

**AN201 Introduction to Anthropology**

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# **Ethnicity and Nationalism**

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## Videos

### I. Genetics of Southeast Asia: Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and More!

- Diversities in history, languages, cultures
- Diversified ethnic groups

### II. Myanmar | Freedom from Hate | 101 East

- Meikhtila township and violence in March 2013.
- Ethnic violence – killing in the name of religion!
- Ethnonationalism (Buddhist Burmese – religion + nationalism).
- Ethnonationalism & violence (supported by the state?).

## **Race and Ethnicity** (Justin D. García, “Perspectives: ...”)

- **Race** [an attempt to categorize humans based on observed physical differences] – USA socio-cultural and political experiences.
- **Assimilation** [pressure placed on minority groups to adopt the customs and traditions of the dominant culture].
- **Acculturation** [loss of a minority group’s cultural distinctiveness in relation to the dominant culture].

Socio-economic and political changes in the last few decades (partly, political movements, partly, globalization)

- **Identity politics** – political movements (for equality & legal rights)
- **Independence and ethnic autonomy**

## **Discussion topics** (AN201, Course Outline)

- **Problems of ethnic classification: Definitions**
  - Ethnicity
  - Nation
  - Nationalism
  - Ethnonationalism
- **Globalization & impacts on ethnicity & nation**
- **Deterritorialization**
- **Transnationalism**

# Globalization

Flows or “**scapes**”: Arjun Appadurai’s definitions

- a. **Ethnoscapes** – the movement of people around the world (tourists, refugees, exiles, economic migrants and other moving groups and persons).
- b. **Technoscapes** – the ways technologies help speed up cross-border movements.
- c. **Ideoscapes** – the ideas, symbols and narratives that have spread around the globe.
- d. **Financescapes** – the rapid movement of money across borders.
- e. **Mediascapes** – media has an increasingly global reach.

# Globalization

the growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by **cross-border trade** in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information.

- **Flows** – goods & objects, capital, technology, information, ideas & ideologies, people & cultures, consumption.
- *Flows* – everywhere, no one single center,
- **Local interpretations of globalization** – no one single globalization, but rather the global-local incorporating.

## Appadurai's *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*

- The new global cultural economy cannot be explained anymore in terms of existing **center-periphery** models. It is **complex, overlapping, disjunctive order** and it has to do with economy, culture and politics.
- **Deterritorialization**
  - created by the global economy; labour from the poorer countries seeking jobs in the wealthier countries,
  - creates new markets for businesses, such as film, art, travel, etc., serving the labour population for contact with their homeland [see [Transnationalism](#)],
  - living in the borderless world.

## **Deterritorialization** (Appadurai)

- Nation-states are threatened by the **flows** of borderless world.
  - Threats to the nation (centralized & standardized culture challenged by the global culture), national security (ethnic autonomy, terrorism, revolts), state ideology challenged by new ideologies & ideas, etc.
- Globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization, but globalization involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenization (clothing styles, advertising techniques, etc.).

## **Transnationalism: Definition**

The process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders”.

# Transnationalism & Globalization

- Modern transportation system – faster, convenient, efficient.
  - Travel is easier. More people, even the poor travel [in search of jobs].
- Modern telecommunication system; internet, cell phones, etc.
  - Accelerating people's communication & contacts.
- Modern economic & financial systems and Global Cities – Hong Kong, Singapore, New York, Vancouver, etc.
- New self identity as the result of consumerism

## **Transnational Community:** Definition

Dense networks across political borders created by immigrants in their quest for economic advancement and social recognition. Through these networks, an increasing number of people are able to live dual lives. Participants are often bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in both

## **Transnational Community: Some characteristics (Cont.)**

- ‘Resettlement’ in the new country,
  - ‘Home’ (where the migrants came from); yearning – family, friends, food, entertainment, etc.
  - Transforming ‘Resettlement’ to “Home”,
    - ‘Transnational Community’ where the migrants feel like ‘Home’
  - Relationships and contacts with ‘Home’,
  - Sending money home: Remittance.
- ❖ As long as the migrants keep relationships/contacts with ‘Home’, it’s a transnational community.

## **Transnational Community:** Some perspectives

- Global economy – transnational migrants as cheap labour.
- ‘Cultural agency’ – transnational migrants introduce their (local) cultures to the host countries (globalization meets local cultures).
- Transnational politics – how to deal with transnational migrants politically (their legal and political rights, the host attitudes towards the workers, etc.).

## Problems of ethnic classification

- Ethnicity is diversified – formed by geographical conditions, history, politics (wars, conflicts, colonialism), migration, globalization & global economy, etc.
- Definitions of ethnicity are varied – no single concept can cover all.
  - The term 'ethnicity' is problematic, created for the academic purposes.
  - The term is misinterpreted and misused – e.g., ethnic food, ethnic culture.
- Ethnicity is changing – especially in the globalization era.
- Ethnicity is influenced by the politics – ethnic-politics relations, nationalism, ethnonationalism.

## **Ethnicity: Definitions**

### **Ethnic Group** (Max Weber)

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 colonisation and migration; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationships exists.

## **Ethnicity: Definitions**

Reading Max Weber's "Ethnic Group" (Siniša Malešević)

- I. Ethnicity exists only on the basis of a particular group belief – if there is no group shared belief there will be no ethnic group.
- II. Ethnicity is rooted in a single but omnipotent belief – the belief in common descent.
- III. Although this belief in common ancestry is for most part fictional it is reinforced and reconfirmed on the ground of cultural or physical similarity or on the basis of shared collective memory.

## **Ethnicity: Definitions**

### **Primordial attachment** (Clifford Geertz)

one that stems from the “givens” – or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed “givens” – of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices.

## **Ethnicity: Definitions**

**Ethnic group** – a population which: (Fredrik Barth)

1. is largely biologically self-perpetuating,
2. shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms,
3. makes up a field of communication and interaction,
4. has a membership which
  - a. identifies itself (“self-ascription”),
  - b. and is identified by others (“ascription by others”), as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order”.

## **Ethnicity: Definitions**

**Ethnic Community** (French – *ethnie*): Main attributes (Anthony D. Smith)

- A collective proper name,
- A myth of common ancestry,
- Shared historical memories,
- One or more differentiating elements of common culture,
- An association with a specific “homeland”,
- A sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population.

## **Ethnicity: Definitions**

### **National Identity: Fundamental features** (Anthony D. Smith) (Cont.)

- An historic territory, or homeland,
- Common myths and historical memories,
- A common, mass public culture,
- Common legal rights and duties for all members,
- A common economy with territorial mobility for members.

## Ethnicity: Definitions

### Ethnic Oscillation (Judith Nagata)

#### Oscillating between Malay identity and Other

- Intraethnic differences among Muslim population in Malaysia – Malays, Indonesians, Arabs, some Indians Muslims,
- identify themselves as “*Melayu*” (Malay) in relation to the Chinese who are viewed as political and economic rivals, but fall back on their ancestral origins in other circumstances.

Nagata relates a situation in which a lady had repeatedly identified herself with her Malay neighbours who lived in the same *kampung* (village). **When the author commented on her industry as she was busy cleaning her house, she remarked proudly that she is an Arab, and that “Arabs are not lazy like Malays”.**

## Two distinct debates in the study of ethnicity (Thomas Hylland Eriksen)

### a. Between “**primordialism**” and “**instrumentalism**”.

- **Primordialist** view, the participant perceives ethnic ties collectively, as an externally given, even coercive, social bond.
  - Primordialism views ethnicity as expressive, attached and “given”; as basic and elemental with a power and determinism of its own.
- The **instrumentalist** approach, on the other hand, treats ethnicity primarily as an ad-hoc element of a political strategy, used as a resource for interest groups for achieving secondary goals such as, for instance, an increase in wealth, power, or status.

## Two distinct debates in the study of ethnicity (Thomas Hylland Eriksen) (Cont.)

### B. Between “**constructivism**” and “**essentialism**”.

- **Constructivists** view national and ethnic identities as the product of historical forces, often recent, even when the identities are presented as old.
- **Essentialists** view such identities as ontological categories defining social actors. [in other words, **Primordialists**]

## Nationalism: Definitions

**Nationalism** has “two fairly clear groups of meanings”: (Anthony D. Smith)

- a. It is used to refer to **doctrines or ideologies** about the character, interests, rights and duties of nations, and political programmes or movements which propagate such ideas or attempt to realize them.
- b. It refers to **sentiments, or emotions** in which individuals identify with, and express a devotion to their own nation – which should be called “national sentiment”.

## **Nation: Definitions**

### **Nation** (Ernest Gellner)

Two men are of the same nation ...

I. if and only if they share the same culture,

- Culture – a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.

II. if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation.

*Nations maketh man; nations are the artifacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities.*

## Nation: Definitions

### **Nation** (Ernest Gellner) (Cont.)

- A mere category of persons (say, occupations of a given territory, or speakers of a given language, for example) becomes a nation if and when the members of the category firmly recognize **certain mutual rights and duties** to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it.
- It is **their recognition of each other as fellows** of this kind which turns them into a nation, and not the other shared attributes, whatever they might be, which **separate that category from non-members**.

## Nationalism: Definitions

### Origin of Nationalism (Ernest Gellner)

- Industrialization – agrarian based economy and social structure to industrialism,
- Culture – diversified local cultures to a shared common culture [peasant-based local cultures under fiefdoms to a *nation*],
- Language – local languages to a shared language [to serve the industrialized-based economy],
- Literacy & standardized education [being able to read to work for the industrialized-based economy].

## Nationalism: Definitions

Some central features of **Ernest Gellner's nationalism**: (Thomas Hylland Eriksen)

- Shared, formal educational system.
- Cultural homogenisation and “social entropy”.
- Central monitoring of polity, with extensive bureaucratic control.
- Linguistic standardisation.
- National identification as abstract community.
- Cultural similarity as a basis for political legitimacy.
- Anonymity, single-stranded social relationships.

## Nationalism: Definitions

### Imagined Communities (Benedict Anderson)

Nation is ...

- socially constructed,
- a community because “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, **not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings**”.

## Nationalism: Definitions

### Imagined Communities (Benedict Anderson) (Cont.)

- the main causes of nationalism are the declining importance of privileged access to particular script languages (such as Latin) because of **mass vernacular literacy**,
- the movement to abolish the ideas of rule by divine right and hereditary monarchy,
- and the emergence of **printing press capitalism** – “the convergence of capitalism and print technology ... standardization of national calendars, clocks and language was embodied in books and the publication of daily newspapers”.
- Occurring with the start of the Industrial Revolution.

## **Nation: Definitions**

**Nation** is (Walker Connor)

- “a self-defined rather than an other-defined grouping”,
- “a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from other people in a most vital way”.

Meaning:

- Psychological bond – ancestrally related, sharing common descent,
- Nation – an extended family.

## **Nationalism: Definitions**

### **Nationalism** (Walker Connor)

powerful and influential because of the claim of common descent (members of the same family),

– meaning, demanding the loyalty and solidarity to the nation.

- Nation – psychological bond (ancestrally related, sharing common descent; an extended family).

## Ethnonationalism: Definitions

Reading Walker Connor's "**Ethnonationalism**" (Daniele Conversi)

- Nation – a self-defining category; in other words, it is the subjective experience of self-awareness that brings the nation into being.
- Nation – a continuity between the ethnic and the national dimensions.
- Ethnonationalism is the loyalty to a nation deprived of its own state and the loyalty to an ethnic group embodied in a specific state (as a 'nation-state').

## **Ethnosymbolism** – Reading Anthony D. Smith's (Daniele Conversi)

Ethnonationalist sentiments supported by ethnosymbolism.

- *Ethnie*-National Identity connection (*i.e.*, nationalism),
- Main features – shared common myths, memories, values, traditions and symbols,
- Myths of ethnic descent – ‘ethnic chosenness’ – its core,
- & Myth of a ‘golden age’,
  
- *Intellectuals* – scholars, writers, artists, musicians, poets, etc. – as the creators, inventors, producers and analysts of the ideas.