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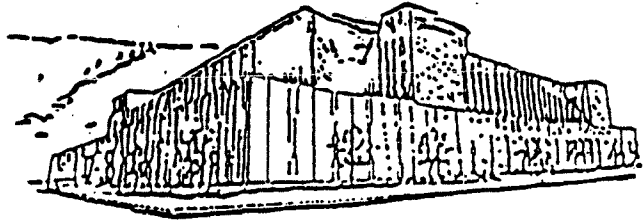
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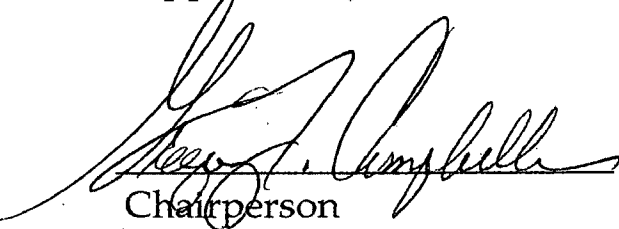
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The Duality of Social Identity: Theories Concerning Self and Social Categorization.


by
Chris Girard

B. Sc. Northern Michigan University
presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
The University of Montana
May 2000

Approved by:



Chairperson



Dean of the Graduate School

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The Duality of Social Identity: Theories Concerning Self and Social Categorization.

Chairperson: Dr. Greg Campbell



This investigation examines the process of ethnic identity formation as a specific manifestation of social identity. It is the author's hypothesis that individuals are able to capitalize on inherent ambiguities, created by the multilevel nature of social identity, to gain mobility within a given culture.

To illustrate how widespread this phenomenon truly is, three cases, from three unique temporal contexts are examined. The first example refers to the development of the Rastafarian ethnic identity in post-colonial Jamaica. The second case comes from the Canadian Metis, as a result of the fur trade economy. Lastly, I have scrutinized the current situation in Northern Ireland to demonstrate why the Ulster Unionists have repeatedly blocked attempts to unite the island of Ireland.

To fully comprehend the phenomenon of ethnicity it is important to focus on the transitional periods where identities are challenged. In some cases specific minority identities are in jeopardy of being absorbed into the majority population, in others, the particular group is able to maintain autonomy by retreating from the context of conflict.

Through these cases, I will demonstrate that ethnicity is contextually defined, so that the only time that ethnicity appears to be primordial or static is when it is removed from its unique historical context.

Contents

Introduction-	On Social Influence	1
	Statement of problem	2
	Methods	5
Chapter 1	Social Identity	7
	Social comparison	11
	Cognitive dissonance	17
	Stereotype formation	19
	Multidimensionality of social identity	22
	Racialisation	28
Chapter 2	Ethnogenesis	34
	Ethnogenetic theory	38
	Social conflict	39
	Assimilation and extinction	41
	Boundary maintenance	42
	In conclusion	45
Chapter 3	Rastafari	48
	Us vs. them heuristic	56
	Assimilation and extinction	61
	In conclusion	65
Chapter 4	Metis	71
	Us vs. Them heuristic	79
	In conclusion	82
Chapter 5	Northern Ireland	85
	Us vs. Them heuristic	92
	In conclusion	96
Chapter 6	Summary	98
<i>References</i>		108

Introduction

On Social Influence

A few years ago, I became interested in the types of influence that groups could exert over their individual members. I was particularly amazed at how quickly a 'mob mentality' could overcome an otherwise peaceful crowd; turning it into a violent and destructive entity. To the bystanders, it seems like calmer heads should prevail, but time and again this proves not to be the case. It is almost as if a new force is created when we form groups, a force which compels even the most disciplined to act in ways that would not be considered acceptable under normal circumstances.

One place where this social phenomenon is becoming increasingly apparent is in the protracted ethnic conflicts that litter the world today. I believe that ethnic fighting is only going to intensify as populations surge and compete for limited resources. To counter this trend, I believe that it is extremely important to intensify the dialogue we have already started surrounding social identity, especially as it relates to ethnicity.

Statement of Problem

Much of the confusion concerning current conceptions of ethnicity stems from the lack of any well established, uniform for criteria for defining ethnic identity. Yet this task has not proved to be as easy as it may sound. For one thing, ethnic identity has been known to exist on more than one level simultaneously.

In today's global society, all people are members of more than one social group at any given time. In other words, ethnicity must be understood in terms of the broader category known as social identity. However, current theories concerning ethnic identity tend not to recognize the multidimensional nature of social identity. Instead they seem to treat ethnic identities as bounded, static

entities when, in reality, the only time that they appear to remain constant is when they are completely removed from their particular historical contexts.

Another thing which has persistently confounded the study of social phenomena relates to the fact that many of our perceptions and behaviors are context dependent. This being the case, it becomes difficult to make broad generalizations about human social behavior because there are too many variables to account for when one looks to make cross-cultural comparisons. The best that we can hope for is to make controlled comparisons by carefully selecting the qualities we wish to contrast.

Research in the area of social identity theory (Tajfel et al., 1971; Turner, 1975) indicates that subjects characteristically hold divergent perceptions of in-groups (i.e. groups to which they belonged) and out-groups, irregardless of how they are defined. For the most part, subjects tend to describe members of their own groups in much greater detail than they would members of another group. The end result of this differential process of differential attribution is prejudicial behavior. As such, whole groups of individuals can become units of competition and group membership

then becomes a political tool which can be utilized by the individual to secure mobility within society.

To better understand the ramifications of social identity, it is crucial to recognize that ethnicity is defined along two distinct, yet interdependent lines. The first, social categorization, is ascribed from without and is strongly reductionistic. The second, self-categorization, is a personal attribution, held by the individual, which reflects their social loyalties. This apparent dichotomy of social identity inevitably leads to the formation of groups based on commonalities, often incorporating shared elements of ancestry, language, and culture. Perhaps more importantly though, it also gives rise to an out-group based on differences.

For the purpose of this study, I have selected three specific contexts of conflict between dominant and minority ethnicities for the purpose of identifying the duality of social identity. One place where this duality become particularly noticeable is in the definitions and attributions the two respective populations hold towards each other. In effect, the boundaries that maintain various social groups can be seen to vary depending on who is doing the defining.

Methods

My sample for this examination is comprised of three discrete, minority ethnicities which are in constant conflict with the dominant population. The first case which I analyze is that of the Rastafarians. It is my contention that this identity has its roots in the culture of domination which existed for centuries in Jamaica, though its current manifestation is more a product of economic oppression.

The second case I draw upon comes from the post-fur trade Metis. These proud people have repeatedly been denied their basic Aboriginal rights by the Canadian government, yet through continued resistance they have been able to win token recognition as a legal entity.

The third and final example I look at is that of the current conflict in Northern Ireland. At this time, it looks as though the entire island of Ireland is, in the near future, going to become united and free of British control. If this does in fact occur, it will bring to an end a struggle which has literally defined the two populations inhabiting Northern Ireland; the Ulster Unionists and the Republican Catholics.

The methods, which I have employed, in the course of this study have been primarily ethnohistorical in nature. I feel that by scrutinizing the development of these three specific ethnicities I will be able to tease out the essential dichotomy, produced by social conflict, which eventually leads to discrimination.

Social Identity

On March 24, 1999 combined N.A.T.O. forces, led primarily by the United States, began an all-air assault in the former territory of Yugoslavia. The purpose of Operation Allied Force was to destroy or significantly degrade the military-industrial structure of Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic. In the months prior to this action, Milosevich had used military and paramilitary troops to depopulate the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo. Unfortunately, examples of this type of ethnic cleansing are becoming alarmingly frequent as flourishing populations force people to migrate, en mass, all over

the world. As cultures come into contact, many times they clash. Some of these conflicts have gone on for thousands of years and some are the product of recent developments.

Whatever the case, it seems to me of the utmost importance to examine the nature of such conflicts in an attempt to understand how these social (i.e. ethnic) identities can become so powerful as to make us slaughter each other by the hundreds of thousands to protect and promote them.

So why do we form groups; what is it that compels us to seek the affiliation of others? Some researchers (Griev & Hogg, 1999) have proposed the idea that by associating with a group we give meaning to the world by differentiating it. Others propose that, by affiliating with positively valued groups we further our own self-image (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971; Turner, 1975).

To these theories I would just like to add my own insight into the complex nature of social identity. It is my contention that social identity is defined along two distinct, yet interrelated lines. The first, social-categorization comes from outside the group boundary and is, for all practical purposes, cast onto said group, despite the wishes of its members. Social-categorization is part

and parcel of the language of domination; it is symptomatic of outside interests being imposed onto the individual members of a subordinate group.

The other side of social identity, I would argue, is constructed by individuals who comprise the in-group and is more of a process of self-categorization. Furthermore, it becomes evident, in the individual's choice of affiliation, how they view themselves. In other words, through choices concerning self-categorization we are provided with a clue to the person's self-concept.

However, on this point, let me caution that there are tacit limitations placed on the individual when seeking social identity. Obviously, before an individual can become part of a group and begin to draw on its identity, which is available to its members, the group must validate the individual's membership. That is, just because I may want to belong to a given group does not always guarantee that they will welcome me into their ranks.

In any event, the end result of this dual process of social identity formation is the establishment of essentially two relevant categories; '*us and them*'. Consequently, we see the construction and maintenance of obvious boundaries (Barth, 1969) between social

groups. This is evident in the adoption of symbols, speech and behaviors that make the dividing line immediately noticeable. Moreover, this type of polarization is what eventually leads to the level of conflict that we see today in places like Kosovo and Northern Ireland, to name just a few.

It is important to note however, that by drawing these lines between groups, it allows us to depersonalize our image of individuals who are not like 'us'. And once this has occurred it becomes significantly easier to rationalize their persecution, either through violent conflict or through institutionalized social sanctions which subtly inhibit their ability to compete. Evidence of this effect has been empirically demonstrated by Tajfel *et al.* (1971) who found that,

under certain conditions the mere classification of subjects into the in- and outgroupers is a sufficient as well as necessary condition to induce forms of ingroup favoritism and discrimination against the outgroup (Turner, 1975: 5).

The significant aspect of this finding is that mere classification is all that is required to produce differential behavior. By creating oversimplified categories and pigeon-holing

people into those imposed divisions we create an environment which is ripe for discrimination to exist. This being the case, I think it appropriate to examine some of the more subtle features of this process of differentiation which is so central to the concept of social identity. For, if we ever hope to reduce the effects of prejudice, we need first to recognize the cognitive processes that give rise to discrimination. Only then will we be able to figure out the appropriate measures necessary to mitigate this effect.

Social Comparison

Before continuing on any further, I think it pertinent to address certain issues concerning the way that the human mind processes information because it directly relates to the phenomena of social comparison.

Now, it almost goes without saying that, we understand various concepts in terms of their polar opposites. In other words, we know 'good' in its relation to 'bad', however it is important to recognize that these are really not mutually exclusive categories; they are instead just relative points along a continuum.

Unfortunately, this type of uncertainty does not sit well with us. To

the contrary, we seek finite designations when handling incoming information, so we impose a sort of false dichotomy which literally transforms the world into a series of essential dualisms, strongly oriented towards difference.

Universally speaking, an unidentified landscape makes very little sense to us, so creating cognitive categories and placing information into them becomes one of our primary functions. As such, “identity emerges from the context of intergroup relations. Thus one defines oneself as the member of an in-group vis-à-vis an out-group” (Deaux, 1993: 4).

In both the disciplines of cultural anthropology and cultural psychology, it has been hypothesized that the human brain interprets the physical world in terms of cognitive schemata. Such schemata are best thought of as conceptual structures which facilitate the classification of objects and events into an understandable order. Therefore, schemas are at the very root of behavior because we act on the basis of what we perceive to be true. For instance, we employ schema in pursuit of the goals that we ultimately adopt.

Furthermore, schema can be seen to vary between cultures because, “the learning of motives is a result of the experience of the

infant and child as shaped by socialization and parental identifications” (D’Andrade, 1992: 37). Thus, the rudiments of the particular cultural model are frequently apparent in everyday discourse.

However, in certain instances, when the mind lacks an appropriate cognitive category in which to place new information, it is forced to either redefine the parameters of said category or alter the perception so that it fits within the preexisting cognitive structures. In other words, information that challenges the parameters of our social categories can at times force a revolution, or at least redefinition, of our cognitive representations. At other times though, it seems that, “once internalized, it appears that cultural schemas are difficult to abandon or even modulate” (D’Andrade, 1992: 40).

This specific theory of information processing can be traced back, at least to the work of twentieth century French psychologist, Jean Piaget, who expounded the related concepts of assimilation and accommodation.

Assimilative activity transforms a given input into objects that correspond to the person’s structure of

knowing. Accommodative activity transforms the organism according to the particular characteristics of the input. When this input, as in the case of perception, consists of sensory data, it is part of the accommodative activity to adjust itself to the particular configuration of these data. Such correspondence to the outside state can be literally observed in the accommodation of sense organs, as for instance in the adjustment of the eye to the various visual characteristics of a seen object, its distance, brightness, shape (Furth, 1969: 135).

In short, if incoming information is consistent with a preexisting cognitive category then it is merely a matter of assimilating the data into that division. But if the mind lacks an appropriate category in which to store new data, then it may be forced to mutate the cognitive structures to accommodate it.

The reason that I mention this is that it directly impacts the way that we classify information about our own group and consequently define the 'others'. Which is to say that, "an individual defines himself as well as others in terms of his location within a system of social categories" (Turner, 1975). As a result, the standards of our own group provide the point of reference for defining the boundaries and judging the out-group.

Moreover, because the in-group becomes part of the self-

concept (Smith & Henry, 1996), it is important to have a favorable opinion of those groups to which we belong. Otherwise we are motivated to abandon previous loyalties in favor of membership in groups with a positive image. In support of this point, Tajfel *et al.* have shown that,

when subjects have a choice between acting in terms of maximum utilitarian advantages to all (MJP) combined with maximum utilitarian advantage to members of their own group (MIP) as against having their group win on points at the sacrifice of both these advantages, it is winning that seems to be more important to them” (1971, 172).

These researchers go on to explain that subjects were even consciously aware of alternative strategies, which makes their behavior even more remarkable. What this says to me is that image (both group and self) is the preeminent behavioral motivator.

Another function of social comparison is that it allows the individual to draw on social groups as a source of information concerning normative behavior. That is, “people strive to feel certain that they are correct so that they may ascribe meaning to their world and their place within it and thus be able to interact adaptively with their environment” (Grieve & Hogg, 1999: 927).

Thus, it is against the backdrop of in-group norms that we contrast our own beliefs and judge their correctness.

An important cognitive consequence of this pervasiveness is that the articulation of an individual's social world in terms of its categorization into groups becomes a guide for his conduct in situations to which some criteria of intergroup division can be meaningfully applied. ('Meaningful' need not be 'rational'.) An undifferentiated social environment makes very little sense and provides no guidelines for action" (Tajfel *et al.* , 1971: 153).

Furthermore, there are multiple types of information that the group can provide for individual members.

Social comparison is a process by which people seek informational influence. But we can see now that people really seek two kinds of information, broadly speaking: (1) information that validates, or gives comfort that they are already correct or close to it; and (2) information that evaluates, or more truly instructs them about the appropriateness of their subjective attitudes. Generally, both kinds of information can be gained by social comparison with like-minded people (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991: 134).

In addition to the fact that we look to others to confirm that our opinions are correct, or in line with the group norms, we also try to make sure that our beliefs are in line with what we personally hold to be true. In other words, they must be consistent with our

individual underlying cognitive realities, which is perhaps why certain social attributions are so hard to dislodge. Hence, the epistemological categories that we create through social comparison effect, to varying degrees, the way that we handle incoming information. So in effect, we are primed to accept some attributions more readily than others.

However, in the event that our perceptions and those of the group are inconsistent, anxiety and dissonance are produced.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Aronson, 1972) is a phenomena that occurs when we hold two beliefs, at the same time, that are obviously contradictory. This situation eventually produces a type of psychic tension that we can act to resolve by rationalizing a sort of bridge between the various dissonant concepts. Because of this phenomena, much information that does not match our preconceived notions or stereotypes can be rather easily explained away and in effect, lost.

For instance, let us just say for arguments sake that I believed that Americans are industrious and have worked their way to the

head of the world market. And then I found out that American schoolchildren rank low on aptitude tests compared with schoolchildren from other industrialized nations. I might reconcile these two disparate statements by concluding that imagination is more important than knowledge or that hard work makes up for ignorance.

More likely though, I would question the validity of the finding on methodological or other grounds. In this manner I could shrug off disconfirming evidence by referring to its conceptual flaws.

Another problem recognized by dissonance theory is that oftentimes, we tend to errantly assume that other people perceive events or information in just the same way we do. In so doing, we essentially ignore the fact that,

people are not passive receptacles for the deposition of information. The manner in which they view and interpret information depends on how deeply they are committed to a particular belief or course of action. Individuals will distort the objective world in order to reduce their dissonance (Aronson, 1972: 184).

One of the ways that we distort the objective world is by employing stereotypes that are erroneous and unfortunately, many

times self-fulfilling. Another popular method of distortion is to be selective about the sources, or types, of information which we expose ourselves to. In the words of the forefather of the theory, Leon Festinger,

if (a person) is led, for one reason or another, to expect (an information source) will produce cognitions which will increase consonance, he will expose himself to the information source. If the expectation is that the cognition acquired through this source would increase dissonance, he will avoid it (1957: 128).

Though we may not always recognize it, prejudice can work in very subtle ways. For instance, it can influence, through cognitive dissonance, the way that we interpret everyday experiences. And most frightening of all, it can be transmitted to future generations if it is not guarded against.

Stereotype Formation

On a daily basis, the mind is bombarded with much more information than it can ever possibly attend to. This creates a situation where we are forced to develop various strategies or heuristics for handling the relevant part of said information; essentially we are forced to become cognitive misers for the mere

sake of economy. Unfortunately, in so doing we inevitably create oversimplified stereotypes that can become so entrenched, that information which contradicts them is virtually disregarded.

According to Bertjan Doosje, Russell Spears, and Willem Koomen it was found that,

perceivers who receive negative sample information concerning the in-group (and positive information about an out-group) may not only challenge this information in their central tendency judgements, but also may simultaneously try to compensate for this disadvantageous situation by exaggerating the expected variabilities within both the in-group and the out-group populations (1995: 643).

This means that our minds are not easily changed; inconsistent data, which should challenge the validity of certain stereotypes is instead rather easily disregarded. Whatever the case, it allows us to harbor a host of misattributions, as room in the working memory is at a premium.

In addition to this strategy of oversimplification is the fact that attribution processes differ for in-groups and out-groups. It seems that, "in general, we tend to see members of out-groups as more similar to each other than the members of our own group"

(Aronson, 1972: 144). And I would argue that this is a direct result of the use of simplifying heuristics. It would seem that we only have mental room for complex, heterogeneous perceptions of our own group. And in fact, Park and Rothbart have demonstrated that, “men and women were more likely to remember the subordinate attributes of an in-group member than of an out-group member” (1982: 1051). Consequently, the ‘others’ are often characterized by a relatively few shared traits.

“When we assign attributes to a category, we stereotype” (Triandis, 1994). In effect, we limit the amount of information we attend to and this leaves room for misinformation to exist. Many times the misinformation is self-serving, in the sense that it bolsters our own self-concept. So, in order to counter the dehumanizing effect that stereotyping can have on individuals which we perceive to be different, we need to be consciously aware of the fundamental biases, inherent in the stereotypes that we all harbor.

Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that, at times when social identity is stressed, stereotype consensus within the group increases. A recent article by Haslam *et al.* detailed findings which indicate that,

Consensus appears to derive from the ability of group life and group memberships to structure the cognitions of individual perceivers, so that they expect and seek actively to coordinate their perceptions and behavior with others who share the same group membership (1999: 816).

This means that belonging to a group can impose a sort of filter, on the individual, through which information is screened. This type of censored information is then passed on, through interpersonal communications (Schaller & Conway III, 1999), so that even individual contact between group members helps to reify the preferred attributions. In extreme cases, where dissenting opinions and contradictory images are absent, the phenomena known as 'group think' can occur. So, to counter extreme stereotypes from developing, it is crucial to flood the environment with positive images or information that contradicts the stigmatizing attitudes.

Multidimensionality of Social Identity

Up until this point, experimental theories (Turner, 1975; Tajfel *et al.*, 1971) concerning social identity, which would of course, include on some level ethnicity, have not been able to account for the complexity of 'real world' manifestations in their experimental research. I believe that this is because they have had

trouble defining the appropriate cultural unit needed for social comparison to take place. They fail to account for the fact that social comparison can take place on many different levels, virtually simultaneously.

In a recent work, John Turner (1975) described three distinctly abstracted levels of self-categorization; they were: human identity, social identity and personal identity. I would argue that the last of these three can be further dissected because most individuals possess a variety of identities that can be subsumed under the heading of personal identity and in some cases this phenomena can be extended to social identity. For, as Kay Deaux (1993: 5) has so diligently observed of Turner's framework, "I see the distinction between personal and social as somewhat arbitrary and misleading. Rather than being cleanly separable, social and personal identity are fundamentally interrelated".

Additionally, most of the recent literature also fails to account for the fact that individuals can be scrupulous manipulators of their social identity. This notion is particularly evident in the fact that, "people can categorize themselves at various levels of inclusiveness, ranging from the personal self to broad social

categories such as ethnic groups” (Smith & Henry, 1996: 635). At times, individuals are even capable of capitalizing on inherent ambiguities, created by the fact that they may possess several independent identities, to improve their position and mobility within society.

Thus knowing which identities a person claims is not enough. Information about the position of an identity within the overall structure may be an important predictor of affective state, behavioral choice and response to interventions (Deaux, 1993: 8).

The secondary aim of this paper is to examine what I believe to be the larger question of group formation processes and the ramifications these have on stereotype development. I do not claim however, to be the first to have recognized, “the need for more historical studies of ethnic groups to analyze the evolution of ethnic identities and the role of social and economic circumstances relative to psychological factors in shaping group identities” (Cohen, 1984: 1029).

However, it is my contention that the perceptions of individual group members significantly affect our understanding of, and attitudes towards ‘non-members’. As I have alluded to earlier, these

oversimplified, inaccurate attributions become reified through continued reinforcement within the group and eventually discriminatory practices are adopted. Hopefully, by continuing the dialogue on the foundations of prejudice we can begin to see what it will take to move this discussion to the next level; the dissolution of discriminatory language and behavior.

Recently, it has occurred to me that most of the confusion concerning current conceptions of ethnicity stem from the apparent lack of a well established, uniform criteria for defining ethnic identity. There is also little agreement concerning the appropriate unit of culture at which to compare any two given societies. To his credit, Raoul Naroll did identify six qualities that characterize the fundamental cultural unit in a 1964 *Current Anthropology* article.

They were as follows:

- (1) Distribution of particular traits being studied.
- (2) Territorial contiguity.
- (3) Political organization.
- (4) Language.
- (5) Ecological adjustment.
- (6) Local community structure(284).

Nevertheless, circumstances have changed significantly since

the mid-sixties. In the world today, cultures are coming into contact at an unprecedented rate. Ideas and identities are mixing in many unique ways and the existing theoretical framework surrounding ethnic identity seems ill equipped to account for the resulting complexity. Moreover, current conceptions of ethnic identity lack the ability to account for the fact that a person is often a member of more than one group at any given time and consequently may have numerous social identities to draw upon. A fact that will only become increasingly frequent as we move towards a global society.

Moreover, to fully comprehend the nature of social identity, we also have to account for the fact that there are several levels of social identity, beyond the three that Turner (1975) has defined. In certain situations, subordinate identities can be lost or put aside in favor of a higher order identity, as was the case with the Christian Crusades. In this instance, feudal loyalties were temporarily put aside in favor of saving the Christian homeland from muslim invaders.

There also exists the possibility that, at times, higher order identities can become a disadvantage. If this is the case, then we

have the option of retreating, and seeking solace in a minor identity which may be considered to be more personal. An example of this can be found in minority group members who emphasize their minority heritage, in order to secure financial assistance, even if they may feel no real connection to that heritage.

In other words, social identity is not often a straightforward, easily described phenomena. Instead they are rather context dependent and impermanent. For proof of this, one only need check the number of times that the countries of the world have reorganized themselves in the last century or two. In reality, the only time that ethnic identities appear to remain constant, is when they are totally removed from their individual historical contexts. Granted, some identities persist for longer than others, however ultimately, all are temporary and culturally determined. Perhaps by examining the transitional periods, when ethnic identities are challenged, or more poignantly shift, it will become increasingly apparent just how fickle and fluid social identities (i.e. ethnic identities) really are.

To this end, the case studies which I have selected for this paper represent three unique situations in which dominant identities

either give rise to new ethnicities or are directly challenged by the competing interests of other burgeoning identities.

In order to better understand the ramifications of social identity, we must remember that ethnicity is defined along two distinct yet interdependent lines: social-categorization, which is ascribed from without and is seriously reductionistic, and self-categorization which is partially governed by the individual. Of the two, the latter process of identity formation is much more complete and pliable.

This apparent dichotomy of social identity inevitably leads to the formation of groups based on commonalities, often defined along ethnic lines. Perhaps more importantly though, it also gives rise to the subsequent definition of an out-group based on difference. Differences which, we will see, become accentuated as newly spawned identities fight to differentiate themselves.

Racialisation

One of the most easily apprehended and widely employed axis of differentiation has typically been drawn along 'racial' lines. This distinction, which has little scientific basis, has been used since before we fully understood the intricate workings of genetic

inheritance. Nevertheless, we are still able to identify a, “social process of conferring social significance on these visible markers. Racialisation is the process of making physical differences into social markers and, typically, enforcing them in a regime of oppression” (Fenton, 1999: 66).

As if by fiat, values have become assigned to skin color and there is a repeating tendency to underestimate the amount of variation contained within the various ‘races’. The myth that ability is somehow related to skin color is rooted in specific colonial events, and even within the ranks of academia there is a significant body of evidence which helps to perpetuate this attitude. Instead of focusing on the common traits of all members of the species *Homo sapien sapien*, we seem all too ready to focus on one trait that has absolutely no bearing on intelligence or ability.

What the layman fails to appreciate, in the emphasis on skin coloration, is that observable differences within the world’s population are the result of relatively long periods of geographic isolation throughout the history of our species and normal evolutionary processes acting within these populations. That is, we know that,

Evolution works through gradual change and the gradual branching of family trees, combined with interbreeding between groups, resulting in an array of populations which resemble one other to varying degrees like the branches of any family. In fact, the major premise of evolution is that we are all part of the same large family (Cohen, 1998: 42).

However these circumstances do allow certain traits, like dark skin for example, to cluster which means that they are expressed with greater frequency in certain parts of the globe. Eventually, with enough generations, the whole population inhabiting a given environment begins exhibiting a marked similarity, provided that the environment does not change significantly and that the gene pool stays somewhat static. The meaning of variation in skin coloration is further confounded by the fact that,

genetic similarities in visible or adaptive traits need not imply family relationships at all. Some obvious 'racial' traits actually seem to have originated several times and to occur in populations that are not otherwise very much alike. Thus, parallel skin color variations occur repeatedly in different parts of the world corresponding to solar radiation, among people who otherwise have different traits and appear historically unconnected (*ibid.*: 45).

The other trend that has developed in the last few years concerning social attribution is a strong backlash against 'racial'

mixing. It would seem that at the same time mainstream America has been striving for greater integration and equal treatment under the law, various factions of extremist thought have gained popularity using the rhetoric of hatred and preaching separation between the races.

Perhaps these groups are responding to what they perceive to be a threat to their autonomy by adopting an isolationistic philosophy. It could very well be that they fear for the integrity of their identity because they know that they may very well fall prey to a rapidly changing world order.

In any event, my reason for mentioning the process of racialization is twofold. On the one hand, I want to bring it to the reader's attention that 'race' is a social distinction which is weakly based on genetic inheritance and certainly dependent on environmental inputs. But in addition, I want to point out that racial attributions shares much in common with ethnically based attribution processes. For instance, both tend to impose boundaries based on shared ancestry, culture or language.

Even today, skin color is still employed as a very popular social marker, though in individual contexts it can take on different

values. Despite repeated objections (from many different disciplines) that it is not a valid scientific distinction, we are forced to acknowledge the presence of this racial distinction as a sociological and psychological phenomena. The reality of the matter is that people of color are still fighting against negative stereotypes, on a daily basis, which can inhibit their attempts to advance in American society. In spite of our rhetoric, we fail to attain a situation where all have an equal footing. Oppression is still the way of the *status quo*, yet now it is carried on in a more subtle manner. The roadblocks that currently exist are veiled in secrecy as they still aim to exploit.

One way that any collectivity can fight with greater impact is by gaining new membership. By appealing to a broader audience, or uniting disassociated factions against a common enemy, groups can gain clout; both within the confines of the law and without. This being the case, the process known as 'ethnogenesis' can be seen as a strategy for gaining power in society. By rallying around the symbols of shared ancestry, language or culture, populations can be galvanized into a fierce unit of resistance to the *status quo*. Or if opportunity provides no shared elements of culture to draw upon,

then we are forced to fashion new identities out of the aggregate.

In the relatively short history of our species, it has been advantageous to keep our social groups fluid so that we could endure periods of scarcity and disease. Therefore, to treat ethnic identities as anything but an adaptation to changing social circumstances is to miss the functional value of entering into social contract. The next section of this paper will do just that, it will examine the process known as 'ethnogenesis' in the context of conflict; as an adaptive strategy for dealing with a changing social landscape. It specifically focuses on what the ethnic group can provide for its members, namely *agency*.

Ethnogenesis

Now that we have gone over some of the finer nuances of social identity, I think it appropriate to examine one specific level of this phenomenon; ethnicity. I contend that ethnicity is somewhat unique to the realm of social identity in that it is grounded, again to varying degrees, in shared ancestry, or common fate. It is not an altogether spurious designation, but in order to endure, it must continually be maintained.

In 1971, William Sturtevant described the ethnogenesis of the Seminole Indians out of former Creek Indian populations. He

explained that these populations gradually acquiesced and eventually asserted their independence while, at the same time, receding to the seclusion of a marginal environment (the Big Cypress swamp of central Florida) in order to avoid being absorbed by expanding Euro-American settlements. In his own words,

The Seminole provide a striking instance of these transformations of Indian society and polity in response to European pressures, for the tribe is an entirely post-European phenomenon, a replacement by Creek settlers of the Florida aborigines whom they eliminated in frontier military campaigns growing out of antagonisms between European powers (Sturtevant, 1971:92).

In this one example, we have evidence of at least three primary identities which are mutating as a result of their interactions. One identity, that of the Florida aborigines, was even in jeopardy of becoming extinct at one point. For this discussion, it is useful to remember that, "every innovation, and thus all culture change, must be considered to be a recombination of previously existing configurations" (Wallace, 1970: 168). This, in part, explains why it is common practice to draw on older, previously existing identities when forging new ones.

At this point in history, we cannot deny the fact that all identities reflect the power relationships that underlie and coincidentally produce them. In the course of their interactions, some inevitably fall prey to changing world conditions. Yet others are forged out of the remnants of that very struggle; at times assimilating diverse populations and creating elaborate creoles.

As a result, the study of ethnic identity has, in the past, been confounded by the fact that identities can be either stressed or suppressed depending on the local climate. Moreover, because social identity is context dependent, individual actors are able to gain power by strategically manipulating the various identities that we all come to possess.

Human agency may be frail, especially among those with little power, but it happens daily and mundanely, and it deserves our attention. Humans' capacity for self-objectification- and through objectification, for self-direction-plays into both their domination by social relations of power and their possibilities for (partial) liberation from these forces (Holland *et al.*, 1998: 5).

As a result, individuals are sometimes able to gain greater access to mobility within a given society. In support of this point,

Ellemers *et al.* (1997) demonstrated that individuals who did not strongly identify with an in-group showed an increased desire for mobility to a higher status group.

In most instances of culture contact, the newly encountered identity, or identities, are scrutinized by the respective populations to see if they are, in fact, compatible with the structure of schema, or motives, common to them. Most of the time, the closer or more compatible the particular groups are, the more cultural borrowing one can expect to see. From a slightly different perspective,

a 'donor' culture presents a new cultural configuration to the recipient culture. The members of this culture then subject the new configurations to various tests and sooner or later, accepts it or rejects it (Wallace, 1970: 172).

At the same time, we must also remember that not all cultures define identity in exactly the same manner. In fact, we know that, "the idea of self (and, therefore, of personal identity also) is not a discrete psychological entity in all cultures" (Hoare, 1991: 49). And as you can well imagine, lack of self-concept significantly affects the way that identity is construed.

Consequently, I believe this means that there is a need for a

range of frameworks to explain ethnic identity formation processes. Most importantly though, our theories will have to be able to account for the dynamic nature of social relationships through time. They will also have to recognize the fact that, unless the society is geographically isolated, genetic and cultural borrowing are bound to occur. We can find an example of exactly this kind of framework in the expanding area of 'ethnogenetic theory'.

Ethnogenetic Theory

Ethnogenetic theory is, for all practical purposes, a response to the use of cladistic (i.e. biological) models for explaining culture change. As opposed to cladistic methods, ethnogenetic models allow for much greater exchange of cultural material between ethnic units of varying sizes. The essential difference between these two approaches has been summed up nicely by John Moore.

The fundamental issue is historical- the extent to which language, culture, and biology coevolve in human societies. If human societies have consistently maintained ethnic boundaries in their evolution, then all kinds of human characteristics- language, culture, and biology- should have coevolved within these boundaries, and it should be simple to describe these events in a single theory....But if ethnic boundaries of human societies are best considered as fragile,

permeable, or illusory, then other kinds of models would be more appropriate; namely those that allow language or culture to change, or intermarriage to take place, without affecting other aspects of language and culture (1994: 12).

Furthermore, we must always bear in mind that there are many representative examples of both situations to be found throughout history. So, the key then is to be able to know which model to use in any given situation. Typically, the only time that cladistic explanations are appropriate is when the particular population has remained geographically isolated for a significant period of time.

Social Conflict

Social conflict can effectively be viewed as the source of the process of ethnogenesis, in the sense that oftentimes identities are constructed for use as a political tool. Hence, if we are looking at long-term social change in a situation that is in no way isolated, we must not only assume that exchanges are taking place, but we must also know to what degree they are occurring. However, we must also remember that there are usually more than just two actors on the landscape at any one time. In fact, there are a multiplicity of competing interests involved in most situations.

In the past, it has been recognized that, “enmities and reciprocal antagonisms also maintain the total system by establishing a balance between its component parts” (Coser, 1956). Thus, certain systems can enjoy relatively long periods of stasis, before being upset by a redistribution of power, if conditions remain favorable. As I mentioned before, these relationships, just like group boundaries, need to be maintained; so they are not as ‘natural’ as they may seem to some people.

If history has taught us anything it is that collapse is an inevitability for all social systems (Yoffee, 1988). In part because the amount of energy input required to maintain social cohesion becomes too great. For instance, in the last two hundred years or so, most of the former colonial powers have opted to relinquish control of their protectorates. And this trend towards independence has spawned many new identities as the former colonial satellites strive to establish themselves on the world stage.

In direct contrast to this trend towards independence are cases where populations are absorbed or extinguished by encroaching settlement. This is really the antithetical process to ethnogenesis, it is tantamount to a loss of cultural autonomy.

Assimilation and Extinction

There is a rather large body of evidence to suggest that contact between cultures can have catastrophic effects. Whether through design or unintentional coincidence, vast populations can disappear virtually within one generation. When this happens, the survivors are confronted with a dilemma. Usually, if their immediate group remains intact then there really is no significant challenge to their loyalty. However, if their population is so decimated that it no longer functions like a group, then individual members may be forced to assimilate into another identity.

Moreover, I believe that there are basically three basic contexts where assimilation, and in extreme cases extinction, is likely to occur. The first deals with situations where disease has led to rapid population losses. In instances such as these, the remaining members are forced to seek entry into other groups. The particularly interesting thing about disease, as a vehicle of ethnocide, is that populations do not have to be in direct contact for epidemics to have drastic effects. Because many indigenous groups in North America aggregated at set rendezvous in the summer and

disbanded for the winter, infected carriers could wipe out complete lineages.

The second context, in which assimilation is likely to occur, is produced when one population conquers and absorbs another population. This situation posed an array of problems for colonial managers who had to decide what law codes the natives should be held to. One of the central functions of the Federal government is to incorporate the component populations into one cohesive producing unit. And it is in the best interest of this superordinate, national identity that peaceful relations are maintained. Though it may not practice equal treatment, the national government is quiet efficient at suppressing openly violent conflicts within its jurisdiction.

The last context that I want to identify occurs when populations migrate into a new area and begin to compete with the *in situ* identities. Depending on the circumstances of the migration and resulting settlement, groups can either retain their autonomy in the new place or they can be absorbed by the surrounding population.

Boundary Maintenance

For most groups differentiation begins with the adoption of

symbols, practices or language that are distinctive and which help to perpetuate and strengthen imposed boundaries. There are even instances where certain groups can merge and establish new boundaries in defense of a common enemy. In fact, this is the case with most nationalist identities and the United States is a particularly notable example of this phenomena. For over two hundred years this national identity has managed to unite a widely divergent population of indigenous peoples and foreign immigrants into one cohesive unit competing in a fledgling world market.

As was mentioned earlier, research in the realm of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1971) indicates that subjects characteristically hold widely divergent perceptions of in-groups (i.e. groups which they were a part of) and out-groups, irregardless of how they are defined. In general, subject tend to describe members of their own group in much greater detail than they would members of another group. The end result of this process of differential attributions, which incidentally follows group lines, is prejudicial behavior. As such, whole groups of individuals can become units of competition and group membership then becomes a political tools which can be utilized by the individual to secure

greater mobility within society.

As Frederick Barth (1969) has so adeptly pointed out, social groups are maintained by their boundaries. Boundaries establish autonomy and create cohesion. Therefore, much of our attention should be devoted to these dividing lines. In the formation of a new identity it would seem that boundary formation, through the adoption of distinct symbols, speech or the like, is a critical process. Yet as fixed as the boundaries may seem, the ethnicities defined by them show an amazing amount of fluidity dependent on context. As the author, Marcus Banks, has pointed out when describing Barth's ideas,

Barth tried to show that ethnic groups are socially constructed (subject to environmental constraints) and that the content of the groups-in terms of both 'culture' and personnel- has no a priori existence or stability. That is to say, it is not so much the group which endures as the *idea* of the group (Banks, 1996: 12).

However, it is also important to note the inherent dangers in treating cultures as bounded entities. This tendency can cause one to severely underestimate the amount of interactions taking place between actors on any given landscape. Unless a particular culture exists in isolation for any significant period of time, it will be

subject to exogenous forces of varying degrees. Unfortunately, many ethnographic texts contribute to the perpetuation of an axiomatic view of the social world as a mosaic of discontinuous and definite cultural difference, rather than a seamless web of overlapping and interweaving cultural variation.

Conclusions

The important thing to stress here is that social identity, even ethnicity, is fluid and subject to historical forces. Thus by focusing on the transitional periods, where identities are challenged or shift, we can gain a better understanding of ethnic identity formation processes. By looking at diverse example and trying to draw out the commonalities we can begin to think about theory building, assuming that our comparisons are controlled and limited to a few salient features.

In situations where a particular ethnic identity persists, it is important to examine how it was able to assimilate changing conditions and remain a prominent social identity. This is what I hope to demonstrate through examination of the three forthcoming case studies. Each of the three examples, which I have chosen,

represents a unique situation in terms of identity development and maintenance. Each can shed light on the process by which ethnic identity becomes either a social tool or a social handicap.

Eventually, our explanatory framework must become flexible enough to account variation in the way that identity is defined in different cultures. It must allow for differences in the way that group membership is defined, it must recognize that some social barriers are more permeable than others. For instance, the barriers imposed in the Indian caste system are much less permeable than the barriers of the American class structure.

It is also important to identify situations which require ethnogenetic explanations as opposed to cladistic models. In other words, "the greatest task facing researchers of ethnogenesis is determining how often human societies undergo these radical linguistic and cultural transitions....That is, how much of the current diversity in language is due to rapid, ethnogenetic processes, as opposed to slow, cladistic processes" (Moore, 1994: 18).

The next three chapters focus on three either emerging or changing ethnicities. In any event, they are all in transition with uncertain futures. The extreme examples are to be found in the

present-day Metis and the Rastafarians because neither of these two groups are presently sustained by a land base. Both are essentially displaced populations that had to build their new identities out of fragments of their former cultures and elements of their newly encountered cultures.

Rastafari

On November 2, 1930 a prophesy was realized in the ascension of Ras Tafari Makonnen to the throne of Ethiopia. The Emperor, crowned Haile Selassie, was described as exhibiting the true aura of a king (Mosley, 1964). More importantly though, Haile Selassie was and is considered to be a messiah by members of the Rastafarian movement, the majority of whom still inhabit the island of Jamaica in the British West Indies.

It seems pertinent, right off the bat, to mention that it is hard to talk about Rastafarianism as a structured ethnic identity because

there is a general disdain for leadership among them, with the obvious exception of King Selassie who was actually seen to be the living God.

Additionally, there is a strong anti-government sentiment among Rastas due to the fact that they have been stripped from their homeland and enslaved during their previous encounter with what they consider to be similar institutions. However, I should caution that one should not underestimate the cohesive power of such a decentralized structure. Rastafarianism is experienced by its dedicated constituents at a very elementary level. It is, in every sense, a powerful spiritual movement with definite structure and strict codes of conduct for the loyal observer.

With the above preface in mind, I contend that the original elements which provided the context in which Rastafarianism developed in Jamaica go back to 1655; the time of the British defeat of the Spanish and their subsequent possession of the Island.

The Spaniards, finding themselves outclassed by the British, sailed from the north coast of Jamaica for Cuba and left their slaves to the British. But the slaves had ideas of their own. Although we have no true records of the treatment of Spanish slaves in Jamaica up to 1655, we may assume from the behavior of the Spanish slaves

that they were discontent with slavery, for they soon sought freedom in the hill country where they fought a grueling war to the death. These Spanish slaves came to be called "Maroons" (Barrett, 1977: 30).

As this passage indicates the seeds of insurrection were planted early and found sanctuary in Jamaica's isolated hill country. As a result of this effective resistance movement, Jamaica has experienced several violent upheavals in its relatively short history. Obviously, the British colonial government did, from its inception, ultimately succeeded at quelling revolutionary movements in her colonies through its military strength, but they were significantly less successful at containing the rhetoric of discontent that is a common feature of all oppressed societies.

Consequently, the rastafarian ethnicity must be understood in the context of oppression. It is a grass roots movement that was born out of the conflict with the almost exclusively white colonial elites. As such, color has become a primary ethnic boundary marker for the Rastafarians who often collectively refer to the dominating white power structure by the term 'Babylon'.

Faced with such adverse conditions, the newly freed black population of Jamaica was inspired by the belief that they might

return and be repatriated in their country of origin, Ethiopia. Marcus Garvey, native Jamaican and one of the most outspoken black nationalists of the 1920s, openly advocated an exodus back to Africa (Fax, 1972; Cronon, 1955). Although this mass migration has not yet taken place, most Rastas still believe that it will, sometime in the future, when they will assume their true position as the chosen people. To fully comprehend this belief, one must first understand that many Rastafarians believe themselves to have much in common with the exiled twelve Tribes of Israel.

Much of Garvey's rhetoric has been incorporated into the Rasta ethos; especially his prophesy of 1916. Prior to his departure for the United States, Garvey stated, "Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black King, he shall be the Redeemer" (Barrett, 1977: 67).

As one might expect, the years of anticipation amplified the expression of hope among Jamaicans and when Haile Selassie came to power in 1930 many believed a new era was at hand. Even though he ruled a land half a world away, Selassie became the ultimate manifestation of the sacred for Rastafarians. Given Selassie's status, one can well imagine that his death caused a crisis for many who believed in his divine nature. Seeking answers, "the brethren

looked to (Bob) Marley, the best-known Rastafarian in the world, to comment on this unsettling metaphysical development. 'Jah Live' was his response. 'Jah live because you can't kill God" (Jacobson, 1995: 50).

There is little doubt that the coronation of Haile Selassie was an important event in the Rastafarian cosmology, however it did not directly lead to the development of this identity; though it is the namesake. The real seed of crystallization for the Rastafarian movement was provided by a minister in Kingstown by the name of Leonard Howell. By the year 1930, Garvey's destiny had taken him beyond Jamaica, and this provided an opportunity for Howell, along with Archibald Dunkley and Joseph Hibbert, to step in and assert leadership.

Howell, the most prolific of the three, openly preached the following six tenets:

- 1) hatred for the White race
- 2) the complete superiority of the Black race
- 3) revenge on Whites for their wickedness
- 4) the negation, persecution, and humiliation of the government and legal bodies of Jamaica
- 5) preparation to go back to Africa
- 6) acknowledging Emperor Haile Selassie as the Supreme Being and only ruler of the Black people (Barrett, 1977: 85).

As one might expect, such ideas did not sit well with the Jamaican government and Howell was eventually arrested, and then sentenced to two years in jail for his seditious activities. Upon release, he receded to hilly stronghold near Sligoville, Jamaica appropriately known as the 'pinnacle'. There Howell and many of his followers created what would become an example of the prototypical Rasta camp; roughly governed by a small number of elder/chiefs. Life in the 'pinnacle' was described by the professor Barrett thusly, "Howell served as chief (African style), and was reported to have taken thirteen wives for himself. For a living, they planted native cash crops, among them the famous ganja (marijuana) herb that has remained the center of the movements ritual practice" (1977: 86).

When the police got word of Howell and his camp hiding out in an old Maroon stronghold they quickly moved to disband these early Rastafarians, perhaps sensing the danger such congregations could pose. Eventually, many of the early initiants of Rastafarianism would take their ideas down into the slums of the major cities of Jamaica, especially Kingstown, where they could take root and propagate. Not coincidentally, the themes that Rastafarianism

embodies are consistent with much of the life experience of those in Jamaica who are still being oppressed; only this time through economic restrictions instead of institutionalized slavery.

The other direction that Rastafarianism took after 1960 led to the establishment of bush camps, reminiscent of the 'pinnacle', scattered throughout the hinterlands of Jamaica. And it is in these two specific environmental contexts that the movement of Rastafarianism has evolved. However, now that some of the background has been laid out, pertaining to the development of this ethnicity, I think it wise to shift perspectives and examine some of the 'cultural stuff' which constitutes the Rastafarian ethnic group.

In the case of Rastafarianism, the major players on the landscape were the English colonial government, missionaries from a variety of Christian denominations, and the former slave population of Jamaica. This matrix has since become more complex, but for now I wish only to deal with the early developmental period of Rastafarianism; circa 1930-1965.

More specifically, I wish to examine the boundary between Christianity and Rastafarianism because the latter shares much of

the former's theology, but with certain crucial modifications. The reason for this discrepancy is that Rastafarians believe that the text of the Bible has been altered in the course of its many translations to suit the purposes of Babylon. Hence, the discovery of truth, through the scriptures, must take into account the possibility of alteration.

One of the most striking distinctions between the two is the Rastafarian emphasis on the totality of creation, not its separateness. This is evidenced by the Rasta concept of 'I & I', which refers to the element of 'Jah' or the Supreme that is inherent in all things. This, in part, explains why most Rastafarians are vegetarians preferring a diet which they call 'i-tal'; referring to things being in their natural state. Though probably the most commonly recognized ethnic marker of the Rastafarians would have to be the dreadlocks. Indeed there are many myths concerning their origin, but their functional value is really the pertinent issue.

Hair has always been a problem in Jamaican society in that it is often used as an index of social difference; for example, fine, silky hair has always been considered "good", while woolly or kinky hair is frowned upon. The person with fine, silky hair was considered better and more socially acceptable than

the typical Negroid type. Thus the dominant hair styling of the Rastafarians is a symbol of the contradiction in the society; the Rastafarians are unconsciously ridiculing the ambivalence of the society (Barrett, 1977: 138).

Whether or not a hair style is capable of ridicule is not at issue, what is important is the fact that dreadlocks are an unmistakable cultural marker and form part of the boundary of this ethnic group.

Another popularized marker is the ritual use of ganja by many Rastafarians. Most believe that this practice grew out of the interpretation that marijuana is the holy herb mentioned in the Bible. Whatever the case, ganja is used in ceremony, where it is smoked out of communal chalice pipes as an aid to meditation. The smell is supposed to be pleasing to 'Jah'.

Us vs. Them Heuristic

As was noted earlier, Rastafarianism must be understood in the context of conflict. The movement is based on almost 350 years of defiance, sometimes openly violent and sometimes subtly coercive. This being the case, it then seems plausible to view ethnicity as an adaptive strategy, in this battle, with a biological

basis. I know that this assertion will bother some so let me quantify it by stating that it is the impulse to form groups that is biologically based. Humans are invariably social animals and we cannot deny the implications of this fact. However, the attributes the individual group may chose to 'key in on' (i.e. the ethnic boundary) are definitely subject to modification by circumstance and, at times, design. Unfortunately, one of the most used heuristics is based on appearance because that is one of the first things we experience when interacting with others.

In post-colonial Jamaica the distinction between different ethnic groups was an easy one because it was based primarily on the degree of color in one's skin and this characteristic was easily apprehended. Unfortunately, this was often the only measure of value that was applied to human life.

Even after slavery was abolished, being Black still carried a large stigmatism with it. Though people of color do comprise a numerical majority in Jamaica, they have had a difficult time gaining access to positions of power, with a few notable exceptions. Moreover, the Rastafarians in particular have remained isolated from the mainsteam state institutions by choice, as they believe

that said institutions are, by their very nature, evil.

As I mentioned earlier, many sought repatriation in Ethiopia. But in Jamaica, most attempts to incorporate the large body of slave labor into the existing capitalist structure proved unsuccessful. And, it is in reaction to the limited mobility of Jamaican society that Rastafarianism has really showed its power.

It gave the destitute, those who had no hope of improving their living conditions in one lifetime, a sense of solidarity in suffering. Rastas take pride in the work and many are notable sculptors or general craftsmen. They handle the sparse times extremely well, citing the parable in the Bible concerning seven years of famine for seven years of plenty.

Before going any further on the topic of group identities I have to reiterate that there are two analytically distinct processes of group perception which results in the 'us vs. them' dichotomy. One is self-categorization which, for all practical purposes, occurs within the ethnic boundary, and involves characterizing members of one's own group. The second is social-categorization which takes place outside and across the boundary (Jenkins: 1997). In addition, it is important to note that in the past, racial distinctions have been

emphasized in out-group ascription more than they have for characterizing ones own group.

The rites and rituals of both everyday existence and ceremony are what makes Rastafarians different from any other ethnicity. They have a shared common history; most of the original slave population in Jamaica came from the Ashanti tribes of West Africa. And this is evinced by the fact that many of the words used in present day Jamaican street language have Ashanti roots. Interestingly, these fundamental themes have provided a rallying point for the Rastafarians and other civil rights movements whos focus is on heritage. They have realized that the greater their numbers, the greater their efficacy.

To other civil rights movements in Jamaica the Rastafarian position has been considered to be extreme because it is, at times, openly militant. However, In the 1950s attempts were made to unite the various Black factions of Jamaica. The first effort came from the Ethiopian World Federation, which hollowly talked about the possibility of repatriation. Unfortunately, the criteria they proposed to use to select candidates would have excluded many Rastafarians because most did not possess a marketable trade.

The second, and more substantial, result of such efforts was the Rastafarian convention of 1958. Professor Leonard Barrett explains that, "The convention not only disclosed many aspects of the cult hitherto unknown to the public, but gave the Rastafarians unprecedented publicity" (1974: 165).

The other analytical perceptual process that was mentioned earlier was social-categorization. This process works from the top down in the social hierarchy. And the effects of social-categorization are then often internalized by the dominated society, so that the existing power structure is reified and rarely challenged. Historically, the Rastafarians have seen through the guise of their colonial dictators and challenged, at every level, the legitimacy of the elite class.

On the other side of the coin, most of the elite whites see the Rastafarians as malcontents who refuse to do anything to better their living conditions. This is an easy position for the elite class to hold because it masks the fact that they are largely responsible for the continued poverty of the lower classes. As noted social psychologist Elliot Aronson has pointed out, while describing African-Americans in our own society,

We imprison these people in overcrowded ghettos; and we set up a situation in which the color of a person's skin almost inevitably unleashes forces that prevent him from participating in the opportunities for growth and success that exist for white Americans... He becomes painfully aware of the opportunities, comforts, and luxuries that are unavailable to him. If his frustration leads him to violence or if his despair leads him to drugs, it is fairly easy for his white brother to sit back complacently, shake his head knowingly, and attribute this behavior to some kind of moral inferiority (1972: 131).

Aronson's statement does a good job of illuminating a deeper trend in how we characterize our own and other groups with which we constantly interact. It shows just how errant our judgments can be if we don't take the time to identify the true nature of a given phenomena, like group attributions for instance. We are forced to act on our biases in the absence of adequate information which creates a lot of temporary answers that need to be readdressed constantly.

Assimilation and Extinction

The model of ethnicity that I have explicated thus far would be best described as a conflict model (Coser, 1956) with constantly changing power relationships. Although the overall structure of

Jamaican society has not changed drastically in the last two hundred years, this does not indicate apathy or acceptance on the part of the subjugated. As was previously mentioned, several uprisings have plagued the Jamaican authorities since they assumed power over the Island.

To quiet the insurgents, the colonial government has tried several different methods of assimilation. None of which have proved very effective at giving the former slave population of the Island access to the resources that would be necessary to elevate their standard of living en masse.

Compounding this condition is the fact that virtually all of the farmable land in Jamaica is already occupied. Without the prospect of a land base, individuals, most of whom are unskilled, are forced to move into towns where they have access to only the lowest paying positions.

All of these factors have created a situation in Jamaica which is hierarchically segmentary and based largely on ethnicity.

Although slavery has been officially abolished in Jamaica, conditions still exist that perpetuate the existing class divisions, and these class divisions mostly follow the same lines as racial

divisions, even when one takes into account the more recent waves of migration.

To better explain the existing power relationships in Jamaica, I think it appropriate to employ a personal metaphor. You see, I was walking in the woods the other day, examining the overarching canopy provided by the surrounding hardwoods when I was struck by an epiphany. It involved the second growth sapling that were growing up in the proverbial shadow of their bigger brothers. And for arguments sake, we will say that the saplings represent the subordinate ethnicities of Jamaica. Then any of the larger trees in the forest would represents Jamaica's white elites.

The saplings compete, on a daily basis, for the meager allotment of nutrients that make it through the canopy's broad reach; simply to insure their continued existence. But at some point one of the great hardwoods will have to fall. And when this happens it will create an all out race between individual saplings to fill the void in the canopy.

This simple biological metaphor says more than I could in ten pages of text because it illuminates the relationship between ethnic factions and the larger culture of which they are a part. The other

thing that this model illustrates is the role that resistance plays within the larger power structure.

This theme has been touched upon earlier, but it requires further clarification at this point. Most theorist, writing on the issue of ethnicity, place the emphasis on imposed ethnicity or social-categorization while largely neglecting the power and ramifications of resistance movements.

Ethnic identities do not naturally exist; they are fluid like power relationships and as such, need to be maintained, both internally and externally. Thus choice, in group affiliation, and factionalization within groups creates a sense that ethnicity is situational or dependent on context. As such, ethnicity can be seen as a tool, most often utilized to further ones social or political goals by granting mobility in times of crisis. Additionally, it is this aspect of ethnicity that creates the possibility for assimilation into another ethnic group. Eventually if the impetus for assimilation is strong enough, extinction becomes a real possibility.

Up to this point in time, the Rastafarian ethnicity has derived strength through its ideological opposition to the Jamaican government, but that does not mean that this will always be the

case. In many respects, Rastafarianism owes its existence to the class struggle in Jamaican society, but if circumstances change so that Black Jamaicans are granted access to an equitable allotment of resources then Rastafarianism might be abandoned.

Hypothetically, the liberated population might form a different ethnic group based on themes that are more consistent with new conditions.

In Conclusion

What this hypothetical situation demonstrates is that ethnic identity is, in part, a function of how deeply a given identity is internalized by its members. Now bear in mind, this applies for both internal and external processes of perception; for both processes do exhibit a certain amount of autonomy.

There is an old adage attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt which states that no one can make you feel inferior without your consent. This a great way of summing up the functional value of Rastafarianism. The Rasta ethos provides a sort of mental armor for its members, so that they can weather the inhumane conditions of Jamaican ghetto life without losing hope.

Much of the Rastafarian's strength is derived from their tradition of struggle and the knowledge of their once great empire. I am referring of course to the Ethiopian empire, of which Egypt is supposed to have been a part, which acted as the cradle for civilization. Rastafarians are very aware of the fact that their ancestors had built an empire in Africa that would be of comparable complexity to the later Greek city-states.

The testimony of the ancients and many Egyptologists have confirmed that this Black civilization, however, was unable to withstand the barbaric hordes which surrounded the Mediterranean basin. By 814 B.C., with the Roman victory over Carthage, the Black civilization lost its power. Thereafter, they were oppressed by all races (Barrett, 1977: 74).

The gap between have and have-not is very apparent in present day Jamaica with the elites now living in the very hill territories that the Maroons had sought shelter in a few hundred years earlier. Many inhabitants of the island live in shanty towns constructed with whatever materials are available. Amazingly conditions have not noticeably improved for the landless poor in Jamaica, most of whom are black, since England abolished slavery in all her colonies. Yet in the face of all of this, the Rastafarians have never lost faith in their

worth as God's chosen people.

History will bear witness to the fact that ethnic groups coalesce and disband frequently in response to changing conditions, and most of the time they are loosely based on the vestiges of some common ancestor. Just as nations modify their borders and populations through time so do ethnic groups. In a sense ethnicities are a microcosm of nationalities, which are oftentimes identified with specific races.

Though it must be emphasized once again, races, like cultures, should not be treated as bounded entities. Genes do not create disjointed categories of humans, cultures do. It cannot be stressed enough that prejudice is the result of misapprehensions about the 'other'. And it is only through dispelling these myths that we can ever realize the true potential of the human animal.

However, this effort will be further confounded by the general ignorance surrounding how genes work to build the individual. There needs to be greater clarification concerning what exactly genes are capable of determining. In other words, it is easy to rationalize someone's station in life by referring to their genetic composition or genetic propensities, but more commonly the particular situation

is a result of exogenous forces over which the individual has no control.

In the case of the Rastafarians, there is no genetic inferiority which leads them to their current position in the Jamaican social hierarchy. They were a conquered people, valued and transported to a foreign land mostly for their labor. It would have been easy to lose their African identity in lieu of the restrictive new system they were faced with. Instead, they chose to emphasize elements of an older identity that had served them well in the past. And even today, Ethiopianism continues to bond these exiled people while in diaspora.

Lastly, I would like to discuss Rastafarianism as it exists today. Without a recognized body of leadership this movement has breached the border of the isolated Island of Jamaica and spread throughout much of the world. There are, I think, two main reasons that Rastafarianism's message has been so widely recognized. One is the fact that it is an innately appealing perspective for groups or individuals who find themselves scraping out an existence in the wake of the capitalist machine. Secondly, Rastafarianism is closely linked with Christianity, though of a more indigenous flavor as

opposed to the Eurocentric form that was presented by missionaries.

In the United States of the 1950s and 60s, there was a rebirth of African identity rising out of the civil rights movement.

Rastafarians who traveled to the U.S. at this time brought many of the techniques and themes back with them to Jamaica, further adding to their appeal. Additionally, as a result of interactions between Jamaican Rastafarians and those who had migrated to the United States various organizations were created, most notably in New York and San Francisco, which gained Rastas greater publicity and increased acceptance.

Currently, when most people think about Rastafarianism they relate to its manifestation in Reggae music. This is the popularized side of this ethnicity, but it remains very consistent with the themes of early Rastafarian development. For example, I would like to conclude with an excerpt from the last song, on the last album, that Robert Nesta Marley recorded before his death on May 11, 1981.

Old pirates, yes, they rob I
Sold I to the merchant ships,
Minutes after they took I
From the bottomless pit.
But my hand was made strong
By the hand of the Almighty.

We followed in this generation, triumphantly.
Won't you help to sing these songs of freedom?
Cause all I ever have: redemption songs,
These songs of freedom (Marley, 1980).

Metis

The Metis represent a good example of how political and economic forces can coalesce to produce hybrid ethnicities. In effect, this ethnic group was created as a result of repeated and continuous European-Indian interactions. Moreover, the Metis ethnicity was established rather rapidly as a distinct identity category, separate from both Euro-American and Aboriginal ethnicities, while at the same time intermingling with both. Unfortunately, in the last two hundred years or so, these people have become displaced due to the near constant pressure of encroaching

white settlement and a general lack of government support.

Yet despite the lack of a fixed land-base, these people have managed to maintain their opposition, to varying degrees, and thereby distinguish themselves as unique agents in the pantheon of identities which became subsumed by the Canadian national identity.

In more recent times, the members of this ethnic category have started to reorganized and are beginning to gain recognition in the courts. According to author Joe Sawchuck, “the Metis who appear to fade from the scene after their last disastrous uprising in 1885, were able to come back in the mid-1960s when the political climate was particularly favorable to the kind of ethnic politicking the group could practice” (1978: 12). In effect, by uniting and contesting their non-status, they have been able to secure the resources needed to once again achieve some level of self-determination.

The Metis people are often called “the children of the Canadian fur trade”: as the European fur traders in the East needed wives, they simply chose them from the tribes whose territory overlapped the trade—mainly Cree and Ojibwa, both being close relatives within the Woodland culture of Algonquian-speaking Indians. That was in the 17th century, when the French traders outnumbered the British ones: this explains why the

new hybrid race received a French name. From then on, as the fur trade expanded westward, the Metis proliferated in Rupert's Land (Douaud, 1983: 73).

Those Metis that chose to remained in the East were, for the most part, assimilated into the dominant Euro-Canadian culture. However, another significant portion of these people decided to follow the rapidly expanding western frontier, as employees of the Northwest and Hudson Bay Companies.

As agents of the fur trade, the early Metis acted as a sort of bridge between the predominately European managerial classes and the Native American suppliers who performed the bulk of the trapping activities. For this reason, settlement patterns tended to cluster around the major trading centers. To the point that, "at every little trading post the number of Metis increased dramatically, so that by 1800 most posts had a number of Metis homes grouped around the walls" (Sealey and Lussier, 1975: 8).

On these semi-fixed settlements, the Metis employed a range of subsistence activities which included, but were not limited to, hunting buffalo, farming and most importantly, trading. It has been noted that, "this general adaptation exhibited highly variable coping strategies, forming a continuum in work regimens and level of

integration into trading company hierarchies” (Jarvenpa and Brumbach, 1985: 309). And it was in the area of trade in particular that the Metis enjoyed a distinct advantage, as it was the Hudson Bay Company’s policy, during the 18th and early 19th centuries, to only give full-blooded Native Americans temporary seasonal positions. “On the other hand, mixed-bloods could obtain regular employment, but they were largely excluded from the officers ranks. Thus, racist thinking entered into the fur trade employment practices of the Hudson Bay Company well before 1821” (Ray, 1982: 97).

We must bear in mind that life on the frontier was never static, for one thing, animal populations were quickly influenced by the relentless activities of company tappers. And in fact, “the diaries and journals, from the late 18th century through 1821, give the impression of a steady decrease in the beaver and other valuable animal populations around Lake Winnipeg and along the Saskatchewan” (Carlos, 1982: 165). In many of the Prairie provinces, it seems that an entire way of living was essentially undermined in the course of only one or two generations.

By the end of the 19th century, the Plains Metis found

themselves in a situation where they possessed neither land nor a legal identity in the eyes of the Canadian government. Then there was a long period, from the end of the 19th century to around the late 1950s, in which the Metis identity seemed to virtually fall from sight. However, during this time some Metis continued to practice a traditional lifestyle in the relative isolation of rural communities without the aid of the federal government. Others chose to wander the country, finding work and food where they could.

In describing the fate of the Metis during this period, the author Patrick Douaud has identified four main 'types' which characterize the various Metis populations; they are as follows:

- a) integrated: those Metis who had settled definitively and had successfully adapted to Euro-Canadian culture;
- b) living on the fringe of white settlements: the Road Allowance people...wandering from job to job and destitute;
- c) living on the fringe of reservations: a common phenomenon;
- d) living in small isolated communities: with an economy based on fishing, hunting, trapping, this group best preserved the traditional Metis identity and was to provide most of the Metis leaders that arose after World War II (1983: 75).

One institution which did help to maintain the integrity of the Metis identity during the early part of the 20th century was the

Roman Catholic Church. To its credit, “the Catholic Church, mostly French-speaking, urged the Metis to preserve their French language in the same way that it later urged the Irish to revive the Gaelic tongue” (Douaud, 1983: 78). Thus, the fate of many Metis populations were significantly influenced by the attitudes of members of the various European groups with which they had contact. In other words, the Spanish and French inhabitants of the New World tended to be much more appreciative of Native cultures and customs. As a result they did not put much energy into trying to suppress the expression of traditional practices. And one area, where this trend was particularly noticeable, was in their respective policies concerning intermarriage with the Indigenous inhabitants of the Americas. As a general rule, the northern European groups were less tolerant of intermarriage with Native American populations than were the southern European groups.

To state the obvious, intermarriage was key to the maintenance and expansion of the Metis identity, yet at the same time, traditionally, there was a strong tendency towards endogamy in many Metis marriages. This inclination also helped a great deal to perpetuate the fledgling Metis ethnicity because not only were

individuals encouraged to seek unions with Native American partners, but it was also common in traditional Metis culture to take a mate from within the confines of one's own group.

As I have pointed out previously, in opposition to the many pressures to assimilate, there were a select few institutions like the Catholic Church which did work to maintain the autonomy of the Metis identity by encouraging the maintenance and transmission of the French language. The other factor which played a significant role in preserving the Metis ethnicity into the present was the vast, yet informal communication network which functions in this community. "The Metis communication network, owing its existence to common interests and a consciousness of kind, in turn functions to maintain these" (Slobodin, 1964: 50).

Nevertheless, for roughly all of the 20th century, the policies of the Canadian government have failed to recognize the Metis as a distinct legal entity. Moreover, the token attempts, made by the Canadian government, to assimilate the Metis into the developing economy had little hope of succeeding. Patrick Douaud has argued that there were three reasons why the attempts to affect a transition failed, they are as follows:

- 1) the Metis were expected to adapt quickly to the new lifestyle;
- 2) White speculators often manipulated them into selling their scripts for a pittance; and
- 3) seldom did the White authorities show much understanding or provide thorough aid (1983: 76).

In reference to this issue, a recent article written by Paul Chartrand of the University of Manitoba charged that, "Canadian governments are still in breach of their constitutional obligation to identify and define the rights of the Aboriginal peoples. Thus, the constitutional meaning of 'Metis' is not yet determined" (1991: 21). Not only does this create a situation whereby the state and federal governments are unable to make constructive policy decisions, but it also makes it all but impossible for the Metis to make legal claims, for land and mineral rights, within the legal system.

At this point, I think it is important to point out that there is an essential dichotomy between the way that the Metis are viewed, or more appropriately, not viewed, by the Canadian government and the way that they view themselves. In short, there should be no doubt that the modern Metis are descendants of a people who helped to establish Canada as a force in the world market, yet they have

continually been denied a history by the very nation which they helped to found.

Us vs. Them Heuristic

Canadian geographer Arthur J. Ray has observed that, “the Metis have continued to receive remarkably little attention until very recently” (1982: 92). I believe that one of the reasons for this neglect is that, prior to the last thirty or so years, Metis heritage was not really emphasized, except for in a few isolated communities. Only relatively recently has this identity once again emerged, to be widely asserted.

One place that it has recently become actively advanced, is in the Canadian legal system. In the Canadian province of Alberta, the Metis have come to be legally defined as, “those people who fail to meet the legal or social requisites of either Indian or White, and yet are the offspring of both” (Hatt, 1969: 19). It seems as though this should be a fairly obvious assertion, but even getting a court to recognize the Metis as a distinct ethnicity, has in the past, proved to be rather problematic.

Part of the problem is derived from the fact the Canadian

government and the various Metis collectives seem to hold divergent perception of what it means to be Metis. In other word, being Metis is often a matter of perception; on average though, Metis definitions of membership tend to be more liberal than the rigid, legal definitions. In general, “Aboriginal people have been split into the ‘status’ and ‘other’ groups in more ways than one. The legislated definitions and policies have obscured the relevance of heredity, kinship, cultural and other factors in determining personal and group identity” (Chartrand, 1991: 19). Beyond that, there is also a good deal of uncertainty as to just what kind of right Aboriginal people are entitled to. And this is something which is continually being tested and retested in the courts. With respect to this point,

Canada has officially taken the position in the international forum that “peoples” in section 35 of the Constitution Act. 1982 should not be interpreted as supportive of the notion that Canada’s Aboriginal ‘groups’ are ‘peoples’ in the sense of having the right to self-determination under international law (*ibid.*, 1991: 10).

One can see that this is a very important distinction to make because it denies the legitimacy of claims that Indigenous groups should have the right to exist and function without the interference

of the central government. So that, at the same time that it is stating its own authenticity under international law, the Canadian government is denying this fundamental right of self-determination to certain entities which exist within its borders.

Furthermore, these type of repressive tactics, on the part of the Canadian government, are present on all levels of the bureaucracy. There is a rapidly growing body of research evidence which indicates that, "Metis and Aboriginal peoples are differentially impacted by the operation of the justice system as it now exists, that the effects are adverse, and that systemic discrimination is prevalent" (Barkwell, 1989: 122). In practice, we can see that the Canadian government is not only denying the claims of the Metis, they are actively seeking to keep these people in state where they are not able to contest the powers which control their fate.

One way that this is accomplished is by dictating the way that this group is defined. The Canadian government has a vested interest in keeping the membership of this ethnic group at a minimum, so that they may limit any compensation that the courts may see fit to grant them. From the very beginning, the Metis have

had to accept the definitions and attributions which were placed on them by the dominant Euro-Canadian society. They have not been granted the ability to perpetuate their own labels and characterizations. If they had, they probably would not have been marginalized to the extent that they are today.

In Conclusion

A community is rarely bounded by fences and signpost: more often it is shaped by the overlap of adjacent cultural continua of social organization, language, dress, diet, etc.; and its boundaries are integrated as a series of cues (Douaud, 1987: 216).

In the case of the Metis, the lines which separate the respective Euro-Canadian, Native American and Metis ethnicities are particularly transparent. In fact, many commonalities can be found between these three traditions, and perhaps this is why it was supposed that the Metis could be easily assimilated into the Canadian national identity. In addition, it has been proposed that, "the Metis have been 'forgotten' because in a society which has some difficulty comprehending social or ideological overlaps and seeks to impose clear-cut, distinctive labels on all its members, no one knows on which side the Metis are" (Douaud, 1983: 86).

They are a people who incorporate many elements of these two other discrete identity categories. This being the case, they are afforded a small amount of leeway concerning how they choose to define themselves.

One of the difficulties in pinpointing cultural markers arises from the fact that we are dealing with a relatively recent reformulation of a once distinct tradition. Also, there is a tendency for Metis to suppress cultural differences that might precipitate further discrimination (Sawchuck, 1978: 40).

For the first part of the last century, it was not considered acceptable to assert this particular ethnicity, except within a few limited contexts. However, times have changed and for whatever reasons, these so-called 'forgotten' people are beginning to challenge the terms of their domination. They are speaking out against the premise that the Canadian national identity should be able to claim autonomy at the expense of another.

In 1982, amendments were made to the Constitution of Canada which were designed to clearly establish the aboriginal rights of three different groups, the Metis, Inuit and Indians. These amendments aimed to basically reaffirm the type of, "rights derived from original occupancy" (Chartrand, 1991: 4). Unfortunately, like

many other complicated constitutional issues, the reforms which were mandated in these amendments are still not fully implemented.

Justice is something which is slowly coming about for the Metis, and it seems as though they are beginning to have more success at pressing their claims through litigation. Indeed, some of the roadblocks which had previously existed, have been removed, but the situation is still far from equitable.

These days, there should be little doubt that the shared elements of ancestry and language have maintained the Metis identity through decades of oppression. And now, because the political climate has shifted, making it once again acceptable to profess membership in this group. Furthermore, the Metis have recently made themselves known in the realm of national politics. The Canadian government, in its 1982 Constitutional amendments, recognized the Metis explicitly and acknowledged that they were indeed entitled to a land base. Unfortunately, they have been rather slow in moving to rectify the situation.

Northern Ireland

Even as I write these words, the conflict in Northern Ireland is still actively being played out. Though, at the same time, it appears that the political climate is certainly changing in such a way that a lasting peace could soon become a viable goal. Finally, after more than thirty years of openly violent conflict, it now seems possible that both the Ulster Unionists and the Catholic Nationalists are ready to legitimately consider an end to British rule in the north of Ireland. However, it is also true that the motives of those who favor terminating England's presence in the northern six counties are somewhat varied.

On one side of the argument, there are the Ulster Unionists, who I believe recognize that Britain is eventually going to withdraw her support, it is really just a matter of time. Ultimately, this process was set in motion back in 1921 when the British government acted to partition the island. In so doing, England relinquished its control over most of the Ireland, with the exception of the northern six counties. There, in the north, Protestants were concentrated and in fact formed the majority.

After the partition of Ireland in 1921, one party, the Unionist Party, was in uninterrupted power in the new state of Northern Ireland until 1972. The institutions of the state were frequently used by the ruling party to discriminate against the nationalist population who were in a numerical minority (Rolston, 1998: 27).

In part due to their superior numbers (56.9% of Northern Irelands total population belong to Protestant denominations), but also because of continued British military presence, the Ulster Unionists have, in the last eighty or so years, managed to remain in control of their destiny in the north.

However today, it seems as if the fears, that many Northern Irish Protestants have expressed in the past, concerning the continued support of the crown are beginning to appear to be well

founded. Though they go well beyond the commonly cited observation that if unification does occur, they would lose their majority status. Since 1920, Northern Ireland has become quite reliant on the annual subsidies provided by Britain, which currently amount to roughly five billion dollars (O'Toole, 1998).

For England, this rather large, annual investment is beginning to represent a situation of diminishing returns. There is a real sense throughout the country that a peace deal would significantly help to alleviate this fiscal burden, which, for many English, amounts to nothing less than national welfare. Not to mention the fact that public opinion has started to turn against the heavy handed tactics which characterized the struggle during the early 1970s.

For a number of reasons, it now looks as if the situation in Northern Ireland is ripe for reform, the main question which remains to be answered, is will the Protestant majority willingly agree to relinquish their dominant position in the government? One can see, that at this point in time, the ethnic identity of the Ulster Unionists is facing immanent changes, as the Catholic majority of the Irish Free State seeks to consolidate their control over the whole island. "In other words, Britain will leave Northern Ireland if and when

Irish Nationalists can get Ulster Unionists to agree that it should” (O’Toole, 1998: 58).

I think it safe to say that, in the past, the Catholic Nationalist and Ulster Unionist identities have developed simultaneously in a context of conflict. One result of this type of protracted ethnic friction is that people and attitudes tend to become polarized between these ethnicities. In other words, “conflict has heightened attachment to traditional values which in turn have been better buttressed to resist encroachments of secularization and pluralism” (Wallis *et al.*, 1987: 294). One can see that loyalties run deep on both sides of this divide, which helps to explain why it has been so hard to achieve a substantial settlement for ending the hostilities. We must remember that there is a long history of hatred in both populations, dating all the way back to events surrounding the original colonization of Ireland by the British.

The colonization of Ireland decimated many aspects of indigenous culture, either directly - for example, the Penal Laws, which outlawed the practice of the Catholic religion and prevented Irish natives from inheriting land, holding public office and owning weapons - or indirectly - for example, the Famine, which not only halved the Irish population through death and emigration, but also led to profound cultural

changes in areas such as religious practice and attitudes to marriage. Protestantism became the established religion, where most of the people were Catholic. English became the dominant language for a people whose parents and grandparents had spoken Gaelic. The dominant symbols of nationalism were British, not Irish. Irish culture was suppressed (Rolston, 1998: 25).

From the beginning, the older Catholic identity was marginalized by the British colonizers. So that, by 1920 this relationship of dominance had become so entrenched that most Irish Protestants would not even consider the thought of Irish independence. Consequently, "Northern Ireland was formed as a result of the unwillingness of the Protestant majority in the northeast of Ireland to be assimilated into the Irish Free State when it was formed in 1921" (Wallis *et al.*, 1987). Obviously, it would be ludicrous to assume that the Ulster Unionists are going to surrender their autonomy easily. They have repeatedly demonstrated that they do not want to be ruled by Dublin. In short, they dread the thought of being absorbed by the Catholic majority of the Irish Free State.

For the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland assimilation is a fate that they know all too well. When Northern Ireland was created in 1921 it is estimated that about half a million Catholics ended up

on, “the ‘wrong’ side of the border” (O’Toole, 1998: 56). In the north, the Catholic minority has suffered through years of blatant discrimination at the hands of the Protestant Unionists.

Like many postcolonial settler societies, Northern Ireland is composed of two ethnic communities, Irish-Catholic-Nationalists and British-Protestant-Unionists, arranged hierarchically in a relationship of domination and subordination. This hierarchical relationship of Protestant domination has always been maintained primarily by force and has therefore, always produced resistance. The presence of this resistance in turn was used as a rationalization and justification for the development of a culture of terror aimed at repressing it, and this in turn has now led to the evolution of a culture of resistance in the Catholic ghettos. The basic contradiction in repression emerges here-namely, that while it is intended to counter resistance, in operation it creates or exacerbates it (Sluka, 1995: 74).

In the preceding paragraph, Sluka identifies a very important point concerning the formation of violent resistance movements, like the Irish Republican Army for example. He correctly asserts that the level of force used by British, and other forces to counter Republicanism have been matched by the resistance at every level. In short, “whenever state repression has increased (e.g. Internment, Bloody Sunday, etc.) support for the violent opposition to the state has increased” (*ibid.*, 86). By adopting heavy handed tactics,

Unionists have merely strengthened the resolve of their opposition.

For most Catholics in Northern Ireland, religion forms a large part of their identity. In fact, “66 percent of Catholics chose religion and nationality as their most significant social identities” (Smooha, 1980: 260). Consequently, many rely on their faith to draw them together, it has provided a sense of hope in the face of overwhelming political and economic disadvantage. For Northern Irish Catholics, religion forms the basis of resistance, though resistance may take on many different forms. In the extreme situation, the Irish Republican Army, has since its inception, advocated direct and violent resistance against their oppressors. However, for the majority, resistance has a more mundane meaning. “Everyday forms of resistance include things like refusing to fill out census forms, graffiti writing, throwing stones at Brits and ‘Peelers’ (police), refusing to give date of birth to soldiers, etc” (Sluka, 1995: 83).

We must bear in mind that fears for religious freedom, on the part of the Irish Protestants, are what ultimately led to the 1920 partition of the island. In the years following the 1916 Catholic uprising, “most Protestants in Ireland feared losing their religious

identity within a state dominated by the Catholic Church” (Crighton & Mac Iver, 1991: 130). Thus, it is apparent that religion is an important diacritical marker for both populations, nevertheless state sponsored Protestantism does occupy a distinct position of advantage, at least in the north.

Ideologies of resistance have also led to a contemporary revival of elements of an older Gaelic identity. The emergence of several Irish language programs and the creation of the Gaelic Athletic Association in the years following the partition provide evidence of this reawakening process. Slowly but surely the Catholic Republicans are gaining momentum in their efforts towards, once more, unifying the island. Ironically, some observers have argued that the efforts of the state government in Northern Ireland have actually helped to fuel the passions of the Republican opposition; thereby aiding the cause.

Us vs. Them Heuristic

It has been observed of the respective ethnic identities in Northern Ireland that, “you could either conceal it and be rigidly defenseless or proclaim it and invite attack” (O’Toole, 1998: 61). In

the case of the Catholics, the area where their identity was most strongly proclaimed was in the Nationalist ghettos of Northern Ireland. There in the midst of so much poverty and ill sentiment the Catholic Nationalist identity became a rallying point for those who had been mistreated by their own government. And they derived strength from supporters and relatives living in the Irish Free State and abroad.

Their message was broadly appealing because it spoke against the type of tyranny and repression that exist throughout the world. Many of the themes, inherent in the Republican movement focus on liberation from the inequality of their present situation. It is this type of rhetoric which helps to firmly delineate the boundary between these two communities.

In an article in the journal, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, John Whyte identified seven factors which function to maintain the ethnic boundary between Protestant and Roman Catholic populations in Northern Ireland, they are as follows:

- (1) the Churches themselves;
- (2) the Orange Order;
- (3) social ranking;
- (4) political differences;

- (5) residential segregation;
- (6) separate education;
- (7) endogamy (1986, 219).

As was discussed before, religion is one the most important attributes of the two respective identities in Northern Ireland. There is a very clearly spelled out ideological difference between these two faiths. Though it is also important to point out that there is greater factionalism apparent in the various Protestant denominations. Therefore, the Catholic community represents a united front, whereas Protestant politics are often plagued by infighting.

One place where a majority of Protestants can find common ground is within the ranks of the Orange Order. This society, "which is open to male Protestants of all denominations, is closed by its rules to Roman Catholics" (Whyte, 1986: 222). Most of the time, the Order works in subtle ways to support the unionist effort, however, during marching season these people put on very visible displays aimed at showcasing their common identity.

The overall social structure in Northern Ireland is relatively unchanged since the island was divided. In general, Catholics are

disadvantaged in terms of economic status. They tend to have higher unemployment rates and are more likely to occupy unskilled positions. As a result, stereotypes which cast Catholics as unindustrious and less intelligent than Protestants have become reified in the popular consciousness.

This ability to learn stereotypic cues without recourse to personal experience may also play an important role in the acquisition of such denominational cues within Northern Ireland, where most individuals are confronted with the evidence of sectarian division through the media (Stringer & Cook, 1985: 405).

The last four factors that Wyte (1986) identified were all indicative of the amount of social separation which exists between these two groups. Their past histories of mutual prejudice have led to a situation which is characterized by social and ideological isolationism. In describing the circumstances in Northern Ireland, Elizabeth Crighton and Martha Mac Iver (1991) portray this type of protracted ethnic conflict as 'identity-driven'. They go on to state that the conflict is, "the result of an underlying 'fear of extinction' that grows out of the experience of being a vulnerable ethnic group living with memories of persecution and massacre" (*ibid.*: 127).

From 1690 on, Catholics in Northern Ireland have continued to resist the political and economic roadblocks which were instituted to keep them 'in place' at the bottom of the social hierarchy. They have found strength in their numbers and are currently fighting for essential freedoms that the rest of Ireland gained almost eighty years ago.

In Conclusion

At this point it should be apparent that the main sticking points for both sides, in the ongoing peace negotiations, have been ideological. Despite mounting pressure for unification, the Ulster Unionists are bound and determined to maintain the power that they currently possess. For years, Northern Irish Protestants have been subjected to, "a concerted propaganda campaign aimed at vilifying, demonizing, and generally misrepresenting Republicans - particularly IRA 'terrorists' - for political purposes" (Sluka, 1995: 81). This being the case, is it any wonder that these people would fear the loss of British support?

For Ulster Protestants-most of whom are unionists, that is, they wish to maintain the link with Great Britain-the Irish Republican's claim to sovereignty over the whole island, and the rejection of the Northern

Ireland state by the large Catholic minority in the North, have continually amplified the political salience of Protestantism (Wallis *et al.*, 1987: 294).

Up until this point, the Ulster Unionists have perpetuated their identity by continually repressing the Catholic minority living in the northern six counties. It is important to recognize that, in a very real sense, Protestantism could not exist without the opposition provided by Republicanism. These two ethnic identities are complementary to each other, and can be shown to even converge on certain points; after all they are both part of the Christian faith.

Following the partition of the island in 1921, virtually the only thing that Northern Irish Catholics were left with was their identity. This act essentially made them into a people in exile. They were at a social and economic disadvantage when compared with their counterparts living in the Irish Free State. However today, it seems as if the political climate is ripe for reform. Owing in part to broadbased economic changes that have occurred as a result of Britain's entry into the European Union. England is beginning to favor decreased involvement in Northern Ireland, which may ultimately result in a single unified Irish state ruled from Dublin.

Summary

As I have repeatedly tried to illustrate, social identity is constituted through the dual processes of self and social-categorization. Furthermore, social identity should be viewed as multidimensional, in the sense that we all possess a variety of social identities at any given time. In some situations, gender may become the most salient feature of social identity, in another, race may be emphasized. In any event, as a result of this variability, we tend to construct our social categories along several different lines.

These categories are by and large associated with the

major social divisions-gender, class, race, ethnicity-that separate those who are routinely privileged from those who are not. Cross-cutting markers tend to become stereotypically associated with these social categories, if not actually demanded by their members in practice (Hollandet *al.*, 1998: 130).

Furthermore, by strategically manipulating our manifold identities, we are able to achieve greater mobility in the larger community. Thus we notice, in the study of ethnicity, that certain identities can either be stressed or suppressed as circumstances may dictate.

In certain situations, we can see a revival of specific elements of an older identity. For example, in Ireland, the Easter rising of 1916 occurred at the end of what was known as the Gaelic Revival (Rolston, 1998). Hence, many Northern Irish Catholics feel a great deal of affinity for their Gaelic ancestors and the spirit of resistance which they possessed.

Let me reiterate that this study was primarily designed to provide a controlled comparison of three unique contexts of ethnic identity formation. As such, the common feature between all of these three respective identities is that they have all developed as a result of colonial efforts towards expansion. The Rastafarians,

Metis, and Northern Irish Catholics are all groups which have ultimately coalesced in response to colonial oppression.

In all cases, I hope to have demonstrated that ethnic identity, as a specific manifestation of social identity, is always being contested at some level. As such, it is subject to punctuated periods of modification. We cannot ignore the fact, when studying ethnicity, that all identities exist within a vast system of power relationships. Therefore, we must allow for the fact that these relationships are extremely dynamic, and as such, they must be continually maintained. In each of the three cases I examined, the intensity of resistance was directly related to the degree of oppression.

Moreover, it was found that resistance was especially strong because it was firmly grounded in shared ancestry, language, and culture. Obviously, these common features have remained salient and have led to the perpetuation of each respective identity. By stressing such common elements, these groups were able to maintain their cohesion in the face of mounting pressures to assimilate into the majority population.

In addition, it is important to emphasize that all three cases

involve marginalized peoples, some of whom clung viamety to their respective identities despite near constant persecution. As circumstance changed, the political climate either became less or more favorable for active expression of ethnic identity. However, I submit that ethnicity always functions as a political tool for those who chose to focus on it.

We must remember though, that in many situations, there is a great deal of overlap between populations; in terms of both individual members and cultural material. It seems that some boundaries are more permeable than others, and at certain times, this allows for the individual to move between populations.

As I have tried to stress, ethnic identity is in many ways a matter of perception, in the sense that it is the individual who initiates the process of self-categorization. And this really gives the individual a good deal of power when determining which groups they wish to affiliate with. However, I should also quantify that there are limits placed on the type of groups that we can seek membership in. For instance, Protestants of all denominations are able to seek membership in the Orange Order, but no Catholic would ever be allowed to join. In short, the other side of social identity is

social-categorization, which mediates the self-identifications that we inevitably make. Furthermore, social-categorization works proactively, by strongly influencing our perceptions and stereotypes.

And this is a major part of the problem of discrimination, these preconceived cognitive representations (i.e. schemas) are so basic to the decision making process that they are not often scrutinized. Only by recognizing these biases, can they be countered.

We must appreciate that one of the major sources of personal bias is the in-group, as we often incorporate the perceptions of others who we affiliate with, when formulating our own beliefs. By referencing the in-group, the individual not only gains information concerning group norms, s/he also gains in positive self-identity by validating that they are part of the group.

The social group is seen to function as a provider of positive social identity for its members through comparing itself and distinguishing itself, from other comparison groups, along salient dimensions which have a clear value differential (Commins & Lockwood, 1979: 218).

It is also important to note that the value differential varies between the in-group and the out-group. In general, individuals tend to be more favorably biased towards members of their own group. In

reference to this fact, we do know that individuals perceive members of their own group as more heterogeneous, or complex than non-members (Aronson, 1972). However, all too frequently, oversimplified stereotypes are able to persist because of a lack of dissenting evidence. In situations where two or more competing ethnicities are in constant contact, the salience of the respective identities is commonly amplified. And it is in this context particularly, that we should expect to see a clear definition of boundaries functioning to produce social separation.

The boundaries of ethnic groups are symbolically represented - as the bearers of a specific language, religion or, more generally, 'culture'; but they are also materially constituted within the structures of power and wealth. Thus ethnicity should be regarded as materially and symbolically constituted, as a systematic feature beyond the reach of individual actors, as well as a dimension of individual action itself (Fenton, 1999: 25).

One of the reasons I believe there has been so much confusion in the past, surrounding the concept of ethnicity, is that it is a phenomenon which is both grounded in ancestry and symbolically constructed at the same time. This feature of ethnic identity creates a situation whereby some attributes are more subject to

local forces. Though ancestry is one attribute which appears not to be as prone to drastic, random shifts, with the possible exception being instances where large populations are displaced through war or economic hardships.

Therefore, we must also be able to account for the possibilities of extinctions and revivals when constructing frameworks for studying ethnic identity. I believe that, when culture change is viewed at the individual level, it becomes increasingly noticeable just how fluid social identity can be. So why is it that we seem to insist on treating human social groups as bounded, static entities? Perhaps it is something fundamental to the way that we have come to rigidly conceptualize social organization; we seem to have a good deal of difficulty accommodating individuals who may straddle the border between several different groups.

Only recently, have researchers such as John H. Moore (1994), started to caution that we must pay particular attention to the level of social interactions between groups, to see if rhizotic or cladistic models are more appropriate for explaining culture change. And I contend that our past tendency to favor cladistic explanations has

aided in reifying the notion that cultural boundaries are fixed and impermeable.

It should be clear, from my case study of the Metis legal situation in Canada, that some significant groups are being excluded when rigid definitions of ethnicity are imposed by the State and Federal governments. In other words, social-categorization processes do not usually take into account the existence of fringe groups. In terms of the Canadian government, perhaps their long standing persistence on not legally recognizing the Metis reflects their hope that the Metis would eventually assimilate and forget their claim to the right of self-determination.

Though we must also realize that social-categorization is but one aspect of social identity. The other side of the coin, self-categorization, also works to promote the development of the *ad populum* dichotomy by delineating what we are from what we are not. In effect, the process of social comparison is what ultimately perpetuates the illusion that there are only two mutually exclusive categories; us and them. Through the creation of the cultural other, and the depersonalizing tendencies which result, we begin to facilitate the persecution of those who we perceive to be not like

'us'.

It is important to always remember that ethnicity is not just the subject of academic discourse, there are very real economic implications related to ethnic identity. Not only in the sense that ethnicity exists within an established network of power relationships, but also because the United States government allocates funding for many social programs based on the population statistics that it collects. This being the case, the methods which they employ to define the recognized ethnic categories then become a political issue.

To say the least, there are significant economic incentives for maintaining the *status quo*, for keeping marginalized people on the fringe. Any change that does come will inevitably mean a redistribution of power that may lead to challenges of the power relationships as they currently exist. For many minority ethnic groups, the creation of a strong, broadly appealing identity is one way that they may gain new membership and increased political efficacy.

The Rastafarians represent a poignant example of how a social movement can be transformed into the functional equivalent of

ethnic identity. Ultimately, the Rastafari identity was able to reach beyond the borders of the tiny island colony of Jamaica to all corners of the globe. One of the reasons that the Rastafarian identity spread so quickly was that it drew upon themes that were familiar to oppressed people the world over. The Rastafari embodied a message of spiritual rather than material rewards. For a people who had little more than the cloths on their backs, they spoke out against the false prosperity of the elite class in Jamaica. As pawns in a capitalist bureaucracy, they resisted all attempts at assimilation, choosing instead to live a life of poverty, while focusing on spiritual development.

When all is said and done, we cannot change the catastrophic instances of culture contact which have marred our recent history. We can however learn from our past mistakes so that we do not repeat them in the future. I feel that by stressing the differences which distinguish various social identities, we underscore the fundamental relatedness of all members of our species. In net effect, it is these perceived differences which form the basis for competition between human groups who believe themselves to be unique and superior to all others.

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