

## (Identity and Difference): What Good are (Ethnographic) Models?

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Because I know *these ethnographic cases* best, I use examples from my work with coauthors to give ethnographic modeling examples—for Turkish nomads, the Irish Republic, Natchez and Australian social networks—in order to highlight propositions about ethnographic modeling.

**Ex.1.** *Aydınli nomads* (White and Johansen 2005). Models may “travel,” stretch and condense, as to how they operate on multiple levels. Much of my recent work, as in this book, focused on models that use new concepts for deriving significant social properties from data on kinship networks. For the *Aydınli* nomads, one use of these models was to explore the implications of concepts as they expand or shrink their meaning *in relation to the network(s) they refer to*. The *Aydınli* have sets of concepts such as those roughly translated as clan and family—*kabile* and *aile*—that operate as shifting signifiers for actual *scalable groups*. *Kabile* (Arabic~*lineage*) is used for maximal lineages or large sublineages but also for clans composed of cohesively linked lineages, and for tribes as cohesively linked clans. Similarly, the key term *aile* (Arabic~*family*) is shown to be a signifier for cohesive family levels that shift meaning from a densely intermarried lineage segment, down to an extended family, to a nuclear family, or the broadly metaphorical “we’re all family”—i.e. cohesively intermarried at some level. We showed how these sliding signifiers, when synchronized with changes in actual kinship networks, corresponded to sliding scales of social cohesion in which the size of kinship groups expands or contracts with changes in their cohesive boundaries and densities that operate through *structural endogamy*. A ***structurally endogamous group*** is one whose marriages and blood linkages extend so as to connect every married pair by redundant kinship-marriage paths. New vocabularies and network models such as these allow us to find and visualize how social configurations map out ethnographically, which we do in successive chapters, as in, for example:

Ch6 on how *structural endogamy* as social cohesion continually reconstructs the *Aydınli* clan and deconstructs it over time into different segments

Ch7 on the *flexible scalability of cohesion*—in which scale-up or scale-down can enlarge, without adding interpersonal costs, when links are formed, or shrink as certain ties are dissolved

Ch8 on *fractally scalable* network structures for the *Aydınli* (also found throughout the Middle East) when generated by preferential decay for marriages with blood relatives ranked by kinship distances

Ch9 on how judiciousness and *structural cohesion* among generational sibling-in-law sets and elders acts an equivalent of “electability” in a decentralized system of emergent leadership.

The modeling of effects of emergent structural cohesion, here (reviewed by Wolfe 2005), as elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> has been predictive, in a great variety of social contexts, ranging from high school attachment to collaborations among firms and organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> D R White & U C Johansen, 2005. *Network Analysis and Ethnographic Problems: Process Models of a Turkish Nomad Clan*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Press (one of their best sellers). (Review by Alvin Wolfe in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38(4):603-605). James Moody & D R White. 2003. Structural Cohesion and Embeddedness: A Hierarchical Conception of Social Groups. *American Sociological Review* 68(1):1-25. Walter W. Powell, D R White, Kenneth W. Koput, & Jason Owen-Smith. 2005 Network Dynamics and Field Evolution: The Growth of Interorganizational Collaboration in the Life Sciences. *American Journal of Sociology* 110(4):901-975.

**Ex.2. Irish language.** Here, our models led to national policies for voluntaristic rather than coercive support for the Irish language, Irish is now thriving and extensively supported by voluntary organizations such as listed here from the Government of Ireland (2006:34) website.

Organisation	Role	Website
Conradh na Gaeilge	Promotion of Irish language in all aspects of life	www.cnag.ie
Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge	Support for the Irish language as a living language and development of ability to speak it	www.gaelport.com
Gael-Linn	A Foundation that promotes the language in the culture and business sectors	www.gael-linn.ie
Coláiste na bhFiann	Clubs to provide opportunities for members to enjoy leisure activities through medium of Irish	www.colaitenabhfiann.ie
Glór na nGael	A national competition with language preservation and development as central objectives	www.glornagael.ie
Comhluadar	Provision of support for parents who wish to raise their children through Irish	www.comhluadar.ie
An Taibhdhearc	National Irish–language theatre	www.antaibhdhearc.com
An tOireachtas	Festival of native Irish language art and culture	www.antoireachtas.ie
An Cumann Scoildrámaíochta	Promotion of school drama in Irish	
Gaelscoileanna	Co-ordination organisation for all-Irish schools	www.gaelscoileanna.ie
Eagraíocht na Scoileanna Gaeltachta	Umbrella and support group for Gaeltacht schools	
Ógras	Irish language Youth Organisation linked to Conradh na Gaeilge	www.ogras.ie
Feachtas	Summer camps and other activities through Irish organised for young people	www.feachtas.ie
Concos	Over 25,000 students attend Irish Colleges every Summer	www.concos.ie

**Table 1: Network-based voluntary supports for Irish, 2006**

**Ex.3. The Natchez “paradox”** (Hart 1943, and discussed up to 1974 in many anthropology texts) was highlighted by anomalies brought to the surface in simulation models that subscribed to John Swanton’s description of a bizarre system of lineages. “Weakened assumptions” of the model that resolved the paradox were tested by prosopographic network modeling (e.g. there were *no Honored women mentioned in the full corpus of historical texts on the Natchez!*).

	<u>Swanton’s (1911) Model</u>	<u>White’s (1974) Model</u>
<b>Axioms</b>	Matrilineal lines in 4 groups	Matriline for Sun royalty with rank decay for nobility
<b>Groups</b>	Sun matrilineage, children of ♂ are Nobles Noble matrilineages, children of ♂ are Honored Honored lineages, children of ♂ are Commoners Honored (♂) titles Commoner (♀♂) lineages	Sun’s royal lineage, children of ♂ are Nobles, matriline rank for 3 <sup>rd</sup> generation ♀s falls to Noble rank. Noble lines, children of ♂ are Honored, matriline rank for 3 <sup>rd</sup> generation ♀s falls to <i>Commoner status</i> Honored: (♀- <i>no Honored women!</i> ) sons (♂) of Noble men Honored titles (♂), achieved ( <i>no Honored women</i> ) Commoners (♀♂)

**Table 2: Weakening the Axioms of Descent for Natchez Nobility**

**Ex.4. Australian section systems** are recast in models and ethnographic understandings on larger scales and in local detail. A simple cognitive model of chains of sibling and siblings-in-law sets in which marriages sequentially connect to “same generation,” linking back or ahead in history if wives are much younger on average than husbands, or can jump two generations above or below as allowed by alternating generation moieties. This model allowed us to compare and reconcile cognitive egocentric categories with actual networks of marriage and descent.