A THEORY OF INTERGROUP ANTAGONISM

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by
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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this paper is to present a macro-structural theory predicting which groups in a society will be antagonistic towards which other groups, with an eventual aim of understanding why certain societies experience one type of antagonism, while other, apparently similar societies do not. Drawing on many methods of interpreting conflict, the theory argues that intergroup antagonism is caused by a threat that is generated by a change in the level of interaction or stratification within the society. Interaction and stratification also predict the groups involved in antagonistic behavior.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Judith Rosenstein is a graduate student in the sociology department at Cornell University in the Center for the Study of Inequality. She graduated from the University of Michigan with a bachelor’s degree in sociology and mathematics.
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INTRODUCTION TO INTERGROUP ANTAGONISM

Researchers have been interested in intergroup antagonism, in one form or another, for many years. At their best, these analyses cover only a portion of the types and manifestations of intergroup antagonism, while leaving the remaining unaccounted for. Studies of intergroup antagonism frequently take one of three approaches (see table 1): attitudinal analyses that examine such phenomenon as prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Feagin 1991; Feagin and Eckberg 1980; Pettigrew 1998; Quillian 1995); group-specific analyses that are restricted to certain groups or types of groups, including examinations of ethnic competition (e.g., Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Horowitz 1985; Olzak 1986; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Olzak, Shanahan and McEneaney 1996), antisemitism (e.g., Chesler 2003; Zukier 1996), heterosexism (e.g., Herek et al. 1997), nationalism (e.g., Hage 1998); racism and ethnocentrism (e.g., Fredrickson 2002); and xenophobia (e.g., Chalmers 1965; Krueger and Pischke 1997); and act-specific analyses that focus on expressions or manifestations of antagonism such as collective violence (e.g., Pitcher, Hamblin and Miller 1978), “hate crimes” (e.g., Aronowitz 1994; Glaser, Dixit and Green 2002; Levin and McDevitt 1993), church burnings (e.g., Fumetio 1996), lynchings (e.g., Beck and Tolnay 1990; Reed 1972; Stovel 2001), and rioting and civil disorders (e.g., Berk and Aldrich 1972; Boskin 1976; Olzak, Shanahan and McEneaney 1996; Spilerman 1976). In contrast, theoretical models of conflict (e.g., Bonacich 1972; 1973; Smelser 1963) attempt to explain the emergence of conflict between two groups, without specifying the type of conflict or the groups involved. The latter theoretical models come closest to covering all three aspects of intergroup antagonism, but even they are limited in scope. This
Table 1: Overview of intergroup antagonism studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDY TYPES</th>
<th>Attitudinal</th>
<th>Group Specific</th>
<th>Act Specific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>(Blalock 1957; Feagin 1991; Feagin and Eckberg 1980)</td>
<td>Antisemitism</td>
<td>(Pitcher, Hamblin and Miller 1978)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexism</td>
<td>“Hate Crime”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Herek et al. 1997)</td>
<td>(Aronowitz 1994; Glaser, Dixit and Green 2002; Grattet, Jenness and Curry 1998; Green, Abelson and Garnett 1999; Green, Glaser and Rich 1998; Green, McFall and Smith 2001; Jenness and Grattet 2001; Levin and McDevitt 1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>Church Burning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Hage 1998)</td>
<td>(Fumento 1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Racism/Ethnocentrism</td>
<td>Lynching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Fredrickson 2002)</td>
<td>(Beck and Tolnay 1990; Reed 1972; Stovel 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Xenophobia</td>
<td>Rioting/Civil Disorders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
study attempts to provide a comprehensive theory that encompasses virtually all types and manifestations of intergroup antagonism occurring within a society, as well as predicts which groups will be hostile to each other.

The word “antagonism” was chosen because it encompasses all levels of intergroup conflict and allows for the conflict to be mutual rather than one-sided (Bonacich 1972; Wilson 1980). The latter point is particularly important when dealing with antagonism between two groups of which neither is the dominant group in the society. Antagonism covers the spectrum of hostility including prejudice (Feagin 1991; Feagin and Eckberg 1980; Pettigrew 1998; Quillian 1995), nonviolent acts of intimidation such as spreading propaganda and vandalism (ADL 2001; 2002; Bund 2000; EUMC 2000; 2002), violent acts against an individual (Green, Abelson and Garnett 1999; Herek et al. 1997; Perry 2001), and large scale ethnic violence such as that seen in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia (Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Fearon and Laitin 2000).

For the purpose of this analysis, the term “intergroup antagonism” is defined to include all forms of antagonism between multiple groups, without restriction on the relationship between the groups involved. For the most part, intergroup antagonism occurs between two or more groups of the same type (i.e., an ethnic group versus another ethnic group); however, one of the benefits of this definition is that it allows for antagonism to be between two or more groups of different types (i.e., an ethnic group versus a religious group). This type of antagonism is rare, although it does occur, as seen with the hostilities between blacks and Jews\(^1\) (Friedman 1995; Perry 2001).

\(^1\) Although it is often argued that Jews are a racial group, not a religious one (Chesler 2003; Friedman 1995)
The theory presented here builds on the most widely used theories of conflict, and has as its first theoretical premise that in a social system intergroup antagonism is sparked by a threat. In this context, a threat is anything which could undermine an individual or group’s well-being, whether economically, politically, socially, culturally, or psychologically. Given this, the second premise is that the groups in conflict can be predicted by the types of stratification and the levels of group interaction within the society. Furthermore, knowledge of these aspects of a society’s social structure enables the prediction of which types of conflict will be the most severe and which groups are the most likely to be victimized by which other groups.

The first section of the paper provides an overview of the dominant theoretical approaches to intergroup antagonism. Considering that each approach was developed to explain only or two types of intergroup antagonism, it is not surprising that none of the theories are able to explain all, or even most, forms of the phenomena. By combining these theories, it is possible to create a theory that better explains intergroup antagonism, while simultaneously addressing many of the problems inherent in each individual approach. The second portion of the paper introduces stratification and group interaction as core components of the theory. Neither stratification nor group interaction is new to the discussion of intergroup antagonism; however, they have yet to be examined together, so the association between them has not been explored.

APPROACHES TO INTERGROUP ANTAGONISM

A plethora of theories have been used to explain intergroup antagonism or an aspect of intergroup antagonism. Some of the most commonly cited approaches include psychological and social psychological arguments (e.g., Banton 1983; Green, McFalls and Smith 2001; Green, Strolovitch and Wong 1998; Perry 2001); ecological
theories (e.g., Banton 1983; Olzak 1992), including economic models (e.g., Bonacich 1972; 1973); cultural pluralism (e.g., Banton 1983; Horowitz 1985; Young 1986); and the modernization based arguments of diffusion (e.g., Horowitz 1985) and internal colonialism (e.g., Hechter 1975) (see table 2). Individually, each of these approaches provides insight into the phenomenon of intergroup antagonism; however, when taken together, they offer a more comprehensive understanding of intergroup antagonism and yield broader implications.

Table 2: Theoretical approaches to intergroup antagonism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Cause of Conflict</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Direction of Antagonism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Pluralism</td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>- - -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Migration</td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Mutual, or Dominant to subordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Mutual, Dominant to subordinate, or subordinate to dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernization</td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Subordinate to dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Colonialism</td>
<td>Subordination (exploitation)</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Subordinate to dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>Frustration (threat)</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Dominant to subordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Psychological</td>
<td>Group pressure (threat)</td>
<td>Small group</td>
<td>Dominant to subordinate, Subordinate to dominant, or subordinate to subordinate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Psychological models are one of the few approaches to intergroup antagonism concerned with explaining why individuals experience and express antagonism towards people of other groups. These models focus on frustration, arguing that some people store their frustration and release it as aggression. The self-perceived victims lash out at the Other, often blaming them for all manner of social and personal problems, such as the state of the economy or the “victim’s” own joblessness. Through displaced aggression (i.e., scapegoating) a person transfers guilt from the responsible but untouchable party to an innocent and powerless party (or projects responsibility to a weaker party when no one person or group is actually responsible). The transfer of responsibility makes the now guilty party accessible and the perceived victim can release his anger at his target (Chesler 2003). Another variant of this approach perceives scapegoating and acts of bias as a means for the perpetrator to increase his self-esteem or his status in the eyes of others (Perry 2001). In both situations, the person constructs the Other as a personal threat to his well-being.

In contrast, social psychological models focus on small group behavior, asserting that the pressure of peer groups and group norms encourages people to behave aggressively towards members of other groups. In these situations, reluctant group members can be convinced to commit acts they would not commit on their own. Participation can be encouraged by denigrating the target groups (often through continuous emphasis of stereotypes and the group’s perceived threat), belittling the reluctant person, and threatening ostracism if the person does not participate (Levin and McDevitt 1993). Whether it is concern about potential action directed at oneself or the threat posed by the target group, some form of perceived threat is often involved in these situations. Social psychological arguments are particularly useful for examining the many acts of bias motivated violence committed by small groups (Levin and McDevitt 1993; 2002). When these arguments are employed, it is often to
explain antagonistic behavior of dominant group members to members of subordinate
groups; however, the protection afforded by acting as part of a group allows for the
possibility of antagonism of a subordinate group directed towards the dominant group,
or a subordinate group to another subordinate group. An additional strength of
arguments of this type is that they explicitly highlight the potential role of the media
and political elites in intentionally or unintentionally encouraging acts of bias. The
media participates by disseminating and legitimating prejudicial ideas and
encouraging future acts through the publicity given by the reporting of bias motivated
incidents (Green, McFalls and Smith 2001; Woolf and Hulsizer 2002-2003), while
political elites can “[attribute] blame and [foment] public resentment towards
minorities” (Green, Glaser and Rich 1998, p.89).

At the group level, ecological theories focus on the boundaries of group
membership and how these boundaries respond to interaction with other groups. One
characteristic of these models is the impact of migration, both in the context of
migration into a community and migration into a market (Olzak 1986). Models
centered around economic (i.e., market) interactions are one of the most widely used
approaches to intergroup antagonism, to the extent that their ecological base is often
ignored. Many of these models omit the processes the brings group into contact,
instead focusing on the nature of the relationship between the groups (e.g., Bonacich
1972).

The foundation for economically motivated conflict is the assumption that a
group will strive to protect its economic interests, particularly in the labor market.
When these interests are threatened, the group will respond by “attacking” the group
posing the threat. Attacks can take a variety of forms including violent action, legal
proceedings, and exclusionary business practices (Banton 1983; Bonacich 1972; 1973;
Wallimann 1984). The purely economic approach has been expanded to include
socio-political factors such as political competition (Jacobs and Wood 1999; Olzak 1992; Perry 2001) and competition for social resources like parks and public services (Banton 1983; Wilson 1980). Other forms of social competition, such as that for mates, are not subsumed under this approach. One of the strengths of this argument is that it allows for antagonism that is mutual, dominant to subordinate, and subordinate to dominant; furthermore, it is sufficiently flexible so that it can be expanded to cover subordinate to subordinate antagonism.

Ecological theories focusing explicitly on migration derive from Darwinian principles of evolution and offer two ways in which conflict can emerge. The first is that when a new group enters a region and comes in contact with native groups, conflict over resources can result. Alternatively, when the groups come into contact they may realize that they have different skills, which leads to the development of a social hierarchy and a division of labor.² In this context, prejudice emerges as a mechanism for the dominant group to protect its interests (Banton 1983). Like economic models, migration models encompass mutual antagonism, although they are not sufficiently broad so as to include subordinate to dominant and subordinate to subordinate antagonism.

Unlike ecological models, cultural pluralist theories of conflict focus on the importance of cultural differences between groups, with the premise that when a society contains groups with different sets of values, there will be disagreement and conflict (Horowitz 1985). Young (1986) presents this phenomenon as akin to class conflict, except along ethnic lines. According to one proponent of cultural pluralist

² Theoretically, a social hierarchy can already exist, but become particularly relevant as migration increase group contact. This is the situation discussed by Green and colleagues (1998) when conflict resulted from blacks entering predominantly white neighborhoods.
theories of conflict, stability in a society containing groups with highly divergent cultures and values requires that one group must be subordinate to the other. It is important to recognize that in this context, unlike that of internal colonialism discussed later, stratification leads to stability, while interaction leads to conflict. Regardless of whether there is subordination, intergroup contact is most effectively minimized by the institutionalized separation of groups within the society\(^3\) (Banton 1983; Horowitz 1985). Although institutionalized separation is now rare in the modern world, non-institutionalized separation is common. As such, aspects of cultural pluralist theory are applicable to instances of conflict emerging from the influx of one group into a community previously dominated by another group.

Modernization theories, another set of group level models, assert that it is the process of industrialization produces conflict between groups in a society. There are two approaches to the modernization argument: diffusion and internal colonialism. Diffusion posits that modernization produces interaction which leads to conflict, while internal colonialism asserts that modernization produces stratification, which in turn generates conflict. In both case, a subordinate group is antagonistic to the dominant group. More precisely, diffusion contends that the process of modernization brings groups into contact, which previously had minimal to no interaction. Furthermore, not only do the groups tend to be unequal, but they also often compete for goods and resources. For the lower status group, this competition can engender feelings of insecurity, which can cause them to return to the relative security of their own group. The use of the groups for emotional support fosters tribalism, which only increases levels of intergroup hostility. Over time and with continual interaction the subordinate

\(^3\) This differs from conceptions of cultural pluralism not focused on conflict, where institutionalized group separation is not a fundamental characteristic (Gordon 1964).
group will adopt the norms, culture, and beliefs of the dominant group. Eventually the
groups become indistinguishable (i.e., assimilation occurs) and intergroup antagonism
dissolves. This perspective primarily applies to regions undergoing the transformation
from traditional societies to modern ones, and therefore has less application for
developed nations  
(Hechter 1975; Horowitz 1985).

Although diffusion models avow that through interaction the saliency of ethnic
identities will diminish and ethnic antagonism will disappear, this is not always the
case. Internal colonialism attempts to explain the persistence of ethnic antagonism in
modern societies. The theory posits that industrialization often disproportionately
benefits one group and facilitates the emergence of a power differential. The group in
power earmarks the most desirable jobs and resources for itself, thereby creating a
systemic division of labor along ethnic lines. Together, the power differential and
division of labor promote the strengthening of existing ethnic identities or the
formation of new ones. The subordinate group’s discontent with their inferior political
and economic position generates hostility towards the dominant group. In this theory,
unlike cultural pluralism, stratification (subordination) leads to conflict (Hechter
1975).

As should by now be apparent, the individual approaches to intergroup
antagonism have unique and valuable strengths, but conflicting theoretical premises
that cannot be easily reconciled. Before formulating an alternative approach, it is

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4 Potentially more applicable are theories focusing on a society’s transition from an industrial economy
to a postindustrial economy. Rydgen (2002) argues that this transition is partly responsible for the
emergence and persistence of extreme rightwing populist political parties in Western Europe, which
have ethno-nationalism and xenophobic based platforms. I have yet to see this type of argument
applied to intergroup antagonism outside of this context.
worth emphasizing the latter point with two illustrations. The first set of examples given provides instances of antagonism not covered by theories of resource based competition, while the second highlights the importance of not restricting the direction of conflict.

Ecological and modernization theories both stress that competition for resources is an important trigger for intergroup antagonism; however they do not account for non-competition based antagonism. One example is crimes against people perceived to be gay, lesbian, bi- or transsexual (Herek et al. 1997; Perry 2001). Gay and straight men are not in competition over sexual partners, nor is there reason to assume competition in the labor market or over economic resources, thus competition does not explain the animosity. The hostile reactions sometimes seen to the integration of white neighborhoods provide another example (Green, Abelson and Garnett 1999; Green, Strolovitch and Wong 1998; Levin and McDevitt 1993). Outside of poor communities, residents are not in competition for resources, scarce or otherwise; therefore the competition argument does not seem appropriate. Then there is the rash of anti-Semitic incidents in Europe that followed the start of the second intifada in 2000. In France, authorities reported that attacks on Jews in the street and places of Jewish worship were perpetrated by young Muslim immigrants (AJC 2002; EUMC 2000; Samuels and Knobel 2002). Jews pose no more competition to Muslim youths in France than do Christians and other religious groups. If we accept the argument that this antagonism is the result of conflict, then we would expect to witness comparable attacks against other religious groups. Since other religious groups have not been attacked (Waintrater 2003), competition does not appear to provide an adequate explanation. In addition to the previous examples, participants in intergroup violence often provide rationales that do not fit in the competition framework, such as threats of miscegenation (Glaser, Dixit and Green 2002).
Similarly, the majority of models discussed emphasize the importance of a power differential between the groups in conflict. Although there are many situations in which antagonism emerges between groups of unequal power, there are also situations where antagonism flares between groups of relatively equal power. The long history of racial inequality in the U.S. makes a power differential relevant when examining relations between blacks and whites; however, it does not appear to provide much insight into the often strained relationship between blacks and Koreans (Perry 2001). Furthermore, there are situations, such as interracial relationships (Friedman 1995; Glaser, Dixit and Green 2002) and same-sex relationships (Herek et al. 1997; Perry 2001) that can spark conflict but do not involve power relations.

THEORY RECONCILIATION

Given the vast disparities between the various theories it appears that they are difficult to reconcile; however, looking at the second column of table 2, it becomes apparent that across the seven theoretical approaches there are only three distinct causes of conflict. The cultural pluralist, ecological, and diffusion models all stress the importance of interaction in bringing groups into conflict, while the internal colonialist model argues that subordination or stratification leads to conflict. Finally, the economic, psychological, and social psychological models all in some way highlight the importance of threat in producing conflict. The foundation of the theory presented here is that intergroup antagonism is generated by a threat, although it may be perpetuated by a desire for retribution or revenge. Together, a society’s level of interaction and type of stratification define which groups will be threatened and which groups will be threatening.

Even though it may appear that this approach minimizes the importance of interaction and stratification, particularly in contrast with earlier theories, this is not
the case. In fact, these earlier theories incorporate threat as an intermediary, often unspecified, mechanism. Consider first, interaction theories. Cultural pluralism and diffusion models assert that when groups with different cultures and values interact, there will be conflict. Why, because the Other poses a threat to the group’s culture, values, and resources. Exposure to a new culture and set of values means that the old ones may change, which is a threat to the group’s identity and possibly their existence. With migration models, groups compete for their very survival, while in economic models they compete for needed resources. In both ecological models, the Other is a threat to the group’s well-being. Similarly, with internal colonialism, the one stratification based model discussed, differential power and a division of labor lead subordinate groups to be antagonistic towards the dominant group, because the dominant group’s control threatens the well-being of the subordinate group, as well as demeaning (i.e., threatens the self-esteem of its members).

For purposes of the argument presented here, stratification will refer to the existence of hierarchical levels or strata within a society. Some societies have many different strata, while theoretically, others could have none. For current purposes, stratification will be defined as difference across groups with respect to resources such as wealth, power, prestige, ancestry and honor. The forms of stratification present in a society are dependent on that society. For instance, in both capitalist and communist societies, wealth is the main resource of interest, while in an aristocracy ancestry is arguably as important as wealth in distinguishing strata. The amount of meaning invested in these levels is again society-dependent. The level of rigidity can also vary, so that in some systems a person can move up or down (Featherman and Hauser 2001; Gottschalk 2001; Mosca 2001), while in other systems people cannot leave the level into which they are born (Bonacich 1972; Grusky 2001). Finally, individual societies may have multiple types of stratification, just one, or none.
Group interaction, especially civil interaction (i.e., interaction outside the workplace) is the second factor of interest in building a model of intergroup antagonism. At one extreme is a completely segregated society in which there is no interaction between groups, while at the other end of the spectrum is a society with high group interaction. Within a society there may be high interaction with respect to one type of group (i.e., religion) while minimal interaction with respect to another (i.e., race). In a society with minimal group interaction, cliques will tend to be homophilous with respect to group membership; whereas in societies with complete group interaction, clique membership will reflect the composition of the society. In a society in which there is no interaction, there is no potential for antagonism beyond prejudice. Furthermore, without contact, there is no basis for a threat to exist. When groups are in contact, group membership can become a basis for treatment. For instance, people may treat members of their in-group better than members of the out-group; alternatively, one group may receive preferential treatment from both in-group and out-group members.

MAPPING SOCIAL SYSTEMS

Stratification and interaction are both characteristics of societies and together can form the social system “state space”, where societies can be classified based on their levels of stratification and amount of group interaction. Assessing the association of different societies with respect to these traits enables the comparison of these societies. Representing the relationship graphically facilitates the grouping of similar associations and can help ascertain why societies that on the surface appear similar exhibit different forms of intergroup antagonism. (see figure 1).

Societies with both high stratification and high interaction are in the upper right quadrant. In these societies, there is a clear and meaningful distinction between
those at the top of the stratification system and those at the bottom; even so, members of different strata interact frequently outside the workplace. Consider an aristocracy, where the society is stratified by ancestry, such that people with the proper breeding live in expensive houses, receive better than average medical treatment, and have the option, rather than the necessity, of employment. Yet since this society also has high interaction, members of the aristocracy will regularly have primary relationships (e.g., close friendships, marriages, etc.) with commoners, they will also eat at the same restaurants, and attend the same events.

![Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 1:** Relationship between different types of societies with respect to interaction and stratification
The lower right corner of the figure contains societies with low levels of stratification and high levels of cross-group interaction. An example of a society in this quadrant is one in which people espouse beliefs that diversity provides strength and that there are benefits obtained through interaction with those who are different. Highlighting the values of each group decreases ideas about one group’s superiority or inferiority. As a result, the society will contain different groups, but there will be minimal ranking of groups, and as a result the society will have lower levels of stratification. Such a society could be labeled “multi-culturalist”.

In contrast, a highly stratified society with low group interaction (upper left quadrant) could be a colonialist, caste-based, or slavery society. In all of these societies there is significant separation between the group at the top and the group at the bottom of the social hierarchy. None of these systems can occur unless the society is highly stratified so as to have clear distinctions between the groups at the top and the bottom. Such distinctions are apparent when there is a phenotypic difference between groups or when groups with the same phenotypes show group affiliation through styles of dress, branding, language, and other non-ascriptive characteristics (Horowitz 1985). Slave societies are placed in this quadrant because while interaction between slaves and free people occurs in the “workplace”, social interaction across groups is minimal.

Finally, a system with low stratification and low interaction (lower left quadrant) is uncommon in modern western societies. Tribalism is one society type that could fit in this quadrant if, for instance, the tribe is split along gender lines. In such a community, women may gather and prepare food and care for children, while men hunt and prepare meat. The responsibilities may be so strictly divided that it is impermissible for someone to participate in tasks of the other sex. Furthermore, there may be rituals restricted to members of one sex and forbidden to members of the
other. Although interaction between the sexes is limited to specific situations, one sex is not grossly superior to the other and both are equally necessary for the group’s survival.

An individual society may fit multiple places on the map if it treats different types of groups differently. The United States provides a good example (figure 2). Although religious groups are well integrated in the U.S., there is some stratification. First, while major religions are treated relatively equally, cults and Satan worshippers are not highly regarded and do not receive equal treatment. Second, even though religious groups are integrated, the U.S. has a strong heritage of Judeo-Christian morality and has institutionalized the observance of Christian holy days, such as the Sunday Sabbath\(^5\) (e.g., no mail delivery, blue laws, etc.), and Christmas (e.g., no mail delivery, closure of government office buildings, etc.). Evidence of stratification is also seen by the fact that there are and have been discussions of religion surrounding the candidacy of individuals for elected office, particularly John F. Kennedy as the first Catholic president and Joseph Lieberman as a Jewish presidential candidate. However, in areas with multiple religious groups individuals from different religious groups routinely interact and socialize, so religious groups can be characterized as having high interaction. This characterization of the United State’s treatment of religious groups, places the country in the lower right quadrant. Nevertheless, there is one dimension of integration which religious groups have yet to fully embrace and that is intermarriage (Fishkoff 2002). For instance, many Jewish leaders are concerned about the loss of members that are evidenced by and result from intermarriage (Fishkoff 2002; Harris 2002). Even so, the current rate of Jews marrying gentiles is only 47%, which is significantly lower than would be expected from random

\(^5\) Jews and Muslims celebrate Sabbath on Saturday.
interaction, since Jews comprise less than two percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau 2001; UJC 2003).

Figure 2: Position of the United States with respect to interaction and stratification

In contrast, with regards to race and ethnicity, the U.S. is moving from a highly segregated and stratified society to a more integrated and less stratified one. Racial integration is not as complete as religious integration. Over the course of U.S. history, the country has moved from allowing slavery, to Jim Crow laws and legal segregation, to the prohibition of unequal treatment on the basis of race or ethnicity. Blacks and whites now interact regularly and relatively equally in the public sphere, although social interaction is still not as common; housing segregation is slowly declining (Charles 2003; Massey and Denton 1993); and although rare, intermarriage is becoming more frequent (Sandefur et al. 2001). Today, whites still control more wealth (Oliver and Shapiro 1997; 2001), have higher earnings, and higher educations
than blacks (Blank 2001). That discrimination (an indicator of stratification) persists is illustrated by a recent study which found that white job applicants are more likely than black job applicants to receive call-backs (Pager 2003). In contrast, the disparities between whites and other racial and ethnic groups are not as great. Asians have higher median family incomes and educational attainment than whites (Blank 2001), and more than 45% of Asians marry non-Asians (in contrast to less than five percent of blacks who marry non-blacks) (Qian 1997). This illustrates that racial stratification is declining, albeit slowly, while interaction is increasing.

The upper right quadrant into which race relations are moving contains gender relations. Interaction between the genders is more frequent than interaction between ethnic groups, the most obvious difference being that males and females live together throughout their lives, with the exceptions of relatively brief periods of separation (e.g., summer camp, college dorms, etc.). Neighborhoods are fully integrated from the household, to the grocery store, to the playground. Also, as more women have entered the workforce interaction there is becoming more frequent. Even so, many jobs are still dominated by one gender or the other, resulting in minimal opposite sex interaction among members of these occupations. Although declining, there remains significant stratification by gender. Persisting gender differences in the labor force and the family have contributed to a power differential. Until recently, men have controlled household incomes as the primary earner, as well as domestic and international policy, dramatically influencing not only their lives, but those of women as well. Politically and socially dramatic strides have been made to balance the distribution of power; however as of 2003 only fourteen percent of House and Senate seats were held by women (CAWP 2003). Overall, gender stratification is decreasing, while interaction is increasing.
Finally, with sexuality the United States government permits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Without equal legal protection, people who are not heterosexual are treated as second-class citizens. The “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy of the U.S. military, which allows people of same-sex orientations to be discharged, is a clear example of stratification on the basis of sexual orientation. Legalized discrimination also encourages group separation by allowing the groups to be kept apart artificially through housing segregation and the absence of on-the-job interaction.\(^6\) There is also the controversial topic of marriage between members of the same sex. Ohio recently passed into law a bill banning gay marriage and denying benefits to unmarried partners of either sex, making it the 38\(^{th}\) state refusing to recognize same-sex marriages (CNN 2004). Furthermore, gay jokes are still considered acceptable in some groups and children on the playground routinely use derogatory terms such as “fag” and “queer” to insult their companions. That similar racial comments and discriminatory behavior are no longer acceptable indicates that there is less stratification on the basis of race than sexual orientation.\(^7\) There is compelling evidence that stratification is declining, including the addition of five states within the past three years to the ranks of those that have passed laws banning

\(^6\) As of August of 2003, only 14 states have laws banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation: California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin. Minnesota, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and California (as of January 1, 2004) also ban discrimination on the basis of gender identity. In Oregon discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is banned under the law prohibiting sex discrimination in the workplace (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force 2003a).

\(^7\) Recall that discrimination is an indicator of stratification.
discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. There are also the 2003 Supreme Court rulings overturning some state laws prohibiting sexual activities between members of the same sex. Before the rulings, thirteen states had anti-sodomy laws; now, none do (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force 2003b). The amount of interaction between people of same-sex and opposite-sex sexual orientation varies, although it is probably more frequent than interracial interaction. Social interaction is often greatest before a person declares her same-sex sexual orientation. Once she makes her sexual orientation known, she faces the possibility of being ostracized by family, friends, and coworkers. Away from the workplace, with the exception of a few enclaves in large metropolitan areas, housing is integrated (Green et al. 2001). Based on this unequal treatment of people with same sex orientations, the United States can be placed in the map quadrant for separate and unequal.

Another illustration is the comparison of immigration policies in various countries as seen in figure 3. Japan and Germany have a history of highly restrictive immigration policies, to the extent that in Japan no foreign national may obtain citizenship (Simon and Lynch 1999). Germany has a history of only admitting people who are ethnic Germans returning to the homeland or those needed to meet labor demands, with laws such that these laborers could be deported at any time when jobs grew scarce (Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Kurthen and Hermann 1995; Simon and Lynch 1999). In recent years Germany has begun to ease regulations by granting citizenship to children born in the country to non-German citizens (if they have lived in Germany for eight or more years), allowing more unlimited residence permits, and easing naturalization requirements (Bloemraad 2000; Kurthen and Hermann 1995).

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These hierarchical policies that allowed insiders in while keeping outsiders out are in sharp contrast to the perceived openness of U.S. policies; even so, the three immigrant nations, the U.S., Canada, and Australia, have placed restrictions on immigration. Each country restricts the number of immigrants per year and gives preference to family reunification, followed by economic contribution, and refugee status. The U.S. also has preferences for immigrants from countries that once contributed a large number of immigrants (e.g., Western Europe). France and the United Kingdom are somewhere in between the two extremes permitting immigration from selected areas and for family reunification (Simon and Lynch 1999). As Bloemraad (2000) notes, immigration policies in Europe and other Western countries are beginning to converge.

![Diagram of immigration policies with respect to interaction and stratification](image)

**Figure 3:** Immigration policies with respect to interaction and stratification
Potentially more important for the treatment of immigrants by residents than the actual immigration policies are the attitudes natives hold towards immigration and immigrants. Simon and Lynch (1999) found that in no country they examined “[did] a majority of the citizens have positive feelings about their current cohort of immigrants” (p.458). Treatment of immigrants, however, is a different issue. Freeman (1995) reports that the non-settler societies of Western Europe experience more conflict and violence than do the settler societies. Given this, it might be expected that immigrants to the U.S., Canada, and Australia encounter relatively less hostility than do immigrants to Germany or France, where there are strong feelings of being “true” Germans or French (Kurthen and Hermann 1995; Simon and Lynch 1999).

SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND INTERGROUP ANTAGONISM

The main argument of this paper is that changes in the social structure produce threats which lead to intergroup antagonism (Boskin 1976; Green, Abelson and Garnett 1999; Green, Strolovitch and Wong 1998; Olzak 1992; Olzak, Shanahan and McEneaney 1996). Because the social structure is known, any changes can be monitored, enabling predictions about antagonism. A change in the social structure means a corresponding change in intergroup dynamics, which produces in a group or members of a group the feeling of being threatened. Since the threat is generated by group dynamics, another group is considered to be to blame and intergroup antagonism results. No system is ever in stasis, so there is always some movement and therefore some antagonism. The more pronounced the movement, the more pronounced the antagonism. This is seen time and again through history; for instance during the social revolution in France the lower classes fought the nobility (change along the axis of stratification); while during the U.S. civil rights movement of the
1960s the fight was to eliminate racial segregation (change along the axis of group interaction) (Boskin 1976; Wilson 1980), as well as to increase political representation by obtaining equal access to the vote (change along the axis of stratification) (Morris 1984).

Given the mapping presented in the previous section, there are four cardinal directions of movement in the social state space (high stratification to low stratification, high interaction to low interaction, low stratification to high stratification, and low interaction to high interaction) and four combinations of the primary directions (high to low stratification with high to low interaction, high to low stratification with low to high interaction, etc.). The direction of movement indicates the group types (i.e., religion, ethnicity, etc.) involved in the social change and thereby provides an idea of which group(s) (i.e., Christians, Jews, Muslims, etc.) would feel antagonized by which other group(s). For instance, if the society in question is highly stratified, then movement along the vertical axis indicates that groups in the hierarchy will be involved. The direction of movement (high to low or low to high) indicates whether the dominant group will be hostile to the subordinate group or vice versa. The implications of each direction of change are discussed below.

1. High Stratification towards Low Stratification

When the extent of stratification in a system declines, people at the upper levels fear losing their privileged position. They will lash out at the lower levels for the indignity, the insolence, and the brazenness of it all. The attitude is “how dare they!” and the reaction is to “put them back in their place.” The classic sociological trigger of such a social movement is a Marxist social revolution of the proletariat revolting against the bourgeois. Another example is the attitude of white supremacists towards Jews, Catholics, racial minorities, and homosexuals. White supremacist
groups in the U.S. are predominantly Protestant (Chalmers 1965; Perry 2001). These
groups believe they are the chosen people and that the United States is their country,
and that other racial and religious groups, especially Jews and Catholics, are taking
over. In fact, they call the U.S. government a Zionist Occupied Government, or ZOG
for short (Levin 2002; Perry 2001). To protect their race and ensure its survival, white
supremacists advocate the elimination or separation of non-whites. In her interviews
with female members of white supremacist organizations, more than one spoke to Blee
(2002) about the need to “rid our land of the Jews and isolate them in a country of
their own” (p.90), with similar comments made about racial minorities.

2. Low Stratification towards High Stratification

As the social structure begins to change, the people moving down will become
hostile towards those moving up. The people at the bottom may feel the system is
unfair and that those people moving up are no more worthy than those moving down.
These downward movers will lash out at the upwardly mobile. This is an explanation
for the hostility many blacks feels towards Jews and Koreans. Like blacks, both Jews
and Koreans are minorities who started out at the bottom of the social structure.
However, unlike blacks, both Jews and Koreans have achieved some success and no
longer reside with blacks at the bottom of the social structure (Perry 2001). Another
possible situation is a religiously unstratified society becoming a theocracy. Since this
change will cause the non-dominant religious groups to lose their power, members of
these groups will oppose the emergence of the priestly rulers and work to prevent their
takeover of power.
3. Low Interaction towards High Interaction

In a segregated society, there will be a group (or groups) that fears integration. What specifically is feared may depend on the type of stratification: it may be based on lack of exposure to the other group, or concerns about group purity (Nelson 2002-2003). The group fearful of interaction is the group that will be antagonistic. This occurred in the United States with the end of slavery and the civil rights movement, and persists today (Levin and McDevitt 2002). More explicitly, white attackers have repeatedly claimed that interracial relationships provoked their attacks on blacks (Glaser, Dixit and Green 2002; Levin 2002; Levin and McDevitt 2002). How does miscegenation fit into this framework? Consider a white man living at the bottom of the economic ladder with only his pride in being white to make him feel good about himself. Simply being white, would cause this white man to feel superior to a black man because the black man is not white. But if that black man starts to date a white woman then (according to our white man) the white woman would feel that the black man is superior to white men (otherwise she would be dating a white man). In the white man’s eyes such black superiority is unacceptable and in order to recover his dignity the white man must punish the black man (Perry 2002).

4. High Interaction towards Low Interaction

The shift from high interaction to lower interaction can occur in one of two ways. The first is a situation in which two groups closely interact and then separate. At a macro-level this can occur when a group is integrated into the society and then is forcibly ejected, as happened to German Jews during World War II. At a more micro-level, this can occur when a partnership is dissolved, such as the collapse of the alliance between blacks and Jews towards the end of the civil rights movement (Friedman 1995).
The second situation is when one group splits into two, such as a religious schism or a civil war. At the point when the split occurs, the primary group is threatened by the separating group. The new group’s existence undermines the old group’s authority and validity. If some group members disagree with the primary group enough to separate, then maybe the group was in error. The separating group believes it is right and therefore is not threatened by the primary group. The only time a separating group will be antagonistic towards its primary group is if it has to fight for its independence. In the case of a civil war, the country fights to maintain its integrity, while the separatists fight for their independence. If the separatists are granted independence, then they have no reason to fight. Once separation has occurred, the two groups are distinct and their level of interaction (and thus their position on the axis of interaction) must be reassessed.

In reality, when a social system changes, the shift rarely occurs in only in one of the four cardinal directions. Instead, shifts tend to occur in two directions simultaneously, such as a society integrating and destratifying. Those shifts that are unidirectional are usually accompanied by the actual or perceived threat of movement along the other axis. The combined fear of change in two directions provides additional motivation and rationale for hostility. For instance, during the U.S. civil rights movement whites responded not only to the fear of integration, but also to the threat of losing their political power and their position of social dominance (Morris 1984).

As discussed in the previous section, interaction between racial groups is increasing, while stratification is simultaneously decreasing. The increase in interaction suggests that those groups fearing interaction will be antagonistic towards those groups with whom they are increasingly interacting. In the case of race
relations, blacks, who have been the most segregated group, will have the most noticeable increase in interaction, so blacks should be the primary target of antagonism. Furthermore, as the group most distant from blacks, whites have the most to fear from integration. A reduction in stratification also suggests that the greatest antagonism will be directed at blacks from whites. As the top group in the racially hierarchy, whites have the most to lose from declining stratification, and since blacks are the lowest group in the hierarchy, they will receive the blunt of white hostility. This is in fact what has been occurring. According to data from the FBI’s 2002 Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program, 9 71% of the known perpetrators of all racially motivated incidents were white. Furthermore, more than two thirds of victims of racially motivated incidents were black, with whites committing 90% of these attacks where the race of the offenders was known. 10

**DISCUSSION**

This model presents a number of difficulties. The most significant is the proper classification of groups. Group types (i.e., religious, ethnic, etc.) must be properly positioned in the mapping and groups (i.e., Jews, Asians, etc.) must be matched with the correct group type. The latter is more important than the former. When making predictions about intergroup antagonism, the direction of movement is more important than positioning in the mapping. Both the relation of group types to

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9 For a discussion of the numerous problems with UCR data see Perry (2002) and Green and colleagues (2001).

10 It is not uncommon for the offender or the race of the offender to be unknown. Overall, 35% of the perpetrators of racially motivated attacks were unknown or of an unidentified race, as were 36% of the offenders of incidents with black victims (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2003).
each other and the direction of movement matters, but the exact positioning is less relevant; the classification of groups into their proper group type is more important. Since group types may be shifting in different directions, knowing to which group type a group belongs is imperative for making accurate predications. Jews are perhaps the most obvious example of a group than fits into multiple group types, as they are a religious group that is often considered an ethnic group (Chesler 2003; Friedman 1995). For instance, in the U.K., Jews are legally considered an ethnic group, whereas in the U.S. they are not (Musab 2003).

Another problem is predicting antagonism between group types. As currently conceived, the model does not provide an explanation for the existence of antagonism between groups from different group types. As mentioned previously, this phenomenon is rare. In fact, it may not actually occur. What may transpire is that group classification may vary by context. There is no theoretical reason that a group cannot simultaneously belong to multiple group types, such that religious change impacts the relationship between Jews and Christians, while racial/ethnic change influences the relationship between Jews and blacks.

One limitation of the model is that it cannot predict the form intergroup antagonism will take, or explain why its manifestation varies (i.e., vandalism versus violent attacks against individuals). In the future, it may be possible to add another dimension to the model that facilitates this prediction; but for now, such individual level decisions are not addressed. Similarly, the model provides no insight as to why some people express their antagonism violently, while others do not.

Finally, as globalization increases, it will become increasingly difficult to determine whether certain acts of antagonism are occurring within or across societies. For instance, how do we classify an act in country A directed at a specific group, but perpetrated by members of an international organization? Do we distinguish by the
perpetrators’ country of residence or country of origin? A possible solution might be to allow the model to apply at the global level rather than at the society level. The exploration of such a possibility is well beyond the scope of the current discussion.

Notwithstanding the numerous complications and limitations of the model, this new approach offers valuable insights into intergroup antagonism. One of the greatest assets of the model is its reliance on well-established theories of conflict. In combination, these theories provide a strong foundation for interpreting intergroup antagonism. Furthermore, by combining the theories, the new model incorporates the strengths of each individual approach, while simultaneously addressing its weaknesses.
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