

# The Ethnic Dimensions in Social Movements

Pamela Oliver

University of Wisconsin – Madison

[Pamela.oliver@wisc.edu](mailto:Pamela.oliver@wisc.edu)

[orcid.org/0000-0001-7643-1008](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7643-1008)

## Abstract

This paper draws on work in the social construction of race and ethnicity to explain why race/ethnic divisions are so often axes of domination and why these divisions are central to social movements. (1) Ethnic/racial groups are constructed in political processes that are tied to state formation and social movements. Many states (including the United States) have an ethnic/racial bias or footprint in their construction. Ethnic/racial groups that are numerical majorities have an advantage in determining state policies and state actions that advantage dominant groups over subordinate groups, create chains of interrelations that amplify differences in power and privilege, and take actions to prohibit or prevent reparations or redress for these past actions. (2) Network isolation and intergenerational transmission interact with structures of domination to reproduce domination over time. “Ethnicity” matters when ethnic boundaries are relatively sharp, consequential, and highly correlated with domination structures and social networks. Strong “ethnic” boundaries tend to divide societies into majorities and minorities. (3) Dominant groups develop and reproduce cultures of domination that include both hostile and benign paternalistic relations with other groups. Subordinate groups develop and reproduce cultures that intermingle opposition and submission. Collective identities are both imposed from without by the actions of others and asserted from within. Identities and cultural practices are developed collectively within social networks and influenced by the actions and speech of political actors, including social movements. (4) Regardless of whether their goals are group-oriented or issue-oriented, all movements in an ethnically-divided or ethnically-hierarchical society have an “ethnic” dimension in the sense that they draw from or map onto one or more ethnic groups. Movements arising from privileged “ethnic” majorities have different dynamics from movements by disadvantaged “ethnic” minorities or mixed-ethnic movements.

Processes of group formation derived from theories of the social construction of ethnicity illuminate other movement-relevant group formation processes, including class formation and political subcultures. Lying at the intersection of the sociology of social movements and the sociology of race and ethnicity, the “ethnic” dimensions are revealed as a lens for understanding the general problems of group and identity formation and collective mobilization that lie at the heart of both areas.

# The Ethnic Dimensions in Social Movements

## Introduction and Preliminaries

This paper uses theory from the social construction of race/ethnicity to argue that race/ethnicity is a central aspect of all social movements<sup>1</sup> and that movement processes differ based on their racial/ethnic character. It builds on Morris and Braine's (2001) arguments that structures of domination matter and that there are differences between movements by entrenched subordinate groups whose identities are externally imposed and movements by relatively privileged people pursuing "social responsibility" issues. Morris and Braine (2001) criticize cultural studies of social movements for ignoring issues of power and domination and assuming that "all movements confront basically similar tasks and operate out the same internal logic" (p.20). Drawing on Morris's earlier work (1992), Morris and Braine define a system of human domination as "that constellation of institutions, values, ideas and practices which successfully enables one group to achieve and maintain power and privilege through the control and exploitation of another group" (p. 25) and stress that cultural and material domination are intertwined.

I depart from and extend their arguments by developing a framework for explaining how race/ethnicity maps onto society differently from gender as an axis of domination and why this affects social movements. I also take seriously the task of understanding movements by dominant groups, including hostile anti-minority movements as well "social responsibility" and "ally" movements.

My empirical motivations for this analysis are several. First, I have been working on the issue of racial disparities in criminal justice for many years. When I started working with these ideas in 2000, that movement was struggling with repression and resource deficits, and most of the action was being carried by professional reformers and allies and much of my theorizing was about why this movement was so weak. We are now seeing the consolidation and rise of a new radical Black Lives Matter movement that centers on criminal justice issues. Second, I wanted some tools for talking about why White working class movements often take on a racist or xenophobic tone. The current election makes this question even more salient than it was when I started. This paper does not seriously address either of these issues in depth, but its agenda is to provide a framework for addressing these issues.

Scholars of the social construction of race have shown how political processes and social movements create ethnic groups and identities and have described the many different ways in which these groups and identities might relate to each other and the state. These processes of group formation and identity construction happen in all social movements, and other types of groups might be created in some of the same processes. At the same time, the ethnic character of a movement is always important in ways that "mainstream" studies of social movements have often neglected. In particular, White movements in the US have often been theorized in ways that are blind to their Whiteness, while the importance of the minority-ness of movements peopled by minorities is often neglected.

The paper has three loosely coupled parts. The first part explains why race/ethnicity is central to structures of domination and social movements: the construction and maintenance of racial/ethnic groups is intertwined with the formation and maintenance of states and nations, and social movements both draw on and create these constructed racial/ethnic identities. It emphasizes the importance of

numerical majorities and group size as well as material resources in maintaining domination. The second section draws on ideas from the social construction of race as well as ideas about networks and universes of discourse to identify when and how ethnicity is an important axis of cleavage in society. It emphasizes the interrelation between structures of domination, networks, and families and reproduction. It provides tools for understanding why different axes of domination map differently onto society and social movements and, in the process, explicates why ethnic/racial divisions can persist as structures of domination. The third section develops an “ethnic” typology for social movements that distinguishes between majority and minority movements and discusses the important ways in which they differ.

## Ethnicity (and Race) as Both Socially Constructed and A Central Axis of Domination

This paper assumes a social constructionist view of ethnicity, race and nationality (Brubaker 2002, Brubaker 2009, Brubaker 2012, Brubaker 2013, Omi and Winant 1986, Omi and Winant 2014, Saperstein, Penner and Light 2013, Winant 2000) which, in turn, is tied to a broader literature on the social construction of groups and group boundaries (Bernstein 2005, Lamont and Molnár 2002). Consistent with most work in the field (Brubaker 2009, Wimmer 2008, Wimmer 2013a, Wimmer 2013b), I use “ethnicity” as a general tag for a class of relationships that also encompasses race and nationality and other distinctions such as religion or caste or tribe or language group that may have similar properties (Brubaker 2012, Brubaker 2013). I agree with the argument that “race” has a historical meaning that always encompasses domination and hierarchy, while “ethnicity” may not be hierarchical, (Bonilla-Silva 1997, Bonilla-Silva 1999a, Bonilla-Silva 1999b, Omi and Winant 1986, Omi and Winant 2014, Winant 2000), but I prefer to treat domination and hierarchy theoretically as a variable dimension to ethnicity rather than a qualitative difference. Empirically, in the US, “race” is the “ethnic dimension” that matters, and structures the society.

Race/ethnicity in the United States and in many other countries is a structure of domination and a basis for social closure. Racial/ethnic groups are socially constructed, but this does not mean that they are ephemeral or optional or superficial. Money and education and marriage are also social constructions that have very real consequences. Morris and Braine acknowledge feminist and gay-lesbian-queer theorists for seeing that cultural and structural factors are connected and “social constructions themselves are products of power relations and historical forces, not neutral negotiations among individual or collective actors of equal social resources and standing” (p. 25). Although Morris and Braine do not cite them, scholars of the social construction of race/ethnicity stress exactly this point. Most importantly, the result of social construction is group definitions and boundaries that are treated in practice as natural facts about people and have profound consequences for their lives. Citizenship is entirely a social construction that operates at the level of laws and institutions; one’s citizenship has huge and very real material consequences. Ethnic, racial, nationality or religious groups are constructed by laws and institutions as well as by cultural and social practices. In some societies, some group definitions and boundaries are very sharp, legally enshrined, nearly universally accepted, and of very high salience. In some countries, racial, ethnic religious, or other group differences define or limit the rights of citizenship.

I cannot do justice to all the nuances and debates in the literature on the social construction of race and ethnicity, but I need to at least nod to some of the issues. Ethnicities may be just categories or labels or they may be groups with social relations among their members; ethnicities are often “imagined communities” in which people feel a commonality with others they do not actually know. It is further understood that social classification of people into these ethnic categories and the definitions of the

categories themselves are inconsistent, shifting and blurred and that people's beliefs about the origins or histories of groups do not necessarily stand up to objective historical research. Scholarly debates in the field differ in the extent to which they emphasize the active processes of defining differences and creating boundaries and collective identities and the ways these constructions are myths or fictions that over-emphasize the "groupness" of boundary-making (Brubaker 2002, Brubaker 2004, Brubaker 2009, Loveman 1999a) or emphasize the ways these processes create or resist structural and material inequalities and structures of domination (Bonilla-Silva 1997, Bonilla-Silva 1999a, Bonilla-Silva 1999b, Calhoun 2003a, Calhoun 2003b). All scholars agree that this social construction is not merely an individual psychological phenomenon, but a product of social interactions, power relations, and political processes. Like age or education or economic class, ethnicity may sometimes function as relatively continuous variation (e.g. skin color as a marker of race) or fuzzy sets rather than discrete categories. Just as income or education hierarchies are linked to power and privilege despite their continuous variation, continuity and fuzzy boundaries in ethnicity can still be linked to systems of domination. Work in the social construction of race and ethnicity addresses the myriad ways in which ethnicities can be more or less sharply defined, more or less salient for group action and collective identity, more or less tied to other systems of inequality. This paper is less focused on these processes of construction and boundary-formation and more focused on how the ethnicities they create shape social movements.

Scholars of ethnicity and nation often stress that the ethnic or racial group as it is understood today is a modern higher-level social group construction that is a product of nation-formation and that smaller units such as villages or clans or tribes were historically the more important basis of group identity and action (Olzak 2004). I do not engage that empirical debate but instead point to it as an example of social construction. Similarly, I do not engage (although I am influenced by) the rich scholarship on the social construction of race in the Americas (Loveman 1999b, Loveman and Muniz 2007, Loveman, Muniz and Bailey 2012, Telles and Sue 2009), nor do I engage the debates about whether the visibility of race makes it a different kind of group distinction than ethnicity or religion, which can be more easily changed by acculturation or conversion. That is, I am not trying to reify the ethnic group as a particular type of object, but rather am using the term ethnicity in a very abstract way to point to the processes whereby the boundaries between "people like us" and "people not like us" get created. In this abstract conception, nationalities are also social constructions and are ethnic. Importantly, I am stipulating that the markers of group boundaries and group difference that seem "obvious" and "visible" to members of a particular society are themselves products of social construction. Their visibility is itself a product of structures of society (themselves products of history) that constrain socialization and social interaction, not an immutable biological fact.

## States and Ethnicities

Ethnicity or race is typically a central axis of domination because ethnic or racial differences are intertwined with the formation of nations and states. Figure 1 illustrates these relations. States take control of territory and the people in the territory and, in the act of asserting control and creating governance structures, define the relation between the state and the people in the territory. State formation frequently involves either the imposition of rule by one group over another group or the melding of initially-distinct groups into one nation (Olzak 2004). A large body of comparative historical research has established the centrality of ethnicity in state formation. States and ethnicities create each other. Ethnicity is generally implicated in the process of state formation and the definition of nation and citizenship; states distribute resources and repression along ethnic lines, foster ethnic mobilization and define ethnic groups (Alonso 1994, Barkey and Parikh 1991, Enloe 1981, Enloe 1978, Loveman 1999b). The colonial and post-colonial states throughout the Americas as well as other settler states including South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand were constructed around European/White supremacy and

continue to show these legacies in racial hierarchies, although in different ways in different countries (Bonilla-Silva 1999a, Marx 1995, Marx 1996). Elsewhere, nation-states were constructed in many different ways around ethnic boundaries in the wake of the dissolution of empires and subsequent migration even as ethnic groups were created, redefined, and activated in many different ways in the process (Brubaker 1995, Brubaker 1998, Wimmer 2008, Wimmer 2013a, Wimmer 2013b).

These historical political processes have varied between places, creating variations in the ethnic character of states. The existence of ethnic majorities and minorities is never accidental, but is always consequence of a particular society's history and formation. War, conquest, genocide, slavery, and legal exclusions are implicated in the creation of group differences, while political and cultural domination that lead to forced linguistic assimilation and political incorporation create homogeneity out of prior diversity. There are few societies that are truly ethnically homogeneous, but societies vary greatly in the size of the largest ethnic group, the number and sizes of ethnic minorities, the degree of cultural difference among ethnic groups, and the extent to which there are substantial differences among ethnic groups in economic and political power.

"Ethnic conflict" research is focused on identifying the factors that predict when protest or violence will occur along ethnic lines (Brubaker and Laitin 1998, Hechter and Okamoto 2001, Olzak 1985, Olzak 2004, Williams 1994). This research generally finds that overt conflict is more likely to occur along ethnic lines when ethnic differences coincide with differences in economic class or political power. (Siroky and Hechter 2016) examine 100 countries and find conflicts are organized along ethnic lines when there is more economic difference between groups than within, and along class lines when there is more economic difference within groups than between them. (Hechter and Okamoto 2001) stress that nationalist movements require distinctive social identities, overcoming free riding, and the development of institutional structures promoting autonomy.

In her comprehensive review of the literature on ethnic and nationalist social movements, (Olzak 2004) argues that most of the literature has been organized by region or outcome and has focused on movements that make claims for territorial sovereignty. She defines four types of movements: (1) regional, demanding sovereignty over territory; (2) civil rights, demand expansion of rights or end discrimination; (3) antagonist movements against specific targets; (4) state-strengthening nationalism seeking to unify and stresses that "The same ethnic movement can be described as genocide or a liberation movement, depending on the actors defining the situation." The focus of this literature is on movements that define themselves as ethnic-racial-nationalist, the conditions under which this becomes the axis of movement mobilization, and whether violence occurs. Many different theoretical perspectives are developed to apply to different specific questions.

Ethnic competition theory emphasizes structural conditions that put groups (existence and salience are already given) into conflict over scarce resources. Research also tends to find that political leadership, public discourse and social movements play significant roles in activating ethnic distinctions and discursively creating group differences and group boundaries.

Ethnicity is often a structure of domination, a basis for social closure, for keeping valued resources in the hands of some people and away from other people. As Olzak argues (Olzak 2004), states always show the imprint of their origins in their ethnic constellation, and these origins frequently involve a state that is the instrument of or biased toward one ethnic group over others. Race is always a structure of domination because race was socially constructed in the context of colonialism and imperialism in which people from one continent (Europe) conquered, enslaved and imposed rule on those from other continents (Americas, Africa, Southern Asia).

The specific history of the United States involved the creation of a White nation on the American continent as it battled indigenous people for control of territory; enslaved Africans and denied even free Africans full citizenship; subordinated Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders in imperialist expansion; welcomed and assimilated European immigrants; and largely excluded or subordinated immigrants from regions other than Europe. Europeans/Whites became and remained a majority through overt policies of immigration and genocide. Overt hierarchies and structures of domination by race were embodied in government agencies and practices well into the 1960s, and the interests of the White majority were naturalized as “national interests” and “state interests.” Even in the post-Civil Rights Era, in a very real sense, the government of the United States remains a White state under the control of the White majority, as do 49 of the 50 states within the US<sup>2</sup>. Minority groups have never been passive victims of the White state; they have mobilized to pressure for change and used the parts of the state that govern them or taken advantage of splits among Whites to seek allies for their interests, and have achieved victories and gained some power, but they do not have final control over a single aspect of the national state and remain dependent upon White action. The White majority still has the power to reverse prior victories and re-impose White domination on minorities if Whites agreed to do it.

The “tyranny of the majority” as the dark side of democracy is especially evident in inter-ethnic relations. Democratic majorities have often voted to kill, displace, enslave, disenfranchise, or disadvantage ethnic or racial minorities. The state institutions created by the majority typically operate under assumptions and practices that automatically and invisibly privilege the majority, even when there is no overt discrimination. White groups have persuaded White-dominated courts and legislatures to reverse some of the gains of the Civil Rights Movement. Laws against racial discrimination are interpreted as requiring that the effects of past discrimination must be allowed to stand. Employers, housing providers and lenders are legally prohibited from discriminating but are routinely found in controlled tests to be doing so anyway. Police forces, even those staffed by minorities, are tasked with maintaining segregation and the structures that reinforce White dominance. National discourses about American traditions of freedom and liberty simply erase the historical experiences of indigenous, Black, Latino, and Asian people. Education is conducted in English and schools are largely controlled and funded by Whites and largely teach a curriculum that validates White supremacy. Even accommodating languages other than English is often met with hostility and majorities have voted to require that official documents and proceedings be in the majority language. Mass media portray images that replicate and reinforce social hierarchies. The interests and viewpoint of the White majority are everywhere naturalized as the “general” or “national” interest while the interests of racial/ethnic minorities are defined as “special” or particular interests.

Social control agencies reinforce hierarchies. Muller (2012) shows that Black incarceration rose as foreign Whites moved into Northern police departments between 1880 and 1940 and cites historical evidence to support the claim that foreign Whites, especially Irish, intentionally used their control of policing to repress Blacks and advance themselves into the privileges of Whiteness. Olzak and Shanahan (2014) use incarceration for misdemeanors (minor crimes) as an indicator of repressive policing and ethnic boundary-maintenance, finding that African American incarceration rose where there was more competition between Blacks and Whites for jobs (i.e. less occupational segregation by race), with Black poverty and illiteracy rates having no effect. For foreign born Whites, incarceration rates for minor crimes was higher where immigrants had higher rates of poverty and illiteracy. Cities with histories of racial violence also incarcerated people more. There is evidence of ongoing ethnic conflict. Green, Strolovitch and Wong (1998) report that White crimes against Asians, Latinos, and Blacks are most frequent in predominantly white areas that had experienced an in-migration of minorities, a finding they interpret as consistent with ethnographic accounts of “defended” white urban neighborhoods.

A number of scholars explicitly criticize the assumption that regime types can be classified without regard to their treatment of different ethnic groups. Using Palestinian citizens of Israel as an example, Sa'di (2015) emphasizes that in many countries citizenship rights are unevenly distributed. This means that different subgroups may be guided by different logics. He criticizes social movement theory for focusing narrowly on instrumental rationality and a focus on the possible, returning to Weber's claims that there are four types of rational social action (affectual, traditional, value-rational, means-end) and argues that under repressive conditions people may rationally resist overwhelming repression as a moral claim.

Bracey (2015) treats the US state as biased toward Whites. He compares Omi and Winant's concept of the racial state where the state is sometimes seen as an autonomous agent in which white interests are naturalized as state interests, and sometimes as a pluralist arena for competing groups, with Critical Race Theory of the State, which treats the state as an instrument of Whites. In the latter (CRT) view, Whites may sometimes yield certain benefits to minorities as part of inter-white struggles, but the state is inherently White. Bracey argues that the CRT view provides better analytical purchase. These ideas inform his critique (Bracey 2016) of Political Process theory for failing to incorporate critical race theory into its model of the Black movement. As a result, Bracey says that PPT adopts an assimilationist conception of race, where the only goal is inclusion into White realms, assumes that passing legislation constitutes victory and real power for Blacks, treats Black radicalism and Black riots as a "decline in insurgency," and ignores the ways in which the White state responded allow Black gains to be reversed in response to White political mobilization.

## Dimensions of ethnic domination

Ethnic groups vary greatly across a variety of dimensions of dominance. The first is the relation between the ethnic group and the definition of nation. Do the boundaries of nation encompass the group? In the United States, the "nation of immigrants" is the White nation. Native people, descendants of slaves, and residents or descendants of places conquered by the United States are erased from the national self-definition. In France, the nation is French people; in Germany Germans, in Sweden Swedes. Other countries construct the definition of nation as encompassing multiple ethnicities. This "cultural" factor is also inscribed in institutions and practices that have material consequences.

A second dimension is sheer size. Larger groups always have more potential power than smaller groups, and numbers count in a democracy. Groups that form an electoral majority are able to dictate to the rest of the society. Larger minorities have more sway than smaller minorities and may be in a position to build coalitions to gain some power. It is especially important to attend to majorities as ethnic groups that have size and power. Social movements scholars have often ignored this dimension. Ethnic majority movements are the single largest category of movement types and too much movement scholarship has been blind to the ethnic-ness of ethnic-majority movements.

A third dimension of domination is material wealth including control of land and the means of production. Groups that have economic power can use it to gain more economic power and to leverage political power.

A fourth dimension is control over coercive forces. In the extreme, military dictatorships may take and maintain control over a large unwilling majority, sometimes as a coercive state "for itself," and sometimes as a coercive state on behalf of an ethnic minority. In weak states, extra-state criminal or rebellious groups may compete for coercive control. In strong states, coercion is strongly in the hands of the state and operates to benefit those who control the state. The role of internal coercive police forces in maintaining White racial domination is one of the major issues in the current Black Lives Matter movement.



Group size, group material wealth and resources, and group political power tend to reinforce each other and create a racial or ethnic structure of domination that advantages the majority and disadvantages minorities. In some countries, where these differences are not extreme, the term “structure of advantage” may be more appropriate than “structure of domination.” But in the US, race unambiguously forms a structure of domination that is different for each minority group.

## Cultural Domination

Morris and Braine argue that entrenched subordinate groups develop cultures that intertwine themes of acceptance and resignation (cultures of subordination) with themes of resistance and critique (cultures of opposition). All entrenched subordinate groups have cultures of opposition, but bringing these to a fully blown oppositional consciousness to motivate collective action requires overcoming the culture of subordination. Dominant majority groups also have cultures. Dominant majority cultures tend to reinforce the habits of domination and privilege in which they expect others to submit, expect to be able to achieve their desires without opposition, and expect their identities to be positively affirmed. They begin with assumptions of efficacy and entitlement. Some members of dominant groups are well aware of their dominant position and are actively motivated to defend it against challengers. Other members of dominant groups may be blind to their position and accept privilege unthinkingly.

Structures of domination also take cultural form. Symbolic dominance includes rituals of submission (e.g. bowing, stepping aside, averting eyes) and other practices that reinforce social definitions of groups as superior or inferior. Practices of cultural or symbolic domination often reinforce material domination. These often include restrictions on daily life such as physical separation or ghettoization, exclusion from some occupations or activities or places or surveillance requirements as well as enforced ignorance through bans on literacy and restrictions on education. Subordinate groups are often required to speak, dress and act differently, to mark themselves as different from dominants. Cultural practices like these reinforce group boundaries, difference, and hierarchy. Morris and Braine argue that subordinated groups tend to have cultures that mix elements of domination and submission, even as they tend to have a strong sense of group consciousness and awareness of their subordination. Oppressed groups have to overcome cultures of submission to turn oppositional culture into oppositional consciousness, and this is why the cultural processes are different for subordinate groups.

In some cases, cultural domination takes the form of erasing or blurring group differences, instead of magnifying them. Language, cultural or religious minorities may be required to adopt the language, religion or cultural practices of the dominants. In some cases, this is part of a liberal or integrative strategy by dominants, intended to reduce people’s material subordination in exchange for their disappearance as a distinct group, as when immigrants are offered full citizenship in exchange for cultural assimilation. In other cases, language or religious suppression is associated with military conquest and coercive control of one territory or group by another and is meant to reduce the capacity of subordinates to resist domination. Historical examples include forced conversions, boarding schools for indigenous children in the United States, Canada and Australia, the Japanese occupation of Korea, and the suppression of Catalan and Basque under Franco in Spain. In these cases, group boundaries remain despite cultural assimilation.

## Dimensions of Ethnicity and Group Formation

Any categorization involves recognition of differences and boundaries. The “ethnic” categorizations have the additional feature that by definition they are both intergenerational and ascribed: you are generally born into an ethnicity which you inherit from your parents and are acculturated into through childhood socialization. Socialization matters because differential socialization of children can replicate



group difference into the next generation and reinforce group boundaries. Further, families and kinship networks are typically mono-ethnic and whole communities can be mono-ethnic.<sup>3</sup> This is important both for creating real social ties that can make a group out of a category, and for creating high levels of common fate. This can be contrasted with gender, which is also ascribed at birth, but families and communities are inherently mixed-gender. Ethnicity may also be contrasted with groups one voluntarily joins as an adult.<sup>4</sup>

Ascription is closely related to but different from intergenerational inheritance. Morris and Braine argue that it is important to distinguish groups you choose from those forced upon you by the larger society. This is an important distinction, but one that requires refinement and analysis. At one extreme are biologically-determined traits such as sex or genetic heritage or physical impairment; at the other are groups organized around freely chosen avocations or opinions. But there is a continuum between these extremes. Race is understood to be an ascribed physical trait tied to genetic heritage, but many people are of racially ambiguous physical appearance and make choices about whether and how to display their racial categorization (Khanna 2004, Khanna 2010, Sims 2012, Sims 2013). Ethnic classification is treated as ascribed for some groups in some societies and as voluntary for other groups in other societies. While language is cultural and not biologically determined, mother tongue and regional dialect or accent are deeply imprinted in childhood, effectively ascribed, and frequently mark one as “other” and subject to discrimination. Although some linguistically talented individuals can speak a foreign language or dialect acquired as an adult well enough to pass as a native, most adults are unable to do so and are identifiable when they speak. One’s accent has been used throughout history to identify outsiders and ferret out spies. Religion similarly is cultural, not biological, but has been socially constructed as a freely-chosen belief system in some times and places and as an ascribed race- or ethnicity-like category that is inherited regardless of one’s personal opinions in other societies. Parents’ social class is clearly ascribed, in the sense that it and all the other characteristics of one’s parents influence a child’s social position. But in some societies, parents’ class is seen as an inherited trait that marks a person regardless of individual achievement while in other societies, parents’ class affects adult class only through mediating opportunities for achievement. And, of course, there are ongoing debates about the extent to which sexual orientation and sexual identity are voluntarily chosen or ascribed and immutable. In short, ascription itself is socially constructed.

A key feature of the social construction of ethnicity is the dialectic of ascription and achievement, the ongoing interaction between externally-imposed boundaries and internally-asserted identities. Figure 2 captures this dialog. States, social movements, other political actors, and people in society classify groups and make claims about them, identifying differences and defining boundaries between groups. Externally, groups are differentiated from one another and boundaries are defined through the mutually-reinforcing dimensions of structures of domination, network segregation and maintenance of group difference across generations. (More about these dimensions below.) These external forces can operate whether you believe in them or not. Internally, group membership is reinforced through collective identities, a consciousness of difference, and group organization. The internal processes lead people to identify with the group, see their group membership as a salient individual characteristic and have some willingness and ability to act in concert with other group members. Both the internal and the external aspects of “ethnic” group construction vary greatly among groups and in their impact on social movements.

If groups are endogamous (marrying within the group), they tend to persist over time and, conversely, endogamy is a precondition for maintaining sharp group boundaries over time. Social scientists have long recognized the importance of marriage patterns as markers of class closure (e.g. Van Leeuwen, Maas and Miles 2005). To the extent that economic classes or educational groups or members of a

particular religion or linguistic group practice endogamy, they are more like ethnic groups in that they will tend to persist over generations.

## Relations, Networks and Social Cleavage

Social networks are the key link between ethnicity as a mere category and ethnicity as a social group and collective identity. In addition to interests tied to the individual characteristics of people, there are interests that derive from the relations people have to each other. There are spatial interests: regardless of their individual characteristics, people who live near each other share common consequences from environmental pollutants, crime, local services, weather and other factors that affect places.<sup>5</sup> There are also interests derived from indirect or network effects. These network interests are often ignored in social policy and social movement theory, but are central to my argument.

This argument is represented heuristically in Figures 3 and 4. Figure 4 schematically portrays two societies, one in which the ethnic groups (represented by dark and light figures) are intermixed and another in which they are physically (and by implication socially) segregated. In figure 4, the explosion represents a policy that disproportionately impacts the light stick figures; the ring around the explosion represents the side effects of being in social or spatial contact with someone directly affected by the policy. When the light and dark figures are segregated, all the direct and indirect effects of the policy are concentrated on the light figures. When the groups are integrated, the indirect effects of the policy impact most of the dark figures as well as the light figures, even though the direct effects of the policy are still concentrated on the light figures.

These indirect effects through social networks are material, emotional and cognitive. The “social capital” concept recognizes that individuals are affected by the wealth or poverty and knowledge of the people they are socially connected to, not just their own. The concept of economic multipliers recognizes that people benefit from having other people spend money in their community. But these relational or network effects are not just material. Individuals respond emotionally to crimes committed against people they know, to the grief of people they know, to the hardships of people they know. And their perceptions of reality and the circumstances of “typical” people are similarly shaped by the people they know. In addition, people react emotionally to events that affect people they perceive as similar, especially when media portrayals activate those identities. For example, Harris-Perry (2011) reports that Black people reported more distress about Hurricane Katrina than Whites, while Whites reported more distress about 9/11. These emotional and cognitive effects affect the group identities and perceptions of grievance that are central to much social movement theory, alongside the enduring importance of material interests. The clear bottom line is that for predicting how a person views a given social issue, it is not enough to know that individual’s personal characteristics but also essential to know the characteristics of the people that person is linked to spatially or socially.

The existence and maintenance of distinct cultures depends upon networks of social relations, specifically a higher density of social ties within subcultural groups than between them. In Figure 3 the extent of social segregation is represented heuristically as separation in space between the dark and light stick figures. The figure elides the important difference between cases in which groups are spatially segregated from those in which they are spatially integrated but have few social ties, or spatially dispersed by have strong social ties. Both spatial and social integration are themselves multi-dimensional. People may reside in spatially segregated neighborhoods but be integrated at work, in school, or in public spaces. Similarly, the social ties of coworker or fellow student or neighborhood acquaintance may be relatively superficial compared to the deeper ties of coreligionist or fellow immigrants from the same place in a larger hostile society.

Network relationships and cultural differences among groups are, of course, a structural property of the society as a whole. Thus the network dimension is both a property of the whole society and a property of any group within the society. The central question for the ethnic dimension of social movements is how segmented or cliqued the networks are. Groups that are socially and spatially isolated are both more likely to have non-overlapping and cleaved interests rather than cross-cutting interests and also more likely to develop the distinctive cultural practices that separate groups and, concomitantly, create sharper boundaries between them.

Network structures that are cliqued along network lines tend to reinforce ethnic differences and ethnic boundaries. Groups that are spatially and socially isolated are more likely to develop distinctive cultures that are ethnically distinct, as well as to nurture cultures of opposition and subordination. Isolated groups and culturally distinct groups are less likely to intermarry outside the group and thus to persist across generations. Groups that are endogamous across generations tend to become more physically and culturally distinct.

A great deal of social movement theory has focused on the structure of networks within a movement carrier including the extent to which they are dense enough to support mobilization or on the subgroups within a movement. In this paper I am focusing more on the extent to which there are network ties between the movement carrier and the rest of the society more generally and the dominant groups in society more specifically.

### Social Networks and Cross-Cutting and Reinforcing Cleavages

A longstanding concern in political sociology has been the extent to which social cleavages in society are overlapping or concentric versus cross-cutting or intersecting. Social policies affect people differently, depending on their social location. People have class interests around economic policies like tax systems, labor regulations, wages and welfare programs that are tied to their economic and occupational positions. They have linguistic interests tied to the dominance of their mother tongue and the ability to communicate easily with those around them. They have cultural interests tied to the ready accommodation to their preferred lifeways and ritual calendars. They have status or prestige interests about the social honor or respect accorded tied to the various social groups they are members of. Ethnic divisions matter more if they coincide with other divisions and hierarchies, especially class. Siroky and Hechter (2016) compared 100 countries and found that conflicts were organized along ethnic lines when there was more economic difference between groups than within, and along class lines when there was more economic difference within groups than between them.

We can avoid debates about hierarchies of oppression and still recognize that not all axes of dominance and subordination are the same. One important way in which they differ is in their network structure. Gender is an axis of domination but not of network cleavage: all communities and families have people of both sexes and all sexual preferences and gender identities. All communities also have people of all ages and people who are disabled. By contrast, in the United States, race historically was a clear social cleavage, especially along the White/Black axis, and to a large extent still is. That is, some families and communities and social networks are essentially all White and others are essentially all Black; American Indians on reservations and many Latinos are also in largely ethnically homogeneous networks, and Asians were also segregated or excluded historically. In Northern Ireland, the Protestant/Catholic divide was a social cleavage; religion is similarly a social cleavage in Israel/Palestine. In much of Europe today there is a social cleavage between a national majority (e.g. French, German, Dutch) and some immigrants (e.g. Muslims or Blacks) who are seen by the majority as unassimilable challenges to the character of the society.

Distinguishing the network structure from the dominance structure of group boundaries gives us new tools for understanding economic classes. The question is whether there are network ties across class lines and how these network ties relate to the networks structured by race/ethnicity. In the United States, there is both class heterogeneity within all nearly all racial/ethnic groups and substantial differences between racial/ethnic groups in the central tendency and dispersion of these distributions. Recent research suggests that the spatial residential segregation of economic groups within racial groups may be as high as or higher than the spatial residential segregation of racial groups within economic groups. What is less clear is how deeply these patterns of residential segregation map social segregation. For example, middle class Blacks are much more likely than middle class Whites to have poor relatives who made economic and personal demands and them and, conversely, poor Whites are more likely to have non-poor relatives who can offer them assistance (Pattillo 2013). A substantial body of research examines the “social capital,” i.e. resources available through network ties, of people of different classes and races.

Social scientists have long attended to the importance of reinforcing versus cross-cutting cleavages. The importance of the extent to which different dimensions cross-cut or reinforce each other is well recognized as a central feature of comparative ethnic-racial relations and is well-recognized in modern political science theories of public opinion. Some social movements work is recognizing this. Most visible [to me, anyway] is recent work on White racist movements and politics, which are shown to be fostered in certain social contexts. KKK groups in particular have been the subject of a flurry of recent research that identifies their political and network contexts and consequences (e.g. Cunningham and Phillips 2007, Cunningham 2012, McVeigh 1999, McVeigh 2001, McVeigh and Cunningham 2012) Consistent with this paper’s emphasis on the network dimensions of movement carriers, McVeigh (2004) emphasizes White social isolation that creates a structured ignorance makes white supremacist worldviews logical and meaningful. Adams and Roscigno (2005) examine the online discourse of white supremacist organizations, finding that nationalism, religion and definitions of responsible citizenship are interwoven with more specific racial claims. Okamoto (2003) finds that the pan-Asian collective action in the US is facilitated by segregation which in turn promotes intragroup interaction, common economic interests, and common fate.

These findings about social isolation conflict somewhat with competition theory that emphasizes that violence arises primarily when social barriers and social closure break down and minorities are more in contact with and challenging majorities for resources (Olzak and Nagel 1986, Olzak 1992, Olzak, Shanahan and West 1994, Olzak, Shanahan and McEneaney 1996, Olzak and Shanahan 2003, Olzak and Shanahan 2014, Shanahan and Olzak 1999). There is substantial evidence that the advances of previously subordinated people are often met with resistance and counter-attack.

### Intergenerationality, Networks, Domination

Figure 5 emphasizes the ways in which social networks, domination and intergenerationality reinforce each other in ethnic group formation. Inter-marriage between ethnic groups is both an indicator and cause of reduced of social distance between them. People tend to marry people with whom they have contact on a relatively equal basis. Groups that at time 1 are distinct groups will blend and mix over time if they intermarry and produce children of mixed origins.<sup>6</sup> If groups are endogamous (marrying within the group), they tend to persist over time and, conversely, endogamy is a precondition for maintaining sharp group boundaries over time.

Social networks obviously impact marriage patterns and, thus, intergenerationality. Structures of domination that create social distance and segregation reinforce network cleavage and intergenerational persistence of group difference. Groups that are intergenerational and relatively

segregated tend to develop separate cultural practices and identities that reinforce group differences and tend to maintain social distance and reduce intermarriage that reinforce group boundaries. Structures of domination can affect network ties. Day-to-day restrictions on life, rules of segregation and exclusion, differential access to resources, enforced ignorance and rituals of symbolic or cultural dominance can all contribute to physical or social separation between people in different groups. Populations experiencing enforced segregation do tend to develop distinct subcultures and to have few ties to the larger society. Rituals of domination that prohibit inferiors from speaking to or contradicting superiors can create social boundaries that block communication and create different worlds of experience. Alternately, assimilationist cultural dominance can destroy a group's separate identity if it is accompanied by integrationist policies that lead to genuine social mixing.

Intentional political actions also affect networks and identities. Social movements (broadly construed) play important roles in the construction of race/ethnicity. Communal riots and violence harden group boundaries. Politicians target or stigmatize "others" to get votes. People who face oppression come to define themselves as being in the same group. Activists try to forge definitions and boundaries. Shifting racial ethnic identities that are not only where the boundaries are, but what the content of group membership implies.

## How axes of domination vary

"Are you surprised the culture around gay marriage has changed so quickly?" "I am. In 2004, when all those anti-gay marriage amendments passed and George Bush got reelected, I thought this will never happen in my lifetime. But we kept fighting. The secret weapon is, we're randomly distributed throughout the population and in all families. If you don't have a gay, lesbian, bi, trans in your immediate family, there's probably one in your extended family. Definitely your extended family. That is our secret weapon, and that humanizes us. If African Americans were randomly distributed throughout the population and in every family, George Zimmerman would be in jail and so would that cop in Ferguson." From an interview with Dan Savage (Davidoff 2014).

One of the points of departure for this paper is explaining why gender (including gender identity and sexual orientation) is different from ethnicity as a structure of domination. Gender mostly varies within families and communities, while ethnicity mostly varies between families and communities. If ethnicity defines groups that lack few network ties and are spatially and socially segregated, people in different ethnic groups have little common fate. By contrast, people of different genders and gender orientations who are in the same families and communities typically share a great deal of common fate, even if they are personally oppressed within these groups. This can, of course, be lessened to the extent that people leave their families and settle in other places, but it remains difficult for single-gender groups to reproduce themselves across generations.

Although Morris and Braine (2001) do not elaborate on the differences among different axes of domination, they do discuss the importance of physical and social segregation for the formation of oppositional consciousness from oppositional culture. They contrast segregated racial minority and working class communities with the typical integration of women and men in creating the conditions for consciousness and note that women's consciousness developed when they created separate political spaces. They also draw on another paper in the same edited volume that contrasts the integration of the blind and the segregation of the deaf in influencing the structure of these two movements. More generally, we may say that "community" based movements are more likely for axes of domination that are stronger between families than within and that movements based in voluntary associations or workplaces are more likely for axes of domination that vary more within families than between them.

The processes of collective identity formation, of defining difference and boundaries, apply to all groups, not just ethnicities. Recognizing the interrelations among structures of domination, network structures, and intergenerational continuity provides tools for understanding other axes of domination and cleavage, particularly class. Class and ethnicity are often intertwined, as subordinate ethnicities typically occupy lower class positions and employers have historically intentionally exploited ethnic differences and fanned ethnic conflict as a strategy of labor control. Additionally, to the extent that people of different economic classes are in separate social networks and exhibit endogamy and intergenerational transmission of class position, class identity, and class subcultures, so that families, kinship networks and even communities may be mono-class, classes may be said to have an “ethnic” character. If groups are endogamous (marrying within the group), they tend to persist over time and, conversely, endogamy is a precondition for maintaining sharp group boundaries over time. Social scientists have long recognized the importance of marriage patterns as markers of class closure (e.g. Van Leeuwen et al. 2005). To the extent that economic classes or educational groups or members of a particular religion or linguistic group practice endogamy, they are more like ethnic groups in that they will tend to persist over generations.

Religion or political orientation may also take on an “ethnic” character if people with particular beliefs have high network connections to each other and low connections to others, especially if people come to marry only like-minded people and socialize their children into intergenerational communities of like-minded people. It is already the case that many localities in the US are politically or religiously quite homogeneous. People are already creating distinct subcultures and universes of discourse which shape their political orientations and worldviews. Social movements are already drawing from these distinct movement carriers defined by politics and religion. There is already rhetoric about “attacks on Christianity” and anti-immigrant or anti-minority rhetoric that is contributing to perceptions of group difference and group boundaries. One view is that this is evidence of a resurgence of White Evangelical Christian as a salient ethnic identity. The recent work on White racist ideology is consistent with this (e.g., McVeigh 2004). There may also be another emergent White Liberal ethnic identity.

Finally, it seems to me that bringing the expanded idea of the “ethnic” into social movements theory provides tools for answering Andrew Walder’s (2009) challenge about explaining the content of movements. Walder reviews and critiques social movement research for narrowing its focus to the problem of mobilization and ignoring the problem of content. As Walder’s review acknowledges, older class-centric or deprivation theories that tried to explain movement content were generally unsatisfactory. One of the paradoxes we know is that people who seem to be in objectively the same material condition often embrace wildly different political and movement ideologies. This is the problem of “unexplained” ideological divergence. In the United States today we can observe that White Americans in roughly the same socio-economic circumstances are embracing divergent ideologies. We also know that non-“interest” factors, particularly religious affiliation and geographic location, are strong predictors of this divergence in opinions.

People of different ideological views are in different networks: they live in different neighborhoods, participate in different secular or religious organizations, and read or watch different information sources. They live in radically different universes of discourse. Movements mostly recruit from populations or movement carriers that support the general world-view of the movement, and concentrate on activating and extending the basic values and opinions of the movement carrier. Further, a common response to encountering people who are talking from a different or unfamiliar universe of discourse tends to produce outrage and polarization, not influence. There is evidence that people form ethnic-like identities that are associated with their political opinions, and that group identity and reactions against outsiders help to fuel support for or affiliation with movements.

This approach does not immediately answer the questions of movement content, but it does point toward a strategy for answering it. It says that we cannot expect to read movement content directly from an individual's personal circumstances, but from the larger network of affiliations in which people are embedded. These larger networks of affiliations affect what ideas they are exposed to and how they react to new ideas. People are making sense of the world they live in, but they do so in a socially-defined context in which some things are taken as unquestionably true or real and polarization develops when they are aware of others who are actively supporting different views.

## Ethnic Networks and Social Movement Carriers

Morris and Braine use the term "movement carrier" rather loosely to refer to the stratum or segment of society from which the activists in a movement are drawn. This is different from the "social movement community" concept as it is usually defined to refer to the loose network of activists a movement draws from (Buechler 1990, Stoecker 1995, Taylor and Whittier 1992). However, there are many common casual usages of the term "the community" that are closer to their idea of a movement carrier, as when people speak of "the Black community" or the "LGBTQQ community." Related concepts are the older resource mobilization concept of "beneficiaries" (the social group who are meant to benefit from a movement), the "constituency" (the group who feels represented or spoken for by the movement), and the "adherents" (the people who agree with a movement). All of these terms are both useful and somewhat problematic for the purposes of this paper. The goal of this paper is to be able to identify segments of society that are or might be the social bases of social movements and analyze their properties. I refer generally to these as "social groups," or "social categories," or "collectivities," stressing that the way in which the people in society define these is precisely part of what is at issue, but have found no better language than "movement carrier" for referring to the segment of society from which a movement draws participants.

There has been significant research mapping the networks of relations among movement organizations and movement activists, but less attention has been paid to understanding the network position in society of the movement carriers, the population from which movement participants are drawn. Just as all people have a gender and all people have a race, all social movements have an ethnicity. That is, all social movements have an ethnic/racial make-up that maps onto the ethnic/racial structure of the society it is in. All social movements are either internally homogeneous or they are internally heterogeneous; it matters either way. All social movements are either dominated by a majority ethnic group, dominated by a minority ethnic group, or are ethnically mixed. It matters regardless of which it is. All movements either have extensive network ties to the broader society, or are insular and isolated. All movement discourses are either relatively central to or relatively peripheral to mainstream discourses. All movement participants either identify with dominant social groups or they do not. It is impossible to do good theorizing about social movements without theorizing their ethnic dimension. Unfortunately, too much theorizing has ignored this dimension and has attempted to draw inferences about social movements in general from one narrow type of movement.

Figure 6 expresses these ideas. In this figure, economic class or advantage is on the vertical axis, and several stylized ethnic groups are on the horizontal axis. In this figure, there is a correlation between class and ethnicity. The dotted lines heuristically sketch different configurations of social movement supporters. These dotted lines represent the social locations of actual participants or supporters, not the theoretical beneficiaries of the movement. Some draw on people of the same class across ethnic group lines, and others on people of the same ethnicity across class lines. Some draw from only one intersectional class/ethnic fraction, some draw from several. In this figure, as in real life, no movement draws from all segments of society.



These spatial graphs imply an empirical and theoretical claim that gender, age, disability and other personal characteristics that vary inside families and communities (rather than between them) are structurally different as a basis of domination. However, the theoretical tools we have developed, specifically the focus on networks, provides predictions about movements around such characteristics. Specifically, we expect that movements around such characteristics will be organized not through families and communities, but through organizations or institutions that provide a basis for network ties. For example, the structural bases for the women's movement of the early 1970s were political organizations and employment, places where women gathered with other women. The structural bases for disability rights movements were organizations of caregivers and schools for the deaf.

Morris and Braine (2001) distinguish three types of movements: liberation movements, whose carriers are historically subordinate and which are aimed at overthrowing systems of domination; equality-based special issue movements that address issues that exclusively or disproportionately affect one group, and have more limited ideologies; and social responsibility movements that challenge conditions affecting the general population. Jasper (2008) distinguishes between "citizenship" movements of groups excluded from full political participation and "post-citizenship" movements of groups who are included in political systems. Neither classification recognizes group-focused movements arising from dominant groups as well as entrenched subordinate groups. I also explicitly recognize, Morris and Braine and Jasper do not, that there are White supremacist and other movements by and for majorities or the powerful that seek to improve their own position by subordinating others. Also, I explicitly "race" the so-called "social responsibility" or "post-citizenship" movements that are empirically grounded in dominant majorities, thereby recognizing the emphasis of Critical Race Theory and other race scholarship on the ways in which majority White and/or middle- or upper-class interests are naturalized as "society's" interests.

I classify movements across two dimensions, first according to their movement carriers, with emphasis on their ethnic and class bases, and then according to whether they are group-focused movements whose central goal is to improve the position of some subgroup of society (e.g. Blacks, Whites, women, sexual minorities, workers, business owners) or issue-focused movements whose central goal is an issue that affects society as a whole (e.g. environment, peace, abortion).

## Majorities and Minorities: An "Ethnic" Typology of Social Movements

Previous sections of this paper have argued that "ethnic" groups are the socially constructed products of political processes. These social construction processes are ongoing and the constructed groups are not static but evolving. However, this section of the paper takes these social construction processes as givens, and considers the importance of majority-ness versus minority-ness in movement dynamics. It fits the United States, which has a dominant White majority and a variety of non-dominant ethnic minorities. It also applies to other countries with dominant ethnic majorities and subordinate minorities. This typology has two dimensions. One is the actual empirical membership of the groups, where we contrast majority movements with minority movements and mixed majority-minority movements, but also consider other axes of domination, particularly class. The second dimension is the nature of the claims of the group, which may be subdivided first into whether the movement is focused on improving the position of some group relative to other groups, or whether it is focused on a specific issue or policy. For both group-focused and issue-focused movements, we may ask about the match between the beneficiaries of the movement as it frames itself and the empirical base of the movement. So, for example, the women's movement claims to be "for" all women but has been criticized for being empirically of white middle class women. In this paper, I emphasize the ethnic composition of a

movement, but a typology could also be constructed for class composition or gender composition or regional composition. Although ethnic group-focused movements almost by definition activate ethnic identities, issue-focused movements may not, even when their membership is empirically mono-ethnic. Because dominant ethnic majorities have access to more power and resources than subordinate ethnic minorities but do not necessarily have externally-imposed collective identities, they face different issues in mobilization from ethnic minorities.

## Ethnic Majority Movements

Ethnic majority movements are movements that are empirically overwhelmingly dominated by ethnic majorities. There are four broad types of ethnic majority movements: (1) group-focused movements promoting the interests of the ethnic majority as opposed to ethnic minorities (e.g. White supremacist or Hindu nationalist movements); (2) group-focused movements promoting the interests of a group subordinated on a different axis of domination within the ethnic majority (e.g. gender or class movements); (3) issue-focused movements promoting issues that affect society as a whole (e.g. peace, environmentalism, animal rights); and (4) group-focused ally movements promoting the interests of ethnic minorities. The last type is comparable to mixed-ethnicity groups for ethnic minorities, which will be discussed below.

Ethnic majority movements tend to be in the most advantageous position for mobilization. Ethnic majorities draw on larger pools of potential participants and resources. They have the numbers to exert electoral influence or power. They are much less likely to be repressed and are more likely to generate sympathetic backlash from the rest of society if they are repressed. Ethnic majorities are more likely to be able to gain advantages from violent tactics without being violently repressed.

The processes of developing collective identities are different for ethnic majorities than for minorities. In line with the arguments of Morris and Braine, dominant ethnic majorities may not have particular ethnic majority group consciousness, instead identifying themselves either with the nation as a whole or with some subgroup within the majority such as their class or religion. People typically become members of majority movements by choice, not ascription, although some types of movements lodge within subcultures within the majority. This latter possibility, which I think of as proto-ethnic subcultures, will be discussed more below.

Majority movements may be further subdivided according to their stance with respect to minorities, which can be positive, hostile, or neutral. Some majority movements are organized around positive support for minorities. The dynamics of these movements are best discussed with mixed-ethnic movements, to be discussed below, even though there are many solidarity groups that are empirically majority-dominated.

Many majority movements are overtly hostile toward other groups and have explicit anti-minority ideologies, including White Supremacist, anti-immigrant, or anti-Jewish or anti-Muslim or anti-Catholic movements. Such movements tend to appear in many multi-ethnic countries and are the subject of much of the “ethnic conflict” literature. Hostile majority movements tend to view minorities as threatening their status or power or cultural dominance. Hostile majority movements typically are aroused or enflamed by politicians whose goal is to gain votes and win elections. White supremacist movements appear to have been increasing in recent years in the US and elsewhere (Bonilla-Silva 2000), and seem especially active and virulent after the election of Obama. White supremacist movements are at this writing (summer 2016) highly visible in supporters of the Trump presidential campaign.

Majority movements addressing non-ethnic issues such as gender, sexual orientation, class, environment, peace, or morality often have a shifting or mixed position with respect to minorities. In

many cases, they see themselves as speaking for or to “society as a whole,” and may encourage minorities to join them. However, majority movements addressing non-ethnic issues often take on an anti-minority agenda. Historical examples in the US include the [White] labor movement and the [White] women’s movement, which each had factions in some eras that were virulently and even violently anti-minority. Moral reform and religious movements also often associate immorality or religious error with minorities. Many studies focus on the ways putatively general social issues or concerns are racialized. This is most clear with respect to crime control policies which disproportionately target minorities and are more supported in the US by Whites who are anti-minority (Staples 1975, Tonry 1995, Tonry and Melewski 2008, Unnever, Cullen and Jonson 2008, Weaver 2007). Felon disenfranchisement was promoted as an explicit way to maintain ethnic dominance (Behrens, Uggen and Manza 2003) On the opposite pole, Matsueda and Drakulich (2009) demonstrate that perceptions of bias in criminal justice is associated with other pro-minority attitudes and policy opinions. Opinions about social welfare programs in the US are also highly racialized, with Whites who dislike minorities being more opposed; Faist (1995) finds that this is a growing pattern in Germany as well as in the US.

That majority movements that are not “about” ethnicity may take on an anti-minority agenda is empirically well established. Why this happens is less clear. One reason may be due to the fact that majorities inherently have less contact with minorities than minorities have with majorities as long as there is even a partial tendency for like to associate with like (Blau 1977a, Blau 1977b). This makes majority people more ignorant of the needs and interests of minorities and also more at risk of stereotyping. This structural tendency to reduced network ties with minorities contributes to the processes of ethnic group construction and us-them dynamics that lead majority group members to view minorities as competitors or enemies rather than potential allies or co-occupants of the same societal boat. McVeigh (2004) draws on Schwartz’s ideas of structured ignorance, theories of bounded rationality, and Blau’s discussion of social structure as a multidimensional space of social positions to identify the conditions under which a white racist interpretation of the facts around a person can make sense. Lipset (1959) stressed that “authoritarian predispositions and ethnic prejudice” are more common among working class people, but failed to mark his implicit assumption that “people” were White. Commentators today would note that upper class or highly educated people often have class prejudice against lower class or uneducated people.

Economic or political elites often fan ethnic conflict. Ethnic/racial labor conflicts in the US have generally been tied to employer practices of segregating workers by ethnicity and paying minorities less; majority workers have viewed minorities as direct competitors driving their wages down. Political elites competing for ethnic majority votes often promote fears of minorities as a vote-getting strategy. McKean (2016) argues that populist us-them anti-elite rhetoric has the inherent danger that it homogenizes “us” and can thus readily be turned against outsiders. He provides examples of politicians who explicitly reject racist tendencies in their rhetoric, but stresses that this takes rhetorical “work.”

Even when majority people are not hostile to minorities and would welcome them as allies, patterns of ethnic spatial and social segregation reinforced by group differences in economic resources create gulfs between groups in both their objective interests and their subjectively experienced realities. They may pursue policies that benefit them but hurt others, not out of hostility to others but out of genuine ignorance of the interests and conditions of life of other groups. Majorities may enact dominance even while supporting minorities. Hughey (2015) compares White racist and anti-racist activists whose overt ideologies or frames are antagonistic but finds that their interactional scripts and identities as White men are very similar in that they see Whites as rational, intelligent and objective, Blacks as dysfunctional, and racial differences as relatively immutable.

In short, ignoring the majority-ness of majority movements and both their advantages in mobilization and the ways in which they generate direct or indirect problems for minorities puts severe limitations on understanding movement dynamics and outcomes.

## Ethnic Minority Movements

Ethnic minority movements are movements that are empirically dominated by ethnic minorities. Ethnic minority movements include both group-oriented and issue-oriented movements. Group-oriented minority movements specifically advocate the advancement of the ethnic minority. Depending on their structural location and ideology, they may be civil rights movements seeking a change in their legal status within a particular state, separatist movements seeking political autonomy for a homeland, or cultural separatist movements. They also include “intersectional” movements that explicitly link ethnic subordination issues to another issue. Examples of intersectional movements include the environmental justice movement (Novotny 1995, Perrolle 1993) and the movement of women of color for reproductive rights (Cole and Luna 2010, Luna 2009, Luna 2010, Luna 2011) or the Black Lives Matter movement that focuses on police violence.

Ethnic minorities are often economically disadvantaged, although not all are. Even if they are not economically disadvantaged, they are generally politically disadvantaged. Even economically advantaged minorities may experience discrimination. Economically advantaged minorities who do not control state power have often been the target of hostile and violent attacks by majorities. Sheer minorityness typically gives them little power in an electoral democracy, although they may sometimes have power as swing votes or in certain local areas where they are a majority. Historically, ethnic minorities have often been politically disenfranchised. Ethnic minorities typically lack sufficient resources and political power to achieve their goals without allies from the majority group, and this is especially so if the minority is economically disadvantaged or politically disenfranchised.

This need for outside majority allies is one theoretically important way in which minority movements diverge from majority movements. Another is that movements by ethnic minorities are subject to higher rates of repression than majority movements and are less likely to generate widespread backlash when they are repressed. As Morris and Braine argued, minorities that are disadvantaged, and especially those that have been subject to overt repression and oppression, typically develop subcultures that intermingle themes of subordination and opposition. Awareness of group identity and a sense of grievance and opposition are typically givens, but so are fear of the consequences of resistance and customs and rituals of subordination, acquiescence and compliance.

Just as movements may be empirically dominated by ethnic majorities without the “issue” being ethnicity, movements may be empirically dominated by ethnic minorities without being framed as ethnic or having an ethnic collective identity. A substantial amount of work in the academic study of ethnic conflict is precisely concerned with the circumstances under which issues and movements become framed as ethnic. Movements that are framed as ethnic minority movements include civil rights movements, national liberation or secessionist movements.

In addition to movements that explicitly identify or frame themselves as ethnic minority movements, there are movements that define themselves as class-based or place-based movements that are empirically peopled by ethnic minorities. There are also movements by and for particularly oppressed groups of people who are disproportionately minority, such as felons or undocumented migrants. Movements that are empirically peopled by disadvantaged minorities have most of the characteristics of minority movements whether or not they frame their movement in ethnic terms. That is, they tend to be weaker in resources, have fewer social ties to the broader majority-dominant society, and are vulnerable to repression. However, minority movements may have global allies. Fleming and Morris

(2015) talk about inter-movement effects of minority movements, e.g. the influence of Gandhi and Algerian liberation on the Black movement and the influence of the Black movement on other minority movements in the US.

It is important to stress that, analytically, the problems of minority movements are due to the hierarchical or vertical issues of subordination that make them resource-poor, small numbers and structural exclusions that give them low influence with the state, and too few network ties to the broader ethnic majority to draw in allies.

### Mixed Majority-Minority Movements

Some movements empirically mixed majorities and minorities in their ethnic composition. Some are peopled primarily by ethnic majorities but have substantial minority participation, while other movements are peopled primarily by ethnic minorities but have significant majority participation. Some multi-ethnic groups combine professionalized advocates who are disproportionately of majority ethnicity with disadvantaged beneficiary adherents who are primarily of minority ethnicity; this is the configuration that dominates the racial disparities movement that I have been working in. "Solidarity" movements in which majority people organize themselves to support minorities also have many of these dynamics.

It is well recognized among activists that it can be very difficult for culturally-different groups to work together, especially if there are also different levels of privilege and disadvantage that are correlated with ethnic differences. In practice it is often difficult to hold such groups together and they are typically marked by tensions along the majority-minority ethnic divide. These lines of tension include privilege, hierarchy and power, cultural practices, and agendas.

Marx and Useem (1971) identify common problems that have arisen in movements for minorities (US civil rights and anti-slavery, Indian anti-untouchability plus similar movements in Japan, South Africa, England and for Mexican Americans) when members of dominant and subordinate groups try to work together. Outsiders (members of the dominant group) have more resources and political power, which both makes them more effective and leads them to want to control the organization. Insiders are more radical in both their goals and tactics and are less concerned with their relations to other movements. Cultural differences mirroring the larger society lead to conflicts about how to interact and run the organization. Appel (2003) finds similar patterns in an analysis and critique of the white supremacist tendencies in leftist politics that arise despite good intentions. Eder, Staggenborg and Sudderth (1995) describe racial divisions at a women's festival, as well as conflicts between lesbians and straight women.

Problems of privilege plague movements that seek to bridge the privileged and the disadvantaged. Some of these gaps are material and practical, including access to telephones, email, copiers, computers, cars, travel money, days off, and discretionary time. Some are tied to levels of education and knowledge. Some are tied to the unconscious internalization of social hierarchies (Hughey 2007). People from privileged backgrounds typically have habits of domination and skills of self-assurance and confidence in talking and writing, while people from disadvantaged backgrounds may have been trained in submission and have absorbed what Morris and Braine call "cultures of submission." Privileged people are often uncomfortable when disadvantaged people are assertive and claim authority and want to do things their own way. These practical and interactional differences plague all groups that seek to work together across lines of privilege.

The privilege issues merge into the hierarchy and power issues. Privileged people typically have more access to outside sources of power and are more likely to be viewed as knowledgeable and objective by outsiders. The privileged are more often in control of an organization's purse strings due to being seen

as more legitimate in the eyes of funders, and they are more likely to be gate-keepers for jobs or benefits needed by less advantaged group members. The privileged are also much less likely to be repressed for their actions, while disadvantaged members often have genuine reason to fear repression. These hierarchy and power issues are especially acute in professionalized organizations, or organizations with outside funding.

Even when issues of privilege and hierarchy are not acute, different ethnic groups may have difficulty working together because of cultural issues tied to the fact that network cliquing gives them different expectations about what it means to “do” collective action. This is obvious whenever groups speak different languages, but it comes up whenever people’s background and experiences are markedly different. Groups from different networks may have had different experiences that give them radically different view of “reality.” These lead to different group identities and different ways of talking about and framing issues. In addition, cultural groups vary in the practices that undergird collective action. They have different ways of holding discussions and structuring meetings and different understandings about the proper forms of action. One especially important difference is that ethnic groups vary markedly in the ways in which disagreement is expressed. In some ethnic groups, overt and challenging statements of disagreement and confrontational language are the norm, while in other ethnic groups, any overt expression of disagreement is taboo and all communications must be made under norms of ritual politeness and circumlocution. Of course, even this simple contrast is too simple to capture the huge variability in the cultural practices around having conversations and making decisions. People from different backgrounds who are not aware of these cultural differences can infuriate each other in meetings and can find it nearly impossible to work together.

Finally, there are agenda issues when groups work together. People from different backgrounds will often have divergent goals. There can be internal conflicts over the allocation of resources within a movement, such as access to paid positions for dispersion of funds to different work groups. There are often conflicts over leadership. In addition, the mixing of conscience constituents and beneficiary constituents inevitably raises concerns about shared fate. Who will suffer the consequences if things go wrong? Are the conscience constituents really in for the long haul, or will they leave when things go sour or they don’t get their way?

### Mixed Minority Movements

Another type of movement is made up of multiple minorities. They arise in various ways. Some groups are dominated by one ethnicity but reach out to incorporate others, some are formed as coalitions between groups representing different ethnicities, and some are drawn from constituencies that are multi-ethnic. Groups that mixed multiple minorities often combine the dynamics of minority movements in terms of lacking political clout and needing outside allies to win with the cultural conflicts of mixed majority-minority movements. However, most multi-minority movements are formed around issues in which members are similar to each other in terms of not being particularly privileged, and the common sense of being ignored by the majority is often a basis of solidarity.

Some researchers have examined multi-ethnic movements. Diaz Veizades and Chang (1996) describe the conflicts that led to breakups of coalitions between Blacks and Koreans and Latinos and Blacks, including low resources, power struggles, and nationalist ideologies in the larger communities. Brown and Brueggemann (1997) compare successful and unsuccessful cases of building interracial (Black-White) labor unions in US history, arguing that success required both more favorable economic relations and concrete strategies for incorporating Blacks. Jung (2006) describes how Japanese, Chinese and Filipino workers in Hawaii built strong multi-ethnic Communist unions by explicitly incorporating race/ethnicity into their representational structures.



## Summary and Implications

I have argued that different movement carriers are in different ethnic-structural locations that affect everything about them: mobilization processes, choices of strategy and tactics, core framing tasks and consciousness raising, the likelihood of repression, and the ability to influence the larger society. The three groups of ethnic dimensions are the vertical dimension of structures of domination (including ethnic states), the horizontal dimension of network ties and network cleavages and the temporal dimension of intergenerational transmission. These three dimensions are the analytic tools for characterizing the social location of any group. Any theory of social movements needs to pay attention to these dimensions as part of its analysis.

“Ethnicity” matters for social movements if and when it functions as a network cliquing structure that tends to affect the factors that are important for movement formation. That is, “ethnicity” as network cliquing and intergenerationality matters if and when it

- creates both shared fate within a group and a lack of common interests between groups, fosters conflicts of interest between groups,
- fosters subcultural divergence between groups,
- promotes common identities within groups and contrasting identities between them, and
- promotes common understandings of reality and common frames within groups and different understandings and frames between groups.

Groups that are relatively socially isolated from other groups tend both to have distinctive interests and to develop distinctive cultures and views of the world. Groups that are socially isolated and culturally distinct tend to misunderstand each other and view each other with suspicion or hostility. These differences are the social structural underpinnings for movements and conflicts organized around ethnic/racial differences. Such movements may be movements by minorities challenging structures of domination, but they may also be movements by majorities seeking to impose structures of domination on other groups or violent genocidal or exclusionary movements seeking to eliminate other groups entirely.

Ethnicity in the broad sense is always an important dimension of movement analysis because ethnic group definitions and boundaries are always intertwined with state formation and state functioning. States are generally biased in favor of some ethnic groups and against others, and in many cases, ethnic categories (especially racial categories) are the bases for strong structures of domination.

Not all types of movement carriers are equally likely to need to or to be able to generate social movements and collective action. Ethnic majorities typically have the numbers, resources, electoral clout and network ties that facilitate mobilization, enhance the chances of success, and reduce the chances of repression. Advantaged majorities may not need movement mobilization at all if they are able to satisfy their desires through ordinary individual or political channels. If they are opposed by other members of the ethnic majority who have differing political views, we may see the development of movement-counter movement pairs, with each side able to gain adherents and influence, and neither side subject to excessive repression.

By contrast, ethnic minorities are often in situations that hinder movement success. On the plus side, network cleavages may give them the internal network ties and associated sense of identity and solidarity to facilitate collective action. But on the negative side, ethnic minorities are more easily repressed and the very structures of domination that oppress them may enforce habits of subordination as well as reduce the resources and network ties that would provide a basis for achieving their goals.



The analysis in this paper has suggested that class can fruitfully be analyzed in ethnic terms. When there is greater class closure, greater within-class endogamy, and lower intergenerational class mobility, economic classes are more like ethnic groups as I have been analyzing them. The question is how these ethnicized class groups map onto the ethnic structure of society. I view this as a question of network cleavage. Are there more cross-class ties within ethnic groups or cross-class ties between ethnic groups? Are there cleavages within the ethnic majority? Taking race/ethnicity into explicit account and then asking whether there are cleavages within racial/ethnic groups as well as asking about the extent of ties between ethnic groups will help to map the social movement space. It is my impression, for example, that there is a growing cultural-ideological cleavage between conservative and liberal Whites, even as the majority of neither group has real social ties to non-Whites. Instead, there is a politics of signification about the kind of White person one is. Liberal Whites eschew racism as an ideology but typically still enact a culture of domination. If these political/religious cleavages among Whites grow, and if White people tend to marry within these groups rather than across these groups, there is a sense in which political groups could take on an "ethnic" character.

To sum up, we find that starting with taking seriously the difference between ethnic majorities and ethnic minorities in their prospects for mobilization and seeking to identify the theoretical dimensions of ethnicity and how they influence social movements leads us to a new set of ways of looking at the core problems of meaning-making and the construction of movement identities.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This statement is empirically true for the United States and other countries that are stratified by race or ethnicity. I am also arguing that it is analytically true in the sense that all countries have some sort of ethnic structure and that all social movements map onto their country's ethnic structure. These distinctions will be clearer as the paper unfolds.

<sup>2</sup> Hawaii is majority Asian descent, although Whites remain the economic elite in Hawaii.

<sup>3</sup> A case can be made that immigrant communities are not mono-ethnic, as the children grow up in a different culture from their parents.

<sup>4</sup> Of course, ethnicity may also be viewed as achieved or chosen, if a person works to assimilate to a new culture as an adult.

<sup>5</sup> There are typically interactions between individual characteristics and spatial effects so that a spatial interest generally does not affect everyone in the area in the same way, but this does not change the basic point that there is some common spatial effect.

<sup>6</sup> Scholars of race and ethnicity recognize that the rules defining the race or ethnicity of children of mixed unions vary between societies and can be quite complex. Sometimes mixed children are seen as a distinct group, sometimes as belonging wholly to the group of one of the parents. Whether mixed unions are treated as legal marriages or as informal unions affects the status and categorization of their offspring. These complexities are beyond the general point being made here that endogamy, or more precisely in-breeding, is closely tied to maintaining a distinct ethnicity.



Pamela Oliver

Figures for The Ethnic Dimensions

Presented American Sociological Association August, 2016

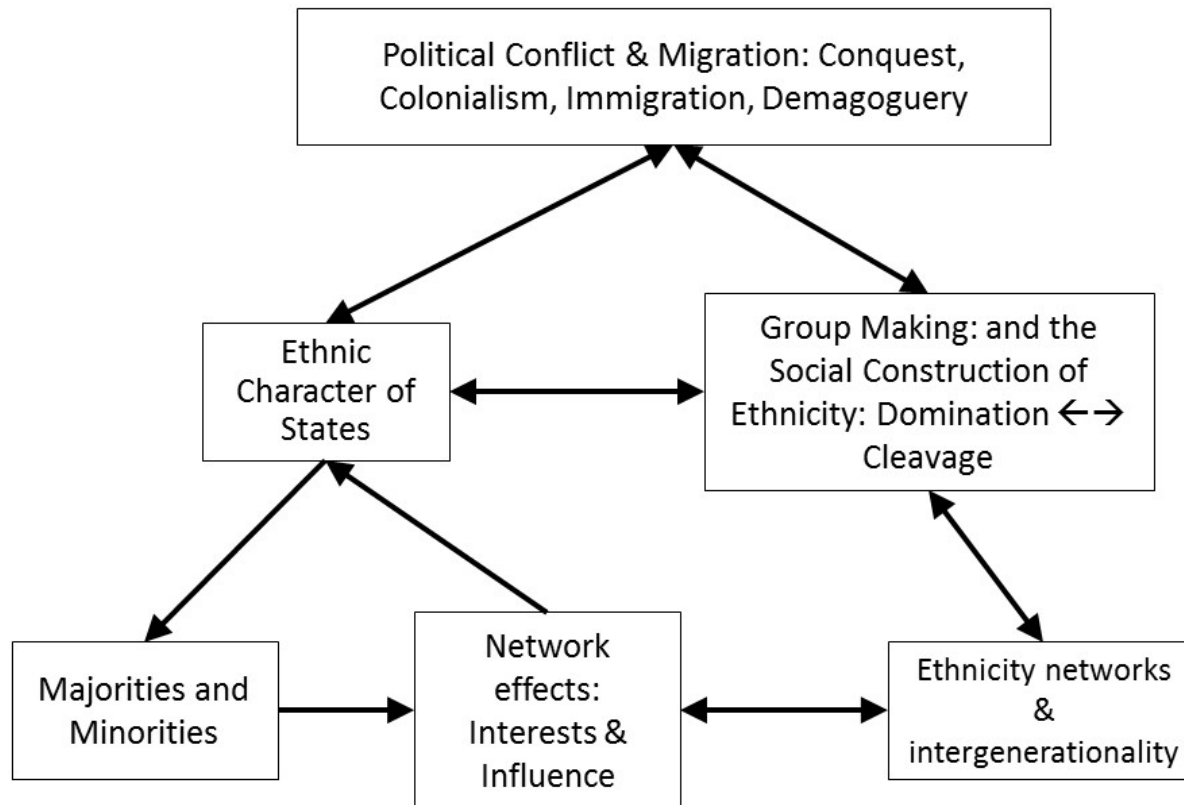
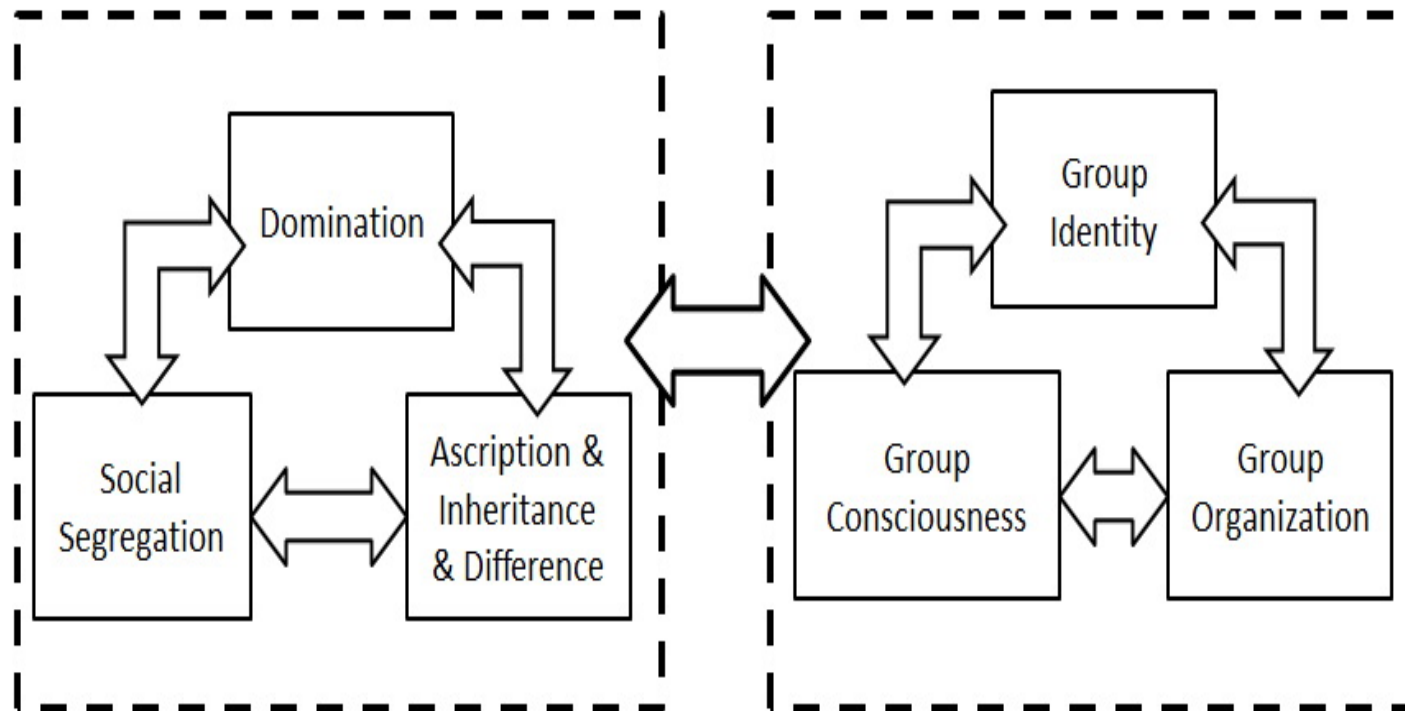


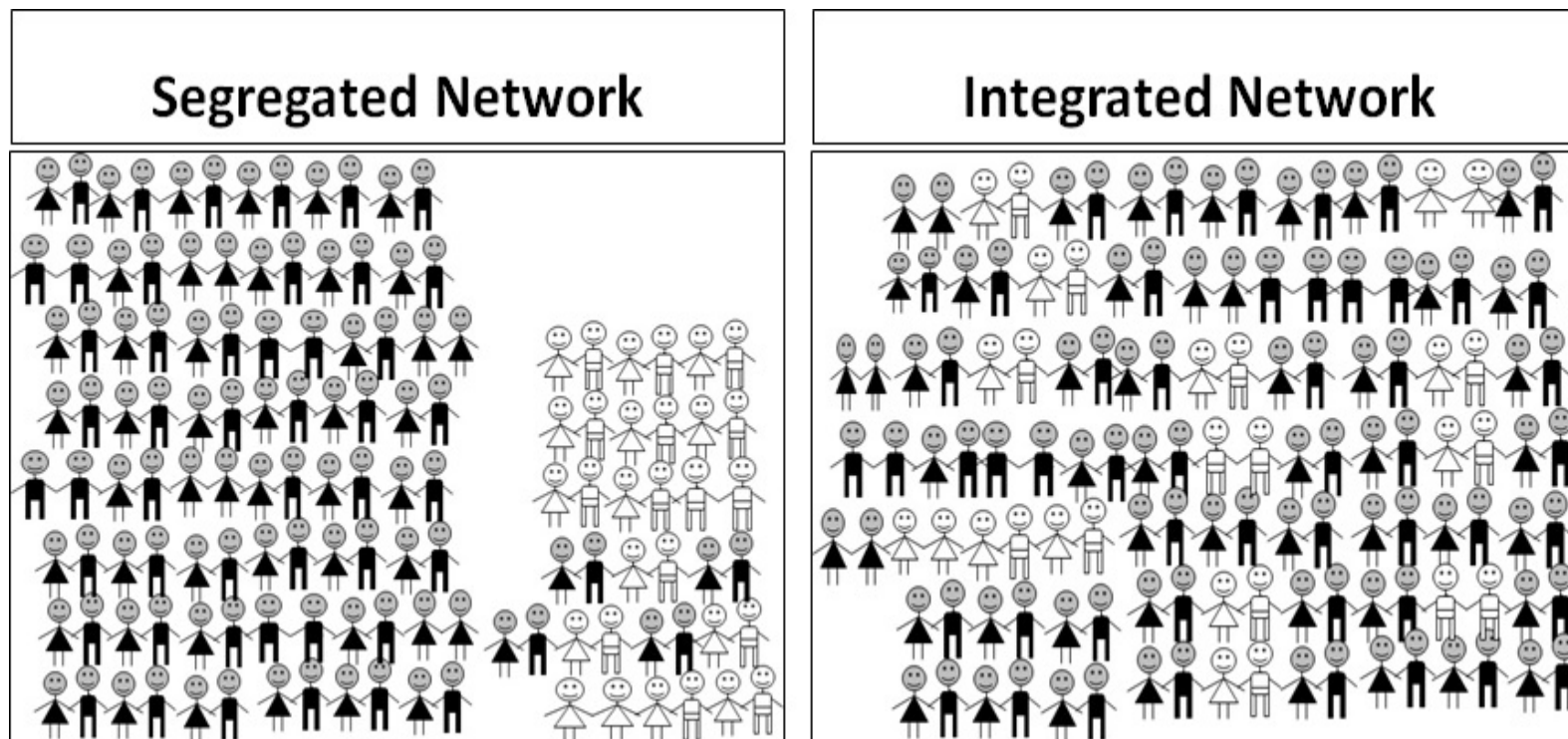
Figure 1 *Ethnicity and states*

## External Ethnic Dimensions

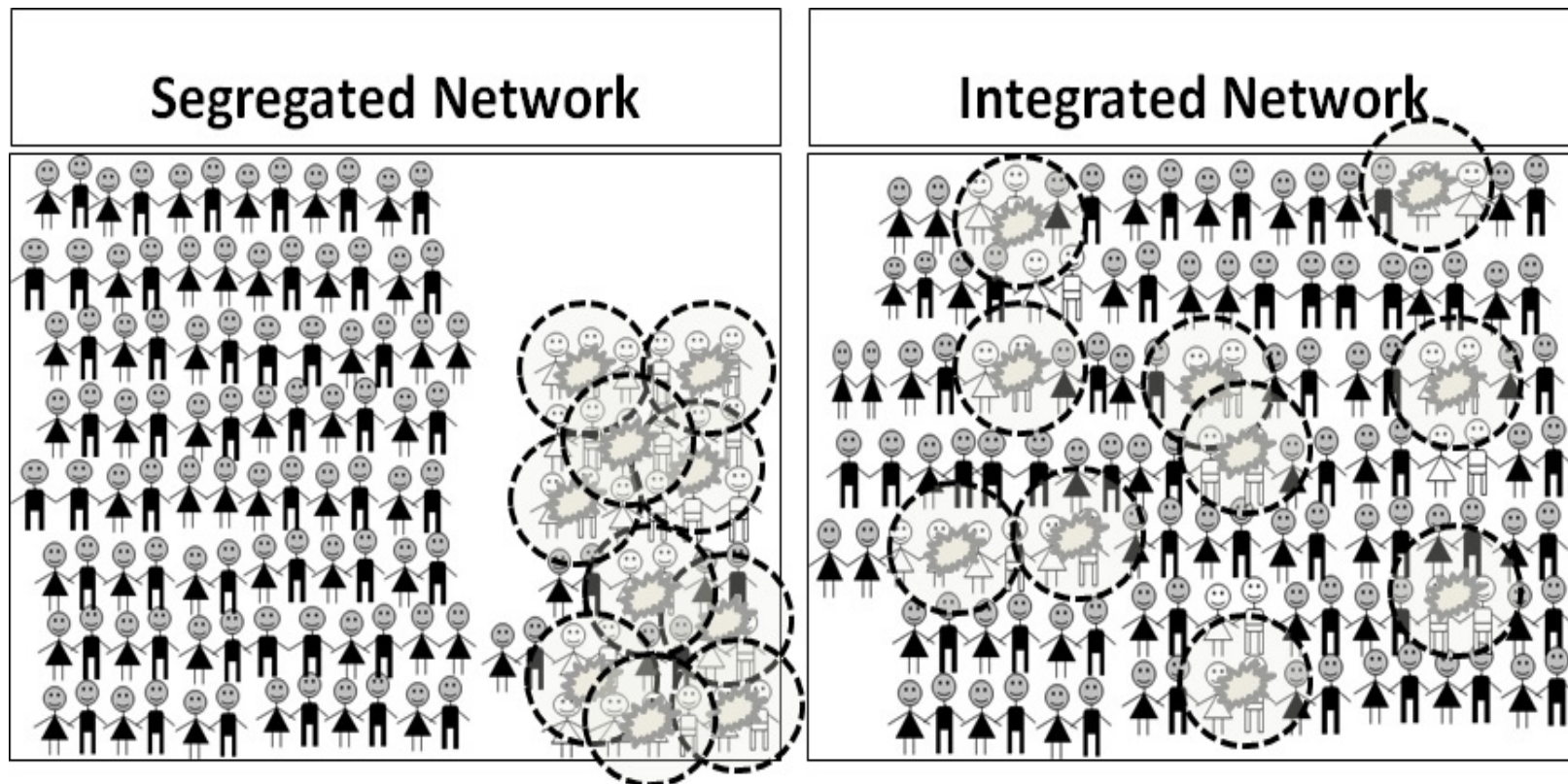
## Internal Ethnic Dimensions



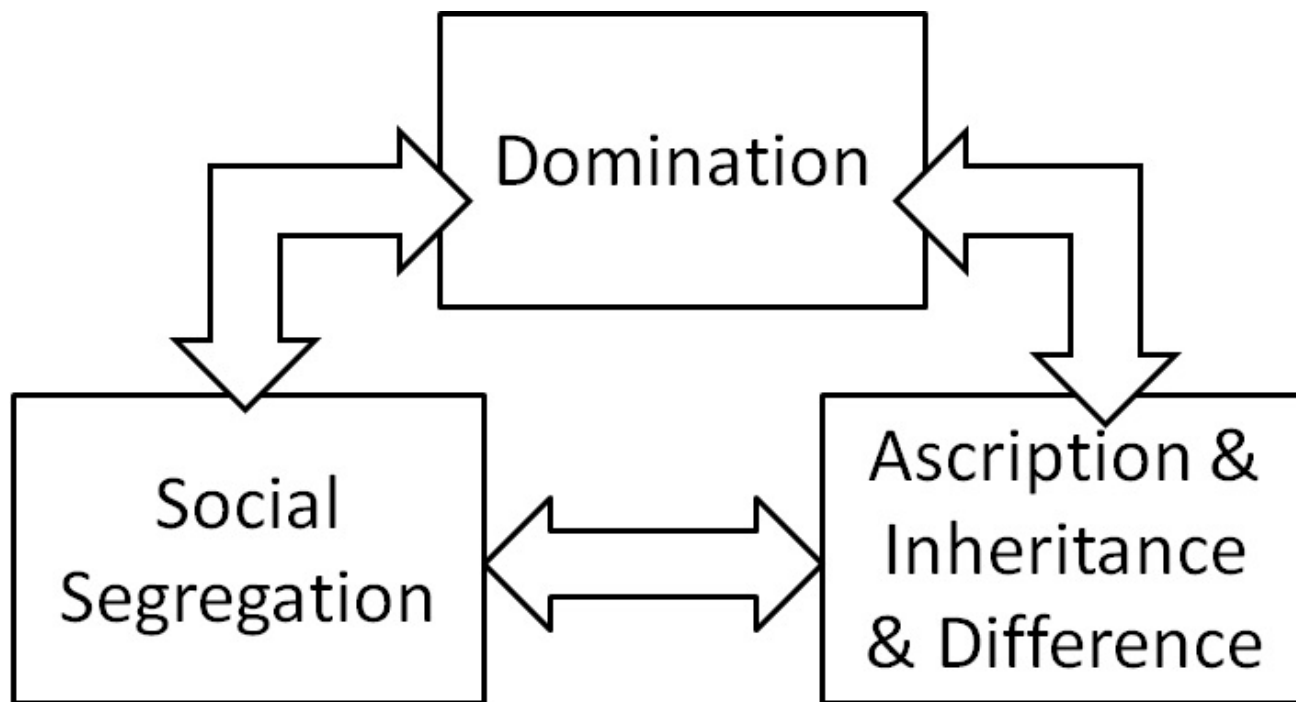
*Figure 2 Internal and external processes of ethnic group formation*



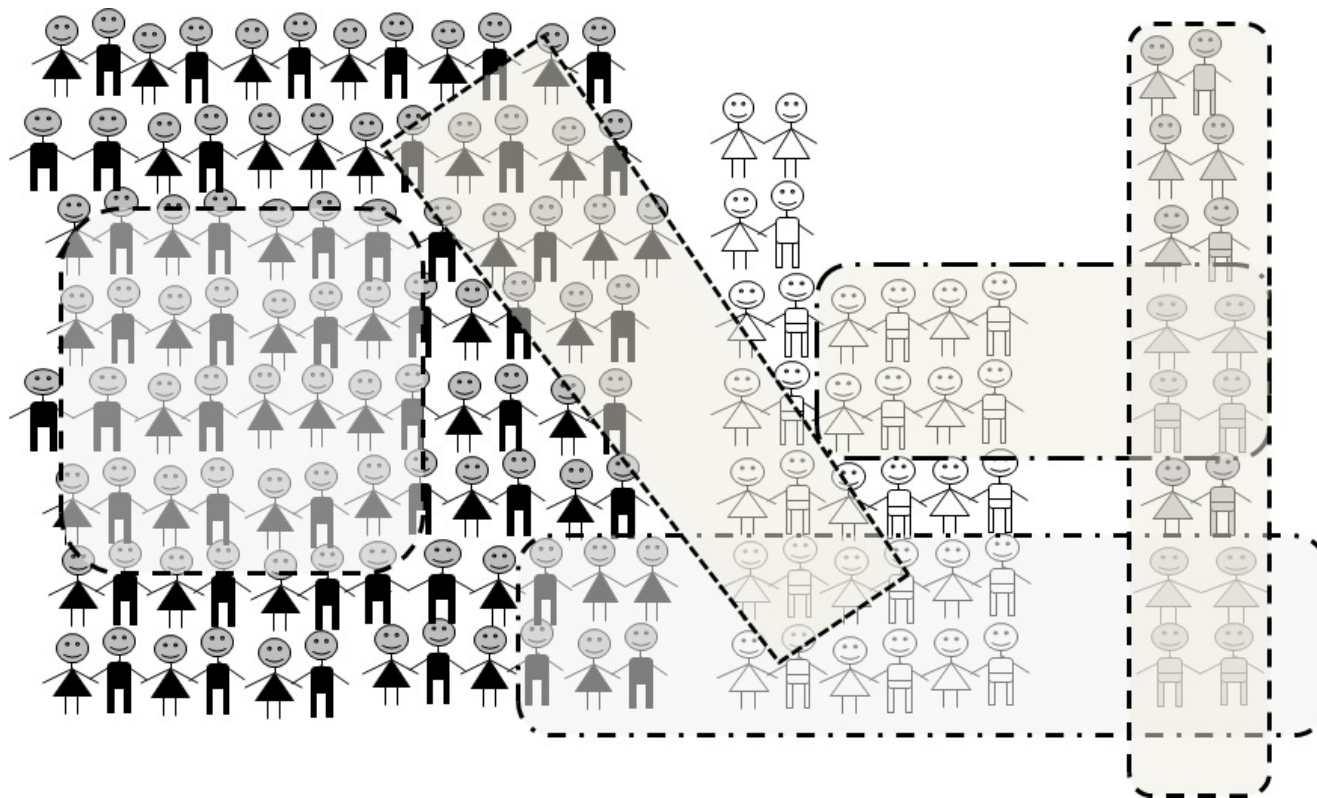
*Figure 3 Segregated and integrated networks*



*Figure 4 Policy impacts in segregated and integrated networks*



*Figure 5 Mutual reinforcement of domination, networks, difference and inheritance*



*Figure 6 Different movements draw from different ethnic bases*