What about racial groups and boundaries (and race and racism)?

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Abstract

This article begins by discussing the major theoretical contributions of Barth's "Introduction" to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* and of a later essay he wrote on "Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity" (1994), which assessed the significance of his edited book. Among the principal contributions of Barth discussed are the greater sociological concern with ethnicity beginning in the 1970s, his emphasis on what "the actors themselves regard as significant," which contributed to the understanding of the social construction of ethnicity and race, and his argument that ethnic groups organise interactions between people, which led to the view of ethnicity (and race) as an organising principle of social relations. Also reviewed are the primary shortcomings of Barth's essays, including not mentioning the significance of race and racism and how race, rather than ethnicity, is the dominant principle of social organisation in many societies and thus serves as a boundary among groups.

KEYWORDS: Race, racism, ethnicity, Micronesians, Hawai'i

Introduction

Four and a half decades ago, as a postgraduate student in the Department of Anthropology at University College London in 1973, I wrote a paper, "Critique of Barth", for one of my weekly tutorials with my advisor Prof. M. G. Smith. My paper discussed Barth's "Introduction" and other chapter, "Pathan Identity and its Maintenance", in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, including the example of ethnic boundary crossing provided by him. I later included Barth's perspectives on ethnicity and my criticisms of some of his arguments in an article I wrote on "Situational Ethnicity" (1981).[2] Since then, I have conducted my own fieldwork on Filipino immigrant ethnicity in Hawai'i and have researched and written on other issues concerning race and ethnicity in Hawai'i and in the continental United States. I also have moved on from social anthropology and consider myself a specialist in Asian American studies with particular expertise in race and ethnicity, and my contribu-

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[1] I express my sincere appreciation to Dr Marek Jakoubek for inviting me to submit an article for this special issue and for the opportunity to rethink *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* and its theoretical contributions.

[2] In 2016, Jakoubek translated my article on Situational Ethnicity into Czech and included it in a volume he edited, *Theory of Ethnicity: Anthology of Texts.*

tion to this special issue is based on and written from the latter perspectives.

My article begins by discussing what I consider to be the major theoretical contributions of Barth's introductory essay in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* and his later assessment of the book, "Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity" (1994), to studies of ethnicity and race.[3] Among the principal influences of Barth that I review are the greater concern with ethnicity in the social sciences beginning in the 1970s, his emphasis on what "the actors themselves regard as significant", which contributed to the understanding of the social construction of ethnicity and race, and his argument that ethnic groups organise interactions between people, which led to the view of ethnicity (and race) as an organising principle of social relations. I also discuss what I consider the primary deficiencies of Barth's approach, especially not mentioning the significance of race and racism at all and not acknowledging that race, rather than ethnicity, is the dominant principle of social organisation in many societies. In the latter, their members view themselves as belonging primarily to different racial, and not ethnic, groups, and racial boundaries prevail over ethnic boundaries in regulating social relations.

Contributions and influences

Although Barth did not use the term "ethnicity" in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, his "Introduction" clearly resulted in greater theoretical and empirical interest in the concept. Very likely because he was a social anthropologist, the book appears to have had more of an influence in British social anthropology than in American anthropology and sociology. It possibly contributed to the convening of the 1971 annual conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth (ASA) on the theme of "Urban Ethnicity". The papers presented at the conference were published in an ASA monograph with the same title three years later, which was edited by Abner Cohen (1974), and included contributions from several of the foremost social anthropologists of ethnicity, such as Cohen, J. Clyde Mitchell, and David Parkin. In his very enlightening chapter, "Perceptions of Ethnicity and Ethnic Behaviour: An Empirical Exploration", Mitchell (1974: 17) commends Barth and his contributors to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* for producing 'the most sophisticated treatment of ethnicity as a cognitive category thus far'. However, in his introductory essay, "The Lesson of Ethnicity", Cohen (1974: xii–xiii), after very briefly and poorly summarising Barth's arguments, contends that his approach raises several

> … logical, methodological, and sociological difficulties. Its central theme is descriptive and its argument is essentially circular. What it says is that people act as the members of ethnic categories because they identify themselves, and are sometimes also identified by others, with these ethnic categories. How do we know this? The actors say so, or so they act…. At most, what we are establishing by this procedure is the simple fact that ethnic categories exist …. It generates no hypotheses and leads to no further analysis.

[3] Barth wrote this essay for a collection, *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'*, edited by Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers, which was published to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of publication of his edited book.

One certainly can, as many scholars subsequently have, hypothesise and analyse the meaning, significance and content of ethnic categories for the social relations among people who identify and are identified with different categories.

In British social anthropology, Sandra Wallman was at least initially associated with applying Barth's perspectives in her work on "ethnicity and the boundary process". The influence of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* is evident in her arguments that 'ethnicity is the process by which "their" difference is used to enhance the sense of "us" for purposes of organization or identification …. As the sense of "us" changes, so the boundary between "us" and "them" shifts' (Wallman 1979: 3). However, Wallman (1986: 232, emphasis in original) eventually parted theoretical company with Barth: 'When he [Barth] proceeds to explain *why* ethnic (or other) choices are made, … Barth's argument is dismally circular; because individuals and groups act (by nature?) in their own best interests, they always choose to "maximise value"'. Wallman's criticisms are very similar to those that have been made against the rational choice approach to race and ethnic relations of Michael Banton (1980).

More significantly, British social anthropologist Richard Jenkins (1986: 173-174) considers *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* to have initiated 'the paradigm shift within social anthropology from "tribal society" to "ethnic groups"'.[4] Subsequently, anthropologists viewed their traditional ethnographic subject of research – "tribes" – as ethnic groups within a larger common society and began to analyse the relations among them rather than study and represent them in isolation. Jenkins asserts that Barth and his contributors outlined the essential argument of this "paradigm of ethnicity" that came to dominate the discussion of ethnicity in social anthropology and, to a lesser extent, in North American cultural anthropology.

In the United States, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* certainly contributed to a greater theoretical concern with ethnicity in the social sciences in and beyond anthropology starting in the 1970s. Prior to that decade, "ethnicity" was not a very commonly used term in the social sciences.[5] The eminent sociologists Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1975) acknowledge the influence of Barth's volume on their edited work, *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*.[6] In their introductory essay, they argue 'there is something new afoot in the world. … The new word is "ethnicity," and the new usage is the steady expansion of the term "ethnic group" from minority and marginal subgroups at the edges of society … to major elements of a society' (5). This new perspective focused on ethnicity and ethnic groups also contributed to the ongoing challenges to assimilation theory as the dominant approach to race relations, which Glazer and Moynihan (1963) had initiated in *Beyond the Melting Pot*. The contributors to Glazer and Moynihan's edited book in-

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4 R. Cohen (1978: 384) had earlier noted the 'shift from "tribe" to "ethnicity"' in anthropology, as a result of acceptance of the latter concept, but did not attribute it directly to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*.

5 Glazer and Moynihan note that "ethnicity" does not appear as an entry in *A Dictionary of Sociology* (Chicago: Aldine, 1968). R. Cohen (1978: 380) adds that Despres (1975) found that thirteen of the leading anthropology textbooks from 1916 to 1971 had no index entries for "ethnic" and "ethnic group".

6 In their introduction to the volume, Glazer and Moynihan (1975: 26) list *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* among a number of recent books 'developing a comparative view of ethnicity', from which they had benefited.

cluded many of the leading American sociologists and political scientists, such as Talcott Parsons, Daniel Bell, Milton Gordon, and Orlando Patterson, who all discussed "ethnicity", "ethnic identity", and "ethnic relations", rather than race and race relations, which had been the more general practice.

In a review article on anthropological studies of ethnicity, Ronald Cohen (1978) in "Ethnicity: Problem and Focus in Anthropology" similarly contends that very suddenly, "ethnicity is a ubiquitous" concept, evident in a multitude of titles of books, new journals, and other publications using *ethnic* or *ethnicity*. Citing anthropologist Leo Despres (1975), he attributes this new concern possibly to "Barth's influential book". Cohen (1978: 383) maintains that Barth's contribution was in viewing 'ethnicity as a subjective process of group identification in which people use ethnic labels to define themselves and their interaction with others'. The concept of ethnicity, Cohen (381) continues, raises 'the question of categorization by non-members [including the anthropologist] (the objectivist emphasis) as opposed to a person's own identity or identification with a particular ethnic group (the subjectivist emphasis)'. While Barth did not discuss this issue in objective/subjective terms, the influence of his emphasis on ethnic groups as "categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves" for their social relationships with one another is markedly evident.

While not a book, Herbert Gans' (1979) highly influential article, "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America", further demonstrates the increasing theoretical salience of ethnicity, which followed from *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Gans discusses how White ethnic groups, such as Italian Americans, Irish Americans, and Jewish Americans, by retaining important symbols of their culture are able to maintain distinct ethnic identities, despite acculturating into White American culture and assimilating into a White racial identity. Gans' article resulted in similar ethnicity-centred studies on Irish Americans, such as Andrew M. Greeley's *The Irish Americans: The Rise to Power and Money* (1988), and on Italian Americans, such as Richard Alba's *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity* (1985).

The developing focus on ethnicity eventually resulted in the view, by the 1980s, at least among many social scientists in the United States, that 'Theoretically, the ethnicity paradigm represents the mainstream of the modern sociology of race' (Omi & Winant 2014: 21). For such mainstream sociologists, ethnicity had eclipsed race as the foremost principle of social organisation in America, and race was declining in significance in structuring fundamental social processes, such as access to employment, education, and wealth. What race theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2014: 39) have criticised as 'the ethnicity paradigm of race,' which subsumes race under ethnicity, resulted in blurring the analytic distinction between races and ethnic groups, such that even African Americans were considered an ethnic group (see Cornell & Hartmann 1998: 34). Under the theoretical influence of the ethnicity paradigm, the notion emerged that America had transcended race and become a post-racial, if not colour-blind, society by the 1990s (Okamura 2011: 134). This rightward direction in ethnicity theories reflected a similar rightward shift in racial politics in America, which had begun in the late 1960s in opposition to the gains of the civil rights movement. The ethnicity paradigm has been challenged by

race theorists, such as Omi, Winant, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, and other social scientists, who argue that the opposite is the case – race is, in fact, increasing in significance in America and extending its harsh disadvantages for people of colour into previously racially unaffected social and cultural arenas.

The second major theoretical contribution of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* is Barth's emphasis in his *Introduction* on what "the actors themselves regard as significant". This perspective can be appreciated as contributing to the consensus in the social sciences and humanities of the social construction of ethnicity and race. In his 1994 article, he notes this influence himself that he had previously argued "for what would now be recognized as a constructionist view". Thus, one can agree with Barth (1994: 13), 'If it is true as many have said, that *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* revolutionized the debate on the subject,' it would be in this regard that ethnicity and race are socially constructed. The previous understanding was that ethnicity and race are objectively defined or natural phenomena or worse, biologically determined. Bonilla-Silva (1997: 472) acknowledges Barth's contribution to constructionist understanding: 'After the process of attaching meaning to a "people" is instituted, race becomes a real category of group association and identity'. He adds that this point has been emphasised by many social scientists since 'Barth's (1969) crucial work conceiving of ethnicity as a form of social organization'. In this regard, in his Introduction, Barth (1969a: 13-14, emphasis in original) asserts,

> By concentrating on what is socially effective, ethnic groups are seen as a form of social organization. The critical feature then becomes … the characteristic of self-ascription and ascription by others …. To the extent that actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for purposes of interaction, they form ethnic groups in this organizational sense.

In this process of forming ethnic groups through ascription, ethnic boundaries are also socially constructed based on perceived cultural differences. These arguments also contributed to the eventual view concerning the social construction of ethnicity and race based on the perception of differences and the meanings assigned to them by actors.

Actors, or more generally the members of a common society, decide what social criteria, for example, cultural or phenotypic, are used to define group membership and hence whether these groups are races or ethnic groups.[7] If they regard their cultural differences as more significant for distinguishing members and non-members, then they consider the constituent groups as ethnic groups; however, if they view their phenotypic differences as more important, then they perceive themselves as belonging to different racial groups or races. As Barth (1969a: 15) maintains, 'ethnic categories provide an organizational vessel that may be given varying amounts and forms of content in different socio-cultural systems. They may be of great relevance to behaviour, but they need not be; they may pervade all social life, or they may be relevant only in limited sectors of activity'. Societal members themselves decide on the salience of ethnic or racial categories for their social relations with one another rather than social scientists being able to make

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[7] Classes are socially constructed through a similar process by societal members.

an *a priori* assumption of their significance. Thus, racial categories may be of greater relevance in regulating behaviour than ethnic categories. Hence, one can take issue with Barth's argument that 'regarded as a status, ethnic identity is superordinate to most other statuses, and defines the permissible constellations of statuses…, which an individual with that identity may assume' (1969a: 17). Racial identities may supersede ethnic identities in a given society or situation, particularly in a society in which race is the leading principle of social organisation.

The third primary contribution of Barth's edited book is his contention that ethnic groups, as categories of ascription and identification, organise interactions between people (1969a: 10), which led to the view of ethnicity (and race) as an organising principle of social relations. While the subtitle of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* is "The Social Organization of Culture Difference", in his later article Barth (1994: 13) asserts more generally that 'ethnicity is the social organization of culture difference'. As such a principle of social organisation, besides demarcating group differences, ethnicity regulates the relations among ethnic groups and their members. These relations include those pertaining to the distribution of political power, wealth and income, higher education, occupation, housing, justice, health care, and other sources of inequality in society. A racial corollary of the subtitle of Barth's book would be that racial groups and boundaries, or race itself following his 1994 argument, is the social organisation of phenotypic difference.[8] As an organising principle, race structures the relations among racial groups in a common society, particularly access to the same resources noted above for ethnicity. As principles of social organisation, ethnicity and race also can be seen as maintaining ethnic or racial boundaries, as the case may be, among the constituent groups in a society.

Before proceeding further, a brief discussion of the analytic difference between ethnicity and race needs to be provided. Ethnicity is associated with culture, and thus cultural features, such as language, religion, values, and symbols, distinguish ethnic groups, although these attributes are not necessarily exclusively or uniformly distributed among group members.[9] According to Omi and Winant (2014: 21), ethnicity theory 'is an approach … that affords primacy to cultural variables'.[10] In contrast, race is associated with phenotype, and hence phenotypic or physical markers differentiate racial groups or races, which can similarly vary among group members. As Omi and Winant (ibid.: 111) observe, 'Race is a … representation or signification of identity that refers to different types of human bodies, to the perceived corporeal and phenotypic markers of difference and the meanings and social practices that are ascribed to those differences'.

Since it is associated with culture, which can be acquired or relinquished, ethnicity as a marker of identity can be changed, while race as a comparable signifier of identity

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[8] A class version of Barth's argument would be that class is the social organization of economic difference.

[9] Since I am emphasising the differences between ethnicity and race, I am ignoring that the former can also be based on ancestry or descent.

[10] In a lecture on "The Difference between Race and Ethnicity" for the California Pluralism Project, Winant (2015) states, 'Ethnicity is a matter of culture […]. Ethnicity is about your religion, your language, your cuisine, perhaps your national origin, your dress. It can be changed. It can change in ways that race cannot'. The lecture was posted on YouTube on October 22, 2015.

is much less changeable. Moreover, phenotypic features, commonly but not universally skin colour and hair texture and colour, are visible in ways that cultural attributes are not readily evident, for example, values or meanings. Hence, given that race can be read from the body, Omi and Winant (ibid.: 246) underscore the "ocularity" and "corporeality" of race, which are not distinguishing aspects of ethnicity. They also contend that, if race is understood as a variety of ethnicity, then it means 'to neglect stigma, exclusion, privilege, and violence, all characteristics inherent in "the mark of race," the phenomic, "ocular" dimension of racial belonging' (ibid.: 40). Culture and cultural differences are also much less significant with regard to race and demarcating racial groups, which can include different ethnic groups with differing cultures, such as Asian Americans consisting of Filipino Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Asian Indians, and others. The analytic differences between ethnicity and race result in corresponding differences between ethnic groups and racial groups and between ethnic boundaries and racial boundaries.

Ethnic or racial groups and boundaries

Barth (1994: 11, emphasis in original) highlights in his later article that *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* was particularly focused on 'persons who *change* their ethnic identity'. His ethnographic contribution to the book on the maintenance of Pathan identity analyses such a transformation from Pathan to Baluch identity in Afghanistan (Barth 1969b: 125), and the chapter by Gunnar Haaland (1969) on 'Economic Determinants in Ethnic Processes' discusses the change from Fur to Baggara identity in western Sudan. In a chapter in an edited book, which commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, anthropologist Katherine Verdery (1994: 36) asserts that 'the notion that ethnic identities are not necessarily fixed and permanent but malleable, in at least some circumstances,' has been common knowledge in anthropology, and Barth did much to make it such. Setting aside the question of the validity of Barth's and Haaland's analyses of ethnic identity change, the more salient issue concerns the much greater difficulty for persons to switch their racial identity. Since as noted above, ethnic identity and ethnic groups more generally are associated with cultural attributes, such as language, religion and beliefs, they can be changed in the course of a person's lifetime. However, racial identity change is not as easily accomplished because phenotypic characteristics, such as skin colour, are far more difficult to alter for an individual. Thus, racial boundaries are much harder to cross compared to ethnic boundaries, which makes evident the limits of the arguments regarding changes in ethnic identity advanced in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Furthermore, personal change in ethnic or racial identity hardly constitutes a major problem or issue pertaining to ethnicity or race, certainly not in comparison to persisting racial inequality and recurring cases of ethnic cleansing for groups.

Instead of a concern with persons who change their ethnic identity, sociologist Andreas Wimmer (2008: 1925) provides a "new taxonomy" of how ethnic boundaries can be changed by actors, which he claims to be "exhaustive" and capable of accommodating numerous historical and contemporary cases from both the developed and developing world. He distinguishes five principal strategies:

to redraw a boundary by either expanding or limiting the domain of people included in one's own ethnic category; to modify existing boundaries by challenging the hierarchical ordering of ethnic categories, or by changing one's own position within a boundary system, or by emphasizing other, non-ethnic forms of belonging.

Commenting on the work of Barth and his colleagues in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* and of others who advance similar analytical strategies to ethnic boundary making, Wimmer (1027) contends that it was "comparatively static" and concerned primarily with the characteristics of the boundaries and their maintenance. Given his concern with how actors can change ethnic boundaries, this criticism is not surprising, but it does not address whether his five strategies also apply to racial boundaries. To change one's status within a boundary system, especially one based on race, while possible, is not that easily accomplished, whether for individuals or groups.

Given his emphasis on boundaries, Barth (1969a: 15, emphasis in original) in his Introduction claims that 'the critical focus of investigation […] becomes the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses'. Insofar as "cultural stuff" includes the diacritica that define group membership and identity, such as language, religion, meanings, and values, they also can be understood as constituting the boundary dividing ethnic groups, and not just defining them. Verdery (1994: 40, 43) maintains that another key insight of Barth's approach to ethnicity was his 'resolute separation of culture from ethnicity,' which 'amounted to a stunning demotion of a concept fundamental not just to the idea of ethnic identity but to anthropology as well'. However, Barth (1994: 17-18) observes that 'the issue of cultural content versus boundary, as it was formulated, unintentionally served to mislead' and that 'central and culturally valued institutions and activities in an ethnic group may be deeply involved in its boundary maintenance'. For racial groups, however, cultural factors are less significant for defining and maintaining group boundaries compared to phenotypic factors, such as skin colour, hair colour or texture, facial features, or a combination of such characteristics.

Given that race, as opposed to ethnicity, can be read from the human body, corporeality and visibility are highly distinctive attributes of races in contrast to cultural criteria, which are less visible and are not limited to the body, for example, symbols. As Omi and Winant (2014: 40) argue, 'The racial body […] still serves today as an imperfect but effective tool and marker: for both domination and resistance, for the assignment of identity and the recognition of difference, [and] for the maintenance of social control and the drawing of boundaries among groups'.

In short, racial boundaries differ qualitatively from ethnic boundaries in their social construction and in the extent to which they can be overcome. Furthermore, cultural assimilation, more often than not, does not result in racial boundary crossing. A highly educated, professionally employed, fully acculturated, upper-middle-class African American, male or female, who could be said to act White behaviourally, is still perceived and treated as Black by Whites because of the dominance of race over ethnicity (and class) as the primary principle of social organisation in America. Thus, one can take issue with Barth's (1969a: 15) contention that:

It makes no difference how dissimilar members may be in their overt be-
haviour—if they say they are A, in contrast to another cognate category B,
they are willing to be treated and let their own behaviour be interpreted and
judged as A's and not as B's; in other words, they declare their allegiance
to the shared culture of A's.

While our hypothetical African American might assert their commitment to
White culture and identity and allow their behaviour to be evaluated as White, it is ex-
tremely doubtful that they would be accepted as White, even if they for some reason
claim to be.

I find it curious that Barth (1994: 11) in his assessment of *Ethnic Groups and
Boundaries* asserts that its approach, in addition to Goffman's work on the definition of
the situation, developed primarily from 'corporate group theory out of British social an-
thropology'. He does not demonstrate much concern to distinguish between ethnic groups
and ethnic categories and so appears to have missed the conceptual distinction advanced
by British social anthropologist M. G. Smith (1968: 31) between corporate groups and
corporate categories. According to Smith, the latter lack the 'inclusive organization,' set
of common affairs, and 'autonomy necessary to regulate them,' which the former have.[11]
In this regard, sociologist Rogers Brubaker (2009: 29) challenges what he refers to as
'"groupism": the tendency to treat various categories of people as if they were internally
homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common
purposes; and to take ethnic and racial groups and nations as basic constituents of so-
cial life'. He notes Barth's inconsistency concerning this difference between groups and
categories and that 'his central metaphor of "boundary" carries with it connotations of
boundedness, entitativity and groupness' (Brubaker 2002: 169). Citing the work of others
(Handelman 1977: 187, Cohen 1978: 386-387, Jenkins 1997: 20-21), he argues that Barth
'equates the drawing of ascriptive distinctions, and the channeling of certain actions in
line with such distinctions, with the existence of bounded ethnic groups and thereby con-
tributes […] to the reification of groups' (Brubaker 2009: 29), a frequently made criti-
cism of Barth's arguments.[12] Brubaker (30) contends that 'ethnicity works not only […]
in and through bounded groups, but in and through categories, schemas, common-sense
knowledge, symbols, elite and vernacular discourse, institutional forms, organizational
routines, public ceremonies, and private interests', which is not surprising if ethnicity is
understood as a major organising principle of social relations. Nonetheless, he acknowl-
edges that Barth's introductory essay 'was extraordinarily influential in directing atten-
tion to the workings of categories of self- and other-ascription'.

Beyond Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: Race and racism

As a social anthropologist conducting fieldwork in societies in which its members, such
as the Pathan and Baluchi, do not consider themselves or are considered as belonging to

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[11] According to Smith (1968: 31), the characteristics of both corporate categories and groups include their 'pre-
sumed perpetuity, closure, determinate identity, and membership.'
[12] R. Cohen (1978: 386) had much earlier expressed this criticism.

different racial groups, one can understand why Barth and other similarly situated anthropologists do not address issues related to race and racism. Adhering to this constructionist approach to ethnicity (and race), if the people concerned regard the differences among them to be primarily based on culture rather than phenotype, then they should be viewed and analysed as ethnic groups and not races, and one should not impose a racial perspective on them. However, by discussing only ethnic groups, boundaries, identities, and relations, and ignoring their racial counterparts, Barth and his colleagues in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* limited the applicability of their theoretical approaches and arguments. While the notion of ascription by self and others certainly can be applied to persons of differing race, insofar as it is associated with "cultural stuff," the concept of ethnic boundaries lacks the same degree of transferability, although there obviously are racial boundaries. The latter can be said to be based on "phenotypic stuff", such as skin colour, hair texture, and ultimately racialised bodies, and hence racial boundaries are far more rigid and difficult to transgress, at least under ordinary circumstances.

While Barth cites the term "race" in passing in his Introduction, he makes no mention of racism or discrimination, which are two dominant related forces that maintain racial inequality, oppression and injustice throughout the world, including Norway.[13] In his 1994 article, by which time many non-Whites from different countries had immigrated to his homeland, Barth (1994: 14) discusses the social adjustment experiences of a hypothetical Pakistani immigrant family in Oslo. Given his primary concern with culture and ethnicity, he especially focuses on the resulting cultural differences among them, including their Norwegian-born children, and does not address their probable experiences with xenophobic racism and discrimination in Norway or the nature of their social relations with White Norwegians. Barth does mention "growing Norwegian stereotyping of Pakistanis" but does not reveal anything about their content and how they represent Pakistanis, especially in racialised terms. Instead, he underscores how the experiences of his Pakistani family, the members of which are said to be 'deeply divided in the culture' each follows, highlight 'flux and continuity of variation', which are emphasised in contemporary concepts of culture (15). Barth thus replicates the same conceptual and methodological problems of earlier studies of "tribal" societies of viewing and representing them in ethnographic isolation rather than in relation to other comparable social groups. Obviously in this example, which is hardly imaginary, Barth could have easily discussed and analysed racial groups and boundaries between White Norwegians and Pakistanis and other persons of colour in Norway. However, his focus on ethnic groups and boundaries and the role of culture in both limited the scope of his analysis and hindered a more productive understanding of the problems faced by racial minorities in his country, although admittedly that was not his purpose in presenting his example.

Rather than ethnic groups and boundaries, an emphasis on race and racism results in a more insightful analysis of the problems encountered by racial and ethnic minorities in racially divided societies. Race scholar Joe Feagin's (Feagin & Elias 2013:

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[13] In his review article on anthropological approaches to ethnicity, R. Cohen (1978) also does not mention race.

937) theory of systemic racism, by which he refers to the 'foundational and large-scale hierarchical system of racial oppression maintained by Whites,' is especially salient in the American context. Systemic racism includes: 1) the exploitative and discriminatory practices of Whites; 2) the unjustly obtained resources and power for Whites institutionalised in the racial hierarchy; 3) the maintenance of material and other resource inequalities by White-controlled social reproduction mechanisms; 4) and racial stereotypes, representations, and narratives of the "White racial frame" produced to rationalise continuing racial oppression. These diverse but interrelated dimensions of systemic racism demonstrate the analytic inadequacy of a narrow concern with ethnic groups and boundaries, which fails to address critical problems related to oppression, discrimination, hierarchy, and stereotyping in the relations of groups, whether ethnic or racial.

Like Barth, I would like to assess *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* by considering the situation of an immigrant minority in my homeland of Hawai'i. Rather than only among Whites in America, systemic racism is highly evident in the denigrating representation and discriminatory treatment of the growing Micronesian population in Hawai'i, despite the islands' global reputation as a multicultural paradise. As the most recent migrating group, since the 1990s an increasing number of Micronesians have settled in Hawai'i from the Marshall Islands, Belau, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and other very small islands and atolls in the western Pacific, a vast area which spans more than a million square miles. Their migration has been furthered by the Compacts of Free Association (COFA) signed between their home nations and the United States between the mid-1980s and 1996. The compacts followed more than forty years of U.S. colonialism in Micronesia as the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific, which was mandated by the United Nations after World War II.[14] The COFA nations are the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Belau, and the Federated States of Micronesia, all of which are internationally recognised, including being members of the United Nations. Thus, within their community in Hawai'i, Micronesians identify themselves and others as Marshallese, Belauan, Chuukese, or Pohnpeian and are aware of the national, cultural, and other social differences among themselves. However, they assert a collective Micronesian identity to non-Micronesians in Hawai'i; for example, Micronesians United is a non-profit advocacy organisation representing their community. As ethnic identities, Belauan, Chuukese and Marshallese certainly are associated with cultural differences, particularly language, among Micronesians. However, most people in Hawai'i are unaware of these differences and are unable to distinguish the identities and cultures of these ethnic categories and hence racialize Micronesians as such.[15]

Due to the compacts, COFA citizens can legally reside and work in Hawai'i (and the rest of the United States) without a visa but still number only about 13,000, which is

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[14] The compacts allow the United States to have military access to the COFA nations and their surrounding seas, including for ballistic missile testing, and provide tens of millions of dollars in annual payments to each nation.

[15] Other Micronesians in Hawai'i include Chamorros from Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, but they are not COFA citizens because their homelands as continuing U.S. territories do not have compact agreements with the United States. Chamorros (6,600) are less numerous than COFA citizens in Hawai'i and tend to have a much higher socioeconomic status and are less subject to anti-Micronesian racism.

less than one per cent of the state population of 1.4 million (Blair 2011). A considerable majority of COFA migrants are from the Marshall Islands (9,215) (DBEDT 2018), which includes Bikini and Enewetak atolls that were used for atomic bomb testing by the United States in the 1950s with consequent chronic health problems for Marshallese. A recent state of Hawai'i report (DBEDT 2018: 12), which is based on the 2011-2015 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau, found that the median household income of Marshallese ($32,700) is less than half the median for Hawai'i households ($69,500). Marshallese (46.2 per cent) also have a much higher percentage of families living in poverty compared to that for Hawai'i as a whole (7.7 per cent) (13). Comparable data for other COFA groups besides Marshallese are not provided in the DBEDT report because of the small number of them that were included in the American Community Survey. However, the socioeconomic status, as indicated by income, occupation, and education data of those other COFA groups is very likely similar to that of Marshallese.

Of the four frames of systemic racism, the first regarding institutional discrimination, and the fourth concerning racist stereotypes and representations are especially evident against Micronesians in Hawai'i. The most egregious example of the former was the determined effort by the state of Hawai'i to deny COFA citizens equal access to government-funded health care services. Besides employment opportunities, the latter is one of the primary reasons that COFA citizens settle in Hawai'i, including dialysis treatment for diabetes, which is not available in their home nations. After the onset of the global recession and faced with a consequent annual budget deficit of $1 billion, the state of Hawai'i in 2010 dropped COFA citizens from its health care programme for low-income residents (Med-Quest) and placed them in another programme, which provided significantly fewer services and benefits. An advocacy organisation, Lawyers for Equal Justice, filed a suit on behalf of the COFA citizens against the state of Hawai'i to have health care services restored to them. A federal judge ruled in their favour and declared that the state had violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and, in effect, had discriminated against the COFA citizens. They were reinstated into the Med-Quest programme in 2011; however, the next year a new state government administration appealed the court decision against the state and won its case. So legal advocates of the Micronesian community again had to file a lawsuit and succeeded in having their health care services restored in 2012. These repeated state of Hawai'i initiatives to deny COFA citizens the health care benefits they are legally entitled to under U.S. law abundantly demonstrate the institutional discrimination they encounter in the Aloha State. Even Hawaii's delegation to the U.S. Congress has sought to limit Micronesian migration to the state by urging the federal government to establish medical screening centres in the COFA nations to prevent those with certain chronic diseases from entering the United States (Blair 2011).

As for racist stereotypes and representations of Micronesians, among the most prevalent is that they are "leeches", who excessively and undeservedly use public services, such as health care, low-income housing, and welfare benefits. Another demeaning term related to this stereotype depicts COFA citizens as "cockroaches", who steal or take government resources similar to how such common insects in Hawai'i come out at night

and nibble at any food left uncovered. Consistent with the false nature of stereotyping, Micronesians are wrongly accused of using federal need-based benefits, such as welfare assistance and food stamps, which they have been ineligible to receive since 1996 under U.S. law. Denigrating terms, such as "leeches" and "cockroaches", underscore how COFA citizens are perceived as not even fellow human beings and hence confirm the extreme racism directed toward them.

The prevalence and severity of stereotyped perceptions about COFA citizens are evident in online comments about a Honolulu newspaper article on homelessness among them. A reader wrote:

> A Micronesian family (looks more like 10 families) resides in our neighborhood. … Almost every other night, they have people hanging around in their front yard sucking up beers and soda talking story often until 2 a.m. on a WEEKDAY….J-O-B? Nope, not in their vocabulary. I swear that out of the 10+ adults in that home, 2 or 3 work. The rest stay home all day and do NOTHING. The owner of the house could care less because he's content knowing that his [government] rent checks will come in.

Like many other people in Hawai'i, this person incorrectly believes that COFA citizens receive federal rental housing assistance and criticises them for their overcrowded home when they are helping others from becoming homeless. Another comment included: "Keep these leaches [*sic*] off our island. We have more than enough locals struggling to get by. We don't need any more people migrating here and sucking our already lacking system bone dry" (cited in Blair 2011). The above statements are typical of the extreme xenophobic attitudes that have developed against COFA citizens. While they were expressed during the global recession when the state of Hawai'i was reducing government programmes and services, they have continued to the present, even though the Hawai'i economy has undergone a complete reversal of fortune due to its booming tourist industry.

As a result of difficulties gaining employment, which can, at least partially, be attributed to discrimination,[16] and the exorbitant cost of housing in Hawai'i, many COFA citizens have ended up in public housing or homeless in shelters and public parks. Living in their tents or makeshift structures, they are highly visible and have been made even more so by the news media with their ongoing coverage of homelessness as a major problem in Hawai'i. While the state has the highest per capita rate of homeless people in the nation, annual surveys have established that Native Hawaiians are the largest group among them. Nonetheless, an editorial in Honolulu's only print newspaper claimed that in the largest homeless camp in the city 'a vast majority of [them] appear to be from Micronesia and the Marshall Islands' ("Keep pressure on for COFA funding" 2015), which a survey showed was not the case.[17] The news media have also reported on the

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[16] Since the mid-2010s, at less than three percent, Hawai'i has had among the lowest unemployment rates in the United States, especially in the dominant tourist industry, which employs tens of thousands of Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants.

[17] The ignorance of the news media regarding Micronesians is evident when it uses terms such as 'Micronesia and the Marshall Islands,' as though the latter are not in Micronesia.

overrepresentation of Micronesians in state homeless shelters (cited in Blair 2011). One of the primary reasons that they are highly represented in homeless shelters is because COFA citizens are complying with state of Hawai'i policy that gives preference for public housing to those who are residing in shelters rather than in public parks. This policy was established to encourage homeless persons to make use of the shelters, which continue to have vacancies, instead of camping in parks or sidewalks.[18]

Another principal source of the racist stereotypes and representations of Micronesians is joke telling about them. They are the regular target of jokes that admittedly are made about almost every ethnic group in Hawai'i, a practice which is referred to as "ethnic humour". However, jokes about Micronesians are especially dehumanising and vile and focus especially on their physical appearance, personal hygiene, and being homeless. A typical example is evident on the Facebook page of one of Honolulu's popular radio stations on its weekly "Stupid Joke Friday' feature: 'Why do they spread doo-doo [faeces] on the walls at Micronesian weddings?". Another comparable joke in its degeneracy is: "An Asian baby dies and turns into an angel. What do Micronesian babies turn into?"[19] Given the very small number and percentage of Micronesians in Hawai'i, the widespread proliferation and popularity of denigrating jokes about them are startling, as is the racist hostility expressed in the jokes.

COFA citizens also have been targeted for xenophobic violence at public schools in Hawai'i, very similar to what was called "Kill Haole [White] Day" and to attacks against Filipino immigrant students in the 1970s. In 2012, several fights occurred at a high school between what the press described as twenty to thirty "Micronesian and local students" (Smith 2012). These conflicts followed the "bullying" of Micronesian students and led to the school closing for a day, the suspension of twenty students, and the arrest of eight students for disorderly conduct. A state education official asserted that "ethnic tensions" played a major role in the clashes and that the problem was not limited to the high school and was a "community issue", indicating its wider prevalence (Gaddis 2012). Thus, two years later, a large street brawl between what the news media reported as "Micronesians and Samoans" broke out in their Honolulu neighbourhood, resulting in the arrest of one person for attempted murder (Hawaiinewsnow.com 2014). Racist stereotypes and jokes and violence against Micronesians demonstrate the pervasiveness of racism against them in a state that lauds itself for its ethnic harmony and tolerance for others.

The reference above to the fights between "Micronesian and local" students denotes how the ethnic boundary between Micronesians and non-Micronesians is perceived by both groups and others in Hawai'i. The term *local* refers to the common identity of Hawai'i residents who have an appreciation and attachment to the land, peoples, and cultures of the islands (Okamura 1994). Local groups include Native Hawaiians and the descendants of immigrants who were recruited to work on the sugar plantations, such as Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, and Portuguese Ameri-

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[18] Among the reasons homeless persons choose not to stay at shelters are because of their curfews and rules against having pets, such as dogs.

[19] So as not to contribute to anti-Micronesian racism, I will not give the punchline to these jokes, but they can easily be found online, which contributes to their dissemination.

cans, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. Local tends to be used in reference to non-Whites, although not to those groups of colour that have recently moved to the state, including Micronesians and Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants. Thus, the local-nonlocal boundary is not based on race but on ethnicity since nonlocals are viewed as cultural outsiders who do not follow the local culture of Hawai'i, although over time with acculturation they can be considered local. As relative newcomers to Hawai'i, Micronesians are definitely ascribed a nonlocal identity by local people, despite being non-White, and much of the racism, joke telling, and violence directed against them can be understood as resulting from their categorisation as not local. In this regard, sociologist Raul Perez (2017: 970) contends that 'shared racist humor works to simultaneously increase social bonding, cooperation, and group identity formation among white participants at the expense of racialized targets.' Rather than Whites, so-called "Micronesian jokes" contribute to identity construction among some locals in Hawai'i by affirming and expressing their shared xenophobia and racism against Micronesians.

While I have been critical of Barth's emphasis on ethnic groups and boundaries, these concepts do apply to Hawai'i and its constituent groups because ethnicity is the foremost principle of social organisation and not race, as is the case in the continental United States. Thus, Barth's contention that, insofar as actors employ ethnic identities to categorise themselves and others for interactional purposes, they create ethnic groups in an organisational sense is evident in the construction of Micronesian and local as contrasting ethnic categories. Furthermore, through this process of forming these ethnic categories by ascription of identities, the ethnic boundary between Micronesians and locals is also socially constructed and defined as problematic, if not conflictual, for both groups. Beyond cultural differences, the ethnic boundary between the two groups is maintained by ongoing institutional discrimination, racist stereotyping, and individual and collective violence against Micronesians.

Situational ethnicity revisited

As noted above, almost forty years ago I wrote an article titled "Situational Ethnicity" that reviewed and critiqued arguments of Barth and his colleagues in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, as well as those of other social anthropologists who employed a situational approach to ethnicity.[20] In my essay, I distinguished between what I referred to as "the cognitive and structural dimensions of ethnicity" and discussed Barth's perspectives in his introductory chapter as exemplifying the former. I defined the cognitive dimension as concerning "the actor's subjective perception of the situation" in which she finds herself and the importance she assigns to ethnicity as a factor in that situation (Okamura 1981: 454). It also includes the actor's understandings of cultural symbols or signs and the meanings attributed to them, as is evident from categorical ascriptions of ethnic identity to self and others for interactional purposes.

As for the structural dimension, I delineated it as pertaining to 'the constraints

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[20] Published in 1981, the article is my most cited publication and continues to be cited every year, somewhat to my amazement at this point.

imposed upon actors within social situations as a consequence of the overall structure of ethnic group relations in a society' (Okamura 1981: 456). The structure includes consideration of the relative political and socioeconomic power and status of groups, as is evident from the distribution of political power, wealth and income, employment, higher education, and other social and material resources among them (ibid.: 454). It is hence marked by varying degrees of inequality among the constituent ethnic groups and in their hierarchical relations with one another, including avenues for political and socio-economic mobility.

I asserted that 'in some situations ethnicity is a relevant factor which influences the interactions of actors, while in other situations the relationship proceeds according to other attributes of the parties, such as class, religion, occupation, sex, personality, etc.'. Note that I failed to include race as one of those attributes. I concluded that the structural dimension of situational ethnicity underscores 'the essentially variable significance of ethnicity as an organising principle of social relations' and that 'the degree of its significance in a given social situation … is dependent upon its salience at the overall level of ethnic group relations' (1981: 454). I still would subscribe to this argument but would not necessarily argue for the variable significance of race. In contrast to ethnicity, race varies much less in salience as a structural principle because of its visibility off the human body, particularly at the interpersonal level of social relationships. Racialisation, or the extension of racial meaning to previously racially unclassified relations, practices, or groups (Omi & Winant 1986: 64), is another major factor that contributes to the increasing significance of race, at least in America. Nonetheless, the notion of situational race is certainly valid in societies in which other fundamental principles of social organisation, such as ethnicity or class, are present. However, for the reasons stated above, race is far less situational than ethnicity is and, in general, the structural dimension of race is of greater significance for its analysis as an organising principle in a given society than the cognitive dimension.

Like Barth and the social anthropologists I criticised above, I also did not address race and racism in my article on situational ethnicity, and this is a major deficiency in it. I was definitely focused on the expanding theoretical influence of and research interest in ethnicity, which became a central concern of my doctoral dissertation on Filipino immigrants in a multi-ethnic, working-class area of Honolulu, Hawai'i, where I did my fieldwork in the early 1980s. Since then, I have become far more cognizant of how race operates as the dominant organising principle of social relations in the United States, although I continue to view ethnicity as the leading such principle in Hawai'i (Okamura 2018). However, historically in Hawai'i, race prevailed over ethnicity and constituted the dominant social boundary between Whites and non-Whites, including Native Hawaiians and the various immigrant groups recruited to work on the sugar plantations and their descendants.

Conclusion: 'We should have more people from places like Norway'

In his assessment of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, "Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity", besides discussing the concept of culture, Barth (1994: 29-30) expresses more critical concerns regarding ethnicity. He pronounces that 'issues involving ethnicity play a growing, and often tragic, part in public policy, violence and war' and that 'what drives us in our analysis may well be a humane concern with the miseries caused in the world today by ethnic divisions and persecutions.' The same could be said of why we, certainly not limited to social anthropologists, should be concerned with race and racial divisions. Thus, Barth's focus on enduring and emerging issues in analysing ethnicity can be extended to similar issues regarding the analysis of race. Hence, 'in order to understand more of what is going on,' as Barth would have us do and with which I fully agree, we require theoretical perspectives that underscore the enduring institutionalised and systemic workings of racism and of race as a powerful organising principle, instead of having them obscured by an emphasis on ethnicity and ethnic groups. Race and racism remain deeply entrenched in many societies, such as the United States, and analyses need to be broadened beyond ethnicity to incorporate race and racial divisions as obstinate sources of persisting inequality and oppression.

As for emerging issues in analysing race, one of the foremost is that the United States and the rest of the world are in the chaotic throes of the second year of having to endure Donald Trump as America's racist-in-chief. While *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* has contributed to major theoretical advances in racial and ethnic studies in the fifty years since its publication, the Trump presidency has taken America politically and culturally backwards in its continuing efforts to address its enduring problems resulting from race and racism. Despite claiming on numerous occasions that he is "the least racist person that you have ever met", Trump's blatant racism directed against Americans of colour resurrects ideologies and practices prevalent before the civil rights era more than sixty years ago.

While colour-blindness is the dominant racial ideology in America, Trump has escalated hostile and divisive assertions of race consciousness, such as White supremacy, rather than seek to ameliorate persisting racial inequality and injustice. Trump notoriously maintained that 'both sides' were to blame for the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017 – neo-Nazis and White supremacists and those who resisted their marching and racist chanting ("Jews will not replace us") through the city – drawing a moral equivalence between racists and antiracists. Trump's open racism has targeted Latinos as in his persistent threats to terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA program, in which they are a majority of the estimated 700,000 "dreamers", who face deportation for having entered the United States illegally through no fault of their own. Trump also has focused on Muslims of colour from Middle Eastern and other Muslim majority countries in imposing a ban on their travel to the United States. Commenting on a proposed U.S. immigration plan, he expressed a preference for immigrants from Barth's homeland of Norway over those from "shithole countries", such as Haiti,

Nigeria, and other African nations, very likely because of his racist assumptions of the innate inferiority of persons from the latter countries compared to Europeans. This assertion is yet another disturbing indicator that the publicly expressed racism of the most powerful individual in the world is based on biologistic notions of race, which prevailed more than a century ago.

Trump's racism, which informs his policy decisions and is not limited to offhand comments or tweets he makes, clearly is directed to his primary base of support – non-college educated, working class Whites – as he and they try desperately to make America White again. His racist rants have emboldened those and other supporters of his to assert their racism openly in the media, in the streets of America, and in Congress and other government bodies. Trump and other right-wing Republicans have continued the transformation of their party into the White people's party rather than reach out to Americans of colour toward establishing a racial common ground based on empathy and concern. It is striking to recall that in 2008 with the election of Barack Obama as president, many Americans celebrated, albeit prematurely, their having become a post-racial nation. However, the election of Trump eight years later has plunged America into the racial darkness of xenophobia, hate mongering, and violence. Given Barth's "humane concern with the miseries caused" by the latter, I would like to think that, in addition to ethnic groups and boundaries, Barth would share my concern with racial groups and boundaries and with race and racism.

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Povzetek

Članek obravnava glavne teoretične prispevke Barthovega *Uvoda* v zborniku *Etnične skupine in meje* ter kasnejšega eseja *Trajna in nastajajoča vprašanja v analizi etničnosti* (1994), ki je obravnaval pomen njegovega zbornika. Med glavnimi Barthovimi prispevki, ki so obravnavani, sta večja sociološka pozornost do etnične pripadnosti, ki se je začela v sedemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja, njegov poudarek na tem, kar "akterji sami ocenjujejo kot pomembno", ki je prispeval k razumevanju družbene konstrukcije etnične pripadnosti in rase, ter njegov argument, da etnične skupine organizirajo interakcije med ljudmi, kar je privedlo do pojmovanja etničnosti (in rase) kot organizacijskega načela družbenih odnosov. Obravnavane so tudi glavne pomanjkljivosti Barthovih esejev, vključno s tem, da ni omenjal pomena rase in rasizma in tega, kako je rasa, ne pa etnična pripadnost, prevladujoče načelo družbene organiziranosti v mnogih družbah in tako deluje kot meja med skupinami.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: rasa, rasizem, etničnost, mikronezijci, Havaji

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