

ETHNICITY WITHOUT GROUPS

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Rogers Brubaker (b. 1956) is currently a professor of sociology at UCLA, and was recently elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Previously, he was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship (popularly known as the "Genius Award"). While his early publications focused on the theme of rationality in the thought of Max Weber and on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, his more recent focus has been on ethnicity, nationalism, and citizenship. His book on *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (1992) provided a model for exploring different citizenship regimes by contrasting France's civic nationalism to Germany's ethnic nationalism and exploring the implications of these differences for immigrants seeking to become naturalized citizens. Most recently, he coauthored *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (2006), which offers a richly detailed account of the significance of ethnicity in the city of Cluj, Romania. He has also written a number of articles that attempt to clarify theoretical issues associated with ethnic and immigration studies, including assimilation, diaspora, identity, and ethnicity. "Ethnicity Without Groups," first published in 2002, has quickly become a widely cited article, one that takes aim at the essentializing and homogenizing tendency that treats ethnicity as a "thing" in much that is published in ethnic studies and seeks to offer as a corrective a perspective that stresses ethnicity's "relational, processual, and dynamic" character.

I. COMMON SENSE 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 sub-discipline. 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 in 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 in this paper is not to enter into conceptual or definitional casuistry about the concept of group. It is rather to address one problematic consequence of this 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: the tendency to take discrete, sharply

differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis.² In the domain of ethnicity, nationalism and race, I mean by "groupism" 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 groupism in this sense 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 such sharply differing enterprises as ethno-methodology and conversation analysis, social network theory, cognitive theory, feminist theory, and individualist approaches such as rational choice and game theory. More generally, broadly structuralist approaches have yielded to a variety of more "constructivist" theoretical stances, which tend—at the level of rhetoric, at least—to see groups as constructed, contingent, and fluctuating. And a diffuse postmodernist 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 postmodernist 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 so 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—common-sense 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 common-sense ways of carving up the social world—about what Lawrence Hirschfeld (1996) has called "folk sociologies." The evidence suggests that some common sense social categories—and notably common sense 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 common sense 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 common sense understandings. We need to break, for example, with the seemingly obvious and uncontroversial point that ethnic conflict involves conflict between ethnic groups. I want to suggest that ethnic conflict—or what might better be called ethnicized or ethnically framed conflict—need not, and should not, be understood as conflict *between ethnic groups*, just as racial or racially framed conflict need not be understood as conflict between *rac*es, or nationally framed conflict as conflict between *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. But this is no warrant for analysts to do so. 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 may, as Bourdieu notes, "contribute to producing what they apparently describe or designate" (1991a: 220).⁵

Reification is a social process, not simply an intellectual bad habit. 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. This may be one of the most important tasks of the theory of ethnic conflict. 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.

II. BEYOND GROUPISM

How, then, are we to understand ethnic conflict, if not in common sense 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 implications of them. 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 non-cumulative 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, 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 fill them out a bit 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,⁶ 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 famously said about class. At the same time, it keeps us analytically attuned 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 1998) and an overestimation of the incidence of ethnic violence (Fearon and Laitin 1996).

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 (Sacks 1995, I: 41, 401; Handelman 1977; McKay and Lewins 1978; Jenkins 1997: 53ff).⁷ It is at best a potential basis for group-formation or “groupness.”⁸

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 (Weber 1968 [1922]: 43ff, 341ff; Barth 1969; Brubaker 1992; Tilly 1998), but it also includes more mundane actions such as identifying or classifying oneself or others (Levine 1999) or simply “doing being ethnic” in an ethnomethodological sense (Moerman 1968). 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" (Noiriel 1991; Slezkine 1994; Brubaker 1994; Torpey 2000; Martin 2001). 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 (Dominguez 1986). And drawing on advances in cognitive research, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, we can study the sociocognitive and interactional processes through which categories are used by individuals to make sense of the social world;⁹ linked to stereotypical beliefs and expectations about category members.¹⁰ 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 1991a, 1991b). 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 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).

Of course, this group-making strategy employed in the late 1990s did not start from scratch. It had already begun 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 serve to galvanize and crystallize a potential group, or to ratchet up pre-existing levels of groupness. 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 common sense 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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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 PKK claim to speak and act in the name of the (Catholic) Irish, the Kosovo Albanians and the Kurds; 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 (Heisler 1991).

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 non-members. 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

between 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, much more easily than they can be the subjects or undertakers of such action. 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?¹³ And what makes violence count as ethnic violence? Similar questions can be asked about racial and national conflict and violence. The answer cannot be found in the intrinsic properties of behavior. The "ethnic" quality of "ethnic violence" for example, is not intrinsic to violent conduct itself; it is attributed to instances of violent behavior by perpetrators, victims, politicians, officials, journalists, researchers, relief workers or others. Such acts of framing and narrative encoding do not simply *interpret* the violence; they *constitute* it as *ethnic*.

Framing may be a key mechanism through which groupness is constructed. 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). When ethnic framing is successful, we may "see" conflict and violence not only in ethnic, but in groupist terms. Although such imputed groupness is the product of prevailing interpretive

frames, not necessarily a measure of the groupness felt and experienced by the participants in an event, a compelling *ex post* interpretive framing or encoding may 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—is regularly accompanied by 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 (1991: 2), do not simply shadow conflicts from the outside, but are integral and consequential parts of the conflicts. 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 act of social definition that can have important consequences (Brass 1996b). Social struggles over the proper coding and interpretation of conflict and violence are therefore important subjects of study in their own right (Brass 1996a, 1997, Abelman and Lie 1995).

Coding and framing practices are heavily influenced by prevailing interpretive frames. Today, ethnic and national frames are accessible and legitimate, suggesting themselves to actors and analysts alike. This generates a “coding bias” in the ethnic direction. And this, in turn, may lead us to overestimate the incidence of ethnic conflict and violence by unjustifiably seeing ethnicity everywhere at work (Bowen 1996). Actors may take advantage of this coding bias and of the generalized legitimacy of ethnic and national frames, by strategically using ethnic framing to mask the pursuit of clan, clique or class interests. The point here is not to suggest that clans, cliques or classes are somehow more real than ethnic groups, but simply to note the existence of structural and cultural incentives for strategic framing.

ETHNICITY AS COGNITION

These observations about the constitutive significance of coding and framing suggest a final point about the cognitive dimension of ethnicity.¹⁴ Ethnicity, race and nationhood exist only in and through our perceptions, interpretations, representations, categorizations and identifications. They are not things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world.¹⁵ 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 that activate them, such as the ubiquitous televised images that have played such an important role in the latest intifada. 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, can help advance constructivist research on ethnicity, race and nationhood, which has stalled in recent years as it has grown complacent with success.¹⁶ 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 macro-level outcomes with micro-level processes.

NOTES

1. Foundational discussions include Cooley 1962 [1909], chapter 3 and Homans 1950 in sociology; Nadel 1957, chapter 7 in anthropology; Bentley 1908, chapter 7 and Truman 1951 in political science. More recent discussions include Olson 1965, Tilly 1978 and Hechter 1987.
2. In this very general sense, groupism extends well beyond the domain of ethnicity, race and nationalism to include accounts of putative groups based on gender, sexuality, age, class, abledness, religion, minority status, and any kind of “culture”, as well as putative groups based on

combinations of these categorical attributes. Yet while recognizing that it is a wider tendency in social analysis, I limit my discussion here to groupism in the study of ethnicity, race and nationalism.

3. For useful 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 common-sense understandings of the social world, to the extent that such categories are used as a resource for participants, and are demonstrably deployed or oriented to by participants in interaction, 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, common-sense 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' (2000: 27). The same might well be said of common sense 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: 248–251).
6. For accounts (not focused specifically on ethnicity) that treat groupness as variable, see Tilly 1978: 62ff; Hechter 1987: 8; 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.
7. 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. But Barth does not distinguish sharply or consistently between categories and groups and his central metaphor of "boundary" carries with it connotations of boundedness, entitativity and groupness.
8. 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".
9. 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 (2000: 30–31): "And 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 common-sense 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 1995; I, 40–48, 333–340, 396–403, 578–596; II, 184–187.
10. 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). 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' discussion of the "inference-rich" categories in terms of which much everyday social knowledge is stored (1995: I, 40ff *et passim*; cf. Schegloff 2000: 29ff) and of the way in which the knowledge thus organized is "protected against induction" (*ibid.*, 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.

11. One should remember, though, that organizations often compete with one another for the monopolization of the right to represent the same (putative) group.
12. 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.
13. These paragraphs draw on Brubaker and Laitin 1998.
14. These paragraphs draw on Brubaker *et al.* 2001.
15. As Emanuel Schegloff reminded me in a different context, this formulation is potentially misleading, since perspectives *on* the world—as every Sociology I student is taught—are themselves *in* the world and every bit as "real" and consequential as other sorts of things.
16. 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.

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