

EDITOR'S NOTE

At first glance the articles in this volume of ESR appear as disparate entities connected only by so much glue and binding materials as necessary to construct this volume. But this is not the case. Not that there must necessarily be a nexus between the pieces, but the fact of the matter is, that there are several points of conceptual convergence between the articles contained in this volume. It is also more than a little interesting that where there is subject matter convergence it occurs at research and instructional junctures long capturing the attention of ethnic studies teacher-scholars. The works included here again turn our attention to the important subjects relating to identity formation, the socialization processes of acculturation-assimilation-nationalism and how these dynamics effect our sense of who we are and our understanding of our individual and group place in this space called the United States.

The opening article, "Being Ourselves, Immigrant Culture and Self Identification Among Young Haitians in Québec," provides a case in point as to how young Haitians living in Francophone Québec attempt to develop a sense of identity given the many challenges they encounter in a host nation that is predominately Anglophone and a host city that is predominately Francophone. On this point, the article's author, Scooter Pégram, provides an interesting and challenging study of a clash between forces of assimilation, exclusion and resistance. In this article we are informed of the responses by young Haitians to societal pressures

to conform to the dominant culture. And yet, when polled, most young Haitians –mostly males- believed that the society was not as inclusive as it should be. Consequently, the clear majority of young males developed an ethno national identity. That is, they saw themselves as Haitians first. The observations contained in this article have important implications for how multiethnic societies approach the highly sensitive matters relating to incorporating different cultural groups into the body politic.

In “Beauty, Borders and the American Dream in Richard Dokey’s ‘Sanchez,’” Kenneth Hada, brings to the fore some of the cultural and emotional challenges facing many Chicanos in the United States who choose to pursue the “American Dream.” Hada provides an multilayered analysis of the protagonist, Juan Sanchez’s, struggles to achieve material well being in a society whose values are in opposition to Sanchez’s indigenous values. Can “happiness” be gained at the expense of one’s cultural values? What cultural costs does one pay when one crosses into another’s cultural space and adopts the value orientations of that space? Who do we become when we chase the dreams of others?

Similar questions and concerns are raised in Reinaldo Silva’s “The Ethnic Impulse in Frank X. Gaspar’s Poetry and Fiction.” Exploring representative works of poetry and fiction by Frank X. Gaspar, Silva challenges us to consider the role of ancestral culture in shaping our self identity. This is especially crucial when the ancestral is confronted by the forces of Americanization. We are urged to consider the extent to which these forces distance us from those cultural forms more familiar to that of our parents and their parents. And in this process who do we become if in adopting the new we display -consciously or not - a discomfort with the ways of our mothers and fathers? By drawing a portrait and presenting an analysis of some of Gaspar’s poetry and fiction, we are confronted by questions of identity and place as we try to better understand how acculturation forces in this society shape one’s sense of identity.

Larry Shinagawa’s essay, “Towards First - Rate Ideas,” challenges ethnic studies scholars to make a careful examination of the changing nature of ethnic group relations. The author sets forth a compelling case exploring the highly complex nature of

ethnic identity in this post civil rights era. One dimension of the complexity is framed by the tendency - in the first and second generation youth born of inter ethnic marriages - to subscribe to multiple identities. Shinagawa argues that this society has not developed a descriptive and analytical language to accurately explain the complexities of identity formation in the contemporary United States. And because we have not done this, we cannot adequately, that is, authoritatively explain -much less understand - contemporary ethnic relationships.

Shinagawa challenges ethnic studies scholars to do the scholarly work necessary to better understanding the social, cultural and other factors which shape ethnic identity in contemporary American society.

Each of these articles drawing from different disciplinary tools provides a salient comment of what it means to live in a multicultural cultural space. Each article should provoke much thought and conversation.

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