Introduction

- Last week: How do social movements mobilise?
  ➔ Collective identity construction

- Analytical sociology and structural individualism:
  “Instead of assuming social norms or pre-existing identities as given... this approach regards dynamics of identity construction and group identification as part of the process that leads to the definition of both the individual and group interest.”
  (Baldassarri, 2011: 402)
Collective identity construction

▪ **Example: Bolivia**
  ▪ Evo Morales - first *indigenous President*
  ▪ Core supporters, Aymara- and Quechua-speaking rural labourers—previously in peasant unions; yet, since 1970s *qua indigeneity* (e.g. Yashar, 2005)
  ▪ E.g. indigenous/peasant women’s organisation: est. 1980 as *National Confederation of Peasant Women*, renamed since as *National Confederation of Indigenous Aboriginal Peasant Women*

➔ **Collective identity, such as ethnicity**
  ▪ Both ascribed *and* self-defined
  ▪ Both inwardly experienced *and* outwardly signalled

*Evo Morales inauguration ceremony: Tiwanaku, 2006*
Collective (ethnic) groups

- Collective identities
  - Ethnic group, nation, etc.

**Exercise:**
- Do you identify with a specific ethnic/national group?
- If so, can you trace its origin, or has it existed since ‘time immemorial’?
- And, how is it maintained as a group?
Collective (ethnic) groups

- Collective identities
  - Ethnic group, nation, etc.
  - *Not* primordial, nor static, but dynamic
  - Products of social interaction (intentional *and* unintentional)

- **Socially constructed:**

  *We shall call ethnic groups those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists*” (Weber, 1922: 389)
Collective (ethnic) groups

- Also, relational

- Obverse question (Hechter, 1976): **ethnic boundary** as focus of investigation, not the cultural ‘stuff’ inside

"categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories.”

(Barth, 1969: 9)

- **social** boundaries (although may map spatially)
Ethnicity as a low-cost club (Landa, 1981)

- How do people trade with contract uncertainty?
- **High transaction costs**
  - coordination costs + costs of contract enforcement + information costs
- Personalize exchange relations
  - Calculus of relations based on “status rights”
  - How to correctly identify the trading partner
- **signals and screening**

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Social Relations</th>
<th>Grades/Ranking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. (Insiders)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Near kinsmen from family</td>
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<td>2. Distant kinsmen from extended family</td>
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<td>3. Clansmen</td>
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<td>4. Fellow villagers from China</td>
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<td>5. Fellow Hokkiens</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. (Outsiders)</td>
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<td>6. non-Hokkiens (Teochews, Cantonese, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. non-Chinese (Malays, Europeans, etc.)</td>
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Ethnicity as a low-cost club (Landa, 1981) 2

➔ **EHMG** (ethnically homogeneous middleman group)
  - = low cost ‘club-like’ institutional arrangement
  - Shared language decreases transaction cost, but full story of ethnicity as “low cost screening device”

- Marketing areas - homogeneous communities
- Also, e.g., Lebanese in North Africa, Jews in Medieval Europe, Medici merchant bankers in 15th century Florence (p. 361)
Collective group dynamics

- Emergence vs. maintenance
- Reduction of transactions costs in Landa’s example making use of pre-existing group difference

**But**, emergence in the first place?

- Example of nationalism

- Pre-existing ‘ethnic’ basis for nation? (Smith’s (1998) ethno-symbolism)
- **But**, timing of nation-state emergence something ‘modern’ about the nation?
Nations and nationalism (Gellner, 1983)

➔ **Nations as ‘modern’**
  - Result of industrialisation, modernisation, urbanisation & bureaucratisation
  - Industrial revolution ➔ urbanisation ➔ suddenly, linguistic/cultural difference more ‘visible’
  - Vernacular standardisation:
    
    “generalised diffusion of a school mediated, academy-supervised idiom, codified language for the requirements of... bureaucratic and technological communication” (p.56)

  - Demands of capitalism (e.g. constant retraining) ➔ common language among workers ➔ invention of the nation ➔ common past, common culture (created by turning "low" folk cultures into "high" state cultures) and a common language

➔ **Nationalism as functional**

➔ *But*, nation-state as inevitable result?
Anderson (1983): *Imagined Communities*

- Patriotism ➔ nationalism?
  - Social constructivist approach
  - Similar to Gellner, but **print capitalism key**
  - Explains both emergence & maintenance

⇒ Nations as *‘imagined communities’*
  - Reading the morning papers – feeling of belonging to a cohesive community
  - Not primordial or ‘dormant’

- *Still*, nationalism ➔ nation-state?
- Political factors ➔
Example: Czech nationalism

- ‘National revival’: initial (apolitical) scholarly attention
  - Failed attempt to replace word for dumpling, “knedlík” (from German “knödel”) with “šiška” (lit. cone))
  - Bohemian history – even faked mediaeval manuscripts!

➤ Structural conditions, such as urbanisation, extension of literacy and nascent middle class (Gellner, 1983)

➤ But, necessary but not sufficient

➤ Political elite interest in self-governance & increasing popular demand (Breuilly, 1993)
Laitin ‘language games’ (1988)

➔ Question of **intentionality**:  
  ▪ political agency: “state appropriated the nation by its confiscation of patriotism” (Woolf, 1996: 19; see also Breuilly, 1993)

▪ **Laitin:**  
  ▪ State rationalization ➔ use of a common language to reduce transaction costs ➔ regional elites learn centre lang.
  ▪ Nation-state building: *both* anti-colonial *and* imposition of centre elite on periphery
  ▪ Regional reactivation
  ▪ **Regional ‘tipping’** ➔

➔ Regional elite resistance (with popular electoral support)
Social cohesion (Heath, 2018)

- How do collective identities matter today?
- Example: research into **social cohesion** (Heath, 2018)
  - Latin *cohaerere* – to stick together
  - In a way, back to Durkheim (social solidarity)

  “[The] heart of the concept of social cohesion as the idea that the members of the society feel that they belong to a common national community, feel morally obliged to follow the norms of the community, and feel some responsibility for the welfare of its other members” (Heath, 2018: 5)

- Potentially overcomes free-rider problem & enables more optimal provision of public goods
- Relevance: civic participation, multiculturalism, support for welfare state, etc.
Social cohesion in the UK? (Heath, 2018)

- Rising inequality as corrosive? ➔ rising inequality from 1980 (when inequality increased rapidly in Britain) ➔ reducing trust and willingness to help the less fortunate members of society (Wilkinson and Pickett)?

- Rising diversity ➔ reducing trust, leading to ‘hunkering down’ (Putnam) and undermining willingness to support welfare state?

- Increasing individualism ➔ ‘risk society’ undermining a sense of community and responsibility for others (Beck), declining civic and political engagement?

- But, evidence of this?
Pride in being British and sense of belonging to Britain not in long-term decline (Heath, 2018)
Support for “British values” generally high, although somewhat lower for tolerance and helping others, esp. globally (Heath, 2018)

**British Values**

- Responsibility to obey and respect the law: 97%
- Responsibility to treat others with fairness and respect: 96%
- Responsibility to treat all races equally: 93%
- Support for democracy: 90%
- Important to try to understand the reasoning of people with other opinions: 84%
- Important to help people in Britain who are worse off than yourself: 78%
- Important to help people in the rest of the world who are worse off than yourself: 55%
Social divisions in support for “British values” generally small, but education & ethnicity can matter (Heath, 2018)
Divisions over immigration long-standing, with little sign of change over time (Heath, 2018)
Social divisions over redistribution of income and wealth are longstanding, but their magnitude has diminished (Heath, 2018).
Social cohesion (Heath, 2018)

Little evidence for decline in trust, and not that high to begin with.

Voluntary associations

Little change over time in civic engagement.
Most countries divided on immigration & distribution (Heath, 2018)

*Pro-immigration: education divisions*

*Pro-redistribution: income divisions*
Social cohesion in the UK (Heath, 2018)

➔ **Little evidence** for declining ‘social cohesion’, even as socio-economic inequality and diversity have been increasing; little evidence for ‘hunkering down’

- Social and economic marginalisation & disconnect “not a new problem” in UK
- Some evidence for a new decline in electoral turnout, especially poorer and younger voters ➔ in general, increasing **heterogeneity**

➔ **Specific political factors:**
  - Nationalist movements; divisive political issues (e.g. Brexit)
  - Political representation deficit concentrated for younger and poorer voters
Collective identities & groups?

- ‘Social cohesion’: a (very) contested term
- Collective identities
  - Intentionality in emergence/maintenance?
  - Going back to individual motivations v. structural constraints
  ➔ Agency v. structure?: recall structural individualism:

  "If we can’t identify agency, we can’t observe the structures that limit it."
  (Jasper, 2004: 4)

- Who/what maintains something like ‘social cohesion’?
- Role of the state?
  ➔ *Power: governmentality / totalitarianism next week*
Essay questions:

- Does ethnicity help overcome transaction costs?
- Can signalling theory help explain the formation and persistence of ethnic markers?

Further revision questions:

- Is ethnicity a primordial feature of human societies?
- Can ‘culture’ be reduced to the preferences and beliefs of individuals?
- Are any social institutions sustained by self-interest alone?
- Can sociologists explain ‘irrational’ beliefs?
Any questions?

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References

Core readings:

Extra resources:

*The lectures slides were also informed by previous lectures notes by Prof. Federico Varese and Prof. Anthony Heath.*