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Migration, everyday life and the ethnicity bias

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The purpose of this special issue is to examine how diverse perspectives on difference are experienced and enacted by ordinary people in the everyday contexts of migration. Ethno-cultural interpretations of difference have come to be seen as inextricably linked with migration in political rhetoric, policy prescriptions, media coverage and institutional structures. Ethnicity is the ongoing product of migratory processes that give it both form and meaning, and it is the idiom through which the politics of multiculturalism expresses itself in accommodating (and sometimes constituting) post-immigration difference. This privileging of ethnicity is consequential. But as the contributors to this volume will demonstrate, it is not determinative. Understandings of difference are shaped not only by politicians, the media and public institutions; they are simultaneously the practical accomplishment of ordinary people engaging in routine activities. We situate our examinations of diverse modalities of experience in the everyday lives of the people claiming them. Our analyses neither privilege nor dismiss ethnicity, but rather consider how ethnicised views of the world exist and interact with other perspectives on difference.

The problem

A preoccupation with ethnicity, not only in the empirical world but also in our scholarly analyses of that world, has intentionally or unintentionally endowed ethnicity with a privileged status. Ethnicity has assumed a fixity in both popular and scholarly imaginations that is at odds with its contingent and socially constructed nature. Nowhere is this more evident than in the field of migration. Whilst there is broad agreement that ethnicity should not be understood in essentialist terms, the practices and processes of migration have an uncanny way of essentialising it. Ethnicity is naturalised as a taken-for-granted fixture of the migration landscape. When we study transnationalism and diaspora, we surreptitiously posit the existence of collectivities whose members we assume to understand

themselves ethnically. When we study ethnic niches, ethnic networks and ethnic capital, we give ethnicity a certain structural fixity (and therefore ontological reality) in order to account for the (important) ways in which 'it' structures social relations. Ethnicity may indeed be important, but its importance should not go unquestioned, its relevance should not be assumed. Ethnicity has stood in the limelight, impairing, at times, our ability to see and appreciate other modalities of difference.

The methodological nationalism critique spearheaded by Wimmer, Glick Schiller and colleagues (Glick Schiller, 2008, 2009; Glick Schiller et al., 2006; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002) has highlighted this bias convincingly. These observers argue that the logic of the nation-state continues to inform (and constrain) the ways in which we as social scientists think about and make sense of difference in the world, particularly in contexts of migration. This nation-state logic privileges ethno-national difference, thus 'obscur[ing] the diversity of migrants' relationships to their place of settlement and other localities around the world' (Glick Schiller et al., 2006: 613). Migrants' activities are assumed to be 'centred in ethnic and national categories of identity' (Glick Schiller et al., 2011: 405), and the significance of non-ethnic 'pathways of incorporation' such as religion, the workplace and participation in public life may be sidelined or disregarded entirely (Glick Schiller et al., 2006: 625). Furthermore, ties and networks more appropriately defined as familial or propinquitous may simply be assumed to be (and thus represented as) ethnic (Wimmer, 2007: 28). Ethnicity's significance and salience to migrants' everyday lives is exaggerated through a research design which privileges it in sampling methods and data collection: the assumption that the ethnic community or ethnic identification is inevitable 'becomes the conclusion' (Brettell, 2003: 104; see also Brubaker et al., 2006: 381).

Whilst these critiques apply to (and originate from) the scholarship on migration, ethnicity's reach extends further. Indeed, wherever we go looking for ethnicity, we seem to find it. The study of immigrant incorporation, diaspora and multiculturalism often assumes ethnicity's relevance rather than questioning it. The scholarship on (and politics of) multiculturalism has been criticised for artificially 'hardening' ethnicity through its formal recognition of ethnic difference (May, 1999); with an ethnic sleight of hand, immigrant claims making and minority mobilisation become ethnic claims making and ethnic mobilisation. As Baumann (1996) has warned, multiculturalism's oversimplification and normalisation of difference does not adequately capture the fluid, context-driven and contiguous identifications which are practised by people whose everyday concerns and identifications are too readily categorised as 'ethnic'. North American scholars have similarly critiqued the over-determination of race and ethnicity in analyses of inequalities and social relations, particularly at moments of crisis such as the 1992 LA riots (Chabram-Dernersesian, 1994).

Ethnicity of course is not confined to migration or post-migration, but pervades multiple domains of social life (and analysis). It enjoys a privileged and at times unquestioned place in studies of ('ethnic') conflict. 'Age-old ethnic hatreds' have become a favourite trope to explain conflict around the world. Ethnic conflict is depicted as conflict between ethnic groups, as opposed to conflict that produces ethnic groups. Such interpretations fail to take account of ethnicity's constructed and instrumental character (Ruane and Todd, 2004: 4) and the contingency of violence: 'They can't explain why violence occurs only at particular times and places, and why, even at such times and places, only some persons participate in it' (Brubaker, 2004: 111). Furthermore, 'evidentiary weaknesses' prevent us from knowing the extent to which hatred and fear propagated by ethnic elites or entrepreneurs who 'frame' conflict as ethnic, are held by the wider population (Brubaker, 2004: 110; see also Brass, 1997). Focusing on ethnicity also neglects the role other factors such as structural inequalities and institutions play in shaping conflict (and the interpretations of those conflicts) (Gilley, 2004).

Ethnicity is not only pervasive, it can also be pernicious. These various and overlapping domains of research on ethnicity all point to varied but powerful ways in which ethnicity is invoked, legitimated and essentialised as an idiom of collective belonging. To be sure, many of the people identifying in ethnic terms do tend to view their ethnicity in essentialist terms. Gil-White (1999, 2001) and Fischer (1999) have warned that academic attempts to establish the 'ontological fact' that ethnicity has no 'essence' risk 'cloud[ing] our understanding of local epistemologies', within which ethnicised essentialism is 'a self-evident worldview' (Gil-White, 2001: 515; see also Geertz, 2000 [1973]: 259–263). This 'self-essentialising' can also be a powerful tool of claims-making, adopted not only by political entrepreneurs, but by grassroots migrant and minority activists against racism and discrimination (Werbner, 1997). Politicised constructions of imagined ethnic communities premised on essentialised identities articulate a 'group solidarity that purports to cross-cut and supersede internal differences of class, status, wealth and power' (Karner, 2007: 18). Essentialised solidarities, whilst a distortion of a more fragmented and complex landscape of attachments, can nevertheless be important for purposes (and also as a consequence) of political mobilisation. Mavroudi's research with Palestinians in Greece reveals articulations of 'unity in diversity', that allow 'people [to] come together for strategic purposes at particular times (and in particular spaces),... creat[ing] more essentialised identities based on notions of ethnicity, religion and nationalism in the process' (2007: 406), while Houston and Wright's work among exiled Tibetans highlights how regional and sectarian traditions that served as 'an important basis for individual definition' for Tibetans prior to Chinese occupation are 'flatten[ed]' in favour of a unified standpoint for diaspora activism to counter the 'exterior threat of cultural extermination' (2003: 222–223).

In some cases, this relationship between 'top–down' essentialised categorisation of politicians and policymakers and the production and performance of ethnic group identities by everyday actors is mutually constitutive (Jenkins, 1997: 81–82); in other cases, these meanings operate more independently. Baumann's ethnography of the London borough of Southall reveals how actors sometimes adopt a 'dominant discourse' which equates culture with community, and that clashes with a 'demotic discourse which separates culture from community' (Baumann, 1996: 195–197). This can be viewed as a competitive 'articulation of cultural distinctiveness' that also has its uses for securing political representation or other public resources (Ballard, 2002: 28).

Essentialism thus has its place in the world we study, both as an empirical fact of ordinary self-understanding and as a strategic tool of political manipulation employed by elites and non-elites. We heed these cautions against discounting ethnicity's everyday essentialism. But at the same time, we also caution against unwittingly contributing to this essentialism in our scholarly analyses of these phenomena. The problem is not when the people we study are essentialist (indeed, we need to account for this); the problem is when we as scholars sometimes contribute to this essentialism. To do so not only risks reification of social difference, it also usurps agency from the everyday essentialisers by side-lining or simply disregarding alternative non-ethnic modes of identification. An 'ethnicity lens' does not just focus our gaze on ethnicity; it can also impair our vision of other modalities of difference-making.

The remedy

We are of course not the first to recognise this ethnicity bias, nor the first to propose a remedy for it. But whilst a consensus on the nature of the problem is emerging, there is less agreement on what is the best way to deal with it. Indeed, a number of different strategies have been elaborated for 'de-ethnicizing research designs' (Wimmer, 2007: 25).

Perhaps the most obvious is to simply purge ethnicity from our analyses altogether. This involves refocusing the analytical lens away from ethnicity and onto other non-ethnic phenomena such as labour market position or religion. This strategy is exemplified by Glick Schiller et al.'s (2006) research on born-again Christian congregations. Approaches like these have shaken us from our ethnic gaze (and daze) by equipping us with new lenses for understanding difference (see also Christensen and Jensen, 2011). Glick Schiller et al.'s (2006) consideration of religion as a 'pathway of incorporation' for migrants into host societies has inspired a number of recent studies exploring Pentecostal churches in Europe and North America. While these congregations could be described in ethnic terms, research conducted within them has uncovered the importance of more global

orientations (through the global networks of Pentecostalism), with members fostering 'interactions beyond linguistic, cultural and ethnic boundaries' (Krause, 2011: 419; see also Hu¨welmeier, 2011). Similarly, Christian migrants of diverse African origins in Europe have been shown to 'see themselves as part of an international, rather than ethnic church... using religion as a source of capital to bridge outwards and link upwards beyond the bonding provided by cultural heritage *per se*' (McLoughlin, 2010: 572). Shifting the focus to these non-ethnic phenomena is a tempting and not altogether unwarranted strategy. These approaches draw attention to aspects of experience and organisation which have been hitherto obscured by ethnicity's long shadow.

Intersectionality is a second promising remedy that shares much in common with Glick Schiller et al.'s approach. But where Glick-Schiller et al. refocus their lens away from ethnicity, scholars of intersectionality want to adjust the aperture to take in multiple, intersecting modalities and structures of social organisation simultaneously. An intersectionality approach posits that no single social identity should be studied in isolation, but must instead be examined where it intersects and interacts with other identities. Pioneered by Black Feminists, who argued that their marginalisation had to be understood simultaneously in racial and gender terms (Crenshaw, 1993: 1242–1244), the intersectionality framework has subsequently expanded beyond the 'big three' (ethnicity/race, gender and class) to incorporate multiple (and still intersecting) social divisions including sexuality, disability, age, religion and so on. This is an equitable approach that re-centres the pendulum at the conjunction of multiple structural variables – 'a more integrated analysis of identity formation' (Anthias, 1998: 571; see also Mahler and Pessar, 2001).

A third strategy has been to refocus the study of ethnicity towards its manifestations in everyday life (Karner, 2007). This is not a remedy for an ethnicity bias *per se* (indeed, the focus remains explicitly on ethnicity), but for an elite bias in the scholarship that tends to exaggerate ethnicity's importance. These approaches thus begin their examinations 'from below', examining the quotidian practices and processes through which ethnicity is invoked and evoked by ordinary people (Brubaker et al., 2006; Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008; Karner, 2007). Such approaches do not assume ethnicity's salience but rather specify the routine contexts of everyday life in which it is meaningfully enacted and reproduced. The contentiousness and divisiveness that defines nationalist politics between Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania, for instance, was found by Brubaker et al. (2006) to be a poor predictor of the more mundane ways in which ethnicity mattered – and often did not matter – to ordinary Hungarians and Romanians in their everyday lives. Research on 'African diasporas' has found that groupings typically regarded as 'ethnic', such as migrants' hometown associations, were in fact constituted by diverse actors that reflected an 'unbounded locality which gathers together Africans from diverse ethnic backgrounds in their loyalty to ''home''' (Fumanti and Werbner, 2010:

7–8). Jones' (2013) work with Tamil migrants (also in the UK) shows how 'Tamil-ness' is expressed in different ways in different contexts, intersecting with alternate or concurrent identifications of statehood, religion and class. This everyday ethnicity strategy thus corrects elite and structuralist biases in the scholarship that are often coupled with ethnicity biases. These approaches do not simply deduce ethnicity's meaning or salience from political privileging or structural conditions, but rather set out to examine how, when and where ethnicity matters for ordinary people, to the extent it does so at all (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008; Karner, 2007). Drawing on a long anthropological tradition of empirically grounded research, these approaches are useful for shifting the analysis beyond the role of elites and the effects of social, economic and political structures.

A fourth strategy attempts to sidestep ethnicity by launching investigations from non-ethnicised, platforms. Some of these studies have been spatially circumscribed, as represented by Baumann's (1996) ethnography in Southall, Wessendorf's (2010a, b, 2011) research in Hackney, and Wimmer's (2004) study of Swiss neighbourhoods. These investigations do 'not presume the existence of ethnic-cultural groups'; rather, they aim to 'grasp the social categories used to describe the neighbourhood and to understand processes of everyday group formation' (Wimmer, 2004: 4–5). Indeed, Wimmer's research shows how ethnicity and nationality are secondary to compliance or non-compliance with local 'schemes of order' (such as keeping apartment building courtyards tidy) in designating 'established' residents versus 'outsiders', with these classifications often cross-cutting ethnic or national difference (2004: 10; see also Schaeffer 2013). This site-specific approach has also been taken up with a recent emphasis on the city as a shaper of migrant pathways of incorporation (C¸ agˇlar and Glick Schiller, 2011; Conradson and Latham, 2005; Glick Schiller, 2008; Glick Schiller et al., 2006). Moros¸ anu (2011, 2012, 2013), in contrast, brackets the ethnic question by adopting a network analytical approach. In her study of Romanian migrants in London, she focuses on the ways in which social networks become experientially inflected with ethnic or indeed other modalities of experience. Studies such as these do not presume ethnicity's relevance, but rather allow it to emerge in accordance with the specific features and dynamics of the spatial sites and social structures being investigated (see Anthias, 2002; Jackson, 2012).

All of these approaches are welcome interventions, but they are not without their individual pitfalls. Purging ethnicity from our analyses not only risks impairing our vision of ethnic phenomena (still in wide circulation in the world), but also replacing one bias (or lens) with another. Intersectionality approaches have shed the inevitable over-determinism of analyses concentrating on a single structural variable, but they have replaced them with a more nuanced (and therefore more palatable) determinism that understands social phenomena at the intersection of structural variables. The problem with this new and improved determinism occurs when these variables are

still depicted in fixed or 'given' terms, rather than as 'constructed in social practice' (Anthias, 2013: 6). '[R]eplac[ing] larger homogenising rubrics (''Hispanics'') with smaller ones (''Hispanic women'')', write Desmond and Emirbayer (2009: 349), offers little conceptual refuge from reductionist and reifying tendencies exhibited in earlier, cruder forms of structural determinism (see also Werbner in this issue). The third strategy of everyday ethnicity effectively corrects the biases found in elite-driven and structuralist accounts of ethnicity, but it does so by preserving its focus (and therefore bias) on ethnicity. Only the fourth strategy provides a level conceptual playing field for ethnicity to compete with other non-ethnic modalities of experience, although even here the assumptions that inform site selection must be transparent lest a non-ethnic focus is replaced by an over-ethnicised research design.

The special issue

Our own approach draws on insights from all of these critiques and the remedies they have developed, whilst simultaneously attempting to correct some of the biases that remain or are introduced into those remedies. We can take from the earlier critiques of methodological nationalism that an ethnicity bias has skewed our interpretation of diverse social phenomena in the world. But we should not forget that the world which we study very often also has an ethnicity bias. There is an ethnicity bias in our approaches, in part, because there is an ethnicity bias in the world that we study. Ethnicity indeed remains a, if not the, dominant paradigm for interpreting, ordering and marking difference in the world. It is not just the literature on multiculturalism that favours an ethnic lens; it is the politics of multiculturalism that favours it too. It is not just the scholarship on conflict that views conflicts in ethnic terms; it is the politicians, and pundits who project ethnicity onto conflict. And it is not just the logic of nation-states that impairs our vision of nonnational and non-ethnic migration phenomena; it is the passports, the borders and the policies of immigration control that powerfully reproduce the nation-state logic for migrants everywhere. Seen from this perspective, it is perhaps somewhat more understandable that we as scholars have also been infected with the ethnicity bug: we are responding to its pervasiveness in the world we study.

All of this is to say that we should not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Our goal in this special issue is not to ignore ethnicity, or pretend that it is not there. Rather, our aim is more modest: to do away with the bias that unnecessarily privileges ethnicity as both an empirical focus of investigation and an analytical lens through which those investigations are conducted. Rather than rejecting ethnicity, or adopting an entirely non-ethnic lens, we join established and new scholars in attempting to capture the complexity of social experience in ways that do not privilege – nor

censure – ethnicity. 'Just as we acknowledge the potential salience of migrants' non-ethnicised experiences' urges Moroşanu (2011: 39), 'we cannot ignore participants' invocations of ethnicity as a relevant feature of their everyday life'. We should not assume a path dependency from migration to ethnicity (Wessendorf, 2010b: 366, 377–378). Rather, we should be specifying the contexts and practices through which ethnicity, alongside other modalities of experience, is invoked and evoked in everyday life (Wimmer, 2004: 30; see also Wessendorf, 2010a: 15–16). As Wimmer (2007: 28) reminds us, 'there is no reason why a study design should not start by taking individuals from a particular country [read also ethnicity] as the unit of observation', so long as one avoids the 'fallacy of assuming communitarian closure, cultural difference and strong identities. The study has to ask, rather than take for granted, whether there is indeed community organisation, ethnic closure in networking practices, a shared outlook on the host society'.

Anthias' concept of 'translocational positionality', developed as a sympathetic critique to some of the pitfalls of intersectionality identified above, 'moves away from the idea of given ''groups'' or ''categories'' of gender, ethnicity and class, which then intersect... instead pay[ing] much more attention to social locations and processes' where such intersections might occur (2008: 5, emphasis in original). This allows researchers to capture the variation of social experience as it manifests itself in diverse spatial and temporal contexts. By advocating a 'bottom-up' or 'wait and listen' approach that 'holds back from predetermining... the particular analytical matter(s) of relevance in a particular case', researchers can be better positioned to 'maintain a rigorously open ear – and broad mind – as to what emerges as meaningful to participants' (Jackson, 2012: 44). As Gunaratnam (2003: 38) cautions 'we can neither take for granted the meanings or the effects of [ethnic or national] identifications, nor can we ignore their relationships to other categories of difference' (see also Jenkins, (1997) for distinction between 'nominal' and 'virtual' forms of identity).

So how can we practically achieve the goal of being attentive to ethnicity's varied manifestations without unduly privileging it? We propose a three part remedy. Our first intervention is methodological. We need research designs that do not simply reproduce the patterns of ethnic attachment, boundary-making or closure which may be relevant for only a minority of the population under consideration. The well-trodden path of sampling solely on the basis of ethnic associations, 'choos[ing] a community to find or prove community' (Brettell, 2003: 109), and thus neglecting the experiences of those who are 'lost to the group' (Wimmer, 2007: 28) must be avoided. Werbner's work on Pakistanis in the UK for instance reveals multiple networked sites 'of religious, political, or cultural expression and contestation, but also of popular culture – of fun, leisure and celebration' (2002: 220) where ethnicity might – or might not – happen. So too should we resist the temptation to (only) go looking for (and finding) ethnicity's most visible manifestations

amongst those migrants (perhaps a small minority) who are predisposed to displaying and performing their putative ethnicity, often in rarefied (and reified) forms (see Wessendorf, 2010b: 371–72). Everyday difference manifests itself in multiple ways and varied intensities. Sampling on an ethnic dependent variable (by starting with ethnic associations and/or public displays of ethnicity) risks overlooking a more tacit 'commonplace diversity', 'an implicit grammar of living in a super-diverse area' (Wessendorf, 2011: 24; Ho and Hatfield, 2011: 708; see more generally Karner, 2007: 23–35; Billig, 1995: 37–92) that more subtly informs social interaction without requiring, or indeed allowing, self-conscious engagement or reflection.

The contributions to this collection adopt a range of sampling strategies and entry points either alongside or, in some cases, instead of the more overtly ethnic sites commonly described in the literature. Devadason and Fenton begin their investigation from transnational corporations and supranational agencies; Werbner considers the 2012 Olympics in London as a venue not just for the performance of national pride but ethnic allegiances as well; and for DeHanas, it is the Hajj and trips to the homeland that become sites for the expression of various religious and ethnic modalities of experience. These contributions are also attentive to ethnicity, not as it is yelled from the proverbial rooftop, but as it seeps from the cracks of mundane social interaction and the sediments of social structure. Jones' contribution for example, describes the surprising relevance of an ethnic lens in the narratives of self-consciously 'cosmopolitan' migrants. For Glick-Schiller, ethnicity is not a dominant paradigm defining experience in nominally multi-ethnic Halle but rather one of many context dependent resources for understanding and interpreting diverse experiences. In these and other ways, our contributions open an analytical space to explore more varied modalities of everyday experience.

Our second strategy is to treat ethnicity (and other modalities of experience) as 'categories of practice': 'categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, as distinguished from the experience-distant categories used by social analysts' (Brubaker, 2004: 31). Whilst there is movement, even perhaps a dialogical relationship between categories of practice and categories of analysis (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 4; Wacquant, 1997: 222–223; Banton, 1979: 128), we as scholars put our categories to different uses. As Banton reminds us (1979: 133–134; 2005), social scientists are in the business of constructing theories that exhibit more-or-less law-like properties; generalisable propositions which can help us decipher the much messier variation found in the empirical world. Our task is then to account for the ways in which ethnicity (alongside other modalities of experience) becomes a socially meaningful and consequential category of practice. But doing so does not require us to employ ethnicity as a category of analysis (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 5). Indeed, we already possess a rich analytical vocabulary for

understanding the multiple and complex processes and practices that contribute to the construction of ethnicity. Macro-analytical approaches have identified varied structural forces and factors from labour market competition to political mobilisation that have contributed to the emergence and reproduction of ethnicity. Micro-analytical perspectives in turn have shown how ethnicity is the contingent outcome of a range of discursive, cognitive and interactional practices. Ethnicity is the result of these and many other dynamic and relational processes through which the boundaries of human existence and experience are negotiated (Barth, 1969; Jenkins, 1997). These approaches furnish us with an analytical vocabulary for understanding the production and reproduction of ethnicity without recourse to ethnicity itself as a category of analysis. Ethnicity is the phenomenon to be explained, not to do the explaining with.

We as scholars are there to observe and account for these ethnicity-making practices and processes. But when we attempt to operationalise ethnicity as a category of analysis, we become unwitting participants in the reproduction of the ethnicity we sought to merely observe and explain. Using ethnicity (as a category of analysis) to explain ethnicity (as a category of practice) seems not only tautological but potentially teleological: it risks producing ethnicity as an artefact of the analysis itself. Adopting an ethnicity lens (as a category of analysis) predisposes us to see ethnicity (as a category of practice), misinterpreting our lens as evidence of the real thing in the empirical world. It also risks assigning a certain fixity to ethnicity by surreptitiously transferring the more law-like properties of the analytical category to the more contingent and nebulous features of the practical category. We want to be able to analyse ethnicity in a way that does not reproduce or reify ethnicity as an artefact of our analyses (Banton, 2005: 472; Fox, 2012: 1155). Ethnicity does have very real and tangible consequences in the social world, but it does not have an objective existence independent of those social consequences (Loveman, 1999; Wacquant, 1997). If we go looking for ethnicity equipped with an ethnic lens, chances are, we are going to find it. If we go looking for ethnicity equipped with a more variegated toolkit we may also find it, and we may just as readily discover other things going on as well. The latter strategy affords us a more balanced and less contaminated appreciation of ethnicity in the world.

Ethnicity, then, along with gender, class, religion, community and so forth are neither essential traits nor inevitable conditions: rather, they are the variable and contingent outcome of assorted practices that make them meaningful in some contexts but render them invisible and irrelevant in others. DeHanas explores how both ethnicity and the imagined community of the global Islamic Ummah emerge and interplay in the identity narratives of young Bengalis in East London, while Werbner's interest in everyday multiculturalism allows for multiple modalities and intensities of experience to emerge in response to the shifting imperatives of migrant life in Britain. Ethnicity and other

modalities of experience uncovered in this issue are contingent and constructed, with variable meaning and salience.

Following from this, our third strategy is to develop an approach that is sensitive to ethnicity in the empirical world, but which does not impose it where it is not (Anthias, 2002; Jackson, 2012; Werbner, 2012). Ethnicity matters in certain contexts, at particular times, and in specific ways (Schaeffer, 2013). Instead of assuming ethnicity's meaningfulness and salience across time and space, our collective aim in this issue is to specify the actual practices and processes through which ethnicity and other modalities of experience are negotiated and reproduced, or undermined, resisted, rejected and rendered irrelevant in the routine contexts of everyday life (see also Ho and Hatfield, 2011: 710; Conradson and Latham, 2005: 228–229; Halfacree and Boyle, 1993: 334–336): The contribution by Moroşanu and Fox in this issue finds that Romanians in the UK respond to ethnic stigmatisation in both ethnic (and ethnicising) and non-ethnic (and de-ethnicising) ways. These divergent strategies are not associated with specific individuals, but rather represent context-specific attempts by the same people in different situations to attenuate the effects of stigmatisation. Like Wimmer's (2004) Swiss neighbourhood study and Moroşanu's (2011) research on Romanians in London, the contributors to this issue capture the varying experiential values and interplay of ethnic and non-ethnic identifications in multiple and shifting contexts.

But unlike these studies, these contexts are neither spatial, temporal nor social relational, but rather the varied domains of the everyday. The everyday, we posit, offers us a way out of the conundrum of the ethnicity bias because there is nothing inherently ethnic about it: it can contain ethnicity, but so too can it contain other forms of attachment. We are interested in the different modalities of experience that get implicated in everyday social interaction, practices and processes (Ho and Hatfield, 2011: 708–710). We suggest that a focus on the everyday does not privilege any particular modality of difference making. By beginning our investigations from the everyday, we are compelled to specify rather than infer ethnicity's salience. Moroşanu and Fox thus point to migrant strategies for dealing with stigmatisation that alternatively harden and weaken ethnic boundaries, while Devadason and Fenton draw attention to the context specific ways in which ethnicity can be a resource used by transnational elites to frame their experiences of mobility. The contexts and contents of everyday life also provide Werbner with an empirical space in which she situates her discussion of the mundane practices of everyday multiculturalism.

Like ethnicity, everyday life has also been the focus of much scholarly investigation. Much of this scholarship is concerned with theorising the internal properties and external parameters of everyday life. Here there is little consensus. For some, everyday life is the site of the unselfconscious, routine

and even banal reproduction of the social world (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). For others however, this reproduction of the social world occurs not (only) unselfconsciously, but as the meaningful and purposeful practical accomplishment of ordinary people engaging in routine interaction (Garfinkel, 1967; Goffman, 1990; Sacks, 1995). For still others, the everyday is a site of resistance, not where the *status quo* is unselfconsciously (or consciously) reproduced and upheld through the panoply of trivial practices and unselfconscious thought, but where a revolutionary potential can be unlocked to challenge or subvert that hegemonic social order (De Certeau, 1984; but see Lefebvre, 2008 [1958]). The everyday is thus many things to many people. Indeed, one of its peculiarities is that many observers seem more at ease describing what everyday life is *not* rather than explaining what it is (Elias, 1998 [1978]: 167, 170). Everyday life is thus presented as a residual category, whose contours and content can be better appreciated vis-à-vis more explicit (and better defined) opposites (Jacobsen, 2009: 4, 11–12). In this view, the everyday is a world *not* inhabited by elites (but by non-elites); it is characterised *not* by singular extraordinary actions (but by the aggregate of a multitude of ordinary acts); and it is the domain *not* of purposeful, self-conscious action (but of unselfconscious and taken-for-granted habits).

Whilst recognising the intellectual traditions out of which these various scholarships have grown, our own use of everyday life is a bit more 'everyday'. We wish to demystify it and return it to its quotidian origins as simply a domain of enquiry (Elias, 1998 [1978]: 166–167). Following anthropological traditions, we concur that 'one can learn much about socio-cultural worlds by examining the daily acts performed by ordinary people as they go through their lives... [as they] live, make and experience their worlds' (Mines and Lamb, 2010: 1). For us, the everyday is thus a venue for the practices through which different perspectives on difference are experienced and articulated, ignored and neglected. It is not an object of investigation, but a site for investigation of other phenomena; it is a place, not spatially or temporally circumscribed, but imperfectly delineated by the individuals who people it. The everyday is not autonomous from other domains of social life (conceived alternatively as the political, the elite, the spectacular, and/or the powerful), nor is it safe from the perils of ethnicisation (the residue of politicised and other forms of ethnicity can and often does spill over into the everyday).

But whilst it is not autonomous it is at least distinct. Indeed, it is telling that some of the most sustained ethnographic investigations of ethnicity in everyday life in contexts where ethnicity is highly politicised have found that everyday versions of ethnicity bear little resemblance to the more stylised versions favoured in political life (Brubaker et al., 2006; Herzfeld, 1997). And these are the studies that have gone looking for ethnicity. If we do not wish to privilege ethnicity (or any other modality of experience) then the everyday is as good a place as any to begin our investigation. The

practices of everyday life, whilst occurring within larger structures of power relations, do not always correspond perfectly to the logic of those structures (De Certeau, 1984: xii-xiv, 95–98). This is to say that we cannot simply deduce the forms of the everyday from the larger social structures in which they are embedded. For us then, the everyday provides a methodological starting point, rather than a theoretical end point. It is where we begin our investigation about other phenomena.

The advantage of the everyday is that it does not direct us unequivocally to ethnicity or any other modality of experience. There is no path dependency. It allows us to observe ethnicity, without pre-disposition, alongside other modalities of experience. The everyday is not the solution to the ethnicity bias, but it is a solution. It supplies a fruitful and economical approach which, when employed in conjunction with other approaches, can mitigate ethnicity's over-determinism. Our investigation thus begins with the domain of the everyday and with the users (and non-users) of all manner of social categories. This approach does not compel us to gaze through an ethnic, or indeed any other singular lens; rather, it is a varifocal lens through which all manner of phenomena may be viewed and brought into focus (see also Conradson and Latham, 2005: 228–229; Ho and Hatfield, 2011: 708–710). But whilst we define the everyday liberally to accommodate this sort of variation, we are less compromising in our commitment to specifying the actual processes through which ethnicity and other modalities of experience are enacted and reproduced in everyday life.

The contributions to this special issue are diverse: they reflect multiple theoretical orientations, they produce varied findings and they advance different agendas. But they share two fundamental features in common. First, the contributors did not privilege ethnicity in their research designs, but rather allowed ethnicity to emerge as experientially salient (or not) as a consequence of the diverse research agendas employed. Second, all of the contributions draw attention to the ways in which varied modalities of experience, including, at times, ethnicity, are embedded in and reproduced through the everyday practices and processes of difference-making in contexts of migration. The variation in the actual ways this can occur is captured in the richness of the variation between the individual contributions.

Ethnicity is indeed inextricably linked to migration contexts and has become a taken-for-granted fixture of the social world with very real and profound consequences for many people. This is not to say that ethnicity is contained to migration or post-migration contexts; it is not. But our empirical focus, and thus our analytical interest as well, is confined to everyday life in various migration and post-migration contexts (broadly understood). The everyday is not a panacea, but rather a further warning to avoid an ethnicity bias, with a strategy for accomplishing that avoidance. Ethnicity is a dominant paradigm of social life, and the porous boundaries of the everyday are ill-suited for

preventing its incursions. Our aim is not to keep ethnicity out of our research – we should account for ethnicity when ethnicity becomes important – but its tenacity should not belie its ultimate contingency. This special issue is intended to draw attention to the precise ways in which ethnicity, and other modalities of experience, are reproduced in everyday life. Rather than following those well-trodden pathways of elite design and structural determinism, this volume inverts the analytical focus and begins its investigation from the perspective of ordinary people and their quotidian reproduction of difference. This is its main contribution: to specify empirically and conceptually the modalities and practices through which ethnicity is enacted and reproduced, or rejected and ignored, in the everyday contexts of migration.

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