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Thesis, MSc Political Science

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'THE CALCULUS OF ETHNICITY'

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

I recently attended a lecture and panel discussion on Russia's intervention in Crimea, which involved several Baltic and Eastern European diplomats and Russian security expert ret. Dutch Lieutenant-Colonel Marcel de Haas. During the discussion on the official Russian pretext for invasion, the issue of security for Crimea's ethnic Russians was raised, at which time de Haas gestured towards the Lithuanian diplomat to his left and quipped that, since speaking Russian constitutes the basic distinction between ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians, then he and the Lithuanian diplomat ought to feel uneasy that they too could fall under Vladimir Putin's "protection."

De Haas's comment, of course, implied doubt over the extent to which Crimea's Russian speakers really make up an *ethnic* group. But this question is largely irrelevant. What matters more is that, by justifying intervention in terms of "protecting ethnic Russians," Putin conjured the imagery and fear of ethnic conflict, with all of its bloody, riotous connotations. Such powerful connotations offered Putin a clear strategic utility in his move to annex Crimea, a utility that he was sure to enhance through rhetoric. In his speech to the State Duma shortly after Crimea's referendum, he pronounced that "Crimea is primordial 'Russkaya' land, and Sevastapol is a 'Russkii' city" (Marten, 2014: para. 3). But what is the source of the power summoned by Putin's 'ethnic' call?

For several decades, scholars have grappled with the phenomenon of 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic groups.' Their efforts have taken many forms and have produced many interesting theories and avenues of research, but definitive conclusions on the subject remain ever elusive. In many regards, theorizing about ethnicity, its nature and its effects, has been akin to attempting to capture smoke with one's bare hands.

I make no special claim to furthering this task here, but rather, seek to change track and approach the subject from a perspective that avoids the fuzziness of past debates. Accepting from the outset the, sometimes obscured, reality that ethnic groups are

malleable and changeable products of society rather than antecedents to it, I consider whether the construction and salience of ethnic groups and identities can be explained exclusively by the instrumental pursuit of *benefits*, in the form of economic and political outcomes. The propositions I am concerned with testing, therefore, are those that are contained within a subset of the broader literature on ethnicity, termed 'instrumentalist,' which sees ethnic groups as nominal coalitions of self-interested agents, and thus sees ethnicity as without intrinsic value. To approach the empirical component of my research with conceptual and theoretical clarity, I synthesize instrumentalist propositions into a model that elucidates their core expectations concerning ethnic identity stability and change. I then deploy this model empirically to direct my analysis of three cases, each involving a salient ethnic group or cleavage: the Yoruba of Nigeria, the Hutu – Tutsi cleavage in Rwanda, and the Romani in historical and contemporary Hungary. Though my choice of cases might seem strangely eclectic, each presents a distinct type of problem for which the explanatory power of instrumentalist theory will be explored.

The governmental challenges associated with ethnic diversity, which include inter-group conflicts and inequalities, recognition dilemmas, or the management of 'minority claims' on the state, continue to abound around the world. Yet only with a clearer theoretical understanding of ethnic groups – their nature and their dynamics – can sound policy decisions be made. As such, the questions implied by the approach I take below, though the present study constitutes only a modest contribution in this direction, have a clear and pressing social and political relevance. These questions include: *How much does culture matter? And can ethnicity be valued intrinsically?*

The structure for what follows will be this: part one will consist of an analytical discussion of the relevant literature. This will first consist of a brief analysis of definitions of 'ethnic group,' and I will present here my own definition, which will implicitly underpin subsequent work. Then, the classical dichotomy between 'primordialism' and 'constructivism' will be scrutinized, and it will be shown that this debate has essentially been 'miscast.' And finally, the instrumentalist literature will be analyzed, so that its core propositions can be coaxed out. In part two, I synthesize these propositions into a model

that conceptualizes membership in an ethnic group essentially as a constrained choice, and I present the expectations of this model in terms of how the costs and benefits of ethnic group membership should determine aggregate outcomes, in the form of ethnic group stability or change. Also in part two, I discuss methodology and the basis for my case selection. Part three presents the empirical findings of my research.

PART I: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 - *Definitions*

Max Weber offered what is perhaps the seminal definition of 'ethnic groups' when he wrote that:

> 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 of colonization or 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. (1978: 389)

Weber stresses here that 'ethnic groups' need not be grounded in the realm of objective physical characteristics, but merely in the subjective beliefs of ethnic group members regarding their common ancestry. The belief in a common ancestry, therefore, appears critical to Weber's conception of ethnic groups. In turn, a key characteristic of Weber's definition is his assertion that this belief emanates from some consistency (or 'similarity') between members of the same group. Importantly, however, he leaves very open the question of *what* exactly is to be held consistent. Weber's definition clearly allows for ethnic groups whose constitution rests solely on members' commonalities of culture, so long as this leads to their belief in a "common descent."

In contrast to Weber, Barth (1969) deemphasized the role of a common culture in his discussion of ethnic groups. Noting the cultural heterogeneity that is often found *within* ethnic groups, Barth famously asserted that ethnic groups are not characterized by their consistent cultural content, but rather by their specific (and strategic) use of cultural markers to signal the boundary between *their* ethnic group and *another*. For Barth, it is this "ethnic boundary that defines the group" (1969: 15).

Although Barth's and Weber's definitions differ regarding the degree of internal consistency that they seem to stipulate, neither definition stipulates that physical or other 'given' commonalities are essential to the concept of ethnic groups; both definitions, therefore, leave sizeable scope for the role of beliefs, customs and myths in defining them. In contrast, Chandra (2012b) attempts to offer a more 'definitive' definition by arguing that

what distinguishes ethnic groups from other group-types is that they are based on categories that necessarily embody "descent-based attributes." Chandra theorizes that individuals possess a number of potentially *ethnic* identities, each based on some attribute (or combination of attributes) that is descent-based, and which permits the individual membership in the corresponding ethnic group. On close inspection, the usefulness of Chandra's definition is limited because the concept of "decent-based attributes" is in itself indistinct. For instance, Chandra defines this concept as relating to "attributes associated with or believed to be associated with descent" (2012b: 59). This includes the features stemming from one's genetic inheritance, such as one's given physical features, and also attributes such as names, languages, religion, etc., which are also products of culture and socialization, and which are often subject to change during the course of one's lifetime. Because the nature of the types of attributes it includes is so varied, and their 'fixedness' so variable, the singular concept of "descent-based attributes" is of very limited analytical use. Moreover, without further qualification, the term "descent-based attribute" seems to imply more rigidity and objectivity to the concept of ethnicity than is probably warranted.

It's clear that, once deconstructed, Chandra's focus on "descent-based attributes" is not wholly inconsistent with Weber's definition above. Specifically, they both highlight the important link between ethnicity and notions of common descent, and they both ultimately allow for the source of these notions (the attributes from which they stem) to be the subject of subjective interpretation and, in some cases, deliberate change. Horowitz, too, (1985; 2001), deems notions of "putative descent" to be essential to the concept of ethnicity. He writes that:

> Ethnicity is based on a myth of collective ancestry, which usually carries with it traits which are believed to be innate. Some notion of ascription, however diluted, and affinity deriving from it are inseparable from the concept of ethnicity. (1985: 52)

Horowitz's definition mirrors Weber's to a large extent, although it leaves much greater scope for in-group heterogeneity. This, therefore, makes it more consistent with Barth's observations. Again, it stipulates that ethnic identity need not be based on some characteristic that was definitively acquired at birth, but merely the "myth" of a common

ancestry based on traits that are "believed" to be innate. What is important to ethnic identity is that the attributes on which it is based are *interpreted* as being connected to birth and, thus, to one's ancestral origins. The significant role for interpretation to play here leaves open the possibility of change in one's ethnic identity, and for changes in the boundaries distinguishing ethnic groups (à la Barth).

Drawing on the definitions above, I define an 'ethnic group' to be *a group whose membership is based on the shared interpretation of one or more characteristics which are common to the group, whether bodily, linguistic, religious, customary or territorial, as emanating from or leading to notions of a common descent.*

An 'ethnic identity', for my purposes, is one that corresponds to membership in an 'ethnic group,' as defined. The principal theoretical alteration in this definition is that it leaves open the question of whether the interpretation of a characteristic *causes* a group's belief in a common descent, or whether the belief in a common descent amongst individuals, for whatever reason, *causes* their selective interpretation of some shared characteristics. In other words, this definition does not favor the chicken over the egg. In addition, I do not use the use the term 'myth' because, while some ethnic groups may entertain a consistent myth of origin, many do so inconsistently or not at all. Our labeling of a group as 'ethnic' is clearly not contingent on their maintenance of some particular 'myth.' As Chandra (2012b) has pointed out, the myth of a common ancestry is merely a secondary characteristic that is dependent on some shared trait possessed by the group. Further to this, I suggest that it is the *shared interpretation* of that trait (or traits) that is *fundamental* to the ethnic group.

My definition is a broad one and, like many others, I include such categories as race, caste, nation, tribe, religion, linguistic group, etcetera, as being *potentially* ethnic; so long as the underlying attribute (or attributes) in a given context is interpreted as relating to notions of shared descent[1]. This qualification explains why 'Protestant' in the United States is not an 'ethnic' category, whereas it is in Northern Ireland, where religious identity is

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[1] Like Horowitz (1985), I would add a minimal scale requirement here to distinguish ethnic groups from conventional 'families'.

interpreted as relating to descent rather than simple conversion (Fearon, 2006). Additionally, it's important to note explicitly that, because ethnic identity is the subject of *interpretation within a population*, it is activated both through processes of subscription (by self) and ascription (by others). It is not enough merely to 'feel' oneself a member of ethnic group *x*; but one must also bare the shared characteristics of that group in a way that is consistent with popular interpretations, at a minimum. Conversely, it is the case that others may ascribe to an individual an ethnic identity even *without* that individual's self-identification with the corresponding group. On the whole, however, we can expect that in most cases self-identification with a group will coincide with the ascriptive interpretations of others.

1.2 - *The Nature of Ethnic Groups: Primordialism vs. Constructivism*

By defining ethnic groups as I have above, I have not meant to preempt the discussion about their nature. While I propose a definition of ethnicity that is based on a group's shared *interpretations of traits,* the question of the purpose, meaning or substance of ethnic groups (many theories of which could be consistent with my definition) remains open. The voluminous literature on the *nature* of ethnicity and ethnic groups has been classically dichotomized into 'primordialist' and 'constructivist' camps, which will now be considered.

While the dictionary definition of the term implies something ahistorical, there is virtually no 'ahistoricism' to the various 'primordial' accounts of ethnicity. As self-declared 'primordialist' Van Evera asserts, "our ethnic identities are not stamped on our genes" (2001: 20). Chandra has noted that "the key distinguishing aspect of the primordialist view is that an individual's ethnic identity becomes immutable once acquired, no matter where it comes from" (2001: 7), yet the immutability of ethnic identities is also not a defining feature of primordialism. It seems that primordialists largely accept that ethnic categories are malleable and that their reconstruction can occur; they simply assert that such reconstruction is both difficult and rare (Van Evera, 2001; Hale, 2004; Horowitz, 1985). In

general, therefore, the primordial view has stressed that ethnicity is, *for practical purposes,* fixed. So-called primordialists also propound that ethnic identity exists as a powerful force in its own right, which is to say that ethnic identity is inherently emotive and substantive. Geertz, for example, writes that:

> Congruities [between ethnic group members] of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, ipso facto; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself. (1973: 259)

In addition to considering ethnicity as being practically fixed and inherently emotive, the proposition that ethnic identity is *singular* has also frequently been attached to primordialism (e.g. Chandra, 2001; Chandra, 2005; Chandra, 2012b). On this count, as on the others noted above, substantial ambiguity exists. In defending his 'primordialist' view, Bayar, for instance, writes that "where constructivists assume multiple ethnic identities primordialists see a single ethnic identity with multiple dimensions" (2004: 1643). In general, this confusion seems to stem from differences in definitions. Chandra (2012a: 11) offers a useful resolution to the question of multidimensionality by highlighting the conceptual difference between 'activated' and 'nominal' ethnic categories. While individuals or populations hold a 'repertoire' of attributes from which multiple ethnic identities *may* be composed, the 'activated' ethnic identity for an individual in a given context can be conceived as singular (ibid).

The core tenets of constructivist approaches to ethnicity are easier to nail down, for the most part because scholars appear more ready to state them explicitly. Chandra, for example, asserts that the propositions that ethnic identities are multiple, fluid and endogenous "are the minimal propositions that scholarship labeled 'constructivist' has in common" (2012b: 140). As noted above, however, since few (if any) primordialists actually claim that ethnicity is truly a 'given' of human existence, scholars from both camps ultimately agree that ethnic identity is constructed. Indeed, as Hale (2004: 461) has commented, the primordial versus constructivist theoretical dichotomization is therefore

somewhat 'miscast', and probably serves to obscure, rather than enhance, our understanding of ethnicity.

A better way to approach the subject of ethnicity has been to start with the proposition that ethnicity, and 'ethnic groups', are constructed, and then to look at the processes at work to form and re-form them. Once the endogeneity of ethnic identity is established, the diverse range of theories seeking to explain ethnic groups can be ordered in terms of the *types* of processes that they present as important. Are ethnic groups the product of cognitive or social-psychological phenomena, such as our need to impose order on our surroundings (e.g. Hale, 2004) or our need for kinship-like networks (e.g. Horowitz, 1985)? Or are ethnic or national identities related to patterns of broad-based socio-economic change (e.g. Gellner, 1983)? Or are ethnic groups merely a type of interest group, what Brubaker (2002: 167) has called "practical categories…institutional forms" or "political projects", formed and shaped in line with economic or political incentive structures and opportunities?

Clearly, each of these different types of process implies a distinct view about *what ethnicity is* and also about *how quickly* ethnic identity can change. In other words, each type of process leads to different conclusions regarding both the *substance* of ethnic identity and the *extent* of ethnic group endogeneity. Since, as shown above, a consensus basically exists among scholars on the proposition that ethnic groups are socially constructed, and since we can mostly resolve the issue of multidimensionality by distinguishing between 'activated' and 'nominal' ethnic categories (Chandra, 2012a), we can refine our research on the *nature* of ethnic groups by testing empirically the propositions contained within the various theories of ethnicity against cases where we observe change in activated ethnic identity (at the individual level), and consequently, change in ethnic groups (at the macro level). Equally, the same logic should be applied to examine cases where, despite substantial contextual variation across time or space, a particular ethnic group or identity may persist. This study is of the type just outlined, and the propositions I wish to test are those contained within the various *instrumentalist* accounts of ethnicity.

1.3 - *The Economic Approach to Ethnic Identity and Ethnic Groups*

To acknowledge that ethnic groups are constructed rather than given is to acknowledge also that ethnic groups are endogenous; that is to say, that they exist within a system of forces to which they are also subject. In itself, however, the proposition that ethnic groups are endogenous does not imply anything particular about their *nature*, nor that of the various forces to which they may be subject. Beyond the assertion that ethnic groups are constructed there exists great scope for differing views about what drives *ethnic* behavior (or human behavior more generally). But it is the 'economic approach' that I am concerned with here.

In *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior,* Garry Becker famously declared that he had "come to the position that the economic approach is a comprehensive one that is applicable to all human behavior" (1976: 8). The Nobel Prize-winning economist summarized this approach as follows:

> The heart of my argument is that human behavior is not compartmentalized, sometimes based on maximizing sometimes not, sometimes motivated by stable preferences, sometimes by volatile ones, sometimes resulting in an optimal accumulation of information, sometimes not. Rather, all human behavior can be viewed as involving participants who maximize their utility from a stable set of preferences and accumulate an optimal amount of information and other inputs in a variety of markets. (1976: 14)

The propositions contained within this summary form the basic assumptions underpinning what we know as the classic 'rational' model of behavior in the social sciences. Indeed, rational choice theory has been tremendously influential over the past several decades, as scholars, following in the spirit of Becker (and others), have sought to explain all manner of behavioral phenomena by way of referring to a particular view of man as a *rational* being. Man is rational, the theory goes, when he pursues his individual self-interest, defined according to a cost-benefit analysis relative to his consistent preferences. Because rational behavior is necessarily goal-oriented, it is also termed 'instrumental rational' (Varshney,

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2003). It is this instrumental rationality that is the essence of the economic approach, which I will refer to simply as 'instrumentalist' from hereon[2].

Scholars of ethnicity and ethnic groups have differed according to the scope of their rational inquiries into ethnic phenomena. Some scholars, for example, have addressed some of the *behaviors* of ethnic groups, such as their entering into conflict (e.g. Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004), or the extent of their political mobilization (e.g. Posner, 2004; Chandra, 2005). The results of these inquires have often pointed convincingly to rational, economic explanations. But that ethnic groups may be observed acting in an instrumental-rational manner says little in itself about ethnicity. 'Ethnic' groups are 'groups' nonetheless and, as Horowitz notes: "It is not surprising that individuals should find them useful vehicles for the pursuit of their own interests." (2001: 47).

Other scholars have approached the subject in much more fundamental terms, arguing that ethnic groups, and the affiliations that comprise them, are *fundamentally* instrumental-rational. Though they do not always state it explicitly, these scholars see ethnic groups as nominal organizational categories, "institutional forms, political projects and contingent events" (Brubaker, 2002: 167), the value of which is given by their instrumental utility to the pursuit of individual ends, given by economic, political and social outcomes (such as money, political power and status). Ethnic groups are thus seen essentially as coalitions, whose purpose is intrinsically tied to the material situation of members. Crawford Young summarized this position when he wrote that:

> Cultural collectivities are not simply disembodied primordial givens, but contingent patterns of solidarity whose activation depends upon the organization and mobilization of consciousness on the one hand, and the intrusion of the political process in the form of perceived domination, competition, threats, or advantages, on the other. (1983: 659)

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[2] The term 'instrumentalism' has a broader meaning in the popular and philosophical sense (Varshney, 2003), but it is in the economic sense that I use it here.

For scholars in this tradition, the activation of an ethnic identity at the individual level on the one hand, and the salience of an ethnic group cleavage on the other, are events that are conditional on the incentive structures of a particular time and space. Far from having an "unaccountable absolute import" (Geertz, 1973: 259), instrumentalist scholars see ethnic groups as having a very *accountable and relative* import. Instrumentalists also frequently argue that particular ethnic mobilizations are conjured by 'ethnic entrepreneurs'; political elites who exploit and ferment cultural or physical differences among a population in order to raise an exclusive coalition capable of capturing state resources (e.g. Bates, 1983; Young, 1976; among many others).

From this it follows that the endurance of particular ethnic groups is said to result mostly from their continued ability to provide for their members. Though the context of his argument was in Africa's modern states, Bates explicitly captured the instrumentalist view in this respect when he wrote that:

> Ethnic groups persist largely because of their capacity to extract goods and services from the modern sector and thereby satisfy the demands of their members. Insofar as they provide these benefits to their members, they are able to gain their support and achieve their loyalty. (1983: 161)

It is important to point out here that the economic approach to ethnic groups is not necessarily at odds with social-psychological conceptions of groups a means for individuals to impose order and understanding on their surroundings (Hale, 2004). This, for many instrumentalists, provides for the predisposition of individuals to 'group' *in general.*[3] But what provides for groups *in particular* are the sets of outcomes with which they are associated. In other words, it would be consistent with an instrumentalist position to say that ethnic group bonds are valuable and potentially emotive. But it would not be consistent with an instrumentalist position to say that such value or emotion derives *intrinsically* from the ethnic bond. This distinction makes it possible for instrumentalists to justify emotive, seemingly irrational acts of ethnic violence, for example, in rational terms; as such acts are said to strengthen, protect or improve the standing of the group and, thus,

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[3] See, for example, Young's discussion of "Identity as a Social Role" (1976: 38-39).

its outcomes, and, thus, one's own (Hechter, 2000).

Just as instrumentalists consider that the value of ethnic groups derives from the outcomes they can achieve, rather than any *intrinsic substance*, so too do they refrain from attributing intrinsic worth to the characteristics that define the group. To be sure, such characteristics, be they bodily, linguistic, religious, customary or whatever, are not without value, but their value is again said to derive from value of their associated outcomes, which, in the context of ethnic groups, corresponds to the groups to which particular characteristics may grant access[4]. This point is best exemplified by Barth's discussion of "boundary maintaining" by ethnic groups. Cultural or other characteristics, for example, "are used by the [ethnic] actors as signals and emblems of differences" (1969:14). Young also writes that: "appreciation of uniqueness also requires perception of what differentiates the group from others- speech, code, symbols, values, religion, ritual, or physical appearance" (1976: 41). These characteristics form, thus, the 'boundary' that is employed instrumentally to maintain the exclusivity of the group.

In turn, this boundary is said to be the subject of strategic manipulation, being made more or less restrictive depending on the circumstances of the group. The purpose of the boundary is to maximize the per capita value of the resources the group controls or seeks to control. This idea follows logically from the proposition that ethnic groups (and the people who comprise them) wish to maximize their outcomes (this feature is often implicit within the instrumentalist literature, but is noted explicitly by Barth, 1969; Glazer & Moynihan, 1974; Bates, 1983; Fearon, 1999; Chandra, 2004; Chandra & Boulet, 2012; among others).

An obvious question provoked by instrumentalist conceptions of ethnicity is that of *why it is rational to mobilize ethnically,* rather than by class or some other category. This question

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[4] This account is somewhat stylized. The relationship between cultural characteristics, for example, and ethnic groups and rationality is, no doubt, a complex one. It may be possible to argue that some cultural trait is valuable end in itself, in an instrumental-rational sense. But such an argument would be difficult to make in the context of ethnic groups because culture exists independently of ethnic groups (and frequently crosscuts groups) and may thus be acquired independently of ethnicity.

has been addressed in various ways. Bates (1983: 158-160), for example, argued that because the "benefits of modernity" are distributed spatially, local groups develop a "mythology of consanguinity" designed to exclude outsiders. This argument is dealt a blow by the fact that competing ethnic claims often originate from within the same administrative unit (Fearon, 1999). Other instrumentalists have asserted that ethnic categories are preferred over non-ethnic ones because the characteristics that define them tend to be harder to change. Fearon (1999) takes this position, for instance, as does Chandra (2012c: 99), who considers the strategic value of ethnic categories to stem from their "visibility" and "stickiness." Cohen (1969: 5) offers a different and lesser-explored theory, suggesting that the special utility of ethnic groups derives from the extra difficulty that governments encounter in "suppressing" matters of "custom."

To sum up, I highlighted in the previous section that the theoretical dichotomy between 'primordialists' and 'constructivists' is basically a red herring, since scholars from both supposed camps ultimately agree that ethnic groups are socially constructed. The positions that I have described in this section, collectively termed 'instrumentalist', constitute a distinct subset of the broader literature on ethnicity and ethnic groups. For scholars in this tradition, ethnic groups are synonymous with interest groups, whose construction and prevalence rests on their ability to provide for their members. Ethnic identities are activated and ethnic groups mobilized because of their instrumental utility to achieving welfare outcomes. Ethnicity is not valued intrinsically, and as such, neither are the traits that demarcate one ethnic group from another. In the following section, I distill the core propositions of 'instrumentalism' into a basic theoretical model, which I will subsequently put to the test.

PART II: THEORETICAL MODEL AND METHODOLOGY

2.10 – *Model*

In the previous section, I gave an account of the broad approach to ethnicity that fundamentally sees ethnic groups as coalitions of self-interested individuals. Ethnic groups are exclusive coalitions, demarcated by particular traits, without *intrinsic* value*.* In the model below, I seek to elucidate the fundamental expectations of instrumentalist conceptions of ethnicity. This model will then form the analytical framework against which my cases will later be assessed. Clearly, what follows does not take full stock of many of the nuances contained within the voluminous literature. Nevertheless, I feel that my approach is justified by the modest aim of my research, which is to examine the extent to which ethnicity is endogenous to particular, economic forces.

2.11 – *Basic Structure*

For 'instrumentalists', some ethnic identity '*x*' is activated and employed as a result of its instrumentality to achieving favorable outcomes for the individual. Ethnic groups, in turn, represent coalitions of these interests. Ethnic identity *x*, therefore, has some value or *utility*, which I will term 'E', to give 'E_x' for identity *x*.

If we assume a stable preference for welfare among some hypothetical population *N*, with two possible ethnic categories, *x* and *y*,

$$\textbf{If: } E_x > E_y,$$

Then all individuals comprising *N* would prefer identity *x* to *y*, since it has higher payoffs. *No ethnic cleavage would emerge within this population.*

This assumes:

1. Zero intrinsic value attached to identities *x* and *y*;
2. Consistent information among population *N*;

3. Zero restrictions on change from one identity to another;

4. That individuals wish to maximize *E*;

5. Identities *x* and *y* are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive.

Benefits

The specific types of benefits *E* that may be pursued instrumentally through ethnic identities and groups vary according to the level of our analysis. At level of personal interactions between ethnic kinsmen, we may surmise that benefits might broadly include favors, preferential treatment or prices, protection, employment, etc. Posner's description of hypothetical identity change by a Kenyan market trader is illustrative of how perceived benefits might drive micro-level ethnic self-identification for instrumentalist scholars:

> A saleswoman in a Kenyan market might present herself as a Luo to a customer speaking that language (as her mother was a Luo-speaker), as a Kikuyu to a customer in an expensive suit (as her father was a Kikuyu), and as a Swahili to her neighbor in the market (as Kiswahili is the lingua franca of East African tradespeople). (2001: 15)

At the macro (group) level, welfare outcomes associated with a particular ethnic identity mostly refer to what is commonly termed 'pork' (e.g. Fearon, 1999), the spoils of distributive politics for which it is assumed that each individual in a population will prefer *more to less,* but also to welfare outcomes more broadly. Furthermore, I distinguish between two types of welfare outcomes: *Economic outcomes* might refer to material resources, including government or bureaucratic employment, tax benefits, housing, general employment, education, healthcare and other provisions, etc; and *Political outcomes,* which are very much related to economic outcomes, but refer to political representation, legislated rights, etc.

Taken together, we can say that, for instrumentalists:

$$E_x = P_o + E_o$$

Where: 'P_o' indicates the value (subjective or objective) of current or potential political outcomes associated with ethnic identity x; and 'E_o' indicates the value of economic outcomes for x.

2.12 – Restrictions

In reality, it's apparent that individuals are not in many cases free to switch at will between ethnic identities (and, thus, their corresponding groups). There are cases, however, when free switching is possible. Most notably, this may occur when an individual switches his or her active identification from one ethnic identity to another, where both are contained within that person's *repertoire of ethnic identities*[5] (Chandra, 2012d). This type of identity change is illustrated by Posner's (2001) example cited above. The saleswoman is able to switch at will between Kikuyu, Luo and Swahili identities because all lie within her identity repertoire (*i.e.* she possesses and selectively displays the attributes which grant access to each ethnic group).

In other cases, *restrictions* prevent the movement of people between ethnic groups.[6] These restrictions may be <u>*attribute-specific*</u> (given by 'R_a' below) or <u>*systemic*</u> (given by 'R_s'). By R_a I refer to the costs associated with switching between two mutually exclusive ethnic identities, which stem from the nature of the *particular attributes* that demarcate those identities in a given context. By R_s I refer to the costs affecting identity change that stem from the *structure or institutions* of that particular context. For example, an attribute-specific restriction may be the inability to change one's skin color or to learn a new language; and a systemic restriction may be manifested in codified rules of discrimination or segregation (such as 'Jim Crow' laws), or having a particular ethnic identity stated on one's official documents, for example.

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[5] The extent of an individual's repertoire is itself determined by (i) the attributes possessed by the individual, and (ii) the rules governing membership to a particular ethnic category i.e. the ethnic "boundary" in a given time and space.

[6] Caselli and Coleman (2013), for example, use the similar concept of 'passing costs' in their model of ethnic conflict; though their model is significantly more elaborate.

Total restrictions on change R between ethnic groups x and y may be given by:

$$R_{xy} = (R_s + R_a)$$

Clearly, it isn't possible strictly to think about the value of these restrictions in terms of absolute numerical quantities. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that different types of *systemic* or *attribute-specific* restrictions will be more surmountable than others, along some continuum. For example, if membership to some imaginary ethnic group y were to be based around the collective, symbolic interpretation of the wearing of a yellow head-garment as pertaining to notions of common descent (strange as this may sound), and therefore if my authentic displaying of such a garment would grant membership to the group, then this would seem to be a very *inexpensive* criterion for membership. If membership were to be based on such a criterion *plus* that pertaining to a group-specific language, then the cost of membership would increase, but membership would presumably remain attainable if mastery of the language to the required extent were feasible for the aspiring member, and if that person were to possess the required incentive to learn it.

On the other hand, if membership required the head-garment *plus* the language *plus* some bodily feature, such as dark skin, then membership to group y may be prohibitively costly on average for those with light skin, save for those who might possess the means and incentives to consider some type of surgery. In general, we might say that morphological and other bodily criteria for group membership constitute the most costly attribute-specific restrictions on change, with linguistic and complex customary or religious features being less so, and the simple wearing of garments or symbols being the least so. Similarly, for systemic restrictions, we might expect that the extent to which official documents, for example, can be altered over time, or bribed for, might determine the extent they prohibit identity change. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that any assessment of the relative costs of identity change will always be somewhat of an arbitrary affair, but thinking about these costs in terms of restrictions might provide a good framework within which we can be systematic about instrumentalist theory.

2.13 - Cleavages

If ethnic identities (and their respective groups) are made salient because of their value to the pursuit of benefits, given by E, then what accounts for the persistence of ethnic cleavages that embody inequality? Clearly, if preferences are stable, the cleavage must be accounted for by costs imposed on the disadvantaged group, given by R, which prevent its members' assimilation into the advantaged group. That is, if we accept the proposition of *no intrinsic value* to ethnic identities x and y; for the cleavage xy to persist where $E_x > E_y$, then:

$$R_{xy} \geq (E_x - E_y)$$

i.e. the cost of switching is higher than (or equal to) the difference in payoffs between groups.

Furthermore, it's obvious that the value of the outcomes E associated with the advantaged group x are directly tied to the group's ability to exclude, subject to the group's obtaining the minimum size necessary to obtain resources. In the context of majoritarian electoral politics, incentives push the group towards approximating a minimal wining coalition of $[(n + 1)/2]$ people (Fearon, 1999), but in other contexts, only a plurality may be required to secure the group benefits while maximizing their per capita value, other things being equal. The precise ways in which different institutions affect ethnic group size is an interesting question in itself, but lies outside of the scope of the present study. For our purposes it is sufficient to note that the instrumental value of ethnic groups is directly related to their exclusivity, and that that their exclusivity is assured by way of costs, which are *given in this model by R.* Additionally, we may note that it is rational for members of an advantaged group to demarcate their ethnic boundary in such a way that prevents the group's expansion. This is merely a more formalized expression of Barth's (1969) observations about the strategic manipulation of ethnic group boundaries.

2.14 - *Instrumentalist Expectations Concerning Aggregate Outcomes*

From the concepts outlined above, we can deduce several expectations regarding the rational activation of ethnic identities and the mobilization of ethnic groups, based on the relative values of costs and benefits. These *instrumentalist* expectations will be drawn upon in the case analyses that follow.

Where:

    (i) $E_x > E_y$ and R = 0, individuals **ACTIVATE** identity x

    (ii) $E_x > E_y$ and $R_{xy} < (E_x - E_y)$ y individuals **MOVE** to group x

Both of the above cases are *assimilation* strategies (into identity *x,* which has higher payoffs), however I distinguish between 'activating' and 'moving', because the latter entails bearing a cost to assimilate into one mutually exclusive group from another.

Where:

    (iii) $E_x > E_y$ and $R_{xy} \geq (E_x - E_y)$ an ethnic cleavage exists which is characterized by inequality. In this case, individuals in the disadvantaged group may have no choice but to **MANAGE**, since the cost of change to the advantaged group is prohibitively high. Alternatively, members of the disadvantaged group may also (iv) **MOBILIZE** in order to improve their position relative to the dominant group. It seems reasonable to expect that the ability of the disadvantaged group to mobilize is likely to be related to its relative size and to its coercive capacities, with very large groups probably standing the greatest chance of being able to challenge the dominant group.

Figure 1. *Summary of Instrumentalist Expectations for Members of Ethnic Group 'y'*

Where:	$R_{xy} < (E_x - E_y)$	$R_{xy} \geq (E_x - E_y)$
$E_x > E_y$	ACTIVATE or MOVE	MANAGE or MOBILIZE

2. 15 – *Statement of Hypothesis*

Above, the stability of ethnic divisions that embody inequalities in political and economic outcomes between groups *x* and *y* results solely from the costs R_{xy} that prevent change. However, given that we can have some independent estimation of R by examining a particular context and ethnic cleavage, we may encounter a case where the cleavage *xy* persists despite:

$$R_{xy} < (E_x - E_y)$$

In this scenario, the persistence of the ethnic cleavage cannot be accounted for by the costs of change. For such a case, it would seem that some other factor is adding at least to the value of E_y. It is my hypothesis that such a factor exists, and that this 'added value' constitutes the *intrinsic value* of ethnic identity *y,* omitted by instrumentalist theories of ethnicity.

By 'intrinsic value,' I am not suggesting a value attached to ethnicity that might be unaccountable, or unlinked to some alternative concept or theory, as the word 'intrinsic' might imply. What I am suggesting is simply that ethnicity, or ethnic group membership, might be valued in ways that supersede economic interests in the strict sense outlined above. Such a value could stem from particular symbolic codes or beliefs held by ethnic groups (this view, for instance, is expounded by Smith, 1992 to explain ethnic group persistence), or from the 'values' embodied in ethnic groups (see Varshney, 2003). No doubt, much could be extrapolated from the ethnicity literature that has been labeled 'primordialist' to address this question equally. Regardless, I do not seek to speculate on this here, but merely hope to show that such a factor can be elucidated through the theoretical model I have constructed. Below, I discuss the methodology I have chosen for what follows.

2.2 - Methodology

The empirical component of this research will take the form of case studies, as these permit the in-depth analysis necessary for addressing our central question, which is: *whether ethnic group stability and change can be explained exclusively by instrumentalist accounts of ethnicity.* To guide and direct each case, I will deploy the model just outlined.

2.21 – Case Selection

I have selected to examine well-known and salient ethnic groups, about which there are ample data, whose persistence (or change) can be assessed in terms of R (restrictions on change) and E (the value of associated economic and political outcomes)*.*

In the interests of validity, I have refrained from selecting ethnic groups whose membership is determined by common religion, or by a common affiliation to a separate nation state (national diaspora groups). Although groups based on these criteria may legitimately be termed 'ethnic' (according to the terms of the definition detailed in section 1.1), in each case the basis of group membership may unduly moderate or complicate a proper assessment of the calculus that may inform group action. In the case of ethnic groups based on common religion, it is highly plausible that the instrumental calculus may be based on perceived benefits that are seen to extend into the 'afterlife' (Varshney, 2003). Although this possibility in itself would contradict the economic instrumentalist expectations I have synthesized, and could therefore itself confirm my hypothesis, it would not add much to our scholarly understanding of ethnicity because religion may already be commonly regarded as a 'special case.' Similarly, I have not elected to study national diaspora groups because, again, the perceived benefits to membership in the group may be strongly distorted by forces from outside of the context in which the group acts and exists (*e.g.* the associative aspects of the diaspora - 'home state' connection).

I will look in the first place the 'Yoruba' ethnic identity in Nigeria. As an ethnic category with a high degree of 20th century salience within Nigerian politics, instrumentalist theory would expect that its development has been driven by its instrumentality to *the pursuit of political and economic benefits* (given by 'E'). Moreover, because the Yoruba constitute an amalgam of sub-groups, I expect to find that the salience of the Yoruba identity illustrates the processes of ACTIVATION and/or MOVEMENT, as outlined above.

In the second case, I will explore an historic ethnic cleavage that has embodied significant inter-group inequality: the 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' of Rwanda. I expect to find here that the cleavage has been facilitated *by costs* imposed on movement between groups (given by 'R'). Here, therefore, I expect that this case will illustrate MANAGING and/or MOBILIZING on the part of the disadvantaged group.

In the third case, I will examine the 'Romani'. As a salient ethnic group that has persisted for centuries, instrumentalist theory would expect that the group's endurance can be explained exclusively by the presence of either group benefits, or costs that have prevented their assimilation and dissolution. The Romani have, it would appear, endured through a variety of historical and institutional contexts, which enables interesting cross-temporal analysis. Given the centuries-long persistence of the Romani, it is here that my hypothesis, that ethnic group stability cannot in all cases be explained by way of welfare benefits or restrictions on change, will be tested. My expectation is that only by allowing for the Romani identity to be valued intrinsically can the persistence of the group be explained. Although Romani populations are spread over many countries throughout the world, they mostly cluster into the Central and Eastern European states. Given the limited scope and means of the present study, I will limit my analysis to Hungary, though historically I will refer to the much larger Kingdom of Hungary (up to the 1920 Treaty of Trianon). I have chosen Hungary specifically because (i) Romani communities have been consistently present in and around Hungary for several centuries, (ii) I have deemed that there is sufficient historical and contemporary data pertaining to Hungary, and (iii) as with neighboring countries and at the EU level, Romani issues have a high degree of relevance to contemporary policy making in Hungary.

For data, I rely primarily on secondary sources including monographs, edited volumes, articles from leading journals in the field, and PhD dissertations. Additionally, at times I utilize selected reports (e.g. from the EU Commission, Helsinki Watch, etc.), and make use of limited census and other demographic and economic data.

2.22 – Levels of Analysis

As already noted during the elaboration of my theoretical model, the operationalization of the variables E (political and economic benefits) and R (restrictions on change) will vary somewhat depending on our level of analysis. Instrumentalists consider that aggregate level outcomes, judged in terms of the objective saliency of ethnic groups, are the product of a calculus made at the individual level. The individual-level calculus, however, will in turn be affected by macro-level circumstances of the group. To work out whether ethnic group saliency at the aggregate level is in keeping with instrumentalist theory, I will explore the value of the political and economic outcomes associated with group membership (benefits), and will look at the characteristics of the group and the wider institutional context to assess restrictions on change between groups (costs).

2.23 – Limitations

By deploying my model, I will be somewhat constrained by its inherent limitations. Firstly, I will assume in my analysis that the relative values of benefits and restrictions are roughly constant for all members of the same ethnic group in the same context. In reality, this may not the case. Secondly and relatedly, because it is impossible to objectively and quantitatively measure these variables (or even to know *exactly* what constitutes them), it could be argued that the deployment of the model will be somewhat arbitrary. This point has some merit, but I believe my approach is still a good one on balance and addresses the research question with at least as much structure and validity as is commonly found elsewhere in the literature. Moreover, I will attempt to utilize plausible objective indicators of the relevant variables where possible.

PART III: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

3.1 – Where Benefits Beckon: The Making of the Yoruba

The 'Yoruba' make up the second largest of Nigeria's more than 250 ethnic groups, today comprising twenty-one percent of its population (CIA World Fact Book, 2014). They cluster predominantly into the country's southwestern states, and are one of the three "mega-tribes" to have dominated Nigeria's sectarian politics since the formation of the modern Nigerian state, the other two being the 'Igbo' of the East, and the 'Hausa-Fulani' of the North (Peel, 1989). That these groups can be termed "mega-tribes" somewhat preempts the point to be made here. Though to varying extents and in different forms, each group represents an amalgam of subgroups that came under a collective ethnic label purely or mainly for instrumental purposes during the colonial period. What follows could therefore have taken any or all of the three main groups as its focus, but I will limit myself to the Yoruba in the interests of space.

In his detailed portrait of the "Yoruba people," Loyd notes that: "immigrant groups, conquerors from without and inter-kingdom wars within have all contributed to produce a kaleidoscopic pattern of culture and structure, that seems to defy classification into three or four basic types" (1965: 551). Given this, one could be forgiven for questioning the very premise of his attempt to classify the Yoruba as *one.* And yet, even a cursory glance at Nigerian politics and society during the 20th century makes it obvious that the Yoruba are, at once, a singular, meaningful 'ethnic group', and also a very internally divided set of, still meaningful, subgroups and allegiances, which can be made intelligible by considering the *benefits* that this pattern of association has brought to the individuals concerned. Specifically, this case illustrates how the distribution of benefits (in the form of economic and political outcomes) drives the selective *activation* of ethnic identity. Before I discuss the question *why* the Yoruba mobilized as such, it will first be necessary to discuss *how* the concept of a single Yoruba people came about, for this is a case not just of ethno-instrumentalism, but also of ethno-genesis.

Construction

The conceptual construction of a pan-Yoruba identity preceded its becoming popularly salient and politicized by many decades. Peel argues that the Yoruba first acquired the collective designation 'Aku' in the slave trade of Sierra Leone, "where a linguistically defined category emerged to embrace all Yoruba-speaking groups" (1989: 202). 'Aku' was later re-termed 'Yoruba' by Christian missionaries working in the Yoruba-speaking regions of western Nigeria in the early-19th century (ibid). The name was taken from the 'Oyo-Yoruba', the largest of the fifty or so separate kingdoms (notably including the Ife, Ijebu, Ijesha and Ekiti) which constituted the area (Young, 1976). It's widely acknowledged that these separate polities, although sharing some cultural and linguistic traits, had almost no sense of collective identity, frequently conducted slave-raids on each other's territories, and were officially in a state of inter-tribal war for most of the 19th century (Peel, 1989; Young, 1976).

Efforts to pacify the Yoruba-speaking kingdoms and to foster a pan-Yoruba identity were primarily driven by two successive forces and facilitated in a greater number of ways. The role of elites, first the Christian missionary intelligentsia and, later, Western-educated 'Yoruba' elites, was decisive. The missionaries, many of whom were freed slaves who themselves had acquired a shared identity in captivity, constructed a generic literary Yoruba language and orthology, into which the scriptures could be translated (Peel, 1989). The missionaries also went about producing a written and highly deterministic reinterpretation of the history of the 'Yoruba people', which could serve as a unifying agent and a basis for the "inevitability of the future conversion of the Yoruba to Christianity" (Law, 1984: 197). The most famous and successful of these histories was that put together by Samuel Johnson, an ex-slave come Anglican missionary and priest, descended from the Oyo-Yoruba tribe (ibid). Johnson's history, which builds a cohesive narrative of Oyo and non-Oyo tribes as descendants of 'Oduduwa', their common mythological king said to have been driven from Mecca, was not uncontroversial, notably because it took the Oyo as the Yoruba's mythological center (ibid). Though written much earlier, the book was published in 1921 and has since been the subject of extensive historiographical scrutiny (see

Doortmont, 1994). Nevertheless, as Doortmont (1994) argues, its narrative formed the blueprint for much of the then-burgeoning Pan-Yoruba nationalism.

Further fostering the concept of a singular Yoruba nation was the mode of 'indirect' governance favored by the British, who consolidated their position in the area in 1900, and unified the Southern and Northern Nigerian protectorates in 1914. As Cohen notes, the British sought to rule "as little and as cheaply as possible, [and to do so] the administration had to seek to understand native institutions, to preserve *native groupings*, to look for native 'natural rulers' in these groupings and to appoint these rulers as agents of the central administration" (1969: 113-114, italics added). Indirect rule thus necessarily involved simplifying and legitimizing supposedly distinct 'national' groups, each often corresponding to a particular stereotype and territory. In 'Yorubaland,' this involved recognition of the Oyo king by the British Governor of Lagos as "the head of Yorubaland, the four corners of which are and have been from time immemorial known as Egba, Ketu, Jebu, and Oyo, embracing within its area that inhabited by all Yoruba-speaking peoples" (Laitin, 1985: 304).

Concomitant to the beginnings of the British colonial period, a Western-educated Yoruba elite that had formed mostly in Lagos moved to further elaborate the concept of a 'pan-Yoruba nation.' Doortmont (1994) argues that this group was motivated to cohere under a common identity in response to the racial prejudice levied at them by the British. But aside from feelings of inferior status vis-à-vis the Europeans, this group had more material incentive to play up their distinct nationhood. As Ekeh notes, by doing so, this new "bourgeois elite" was able to "cement their influence within the new Nigeria" (1975: 105), notably, in the colonial administration (Doortmont, 1994).

Through indirect rule, the British formalized the notion of a common Yorubaland as a distinct political entity, and the 'Yoruba people' as a distinct group. But importantly, despite the missionary's construction of a pan-Yoruba ideal, replete with its linguistic and mythological unifiers, and the subsequent administrative impact of indirect rule, the pan-Yoruba identity did not begin to crystallize *en masse* until it was invested with broad

political and economic benefits. This occurred as the colonial state advanced, and the various 'national groups', institutionalized by the British, began to interact within a common political structure.

Benefits

In the economic sphere, migrants from all over Nigeria started to cluster into the urban centers in search of employment by the 1920s and 30s, and inequalities between groups from different regions became apparent. This was especially the case in matters of education, which became a controversial issue because whatever group was ahead was seen to be able to monopolize the best jobs (Abernethy, 1969). In the Yoruba regions, Igbo migrants to Lagos and Ibadan were perceived by the native inhabitants as a particular economic threat[7], and, faced with notions that the Yoruba were 'inferior', it was recognized that "only a purifying drive of pan-Yorubahood could bring spiritual renaissance" (Young, 1976: 280). Nevertheless, unlike the Igbo and the Hausa-Fulani, whose internal unifications were effectively pursued early on, the various tribes comprising the Yoruba regions were prone to disunity and conflict well into the 20th century, mostly as a result of the internal animosity fostered by the British recognition of Oyo preeminence (Young, 1976). The drive to strengthen and unify the pan-Yoruba political consciousness within the Nigerian state manifested significantly in 1948, when the British-educated Obafemi Awolowo publicized the 'Egbe Omo Oduduwa'[8], a tribal union formed "for the men and women of Yoruba nationality" (Sklar, 1963: 68). One of the tasks of the 'Egbe' association was to provide for scholarships for Yoruba students and dedicated Yoruba schools (Abernethy, 1969). Among the general provisions laid out in the organization's official constitution were the following stated aims:

> To unite the various clans and tribes in Yorubaland and generally create and

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[7] A fascinating, in-depth treatment of the 'ethnic' behaviors of Igbo economic migrants to Yorubaland is given by Peace (1980).
[8] 'Egbe Omo Oduduwa' translates as 'Society of the Children of Oduduwa' (Horowitz, 1977), building on the ancestral myth of King Oduduwa, which was elaborated and proselytized by Samuel Johnson, as already noted.

actively foster the idea of a single nationalism throughout Yorubaland [...] To study fully its political problems, to plan for the rapid development of its political institutions, and to accelerate the emergence of a virile modernized and efficient Yoruba state with its own individuality within the Federal State of Nigeria [and] to study its economic resources, to ascertain its economic potentialities and to advise as to the wisest utilization of its wealth, so as to ensure abundance and prosperity for its people. (Sklar, 1963: 68)

Subsequently, the personnel of the 'Egbe' travelled throughout the Yoruba provinces, convincing leading tribal chiefs to become patrons of the organization. As Sklar notes, its ranks were filled with the rising class of "lawyers, doctors, businessmen, civil servants, and certain far-sighted chiefs, who perceived that the locus of their economic and political power was not local but regional and national" (1963: 72). It's no coincidence that the establishment of the 'Egbe' occurred shortly following the 1946 constitution, which divided the country into Western, Eastern and Northern regions. As Akanji notes, this arrangement served to greatly engender "the use of ethnicity and indigeneity by the regional governments in the determination of peoples' rights and privileges; ethnicity became the criterion for determining access to political power and political patronage in each of the three regions" (2011: 120). The tri-regional structure dramatically incentivized Nigerian politics into what Young (1976: 292) called a "three player political game," as each region mostly coincided with large majorities of each of the three 'mega-tribes'. But the wide-scale active mobilization of the pan-Yoruba identity was not made fully necessary until the 1951 constitution, which enfranchised millions of new voters. Unsurprisingly then, this closely coincided with the formation the 'Action Group', the political party arm of 'Egbe', also founded by Awolowo (Sklar, 1963). These sectarian incentives were further entrenched by the constitutions of 1954, and the independence constitution of 1960. In the case of the 1954 edition, especially, the 'regionalization' of the Nigerian civil service provided for the regional exclusion of 'strangers', or people who were not members of the 'native communities' living in the area of a particular authority (Akanji, 2011), further increasing the value of the economic outcomes associated with the pan-Yoruba identity.

With the federal structure established in 1946 and after, the political and economic instrumentality of the pan-Yoruba ethnic identity was entrenched. This value has, no doubt,

waned given the various federal alterations that began in 1967 with the portioning of the three former regions into twelve states (Young, 1976). A full treatment of the extent of pan-Yoruba ethnic mobilization after independence is beyond our scope here. It is sufficient for our purposes merely to note that, firstly, a pan-Yoruba ethnic identity did not effectively exist prior to colonial rule. Secondly, that the activation and mobilization of this 'ethnic group' occurred only once it was invested with instrumental value within the context of the cosmopolitan colonial state. And thirdly (and crucially), that the instrumentality of a pan-Yoruba ethnic identity derives solely vis-à-vis the Nigerian state and its national and federal institutions. *Within* Yorubaland and *among* the Yoruba, local sub-Yoruba ethnic identifications persist, principally, in the form of ancestral city identifications.

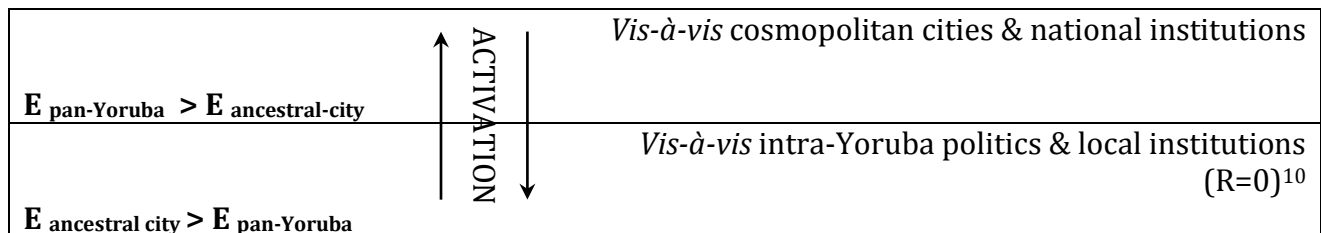*Yoruba Sub-groups and Selective Activation*

Laitin (1985) provides a detailed account of the nature of these sub-Yoruba identifications, which mostly correspond to the various kingdoms of the pre-colonial period, such as Oyo-Ife and Ibadan. Despite the emergence of a pan-Yoruba identity over the last century, Laitin contends "the ancestral city remains today the central basis for political mobilization within the Yoruba states of the Nigerian Federation" (1985: 291). He adds:

> Yorubas who live in the anomic cosmopolitan centers like Ibadan or Lagos derive great pleasure on return to their ancestral city from seeing people bow to them at every encounter and having 'praise singers' follow them through the town, immortalizing their origins and their worldly successes. These sons of the ancestral city want to keep alive to the king of their town their claim to a prime plot of land for a retirement home or for a status home for their relatives. (Laitin, 1985: 291)

Within the Yoruba regions, the persistence of sub-Yoruba ethnic groupings defined according to decent from a common 'ancestral' city can be explained by the benefits that the ancestral-city identification brings to individuals. Traditionally, the economic benefits associated with ancestral city identification have manifested in terms of land. Until the Land Decree of 1978, for example, Yoruba kings could promise land to non-resident 'sons of the town' (Laitin, 1985). Moreover, each Yoruba ancestral city has traditionally

emphasized a strict dichotomy between 'natives', those descended from the town, and 'settlers' who were prevented from owning land and were subject to ceremonial displays of foreignness[9] (Akanji, 2011). Other modern economic benefits tied to one's ancestral city include preferential treatment in admission to regional universities, where indigenes are often given reduced tuition fees and greater access to scholarships and grants (ibid). Additionally, in the political sphere, the native-settler dichotomy within Yoruba regions and affinity to ancestral towns has been fostered by successive Nigerian constitutions. As Akanji notes, "only people who are indigenes of a particular state/community can be considered for political appointment by the federal government to represent 'their' state/community. Incidentally, a similar scenario plays out at the micro level, where political appointments must reflect the indigenous identity of the members of the State or the local government council" (2011: 124). These provisions limit the extent to which those whose grandparents were not indigenous to a particular community can represent the states in which they reside (ibid), which serves to greatly accentuate the value of the political outcomes associated with one's ancestral city.

Figure 2. *Characterization of ethnic identity change between 'pan-Yoruba' and 'ancestral city'*

	ACTIVATION	*Vis-à-vis* cosmopolitan cities & national institutions
$E_{\text{pan-Yoruba}} > E_{\text{ancestral-city}}$		
		Vis-à-vis intra-Yoruba politics & local institutions (R=0)[10]
$E_{\text{ancestral city}} > E_{\text{pan-Yoruba}}$		

In sum, the conception of the Yoruba-speaking peoples of southwestern Nigeria as a distinct 'ethnic group' is a very modern phenomenon. Christian missionaries laid down its common mythological and linguistic foundations in the 19th century, and the pan-Yoruba

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[9] Interestingly, the restrictions on owning land and the 'native' 'settler' dichotomy can be said to serve as a traditional intra-Yoruba systemic restriction, preventing change in an individual's identification from one ancestral city to another, and thus maintaining the exclusivity of the ancestral-city group.
[10] R=0 where both identities are contained within the same identity repertoire, as discussed in model above.

identity was subsequently invested with political and economic value within the context of the colonial state, whereupon its mobilization took place. Effectively, pan-Yorubahood represented a new, overarching ethnic identity, nominally based on the shared interpretation of linguistic and cultural commonalities, underpinned by a common ancestral myth and made salient by the redefinition of territory within the new Nigerian polity. The pan-Yoruba identity was therefore *added to the repertoires* of the Yoruba-speaking peoples. As such, this identity can be selectively *activated* cost-free when it is expedient to do so; that is, in the cosmopolitan cities and in the national and federal institutions, that bring 'Yorubas' in opposition to and competition with members of the other 'mega-tribes'. Within Yorubaland, exclusive, sub-Yoruba identities based on ancestral city persist, as these continue to provide individuals with significant benefits, economically, politically and socially (this pattern of identity change is depicted in *figure 2* above). On a final note, within Yorubaland, this pattern of association in many ways parallels Ekeh's (1975) discussion of the dialectic between a 'civil' and a 'primordial' public. Pan-Yorubahood seems clearly to be a very civil construct, consciously formed and instrumentally employed as a political project in new federal Nigeria. Whereas the ancestral-city identification seems more imbued with ritual symbolism and status meaning, although importantly, it still can be accounted for by reference to material political and economic benefits. Whatever the *residual* value contained within the ancestral city identification, it has not yet been fully brought into relief.

3.2 – *Dichotomous Inequality in Rwanda: The Role of Restrictions*

The genocide that occurred exactly twenty years ago in Rwanda, in which approximately 800,000 people were slaughtered over one hundred days, was certainly the product of many interrelating social, political and economic dynamics. At its core, however, was one of the starkest and most prejudicial ethnic cleavages borne out by the 20th century, that between 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi'. Colonial rule, first by Germany and later by Belgium, did not *create* these categories, but, as will be discussed below, it did redefine them in a fundamental way. During the colonial period, the total political and economic subjugation of the majority Hutu by the minority Tutsi was facilitated by a newly rigidified *ethnic* boundary. Nearing the end of the Belgium colonial period and upon independence, the same constructed ethnic boundary was employed by the Hutu to consolidate *their* newfound preeminence. Before and after independence, therefore, severe inter-group inequality was contingent on the imposition of *costs*, in the form of restrictions on change between groups, which were in turn based upon the colonial definitions of 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi'. In each case, the group finding itself in the subjugated position would have no choice but to *manage* or, as it will be shown, to *mobilize* where circumstances permitted.

Hutu and Tutsi in Pre-colonial Rwanda

Sadowski offers the following synopsis of the Hutu/Tutsi distinction preceding colonial rule:

> When Europeans first stumbled across [Rwanda], most of the country was already united under a central monarchy whose inhabitants spoke the same language, shared the same cuisine and culture, and practiced the same religion. They were, however, divided into several castes. The largest group, the Hutu, were farmers. The ruling aristocracy, who collected tribute from all other groups, was recruited from the Tutsis, the caste of cattle herders. All groups supplied troops for their common king, and intermarriage was not unusual. Social mobility among castes was quite possible: a rich Hutu who purchased enough cattle could climb into the ranks of the Tutsi; and impoverished Tutsi could fall into the ranks of the Hutu. Anthropologists considered all castes to be members of a single "tribe," the Banyarwanda. (1998: 14)

Though somewhat stylized, this account is accurate nonetheless. As Mamdani notes, though it is plausible that the ancestral origins of 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' may correlate with various separate migrations to Africa's Great Lakes region, a single "cultural community" was created in what is modern-day Rwanda "through centuries of cohabitation, intermarriage and cultural exchange" (2001: 74). As is well acknowledged in the literature, the boundary between the Hutu and Tutsi was a porous and overtly political one in the pre-colonial period, primarily defined in terms of socioeconomic status. The ceremonial rise of an individual from Hutu to Tutsi ranks was termed "kwihutura," while the fall of a Tutsi into the Hutu was called "gucupira" (ibid). As such, preceding the colonial period, it is highly contestable whether the Hutu and Tutsi could be called 'ethnic' groups at all, at least according to the definition I have adopted above. To be sure, patrilineal decent, in the absence of other factors, determined one's identity as Hutu, Tutsi or Twa[11], but such a designation was not cemented for life and notions of decent ('per se' or stemming from any cultural, bodily or linguistic trait) were not essential to one's group identity (d'Hertefelt, 1963). Moreover, prior to colonial rule, the Hutu were not *entirely* subjugated to the Tutsi, though they were clearly deemed the 'inferior' class. Hutus were permitted to hold low-level administrative positions, and roughly a third of the country's 'chiefs' were Hutu, these chiefs playing a key role in the distribution of justice among other Hutus (d'Hertefelt, 1963). The Hutu were also historically considered to be the bearers of 'supernatural' powers, which, together with Tutsi 'military' powers, were held as core institutions within the historical Rwandan monarchy (Mamdani, 2001).

Redefinition and Inequality

The crucial redefinition 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' occurred gradually over the course of colonial

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[11] The 'Twa' formed the lowest of the three classes in pre-colonial Rwanda. They were largely associated with hunting and gathering, and inhabited the mountainous forests of northern and western Rwanda. In 1959 they comprised less than one percent of the population (d'Hertefelt, 1963).

rule in the first decades of the 20th century. Though with different means and to different ends, the reconstruction of 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' took place in a way not totally dissimilar to the construction of the pan-Yoruba identity discussed above. It was first an intellectual project taken on by missionaries, though this time they were European Catholic missionaries, and once the intellectual foundations were established, the reinterpreted identities were formalized and institutionalized within the colonial state.

As Mamdani (2001) discusses, underscoring the 'racialization' of the Hutu and Tutsi was the 'Hamitic hypothesis,' that was central to the European 'civilizing' mission in Africa. This view, first applied in the Rwandan context in the latter part of the 19th century,[12] held that wherever there were signs of civilized state life on the African continent, the ruling class must have come from elsewhere and been 'racially' separate from their subordinates. This led to missionaries actively seeking out stark physical and other differences between the various 'races,' where few or none had previously been salient (ibid). As such, the Tutsis were deemed by the church and prominent physical anthropologists as a "civilizing and alien race [from the larger population]… superb humans…combining traits both Aryan and Semitic" (Mamdani, 2001: 86). It's worth noting here that Tutsi elites were not merely passive as this occurred. Des Forges, for instance, has called Hutu/Tutsi racialization a "collaborative enterprise," with Tutsi chiefs, poets and court historians working early on with colonial administrators and the Catholic Church to develop a Hamitic "mythic history to buttress a colonial social order" (1995: 45) (and therefore to buttress their own preeminence over Hutus). The myth, which became entrenched within the oral histories of both Hutu and Tutsi in the 20th century, expounded that the Tutsi had migrated from Ethiopia centuries ago, and "had subjugated the far more numerous mass through their martial skill and superior intelligence" (Des Forges, 1995: 45).

Recognition of the ruling Tutsi elite as 'racially' alien from and superior to the majority

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[12] The Hamitic hypothesis has its roots in religious doctrine, which perhaps explains why the missionaries so exuberantly applied it. Originally, the 'Hamites' (black Africans) were seen as the 'accursed' descendants of the biblical figure 'Ham.' This myth was later revised so that Hamites became the civilized decedents of 'Causations', while 'Negroids' were the uncivilized degenerates formerly termed 'Hamitic' (Mamdani, 2001).

'Bantu' Hutu population fitted conveniently with the German mode of indirect rule, which began in Rwanda in 1897 (Niazi, 2005). Aside from their endorsement of a racial ideology underpinning the Hutu/Tutsi divide, the other key German contribution was that they facilitated the consolidation of Rwandan state control over the Northern parts of the country, which had previously been quite weak. Importantly, the Germans then imposed Tutsi chiefs on these areas, where Hutus had previously been prominent (ibid). Sensing a change in the Hutu/ Tutsi dynamic, it's notable here that in 1911 resentment against the Germans, the Tutsis and the Catholic Church led to a popular Hutu uprising in northern Rwanda, though this was quickly put down (ibid). But aside from these points, the Germans did not significantly alter the traditional institutions of the Rwandan state, so their role should not be overstated.

The Hutu/Tutsi racialization project was significantly elaborated during Belgium colonial rule, which began following World War One under a League of Nations mandate (Niazi, 2005). Drawing on the 'expertise' accrued by the Catholic Church in Rwanda, the Belgians took the Hamitic vision of Tutsi racial supremacy and comprehensively integrated it into the country's core institutions over the course of the 1920s and 30s, dramatically exacerbating the political and economic disparity between Hutu and Tutsi identities. Firstly, modern education, which was administered mostly through the missions, became largely restricted to the Tutsi ranks, with Hutus given separate 'inferior' education taught in Kiswahili as opposed to French (ibid). The separatist education intended not only to prepare the Hutus for manual labor, but also to "underscore the political fact that educated Hutu were not destined for common citizenship" (Mamdani, 2001: 90). Secondly, the system of local administration was significantly altered. The powers of local chiefs were extended, while the traditional structures of accountability to their communities that had existed were removed, making chiefs accountable only to Belgian administrators. All Hutu chiefs were systematically removed from their posts and replaced with Tutsis, many of whom were the products of the missionary schools and had been "nourished on a diet of Hamitic supremacy" (Mamdani, 2001: 91). Through these chiefs, the complete economic subjugation of Hutus was ensured. As well as bearing the brunt of colonial taxation, infrastructure projects and most agricultural production became significantly reliant on the

forced labor of Hutus, which had been codified in law from 1924 (ibid). And thirdly, following the Native Tribunals reform in 1936, the chiefs were invested with near total judicial power over their subordinates and were able to enact any by-law that did not violate existing colonial directives, greatly fostering the 'local despotism' that had taken hold (ibid).

The Cementing of the Boundary

By the end of the 1920s, it's clear that the political and economic inequality between Hutu and Tutsi was drastic, and Hutu subservience was entrenched far more profoundly than had been the case in pre-colonial Rwanda. But crucially, the effective, totalistic subordination of Hutus required a hardened clarity over *who* was Hutu and *who* was Tutsi. Through the Hamitic racialization process, the colonial authorities had introduced both mythological and *physical* interpretations of 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi,' and these were encouraged and elaborated through colonial institutions (as noted above), fundamentally changing the nature of the inter-group boundary. Physical stereotypes now acted as attribute-specific restrictions, greatly inhibiting movement across the Hutu/Tutsi boundary. Nevertheless, it's likely that, from the perspective of the colonial administration, enough ambiguity existed around Hutu and Tutsi that they were compelled to *definitively* categorize each individual in the population (Mamdani, 2001). This occurred with the official census of 1933-34, during which each individual was issued with an identity card clearly labeling their race as 'Mututsi,' 'Muhutu,' or 'Mutwa' (Fussell, 2001). Interestingly, the variety of processes by which individuals were designated to a particular race evidences the arbitrariness of these categories. In many cases, physical measurements of height and nose-width were used, but the inconclusiveness of these measurements often meant that the Belgians were forced to use the ownership of cows[13] as the basis for categorization (African Rights, 1995). At other times, they simply relied on oral information provided by local clergy (Mamdani, 2001).

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[13] This involved what has been termed the 'ten cow rule,' by which those with ten or more cows were deemed 'Tutsi' (with their decedents), while those with less were 'Hutu' (Mamdani, 2001).

With the introduction of identity cards, the boundary between Hutu and Tutsi was finally cemented, the official and definitive designation acting as a crucial *systemic* (institutionalized) restriction on identity change. After 1933, "gucupira" and "kwihutura" were officially no longer possible, with 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' considered legally immutable categories for the first time in the history of the Rwandan state (Mamdani, 2001). The Rwandan census of 1933-34, therefore, marked the final stage in the racialization or, more broadly, the *ethnicization* of Hutu and Tutsi as two mutually exclusive *ethnic* groups, each perceived as having their own distinct mythologies and characteristics. For roughly the next decade and a half, the coercive apparatus of the Belgian colonial state endorsed the subjugation of a group comprising 85 percent of the Rwandan population by a group comprising no more than 14 percent (ibid). What is highly instructive about the Rwandan case, however, is that once this endorsement wavered (and was finally removed following Rwandan independence), the formerly inferior group would employ the very same ethnic interpretations to both justify and facilitate their subjugation of Tutsis.

The Turning of Tables

During most of Belgian colonial rule, the Hutu population had little choice but to *manage* their inferior status vis-à-vis the Tutsi. But, from the mid 1950s, a growing Hutu elite began to *mobilize,* calling for democratization and the redistribution of resources from Tutsis to Hutus, producing the 'Hutu Manifesto' of 1957 (Newbury, 1998). Paralleling the mode by which Tutsi racial supremacy had been established decades earlier, Hutu calls for equality were buttressed by a change of heart on the part of the Catholic Church, and on the part of the Belgian authorities, who sought increasingly to encourage democratization in preparation for Rwanda's decolonization (ibid). The Tutsi elite, however, met the calls for the redistribution of land and political power mostly with hostility, which in turn fostered still greater animosity on the part of Hutus (ibid). Between 1959 and 1961, the nature of political mobilizations on both sides became increasingly extreme, and violence between the groups was frequent. The leading Hutu voice to emerge was that of Grégoire Kayibanda,

one of the nine authors of the Hutu Manifesto and founder of 'MDR-PARMEHUTU[14]', the Hutu 'emancipation' party that, with Kayibanda as its head, would come to dominate the politics of the new Republic of Rwanda from 1961 until his overthrow in 1973 (Mamdani, 2001).

A full survey of post-colonial Rwandan politics is beyond our scope here. For our purposes it is sufficient to note that successive post-1961 Rwandan governments, first led by Kayibanda and then by Juvénal Habyarimana following the military coup of 1973, did not dispense with the artificial, colonial 'racial' divide and inequality, but rather sought to turn it on its head. The independent Rwandan state thus formed a "reversal of the monarchical and colonial social hierarchy" (Hintjens, 2001: 33). Centrally underpinning the dominant post-colonial political discourse was the continued colonial racial mythology that the Hutu were the indigenous 'Bantu' people who had been subjugated by an alien Hamitic 'Tutsi' people (Mamdani, 2001). This notion, that the Hutu comprised an internally homogenous 'race' of separate 'native' Rwandans, formed the legitimizing basis for many exclusionary policies. Civil service jobs and admissions to post-secondary school institutions became heavily restricted to Hutus, while Tutsi were almost entirely prevented from obtaining positions in government (ibid). Seen as 'resident-aliens,' independent Rwanda's Tutsi were deemed "politically illegitimate" (Mamdani, 2001: 134). Moreover, the very stereotypes that were formed to underscore Tutsi preeminence under colonial rule, that they possessed 'superior' and 'devious' capacities (Des Forges, 1995), came to be employed and elaborated by Hutu 'exclusivist' politicians (Mamdani, 2001). Thus, the mythological discourse and imagery that had once served Tutsi interests now greatly hindered them. Interestingly, in the imagery of the hate-filled 'Ten Commandments,' a document that expounded the ideology of 'Hutu Power' preceding the genocide of 1994, the colonial basis for many of the negative Tutsi stereotypes are clearly in evidence. Hutu women, for example, were urged to rescue their men from the clutches of scheming "Hamitic Eves" (Hintjens, 2001: 43).

In the same way that the colonial order required definitive clarity over who was 'Hutu' and

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[14] MDR-PARMEHUTU is an abbreviation for "Mouvement Démocratique Rwandais/ Partie du Mouvement et de l'Emancipation Hutu" (Mamdani, 2001: 121).

who was 'Tutsi,' so did the racial subordination of Tutsi in the post-colonial order. Hutu plans to keep racial identity cards in place were made explicit as early as in the 1957 Hutu Manifesto, wherein it was stated that:

> We are opposed vigorously, at least for the moment, to the suppression in the official or private identity papers of the mentions 'Muhutu', 'Mututsi', 'Mutwa'. Their suppression would create a risk of preventing the statistical law from establishing the reality of facts. (in Fussell, 2001: 9)

As Fussell (2001) has noted, by "statistical law" the authors clearly refer to the statistical *dominance* of the Hutu majority. With the continuance of racial identity cards, therefore, the boundary between Hutu and Tutsi remained cemented after independence. That is to say, despite a stark reversal in the value of political and economic outcomes attached to 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' after independence, and thus the reversal of incentives for individuals to hold these identities, systemic restrictions on change remained firmly in place. Again, an institution that had previously *served* Tutsi interests now served to hinder them[15].

Just as Hutus for most of colonial rule had little choice but to *manage* (given that the Tutsi position was ensured both by the indigenous military and by the apparatus of the colonial state), the reality of the Tutsi minority without colonial endorsement was that they would have, for the most part, no choice but to *manage* in their post-colonial situation. This was certainly the case for Tutsis living under Hutu dominance *within* Rwanda. Nevertheless, the various efforts of Tutsis who had fled to Burundi and Uganda to form political and military opposition to Hutu control in Rwanda can be interpreted as manifestations of *mobilization* strategies, most notably culminating in the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which invaded Rwanda from Uganda in 1990 (Mamdani, 2001). Many other efforts from exiled Tutsis to oppose Hutu dominance in Rwanda could be mentioned, including the host of military raids conducted by Tutsis from the Burundian border in the early 1960s (Hintjens, 2001) and the

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[15] The 'racial' designation on Rwandan national ID cards was not removed until 1997. According to Fussell (2001), they played a key function in the 1994 genocide, with Hutu soldiers given orders to collect the Tutsi identifications from their victims and to supply them to their superiors.

many guerilla raids into Rwanda during the 1980s (Mamdani, 2001).[16]

Figure 3. Characterization of Hutu/Tutsi inter-group inequality pre & post independence

COLONIAL RWANDA $E_{Tutsi} > E_{Hutu}$ AND $R \geq (E_{Tutsi} - E_{Hutu})$	Hutus **MANAGE** (**MOBILIZE**, *post 1957*)
POST-COLONIAL RWANDA $E_{Hutu} > E_{Tutsi}$ AND $R \geq (E_{Hutu} - E_{Tutsi})$	Tutsis **MANAGE** (some **MOBILIZE**, *efforts from diaspora*)

In sum, although I have necessarily simplified the above account, I have sought to illustrate several inter-ethnic dynamics that are congruent with the instrumentalist model, which I characterize in *figure 3.* Like the Yoruba case above, the *construction* of ethnic identity ('Hutu' and 'Tutsi') is evidenced in the Rwandan case. But more crucially, and as the instrumentalist model would expect, the Rwandan case illustrates how an ethnic cleavage embodying substantial inter-group inequality can be accounted for by the imposition of *costs,* given by attribute and systemic restrictions on identity change, which inhibit inter-group assimilation. In this case, *systemic restrictions* have probably been most significant, given the flimsy basis on which physical stereotypes of Hutu and Tutsi were drawn.

Prior to colonial rule, the boundary between 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' was highly permeable and of a socioeconomic, rather than 'ethnic', nature. The people who lived under the jurisdiction of the pre-colonial monarchy, while divided by class and status, comprised a singular cultural, linguistic and religious group and were not divided by separate mythologies or

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[16] A tangential but interesting question here is *why* those diaspora Tutsis, who had fled Rwanda in successive waves from the 1960s, would *rationally* seek to mobilize against the Rwandan Hutu rather than simply assimilating into their host societies? This is especially pertinent in the Ugandan case, where 'Hutu/Tutsi' distinctions were not applicable, and therefore probably not inhibitive. Mamdani (2001: 159-184) provides a tentative answer by pointing to the fact that notions of 'indigeneity' were salient in Ugandan politics. Thus, ironically, the Tutsi diaspora were largely excluded in Uganda for similar reasons as those underpinning Hutu 'native' supremacy in Rwanda.

group-specific phenotypical interpretations. Under colonial rule, by Germany and then by Belgium, the groups came to be ethnicized or 'racialized' through a process that involved the construction and active affirmation of separate mythologies and physical stereotypes. 'Racial' differences were institutionalized within the colonial state and so was the total economic and political subjugation of Hutus. With this, colonial, racial ideologies came to be internalized by both groups, and the boundary between them was cemented by the 1933-34 census and the introduction of racial identity cards, which served as the ultimate *systemic restriction* on identity change. Given Tutsi endorsement by the coercive apparatus of the colonial state, Hutus, for most of this time, had little choice but to *manage* in their subordinate state, notwithstanding attempts to *mobilize* during the colonial twilight.

Post-independence, this situation was essentially reversed. Unchecked by the colonial state, the overwhelming Hutu majority perpetuated the colonial racial dichotomy but inverted its outcomes. Tutsis became the subordinate minority and the inter-ethnic boundary remained cemented through mandatory racial identification by the state and the perpetuation of 'ethnic' group stereotypes. It was now the *Tutsis* who, for the most part, had little choice but to *manage* in their downtrodden position, though several notable anti-Hutu mobilizations were launched, mostly by the efforts of Tutsi diaspora.

3.3 – The Romani: A Deviant Case?

The Romani[17] constitute an internationally dispersed, non-territorial people, who number about 12 million worldwide, but who cluster significantly into the states of Central and Eastern Europe. Their transnational dispersion over centuries and their mixed socio-historical experiences have led to a significant degree of in-group division[18]. Nevertheless, though each sub-group may have its own customary particularisms and name (such as 'Sinti', 'Manush', 'Vlax' or 'Kalderaš',) and intra-Romani solidarity has been frequently called into question, all share (or have shared) common linguistic and cultural markers, and all are said to maintain an *ethnic* dichotomy between themselves as 'Romani', and those who are 'gadže' (non-Romani) (Hancock, 2002). It is a historical truism that the origins and identity of the Romani have been the subject of widespread erroneous speculation and suspicion, evidenced by the selection of names used to describe them, such as 'Gypsies' (Egyptians), 'Tattare' (Tartars), 'Heiden' (Heathens), 'Turks', or 'Tsingani' (from Byzantine Greek for 'hands off'), to name a few (Hancock, 2002). Despite this, historical, linguistic[19] and genetic research conducted on the various Romani sub-groups, mostly during the 20th century, has convincingly shown that they are the descendants of a distinct exodus from India that took place around 1000 AD. Their ancestors were probably affiliated with or a part of the military 'Rajput' tribes, and have been linked with the modern day 'Banjara' in Northern India (ibid).

It is another truism that, whatever internal complexity and diversity characterizes the

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[17] I use the names 'Romani' (or 'Romanies') as opposed to 'Roma' or 'Romany,' following the advice of Hancock (2002).

[18] The diversity of Romani sub-groups and their designations is extremely complex. Names of various sub-groups and tribes derive mostly either from the regions or professions to which particular communities are (or were) associated. E.g. 'Vlax' or 'Vlachi' comes from 'Wallachia', whereas the designation 'Kalderaš' comes from the Romani word for cauldron maker. They are also internally sub-divided according to language spoken, or by Romani dialect, and by their levels of integration into various societies (ROMBASE, 2003).

[19] Interestingly, the first link between the Romani and India was made informally at Leiden University in 1760, when a Hungarian theology student noted a similarity between the speech of two visiting Indian students, and the Romani laborers who worked on his family's estate (Hancock, 2002).

Romani, they have, as a group, been more or less consistently subject to varyingly extreme forms of prejudice, subjugation and marginalization across time and space. Notably, the Romani endured five centuries of slavery in the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia (modern Romania, between the 1300s and 1856) (Fraser, 1992), and up to 1.5 million Romani were killed during the Nazi 'Porajmos' (Romani for 'devouring') (Hancock, 2002). And yet, despite the perils that *being Romani* has so often brought, this ethnic group has persisted for centuries. Moreover, not only are the Romani still very much a salient ethnic group, but their continued marginalization and deprivation is, according to the European Commission, "the most serious social challenge in Europe" (2011: 14). In almost every European country with a noteworthy Romani population, they face worse outcomes than non-Romanies on indicators such as poverty, education, healthcare, employment prospects, housing standards and life expectancy (which, for Romani across the EU, is ten years below the average) (ibid). So what explains the persistence of the Romani? Has the rational dissolution of this disadvantaged group merely been impeded by costs, in the form of *restrictions on identity change*? With the distribution of the Romani across time and space as complex as it is, I cannot hope to fully address this question here. Below, I will consider the costs and benefits pertaining to the persistence of the Romani over the course of their history in Hungary (historically, I refer to the Kingdom of Hungary). It will be shown that *restrictions on change* provide only part of the answer.

Early Experiences

By the time the Romani began to migrate westwards from the Byzantine Empire in the 14th century, they had acquired somewhat of a reputation as fortune-tellers (which exploited the widespread superstition of the day), musicians, bear-trainers and jugglers, professions which were agreeable to their transient lives (Hancock, 2002). Subsequently, various Romani groups became skilled metal-smiths, cobblers and the like, these trades in turn often lending their names to various Romani sub-groups (Fraser, 1992).

The Romani first reached the Kingdom of Hungary in significant numbers probably after

the 1430s, and it may be fair to say that their early experiences were not particularly negative by the standard of the times, that is, vis-à-vis the lives of ordinary peasants, who were greatly oppressed in Hungary and elsewhere in central Europe (Fraser, 1992). It could even be said that, for a time, the Romani enjoyed a rather favored position from the perspective of the authorities. This is principally because many Romani quickly acquired a positive reputation utilizing their skills, especially as smiths but also as musicians, to the extent that Matthias I declared them royal servants "for whose settlement and employment on private estates the consent of the King was necessary" (Fraser, 1992: 109). This special treatment continued under Vladius II, and Romani weapons-smiths would later work closely with János Zápolya (later, King John II), for whom they made musket balls and other weapons (ibid). Notably, Romani smiths were instrumental to Zápolya's efforts to put down a peasant rebellion in 1514, and specially constructed the instruments of torture (and red-hot iron crown and thrown) used on the revolt's leader. When Zápolya was crowned king in 1538, one of his first acts was to grant 'Gypsy liberties' (ibid).

Thus, with their expertise in metalworking and other crafts, many Romani in the Kingdom of Hungary were able to carve out quite a beneficial ecological niche and were viewed favorably by successive monarchs. We can therefore posit that their *incentive* to assimilate at this time was probably weak or non-existent – since to be a regular 'Hungarian peasant' would not have been an appealing prospect. From an instrumentalist perspective then, that Romani groups lived separately from Hungarians, or spoke 'Romani' amongst themselves, or that they maintained distinct cultural practices, are all quite inconsequential facts, since at this time many Romanies lacked good reason to do otherwise.

Elsewhere in Europe, good reason would soon emerge, as policies towards 'gypsies' during the 16th and 17th centuries became increasingly brutal and repressive. Under the Habsburgs, the Holy Roman Empire issued a long series of anti-gypsy legislative acts from 1551, with such intentions as forbidding them the issue of official documents, banishing Romani groups, and flogging and branding captured Romani, even without charge of a crime (Fraser, 1992). At the same time, popular anti-gypsy sentiment was stoked all over, with the Romani frequently labeled 'sorcerers', 'vagrants' and Ottoman 'spies' (ibid). The

fact that the Romani lived outside of feudal structures, while advantageous in some respects, also contributed to their negative image, as some poverty-stricken Romanies earned a particular reputation for thievery in the towns (ibid)

Given the disdain for them brewing elsewhere in Europe, it can be said to have been extremely fortunate for the Romani that much of the Kingdom of Hungary fell to the Ottomans in 1541, with a small strip of 'Royal Hungary' retained by the Habsburgs. In contrast to the active persecution of Romanies sought in the Christian lands, the Ottomans' attitude towards them was mostly one of indifference (Barany, 2001). Like the Hungarian monarchs, the Ottomans benefited from the skills of Romani artisans, and were concerned more with the collection of taxes than with the peculiarities of Romani customs, making the Ottoman lands somewhat of a haven for the Romani (ibid). Meanwhile, in Royal Hungary, policies towards them were generally also less coercive and more tolerant than in neighboring areas, most likely because the authorities continued to benefit from their skills (Fraser, 1992). The imperial governor György Thurzö, for example, seemed to show particular concern for the Romani. In 1616, he issued an unusual 'safe conduct' for a group of them in which he pleaded for understanding of their plight, writing that:

> ...All animals have their place of habitation, the truly wretched Egyptian race, which we call *Czingaros*, is assuredly to be pitied... In accordance with their ancient custom they are used to leading a very hard life, in the fields and meadows outside the towns under ragged tents... they do not seek cities, strongholds, towns or princely dwellings... and [know] no riches or ambitions, but, day by day and hour by hour, looking in the open air for food and clothing by the labor of their hands, using anvils, bellows, hammers and tongs. (in Fraser, 1992: 156)

As well as displaying an unusual sensitivity to the Romani (omitting the words "truly wretched"), Thurzö provides a picture of their isolated and poverty-stricken lives at this time, and he implies that this is by their choosing, as a matter of "ancient custom." Again, though we might consider it somewhat notable that the Romani, even after more than a century in Hungarian lands, still lived very *differently* from Hungarians, it's not obvious that the quality of their lives was much worse than that of ordinary peasants, bonded as they were to their feudal lords.

With the new thinking of the Enlightenment at the end of the 17th century, that advanced a conception of man as a changeable and 'improvable' being, and the Habsburg recapture of Hungary from the Ottomans, policies towards the Romani in the Kingdom fundamentally shifted, most markedly during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa and, later, her son Joseph II. This was the era of 'Enlightened Absolutism' and, through a series of Royal Decrees, the essence of which were mirrored by various other monarchs across Europe, Theresa set about a massive attempt at social engineering which aimed to completely annihilate the 'gypsy identity' and way of life (Barany, 2001). In an effort to settle them, Theresa's first decree (of 1758) banned the Romani from owning horses and made their taxation and service to the local feudal lord compulsory. In her second and third decrees (of 1761 and 1767), she outlawed the official designation 'Zigani' and replaced it with the terms 'New Hungarian' or 'New settler,' made military service or learning a trade compulsory for Romani boys (ROMBASE, 2003), and forbade Romanies from setting themselves apart from Hungarians in dress, speech or occupation (Fraser, 1992). In her fourth decree (of 1773), she sought to finally obliterate the 'gypsy' identity by forbidding marriage between Romanies and forcefully removing Romani children over the age of five from their families, so that they could be brought up in non-Romani households. In addition, "a gypsy woman marrying a *gadźo* had to produce proof of industrious household service and familiarity with Catholic tenets; in the reverse situation, the male had to prove ability to support a wife and children" (Fraser, 1992: 159). Joseph II continued and furthered his mother's policies through a series of his own decrees (from 1783), banning smithery (to force the Romani into agriculture), limiting the number of gypsy musicians, and ordering monthly reports on the 'gypsy way of life' (ibid). Importantly, he also provided a law against the use of the 'gypsy language,' for which a flogging of twenty-four blows would be given (ROMBASE, 2003).

It is difficult to gauge precisely what the 'net' effect of these policies was on the Hungarian Romani. Their documented persistence, however, evidences that the stated aim of completely destroying the 'gypsies' through totalistic assimilation was not achieved.

In many cases, it must be said that the policies enacted by the Enlightened monarchs were not effectively enforced at the local level, with the notable exception of Bergenland (now Austria), where they were enforced vigorously, and where many Romani may indeed have been assimilated (ROMBASE, 2003). This conclusion is drawn primarily on the basis of the disappearance of Romani names from the census data of several towns in the area (ibid).

Because of the generally lackluster enforcement, it could never be accurate to say that all the Romanies who persisted did so because of their own volition. Nevertheless, where the policies were enforced, there is reason to believe that many Romanies actively resisted them. As Fraser remarks, "the 'New Hungarians' gave ample proof of their incorrigibility, refusing to conform in the extinction of their identity and the break-up of the family" (1992: 159). Children who had been plucked from their families were prone to fleeing back to them; 'settled' Romanies often left the box-like houses they had been provided empty and lived in their own shelters; and Romani couples continued to marry according to their own customary ceremonies, unworried that their unions would go unrecognized by the Emperor (ibid). Another small clue to suggest the resistance of the Romani to the destruction of their culture can perhaps be drawn from the fact that, despite measures to restrict their number, the late eighteenth and early 19th centuries witnessed a sharp rise in Romani musicianship, and this is considered somewhat of a golden age for 'gypsy' music (Kemény, 2005). Rather comically, in his 1783 dissertation *Die Zigeuner* (which related specifically to the Hungarian Romani), Grellmann observed the fixedness of the Romani identity as follows (in a very eighteenth century manner):

> ...A boy (for you must begin with them from children, and not meddle with the old stock, on whom no efforts will take effect), would frequently appear in the oft promising train to civilization, on a sudden his wild nature would break out, he relapsed, and became a perfect gypsy again. (1787: xvi)

Whatever the efforts, passive or otherwise, of Romanies to preserve their culture and identity in spite of the assimilatory policies, it is highly probable that these (and subsequent land reforms of the early 19th century) were heavily responsible for two big changes in the Hungarian Romani which are still in evidence today, the first being their

increased propensity to 'settle,' and the second being a decline in the extent of their use of the Romani language. These two outcomes were recorded in the Hungarian[20] census of 1893, in which 90 percent of the 270,000 Romani listed were described as 'sedentary.' Of these, less than half spoke Romani (Fraser, 1992: 212).

The 19th and Early 20th Centuries

The start of the 19th century saw the virtual abandonment of the coercive assimilatory efforts that had characterized the preceding era. The age of Romanticism led to an increased toleration on the part of the authorities to 'gypsy ways', and notions of the Romani as 'noble savages' replaced earlier, more negative, stereotypes in many educated circles, stimulating significant scholarly interest in the Romani (Hancock, 2002). In Hungary, the Archduke Joseph Karl Ludwig (ironically, the grandson of Maria Theresa) took a particular interest in them, even learning the Romani language and studying their musical traditions. Ludwig founded several Romani 'colonies' around Hungary, where he procured Romanies' work and accommodation, and he established a special school for Romani children (though these were small and ultimately short-lived projects) (Fraser, 1992). The mid-to-late 19th century also saw a large influx of Romani ex-slaves from Wallachia and Maldavia, who were officially emancipated in 1856 (ibid).

In economic terms, the 19th century was not particularly negative for the Romani. As in the previous century, and further evidencing the failures of the Enlightenment policies, Romani groups were mostly self-employed in traditional trades such as metal-smithing, the making of wooden utensils and mud-bricks, and there were a large number of Romani musicians and horse-traders (Fraser, 1992). From 1867, Hungary (now as part of Austro-Hungary) experienced strong economic growth, and this had a positive knock-on effect for many Romani, whose skills and labor were increasingly sought for the construction of towns and

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[20] These figures refer to the 'then' state of Hungary, which was three times its present size. Kemény calculates that about 23 percent of this total lived in the area corresponding to contemporary Hungary, 80 percent of whom were native Hungarian speakers (2005: 22-27).

villages (Kemény, 2005). Kemény asserts that, by the 1893 census, "the situation of the Roma was significantly better than it had been in earlier decades or centuries" (2005: 41). Despite this, average economic outcomes for the Romani in Hungary were still very poor. According to the 1893 census, most Romani were living in one or two room houses, and some in tents, mostly in separated enclaves in rural villages. Up to 70 percent of Romani children of school age were not attending, and 90 percent of all Romani were found to be illiterate (Fraser, 1992: 213).

The first decades of the 20th century saw a worsening in the economic situation of the Romani, as new enforcement of trade licensing laws served to the detriment of their largely unlicensed tradesman (Kemény, 2005). 'Racial' prejudice against Romanies also increased, in line with the general trend across Europe at the time. This, coupled with the intensified 'magyarization' policies of the post-Trianon years, led to an upsurge in actions to coercively integrate and control the Romani (Helsinki Watch, 1993). The police were instructed to deport Romanies whose Hungarian citizenship could not be verified, and 'travelling' Romanies became subject to new, draconian policies. A 1928 Interior Ministry decree, for example, stated that:

> …Whether they practice migration in order to avoid work, or do so under the pretext of looking for work, the forces of public order are obliged to arrest and detain [the Romani] where they are found and then to deposit them at the nearest police headquarters. (in Kemény, 2005: 47)

This period culminated in the 'Porajmos,' during which it is estimated that about 30,000 of Hungary's Romani were deported and slaughtered, the Nazis only having entered the country in 1944 (Fraser, 1992).

Under Socialism

The attitudes and polices of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party (HSWP) towards the Romani were mixed and somewhat confused. In 1958, the HSWP endorsed a policy of

support for 'gypsy culture' and education, but this was quickly reversed in 1961 when it officially recognized "the abject poverty and profound socio-economic marginality of the Roma" (Barany, 2000: 427). The party then implemented a policy of forced assimilation and efforts to suppress notions of a distinct 'gypsy' identity, underpinned by the communist ideology that stressed 'gypsy ways' to be products of prior Romani exclusion from the economic means of production (Stewart, 1987). Assimilatory efforts included resettlement, education and employment. The 1961 HSWP decree stated that:

> [The 'gypsy' problem] is a social problem rather than a minority issue. Policy directed at the gypsy population shall start from the principle that despite certain ethnographical characteristics they do not constitute a nationality. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Budapest, 2004: 3)

By the 1970s, however, the HSWP had essentially reversed this position again. In 1974, it called for the establishment of Romani clubs and other organizations and a 'gypsy' newspaper and even bilingual schools in some areas (Barany, 2000). And by 1984, the era of forced assimilation was officially ended when the party declared that "the Roma could freely choose between alternative methods of social integration: through preserving its culture, traditions, and ethnic identity or by voluntary assimilation" (Barany, 2000: 427). The recognition of a distinct Romani culture was marked in 1986 by the establishment of the 'Rom Cultural Association,' an organization that banded together 200 local Romani clubs and dance ensembles, and received official funding of 8 million Florints (Puxon, 1992).

In economic terms, the forced industrialization of the Hungarian economy, undertaken from the 1950s on, was generally beneficial for the Romani, as significant numbers moved from seasonal work in agriculture or traditional craftwork to full-time roles in industry, and full employment was achieved in many areas of the country (Kemény, 2005). Notably, however, despite widespread Romani participation in the industrial wage labor mandated by the HSWP, many Romanies continued to practice traditional trades, such as horse-trading, in their free time (described at length in Stewart, 1987). The resettlement programs improved the general housing conditions of the Romani. Official figures state that

the number of Romani 'slum dwellings' fell from 50,000 in 1964 to around 5,000 by 1984, though these numbers were probably exaggerated (Helsinki Watch, 1993). Overall, the position of the Romani, though improved, was still poor. A representative survey in 1971 (in Kemény, 2005) revealed that 52 percent of Romanies were illiterate and 60 percent were found to be living in 'isolated' or 'segregated' settlements. Only 0.5 percent of Romani males were classified as 'students,' whereas this was 8.2 percent for the non-Romani population (Kemény, 2005). Moreover, once the official assimilation policies were dropped, the segregation of Romani children in schools intensified. They were often sent to either 'special' classes or schools, which "were usually overcrowded, often led by uncaring or poorly qualified teachers, many of whom were assigned to 'gypsy classes' as a form of punishment" (Helsinki Watch, 1993: 7).

The 1971 survey also revealed that 71 percent of Romanies in Hungary spoke Hungarian as their mother tongue, 21 percent were native Romani speakers, and about 8 percent were Romanian speakers (ibid). Interestingly, these figures roughly correspond to three distinct Romani migrations to Hungary, the 'Hungarian' or 'Rumongro' Romani (those who had been present in Hungary for several centuries); followed by the 'Vlachs' (many of whom are the descendants of Romanies from the Romanian principalities who had come to Hungary in the late 19th century) and the Beás (also having migrated from Romania, but speaking an old Romanian dialect as opposed to Romani) (ibid).

Notwithstanding some real improvements in the social and economic positions of the Romani under socialism, they were still a subjugated and impoverished group by 1990, at which time two-thirds of the Romani lived below the poverty line (Barany, 2000).

Contemporary Hungary

The period following Hungary's transition to a market economy and democracy produced effects that were familiar across Central and Eastern Europe. Most notably, unemployment soared, but was borne disproportionately by the Romani, for whom the registered rate was

almost 50 percent in 1993[21], as opposed to 13 percent for the non-Romani population (Kemény, 2005). The Romani also suffered disproportionately in the domains of education, housing and health service provision, as the quality of these services deteriorated much more sharply in areas with majority Romani populations (Helsinksi Watch, 1993).

In terms of political representation and rights, democratization produced significant legislative advances for minority recognition and representation in Hungary. This culminated in the 1993 Minorities Act, which marked the official recognition of thirteen groups, twelve of which were described at 'national' groups, and one as 'ethnic,' the latter being the Romani (Krizsân, 2000). The most important 'pillar' of the Act was its provision for recognized minorities to establish self-governing institutions at the local and national level (composed of representatives elected by local delegates) (ibid). These institutions:

> ...May participate in legislative and administrative work from the lowest to the highest levels of governance, express views on draft legal regulations, and request information from public administrative bodies and local governments on issues affecting the minority they represent and propose and initiate measures. They have a right of veto over matters concerning education, culture, local media, efforts to sustain traditions and the use of the minorities' languages. (Krizsân, 2000: 253).

The number of Romanies in Hungary varies according to the measure used[22], but even the lowest estimates would still make them by far the largest of the recognized minorities. Despite this, and despite the relatively encouraging institutional landscape in Hungary after 1993, Romani political mobilizations have been small in scale, largely ineffective and fraught with internal division (Barany, 1998), though it seems that this is particularly the case at the national level. At the local level, the political efforts of Romanies have been somewhat more effective. For example, in 1998 the Romani established self-governing institutions in 764 settlements, and this increased to 998 in 2002 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Budapest, 2004). Nevertheless, these results should be viewed cautiously as the

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[21] These are the most conservative figures. The Helsinksi Watch report of 1993 details the unemployment rate for the Romani at between 60-70 percent, as opposed to 14 percent for the general population.

[22] For example, as of 1990, self-identification via the census produced a figure of about 1.4 percent of the population, whereas the estimations of minority organizations from the same year put the number at 6 percent (based on figures from Kemény, 2005).

representativeness of many such elections has been called into question. Due to the fact that the Minorities Act did not require that minority voters (or candidates) register as such, both the voters and sometimes the candidates in local minority elections did not belong to the respective minority, with the same candidates sometimes participating in elections for multiple different minorities (Krizsân, 2000) (the Act was amended in 2004 to prevent this).

Spurred by pressure exerted on Hungary to improve the situation of its Romani minority in the run-up to the country's accession to the EU, it seems that national initiatives have somewhat improved the objective social, economic and political positions of the Romani vis-à-vis the non-Romani population. As outlined by Spirova & Budd (2008) drawing on a UNDP survey, the social and economic disparity between Romani and comparable non-Romani, for the most part, is less severe in Hungary than in Bulgaria and Romania. Nevertheless, disparities exist in each welfare category mentioned. From poverty and unemployment to educational attainment and living conditions, the Romani are worse off than non-Romani who live in close proximity, and 57 percent of surveyed Romani said their lives had deteriorated in the five years preceding 2001-2002 (Spirova & Budd, 2008: 97).

Explaining the Persistence of the Romani – Pride or Prejudice?

For almost 600 years, since their arrival from the Byzantine Empire, the Romani have existed and persisted in and around the area corresponding to present-day Hungary. A very conservative assessment of the *ethnic calculus* as it would have pertained to their earliest experiences might plausibly conclude that, in the absence of much active persecution, Romani groups occupied a beneficial economic niche as skilled tradesman and musicians living outside of the, often brutal, feudal regime. So the salience of the Romani for, say, their first century in the Kingdom can be made intelligible by this fact. From the mid-16th century, the situation changed dramatically in the rest of Europe, as Romanies became increasingly persecuted. But, again, with most of Hungary under the relatively indifferent authority of the Ottomans at this time, and policies in 'Royal Hungary' also much friendlier

than elsewhere, the Romani in this area did not have much of an incentive to assimilate into the Hungarian peasantry. The cessation of this period was marked by the Habsburg recapture of Hungarian lands at the dawn of the Enlightenment, and from this period on, right up to the present day, *to be Romani* has, in terms of welfare outcomes, been invariably worse than to be *gadže*. An assessment of the relative value of their political benefits has been mostly unnecessary because, for most of the time considered and for most of the wider population concerned, there were very few or none. But as we have seen, in economic terms the Romanies have suffered at the margins of society for many generations.

In the absence of favorable benefits having accrued to the Romani, answers to the question of why they have persisted can essentially be boiled-down to two possibilities, only one of which is congruent with our instrumentalist model. Either Romanies have endured because, while having the *motive* to assimilate (given by inequality), they have not had the *means*, presumably because of some attribute specific or systemic restriction on identity change. Or, they have endured, despite inequality, because they *value being Romani,* that is, because of some intrinsic value*.* In the first case, we would have expected to see policies of entrenched, institutionalized exclusion and a solidified ethnic boundary that prevented the dissolution of the Romani, but as we have seen, the policies of the Enlightened monarchs, highly coercive though they were, actually constituted the inverse of what our model refers to as restrictions on change. Far from a rigidified ethnic boundary, the assimilatory policies sought to forcefully break down Romani/non-Romani differences. Similarly, though less coercively, the Romani were subject to strong assimilatory pressures during the socialist period. At other times, they were treated simply with disdain or indifference, but their incentive to assimilate was ever present.

So turning to the second possibility, would it be fair to say that, because of the general failure of the Romanies to dissolve, that they have persisted of their own volition, because of the value they placed on being and living as Romani? Is it *pride* that has sustained them? To draw this conclusion on a wholesale basis would be clearly erroneous because to ascertain definitively that the Romani have endured of their own accord, we would need to

know that they have had a real shot at becoming 'non-Romani Hungarians,' and while this may have been the case from a policy perspective, I suspect that it has perhaps never truly been the case from a *popular* perspective. Popular prejudice and suspicion towards Romanies has been entrenched across Europe for centuries, and it's inconceivable that this has not played a key role in stiffing their assimilation. Moreover, what made that prejudice 'stick' was the fact that the Romani are and were easily identifiable. And what made them identifiable, beyond their customs, language (which, in many cases for the Hungarian Romani has been lost) or segregated lives was the *color of their skin*, which is explicitly noted in almost all of the first hand accounts of the Romani by Europeans from the fifteenth century on.[23]

A large portion of the conundrum of explaining Romani persistence can be addressed once we take stock of the dual-character of ethnic identity, as both an attributed category and a self-ascribed one. Szelényi & Ladányi (2006) provide an illuminating study that reveals a very large discrepancy between the self-identifications of Hungarian Romani and the attribution of that identity by 'outsiders.' In their representative sample, only 37 percent of those identified as Romani by interviewers self-identified as such on a separate survey. Moreover, skin color was found to be the 'most important' indicator to influence the decision of interviewers. A separate study in Hungary by Csepeli & Simon (2004) revealed exactly the same discrepancy between in-group/ out-group classifications, with skin color and material deprivation found to be the most important indicators for attributing Romani identity to interviewees.

Though the results of studies like these are not ultimately definitive, they do signal towards two crucial points for our purposes. Firstly, that many (or perhaps most) Romanies in Hungary do not want to be considered as such, and secondly, that skin color may serve as an *attribute-specific* restriction on their assimilation, regardless of their incentives or desires. In addition, because we know that the largest part of the Hungarian Romani are both 'settled' and native Hungarian speakers, it would appear that skin color has technically been the crucial facilitator of their continued exclusion and marginalization.

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[23] A number of such accounts are contained in Fraser (1992).

Given the profound animosity often shown towards Romanies in popular culture, the media[24], and, to a growing extent, in politics (as evidenced recently by the rise of 'Jobbik,' a fascist and virulently anti-Romani party) and the range of pejorative stereotypes levied at them, their continued marginalization has no doubt historically been self-reinforcing given the visibility and 'stickiness' of skin color.

So are we to conclude then that the Romani are merely a subjugated group who desire assimilation but are excluded based an ethnic boundary drawn according to skin color? As with the opposite view, that Romani persistence is explainable entirely by their own, seemingly *non-instrumental* ethnic pride, this view provides an equally unsatisfactory and incomplete explanation. If we consider the 2011 Hungarian census, in which 308,957 (or 3.3 percent of the Hungarian population)[25] actively self-identified as Romani, and if we take the findings of the above studies completely at face value (and apply the result that only 37 percent of those attributed Romani identity actually self-identify as such), then the total number of people considered Romani by their environment in Hungary would be 835,019 (or 8.9 percent of the population). Deducting the number of 'self-identifiers' from this figure would mean that 5.6 percent of the Hungarian population are attributed the Romani identity without self-identifying as such. Thus, while all Romanies may be subject to prejudice, this group might approximately constitute those whose Romani identity is constructed solely on the basis of prejudice, though even this conclusion can only be made very tentatively, not least because failure to self-identity as Romani on a survey or census does not necessarily indicate that an individual does not 'feel' Romani. Fear of

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[24] A survey of popular prejudice in Hungary towards the Romani is unwarranted, but its tone and seriousness was captured in a January 2013 editorial published in the Magyar Hírlap newspaper, in which Zsolt Bayer, journalist and co-founder of the ruling Fidesz party wrote: "...A significant portion of the gypsies are unfit for co-existence, not fit to live among human beings. These people are animals and behave like animals... If he finds resistance, he kills... He wants what he sees. If he doesn't get it, he takes it and he kills... From his animal skull only inarticulate sounds come out and the only thing he understands is brute force... These animals should not exist. No way. This must be solved, immediately and in any way possible" (European Roma Rights Center, 2013).

[25] According to the census, the Hungarian population was 9,337,628 in 2011 (Hungarian Central Statistics Office, 2011).

discrimination or other repercussions may also make respondents wary of disclosing this information[26].

An ahistorical appraisal of Romani self-identifiers might lead some to speculate that they could be the products of modern ethnic entrepreneurs, who, to be sure, have (to a very limited extent) surfaced in the context of post-socialist Hungarian politics (see Barany, 1998; Krizsân, 2000); or they might consider them to be in search of some material claim on the modern state for its own sake. But, as we have seen, Romani resistance to assimilation is as old in Hungary as they are. Moreover, cultural expressions of Romani identity, through language, through music, through traditional trades and ways of life, to name a few examples, have surfaced in every historical and institutional setting in which the Romani have found themselves. In short, history provides a good indication that many Romani, though perhaps only a minority of those who are now externally labeled as such, do, in fact, want to be Romani rather than *dark-skinned Hungarians*.

In turn, it is notable that it is frequently the very cultural expressions of *being Romani* that have produced and informed much anti-Romani prejudice. Thus, the stigmatization and marginalization of Romanies has not been drawn, for the most part, from their *physical characteristics* per se, as could be said about the pure 'racial' ideologies apparently informing Hutu subjugation in colonial Rwanda, or Black/White dichotomies at various times around the world, but by characterizations (or, more frequently, mischaracterizations) of Romani lifestyles. Though the nuances may have changed slightly over time, the essence of anti-Romani prejudice, whether in Hungary or elsewhere, has been formed from a conception of them as profoundly 'other' (see Kende, 2000). Sometimes, the 'otherness' of Romanies has been romanticized, as in the 'noble savage' stereotypes of the nineteenth century (see Fraser, 1992; Hancock, 2002). More often, Romani 'otherness' is portrayed with deep negativity and suspicion, as in the ubiquitous

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[26] Non-disclosure of self-identification is a particularly endemic problem for Romani research. This results from the deep suspicion towards outsiders felt by many Romani communities. Weyrauch & Bell, for example note that: "Gypsies believe they should approach and respond to the *gaje* with caution, especially if [they] profess good intentions, claim to serve the best interest of the gypsies, or propagate some abstract ideals of non-Gypsy origin, such as the scholarly pursuit of truth" (1993: 337). See also Hancock (2002).

imagery of the 'gypsy' exonym. Trumpener summarizes the popular imagination of 'gypsy' life as follows:

> Moving through civil society, the gypsies apparently remain beyond reach of everything that constitutes Western identity [...] outside of historical record and historical time, outside of Western law, the Western nation state, and Western economic orders, outside of writing and discursivity itself. All the gypsies have, all they need, all they know is their own collectivity, which survives all odds and persecutions, as if their identity inheres in their very blood. (1992: 860)

This presents the commonplace outsider's projection of *gypsy* identity; one that in folklore has unfairly and invariably suggested a group whose exclusion and backwardness is of entirely of their own doing (relatedly, "if only they would civilize themselves" has frequently gone the thinking of governments across time and space). Such a characterization must be considered ironic given the instrumentalist expectation that the Romani would constitute no more than a downtrodden group of 'out-casts,' effectively excluded on the basis of skin color. Unfortunately, accurate accounts of the construction of Romani identity *from a Romani perspective* are still sparse, save for those provided in the most general terms, and this problem is complicated severely by the heterogeneity of Romani communities. Nevertheless, enough has been documented about them to establish that the majority-constructed gypsy/non-gypsy dichotomy is only half of the story. An equally ubiquitous dichotomy lies in the Romani/gadže separation, which is perhaps the singly most significant common denominator across Romani communities (Hancock, 2002). This symbolic, ritualistic separation, which pervades much of Romani culture has, no doubt, served a functional role for the Romani by keeping them apart from majority populations that have frequently sought to harm them (ibid). But aside from this functional value, the Romani-maintained cultural separation from gadže has its roots in a much deeper and highly complex belief system; one that has been shown to closely reflect the purity/pollution dichotomies found in the Indian caste system (see Hancock, 2002; Weyrauch & Bell, 1993, for example). As Fraser notes:

> [Romani] pollution beliefs can be seen as a core element of their cultures, serving to express and reinforce an ethnic boundary and to delineate a fundamental division between gypsy and gadžo [...] the taboo system informs all interaction between male and female and gypsy and gadžo. And for a gypsy to be declared polluted is the

greatest shame a man can suffer, and along with him his household. It is social death, for the condition can be passed on: anything he wears or touches or uses is polluted for others.

My point here is ultimately a simple one. Romani persistence cannot be reduced to problem of out-group exclusion. Though, to be sure, the 'gypsy' image has frequently attributed to them a status as 'pariahs,' and this broad category almost certainly encapsulates a much larger group than that which calls itself 'Romani,' the Romani too have perpetuated their own exclusionary identity and culture; one that, despite its subjugation, is clearly not clamoring at the gates of the Hungarian (or any other) ethnic boundary, desperate for assimilation. Recognizing this, with a firm appreciation of history, is surely crucial because failure to do so serves to perpetuate the indignity that the Romani have so often faced.

This brings us to an important practical implication of instrumentalist theory. If it were merely skin color that is holding back the Romani, then reducing 'racism' in Hungarian society would appear to be the remedy for improving their situation. The same effect would be brought about by any natural increases in the physical or 'racial' heterogeneity of the Hungarian population, through immigration or intermarriage, by decreasing the viability of exclusion based on skin tone. In either case, the recognition of the Romani as a distinct 'ethnic' group for the purpose of endorsing their cultural equality would be unnecessary because the instrumentalist view supposes that no Romani would want to remain so in a world where one could be a Hungarian, holding other things constant. Given the right incentives and absent prohibitory costs, the Romani would simply dissolve into the dominant group. It's easy to see how this view is highly reminiscent of the mechanical thinking of the Enlightenment, and why it might easily be considered misguided at best, and offensive at worst.

In sum, above I have provided an outline of the material situation and institutional contexts to which Romani groups in the area broadly corresponding to contemporary Hungary have been subject since their arrival almost 600 years ago. It has been made clear that, for most of their time in the area, they were subject to strong assimilatory pressures, given by their persistent economic marginality and varyingly coercive efforts to integrate them.

Explaining their endurance is no doubt a highly multifaceted problem, and the complexity of relevant factors across time has meant that I have only been able to touch upon this here. I suggest that it is highly probable that out-group attributions with prejudicial underpinnings (given on the basis of *attribute-specific* restrictions on identity change) account for much of the diverse group regarded en masse as 'gypsies' today in Hungary, but this still leaves a large number of self-identifying Romani seemingly unaccounted for by instrumentalist theory. In *figure 4,* I provide a presentation of the pattern of Romani identification as it may manifest in contemporary Hungary.

Figure 4. *Tentative characterization of the Romani in Contemporary Hungary*

$E_{Romani} < E_{Non\text{-}Romani}$ $R^* \geq (E_{Non\text{-}Romani} - E_{Romani})$	*If, as Szelényi & Ladányi (2006) show, skin color is indeed the principal marker distinguishing Romani from Non-Romani.
$\approx$ *37%* Self-Identifying Romani	$\approx$ Remainder, out-group attributions.

The importance of skin color for out-group attributions of Romani identity would imply that the persistence of much of the Romani group could rest, to a large extent, on the physical homogeneity of the broader Hungarian population. As such, the plight of *many* Romanies can probably be boiled-down to simple 'racism,' the reduction of which in Hungarian society may do very well to foster Romani integration and assimilation. But, from the perspective of the broader study of ethnicity, it is those who actively self-identify as Romani - whom I suggest have most likely preserved and perpetuated their own exclusionary identity - on whom I believe future research should focus. Additionally, though the practical constraints of the present study required that I focus on one area, the Romani are clearly very much more than a Hungarian phenomenon and I suggest that the most fruitful studies on the Romani should consider them across space as well as across time. This is not least the case because skin color is not likely to be able to effectively account for the exclusion of Romani groups in countries where dark skin is prevalent among the larger population.

CONCLUSION

In itself, the now almost universally accepted idea that ethnic groups are endogenous entities, constructed and reshaped through societal processes, says nothing in particular about their *nature*. Just because we are all now 'constructivists' does not close the door on a wide variety of theories concerning this. In this thesis, I have analyzed a particular view regarding the nature of ethnicity and of what drives *ethnic* behavior, termed 'instrumentalist.' This view sees ethnic groups as coalitions of self-interested agents, and thus sees membership in an ethnic group as a constrained choice, the purpose of which is the pursuit of maximal benefits. For instrumentalists, ethnic groups and identities are, therefore, not valued intrinsically, but for the outcomes with which they are associated. I have synthesized the basic propositions of instrumentalism into a conceptual model, and with the core tenets and expectations of instrumentalism elucidated, I have then applied this model to test its explanatory power in three cases, each involving a distinct theoretical problem.

In 'Yorubaland,' the problem to be addressed was that of ethnic identity *change*, but this case also involved ethnogenesis, or the construction of an ethnic group that had not previously existed as such. It was shown that both ethnogenesis and ethnic identity change (through *activation*) were consistent with instrumentalism. Specifically, the new incentive structures produced within the consolidated colonial state, and subsequently, served to invest the 'pan-Yoruba' identity with broad political and economic value, while not negating the value of sub-Yoruba ancestral-city identifications.

In the case of Rwanda, the emergence of the Hutu/ Tutsi ethnic cleavage also involved ethnogenesis, since these categories were 'ethnicized' within the context of the colonial state. But the principal theoretical problem to be explained here was the emergence and persistence of an ethnic cleavage that embodied stark inequality. Congruent with instrumentalist theory, this cleavage was enabled, before and after the country's independence, by a rigidified ethnic boundary that prevented the assimilation and dissolution of the subjugated group. This boundary, moreover, was facilitated in terms of

attribute-specific restrictions on identity change, given by physical stereotypes, but much more significantly, by what I have termed a *systemic* or institutional restriction, given in this case by ethnic identity cards.

While both the Hutu/ Tutsi cleavage, and the emergence of the Yoruba, constituted relatively discreet and recent phenomena, the many centuries-long persistence of the Romani is a theoretical problem that requires substantial scrutiny of a breadth of historical and institutional contexts. Given the huge scope of such an inquiry, I chose to delimit my analysis to historic and contemporary Hungary, as Romani groups have been consistently present in this area for almost 600 years. For a significant part of this time, the Romani have persisted in a state of severe subjugation, often living segregated and distinctly different lives from the non-Romani population. In light of this, instrumentalist theory would have expected that entrenched, institutionalized exclusion facilitated by a rigid ethnic boundary has perpetuated the Romani. But as we have seen, from a policy perspective during both the Enlightenment and during socialism, the Romani were institutionally subject to coercive efforts to assimilate them. At other times, institutional attempts to assimilate the Romani may have been downplayed, nevertheless, their subjugated position gave them a strong incentive to assimilate and homogenize with the broader Hungarian population, according to instrumentalist theory.

While the persistence of the Romani may not be accounted for by way of policy responses, I have suggested that popular prejudice has undoubtedly played a role in stifling their assimilation. Moreover, it is highly likely that an *attribute-specific* restriction (skin color), has facilitated their marginalization, and that their enduring subjugation has therefore been historically self-reinforcing. With this in mind, the persistence of the 'gypsy' category in Hungary can, to a significant extent, be accounted for in a way that is consistent with instrumentalism. But instrumentalist theory fails to provide answers to many interesting questions, such as why a significant number of people actively self-identify as Romani in Hungary, and, why Romani customs and the Romani language persist, to *any* extent. Additionally, I have focused above on only one side of the story, having not considered the

question of what *instrumental* purpose, if any, the exclusion of the Romani might have served for the non-Romani.

So, can ethnic groups be reduced purely to interest groups and can ethnic group membership be reduced to a welfare calculus between costs and benefits? In at least two of the cases considered above, instrumentalist expectations seem to hold substantial explanatory power. In the case of the Romani, the results of the present study appear largely mixed. My hypothesis, that ethnic groups can hold *intrinsic value* for their members, cannot be definitively confirmed on the basis of the data I have considered, or according to the theoretical model I have constructed, because I have not been able to ascertain, in the Hungarian context, that the Romani have endured as such of their own accord, and not as a result of imposed costs on their dissolution. But while, strictly speaking, this means that definitive conclusions cannot be drawn out here, I strongly consider that further research on the Romani is warranted. As a salient ethnic group that has persisted for centuries through an enormous variety of institutional settings, more extensive historical analysis, and more research on the modern construction of Romani identity across space, would be highly profitable for the study of ethnicity. If we are to learn what, if anything, is 'special' about *ethnic* identity, then such a pursuit would no doubt give valuable insight into this question, affirmative or not.

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