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DOUBLE JEOPARDY:
THE CHILDREN OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ethnic minorities are often severely disadvantaged in relation to the dominant or majority group in a given society. The United Nations system, while recognizing this as a serious international problem, has taken only cautious steps towards producing legal instruments and protective measures for minorities. So too, regional organizations have been reluctant to deal with the question of minority protection; of all regional systems, only Europe has confronted the matter on a supra-national level.

While issues concerning ethnic minorities have gained increasing prominence in research in recent years, due particularly to their growing importance in national and world affairs, attention to the problems of the more vulnerable members of minority groups - families, women, youth and particularly children - remains scarce and unsystematic. The literature on children is not rich in information on ethnic minorities, nor does the literature on ethnic minorities give adequate emphasis to the situation of children. This paper examines the state of current research on ethnic minorities and particularly their children and discusses areas of further study needed so that effective policy guidelines, within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, may be developed.

The paper presents a number of examples of ethnic minority situations in order to illustrate the particular problems faced by families, children and youth of ethnic minorities and indigenous and tribal peoples. The predicament of minorities - marginalized territorially as victims of 'development' projects or 'ghettoized' in cities as migrants and refugees - is very often seen as their own responsibility. The solution, it is commonly held, lies solely with them, in their ability and 'willingness' to adapt, rather than with the government or the dominant society or the 'system'.

The paper argues that the problems of ethnic minorities, and the conditions of their children, frequently lie at the very centre of today's problematique. For this reason, the question of 'ethnic children' must be addressed within the framework of the overall 'ethnic question'. Following a description of ways in which minority status is generally categorized - territorial minorities, ethnic and cultural minorities, immigrants and refugees, indigenous and tribal peoples - the paper surveys theoretical approaches to the study of ethnicity. However, no one theory or paradigm can explain all the different facets of the term 'ethnic question', due to the very complexity of ethnic problems and to the overlapping uses of terminology in referring to different phenomena.

The paper also raises the issue of cultural values in relation to one of the key principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: 'the best interests of the child'. Conflicts over cultural values arise not only as regards universal human rights standards, but also between minority cultures and the cultural norms or standards of existing states and legal systems. The issue of duties and obligations, both on the part of states and sub-state level cultural communities, requires further study, particularly in relation to the rights and best interests of children.

Though the relationships between ethnic minorities and dominant societies are multi-faceted and complex, the interrelated but distinct dimensions of marginalization and discrimination provide a useful framework for studying minority groups. Poor children the world over are vulnerable to abuses, violence, exploitation and human rights violations. When, in addition, they belong to disadvantaged minorities, their plight warrants special attention and requires special policies. The paper concludes by exploring several areas relating to minority children which call for further research, not only with the aim of developing the most effective policies for improving the situation of minority children but also in order to contribute to the creation of a world in which cultural diversity can lead to more, rather than less, tolerance and to the equal enjoyment of human rights by all.

I. THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Persons belonging to ethnic minorities are often severely disadvantaged in relation to members of the majority or dominant group in a given society. This situation is recognized as a serious international problem by the United Nations, which has, over the years, developed special standards concerning protective measures for minorities in international human rights instruments.

The question of minorities has also recently become a matter of particular concern to the European countries, as well as to other regions, where the rights of minorities are currently subject to international scrutiny and legislative action.[1]

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, specifies the rights of children (Article 24), and also explicitly recognizes that members of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities have a right to special protection (Article 27). While the rights of children were later developed in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, further international legislation on the rights of minorities has been slow in coming. Only at the end of 1992, after many years of discussion in the relevant UN bodies, did the General Assembly adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Minorities, which of course does not have the same legal status as a Convention. The UN Sub-Commission is also currently drafting a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples but, as of this time of writing, it is not yet clear when this document will be adopted by the General Assembly.[2]

Some of the United Nations specialized agencies have produced instruments designed to guarantee and protect the rights of minority groups. UNESCO, for example, has adopted a number of resolutions regarding cultural rights, including those of ethnic and linguistic minorities; the ILO adopted Convention 169 on the protection of indigenous peoples in 1988. In general, however, the United Nations system has not been prodigal in legal instruments and protective measures for minorities. This is understandable, insofar as the United Nations is an organization of states, who are jealous of their sovereignty and usually consider that the situation of ethnic and other minorities within their borders is a purely internal matter.

Most regional organizations of states have not done much better than the United Nations in the field of minority protection. The Organization of African Unity deliberately avoided the issue for many years, and so have regional organizations in Asia. The Organization of American States supports a specialized institute for indigenous affairs (the Interamerican Indianist Institute), but the regional American human rights instruments do not as yet contain specific references to indigenous peoples.[3] Of all regional systems, only Europe has dealt with the question of minority protection on a supra-national plane but, according to observers, the European system is still far from perfect.

While there may be privileged minorities or ethnic groups who enjoy full equality of opportunity with other members of a given society, concern over minority protection and minority rights arises from the fact that in numerous instances, and in historical perspective, minorities usually enjoy less than equal opportunities, suffer discrimination and marginalization, occupy lower levels of income and standards of living than other groups, may be excluded from positions of power and decision-making processes, and may be handicapped in any number of other ways from freely enjoying unrestricted human rights. Recent and ongoing ethnic conflicts in different parts of the world underline once again that minority peoples, whatever their nature, are particularly vulnerable to violence, and often become the victims of genocides and ethnocides.[4] At the present time, over 50 civil conflicts involving distinct ethnic groups are raging or smouldering on the planet, involving many millions of victims. Observers estimate that by the end of the century there may well be over 20 million refugees, most of whom will be members of ethnic minority groups. One recent

survey concludes that over 200 politically active communal groups in 93 countries currently constitute "minorities at risk".[5]

II. CHILDREN AND MINORITIES: CHALLENGE FOR RESEARCH

Comparative research on minority issues and inter-ethnic relations points to the tendency that when ethnic minorities are vulnerable as a group, then the families, women, youth and children of such minorities will be particularly disadvantaged. Why this should be so is of course an empirical question that must be addressed by specifically oriented research. But some general factors may be suggested.

In male-centred societies (the world's majority), women and children are traditionally subordinated to adult men. In periods of social upheaval, when long-standing social structures disintegrate under the pressure of modernization, urbanization, industrialization and the market economy, economic and social rewards accrue mainly to the male in the labour market, often separated from hearth and home. Women, and particularly children, will be left to fend for themselves to a great extent. Impelled by economic need, women who enter the labour market in disadvantageous positions, will be hard pressed to provide sufficient attention to their children. Children may likewise be forced into the labour market, or sent out into the streets. The drama of the world's street children has become an issue of worldwide concern.[6]

This pattern, which repeats itself regularly in Third World countries as well as in the 'inner cities' of the industrialized world, is particularly skewed against minorities. They become either marginalized territorially (victims of 'development' projects, as has occurred to many indigenous and tribal peoples), or they become 'ghettoized' in the cities as migrants and refugees. In any case, they tend to become a 'problem' for the powers that be. As long as minorities are not 'visible', as long as their needs and demands are not formulated in political terms, they do not threaten the established way of doing things. However, when they become visible and vocal, they turn into a 'problem'. When this occurs, the minorities themselves are often said to be responsible for their predicament. The victims become the guilty party. The solution, it is said, lies squarely with the minorities, in their attitudes and traditions, their family structures, their ability and 'willingness' to adapt, rather than with government or the dominant society or the functioning of the 'system'. Some examples will illustrate these tendencies.

Being Black in the Urban Ghetto

In Britain, analysts concerned about the implications of a number of urban riots in recent years have shown that institutional racism strengthens the identity of, among others, a Black youth culture, which the dominant whites perceive as dangerous and destabilizing. This leads, in turn, to the 'criminalization' of all ethnic groups who are identified as 'Blacks', regardless of whether they are long-established citizens of the United Kingdom, or recent immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. This is the environment in which issues of education, housing, leisure time, urban renewal, administration of justice, and other areas involving families, youth and children of minorities must be resolved.[7]

Educational policy with regard to black children and youth in Britain in the 1960s was considered as embodying the philosophy of assimilation. Schools were viewed as the primary site for successful assimilation. It was felt by the authorities that the 'race problem' would literally die away with the older generation. Educational testing in the mid-1960s was taken to 'prove' the educational inferiority of the black child; educational performance was seen as a product of the conditions of the countries of origin, not the situation of racism and racist pressures which black and immigrant children suffered in their communities. Officially it was concluded that if educational performance was considered to be low, the answer lay within the black community itself. A black child speaking a language from a black country was seen as backward, not as actually or potentially bilingual.

By the late 1960s it was recognized that assimilationist policies and practices had failed and could not hope to succeed. While language does not disappear as a problem, it becomes incorporated into a complex which also includes 'culture shock', 'cultural conflict' and 'generational conflict'. Many of the disabilities faced by black youth were traced to the black family, constituted as a pathological family structure. Most frequently, the focus was placed upon the black mother. Contemporary debate is still locked into a framework of assessing the educational 'failure' of the black child. Under-achievement is assumed and then tested in order to be proven. Though black parents dissent and argue that their children currently in school were born in the United Kingdom and should no longer be treated as an alien sector of the school population, educational policy and practice continues to constitute black children as an alien group that presents 'problems' which remain external to 'normal' schooling.[8]

According to the United Nations Human Development Report, the United States ranks among the highest countries on the Human Development Index.[9] Nevertheless, the African-American population ranks consistently lower than the white population, and in some respects even lower than the average of a number of Third World countries. As one author notes, "Virtually every index of harm to children, from death at birth to poor school performance, from malnutrition to low self-esteem, is firmly associated with poverty and race."[10] Some examples: African-American babies suffer an infant mortality rate more than twice that of white babies in the United States. While 11.4 per cent of white children live in poverty, fully 44 per cent of black children and 38 per cent of all Hispanic children are to be found in this category. In 1990, 73.4 per cent of white children graduated from high school, whilst only 60.7 per cent of black children and a scandalously low 41.6 per cent of Hispanic children did so. The figures for poverty in the USA are stark: in 1989, nearly 20 per cent of American children were poor.[11] Current figures reflect a shift in poverty from the elderly to the very young. The burden is again disproportionately shared by African-Americans, whose poverty rate of 44 per cent is four times that of white children. Of all births to African-Americans in 1990, 20 per cent were to single teens. This percentage was more than three times the figure for white teens.

A survey of the situation in one American city, Detroit, carried out for this study, reports the following findings. The make-up of Detroit youth has changed in recent years, becoming younger in dimensions paralleling the national demographic shifts. The changing racial composition of Detroit is most evident in the declining youth population. The absolute numbers of youth in every age category have decreased as the 'Rust-Belt to Sun-Belt migration' and urban-suburban (white) flight have produced a sharp decline in Detroit's total population, from 1.5 million to barely over 1 million in 1990. The current youth population in Detroit is 82 per cent black, and comprises 30 per cent of the city's total population. As Detroit's financial resources decline, its children face an increasingly 'double' minority status: proportionately younger and blacker than ever before. Blacks make up 76 per cent of the

city's population, an increasing majority in fact. In this respect, Detroit is representative of a number of other urban centres in the United States, in which 'minorities' comprise majority populations.

The main issues faced by black children in Detroit, as is the case with minority children elsewhere, relate to health, poverty, education, family structure and violence. In Detroit, infant mortality rates, which had been declining for some decades, began a renewed ascent in the middle of the 1980s. For the city as a whole, 15.4 per cent of all black babies had low birth weights as compared with 8 per cent for white babies. One local community services administrator stated: "Where you have high rates of poverty, you have high infant mortality rates. You can't say discrimination and racism don't play a part; black babies are dying at much faster rates than white babies." Detroit has the highest poverty rate for its entire youth population of any American city. Almost one half (46.6 per cent) of Detroit's youth live in poverty, and among black youth in the city this proportion rises to 48.6 per cent.[12]

Similar conditions among black children and youth have been documented in other American cities, such as Chicago, Philadelphia and New York. The situation is particularly dramatic in the black ghettoes such as Harlem and in low-rent public housing projects. Living conditions in these environments have been described by some authors as virtual concentration camps for black children and youth, where poverty, discrimination, unemployment, crime and violence are the order of the day.[13] The increasing poverty that black children and youth experience is the result of the changing demographic and economic pattern of America's industrial cities, resulting from the 'de-industrialization' of the United States. As manufacturing jobs decline because large companies close their doors or relocate to other more favourable climes, unemployment rates have increased sharply, particularly among the lower-skilled population, namely, the African-Americans. Job insecurity, long-term unemployment and decreasing incomes have, in turn, affected the black family structure. The traditional African-American extended family, based on collective solidarity and strong affective links among its members, has given way more and more to the single-parent, female-headed family. Many black children do not have a father as a male role model; teen-age pregnancies have increased the vulnerability of single-mother families. Children and youth become involved in the dynamics of urban and neighbourhood gangs, the locus of violence, crime and drugs in America's cities. Homicide has become the largest single cause of death among American black youth between the ages of 15 and 19.

This situation is reflected in what one author calls "savage inequalities" in America's schools. Even 40 years after the Supreme Court declared segregated education unconstitutional because of its inherent inequality, schools in the USA continue to be racially segregated. The author finds that *de facto* segregation provides highly unequal educational resources for the different racial groups, and that black children are particularly disadvantaged. He finds, moreover, "that influential people that I met showed little inclination to address this matter..."[14]

Immigrant Children

In Germany and elsewhere in Western Europe, children of the 'guest workers' (*Gastarbeiter*) of the 1950s and 1960s now constitute new ethnic minorities with special problems. One study reports that migration and the conditions of inner-city, working-class life often lead to considerable stress for foreign families. The effects on children's mental development, social relationships and school success are often negative. This report argues that the special

educational problems of foreign children and the inadequacy of official measures to cope with them lead to severe educational handicaps.[15]

Similar conditions prevail among West Indian immigrants in Britain. In Bristol, homeless and unemployed West Indian youths are known as 'teeny-boppers'. One author notes that "they are only partly British and are sometimes referred to as the 'misplaced generation'... They are the outcome of the process whereby West Indian parents migrated from the West Indies individually and later sent for their children to complete their childhood in Britain. The teeny-bop explosion represents one of the biggest social problems in Britain, for it is the result of inferior education in working-class schools in the West Indies as well as of the racist practices prevalent in British schools."[16]

Similar problems are found in other countries. It has been argued that the children of immigrants in Italy are simply socially invisible, and that they become visible only when they are perceived as a danger for the social order. They lose their invisibility as they become objects of discrimination, not only in the school system but also in other aspects of life such as work, health, housing and justice.[17]

Gypsies in Europe

The children of immigrants are not the only disadvantaged group in Europe. Recent studies testify to the severe handicaps faced by the Gypsy population, which has been marginalized and persecuted for centuries and was singled out together with the Jews for genocide by the Nazi regime in Germany. A recent UNICEF study concludes: "The underprivileged social situation of Gypsy children begins at birth, with the disadvantaged conditions they are born into. Material deprivation, particularly in the areas of health and accommodation, which was originally the result of social deprivation, has over time become the main perpetuating force of their hardship ... This 'marginality cycle' reproduces many of the aspects of disadvantaged child life associated with 'street children'."[18]

In Central and Eastern Europe, the transition to the market economy has provoked enormous hardship for the children in these countries, exacerbating situations of severe disadvantage already widely felt before the profound political changes of the early 1990s. A UNICEF study reports that in the Soviet Union about 10-12 million children could be considered poor, while in Bulgaria half of the young families lived on the verge of poverty. In Hungary, during the 1970s and 1980s, there was an increase in the number of children living below the poverty line. In all the countries of the region, infant mortality rates increased during this period.

The study points to substantial differentials in infant mortality rates by location, ethnic group and social class. In the Soviet Union, these rates were lowest in the Baltic states and highest in central Asia. In Yugoslavia, Slovenia had the lowest infant mortality rates, and in Kosovo, where the majority of the population is ethnic Albanian, the rate was five times higher. The Gypsy population in general suffered much higher infant mortality rates in all the countries of the region, and the ethnic Turk minority in Bulgaria had higher rates than the Bulgarian population. Gypsy children and youth also had higher delinquency rates. As regards housing, Gypsy families had half the living space per person than the national average in Czechoslovakia in 1987.

Since the market reforms started in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the number of children living in poor families has increased, dietary standards have declined, educational facilities have withered, housing has deteriorated and increasing unemployment has hit the welfare of children in particular. The UNICEF study argues that "the protracted

crises and the expected shocks in the years ahead will definitely impose an increasing psychological burden on already worn out populations in central and eastern Europe."[19] If past tendencies are any indication, ethnic minorities will, as elsewhere, bear the brunt of this disaster.

Caste and Tribe in Asia

In some Asian countries, children of minority groups are less likely to complete their education, and the youth are less likely to find jobs, than is the case for the children and youth of ethnic majorities. In some parts of India, for example, the Adivasi group ('scheduled tribes') tends to show higher rates of illiteracy and lower educational attainment than the rest of the regional population.[20] Despite affirmative action policies over the last decades, the situation of the Untouchables, also known as Harijans, (more than 105 million people) is still dramatic. Untouchable literacy is half that of the rest of the Indian population. And while important educational progress has been achieved by this group, only 75 per cent of Untouchable children in the 6-11 age group are in school, compared to 88 per cent of non-Untouchable children, and 25 per cent versus 42 per cent of the 11-14 year olds.[21] Among the country's rural poor, the children of the lower castes are frequently obliged to work, and labour competes with education in the children's lifeworlds.[22]

In general, hill tribes and other ethnic minorities are particularly disadvantaged in all South-East Asian states. "In the nation-states of mainland Southeast Asia today there appears to be little place for the perpetuation of tribal ways of life... Being denied the rights of other citizens has often been linked with prohibitions by states against swidden, or slash-and-burn, agriculture, the form of production followed by most tribal peoples... Their ability to continue their traditional way of life is being steadily eroded... At the present time, all of the countries of mainland Southeast Asia deny tribal peoples legitimate ways to maintain and promote their own cultural identities... Tribal peoples have been relegated to marginal positions or even excluded from participation in national life."[23]

Among other serious problems that these policies have generated, the exploitation of young girls from ethnic minorities for sexual purposes in some South-East Asian countries has been widely documented in the press. One observer reports: "In Thailand it is a tragedy to be born poor. It is a double tragedy to be born poor and pretty. Poor children from the provinces become part of the captive juvenile labor force; the poor and pretty do their version of child labor in somebody's bed or brothel.

"Bangkok today has the invidious distinction of being the world's only completely open market for the buying and selling of children. During the January to March dry season, trainloads of children — prepubescent, confused, often alone — arrive in the capital city, mainly from the northeast.

"As many as 500 of these children arrive each week. They change hands for prices of between $100 and $150, although lower prices are not unknown. Once bought, these children, in effect, become slaves. The living merchandise is bought for life or until no longer wanted.

"Children with the shortest working life are those exploited for their youthful attractiveness. In Thailand, particularly in the northern town of Chiang Mai, there is a third factor in the exploitation equation: ethnicity. Girls from both sides of the Thai-Burmese border are being prostituted because of their poverty, sex and 'exotic' allure.

"The tribes providing most of the girls are the E-Kaw and Thai Yai. Their parents relinquish them to 'brokers' for about $125, a fortune for a hill family. There are no reliable

statistics for the number of tribal girls in brothels. The only certainty is that there are now some hundreds in Bangkok alone and that their number is increasing."[24]

In the Philippines, an anthropologist who has studied the Agta tribal people in northern Luzon for many years reports that: "The health of Agta women is deteriorating as a result of liquor, stressful personal interactions, loss of social status, lowered self-image, and diminishing faith in Agta culture.

"Gestation, childbirth, and childrearing are difficult for Agta, and are becoming more so. While work loads have increased for Agta women residing close to farming communities, pregnancy problems appear to be increasing as a result of inadequate protein in the diet, less variation in forest procured plant foods, and generally poorer health... Women consider their health as well as that of the children to be deteriorating as a result of increased diseases and malnutrition. Immigrants increase the frequency of diseases. Tuberculosis is especially significant, debilitating and killing even young mothers. With population increases in the area, streams and rivers have become polluted by chemicals, human wastes, and erosion... Agtan in general and women in particular are viewed by many of the surrounding groups as easy marks – to be cheated as efficiently as possible, as barely human, inferior beings, and as of no real worth. They are on the bottom of the complex Philippine social hierarchy."[25]

Indigenous Children

Indigenous populations all over the world suffer severe forms of oppression and exploitation, as has been shown by the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues.[26] Indigenous women and children are particularly vulnerable. Indigenous peasant women suffer triple disadvantages: as women, as peasants, as indigenous, and this condition is reflected in the situation of their children. A recent report on Mexico's Indian population underlines the 'pathology of poverty' associated with indigenous children.[27]

At the 1988 session of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the representative of Australia's Aborigines made a dramatic appeal to the world, in the name of young Aboriginals who were arrested and tried without due process of law, some of whom had died in detention. She stated that "For many of us an arrest or gaol sentence could mean a possible death sentence."[28] Shortly thereafter the Australian Government announced the creation of a Royal Commission to look into these matters. Meanwhile, in the Canadian Arctic, a wave of suicides among indigenous youths was attributed to unemployment and the destruction of the local trade in mink skins. During a two-year period reported upon, about one third of an indigenous community's young men tried to commit suicide; eight of them succeeded. The unemployment rate in this island community, about 600 kilometres north of Montreal, is 95 per cent. Since hunting of mink was banned by international boycotts of the skins in the 1980s, the local economy has become almost paralysed. A local official stated that indigenous youths felt that there was no work and nowhere else to go.[29]

Many of the problems that indigenous families face today are the result of efforts over the years to 'assimilate' indigenous peoples into the dominant society. In numerous instances, this was attempted through the establishment of government or missionary schools which indigenous children were forced to attend. For many decades, the residential school system in Canada separated Native children from their parents. One former inmate recounts her experience: "The residential schools eliminated familiar social rituals that helped establish a sense of security and safety. The schools eliminated time spent with the extended family and changed ideology and beliefs. By cutting children off from their communities the schools

effectively cut off access to traditional teachings about living on the land and having respect for all creatures." There was also verbal abuse and sexual violence against indigenous children: "The violence affected not only individual children, but also whole families and future generations... If you subject one generation of children to physical and verbal abuse and they become adults and have children, and then you subject that generation and a third generation to a residential school system, you have a whole society affected by isolation, loneliness, sadness, anger, hopelessness and pain."[30]

In the 1970s, world attention was drawn to the genocide of the Aché Indians in Paraguay, an issue which was taken up by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights.[31] Attacks upon the lifestyle and, indeed, the survival of indigenous peoples continues, despite increasing international concern. The New Tribes Mission (NTM), an evangelical group from the United States, has continued to harass native peoples in Paraguay. With the support of the former Paraguayan military dictatorship, the NTM stepped up its activities during the 1980s, capturing groups of Indians in their habitat and forcing them into missionary settlements for religious conversion and integration to a so-called civilized way of life. The Indian children are forced to attend missionary schools, and according to one observer, "NTM education succeeds, at least partially, to impose passivity and submission, conformism and resignation – those fundamental Christian values used to support the expansion of internal colonialism and the acceptance of exploitation. It manages, many times, to cover up misery with the ancient myth of the congenial laziness of indigenous people and to conceal worldly injustice with promises of a remote celestial justice."[32]

While less well-known to the wider public, indigenous peoples have their particular problems in Africa as well. The nomad populations of the Sahara are a case in point. In Mali, the Tuareg nomads, whose children have special educational problems, receive only sporadic attention from the Government. As one study reports: "Facing both hostility from the social environment and insufficiency of funds, it took a long time for schools to open in nomad areas. Until 1948, the Tuareg were very reluctant to accept the introduction of schools, because they symbolized French domination, and they saw it as a kind of masked tribute they had to pay. They also considered a child allowed to attend school as definitely lost to tradition." Furthermore, "[m]odern school ... has not yet succeeded in fulfilling the needs of the nomad population in relation to their way of life. Keeping children far from their social and cultural environment is not harmless: it causes affective damage, thus altering their psychological balance. Lengthy separation also deprives families of their share of the work children traditionally take on. Discontinuity in the knowledge transmission system accelerates their loss of identity."[33]

Multiculturalism and Assimilation

The 'problematization' of inter-ethnic relations between majorities and minorities is frequently reflected in the uneven distribution of social services, the dynamics of the education system, the struggle for political representation and balance, and the polarization of attitudes and public opinion. Again, in such circumstances, women and children are particularly penalized, as is shown in the widespread discussions over minority education, cultural identity, family cohesion and solidarity, social security, crime prevention, administration of justice, jobs, and income and employment issues.[34]

An interesting example of bilingual and bicultural education is taking place among the lowland Shuar Indians in eastern Ecuador, where, in the absence of schools, a Bilingual-Bicultural Radio school was established. An active participant in this project reports: "To

obtain any education, Shuar children had to attend boarding schools established by Salesian missionaries in one of about 13 urban mission stations, usually at least three to five days' walk from home. While they learned to read and write for years in these enclosed quarters, they lost the chance to pick up the sort of Shuar history and culture that is transmitted orally and irregularly by elders as the families cluster around the hearth in the early morning and late evening. Nor could the children practice gardening, hunting, fishing or any of the other essential aspects of life in the tropical forest... So to become 'educated', children could easily miss the opportunity to become a Shuar...

"Inaugurated in 1972, the radio school now broadcasts to nearly 4,000 elementary school students and about 1,000 secondary students. The daily programs are developed by a planning unit of about 10 Shuar with advanced degrees in education. The lessons they prepare are transmitted by two to four teachers, *telemaestros*, and by *teleauxiliares* in the schools."[35]

Children at War

In situations of violent ethnic conflict, children and youth become particularly involved. One case in point is the Palestinian *Intifada*. A report on this movement in the Palestinian refugee camps indicates that: "Education, in particular, has been targeted as part of the Israeli army's effort to contain the intifada. Following the spread of mass demonstrations against the occupation in December 1987, Palestinian education institutions were closed down en masse for periods ranging from almost two consecutive years in the case of West Bank schools to more than four years in the case of some universities. Even kindergartens were included in the military closure orders issued by the Israeli army. Education has also been disrupted by the frequent imposition of lengthy round-the-clock curfews on selected locations or entire regions, confining communities to their homes for periods ranging from one day to several weeks or months in a row."[36]

Worsening economic conditions during the *intifada* placed many families under considerable strain, contributing to increased school drop-out levels, which was compounded by considerable physical danger and psychological damage to Palestinian children (see box).

As in the Palestinian *intifada*, in numerous guerrilla movements and wars of liberation around the world, or in the urban gang wars of the industrialized countries, children and adolescents are at the forefront of the action, and usually the foremost victims. This is tragic enough in itself, not only for the loss of life and of childhood; what is even more worrying are the psychological wounds that are carried into later life by the survivors. The accumulated pain, resentment and hatred borne by the children caught up in the whirlpools of

One study by UNICEF of 650 children in Gaza examined the effect of violence on Palestinian children and reported the following picture:

97%	home raided
95%	exposure to tear gas
52%	beaten
50%	family member detained
37%	witnessed beating of family member
35%	detained briefly
11.2%	imprisoned
11%	house demolition in extended family
11%	fined
3%	extended family member killed

Ramsden and Senker, 1993, p. 94.

ethnic strife, whether it be in Rwanda or Guatemala or Kashmir, should be a sobering warning to us all.

Ethnic violence has had a deplorable impact on children in other contexts as well. In Kenya, for example, as a Human Rights Watch report details, state-sponsored ethnic violence has provoked havoc among the country's children. "Kenya is a country with an annual growth rate of over four percent, one of the highest in the world. The average Kenyan woman has between six to eight children; over half the population is under fifteen years of age. Accordingly, children have suffered disproportionally in the clashes... In most camps visited, the number of children was double that of the adults. As a result of the crowded camp conditions, many of these children are showing signs of infectious diseases such as respiratory problems and tuberculosis as well as scabies and malnutrition.

"The violence has deeply affected the children. Many of the children have witnessed their family members being killed and their houses burned down. In some cases, they have themselves suffered injuries from attack. These children have acquired a keen awareness of their ethnicity and that of their attackers. Prior to the clashes, children of all ethnic groups would play with each other. Now, former friends from different ethnic groups have become sworn enemies. Reports of children displaying aggressive behavior or bringing knives to school have been reported by teachers even outside the clash areas. Many children are also suffering nightmares from the violence they have witnessed.

"In some areas, the schools are overcrowded as a result of trying to accommodate the large influx of displaced children. Many schools that previously included students of all ethnicities now have students from only one ethnicity."[37]

In the civil war in Uganda during the 1980s, child soldiers became prominent. The UNICEF Representative reported that during the final fighting in January 1986, "The child soldiers were highly visible. They were the mascots of the (rebel) NRA and became written of as young liberators. To the credit of the NRA they came equipped with a code of conduct and exercised restraint previously unseen in the (government) UNLA where young soldiers were especially feared. The NRA took prisoners of war and often assigned child soldiers to guard duty." After the war, child soldiers were rehabilitated, with help from UNICEF, yet "it should be recognized that these children of Uganda's terror will carry with them the scars of violence and war. They are mature beyond their years, but the respect shown them by adults is frequently because of the weapon they proudly carry."[38]

Child soldiers have become more numerous over the years in situations of ethnic conflict, such as in Mozambique, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Guatemala, as well as in 'non-ethnic' conflicts including El Salvador, Nicaragua, Afghanistan and Cambodia. A recent study reports that more children and youth bear arms in internal armed conflict and violent strife than ever before. The study reports that "forced recruitment [of children] is practised because of shortages of soldiers, institutionalized discrimination against certain sectors of society, a perceived need to control the population, or ideological vigour. Some groups also have discovered that young, impressionable children can be turned into the fiercest fighters through brutalization, exposure to and involvement in violence." But, adds the report: "Not all child participants are necessarily driven into conflict. Sometimes, they are among the first to join; at other times, they may even be the initiators of violent strife. What moves them lies deep in the roots of conflict, in the social, economic and political issues defining their lives... The line between voluntary and coerced participation is fluid and uncertain."[39]

In February 1993, a workshop was held in London on the health hazards of organized violence for children. It was pointed out that half the world's refugees, more than 9 million, are children. In Europe alone, as a result of the wars in former Yugoslavia, the number of children and adolescents among refugees and asylum-seekers is increasing. The report of the

meeting concludes that the majority of refugee children have experienced organized violence, and that refugee families are often stressed beyond their capacity to provide for the needs of their children. As a consequence, children suffer heavy psychological trauma which is often carried over from one generation to the next.[40]

Similar psychological damage has been found among Central American child refugees in the United States. For these children, the trauma of being a refugee, separated from their families, is compounded by the trauma of detention. During the 1980s, war and violence in several Central American countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua) generated a large flow of refugees towards the United States. As most of these refugees did not have their legal papers in order (a condition which was almost impossible to remedy in situations of conflict), a large number were detained and deported from the United States. A particularly poignant issue that involved human rights defence organizations in that country was the problem of unaccompanied and undocumented Central American children, most of whom were fleeing the violence in their countries and had somehow made their way into the United States. By 1984, the flow of Central American refugee children was conservatively estimated at somewhere between 150-300 per month. An estimated 200 children were in special detention centres of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) at any given time, awaiting deportation procedures. A research project carried out by a working group at Stanford University in 1990 found that the situation of children in the detention centres was deplorable. Several human rights organizations had accused the INS of impropriety, including detaining children in facilities designed for criminals and social deviants, and holding unaccompanied minors as bait for undocumented adult relatives who were forced to risk their own apprehension while seeking the children's release. After a series of litigations and public protest campaigns, the children's situation was improved somewhat, and demands that they be released to family members were partially successful. The research team recommended an overhaul of the US asylum system as it applies to unaccompanied minors.[41]

Solutions to ethnic conflicts, as well as their management and possible prevention, will necessarily have to deal with such problems, yet they are not usually discussed in peace-making and peace-building debates. At a time when the international community has become more sensitive to the issues of minorities and indigenous peoples, as expressed in the development of new human rights instruments in the United Nations and regional inter-governmental organizations, and when, at the same time, violent ethnic conflicts continue to break out with disastrous consequences in various parts of the world, it is imperative that more attention be paid to the particularly vulnerable position of childen, youth and families of these groups. More research in this field is needed to guide policies that will contribute to lessen human suffering and to improve the life chances of future generations.

III. THE ETHNIC QUESTION TODAY

The cases reported in the previous section illustrate some of the particular problems faced by families, children and youth of ethnic minorities and indigenous and tribal peoples. As has been seen, these are not problems simply left over from previous times which remain unattended. Nor are they peripheral to the great issues of today's world. On the contrary, the conditions of children of ethnic minorities are frequently at the very centre of today's problematique. Indeed, they are constantly being created and recreated as a result of

contemporary macroeconomic, demographic and political tendencies. Therefore, the question of 'ethnic children' can only be understood within the framework of the 'ethnic question' as a whole.[42]

Prominent among the factors related to the re-emergence of the ethnic question at the present time is the dominant position of the modern nation-state as ultimate arbiter of economic and political relations within a given territory. The idea of the state and the nation being coterminous, which emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century and from there extended to the rest of the world, has been at the basis of the various kinds of policies regulating relations between states and the diverse ethnic groups which intermingle on the territory of most currently existing countries. This is the ground upon which the concepts of 'ethnic minority' and the idea of the protection of minority rights arises. Consequently, the issue of minority rights at the present time can only be understood within the framework of the concept of the modern nation-state and in relation to the policies of states regarding minorities.[43]

Secondly, the ethnic question has arisen anew in world affairs because the two major paradigms through which historical change has been interpreted for the last century or so, and particularly over the last 50 years, practically ignored, and certainly neglected and disregarded, the ethnic factor, or ethnicity as it is commonly called.[44] The first paradigm refers to the process of modernization, the transition from the pre-industrial to the industrial and post-industrial stages of social organization; the integration of the modern nation or the process of 'nation-building' as it has been referred to in relation to the Third World countries; the process of economic development from the agrarian, isolated, traditional units of production and consumption to the global world economy of interrelated and interdependent transnational enterprises; the transformation of locally-anchored members of relatively closed and self-centred communities into national and global citizens, that is, a process of progressive acquisition of citizenship rights and obligations in the wider polity. In this worldwide process of modernization, this great transformation, it was expected that sub-national ethnic identities would tend to disappear and lose their erstwhile relevance. Local, communal and ethnic identifications would be replaced by wider loyalties to the nation and the state. Within this theoretical approach, ethnic factors were relevant only insofar as they were destined to disappear sooner or later. And ethnically-based conflict could be explained away as the expression of passing maladjustments or resistance to the overriding and all-encompassing historical movement towards something called modernization.

Contrary to the expected and predicted consequences, modernization in fact stimulated the growth of ethnic identities in urban settings (particularly in Third World countries), fostered the emergence of ethnically-based political parties and movements within the framework of mass politics and democratic electoral systems, and contributed to making ethnicity more salient in situations of massive migrations across national borders, as in Western Europe and the United States.[45]

A competing paradigm, the Marxist *Weltanschauung*, was equally disdainful of ethnic identities as a factor of relevance in its interpretation of modern history. In fact, it considered ethnicity as downright dangerous to the conceptualization of historical process as a continuing struggle between opposing social classes. If the modern capitalist system is seen mainly as a political space of struggle between exploiting and exploited classes, then questions related to ethnic identity are not deemed relevant, either in the analysis of concrete social situations or in the structure of political organization and action.

Thus, both the modernization and the Marxist paradigms were unable to integrate the ethnic factor meaningfully into their respective approaches to contemporary society. But while the ethnic question disappeared from theoretical discourse, it in fact retained its

powerful mobilizing potential. As these paradigms proved themselves increasingly inadequate to explain, let alone to predict and direct, human behaviour and the dynamics of contemporary societies, the stark reality of ethnic diversity, ethnic policies and ethnic conflicts has again come forward to occupy centre stage.

IV. TYPES OF MINORITIES

For a number of reasons which analysts are still coming to grips with, the end of the cold war and the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe have also provided the setting for a resurgence of ethnic identities and the emergence of majority-minority relations as crucial pivots around which the social and political organization of the post-communist states revolves.

Most modern countries are in fact multi-ethnic or multi-national, and the way in which these countries deal with inter-ethnic relations impinges upon the situation of minority groups. There is great variability in the ways in which such relationships are ordered, from local-level communal relations, to the workings of the labour market and the economic system, to governmental policies and legislative structures.

Furthermore, minority groups are heterogeneous: their minority status may be based on legal, cultural, religious, linguistic, territorial, biological or national criteria. In general, one may speak of territorial and regional minorities, cultural minorities who live dispersed among the rest of the population, immigrants, refugees, tribal and indigenous peoples. In each case, minorities face special problems and government policies may vary accordingly.

a) Territorial minorities are those groups whose identity is linked to the traditional occupation of specific regions or territories. Many distinct ethnic groups in Europe are territorially based, such as the Bretons in France, the Welsh in Britain, the German-speaking Italians in Alto Adige, the Hungarians in Romania, and so forth. Conflicts between states and territorial ethnic groups have become widespread in recent years: Kurds in Turkey and Iraq, the peoples in southern Sudan, the Sikhs and Kashmiris in India, the Tamils in northern Sri Lanka. The territorial imperative is one of the more powerful factors of ethnic identity around the world, but not the only one of course.

b) Ethnic and cultural minorities in many countries do not identify with specific territories, but tend to maintain their identity through language, religion, culture, national origin or racial characteristics, even as they live dispersed within the wider society. Examples include Gypsies and Jews in Western Europe, Russians in some of the post-Soviet states of Eastern Europe, Muslims in India and the various ethnic groups from all over the world in the United States.[46]

c) Immigrants and refugees must be dealt with as distinct groups, because they are identified as temporary residents and are seen as 'outsiders' by established populations. Furthermore, their legal status often singles them out for special treatment by governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. As already mentioned, ethnic refugees are, alas!, not a passing phenomenon, but rather an increasingly complex problem in today's world. As for transnational immigrants, it was considered common wisdom some decades ago that the era of the great world migrations had ended after the

colonial expansion of Europe overseas. Migration flows, of course, have been reversed, and the Third World now arrives in increasing numbers at the core of the former colonial empires. This process, which was encouraged during the post-World War Two economic boom, is now considered to be endangering the stability of the Western countries. The progressive closing of borders by the industrialized states has become a major political and social problem that the international community is not yet dealing with in an adequate manner.[47]

But beyond the question of numbers and demographic balances, it is obvious that the implications of international migration have changed. Immigrants used to be seen as being involved in a process of assimilation to the host country's dominant culture, if not immediately, at least within a generation or so. The success stories of upwardly-mobile immigrants, or the relatively painful and complex tribulations of culturally distinct families in new social environments, have been the stuff of literature and cinema for many decades. Nowadays, however, immigrant communities, also referred to at times as *diaspora* communities, increasingly tend to maintain and, indeed, to reinforce and reinvent their particular cultural identities.

Assimilation is no longer fashionable: multiculturalism is **in**. New minorities are in fact being created in numerous countries around the world, involving a twofold process. On the one hand, immigrant communities, as already suggested, may not wish to assimilate. On the other hand, the dominant culture, particularly its most conservative elements, rejects immigrant cultures and tends to maintain them as encapsulated, non-integrated communities. This is an explosive mixture, and the rise of xenophobia and racism in Europe and elsewhere, with all its disturbing implications, is one of its most dangerous outcomes.[48]

d) Indigenous and tribal peoples have always been among the more vulnerable ethnic minorities due to their general poverty and marginalization resulting from a long history of colonialism, oppression and exploitation. However, they did not disappear in the process of modernization, as many scholars expected. On the contrary, indigenous and tribal peoples have acquired an important new political presence in the international system, underlined by the fact that 1993 was proclaimed the United Nations International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples and that the UN Sub-Commission is currently drafting a Universal Declaration of Indigenous Rights. Mention has already been made of ILO Convention 169, adopted in 1988, and ratified by a number of countries. Indigenous peoples do not generally wish to be identified as 'ethnic minorities' in the traditional sense, particularly because in some countries they are in fact numerical majorities (in some Latin American states, for example), but also because they consider themselves to be the original inhabitants of the territories where they live and have usually been subjected to various forms of colonialism. While other minorities may be involved in processes of assimilation and struggle for equal rights with majorities, indigenous and tribal peoples are jealous of their sovereignty and distinctiveness; many of them are currently engaged in negotiations with established states, striving for different forms of self-determination, self-government and autonomy.

V. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO MINORITIES

One of the reasons why it took the United Nations so long to adopt a Declaration on the Rights of Minorities, and why it will probably be unable to find enough support among its member States for a binding international convention on minority rights, is that there is no consensus, even among scholars, about the meaning of the term 'minority'. Obviously, we are not talking simply about numbers, but about the social, economic and political status of a given identifiable group within the confines of the state. Thus, in a number of Latin American countries, the Indian population is in fact a numerical majority but is treated as if it were a minority, that is, a so-called sociological minority. Moreover, when we speak about minorities, we usually refer to bounded groups, sometimes identified as communities (as in Lebanon, India, and so on) which persist over time and which reproduce themselves both biologically and culturally as distinct groups. This is when we may speak of ethnic minorities, in distinction to other kinds of minorities (such as political groups, sexually identified groups, or populations that deserve special protection or treatment for other reasons).

However, there is also no agreement about what constitutes an ethnic minority, and just as the work of the UN Sub-Commission has floundered on the lack of a common definition, so also multiple definitions are used indiscriminately by academics and the general public. Scholars usually distinguish between **objective** and **subjective** elements, and there are a number of competing approaches to the study of ethnicity.

Primordialism

Some authors refer to ethnicity as a kind of kinship and to the ethnic group as an extended kin group. Kinship may be a real bond, based on blood ties, when descent from common forebears can be traced. But usually it is fictitious, deriving more from shared beliefs about supposed common ancestry. Founding myths and stories are passed on from generation to generation and strengthen the bonds and identities of those who hold them dear. The important element, it is held, is that even if kinship is fictitious, the members of an *ethnie* assume it as if it were real.[49]

This primordialist position is taken to extremes under the recent influence of sociobiology. Within the framework of this approach, some authors contend that ethnicity (the close ties which bind together the members of an ethnie) is grounded in genetics. More specifically, persons who share a certain number of genes (it is not said how many nor which) will bond together as an ethnic group and seek to reproduce these genes in the most efficient possible manner. This is achieved through the endogamy of the ethnic group, leading to a process of genetic selection which ensures greater opportunity for the survival of the group.[50]

Culturalism

Beyond genetic imperatives and primal bonding instincts in humans, ethnic groups are sometimes defined by their persistence over time (including many generations) and their capacity for biological and cultural reproduction. Why and how do people bond in this

fashion, not only at any one time with other members of the group but also, more importantly, with past and future generations?

One answer to this question is provided by the idea of **culture**. Ethnic identity and continuity is maintained as a result of the transmission within the group (through the processes of socialization, education, internalization of values) of the basic norms and customs which constitute the central core of the ethnic culture.[51]

In time, cultural patterns may vary, but this is usually a slow process and takes several generations. It does not alter the fact that the core culture is reproduced and transmitted from generation to generation through shared norms and values. This, then, would explain the diversity and persistence of ethnies in time and space. It is through the mechanisms of cultural reproduction that the basic norms which structure the life of the group are defined. People 'belong' to a culture, are bounded by it and distinguish themselves from others who belong to other cultures. Inherent in the notion of culture is the concept of ethnocentrism, the idea that those on the inside consider themselves to be better and superior to the outsiders. The 'we' and 'they' approach to inter-ethnic relations is fraught with potential conflict. If the outsider is seen as inherently dangerous, if the 'other' is rejected, feared, despised, excluded, satanized or dehumanized; or conversely, if the 'we' group is thought to be threatened, its survival endangered and its existence as a group undermined by the 'other', then conditions for conflict are a given. Whether such conditions are enough for conflict to break out is another question. We are familiar with many societies in which such conditions exist but conflict does not break out. This is because a number of other circumstantial factors besides conditioning elements must usually be present, the so-called triggering mechanisms of conflict emergence. The tenuous relationship between latent and open conflict has not been theoretically elucidated.

Ethnic Boundaries

Anthropologists have learned that ethnic groups are not only defined by the content of their culture; indeed, some would argue that cultural content is actually irrelevant. What appears to be more significant is boundary-formation through social organization, that complex web of relationships whereby groups are formed, bounded and defined, and by means of which individuals become included or excluded. Thus, membership in an ethnic group may be strengthened by self-attribution and the exclusion of others, or by attribution and being excluded by others. Religious minorities, for example, are often linked through strong internal bonds and the rejection of those who do not belong. Racial minorities, on the other hand, are frequently identified and excluded by others through the processes of discrimination and racism, even when they wish to belong.

Ethnic group boundaries may be rigid and fixed, or they may be permeable and flexible. In either case, the presence or absence of conflict is not easily deduced, for the presence of strong boundaries may either deter conflict or induce it, whereas weak boundaries may, under differing circumstances, lead to similar contradictory results.[52]

Ethnic Ecology

Ethnic groups are often linked to specific territories and habitats. Moreover, in complex modern societies ethnic groups as such may occupy particular economic or occupational positions (middlemen, crafts and trades, agricultural labour, and so on). When competition

arises between ethnies over such 'ecological niches', various forms of conflict may frequently ensue. A strong theoretical position in contemporary studies of ethnic relations argues precisely that ecological competition over scarce resources is usually the root cause of ethnic conflicts. In contrast to some other explanatory approaches, this model may be tested empirically with quantitative measurements and may have predictive value.[53]

Structuralism

From another viewpoint, ethnies are groups placed in asymmetrical relationships to other groups within the framework of historically given social and economic formations. They occupy different positions in the wider system as well as in scales of wealth and power. Accordingly, the cultural characteristics of ethnic groups are seen to be a response to the challenges raised by certain kinds of social and economic relations between different populations. This structuralist approach has been found useful in the study of inter-ethnic relations in two distinct types of situations. In the first place, it may usefully be employed within the framework of colonialism, in which colonizers and colonized face each other as dominant and subordinate groups. The ethnic (cultural and biological) characteristics of the opposing groups become emblematic in the functioning and maintenance of the system of colonial exploitation and domination. Racism, other forms of discrimination and the cultural categorization of the population contribute to perpetuating and accentuating ethnic differences that turn into markers of inequality and stratification. When such a situation prevails in the post-colonial period, it can be referred to as internal colonialism.[54]

Secondly, the structuralist approach helps to understand the dynamics of immigrant societies where ethnically distinct groups also become integrated differentially into new social and economic structures. They are, in turn, categorized racially and culturally in answer to the needs of a segmented and fragmented labour market. There is thus a cultural division of labour; that is, the pattern whereby cultural differences between ethnic groups determine the nature of their members' insertion in the labour market (and therefore their access to resources and economic and social goods). But this differential insertion (which is the result of historical process) in turn reinforces the cultural characteristics of the group. This approach underlines the fact that ethnic identities as well as inter-ethnic relations depend to a great extent on the structural context in which they occur.[55]

Instrumentalism

That the ethnic identities of groups may be the result of certain historically given economic and social structures is a persuasive argument in some contexts. However, it does not explain the variability of the ethnic phenomenon, why some groups assume their ethnicity more intensely than others, or why some ethnically-based movements last longer and are more successful than others. Some scholars look for explanations to these questions not in social, economic and political structures but in the motivations and behaviour of individuals. Group identities and behaviour can then be traced back to the preferences and rational choices of individuals rather than to the weight of custom, the norms and traditions of peoples or the imperatives of economic and political structures. Rational choice theory, derived from economics, states that individuals will act rationally to obtain their valued ends and maximize their benefits. If emphasizing their ethnicity will further these objectives, then rational individuals will be impelled to do so. This would explain, according to the theorists

of this tendency, why some individuals opt for ethnicity to achieve their individual ends, whereas others reject or ignore it. To the extent that individual action is motivated by maximization of utilities or individual benefits, it may or may not coincide with the aims or objectives of the group. Ethnic groups are said to have collective interests (the sum of the individual interests of their members), and they compete for them among themselves in a rational and calculated manner (resources, power, prestige, wealth). Consequently, ethnicity as a variable is seen as the result of the rational interests of the members of the group; it is 'something' which can be taken or discarded by choice.

In a number of current inter-ethnic relationships, it is clear that some group leaders use ethnic symbols and identities to further specific rational political and economic ends. Ethnicity becomes a means to an end rather than a value on its own terms. This instrumentalist interpretation of ethnicity can help explain certain aspects of ethnic relations and conflicts, but it can hardly tell us why ethnic identities are effectively mobilized in some instances but not in others.[56]

Post-modernism

Finally, a currently fashionable way of dealing with ethnicity is to deny any 'reality' to ethnic groups as such. What seems to be more important is the 'discourse' on ethnicity; that is, the way people 'invent' or 'construct' their ethnicity or that of others. This may be the result of political imperatives or ideological preferences, but once a 'discourse' or a 'narrative' is generated and becomes legitimized to some extent, it exerts considerable influence on the dynamics of ethnic relations and on human behaviour. In the whirlpools of ethnic conflict, ethnicities certainly become constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed, but this can hardly be done out of thin air, if there are no pre-existing cultural identities to construct. Thus, ethnic conflicts can be analysed as a form discourse and the analysis of the discourse of conflict can tell us much about the conflict itself.[57]

VI. ETHNIC IDENTITIES

A recurrent question relating to ethnicity is the formation and persistence of something called an 'ethnic identity'. The mere existence of shared attributes among the members of an identifiable ethnic group (language, religion, biological features, national origin, and so on) is apparently not enough to fire the common ethnic imagination at all times and under all circumstances, let alone trigger ethnic conflict and violence. But how and why does ethnic identity, as a subjectively perceived factor, become such a mobilizing force?

One explanation can be found in identification theory, developed by social psychology, and applied to national identity and international relations by William Bloom.[58] This theory states that at an early age infants identify with their parents and then come to internalize certain values and attitudes derived from this process of identification. As the human being grows, there develops an image of the 'self' which he/she shares with other individuals in the family, the locality, the community. In later years, adults will thus acquire a shared identity, and in order to navigate the social environment in which they find themselves they require a secure sense of identity. This will provide them with a sense of well-being, whereas a diffuse identity or the lack of a secure sense of identity will lead to

what is commonly termed an 'identity crisis', and sometimes to personality breakdown. Individuals, then, will tend to identify with general modes of behaviour and share values and attitudes with others, by which their individual sense of identity finds support and strength. Such general modes of behaviour and shared values refer to culture and ideology. Consequently, a threat to ideology or culture is a threat to identity, and equally, an enhancement of ideology or culture enhances identity. Inasmuch as most, if not all, identities are social, that is, shared with other individuals, group identifications become crucial in maintaining cohesive social systems, and this creates the potential for the group to act together to enhance and protect that shared identity. As individuals become socially and politically active, identifications transcend the immediate family or locality, and are made with more diffuse symbolic entities, such as the ethnic group, the religious community, the social class, or the nation. Identification theory may help us understand why Hutu and Tutsi in Burundi and Rwanda, Blacks and Indians in Guyana, Sinhala and Tamils in Sri Lanka, Blacks and Whites in Bristol, Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslims behave the way they do in specific contexts. This last condition is important because group identifications only occur within the same environmental circumstances.

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The brief review in this paper of some of the principal theoretical approaches currently used in the analysis of the ethnic question does not do justice to their complexity. It may appear at times that they are exclusive, but it is clear that in most cases these different orientations are in fact complementary to each other. There is no general theory, no matter how abstract, which can account for all of the aspects included in the term 'ethnic question'. This is due in part to the extreme complexity of ethnic problems and in part to the fact that the same terminology often refers to different types of phenomena.[59]

VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

While the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the world's most widely ratified human rights treaty, deals with the rights of children in a universal framework, it has long been recognized that the significance and nature of childhood varies considerably among different cultures.[60] A recent publication addresses this difficulty in relation to the principle of 'the best interests of the child', one of the major pillars of the Convention. Philip Alston rightly states that culture is not a factor which should be excluded from the human rights equation, but he also warns that there are many cultural practices which, by human rights standards, are difficult if not impossible to reconcile. Cultural arguments continue to be used to justify the denial of children's rights. "They include arguments designed to defend the full range of practices relating to female circumcision, to justify the non-education of lower class or caste children, or to justify the exclusion of girls from educational and other opportunities which would make them less sought after in marriage."[61]

As has been seen in earlier pages, conflicts over cultural values arise not only in relation to universal human rights standards but also between minority or subordinate cultures and the cultural norms or standards of existing states and legal systems. International human rights instruments, as signed and ratified by states, involve first and foremost duties and obligations on the part of the state itself, but it has been argued that they apply to cultural communities at the sub-state level as well.[62] This is an issue that needs further exploration, particularly as regards the rights and best interests of children.

Current research is not especially rich on these issues. Anthropology has perhaps contributed more than other disciplines to an understanding of childhood in different cultural settings, but has devoted less attention to the strains and conflicts that are borne by children of minorities and subordinate cultural groups in multicultural environments. Such issues are addressed by sociologists, educators and psychologists, who are mainly concerned with practical issues related to education, employment, immigration or crime, for example, in the urban world. While the problems of ethnic minorities have become salient in research in recent years, due to their increasing importance in national and world affairs, particular attention to families, children and young people is still scarce and unsystematic.

The children of minorities share, of course, most of the problems of children everywhere. To the extent that minority groups may be marginalized and discriminated against by dominant majorities, their children will suffer marginalization and discrimination too. As has been documented widely, poor urban and rural children (the world's majority) are particularly vulnerable to abuses, exploitation and human rights violations. When, additionally, they belong to disadvantaged minorities, then their plight deserves special attention and calls for special policies.

While the relationships between ethnic minorities and dominant societies are multi-faceted and complex, the situation of minority groups may be considered within two interrelated but distinct dimensions: marginalization and discrimination. By marginalization it is generally understood that a minority group (or a tribal or indigenous population) is not sufficiently integrated in the wider economy and society, and consequently is less likely to share in the benefits of growth and development. Thus, members of marginalized groups may have less access to public services, employment, economic opportunities and other valued goods, and they are usually ranked lower on the scales of social and economic indicators. Marginalization may be the result of a number of factors, such as regional underdevelopment (for example, Kosovo versus Slovenia in the former Yugoslavia), internal colonialism (indigenous peoples in Latin America), ignorance of the national language (linguistic minorities in Asia, immigrants in Europe), or geographical isolation from poles of economic growth (nomads in Africa, tribal communities in Asia).

To combat marginalization, states adopt various kinds of 'development' policies designed to 'integrate' the marginalized populations. Regarding children, such policies often imply the setting up of so-called safety-nets, special educational and training programmes, community development projects at the local level, and so on. Usually, these policies tend to become 'assimilationist'; that is, they impose on the target group the need to adopt new cultural models and ways of life which may conflict with traditional cultures and may, in fact, be designed to destroy or irremediably change such cultures in order to adapt them to the dominant or majority model. As has been noted above in the case of some indigenous and tribal peoples, these policies may not always have beneficial results for the target group.

The second dimension is discrimination. While marginalized ethnic minorities may also suffer from it, discrimination by dominant or majority populations focuses rather on ethnic or racial minorities that are in fact highly integrated economically and socially in a complex multi-ethnic, usually industrialized, society. This is the case in the United States and

Western Europe, for example. Discrimination here means a pattern of behaviour directed at minorities which tends to exclude them more or less systematically from the generally shared valued goals of the society: wealth, prestige, power. While some discrimination takes the form of interpersonal rejection, based on individual or group stereotypes and prejudices, the more persistent form is what sociologists call 'institutional discrimination'. This refers to patterns of decision-making in public and private institutions (for instance, businesses, schools, government) through which members of minorities become systematically harassed, excluded, exploited, demeaned, relegated, rejected or neglected. The more highly structured the social and economic relationships between a dominant group and a subordinate ethnic minority or majority, the harsher the effects of discrimination may become, as the experience of apartheid shows. Institutional discrimination also means that existing structures of authority and power, not only private or individual actors, are involved in maintaining such a system of inequality. Discrimination, even more than marginalization, constitutes a violation of universally accepted human rights.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of discrimination, and they quickly internalize the dominant stereotypes against their racial, ethnic or cultural community. As so many studies show, the psychological ravages of discrimination on children of minorities can be devastating. Kozol reports that when he read a poem by the black American writer Langston Hughes:

> *What happens to a dream deferred?*
> *Does it dry up*
> *like a raisin in the sun?*

to his pupils in a segregated elementary school in Boston, one embittered child began to cry, and he, the teacher, was promptly fired for using an 'inflammatory' text.[63]

The reaction against discrimination may lead to intensive striving in the school and the community to 'make good against all odds'. This is usually what anti-discriminatory or anti-racist policies attempt to achieve. Another reaction, however, may be to strengthen the cultural identity of the minority group, leading it to emphasize its distinctiveness and values as against those of the dominant society. This is the reaction leading to Reggae and Rasta among black immigrant youth in Britain, the emphasis on Muslim values among young Arabs in France, the rediscovery of Native American identity among young people in Canada and the United States. In this context, policies directed at children would appear to be neccessarily different from those of children in general.

As mentioned, the literature on children is not particularly rich in information on ethnic minorities, nor is the literature on ethnic minorities especially concerned with the situation of children. Before overall guidelines on policies for children of ethnic minorities can be adopted, within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it would be well to pursue scientific research in this field. At first blush, it would appear that further study could usefully be carried out on the following issues:

a) Racial discrimination in the urban environment. As exemplified in industrial countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, changes in demographic patterns and economic structures affect the life-chances and living conditions of racial and ethnic minorities in the urban environment. Families, women, children and youth are particularly vulnerable to such changes and are frequently unable to cope. In the industrial heartland of the United States, for example, the inner cities are racial and ethnic ghettoes that circumscribe and contain the lives of children and youth. As factories close and business

enterprises emigrate, employment opportunities diminish, families tend to become single-parent, mainly female, households, children and youth face a bleak and desperate future. Only intensive community work, as has been undertaken in many areas, coupled with a reorentiation in economic policies (which does not seem likely in the short term) can provide the kind of services that might help these new generations to overcome the handicaps they currently face.

b) Immigrant minorities in industrialized countries. The situation of culturally distinct immigrant minorities in industrialized countries (as well as in other areas) differs from the picture described above, in that children and youth in this case clearly suffer the stress of competing cultural paradigms. The relative balance between the culture of the immigrant community, such as the Turkish 'guest workers' in Germany or the 'Boers' (Arabs) in France, and that of the dominant and majority nation-state is matter for much debate. Should immigrants assimilate? Should the state provide social and educational services to members of the immigrant community who wish to maintain their culture and identity? Will children who integrate into the wider society have to break with their families and communities, and will children who retain their customs and traditions feel rejected and outcast from the wider national society? These are some of the highly controversial issues which are subject to policy debates in a number of Western countries at the current time.[64]

c) Multicultural and multilingual education. A specific problem area related to the above, but not unique to countries with large immigrant populations, concerns the question of multicultural and multilingual education. Much has been written about this issue, mainly from the point of view of educational institutions, priorities and policies; much less has been said about the place of children themselves in the framework of multiculturalism. What are, indeed, the 'best interests of the child' as regards educational options in a complex environment? How important is the maintenance of a child's mother tongue in a foreign environment? How does the use of the mother tongue in early education enhance the child's ability to learn and develop? What is the best mix between the teaching of the mother tongue and the teaching of the 'official' or 'national' language? How do educational institutions strike a balance between the transmittal of the model of a 'national culture' (highly valued in unitary states as an instrument of political control and the building of a common citizenship) and the reproduction of local or minority culture (valued as a collective human right and put forward as a claim by members of these cultures (for example, the situation of the Kurds in Turkey)?

d) Child labour. While child labour is carefully regulated in national and international legislation, it is in fact a widespread phenomenon which frequently escapes effective regulation, particularly in the economically less developed countries. The children of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples are often especially vulnerable to labour exploitation because of racial and ethnic discrimination and the generally poor socio-economic conditions of their families. In family-centred subsistence economies, children play an important, traditionally valued, economic role. When the monetary economy expands, children are often recruited as 'cheap labour' and submitted to unacceptable conditions of exploitation. Particularly serious violations of children's rights occur among young girls from tribal environments exploited as prostitutes in some South-East Asian countries, or indigenous girls employed as domestic servants by *mestizo* urban families in some Latin American countries.

The work of children, however, implies more than the concept of 'child labour' as used according to Western legal standards. The contribution of children to productive

activities of various kinds and to the maintenance of rural and urban households is a widespread phenomenon, especially in the Third World. Among different ethnic groups, the labour of children is valued, assessed and managed differently, an issue that child-protection policies do not usually dwell on.

e) Indigenous and tribal children. As indigenous and tribal peoples have come under increasing economic and ecological pressures in recent decades, which has indeed led to the need for international legislation,[65] their children and youth suffer the stress of cultural change, the breakdown of traditional society and the challenge of adaptation to modern ways of life. This process of modernization used to be considered as inevitable and even desirable within the process of nation-building. In recent decades, however, it has become evident that indigenous and tribal peoples lose much more than they gain from these changes, and newly assertive indigenous and tribal movements have become active at the national and international levels. It would be a mistake to consider them as anti-modern, revivalist movements led by traditional and conservative elements of the community. On the contrary, the leadership of many of these movements is today in the hands of younger, modernized elites who struggle for cultural collective rights, economic self-determination and political participation. The rediscovery of community and the strengthening of cultural values is an important part of the political agenda of these movements, and the children and youth of such minorities and of indigenous and tribal peoples are expected to play a pivotal role in their dynamic.

f) Children at war. A tragic consequence of ethnic conflicts in the world has been the victimization of children. Not only are they the direct casualties of violence, with large numbers of children killed, wounded, orphaned, displaced or made refugees during conflicts, but they are also active participants of military organizations, trained killers and support elements of governmental or opposition troops. When members of ethnic groups are singled out for violence, then it is likely that children will be especially victimized. The long-term consequences if these problems are as yet unforeseeable, but it is essential that they be taken into account when plans for reconstruction and reconciliation are made within the framework of peace-making and conflict resolution.

There are numerous other issues involving minority children which deserve the attention of scholars. Cultural diversity, like bio-diversity, is part of the human heritage. Ethnic identities are acquired in childhood and they usually constitute an important part of human and social development. In our currently increasingly integrated world, ethnic identities undergo changes; they may disappear but they also re-emerge and reconstitute themselves. Acquiring an ethnic identity does not necessarily mean the rejection of other identities. If discrimination is learned behaviour, then children can learn how not to discriminate. Cultural diversity in an inter-ethnic world can lead to more, rather than less, tolerance, and to the equal enjoyment of human rights by everyone. Children have a particularly important role to play in the rebuilding of such a world.

NOTES

1. Cf. Phillips and Rosas (eds), 1993.

2. *Ibid.*

3. This is now changing. The General Assembly of the Organization of American States has charged its subsidiary organ, the Interamerican Commission of Human Rights, to explore the possibilities of drafting an inter-American legal document on the rights of indigenous peoples.

4. Genocide, the wilful destruction in whole or in part of a distinctive people, is an international crime under the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948. The term ethnocide is used to refer to the cultural destruction of a people (including minorities) through coercive policies of change and assimilation. It is not a legal but a sociological concept.

5. Gurr, 1993.

6. Agnelli, 1986; Szanton Blanc, 1994; Boyden, 1991.

7. Gilroy, 1991.

8. Carby, 1982.

9. United Nations Development Fund, 1993.

10. De Lone, 1977, p. ix.

11. The current poverty line for a US family of three is an annual income below $US 9,885.

12. These figures are taken from an unpublished report prepared for this study by Cynthia Duquette of Wayne State University, to whom the author wishes to acknowledge his thanks.

13. Nightingale, 1993; Williams and Kornblum, 1994; Kotlowitz, 1991.

14. Kozol, 1991.

15. Castles, Booth and Wallace, 1984.

16. Pryce, 1979.

17. Chiozzi, 1994.

18. Costarelli, 1993.

19. Cornia and Sipos, 1991, p. 31.

20. Khoi, 1991.

21. Joshi, 1986.

22. See Nieuwenhuys, 1994, for a study of this situation in Kerala.

23. Keyes, 1987.

24. Whitaker, 1986.

25. Griffin, 1984.

26. ICIHI, Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, 1987.

27. Hernández, 1993.

28. Boyle, 1988.

29. IWGIA, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1988.

30. Hodgson, 1992.

31. Münzel, 1973.

32. Escobar, 1989.

33. Veber, Dahl, Wilson and Waehle, 1993.

34. Cheetham, *et al.*, 1981; Williams, 1988; Jelen, 1993.

35. Macdonald, 1986.

36. Ramsden and Senker, 1993, p. 9.

37. Africa Watch, 1993.

38. Dodge, 1986.

39. Henry Dunant Institute, 1993, pp. 136-7.

40. Willigen, 1993.

41. Franz, 1993.

42. See Stavenhagen, 1990.

43. Brölmann *et al.*, 1993; Sigler, 1983.

44. Glazer and Moynihan, 1975.

45. Epstein, 1978.

46. These groups are sometimes referred to as 'hyphened Americans', such as African-Americans and Asian-Americans.

47. Most of the victims of the tragic January 1994 earthquake in Los Angeles turned out to be Mexican immigrants, many of whom lacked the correct legal papers. Because

of the undocumented status of many Mexicans in southern California, public calls were made for official help to be withheld from them.

48. European Parliament, 1985.

49. Isaacs, 1975.

50. Van den Berghe, 1981.

51. See *inter alia* De Vos and Romanucci-Ross, 1982; Royce, 1982; Smith, 1981.

52. Barth, 1969.

53. Banton, 1983.

54. Hechter, 1975; Stavenhagen, 1990.

55. Miles, 1982.

56. Hechter, 1985.

57. Gilroy, 1987; Lemarchand, 1993.

58. Bloom, 1990.

59. Casiño,1985; Rex and Mason, 1986.

60. Mead and Wolfenstein, 1955.

61. Alston, 1994.

62. See, for example, Goonesekere, 1994.

63. Kozol, 1991.

64. See, for example, Parris, 1982; Dinello, 1985.

65. The International Labour Organisation adopted Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples in 1988, and the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities is preparing a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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