TANG'S DILEMMA AND OTHER PROBLEMS: ETHNIFICATION PROCESSES AT SOME MULTICULTURAL WORKPLACES

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1. Introduction

In this paper I will consider several different types of ethnification processes related to the social organization of people in multicultural workplaces.¹ By ethnification process I mean a series of actions which either directly or indirectly make an ethnic characterization of some individual or group a normatively and/or conventionally 'proper' description.² Most of the social organizing I will be talking about will be the organization of face-to-face communication within various social activities. My goal here is to show how ethnicity, as one of many possible determinants of an identity, is constituted in this type of communication. Other types of social organizing I deal with, e.g. job assignments, recruitment, production processes I have no direct communicative data from; rather the data I have is of people telling us how these things are carried out. What I take ethnicity to mean is, hopefully, what the people I investigate mean by it. Thus I also hope to show some aspects and uses of ethnicity as a member's concept, the type of work it does and when, how, and why it is used.

The work presented here is micro-oriented and empirical. I will make some claims about the locus and functionality of ethnicity for a few of those very same people more macro-oriented investigators talk about in statistical terms. Whereas the question for more macro-oriented work is 'Who and what are the X (Swedish, Jewish, Kurdish, etc.)?', I feel my question is 'Why and how are the X?'. The distinction between macro and micro here is premised on the argument that 'who and what' questions are answered by social scientists as lists of traits which are potentially infinite and can not supply necessary and sufficient conditions for identifying someone as of a certain ethnicity. Instead, the counter argument goes, the identification of a person on ethnic grounds is an accomplished discursive matter contingent upon the referential occasion (Moerman 1974; Weider & Platt 1990). Furthermore, in this view ethnicity is both a process (Barth 1969) and intersubjective

¹ I'd like to thank Dora Kós-Dienes for help with an earlier version of this paper. The paper in its current form was presented at the 4th International Pragmatics Conference, Kobe, Japan.

² I will explicate this further on, but I am referring to symbolic interactionist and ethnomethodological thinking on so called "Labelling Theory" (see, e.g., Pollner 1974, as well as work on description by Harvey Sacks (see, e.g., Sacks & Schegloff 1979).

(Anderson 1983).

I will begin, in section 2, by fleshing out some of the concepts alluded to above. In the next section, entitled "Excerpts", I turn to a series of excerpts with relevance to ethnicity from two studies. In section 4, finally, I offer some conclusions based on the work presented in this paper. I have tried to order the excerpts by the studies they are taken from and the level of generality, size, and/or institutionalization of particular social aggregations. Here are brief introductions to the studies from which I have drawn the excerpts:³

FAAS: The project FAAS, ('Prior Understanding and Attitudes towards Work and Questions of Work Environment', 1985-1989, Dept. of Linguistics, University of Göteborg), focused on possible cross-cultural differences in the interpretation of some general concepts (work, safety, caution, danger, health, cooperation, friendship, family, etc.) which were relevant to workers' attitudes towards their work environment. FAAS also focused on differences in interaction routines and their effect on cooperation between persons with different cultural backgrounds. The study, in which ten workplaces in the west of Sweden were investigated, utilized observations, interviews and informal discussions with different categories of employees, questionnaires, and recordings of interactions. The FAAS project is reported in Allwood et al. (1985), Kós-Dienes (1987), and Bergman et al. (1988).

CIC: CIC ('Communication in Context at a Multicultural Workplace') is an in-depth study of communication within one multicultural workplace. Material for the study consists of video and audio tape recordings of varying types of communicative activities, the results of observation schemes, and notes and recollections from participant observation. The main informants in CIC were members of three work groups, Groups 1, 2, and 3 respectively. It is inconvenient to gloss these groups any other way than numerically. Their identification was, as I will show in this paper, a contested and discursively accomplished matter in the workplace under study. For the company's management, on most occasions, they were Chinese, Yugoslav, and Swedish respectively. This ethnification of the groups, I will argue, was contested by Groups 1 and 2. Below I will discuss in more detail phenomena concerning these groups. The CIC study is reported in full in Day (forthcoming a). Papers dealing with specific aspects of the study are Day (1993) and Day (forthcoming b, c, and d).

2. Background

In this section, I discuss some of the conceptual distinctions I make for the analyses of communication within social activities, in particular the concept of ethnification processes as one specific sub-process in a larger process of identity negotiation. The negotiation of identity deals with the continual formulation of who interlocutors are to be seen as being by participants within social activities. Whereas I feel reasonably

³ All informants' names in this paper are pseudonyms. English translations of informant speech is cited in quotations. When applicable the original Swedish, or other language, is given within parentheses immediately following the English translation.

sure of the concept of ethnification as such, I am in no position to set up any kind of strict taxonomy over the different types of ethnification processes. I do, nonetheless, try to distinguish between different types along a dimension of institutionalization.

My interest in ethnification processes arose in studies of workplaces and, more specifically, observations of the ways informants dealt with ethnicity as a practical and problematic matter. In these studies, and in this paper, ethnicity is taken as a discursive phenomenon and by no means a given because of, e.g., diverse places of birth and upbringing. For an ethnic identity to be a proper description of some group of people demands work.⁴ This view of ethnicity is attuned to the situational and dynamic process of identity negotiation. Furthermore, it is attuned to the fact that people's cultures, ethnicities, ways of life, etc. can be oppressed. Hinnenkamp (1987, 1989, 1991) has similar views as these in his work on communicative interaction between Turkish 'guestworkers' and Germans. In this work, Hinnenkamp attempts to show how the social order becomes structured within communication. What I have termed ethnification processes are found in Hinnenkamp's work on, for example, the function of 'foreigner talk'. The work I report in this paper is consistent with Hinnenkamp's (1987), yet attempts to augment it by framing the discursive accomplishment of ethnic identity within the more general conversational process of identity negotiation as well as linking ethnic identity to *local* contexts, e.g. particular workplaces and their cultures. Thus, whereas Hinnenkamp focuses on relationships between macro-level social order and the micro-level discursive establishment of an individual's identity, my present discussion seeks to delineate the ground between these two levels.

The investigation of identity negotiation and, in particular, ethnification processes as situational and dynamic processes presupposes a conception of social context as a basic analytic unit. I begin by offering such a conception of social context, then proceed to a more thorough discussion of ethnification processes.

2.1. *Social context and social activities*

In this study, I utilize the following three tenets for delineating social context.

- 1) A social context is what interactants may orient to in their surroundings.
- 2) The major determinant of what interactants actually orient to is the social activity they are engaged in.
- 3) Through a reflexive relationship the social activity becomes the social context of an interaction.

The social context of a communicative interaction is thus defined as interactants' displayed orientations accountable as social activities. What becomes this social context is a matter of what interactants show they are attending to in their surroundings, be it a prevailing attitude, a physical object, a common goal, a previous turn, an ethnic identity, etc. Such displays of attention are, however,

⁴ "Work" here is used in an ethnomethodological sense.

reflexively related to a prevailing social activity.

Social context and social activity can be seen as types and tokens, such that one might construe possible social contexts and social activities and in pursuing a course of action one instantiates a social context and social activity. Social context as a type refers to potentially available resources for social activities. By resources I mean basically (1) 'knowledge that' and 'knowledge how' — I use these terms as general classifications for beliefs, values, rules, norms, strategies, common sense, etc.; and (2) phenomena in the physical world, such as the physical environment, the biological states of organisms within the environment and so on. Social activity as a type refers to a conventionalized/normalized collection of these resources, the most important of which is the purpose or goal of the activity.⁵

In Table 1, I sketch out the parameters used in analyzing communication within social activities. The first distinction, between 'resource' and 'product', is fairly straightforward. Resources are things used to either produce or understand communicative behavior while products are that behavior. The distinction between 'global' and 'local' parameters is one of scope. Global resources affect the entire activity and, similarly, global products are patterns emerging from the entire activity. Local parameters, on the other hand, are minimal units⁶ of the activity. Local resources provide for collective representations of minimal sub-activities and for individual states at a given time, whereas local products deal with communicative behavior which is both collectively and individually constituted. Finally, the distinction between collective and individual parameters is one of a resource or a product being ascribable to more than one individual or only one individual respectively. For example, turntaking, as a global product, requires the efforts of two individuals, while the particular tools by which an individual expresses turntaking moves are ascribable to that individual's idiolect. The foregoing concepts related to resources are intended as explanatory devices for recurring communicative features of interaction. They are sense making devices which aid interactants', and our, case for the intelligibility of a communicative interaction and are not to be seen as independent of the recurring communicative features, or products, themselves. Rather, they are reflexively related to them.

The method used can be described as follows: an analysis utilizing these concepts proceeds cyclically, from the resources of which one is aware to the products, or from the products to some set of possible resources. The ultimate aim is to arrive at resources to account for particular products and the orderly, or disorderly, features of their accomplishment.

⁵ Much of the discussion of social activities here is an adaptation of Allwood (1984). Other works influencing the discussion here are Vygotsky (1962); Schieffelin & Ochs (1986); and Levinson (1992). The discussion of social context is consistent with Duranti & Goodwin (1992). For a more detailed account of these particular conceptualizations, see Day (forthcoming a).

⁶ I am stipulating here that activities may be embedded within other activities, and in doing so may be referred to as sub-activities. Social activities larger than minimal units, with minimal units here being two-part adjacency pairs, are inherently 'embeddable'.

Table 1: Parameters of social activities

RESOURCES	
<i>Global</i>	
-Collective:	Goal, Roles (identities), Sequences, Physical circumstances, Artifacts, Codes
-Individual:	Mental state, Biological state
<i>Local</i>	
-Collective:	Sub-activities, e.g. question-answer, invitation-refusal
-Individual:	Mental & biological states at a given moment
PRODUCTS	
<i>Global</i>	
-Collective:	General patterns of interaction, e.g. sequencing, turn taking, feedback, etc.
-Individual:	Individuals' communicative tools, e.g. body movement, phonology, grammar, vocabulary, etc.
<i>Local</i>	
-Collective:	Sub-activities, e.g. question-answer, invitation-refusal
-Individual:	Individuals' utterances, e.g. question, answer, invitation, refusal

2.2. Ethnification processes

As mentioned, ethnification processes are series of actions which either directly or indirectly make an ethnic characterization of some individual or group a normatively and/or conventionally 'proper' description. Sacks (1972) shows how participants in communicative events use their social knowledge, through practical reasoning and interpretative procedures, to make sense of and in those communicative events. More concretely, use of social knowledge is evidenced in the selection, management, and comprehension of 'what or who is being talked about' in the interaction. One of Sacks's well-known examples is his analysis of why we (presumably Americans and other 'Westerners') understand the following 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up' as 'The baby cried. *Its* mommy picked it up'. Although the analysis itself is too detailed to go into, a central notion of relevance here is that of 'membership categorization device'. I am interested in how informants categorize people in the workplace and how these categorizations find expression, through proper descriptions, in the enactment of particular social activities.

Proper description refers, to put it simply, to an appropriate way of referring to some person or thing. There are numerous ways of referring, for example, to 'my friend Howard' (this being one of them). I might say Howard Twilley, Mr. Twilley, Cap'n, my friend with British parents, by pointing at him, by drawing a caricature, etc. The appropriateness of any of these descriptions is determined by the availability of the categorization which is implicated in the term and by norms and

conventions at play at a particular occurrence of expression. In the case of ethnification processes, a proper description which embeds such a process is one which makes salient some local notion of ethnicity of the person described. The particular notion of ethnicity used is yet another parallel empirical matter.

At the level of a social activity, an obvious place for an ethnification process is that of 'roles (identities)' (see table 1). With '(identity)' in parentheses, I am indicating identity as a further specification of a role. Examples of ethnic identity ascriptions at this level of description would be "Swedish foremen", "Finnish carpenters", "Kurdish cleaners", etc. Moving our focus back somewhat, a result of interest for this discussion would be then the following partial description of a social activity type:

At company A there is normatively and conventionally a long-standing social activity, let's call it 'shift-change reporting', in which participants fulfill roles such as Swedish foremen, Kurdish cleaners, and so on. In other words it is an institutionalized fact of life that in doing 'shift-change reporting', one is dealing with *Swedish* foremen and *Kurdish* cleaners. If this is not the case, then one is either not doing 'shift-change reporting' or one is enacting it less than optimally.⁷

The process of ethnification in this type of example lies both in the actions leading to the creation of just this kind of social activity, and in its every instantiation. Furthermore, being an integral part of a social activity as a global resource parameter, I would claim that this ethnification process is quite institutionalized by which I mean that it has become to some extent normalized and/or conventionalized within its social context. This conclusion involves considering social activities as institutionalized structures of social interaction. Social activities vary, however, in their degree of institutionalization. For example, consider the differences in regularity and expectability between a Catholic mass and a stag party.

The relation between ethnification processes on the one hand and the conversational process of audience design on the other, can be seen in the latter's stipulation that talk is designed for an intended audience by an intended speaker. Take for example the way one talks as a grandchild to a grandparent about some issue, and the way one talks as a parent to a child about the same issue. Ethnification processes seen at the level of audience design may be more or less institutionalized, in the sense that they may be intelligible as a result of a particular social activity type, as above, or as a more or less spontaneous act.

As for the notion of audience design in relation to ethnification, I offer the following example from the CIC project. (For transcription conventions used in this and other transcripts, see appendix.)

L = Lars, a Swedish foreman
R = Rita, Group 2, female
X = Xi, Group 1, female

⁷ The evidence for such an activity would be the occasion where, for example, a *Kurdish* cleaner were not available, making the assignment of another 'ethnic' cleaner problematic.

14 L: va ska vi äta då(?)på de här festen?	what shall we eat at this party
15 R: *vvde bli kanske*\	well, maybe
0.2	
16 L: va tycker ni?	what do you think?
17 X: >*spelar inga roll,*<	doesn't matter
<skratt >	<laugh>
18 L: jaa,>men<vi har ju många olika: nationaliteter? här va.=	yea, but we have a lot of different nationalities here, right?
< gester med händer > []	<gesture with hands>
19 X: ahh	ahh
20 R: = men de gör inget.	but that doesn't matter
[]	
21 X: (.....)	
< mumlande >	<mumbling>
22 L: vad som passar alla,(.) egentligen.	something that suits everyone, really
< liftar på gonbrynen>	<raises eyebrows>
23 X: *(xx) inte*alltid	(xx) not every
[<skratt >]	<laugh>
24 R: de blir kanske olika mater,/(0.2)/*olika mat* kanske<DE bli(?)BÄ(?)TTRESOM ALLA(?)	maybe it'd be different food, different food, maybe it'd be better
[]	
25 L: a::men >vi få nästan</ bestäm bestämma för: <u>nånTing</u> .	but we should really decide, decide on something
0.3	
26 R: *Ja vet inte*,	I don't know
0.7	
27 L: har vi inte nånting so::: man kan äta som/,(.)*i*Kina elle\	Don't we have something that, one can eat that, in China or
28 R: d'kinamat ä iochförsig bra	Chinese food is really pretty good
29 X: hihi(xx)spelar ingen roll jag äter allt	hihi, it doesn't matter, I'll eat anything
30 R: a:(de jag som)	a that's what I that
[]	
31 L: ja men dejäller alla dom andra också va?	yea, but this concerns everyone doesn't it?
32 X: nja: m	yea, um
0.4	

There is an initial problem over what to eat at the party as shown by the silence between lines 15 and 16, the reformulation (repair) of the question at line 16, and the indecisiveness at line 17. The account by L of the importance of the question at 18 reveals that for him this is a question of multiethnicity, i.e. that people's different nationalities must be considered and, through his use of "we" (vi), that he

and his audience can be considered multiethnic. Thus multiethnicity is defined as differences between people due to their nation-state of birth. This account is met with some resistance as shown by the minimal response of X at lines 19 and 21 and the indifference shown by R at line 20. These responses motivate yet another account by L at line 22. At line 27 L makes the concrete suggestion of "Chinese food" which is taken as being designed for X, a member of the 'Chinese' Group 1, as she takes the following turn. X indirectly rejects the idea. L proceeds further on with yet another account of his reasoning at line 31 and again meets resistance, or at least indifference at line 32. An issue which I will pursue further on is that both ethnification processes, beginning at line 18 and at line 27, are met with resistance.

3. Excerpts

3.1. *Management's organization of work and workers*

3.1.1. *CIC*

I found that the organization of the work process, as revealed through a communicative activity analysis, inhibited communication at the workplace in that there were few work activities which necessitated cooperative undertakings amongst workers. Although there were work activities involving more than one worker, these activities rarely required more than simple physical coordination of individual assignments. As for job assignments, management policy was to assign particular sorts of people, referred to by, for example, ethnic labels such as "Chinese", "Poles", "Yugoslavians", etc., to particular jobs in the workplace. Thus job assignment here is an example of an ethnification process. What I'd like to point out here is that this ethnification process resulted in proper descriptions, e.g. a group in the workplace referable to as "Chinese", for management but not for members of the groups themselves. In other words, within a group, references to the group as "Chinese", "Yugoslavian", etc. would not be considered proper descriptions amongst group members.

3.1.2. *FAAS*

Managerial policies for organizing working teams were decided on different levels, from centrally issued directives to more or less spontaneous decisions of individual foremen, supervisors, etc. The most frequently mentioned reason for considering employees' ethnic background in placing them into a team was the question of their competence in Swedish. The different policies accounted for in the interviews conducted for this study included:

- (i) **To organize ethnically homogeneous teams.** Reasoning: the workmates can help each other when translations into/from Swedish is needed at the workplace which is good for safety reasons; they get along well together; they have no language problems when talking to each other so they can conduct their social contacts at the workplace

in a more natural way.

(ii) **To organize ethnically heterogeneous teams.** Reasoning: people in mixed groups have to use Swedish which helps them learn it; the use of minority language causes discomfort and suspicion among other ethnic groups; the use of languages other than Swedish might cause safety problems.

(iii) **To ignore the question of ethnicity when organizing work teams.** Reasoning: the natural outcome of this policy will be ethnically mixed groups, with Swedish as the main language. But if persons of the same ethnic group happen to work together, it does not matter. Neither potential communication problems nor the workers' ethnic affiliation per se are issues for the management to deal with. Problems are to be dealt with if they turn up.

Interviews showed that where policies (ii) and (iii) applied, the presumption was that Swedish is and should be the only accepted language at work as evidenced by the following quotations from our interviews:

"Unfortunately, there are still teams on the floor where Finnish is used during working hours..." (a Swedish foreman)

"If we encourage the use of immigrant languages, we sabotage the Swedish policy of helping immigrants to learn Swedish by giving them free language instruction during working hours." (a Swedish safety engineer)

These results can be interpreted as the reigning 'conventional wisdom' amongst those who decide such things as job assignments. Because of the affinity between language and ethnicity in Western ideological discourse (see Blommaert & Verschueren 1992) the act of placing people in groups according to their 'mother tongue' can be seen as an ethnification process. Further, what all of the above policies have in common are notions of language ability, language needs, and language use in an 'account' for a particular job assignment policy. There has, unfortunately, been very little research done on these notions. The basic question is what are the relationships between ability in a particular language(s) and the communicative demands of a workplace. A worst-case-scenario is that in many workplaces there is no relationship. Either the production process is designed such that communicative interaction is unnecessary (at least from an engineering viewpoint), which is what may be the case under policy (iii) above, or language ability is being used as a kind of 'shibboleth' test.⁸

⁸ From the Old Testament (Judges 12, 4-6), 'shibboleth' was the 'test' word by which, when pronounced, one could determine if another were an Ephriamite. If this was the case, then one was killed. This is discussed in relation to intercultural communication, in modern times, by Hooper (1986). The point is that it might be the case that no matter how one were to say the word, once suspected of being an Ephriamite one is doomed. For the studies reported here the 'shibboleth test' metaphor would suggest that language ability is being used as a convenient justification for discrimination.

3.2. *Workers' informal organizations*

3.2.1. *CIC*

As noted above the main informants in CIC were members of three groups, Groups 1, 2, and 3 respectively. The following discussion comes as a result of analyses performed on data obtained through recorded interviews with the informants, and recorded interaction of talk between informants as co-members of their groups.

The three groups differed in their attitudes and norms towards work and towards the social characteristic of the workplace. The main difference between the groups' attitudes and norms involved the separation of social life in the workplace from 'work-life'.⁹ For example, for the largest of the three groups (Group 1), the prevailing attitude was that there should be no difference in how one related to another person should the interaction be social life-related or work-related. Others were primarily judged and categorized according to their bearing as social 'actors' at the workplace rather than according to the skill as a worker per se. Members of the other two groups, on the other hand, were very concerned to distinguish between work and social life, the attitude here being, very roughly, 'you don't have to get along with others to do good work together'.

Workers' conceptions of their identities as members of the three groups seemed to have little to do with their possible identities as members of particular national cultures, such as Vietnamese, Chinese, Yugoslav, etc. This is to say that for group members, being a member of the group did not entail a particular ethnic identity. In general, I found little 'correlation' between place of birth and group membership, which is to say that being born in a particular country or being describable as a particular sort of 'ethnic' person seemed to be of minor importance *within* the groups. Of more importance were the inclination of a person to comport oneself in accordance with the groups' norms and attitudes, and circumstantial factors leading to just these people being at this workplace at this time — such as their involvement in a particular job-recruitment procedure or their assignment within the workplace by management. Furthermore, I found my awareness of the particular 'home-land' cultures of the informants to be of little help in my understanding of the groups' 'cultures' in the workplace. It seemed, contrarily, that the groups' cultures were determined by the functional need to adapt to a particular set of circumstances within this particular workplace.

Just as with the relationship between nationality and group membership, the use of home-land languages seemed poorly correlated with group membership, which is to say that a particular language was not an identifying characteristic of a particular group. All three groups tended to speak Swedish amongst themselves. This is not so surprising, however, given the diversity of linguistic backgrounds within at least two of the groups. Another note, in passing, regarding languages, is that I found workers seemed to have little problem in communicating in Swedish within the workplace, although, to the purist, the Swedish they spoke was somewhat less

⁹ The intuition that workplaces comprise discourses related to work in a narrow sense as well as to social intercourse in general was born out in talk about the workplace by informants.

than standard.

To exemplify how I arrived at some of these results, and in particular the problematic nature of ethnicity, I present the case of Tang. As mentioned, management's policy in this workplace was to maintain "ethnically homogeneous" work groups. By this strategy one of the informants, Tang, was 'physically' placed in Group 1, this group being referred to by the recruitment personnel as "the Chinese". Being in the "Chinese" group was a problem for Tang, and she subsequently asked to be moved to the place 'inhabited' by Group 3. I will exemplify Tang's problem with a description of how she described who she worked with. In the analysis of these types of descriptions I paid special attention to how informants used the pronoun "we", the idea being that who "we" refers to is a possible candidate for which 'group' the informant considers herself to be a member of. The method here is essentially to determine the referents of these expressions located 'out there' in the discourses of the workplace. Occurring within interactions themselves, these expressions were contingent on the interlocutors', i.e. informants' and researchers', knowledge of the workplace and were thus potential objects of repair work should their reference fail. Tang's "we's" looked like this:

Tang: 11 we's

- 1) 10 we's referring to "employees"
- 2) 1 we referring to Group 3

From Tang's expressions it does not seem that she identifies herself as belonging to any particular group in the factory other than "employees in general". A communicative network analysis, where I charted out who talked to whom, when, where, how, about what, and why, showed, however, that Tang is, communicatively at least, a marginal member of Group 1. Tang's marginality within Group 1 and distance from any other group in the factory can be understood from the following observations.

Tang has asked to be assigned to the "bow side", in spite of a strong dislike for the cheese products packed there. Here original job assignment was to Group 1, the "Chinese". Thus, she uses the organization of work in the factory to distance herself from Group 1's job assignment, her only other alternative in terms of where she could be assigned, and from Group 1 proper, a group she would be under strong pressure to join should she work on that side. Tang shares many characteristics with Group 1 members, i.e. she is 'officially' a Sino-Vietnamese, married with children, same age group, and she speaks, to varying degrees, the three languages most often used by Group 1, i.e. Swedish, Cantonese, and Vietnamese. Despite these shared characteristics Tang's reluctance to join Group 1 is seen here in her use of "we" and in other data; for example, (1) Tang, unlike some members of Group 1 who are also Sino-Vietnamese, made a point, albeit under pressure (see below), of her Vietnamese background in the party planning activity, as well as in other talks with us; (2) she says she does not like to speak Cantonese, because she's not good at it and because she speaks Swedish better; and (3) her communicative network comprises many non-Group 1 members.

Tang's desire to distance herself from Group 1 appears to be more a reaction against her possible categorization as "Chinese" than a possible categorization as a Group 1 member. The company management's categorization of Group 1 as "Chinese" can be characterized as a broad ranging cultural *qua* ideological resource in the factory with which people in the factory can routinely be organized. However Group 1 may care to categorize themselves can be seen as a narrow-ranging resource, and thus less available for the work of organizing people. It follows that company management has more control over 'organizing' resources, thus Tang's categorization as "Chinese" would be quite prevalent throughout the factory.¹⁰

In my first contacts with Tang, I was unsure as to whether she considered herself Sino-Vietnamese or not and, this seeming to be a sensitive issue, I was reluctant to ask outright. It was not before I had known Tang for some nine months that she told me that her family on her mother's side was from China, that her husband was Vietnamese, and that, in general, she and her siblings had more or less become acculturated Vietnamese. Furthermore, I had noted early on that Tang and her husband had, for several years, had plans to open a small grocery selling predominantly Vietnamese foods, and that she would be quitting her job at the factory as these plans were soon to be realized. These factors, however, would not prevent her from being a member of Group 1 by that group's own 'standards'. The company's management had established a resource in the factory whereby people like Tang were 'Chinese'. Her self-constructed ethnic background and future plans can thus be seen as motivating a reaction against a categorization of her as "Chinese", an ethnicity based label which Tang felt was incorrect and possibly inhibiting to her future business enterprise. This is what I mean by "Tang's Dilemma". We will see a bit more of it below.

3.2.2. FAAS

Spontaneous group building in breaks

Swedish¹¹ workers stressed in the interviews that it is strenuous to keep company with people during breaks who are not fluent in Swedish. "It has to be easy [to communicate]... if it's not easy, I just don't bother to try and make an effort". Another quote about an Iranian by a Swedish worker: "Ali, he doesn't count as an immigrant...he speaks Swedish fluently, I treat him like a Swede".

Ali has, to some extent, accepted his position as honorary 'Swede'. He revealed in an interview that he withholds a lot of information about himself from his Swedish friends: "I don't talk so much about myself... I don't want them to know

¹⁰ Group 1 did, in fact, have a way of categorizing themselves. They used to term "chipsider". The use of this term is discussed in Day (forthcoming a) as well as how the company management's term "Chinese" links up to ideological practices outside the factory.

¹¹ Again I must make some comment on my own references to informants in the studies. In the FAAS study, informants were chosen because of their possible identifiability as members of ethnic groups. The ethnic labels used in discussing the FAAS project reflect, essentially and for all we know, therefore, the researcher's ethnification processes.

about my mother who walks around in a veil (*chador*) in Teheran...". Obviously such talk would threaten his position.

A group of Latin-American workers accounted for their voluntary segregation from their Swedish and Finnish colleagues during breaks in the staff room by stating that the Swedes and Finns do not give any sign whether or not they are willing to have a chat. According to the Latin-American workers, the Swedes and Finns "bury themselves in newspapers" and do not initiate conversations. Thus, any attempt by the Latin-Americans at small talk would feel as an intrusion. Latin-American colleagues, on the other hand, are seen as always ready to give up a newspaper for keeping company. This pattern of group-building breaks up however if there is some activity workers pursue together: e.g., for a card game people leave their groups and join others.

Once again we see language ability as a criterion for a particular group membership, and, as in the foregoing discussion, it is set by the majority group. The example from "breaks in the staff room" is interesting because it is not language ability per se that motivates the Latin-American workers' segregation, but a perceived unwillingness to communicate. The account seems based on some notion of the workplace as a social scene, as opposed to a purely 'work' scene. This is similar to what was found in CIC (3.2.1 above).

Ethnic classification as expressed in interviews

Ethnicity was a constant topic in this material since the questions in the interviews focused on cooperation between different ethnic groups. Thus informants are given a priori a possible categorization of the workplace as comprising ethnically distinct groups. Given this 'discourse', it is of interest if and how these groups were referred to by informants.

Swedish workers usually differentiated between:

		ETHNIC GROUP 1
OWN ETHNIC	..	ETHNIC GROUP 2
GROUP		ETHNIC GROUP n

Immigrant workers usually differentiated between:

OWN ETHNIC	..	UNDIFFERENTIATED OTHERS
GROUP		

Finns are exceptions, tending to use the category 'Nordic' (Sw. *nordbor*):

	ETHNIC GROUP 1
(FINNS/SWEDES) "	ETHNIC GROUP 2
"NORDIC"	ETHNIC GROUP n

The differences within these schemes of classification might be interpreted in this way: Swedes, who are in positions of authority as foremen, supervisors, etc., make such ethnic distinctions in their organization of the workplace. It is therefore not unusual that the same distinctions are made here. Finns by having the "Nordic" category available, gain distinction through affiliation. Non-Swedes/Finns, on the other hand, seem to see things another way. Workplaces are not necessarily seen as comprised of other ethnically defined groups. Again, this interpretation has analogies in the CIC study (see 3.2.1).

3.3. Communicative activities: Identity negotiations

3.3.1. CIC

In this section I will give an example of results from conversation analyses of talk between members of different groups. This particular interaction was a simulated 'party-planning' activity. Ethnification appears in this interaction as part of the ongoing negotiation of identities ubiquitous to all communicative activities. Other examples of ethnification in the data, which I will not deal with here, include, for example, institutionalized role specifications within a particular communicative activity. An example of this from the activity at hand is that 'Swedes', for example, were normatively and/or conventionally 'chairpersons'. The following is a transcription of the section of the activity I will discuss.

M = Malia, forewoman

MA = Mia, Group 2, female

T = Tang, Group 1, female

40 M: (0.5)*underhållning.man ska kunna ha.me chin chon huang*	entertainment one could have chin chon huang
< mycket tyst> <skratt>	<quietly> <laughter>
men de ä lite svårt.	but it's a little difficult
41 MA: uu;	uu
42 T: o>deåde<	yea it is
43 M: underhållning,(0.2)o.först, a sen ska vi ta vilken mat.(.)o drick. o sen? underhållning.=de tar vi sist.	entertainment, first, and then we can take which food and drink and then entertainment we'll take it last

44 MA: ja!	yea
[]	
45 T: m	m
46 M: mat.(xx)de ska va nåt gott.	food. (xx) it should be something good
47 T: uu.	uu
48 M: oxfile:o, o de?kla:rt,	filet mignon and that of course
[]	
49 MA: x-xxxbetala"om dom betela så..då ska de vara dyrt	pay if they pay we'll have that, it should be expensive
50 M: (xxxx) jo de ska va nåt jätte gott	(xxxx) yea it should be real good
51 MA: hmm	hmm
<rörelser med pennan i händerna, skakar på huvudet>	<twirling pen, shakes head>
52 T: underbart en gott midda.du vet på svenska?	great, a good dinner in Swedish?
53 M: oxfile är jätte\ oo.	filet mignon is really goo
54 MA: hmm	hmm
[]	
55 T: mm .	mm
56 M: go mat. johoo	good food yeah
57 MA: *biff*(.)elle nånting sånt gobiff. (0.1)	beef or something like that, beef
58 T: md	md
<vänder på sig>	<turns away>
59 M: oBLANDAD de ska vå.	mixed it should be
[]	
60 T: (xxx)mycke få om man ska	very little get if one is gonna
61 M: jaa men de ska va ju blandad också,=	yea but it should be mixed too
62 T: = måste!	must be
63 M: så man kan ha,jo?,(0.15) de ä rätt många kineser.-o>varför inte:<-ha kina mat blandat,	so one can have, there are a lot of Chinese and why not have Chinese mixed
64 M: blandade olika rätter.	mixed different dishes
65 T: blandad o: blandad	mixed and mixed
66 MA: så bara (spotoss) fram,bära olika smorgås till,	so just (xxxxxxx) ahead carry different sandwiches
67 T: juste,	that's right
68 M: precis.(.) olika: o:	precisely different
69 MA: >ha en smorgås bord. om man säger som </	have a smorgasbord if one says like
69 M: lite vi:n: oo,	little wine
70 MA: glassprit	glass of liquor
<skratt>	<laughter>
71 T: jo vet.	yea I know

72 M: Ja de ä klart.	of course
73 MA: ja!	yea
74 M: lite sprit få man ju ha.sk-SKRIV DÅ! olika maträtter.	little booze one can have write it down! different food
[]	
75 MA: m .	m
76 T: ok vem ska vi göra maten av?	OK whose gonna make the food?
77 M: de ska vi köpa färdigt":	we'll buy it already cooked
78 MA: naturlitvis.	of course
<skriver>	<write>
79 M: vviss	of course
80 T: ja ska :säpa speciellna:, får:, vietnamesiska mat. (.) till mej.	I'm gonna buy special, get, Vietnamese food for me
<skratt>	<laughter>
81 M: mm.juste	mmm that's right

In this interaction the global collective resource parameter of social identity is a problem source. Line 40 marks the beginning of talk on the issue of entertainment. Malia, perhaps indicating that Tang has not been participating enough as evidenced by a call for feedback from her at Line 31 (not shown), tries to get Tang involved in the discussion by suggesting that they have "chin chon huang" for entertainment. The expression "chin chon huang" is Malia's guess at what a Chinese expression might be like. What is interesting is what she is trying to do with it. Malia has initiated an "identity rich puzzle" (Schenkien 1978). By saying something in the form of an assessment which no-one will understand, but which is obviously related to someone 'Chinese-like', i.e. Tang, Malia passes the turn over to Tang. Now it is Tang's responsibility to agree or disagree with the assessment. Thus, Malia has made Tang accountable for explaining "chin chon huang" to the other participant, i.e. Mia, who from her feedback at line 41 does seem puzzled. And, by being able to explain "chin chon huang", Tang will identify herself as being Chinese. Malia does attempt to downgrade, i.e. make less face-threatening, the identity rich puzzle by speaking quietly, as indicated by the asterisks, and by noting that her assessment might be difficult to implement, "but it's a little difficult" (*men de är lite svårt.*).

Tang refuses to solve the puzzle, and Malia's downgrade of the assessment supplies her with the means to do it. Rather than going into what "chin chon huang" might be, Tang opts to agree with Malia that it would be difficult to implement "chin chon huang". That this short sequence is experienced by Malia as problematic is evidenced by her in line 43 where she, in her role as leader, closes down the issue. Furthermore Mia and Tang appear to approve (lines 44 and 45) of pushing the entertainment issue (and consequently "chin chon huang") to the bottom of the agenda.

The next issue is food and here Tang attempts to sort out her ethnicity for the others. Her agreement to the assessment concerning "filet mignon" (oxfile) at line 52 is made seemingly ironic by her remark about it being a good choice for the party "in Swedish" (på svenska). Here Tang is pointing out that, if ethnicity is to be a question, then such taken for granted assumptions like the appropriateness of filet

mignon, can not be taken for granted as they also can be seen as markers of ethnicity. Malia seems to pick up on this. At line 56, she upgrades, i.e. makes more 'palatable', the original assessment (line 48) to just "good food" (go mat). Mia tries to reinterpret this as "beef" (biff) upon which Tang turns away, seemingly refusing to participate further. Malia then, emphatically, provides a new assessment (line 59), a type of compromise, that they should have "mixed" (blandad) food and Tang re-enters the social activity.

Troubles begin again, however, at Malia's assessment (line 63) that because there are so many "Chinese" (kineser), they should have "mixed Chinese food" (kina mat blandat). Tang, at line 65, seems to disagree that it should be mixed Chinese food, suggesting instead in an upgrade that the food should just be "mixed" (blandad o: blandad). Following some brief discussion of alcohol, the issue of where they are to get the food is brought up by Tang who, surprisingly, overrides Malia, takes control and moves to another issue (line 76). It is in this sequence that I see Tang setting the record straight as to her identity. After an agreement that the food should be catered has been reached, Tang, at line 80, provides the assessment that "special Vietnamese food" (specielna:, får:, vietnamesiska mat) should be bought. She downgrades her assessment, which might otherwise appear egoistic, with a laugh. Malia agrees with the assessment and the matter appears settled.

4. Conclusion

As a way of tying things together I would like to suggest some areas for further research to some extent warranted by the discussion of the studies reported in this paper. The first has to do with what I'll call the 'ethnicity' problem. In the studies presented here, the problem seems to be one primarily for people in authority, or who wish to be so, and in the observed cases this usually implies the majority ethnic group, i.e. Swedes.¹² Non-Swedes, on the other hand, just don't seem to indicate in their talk a categorization of people along ethnic lines. In fact, it often seems as if they wish to avoid such a categorization. This is an interesting result in relation to other studies where it was found that possible minority group members use ethnic minority categorization as a way of avoiding a social class-based categorization (Moerman 1974; Spicer 1940). In these studies, however, the possible ethnic minority members were at the bottom of the social class-based scale, thus a social class-based categorization would be heavily stigmatized. Because of the relative egalitarianism of Swedish society, the social class-based distinction is less available, thus the avoidance of an ethnicity based categorization would indicate that *ethnicity* is heavily stigmatized.

That potential members of ethnic minorities wish to avoid such a categorization can be made sense of if one takes note of why a particular 'ethnic' group of people is in a particular place, at a particular time, for some particular

¹² Further study based on this line of thinking, however, must take into account, and indeed incorporate as an area of study, reports of problems grounded in ethnification processes between ethnic minority groups. In a rather speculative vein, I suggest that this type of 'ethnicity' problem might be a process upon a *proactively* established ethnically divided scene.

reasons. Focusing more on the methods by which immigrants come to grips with lives in their new circumstances and just what those circumstances are is, I feel, a method common to other researches which have attempted to 'turn the tables' on previous studies of intercultural contact and communication. I have in mind here, aside from the work by the contributors in this volume, works such as Hinnenkamp (1987) and Singh et al. (1988), which have helped to offer a view of minority group members as active agents trying to find a place in a new, and often not so receptive, society. This is quite a different view than that prevalent in many other studies of intercultural contact. In studies of, for example, value orientations (e.g., Hofstede 1980), so-called intergroup communication (e.g., Gudykunst 1986), second-language learner discourse (e.g., Varonis & Gass 1985) there seems to be a suggestion that all differences between people are cultural and that culture is omnipotent within the individual. Culture is seen, in the first two examples, as a kind of transcendental 'personality' which determines individual psyches or, in the third example, as a 'world-view' determined by a 'speech community'.¹³ People are cultural automata and, in being so, their actions in the world are made accountable for in terms of unmotivated and unconscious processes. Thus differences, which cause "problems", are essentially blameless, and inevitable.

Offering the alternative view of interlocutors as active in the 'here and now' has some consequences. For example, communicative behavior formerly seen as 'interlanguage' phenomena can now also be interpreted, for example, as possible forms of passive resistance.¹⁴ An example of this is the lack of participation on the part of Tang in the excerpt above. One possible interpretation of this might be that it is caused by a lack of linguistic resources. My interpretation has been, however, that through such behavior Tang shows her resistance towards an ethnification process. Another example makes poignant a consideration of why Tang, as a potential member of a particular ethnic group, was where she was. One can gloss Tang's dilemma as the problems of a person who would rather not be ethnically categorized, but, when such is unavoidable, then cast her as Vietnamese and not Chinese. Tang is in Sweden because of the same dilemma. Cast as Chinese in Vietnam, she was forced to leave that country and, to her chagrin, this dilemma has followed her all the way to the party planning activity. I think the same sort of dilemma is a feature of many immigrant lives, especially political refugees and poses a difficult, though not insurmountable problem, I feel, for prescriptive thinking on 'multicultural' societies.

Another area of study I feel worth pursuing deals with members' concepts of ethnicity. In the studies summarized here, characteristics such as race, nationality, and language ability seemed to be the main criteria for ethnification processes. One way of structuring these criteria as members' resources is as a set of ordered rules such that:

¹³ These views of the 'culture' of intercultural communication is also criticized in, e.g., Blommaert (1988) and Day (forthcoming c).

¹⁴ With this term I am alluding to the work of, e.g., Scott (1985) and de Certeau (1988).

1. If 'mother language'¹⁵ is known then that language implies that ethnicity.
(mother language = Chinese → ethnicity = Chinese)
2. If 1 doesn't hold then country of passport implies that ethnicity.
(passport country = China → ethnicity = Chinese)
3. if 1 and 2 don't hold, then race implies that ethnicity.
(person 'looks' Chinese → ethnicity = Chinese)

Rule 1 above has been discussed in some fascinating work by Blommaert & Verschueren (1992) in their discussion of how journalistic texts project a particular analysis of the relations between language and ethnicity. The journalistic analysis shows a complex set of implicational relations between the concepts of ethnicity and language, especially language ability, as members' concepts. These findings give further understanding of the use of language and linguistic ability in the accounting practices discussed above. Rule 3 receives some treatment in Rothbart & Taylor (1992) in their suggestion that members use social categories as natural kinds. I feel that these types of analyses are very useful in understanding the dynamics of intercultural contact and communication in that they attempt to fathom ethnicity and ethnic differences from the perspective of participants in such contact and communication. That is, concepts like ethnicity, culture, race, etc. become topics of research rather than analytic resources (see Zimmerman & Pollner 1971). In this paper I have attempted to show what one might do with a concept of ethnicity, however it is conceived. Studies devoted to abstracting over these concepts are important, yet equally important is an understanding of the functionality of them in particular circumstances.

Appendix

Transcription conventions:

(.)	micro pauses
.	stopping fall
,	continuing intonation
?	rising intonation
-	cut off sounds
!	animated intonation
x	quieter speech
CAPITALS	louder speech
>x<	quicker pace
—	emphasized, stressed speech
(xxx)	inaudible talk
<xxx>	para- and extralinguistic speech phenomena
:	continuing sound
=	quick start after previous speech
[]	overlap
0.5	pause (minutes.seconds)
/	self interruptions
\	interruptions

¹⁵ By "mother language" I mean the peculiarly western conception of a person having one 'basic' language.

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