do not presuppose commonality or "groupness."
67. See also Boissevain's (1974) classic study.

3. *Ethnicity as Cognition*

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

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