

# Lecture 1

## The Puzzle of Ethnicity

# The Puzzle of Ethnicity and Race

- Many social scientists in the early 1900s predicted that ethnicity and race would disappear in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
- Why did they think it would disappear?
- What examples can you think of in which ethnicity remains strong today?

# Example: The Holocaust

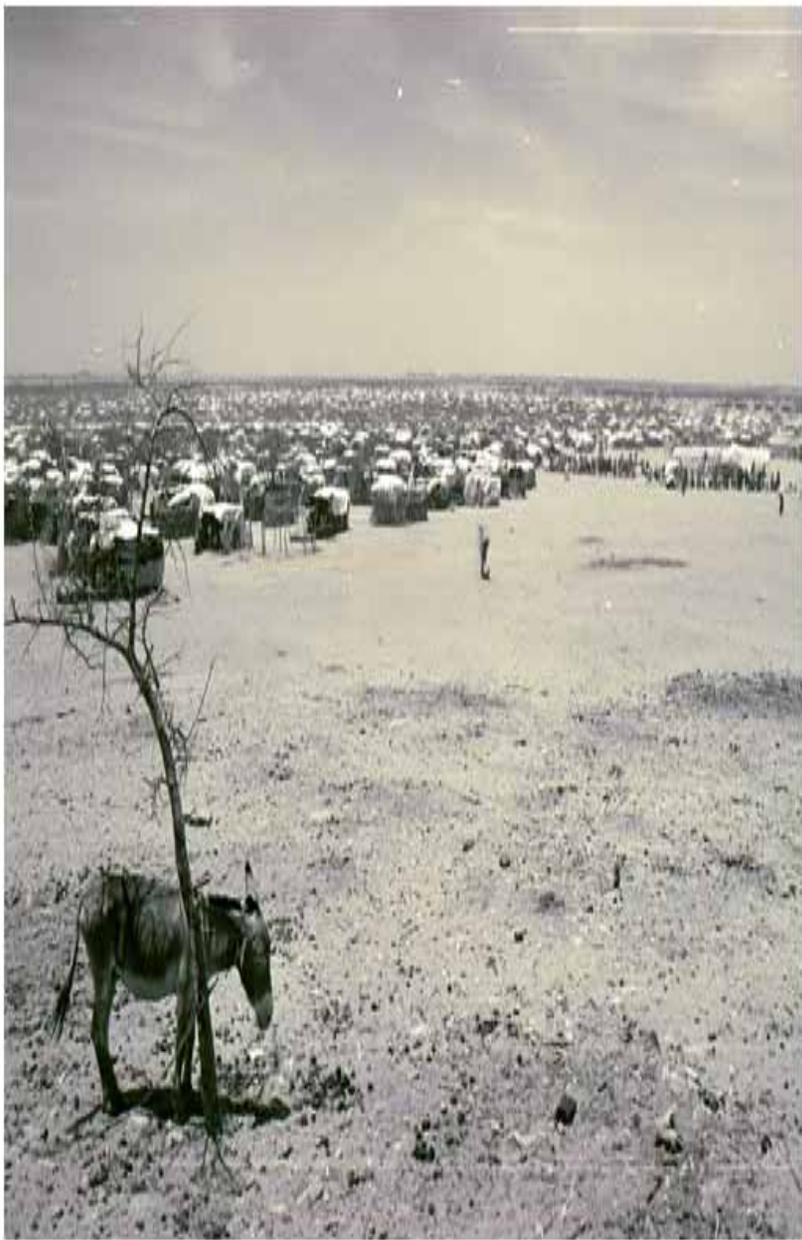
- During WWII, the Nazi regime undertook the systematic extermination of Jew, gypsies, and other “undesirables”



# Example: Genocide in Sudan

- A genocide has recently occurred in the Darfur region of Sudan
- Why do such atrocities continue to occur?









List of massacres, compiled by refugees in Touloum refugee camp, Chad. The refugees are desperate to have their stories told - they want the world to know where, when, what and who.

The Number of whom  
Kills and murder in Darfur

number of dead	place of Kill	Kind of Kill	Date
24	Gemaz - Kuttan	Ar-Antinogh	18/7/20
14	Abra village	Ar-Arab melishan	24/6/20
children	Amo	shoot of Duta	
45	Ria - east Kuttan	Gangawet	7/1/20
5	Amo - east of Kuttan	Antinogh	2/1/20
24	Abu Gielad - market	Gangawet	3/6/20
5	bitaine east Abogawet	Gangawet	16/7/20
8	K. L. ...	and soldiers	

The few animals that refugees have brought with them are dying from lack of fodder and water around Bahai. The International Rescue Committee has organized a program to collect and burn carcasses to prevent the spread of disease.



# Example: Tamils in Sri Lanka

- The Tamil Tigers' struggle in Sri Lanka is one of the longest-running wars.
- The insurrection by the island's Tamil minority, has claimed 60,000 lives and is dragging on into its 18th year
- Bombs in the capital, Colombo, have the far-away quality of motorway accidents.



# Example: Ethnicity in the US

- 1960s and 1970s brought a resurgence in ethnic political mobilization.

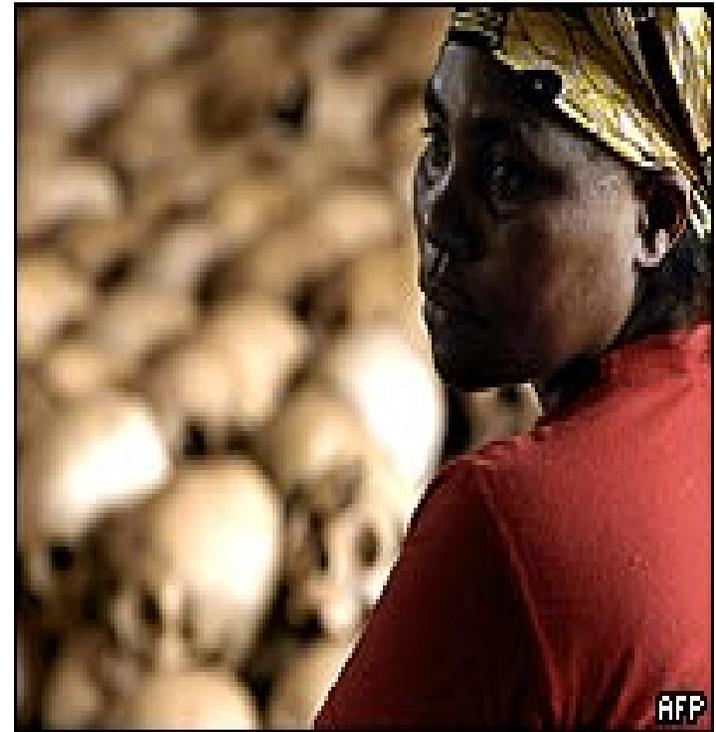


RAFO20204-2/2/60-GREENSBORO, N.C.: A group of Negro students from North Carolina A&T College, who were refused service at a luncheon counter reserved for white customers, staged a sit-down strike at the F.W. Woolworth store in Greensboro 2/2. Ronald Martin, Robert Patterson and Mark Martin are shown as they stayed seated throughout the day. The white woman at left came to the counter for lunch but decided not to sit down. UPI TELEPHOTO fwb



# Example: Conflict in Rwanda

- Between April and June 1994, an estimated 800,000 Rwandans were killed in the space of 100 days.
- Most of the dead were Tutsis - and most of those who perpetrated the violence were Hutus.



# Example: Quebec

- The question of Quebec sovereignty has been a big issue in Canadian minds since the 1960s, when General de Gaulle uttered his infamous, "Vive Montréal, vive le Québec libre, vive le Canada français, vive la France," at Montreal's Expo '67.
- Quebec (or Lower Canada as it was known then) was ceded to the British in 1763 after the Seven Years' War.



# Should Quebec separate from Canada?

CANADA

**YES**

**44.5%**

**NO**

**42.2%**

**UNDECIDED**

**13.2%**

QUEBEC

UNITED STATES

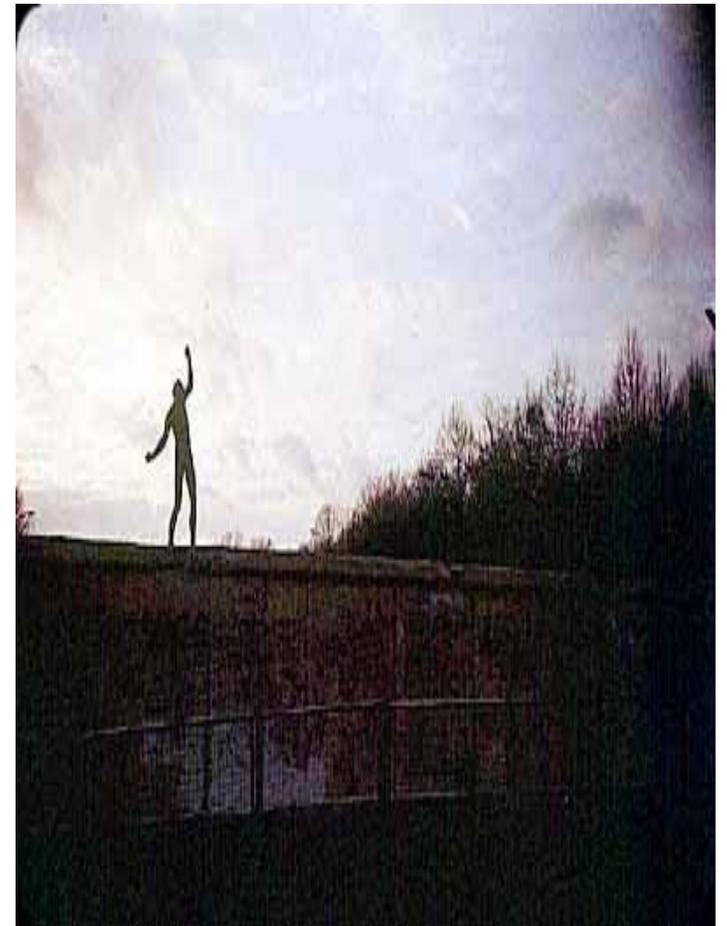
Sampling Error +/- 8% pts.

# Conflict and Cooperation

- The most cited examples of ethnicity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century often involve conflict.
- However, ethnicity and race has also been a source of collective action and cooperation.
- **We will focus more on conflict than cooperation in this class. But keep your eyes open to the positive side of “interethnic contacts”**

# Ethnicity and Social Bonds

- East and West Germany have been on very diverse cultural and economic trajectories.
- On October 3, 2000, Germany celebrated its Unification Day. This day back in 1990 brought a happy and a very significant event on the world political scene.
- The symbol of the Cold War - the Berlin Wall - was torn down, and East Germans could freely face the world.



# An Unexpected Persistence

- Prominent sociologists such as Robert Park was arguing for the disappearance of ethnicity due to forces such as trade, migration, mass media, cinema.
- He predicted “interpenetration of peoples”



*Robert E. Park*

# Assimilation Process

- **Melting pot assumption and Proposed stages of assimilation (Robert Park):**
  - 1.) initial contact**
  - 2.) competitive phase: ethnic populations compete over resources, such as jobs**
  - 3.) accommodation phase: immigrants and descendants are forced to change and adapt to their new environment**
  - 4.) assimilation**

# First Generation Immigrants

- Unable, unwilling to give up elements of foreign culture and society but may hope that children will move toward becoming "American"

# Second Generation Immigrants

- Learn many of old country ways, unable or unwilling to drop all vestiges of parents' culture and behavior, much more fluent in English than parents, may fail to learn or actively reject certain features of old-country ways, may move up the ladder of economic success...out of old neighborhood or marry someone of a different ethnicity or change name to sound less ethnic, but many elements of old culture may persist either by preference or necessity and still regarded by themselves or others as "ethnics"

# Third Generation Immigrants

- Completely in mainstream of American life, parents will not have transmitted to them a noticeable portion of old culture, either because wish children to lose ethnic identity or because parents don't know enough of old culture to teach them...may learn a few words of old country language, especially if grandparents are alive, and may learn recipes, folk songs, proverbs, feel a strong sense of attachment to old country and to other Americans who share a similar heritage, but speak standard English, and questions concerning their nationality seldom arise...completely Americanized

# Colonies and Ethnicity

- Colonies ruled by Europeans brought smaller independent ethnic groups under the rule of one government.
- The British colony of Nigeria began in 1914, and brought together numerous ethnic groups: Fulani, Igbo, Ijaw, Oyo and many others.
- What would happen during independence?

# Colonies and Ethnicity

- Common assumption from 1940s to 1960s that the newly independent colonies would continue to develop in the liberal market tradition
- Markets, intermarriage, mass communication, mixing of peoples and knowledge, and common language a few of the forces to tie people to **nations**, and not their ethnic loyalties.
- Did ethnic bonds disappear in the colonies?

# Marxism and Ethnicity

- Ethnicity is *epiphenomenal*, secondary to deeper forces (i.e. material interests).
- Ethnic identifications = false consciousness.
- Marxist revolution (Workers of the World Unite!) will end ethnic based thinking.

# Marxism and Ethnicity: But the reality is . . .

- Former communist countries of Eastern Europe: many new ethnic mobilizations.
- Developing countries: economic development *fuels* ethnic mobilization.
- Examples: USSR, Yugoslavia



# Weber and Ethnicity

- Weber predicted that the modern world depends on a sense of rationality and bureaucracy, whereas the tradition world involves communal relationships.
- Weber predicted that ethnicity and race (communal government structures) would be replaced by structures where people rule based on their bureaucratic roles.

# Weber and Ethnicity

- Weber, like others was wrong.
- “Traditional” peoples did learn and embrace modern practices such as formal bureaucracies and markets. Yet, the decline of ethnicity and “communal” ties did not occur!

# This class is about ...

- “Ethnicity is at the center of politics in country after country, a potent source of challenges to the cohesion of states and of international tension” -- Donald Horowitz
- **WHY, have ethnicity and race remained so important in the modern world regardless of all of the modernizing forces that should reduce their importance.**

# The Challenge of Diversity

- The world is full of numerous ethnic and racial groups
- What is more interesting is to think about how these groups change through time, and differ among place.

# This class is also about...

“If the Gods—or social scientists, it makes little difference—do know the answer, maybe they could explain: Why is ethnicity sometimes the basis of bitter conflict, even genocide, while at other times, it is no more than the stuff of gastonomic totemism”?

**HOW can we account for the rise and fall of ethnic/racial identities and their myriad of variations?**

# The Sociological Approach

- Historical and social contexts are seen as important
- Group processes are important: social groups are often dynamic and “in flux”
- Pay attention to what the groups bring with them (composition) and what they encounter (context)
- Pay attention to how people interpret and negotiate their lives in racial or ethnic ways.