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Ethnogenesis, Ethnicization and Ethnopolitics: Some Analytic, Theoretic and Policy Insights from Guyana

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this inaugural working paper series is to examine the socio-economic and political implications of petroleum extraction in Guyana. On its own, the prospect of petroleum extraction is worthy of extensive academic examination, due to its promise of economic prosperity, its environmental ramifications and the political disruption within which its arrival is ushered. These issues are compounded when played out in a society such as Guyana's characterized by stark racial and ethnic cleavages, age-old political tensions and entrenched socio-economic problems. Further to this, is the question of external influence in the form of supranational governmental agencies, foreign financial corporations upon the process of petroleum industrialisation in this developing state.

In recognition of the complex nature of this topic, the authors in this series explore the question of a petroleum Industry in Guyana from a sociological, political and economic perspective. These papers not only seek to make academic inferences but also to provide recommendations and suggestions as to how the current and potential issues can be approached to prevent political and socio-economic failure in Guyana

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ABSTRACT

Guyana is entering into a new phase of economic activity occasioned by massive oil finds off its northern coast. While some are hopeful that this new economic dispensation will bring about qualitative changes in the race relations in the country, others are of the view that without resolving the racial/ethnic problems in the country the new dispensation will be plagued by the same social problems which hindered development in the past. This article sides with the latter view. Resolving the ethic/racial problems, however, depends on an understanding of two important social processes, namely ethnogenesis and ethnicization. It also depends on a theoretical understanding of how those influence ethnopolitics. With the aim of unearthing the processes through which ethnogenesis and ethnicization occurred in Guyana, a review of Guyanese history from the pre-Emancipation period to the post-Independence period is undertaken. By means of this historical review, it is found that in line with the postulates of the emergent ethnicity perspective, social structural factors are critical to the formation and salience of ethnic identity. Beyond the emergent ethnicity perspective, however, the paper found that ethnicity could be emergent in the way the concept is used in social complexity literature, thus offering an opportunity for the extension and updating of the emergent ethnicity perspective to explain the persistence (rather than simply the emergence) of ethnicity. Further, it is argued that an adjusted emergent ethnicity theory could be used as a basis for a theory of ethnopolitics and institutional forms in plural societies. Along with these analytic and theoretical insights, policy approaches to deal with the negative aspects of ethnopolitics are also proffered.

Keywords: Ethnic studies, Ethnogenesis, Ethnicization, Caribbean Sociology, Sociology of ethnicity

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Introduction

Ethnic competition among the two major ethnic groups in Guyana has been the number one social problem since Guyana gained its independence in 1966. Five decades after independence the problem of ethnic competition played out by means of a sometimes brutal, sometimes subdued clash for power and for control of resources remains among the foremost of problems affecting the development of the country (Ellis 2019). The results of the last National and Regional (2015) and Local Government (2016) elections provide evidence of the sharpness of the differences between the two groups. Both groups consolidated their support behind the parties which reflected their ethnic make-up, and which have been historically aligned with their ethnic interest. Moreover, it was the first elections after a very long time that direct appeals were openly made to ethnic fears resulting in litigation against one of the ethno-political leaders[1]. Ethnic voting, though not a problem in itself, becomes a problem in a society which has weak political and other corrective institutions. In this case, having an assured ethnic constituency which offers uncritical support and which places the interest of the ethnic group above the larger national interest translates into a moral hazard since those who assume power on account of the unwavering and uncritical support of their constituency, and are unconstrained by any oversight institutions, tend to use government as a means to transfer resources from the state to a narrow set of political elites sharing their own ethnicity and political values. In the absence of any pressure towards upholding substantive democracy, whether it expresses itself through the randomness of voting choices or through the presence and effective

[1] See story at the following link: https://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2015/12/13/jagdeo-racial-incitement-case-thrown-out/

functioning of good governance institutions, self-interest abounds.

This has been the story of Guyana since Independence. The decade culminating in 2015[2], however, has seen a massive transfer of wealth from the state to private individuals aligned with the then ruling People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) (Khemraj and Hinova 2011). Invariably, the beneficiaries of these transfers were of one ethnic group. This gave rise to heightened ethnic suspicions, ethno-political conflicts, and a widespread feeling of corruption in the society, which resulted in Guyana scoring very low on the Perception of Corruption Index, as one of the most corrupt country in the Caribbean (Transparency International 2014). Attempting to understand how a government so insensitive to the needs of the country could repeatedly secure the votes of a majority of the electorate, many social commentators and academics have proffered varying viewpoints and accompanying solutions.

This paper takes the view that in effectively tackling any problem of racial/ethnic conflicts, there needs to be a prior understanding of the processes through which groups became ethnicized/racialized and how various subsystems in the larger social supersystem became ethnicized. It is with this view in mind that (Danns 2014) sets out to account for the emergence of ethnicity, identity and class formation in Guyana. He identified five phases which were beset by their own dynamics and agents, and which structured the context within which the various identities and social formations were given shape. Similar to Danns (2014), the present work seeks to identify the phases, their internal dynamics and their main movers and shakers in ethnic and class formation. Different from Danns (2014),

2 In 2015, there was a change of government after 23 years of rule by the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C).

however, the study is specifically focused on teasing out a theory of ethnicity based on the emergence, diffusion and persistence of ethnicity in Guyana and providing some policy insights based on the theory of ethnicity.

This paper postulates three main theses. First, in agreement with Yancey et al. (1976), structural factors are essential to ethnogenesis in Guyana. This runs counter to the view held by Gowricharn (2013) who postulates what he refers to as an 'adjusted primordialism'. Secondly, while the emergent ethnicity perspective is sufficient to account for the emergence of ethnic groups in industrial societies, it fails to account for their persistence. This weakens the theory and affects it applicability to societies in which ethnicity has independent effect on certain social, political and economic processes. To correct this weakness, I posit an extension of the emergent perspective by drawing on the contribution of social complexity theory which takes a non-reductivist approach to the concept of 'emergence'. Lastly, I argue that the extended theory is valid enough to form the basis of a theory of institutional forms in plural societies and a theory of ethnopolitics. In pursuit of this task, the paper is divided into three main sections. The first section provides a historical review of ethnicity formation and persistence based on secondary historical data. The section sets out to tease out the descriptive, analytic and theoretical implications of the historical review. And, the final section puts forth what is assumed the best policy direction to challenge the negative effects of ethnicity in Guyana.

Ethnic Conflict and Ethnopolitics in Guyana: Reviewing the Literature

Writings on ethnic conflict and ethnopolitics in Guyana take either one of two forms. In the first set of writings, ethnic conflict and ethnopolitics are seen as outcomes of a fight

for resources. This, I refer to as the resource competition hypothesis. In the other set of writings, conflict is an inevitable outcome of the way society is organised horizontally. This will be referred to as the social segmentation hypothesis. The resources competition school takes two form. One set of theorists highlight the internal dimension of the competition for resources (Khemraj 2019, 2015; Wilson 2014). This school emphasises such economic categories such as scarcity, poverty, state capture, and underdevelopment. The second set of theorists highlight the external dimension of this conflict by highlighting the role played by international capitalist firms (Mars 2001; Hintzen 1985). Hintzen (1985), for example, argues that international firms influence ethnic conflicts in two ways: they either influence directly by transferring resources to one ethnic group in a country or indirectly by influencing the state and by their mode of penetration in the economy. For both schools, ethnic conflict serves as a mask of the real divisions in the society, that is to say, the class division (Bartels 1980; Barth 1967).

Theorists working within the resource competition framework, however, fail to offer any sociological insight into how and why groups tend to compete along ethnic lines rather than along other social divisions such as class, geography or gender lines. Consequently, they leave some very important sociological questions unanswered. If ethnic conflicts are mainly about the disproportionate allocation of resources, then why is there hardly any intra-ethnic class conflict even when the intra-ethnic class gap is wider than the inter-ethnic class gap? Resource competition hypothesis only makes sense if it assumes a methodological individualism. And, if this is the case, it has to and fails to explain why individuals find it more convenient to compete for resources as ethnic groups as opposed to other groups such as class, which would make more sense as part of a resource's

competition hypothesis. Why the lower classes in each ethnic group are willing to forgo their own economic benefits to fight for the ethnic group whose elites benefit more than anyone else? What are the factors which make ethnicity more salient than class, gender, geography, and ideology? The answer to this question cannot be resources because it makes no sense to talk about ethnicity: class would be enough to account for the rivalry. There is also a confusion in the use of the word class. One is never fully aware if the definition of class being used is strictly Marxist in conception, or the more conservative Weberian definition. Sometimes it is used to mean differences in occupation and other modes of stratification, rather than differences in ownership of the means of production and distribution. If class is taken in its traditional Marxist meaning, then there are hardly any class differences between the masses of the ethnicities, while there are definitely occupational differences which set them apart.

In opposition to this narrow, economistic explanation of ethnic conflicts, the social segmentation school offers a broader conceptualisation by ascribing equal weight to non-economic factors as explanatory variables (Furnivall 1984; Smith 1974; Horowitz 1985). Milne (1988), for example, argues that the presence or absence of ethnic conflicts in a society, need not be a result of distribution of economic resources as there are societies in which the distribution of resources are very skewed, but stability is maintained by means of the hegemonic dominance of one group over the other. Milne, however, does not de-emphasise the role that the distribution of economic spoils plays in ethnic conflict but is adamant that other equally or more important factors have as much influence. One such important factor is the need for security.

"To be sure, the drive for hegemony is concerned largely with the acquisition and

distribution of resources, but only up to a point. The prime motive is indeed basically security, but once the power to allocate is recognized, there may actually be some approximation to proportionality." (107).

Along with resource competition and the need for security, the author highlights equally weighty factors such as external intervention and concentration of ethnic groups in one geographic area. With respect to the geographic concentration of ethnic groups, recent findings on a global scale seem to accord with the importance geographic separation plays in ethnic conflict:

> "...social integration decreases ethnic groups' distinctiveness and internal cohesion, which reduces the strength of collective mobilization. While this lack of organizational strength affects collective action in general, it becomes particularly consequential in the case of costly and high-risk forms of it, such as armed rebellion" (Vogt 2017).

This geographic hypothesis is also emphasised by Wagner (1975) in a study of structural pluralism in Guyana. He highlights the role geography played in the structural pluralism in Guyana which is the basis upon which ethnic conflict perpetuates. Dissimilar to Khemraj (2015), Wagner argues that geographic separation provided one dimension to structural pluralism. Without having to work through the economic system, the geographic separation acted upon the economic system by giving various groups differential access to various aspects of the economy. For example, in the period post-Emancipation and pre-Independence, Portuguese were privileged as the main players in the commercial sector

while East Indians became the main players in the plantation sector and Africans in the free village and peasant sector. This geographic separation led to occupational separation, another dimension of structural pluralism, and provided the basis of continual ethnic conflicts.

While leaning more towards the social segmentation hypothesis, the present study aims to demonstrate how both could be incorporated into a more general theory of ethnopolitics, treated in this paper as a subdued kind of ethnic conflict. This more general theory adopts and adapts the emergent ethnicity perspective postulated by Yancey et al. (1976). While the emergent ethnicity perspective essentially provides an explanation of ethnogenesis in industrial societies, it could be adapted to explain both the persistence of ethnicity and ethnic conflict in plural societies. Moreover, it provides the basis upon which both hypotheses discussed above could be incorporated into a more general and comprehensive theory of ethnic conflict and ethnopolitics.

Scholars of the emergent ethnicity perspective argue that ethnicity is an emergent phenomenon which emerges in reaction to structural conditions. Employment differentiation occasioned by the development of the industrialization process saw the blooming of various industries and the occupations associated with them. The inflow of immigrants into these various occupations led to occupational concentration and the development of similar lifestyle and class interest. Invariably, because of the transportation constraints persons working in one industry usually live close to the industrial centre, thus resulting in residential concentration. The sharing of common occupation and residence in proximity eventually result in the sharing of same institutions such as churches, schools, etc. The combination of these structural, institutional and cultural similarities results in the

formation and crystallisation of ethnic groups (Yang, 2000, Yancey et al., 1976, Glazer et al., 1970, 4–7, Nahirny and Fishman, 1965). Moreover, the combination of these factors also produces, what this paper calls 'opportunity structures' and 'incentives' in societies with representative political systems. Opportunity structures in that they provide ready-made communities easily capable of being organised for political purposes. Incentives in that the occupational differentiation results in differential access to income and resources which could motivate elites of the various groups to action (Ballentine and Sherman, 2003, 6; Østby, 2008, 145; Sambanis, 2005, 329).

This paper aims to show how the twin factors of opportunity structures and incentives combine to influence ethnopolitics as a subdued kind of ethnic-based conflict. It does so by means of a case study of Guyana, an ideal plural society in which various social divisions combine with ethnic division. It does so within the framework of the emergent ethnicity perspective which it adds to and extends to cover issues such as the persistence rather than the mere emergence of ethnicity, institutional forms and the nature of ethnoplitics in plural societies. In this sense, ‘emergence’ takes on a broader meaning beyond that which is intended by Yancey et al. (1976) and more in line with the usage in social complexity theory.

Historical Review of Ethnic Group Formation in Guyana

Ethnogenesis: Ethnicization of the Economic Structure

This part of the paper deals specifically with the process of ethnogenesis in Guyana. It highlights the historical processes which give rise to ethnic formations by reviewing the historical records. Ethnogenesis is referred to by Gowricharn (2013) as ‘the transformation of a collection of individuals into an ethnic group that believes in a common history; in this

sense it is the process that eventually leads to the formation of an ethnic group'. The author highlights two distinct types of ethnogenesis: the first refers to groups which claim indigeneity when their space is invaded by others, and the second has to do with the formation of new identities among immigrant groups. The indigenous peoples of Guyana are an example of the first type, while Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese especially are examples of the second type. Using Hindustanis of Suriname as his case, the author proffers what he terms an 'adjusted primordialist' theory of ethnogenesis and ethnicization. His theory gives primacy to the internal (intra-group) processes which give rise to ethnogenesis. In the case of Suriname, he outlines three phases through which the Hindustani group came into being as an ethnic group. In the first phase, interaction on the plantation necessitated the development of a common language, the forging of family relations and the breaking down of the caste system. This resulted in a unity among the disparate ethnic groups brought from India. Although the author concedes that 'external' processes on the plantation in some cases influenced these internal processes, he was adamant that the latter must not be seen as subject to the former. Gowricharn (2013) also concedes that in the first phase, the Guyana case differs from the Suriname case, as ethnogenesis in the Guyana case played out in an externally driven, very competitive environment. This current work deviates from the internalist, primordialist approach and emphasises the primacy of the external environment in the first phase of ethnicization in the case of Guyana. The competitive nature of the environment and the structural realities which give rise to ethnogenesis will be outlined below by means of a review of historical documents.

Emancipation

After approximately over two centuries of enslavement, Africans were emancipated in 1838. Emancipation brought about both qualitative and quantitative changes in the plantation society. For the first time in those 200 plus years, planters were faced with the added burden of remunerating its labour force for the work done on the plantation. It is at this particular juncture that two elements of the Guyanese occupational structure started to emerge. These are the proletariat and the peasantry. Immediately after emancipation the Africans became fully aware of the new dynamics and the opportunity for development provided by this change of situation. They used their freedom to bargain for wages befitting the work they were expected to do and for better working conditions. Faced with these new demands, coupled with an unwillingness to expend too much money on labour after having been accustomed to free exploited labour, the planters resorted to a strategy which would undermine the bargaining power and economic status of the Africans. This new strategy was immigration of indentured labour. Faced with this new challenge to its livelihood, Africans also were forced to strategize in relation to its own livelihood. The result was the pursuit of a land acquisition strategy which would make it independent from the plantation, an institution which had exploited it for years and relegated it to the lowest level of human existence. This resulted in the largest legal land acquisition strategy in the history of post-emancipation Guyana (Young 1958). Unable to purchase land individually, because of the meager resources available to them, the newly freed Africans opted to pool their resources and purchased abandoned estates. This strategy represented their attempt to radically alter their socioeconomic status by seeking to exercise ownership and control over the means of production (Rodney 1981; Young 1958; Ishmael 1993, 60).

Indentureship

The historical consensus regarding indentureship in Guyana is that it came about as a response to the enlightened labour demands by the newly freed Africans for wages commensurate with their work and with better working conditions (Wagner 1975). To keep the price of labour down, the planters decided to augment the labour force by bringing immigrants from Germany, Malta, Brazil, China, Madeira, Mauritius, Europe, Africa, and other Caribbean territories. Its Indian attempt, however, turned out the most successful. Of the 341,000 immigrants brought to Guyana, Indians accounted for over 236,000 which is approximately 69% of the total numbers brought (Kandhi 1989). This strategy dealt a serious blow to the African attempt to restructure the economy and to bring about marked improvement to the working conditions and industrial relations in Guyana. The Indians came on five-years working contracts which tied them to the plantation. As a result, there were little improvements in the working conditions under which newly indentured labourers were expected to work. The importation of the immigrants resulted in racial and cultural variations in the social and cultural system in Guyana. The previously binary system of whites at the top and blacks at the bottom became a little more complex and complicated since Europeans, Portuguese, Chinese, East Indians, Amerindians and Africans inhabit the society. The two largest groups, however, were Africans and East Indians who were now forced to compete in the same economic space for the same economic value. It was Durkheim (1984) who said argued that population density and the resulting competition for scarce economic resources lead to occupational differentiation and division of labour. This process occurred in Guyana as Africans faced veritable labour competition from a labour force which was bound by contract to work for wages and under

conditions which Africans loathe to receive and work under respectively. The African response to this labour competition was to pool resources and purchase abandoned estates and to establish itself as a free peasantry (Greenidge 2001; Young 1958).

By the late 1800s many indentured contracts were expired, and the sugar economy was once again faced with a labour problem. East Indians were no longer legally tied to the estate, and they were now in a position to exercise some amount of freedom of choice in relation to estate work. One such choice was the return to India. This option, however, would have placed the sugar economy in the same situation it was in a half century ago when Africans were making some enlightened demands for better working conditions and wages. To pre-empt such a labour crisis, planters embarked on a list of strategies designed to keep East Indians in Guyana and tied to the estates, strategies which eventually redound somewhat to the benefit of Indians. In the late nineteenth century, Crown lands were becoming more easily accessible as a result of the amendment of legislation favouring a reduction in the prices and quantity of land offered for sale. In addition to these lands were offered to East Indians in lieu of return passage to India which was a provision of the indentureship contract. These lands offered were situated near to the plantations and they were usually well-drained and empoldered making them suitable for rice farming (Rodney 1981, 86).

The centripetal movement of East Indians off the estates and the beginning of what was the second phase of peasantization was not only influenced by the end of the indentureship period, but also by the crisis of the sugar industry which heightened the unemployment rate. In addition to the gradual rise of a lobby calling for a shift in exclusive attention from sugar to other minor industries (Seecharan 2005). These geographic

movements of both Africans and East Indians set the basis of the structural pluralism which later characterised the country. The geographic separation of the three main ethnic groups (Africans, East Indians and Indigenous Peoples) in the country comprised one dimension of the structural pluralism which later developed in the country. The other dimension is the occupational dimension which will be dealt with shortly. In addition, the structural dimension was only one of the many dimensions of the plural configuration of the society.

Rise of the Portuguese

While Africans were moving off the estates and into other activities and East Indians were essentially replacing Africans as estate workers, another major social structural change was taking place that would have tremendous impact on the socio-economic structure of the postplantation society. This process was the making of the Portuguese as a commercial class in the colony. As it were with the East Indians, the Portuguese were brought to Guyana as indentured labourers to replace or supplement African labour. Unlike East Indians, however, Portuguese were not seen as very suited for the kind of laborious activities which characterise plantation life. As a result, they were not brought in the large numbers as the later East Indian group. Moreover, with the emergence of East Indians on the plantations, Portuguese labour became redundant and unnecessary. This however redound to the benefit of the Portuguese as they were elevated from plantation workers to hucksters and subsequently store owners and operators. By 1852, 14 years after the importation of the first set of Portuguese immigrants, the praise of this group as a commercial class had already being sung by the local news organs (Wagner 1975, 188). Those commendations ignored the many efforts and machinations which were expended on frustrating the Africans, from gaining any success in this area and thereby competing

successfully with the Portuguese (Moore 2009, 145). Before the emergence of the Portuguese, this sector, though not as buoyant as it was under the Portuguese, was dominated by Whites and a few creole Africans.

The emergence of the Portuguese coincided with the beginning of a wage economy in the colony and with the need for a class or group that is not tied to plantation life to fulfill the role of providing consumer goods to the public demand. The Portuguese fitted this role in two important ways. First, the status structure in the colony was based on colour differentiation: the lighter the colour of a group's skin, the higher that group is in the status pyramid of the society. Portuguese were hardly distinguishable from the White planters where skin colour was concerned, so it would have been contradictory to the prevailing status structure and values to place them in the same status rung as Africans and East Indians who possessed visibly darker skin colour. Commercial activities provided an opportunity to differentiate the Portuguese group from the other darker skin groups. Secondly, Portuguese labour was no longer required on the estates, so their economic upkeep required that they transition into some other area of economic activity.

Wagner (1975) argues another important point. In any plural society which is characterised by the phenomenon of a mass of people fitting into some socio-cultural category being exploited by a small minority of another socio-cultural category, the issue of control and social order becomes a very problematic issue. One way by which minorities can deal with this issue is the control of military power. But as no society can be held together purely by military power and violence, other means of maintaining social order in an essentially exploitative society must be explored. The strategy of the White population was to use the Portuguese as a buffer group between the minority White elite and the

majority African/Creole exploited workers. The Portuguese fulfilled the function of "an allied group whose function would be to support the status quo and to overawe the subject majority" (142). Wagner's point explicitly outlines the process by which minority control is exercised over majority groups in plural societies and thereby addresses some blind spots in M.G. Smith's theory of pluralism which focus specifically and exclusively on military and political power.

In the midst of these socio-economic realities, Portuguese were able to obtain credit easier than anyone else to engage in wholesale and retail trade (Wagner 1975). Because of this easy access to credit, the Portuguese monopolised the wholesale and retail trade in the towns and around the estates. Another factor which was responsible for the success of the Portuguese is the fact that they still maintained or were allowed to maintain links with the home country. This factor also worked well for the East Indians as asserted by Rodney (1981).

At this point the socio-economic structure of the society had the following form: White Europeans made up the planter class and the political class; Portuguese and to a lesser extent Chinese made up the commercial class; Africans made of the peasantry; Indians made up the estate workers, the rural proletariat, and Indigenous Peoples were by and large restricted to activities in the hinterland. The society became entirely differentiated along ethnic and occupational lines.

During this first phase of ethnogenesis and ethnicization, various ethnic groups were introduced into the society by means of immigration (Sarna 1978). These groups came as indentured labourers to work on the sugar plantations in the colony. Their introduction adds to the complexity of the society which was formerly peopled by two corporate groups,

namely, enslaved Africans and white European planters and colony administrators. Along with these two groups were the native population who existed on the outside of the plantation system, referred to by writers as the "outer plantation", a sphere in any plantation society which is characterised by varying levels of autonomy. With the introduction of Chinese, Portuguese, and East Indians, the social and cultural system of the colony became very complex. Each of these groups served various labour functions as required by the plantation economy and fit into various status positions as necessitated by the status structure in the society (Danns 2014). While the groups were divided along occupational lines, they also became separated along geographic lines as various occupations were carried out in various geographic spaces. As a result, the groups became differentiated by phenotype, except for the Portuguese and the British who share identical phenotypical features, occupation, geography, and ancestry. These separations laid the structural basis for the hardening of ethnic identity in the latter phases of ethnicization (Yancey et al. 1976).

Second Phase of Ethnicization: Ethnicization of Civil Society

The first phase of ethnicization, dealt with above, served as the basis upon which ethnic identity developed and became solidified. This development and solidification of ethnic identity occurred for the most part in the second phase of ethnicization. This is the phase in which the modernization process referred to by Yancey et al. (1976) led to the homogenization of various ethnic groups coming from the same ancestral backgrounds and sharing the same phenotypical features. For example, among the immigrant from India, various ethnic groups were brought, but these groups eventually fused into one ethnic/racial group sharing similar ancestral narrative, phenotypical features, geographic spaces, and

industrial occupations. This identical process affected the Africans who were brought as enslaved labourers centuries before. Although they came as various ethnic groups, they became in fact racialized and differentiated as a whole from the other racial group in the colony.

The second phase of ethnicization saw the unfolding of two important processes: the formation of cultural associations and unionization. Cultural associations were specifically geared towards fostering intra-group unity and enhancing intra-group identity. They were therefore explicitly ethnic organisations with explicit ethnic/racial objectives. The unions on the other hand started as genuine industrial relations organisations but became victims of the ethnicization process which by then had already engulfed the colonial society.

In a study of the relationship between voluntary organisations and political parties, Premdas (1972) provided data relevant to this study. In the year 1969 in the the study was conducted, the author listed sixteen voluntary organisations among Africans, eleven among East Indians, six among Portuguese and Europeans, and one among the Chinese. Of the sixteen voluntary associations among Africans, two were cultural associations and fourteen were labour unions. And, of the eleven among the Indians, four were cultural associations and seven were labour unions. For the Portuguese and Europeans, there were equal number of cultural and economic associations. Premdas posits that the relatively larger number of economic associations among the Africans reflects the greater variability in the nature of work in the urban areas as opposed the the lesser variability of work in the rural areas among East Indians. East Indians were engaged mostly in agricultural work in the rural areas while Africans were engaged in various kinds of work in the public sector and mining.

The study was not necessarily concerned with the history of these organisations and therefore did not supply any information about the year of origin of these associations. It was, however, known from other sources that most of the main cultural organisations were formed early in the 20th century, while the economic organisations sprang up mostly around the time of the Great Depression in the 1930s (Crawford 1989).

The needs which these associations were established to cater to were no doubt influenced by the competitiveness of the external environment. For the masses of the various ethnic groups, intra-group social cohesion was one way of developing a strong network to enhance the competitiveness of the group viz-a-viz other groups. For the elites of the various ethnic groups, the attainment of status was made difficult by the fact that the political system at that time restricted access to persons who could not marshal a certain amount of income or property. Group representation, therefore, offered these aspiring elites a channel through which they could have achieved status in the colonial society.

Third Phase of Ethnicization: Ethnicization of the Polity

In this section the task is to highlight what I consider the third iteration of ethnicization in Guyana. During this phase political party formation and mobilization became the central institutional mechanisms through which the ethnicization process was accomplished. This occurs, however, within an environment already conducive to ethnic mobilisation and framing - a fact which will be outlined below while exploring some historical events during the third phase.

The emergence of a mass-based, multi-ethnic, national party

The People's Progressive Party (PPP) is known as the first mass-based, multi-ethnic

party in the country. The leadership comprised members of both major ethnic groups and the two ethnic groups rallied their support behind the party. For the first time contesting under universal adult suffrage in 1953, the party won the elections by copping 51% of the votes cast and 75% of the seats in the legislature (Ferguson 1999). Many researchers dealing with this period in Guyanese history refers to this period as the golden years of ethnic unity and the PPP as a united party. These researchers tend to ignore the always underlying ethnic division present at that time in the society at large and in the party itself among the various factions which made up both the society and the party. In a study of how class and ethnicity interact in the class universalism of the Bolshevik Revolution, Riga (2008) makes the point that as long as political oppression was acted out by a dominant ethnic group, a multi-ethnic coalition of the repressed which purports to transcend the barriers of ethnicity remains a viable and effective mobilization tool. It was the same phenomenon manifesting itself in British Guiana at that time. However, the unstable basis of this unity did not take long to implode.

Unfortunately, the rule of the mass-based, multi-racial party was short lived as the communist, Marxist rhetoric of a cross-section of its leadership was used as the pretext for a suspension of the constitution and the imposition of an interim government by the British. Even before the suspension, ideological differences began to develop within the party among the moderates and the left-wing factions of the party (Nehusi 2013). These differences played out in, and were even advantaged by, the colonial press. These differences became evident when it was reported in the press that immediately after winning the 1953 election, Burnham, Chase and Van Sertima refused to take up ministerial positions (The Daily Chronicle 1953a). This refusal gave rise to public concerns about an

apparent split in the party, and many party supporters upon reading the news gathered around the party office to persuade the leaders to arrive at some *modus vivendi*. While the party was private about the reasons for the refusal of the ministerial positions by the three leaders, the resignation of Vice-Chairman of the Party, Barrister Clinton Wong shed some light on the apparent reason(s) why the ministers had refused to take up positions. Barrister Wong gave the reason for his resignation as "...a newly elected irresponsible and unmanageable element has been able to direct the party affairs by means of having the greater voting strength both in the Party's Executive and General Council which are the main policy-making and supreme authority of the Party in between the annual conferences" (The Daily Chronicle 1953b). The Daily Chronicle of May 16, 1953 reported that the rumour surrounding Barrister Wong's resignation was that he was a strong supporter of Burnham as leader of the House and that he was dissatisfied with the Party's election for ministerial posts.

The ideological split led to an actual split in the party resulting ultimately in two parties, the PPP and the PNC. The fact that the leaders of these parties were from different racial/ethnic groups gave rise to the re-emergence of race and ethnicity as a point of contention. In spite of the fact that both parties had high profile members of the opposite race groups, the fact that the figureheads of the parties reflected certain phenotypical characteristics was enough to divide the country politically along ethno-racial lines.

Milne (1981) argues that the ideological differences to which many researchers give independent status was in fact derived from, in a Pareto sense, the logic of ethnic division in the country. Hinds (2010) further argues that the ideological differences served to mask the real underlying motivation behind the actions of these two leaders

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Table 1: Election results and seats distribution for three elections

Political Parties	**Years**		
	1957	**1961**	**1964**
People's Progressive Party (PPP)	47.65 (65)	42.6 (57)	46 (45)
People's National Congress (PNC)	39.4 (28)	41.0 (31)	41 (41)
United Front (UF)	-	16.3 (12)	12 (13)
Others	13.0 (7)	-	-

Note: Figures displayed represent percentages of popular votes obtained and percentages of seats obtained (in parrentheses).

It did not take long for the support of the two major ethnic groups to become crystallized behind the parties, which they thought reflected their ethnic make-up as the elections results from three elections after the split indicate.

The figures above show that the electoral support for each party correspond quite significantly with the numeric composition of its ethnic support base in the larger population.

In the first election in which the two-party competed against each other, the PPP received 47.5% of the total votes cast, while the PNC (then PPP-Burnham faction) received

25.5%. Some other smaller parties representing disparate groups received the remaining percentages (Premdas 1972). By the next election in 1961, another political group headed by a Portuguese, Peter D'Aguiar was formed and contested the election. So, this election was characterised by three different ethnic groups competing with each other for political space. The PPP headed by Dr. Jagan was supported primarily by the East Indian ethnic group, the PNC headed by Forbes Burnham was supported primarily by the Africans and the UF headed by Peter D'Aguiar was supported primarily by the Portuguese, Whites and other small race groups. Apart from the ethnic difference in the leadership and support of the parties in question, there were ideological differences which set the parties against each other. As highlighted earlier, the PPP was an unapologetically Marxist group intent on transforming the country into a communist state and breaking the stranglehold that the plantation had over the country's economy. Ideologically, the PNC was somewhat of a moderate socialist party that developed an appreciation for the complexity of the prevailing global situation and the power of the plantation system. The UF on the other hand was outright capitalist.

Though the ethnic groups voted according to their own ethnic interest, the electoral system then skewed the distribution of legislative seats in the favour of the PPP. As is evident in the table above, in 1957 the PPP receive 47.6% of the votes cast but gained 65% of the seats in the legislature. The PNC on the other hand had gotten 39.4% of the votes cast and 28% of the seats in the legislature. The electoral system was based on the electoral system in the other parts of the British West Indies. Geographic constituency representation was the principle upon which this electoral system was establish. Britain then was largely a homogeneous society, so ethnicity was not necessarily a major factor. It was the same for

many of the colonies which imported the British system. But the situation was different in British Guiana. In British Guiana as soon as the two charismatic leaders split, their ethnic support base started to crystallise behind them. And as long as the system remains a system based on first past the post constituency system, Dr. Jagan and the PPP would continue to gain the upper hand legislatively speaking.

Dr. Jagan who benefited from the system as it was then had absolutely no problem with the system remaining so. Forbes Burnham, on the other hand, saw no prospect of emerging victorious with the system as it was. He, therefore, started a campaign aimed at changing the electoral system in his favour. While many interpreted this call in purely self-interest terms, one of the main theorists of plural societies had actually recommended proportional representation (PR) as a means of dealing with the negatives of plural societies (Horowitz 1985).

As theorised by Horowitz (1985), the PR system did result in an opportunity for the forging of a coalition by the UF and the PNC in the 1964 elections. The two groups came together and formed the new government and led the nation to independence in 1966. This victory of the coalition further widened the rift between the ethnic groups in the country, especially the Africans and East Indians. Africans were seen as co-conspirators with the imperialists to wrest power away from Dr. Jagan and his party. Dr. Jagan and his party held this view in spite of the fact that the system was changed from first-past-the-post to PR by means of an arbitration process that Dr. Jagan himself had agreed to. Moreover, although Dr. Jagan claimed that the majority of Guyanese were against the electoral change, the result of the 1964 election, the election immediately after the change in the electoral system, a majority of the electorate voted against Dr. Jagan and his party. Therefore the

1964 election was by all means a legitimate election and the coalition government was a *de jure* government.

Using the claim of victimhood, Dr. Jagan exploited the insecurities of his ethnic supporters and further added to the historical distrust and suspicions which existed between the two ethnic groups. To boot, the party's strategy to deal with the claim of being cheated out of the election was to respond by means of economic sabotage and the non-recognition of the government. It is important to note that at this time the major contributor to GDP was still sugar. Sugar production therefore was the key economic activity in the country. The sugar estate workers were mainly East Indians, Dr. Jagan's ethnic support base. And by this time the East Indians were a very organized and closely knitted group owing to the presence of such integrative bodies as the mosques and mandirs, the ethnic associations and the labour unions. All these bodies were more or less marshalled by the PPP to support its program of non-cooperation and economic sabotage. The struggle was seen as a struggle for East Indian right to rule in the face of imperialist intervention. Consequently, a high level of racism and ideological extremism had developed in the party which forced out the more moderate members from the party. During the period between the elections, two groups of people broke away from the party on account of the direction the party was going. The first comprised a group of Afro-Guyanese who accused the party of degenerating to a low level of racism within its leadership and a group of East Indians who accused the party of ideological extremism. Both groups accused the party of gearing up for economic sabotage and insurrection (Ferguson 1999; Henry 1966).

The claims of sabotage moved from planning to actual execution. In 1965, there were a series of bombings and bomb threats. One such was the bombing of the US

Consulate in June of that year. These bombing and bomb scares were linked directly to the PPP by later defectors.

These acts, reflective of the official approach of the PPP foreclosed any real possibility of a coalition between the parties at a time when Burnham and the PNC were more open to forming a coalition. Burnham's willingness was reflected in many of the accommodating acts between that period. For instance, when Jagan used the pretext of ethnic balance in the armed forces as a condition for any cooperation by his party, Burnham had commissioned the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) to undertake a study of the ethnic distribution in key areas of the public sector and to recommend ways in which any imbalance could be rectified in the shortest practical period. Ferguson (1999) recorded that the first set of appointments after the commission's report saw the recruitment of 102 new recruits, 76 (75%) of which were from Indo-Guyanese extraction. In addition, in 1968, the ethnic imbalance in the police force was reduced as the distribution of Africans was reduced from 73.1% in 1964 to 61% in 1968, while the percentage of Indians was increased from 21.4% to 34% during the same period. The author saw this as a genuine attempt to address the legitimate concerns of the opposition, especially when it comes to the critical issue of race.

The coalition was short-lived as ideological (which in Guyana's case could have been translated into class and ethnic differences) differences prevented the parties from uniting for more than one term. The rift between the coalition partners placed the PNC in a vulnerable situation owing to the fact that the African numerical strength was not enough to guarantee victory to the PNC in a one-to-one race with the PPP. With the assistance of the United States of America, Burnham resorted to rigging subsequent elections in his

favour (U.S. Department of State). This rigging denied East Indians and their political representatives the opportunity to gain power through legitimate means. In reaction the PPP and the sugar worker's union, the Guyana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) organized a series of strikes and arson in the sugar industry to sabotage the economy of the country. In any ethnically homogeneous country these events would have been interpreted in purely class terms, but in Guyana these events were most readily interpreted in ethnic terms as the bulk of the Government supporters were Africans and the bulk of the PPP supporters were East Indians. The struggle became an ethnic struggle for political space and survival. Indians felt that they had a right to rule the country based on their numerical advantage and the principles of democracy which gave preference to that advantage. For them, the polity was being rigged against their own political interest. Africans, on the other hand, because of centuries of domination and exploitation were not willing to submit to yet another ethnic group. In light of the fact that the economy had been rigged against them, they had no other recourse to power but the control of the political system and the public sector (Hinds 2010).

Analytic and Theoretical Insights

From the historical review, various descriptive, analytic and theoretical insights present themselves. These are critical to an understanding of the persistence of ethnopolitics in Guyana. It is convenient to state the descriptive first then move on to the analytic and theoretical. First of all, the current ethnic configuration of the society emerged from the structural configuration of the society during the plantation era which in turn came about as a result of an interplay between economic (slavery) and ideological (white racism)

factors characteristic of extractive colonialism. Secondly, ethnic identity formation became consolidated over various historical phases, starting as mentioned above, with the structural configuration of the society, followed by the emergence of primary institutions among structurally separated groups. These primary institutions are kinship, religious and cultural institutions. They are referred to as primary because they are critical to the early socialisation of a people, and they are essential in forging group identity. Dependence on these shared institutions and their correspondence with structural borders effectively produced a combination of structural and symbolic borders coinciding with each other. Thus, making groups effectively ethnic and ready to be mobilised as such for political and economic purposes.

Mobilisation came in the form of trade unions and political parties. It must be noted that not all trade unions and political parties were constructed with explicit aim of mobilising specific ethnic groups. In the case of the first trade union and the first mass-based political party contesting under universal adult suffrage, the intentions of the leaders transcended ethnic considerations. In spite of these cross-ethnic intentions, both organisations became victims of the structural logic of the environment and splintered along the lines of race and ethnicity. Because it occurred with both trade unions and political parties at different historical junctures, it raises an important insight into the relationship between intentions and agency on one hand and social structures on the other hand. The exercise of agency seems to be more effective when the structural environment within which it is acted out is favourable. Otherwise, unless agency is directed at transforming those structures themselves, it eventually becomes victim of the prevailing structural logic.

Thirdly, the ethnicization process seems to have followed an evolutionary logic, in which the ethncization which started at the level of primary institutions such as kinship, religious and cultural institutions then proceed to secondary such as labour representation and political representation, and finally to tertiary institutions such as government. This evolutionary process results in a complete, self-sustaining, self-perpetuating ethnic subsystem. Ethnicity, therefore, became emergent beyond the meaning given to it by Yancey, et al, and took on the added meaning extant in literature of social complexity (Sawyer 2005, 2002). That is to say, ethnicity is not only emergent in the sense of being an outcome of the structural organisation of the society but also emergent in the sense that it became a self-sustaining phenomenon with independent effect on the persistence of the very structures which brought it into being.

The correspondence and coincidence of structural and non-structural factors which consolidate ethnic identity in Guyana produces what I will henceforth refer to as ethnic substructure. When various modes of differentiation coincide with each other they create distinct groups with sharp boundaries, distinct interests, experiences, and group identities. This ethnic substructure, the coincidence of these various modes of differentiation, functions as an opportunity structure. Distinct groups with distinct identities and differential location in the socio-economic sphere provide ready-made communities, already assembled social groupings if you may, with specific group-level issues and interests which could be easily co-opted and championed by aspiring politicians and/or other ethnic entrepreneurs. Whenever any of these assembled groups are (or are represented as) victims of social, economic or political exclusion this gives rise to political incentives and inducements which motivate and animate the political and social elites to act in a

certain manner. These incentives I refer to as ethnopolitical incentives and inducements. The incentive-induced behavior is characterised as ethnopolitics. Ethnopolitics is not restricted to the activities of persons involved in formal political parties. In fact, in the Guyana case ethnopolitics preceded the formation of formal political parties. Before these, cultural associations and trade unions were veritable political organs marshaled by the respective elites as tools of political mobilisation. With the formation of political parties, however, ethnopolitics gave rise to two outcomes thereby influencing ethnic insecurities both directly and indirectly. Firstly, it reinforced and consolidated the ethnic substructure by adding another institutional/organisational dimension to the existing structure. Because political parties vie for the control of the state and its resources, in countries in which these parties are ethnicized, ethnopolitics sharpen ethnic insecurities by reinforcing the interrelationship between vertical and horizontal differentiation. Ethnopolitics also directly sharpen ethnic insecurities by the use of divisive rhetoric by ethnopoliticians.

What does this mean both for theory and for policy? In the case of theory, what could be deduced is that ethnicity formation follows a particular logic. First of all, groups become associated with different geographical spaces and occupations as asserted by Yancey et al. (1976). They become horizontally separated. And, because no group of people could exist without the the most minimal institutionalisation of modes of interaction, communication, and regulation, various primary institutions such as kinship, religious and cultural institutions develop within these structurally, horizontally separated groups. These primary institutions add a symbolic dimension to the structural separations. They supplement structural boundaries with symbolic boundaries thus effectively creating ethnic groups. These are still only ethnic groups 'in themselves' which are not necessarily conscious of

their ethnic identity. As such their ethnic identity is not deployed for political, economic or any other reason, but their very existence creates the conditions of possibility for the development of higher order symbolic parameters.

These come in the form of the formal correspondence of secondary institutions with the parameters of primary institutions. By conditions of possibility it is meant that the very existence of these structural or positional parameters and their corresponding primary institutions does not translate into group consciousness or group deployment - the latter is accomplished by attaching symbolic 'meaning' to structural boundaries. The second inference is that implicit in the historical review and the descriptive facts is a theory of institutional form. By institutional form, it is meant here whether institutions serve general or particular interests in a given society. The argument being proffered here is that in plural societies institutions become fractured along the lines of the structural fractures in the society. In such societies the secondary and tertiary institutions osmotically replicate the delineations of the primary institutions and the cleavages in social structures. In some cases, this process is given formal recognition, while in other this process exists in fact though not in right. In explaining this relationship, we will address the dynamics which give rise to secondary institutions and move on to tertiary institutions. By secondary institutions, it is meant here those institutions which exist in the intermediary between the private and public social realms. These are generally referred to as civil society institutions. These institutions represent private interest in the public sphere. The two empiric examples in the review above are political parties and trade unions. Because the *raison d'etre* of these institutions depends on offering representation to identifiable groups, it becomes easy to see how the form of these will easily replicate and reinforce the social cleavages. Moreover,

the extent to which these groups are already existent serves as opportunities for political action. Secondary institutions will more likely be formed around the most salient groupings in the societies and by that fact further consolidate the salience of those groupings. In order for these secondary institutions to remain relevant, these grouping will have to remain as such and all attempts at erasing those boundaries will be strongly resisted by those who benefits from the salience and the reality of these groupings.

This point is important especially in relation to Guyana. Implicit in this explanation is the bold postulate that ethnopolitics is not necessarily the outcome of distributional issues as much as it is the cause of those issues, or more specifically the cause of which set of distributional issues is given prominence. If distributional differences exist both within and across ethnicity/race, gender and geographic groups roughly to the same extent, what determines which set of distributional matters take centre stage in the politics of the society? What accounts for the salience of the across-ethnic-group rather than the within-ethnic-group inequality and conversely, the within ethnic group rather than the within class solidarity? An analysis which is purely economic is incapable of providing a satisfactory response to this question (Henry 1989). The response being postulated here is that the distributional problem which will be most salient is that which accords with the social substructure of the society in question. The Guyana case substantiates this hypothesis. if political parties get their support from a multiracial group, the shared interest of that multiracial group will become the foremost social problematic. And they will get their support from a multi-racial group if the configuration of the social substructure changes making it difficult for them to court or pander to specific ethnic groups.

Moreover, the structural differentiation of these secondary institutions will dictate the form and functions of tertiary institutions. By tertiary institutions it is meant here those institutions whose manifest functions are to serve the general rather than particular interest. These institutions include the various branches of government, constitutional commissions, etc. Though the manifest functions of these institutions are general in nature, the actual functions are determined by the nature of the social divisions in society, particularly the divisions in the social structure and lower order institutions.This process, however, does not replicate itself in 'pluralistic' societies. It is essential to explore therefore what factors limit or hinder the ethnicization of secondary and tertiary institutions, thereby rendering the society as 'pluralistic' instead of 'plural'? Two answers immediately present themselves.

Drawing from the history of Guyana, a complex plural society approximating the ideal type of plural society (Smith 1991, 7), it is known that during the period of colonialism legislation outlining financial and property criteria for voting rights were put in place to restrict the emergence of secondary institutions such as trade unions and political parties among the colonised. These laws intended to restrict what was essentially an expected sociological outcome, that is, the replication of the structural divisions at the institutional/organisational level. It is evident, therefore, that legislative and institutional methods could be employed to restrict the process of ethnicization at the level of civil society. It is only when the legislative and rules-based barriers were gradually removed through the constant agitation of the colonised that the process of ethnicization started at the level of the social substructure continued at the level of secondary institutions. These legislative and restrictive barriers do not, however, remove either the opportunity structure

or political incentives induced by the structural organisation of the society; they merely stack legislative hindrances against them. Today Guyana remains a complex plurality in spite of various institutional and economic developments.

A different set of explanatory factors present themselves in the case of pluralistic societies, of which there are two types. One in which the coincidence of ethnicity and other modes of differentiation is low (blurred boundaries) and another in which it is relatively high (sharped boundaries), but in which there exists a large ethnic group whose hegemony determines the nature of institutional development of those societies. In the first set of societies, because of the low level of coincidence of ethnicity and structural factors, the blurring of the boundaries, and the randomisation of ethnic groups throughout various structural subsets, the ethnic-based opportunities and incentives are low and groups are mobilised along other lines of differentiation than ethnicity. This serves as a structural (as opposed to legislative) hindrance to the ethnicization process. As such the ethnic differences are not replicated in the structure of the society. This set of society is characterised by cultural pluralism only (Smith 1991, 7). Switzerland stands as an example of this type of society.

In pluralistic societies in which the overlap between ethnicity and other structural differentiation is relatively high other structural processes take place. For example, in the USA, the constituency system and political party financing lead to the dominance of two traditional political parties and foreclose any possibility for the relative success of a political party representing minority interest becoming politically critical. So, although the USA is a pluralistic society with relatively high coincidence of ethnic/racial and structural factors, the configuration of the political system suppresses institutional incentives at the

national level. This is why there is no essentially African American or Latino American party at the national level although there have been attempts to accomplish this.

This relationship between social structures and institutions and between primary and secondary institutions have implications both for the kinds of dynamics which could be expected to manifest in secondary (political parties, trade unions) and tertiary institutions (executive, legislature, judiciary). In plural societies it is expected that political party leaders fight to maintain their constituency intact so that their political support would be assured. In situations where a party has the minority, it still tries to maintain its political/ethnic base while winning over a critical cross-section of the other ethnic group's base (Hintzen 1985). This leads to the consolidation of ethnopolitics. And, it also adds another dimension to an already ethnicised social system. The reality is the opposite in pluralist or homogeneous societies. In such societies efforts are not necessarily expended in trying to maintain or win over a clearly defined community, but an amorphous, relatively fluid mass with intersecting boundaries. In pluralist societies as most industrial societies are, the ethnopolitical subordination of all ethno-classes under one dominant ethno-class renders the intra-national ethnic conflicts secondary to the international economic competition. In plural societies on the other hand, the intra-national ethnic conflicts gain more salience and prominence than the international economic competition. This is because there is no large and powerful mono-ethnic (or mono-racial) or cross-ethnic nationalist or creole group with the power to ideologically challenge the ideological salience of the segmental groups. The difference with industrial societies and societies such as Guyana is that in the former set of societies, there exists an ethnoclass capable of influencing

government policies in an environment in which national competitiveness was more salient than intra-national segmental interest, which is more salient in the latter set of societies.

Policy Insights

In response to the dominance and salience of ethnopolitics in plural societies, various scholars have proposed various solutions. With respect to Guyana, the most popular are powersharing (Jeffrey 2017; Hinds 2010; Ramharack 1992; Premdas 1972), federation (Dev 2018) and the Madisonian kind of separation of powers (Roeder 2000) which entails dividing up the majorities or the various blocks by fragmenting national power between executive, legislative and, judicial branches of Government. This coupled with the extension of civil liberties. And lastly, proportional representation (Edwards 2019) which represents another attempt to divide up the majorities. It would be useful to discuss these solutions and the assumptions upon which they are based in the context of Guyana and societies such as hers.

Power-sharing as a solution is based on the work of Lijphart (1969), and it presumes that ethnic conflict is primarily about access to political power by political elites. Theorists within this framework see political leaders as the main framers of ethnic identity and ethnic conflict. If the political spoils are, therefore, distributed fairly among these political elites, then there is no reason for them to appeal to the fears of ethnic groups in their mobilisation strategies. A reduction in this direct appeal to ethnic sentiments, and the symbol of elites working together will eventually defuse any prejudices among the larger population.

I have two arguments against this solution. Firstly, the solution deals with the political incentives aspect of the ethnic situation in the country while leaving the other incentives

and the opportunity structure intact. The distribution of economic and occupational goods along ethnic lines are incentives which political power-sharing as a political strategy is not directly aimed at resolving. Moreover, it does not even consider the opportunity structure and the kinds of influence this has on political behaviour. Therefore, the analysis in which it is embedded is incapable of explaining and accounting for the total disinterest of the political actors in power-sharing.

Secondly, power-sharing as a political solution ignores a basic sociological fact. Organic solidarity, a solidarity which naturally arises from interdependence of groups in the society, is more stable a basis for social cohesion than mechanical solidarity, a solidarity imposed on groups without regard to the structural configuration of groups.

There is still need for empirical studies of countries which adopted power-sharing as a solution and the success of those strategies (Hong 2005). The Guyana example shows, however, that since 1966, the talk of power-sharing was part of the national discourse. Attempts were also made by political leaders in some instances to initiate discussions towards this end. The reality has, however, been that there seems to be lack of interest by those in power to share power with the outsiders. The power-sharing sentiment is always more active among those outside of executive power. Whenever their situation changes with respect to executive power, their position on the need for power-sharing also changes. This means that there is something either in the social structure or political structure which produces incentives favourable to those with executive power.

If we presume that the incentives are created by the political structure and the powers which are given to the executive and the President, which is a prevailing view in Guyana, then the solution of adopting a Madisonian kind of democracy as proposed by Roeder (2000)

seems more appropriate. According to Roeder, the Madisonian democracy produces divisions in the group in power by subdividing its power into executive, legislative, judiciary, etc. The logic is that if divisions are created in the majority or those with power, it becomes more difficulty for them to combine against the interest of the minority (as in some cases the interest of the minority would coincide with the interest of either the executive or the legislature). This, however, is only possible in societies in which a high coincidence among various modes of differentiation is not existent. Those are societies with blurred borders, and as argued above, the structural differentiation at the lower level of the social structure replicates itself at the higher level of the structure.

These problems notwithstanding, the core assumption of Roeder's postulate, that is the division of power, is still worthy of assessment. The solution put forward by Horowitz (1985) is based on a similar concept. Proportional Representation is proposed by Horowitz (1985), because it has the potential of dividing power by dividing the source of that power, which is the electorate. It is assumed that with Proportional Representation, there will be a proliferation of parties based on the various manifest interests in society. Parties will be formed based on ethnicity, class, gender, and other prominent social issues. This has the potential of fragmenting the electorate, therefore, leading to various competing interests at the level of the Legislature and highly likely, based on the need to forge coalition governments, at the level of the Executive. A cursory comparison of countries with first past the post (FPTP) electoral systems and those with PR systems shows that there is some merit to this proposition. As most FPTP systems are dominated by two parties, while PR systems tend to have more parties represented in the government system. Because of this cursory comparison, I had agreed with Horowitz and proposed the removal of laws

restricting post-election coalitions so that the process Horowitz hope for could manifest itself (Edwards 2019, 2017).

However, if there is no societal transformation, which randomise the distribution of ethnic groups throughout certain modes of differentiation, then the ethnopolitical opportunities and incentives still remain. And, as long as those structurally induced opportunities and incentives remain, they serve to motivate those in power to organise and engineer institutions in their favour. There are many instances of this in Guyanese history. For example, when Forbes Burnham saw that the FPTP system was not working in his favour, supported by the US, he clamoured for a change in the electoral system from FPTP to PR. This was achieved with colonial assistance, and by forming a coalition with another party. Ultimately, Forbes Burnham was able to win the executive branch of Government. After winning the government, in order to prevent the system from producing the results Horowitz predicted, Burnham fashioned the constitution to prevent post-election coalition at the executive level. This meant that if a party win by a plurality, it was assured that the other two or more contestants could not have formed a coalition and secure the seat of power. So, while the solution posited by Horowitz (1985), no doubt provides temporary relief, a longer-term solution would be to divide the bases of power by randomising the various ethnic groups across various structural differentiation, thus, dealing with the structurally induced opportunities and incentives at their very source

Conclusion

This paper makes the point that Guyana's social system is currently characterised by a complex, multilayered, multidimensional ethno-racial structure which is a combination

of the results of intentional acts of various elite groups (Gowricharn 2013) and the structuring structure (Fenton 2003) within which these acts are constrained and to some extent determined. These various layers have been constructed in various historical phases by various elite groups pursuing status in the colonial society and representing the interest of the groups with which they identified.

The first phase of ethnicization and racialization responded to the demands of the plantation economy and society of the post emancipation period. The need for cheap, manipulable labour in the plantation economy forced the planter class to engage in a large-scale importation of indentured labourers into a formerly racialized, slave society. This led to the diversity of the sociocultural system as immigrants were brought from countries and continents quite different from the groups then extant in the colony. As the groups became distributed into various industries and sectors, by necessity they also had to occupy different geographical spaces thus resulting in phenotypical, occupational, and geographic differences among the groups. Coupled with the demands of the plantation economy, the plantation status system required that the groups become not only horizontally separated along the lines listed above, but also hierarchically structured based on skin colour and claims of ancestry.

This deepened and extended the racialization process which started in the preemancipation era and which saw Africans reduced to chattel in a globalizing economic project justified by a racist ideology. This structural differentiation provided the context and served as the base for another historical phase of ethnicization carried out primarily by another elite group in its quest for status and in its attempt to represent its ethnic (and class) constituency. This second phase of ethnicization saw the proliferation of cultural and

religious organisations and labour unions which are collectively being referred to here as civil society organisations. This phase saw the internalisation of an essentially exogenously influenced ethnic identity thus validating the point made by Sarna (1978) about the dual process through which ethnic identity is formed. In effect, this phase was characterised by the construction of the symbolic and institutional dimension to the structural differentiation of the previous phase; it provided the cultural and institutional legitimation of the differences created by the plantation system. The structural and civic institutional dimension so far constructed served as the structuring context within which the actions of a new set of political elites led to the scaffolding of a political institutional dimension to an already institutionalised ethnic reality. Their actions were both agentic and determined. Agentic in the sense that they were motivated by both the need for status attainment in a society which limited the means by which certain groups could attain status and for group representation. And, determined in the sense that they were conditioned by the structural and civic institutional realities of the former phases.

By means of a historical sociological approach to the study of ethnicity formation in Guyana, the paper highlights some analytic and theoretical implications of the historically constructed ethnic subsystem in Guyana. These analytic and theoretical implications have further implications for policy aimed at confronting the negative aspects of ethnopolitics in Guyana. The most instructive of all policy implications is the fact that actions which intend to transcend the logic of the ethnic subsystem eventually become victim of the constraining logic of that subsystem. While there are many historical instances to prove this fact, the two captured in the historical review are the formation of trade unions and political parties. Both of these were initially formed with cross-ethnic intentions but later

succumbed to the logic of the ethnic subsystem. The main insight here is that unless social action, policy oriented or otherwise, is aimed at reconfiguring the structural side of the ethnic subsystem, these actions eventually become victims of the inducements and incentives generated by those structures.

However, most attempts at conceptualising and addressing ethnic issues are approached from the ethnopolitical angle while ignoring the multilayered nature of ethnicity and ethnicization in Guyana. These attempts prioritise the development of institutions which would curtail and restrain the actions of ethnopoliticians. They then leave in place the ethnic incentive structure which functions as a compelling political force for aspiring politicians looking for a ready-made constituency. To effectively confront ethnic problems, the ethnic incentive structures must be frustrated. Without directly confronting this structure, any attempt at political institutional reforms would be at best piecemeal and temporary, and at worst, totally ineffective thus contributing to a build-up of social apathy. It is this very incentive structure which renders ineffective good governance institutions which function effectively in democratic, homogeneous societies as asserted by Premdas (1973).

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