Race and Ethnicity

Culture, identity and representation

Second Edition

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■ RACE AND ETHNICITY

Broad-ranging and comprehensive, this completely revised and updated textbook is a critical guide to issues and theories of 'race' and ethnicity. These concepts are shown to be inextricably linked to colonial domination which legitimated forms of discrimination and disadvantage. This book provides students with a detailed understanding of colonial and post-colonial constructions, changes and challenges to race as a source of social division and inequality.

Drawing upon vivid international case studies from Australia, Guyana, Canada, Malaysia, the Caribbean, Mexico, Ireland and the UK, the book clearly explains the different strands of theory which have been used to explain the dynamics of race. These are critically scrutinised, from biologically based ideas to those of Critical Race Theory. This key text includes new material on changing multiculturalism, immigration and fears about terrorism, all of which are critically assessed.

Incorporating summaries, chapter-by-chapter questions, illustrations, exercises and a glossary of terms, this student-friendly text also puts forward suggestions for further project work. Broad in scope, interactive and accessible, this book is a key resource for undergraduate students of 'race' and ethnicity across the social sciences.

Stephen Spencer is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Sheffield Hallam University. His research interests include the exploration of 'race' and ethnicity, media representation and social identities, as well as the use of visual methods in the exploration of social issues. Other publications include: *Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences: Awakening Visions* (2011) Routledge, and *A Dream Deferred: Guyanese Identity Under the Shadow of Colonialism* (2007) Hansib.

Stephen Spencer brilliantly combines theoretical analysis with case studies drawn from eight countries, to offer a compelling argument about the centrality of representation to an understanding of the issues of 'race' and ethnicity': an argument with 'real world' consequences for the oppression and exploitation of different communities globally. This thoroughly revised second edition of *Race and Ethnicity: Culture, Identity and Representation* is quite simply a classic text and nothing less than an essential read for students, teachers and scholars.

Bob Franklin, Professor of Journalism Studies, Cardiff University, UK

This is an engaging and textually rich exploration of the construction and significance of race and ethnicity. Case studies from across the world, as well as the migratory, diasporic flow of people, are examined with great insight and aptitude. This is a must-read for anyone trying to make sense of the complexity of identity, media representations and the realities of contemporary society.

Associate Professor Panizza Allmark, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia; General Editor, Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies.

This is a great book, which can be recommended without any reservations. It is better written than most of its rival texts, more broad-ranging than any of them in its choice of examples and adopts an approach to theory that is at once accessible and even-handed. Nor does it shy away from policy or politics. Stephen Spencer is an important voice in the field, and his *Race and Ethnicity* should be high up everyone's reading lists.

Professor Richard Jenkins, Department of Sociology, University of Sheffield, UK

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Nearly eight years on, this second edition of *Race and Ethnicity: Culture, Identity and representation* comes with significant changes and additions. However, the perspective of the book remains constant, demonstrating that representation offers a powerful, if often neglected, window on the world through which the complex issues of race and ethnicity become comprehensible. Ethnographic and interpretative approaches to ethnicity are central to the discussions in these chapters. The key focus is on the role of collective signs and symbols; the semiotic resources of a culture. Our under-standing of these concepts is always formed within the process of representation – as, indeed, are our identities. At one level this is a truism, in that all knowledge is filtered and interpreted through conventional codes, but even at the abstract level of theoris-ing this is done through the developed paradigms and discourses of thought reflecting the genealogy of sciences in the western world. Furthermore, the intention of this text is not merely to skim over the surface of these representations, discursive formations and collective signs, but to examine their expedient and contingent uses in social contexts. Race is not some academic exercise; it has material consequences for the way society is organised and the ongoing exploitation and oppression of different groups.

There are several new inclusions as well as a careful revision of some of the existing material. The intention was always to use a variety of different 'windows on the world' to convey the pervasive nature of colonial/post-colonial thinking in everyday life. For this reason I have made the rather unusual decision to include examples from interviews. These soundings from different cultural sites of eth-nic identity provide an immediacy and honesty that enhances academic discourse, showing the lived realities of division and complex identities in action. Further examples of theoretical approaches which might be used to critically examine race and ethnicity have also been added. This has the advantage of presenting theoretical paradigms as relative explanations, giving a sense of the development of ideas his-torically, and further suggests that there may be multiple and, in some cases, com-plementary approaches to understanding complex cases of race and ethnic division. The specific contexts described have been updated and there are now links to a range of definitive texts for further reading.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

■ INTRODUCTION

Images of others, images of ourselves

Consider the following image. Paul Sharrad describes a press photo from the 1991 Gulf War:

> In a camp of refugee workers from Kuwait containing amongst others, Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalis and Arabs of inconvenient nationality without the means of getting home, there huddled a group of Filipinos, triangulated like paintings of Custer's Last Stand or the Iwo Jima statue under a flag which pleaded 'Don't leave us among Asians'.
>
> (Sharrad 1993: 1)

This strange image is an example of the complex negotiated identities generated by global diasporas. It provides a graphic example of the urgency of striking a distinct identity and finding means to 'flag' this to others as well as the complex and ambiguous cosmopolitan relations in which identity and 'otherness' are defined. The Filipinos in this story came to recognise themselves as a distinct group, united by common characteristics which to them made their difference self-evident; their identity then was quite removed from the category 'Asian' within which any western observer would almost certainly pigeonhole them. Under conditions of extreme anxiety their common history as a people at once united them and separated them from others – now those attributes of their unique and complex colonial ancestry had to be urgently signalled.

How does this 'alienation of body and soul' (ibid.) come about? Diaspora is of increasing significance in a post-Fordist decentralised world, more than ever dependent upon flows of migrant labour, where outbreaks of conciliatory multiculturalism are punctuated with policies of regressive racism, moral panics, asylophobia and islamophobia; anxieties outside and inside the increasingly uncertain boundaries of the western world. The shared histories and transitory cultures are the breaking news of our globalising world. Without some recognition of the multi-layered history of Filipinos, their struggle and colonial history of connection to the USA, such scenes may appear surreal.

What can such examples tell us about the way we make sense of our identity and the way in which these meanings are constructed and communicated? Examples such as these make us recognise the reflexive and constantly negotiated nature of ethnicity. As Sharrad and others suggest, the growing emphasis on post-colonial identities reflected in courses of study and literature poses an important challenge to one-dimensional approaches to ethnic identity.

The long colonial era has left a legacy of deeply embedded divisions in many national cultures. Nations have been shaped by the exploitation and racism of a handful of European colonial empires. Today, contemporary literature bears witness to the same exploitation and racism: 'the doctrine of divide and conquer persists, the pattern of varying psychic upheavals continues to be registered in "diaspora literature"' (ibid.).

This book examines the complex representations, identities and relationships of groups differentiated by 'ethnicity' or 'race' through analyses of examples from around the world. I should stress that these samples are not drawn only from 'exotic' ethnographies but largely reflect, as Marcus suggests, ethnography that 'begins at home' (Marcus 2012). There are two significant studies from Australia and Guyana, but the others are based on reflections from the migratory, diasporic flows of people interviewed on the home front, here in Sheffield, South Yorkshire.

This is a book about the construction and consequences of race and ethnicity. I begin from the position that these are concepts which have a historical geneal-ogy: they are social constructions which often become identifiable where and when the boundaries between groups become noticeable, perhaps owing to competitive relationships or differences of cultural identity or practice. Sometimes there are real physical differences; at other times, these are culturally or linguistically ordered. The two concepts in this title are among the most complex and problematic in the social sciences. They are also inextricably linked: 'race is an allotrope of ethnicity' (Jenkins 1997: 167). Jenkins' use of this analogy from chemistry is very fitting – in other words, ethnicity is a different structural modification of a base element (i.e. the concept of race). While the social currencies of ethnicity are perhaps of the most vital importance in social affairs, race has been (and continues to be) 'an organising principle of domination without parallel' (ibid.).

To understand this difference it is important to examine the process by which categorisation and segregation came into operation, stemming, as they did, from racial schema in the service of exploitative colonialism. The long-term effects of slavery have left their taint on the world order and have persistent structural influence on social organisation to this day. Loic Wacquant argues that the racial ghettoisation of African Americans is of a different order to the class-based ghettos of Britain and France because the former is an ongoing result of the stain of enslavement. African American culture can be understood only in relation to its genesis: 'the historical crucible of two and a half centuries of slavery followed by another century of rigid racial separation subtended by various forms of state-

sponsored discrimination and racial violence, many of which persist in attenuated forms' (Wacquant 2010: 185).

American cities are divided in a way which is extreme compared with the British experience. Nevertheless, slavery casts a shadow over the relative prosperity of western countries whose imperial power and wealth was based on the productivity and commodities gathered and exchanged through the stolen labour of slavery. Slaves were the ultimate commodity and the trade in human misery was enormously lucrative. The expedient construction of racial categories to permit such moral degradation is certainly one reason why race and racial categorisation has proved an enduring feature of global societies.

This book builds on the viewpoint, well accepted in the literature, that ethnicity is a matter of shared meanings and conventions. As several authors have pointed out, this view derives from the seminal work of Fredrik Barth (see e.g. Jenkins 2008; Malesevic 2004) and in turn Barth's view rested on older strands of sociology (Weber, Simmel and others). Hence the focus here will be on recognising the language of 'race' and ethnicity, a dialectical way of speaking simultaneously about 'others' as well as a means of affirming identification of self and community.

While the constructed nature of race and ethnicity is time-bound and expedient – a reflection of the zeitgeist, of the economic and social realities of the day – it is not sufficient to proclaim race and ethnic identity to be mythical constructs when experiences of racism are very much an everyday reality. The case studies and discussions in this book underline the inherent problems behind the question: Can we have an empirical approach to 'race' and ethnicity that is not reductionist and does not reify the dynamic, interrelated and situated meanings of lived experiences of 'race' and ethnicity?

The complex variables at play in these examples show the contingent and local forms in which 'race' and ethnicity are manifest. It is important not to reproduce an essentialist view of 'race' and ethnicity – where experiences are predetermined – as real-life experience is much more complicated, contingent and mercurial.

It is for these reasons that this text examines post-structuralist approaches: because they question the stability of categories of 'race', along with those of class, gender and sexuality, which help us to understand subtleties of identity and subjectivity. In addition, it is foolhardy for any research into ethnicity to neglect the fact that the researcher's own identity is always an aspect of the interplay of meaning and interpretation; hence, researchers must recognise their cultural baggage and strive for a more intersubjective approach. However, here too the nuanced constructed nature of ethnicity is problematic, as it may result in difficulties in demonstrating the experience of racism. Thus it can be seen that there is a pernicious quality to 'race': on the one hand it is a social construct (used expediently in different ways, evoked as a resource, as a positive source of identity, especially in times of repression, conflict or competition) which should be confined to the dustbin of useless terms, but on the other hand it has real-life consequences. Indeed, in

some contexts avoiding 'race' and only using 'ethnicity' may seem like treacherously avoiding the issue.

WHY FOCUS ON REPRESENTATION?

The realm of representation is central to questions of identity and this book examines the crucial social processes which reaffirm and perpetuate or challenge and overturn our constructions of 'otherness'. This is, again, a legacy of the realisation that differences are contingent on cultural perception and arise when groups determine differences as significant to foreground.

Representation is the social process of making sense of the many signifying systems within a culture. It refers both to the active process as well as to the products of the process of representing. This process of interpreting signs is central to how we see other people and ourselves. More profoundly, by critically exploring those commonplace representations it is possible to demonstrate that the accepted order of things, often presented as 'natural', is really the product of culture.

The example of the alienated Filipino refugees in the war zone of Kuwait highlights this process in action. In this instance the meaning of 'Asians' is an alienated one which arises from the origins of contemporary Filipino culture and the complex Euro-American influences which have been formative of the cultural identity of these beleaguered guest workers. The Philippines were under Spanish colonial rule for over 300 years before becoming subject to American colonial rule after America defeated Spain during the Spanish–American War in 1898, a situation which ended only after the Second World War. This history makes Filipino identity unique among nations in South East Asia, with most Filipinos having some facility with spoken English and knowledge of American culture. Unlike other ethnic groups, when they arrive in the USA most Filipinos can easily adapt to the American way of life because of the absence of language and cultural barriers (de Torres 2002). This example highlights how ethnic identities and the way in which boundaries are drawn are complex consequences of historical processes.

Chapter 1 of this book focuses specifically on the way in which issues of race and ethnicity are represented, examining the process by which we make sense of the 'other'. The social world in which we live is saturated with signs, images and stories projected through every form of media, permeating our consumer culture and all levels of social relationships. It is argued that the media are powerful sources of – in McQuail's term – 'referent power' (2010: 470), presenting persuasive and authoritative messages from celebrities and 'experts', and that the media plays the role of a bard in our culture, functioning as 'a *mediator of language*' (Hartley 1998: 85–6). In other words, some of the complex negotiated views that form our self-identity are shaped by the media.

The collective images and representations which circulate in a culture can be considered a 'cultural imaginary';[1] that is, the available resources that are drawn upon to shape and mediate our cultural identities. It is important to examine and understand these interlinked discursive themes, images and stories circulating in the public arena because they exert influence, albeit perhaps less obviously because they are unspoken and mundane, and are woven into the fabric of everyday life. These cultural forms, mediated signs and images are a reflecting surface, mirroring underlying values which have condensed into everyday language and imagery. 'Whiteness', for example, is rarely spoken about; being largely an invisible 'given', it is no exaggeration to suggest that 'Whiteness has become the default race in our society' (Wang 2006: 12).

'Myth'[2] is a term that has been used to designate collective meanings within the broader cultural imaginary. In this sense myth denotes 'a systematic organisation of signifiers around a set of connotations and meanings' (Fiske *et al.* 1987: xi). Furthermore, myth is of particular interest when considering ethnicity, national identity and the concept of 'race' because it:

> has an important role within ideas of nation, where it is an essential part of cultural meaning and maintenance. Foundations of national ideas and values are established through myth and highlight what is considered natural and accepted or alien and excluded within a culture. These continuous narratives are embedded with various rituals and symbols leading to a collective discourse.
>
> (Price 2010: 453)

In relation to these accepted collective meanings, this chapter discusses Roland Barthes's use of myth to denote banal commonplace signs of colonial paternalism. A Barthesian interpretation of 'myth' suggests that the habitual portrayal of certain issues disguises this human process of construction and makes the portrait appear to be the thing itself. Other recent examples are presented that will allow the reader to recognise the signifying practices employed in constructing (and deconstructing) images and other popular representations of 'otherness'. This is an abiding theme; like the flickering shadows in Plato's cave, representations of the world around us are always at a distance, prone to distortion, open to multiple interpretations and sources of symbolic power. Cultural uses of difference are malleable and can be utilised as a resource, reinvoked in times of conflict and competition or expediently played down and ignored. Representation is, as Stuart Hall points out, the sphere in which identity is always constructed; representational forms are the available resources through which we express our subjective sense of self and, by the same token, 'the pole of the other' (Bagnoli 2004) provides the collective lexicon for the attributes of difference which in turn define our ideas of shared identity. A dialectical process permits us to draw on this multiplicity of voices and signs, which could be role models or fictional or imaginary characters.

'Present within one's individual consciousness in the form of representations of significant others, this 'other' can be thought of as pertaining to the world of everyday experience, as well as to the world of one's imaginary' (ibid.: 3). The forms of expression may be uniquely individual but they often reflect broadly shared cultural and ethnic values interpreted though our own experiential framework. This chapter gives more detailed consideration of the apparent 'givens' in western culture, and the difficulties of exposing and challenging these.

Chapter 2 addresses the problem of naming, permitting analysis of the history of race, ethnicity and racism. The 'problem of definition' highlights the fact that race is a 'floating signifier' (Hall 1996b); the meanings of both race and ethnicity are never static. Making assumptions based on well-worn definitions and attempting to fix identities misses the point that how 'they' can be defined at any one time and place is dependent on the unique coordinates in operation; it depends on the 'us' as well as the 'them' axes. The meaning of 'otherness' changes with social context over time, shaped by political ideologies and shifting regimes of social and scientific thought. A notable shift is the change from more essentialist views of race based on biological determinants to a politics of identity based upon cultural differences. Nevertheless, the focus on culture may merely provide a disguise which masks a more intractable unreconstructed racism. For example in the way that the more acceptably cultural term 'ethnicity' is regularly drawn back towards more primordial biological origins as another synonym for race.

'Who are you?' 'How would you describe yourself?' Answers to these questions are politically charged and to address them means considering the 'givens' of identity. Concepts of 'race' and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, citizenship and nation are discussed along with the attendant problems and sensitivities surrounding the categorisation of identity that arise when the state attempts to record these details. Are these rational, essential differences or 'socially imagined'? The evolving social sciences have been far from neutral in this process of categorisation, and their role will be highlighted here. A brief history of the development of terms and conceptions of the 'other' will be included, drawing on the work of Brackette Williams, Stuart Hall, Theo Goldberg and others. The UK and US censuses are a case in point – recent changes reflect progress made and the more fine-grained recognition of categories. One example in the UK is the use of terms such as 'Arab' that are not merely linked to linguistic communities; many groups of people who speak Arabic may dis-identify with the term and its legacy of ethnic connotations. Similarly, for the first time in 2011 a category has been included for Travellers and Irish Travellers. Research into this change suggested that people felt gratified that the category was recognised.

Imagery is used to demonstrate the accumulation of values that constitute the spectacle of race on which western nations were founded. Drawing from popular nineteenth-century natural histories such as *Goldsmith's Animated Nature* and Baron Cuvier's *The Animal Kingdom*, and twentieth-century works such as Hammerton's *People of All Nations* (1933), the first two chapters discuss the

construction of the 'other'. By examining the discourses that have constituted such images it is possible to open a window onto the jingoism, racism and fascination with diversity reflected in these popular ethnographies.

Chapter 3 provides some illustrative examples from the history of colonialism, the legacy of which has so moulded contemporary ethnic relations. Through the re-examination of histories of colonialism comparisons are drawn between several nations and their construction of the colonial subject. Also considered here is the infra-human treatment of the colonial subject and the need to come to terms with histories that have been disguised, revised or simply ignored. Several examples of colonialism in action are recalled and the long-term consequences of regimes which sometimes treated local people ruthlessly are examined; such aspects witness the complex interplay of race and class in the founding of hierarchical systems. Among other narratives, eyewitness accounts, including descriptions relating to 1940s British Guiana,[3] are included here because they reveal the harsh outcomes possible under colonial systems of rule that rely on racial and class-related beliefs to maintain their dominance. The colonial impact is not just on the bodies of its subjects but on their minds, through the divisive internalisation of colonial values (as Du Bois and Fanon have eloquently explained). Finally, the chapter considers forms of neo-colonialism which operate today through the perpetuation of the relations of exploitation and domination by global economic structures.

Chapter 4 reviews a number of theories that have sought to give explanations for ethnic divisions, including various Marxist-inspired viewpoints, neo-Weberian and feminist strands of theory and post-structuralist ideas. It becomes increasingly clear that 'race' and racism are the result of social and political discourses that change between times and places. Theories, when they compete for a universal explanation of 'race' and the dynamics of racism, show their weaknesses all too quickly. Perhaps it is more realistic, as John Rex stated, to consider that:

> The study of race relations, in common with a number of other politically charged areas in social sciences, seems beset by feuds and conflicts of a quite theological intensity. Thus such approaches as plural society theory, socio- biology, Marxism, Weberianism, the anthropological theory of ethnicity and psychological theories of identity all seem to be making imperialist demands to command the whole field to the exclusion of all other theories. ... Closer investigation of these theories, however, reveals that they are in large measure complementary.
> (Rex 1986: 64)

While a synthetic approach that merely cuts together disparate explanations may not necessarily give greater insight, Rex's willingness to remain open to the value of different theories may be valuable in assessing their relative adequacy as explanations of unique expressions of ethnic identity and racism.

Racism, and its forms, causes and consequences, is discussed here as a phenom-
enon occurring at all levels of society, from the undermining experience of many vis-
ibly different minorities characterised by infrequent but regular verbal assaults using
derogatory terms and stereotypes but often defended as jokes or off-hand remarks,
to violent and organised abuses and incidents of institutional racism that have been
identified in education, health care, the legal system, media reporting, employment
practices and policing. However, apart from these institutional forms of discrimina-
tion, it can be argued that racism is implicit in our conceptions and structures of
difference. Miles argues that 'race' and 'race relations' are invalid terms that merely
perpetuate the hegemony of racist culture (Miles 1989). One of the concerns here is
how far race or ethnicity could constitute a primary site of social division and a genu-
ine category for critical social analyses. Is race a strictly instrumental category derived
from the economic base and relations of production? Or is it instead a category with
semi- or complete autonomy from other determinants of inequality, such as class?

This chapter also looks at the 'dual burden' of oppression experienced by
women within ethnic groups. Black feminism has drawn attention to the intersec-
tion of gender and race and to quite different forms of oppression and resistance
experienced by black women to those emphasised by white middle-class feminists.
Implicit in this fragmentary vision of the self as competing voices of difference is a
recognition of the complex intersectional construction of identity, and of what has
been termed identity politics.

Chapter 4 goes on to consider the social-constructionist viewpoint that discourses
or discursive practices play a significant role in constructing race and ethnicity. This
is achieved through a variety of disciplinary and institutional structures that define
the borders of social consensus and difference. The term 'discourse' has come to
mean a broad disciplinary field and its uses of language. For example, anthropol-
ogy, psychiatry and economics constitute regimes of thought, make claims to truth
and impose their schemes of classification upon the social world. This approach has
been heavily influenced by the so-called 'linguistic turn' in philosophy and social
theory. Especially influential in this discussion is the work of Foucault, Pecheux
and others. However, the chapter focuses on the work of theorists who have effec-
tively applied the approach to studies of racial and ethnic 'others'. Stephen Muecke,
for example, has shown how entire ethnic groups of Aboriginal Australians have
been positioned by restricted categories of discourse.

The chapter finishes with a discussion of Bourdieu's contribution to the empiri-
cal understanding of social relations of difference. By examining the homogenous
conditions through which habitus is formed, and the use of forms of capital in
specific fields a complex understanding of the individual emerges, suggesting that
race and ethnicity influence the manner and power of class effects.

While Chapter 4 introduces the increasing fragmentation and syntheticism of
theories of race and ethnicity, Chapter 5 specifically addresses postmodern and
post-colonial readings of ethnicity that highlight how avoiding essentialist and

universalising views of the 'other' in favour of specific localised subjects can have the uneasy consequence of developing an uncritical acceptance of relativism at any price. However, the complexity and fragmentation of these postmodern analyses more closely mirrors the complex and hybrid forms of ethnic identities. It is in just this way, perhaps, that the diasporic identities of Filipino guest workers in Arab states seem a case in point. There are not so much clear roots and genealogies as fractured experiences of different homes and the gradual emergence of new hybrid identities which might still retain memories of 'home', albeit the home territory has meanwhile changed at a pace that has no mercy for stranded expatriots.

Following on from the previous chapter, post-colonial feminist critiques are discussed in Chapter 5. Portrayals of Asian women are, as Yegenoglu (1998) suggests, instrumental, if not pivotal, in the maintenance of western cultural hegemony. Asian women are portrayed as passive and exploited, subject to a culture presented as backward, while, in contrast, women in the west enjoy a growing independence – a situation, Yegenoglu argues, that merely helps to reinforce the myth of Orientalism. The chapter also examines traditional leftist criticisms of identity politics, which are seen as an obstacle to socialist ideals. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of Critical Race Theory, suggesting that despite the abiding problems shared by postcolonial theorising of relativism, subjectivism, and reduction to processes of signification, CRT has some salutary qualities, reminding us that changes which appear to be progressive and empowering often have more to do with maintaining the power of white elites while giving displays of liberal-mindedness.

Chapter 6 focuses on the situation of indigenous ethnicity with one multi-faceted case study. Based on research in Darwin in northern Australia, the chapter highlights the realities of life in an urban Aboriginal community on the fringes of white Australia's monocultural affluence; it considers the consequences of the historical exclusionary treatment of Aborigines and modern-day discourses that show the persistence and function of white Australian attitudes. At the end of the chapter the case is further analysed through the prism of several theoretical approaches. This is intended to provide the student with a case to consider from a variety of different theoretical positions. Aside from direct ethnographic research (with all its attendant problems) and the theoretical paradigms that can be used to examine and explain the situation in Australia, the representation of indigenous Australians provides a sort of 'indirect ethnography' (Harper 2005: 748; Spencer 2011) revealing the popular views manifest in different cultural forms. This approach, broadly semiotic and discursive, is at the heart of the approach pursued in this book. The point is not merely to look at the semiotic terrain in a distant and aridly formalist manner, but to ground this analysis in social realities and combine the poetics of meaning with the politics of experience and dynamic change.

Building on the theoretical discussions of the previous chapters, Chapter 7 explores conflict in ethnically divided societies. One intention is to show that imagery, stereotypes and other popular representations embody ingrained political

differences and are employed situationally. Some examples are given of tensions within multicultural societies, changes and threats to the orthodoxy of social meanings and the struggle for symbolic dominance between groupings in ethnically divided post-colonial nations. The chapter will draw upon research into cases of bipolar ethnic relations in Guyana as well as similar rivalries in Malaysia.

In reference again to the Filipinos described at the head of this Introduction, at the time of writing the Philippine government had reached a framework peace agreement with the largest Muslim rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which has been fighting for an Islamic state in the southern Philippines region of Mindanao for several decades. The settlement is likely to grant this Islamic faction a separate status and territory (BBC News, 7 October 2012; Philippines profile www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-15581450). Thus, the Filipinos in the opening vignette represent just one entangled story of identification and division. Many nations experience complex ethnic divisions and conflicts, struggles to break away from or claw back majority perceptions relating to religion, language, region, politics and history; societies are stratified economically and socially along lines of class and caste that are often linked intersectionally with ethnicity.

Certainly, ethnicity does generally describe groups with a shared identity and shared origins, interests and codes, but, just as with class, where there is a tension between the concepts of a 'class in itself' and a 'class for itself' (where the latter represents class consciousness), ethnicity has both internal and external definitions. Individuals belonging to the dominant culture may find it unnecessary and peculiar to consider *themselves* an ethnic group, yet officialdom readily monitors and catalogues ethnic distinctiveness within 'ethnic minorities'. This is an example of the process of delineating ethnicity as an external phenomenon. (The example of the exnominated[3] nature of 'whiteness' is used as a case in point here.) Conversely, the internal definition of a group as united by common culture, language, beliefs and aspirations may draw boundaries in quite a different fashion. The chapter explores the way that internal and external ethnic boundaries are drawn and reviews key areas of theory used to explain the dynamics of ethnic divisions. The examination of boundaries and their constant drawing and redrawing is of fundamental importance to issues of 'race' and 'ethnicity'. These should be considered as terms indicative of change and fluidity rather than of fixed or static identities. Racial or ethnic boundaries are subject to periodic softening or hardening, blurring or sharpening of emphasis. These boundaries are not only structures of state power and legislation or geographical or political lines drawn on a map to delineate territorial rights: they are part of the internal landscape of people living on either side of ethnic boundaries. 'Boundaries define the borders of nations and territories as well as the imaginations of minds and communities' (Cottle 2000: 2).

One primary intention of this text is to demonstrate in several unique global contexts these processes of racialisation and boundary-drawing and the cultural content (those shared meanings of ethnic identities) as well as the interactive contexts