



The American Ethnic Geographer

A Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers

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Editorial Note:

The next issue will be published in September 1997. The deadline for submission of items for the next issue is September 1, 1997.

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Comments from the A.E.G.S.G. Chair

This is a very exciting and strategic time in geography in the United States. As states develop plans to implement the geography standards of Goals 2000, we can play an important role in partnering with K-12 educators in a number of ways. Many of us are involved with geographic alliances and thus are active in professional development programs for teachers. Others of us could be reaching out to the education departments in our respective campuses to help develop pre-service programs for future teachers. Many of the lessons and special projects we develop for our students are readily adaptable to K-12 settings. What does this have to do with American Ethnic Geography? I would challenge each of us to become familiar with the 18 geography standards for Goals 2000 and to examine the implementation frameworks in our states. Our role as ethnic geographers becomes immediately apparent. Most of the teachers now expected to teach what we would consider part of the rubric of ethnic geography have never had a college geography course. The New York State Social Studies Framework 3: Geography is adapted from *The National Geography Standards 1994: Geography for Life* and expects teachers to be able to teach the use of census and other data sources to the relationships between migration and culture change, to cartographically present demographic data, and to understand the relationship between culture and environmental adaptations, whether urban or rural — many of the things about which we are specialists. I would like to challenge and encourage you all to consider what role you might play in the future of both our discipline and our specialty, particularly in light of Goals 2000.

Now as we prepare for this year's meetings in Fort Worth, I am very excited and encouraged by all the sessions sponsored or co-sponsored by our specialty group as well as others that would be of direct interest to ethnic geographers. In this newsletter, we have listed a number of sessions, papers, and workshops on American ethnic geographic topics. I would also like to remind you to encourage students who will be presenting papers to submit manuscripts to Doug Heffington for the student paper competition and to participate in the business meeting on Thursday, April 3 from 5:45 to 7:00 p.m. I look forward to seeing you in Fort Worth!

Ines Miyares, Chair

A.E.G.S.G. Sponsored or Co-sponsored Sessions at the Fort Worth AAG Meeting – 1997

Wednesday April 2

124. Sacred and Sanctified Landscapes: From Here to Hereafter

- 1:45 Darrel L. McDonald, Stephen F. Austin State University, Gordon Wells, Stephen F. Austin State University, P. R. Blackwell, Stephen F. Austin State University, Sacred Space and Sanctified Places: An East Texas Conundrum.
- 2:05 G. Rebecca Dobbs, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Interpreting the Navajo Sacred Geography as a Landscape of Healing.
- 2:25 Kari Forbes-Boyte, Emporia State University, Cultural Genocide and Sacred Places: The Desecration of Bear Butte.
- 3:05 Denis A. Beraert, Middle Tennessee State University, The Pathway to the Landscape of Life After Death: Native American Perspectives.

Thursday, April 3

198. A Tribute to Allen G. Noble

- 8:00 A Tribute
- 8:10 Allen G. Noble, University of Akron, Geography of Immigrant Ethnicity: The Case of Utica, New York
- 8:50 Discussants: Ary J. Lamme III, University of Florida, Peter J. Hugill, Texas A&M University, Jesse O. McKee, University of Southern Mississippi.

236. Maintaining Ethnic Identity on the Internet

Panelists: Brock Brown, Southwest Texas State University, Thomas D. Boswell, University of Miami, Lawrence Estaville, Southwest Texas State University, Doug Heffington, Middle Tennessee State University, Scott R. Ritenour, Middle Tennessee State University, Ira M. Sheshkin, University of Miami.

336. American Ethnic Geography Specialty Group Business Meeting 5:45-7:00

Friday, April 4

365. Rethinking Identity: Constructing Race, Ethnicity, and the Indigenous in Geographic Research

Panelists: Timothy G. Anderson, Ohio University, Martha L. Henderson, Evergreen State College, Wei Li, University of Southern California, Dong-Ok Lee, Michigan State University, Robert A. Rundstrom, University of Oklahoma, Nanda R. Shrestha, Florida A&M University, Carlos Teixeira, University of Toronto.

403. AAG Specialty Groups: Status, Challenges, and Prospects

Panelists: Kevin D. Klug, AAG, Melissa Savage, University of California-Los Angeles, Douglas Heffington, Middle Tennessee State University, Carolyn V. Prorok, Slippery Rock University, Darrel L. McDonald, Stephen F. Austin State University, Ines M. Miyares, Hunter College.

407. Immigrants and Refugees in North American Cities: A Comparative Approach

- 10:00 Madeleine Wong, York University, Edward Opoku-Dapaah, York University, Economic Integration of African Refugee Women in Toronto: A Case of Ghanaians and Somalis.
- 10:20 Purba Fernandez, Pennsylvania State University, Community Organizations and South Asians in Toronto and the San Francisco Bay Area.
- 10:40 Carlos Teixeira, University of Toronto, The Suburbanization of Portuguese Communities in Toronto and Montreal: From Isolation to Residential Integration?
- 11:00 Bryan Thompson, Wayne State University, Yemeni Communities in Metropolitan Detroit: Patterns of Growth and Interaction.
- 11:20 John Mercer, Syracuse University, Immigration and Metropolitan Systems in North America

445. Geography in Judaic Studies

- 1:45 Pavel Ilyin, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jewish Settlement Patterns in St. Petersburg in the Late 1980s and Early 1990s
- 2:05 Mikella Kagan, Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, Jewish Immigration from the Former USSR in the USA: Communal Values versus Individualism.
- 2:25 Yosseph Shilhav, Bar-Ilan University, When the Ultra-Orthodox Take Over a Modern City.
- 2:45 Pedro P. Geiger, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Currents of Geopolitical Practices in the Jewry.
- 3:05 Ira M. Sheshkin, University of Miami, Atlanta-Jewish Capital of the South.

Saturday April 5

517. Geographic Aspects of Ethnic Economies I

- 8:00 David H. Kaplan, Kent State University, The Spatial Structure of Ethnic Economies.
- 8:20 Wei Li, University of Southern California, Los Angeles' Chinese Ethnoburb: Globalization & Stratification of

continued on page 7...

The 28th IGC: through the eyes of a PhD student

As one of the recipients of the travel grant awarded by the U.S. National Committee for the International Geographical Union, I attended the 28th IGC at The Hague as a solo scientific paper presenter. I also participated in a number of main sessions, symposia and a couple of scientific day trips. I benefitted greatly by the experience of participation itself, and would like to share these experiences with other Trojan geographers.

My paper, entitled "Los Angeles Chinese Ethn suburb: a new model of ethnic settlement", was presented at a joint session organized by the Commissions on Gender, Population Geography and Urban Life. My paper was well received during and after the session. Some geographers expressed a desire to introduce and test the ethn suburb concept in their research and/or teaching. I was contacted by the local organizer after my session and invited to submit my IGC paper for inclusion in a special issue of *Urban Studies*, planned for January 1998. I also had discussions with other geographers about how to conduct future studies on race/ethnicity and ethnic settlement, and reached a tentative agreement on future cooperation, including the organization of an AAG session.

I feel that I benefitted most from the two scientific field trips I attended, "Immigrants in Amsterdam and Rotterdam: Gateway to Europe". In Amsterdam, we saw the traditional Jewish sector of the city, ruined by the Nazi's during World War II. We walked along several major street marts in different parts of the city, each of which has clear ethnic signatures, e.g. faces of different skin colors, accents of different kinds. We were introduced to the most infamous neighborhood of Amsterdam, due to its image of crime and high concentration of black immigrants from Surinam, finding it to be a nice, clean complex of high rises with beautiful lawns, and families with kids wandering around, which is nothing even close to the American public housing with which I am familiar. Our guides told us that actually the neighborhood is relatively safe, too. Because Dutch white people were not used to associating with black people, and hate high-rises, this area gained such a bad reputation.

We were also informed about the three immigrant waves to the Netherlands: Indonesians, Surinamese and Southeastern Asian refugees (though the Dutch government stopped conducting their census in the 1970's, so nobody knows how many immigrants are there in the country). Compared to that, I am grateful that at least we have census data which makes my research possible. In Rotterdam and its harbor, we were introduced to the Rotterdam equivalent of Ellis Island. We saw urban development, characterized by a combination of old,

traditional buildings and new, postmodern style high-rises, clearly different from The Hague and Amsterdam.

We also witnessed the well organized, busy, and largest harbor of the world. I was particularly moved when we climbed the dike at the westernmost end of the harbor and were told by the guide that "ladies and gentlemen, you are now at the beginning and the end of Europe" (though people from the U.K., Ireland or Iceland may strongly oppose such an idea!). People in the Netherlands are acutely aware of what is going on in the world, worry that they will be left out of the Pacific Century, and try hard to keep their share in the global economy. This field trip itself demonstrates this concern.

Although the U.S. delegation was probably the largest one at the congress I wish that more renowned U.S. geographers would participate in future IGC's. My experiences in the 28th IGC indicate that though I've tried my best to meet geographers from other parts of the world in the past, the results of my solo effects were limited until after my own presentation. I think the international geographical community would have benefitted more if renowned U.S. geographers would participate — not to play any particular leadership role (I think no country should claim such a role), but to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation. As the economy becomes increasingly globalized, I believe our work should be too.

In summary, the first and foremost benefit for me was the participation itself. Only by participating did I have a chance to introduce my work to colleagues around the world, to learn from other's work, to understand the trends in our field, to meet old advisors, colleagues, students and old friends, and to make new friends. Also, as a geographer, did I have the opportunity to experience a different part of the world (it was my first ever trip to Europe) to learn from first hand experiences. In the future, this will enable me to integrate into my lectures these field experiences, and these let students know more about the world and its geography.

Wei Li

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A.A.G. Session Report

American Ethnic Geography and Urban Geography Specialty Groups (summary of discussant comments)

Ethnic Entrepreneurship in a Comparative Context II

(Organizer: Carlos Teixeira, York University)

First, I should like to thank Carlos Teixeira very much for all his hard work arranging these two sessions on Ethnic Entrepreneurship [the first session was reported in the **AEGSG Newsletter** Vol 4, no 2 (1996) pp. 4-6]. Second, I would like to thank all of you for attending both these sessions and for some very stimulating questions. Third, I would like to thank the speakers in this session for their excellent work — both in terms of delivery and content. We have been privileged, I think, to hear from some distinguished and thought-provoking workers in the field.

Now, let me, as discussant, try to make some general observations on what we have heard from the speakers in this session — and let me confess that "ethnicity" is an issue that has been much on my mind lately. I come to this task straight from having marked 100 first-year assignments on the topic of "ethnic restaurants" in Montreal, inspired by the work of Wilbur Zelinsky, whose presence graced the first session of this specialty group's meeting (see his "The roving palate: North America's Ethnic Restaurant Cuisines", **Geoforum** 16 (1985): 51-72).

During this session, if I may remind us, we have heard from Carlos Teixeira (York University) about the activities of Portuguese real estate agents in Toronto and how very important are their networks of kinship, friendship and community in the successful completion of their business. Margaret Walton and Dan Hiebert (University of British Columbia) provided us with an examination of the downside of such ties for construction workers — arguably the "quintessential ethnic niche sector" — of Indo-Canadian origin in Vancouver, and demonstrated how concepts of culture and economy intersect at many levels of analysis. In her paper, Purba Fernandez (Pennsylvania State University) similarly noted how such kinship difficulties affected the Asian Indian community in the United States, a community predominantly involved in retail and service enterprises. Finally, and nicely complementing Fernandez and Teixeira, Trevor Jones and David McEvoy (John Moores University), in a paper rich in both theory and empirical analysis, presented a comparative account of South Asian entrepreneurship in an overview of 160 retail and consumer service enterprises in Canada and Britain.

In order to focus our thoughts on the issues raised by these papers, let me — almost heretically, perhaps — ask why are we

involved, as scholars, with this research? Why is it that we are so fascinated with the topic of ethnic entrepreneurship? I suggest that the answers to such issues are central to some of the questions begged by our presenters today. Let me list some of them that we have heard, before I conclude by trying to answer these questions myself.

First, we are told by Walton and Hiebert that geography has not paid much attention to the issue of ethnic entrepreneurship, and that what little work has been done, has been standard economic geography. Partly this has been, as they note, because such a paradigm has been unable to conceptualize much else outside its boundaries of profit and loss. But why are "modern" economic geographers, presumably not so hide-bound, continuing this omission? Is there a good reason for their neglect? Second, in terms of the definition of "ethnic" itself, at least one presenter in their verbal remarks today confesses to being bothered by this, for we are all "ethnic". Clearly, "ethnic" is something that is culturally, economically and socially constructed, very fluid and ever-changing. As my students found in their restaurant assignment, "ethnic" also becomes commodified. But what is it that is intrinsically "entrepreneurial" about being "ethnic"? We are told by Walton and Hiebert that the construction industry has traditionally been "ethnic", but this is simply a surrogate for the low-capital labour-intensive entry into the job market that anyone might make. Similarly, we are all told that certain groups (such as the Chinese, say, but not Caribbean blacks) are "entrepreneurial" but what do we really mean by this?

Presumably, as Jones and McEvoy argue, the reason is fundamentally because of the "Big Idea" of ethnic entrepreneurial studies, that "ethnicity" is somehow a resource that itself can be exploited by the immigrant entrepreneur to her or his advantage — an idea echoed by one other presenter, Purba Fernandez, when she spoke of the existence of "human capital and ethnic resources". However, we have heard from our speakers that we should question this "Idea" for it is not always an advantage. Fernandez mentions this problem. In a similar vein, Walton and Hiebert discuss the kin problems associated with the apparent "resources" of having lots of contacts and relatives. Thus, they conclude their study by arguing "we have found evidence to temper any unqualified view that ethnic communities foster entrepreneurial success", evidence which leads them to remark that "we would challenge the notion

frequently implied in the literature on ethnic entrepreneurialism — that self-employment is an antidote to discriminatory practices in the labour market: 'keeping it in the family' does not necessarily lead to harmony in family life or to success in business relations". Jones and McEvoy note the dangers of "overcrowding" in economic niches that are enough to suppress or drive down the immigrant entrepreneur. As they observe in terms of "market potential", the "ethnic market" can be exploited but it soon becomes saturated and drives people down. Thus, we learn that "ethnicity" as a resource is very much a two-edged sword and may not be much of a resource at all. (This ambiguity might well be at the root of Jones and McEvoy's general point that although there have been many studies of ethnic entrepreneurship, there has been no attempt at drawing together some generalities from such work.)

A disquieting feature of much of our research is that ethnic small business may have some distinguishing features, but are they that much different from small business in general? We probably simply don't know — but at a time of global restructuring and so on, it is not just immigrants who are having to set up on their own and if we were to slice the entrepreneur community by gender, age, etc., we would see stories as chilling as the mixed blessings that we have heard reported here today. "[A]s our own enquiries have revealed", Jones and McEvoy tellingly observe "many entrepreneurial values and practices conventionally argued to be uniquely 'Sikh' or 'Gujerati' turn out to be part of an overarching small business culture". As but one example, Giles Barrett's work on the African-Caribbean community in Britain, reported this morning, clearly shows how important the gender dimension on its own can be.

Finally, I am troubled by the practical outcome of this body of work, as riddled with difficulties of definition, concepts and methodologies as it is. There are policies that flow from these ideas and have been clearly enunciated by government. To take my own area of research, Canada's business migration program is very much seen as a way to foster entrepreneurship in Canada and to encourage links with overseas enterprises. Self-employment is lauded as the way of the future and the power house of the economy, creating thousands of jobs. The ethnic enclave is even argued to be a "good thing" because it enables people to be incorporated into society without a cost to the public purse. But if what we have heard today is close to the truth, perhaps we need to rethink these policies in order to focus much more on economic policies that are regionally rather than program-based.

So why study "ethnic entrepreneurship"? From what we have heard today, does the phenomenon exist at all? You can come to your own conclusions but let me offer two concluding thoughts. One is that as geographers, with our fascination for places, regions, countries and the differences between them,

we have an almost over-tempting imperative to believe that there simply must be something of explanatory significance to be found in the different geographic backgrounds of the entrepreneurs that we study. At its best, this results in the harmless fascination that my students have in the multitudinous fare of metropolitan Montreal. However, at its worst, are we not some modern day colonialists, off on yet one more exploration — not, this time, to exotic far-off places but into cultures that we have set apart from us, that we have constructed for their "otherness", that we have exoticized for their "ethnicness", an approach that may say more about ourselves than those we think we are studying.

My second answer is by way of an analogy. Evidently, Malthus could never understand why the poor persisted in having more children. It simply did not make any economic sense. Why would you dig yourself deeper into economic poverty by having extra children? Evidently — according to Marx — the answer was to see the family as a resource and to recognize that (once divorced from the land) that the family had only its labour power at its disposal. More children allowed it to maximize that resource of labour and, in this manner, thereby to cope. It was a strategy of survival. And that is surely what we have here. In the face of discrimination, language barriers and economic restructuring, the new immigrant family must adapt to its new situation as best it can and as soon as it can. That "ethnicity" will be utilized as a resource in this battle should not surprise us. Even if it cannot guarantee an unproblematic situation — as the work of Fernandez, and Walton and Hiebert ably demonstrate — it is so often the *only* solution available and has to be used. That many stay in that situation — the Portuguese real estate world of Carlos Teixeira, the "economic space" of Jones and McEvoy — is perhaps the more compelling problem, for it is the lack of language training, credential recognition and economic exploitation (the crucial issues that policy makers should be addressing) that undoubtedly conspire to trap immigrants at their point of entry. These are the processes that give us the phenomenon we see as "ethnic entrepreneurship" — a phenomenon which lies, as we now see, completely with the context in which individuals find themselves and with the categories in which we ourselves have placed them, and one that has little, if anything, to do with the characteristics of those individuals themselves.

Alan Nash, Concordia University

News from Canada

Housing Experiences of New Canadians: Comparative Case Studies of Immigrants and Refugees in Greater Toronto
David Hulchanski, Social Work, University of Toronto; Adrienne Chambon, Social Work, University of Toronto; Robert Murdie, Geography, York University; and Carlos Teixeira, Geography, Scarborough Campus, University of Toronto

Housing Experiences of New Canadians is a multi-year project designed by a partnership of academic researchers and ethnic based communities in greater Toronto and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The objectives of the project are to examine the means by which immigrants and refugees obtain housing, the degree to which their housing needs are being met, and the quality, adequacy and cost of the housing they obtain. The project consists of community-based case studies using multiple methods of data collection including qualitative and quantitative survey research. The method is based on a participatory research process with three ethnic communities: Jamaicans, Poles and Somalis.

In contrast to the large body of literature on the socio-economic aspects of ethnicity and 'race', very little is known about the housing experiences of immigrants and refugees in Canada. It is assumed, however, that many new Canadians are likely to experience multiple aspects of discrimination resulting from three key factors: 'race' (defined mainly as skin colour), gender and class (socio-economic status). Finding housing in Toronto is also likely to be difficult for new immigrants because of the relatively few rental vacancies, both in the private and public sectors. For most lower income new immigrants, housing opportunities are restricted to the rental market.

The three immigrant groups were selected so as to have two visible minority groups represented, the Jamaicans and Somalis, and one 'non-visible' group, the recent wave of immigrants from Poland. These are all relatively large groups and representatives from each participated in the initial workshop sessions which defined this research project and serve on the project's steering committee. Jamaicans began to arrive in Toronto in the late 1960's and are still coming in large numbers. In contrast to the Jamaicans, the Somalis are a 'recent' visible minority group who started arriving in Toronto in the late 1980's. The Polish group is part of the 'Solidarity Wave' who left Poland as a result of the deteriorating economy and political tensions of the 1980s. Like the Jamaicans, and in contrast to the Somalis, the Poles have a long established community structure in Toronto.

The housing experiences of these groups are being examined through two research strategies, focus groups and a semi-structured questionnaire survey. The focus groups were planned

as a preliminary step to the development of a questionnaire survey but it was soon discovered that they provided a rich source of information by themselves. The focus group discussion topics included housing preferences, barriers, strategies and outcomes. Barriers to obtaining suitable housing was the most important topic in each focus group session. Findings from the focus group sessions indicate that the three ethnic groups experiences quite different barriers in the Toronto housing market. Aside from income constraints, two major factors dominated the discussions, language and 'race'. In some instances the groups faced multiple barriers that are cumulative. This is especially true for the Somali community which suffers from the multiple disadvantages of language, racial discrimination, and discrimination against large families and single parent female headed families. The outcome of the barriers is fewer choices in the housing market, fewer locational choices in the city, overcrowding and overpayment for accommodation.

Work is now proceeding on a pretest of the questionnaire. Important components of the questionnaire include the housing history of the respondent before coming to Canada, a summary of each housing situation in Toronto, details of the housing search process, feelings about house as 'home' and neighbourhood as 'community', and issues concerning racial and gender discrimination in the housing market. Interviews will be conducted with about sixty respondents from each of the three groups.

Further details may be obtained from Robert Murdie (email: murdie@yorku.ca) or Carlos Teixeira (email: cart@scar.utoronto.ca)

Robert Murdie, York University



Sessions...continued from page 2

Economic Structure.

8:40 Ines M. Miyares, Hunter College, "Little Odessa"-Brighton Beach, Brooklyn: The Next "Little Havana?"

9:00 Eran Razin, Hebrew University, Ivan Light, University of California, Los Angeles, The Income Consequences of Ethnic Entrepreneurial Niches.

9:20 Yu Zhou, Vassar College, Place Matters: Comparing Chinese Ethnic Economies in New York and Los Angeles.

553. Geographic Aspects of Ethnic Economies II (Plenary)

10:00 Ivan Light, University of California-Los Angeles, The Place of Geography in the Ethnic Economy

Discussants: Dong-Ok Lee, Michigan State University, Nancy Ettliger, Ohio State University, James Allen, California State University-Northridge.

616. Making Census Data Accessible for College Classes: The SSDAN Network

Panelists: William H. Frey, University of Michigan, Ines M. Miyares, Hunter College, John R. Weeks, San Diego State University.

A.E.G.S.G. Officers

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A.E.G.S.G. Student Paper Competition Charlotte, North Carolina, 1996

Congratulations to Jennifer A. Paine (Hunter College) who won our Student Paper Competition in Charlotte.

Abstract:

A Typology of 'New' Japanese Immigration to New York City

Japanese immigration has increased in the last ten to fifteen years after a long period during which there was little Japanese immigration to the United States. The stereotype of Japanese businessmen and their families being representative of the Japanese population in the United States masks greater diversity among the Japanese population. The ethnic neighborhood of the East Village represents a center of the Japanese immigrant network in New York City and integrates many new immigrants into the city. Japanese immigration is a more complex issue than it appears on the surface. How these immigrants make the decision to migrate and the factors that pull them to New York City differ between men and women because of their distinct roles in Japanese society.

Based on a survey of Japanese immigrants in the New York City area, this study proposes a typology of who migrates to New York and the factors involved in the decision-making process. Japanese society places many restrictions on the behavior and lifestyle choices of its members, and a major theme among many immigrants is the desire for freedom of choice and a different lifestyle than is possible in Japan.

Recent Releases:

Jordan, Terry G., Jon T. Kilpinen and Charles F. Gritzner (1997). The Mountain West: Interpreting the Folk Landscape, Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Isbister, John (1996). The Immigration Debate: Remaking America, West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press.

O'Loughlin, John and Jurgen Friedrichs (editors)(1996). Social Polarization in Post-Industrial Metropolises, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Roseman, Curtis C., Hans Dieter Laux and Gunter Thieme (editors)(1996). EthniCity: Geographic Perspectives on Ethnic Change in Modern Cities, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Robinson, Ira and Mervin Butovsky (editors) (1995). Renewing Our Days: Montreal Jews in the Twentieth Century, Montreal: Vehicule Press.

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