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Special Issue: 
Ethnicity, Family, and Community

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Editor’s Note

This special issue of the journal is on the theme “Ethnicity, Family and Community,” which was the topic of our 23rd annual conference held in March 1995 in Boulder, Colorado. Mary Kelly, our special issue editor, has selected an excellent set of quality articles focused on the theme. Nowhere more than in the field of ethnic studies do the topics of family and community play such important roles. One need only look at the dynamic changes occurring in U.S. society to see how these changes influence and are influenced by ethnic/racial families and the communities in which they reside.

In her introduction, Mary Kelly demonstrates how immigration has played a significant role in establishing ethnicity and ethnic identity within a societal context. It is important to note that recent immigration continues to influence both immigrant and non-immigrant perspectives on ethnicity and ethnic identity. Several themes found in the articles revolve around topics such as the pressures of assimilation, the maintenance and transmittal of ethnic identity, ethnic options related to class differences, and the emerging impact of ethnic identity for multiracial children. In this latter respect, the potential creation of a multiracial category by the federal government for census purposes could have a tremendous impact on ethnic/racial groups in our society.

This issue also marks the first one with our new journal title - *Ethnic Studies Review*. We have restructured and combined the publication of our journal, formerly titled *Explorations in Ethnic Studies*, and our book review issue, previously called *Explorations in Sights and Sounds*, into this new format. In *Ethnic Studies Review* we will continue to publish our standard research articles, but will also include research notes, as well as the major review essays and book reviews formerly found in our book review issue. Additionally, we will increase the number of issues per volume from 2 to 3. We will keep the current volume numbering sequence and issues 1-3 of each volume will be published in February, June and October, respectively.

Miguel A. Carranza
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
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The Importance of Families and Communities in Understanding Ethnicity and Maintaining Ethnic Identity

Mary E. Kelly
Central Missouri State University

Introduction

Social science provides us with a variety of theories that attempt to explain the dynamics of race and ethnicity. Many of these theories are concerned with the basic question of ethnic difference: its origins, persistence, and decline. In the contemporary literature on immigration to the United States and on how immigrants adjust to that relocation, assimilation and the persistence of ethnic identity have often been considered polar opposites. Researchers, however, are beginning to find that both processes often occur simultaneously, as when immigrants become acculturated into American society but also maintain or even construct distinct ethnic identities, often "symbolically." Even though a generation of immigrants may give up their ethnic identities, adopt the host language, and intermarry, their children or grandchildren may choose to renew ancestral ethnicities, and in so doing, may even contribute to the re-ethnicization of their parents as adults. Ethnicity (and ethnic identity), therefore, is both a conservative force as well as an agent of change. The articles in this special issue of Ethnic Studies Review explore the dynamics of ethnicity in the United States and contextualize the experience of various groups within families and communities.

Since "Ethnicity: Family and Community" is such a broad topic, this special issue can only capture a portion of the very interesting ongoing research in the area. While the articles included are diverse, they center around the general themes of understanding problems associated with ethnicity and ethnic identity. Social issues related to ethnicity include internal migration patterns and providing public assistance to immigrants. How can communities cope with the needs of diverse immigrant groups? Is assimilation into the dominant host society always
the best solution for these groups? Another difficulty associated with families and ethnicity is when families want their ethnic or racial culture to be taken into consideration even when they and their children are in settings outside of the home. Two articles in this issue focus on dilemmas of transmitting ethnic culture and identity when children are of a different race or ethnicity than their caregivers (including within the home). Finally, the issue concludes with articles concerning the maintenance and transmission of ethnic identity. In the case of Vietnamese Americans, the focus of concern is on the too rapid “Americanization” of the second generation. For Lithuanian Americans, however, the concerns are somewhat different. Instead, the task facing Lithuanian Americans (and other white ethnic groups) is how to retain ethnic identification after several generations of acculturation, assimilation, and intermarriage in the United States.

**Understanding Ethnicity**

Jenkins reminds us that although internal processes of group identification take place, the role of external categorization (which includes power and authority relations) is also important in that it establishes what identities are acceptable to various groups. It is this external categorization which affects recent immigrant groups with few resources, as is the case among the Hmong in the United States. Additionally, whites have different "ethnic options" compared to "colored" minorities in the United States. This is a particularly sensitive issue among parents of multi-cultural/racial children and for parents raising children of another race than their own who feel that their choices are unfairly constrained. An important element of ethnicity is its intersection with social class. For instance, purely symbolic ethnic connections are more prominent among middle-class Hispanics and whites, while lower-class Hispanics tend to view ethnicity as part of their disadvantaged minority status. We see this played out among parents concerned with their children’s child care--do they emphasize their class expectations when searching for daycare or does finding a culturally sensitive daycare take precedence?

The article, “Hmong on the Move: Understanding Secondary Migration” by Jac D. Bulk focuses on the geographic movement of Hmong refugees in the United States. They tend to settle in three states: California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota both for employment opportunities and to meet their familial obligations. While they are accused of being “welfare nomads,” Bulk convincingly argues that this is an erroneous assumption. Although Hmong refugees tend to congregate in regions with high rates of unemployment and welfare dependency, they do so in order to be with family and clan members. For them, it is more important to maintain their traditional identity as a community than to maximize
their own individual self interests. In effect, these conditions result in Hmong having a migrant rather than a minority orientation toward their position in United States society.

The articles by Verschelden and Uttal also focus on the problems of maintaining traditions and ethnic identity. The article “Shared Ethnicity in Transracial Adoption” by Cia Verschelden explores the complexities and controversies over transracial adoption. In particular, she addresses issues faced by white parents who adopt black infants. Such an adoption questions the nature of ethnicity. Is it an inherited trait or learned? Verschelden argues that the learned aspect of ethnicity is the most important one. However, given a society which treats blacks and whites differently due to racial characteristics, white parents of black children are faced with the task of trying to teach their children necessary coping skills. She contends, however, that through the process of “sharing ethnicity” that both parents and their children can cope with social reality.

Like Verschelden, Lynet Uttal focuses on the issues associated with maintaining ethnic/racial identity. In her article “Racial Safety and Cultural Maintenance: The Childcare Concerns of Employed Mothers of Color,” however, she explores the lack of continuity between the needs of the parents and paid caregivers. She argues that it is important to have childcare which acknowledges the importance of race, culture, and class. In particular, she argues that mothers of color take into account racial safety and cultural maintenance when they make their childcare decisions. While Bulk, Verschelden, and Uttal all focus on problems associated with ethnicity in communities and families, the final articles place more emphasis on the maintenance of ethnic identity.

**Ethnic Identity**

Both when ethnicity fails to be transmitted to subsequent generations and when it is resurgent, it becomes clear that it cannot be explained simply as the passing down of ethnic traditions and culture from one generation to the next. Instead, ethnic groups and individuals actively construct an ethnic identity through the creation of ethnic symbols, boundaries, communities, and culture that change depending on both group and individual circumstances. One can adopt a multitude of ethnic identities, for example—regional, national, civic, and social. The choices available are often connected to cultural symbols. As individuals and groups, we select what cultural representations we wish to emphasize and act upon.?

Joseph Stimpfl and Ngoc H. Bui’s contribution to the special issue, “I’d Rather Play the Saxophone: Conflicts in Identity between Vietnamese Students and Their Parents” takes a look at identity maintenance among Vietnamese Americans. Ethnic identity formation of the
children of Vietnamese immigrants is affected by their educational attainment as well as their integration into American culture. At the same time, their very assimilation negatively affects their relationships with their parents. Often parental expectations contrast sharply with the desires of the youths themselves. In particular, the acculturated children fail to place the family as a central location in their lives. They tend to place their own interests before the needs of their family.

While Stimpfl and Bui focus on recent immigrants, Mary Kelly's article, "Ethnic Conversions: Family, Community, Women, and Kinwork" focuses on the role that families and community play in transmitting and maintaining ethnic identity among Lithuanian Americans across several generations. What is particularly interesting about her article is the fact that the ethnic identity sometimes is created through community and familial ties rather than through actual ethnic heritage. This is one strategy by which increasingly assimilated ethnic groups with high intermarriage rates can retain ethnic identity and culture.

In addition to the articles, this special issue, "Ethnicity: Family and Community," includes a selected bibliography of current readings on the intersections between ethnicity, family and community compiled by the guest editor and Thomas Sanchez. Readers interested in the articles included in the special issue can further explore these areas on their own. The bibliography is organized into three sections: Anthologies and Edited Volumes, Books, and Journal Articles and Book Chapters. Each section is ordered alphabetically by author. The bibliography includes a sampling of publications in the areas of Sociology, Psychology, Social Work, Dance, Folklore, Education, Gerontology, Ethnic Studies, Social History, Communication, and Women's Studies.

The guest editor would like to thank Miguel Carranza, the editor of Ethnic Studies Review, for giving her the opportunity to work on this issue. In addition, she would like to thank the staff and faculty of the Department of Sociology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Stephen F. Austin State University for their support and assistance. Finally, she would like to thank the contributors to the special issue for their insight and patience and the outside reviewers for their time and helpful editorial suggestions.

Notes


8 This article was sent out for an external blind review by Ethnic Studies Review senior editor, Miguel A. Carranza.
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Hmong on the Move: Understanding Secondary Migration

Jac D. Bulk
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

Between the time of first arrival of the Hmong refugees in 1975 and the mid-1990s, there has been much geographic movement of these new Americans. An initial pattern of Hmong residential dispersal throughout the American states has gradually transformed into a predominantly tri-state concentration (California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota). This highly distinctive resettlement pattern is the result of delicately balancing the most essential substance of Hmong tradition with pragmatic considerations such as job prospects (especially farming work), access to language and job training programs, extended family and clan obligations, changing federal policies for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), changing welfare eligibility regulations between the states (especially as it relates to AFDC-UP), climate and topographical considerations, and the like.

This paper details how the Hmong settlement profile within the United States has shifted between 1983 and the mid-1990s as a consequence of secondary migration. Quantitative comparison among Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Thai settlement patterns throughout the United States is provided. The remainder of the paper attempts to explain why it is that 89 percent of all the Hmong in the United States currently reside in only three states. The broad conclusion reached is that the primary factors driving this dynamic pattern of Hmong resettlement are "economic betterment initiatives" and "extended family and clan obligations". The other factors cited above appear to have more derivative or secondary importance as influences upon Hmong resettlement.

Introduction

As a nation of over fifty million foreign-born persons, the United States has experienced a wide variety of settlement patterns over the past two hundred years. Most typically, however, immigrants have followed the trail of "economic opportunity" often beginning with family relatives. Getting a start in a new society has always been and remains an awesome undertaking. Relatives provide vital resources, information, and social contacts through which one may first gain employment. Most immigrants initially settle in ethnic communities for this very reason. However, the Hmong, like other Southeast Asian refugees, begin arriving in the United States after 1975 without the benefit of any pre-established ethnic communities to move into. Furthermore, most Hmong did not come to America with the intent of seeking a new life but rather with the intent of preserving their old life in a new location.1 This is the distinction that Jeremy Hein draws between a group having a predominantly “migrant orientation” versus a “minority orientation.”2 In light of these differences, the settlement patterns of Hmong and other IndoChinese refugees may be anticipated to differ from the more traditional immigrant groups.

The secondary migration literature shows that Southeast Asian refugees fit into a singular pattern---substantial geographic dispersal, over one-half million Southeast Asian refugees (mostly Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodians, Lowland Lao, and Highland Hmong) by 1982, followed by substantial secondary migration. This internal resettlement resulted in residential movement towards “the West and South and towards areas of higher refugee population.”3 The causes of this secondary migration stem from a variety of factors foremost of which are indicated to be the search for stable employment and reunion with relatives.4 Regarding the first of these, Kelly notes that while the occupational qualifications of the Southeast Asian refugees (in terms of basic census categories) are similar to the general United States population, they tend to be have a difficult time finding jobs that pay above the minimum wage scale. Especially for the Vietnamese, this signifies downward mobility and tends to preserve dependence upon the US welfare system for economic survival.5 Regarding the second of these, Mortland and Ledgerwood conclude that Southeast Asian resettlement “... is part of a larger process: it is a voluntary act by the refugee that is profoundly influenced by traditional kinship relationships, patronage systems, [and] Southeast Asian mobility.”6

At present there appears to be much general confusion and some public ill-feeling directed at the Hmong refugee population in the United States. Much of this is based upon myth and misinformation. One such mistaken notion is that the Hmong are a "nomadic people." Another such notion is that the Hmong lack a strong "work ethic" and as
such prefer welfare dependence over economic self-sufficiency. Together, these mistaken notions suggest that American Hmong have become welfare nomads. As Congressman Mazzoli stated it on the record, "refugees have come to view welfare as an entitlement and quickly abandoned their cultural work ethic." As wrong as these notions are, they can easily be misconstrued from only a superficial acquaintance with the pertinent facts.

This paper will attempt to shed some light upon the phenomenon of Hmong secondary migration in the United States. The term secondary migration is used here to designate the geographic relocation of an ethno-racial group subsequent to its initial settlement. Since fully 89 percent of the Hmong in the United States (as of the 1990 Census) have become geographically concentrated in only three states—California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota—the question of "why this has happened" naturally arises, especially in light of the fact that there was no effort at all on the part of the federal refugee programs to encourage this type of concentrated settlement. Indeed, to the extent that there was any national refugee resettlement policy, it was to encourage a geographic dispersal of Southeast Asians so as to minimize social and economic impact upon local communities. This paper will attempt to clarify both "how and why" this contrary pattern of geographically concentrated Hmong family settlement came about and is continuing.

**Hmong Heritage**

In the first place any notion that the Hmong people are by tradition nomadic needs correction. While it is true that Hmong highland villages tend to move every ten years or so, this is not because the Hmong value "geographic mobility" per se as, for example, the Rom (Gypsies) or Bedouin traditionally have. On the contrary, the principal reasons that whole Hmong villages move are either that the nearby land has become infertile after years of slash and burn agriculture or to get away from an outbreak of disease believed to be caused by the presence of evil spirits, especially the phim nyuj vaim or "forest spirits". However, once the decision to move has been made by the village leaders, the new site is rarely more than two days walk from the old site. This is partly because new sites are often selected on the basis of favorable hunter and traveler reports from local community members. Also, by custom, it is considered "too risky" to allow children to sleep in the forest for more than one night at a time since traditional belief has it that when children sleep outside of the protective enclosure of the Hmong home, the phim nyuj vaim pose a very real threat to the child's health (this is referred to as "soul loss"). This and numerous other more pragmatic considerations explain why Hmong are generally hesitant to resettle. Of course, this cultural fact may be obscured by showing the vast distances that Hmong people
have journeyed across the Asian continent (from Northern China to Central China to Southern China to Laos) over the past several millennia. Nonetheless, these major geographic movements of Hmong population have been infrequent, highly sporadic, and typically driven by Han military force. In short, the Hmong are not properly described as "nomadic," at least not by any standard definition.

Hmong Work Ethic

Likewise, any notion that Hmong people are lazy or deficient in a "work ethic" flies in the face of the facts. Indeed, it is not uncommon to hear adult Hmong say that mainstream Americans are "lazy" by comparison to themselves. As swidden (slash and burn) farmers, the traditional Hmong lifestyle was one of hard physical labor from sunrise to sunset. They grew all their own food supplies, hunted wild game, built their own houses and furniture, and manufactured their own clothing, jewelry, and musical instruments. The misconception of the Hmong as being "lazy" apparently derives from the observation that many American Hmong are currently unemployed and receiving welfare assistance. From this it is inferred that "these people" must not place a high value on "working." However, this has little or nothing to do with Hmong values towards work. Most adult Hmong who are currently without jobs lack English language fluency, lack background in formal education, and do not possess any marketable trade skills. Beyond this, many of the elder Hmong adults no longer feel any obligation to work as their children are now expected to support their parents in their old age as has always been the Hmong tradition. None of this, however, demonstrates any loss of a work ethic. Those Hmong who have found employment (mostly in factory work) are recognized to be reliable, hard workers. Likewise, their children are widely recognized to be hard-working students reflecting their community's normative pressures to excel in their labors.

Clan Obligations

One vital aspect of Hmong heritage is their clan system of social organization. There are a total of 22 Hmong clans of which only 14 are common in the United States---Chang, Hang, Her, Khang, Kong, Kue, Lee, Lor, Moua, Thao, Vang, Vue, Xiong, and Yang. Much of Hmong identity as well as social obligation is rooted in the person's clan affiliation. Most significantly, as relates to the thesis of this paper, where a person resides is greatly influenced by one's clan. Most Hmong villages in Laos, for example, are almost entirely composed of members of the same clan. Upon birth a child always becomes a member of his or her father's clan. And upon marriage the wife always joins her husband's clan while still retaining her birth name (in other words, her father's clan name).
After marriage, the husband also becomes a sort of in-law member of his wife’s clan and a pattern of mutual assistance between the spousal clan groups will be encouraged.

The importance of the clan in Hmong social organization is reflected in the fact that persons of the same clan (xeem) are considered brothers and sisters and Hmong who travel may anticipate being given food and lodging as well as other assistance by their clan brothers and sisters despite having never met them before. This clan support extends across the nation and across the world and there are approximately 10 million Hmong in the world today. Another indicator of the central role of the clan in Hmong life is the custom that a person cannot die in the household of another Hmong clan. And when a Hmong man dies his clan is obligated to care for his surviving wife and children. The general importance of the clan to the Hmong social community is reflected in most aspects of daily living including conflict resolution. Clan leaders, when needed, will be called upon to help resolve marital disputes, assist in disciplinary problems involving children, and even give advice about possible family relocation. It is noteworthy that the social importance of the clan for the Hmong refugee stands in sharp contrast to the comparably lesser role that it plays in the social life of the Vietnamese refugee.

**Extended Family Obligations**

Obligations to the extended family also influence the settlement patterns of Hmong who are, by tradition, patrilineal. This is in sharpest contrast to the Cambodians and Lowland Lao who follow decidedly more bilateral lineage systems. The indirect role that family obligations play in Hmong secondary migration cannot be overstated and should not be regarded as common to all Southeast Asian peoples. Hmong tradition has always been for grandparents, uncles, aunts, parents, and children to live within the same household. While this is often difficult if not impossible to accommodate in the United States, members of the extended family still attempt to reside in close proximity to one another. In short, there is a normative family reunification that impacts all members of the extended family unit. Beyond this there are a myriad of social obligations that serve to draw the Hmong extended family together. Foremost of these obligations is to care for and respect one’s elders. The adage—"Elders see the sky first"—indicates the high status and esteem accorded to those family members with the most years of life experience. And so while young Hmong may venture out in search of new lands and new opportunities, they are nonetheless bound by a whole network of family support obligations which cannot be fulfilled without residential proximity to one’s extended family. For example, when a Hmong elder dies, it is a family obligation to arrange the ceremony in which a Hmong shaman will guide the soul of the deceased to the spirit world.
Hmong migration to the United States commences, by no coincidence, with the fall of Saigon to communist-allied military forces in April of 1975. The first Hmong refugees were placed with non-Hmong sponsors in a geographically dispersed pattern across the US mainland. However, for somewhat unknown reasons this resulted in placements that were more concentrated in the northern states than in the southern ones. As stated in an official government report of 1985, "The original distribution of the Highland Lao in the United States had more to do with the operations of the voluntary resettlement agencies (volags) than with the wishes of the refugees." Likewise, this distribution of the Highland Lao had little to do with regional employment opportunity as reflected by the fact that the national unemployment rate was generally lower than the regional unemployment rate where most Highland Lao were initially settled. While only a few thousand Hmong were admitted to the United States between 1975 and 1978, over ten thousand were admitted in 1979, and another 27,000 arrived in 1980---by far the peak year of Hmong refugee admissions up to the present time. After a hiatus in these 1980 admissions, some additional 30,000 Hmong arrived between 1987 and 1990. And most recently between 1991 and 1994 another 26,000 Hmong refugees were admitted to the United States signifying what is in all likelihood the end of this stream of refugees considering the imminent closing of the Thai refugee camps by September of 1997. From the 4,500 Hmong remaining in the Thai camps as of 1996, 3,500 are now forecast to be reunited with relatives in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and other States when these camps are finally closed.

The settlement patterns that Hmong exhibited were not uniform reflecting an inconsistent set of federal and state policies compounded further by Hmong "economic explorations" and subsequent attempts to promote family reunification. In the first years of Hmong settlement in the United States, the refugees had little to say about their geographic placement. Instead, these initial placements were controlled by the voluntary resettlement agencies (volags) which were private non-profit organizations that were funded largely by the US State Department. These volags were largely New York-based and Atlantic-facing. They relied heavily upon the benevolence of Catholic Charities and other church organizations willing to assist in the resettlement of single Hmong families. Not surprisingly this resulted in a general pattern of geographic dispersal. However, by the early 80s, the newly-settled Hmong families began serving as sponsors for incoming Hmong refugees, especially fellow clan members. This, in combination with the first secondary migration of Hmong refugees, resulted in "a strong movement of Hmong and other Highland Lao refugees from elsewhere in the nation to the
Central Valley of California.\textsuperscript{19}

This influx of Highland Lao refugee population into California---90 percent of which was Hmong---spurred immediate federal action to deflect this secondary migration. The purpose of this deliberate intervention was to promote Highland Lao community stability outside of the State of California. The specific action taken was given the name Highland Lao Initiative (HLI) and it was directed at approximately 32,000 Highland Lao refugees located in some 44 communities within the United States but outside of California. The funding agency of this federal program was the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. At this time about 60 percent of the Highland Lao refugees were concentrated in California and Minnesota and the HLI targeted the remaining 40 percent. The population estimates and locations of the targeted sites are provided in Table 1. As may be observed from this table, the HLI-funded sites were, in fact, geographically scattered. The basic strategy of the HLI was to make these particular settlement areas more attractive to the Highland Lao refugees through selective funding of special services needed by these refugees. Specifically, the funded services included outreach (for example, interpretation, transportation, and advocacy services for individual Hmong), job placement, on-the-job training, vocational training, craft development, English as a Second Language (ESL), farm and gardening assistance, child care support, and some business development help.\textsuperscript{20} Examining the short-term impact of these single year federal funding initiatives (some of which were continued and some not), reveals that secondary migration away from the non-Wisconsin sites proceeded slowly. Specifically, there was a net population decline in these sites of only 3 percent (from 15,302 in the Fall of 1983 to 14,866 in the Fall of 1984) whereas the Wisconsin sites simultaneously showed a sharp 37 percent increase (from 2,882 to 3,936).\textsuperscript{21} When we measure the longer-term impact of this initiative by looking at the geographic distribution of the Hmong in 1990, it appears that the initiative was largely successful in deflecting secondary migration away from California. Whereas the Hmong in California represented 52 percent of the total American Hmong population in 1990, this contrasts with an approximate figure of 51 percent for 1983, the year the HLI began.\textsuperscript{22}

However, this relative stability in the aggregate Hmong population in the State of California between 1983 and 1990 should not obscure the large amount of secondary migration that coincided with this period. As an inspection of Table 2 makes plain, there was an aggregate Hmong population loss of some 10,994 persons from 20 states between 1983 and 1990. The largest of these population losses occurred in the states of Illinois, Rhode Island, and Utah which together account for 42 percent of this Hmong out-migration.
Table 1. Estimated Highland Lao Population in HLI-Funded Sites (May, 1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HLI Site</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
<th>Iu Mien</th>
<th>Lao Lue</th>
<th>Lao Theung</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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Table 2. Hmong Settlement and Movement Patterns by State: 1983 to 1988 to 1990

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* Primary Location refers to the city within the State with the largest Hmong population in 1983.

b These figures represent the State totals and do, in some instances, include Hmong from locations other than the one cited as the primary location.

c These figures for the State of Wisconsin are MAA estimates and are about 10% higher than Census reports.
In sharp contrast to this pattern, Table 2 also indicates that 11 states experienced an aggregate Hmong population increase of 54,456 between 1983 and 1990. And in this group, the three states of California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin account for 72 percent of the aggregate increase in Hmong population. In short, the data give evidence of quite substantial amounts of Hmong population redistribution over a relatively short span of time. As relatively little of this change might be accounted for in terms of differential fertility, we may safely conclude that it is principally the result of secondary migration trends supplemented, to some extent, by new refugee arrivals who would predictably tend to follow the movement patterns of their sponsoring families.

Other insights into Hmong migration and settlement patterns are provided when we look at the geographic distribution of various Southeast Asian groups by the time of the 1990 Census. One fact is readily apparent; namely, California remains the State of preeminent attraction to most Asian immigrant groups in America. The percentage of the Southeast Asian aggregate group populations in California in 1990 was as follows:

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<th>Group</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cambodian</td>
<td>46 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>45.5 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laotian</td>
<td>39 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>35 percent</td>
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On the one hand, this reflects the fact that California is, by far, the largest magnet state for legal immigrants in the United States attracting 40 percent of the 1,827,167 people granted legal permanent residence in this nation in 1991. On the other hand, it also reflects a long established ethnic tradition of Asian immigration preference for the West Coast region of America. This also reflects a strong motivation of these groups to form ethnic enclave communities which may facilitate their adaptation to the mainstream society without having to lose touch with the fundamentals of their ethnic traditions. So even within the State of California we tend to find that these groups are concentrated within certain counties to the exclusion of others (for example, Fresno County, by itself, accounts for about 40 percent of all Hmong persons in the State as of the 1990 census). The four California counties of Fresno, Merced, Sacramento, and San Joaquin together account for over 74 percent of the in-state Hmong population.

Further evidence of this general tendency towards ethnic concentration is provided when we combine the populations of the three states most heavily settled by each of the Southeast Asian groups represented in Table 3. And of these groups the Hmong are the most geographically concentrated.
### Table 3. The Geographic Distribution of Select Indo-Chinese Populations by State: 1990

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The Hmong are distinguished from the other groups represented in Table 3 by their almost complete absence from no fewer than 20 states: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming each have fewer than ten resident Hmong persons. And another nine states—Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Tennessee—each have fewer than one hundred resident Hmong. None of the other groups display any comparable level of geographic compression.

Explaining Hmong Settlement Patterns in America

There appear to be two primary forces which have been driving the Hmong resettlement patterns—first, prospects for both immediate and long-term economic betterment and second, extended family and clan obligations. Adding on to these factors, secondary influences on Hmong resettlement include prospects for farming, access to job training and ESL programs, access to short-term welfare support (mainly AFDC), favorable climate and topography, and avoidance of large congested metropolitan areas. In short, this analysis suggests that the Hmong in America are attempting to make the best out of a most difficult circumstance by attempting to recover their accustomed economic self-sufficiency without an undue abandonment of their familial and clan obligations which are at the core of their cultural identity.

Initiatives Towards Economic Betterment

The various federal site reports on Hmong resettlement provide a rich record of how central the economic betterment motive is to their secondary migration patterns. And yet this does not mean that the Hmong uncritically accept the first job offer they get. Some Hmong actually leave jobs in search of language programs and/or vocational training opportunities which carry hopes of better future employment. To illustrate this, the cases of Hmong migration to and subsequently away from Fort Smith, Arkansas and Portland, Oregon will be briefly examined. Fort Smith will be discussed first as a case of planned secondary migration
away from Southern California (one of the Hmong magnet states). Subsequently, the Portland, Oregon case will be discussed to highlight other factors (but especially the role of state and federal welfare policies) that jointly serve to influence Hmong secondary migration.

**The Fort Smith Case**

The first Hmong families to move to Fort Smith arrived in November, 1979 and were soon followed by others who formed a cohesive Hmong community of 296 by 1983. Surprisingly, "as many as eighty percent of the employable adults who went to Fort Smith were not on public assistance prior to their move but left steady, full-time jobs in order to go."\(^{25}\) The oddity of this resettlement effort is compounded by realizing that this move meant leaving rather than rejoining relatives. This puzzling migration of Hmong into an uncharted region of the United States is best understood as an outgrowth of Hmong planning for long-term economic self-sufficiency. The site report indicates that, rightly or wrongly, the Hmong leaders believed that by relocating in Fort Smith a number of social and economic advantages would accrue; namely, it was believed that there were good prospects for many manufacturing jobs, that there were reasonable prospects for small farming, that it was feasible for Hmong to pursue self-employment through small business ventures, that the cost of living in Arkansas was less than most other states, and in general that their chances of becoming independent of welfare and uncertain employment were improved. In short, the whole Fort Smith community relocation was premised upon prospects of economic betterment with less government interference stemming from welfare dependence. It is noteworthy as well that this "pioneer community" attracted Hmong families from various parts of California, from Montana (Missoula), from Illinois, from Oklahoma, from Minnesota (St. Paul), and from Utah (Salt Lake City).

However, in spite of an auspicious start, economic difficulties soon arose in a faltering state economy. Many jobs were lost and the dreams of becoming self-employed by acquiring and farming land, raising livestock, and creating business enterprises quickly faded. Instead, many Hmong families found themselves unemployed, without AFDC eligibility, and with mounting hospital bills incurred as a result of childbirth and illnesses. By 1988, there were only 46 Hmong in the State of Arkansas and by 1990 only 23. The Hmong, in this scenario, were clearly motivated to move into and later out of the State of Arkansas primarily by employment prospects and the likelihood of being able to farm for a living. And today there is a similar movement of Hmong into the State of South Carolina seeking an agricultural lifestyle where economic self-sufficiency might be possible without the necessity of welfare dependence and where traditional family and clan obligations might more
easily be observed.

**The Portland Case**

The Hmong settlement in and subsequent mass migration out of Portland, Oregon begins in 1976 and extends over the decade of the 1980s. The first Hmong to arrive in Portland in 1976 were among the earliest refugee arrivals of this group in the United States. As was customary at this time, these refugees were handled by voluntary agencies such as the Catholic Resettlement Office of Catholic Charities who identified sponsors to assist these families in the initial adjustment to American society. However, by 1981, Hmong families already settled in Portland began assuming the major role of sponsors for new arrivals from the refugee camps of Thailand. These new arrivals plus added secondary migration swelled the size of the Portland Hmong community to a peak of 4,500 by December, 1981. However, an exodus migration to the Central San Joaquin Valley of California began in the Fall of 1981 and continued through the Spring of 1983 dropping the Hmong population in Portland to one-fourth its prior size (1,068 persons). And since then the Hmong population in the entire State of Oregon has dropped to just 438 persons. In order to account for this 90 percent decimation of the Portland Hmong community in less than a decade, we must consider both the push and pull factors operative in this State. Among the variety of pull factors were the dream of small farming opportunities in California, access to more English language training programs in California, the desire to promote family reunification, and access to family welfare programs in California.

Foremost among the push factors were the changing federal policies defining welfare eligibility for the Hmong refugees. As many Hmong arrived in the US without either English speaking aptitude or marketable job skills, the need for special training and/or temporary cash assistance was critical. And, since most states had “family composition” restrictions which excluded two parent Hmong families from AFDC eligibility, the federal Government enacted various bills between 1975 and 1992 extending cash assistance to needy IndoChinese refugees. This commenced with the IndoChina Migration and Assistance Act of 1975 and was followed by the IndoChina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1977. These bills were followed by the well-known Refugee Act of 1980 which removed “family composition” welfare requirements and created the Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) program. This important program provided for the federal Government to pay 100 percent of the public assistance costs of each arriving IndoChinese refugee over a three year period. However, beginning in 1982 federal subsidy of RCA was diminished to 18 months and was then reduced to only 8 months in 1992. The consequence of this vanishing federal welfare
subsidy for IndoChinese refugees was to elevate the importance of state welfare policies. And Oregon was one of the twenty-four states that restricted AFDC eligibility to single parent families.\textsuperscript{27} Since Hmong are a very family-oriented group with an extremely low divorce rate, relatively few Hmong families in Portland met the single parent AFDC requirement, thereby intensifying the economic pressure to resettle.

By contrast, California extends AFDC eligibility to needy families without regard to whether or not both parents are living together. In addition, California and Wisconsin are among the few states who take the generous approach in interpreting the rule that recipients prove that they have worked for six of the previous thirteen quarters in order to be eligible for welfare support.\textsuperscript{28} As a consequence, welfare eligibility policies resulted in a strong motive force to leave Oregon and enter neighboring California.\textsuperscript{29} This is in fact the locality to which most of the Portland Hmong did migrate.

It is of telling significance that of the 1,068 Hmong in Portland in 1988, some 87 percent of the families there were economically self-sufficient. This is in sharp contrast to the 28 percent of the Hmong families in California that were self-sufficient as of this same date. While there is no ignoring the fact that the three States attracting the greatest Hmong population growth between 1983 and 1990 are the same states with the highest percentage of families on welfare, this should not be interpreted to mean that Hmong prefer welfare dependency over economic self-sufficiency. On the contrary, as the Portland case indicates, the Hmong are inclined to migrate mostly out of economic necessity. Those Hmong families who have been successful in earning enough money to get off welfare subsidy have for the most part chosen not to migrate even when many kinsmen from the same locality have moved on in search of better employment prospects. Good evidence of this is provided by comparing the average economic self-sufficiency of the Hmong communities identified as positive-growth and those identified as negative-growth in Table 2. The mean economic self-sufficiency of the families in the negative-growth Hmong communities is 84 percent while the families in the positive-growth Hmong communities have a mean economic self-sufficiency of just 30 percent. The number of Hmong families in this former group was 1,594 while the number of Hmong families in the latter group was 15,217. It appears that Hmong families without adequate jobs or adequate job prospects move on while those who have established some measure of economic viability remain. However, since most Hmong who succeed in becoming economically self-sufficient generally do not own businesses, their capacity to employ fellow Hmong or to sustain large numbers of dependents is very limited. This fact, in turn, accounts for much of the ongoing secondary migration. And the states most likely to attract the less fortunate job-seeking Hmong are California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The simple explanation for this is
that these states have emerged as the "most friendly" towards the Hmong in terms of their AFDC policies and, equally important, in terms of their support services relating to language training and job placement. For example, Wisconsin and Minnesota were two of the five states which elected to participate in the Key States Initiative (KSI) in 1987. This is a federally funded, voluntary program that supports a set of coordinated actions to increase self-sufficiency of Hmong and other severely disadvantaged refugees. The essence of the KSI approach is to remove the most critical barriers to family self-sufficiency on a group-specific basis.30

Extended Family and Clan Obligations

The fact that the large majority of the Hmong family units in the United States are not yet economically self-sufficient means that there are strong pressures on these families. And since some states have deliberately made programmatic efforts to meet the needs of the Hmong refugees, this has produced a certain gravitational pull towards either California, Wisconsin, or Minnesota. And this is where Hmong clan, family, and ancestral obligations enter as another powerful factor in explaining the group's resettlement patterns.31

As unemployed adult Hmong, who are still the majority, gravitate towards the states with the most refugee support services and the highest monthly AFDC cash payments, family reunification pressures tend to attract others who may be only marginally employed in other regions. As stated in one of the federal Hmong resettlement studies, "the attraction of family reunification and the desire of the population to live together seem to become an increasingly irresistible force, so that in places like the Central Valley of California, for example, migration continues even in the face of massive unemployment, high welfare dependence and inadequately funded social services."32 Of course, this same dynamic might work to pull Hmong out of the magnet states if a secure employment anchor were to be established elsewhere. However, given the large percentage of Hmong elders without English language fluency or transferable job skills and given the substantial amount of transgenerational family obligation (often referred to as "filial piety") that is characteristic of Hmong tradition, geographically scattered Hmong individuals become subject to a kind of cultural gravity that pulls them back together into clan groupings. The reality of this is best visualized in Table 3 where the geographic spread of the Hmong across states can be seen as far less than for the Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, or Thai groups. Recall that there were 20 states with fewer than ten resident Hmong persons.

And not unlike some ethnic groups in the United States but far more so than average, marriage outside the Hmong group is strongly
discouraged. This is yet another indication of how traditional custom operates upon the Hmong to direct their geographic movements towards areas where other Hmong are already settled. Unlike mainstream Americans affiliated with nuclear family structures and relatively small numbers of close relatives, Hmong are affiliated with clans which recognize a measure of obligation in helping their members to adjust to their new society. While limited resources generally curtail the ability of Hmong to accommodate moves of large numbers of clan relatives to a given locality, the Hmong are still relatively free to change residence on a temporary or provisional basis. This tendency may lead to double counting of Hmong residents as they decide which residential locality is most promising for the future welfare of one’s immediate family. Of course, it is true that Hmong ethnogenesis is part of a dialectical process through which ethnically negotiated adaptation to mainstream custom and law occurs. As such, the Hmong clan system of social organization continues, in its own right, to influence the patterns of residential movement exhibited by Hmong in the United States today. This influence extends to the traditional customs through which Hmong leaders decide when and to where it is appropriate to move their village. Hmong resettlement tendencies must be viewed in the context of a cultural heritage that subordinates the needs of the individual to those of the family (elders especially) and the clan. And it is in this larger context that the welfare needs of the Hmong elderly have a greater impact over the resettlement freedoms of the young than we realize. The conflict between Hmong and mainstream American welfare traditions is well expressed by Jeremy Hein as follows: “In the American mode of incorporation, refugees are expected to use state resources as individuals or households, not as members of an extended kin group or an ethnic community. Refugees’ resist the social welfare system’s individualization of the adaptation process and turn to their kin and ethnic networks for a collective response. Use of state resources is an element of their collective adaptation, and the result is a constant conflict between refugees and refugee managers.”

Conclusions

While the patterns of secondary migration exhibited by the Hmong refugees since 1975 are superficially baffling---showing as they do greatest population growth in those regions with the highest rates of unemployment and welfare dependence---there is nonetheless an explanation for this that does not in any way imply a deflated “work ethic” in this community. This explanation of Hmong residential movements focuses on the reconciliation of the twin goals of economic selfsufficiency, complicated by changing federal and state welfare policies, and the best efforts of the Hmong to accommodate their traditional obligations to family,
clan, and ancestors. In some instances, such as the previously described resettlement in Fort Smith, Arkansas, prospects for economic self-sufficiency were so strong as to risk resettling a Hmong community in a state with very few refugee support services and strict welfare policies which rendered most Hmong ineligible. The site records indicate that those Hmong families around the country who have been successful in finding jobs and who have become economically self-sufficient are not so inclined toward movement as are those without such good fortune.

Nonetheless, a complete explanation of Hmong resettlement patterns requires that attention also be paid to the vital role that Hmong family, clan, and ancestral obligations play. Hmong are not "rugged individualists" in the mainstream American tradition who are free to migrate wherever they might choose without giving serious consideration to their community obligations. This imported cultural reality may be seen as alternately a strength and a liability in the move towards Hmong economic self-sufficiency in the United States. On the positive side, the Hmong community provides a solid anchor for pooling social and economic resources and supporting some persons who might not otherwise be capable of acquiring gainful employment. On the negative side, social ties to family and clan may serve to constrain the ready mobility of younger and more educated Hmong individuals.

And finally, beyond these core factors underlying Hmong secondary migration patterns, there are also a variety of secondary influences at work. For example, the Hmong tradition of farming continues to motivate many families to move into regions that they believe offer prospects of small farming. Another strong influence upon Hmong migration has been access to job training, job placement services, and English language programs (such as ESL). In addition, the Hmong drive towards economic self-sufficiency cannot be divorced from the matter of changing federal and state welfare policies. The net impact of these changes has been to shift the welfare burden from the federal to the state level and in the process has resulted in some states being much more attractive to and supportive of Hmong social service needs.

Some lesser consideration has been given to the climate and topography of a region. Prior to their arrival in the United States few Hmong had any experience with the rigors of a frigid winter season nor were many accustomed to high density urban/industrial living. The one common thread that appears to bind the complex set of motivations for Hmong resettlement is "hope for the future." Not unlike so many immigrant and refugee groups in the history of the United States, the Hmong demonstrate a firm resolve to adapt to their new society. The great challenge confronting the Hmong is to accomplish this without, in the process, breaking their traditional kinship bonds which are at the core of their identity as a people.
In broad overview, we may conclude firstly that while public policy has attempted to encourage the geographic dispersal of Hmong across America, the kinship obligations of this group have effectively worked against this objective. Secondly, we may conclude that the pattern of Hmong secondary migration, exhibited in this paper, follows the general pattern of geographic concentration exhibited by the other Southeast Asian refugee groups but takes this pattern to a higher level. And finally, inasmuch as the Hmong continue to express a migrant as opposed to a minority orientation, the centrality of their extended family and clan obligations are likely to reinforce this resettlement pattern.

Notes


4 David Haines, “Further, there is no doubt that reunion with relatives is a major factor in further moves once within the United States. Even where moves are ostensibly in search of employment, there are likely to be relatives of some kind at the place of destination,” Anthropological Quarterly 55 (1982), 175.


7 U.S. HR 1982a, 4.

8 Cheu Thao, “Hmong Migration in Laos and the United States,” in The Hmong in the West, editors Bruce T. Downing and Douglas P. Olney (Minneapolis: Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project/Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota, 1982).
Hmong tradition holds that one or more of a person's souls (which may number as high as 32) may leave a person's body for a variety of reasons (e.g., fear, trauma) and when this occurs "disharmony" and "ill health" result. The shaman's job is "soul restoration" which requires that the shaman venture out into the spirit world on behalf of the afflicted party and recover the lost soul.


At least by any standard definition of the word "nomadic," this is so. Consider that the word derives from the Greek word nomadikos and refers "to members of a tribe, nation or race having no permanent home but moving about constantly in search of food, pasture, etc."

This is because people are often not able to act on their "values" as they would otherwise be inclined to if certain external constraints upon their behavior were to be removed. One relevant example here is the state welfare policy which discourages a family head from working at a minimum wage level when such employment would result in approximately the same gross annual family income but with a loss of medical insurance coverage for the family. In such a case, the desire to work must be sacrificed to the desire to meet the most basic survival needs of the family.

Neng Yang, Lee Thao, Kaying Yang, and Soua K. Yang, *Introduction to Hmong History and Culture* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Public School; Collaborative Services Department, 1995), 8.

Haines, 173.


For example, in March, 1983, the national unemployment rate was 10.8 percent while the average rate for the studied Highland Lao Initiative sites was 11.5 percent. And by June, 1984, the national rate had dropped to 7.4 percent while these Highland Lao Initiative sites averaged 7.7 percent.

This brings the total number of Hmong refugees admitted to the United States to 119,000 as of September, 1994. This figure does not include Hmong born in the United States after the arrival of their parents.

Teng Yang, et al., 21.

Teng Yang, et al., 28-31

Teng Yang, et al., 98.

The 1990 figures are based upon the official US Census reports for that year; the 1983 figures come from ORR estimates made in 1983 which placed the number of Hmong in California at 30,000 and the number of Hmong in the United States at 58,500.

This tradition began in the 1850s with the early Chinese immigrants and was followed shortly by the early Japanese immigrants to the mainland of the United States.

More exactly, 18,321 of the State total of 46,892 and unofficial agency reports indicate that this concentration has been increasing over the early first half of the 1990s.


By 1981 Hmong families in Portland sponsored 76% of the incoming Hmong refugees, American mainstream families sponsored another 14%, and the remaining 10% were sponsored by Church organizations.

This statistic is current with the year of 1988.

Few, if any, refugee Hmong could offer proof of work over this time period but California and Wisconsin took the position that these persons had worked even if they could not prove it. Also, these states took a broader view than others in allowing refugees to participate in training programs while receiving welfare and, within certain limits, to earn income from work. Robert L. Bach, "State Intervention in Southeast Asian Refugee Resettlement in the United States," Journal of Refugee Studies 1 (1988), 51-53.

The lure of nearby California, which had an AFDC-U program, was irresistible to many facing a future without visible means of support. April, Thousands of Hmong left the Northwest for California in the months just before and after the cutback. The Hmong Resettlement Study: Volume
The other states participating are New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington; Faas, 21-27.

For example, the Hmong Community Survey taken in Minneapolis-St. Paul in 1982 revealed that by far the most frequent reason given for resettlement was "to be with relatives." 64 percent of the respondents gave this reason compared to 22 percent who cited educational and vocational training opportunities and only 6 percent who cited jobs; Reder, 47-48.

While it is true that Hmong marriage tradition requires exogamy outside of one's own clan group, it is nonetheless quite rare for marriage to occur outside the ethnic group. This custom is likely to undergo some change in America but it is one custom whose modification radically threatens the preservation of Hmong heritage.


As a most recent example of this (1995) the Hmong population in North Carolina is reported to have risen to about 1,500 driven largely by prospects of farming opportunity.
"Shared Ethnicity" in Transracial Adoption

Cia Verschelden
Kansas State University

The discussion of transracial adoption of black infants by white parents calls into question the distinction between race and ethnicity for these children and their families. Research on the overall success of these adoption indicate that most of the children are well-adjusted, have healthy self esteem, and do not have problems with issues of racial identity. This paper suggest that the concept of "shared ethnicity" might be useful construction for understanding these multiracial families.

This paper is an exploration of issues of transracial adoption of black infant children by white parents, from an ethnic studies perspective. My husband and I are white and the parents of two black adopted sons (and two homemade daughters). I am also a social worker, so I have both a personal and professional interest in the topic. The discussion of transracial adoption calls into question the distinction between race and ethnicity for these black children and their adoptive families. There are two important perspectives from which this is a critical question. The first is the internal experience of the individual person of being a member of a specific ethnic group, of possessing a certain "ethnicity." The second is the perception of the larger community or society of the individual based upon visible racial characteristics, e.g. when we see a phenotypically Asian person, we make some assumptions about that person's culture and behavior.

An examination of the issue of ethnicity in cases of adoption demands that we try to resolve the problem of whether ethnicity is an inherited trait (biologically or genetically transferred and thus inborn) or something that is learned (transferred to the child from infancy through the process of socialization). If ethnicity is inherited, if it is part of children when they are born, then to avoid robbing children of their ethnic birthright, adoption should be tightly restricted within ethnic groups. For instance, only German Mennonites should adopt a child of German Men-
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noni te birthparents, only Irish Catholic adoptive parents should be appropriate for children of Irish Catholic birthparents, etc.

If ethnicity is learned as part of the socialization process, then an infant who is adopted by parents with a different ethnicity than his or her birthparents would be losing nothing, simply growing up with the ethnicity of the adoptive parents. Such a child would not have a sense of being deprived of a birthright, having been socialized in the ethnic environment of the adoptive family, just as biological children simply accept their family ethnicity as their own without question.

Regardless of the internal experience of the adopted child and whether ethnicity is inherited or learned, the social reality is that most individuals in our society continue to view people differently based on "race." One of the most prominent critiques of transracial adoption of black children by white parents is that these parents cannot teach their black children the necessary skills, attitudes, and strategies to survive as a black person in a white-dominated society.

In this paper, I will briefly review the evolution of transracial adoption in this country and its incidence in recent years. I will then summarize the major objections to the practice as a context from which to look at the research findings from studies of these adoptees. From there, I will focus on the ways in which an ethnic studies perspective can provide insight into transracial adoption. A central issue is the argument that transracially adopted black children do not learn how to interact with society in the ways in which society expects them to behave. Questions arising out of this issue are the following: In teaching our children how to "fit into" society based on the color of their skin, are we not colluding in a process that perpetuates the stereotypical and destructive images and realities of racial minorities in U.S. society?; and How do we prepare our children for the harsh realities of adulthood in this society (violence, discrimination, greed, etc.) without creating a self-fulfilling prophecy and contributing to the maintenance of the status quo?

Transracial Adoption in the United States

The practice of transracial adoption began in the United States after World War II when there were many orphaned and homeless children all over the world. In the 1960's, with impetus from the civil rights movement, there were increasing numbers of these adoptions, with emphasis on placing black children in white homes. In 1970, "one-third of the 6,500 black children in adoption were placed with white families." After the very clear statement in opposition to the practice from the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) in 1972, the number decreased significantly; half as many transracial adoptions were done in 1987 as in 1971. According to a 1992 report, "two percent of the total population of children in the United States are adopted." Out
of this number of adoptions, 12% are transracial, according to the National Council for Adoption; half of these are white parents adopting Asian children, predominantly Korean children. "In 1987, black-white transracial adoptions were estimated to be 1,169, while adoptions of children of other races--mainly Asian and Hispanic--were estimated to be 5,850." Simon estimated that, up to 1984, "approximately 20,000 black children had been placed in white homes in the United States."

Major Objections to Transracial Adoption

From my understanding of the professional literature on transracial adoption, there are four major objections to the practice; two involve the experience and development of the individual children and two address larger issues of societal race relations. Concerning the children themselves, the first claim is that black children raised by white parents will not develop a strong black identity and black cultural pride, which may well result in feelings of low self-esteem and overall poor psychosocial adjustment. The second concern is that white parents cannot teach a black child the strategies to survive as a racial minority in a white-dominated society.

The objections from a societal perspective are that black women producing babies for white families is a continuation of the historic exploitation of blacks by whites in the United States and that the raising of black children by white families is part of a process of cultural genocide. The strongest opponents of transracial adoption do not accept two assumptions that have driven the practice: "(1) that the black community cannot provide the needed black adoptive parents, and (2) that raising the black child in a white home will be better than raising him in an institution or foster home." A statement that summarizes this cultural opposition was made by the President of NABSW in 1985, reaffirming their 1972 response:

We are opposed to transracial adoption as a solution to permanent placement for Black children. We have an ethnic, moral, and professional obligation to oppose transracial adoption. We are therefore legally justified in our efforts to protect the rights of Black children, Black families, and the Black community. We view the placement of Black children in white homes as a hostile act against our community. It is a blatant form of race and cultural genocide.

With regard to the first rejected assumption, I agree that the claim that an adequate number of black adoptive homes are not available is most likely more a function of the failure of the social services
system to facilitate access to the process than a reluctance on the part of the black community to respond to the need. This manifestation of institutional racism that perpetuates this failure certainly needs to be eliminated through more appropriate personnel and procedures.

While I am in sympathy with those members of the black community who feel strongly that their children should remain within the black community and that the movement of black babies into white families has an uncomfortable feel of potential exploitation and colonization, it is difficult for me to assign such insidious motivation to individual parents and families who are involved. The philosophical and political issues of social and economic justice that are inherent in these objections are beyond the scope of this paper, which is intended to look at the experiences of children in families. (A *Time* article in August, 1995, reported that the NABSW had altered its position to accept transracial adoption as a third option behind preservation of biological African-American families and the placement of black children in black homes.16)

Is the adoption of 20,000 children in 50 years part of a larger pattern of exploitation and domination in an overall strategy by whites to erode the black community? In terms of population, the numbers are too small to have much effect on either group. Individually, have some black children been placed with white parents for the "wrong" reasons? Surely some have been motivated by what might be called parent-centered reasons rather than by child-centered reasons. Certainly some social workers have placed black children with white families because of the failure of the system to recruit black families. My understanding is that, in general, most cases simply involve a black child who needs a home and white parents who are desirous of providing one. In light of the research, it does not seem justified to assign racially hostile intentions to individuals who participate in this practice.

Research Results: Racial Identity, Self-Esteem, Adjustment

Beginning in the 1970s, several studies have been done to determine the success of transracial adoption from a variety of perspectives. Children's adjustment to adoption and their overall well-being has been compared to black children adopted by black parents, other non-white children adopted by white parents, children adopted inracially, adopted children in general, as well as to the total population of children. Research has indicated that about 75% of adopted children "...will grow up to be normal adults."17 Feigelman and Silverman, in 1984, found little evidence to support claims of the damaging consequences of transracial adoption. Studies showed that about three-fourths of the children(mostly preadolescent and younger)had adapted well and that racial awareness, identification, and self-esteem did not appear to be problematic.18 In 1981, Feigelman and Silverman conducted a follow-
up of a 1975 study in which they surveyed 372 adoptive families. Numbers based on the racial and national subgroups of the last adopted child of these families included 65 white, 47 black, 161 Korean, 19 Columbian, and 22 other children. At the time of the study, two-thirds of the children were between seven and twelve years of age, while the remaining third were thirteen to twenty-five. In the 1975 study, Feigelman and Silverman concluded that the child's age at placement was the most decisive element in influencing black children's maladjustment scores. Again in their 1981 research, they found that, although race difference and racial antagonism had some influence in the outcome of transracial adoption, these factors were "...overshadowed by the significance of factors associated with the child's age and long delays in his or her eventual adoptive placement." In conclusion, they did not find support for arguments that transracially adopted children in white homes experience psychological damage.

A study by Johnson, Shireman, and Watson, of families who had adopted children in the early 1970s, involved interviews of 26 transracial (black/white) adoptive families and 26 inracial (black/black) adoptive families. The families had been interviewed shortly after the adoption, again when the child was four, and a third time at age eight. At age eight, the authors report that "about three-quarters of the transracially adopted children were judged to be doing well; to enjoy close relationships with their parents, brothers, and sisters; to have friends; and to be relatively free of symptoms of emotional distress." Relative to racial identity, the number of children who identified themselves as black was the same in transracial as inracial adoptive families.

McRoy, Zurcher, Lauderdale, and Anderson examined the self-esteem and racial identity of children in 60 families, 30 in which white parents had adopted black children and 30 in which black parents had adopted black children. The mean age of the children was 13.5 years. With regard to self-esteem, the authors concluded that there was no difference between the transracially and inracially adopted children in the sample. The level of self-esteem of the adoptees was as high as is found among the general population.

The data about racial identity is more difficult to interpret. Of the children adopted by white parents, only eight had two black biological parents, while the remaining 22 were of mixed parentage. Only five of the children adopted by black parents were of mixed parentage. McRoy et al. report that "transracially adopted children were more likely to identify themselves as being adopted and to use racial self-referents than inracially adopted children." Most (86%) of the white parents of mixed parentage adoptees considered their children to be 'biracial,' and were reluctant to accept the notion that they would be socially and legally defined as black. The black parents of similar children, on the other hand, tended to stress to their children that they would be socially de-
fined as black. There was a great deal of congruency between the perception of the parents and the children with regard to racial identity. Since there were no differences in self-esteem among these groups of children, McRoy, et al. suggest that these findings support earlier observations that "...self-esteem and racial self-perception may operate independently in black adopted children."27

Simon and Altstein, in 1972, 1979, and 1984, interviewed 88 families who had adopted transracially. Along with parent interviews, these researchers talked to 218 children in these families. When parents were asked about their relationship with their adopted children, 79 (90%) families responded that it was "basically positive and good" or "there are problems, but the positive elements outweigh the negative ones." Only 9 (10%) families choose "the problems are such that the negative elements outweigh the positive ones" or "basically negative and bad."28 In summary, Simon and Altstein describe the majority of the families in their study as warm, well-integrated, with healthy individual self-esteem and positive relationships with each other.29

The research on transracial adoption, then, suggests that the practice results in a very positive outcome for most of the children and families. In summarizing their review of the recent literature on transracial adoption, Simon and Altstein state that the research continues to demonstrate that,

...transracial adoptees do not seem to be losing their racial identities, they do not appear to be racially unaware of who they are, and they do not display negative or indifferent racial attitudes about themselves. To the contrary, it appears that transracially placed children and their families are... living quite normal and satisfying lives.30

The case is put more strongly by Bartholet in her 1993 book on adoption and the politics of parenting when she states that there is virtually no evidence that transracial adoption has a harmful effect on children. She claims, however that "...there is extensive, unrefuted, and overwhelmingly powerful evidence that the delays in permanent placement and the denials of such placement that result from current matching policies do devastating damage to the children involved."31

The question of whether or not white parents can teach a black child the strategies to survive in a white-dominated society has not been specifically addressed by adoption research. This may be partially because the process of teaching these strategies has not been identified. According to Tizard and Phoenix, "...we lack knowledge of the extent to which black parents,...provide their children with the means to cope with racism, or what the various coping mechanisms are, since these issues..."
have rarely been studied.\textsuperscript{32} Research on transracial adoptees up to age 25, however, has indicated very positive results in terms of self-esteem, racial identity, and general psychosocial adjustment. One would expect that, if white parents had failed in this critical survival issue, this would have had a significant effect on these related measures of well-being. Without evidence to the contrary, it is reasonable to conclude that these adoptive families have provided black children with the psychological, emotional, and social strength to prosper in the larger society.

The concern around this issue of teaching survival skills is actually a concern about how a person interacts in the world given societal perceptions based on physical racial identity. A relevant issue is the unique nature of interracial adoptive families. Even though white parents are still white after they adopt black children, I would argue that there is a qualitative difference between these families and uniracial families. When we were in the process of our first adoption and were considering the question of race, the social worker told us that, "If you adopt a black child, you will become a black family." She was sharing with us her professional experience of community response to such adoptions.

Small described three types of families who adopt transracially. Within the third type, he found the "real parents." These parents go beyond their own interest toward the interest of the child, are open-minded, secure in their own identities and are able to resist societal pressures that reflect stereotypes and narrow views of family. "They eventually become black families in white skins."\textsuperscript{33} Thus, while not physically becoming black, white parents of black children may develop some of the same survival skills that black parents have, possibly from experiences of racism and discrimination perpetrated on their family.

It has certainly been the experience of our family that we are a different family now than we were before we adopted the boys. We are much better connected now to the black community, we are much more likely to attend multicultural events, especially African-American celebrations. We have recently made a decision to move outside the United States to do some service work and our choice of assignment was significantly effected by concerns about the acceptance of our non-white children. Although instances of blatant racism perpetrated on our family have been rare, they have had a profound effect on our worldview as parents and as US citizens. This transformation in the nature of the transracial adoptive family is a subject for further research in the field.

\textbf{Is Ethnicity a Birthright?}

We have seen that, in general, children who have been adopted transracially are well-adjusted and have healthy self-esteem and racial identities. Still, some of us question whether, in the big picture, transracial
adoption is a good idea. Only the strongest opponents argue that it is better for black children to spend their childhood in foster care or an institution than with white parents. Many people, even those who have serious concerns about the practice, tend to agree with Altstein when he states, "A black home is always better than a non-black home, but a family is better than a non-family." When we begin to look at the distinction between race and ethnicity, the issue becomes even more complicated.

Race is a set of physical characteristics that distinguish one group of people from another. Ethnicity is the "...character or quality of an ethnic group." "Ethnic group' is a reference group invoked by people who share a common historical style (which may be only assumed), based on overt features and values, and who, through the process of interaction with others, identify themselves as sharing that style." Race is not the same as culture [ethnicity]. Racial characteristics are physical and inborn, while cultural [ethnic] characteristics are learned and acquired after birth." A person does not belong to an ethnic group by choice. He is born into it and becomes related to it through emotional and symbolic ties." So far, transracial adoption makes sense within these conceptions of race and ethnicity. A child's physical characteristics prescribe a certain description according to race, but the child grows up with a given ethnicity, which is accepted by the child as "natural." Since no one gets to choose their ethnicity, this experience is not different than that of children who are raised by their biological parents. However, when we consider the aspect of ethnicity that is based on the external perceptions of society, then the case is not so clear.

Isajiw, in discussing the subjective approach to the definition of ethnicity,

...defines ethnicity as a process by which individuals either identify themselves as being different from others or belonging to a different group or are identified as different by others, or both identify themselves and are identified as different by others.

A black child raised by white parents might identify him or herself in the context of his or her parents' ethnicity, but with the recognition of race, for instance, black German Mennonite or black Irish Catholic. The child's social environment, however, might assign him or her the ethnicity of African-American, with the variety of assumptions and expectations that might entail. Contact with this social environment, then, could be confusing and a child might be ill-prepared for the interactions.

"An ethnic group consists of people who conceive of themselves of being of a kind." This conception poses further concerns relative to
transracial adoption. With what "kind" will a black child being raised by white parents identify? If ethnicity is learned primarily from family, children will belong to the ethnic group of their parents. They will take on an identity with their "kind," as they live and develop within their extended family, neighborhood, community, school, church, etc., just as all children are socialized. In the case of these black children, however, their "kind" might be defined in society differently than the way it is defined in their family and immediate social environment. The research seems to indicate that this has not been problematic for the children, but still, is it fair and right? Are we robbing these children of something that is rightfully theirs, i.e. to be raised in a family that matches their racial characteristics so that there is less potential confusion between race and ethnicity?

In a previously quoted statement from NABSW, the opposition to transracial adoption is justified in terms of protecting the rights of black children. Another group, the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC), while supporting transracial adoption in order to prevent unnecessary delays in placement, contends that "...the ethnic and cultural heritage of the child is an essential right..." In light of the overwhelmingly positive results of the research on the outcomes of transracial adoption, Hayes rejects the "rights" argument. He sees that the objective of inculcating minority children with ethnic and cultural awareness has developed out of a political agenda opposed to transracial adoption. According to this agenda, there is only one correct way to raise minority children; Hayes contends that other approaches may well be just as effective. He denies that minority children placed for adoption have either the right or the need to develop a distinct ethnic identity or awareness of cultural heritage.

Although from a narrow legalistic view, I might agree with Hayes, from a practical parental view, I strongly disagree. Whether of not my sons have a "right" to a relevant racial and cultural identity, it would seem absurd and even cruel to deny that to them. The existence of race as a significant social construct is a fact in US society. To ignore that reality in the raising of any of our children would be neglectful at the very least. A healthy self-esteem, which includes a sense of cultural awareness, would seem to be a very basic goal of all parents for their children.

When the rights of children are at issue in discussions of transracial adoption, one other aspect should be considered. Ironically, NACAC, the group that affirmed the right of children to their ethnic and cultural heritage, also firmly states its commitment to another right:

We believe every child has the right to a loving, 'forever' family of his or her own. For a great many children now in foster or institutional care, permanency and love can only be found through adoption....
As in many issues addressed by social services policy-makers and practitioners, adoption decisions require a great deal of professional judgment that balances the various rights and needs of all of the parties involved.

**Multiculturalism**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. dreamed of and worked for a world in which people would be judged by the content of their character rather than by the color of their skin. When white parents adopt black children because they desire to parent a child (not specifically a white child), we feel some discomfort about the rightness of the practice. We worry that with a white upbringing, children will not know how to act like people might expect them to act when they go out into the world. They will not expect to be treated a certain way because of the color of their skin. They will not have the necessary "inclination toward doubt of white persons" or the "adaptive inclination to distrust" that they need for survival. By teaching our children to expect negative treatment because of their race, are we not colluding in and even reinforcing the status quo in which people are indeed judged first by the color of their skin?

Given the social realities of race relations in the United States today, we should be worried about all of our children. Teaching our black children to distrust all white people and to expect to be treated unfairly is probably not a good solution. Considering the recurring incidence of violence against women by men, we should worry about our daughters. Teaching our daughters to distrust all men and expect to be abused by them is probably not a good idea. It makes sense to me that we should love each of our children for who they are and to nurture their self-esteem so that they can walk out into the world with their own strength and their own pride in their individual race, gender, and ethnicity.

And in all of this legitimate worry, is there not room for some legitimate celebration? We could celebrate the fact that some children and some parents and some brothers and sisters of various descriptions have gotten together to make families and that most of them seem to be doing well. We could celebrate the fact that, in spite of increasing racial tension in the larger society, some families are living together in harmony in multiracial communities. Isn't that what we say we want? Bartholet has observed that transracial adoptees perceive "their world as essentially pluralistic and multicolored," and suggests that their socialization in two worlds might make them better prepared to operate in both.
Conclusion

When I began this exploration into transracial adoption, I was motivated by both a professional and personal interest. I wanted to better understand the issues, hoping that an ethnic studies perspective would shed some new light on the subject. The research seems to present a positive evaluation of the practice of transracial adoption for most of the children and their families. Professionally, I believe that the social services system must do a more effective job of identifying and recruiting black adoptive parents, not because black children are necessarily in peril with white parents, but because we cannot afford to ignore any resources for the care of all of our children.

Transracial adoptive families are only a subgroup of a growing number of families, for instance those that are formed through interracial marriage or remarriage, in which adults and children of a variety of races and/or ethnicities join together. I suggest that such families create their own "shared ethnicity," a unique blend of the racial heritage and cultural background of the members, carried out in the present in family experiences, traditions and values.

Even though I agree in principle that children do not have an inalienable right to any specific ethnic heritage, I intend to raise my children to be proud of who they are, including their membership in a racial group. Our family values and celebrates difference, which represents the richness of what each of us brings to each other and to the world. Our family ethnicity will be a "shared ethnicity" growing out of our collective pasts and our present choices about how to be in the world. Racial identity will be one of many factors that will influence this unique ethnicity.

Notes


18 Feigelman and Silverman, 589-90.

19 Feigelman and Silverman, 588-601.

20 Feigelman and Silverman, 597-98.
21 Feigelman and Silverman.


23 Johnson, et al., 45-55.

24 McRoy, et al.


26 McRoy, et al.


29 Simon and Altstein.

30 Simon and Altstein, 28.


42 P. Hayes, 301-310.


44 A. Chimezie, 299.

45 E. Bartholet.
Racial Safety and Cultural Maintenance: The Childcare Concerns of Employed Mothers of Color

Lynet Uttal
University of Wisconsin-Madison

When employed mothers of color transfer the care of their children to childcare providers, their needs and concerns reflect their status as members of historically subordinated racial ethnic groups in the United States. This paper introduces two new concepts--racial safety and cultural maintenance--to show how racial ethnic group membership and traditional cultural practices and values are critical concerns that influence the decisions and choices that employed mothers of color make about who will provide care for their children in their absence. This analysis is based on in-depth interviews with Mexican American, African American and Guamanian American employed mothers of infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children.

Introduction

In the 1930s, doctors professed a single model of infant care that was promoted as superior to traditional ethnic infant care practices. A similar movement is currently taking place today in the 1990s in the field of paid childcare services. Childcare advocates are pressing for the professionalization of childcare work and the practice of a single model of developmentally appropriate care. Underlying this proposal is the assumption that childrearing can be stripped of cultural values and practices, and that the type of care a child receives can be offered independent of the social and cultural location of the child's family.

This model ignores how membership in historically subordinated racial ethnic groups creates a different experience for people of color than experienced by the White population. Childcare research has identified systematic differences in preferences by socioeconomic and racial...
ethnic groups. One difference frequently noted is that African American parents, specifically, and low income parents, generally, view childcare as an educational setting more so than do White parents. White parents, especially middle class ones, are more likely to view childcare as an opportunity for their children to have social interactions with other children. African American parents express a greater preference for childcare that provides structured academic programs for preschool aged children, whereas middle class White parents prefer loosely structured activities that expose their children to different concepts through play. This high valuation of education is rooted in beliefs that early education will prepare children for kindergarten and create a stronger foundation for social mobility through education. African American parents are also more likely to advocate the use of authoritarian disciplining styles such as physical punishment and authoritarian commands by childcare providers. In contrast, White parents are less likely to support the use of corporal punishment in daycare, even though they may privately use these methods at home.

One study found that African American parents expected the daycare center’s staff to be aware of and sensitive to racial issues and objected when the daycare center’s programming violated this expectation. In another study, Chinese American parents expressed concern about the conflicting messages children get when what is taught at home differs from what is taught at their daycares, such as differing beliefs about how to address elders and eating practices (e.g. whether picking up a bowl and eating from it is acceptable). These concerns are important to take into account because early childhood education research has shown that presentations of positive ethnic images are important in the formulation of children's self-images and for the transmissions of cultural values. Yet, when childcare advocates propose a single model of developmentally appropriate childcare, they ignore the significance of membership in a historically subordinated racial ethnic group and cultural values in how childcare arrangements are chosen.

Racial group membership and cultural practices are important because they create a lens, or historical consciousness, through which child care is assessed. Historical consciousness, according to poet and scholar Janice Gould, is the awareness of one's historical identity. In her discussion of Native American women, Gould states that historical consciousness is the historical awareness of 500 years of internal colonialism and genocide. Although individual Native American women come from many different tribes and lead very different lives, Gould argues that their historical consciousness informs how individual women live their lives out on a daily basis. Their historical consciousness reflects their social histories as members of particular gender, race, ethnic, and class groups.

Historical consciousness of their status as members of historically subordinated racial ethnic groups informs the types of concerns
employed mothers of color have about leaving their children in other people's care. In this article, I explore two expressions of this historical consciousness in employed mothers' views of their childcare arrangements: racial safety and cultural maintenance. The introduction of two concepts is central to understanding why parents of color seek out childcare providers who are members of their own racial ethnic group and how they view childcare provided by persons who do not share their racial ethnic group membership and/or knowledge of their racial ethnic histories. Furthermore, this article not only identifies childcare problems related to overt forms of racism, but also discusses the problems that occur when well-intentioned White childcare providers lack the cultural competency to care for children of different racial ethnic groups.

Methods

This paper is based on interviews with fifteen women of color (7 Mexican American, 7 African American, and 1 Guamanian American). The analysis presented in this paper is part of a larger research project that examined how employed mothers of infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children made, maintained, and changed their childcare arrangements. In-depth interviews were conducted with 32 employed mothers in a Northern Californian county during the period of 1990-1992. Because this study was exploratory, I used maximum variation sampling to ensure inclusion of a diversity of experiences. This sampling method was used to locate the sample because unlike snowball sampling which sometimes produces a tightly networked and homogeneous sample, maximum variation sampling interrupts the social links between respondents and the researcher, and diversifies the sample on several different factors. In this study, mother's ethnicity, occupation, and type of child care were the three criteria purposefully diversified. This sampling practice results in an analysis that represents a broad range of experiences, rather then one that is limited to a homogeneous sample. Most mothers were interviewed only once and interviews lasted from 2-6 hours. Every interview began by asking the employed mothers about the history of their childcare arrangements. During the first wave of interviewing, mothers were encouraged to talk about any issues that came to mind. In the second wave, in-depth probing focused on three topics: the meaning of childcare, concerns about their current situations, and their relationships with their childcare providers. In the final wave of interviewing, employed mothers were also asked to respond to my developing analyses. I analyzed data as an ongoing process, and new information was constantly compared with previous interviews to push for the development of categories and explanations that generalized from the synthesis of several individual experiences.
According to the 1990 U.S. Census, the Northern California county in which this study was conducted was 85% White, 10% Hispanic, 4% Asian American and less than 1% Black.9 The childcare economy of this county is organized around two sectors: the formal sector composed of licensed family daycares and non-profit (not church-based) and federally funded child care centers, and the informal sector composed of an underground economy of care provided by relatives and unlicensed individual caregivers, including a labor pool of Mexican and South American immigrant women. The division of the childcare economy into two sectors, a formal and an underground one, is a common characteristic nationwide.10

The availability of a labor pool of low paid, women of color is also typical; in other parts of the country these women would more likely be African American. However, the extremely small population of African Americans in this county (less than 3,000) limited the availability of African American childcare providers and African American mothers reported great difficulty in locating same race providers. In contrast, due to the sizable population of Mexican Americans, Central and South American immigrants in this county, Mexican American mothers, like White mothers, had less difficulty locating a pool of providers of their same racial ethnic group.

The Concern for Racial Safety

According to Harriette Pipes McAdoo, "the 'extreme' difficulties which White society imposes on Black people by denying their identity, their values, and their economic opportunities are not unusual or extreme but 'mundane,' daily pressures for Blacks."11 McAdoo compares living with racism to living in a harsh physical environment. In order to survive, historically subordinated racial ethnic groups have to adapt their cultures and material and social structural arrangements to accommodate the daily pervasiveness of this harsh environment. McAdoo identified how racism affects job opportunities, housing, and health care for African Americans, and we know that these conditions are also imposed upon other historically subordinated racial ethnic groups, such as Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.12

Awareness of racism in U.S. society was a common topic when mothers of color talked about their childcare arrangements. Because of their own experiences with racism, they were concerned about how their children would be treated when the childcare providers were White. Often times, mothers discovered these problems only after they established childcare arrangements. For example, Gloria Thomas,13 an African American waitress and mother of two children, observed behaviors that she defined as racist. Gloria said:
I don't know if she was used to [Black people]. I think 
she was kind of narrow minded. I didn't feel comfort-
able, me being Black. [And] she looked like she put 
more energy into the White kids than the Black kids. I 
think she felt that I was on to her, because she said in a 
couple days, or actually I said, "this isn't going to work," 
and she pretty much knew also that it wasn't going to 
work. 14

Gloria expected White childcare providers to have knowledge of how to 
negotiate cross-racial interactions. She said:

If you are dealing with my kids, I hope you do have some 
cultural skills. I don't like prejudiceness at all...You have 
to be not dumb. Some white people can be really stu-
pid. They say the stupidest things.

When it was clear that childcare providers lacked these skills, mothers 
removed their children from the childcare setting. Frances Trudeau, an 
African American lawyer and the mother of two children, responded this 
way when the teachers and administrators at her five year old son's 
preschool-elementary school failed to acknowledge and address that 
the name calling and chasing of African American children was racism. 
When she and other parents spoke to the director, they were told that 
the school could not develop a policy to address these problems be-
cause families came from so many different walks of life and the school 
did not want to tell people how to behave. This response reduced cross-
racial interactions to individual interactions and personal disagreements 
and failed to acknowledge the more systemic nature of racism. Mothers 
of color found this kind of response inadequate and frustrating because 
they are aware of the pervasiveness of the problem of racism. Because 
they know racism's regularity, commonness, and reoccurrence, they do 
not define unpleasant cross-racial interactions as occasional, individual 
disagreements, even in childcare settings.

The mothers of color also experienced racism when they used 
predominantly White childcare settings. Gloria Thomas described one 
such encounter:

This one woman was pretty annoying. She asked me 
this question and to this day I still want to ask her what 
did she mean by it. She said, "Oh, are you a single 
parent?" And I said, "Yes." And she goes, "Oh, do you 
live around here?" And I said, "Yes, I live right around 
the corner." You could tell her mind was [thinking], "She 
goes to this daycare? She's a single parent, Black,
and she lives up here. How can she afford it?" It's really weird.

One of the strategies that the mothers developed to protect their children from racism was to find childcare within their own racial ethnic communities. The use of kin and community networks protected the children and the mothers from having to deal with cross-racial interactions. When mothers of color were able to make childcare arrangements with childcare providers of their same racial ethnic group, the concerns about racial safety and cultural maintenance were eliminated. Yet, care within one's racial ethnic community did not guarantee a fit between the values and childrearing practices of mothers and childcare providers. Often times, mothers had several relatives and acquaintances from which to choose. When this was the case, the mothers carefully discriminated between their choices based on what they considered to be a good environment and good care. After assuring their child's racial safety and exposure to traditional cultural practices and values, they invoked additional criteria to decide which childcare setting was the best. Sylvia Rodriguez, an office manager and the mother of two children, chose her cousin over her sister-in-law. She explained:

It depends on who the relatives are. Like for example, you know, financially [my husband's sister] could have used watch[ing for pay] my son and my daughter at her house. She's real good about feeding them and things like that. But she has a lot of marital problems that I wouldn't want my kids to be around, watching the arguments and fights. I know they use bad language and that's another thing I don't like.

Like Sylvia, Lupe Gonzalez, an administrative assistant and the mother of an eleven month old, was discriminating in terms of which relative she chose to watch her young baby. She had two options: an elderly grandmother and an aunt who was the same age as herself. She was pleased that her aunt was available to care for the baby, although she would have left her baby in her grandmother's care if necessary, but her grandmother was elderly and was already watching several other grandchildren. Because of her grandmother's age, Lupe felt that she would not be as attentive or as physically able to pick up her baby. The advantage of care by the aunt was that her infant son would also be the only child for whom the aunt provided care.

Although Gloria Thomas had left a White childcare provider because she felt the White provider was unable to negotiate the cross-racial interactions, she found that simply finding an African American childcare provider did not necessarily create satisfactory childcare ar-
rangements. Gloria had found a family daycare run by an African American woman, yet other factors prevented her from feeling comfortable with this arrangement. Gloria's views were informed by Black nationalism as well as the health foods movement. She expressed the political position that she would not hire a Latino immigrant because that resembled the racial exploitation of African Americans, and she also rejected high fat and high sugar cooking in favor of low fat and low sugar organic foods. She talked with the African American childcare provider about what kinds of foods were provided at the daycare and she expressed her preference that her children be provided with fresh juices instead of sodas or drinks with sugar in them. In spite of this initial discussion, it was not unusual for Gloria to come to pick up her kids and find them drinking sugar drinks. Gloria defined what her childcare provider was doing as an African American cultural practice:

Black people are raised different where they can eat the fried foods whatever. But I just wasn't trying to act like my kids were special. I was mainly just concerned about their nutrition, but it wasn't like I was acting they were more special. I was just doing it because I didn't want them to eat any sugar.

Unhealthy food was a piece of her cultural heritage that she did not want to continue to practice.

Similarly, Gloria and her provider had disagreements about what were appropriate disciplining practices. Gloria talked with her provider about these issues, but felt that her preferences were not validated by the childcare provider. She said:

Well, I did, I said, "I don't believe in hitting." And she said, "What do you mean by hitting?" I said, "just swatting," and she said, "I do, you know, a slap on the hand." And I said, "pretty much even that I don't want." But I could feel like that she didn't want to hear that.

Since Gloria also wanted something different than what she perceived as traditional African American childrearing practices, she moved her children into a daycare center where she was the only African American parent, as well as of the lowest socioeconomic status and background, and one of only two single parents. She often found herself irritated with what she perceived as a White style of interaction, yet, she felt the social, educational, and environmental advantages of the daycare center outweighed the need to have her child cared for by her previous African American childcare provider.
Young mothers often opposed some of the traditional childrearing practices used by the older and more traditional women in their communities. For example, Maria Hernandez, a Mexican American office manager and the mother of a four year old boy, expressed dissatisfaction with the care provided by her Mexican American mother-in-law. She said:

I don't really like the idea of them being yelled at or spanked. I think if there is a behavior problem, they should be able to tell [the parents] and for us to deal with it. Luckily, I have been in the situation where my kid is pretty mellow, but I've seen her spanking her other grandchildren. I wouldn't like that.

Occasionally, Maria would consider moving her child to a daycare center. Yet, when Maria weighed out all factors (i.e. convenience, location, flexibility, cost, quality of care, being within the family for child care), she decided that this care by her mother-in-law was the best choice, in spite of the differences about disciplining practices.

One of the formal sources of childcare referrals was through the County's childcare referral service. This service provided referrals to licensed daycare centers, family daycares, and unlicensed individual caregivers. However, given the structure of the childcare market into informal and formal sectors, and the racial demographics of the region, the referral service was not often helpful for African American and Mexican American mothers. Even though the service was provided in both English and Spanish, several Mexican American mothers commented that the service was not a good source for Latino providers. One Mexican American mother pointed out that when she visited the referrals given to her by the County's referral service, she saw only White childcare providers and very few non-White racial ethnic children in their care. Mexican American employed mothers reported that they had greater success locating Latino caregivers through informal sources, such as personal referrals and Spanish radio ads. Thus, Mexican American mothers often turned to their social and community-based networks to locate child care instead of using the childcare referral service. African American mothers in this study found it difficult to locate African American childcare providers in either the formal or informal sector of the childcare market.

Another consideration was that simply being of the same race did not guarantee racial safety. Gloria felt that her African American childcare provider was uncomfortable with the fact that her children's father was White. Being biracial located her children in a different category of race than being labeled as simply "Black." Similarly, other mothers found that their searches for child care were complicated by having
mixed race children. Julie Lopez described how her background complicated what she look for in childcare:

I'm bilingual, but I'm not bicultural. My father was Black, my mother was White, my husband is Mexican. My child is half Mexican, Chicano. My grandparents are Jewish. We had all these different types of people all there and I picked parts of different cultures...My child is going to get a different concept of different people.

Since within-group care was problematic, another strategy that the mothers used to protect their children and themselves against racism was to choose childcare settings that were multiracial. Frances Trudeau said:

Whenever we look at places for the kids, we always look at what's the number of minority kids, specifically black kids but also minorities. We're also Jewish so what's the make-up in terms of Jews...[He's going] to be spending most of his day with these people, what do they believe in? What is it that he's gonna get either subtle or not so subtle in terms of their teachings?

Several of the middle class, predominantly White daycares had made a formal commitment to diversify the ethnic composition of their staff and families they served, as well as to develop a multicultural curriculum. They offered full scholarships to children of color in order to diversify the race and ethnicities of the children in their care. Yet, even when the daycare center had a formal commitment to multiculturalism, childcare providers' behaviors and attitudes often demonstrated a lack of cultural competency that resulted in racially unsafe environments for children of color and their mothers.

Racist encounters ranged from outright hostile relations with childcare staff and other parents at the daycare to incompetent interactions with well-intentioned White childcare providers who lack experience in caring for children of color and negotiating cross-cultural interactions. Aurora Garcia, a Mexican American mother, explained how this happens:

They're all White, and they come from that perspective. .. And they have blind spots. I don't know how else to put it. They're coming from their perspectives and their reality, their experiences, and so to change that, you have to ask them to. You have to help them do it, too.
And indeed, one of the consequences of being a parent of a child of color in a majority White daycare was the increased need for parental involvement. Aurora negotiated her child's racial safety by becoming, informally, the daycare center's multicultural consultant. She intervened when the staff at her daughter's daycare center did not interrupt behavior that was racist and stereotypical, such as when a White child pretended to be an Indian and came to school stereotypically dressed in feathers and headbands, wielding a toy tomahawk, and whooping war cries. First, she brought to their awareness that certain behaviors and practices were racist and stereotypical. In the case of the White boy who came to school dressed as a stereotypical American Indian, she told them that she objected to the child's practice as well as the staff's encouragement of it by painting stereotypical Indian war paint on him. When the daycare center was responsive to her concerns and asked her to work with them on it, she talked to the children and staff, and recommended multicultural readings.

Aurora acknowledged the daycare staff's effort to improve themselves, but at the same time she was aware of the cross-cultural gaffes that were a regular part of taking her child to a predominantly White daycare center. She said:

They are very actively trying to deal with some of these issues, and to me that felt good, culturally, you know. They made some boo-boos. [Like] at one point one of these teachers was talking to one of the [Latino] kids in Spanish, and she said, "She's bilingual, right?" [The child wasn't.] Then you have to decode what you are and [let them know that] not all Chicanos speak Spanish. So, on one level, it was like you could ignore it. But I had to talk to her and explain who I am, and this has been my experience, and people assume that if you're a particular ethnicity then you're going to do what they perceive are the stereotypical things of that ethnicity.

Because of their awareness of racism in U.S. society, mothers of color were acutely aware of whether their children would be racially safe in their childcare settings. When one is a member of a historically subordinated racial ethnic group, finding child care that provides children with racial safety is an important concern. Yet, the search is complicated by other racial/ethnic factors than simply what is the child's race or ethnic group.
The Search for Cultural Maintenance

Many of the mothers expressed interest in child care by racially and ethnically similar caregivers. For some, this was motivated by the desire to protect their children and create a racially safe situation. For others, it was an explicit strategy to ensure that their children would learn about their cultural heritage and histories. Many of the mothers had been young adults at a time in history when racial ethnic groups began to take pride in claiming their cultural histories and formed nationalist movements. Prior to the 1960s, historically subordinated racial ethnic groups were expected to socialize their children to the dominant Anglo Saxon Protestant values that undergird U.S. society. As far back as the 1920s, child care services were used to “Americanize” immigrant children and their parents. Mothers of color were aware of these historical biases and purposefully sought out culturally similar providers because they saw child care as a site that would influence their children’s understandings of their cultural heritages.

Several Mexican American mothers sought Spanish-speaking Mexican/Mexican American caregivers for this reason. For example, when Elena Romero, a Mexican American nutritionist, first needed child care, she used this strategy and found a Spanish-speaking provider through a referral from her husband’s office. She said:

We found out about this [family] day care that was run by a preschool teacher that had decided to open up her own day care. And she was Chicana and...I really wanted him to know Spanish. Since birth I had [talked] to him [in Spanish]...Anyway, so I went to this day care and I really was impressed with the daycare center because...she was really organized...and I liked her right away, you know. Then she had like señoritas, mexicanas...come in and cook for her and like they would make a big ol’ pot of albondigas...a meatball soup, you know. So like they would make really good Mexican food.

Similarly, Aurora Garcia said:

I was hoping that, given that my child would be in the household for a significant number of hours during the day, that there be some [ethnic] similarity, you know. Not that I’m traditional, I don’t consider myself traditional, but those values I wanted, kind of implanted, you know, issues of discipline, you know, being really caring and nurturing and her being familiar with Spanish.
In describing what she looked for in child care, Julie Lopez, an African American mother whose ex-husband and stepfather are Latino, said:

There's a cultural thing...one of the things for me, and our family, it has been really important to have [my child] in a bilingual place where she can sit down with other kids and speak Spanish and have a teacher that speaks Spanish. They sit down at lunch and they speak Spanish together. And the writing they do is both in English and Spanish and the pictures on the walls and stuff, because that cultural thing to me is really important...I'm always more comfortable if they're bicultural as well, versus just being bilingual.

Thus, their concerns were not simply about language skills and types of food that their children would be eating, but also addressed a broader understanding that shared cultural practices were expressions of shared cultural values.

Another issue that confronted this group of mothers of color was whether to foster cultural maintenance and racial safety at the cost of middle class opportunities. In particular, mothers who had been raised working class and were now middle class grappled with this problem. When Aurora Garcia switched her daughter from a family daycare home with a Mexican American caregiver to a predominantly White daycare center, she felt like she had to make compromises. She said:

I'm not getting the ideal. I can't find the ideal...there are very few children of color there. I think diversity to them is Jewish. That's being diverse culturally...I mean, the ideal to me would be that she be in a school where she would be learning Spanish, she would be learning those things...And that's a tradeoff for me right now...I think of all the skills she's learning right now, but there's a cultural context to them that would be nice to have.

Aurora acknowledged that because she used a predominantly White daycare center, she was raising her child in a White environment. However, she pointed out that her daughter was exposed to traditional cultural values because of who her parents are. She said, “I'm very much entrenched in who I am and what my cultural values are and my experience, and my partner is in his.” Similarly, Elena Romero reconciled herself to the fact that her children would learn about their culture and history at home. She said:
[My husband and I] are both real proud of being Mexicanos, Chicanos, you know. And we’re both constantly involved in the Movement kind of things. And we both have friends who are bilingual and that have kids, and, you know, our families. If we have a birthday, we have a piñata and and all that stuff. So we decided, well, that they would get it from us.

Yet Aurora and Elena both realized that placing children in White daycares removed them from being fully immersed in their traditional ethnic community. Aurora said:

It’s the same for a child. I mean, it really is how you play, who you play with, what you play. It’s what you eat, it’s how people treat you, what they say to you...[Her teachers] are going to present it from a white perspective because they don’t have bilingual teachers. They don’t have African American teachers. So for me, it’s a trade off.

Clearly, choosing to move outside of one’s culture into a predominantly White daycare is not an easy decision. When they made the decision to place their children in predominantly White daycares, they continued to be conflicted about not being able to find a daycare for their children that could provide cultural maintenance and exposure to traditional cultural practices and values. Although on the surface it may appear that mothers of color who place their children in predominantly White daycare settings are rejecting their own cultural practices and turning their backs on their racial ethnic group, this was not the case. They were highly self-conscious that their children’s child care was not fulfilling one of their major criteria for their childcare arrangements. By providing their children with the social opportunities and formal education which they had come to expect for any well-educated child of the middle class, they had to work harder at home to ensure their children learned about their cultures and histories. Furthermore, by placing themselves in predominantly White settings, they more frequently encountered racism and, more frequently and at a younger age, had to explain to their young children about race relations with White society and how to navigate them.

Both of these concerns—racial safety and cultural maintenance—reflect how membership in specific racial ethnic groups influence views of what constitutes appropriate caregiving. The concern of mothers of color for racial safety addresses their awareness that their children can be targets of racism by a society that has historically devalued their racial ethnic group. The concern for cultural maintenance reflects their
preference to retain and/or retrieve traditional cultural practices and values. They recognize that childcare arrangements are an important site that serves as a source of what their children learn about their cultural practices and develop a historical consciousness.

Conclusion

Mothers' concerns about racial safety and cultural maintenance call into question the current social construction of the professional model of developmentally appropriate child care as culturally neutral. The views of the mothers in this study do not reflect rigid adherence to traditional cultural practices, but rather a recognition of the significance of racism in U.S. society and their desire to have cultural learning be part of the childcare curriculum. First, they are concerned whether the caregivers are competent to negotiate cross-racial and cross-ethnic social relations, and whether their children will be treated with the same respect and positive assumptions made of White children. In short, they worried about their children's racial safety. Second, they are concerned about whether the interpersonal interactions and formal and informal curriculum of the childcare setting supports and validates the cultural histories and practices of their racial ethnic group. This concern is beyond overt or subtle forms of racism, but also addresses the question of whether caregivers are culturally competent to positively educate children about their traditional cultures and practices.

These two concerns--racial safety and cultural maintenance--mark an important distinction between racial status, i.e. membership in a group on the basis of one's appearance, and ethnic cultural values, i.e. practices which are important because of how one was raised and hopes to raise one's children. Another important point is that while racial status may be assigned onto the mother or child, ethnic cultural values may be shed or reclaimed, as was the case of Aurora Garcia, who wanted her child to learn Spanish as part of knowing her traditional heritage, even though Aurora herself had not been raised that way.

It is of no surprise that race status and ethnic/cultural values are important criteria that shape mothers of color's views of their childcare arrangements. Hardly any realm of social life in the U.S. is not influenced in some way by racial ethnic stratification and racism. The existence of these dilemmas in childcare choices is another example of how people of color experience the mundane extreme environment of racism.

Even child care is influenced by the social organization of race in the U.S. In some regions of the country, such as where where this study was conducted, some families are forced to go outside of their own racial ethnic group for childcare either because the racial demographics did not support same race child care, or because the conflation
of class and ethnicity make middle class parents of color ineligible for childcare with their own racial ethnic group. Because childcare is a racially and class segregated system, a range of choices in types of child care for parents of color is limited. This is especially true for parents of color who want alternative practices and/or have been economically upwardly mobile, yet desire their children to be cared for by members of their own racial ethnic group. Mothers of color often must choose between childcare settings that provide cultural learning without the middle class opportunities and those that provide middle class educational opportunities without the cultural learning. Clearly, race and culture have great significance when mothers evaluate the quality of their childcare arrangements and choices. This study points out the need to train childcare providers, especially White caregivers, how to effectively negotiate cross-racial interactions and to know about specific cultural practices.

Concerns about racial safety and cultural maintenance make reducing child care to a single universal model of developmentally appropriate care problematic. Parents will resist this model if it is not put into practice in a way that is sensitive to how racial ethnic group membership and traditional cultural practices and values are important dimensions of the childcare experience for parents of historically racially subordinated groups. Furthermore, an important part of a child of color's socialization in U.S. society depends upon learning to negotiate one's way in a society that is racially stratified. This socialization takes place all the time, and needs to be taken into account especially in childcare settings where today's children are spending much of their time.

Notes


4 Carole E. Joffe.

5 Carole E. Joffe.


12 In this essay, I use different racial ethnic terms interchangeably. First, I use the terms that were given by the source of information (e.g. the Census Bureau uses Hispanic, different mothers I interviewed used different terms). As analyst, I try to use the most specific racial ethnic label that accurately reflects the group or groups I am referencing. What complicates this decision is whether I am addressing issues that have to do with membership in a particular racial ethnic group, or discussing cultural practices and values. Because of the significance of differences in cultural practices between different ethnic groups, it is important to specifically identify the ethnic group (e.g. Mexican Americans), rather than using global labels (e.g. Hispanic or Latinos), when speaking about issues of cultural practices and values. However, when talking about experiences that result from not being White, it is appropriate to speak of Latinos as a group, or people of color as a group.

13 All names are pseudonyms.

14 Quotes are only partially edited for readability. Words are inserted to clarify meaning but ungrammatical syntax is not changed in order to preserve the way ideas were expressed in the syntax used by the speaker.
15 Julia Wrigley, "Different Care for Different Kids: Social Class and Child Care Policy," *Educational Policy* 3, 4 (1989): 421-439; Wrigley has argued that different kinds of childcare are provided for kids of different socioeconomic status: enrichment opportunities that support middle class culture are provided to middle class children, whereas it is assumed that low income kids need care that interrupts their family's cultural practices.

16 Wrigley.
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I'd Rather Play the Saxophone: Conflicts in Identity Between Vietnamese Students and Their Parents

Joseph Stimpfl
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
and
Ngoc H. Bui
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Members of the Vietnamese community in Lincoln, Nebraska range in time of resettlement, background and experience in adjustment to their new home. The impact of cultural change and education on the Vietnamese youth in this community is of particular importance. The Vietnamese youth are under-examined in the areas of adjustment and identity formation. The effects of cultural conflict have profound impact on the future of Vietnamese youth. The following study presents an examination of the variables that may affect Vietnamese youth, specifically culture and education as factors in ethnic identity formation. It also presents how these factors can affect the relationship between students and parents.

Introduction

The degree to which Americans value education in the United States is reflected in the extensive funding that supports American schools. However, the interpretation of "value" varies greatly among education's supporters. Often conflicting interpretations of value are evident in public discussions of what should be taught in school, why it should be so and what goal or result is important. The conflict is most clear in discussions of the social versus academic roles of schools. There are, without a doubt, as many who espouse the social and cultural aspects of schools as those who emphasize their academic elements. But

this may be a false dichotomy. In fact, most Americans are equally concerned with both the social and cultural aspects of education and the academic value of attending school.

An interesting relationship that researchers have yet to examine is the process of ethnic identity formation of Southeast Asian students, the smallest of the immigrant Asian groups, and effects of this process on the students' and their parents' perceptions of the values of education, both socially and culturally.

This study attempts to examine the impact of culture and education on Vietnamese youth in an average-sized mid-western city. Also, the study seeks to delineate the role of ethnic identity in school performance and behavior, as well as what issues the influence of schools and family raise. First, a brief overview of the arrival of Asians, more specifically Southeast Asians, in the U.S. will be covered. Second, the importance of ethnic identity and its role in the education of minority youth will be examined. Third, the authors will present interview data of Vietnamese students and parents, including their perceptions of the roles that culture, education and family play in their lives. Also in this study, how schools may possibly impact these students' cultures will be discussed. Finally, current theoretical explanations, within a psychological framework, will be offered to help identify why these patterns of interactions occur and their possible implications on the future of the education of Southeast Asians in this country.

How do Vietnamese parents view American schools? What values do they put on education? Are there conflicts inherent in the juxtaposition of American views of education and those of the Vietnamese? If there are conflicts, how do these conflicts affect Vietnamese students? What strategies do Vietnamese students employ to deal with the transition from traditional Vietnamese households to the American school? The authors hope to answer these and other questions concerning Vietnamese students and their parents.

Demographics

According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, Asian American and Pacific Islander populations in 1990 comprised approximately 4% of the total U.S. population. Of these included in the census, the largest population of Asian Americans in the United States are Chinese, of which a little more than half (56%) were foreign born. The earliest Asian immigrants to arrive in the United States were the Chinese, who played significant roles in the construction of this country, more specifically, this country's transportation system (e.g., the transcontinental railroad). Their arrivals are estimated to have begun around the middle of the nineteenth century. Currently, there continues to be small influxes of Asian immigrants to the United States every year, especially from the South-
east Asian countries of Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. The most recent arrivals of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are those immigrants from the countries of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. The recent groups have more than 80% of their population foreign born. These data suggest that although the Asian American population is relatively small, the importance of examining issues such as cultural adaptation and ethnic identity formation is quite obvious for the mere fact that the Asian Americans' presence in this country is well established and because these groups are often overlooked in terms of psychological and social services mainly due to their smaller numbers and poorer skills in English and in adapting to their new culture. However, there is a significant difference between recent arrivals and the established Asian American population. There is also a real and meaningful difference between refugees who are by definition not voluntary immigrants and immigrants on whom the vast majority of the research on immigration has been based.

In this particular study, Lincoln, Nebraska, an average-sized midwestern city, was the location of the research. There are about 3,000 Vietnamese living in the area of Lincoln, Nebraska. Although most are refugees and have been here less than three years, the resettlement of the Lincoln Vietnamese has taken place over a 15 year period, so at any time there are a range of experiences and attitudes in the community. Some of the refugees that have been resettled here for the longest time now have children beginning college and who were born in the United States. However, the largest number of Vietnamese students in Lincoln schools were born in Vietnam.

This paper is based on interviews with 10 sets of parents and 10 Vietnamese college students conducted in 1993-1994. All informants were interviewed individually using an unstructured interview format based on a generalized interview protocol designed to ascertain informant views on school experiences, both personal and ethnic identity, and family relationships. Interviews were extensive and follow up interviews were often conducted to clarify or expand issues raised in initial interviews. Informants included long term residents of the Lincoln area, newer arrivals, students born and mostly raised in Vietnam, and others born in the United States or immigrated when they were very young. Findings were discussed with Vietnamese prominent in the community, officials who work in social services, and educators who specialize in minority school problems. This study is part of an ongoing study of Vietnamese parents and children in Lincoln, Nebraska. The ongoing study deals with changes in ethnic identity and considers the various factors that may impact ethnic identity formation and change among Vietnamese. The emphasis is on children and schools but includes other mechanisms and processes that impact ethnic identity.
Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity serves as an important contributing factor to the overall relationship between Vietnamese children and their parents, not only because different concepts of ethnic identity can serve as sources of conflict, but also because it can perform as a means for individuals to feel a sense of commonness and belonging with others and in this way may provide a psychological function. The features of this psychological function are that ethnic identity: 1) includes the general knowledge, beliefs, and expectations that a person has about their ethnic group, 2) serves a cognitive function in that it offers an information-processing framework or filter within which one can interpret and perceive objects, situations, events, and other people, and 3) functions as a foundation for a person’s behavior. Furthermore, ethnic identity has been identified as playing particularly salient roles in such psychological processes as cultural adaptation and acculturation, generational conflicts within families, and psychological adjustment and stress of refugees. Consequently, ethnic identity is specifically important to Asian immigrants, because Asians, especially refugees, are the most recent arrivals to America and their relatively low numbers and distinct physical characteristics that limit alternative group membership demand solidarity and ethnic identity. In addition, the issue of ethnic identity is believed to be an important factor in the relationship between Asian American parents and their children. From studies with college students and high school students, the process of ethnic identity development is a significant factor in understanding the self-esteem and adjustment of minority youth, which ultimately leads to increased understanding of other relationships in their lives, in this case, their family members.

Several models have been developed to describe the formation of ethnic identity. These include the Identity Formation Model, the Minority Identity Development Model, and the Stages of Ethnic Identity. It is noticeable how most of these models describe similar, if not overlapping, stages of identity development.

Identity Formation Model

According to Marcia, identity formation is the process of combining the multiple selves that the individual has developed for themselves and forming a coherent whole self. The main issue of identity for the individual is to achieve some sort of internal consistency. Based on Erikson's theory of ego identity formation, Marcia formulated the four Ego Identity Statuses: 1) identity diffusion; 2) identity foreclosure; 3) moratorium; and 4) identity achievement. Beginning with the first status, identity diffusion is the status of a person who has neither engaged in exploring nor made a commitment to some form of identity area, such
as occupation, religion or political affiliation. Someone who has made at least some commitment to an area that may define their identity but who has not gone on to explore their identity and these areas is said to be in the foreclosed status. Having not made a commitment, but in the process of exploring is known as the moratorium status. Finally, a person who has made a firm commitment following a period of exploration is best described as one who has an achieved identity status. This theoretical model of identity formation relates to ethnic identity formation in that it closely ties to the minority person’s experiences with commitment to an identity area as well as their exploration into these areas, in defining the role of ethnicity in their lives.

Minority Identity Development Model

Asians fit the definition of differentiated minority because they receive differential and unfair treatment, not to mention exclusion from certain aspects of American life, due to their physical and cultural traits. As such, the model of Minority Identity Development may applicably describe the formation of Asian ethnic identity. The model’s first stage begins with one termed the Conformity Stage. This stage entails the adoption of cultural values and lifestyles of Euro-Americans, as well as also having the person, consciously and unconsciously, degrade and denigrate the physical and cultural characteristics of their own minority group. This was hypothesized as individual efforts to try to elevate his or her personal status by identifying with members of the dominant group. Following the Conformity Stage, the second stage in which Asian Americans experience ambivalent feelings about both the dominant group and his or her own minority group is called the Dissonance Stage. This ambiguity is hypothesized to be due to the information and experiences that individuals have encountered that may be inconsistent with their previously accepted dominant group values and beliefs causing them to question their aspiration of membership in the dominant group. In the third stage of Minority Identity Development, minorities totally reject the dominant group and exclusively embrace their own minority culture. This stage is known as the Resistance and Immersion Stage. The individuals show unquestioning acceptance of their group’s cultural values and begin to question why they experienced shameful feelings about who they are. The minority develops a great deal of identification with and commitment to other members of his or her minority group as well as an interest in exploring his or her culture and history. At the fourth stage of Introspection, individuals feel sufficiently secure about their identity to begin to question their previously held strong beliefs. Minorities will hold secure individual identities as members of minorities but also recognize some positive elements in the dominant culture. The fifth and final stage for minorities in developing ethnic identity is the Synergetic Articulation
and Awareness Stage. In this stage, they accept or reject the cultural values of the dominant and minorities groups on an objective basis and have a feeling of self-worth and individuality.

**Stages of Ethnic Identity**

Similar to the Minority Identity Development Model of Atkinson et al., Phinney suggested a three stage movement toward identity formation. Phinney's proposed stages include the periods from an unexamined ethnic identity, through a period of exploration, to an achieved or committed ethnic identity. In the first stage of unexamined ethnic identity, Phinney hypothesized that younger adolescents, and maybe also some adults who experience this stage, have not had normal ethnic group experiences. The result may be that individuals could show a preference for the dominant culture. In the second stage of exploration, the person begins to discover his or her own ethnicity. This second stage is similar to the moratorium status described by Marcia in the model for identity formation. However, this stage describes a more intense process of voluntary immersion in one's own culture through various activities, such as reading and learning about one's culture. In addition, individuals may also experience rejection of the values of the dominant culture. This suggests that as a result of the process of ethnic identity formation, people can come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of their own ethnicity, which is described in Phinney's third stage of committed ethnic identity, and they also experience ethnic identity achievement or internalization.

Models developed to explain ethnic identity formation are usually formulated specific to one ethnic group, usually one with a clearly defined identity in the American context. These models will have differing degrees of relevance to individual Vietnamese who include both immigrants and refugees, and their children. This is particularly the case in families whose children have different experiences based upon place of birth and number of years resident in Vietnam.

**Cultural Dilemmas**

At some point in the context of their schooling, Vietnamese children must make the choice whether they will maintain strong cultural behavior and norms in the face of peer pressure or conform to the expressed cultural system of their American peers and face possible family disapproval. This is similar to the stage of Marcia's Identity Formation Model, known as the moratorium stage, the second stage of the Minority Identity Development Model of dissonance, and also Phinney's second stage of ethnic identity. At this stage it is a difficult choice to make between family and peer expectations, and one that forces children to make
determinations of cultural value and preference. Factors that seem to affect the decision are the individual's age at the point of transition from one culture to the other, the number of Vietnamese in the community and school and the point at which the identity choice must be made.

This can be exacerbated by dominant group perceptions of Vietnamese. For some time there has been a perception that the Vietnamese, like other Asian groups, are a "model minority." However, research in Nebraska and other places\(^\text{18}\) indicates that, although there is a large number of Vietnamese students who have very successful academic records and go on to universities, there is also a significant number who do not have great academic success. Recently it has become clear that many disaffected Vietnamese children are running away\(^\text{19}\) or becoming involved in gangs.\(^\text{20}\) There is evidence in the emerging literature of the American experience of Vietnamese immigrants that there is a disturbing maladjustment among Vietnamese adolescents.\(^\text{21}\) Perhaps, for the Vietnamese adolescent, their maladjustment may be due to the exploration and stagnation they are experiencing in the beginnings of ethnic identity development.

**Vietnamese Adolescents and Family Values**

The Vietnamese family is characterized by a patrilineal and patriarchal structure, with extreme centrality and pooling of resources through a highly disciplined extended family system.\(^\text{22}\) Vietnamese describe themselves as hardworking and industrious, with a relentless drive to be successful.\(^\text{23}\) Core values include filial piety, mutual obligation to family, politeness, modesty and humility. Primary responsibility is to the family lineage: family interests should be put before personal interests.

Like other Southeast Asian groups, Vietnamese allow very young children considerable freedom in behavior. However, after children reach the age when they begin to understand abstract concepts and communicate freely, parents often impose a strict standard for behavior.

Adolescents are expected to fulfill their responsibilities to family and family lineage. With the onset of adolescence, girls are expected to manifest modesty, obedience, chastity. Boys are expected to exhibit adult male behavior. Family members are expected to share in household tasks to the extent of their abilities.

Of course this is an area of contention for Vietnamese children raised in America.

Adolescents in Vietnam have had little choice in moral
values. Traditionally, culture and society have reinforced the morality taught in the family. However Vietnamese coming to this country often find that their traditional family values are inconsistent with those in American society.24

The autonomy and independence of American youth conflict with Vietnamese cultural values. The strong influence of Confucianism on Vietnamese society and its emphasis on obligation and hierarchy contrast with the individualism that is a predominate characteristic of American society.25 In Vietnam, parents usually have major role in or absolute control of the decisions of adolescents. As one student explained to us, "Vietnamese kids are expected to obey their parents in every way." However, more and more Vietnamese adolescents are refusing guidance from parents or making decisions without parental advice.26 Following the ethnic identity models, part of their research for an identity in a newly adopted setting, such as the U.S., there poses much conflict in what the adolescents view as being "American" and what they view as "Vietnamese."

Conflicts

The conflict is most clearly evidenced in the practice of strong peer identification in American children versus the "greater emphasis on achieving one's identity and sense of worth through close relationships with family adults and being a member of an established lineage and extended-family system"27 for Vietnamese. Vietnamese traditions promote family cooperation. The dynamics of the Vietnamese family hinder the development and expression of the kind of individualism that Americans see as appropriate.

Virtually all Vietnamese parents interviewed recited the same litany of expediency: the most important thing for children is to learn English and perform well in school. School performance will insure career tracking that will result in success, in this case defined as the accumulation of capital, acquisition of material goods and rise in status for the family.28 Anything that was not related to this was considered to have little or no importance. As one Vietnamese university student explained, "All they want us to do is stay home and hit the books." Many Vietnamese parents view education as their children's prime source for success and achievement in America and fear that socializing and dating could possibly take away from their studies.29 As one father explained, "I want my son to do only what is important. Not waste time with friends every evening." The concept of "dating" was a particular point of contention. When describing what her parents' views on dating were, a student said that they told her, "no dating until finishing school.
And no dating non-Vietnamese, ever." A female Vietnamese graduate student explained that her parents, although relatively successful and both with post-secondary educations, felt very strongly about her plans for a marriage partner. It was well known in the community that they had directed her to choose a Vietnamese male as a prospective marriage partner. For this reason, even though she was dating and planned to marry a European American, she attended Vietnamese functions with a Vietnamese male friend. "I am not yet in a position to confront them with my future plans. The difficulty is that I can't find a Vietnamese man with a university education." Another student repeatedly mentioned his father's beliefs on education and the potential for conflict.

He really stresses education. He hears I've been dating, but he wants me to only have friends. I don't think he can ask that. I have to do what I want. I don't think he understands it. He will never accept it.

Control of children and the effects of their behavior is considered the responsibility of the family. Undesirable behavior reflects negatively upon the entire family. Most parents do not pressure schools and teachers to cooperate in their definition of success. Unlike other longer resident American minority parents, the Vietnamese want to avoid expression of disagreement with public officials.

My children are supposed to go to school and learn. In this way they can get a good job or even go to the university and learn a career. Anything that gets in the way of this is not good. I don't want trouble in school. It is better if we are left alone. Then my children can devote their time and attention to their studies.30

The idea of the cultural and social value of education makes little sense to these parents. For example, to nearly every parent interviewed, the idea of "multiculturalism" was considered unimportant. The majority were not even familiar with the concept even though it had been the subject of heated local public debate for some time. As one parent explained,

We Vietnamese are homogeneous. We don't discriminate but we don't mix either. We don't mind those others. I work with them and they are my friends. But they don't have anything to do with our lives.

Perhaps isolation and unobtrusiveness are survival tactics for a group
that has been long penalized for any expression of difference. "Under the communists you aren't supposed to be different, uncooperative. We don't want to cause trouble." Avoidance of involvement leads to community isolation which extends to not involving schools in family or home problems. As one Vietnamese community leader explained to us, "school is not able to handle their problems. We must take care of things ourselves. Parents are confused, don't understand, or even disapprove of what goes on in the school, but parents are very hesitant to complain to teachers."

Cross-cultural problems for both parents and children crop up as a result of the emphasis on unobtrusiveness early on in resettlement. Parents recognize that success for children will depend on how well they "fit in." Initially, immigrant parents cooperate fully in the "Americanization" of their children. "We want them to be American. We encourage it. After all, we are in America." The initial goal, to "fit in," is soon mitigated by a growing understanding of the differences between Vietnamese and American culture, and the effect of American culture on their children.

New arrivals are very enthusiastic. But after a while they see the life here is very different. They recognize that activities are not community based. They see that Americans are often isolated and that Vietnamese who are "too American" may distance themselves from the community.

Another difficulty is in the discipline practices. "Children are like bamboo. Without control it will grow any which way. You must bind it up until it grow tall. Only then will it be straight and good." Vietnamese are not used to children who are uncooperative, disrespectful or disobedient. Many parents are concerned with what they consider to be lax discipline in school and believe that it has resulted in a lack of respect for parents. They believe children need strict discipline to become responsible adults. The preferred punishment is corporal. "I spank them when they really do very bad things-impoliteness, fighting, being too stubborn and so on." It is a common joke among Vietnamese, which we heard several times in a variety of settings, that they are afraid that if they punish their children in a traditional manner, the children will call emergency 911 to report their parents to the police. Parents are also quick to point out that this is what children have been taught in school. It is clear that many Vietnamese do not understand the school's need to "interfere" in family relationships.

For parents whose children are born in the United States or attended most of their schooling here, problems often begin to appear around the time of adolescence, when Vietnamese children are expected
Okay there is some breakdown in the family. Kids are growing and becoming American. They want to date. They want to go out. This idea never existed in Vietnam. So the kids cannot tolerate this. And they don't like to be told- anything, particularly to stay home.《38}

Even the best behaved and properly enculturated students are subject to attitudinal differences that are emphasized in school. Individualism and individualized personal growth as expressed in American culture are not familiar characteristics to Vietnamese parents.

I want to please my parents but they just don't see things the way that I do. I got interested in art in school. My father wanted me to be a doctor. So now I am at the university and I am taking pre-med courses, but also art courses. I haven't told them I'm not going to be a doctor. It was the same thing with music. I told my mother I wanted to study music when I was in high school. She asked me to play the piano. I was afraid to tell her, but I didn't want to play the piano. All I wanted to do was play the saxophone.《39}

We found some evidence of this conflict in every household we interviewed. However, it was not always apparent to an outsider. Vietnamese students who are older when they arrive, seem to have the best record of success. They either go on in school or go to work and contribute to family household costs, turning over paychecks to male heads-of-households. Vietnamese who were younger when they arrived, particularly males, often have outright conflicts with parents over such matters as spending money, associating with less desirable friends, and staying away from home too much, often spending nights with friends. This finding has been reinforced by the recent introduction of Asian gangs into the community. The gangs are composed mostly of disenfranchised and dissatisfied males.

**Ethnicity and the Difficulties in Schools**

Choice of affiliation and identity formation can also be influenced by the dynamics of group interaction in schools. This may be beyond the control of the students themselves. If there are very few Vietnamese in the school, children might suddenly find themselves disenfranchised from the majority when ethnic differences begin to be realized by other students. If there is a larger group of Vietnamese, they may find
themselves relegated to "being Vietnamese," regardless of their identity preferences. In some school experiences, particularly when there are no other Asians present, the issue might not arise at all. As in the case of some Vietnamese students, the question of ethnic identity did not arise until they arrived at the university. West High School (a pseudonym) is in a traditional European-American blue-collar neighborhood. Up until a few years ago, minority students had tended to choose to go to other high schools were there were more minority students. According to local school district policy, because of low representation of minorities, West High School was encouraged to take measures to increase its number of minority students. The result was a dramatic influx of Vietnamese students. Although there had been a few Vietnamese students previously, they had either fit into the student body or remained on the margins of school life and activities and been largely ignored.

The increased number of Vietnamese, many of them immigrants, resulted in greater viability of Vietnamese culture. Vietnamese students tended to socialize together and, most tellingly, spoke Vietnamese in social contexts. This created tension, particularly among those children who were not familiar with schooling in cross-cultural contexts, a very common instance in Nebraska. The tension reached a crisis point over the use of Vietnamese language in school. Some students felt that the Vietnamese students were being "exclusive" and not trying to "fit in" because they tended to stay together, particularly in the lunch room, and speak Vietnamese. One white male student objected to a Vietnamese student whom he said was "staring" and "smiling" at him. This was clearly a cross-cultural miscue. In Vietnam, the smile can mean anxiety, anger, fear, embarrassment and even disagreement. It is a public face to cope with all difficult circumstances.

The resultant tension led to epithets being painted on school walls and a series of incidents of name calling. The principal, clearly shaken by the events, tightened security, instituted a dress code and prohibited groups that had the "appearance of gangs." These measures applied to the Vietnamese students as well as the groups who threatened them. The result was that social interactions of groups of Vietnamese students and other minority students were discouraged. One Vietnamese student said, "These things are really just to make us be like them."

This situation has had several repercussions. At West High, Vietnamese students are no longer free to choose between an identity based on Vietnamese culture or assimilating into American culture. Those American students who find Vietnamese culture unattractive have polarized the Vietnamese and classified all students of Vietnamese origin as, according to several teachers, "chinks." In this type of situation, it may be difficult to be successful. Sin40 found that refugee students who are able to retain some of their native, home cultural values, while
also learning to blend into the mainstream culture, record higher academic achievement in school. Such students have a commitment to academic achievement, a strong sense of self-esteem and a clear ethnic self-concept. However, Vietnamese students do not always fit this profile.

Lincoln Vietnamese and their Community

Although lumped into a generic category by outsiders, the Lincoln Vietnamese community is not homogeneous. There are many differences among Vietnamese including such things as religion, affiliation in Vietnam, place of origin, occupation, experience and social status. Since family is so important, family problems are not readily discussed outside the immediate family. However, some support for community problems is offered to Vietnamese through a variety of social and religious groups. Virtually all Vietnamese belong to one or more of these groupings, which may include, among others, the Catholic church, a variety of Protestant groups, a Buddhist temple and veterans of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Such organizations claim that problems with the community are caused by outsiders, particularly those disenfranchised from group membership by life experiences, wartime affiliation, ethnicity, marriage or "immoral" or socially inappropriate behavior. For example, many Vietnamese in Lincoln belong to the Catholic church, which provides support but also describes morality and prescribes behavior.

In one case a Vietnamese teenager was caught shoplifting. The manager of the store took him into his office and told him he was going to call his parents. In most circumstances the preference would be to call parents over the police. However, the Vietnamese boy drew a gun and escaped from the store. He was later arrested by the police. He explained that when he realized that his shoplifting would cause his family embarrassment, he could think of nothing except to run away. As his mother explained, he "did not want to have his father find out. He did not want to shame my family."

Commonly broken or weak families are blamed for many problems in the Vietnamese community. To traditional Vietnamese, not having a family is unthinkable.41 "The worst thing that can happen to a Vietnamese is to embarrass or lose his family. Without family you are no one."42

If you look at any of the problems of Vietnamese children, they are all related to one thing: broken families. Either the child comes from an unmarried mother, is an adopted child from a first marriage or is adopted because there are no parents. These are the problem
children. Vietnamese do not make good step-children or step-parents. Nobody is happy with these children.\textsuperscript{43}

Such children are mentioned as an embarrassment to the community. One Vietnamese mother referred to these children as "dust children." They have no one and no place to call home, they have no value or stability. Another parent said that most of such troublesome children come from California. In fact, it is commonplace to blame Lincoln youth troubles to outsiders.

They really are trouble. I don't like them here. I wish that they would stay in California. Children from broken homes are a bad influence on other children. They loaf around and don't do anything. And they ask other children from good homes to join them.\textsuperscript{44}

One primary school girl living with only her mother fits this classification. It is unclear why the mother is alone, but the child has no status or standing in the community. According to her teacher, she is unable to make friends with any other children. For her birthday, she was only able to invite her teachers to her party, most of whom chose not to go. Says her teacher, "she is so sad and alone. I wish I could do something, but I don't really see how. She is Vietnamese through and through. But she has no ties to that community."

Students and Ethnic Identity

Another group, now just arriving at the university, are those Vietnamese who have been raised American. They often have resisted the "immigrant culture" of their parents, choosing to think of themselves as "average Americans." Inevitably as they progress through the school system, it becomes clear that they will be denied this identity option. As peer groups begin to form, Vietnamese often become "different." This is a particular hardship on children who have grown up with the illusion of "sameness."

At some point minority children must choose some other identity option which is often exclusive in nature. Finding majority identity denied to them, these students may concentrate on school academic performance, or drop out of the system altogether. In interviewing Vietnamese students attending the university we found that many successful students had created a hybrid identity, blending social norms from both American and Vietnamese culture. Of particular note, the students interviewed shared their parents' views of appropriate mates, by appearing to hold on to the traditional values of looking for companions who were within their own culture. Said one female university student:
"I want to marry a Vietnamese guy. We would have cultural understanding, a basic understanding of each other."

Another female student related, "When I was younger, I wasn't in much contact with Vietnamese guys so I imagined myself marrying an American. Now my choices have broadened. I'd rather marry a Vietnamese guy." In a combination of traditional Vietnamese and American views, a Vietnamese male student described the girl he might "date," "Preferably a Vietnamese girlfriend. Before it was American. It's better for me and my family. She'd help me learn Vietnamese, the culture." For these students, cultural continuity has become quite important, not in terms of rejecting American culture, but rather preserving ethnic identity and, as one student explained, "honoring my ancestors." Consistent with our findings of marriage views, students showed an increased appreciation for their culture and heritage, even though some studies have reported that Vietnamese-American youth have exhibited less interest in their traditions and values as compared to their parents and elders. This is often in spite of tendencies they had evidenced in early adolescence to reject traditional Vietnamese cultural values.

I speak mostly English with my cousins, but recently [have been] speaking more Vietnamese. When I came to Lincoln, I wasn't thinking about my traditions. Here, I interact with more Vietnamese; they speak better. It makes me feel bad, embarrassed. I don't want to lose the language. Makes me feel left out. Makes me think about my values.46 Friends who are not Vietnamese, would ask me about my culture and I felt bad about not knowing. [This change to know more about my culture] would not have happened if I were working, if I wasn't in school. It has a lot to do with the university. Here, the setting makes you ask more questions.47

There are implications that this appreciation for culture and heritage is a function of establishing self-identity. The time, place and circumstances of the completion of adult identity formation vary among the students. Also, these students' connections with their Vietnamese heritage are dependent upon experiences in the school setting, especially when it results in an examination of ethnic identity, often in terms of a personal or family crisis.

Conclusions

As this paper has presented, the issues impacting Vietnamese ethnic identity formation are broad and multi-dimensional. It is not surprising that there are other components to the formation of identity that
have not been extensively explored. We have attempted to describe some of the issues concerning ethnic identity formation, including the manifestation of problems concerning ethnic identity and its effects, both positive and negative on children's cultural values. These cultural values, specifically the values inherent in American education, are strongly affected by the development of ethnic identity.

Vietnamese in Lincoln, Nebraska seem to willingly inhabit the fringes of the debate concerning the value of education. They have established an enclave as a normative reference group which sets standards, offers guidance and polices behavior. They leave the decisions on curricular inclusion and education goals to others. For Vietnamese parents, the social value of education is not a high priority. To them, the broader purpose of education is to further the interests of the family. As an integral and contributing member of a family, each child has responsibility to support the welfare and status of the family. Individual excellence is rewarded when it contributes to these goals. Individualism and self-expression are tolerated only in context of achieving these goals. When such personal attributes go beyond or conflict with family well-being they are discouraged and devalued.

Unlike other predominantly European migrant groups to the United States, status and identity are anchored solely to the family. If Vietnamese wish to maintain membership in the Vietnamese community it is only possible through membership in a family. Single Vietnamese who are unable to locate extended family will seek honorary affiliation with an existing family through informal adoption. No Vietnamese will willingly exclude themselves from family membership. The strength and importance of this tie cannot be overstated. Vietnamese students must cope with the demands to be American and the constraints of traditional Vietnamese culture. The inevitable result is the beginning of a hybrid culture which both complements and conflicts with traditional Vietnamese culture. As children progress to adulthood they become more cognizant of their place in the larger community. Often this includes being members of the Vietnamese community and integrating into the non-Vietnamese community. For their parents, community provides a safety net of protection and support. It influences activities and helps to interpret the meanings and activities of the host culture. In contrast, this community can be a burden to children, creating conflict between new and old culture. The responsibility of membership is conformity to cultural norms of the immigrant group: no difficulty to parents, often a hardship for their children. School provides the nexus for an emerging cultural identity. The circumstances and the school will limit the identity choices and force a decision from the student. In some cases, particularly in schools where there are no other Asians, the opportunity to "pass" as a member of the majority group is available to the student. In this case the decision of identity may be deferred or ignored.
In other cases there may be a choice between being Asian and being American or non-Asian. In Lincoln, Nebraska, Vietnamese students must cope with being "Asian," clearly and inexorably different, often in spite of the fact that this was not an issue in earlier grades of primary school. This often results in marginalizing them into an involuntary Asian identity which emerges as a hybridization of American, Vietnamese and even generalized Asian culture. From this cultural adaption conflicts emerge in the family and in both the Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese communities. Together, the examination of ethnic identity and its effects on the education of all youth should be considered carefully. This project will continue in the future to examine emerging issues in Vietnamese identity formation and track change within the Vietnamese community of Lincoln, Nebraska, comparing and contrasting the unique characteristics of this community to other Vietnamese and emerging immigrant communities in the United States.

Notes


3 Uba, 4-5.

4 Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, Special Public Health Report: Minority Health in Lincoln, Nebraska (Lincoln, NE: Author, 1994),


7 N. Nguyen, & H.L. Williams, "Transition from east to west: Vietnamese adolescents and their parents," Journal of American Academy of Child


13 Marcia.


17 Marcia.


Kibria, 43-44.

Finnan; Kibria.

Matsuoka, 343.

Kibria, 154.

Rutledge, 131.

Vietnamese parent.

Vietnamese mother.

Vietnamese mother.

Rutledge, 61.

Vietnamese leader.

Vietnamese father.
Kibria, 147.

Vietnamese father.

Vietnamese father.

Female Vietnamese university student.


Kibria, 101.

Vietnamese leader.

Vietnamese social worker.

Vietnamese parent.

Rutledge.

Vietnamese male university student.

Vietnamese female university student.


Rutledge, 58ff. Roberts, 51ff.

Finnan, 326-327.
Ethnic Conversions:  
Family, Community, Women, and Kinwork

Mary E. Kelly  
Central Missouri State University

According to the straight-line theory of assimilation, ethnic groups by the third or fourth generation should be entirely assimilated into mainstream society and should identify themselves as "Americans." Yet there has been a resurgence of ethnicity among white ethnics in the United States that has led to a renewed interest in particular ethnic groups and their cultures. Third- and fourth-generation European Americans claim an ethnic identity even though their ties to their ancestral homeland may be tenuous. Lithuanian Americans in Kansas City, Kansas, in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s would seem to provide support for the straight-line theory of assimilation, yet since the 1980s they have reconstituted themselves through the Lithuanians of America organization and are experiencing a renewal of their ethnic identity. The Lithuanian American community in Seattle, Washington, also experienced ebbs and flows in the activism and unity of its members. The community was active at the turn of the twentieth century, next revitalized by Lithuanian emigres following World War II, and then became active again in the late 1970s after a decade of inaction. Members of the two groups were given questionnaires in the early 1990s to address the ethnic identity fluctuations as well as the role of non-ethnics in the organizations. One of the more exciting findings from the surveys and from participant observation was the extensive role of "ethnic converts" in the Kansas City organization, and their lesser (but still significant) role in the Seattle Lithuanian-American community.

The Persistence of Ethnic Identity

There is no doubt that ethnic revivalism is a force in American society. However, though it may be true that individuals revive their ethnic identity, the meanings behind the revivals vary. By "ethnic identity," I refer to a group's or individual's cultural construction of their ethnic past which is grounded in an historical context but which also responds to changes in the lives of both groups and individuals. Ethnics are not returning to the ways of their ancestors but are instead choosing cultural symbols (such as folk dancing, folk singing, ethnic festivals, and consumption of ethnic foods) to incorporate into their identities. Ethnic Americans feel free to put on or take off their identities depending on the circumstances they find themselves in, and construct ethnic identities and cultures as a way of linking themselves with society. People with multiple heritages pick and choose the ones they identify with, "feeling" more like one ethnicity when they are performing traditional dances, for example, or when they are associating with friends of that ethnicity. The constructed nature of ethnic identity is even more readily apparent when individuals engage in ethnic "switching" or fully convert to another ethnic identity. I argue that ethnic groups and individuals actively construct an ethnic identity through the creation of ethnic symbols, boundaries, communities, and culture that change depending on both group and individual circumstances.

The construction of ethnic identity, ethnic boundaries, and community can be seen through an analysis of the maintenance and/or creation of Lithuanian-American ethnic identity by people of Lithuanian descent, non-Lithuanians, and Lithuanian-American communities and organizations. Analysis of this small American ethnic group allows one to observe the strategies adopted by groups when their numbers dwindle due to assimilation and dispersal from a central location. It is logical to predict that ethnic boundaries will become more permeable when there is fear of ethnic communities being lost altogether but that they will be more rigid during times of stability for the group. Ethnic groups with more flexible boundaries would be more likely to welcome ethnic converts into their midst. Through comparing two different Lithuanian-American organizations, the LOA and Bendruomenė, it is possible to compare the ethnic boundaries maintained by the groups and to see the role that women, families, friendship networks, and organizations play in encouraging "ethnic converts." Because the two organizations have had different policies about accepting non-Lithuanians into their groups, the comparison makes clearer the necessary antecedents for the acceptance of ethnic converts. I explore how ethnic identity is transmitted, usually through women, and show how even those without an ethnic ancestry can adopt an ethnic identity.
Women, Kinwork, and Family Structures

Families and kinship networks play a key role in maintaining and strengthening ethnic ties and identity because they keep alive ethnic traditions and rituals that would otherwise be lost during periods of low ethnic awareness. Ethnic structures, such as families, churches, schools, and social organizations preserve ethnic identity through multiple generations and dispersal into the suburbs. For instance, family participation in powwows and other symbolic and instrumental interaction confirm Native American ethnic identities in urban and suburban communities, far from reservation communities. Women often act as ethnic architects within family structures; they play a central role in symbolic ethnicity, because it is usually women who cook the traditional foods and socialize their children to have a particular ethnic identity. For example, Mexican-American women have been instrumental in keeping families together and transmitting culture by cooking traditional foods.

Families (especially their female members) actively create symbols of ethnic identity; in fact, family history and culture are used as representations of ethnicity. These symbols, such as the celebration of holidays, become a means of retaining old traditions and practices, and define the family in an ethnic context. Language is another important component of ethnic identity transmission. In a 1983 study of Lithuanian scouts, Van Reenan found that the women played an important role in determining ethnic identification because they were the ones who passed on ethnic traditions and the Lithuanian language. When mothers did not teach Lithuanian traditions in the household, the traditions were often lost.

Women often perform the role of ethnic transmitter even when they are non-ethnics themselves by transmitting their partner's ethnicity to children. Thus, kinwork becomes an extension of the more widely documented "invisible labor" of women, and women become a major force in ethnic renewals. Women are expected to maintain family and ethnic identities through their kinwork and are responsible for organizing the cross-household gatherings that are necessary for the transmission of ethnic behaviors and beliefs. In fact, according to di Leonardo's study of Italian American families, kinship ties diminish or die without an adult woman present in the household, and often women know more about their husband's family ties and background than the men themselves do. The fact that the work of ethnic identity transmission is sometimes even done by non-ethnic women supports the importance of women in transmitting ethnic identity.
Ethnic Conversions

A brief review of the general literature on conversion sheds some light on the processes behind ethnic conversions. Research on conversions usually centers on religious conversions, however, there is nothing particularly "religious" about the conversion process. Conversion occurs any time a group encourages identity change among its members. Although some researchers assume that conversions create a radical shift in the convert's world view, not all conversions are of such an extreme nature. Suchman, for example, argues that most conversions do not have such life-transforming consequences and that "everyday conversions" are more likely to provide a sense of group solidarity than a drastic reorientation of personal ideologies. In my analysis of ethnic converts, I focus on conversion as a means of providing a sense of group solidarity. To that end, I concentrate on the everyday conversions associated with organizational affiliation and allegiance rather than changes in belief systems.

Religious exogamy is one reason for religious switching, a spouse's desire to convert to their partner's religion. Sometimes it is seen as essential for children in a family that both parents be of the same religion, and therefore, if the parents are of different religions, one of them converts--usually the mother. At least one study indicates that ethnic conversions are done for similar reasons; one ancestry is privileged over the other in order to make the transmission of ethnic identity to the children easier. Often it is the father's ethnic ancestry that is transmitted, usually due to his surname (and therefore ethnic heritage) being representative of the entire family. For example, among Native Americans, "some non-Indians who marry Indians become incorporated into the tribal cultures of their spouses." Usually it is wives who are converted.

Another argument that is made about religious conversion is that association with other members of a religion are what leads one to convert. Membership in an organization is of importance because "it is through becoming committed to an organization that an individual becomes converted to the organization's perspective." Friendship networks can also influence an individual's religious or ethnic identity. In a review article examining ten case studies of religious conversions, researchers found that the factors most crucial to the conversion process were the "formation of affective bonds with group members" and "intensive interaction with group members." In one particularly compelling case, Stephen reports that a Chinese-Laotian girl identified herself as a "Chinese Caucasian" when associating with her mostly Caucasian friends. Even when she was not with her friends, however, she reported that her primary identity was as a "Laotian-Chinese Caucasian."

Women, through marriage and other familial relationships, of-
ten draw non-ethnics into family networks and thus into the ethnic community. Non-ethnics also become part of the ethnic community through cultural and political participation, such as taking part in folk-dancing groups, folk-singing ensembles, and ethnic festivals, as well as supporting independence movements. They become “converts” when they adopt a new, nonancestral ethnic identity and often extend their participation to other activities involving the ethnic community and its ancestral homeland, such as taking language classes and maintaining connections with people and organizations in the adopted homeland. What is fascinating, because it highlights the constructed nature of ethnic identity, are the processes through which people without Lithuanian ancestry come to identify very strongly with Lithuanian Americans and Lithuania, and thus “become” Lithuanian American. The Lithuanian-American converts in my study, for instance, became actively involved in Lithuanian-American organizations through marrying into Lithuanian-American families and/or joining the organizations directly, usually through their folk-dancing groups. My analysis of Lithuanian-American converts focuses primarily on the role of families, women, and Lithuanian-American organizations in the ethnic conversion process.

Lithuanian-American Converts

As in much religious conversion, marriage serves as a common path to Lithuanian ethnic conversion. The Lithuanian-American converts I studied were most likely to adopt the goals, ideology, and rituals of the families they have married into or those of the Lithuanian-American organizations they are members of. Not surprisingly, the marriage itself was of significant importance to the respondents. What was more important, however, was the birth of children and the perceived necessity to instruct them in their ethnic background. The family seemed to have the most effect in transforming one’s ethnic identity when the convert had a weak ethnic identity to begin with and/or when the family they married into had a strong ethnic identity bolstered by ethnic activities. The only converts I was able to identify in Bendruomenė, for example, were all married to people of Lithuanian descent. (While only two non-ethnics responded to my survey, I identified several others through my participant observation and analysis of their ethnic conversions are included in this article as well). However, some of the converts in the LOA did not have familial ties, but instead converted through their involvement in the LOA and/or the Aidas dance group.

The Kansas City LOA has a much higher percentage of non-Lithuanian membership as well as ethnic converts than does Seattle’s Bendruomenė. LOA also has had leaders who are non-Lithuanian, while the Seattle Lithuanian-American organization has not. In fact, recent LOA election of officers is a good example of the acceptance of non-
Lithuanians in the community. Since the 1996 election, three out of the four LOA officers, including the president, are non-Lithuanians. Two of the officers are married to Lithuanian Americans, but the new president has no such affiliation. In addition, one of the eight remaining board members is non-Lithuanian, but is married to a Lithuanian American. Non-Lithuanians have been recognized as a vital part of the LOA since its inception. For example, in 1981, the (non-Lithuanian) editor of the Varpas thanked non-Lithuanians for their help during the 1981 festivalas:

Non-Lithuanian Ken Berkin worked beer and drinks for many hours and Ken brought several non-Lithuanian friends who worked various shifts throughout the day, Jim Murray another non-Lithuanian, friend of Don Z., worked [all but] four hours in the drink booths. These and many other non-Lithuanians (about 15) worked without pay and we owe them a great debt of thanks.27

In Seattle, all current Bendruomenė officers and board members are of Lithuanian-American ancestry. Non-Lithuanians are sometimes, but rarely, mentioned in the Tulpé Times, and even then only fairly recently.

Despite the differences between these two communities, both do have ethnic converts and in both communities these converts are widely accepted by the group members as well as outsiders. However, Lithuanian-American converts appear to be accepted more readily in the LOA than in Bendruomenė. In the Lithuanian-American communities in Seattle and Kansas City, I defined as ethnic converts non-Lithuanian-American members who are involved in Lithuanian folk dancing or singing groups, are leaders of any Lithuanian-American organizations, represent Lithuanian Americans in other pan-ethnic organizations, or actively make an effort to inform others outside the Lithuanian-American communities about Lithuanian history, culture, or politics.

Sixty LOA respondents (out of 163) without Lithuanian ancestry responded to my surveys, while only two Bendruomenė members (out of forty-seven) of non-Lithuanian ancestry responded. There are two likely reasons for the discrepancy in the percentage of non-Lithuanians who responded to the questionnaires. One is that I was able to mail out the questionnaires only once to Bendruomenė, and in general did not receive as high of a response rate. A second, and more theoretically interesting explanation, is that the LOA group has much more permeable ethnic boundaries. Barth discusses the notion of an ethnic boundary dividing populations and outlines the conditions under which individuals can “migrate” across boundaries, thus changing their ethnicity. These ethnic boundaries are determined by social interaction, that is to say, both by self-ascription and ascription by others. One must also act out the proper, culturally prescribed roles to be accepted. Thus it is
Kelly—Ethnic Conversions

necessary both for the converts to define themselves as “Lithuanian American” and for the group members to accept them as such.

In Bendruomenė, for example, it is both less likely for non-Lithuans to define themselves as Lithuanian-American converts and less likely for Lithuanian Americans to accept non-Lithuans as full members of the organization. Unlike the LOA, the Seattle Lithuanian-American organization is heavily influenced by Lithuanian-American émigrés, who often have stricter definitions of the qualities necessary for an “authentic” Lithuanian American than ethnic Lithuanian Americans do. One Bendruomenė member (F 3G ethnic), for example, believes that the more rigid boundaries of émigré groups is due to their strong political attachment to Lithuania as refugees:

So this became a national purpose for Lithuanian communities all over the country after World War II, to “never forget” that Lithuania was illegally occupied. 30

Another Bendruomenė member (M 1G émigré) agrees that for the Seattle Lithuanian-American community, “the only glue really was this ‘Save Lithuania’ thing.” 31 Irena Blekys (1G émigré) also believes that Lithuanian-American émigrés have more restrictive ideas about being Lithuanian American:

We always felt (we as in World War II refugees) that “we” are Lithuanians. The other ones [ethnic Lithuanian Americans] when we came over didn’t speak Lithuanian, or they have so many Americanisms . . . And I think that in many ways we tended to keep them out and made them feel like they weren’t good Lithuanians. 32

Bendruomenė, therefore, due to its larger concentration of émigrés, has less permeable ethnic boundaries than the LOA does.

Non-Lithuans in the LOA, for instance, are welcomed without hesitation, while non-Lithuans in Bendruomenė are required to demonstrate their “Lithuanianess.” Therefore, non-Lithuanian Bendruomenė members are less likely to identify themselves as Lithuanian, and less likely to feel themselves to be “official” members in the group. Instead, they consider themselves auxiliary members. This variance is evidenced not only by their greater response to the surveys, but also by their strong leadership roles in the LOA. The leader of Aidas, for example, is a non-Lithuanian married to a Lithuanian American, and there is also a non-Lithuanian who, with her spouse of Lithuanian ancestry, regularly represented the Lithuanian-American community through her leadership role in the Kansas City Ethnic Commission.
The majority of the non-Lithuanians were more than three generations removed from their own ancestry. Only six of the respondents reported that they were third or second generation. Among the Kansas City population with Lithuanian ancestry, almost a third were first or second generation and twenty-two percent were third generation. Only seven and a half percent reported that they were fourth generation, while nearly four percent were of mixed generations. None of the Bendruomenė members reported ancestry further removed than third generation. This helps to support the theory that those with tenuous ties to their own ancestry are more likely to adopt another, or at least to become more involved with the activities of another ethnic group. Of those respondents, I classified twelve LOA members as Lithuanian converts, and I considered both of the non-Lithuanian Bendruomenė members to be converts and identified one other Bendruomenė I interviewed, but who did not complete a survey, as a Lithuanian convert. (Other ethnic converts were mentioned in a Bendruomenė newsletter, and referred to as "honorary Lithuanians," but I have little additional information about them.) Although fifteen respondents is a small percentage of the population studied, I believe it can still prove useful to try and trace how they constructed their new identities and why, and thus gain some insight into the ethnic conversion process.

I expected to find fewer ethnic converts in the Seattle Lithuanian-American group because it is dominated by Lithuanian émigrés who are more likely to have rigid definitions of Lithuanianness than their ethnic Lithuanian-American counterparts, and, in fact, there were fewer. Although several of the respondents from the Seattle group reported less acceptance of non-Lithuanians and even of people of Lithuanian ancestry who married non-Lithuanians in the past, they also believed that tolerance was increasing for such members. They felt that they needed all the help they could get in order to maintain and even expand their outreach programs in the local community as well as their philanthropic efforts in Lithuania. From my interactions with group members, it became clear that when non-Lithuanian members were welcomed it was because the small size of the Lithuanian-American community deemed it necessary. These few non-Lithuanians, however, were not treated as Lithuanian-American converts. Instead, their role was seen as one of helping Lithuanian-American causes, either in preserving Lithuanian-American culture or assisting Lithuania in achieving independence.

Although Seattle Lithuanian Americans are becoming more accepting, their ethnic boundaries are still quite rigid in comparison to the Kansas City group because émigrés tend to have more narrow ideas about what is necessary to be considered "Lithuanian American." Not only is there a smaller percentage of non-Lithuanians in the Seattle Lithuanian-American community than in the Kansas City one, but they are not found in leadership positions. In addition, non-Lithuanians are
often included into the Lithuanian-American group through formal rituals in which they are named “honorary Lithuanians.” Apparently there was a perceived need to ritually transform individuals so that they could penetrate the denser ethnic boundaries of the Seattle organization. According to an article in the Tulpé Times, the “certificates of Honorary Lithuanian Citizenship” were:

awarded in fun to well-deserving individuals who have contributed much deliberate effort and enthusiasm to the promulgation of Lithuanian activities in Seattle. The unsuspecting recipients were required to pass an “oral examination” prior to being awarded a new name along with their honorary status.33

No such rituals exist in the LOA; in fact it is rarely noted who is and who is not of Lithuanian ancestry. For example, in my own research of the LOA, I was surprised several times to find that members who I had assumed were of Lithuanian ancestry were not.

**Continuum of Conversion**

At the same time that there were variations in the extent to which non-Lithuanians were welcomed into Lithuanian-American organizations, there was also variation in the extent to which the Lithuanian converts regarded themselves as such. Some of the respondents made a point of indicating that they thought they were every bit as Lithuanian as those with Lithuanian ancestry. Constance wrote:

I feel I am truly Lithuanian although I am only by marriage. I feel you do not have to speak Lithuanian to be Lithuanian. In fact, all you really need is the desire of the heart. My involvement with the Lithuanian Freedom Movement has long surpassed a casual involvement of some 12 years of awareness on my part. The trip [to Lithuania] only intensified all of these feelings and showed me in reality what I had hoped for, a beautiful country with beautiful people.

Wayne has been so involved in the group that he sees himself as an adopted Lithuanian:

I'm an adopted Lithuanian, I really feel that way . . . . I'm proud of the people, proud of the Lithuanian costume I got there [in Lithuania].
He is not the only one who sees himself that way, however; another respondent wrote that “you couldn't ask for someone more Lithuanian [than Wayne].”34

Others, however, were equally clear that they felt they were not “real” Lithuanians. Mike, for example, wrote, “I'm just a 'fake' or 'pseudo' Lithuanian-American.” Most responses fell somewhere in between, such as Darrell’s:

I am not Lithuanian-American officially, but I found out you don’t have to be. There are appealing aspects to being involved with this community that go beyond ethnicity (e.g. craftwork, art, respect for nature, bravery, etc.).

In addition, Lisa, who is adopted, wrote:

... I don’t know what my actual ethnic identity is and I intend to find out. I would very much like to find out that my ethnic identity is Lithuanian, because I would be honored to be one of the hard working and kind Lithuanians.

In her case, she has chosen to identify with Lithuanians even though her adopted parents are not of Lithuanian descent. Through her own activities with the LOA, she has also drawn in her adoptive parents, who have volunteered their time for various fund-raising activities.

**The Role of the Family in Ethnic Conversion**

Ethnic conversion is partly a function of trying to maintain a consistent identity for all members of the household, parents and children alike. Most of the ethnic converts who are parents (nine have children) believe it to be very important to pass an ethnic heritage on to their children. Eight of them reported that they taught their children their ethnic heritage; the one who did not wrote that he simply did not know enough about his background in order to do so. Because the parents thought it important to explore their families’ roots, they acted as ethnic transmitters to their children. For example, Kevin, who does not identify with his own ethnic background, wrote that his children are “taught Lithuanian identity, even though they are only 1/8 Lithuanian because of our involvement.”

There is also evidence of a “reverse cultural transmission” when parents become more ethnic because of having children and teaching them family history and passing on family traditions.35 In some cases
the traditions did not even seem important to them until they had children to pass them on to. Jack Thompson, for example, wrote that teaching his children about their ethnic heritage “has helped me to understand the world better, to be aware of world conflict and cultures. Also [it] has helped form my identity.”

His own identity was strengthened in his transmission of that identity to his children.

In addition, children can directly get their parents involved in ethnic culture. For instance, my parents did not become involved with Lithuanian-American activities until after I had joined and begun performing with Aidas when I was fifteen in 1981. Other adult relatives of mine reported that their “crazy niece” had gotten them involved in searching for their Lithuanian heritage.

Some of the respondents to my questionnaires traveled to Lithuania primarily because of the family ties the trip evoked. Kevin Parker, for example, wrote that “[travel to Lithuanian was a] chance to visit my wife’s homeland and my adopted homeland.” Another convert wrote:

I wanted to visit the country from which my husband’s parents immigrated, to get to know the people and to dance with them, and to share cultural ideas. I felt that this would help my children to more fully appreciate their heritage.36

They believed it was important to become involved with their spouse’s family ties and to teach their children about their heritage. For them, the trip to Lithuania was a chance to experience more deeply their chosen ethnic identity.

The Gendered Nature of Ethnic Conversion

In a study of conversion to modern Orthodox Judaism, Davidman and Greil found that men and women chose to convert for different reasons.37 Men were more likely to be active seekers and to be interested in abstract theological issues while women were more likely to convert through personal contacts, and they emphasized family and personal relationships as reasons for their conversions. Again, we see the importance of family in conversion processes, particularly for women. Often the women felt it to be their responsibility to convert to their husband’s religion because it was their responsibility to maintain the traditions of the household.38

It seemed to be more important to the women to transmit a cultural identity to their children that corresponded to their surname, and
hence with their father's ancestral background. As respondent Constance expressed it:

Long ago I felt if I carried the name of "Samalavičius" I should be able to speak intelligently about the origin and know the roots of the family.

She thought that her children needed to be taught about the history of the name they carried. She added that teaching the children their ethnic heritage was important because "it is imperative that children understand what has made up the personalities of their families." Sandy apparently agrees, because she wrote, "Since I married a Lithuanian, I have been instrumental in teaching [my children] their Lithuanian heritage."

Sometimes women become so interested in their spouse's Lithuanian heritage that they become more involved in Lithuanian activities than their husbands. In the Lithuanian-American community in Kansas, one of the primary leaders of the group is a woman with no Lithuanian ancestry, yet she is more active than her Lithuanian-American husband. For instance, she is learning Lithuanian--something her husband has never chosen to do. Likewise, the leader of Aidas is non-Lithuanian, yet she is learning traditional Lithuanian folk dances and also is taking Lithuanian language classes. Again, her husband has expressed no interest in learning Lithuanian. Sandy wrote of her own ethnic identity:

I think of myself as American and sometimes as Lithuanian American and Irish American. I feel more Lithuanian than Irish.

Constance also feels a strong identification with her husband's ancestry:

I consider myself as much or more a Lithuanian than most Lithuanians I know, mostly because I chose to be, therefore, dedicating my efforts without guilt or to please anyone else. My country is certainly [the] United States, but my heritage is considered to be Lithuanian.

Other examples include a couple in the Seattle group. The man is an ethnic Lithuanian and his spouse is not, yet Anne is the one who got them involved in the Lithuanian-American community through her involvement in the folk-dancing group. She is also learning Lithuanian, although her husband is not.
Ethnic Conversions through Nonfamiliar Routes

Although most of the non-Lithuanians who were involved in Lithuanian-American organizations and activities with whom I spoke or who answered questionnaires were connected to people of Lithuanian ancestry by marital ties, there were others who became involved in the organizations through cultural (primarily folk-dancing) groups or because of their political activism on the behalf of Lithuanian independence. In essence, their route to ethnic conversion is through formal organizations rather than families. Although for many it is entirely understandable when the spouses (or significant others) of Lithuanian Americans become deeply involved in the Lithuanian-American community, it is more of a mystery why those without such ties become highly active. Such involvement pushes at the boundaries of ethnic construction processes.

These nonfamiliar ethnic converts indicated their involvement in formal organizations played a key role in their identification with Lithuania. For instance, one respondent initially became interested in Lithuania through his wife of Lithuanian descent, but also notes that they probably would not have expressed her heritage or taught it to their children if it hadn’t been for the formation of the LOA.39 An example of the ethnic conversion through involvement in cultural organizations is the experience of Mike, a man of Norwegian descent. He initially became involved with the Lithuanian-American community in Kansas when he joined their folk group Aidas simply because he enjoyed folk dancing and was eager to try new styles of folk dancing. His interest in Lithuania became heightened as he found out more about it from the other dance members.

Anne, for example, a member of the Seattle Lithuanian-American organization, has become very interested in Lithuanian folk weaving and was partly responsible for an exhibit on Lithuanian weaving at the University of Washington and is learning Lithuanian weaving herself. She became interested in Lithuania first through its folk art, and then began to learn more about Lithuania, including its language. Her entrance into the group was first through interest in Lithuanian culture, and then later she began participating in all the Bendruomenė activities and even taught Lithuanian culture to other non-Lithuans. Another Bendruomenė member became interested in Lithuania because he was studying Lithuanian.

Traveling to Lithuania was another route by which non-Lithuans felt their identification with Lithuania was strengthened. An example of this is Mike, for example, was one of the non-Lithuans who traveled with Aidas to Lithuania in 1992. His positive experiences there furthered his interest in Lithuania and Lithuans. Since then, he has sent back gifts and money to the family he stayed with, and invited Lithuans to visit the United States. His involvement has been so intense that there was even a short article published about him in the Kansas City Star entitled “The King of Lithuania.” The article did not
mention he was not of Lithuanian descent, and the reaction of the LOA members was mainly one of pride that his involvement with Lithuania had been written about in the newspaper. He returned to Lithuania the summer of 1995 to visit with his "adopted" family.

Like the respondents of Lithuanian ancestry, many ethnic converts felt that their adopted identity was strengthened by their travel to Lithuania. Kevin Parker wrote that he identified more strongly with his adopted homeland, and that he understood Lithuanian pride better after his trip. He felt that the increased knowledge he had of Lithuania and Lithuanians gave him a stronger Lithuanian-American identity. Similarly, Sandy Bernatonis wrote that her visit to Lithuania "has made me even prouder to be Lithuanian when I see how they cherish their values." Darrell Kelley was even more deeply affected by his journey:

After being there, I believe that Lithuania has something valuable to share with the world; how to tackle conflict non-violently and triumph of spirit over adversity. Although certainly not the first [country] in the world to do this, it is the first for me to be so intimately tied to.

For some of the respondents, their trip to Lithuania made them want to become more involved in Lithuanian-American activities and with efforts to help Lithuanians:

Darrell wrote that he wanted to be more active if he had time because, "the people in Lithuania need people in [the] U.S. to recognize their culture as unique and any participation helps this end."

Constance Samalavičius wrote about how her trip changed her perception of Lithuanian-American activities:

My role has been building over the last 10 years, I expect it to keep doing so. I hope to be more active with National and International progress for the needs of Lithuania.

Lisa Smith had similar goals as she wrote: "I would like to go and give my help or talents to rebuild and help fix, that which need[s] fixing." Mike Anderson wanted to extend his activities into Lithuania itself after his visit there: "I would live there for some time if there were something I could do to help Lithuania and its people."

Lithuanian independence strengthened the converts' identification with Lithuania, much as it did for people of Lithuanian descent. Kevin Parker wrote that Lithuanian independence gave him "even more reason for having pride in Lithuanian identity [and that] . . . the personal
experience and first hand stories about their fight made [him] even more proud." The combination of involvement with Lithuanian-American communities, travel to Lithuania, and the emotional impact of Lithuanian independence all served to create and reinforce a Lithuanian-American ethnic identity.

Conclusion

As can be seen from the above discussion, the acceptance or nonacceptance of non-Lithuanians can be an important part of how Lithuanian-American groups define themselves. Is it enough to simply "feel" Lithuanian, or must there be something else as well? Is participating in folk culture enough, or must one learn the language as well? Or, can one only be "Lithuanian" if one has Lithuanian "blood" or takes place in a naming ritual? Through participant observation and analysis of questionnaires, I have been able to see the important roles that non-Lithuanians play in the LOA and Bendruomenė. Usually the non-Lithuanians are connected by marriage, but sometimes their only connection is an interest in Lithuanian culture and/or the needs of Lithuanians in Lithuania. These are just a few examples of the ethnic converts I have met and who shared their experiences with me. What is it that makes these people so eager to embrace the Lithuanian cause? As stated above, there were two main reasons for this; family and formal organizations. Women particularly often believe it is important to pass on an ethnic heritage to their children. If ethnic identity has not been maintained in one's own family, it is easy to be drawn into a spouse's (or other significant other's) ethnic identity.

A comparison of the LOA and Bendruomenė reveals that the LOA has a greater tolerance for non-Lithuanians and indeed to ethnic Lithuanian Americans. The refugee experience perhaps plays a role in the different ethnic boundaries of the two groups. For the Bendruomenė émigrés, it is important to be 100 percent Lithuanian and to maintain the language and culture for the inevitable return to Lithuania. For Lithuanian-American ethnics of both groups and for younger émigrés, however, the definition for who is and who is not Lithuanian is looser. Both communities are adapting to changes in group composition through the years as well as grappling with the reality of a free Lithuania.

The efforts to maintain and construct Lithuanian-American identities through family structures and kinwork help decipher the puzzle of why ethnic identity remains salient even after generations in America. In addition, the study of ethnic conversions through formal organizations emphasizes the constructed nature of ethnic identity. Although the Lithuanians in Kansas City and Seattle no longer live in urban villages, they still consider themselves Lithuanian Americans and form a community despite the lack of ongoing daily interaction with fellow Americans of
Lithuanian descent. In the absence of such interaction, they must find new ways to maintain and create their ethnic identity. Among those ways are accepting and even encouraging non-Lithuanians to be full participants in Lithuanian-American communities.

This article reveals the important role of Lithuanian-American identity construction and its role in Lithuanian ethnic renewal. The LOA is able to expand its small size by accepting non-Lithuanians at all levels of the organizational structure. By embracing all those who feel Lithuanian, the LOA has been successful in maintaining a Lithuanian-American presence in the Kansas City area. Although Bendruomenë has not been quite as tolerant of non-Lithuanians or even ethnic Lithuanian Americans, their ethnic boundaries are becoming more permeable as they realize that the small size of the Lithuanian-American émigré population in Seattle limits their activities. It is quite possible that, had the two groups adopted more rigid ethnic boundaries, they would have found it impossible to sustain Lithuanian-American communities in either Seattle or Kansas City.

Notes

1 This article was sent out for an external blind review by Ethnic Studies Review senior editor, Miguel A. Carranza. The author would like to thank the reviewers, Miguel Carranza, and Joane Nagel for their insightful comments and suggestions.


6 Stephan.

7 Weibel-Orlando.


11 The Lithuanian Scouts Association, Inc. is comprised of scouts of Lithuanian descent from all over the world. It is primarily a diaspora organization. The association was developed both to follow "the scouting ideals of Lord Robert Baden-Powell" and to create opportunities for girls and boys of Lithuanian descent to meet and eventually "perpetuate scout families"; Antanas J. Van Reenan, Lithuanian Diaspora: Königsberg to Chicago (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990).


14 Obviously, ethnic conversions are quite different from religious conversions in terms of the centrality of an ethnic versus a religious identity. In addition, ethnic identity is more clearly rooted in ancestry, whereas religious identities are more likely to be viewed as matters of belief. Therefore, respondents are unlikely to write that they are Lithuanian, but rather that they identify with Lithuania and Lithuanians. One respondent did, however, write that she was Lithuanian, despite being of Irish ancestry.


19 Stephan.


22 Greil and Rudy, 1984.

23 Stephan.
24 I define *ethnic converts* as individuals who are highly involved in an ethnic community with which they have no biological connection. By “highly involved,” I refer to people who do more than attend ethnic functions with friends or family members. That does not necessarily mean that they renounce their own ethnic ancestry, simply that they are more involved with ethnic groups other than their own.

25 Although more men than women are labeled as ethnic converts in my study, the women tend to be more active than even their (usually Lithuanian-American) husbands. The men, on the other hand, are not as active in their Lithuanian-American ethnic identification but are simply swept along with their in-laws' ethnic activities.

26 In fact, it might be possible that all four officers are non-Lithuanians. The vice president knows he is of Prussian descent, and assumes he may have some Lithuanian ancestry, but he does not really know. (Prussia was one of the powers that divided the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth. Most of Lithuania came under czarist Russian control, but "Lithuania Minor" was under Prussian rule.)

27 *Varpas*, October 1981.

28 Barth.

29 Barth.

30 Interview with Loretta Lopez conducted by Natalie Werner, Seattle, Washington, 1992.


32 Interview with Irena Blekys conducted by Natalie Werner, Seattle, Washington, 1992, when Irena was the president of the Seattle chapter of *Bendruomenė*.

33 *Tulpė Times*, August 1986, p. 3

34 Scott Hampton.

35 Nagel, 1996.

36 Hannah Kubacheck.
Davidman and Greil.


Interview with Wayne Karpisek, February 26, 1994.
Selected Readings on Ethnicity, Family, and Community

Compiled by

Mary E. Kelly
Central Missouri State University
and
Thomas W. Sanchez
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Krase, Jerome. Self and Community in the City (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982).


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Contributors

Ngoc H. Bui is a third year doctoral student in the area of Social Psychology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She received her Bachelor's of Arts degree in Psychology from the California State Polytechnic University-Pomona, in Pomona, California, in 1991. Currently her fields of interest are ethnic identity development in Vietnamese youth and acculturation among minorities.

Jac D. Bulk is the current chairman of the Sociology/Archaeology Department of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. He graduated from Cornell University (BA) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Ph.D.). His principle areas of research have been in the fields of criminology and also racial and ethnic minorities. His areas of teaching expertise are in research methods, marriage and family, law and society, sociological foundations, and racial and ethnic minorities. He is also an avid runner who races at all distances from one mile to the marathon, however, with a distinct preference for the 10K.

Mary E. Kelly is an assistant professor of Sociology at Central Missouri State University. She specializes in the sociology of race/ethnicity, gender, and social class. She also has interests in sociology of the family and social mobilization. She is currently working on her book manuscript titled, Born Again Lithuanians: Ethnic Pilgrimages and Conversions and the Resurgence of Lithuanian-American Ethnic Identity.

Thomas W. Sanchez is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His areas of concentration are social theory, and race and ethnicity, with a special interest in Chicano Studies. He is currently conducting dissertation research on the social construction of immigrant ethnic identity and the ways in which self identification can affect lifestyle and life chances.

Joseph Stimpfl is assistant dean of International Affairs and an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
Lynet Uttal is a sociologist in the Department of Child and Family Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is interested in how work and family issues are affecting U.S. families in the postindustrial global economy. Her research explores the relationship between employed mothers and their childcare arrangements. Her methodological expertise is in racially comparative, empirically-based social science research using in-depth interviews. She is also interested in theories of caregiving, social meanings of care, and research about women of color.

Cia Verschelden is an associate professor of Social Work in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work at Kansas State University. She is currently on a two-year leave on a service assignment with the Mennonite Central Committee (a relief and development agency). She and her husband and four children are living in Little Buffalo, Alberta, Canada, with the Lubicon Cree Nation of Native Canadians. She and her husband are Community Development workers with this band of Native people who have unresolved land claims with the Canadian and Alberta governments and who are living in severe economic poverty in the forests of Northern Alberta.
Review Essay


This essay seeks to make a comparative review of two books: 1) Harold A. McDougall’s, *Black Baltimore: A New Theory of Community*; and 2) W. Edward Orser’s, *Blockbusting in Baltimore: The Edmondson Village Story*. The method of procedure used in this review essay will describe and evaluate the organizational structure of the books in a three-fold manner: 1) summary of the texts; 2) use of oral history in the texts; and 3) contribution of books to oral history literature and conclusion, drawing upon common themes between the two books.

Summary

In reading *Black Baltimore* by McDougall, I found the book to be prolific, offering an alternative epistemology to conducting community studies. The central theme of this book focuses on the concept “Baltimore’s Black Vernacular Community.” The author refers to Black Vernacular Culture as, “Styles of speech, techniques for building relationships, and modes of networking” (McDougall, p. 2).

Equally important, the sub-title, *New Theory of Community*, incorporates and supplements the essential function of culture to this study. Indeed, culture is a primary variable in this book that provides a prism to examine the ethos, mythology, history, and motifs of African Americans in Baltimore, from the turn of the nineteenth century up to the 1980s.

Consequently, the relevance of culture is often times underscored in describing and evaluating the African American experience: thus, McDougall counters this point effectively, and creates a paradigm that locates Blacks in Baltimore from within their own human and historical experiences.
The author's use of oral historiography provides an overview of African American migration to Baltimore. This overview produces a context to explore the nature, cause and consequence of African Americans survival-advancement in Baltimore. Perhaps, McDougall's quest is to illustrate sign-posts that communicate an incentive of reaffirmation for African American self-help. From this historical overview, the author points out consistent patterns of adversity and struggle encountered by African Americans in their attempt to locate a niche within the economic, political, social, and public sphere of Baltimore.

Although Blacks were confronted with institutional and individuals racism, they were indomitable and consistently agitated for justice and equality. Another example the author points out is that African Americans throughout history have transformed and transcended the political and social spheres of Baltimore: adopting ideologies such as DuBoisian or Washingtonism schools of thought (e.g., liberal versus conservative social and political thought). Nevertheless, themes such as self-help, collective-consciousness, and social responsibility were consistently agitated within the African American community, regardless of whatever ideology employed. The objective remained common "upliftment of the race."

McDougall critically and in detail examines the evolution and formation of Black communities in Baltimore, from the status of functional to dysfunctional communities. Significantly, throughout this book McDougall queries the stability of Black leadership and the collectivity of the Black masses in Baltimore to recognize a cultural, political, economic, and social mandate.

*Blockbusting Baltimore* is an extremely valuable resource concerning organization structure and formation of community-oral historiographic studies. William Orser describes this book as "a historical study of racial change in the Edmondson Village." The time period examined is 1910-1980. Paradoxically, the emphasis of this study is drawn on 1955-1965; this period accumulates whites leaving Edmondson Village and African Americans taking up occupancy in this community. Indeed, the latter is a period of protest and civil rights in American history.

The author queries articulations of the "mood, feelings, and reaction" of African American and Euro-American migrants existence and flight from the Edmondson Village. Equally important, Orser defines Blockbusting as "intentional action of a real estate operative to settle an African American household in an all-white neighborhood for the purpose of provoking white flight in order to make excessive profits by buying low from those who fled and selling high to those who sought access to new housing opportunities" (Orser, p. 4).

Orser throughout the book consistently addresses the unresolved issues concerning institutional and individual racism in Baltimore, as it affected housing, economics, politics, and social life. Ironically, in order
for blockbusting to exist in Baltimore, conventional wisdom of systematic subordination would have to be employed to insure the creation and consequence of subordinate group status. The author effectively shows patterns of this dilemma in the text. He adds that the evolution of Edmondson Village uniqueness was created by historiographic context, which eventually supported the concept of blockbusting.

**Use of Oral History**

McDougall's use of oral history in *Black Baltimore* is extremely effective. Selection of resource personnel is balanced and represents African Americans across a spectrum of class levels. For example, the interview conducted with William Murphy, Sr., provided an abundance of oral historiography concerning economics, politics, and social class of the African American community in Baltimore. As an aside, the Murphy's are still considered an affluent African American family in Baltimore today. Other interviews were equally important and represented personnel from Black religious, fraternal, political, and social organizations. Altogether, McDougall has exhibited an alternative knowledge base in conducting community studies, use of oral history, and presenting critical query for the development and advancement of African Americans.

*Blockbusting Baltimore* uses an abundance of oral history. Orser points out in the preface that this study is based on thirty oral history interviews conducted over a ten year period. The personnel consisted of Black and White residents of Edmondson Village. Such in-depth analysis and use of oral historiography provides a prism to describe and evaluate the human experience in this community from a “shared authority.” Collectively, the use of oral history in both books is effective and illustrates applied research and analytical tools for research and writing in theory, memory and methodology in oral history.

**Contribution to Oral History/Conclusion**

Finally, the two books reviewed in this essay make a significant contribution to the literature and intellectual study of oral historiography. In general, the authors are successful in providing new material, new knowledge and new meanings for interpreting community studies. Even more important, McDougall and Orser indicate their interest and social interaction in Baltimore: therefore, this point is relative in locating their interpretative-analysis about culture, social and historical interaction of Black and White residents of Baltimore.

Furthermore, the authors' draw upon common themes of multiple articulations that locate issues such as culture, race, ethnic identity, class, education, and social stratification within this study. Simply put, from reading both books, I was challenged to answer two questions: 1)
How am I integrating this information into my knowledge base; and 2) Where does dialogue begin in examining race relations when groups view reality differently? Overall the two authors’ attempts to critically discuss these issues is effective and provides me with a re-integrative factor in putting together ongoing analysis of new knowledge and consciousness.

James L. Conyers
The University of Nebraska at Omaha

Book Reviews


Although this film is short, it is sweet to the eyes and ears. The story is brief and may appear simple, but its ramifications are extensive, reaching back into the distant past and extending from the present into the future regarding complex matters of ethnicity and ethnic identities. The material is particularly significant to those involved in Hispanic and Judaic studies. Beyond those areas, however, the data present some challenges to definitions of ethnicity, the perceived longevity of certain group and individual ethnic identities, and our knowledge of the processes of culture change.

As implied in the title of the film, Harris is exploring individual and family identities that are, or have been until recently, held in secret. This situation, of course, sets some serious methodological limits to as full an examination as one would be able to conduct, for example, on Hispanics, American Indians, African American, Latvian Americans, or Jews who are not trying to conceal their identities. The circumstances also give rise to some controversies, often bitter, especially among certain Jewish scholars who essentially deny that secret Jews could exist in the American southwest. In some quarters, the investigation of such a possibility is almost taboo. On the other hand, the literature on secret Jews (also referred to as Hidden Jews, Crypto-Jews, or Marranos) in Spain, Portugal and Latin America is fairly extensive. Crypto-Judaism has continued to some degree in those areas and today individuals in considerable numbers are coming out of their clandestine closets. Is it impossible that similar processes are occurring today in the American southwest?

Despite these limitations, Harris gives a fascinating glimpse into this question. With funding from the Tucson/Pima Arts Council and the Tucson Community Cable Corporation, she interviews four informants who
report the following kinds of behavior in their otherwise Hispanic Catholic families: grandmothers who furtively lit candles on Friday evenings, families who refrained from work on Saturdays, a ranch family who raised pigs but would not eat pork, another family whose members were “allergic” to pork, and meals at which milk was not served along with meat. Over the centuries these practices have apparently lost their original ritual meanings and their context within Judaism per se, something akin to biological organs that have become vestigial in organic evolution. Yet into the twentieth century, Hispanic elders carry on these practices, not knowing the reasons why but cautiously whispering to their grandchildren, “Somos Judios” (“We are Jews”). The aunt of one Hispanic informant further told her niece that they were “Levines,” probably not fully understanding the reference to the Levites or temple attendant priests in traditional Judaism. Although these four informants agreed to face Harris’ camera, most individuals involved in these secret practices would not do so. One of the interviewees explains this fact forcefully: “The imperative not to tell is strong.”

This imperative of secrecy is further revealed as Harris turns her camera on Stanley Hordes, former state historian for New Mexico. Hordes describes how the Sephardic Jews in Spain and Portugal were forced to convert or be expelled from Iberia in 1492. Many of these “Conversos” or “New Christians” escaped to the frontiers of the New World where the Inquisition continued but with somewhat less efficiency than in their European homeland. In one old adobe house in New Mexico, Hordes found next to a crucifix an object covered by many layers of paint: it was a mezuzah (a doorpost amulet containing Hebrew prayers). The continuation of these ritual practices and shreds of identity, though vestigial, are certainly intriguing. Even more astounding is the clear and pervasive sense of fear which people feel today as a consequence of events that occurred five hundred years ago.

In sum, this film offers an opportunity to ponder matters of ethnicity and personal identification via an excellent videographic piece: the southwestern scenery is dramatic, the interviewees engaging, and the background Sephardic music poignant.

David M. Gradwohl
Iowa State University


This important volume by the distinguished intellectual historian, David Hollinger, sorts through key multicultural issues and brings a much needed freshness to a very stale, angry debate. In outlining the social contours of a postethnic America, he describes a country less
obsessed with race and ethnicity, and open to the forging of social bonds between people of different heritages of descent. Unlike many criticisms of multiculturalism, Hollinger's postethnic vision remains attentive to ethnic difference while pointing up the relevance and value of an American national culture. Those heavily invested in shoring up racial and ethnic boundaries will surely resist the author's depiction of a less fragmented postethnic America.

Following his introduction, Hollinger lays out his argument in five closely reasoned chapters, beginning with an examination of the differences between ascription and choice in the formation of social groups. Multiculturalism, in its promotion of diversity, has now conferred on the federal government's "ethno-racial pentagon"--Euro-American, African American, Asian American, Latino, Native American--a very doubtful cultural reality. At the same time, people of mixed-race parentage, asserting the value of choice and self-definition, challenge the classification. In a postethnic America, an Alex Haley might just as well seek out his Irish roots without raising eyebrows or objections that the "one drop rule" irrevocably defines who is Black.

Multiculturalism emerged from a steady movement since World War II from "species-centered to ethnos-centered discourse." Hollinger refers to various books making claims about the general characteristics of humanity (e.g. the Kinsey reports) that proved to be culture or class bound--the local masquerading as the universal. Multiculturalism, accordingly, has focused on narrow communities of descent in a determined rejection of the search of universals. Like its antecedent, cultural pluralism, this recalcitrant perspective emphasizes exclusive, ascribed social boundaries. It remains indifferent, if not hostile, both to the idea of a national culture and to social affiliations not defined by ethnic or racial criteria. By contrast, a liberal strain within multiculturalism--what Hollinger calls "cosmopolitan"--values diversity, yet shares with universalism a fundamental interest in the common group between people.

A postethnic America would build on the cosmopolitan world view. The "ethno-racial" aspect of identity would not be eclipsed but merely reduced in importance. Postethnicity emphasizes choice over group prescription and the formation of multiple affiliations. The ethnoracial element would therefore represent one among many bases of belonging. The cultural locales of identity would be capacious and unconfined. Moreover, the cosmopolitan view regards the civic character of the American nation as an effective mediator between the particularities of an ethnicity resistant to non-ethnic social formations and a universalism equally resolute in ignoring local differences. Fully aware of the difficulties of achieving postethnicity, Hollinger discusses some obstacles in his brief epilogue. Particularly vexing is the perpetuation of poverty in Black America because educational and economic opportunities are often beyond reach. Therefore, the possibility of testing bound-
any permeability—a cornerstone of the postethnic order—remains remote, and ethno-racial identities harden as a consequence.

*Postethnic America* cogently examines multiculturalism against the backdrop of the author’s moral unease about the ethnic and racial fault lines running across the United States. It commands the attention of anyone concerned about race, ethnicity and the American future.

Jack Glazier
Oberlin College


Maria Root’s collection of readings cognitively and emotionally engage the reader in the psychosocial experience of being multiracial. These readings also foster a critical awareness of the implications of rising numbers of multiracial persons for issues of inter-group race relations and national identity. This awareness forces readers to re-examine the meanings and construction of race beyond the traditional five monoracial categories traditionally used to gather census data.

The book is well organized and begins with a dialog of implications of *de jure* and *de facto* aspects of the American tradition of racial classification by hypodescent, or the “one drop rule.” Discussion centers on the government’s role in the perpetuation of this blatantly racist ideal, represented by OMB Directive 15, which establishes the race and ethnic standards for federal statistics. Particularly insightful is the insider’s look at the debate among and between racial/ethnic minority groups on implications for politics of collective identity of amending this directive by including a multiracial classification. For instance, the addition of a “multiracial” category could play an important part in dismantling racial construction as we know it today and, in the process, respect the identity rights of multiracial individuals who must negotiate minefields of political and social identification. On the other hand, the seeming contradiction of Blacks’ insistence of maintaining the one drop rule in their struggle against white domination is well represented.

The essence of the book is the confrontation with the traditional structural and hierarchical issues to be faced as the nation pursues the dialog of race identity and race relations, especially as these are commingled with issues of gender, sexual orientation, social class, and biological versus cultural determinants of identity. Discussion includes non-obvious implications of today’s divisive issues, such as critical roles played by multicultural education and diversity in the classroom in mitigating the effects of racism in society, the role of transracial adoptions in exacerbating the stereotype that Black parents are not interested in adoption
and in surmounting racial politics in providing for children, and on the history of affiliation and conflict between Blacks and Jews.

This confrontation with national issues has seemed to overwhelm issues of personal racial/ethnic identity such that multiracial individuals have been forced to develop strategies to negotiate the borders of race. Strategies range from using situational ethnicity and, having linguistic flexibility, to the ability to simultaneously embrace multiple perspectives. These “border crossings” by multiracial individuals defy the traditional monoracial classifications of race and force us to think of ways in which the new dialog may help dismantle negative constructions of race. In the final analysis, the author leads us to a discussion, not only of individual race identity in process, but the more profound implications of national identity. By releasing its firm hold on the rule of hypodescent, the United States is itself in the process of a new identity which may bring the country full circle to the original notion of the ideal of a “melting pot.”

Yolanda Flores Niemann
E. Lincoln James
Washington State University

Vernon J. Williams, Jr. Rethinking Race: Franz Boas and His Contemporaries. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996) 152 pp., $34.95 cloth, $15.95 paper.

The term “Jim Crow II” is frequently used by African Americans to describe contemporary American race relations, by which they mean that just as legal segregation, lynching and voting restrictions followed emancipation, so has a period of racist reaction followed the successes of the Civil Rights movement. Williams sees parallels between the two periods: “I have attempted to describe and analyze the ideas of persons who provided, in a time comparable to our own, the bases of sophisticated discussion of race and race relations.” Williams is too good a historian to settle for merely demonstrating parallels; he also traces the continuing conflict between American social science which, with some notable exceptions, has been aggressively anti-racist since the 1930s, and America’s deeply ingrained racism.

Franz Boas, born into a German Jewish household, and described by Williams as the “father of modern American anthropology,” is the pivotal figure in Rethinking Race. In his work and his relations with colleagues, white and Black, Boas embodied white America’s conflicting ideas about race. Once Boas “had established that white prejudice was the major obstacle to black progress, rather than assumed innate racial traits, it became exceedingly difficult for anthropology and
sociology" to justify American racism. However, Boas himself was not fully convinced that Blacks were able to produce as many "men of high genius" as were whites, although he did argue that not all Blacks were intellectually inferior to all whites and that racist legal barriers were therefore unfair.

Williams traces the complex web of institutional, academic and personal relationships along which Boas' ideas moved during the first four decades of the twentieth century. He does so by drawing on the correspondence of Boas himself as well as on that of such leading figures as W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Robert E. Park, and Booker T. Washington. Washington "initially conceived of his African ancestors as primitive barbarians" and exonerated "white Southerners of responsibility for the so-called Negro problem and placed it squarely on the shoulders of blacks. Learning the virtues of common labor, he believed, would yield far more gains than politics." Washington also insisted that during Reconstruction, Blacks had relied far too much on the federal government and had not done enough for themselves. But influenced by Boas, Washington changed his position, noting in a 1915 speech that while the African American was believed to be inferior, in practice "the idea appears to be that he is a sort of superman. He is expected with about one fifth of what whites received for their education to make as much progress as they are making."

In tracing the influence of Boas' ideas as they were refracted through such white institutions as Columbia University, the Rosenwald Foundation, and the American Association of University Professors, and such Black ones as Howard University, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and The Negro Year Book, Williams writes a history that is neither intellectual nor social, but carefully examines the complex interplay of ideas, patronage (academic, institutional and financial), and organizations. Williams demonstrates that the ideas held by Blacks were not free floating but were enmeshed in organizational, professional, and personal relationships, and he shows that Blacks were not people to whom things happened, but rather played a strong role in fighting racism. Boas suffered a fatal heart attack while denouncing Nazi anti-semitism in 1942, but according to Williams had already received strong support in his attacks on Hitler's race theories from many African American intellectuals.

Williams observes "that only by understanding the pre-1945 social scientific scholarship on African Americans can we come to an understanding of their potential contribution(s) and destiny in the twenty-first century." Rethinking Race is a good place to begin this understanding.

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