Diasporas
Revisiting & Discovering

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Laura De Pretto, Gloria Macri & Catherine Wong
Diasporas:

Revisiting and Discovering
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Preface

Gloria Macri

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Migration is a growing phenomenon that can no longer be viewed as simply referring to the relocation of people from origin to the destination country. The implications and complexities of human mobility become clear once we disengage from a Gastarbeiter perspective and we strive to understand processes that elude the simplistic assumption that migrants will invariably (and eventually) ‘go back home’. Questions have arisen as to why do some migrants organise in groups and thus why do ethnic communities emerge and moreover what makes some migrant communities acquire a diasporic dimension.

The term ‘diaspora’ has referred traditionally to Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion, however the concept now encompasses very different realities and types of community organisation. According to Fludernik, many groups that relocate to a different country or region for economic purposes may at some point begin to develop awareness around their commonalities and begin to construct a diasporic identity1.

The present book brings together a collection of key studies from many disciplines all focusing around the ‘diaspora’ issue. The readers will engage on a journey that spans continents, populations and time frames. Each study seeks to answer some of the key questions in the field of diaspora studies and thus to address some of the existing gaps. With each chapter the authors strive to add another piece to the big diasporic puzzle. We hence believe that this book will finally reveals to its readers a complete picture of today’s diasporas.

The book is structured into several sections, each discussing thoroughly and from a multitude of perspectives four broad topics emerging from diaspora studies. The first section of the book gives us an in-depth insight into the diasporic feelings of belonging. It focuses on the relation that diaspora develops with both the host society, and also with the homeland, while keeping a close look at the process of diasporic identity construction. Although diasporas are according to Safran (1991) dispersed from an original ‘centre’, they maintain a memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland. There is thus a dual loyalty that diasporic people develop in relation with their homeland and the receiving society; therefore Diasporas can be never entirely ‘here’ or ‘there’. Diasporas will almost invariably develop a specific, hybrid identity that merges elements from host community as well as the country of origin, as a place of possible return.
The second section gives us an overview of the diasporic engagement with the homeland. In the last decade, researchers have become more and more aware of the fact that migration does not imply an ‘abandonment’ of an ‘old’ home culture in order to embrace another. Although migrants do leave behind families, friends, and ‘geographical’ spaces, their imaginary, to use Anderson’s term, connections to their roots can never be destroyed and neither forgotten. In many cases diasporas develop transnational connections with their countries of origin and through these ties they not only ‘keep in touch’ with the loved ones, but also contribute to significant changes in their countries of origin, either at the individual, community or national level. We will refer extensively in this chapter to the problematic of remittances, as their impact seems to go beyond the immediate financial use as they may generate more significant shifts in a community’s lifestyle and aspirations.

The third section explores the complex process of identity construction and border setting between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Frederik Barth argues that the critical focus of analysis in defining the group needs to be on the boundaries, rather than the cultural content delimited by it. Thus the boundary becomes a powerful identifier. Bauman develops further the Barthian idea of boundaries and underlines the role of ‘the Other’ in the construction of who we are. This perspective emphasises the idea that identities are not only about ‘sameness’, but about difference as well. Hence ‘the Other’ becomes a central pillar in the process of diasporic identity construction.

The last section uncovers several examples of ‘hidden’ diasporas. Whether we are talking about virtual ‘World of Warcraft’ diasporas, or the forgotten Australians in Paraguay, we can easily notice that some diasporic groups have had little if any recognition so far. This last section aims to inspire a fresh perspective in the field and to stimulate scholars to step occasionally away from the trodden path approach diaspora creatively.

In conclusion, we feel that this book will represent for the reader much more that a collection of case studies as it tries to present a complete and complex snapshot of diasporas from many possible angles.

Notes
Section I

Diasporic Feelings and Belonging
Catherine Wong

Introduction

Diaspora originally refers to the collective displacements and relocations of Jewish population. The notion, however, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is made complicated by the massive movement of people caused by (de-)colonisation, globalisation and other economic and political factors. Nowadays, diasporas as a postmodern paradigm, adopts a more inclusive delineation and generally refers to any ethnic groups of people who have been dispersed from their specific original ‘centre’ to the ‘peripherals’ and relocated permanently to new geographic locations or foreign regions.

One of the distinctive markers of the diasporic communities is that these displaced ethnic groups cannot and are unwilling to be fully assimilated to their host society - they feel isolated from the host culture. As a result, they express their feelings of non-belongingness by retreating to the memory of the past - diasporic communities resolve to restore and establish a collective memory of their original homeland, from its physical location, history, to its myths and culture, so that they can relate to it personally and develop an ethno communal consciousness among themselves. They generally believe that their ancestral homeland as their true and only ideal home where they or their descendents will eventually return to.

In this section, we are going to study across disciplines various types of diasporas, both of the old paradigm as well as of the new order. Felicity Greenfields kicks off the discussion by addressing to the Chinese Diaspora, one of the largest and most prominent emerging diasporic groups in the post-war era while Jonathan Rollins narrows down the topic further and focuses on the examination of the literary representation of identity ‘shopping’ of Chinese migrants as well as other minorities in Canada.

Not only have the two world wars altered the boundaries of nations, but they have also changed the order of the world politically, economically as well as ideologically. Economic globalism and decolonisation destruct the polarity of the centre and peripheral and introduce to the postmodern world both decentred post-colonial states and transnational economic migrations. Kalyani Thurairajah’s chapter draws our attention to these rising migrant diasporas and points to the problem of belongingness the Tamil Diaspora in Toronto is facing whereas Robert Kenedy redirects our attention back to the Jewish Diaspora and investigates the phenomenon of the new wave of Jewish migration from France to Montreal since 1999.

At the height of decolonisation, the problem that a diasporic group faces may not simply be about leaving home - it can also be about returning
to their estranged homeland. Shelene Gomes’s chapter provides readers with an additional perspective of the notion with her discussion of Caribbean and African ‘repatriates’ in Ethiopia. Yasser Munif and Catherine Wong explore the issues of decentred transnationality and imaginary diasporas arisen in African-French community and in Hong Kong respectively.

Last, but not the least, to make the discussion complete, Sharmani Patricia Gabriel, using the case of multiracial Malaysia as an example, highlights all these hybrid and heterogeneous qualities of postmodern nations and suggests an alternative solution to the unsettling feelings of the diasporas.
Migrants’ Hearts: This Land is Not My Home

Felicity M Greenfields

Abstract
The term Diaspora broadened to include cosmopolitans, overseas students, academics; ex-pats, economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have more recently been stretched to the point of distortion. Once a Semitic mark of rejection, diasporic membership, though still embracing those residing, for whatever reason, out-with the geographical boundaries of their birth-lands retains selectivity. Today however, Diaspora is not so much a mark of ‘dispossession’ and ‘otherness’ as a badge of migrant belonging particularly for ethnic minorities of colour. The usefulness, then of diaspora as a concept defining the bonds, which tie exiled peoples to their land of origin, albeit ones which may not even exist out-with their geographical imaginations and if they do are often rarefied through folk memories, myths and imaginings, remains highly questionable. Consequent whether descendants of migrants born into the culture and language of an adopted homeland, who think of home as ‘here’ and not ‘there’, should be termed Diaspora is debatable. This chapter will therefore examine the particularities of Diaspora in relation to the overseas Chinese, comparing its sociological particularities to usefulness as a community-adopted term defining ethnicity and elsewhere belonging.

Key Words: belonging, Chinese, diaspora, homeland, otherness.

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1. Introduction
Given that labels carry with them pre-conceptions and stereotypical images which may be positively or negatively interpreted depending on their context, the usefulness, or otherwise, of labelling individuals and/or groups of people as Diaspora and/or Ethnic not only says something about those doing the labelling but those to whom the label is attached.

As a result labels, irrespective of whether they are imposed or adopted, can and do have social consequences both in terms of how individuals understand themselves to be, as well as how they are perceived by others.

2. Diaspora; Its Origins and Meaning
‘Diaspora’, that word ‘as Martin Baumann calls it (Baumann,1997) metamorphosis from ‘Gulan’ a Hebrew word which speaks of sojourning, exile and banishment has in recent years become something of a ‘buzz word’
a misnomer. This, despite its historically-Semitic - application linking it to a time when over ninety two percent of world Jewry were uprooted and living as diaspora. In origin, then, the term, ‘gulan’ from which ‘diaspora’ is derived has an ethno-religious connection to Jewish socio-religious history and understanding of exile. For Jews, exile from the land of promise was viewed, not simply as a consequence of war, but as Divine punishment, as retribution for breaking the Mosaic, covenantal agreement. As a result, banishment from the Promised Land, was a punishment which, for Jewish exiles, carried with it a sense of homesickness and loss of the divine presence. Consequently, until the 1960’s Diaspora was a term almost exclusively linked to the Jews as a nationally defined people and spoke to a theology of exile (Baumann, 1997). Whilst the origins of Diaspora, maybe somewhat different from the biblical idea of ‘Gulan’ which speaks of exile as punishment, diaspora, nevertheless spoke of exile and ‘social dispersion’ irrespective of whether or not it embodies a sense of divine retribution. Diaspora as a result carried with it not only notions of sojourning and exile, but also colonization, a not uncommon tactic employed by ancient civilizations to ensure subjugated peoples were kept in line.

Diaspora modern usage however, links the term to peoples, whom for whatever reason, live out-with the geographic boundaries of their place of birth. Consequently, today’s term has become divorced from its biblically historic, ethno-religious origins. Moreover, within such a context Diaspora carries no expectations of an ethno-religious connection, despite the ability of religion(s) to influence and define group belonging.

Furthermore, distancing diaspora from its historically specific origins and broadening it to include even settled communities of cosmopolitans, overseas students, academics, economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, in fact any and all peoples living out-with the boundaries of their geographical homelands appears to lessen the need to retain any sense of migrance and/or sojourings. The term is, therefore in real danger of becoming stretch to the point of distortion, in the process of which the meaning and origins of specific migrations may well, over time, become distorted, or lost altogether.

In saying this, the term though divorced from its original setting tends to retain a certain selectivity. As in recognizing peoples marked by difference and displacement, diasporic membership, whilst exhibiting flexibility on issues of sojourning and settledness, still demands from its members a national (ethnic) belonging, sense of emotional connectedness and longing to ‘return’ to ancestral homeland. Nevertheless, this longing, on the part of the migrant, to return to ancestral homelands does not stipulate a generational time line. As a result ‘connectedness’ does not carry a requirement that the migrant or their immediate ancestors were physically born in the place defined as ‘home’.
Although as a term, diaspora, continues to address issues of ‘dispersion’, such processes do not simply affect the emotional and physical experiences of the migrants themselves, but also impact the geographical lands across which their dispersions occur (Baumann, 1997). It is evidenced that diaspora, as with all forms of migration, affects those who go as well as those who stay. This being said, regardless, of the form it takes a defining characteristic of legitimate diaspora remains their status as minority ethnics of migrant origin with a fundamental need to maintain sentimental and/or material links to ancestral birth-lands (Esman, 1981). Unsurprisingly, embedded in this concept is also a sense that these birth-lands, these ancestral homelands, embody an imagined entitlement, on the part of the migrant, to say ‘they belong’ no matter how far removed their ancestry. It is, in effect, as though diaspora carries with it an entitlement to say they come from this or that particular location, despite geographical distance, historical, cultural and/or generational divides.

Such people, Docker argues, ‘belong to more than one history, to more than one time and place, more than one past and to more than one future.’ (Docker, 2001). Needless to say, such ‘remote forms of belonging’ can have an emotionally unsettling affect on people, fuelling in them a sense of otherness, at times preventing assimilation. Certainly, much of the experience of living ‘simultaneously in two different worlds, two different time frames, of belonging somewhere else and sense of rootlessness is what lies at the heart of diaspora experience and identity. Whilst commonality of experiences and emotions may occur, diaspora experiences and identities should not, according to Stuart Hall, be seen as homogeneous, in that it is the actual processes of transformation and difference, he argues, which serve to create and recreate hybrid identities.

Indeed it is often the cultural understandings, traditions and experiences which converge to forge migrant story lines, these narratives of displacement which he sees as giving rise to an endless desire to return to ‘lost origins’ (Hall, 1996). Such myths have an unsettling process, serving, not only to maintain emotional links to ancient homelands, but in the process ensure diaspora identities continue to remain in a state of constant flux. Consequently, as migrants seek to reaffirm a sense of the familiar, by constructing for themselves new identities, these self same diaspora narratives create their own set of unique difficulties.

Cultural theorists point out that when compressed over time and space, distances between original and adopted homelands are lessened (Docker, 2001). As a result, in attempting to feel secure, at home amongst the unfamiliar, migrants attempt to reconstruct for themselves homes-away from home, constructing for example fossilised, Chinatown’s in, say, London/Glasgow/Manchester similar or identical to old ‘Hong Kong and/or Mainland Chinese communities During such process much of that which is
authentic is removed and experiences become rarefied (Docker, 2001). It may also be the case that folk memories, myths and imaginings whilst perhaps vibrant within such settings may have little or no currency out-with the rarefied, geographical imaginations of the diaspora. Diaspora as a result, serves to give credence not simply to the myths of sojournings, but narratives of community existence and identity. In such a context Diaspora, particularly for ethnic minorities of colour (Shepperton, 1965), is not so much a mark of ‘dispossession’ and ‘otherness’ as a badge of migrant belonging.

3. Identities: I am Who I am Because of Everyone!
Given that identity formation is about narrative, the stories we tell ourselves and those we tell others about ourselves, the perceptions through which ‘self’ is defined from the non-self will continue to be profoundly affected by culture and experiences of migrancy (Carter, 2002).

As a result migration and/or diaspora will not only mark a person’s sense of self hood, but will at the same time limit the possible narratives which may be available to them. It is also the case that culture and experiences are factors, boundaries, against which issues of sameness and difference may be explored and identities enabled. In his book Us and Them David Berreby speaks of ‘understanding the tribal mind’ in terms of designating peoples as member of a particular human kind, the issue being he says not so much what ‘human kinds there are in the world’ as ‘what they are in our minds’ (Berreby, 2005:17).

Encountering the ‘others’ therefore, no matter how fleetingly, enables the self to recognize images of sameness and/or different. Moreover, as identities are not constructed in isolation, but formed in relation to others, circumstances and lived experiences have the ability to change owned, perceived and projected images of the self and whilst biology, can and does limited identity construction by restricting individual, real world choices with regard to gender and ethnicity, the fluidity of identity may also be limited in terms of skin colour, race and gender, particularly as projecting images of the self ‘out there’ so to speak onto the public stage involves dialogue and negotiation.

4. Read the Label: Diaspora or Ethnicity
Consequently, despite sociological insistence on Diaspora and Ethnicity, being social constructs ethnicity in its common usage tends to prioritise biology and cultural attributes such as language, religion and skin colour as opposed to shared history, collective consciousness, inherited traits and/or common ancestry.

Although Chinese people have historically been subjected to sojourning as a result of war, famine, racial persecution and a demand for labour that saw many coerced to work overseas as indentured labour, itself a
form of slavery (Diaj, 2003) so entitling many overseas Chinese to adopt the diaspora label. More recent Chinese migrations though, which have tended to be linked to economic pressures as opposed to patterns of international - imperial- aggression (Diaj, 2003) have often brought with them a sense of settledness. Such settledness has as a result removed for many migrant Chinese their sense of elsewhere belonging in the process of which the legitimacy of a diaspora label who’s commonality rests on a sense of forced exile, constant sojourning and emotional restlessness to return to a land of origin may well be questioned. Consequently, being Chinese, in terms of ethnicity may well prove to be a more reliable identity marker than diaspora, as when read from a sociological perspective their ‘culture, awareness of history and sense of belonging’ remains valid regardless of nomadic status and emotional belonging.

In conclusion then, whilst modern usage of the term diaspora fails to embody ethno-religious properties and Jewish concept of exile (Gulan) as divine retribution, it nevertheless has currency in defining processes of exile and the emotional bonds, which tie exiled peoples to their land of origin. Accordingly, as migrancy patterns amongst overseas Chinese lean towards the voluntary, and community members exhibit high levels of settledness, despite well established trans-national networks, it is questionable if such communities meet the criteria for unrequited homeland longing. Furthermore, there is amongst individual overseas Chinese communities a multiplicity of clans, distinct nationalities and number of language groups.

Evidence which suggests that the majority of overseas Chinese, who may be voluntary exiles as opposed to forced migrants and that second and third generation Chinese, born into the culture and language of an adopted homeland, think of home as ‘here’ and not ‘there’ reinforces the question as to whether ‘settled, rooted’ communities currently defining themselves as Diaspora would be better served identifying themselves in terms of their ethnicity, their commonly held beliefs, practices and shared cultural as opposed to an historic, perhaps unfounded, sense of rootlessness. For though diasporic membership is about belonging and identity, adopting any given label is as much about how we perceive ourselves and others and wish to be perceived, regardless of sociological orthodoxy.

**Bibliography**


**Felicity Greenfields** is a PhD Candidate at the Open University, United Kingdom.
Sites of Belonging: Caribbean and African Diasporas in Ethiopia

Shelene Gomes

Abstract
From the middle of the 20th century Rastafari and non-Rastafari peoples alike arrived in Shashamene, Ethiopia from the Caribbean, North America and Europe. This migration was regarded as repatriation, a return home. The chapter will focus on the movement of Caribbean peoples, mainly of African and mixed ancestry, analysing their move as a diaspora experience thereby interrogating key concepts such as belonging, rooted-ness, home and host. Repatriates perceive themselves as belonging to an African diaspora as the descendants of slaves forcibly removed from Africa. Consequently, they identify as ‘Ethiopians’, ‘natives’ who have ‘returned home’ to their ancestral place of origin. In another way they are part of a Caribbean diaspora since they have literally moved from the Caribbean and their ‘shared cultural expressions, social conduct and popular attitudes’1 have resulted from an upbringing in the Caribbean, where Rastafarianism emerged, details which repatriates readily acknowledge. This simultaneous connection to the Caribbean and belonging to Ethiopia, and to Africa, questions and supports notions of rooted-ness. Repatriates’ complexity of attachment to and influence from multiple sites therefore has the conceptual potential to revise political and cultural notions of belonging.

Key Words: belonging, Caribbean, cosmopolitanism, home, homeland migration.

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1. Introduction
This chapter focuses on the worldview, migratory routes, and livelihoods of Rastafari men and women from the Caribbean who claim themselves as part of the African diaspora having ‘returned home’ to Ethiopia. In another sense they are also part of the Caribbean diaspora since they moved from the region, and they share similar attitudes, experiences and worldview.2 This is a worldview that must be situated in the history of plantation economies in the Caribbean and the creative resistance of its peoples in shaping their societies and ideologies.

I examine key tentacles in the concept of diaspora and in migration studies more generally, such as those of homeland, home and host. While the term diaspora is a variable one, it remains grounded in the notion of a native land. I suggest that Rastafari worldview problematises and re-enforces these
categories. Ethiopia is home, not the Caribbean where they were born and bred. Ethiopia is also homeland, where their ancestors came from and the land from which all peoples originate. Rastafari worldview and the accompanying movement to Ethiopia challenges an insular understanding of belonging to place, and at the same time supports it through the classic diasporic idea of ‘homeland.’ Additionally, although repatriates have returned home, they are confronted with similar social, legal, and political problems that other migrants from the Caribbean have grappled with in the 20th century.

2. **Background**

‘We didn’t just come to Ethiopia, we were invited here…we are not refugees,’ an elder repatriate from Jamaica explained to me in Shashamane, Ethiopia. In the 1950’s the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I, donated 500 acres of his personal, arable land ‘as far as the eye can see’ to ‘the Black peoples of the West’ in order to facilitate their movement there. From this period, Afrocentric-inspired peoples from the Caribbean, the USA, Britain and Europe arrived in Shashamane. The administration of the land was entrusted to the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF), and James Piper, an EWF member from Montserrat, was assigned to administer the land grant. The earliest repatriates were members of the EWF from the branches in New York and Jamaica who were not Rastafarians. Repatriation became a key component in Rastafari ideology, though, and Rastafarians from various houses also settled in Shashamane. From the 1970s members of the Twelve Tribes of Israel House in Jamaica, other Caribbean countries such as Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, and other parts of the world arrived in Shashamane. In the 1990s Rastafari from the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress (known as the Boboshanti) and the Moral Theocratical Churchical Order of the Nyahbinghi settled there as well. There are, of course, Rastafari who are unaffiliated to any mansion, and I met one Haitian-American family who was not Rastafari, but almost all repatriates are Rastafarians from the above mansions who number around 200. While there are repatriates who live in other parts of Ethiopia, mainly in Bahar Dar in the north, and in the capital Addis Ababa, my work focuses on repatriates from the West Indies and the wider Caribbean in Shashamane. Repatriates from the Caribbean are Rastafarians of African or mixed African-European-Asian-Arab-Amerindian descent given the racial heterogeneity of the Caribbean.

After the 1974 Marxist revolution in Ethiopia a land reform policy was passed that nationalised much agricultural land, and voided the land grant. Repatriates subsequently submitted a petition for the return of their land to the government and 40 hectares were returned between 1975 and 1976. Since repatriates did not occupy all this land, though, the uninhabited portions were taken by Ethiopians who squatted on the land. Since land can
no longer be granted in Shashamane, then, potential settlers from ‘foreign’
who wish to repatriate must have the financial means to ‘buy’ land. While
this is a deterrent for those who cannot afford to do so, for people who can
purchase land they remain interested in repatriation. During the year that I
lived in Shashamane at least five Rastafari visitors per month, mainly from
the West, enquired at the local Rastafarian-administered NGO office, the
Jamaican Rastafarian Development Community (JRDC), about the processes
of acquiring land and/or a house, and arranging a caretaker in their absence.
Shashamane is recognised by Rastafari around the world as the location of
the land grant, and it therefore remains an active site for repatriation.

I lived in Shashamane for one year between 2008-2009 using
participant-observation as my key method. I conducted semi-structured
interviews with repatriates who lived there for at least thirty years, more
recent repatriates who arrived in the last ten years and with the children of
Caribbean or mixed Ethiopian and Caribbean parents between the ages of 18-
30 who live in Shashamane and in Addis Ababa.

3. Ethiopia is Calling

In Rastafari worldview, repatriation is related specifically to
Ethiopia. Depending on the context, ‘Ethiopia’ refers to the entire African
continent and to the Eastern region of Africa alone. Ethiopia is conceived of
as the ancestral land of all ‘Africans’ who were displaced through the
European slave trade that depleted the continent of its human and physical
resources. Consequently, in Rastafari worldview, repatriates belong to the
African diaspora as ‘Africans’ scattered outside their homeland. Rastafarians
created a ‘myth of origin’ for African-descended peoples in the Caribbean,
and for all peoples to a certain extent, which must be understood as symbolic
and as grounded in the historical institutions of colonialism and slavery. This
worldview creates an uplifting historiography that both builds on and
diverges from the national histories of now independent Caribbean territories.

The ideologies of Caribbean peoples were formed through centuries
of the importation and settlement of forced and voluntary migrants from
various locations, and were ‘shaped throughout by…architectonic forces of
conquest, colonisation, slavery, sugar monoculture, colonialism, and racial
and ethnic admixture.’ Although I argue that Rastafari worldview has
evolved out of the Caribbean’s unique historical conditions, not all West
Indians share the same worldview or share this worldview. Rather, peoples of
the ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous region share a historical
foundation that has resulted in specific ideas about personhood, inter-
connections with the global, and expectations and experiences of movement.
These historical processes provided the conditions for a Rastafari worldview,
centred on an ‘I and I’ concept of personhood, to emerge. As Mintz
emphasises,
to characterise Caribbean peoples as sharing some kind of special personality or philosophy would be to vulgarise the complexity of their pasts and the much differentiated societies in which they live today. But it does seem significant that this region was involved so early in the development of a world system of production and trade, sponsored by the emergent nations of Western Europe, and expedited by the use of vast amounts of unpaid—that is, enslaved—and culturally heterogeneous, non-European labour.12

One of the roots of Rastafari worldview, the origin in Ethiopia, is derived from the ideology of Ethiopianism that emerged in the Caribbean during slavery. This ideology, ‘created out of Biblical references to a Black race (was) largely the vision of a golden past - and the promise that Ethiopia should once more stretch forth its hands to God - that revitalised the hope of an oppressed people.’13 In the 18th century Ethiopianism was formalised with the founding of new ‘Black’ churches, not only in Jamaica, but also on the African continent and in America. Since religious gatherings were one of the few permitted ways for large numbers of slaves to meet, this ‘reinterpretation of Christianity’14 was a successful means of challenging Eurocentric ideas. In the 19th century religious orders opened schools for poor Black, coloured and Asian peoples in Jamaica so the Bible became a familiar text to many. These new beliefs were thus accessible to many Jamaicans and today the Bible continues to be read not only at school, but at church, and in the home. Rastafari beliefs from all mansions continue to be grounded in the Bible. During a conversation with an elder repatriate in Shashamane he bluntly explained to me that, ‘if you want to reason with us, then you have to know your Bible.’

In the 20th century, Marcus Garvey’s philosophy combined Ethiopianism with a detailed ‘Back to Africa’ plan, a development that significantly influenced Rastafari thought. Garvey’s plan to achieve the ideological, economic and political advancement of all ‘African’ peoples included educating Black peoples about past African civilisations, and using the skills and education of ‘New World Africans’ with Africans on the continent to build ‘a powerful and united Africa’, thereby emphasising the ‘Africanness’ of all Black peoples.15 On a theological level, Garvey argued that Africans are made in God’s image, which meant that God had to be Black. Although Garvey was not the first visionary to introduce the idea of a Black God, his combination of theological re-interpretation and pragmatic planning appealed to many ‘Africans’ in the Caribbean, North and Central America and Africa. His philosophy had an immense impact on the core
Rastafari beliefs in the early 20th century regarding god, repatriation, unity and self-empowerment.

Rastafarians built on Ethiopianism and Garveyism by asserting that Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, crowned in 1930, the self-proclaimed descendent of King Solomon, ‘Lion of the Tribe of Judah’ and ‘King of Kings’, was God on earth. Haile Selassie I became ‘a symbol of the black glory and ancient African lineage dating back to Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.’ The divinity of a living Black king was a crucial development that became the basis for Rastafari ideology and extended the divinity of His Majesty to all ‘Africans.’ This consciousness, that started to recover, reify and re-invent African personhood for Caribbean descendants, ‘starts in Ethiopia and extends itself across that sea so, as Peter Tosh sang, ‘it doesn’t matter where you come from, as long as you’re a Black man you’re an African.’’ Rastafari also looked toward the existing Ethiopian Empire since it was the only Black African autonomous territory that had not been colonised by Europeans, a point that repatriates in Shashamane today emphasised in our conversations. This newly formulated body of ideas espoused by Rastafari served to historically and psychologically reclaim a colonialist ethnocentric concept of ‘the African’ as lacking history, worthless and Biblically cursed.

These elements of Rastafari worldview are accompanied by a crucial concept of ‘IandI’, a humanity in which the individual, the collective and God are irrevocably inter-connected. This concept of ‘oneness’, ‘IandI’, establishes the mutual connection of the ‘I’, the person, with the global family of RastafarI. Yet the term ‘IandI’ represents more than the ties among Rastafari. In certain situations ‘IandI’ refers to all ‘sufferers,’ people who may not be Rastafarians, but who are also exploited by the ‘shitstem’ or ‘shituation’, as Peter Tosh called it. When Leonard Barrett did his research in the 1970s he concluded that, binary oppositions are overcome in the process of identity with other sufferers in the society...long before the philosophy of democratic socialism, which advocates the breaking down of divisions among fellow Jamaicans, was ever heard...the Rastafarians were practicing the philosophy.20

This concept of the ‘sufferer’ continues to cross boundaries of race, religion, and gender within Caribbean societies and outside the region as well. However, I am not suggesting that Rastafarians today use a trope of victimisation since many do not. Rather, that the idea of the sufferer is used by peoples around the world, and most especially by Rastafari, as an organisational principle which allows people to unite around their common
experiences of oppression to collectively find ways of re-shaping their positionalities within the system.

The emergence of Rastafari ideology and activism must additionally be situated in the economic inequalities that Jamaicans and West Indians experienced from the colonial period into independence in the 1960s. In the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, thousands of Jamaicans in rural areas were removed from their villages so that the land could be used to build bauxite factories. They were either relocated to the urban camps surrounding Kingston, the capital, or sent to the ‘banana boats’ that carried agricultural produce to Britain. Rastafari meetings provided lower-class and disaffected Jamaicans with opportunities to denounce the enemies of the people: “the white man” and the Jamaican ‘traitors’: politicians, businessmen, clergymen, and the police.”21 This historical awareness and reinvention of personhood, combined with economic exploitation and the desire for “equal rights and justice”22 for all, advocated by Rastafari, enabled Caribbean peoples to create ways of opposing the shitstem.

4. ‘His Majesty…said that we shall be coming from the four corners of the earth to take back our land’23: Home and Homeland

While repatriates conceive of themselves as Ethiopians, as people who are ‘native’ to Ethiopia (Africa), local Ethiopians view them as ‘farangi’, as foreigners. As foreigners then, repatriates should not own houses in Shashamane, have more money or bigger lots of land than ‘real’ Ethiopians, the latter being a point of contestation between local Oromo peoples, the majority ethnic group in Shashamane, and Rastafari repatriates. There is a palpable sense of resentment by many Ethiopians in the area, but not expressed by all Ethiopians. For some Ethiopians, whether Oromo or of another ethnic group, repatriates’ claim that they are Ethiopian reaffirms Ethiopians’ pride in their history of empire. They are pleased with repatriates’ desire to belong to Ethiopia, and to a certain extent, they sympathise with repatriates when their fellow Ethiopians are openly hostile.

Repatriates’ claim that they are natives is also contested by the state. Ethiopian citizenship is supposedly only granted to people who are ‘by origin’ or ‘by marriage’ Ethiopian. ‘By origin’ means that only people who can prove that one parent, grandparent or ancestor was born within the territory of Ethiopia can become a citizen, according to officials at the Office of Immigration and Nationality Affairs in Addis Ababa.24 Such carefully determined parameters of belonging determine who can have access to the resources of Ethiopia, such as land, who can earn a living legally, and who can live peacefully. For example, in Shashamane to get a job with a government office, a person must be a citizen or resident of Ethiopia, speak Amharic fluently and have some knowledge of the regional language, Oromiffa. Regarding the previous land grant, neither the remainder of the
original land grant nor of the 40 hectares that repatriates received in the 1970s from the Derg government was returned. Since land is an economic and symbolic resource, the current Ethiopian government is pursuing a policy of development for Shashamane and land is now designated for ‘investment purposes’ by foreign or local investors. The remaining land can only by claimed by those who are ‘rooted’ to the ‘national soil’ of Ethiopia, i.e. peoples whose tangible origin can be traced to the land, something that repatriates, as ‘farangi’, cannot prove. The distinction between who is native and who is foreign, then, is reinforced on different levels, and impacts on the lives of repatriates.

Repatriates’ sense of belonging and the accompanying denial by other Ethiopians (people whose immediate ancestors are from Ethiopia) are reflected in the historical migrations from the colony to the metropole. West Indians who moved to Britain in the colonial period perceived themselves as moving ‘home’ to ‘the mother country’. This stemmed not only from their legal and political rights as members of the British Empire, but also from an internalisation of their belonging to the empire cultivated during colonialism. The concept of home for these individuals was therefore the combination of a physical place and an affective attachment. However, their racialised experiences of migration led to an ideological disillusionment and material disadvantage when the supposed equality of the empire was not manifested into reality. More recently, similar experiences were noted for Antilleans from the French overseas departments who moved to the metropole. The disavowal of belonging that colonised peoples encountered created a startling disjuncture between their perceptions and experiences.

However, while colonial migrants saw themselves as equal subjects of the empire, Rastafari rejected the idea of Britain as ‘the mother country’, instead looking toward Africa as the motherland and as home, the place where they feel physically and spiritually secure. If ‘home’ is the place that you are attached to, that you feel you belong to, and ‘a safe place to leave and return to’ according to Nigel Rapport, Ethiopia is home for Rastafari. They will be safe in Ethiopia when the apocalypse comes, and the West is destroyed, because no matter what happens in the world, as one repatriate sister informed me, ‘God watches over Ethiopia.’ In this case ‘Ethiopia’ refers to Africa as well. For the children of repatriates the concept of home is varied. When I asked youths between 18 and 30 years old if their ‘navel string’ was buried in Ethiopia as mine is buried in the Caribbean, some replied that it was not, that although Ethiopia is their home, they do not feel ‘at home.’ Others replied that it was buried in Ethiopian soil, and that although Ethiopians consider them to be farangi, they were born and bred there and they feel ‘comfortable’ in Shashamane and in Ethiopia.

Since repatriates do not consider the Caribbean, where they moved from, to be their home but look to Ethiopia, the place to which they moved as
home, this worldview questions concepts of home and host widely used in studies of Caribbean migration. ‘Host’ societies were those that acted as temporary homes for migrants who still conceived of ‘home’ as the territory that they moved from, which is not how repatriates view home. Although repatriates re-define home as homeland, they still include themselves as part of the Caribbean diaspora. They have moved from the region and they share similar attitudes, practices, and experiences as well as beliefs as Rastafarians. Repatriates from the Caribbean deny their ‘origin’ in the region, but they certainly do not deny that they were born and bred there or that their immediate ancestors are from the region. This is partly because they acknowledge that Jamaica is the site where Rastafarianism emerged, where they lived for many years, and because the enslavement of their ancestors that took them from Africa (Ethiopia) and brought them to the Caribbean is a core aspect of Rastafari worldview. Repatriates fulfil certain criteria that Cohen designates specifically for an Afro-Caribbean ‘cultural diaspora.’ As he suggests,

although important, being phenotypically African and being conscious of racism are...insufficient to assign the label ‘cultural diaspora’ to Afro-Caribbeans...other elements should be present. First, there should be evidence of cultural retention or affirmations of an African identity. Secondly, there should be a literal or symbolic interest in ‘return’. Thirdly, there should be cultural artefacts, products and expressions that show shared concerns and cross-influences between Africa, the Caribbean and the destination countries of Caribbean peoples...

This is a helpful way of delineating some of the terms of a contemporary Afro-Caribbean diaspora. Repatriates have a strong desire to return to Africa, they remain economically and culturally connected to other Caribbeans around the world, and most significantly, an origin in Ethiopia (Africa), is ‘imagined’ based on historical events.

5. Caribbean Migration and Caribbean Repatriation

From the 20th century, migration from the Caribbean has been motivated by economic concerns, to better the lives of migrants and their families in home countries by sending remittances or bringing relatives to the north. Migrants often viewed their move as a temporary one to use the system to their advantage, earn money and then return home. Researchers have noted that this ‘ideology’ of returning to the Caribbean was different from the goals of ‘early pioneer or ‘settler’ migrants who never contemplated returning to their homelands. In contrast to migration, repatriation to Ethiopia is a
permanent move motivated by thoughts of bodily and spiritual salvation. Nonetheless, repatriates and migrants in the global north encounter similar problems regarding social relations, legal status and earning a living. Additionally, there are repatriates who migrate or live seasonally in Shashamane because of monetary considerations.

Just as remittances are an important source of income for the families of Caribbean migrants at ‘home’, this is the case for repatriates in Shashamane. Many repatriates are dependent on family members abroad who are either in the West or in the Caribbean. Like many Caribbeans, in each repatriate family there is at least one immediate or extended family member who lives outside the region in foreign. In a few cases, as well, repatriate sisters have left Shashamane in search of employment in Britain as it is usually easier for migrant women to find work. As researchers have demonstrated, legitimate ‘migration ‘opportunities’…are themselves a mirror reflection of the migration ‘requirements’ of countries outside the (Caribbean) region seeking to augment their labour force.”33 For example, one family in Shashamane was primarily dependent on their mother who works abroad. She initially repatriated with her husband, and then subsequently migrated to Britain after ensuring that her husband would remain to care for the children in Shashamane. Since there are few job opportunities in Shashamane, and their family had grown substantially, this decision was meant to explore the possibility of better providing for their children. Since their mother’s migration the family’s standard of living has improved significantly regarding the children’s quality of education, material possessions and diet.

Nancie Gonzalez’s work on the Black Carib (Garifuna) community in Central America, whose household and kin relations are those of a Caribbean type, shows how indispensable their migration to America has become to their survival, which also seems to be the case for Caribbean repatriates in Shashamane. One of the benefits that Gonzalez recognises of remittances, that migrants manage to save for retirement, is relevant for the families of repatriate-migrants and for recent repatriates. The children whose mother is abroad are aware that their mother will probably return only when she has sufficient funds for their parents to ‘live comfortably’ as they told me. Additionally, many older recent repatriates from the Caribbean arrive in Shashamane ‘via’ Britain or North America so they return to Ethiopia after living and working in the global north for varying lengths of time. This enables them to save money for retirement, which often includes buying or building a house in Shashamane. Other repatriates return ‘seasonally’ so they acquire houses in Shashamane and then live for half the year abroad and spend the remaining months in Shashamane. These seasonal repatriates, though, may originally be from the Caribbean, but are now citizens of the European Union, Britain, the USA or Canada. They can move more easily
between their country of citizenship and Ethiopia. This is not the case for citizens of Caribbean countries for whom it is more difficult to enter and leave Western countries and Ethiopia. When Caribbean citizens migrate from Shashamane, then, they tend to remain in the global north. The sister that I mentioned previously, who is a Jamaican citizen, has returned to Shashamane only once since moving almost ten years ago.

Unlike most West Indian migrants to the West, then, repatriates in Shashamane do not send money to families in 'home' societies, but depend on remittances from biological relatives and/or members of the landl family in both 'home' and 'host' locales. In Shashamane I met two professional ‘brothers’, originally from Jamaica who now live in America, who donated supplies to the Rastafarian-administered school. Not only do they visit regularly, they also raise awareness about the Rastafarian repatriate population in Shashamane to encourage more people in the West to send material or monetary donations. Support from the Rastafari family ‘outernational’ is expected by almost every repatriate that I met in Shashamane. This adds another dimension to the well-known flow of remittances from Britain and North America to the Caribbean since relatives in both the wealthier countries of the West and in the poorer Caribbean countries will support repatriates in Shashamane. Some repatriates also combine their income from small businesses with remittances. The prevalence of small shops ‘down the road’ or ‘on the corner’ in the West Indies is replicated in Shashamane. It is a legal way of earning a living ‘outside the system’ that enables repatriates to maintain their autonomy, a common desire for Rastafarians, and it enables women to support themselves and their children instead of depending on their husbands. In Shashamane, since small scale agriculture alone is no longer a sufficient form of livelihood, if one does not have a small business selling food, clothing or furniture or offering services such as medical care, then the only other available jobs are working in government offices, positions that are difficult for repatriates and their children to acquire since many are neither Ethiopian citizens nor legal residents.

6. **Conclusion**

In Rastafari worldview repatriates position themselves as members of the African diaspora who have returned to home and homeland and to a certain extent, as well, as part of the Caribbean ‘cultural diaspora.’ This worldview both problematises and re-enforces naturalised notions of belonging to place. It is part of a critically important project for all Caribbean peoples, but especially for those of African descent, of ‘refashioning how you see yourself’ in the region’s historical context of colonialism, forced and semi-forced migration, and the resulting plantation societies. Although such conceptual strides do not translate into political affirmations of belonging,
such as citizenship or the return of once granted lands, issues that are important for repatriates who live in the state of Ethiopia, there are steps toward re-conceptualising belonging in political spheres. In 2007 the African Union designated the African Diaspora as its 6th Region, thereby recognising the potential of peoples outside the continent in strengthening south-south economic, ideological and political relations.36

Notes

4 Rastafarians use ‘mansion’ or ‘house’ to refer to its membership. One central belief that unifies all houses is the divinity of Haile Selassie I.
5 During colonialism the majority of Amerindian (indigenous) peoples were wiped out and slaves, indentured labourers and traders from Europe, West Africa, Asia and the ‘Middle East’ were brought and came to the region.
6 When repatriates and their children use the word ‘foreign’ it usually refers to the West.
7 Since all land in Ethiopia is owned by the government, land cannot be ‘bought’ according to the law.
8 This is the title of a song written by a repatriated Rastafari musician in Ethiopia.
15 B Chevannes, op. cit., p.10.
16 The first men to publicly announce that Haile Selassie was God in Jamaica, independently of each other, were Leonard Howell and Joseph Hibbert. These men, along with others, are represented as the earliest ‘Rastafari’, named after Ras Tafari Makonnen who took the title Emperor Haile Selassie I.
18 B Chevannes, op. cit., 2006.
19 The ‘shitsistem’ or ‘shituresion’ refers to the ‘system’ that Jamaican independence leaders inherited and perpetuated that maintained colonial hierarchies of power based on race and colour founded on the ideology of African inferiority to European superiority.
20 L Barrett, op. cit., p.144-145.
23 Statement made by a brother during our interview on 11th April, 2009.
24 This information may not be legally accurate since there is a Nationality Law in Ethiopia that allows foreigners to apply for citizenship after residing in the country for a minimum of five years, but I am uncertain if it is still in effect. Only after I spoke with a lawyer and the former Ambassador of Jamaica in Ethiopia did I learn of the Nationality Law of 1930. See UNHCR Refworld, *Ethiopian Nationality Law of 1930*, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country.
27 One Rastafari belief is that the apocalypse is forthcoming when the world will be destroyed and only Ethiopia will remain intact. Each Rastafari group has different ideas about the number of people who will be saved, but the shared belief is that only Ethiopia and the people there will be saved through God’s mercy.
29 Rastafari men and women refer to people in the faith as ‘brother’ and ‘sister.’
30 There is a saying in many West Indian countries that if a person feels an attachment to a place then their navel string, i.e. umbilical cord, must be buried there so they will always be emotionally, if not physically, connected to that spot.
31 R Cohen, op. cit., p.144.
35 B Chevannes, op. cit., 2006.

**Bibliography**


**Shelene Gomes** is a PhD Candidate at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, United Kingdom.
Un/Settling Malaysia: 
Diaspora and National Desire

Sharmani Patricia Gabriel

Abstract
It is not often that diasporas are discussed in tandem with national identity. In fact, the conventional assumption is that diasporas are either non-national, anti-national, or transnational phenomena. Going against the grain of this popular perception, this chapter will focus on recent debates on diasporas that emphasise the ‘national’ vision and aspirations of these communities. It will argue that conflicts and tensions that exist in contemporary society largely stem from the fact that the national narrative and consciousness of diaspora communities is overlooked in state-endorsed policies and discourses on identity. I suggest that this is primarily because the prevailing modes for constructing and representing national culture and identity, in both the developed and developing world, still draw their terms of reference from outdated paradigms that construe diaspora communities simply as extensions of a prior national group. Focusing on the case of the postcolonial nation-state of Malaysia, the chapter demonstrates that the challenge posited by diaspora groups to their marginalisation seriously unsettles the hegemonic narrative of a fixed and identifiable ‘Malaysian’ national culture and identity. To this end, it will examine literary productions by diaspora communities in the attempt to foreground the alternative cultural politics that these texts make possible and sustain.

Key Words: Diaspora, difference, ethnicity, homeland, nation, national identity, nationalism.

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1. Introduction
This chapter attempts to engage with recent discussions on the concept of diaspora in the social sciences. Of particular interest in this examination are those aspects of diaspora that have been the focus of exchange and debate by scholars in recent decades. It is on the important conceptual, ideological, and experiential shift away from dislocation and the preservation of identities to the creative processes of relocation and reconstruction, as predicated on the transformations undergone by globally dispersed communities and the contexts in which they have been dispersed, that this chapter rests.
The need to reformulate the idea of diaspora to one that is congruent with the national desire of minority ethnic groups is imperative as state policies on national-cultural identity continue to be framed along received ideas of diaspora that stress the national ‘otherness’ of these communities. A key question in this discussion is: How does the alternative cultural politics represented by diaspora, either as lived experience or as theoretical tool, unsettle hegemonic narratives of nation and identity and contribute to social cohesion through the understanding of notions of difference and equality? This question will be addressed with specific reference to the nation-state of Malaysia.

2. Tracking Diaspora: From Non-National, or Anti-National, to Transnational, and Finally to National Phenomena

In one of the earliest attempts to define the term, William Safran elaborates that a diaspora is formed when a people (or their ancestors) are dispersed, either voluntarily or by force, across two or more ‘peripheral’ countries from a specific original ‘centre’ or homeland. These displaced people, now ethnic minorities in the ‘host’ country, because they look forward to returning to their own ‘true, ideal homeland’ at some point in the future, are seen as narrating their identity in terms of living in exile and alienation away from that homeland.

Although it provides a useful starting-point for analysis, Safran’s definition of ‘diaspora’ is predicated on the ‘ideal’ Jewish template which, when taken literally to mean a dispersal from an original ‘centre’ and a desire to ‘return’ to that homeland, does not allow us insights into the nature and experience of many contemporary diaspora populations. The argument here is that while what distinguishes the Jews as a diaspora is that they continue to hold on to their ‘Jewishness’, which prevents their assimilation into other national-cultural formations, this is not applicable to most other diasporas. The same limitation applies to the use of terminology such as ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’, ‘homeland’ and ‘host country’, defining parameters of the (old) framework which do not account for the evolutionary shifts and transitions that have taken place in society. Furthermore, the emphasis on the centrality of the ‘homeland’ and the teleology of return to that place of ‘origin’, merely serves to foreground what was lost along the ‘middle passage’, and not the potential gains, of diaspora.

Subsequent attempts to define diaspora, including that by Robin Cohen, do not move the debate much forward. Cohen’s attempt to provide a typology for diaspora again implicitly highlights the point of ‘origins’ rather than the current aspirations and forward vision of diaspora communities.

The idea of desire for ‘return’ and attachment to the ‘homeland’, which is integral to traditional understandings of diaspora, has been appropriated by right-wing nationalist discourses to bolster anti-immigrant
sentiment. The Conservative politician Enoch Powell mobilised fears that England’s ‘white’ racial purity was being ‘contaminated’ by the post-World War II arrival of immigrants from South Asia and the Caribbean. Calling for the repatriation of these immigrants and their children to their ‘own’ homelands (of India or Africa), this idea of diaspora was ultimately predicated on the notion that every race has a nation to which it belonged.

Such racialised articulations of the nation as a response to the ‘menace’ of immigration cannot only be relegated to Western nation-states. The governing elite of Indonesia, Uganda, India, and Malaysia have at various moments of crisis in their nation’s history resorted to the backward-looking conception of diaspora and its twinning of race and nation to consolidate hegemony.

Khachig Tölölyan was among the earliest scholars to foreground the subversive potential of diaspora groups in the face of their marginalisation by the nation-state. In his editorial preface to the founding issue of Diaspora (1991), Tölölyan claims that diasporic groups ‘are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment.’ Here, Tölölyan points to the construction by diasporic groups, marginalised into exclusion as the paradigmatic others of the nation, of a separate-but-equal narrative of identity and subjectivity that transgresses the boundaries of the nation-state. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that in his foregrounding of diaspora as an alternative political sensibility to nationalism and national identity, Tölölyan positions the interrogative potential of diaspora groups within a transnational framework.

I wish to make it clear that this is not the sort of rearticulated potential of diaspora, either as lived practice or as conceptual category, which I am arguing for here. Rather, my ‘exemplary communities’ are those diaspora groups who, despite their oppression and suffering, view themselves as national subjects and who claim national-cultural identification with the present homeland.

In focusing on the contestatory potential of diaspora groups as national, as opposed to transnational, formations, I draw attention to James Clifford’s cogent argument that ‘the process [of diaspora identification] may not be as much about being African or Chinese as about being American or British, or wherever one has settled, differently’. In this grounded formulation, diaspora groups have not uncritically assimilated into the cultural present but have, through their ‘difference’, played a key role in reconfiguring that present. This ‘difference’ speaks of a relationship of power and subordination, privilege and exclusion, but also of resistance and transformation.

Indeed, despite their marginalisation, a distinguishing characteristic of many contemporary diaspora communities is their distinctive sense of their identity as oriented towards the cultural present, not some ‘original’
homeland. In Malaysia, the majority of the generational descendants of immigrants are increasingly rejecting state-propagated nationalist myths such as the ‘true’ or ‘original’ homeland as a key marker of cultural origin and belonging to control, suppress, and discriminate against them. This regressive idea of diaspora is also linked to essentialist notions of ‘pure ethnicity’ that reinforce the popular perception that the loyalty of diaspora communities is to their ancestral homeland. This type of thinking is what puts in place and justifies principles and practices of exclusion by the nation-state.

3. Writing Diaspora in Malaysia

There is a substantial literature in English that has emerged in Malaysia that offers insights into the dynamic processes of identification and alliance of diaspora communities and of postcolonial society in general. Unlike literatures written in Malay and the other ‘sectional’ languages (such as Chinese and Tamil), literature in English has been the site where the idea of the nation has been opened up to new representations. Furthermore, in Malaysia’s ethnically, linguistically, and religiously fragmented society, where the national language (Bahasa Malaysia, or Malay) has been ethnicised as well as bureaucratised because of its strong identification with officialdom, the significance of English is that it remains a language that is not associated with any particular ethnic group.

It is in relation to the argument that literature in English has been an important site for configuring a new political community without reference to ethnicity and without advocating ethnic hegemony, that I locate the significance of K.S. Maniam’s literary imaginings of nation. Maniam has drawn explicitly from the resources and repertoire of his diasporic background to fashion an alternative cultural politics. His diasporic history - his maternal grandmother had left her homeland in southern India for Malaya in the turn of the twentieth century - is an important influence on his fictional and non-fictional writings. His grandmother’s odyssey was part, of course, of that ‘labour diaspora’ of hundreds of thousands of Indian immigrants into Malaya in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to serve colonial economic interests. While these Indians were mostly recruited to work as indentured labourers in British Malaya’s rubber, tea, and oil palm estates, peasants from China were segregated in tin mines. Colonial strategies to ‘divide and rule’ deliberately left the ‘indigenous’ Malays to traditional agricultural activities in the kampungs, or villages.

Maniam’s early stories, such as ‘Ratnamuni’, ‘The Third Child’, and ‘Removal in Pasir Panjang’, capture the early diaspora experience of cultural alienation in the lives of Indian immigrant labourers and their families. Critically, however, Maniam does not represent the Indians as a lost people, condemned to a life of futile mimicry on alien shores. In later short stories, such as ‘The Eagles’, ‘Plot’, and ‘Encounters’, and especially in the novels,
there is the suggestion that nostalgia for the ancestral homeland and blind identification with its traditions have given way to the compulsion to create new narratives of home and belonging, new modes of cultural and national identification commensurate with the larger processes of historical and generational change at work in Malaysia.  

The creative dynamics inherent to such transformative processes of historical and generational change at work in Malaysia are represented in the way that Maniam’s characters, along with the nation’s diaspora communities, have begun to speak of their cultural identity in terms of a *Malaysianess*, rather than in relation to a prior or ancestral (for example, Indian or Chinese) culture.

4. The New Diaspora and the Old State

But while the nation’s diaspora (as well as mainstream) communities are changing, adapting themselves in both creative and resistant ways to the various demands and challenges thrown up by evolving contexts, the discourse of the state has failed to orientate itself to the reality of the complex processes taking place in Malaysian society. I suggest that this is primarily because the state continues to hold on to an out-dated nationalist framework and the practices and strategies associated with it. Born of the exigencies of a different historical era, this paradigm of nationalism privileged the political imperative of a unified national identity, created on the basis of an invented collective history, over and above a cultural narrative premised on an acknowledgement of the actual heterogeneity of the nation’s histories, interests, and identities.

While the old framework of national identity was adequate, perhaps even necessary, to meet the goals of an earlier era, it cannot account for the claims to national inclusion made by diaspora communities in the present historical moment. Diaspora groups are today seeking to affirm their different cultural histories, principally as a strategic response to their exclusion and marginalisation by the state, as well as lay claim to their full identity and democratic rights as Malaysians. This is especially the case with the post-Independence generational descendants of colonial-era immigrants from India and China who have formed clear and unquestionable attachments to their (present) homeland. As Maniam’s short stories such as ‘Arriving’ and his novels *The Return, In a Far Country*, and *Between Lives* together with the works of other literary practitioners such as Wong Pui Nam, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Lloyd Fernando, Lee Kok Liang, and Charlene Rajendram testify, the historical homeland is no longer that place of desire and redemptive return.

Therein lie the contradictions. Although the Malaysian nation-state holds on to a unitary unifying framework of nationalism built across ethnic and other differences, in the weeks leading up to the general elections and also during periods of political and economic crises, the ruling elite does not
hesitate to play up ethnic divisions in society. By continuing to see diaspora communities in terms of their race or ‘origins’, rather than as products of history, the state’s hegemonising strategies and symbols suppress more fluid and dynamic representations, serving ultimately to maintain the hegemony of the dominant ethnicity.

Fifty years and more after Malaysia’s founding as a nation-state, the pattern of ethnic accommodations that marked its path to self-rule is yet to unravel.15 The principal component parties of the National Front coalition (in Malay, the Barisan Nasional) that governs the country are still organised along old, ethnic lines and continue to articulate their vision and muster support through the mobilising of ethnic sentiment. It is adherence to this outdated framework that has created an ideological and conceptual impediment to the inclusion, in the present conjuncture, of notions of difference, democracy, equality, and power in constructions of the ‘national’.

Since the old notion of diaspora, in which the dominant Malays are pitted against their ‘Chinese’ and ‘Indian’ national others, has formed the main sub-text for political manoeuvring in Malaysia since the time of Independence, it is highly unlikely that we will see the dissolution of ethnic-based political parties, policies, and practices in the near future. However, although the governing political parties continue to resist reform for vested economic interests, one of the most visible signs of the transitions occurring in society was the results of the last general elections of March 2008. The vehement rejection of race-based parties and politics, as evidenced in the unprecedented loss of electoral support for the national coalition, is a telling indication of the rising assertiveness in the claims for democracy and inclusion made by Malaysia’s various ethnic communities.

5. Conclusion

Well aware of the demands for reform and inclusion made by the nation’s diaspora communities, particularly of its implications for Malaysia’s economic development and its status as part of a larger international community in the current climate of globalisation, the state has committed itself to the modernisation project of creating a united Malaysian nation, a Bangsa Malaysia, commensurate with the aims of Wawasan (Vision) 2020 to achieve fully industrialised status for the country.16

The concept of Bangsa Malaysia is one where national identity has been rearticulated to jettison the ethnic bias of previous constructions. In so doing, this latest signifier of national identity offers a new feature in the semantics of Malaysian national discourse, where race and diaspora exist in a new configuration with nation. By articulating national identity through the concatenation of nation as imagined community and bangsa, or ‘race’, the idea of Bangsa Malaysia constitutes the first real step in undoing the racial norms and hierarchies associated with the old, hegemonising idea of diaspora
which pits ‘indigenous’ Malays against their ‘immigrant’ others. Thus, however precarious its position in Malaysia’s current volatile political environment and whatever the motivations of the ruling elite in espousing it, the ideology underlying Bangsa Malaysia, and to a lesser extent ‘One Malaysia’, marks highly laudable official attempts to articulate a discourse of Malaysian national identity freed from its heretofore racialised dimensions. But whether the state is ready, or indeed willing, to effect real and genuine change in line with the national desires and aspirations of its diaspora communities remains a central predicament of Malaysian nationhood.

Notes

2 R Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, UCL Press, London, 1997. Cohen points to what he calls ‘victim diasporas’ (e.g. Jews, Africans, and Armenians), ‘labour diasporas’ (e.g. Indian indentured workers), ‘imperial diasporas’ (e.g. the British), ‘trade diasporas’ (e.g. the Chinese and Lebanese), and ‘cultural diasporas’ (e.g. the Caribbeans abroad).
3 To be fair, Cohen does point to some of the positive tensions in the character of diasporas, but his prescriptive attempts to build diaspora ‘types’ constrains understanding of the complex and ongoing processes involving these communities.
4 Powell’s discourse on race and nation, popularly referred to as ‘Powellism’, was in currency in Britain during the 1960s and early 1980s.
6 ibid., pp. 3-6.
8 Malaysia’s population, which in 2008 stood at 27.73 million, comprises various ethnic groups, with the politically- and culturally-dominant Malays (who are Muslims), also making up the majority ethnic community. The Malays’ claim to indigeneity is mirrored in their constitutional status as bumiputeras (Malay, literally, for ‘princes of the soil’). They constitute about 62% of the total population. Malaysians of Chinese descent, who are perceived as holding considerable economic power, account for 24% while those of Indian ancestry constitute 7% of the population. A great majority of ethnic Indians and Chinese are descendants of immigrants who were transported out of their homelands by the British in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to service the imperatives of the colonial economy. The category of ‘Others’ (which includes the Eurasians) stands at around 1%
while non-citizens (comprising mainly Indonesian immigrant workers) represent a significant 6% of the total population.


10 See Maniam’s essays, ‘The New Diaspora’ and ‘Writing from the Fringe of a Multi-Cultural Society’.

11 The Malays’ claim to indigeneity has been interrogated by several groups and remains a controversial issue in Malaysian society.


13 These early short stories by Maniam were first anthologised in L Fernando, *Malaysian Short Stories*, Heinemann Asia, Kuala Lumpur, 1981.


15 Malaysia (which was known as Malaya before 16 September 1963) achieved independence from British colonial rule on 31 August 1957.

16 The concept of *Bangsa Malaysia*, as a core component of *Wawasan 2020*, was launched by then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in 1991. More recently, in early 2009, the concept of ‘One Malaysia’ was introduced by new Prime Minister Najib Razak as another rallying cry for national unity.

### Bibliography


**Sharmani Patricia Gabriel** is a lecturer in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, University of Malaya, Malaysia, where she teaches Postcolonial Literature and Cultural Studies.
Afro-French Subjectivities and French Postcolonial Nationalisms

Yasser Munif

Abstract
The following article examines the analytical relevance of the concept of ‘Afro-French’ within a French metropolitan context. Such a concept offers a crucial entry point to study the situation of post-colonised communities who live in poor urban enclaves. ‘Afro-French’ represents a panethnic category that attempts to comprehend the experience of black African, North African and Caribbean populations living in French suburbs. It has the potential to challenge the dominant trend in French historiography by providing a counter-narrative that gives a voice to subaltern histories.

Key Words: Afro-French, counter-narratives, diaspora, historiography, panethnicity, postcolonial nationalism, racialisation.

1. Introduction
This article examines diasporic identities and modalities of racialisation among black and Arab minorities living in Parisian suburbs. For that end, I use the notion of ‘Afro-French,’ which is a constellation of groups from Black African, North African, and Caribbean origins. The narratives of Afro-French don’t fit easily within dominant French historiographies. Their genealogies are the result of complex and overlapping migratory movements; negotiation with the French imperial narrative; and exchange with transnational social network. These communities have much in common but each one has its own histories, practices, trajectories, and specificities. The hyphenated term of ‘Afro-French’ is employed here to explore the commonalities among these diasporic populations.

2. Who is Afro-French?
The article traces the genealogy of North African and black diasporas in the context of postcolonial France. It contends that ‘Afro-French’ is an analytical concept with important, but underexplored political implications. It’s true that the racial groups constitutive of Afro-French diasporas have been subjugated to diverse processes of racialisation. Certain minorities have struggled to distance themselves from Afro-French narratives. Despite that fact, the concept of ‘Afro-French’ is useful. It consists of a complex unity that provides important tools to unravel the French racial matrices of power. One of the merits of the concept is that it
challenges dominant French historiography. Traditional historiography in European states is impregnated by their respective national imaginary. An alternative historical account is therefore imperative to explain the social conditions of Afro-French diasporas.

To avoid homogenising taxonomies of French minorities, the concept of Afro-French needs to be problematised. The term refers to a constellation of different racial and national communities who share a history of colonial violence. The three main sub-groups of Afro-French are North and West African communities as well as groups the French West Indies. The present study attempts to explore the validity and viability of a panethnic category in the French context. Scholars have explored the relevance of such a concept in the United States. The vast majority of French scholars have rejected the concept of race and ethnicity as valid analytical categories for the case of France. Intellectuals and politicians alike, armed with an abstract notion of universalism, prefer to talk about ‘visible minorities’ or mixed-race individuals (métisse in the French Jargon). With few exceptions, French sociology sustained a blind spot around race relations under the pretext that any talk about races will produce and maintain racism.

In that context, the notion of Afro-French has analytical relevance along three axes. Firstly, it shows that populations from the Caribbean and Africa can share a collective memory of oppression rooted in the history of French colonialism and slavery. Secondly, it allows diasporic groups to self-identify in one way or another, with a certain idea of ‘Africa’ and ‘Africaness.’ Finally, it shows that Afro-French have similar experiences of everyday discrimination and structural racism.

To examine the concept of ‘Afro-French,’ a genealogical reading of colonial and postcolonial histories is undertaken. Such a reading shows that the concept introduces a tension between the fixed boundaries of the French Republic and the fluid contours of blackness and Africaness. The term ‘Afro-French’ contains an inherent tension since it connects two apparently opposed terms, namely ‘Africa’ and ‘France.’ To put it otherwise, the hyphenated concept refers simultaneously to an imperial power - France, and a continent that suffered from French colonialism and imperialism - Africa. The concept destabilises the paradigm of the nation-state. It questions its dominant position as the exclusive analytical framework. It challenges the idea according to which authentic French citizens are necessarily white individuals of European descent and Christian confession. Moreover, the concept renders the colonial origins of certain racial categories visible.

The reference to the genealogical reading comes from Nietzsche through Michel Foucault. Foucault opposes genealogy to traditional history. Genealogy, Foucault argues, disrupts the linear, continuous, and evolutionary historiography. He is clearly critical of the ways historians have been presenting national histories in a linear fashion by locating them in a mythical
These historians think that the present is the result of an ordered sequence of historical events. The duty of the historian, according to conventional scholars, is to trace back that present in order to unravel the underlying historical mechanisms that led to its gradual emergence.

As an alternative to traditional history, Foucault proposes ‘effective history.’ He argues that historiography can avoid metaphysical explanations or teleological trajectories. In other words, the role of effective history is to show that subjectivities are in permanent flux and do not follow a linear trajectory. Effective history favours a perspectival reading; it acknowledges the importance of historical discontinuities. A genealogical reading that examines a diasporic group, is always partial, plurivocal, and heterogeneous. It should not, in any event, be considered as an attempt to look for a fixed origin or a stable point of emergence.

Finally, Foucault reminds us that genealogy pays close attention to the body. It is in the body that history inscribes itself. Everything in the body is historical, whether it is its attitudes, gestures, diets, or postures. The body generates certain modes of thinking and suppresses others. Foucault explains, ‘[g]enealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body.’ The goal of this article is to situate Afro-French diasporas ‘within the articulation of the body and history’ as Foucault puts it.

3. **Periodisation and French Historiography**

The analysis proposed here is based on an alternative geography and temporality. Unlike traditional French historiography, which often ignores the intertwined relationship between colonies and metropole, this article considers these dispersed sites as one unit of analysis. The two sites are traditionally viewed as two distinct disciplines in French history. The first one is labelled ‘French history’ while the second is known as ‘colonial history.’ Seldom is the relationship between the two made explicit.

To undertake a genealogical reading, one needs to start with a periodisation that is different and critical from the dominant one. For example, French historiography has imposed a break between the old regime and the post-revolutionary republic. This periodisation however, wouldn’t have much relevance for the enslaved Africans who worked on Antillean plantations. The famous declaration of ‘The Rights of Man and of the Citizen’ which inaugurated a new era in metropolitan France, was not applicable and did not alter the situation in the Antillean colonies. In the same vein, the victory of the allies in WWII was crucial in metropolitan France. This event doesn’t have the same relevance in French Algeria or French West Africa. Colonised populations did not experience much of a change after WWII. From the perspectives of slaves and colonised
populations, the ‘Black Code,’ abolition of slavery, and wars of independence are more crucial events. Examining French history from the standpoint of the colonies challenges traditional French historiography. Foucauldian effective history has the potential to de-centre the official narrative. It introduces a plurivocal and multilayered history.

A comprehensive and historically informed framework that examines colonial modernity opens a space for a better understanding of Afro-French identities. This framework investigates French modernity from the standpoint of Afro-French diasporas. More specifically, it examines the relationship between two moments of French modernity, namely the first and second French colonial empires and their uneven impacts on deterritorialised populations of Maghrebian, Caribbean and Sub-Saharan descents. The first period consists of a geographical expansion of capitalism. As capital expands, it produces a new global racial logic. The French colonial power started building its empire in North America and the West Indies in the early 17th century. This early period of colonisation and settlement led to a new process of racialisation that took place simultaneously in metropolitan France and the French West Indies. The dominant logic during early modernity was based on the Christianisation of colonial subjects. The second moment overlaps with the first but also differs from it. Its central logic revolves around the consolidation of capitalism in Africa. The dominant discourse of that era is entrenched in the idea of a civilising mission the purpose of which is to enlighten the Dark Continent. One of the paradigmatic events of that period is the Algerian colonial campaign that Charles X inaugurated in 1830.

4. Postcolonial Subjectivities

What does it mean to be Afro-French today? What kind of relationship is there between these populations and the history of French modernity briefly delineated above? Is there any form of continuity between the histories of Afro-French populations and their present conditions? To answer these questions, I draw on ethnographic research I conducted in 2008 and 2009. The analysis focuses on the social and political conditions of poor Afro-French youth living in Clichy-sous-Bois, a city of 30,000 inhabitants located in the north-eastern suburb of Paris. The conditions of the population living in the city are in some ways particular but they help understand the situation of Afro-French communities living in other French suburbs. The city is actually often considered a laboratory for urban planners, policy makers and social scientists. The policies experimented in Clichy-sous-Bois are then deployed in other suburbs. In what follows, I describe the social conditions of Maghrebian, Caribbean and Sub-Saharan populations. These diasporas have a lot in common. First, they live in a poor urban enclave that structures their everyday life and emotions. Second, they experience a daily discrimination that they resist by building a culture of solidarity among each
other. Third, they are often positioned as outsiders to the realm of the French republic. They overcome this feeling of marginalisation by developing their own cultural codes and political practices.

Firstly, the identities of Afro-French youth cannot be abstracted from the living conditions that they experience in French suburbs. In Clichy-sous-Bois, Maghrebian, Sub-Saharan and Caribbean groups are the main occupants of social housing. Since there are no ethnic statistics in France, it’s extremely hard to make an accurate estimate of the percentage of Afro-French living there. My ethnographic observations suggest that a vast majority of non-White families are currently living in Clichy’s social housing. In the 60s and 70s, Afro-French were living in slums (les bidonvilles). The French government appointed military officials and administrators who severed in the French colonies to control this postcolonial population living within the bidonvilles. The most infamous episode from that period is probably the massacre of more than 200 Algerians in 1961 during a demonstration against the Algerian war. Most of the demonstrators came from the bidonville of Nanterre to march in the centre of Paris. The French government viewed the peaceful demonstration as a direct threat to its colonial authority.

Today, the surveillance and spatial management of Afro-French has evolved but it still coerces the inhabitants. On average, an Arab is controlled by the police seven times more often than a white person. A black individual will be stopped in the street six times more often than a white. In the case of Clichy, discrimination is coupled with urban marginalisation. The city is badly connected to public transportation networks. It takes more than ninety minutes from Clichy-sous-Bois to reach the centre of Paris. The same journey takes 20 minutes by car. Moreover, the subway ticket is three times more expensive than the one used inside Paris.

Second, the dominant discourse reminds Afro-French that they are not authentic citizens. One of the most recurrent comments one hears in Clichy-sous-Bois is ‘the French think…’ or ‘the French are….’ When I remind these youngsters that they are French citizens themselves, most of them find the comment irrelevant. In their mind, a French person is white. For these young inhabitants, Afro-French are not exactly French; they are not French in the same way. They prefer to self-identify with their countries of origin.

Finally, to exist politically, Afro-French build their own narratives. My interviews with the youth from Caribbean and Maghrebian origins show that these communities have uneven relationships with French modernity. Their everyday experiences draw on distinct temporalities of French modernity. Afro-Caribbean communities generally designate the starting point of their historical narratives in the first French colonial empire and the history of slavery. Maghrebian and West-African diasporas, on the other
hand, usually remember the second moment of modernity which is characterised by French colonial violence in the African continent. Their entry point into the colonial past begins in the 19th Century with the gradual colonisation of the Maghreb and West Africa.

5. The Complex Unity of Afro-Frenchness

The similarities in the everyday experiences of Afro-French groups do not erase all tensions that exist among the different communities. This tension is present in the practices and discourses of Afro-French living in Clichy-sous-Bois. The place that Rap music occupies in youth culture illustrates this tension. Some youth are willing to form groups of mixed ethnic backgrounds while others refuse that idea. Many Antilleans argue that Rap is the music of African blacks and Maghrebeans. Some of them opt for Zouk, Raggae, and other types of Antillean music. Hip-hop culture is therefore symptomatic of this tension. It provides a unifying cultural language while opening a space for difference. Hip-hop culture forms a complex unity through which certain Afro-French groups have been able to narrate and live their difference. The examination of this culture shows that Afro-French diasporas diverge in three ways.

The first divergence revolves around citizenship and national identification. Each group stresses its own identity and specificity in its own way. Maghrebian and black Africans share a similar posture regarding their relationship to the French republic. In some cases, they have developed a categorical rejection of French official narrative. They have been nurturing the myth of return to the African continent. They declare that they are citizens of Algeria, Senegal, or Mali. They reject the coercive institutions of the state. Time and again, they blame Antilleans for being lured by the state institutions and French culture. Many Antilleans on the other hand think of themselves as French citizens from the Antilles. They often make a career in public institutions including the army or the police. Such a trajectory is almost unthinkable among Maghrebian and black Africans. Antilleans will sometimes have a clothing code that differentiates them from Africans. In certain cases, they will blame Maghrebian and Sub-Saharan for their complicity in slave trade. Sometimes they distance themselves from black Africans under the pretext that they never experienced the ‘middle passage’ and therefore they’re not really concerned about the painful memory of the transatlantic slave trade. Sometimes Antilleans differentiate themselves from Africaness and Arabness to avoid certain forms of white racism attached to these populations.

There is a second divergence that revolves around the idea of blackness. In this form of identification, black African and Antillean develop a form of solidarity from which Maghrebian are excluded. The French right and centre left have been nurturing this fracture for a long period. For
example, some black groups advocate for an alliance with whites associations that leave the Maghrebian population out. It’s the case of the CRAN, a collective of black organisations that is paradigmatic of such a fracture between Maghrebian and blacks (both Africans and Antilleans). The CRAN distances itself from Arab populations and tries to advocates for the rights of blacks by lobbying political parties. In the same vein, there are a number of black and white intellectuals who have been writing a revisionist history of slavery. Their narrative blames Europeans, Muslims and Africans for the enslavement of other Africans. In their simplified version of history, Islamic slave trade is equated to the transatlantic slave trade and in some cases it is more genocidal. For these authors, slave trade emerged very early in the Muslim world and is still a problem in some parts of this world, especially in countries such as Mauritania. In this paradigm, transatlantic slave trade appears as a brief parenthesis within a much more problematic and violent Muslim trade. Most Black diasporas however reject this narrative according to which transatlantic slave trade can be disentangled from the history of modernity or where it is just a sad accident in French history.

These divergences show that black Africans occupy an in-between position that highlights the tension inherent to the concept of Afro-French. On the one hand, like Maghrebians, they reject French official identity because they feel betrayed by the French republic. In that regard their behaviour could be contrasted to the Antilleans who don’t accept Frenchness wholeheartedly, but are more disposed to integrate certain elements into their identities. Black Africans and Antillean, on the other hand, sometimes feel they are relegated to the lowest rank in the racial hierarchy because of their blackness. They argue that Arabs and Muslims took part in the dehumanisation of blacks by enslaving them. In a more contemporary context, black French (both African and Antillean) feel that Arabs still have a discriminatory behaviour towards them. This is why, certain blacks consider that Maghrebians are responsible for racism towards them as much as whites are.

Notes


2 G Kelman, Je suis noir et je n’aime pas le manioc, Max Milo, Paris, 2005.


4 Loic Wacquant is probably the best known example of French scholars who have argued that the category is applicable in the American context but is not valid in French marginalised suburbs. Sylvie Tissot provides an excellent critique of Wacquant’s rejection of racial categories in the French context. L Wacquant Parias Urbains: Ghetto - Banlieues - Etat, Edition De La Decouverte, Paris 2006. S Tissot, ‘The role of race and class in urban marginality: Discussing Loïc Wacquant’s comparison between the USA and France’, in City, Vol. 11, No. 3, December 2007.


7 Ibid., p. 148.


13 During the presidential campaign in 2006 Nicolas Sarkozy announced that there is a small minority that doesn’t want to assimilate the French culture. To appeal to right voters he said: ‘people who don’t like France should just get up and leave.’ N Sarkozy, ‘si certains n’aient pas la France, qu’ils ne se gênent pas pour la quitter’, in *Le Monde*, 23 April 2006.

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**Yasser Munif** is a doctoral candidate in the Sociology Department at the University of Massachusetts - Amherst.
**Home to Hong Kong: The Linguistic Displacement and Imaginary Diaspora in Anglophone Hong Kong Literature**

*Catherine Wong*

**Abstract**
Following the return to China, Hong Kong is now permeated by a national identity that is less ambiguous and more legitimate than its former colonial alter ego. Decolonisation has without a shadow of doubt, provided all Hongkongers with a ‘common goal’ to anticipate. However, the key question is whether present day Hong Kong has given inspiration for its literature, in particular, how its new identity has been reflected in literary works. This chapter pertains to postcolonialism literature emanating from Hong Kong, and its thrust is to dissect and explore the implicit meanings evident in the use of the English language by native Hong Kong writers as they expound the identity of Hong Kong. Does Anglophone writing in these instances express the identity of Hong Kong? How does the medium of writing affect the psychological and cultural profile of spatiality which writers use to expound the city’s identity? Addressing the writings of Xu Xi (*Hong Kong Rose*), and Louise Ho (*New Ends, Old Beginnings*), the chapter considers how such adaptations result collaterally in cultural displacements, diasporic experience and a linguistic identity crisis, which leads to the consideration of whether a uniquely Hong Kong cultural identity may be said to emerge from the postcolonial situation, or whether a hybrid identity existed prior to the political upheaval of 1997. The chapter also examines the significance of writing at home and writing about home in these works. It discusses the formation of a special nostalgia in Hong Kong’s memory is due to its unique political situation. The study of marginal identity will be revisited and the angle will change to bring into view the marginality that is brought about by time, space and language. It explores the procedures which these writers have adopted in constructing a postcolonial identity for Hong Kong by examining their dealings with the displacement brought by migration, colonisation and globalisation, the attempted transcendence of the physical distance and the psychological boundaries.

**Key Words:** belonging, Diaspora, homeland, identity, multiculturalism, postcolonial, transnational.
Home to Hong Kong

A Chinese
Invited an Irishman
To a Japanese meal
By the Spanish Steps
In the middle of Rome
Having come from Boston
On the way home
Louise Ho

From Louise Ho’s poem ‘Home to Hong Kong’, readers are able to have a glimpse of not only the modern lifestyle but also the complex and perplexing notion of ‘home’ in relation to Hong Kong, the newly decolonised British colony. Indeed, what the city has to confront, is not simply the problem of globalisation, the adjustment of itself between the local and global cultures. Hong Kong, facing its decolonisation, feels an urgent need to reclaim its past, insofar as it looks for an ancestral homeland to root itself in and construct for itself a postcolonial identity. However, the special situation of Hong Kong’s decolonisation has aroused a complicated feeling amongst its people towards the past. Due to the unusual colonial past as well as the unprecedented historic event of transfer of sovereignty from capitalist Britain to communist China, Hong Kong people are very sensitive to time and change. Their perception of the past and future has some unique features. While most colonised subjects resolve to revisit the past and the cultural homeland in order to claim back their lost traditions and rebuild their cultural identity, Hong Kong people have a confused feeling towards their past and its relation to their present. It is a mixture of love and hatred, anticipation and anxiety. On the eve of the handover, the urgent need to preserve the past intensified and Anglophone writers like Xu Xi and Louise Ho chose to use language as a tool to re-examine the past and challenge their existing identity which is full of contradiction - the past, that is, the rule of China, is brought back, but at the same time, this new rule is not entirely the same as Imperial Chinese rule; while, the new status quo of a modernised, westernised Hong Kong brought by British rule is placed under threat. This ambiguous political status and almost absurd situation is best illustrated by Louise Ho’s paradox ‘new ends, old beginnings’ which she uses to title her poetry collection.

Nostalgia is one of the strategies on which postcolonial writing chooses to focus. It is especially relevant to the case of pre-97 Hong Kong: while majority of Hong Kong populace were anxious about the uncertainty of their future, they have developed a strong resistance to change. The root nostos of the word ‘nostalgia’ means ‘a return to home’; the notion of
nostalgia, therefore, emphasises the desire to return to the past, to one’s origin. However, in the postcolonial literary context, nostalgia is not simply a disease of homesickness and a physical attachment to a location. It is ‘distinctly modern and metaphorical. The home we miss is no longer a geographically defined place but rather a state of mind.’¹ It is a retreat to private life and a personal past when one loses faith in the possibility of changing one’s public life and the public sense of present and history. As a matter of fact, the sense of the past presented by orientation to nostalgia is mainly subjective, which reveals another dimension of authenticity.

1. **Home and (Non-)Belongingness**

   Hong Kong writings examine the nostalgia in Hong Kong through their representation of time; but these perplexed feelings towards past and present, and tensions between history and memory also emerge in the writers’ perception of the city’s spaces. Landscape plays an important role in projecting the transformation of the ex-colony, and also becomes a means of studying the formation of the city’s cultural identity. Space, or more specifically landscape and architecture, are a form of non-verbal history. The places and architecture depicted in the novels are carefully chosen by Xu Xi to embody Chinese history, reflecting colonial experience as well as the modern, cosmopolitan present of Hong Kong. At the same time, in closely examining the idea of home, the writer gives spatiality a psychological and cultural profile. Romantic philosophy treats home and homeland as places that possess special historical associations. Their uniqueness separates one cultural group from another. In her detailed portrayal of the protagonists’ home and their homeland Hong Kong, Xu Xi attempts to investigate the cultural identities which various colonial and decolonising experiences have brought to the city. Her aim is to identify the mixture of cultures, a unique historical formation that can give a binding identity to all Hongkongers.

   In postcolonial writing, reference to geography is significant as it reflects the relationship of the coloniser and the colonised to the colony; in so doing it reveals the complicated reality of the home ground for the colonised, both physically and psychologically. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson in ‘Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference’ locate and explain the unbreakable link between space and the colonised.² They believe that, even though the colonial experience does not necessarily affect or bring any changes to the physical landscape of the colony, the process of foreign invasion and occupation problematises the spatial identity of the colony, and thus dislocates the colonised subjects’ perception of territory, their psychological space. David Punter, in *Postcolonial Imaginings: fictions of a new world order* states that: ‘Home ground [becomes] foreign territory. And the effect of this impossible conjunction, this inconceivable distortion of boundaries and the sense of place is to construct the threat, to prevent,
therefore, the possibility of language, to erode meaning.' Reference to place can reveal the perplexed identity of the colonised territory. Representation of physical space gives the reader a sense of the colony’s appearance and location; the naming of various places in postcolonial novels can, moreover, be a representation of psychological space, revealing attitudes towards the colonised territory. To colonised subjects the colony is both a piece of land and their home, where they reside physically and are attached psychologically. Nevertheless, to Hongkongers and many colonised people, this place is both familiar and estranged. The concept of ‘home’ is problematic in postcolonial theory, and this is especially so in the case of decolonising Hong Kong, since it is exposed to both Chinese and Western cultures, for which the concept of ‘home’ has different profiles. ‘Home’, in both China and the West, usually refers to the house where one lives with one’s family. ‘Home’ is thus primarily a spatially-oriented word. As a result, people tend to overlook the psychological aspect of the notion of ‘home’.

However, ‘home’ in diasporic writings, and to those migrants, travellers, exiles and refugees, goes beyond its physical space. It is an emotionally charged word. The notion becomes internalised and attention is drawn to the psychological space it occupies in a person. Home can be a sense of belongings to one’s origin. This is especially true in Chinese culture. To Chinese people, home is the physical home ground where one lives, and also an invisible, imaginary space that connects one to their parents. Home in Chinese is synonymous with family while the notion of Chinese family has a very broad and inclusive nature, which horizontally connects the individual to people of the same race and vertically links him/her to the generations of ancestors. Louise Ho exclaims, in her discussion of the pre-97 migration trend of Hong Kong, “[t]he family at home’/ used to refer to one place at a time./ It will now be redefined.” As one is once a Chinese, s/he will forever be connected to the ancestral root of China, which gives him/her an invisible yet inseparable bond with all fellow Chinese. Hence, this emotionally attaching quality of Chineseness has stretched the conception of home beyond its conventional spatial and temporal understanding.

This psychological complicity in the Chinese notion of home is best exemplified by overseas Chinese wah kiu. This sentiment is symbolically represented by the building of Chinatown - overseas Chinese tend to establish a Chinatown at wherever city they migrate to. As a wah kiu herself, Xu Xi makes the observation that

ture to the tradition of wah kiu everywhere, they will insist they are Chinese. I know that cry only too well. It provides a security blanket of denial and comfort in the face of a reality that is changing too rapidly to assimilate or even to fully understand.”
So, no matter where they go, their Chinese ancestral homeland always lives vividly in their mind. And as a matter of fact all the wah kiu wanderers, the Chinese emigrants, always bring along with them their ‘rice cooker’6, their Chinese traditions and culture, transferring and transmitting it to the new place where they try to build a new home that resembles ‘home’. To Ai Lin’s mother, home is the physical space of Far East Mansion where she stays with her husband and her children, but it is also the distant psychological space of Tjilatjap where she spent her childhood with her parents and her brothers; and at the same time, regardless of her alienation from Chinese culture and inability to speak good Chinese, home also refers to her imaginary ancestral homeland of China which her ancestors left eight generations before. Home is, therefore, a practical notion which transcends freely between a physical space which offers shelter and stability to overseas Chinese migrants, a psychological space which provides them emotional comfort and connections to their family and a spiritual space which gives them a sense of identity, a meaning of their existence and the courage and power to live in a foreign country. In fact, the spiritual attachment to their Chinese homeland is so strong that it has transformed into a quasi-religious sentiment:

‘Say your dynasties,’ my mother commands, and we three children begin our recitation, first in Mandarin, then in Cantonese, while Mum listens for mistakes or mispronunciations in Mandarin, as if she could tell the difference. We drone our litany, a litany we know almost as well as the Our Father, Hail Mary and the I Believe....

‘Again,’ Mum commands. ‘You must always remember you are Chinese no matter where you might live. In Indonesia, when I was small, I could always recite the dynasties from the time I was five. And it had been eight generations, eight, mind you, since my ancestors left Fukien for Java. But as my father always said, our family is pure Chinese blood through and through.’7

Chinese homeland is deified while the search for one’s cultural heritage is a religious ritual and a pilgrimage. To all overseas Chinese, this imaginary homeland, like Chinatown, exists as a borrowed place at a borrowed time. It offers them a sense of security however impalpable and distant it is. One may not have ever seen or visited the actual place, but s/he must always faithfully believe in his/her connection with distant homeland and be loyal to it.
This inseparable yet estranged relationship with home is in fact a problem which many Anglophone Hong Kong writers have been confronting with. Even though Louise Ho has always been conscious of ‘speaking from Hong Kong’ and she feels the perplexity in representing her city:

At a literary conference held in Downing College, Cambridge in 1999, Salman Rushdie held forth expansively on cosmopolitanism, speaking very much as a cosmopolitan himself. Following on from him spoke a well-respected Welsh poet who claimed ‘the local’ versus ‘the global’ as his fortified ground, saying, ‘I am very conscious of being aboriginal.’ Being Welsh, he would be so privileged! I felt very envious of his staunch avowal of his sense of belonging. Later on, I gave a mini-reading of my work and I was conscious of speaking from Hong Kong; but, although I was sent there by the British Council as a Hong Kong delegate, I felt I could only represent my puny self.8

Louise Ho finds the gap between private self and public self, her personal interest and general concerns, as well as between her linguistic self and political identity, widened, and her determination shaken as a result adopting an English voice in a Cantonese context. She wrote:

Those of us writing in the English language in Hong Kong would know the feeling of isolation, perhaps of functioning in a void. There is no English-language literary community from which to draw some kind of affinity or against which to react. There is insufficient writing in English here for a critical mass to have formed. The literary traditions that do exist in Hong Kong are, obviously, those of the Chinese language. For us, it is a case of chacun pour soi, in that we each carry a culturally different baggage from the start; and presumably, we each work according to some implied tradition and critical standard of one’s own adherence.9

She is torn between her role as a writer and the identity of being a Hongkonger. She has to juggle her roles in order to represent Hong Kong and to speak for herself. All the problems and complications, which threaten her identity, are reflected in Ho’s works, and they sometimes produce sarcasm and scepticism.

Louise Ho named her first poetry collection that was published in 1994, four years before the decolonisation of Hong Kong, Local Habitation.
Without a doubt, as a Hong Kong writer, she wrote these poems with the ambition of depicting life as a local inhabitant of this oriental city and to portray the vicinity in her works. Many of her poems take Hong Kong as the background and some of them even as the theme. Yet again, what is the definition of the term ‘local’? Even though Louise Ho is labelled a local Hong Kong writer, she is not satisfied with confining herself within one small community and writing with a narrow, local communal scope of topics and perspectives; nor is she content with restricting herself to a rigid, inflexible concept of ‘locality’. Indeed, with the fluidity of people in the modern, globalised world, it is impossible for a person of her background to be confined within one place. By reading the subject matters of Louise Ho’s poems, it is beyond doubt that the poet is aiming to extend herself, her view as well as her poems, beyond Hong Kong. It is not difficult for readers to notice the vivid use of perspectives in Ho’s poems. The poet never tries to portray a static locality in her works. In the collections of poems, her experience in America, Australia and England is juxtaposed with local life in Hong Kong. She links her ‘local’ with the ‘global’. And she tries to resolve the geographical gap of ‘local’ and ‘foreign’ by her sceptical, flexibly local perspectives. She works hard to override the stereotypical label of ‘local writer’, which entails the quality of being Chinese and non-native English speaking, imposed on her by literary critics, and to redefine the characteristics of Hong Kong literature as well as local identity as a whole.

Xu Xi conceptualises Ho’s anxiety and idea of tension between global and local and the two cultures in Hong Kong in her novels and she presents this disharmony through her symbolic portrayal of Chinese and Western homes in Hong Kong Rose. Though Hong Kong has undergone 99 years of assimilation by British culture, various historical events such as the Japanese Occupation, the June-Fourth Incident, and experience of the impending the 1997 Handover have given people a strong sense of identification with the place; the imposed British culture cannot always be reconciled with this. In Hong Kong Rose and Chinese Walls, Xu Xi makes considerable reference to landmarks and colonial architecture in Hong Kong. The occupation of the coloniser in the territory is not only limited to physical space, but also includes cultural invasion of the institutions, livelihood and even psychology of the people. Xu Xi’s works suggest that the feeling of estrangement for Hong Kong people results more from alteration of psychological space than from changes in physical space. In her analysis, the colonised people feel estranged from their home primarily because of the establishment of colonial institutions. Paul Lie Senior in Hong Kong Rose, offers a view of what a home should be: ‘A home,’ he said, ‘has to reflect both of you [Rose and Paul]. Otherwise you won’t want to be in it together.’ So, Hong Kong, as the home of over seven million Hongkongers, should be a place uniquely reflecting and representing the identity and
characteristics of its people instead of a replica of the homelands where they have left. Ironically, however, Xu Xi describes Rose’s home as chaotic. And its chaos is exactly the reflection of the people living in it - the complicated family background of Rose and the historical and cultural background of Hong Kong and its people:

I thought about my parents’ chaotic flat, with its mixture of Indonesian, Chinese and European décor, all jumbled together some piece always threatening to topple over. There was an incongruity about a Chinese goldfish painting hanging above the dark wooden native Indonesian statues of a half naked couple next to an ornate Italian ceramic floral arrangement on top of a Korean sideboard. And that was only one tiny corner of the living room.112

The disorganisation of Rose’s parents’ flat reveals the core reason for the lack of a sense of home of the colonised city. Recent historical experience has exposed the city to the influence of different cultures. The majority of the Hong Kong populace are Chinese emigrants who brought with them their Chinese values and traditions when they first moved to the city, while the British colonial government imposed British culture on Hong Kong through the establishment of various institutions. Nevertheless, just like the flat of the Khos, the city is accommodating but unable to integrate this variety of cultural experiences into its own unique synthesis and, as a result, presents a chaotic, dislocated and even dismantled image to the outside world.

2. Writing the Imaginary Empire

But instead of trying to emphasise and exaggerate the Chineseness and Oriental quality in the landscape, in such a way as to preserve a politically correct Chinese cultural identity for the decolonising city, Xu Xi represents social reality in presenting the totally different picture of Hong Kong from a colonial angle. Indeed, after ninety-nine years of colonial government and British institutional establishment, the originally Chinese landscape of the insignificant fishing island has inevitably changed and taken on colonial colouring. Xu Xi insists on revealing colonial implanting and assimilation in the colony. The writer gives plenty of detailed descriptions of places like Tsimshatsui, which is full of hotels, discos, ‘nightclubs and girlie bars’. In fact, all these landscapes are reminders of the colonial rule in Hong Kong. The writer shows the colony as presenting a miniature of Western cosmopolitan, prosperous city life. These Western geographies found in the ‘Pearl of Orient’ reveal the power and influence of the coloniser on the colony. The colonising process has taken place slowly and gradually, yet
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thoroughly. Xu Xi’s depictions of places such as *La Salle*, the missionary school that Paul studied in, the churches, and the Peninsula Hotel, reflect the fact that the territory is being colonised culturally through different cultural, religious, political, educational and even social institutions. It penetrates into all aspects of the society and life of its people. The complication of the idea of home for the colonised people is largely due to the change of the place’s psychological meaning, reflected in local changes to the physical appearance of the landscape. The colonising process has never been merely territorial and geographical conquest, but has been a process of cultural and political assimilation.

Xu Xi’s landscape is also like a time capsule, which records all the historical experiences of the city. Xu Xi tries to exemplify the unique form of nostalgia in Hong Kong by illustrating how time affects the meaning of a place. Obviously, the colonial geographies depicted by Xu Xi in the novels carry a symbolic meaning, affecting her presentation of colonial geographies. One of the most vivid landscape images is that of Chung King Mansion and Tsimshatsui in *Chinese Walls*. From the description of Tsimshatsui, the area in which Ai Lin’s home is situated, readers gain a glimpse of the traces left by history on the territory:

I like Tsimshatsui and our flat, which has two floors and an interior-connecting staircase. From our verandah on the seventeenth floor, I can watch the Kowloon-Canton railway trains pull into the station, and the grey U.S. battleships dock in the harbour. The sweep of the island’s hills are like a picture frame for the buildings dotting the hillside and the waterfront. At night, the neon lights go on. My favourite is the one on top of the low building in the middle - three red Japanese characters, which Dad says, is an advertisement for monosodium glutamate. It isn’t lonely in Tsimshatsui, or quiet and scary. 13

The place is a miniature of the seeming prosperity and multicultural reality of Hong Kong. The Kowloon-Canton railway represents the colonial situation. Yet, it is also a symbol of Hong Kong’s connection to China, its past and future. Boundary Street where the railway lies reveals the significance of Hong Kong and its colonial experience. It is the embodiment of the Sino-British relationship that has affected the past and present and will definitely influence the future of Hong Kong. The landscape of Kowloon peninsula, the New Territories adjacent to Mainland China and connected by the Kowloon-Canton railway also reveals the writer’s view of the inseparability of Hong Kong from China. The U.S. battleships, brought by the Vietnamese War, link this small port in the Far East to the world power,
whereas the Japanese advertisement remains there as a witness to Japanese Occupation and influence.

Xu Xi’s presentation of Hong Kong is not limited solely to the domestic landscape, but extends to descriptions of the city’s seascape and skyline. In perceived relation to these are features of the transportation infrastructure like the Kai Tak Airport, the Ocean Terminal, traffic networks and runways. While the domestic geography and institutional establishments represent the tension and relationship between the colonial and local cultures within the society, these landscapes and structures provide an outward looking perspective, and present the image of an international city connecting itself to the outside world. These landscapes reveal the prosperity and modernisation of the colonial city, and at the same time the historical changes that the colony is confronting. The airport is adopted as a major motif in *Hong Kong Rose*. Kai Tak International Airport is a terminus and place of departure for planes, and for travellers like Rose, while Hong Kong is a place of convergence for several forces and powers. On one hand the changing landscape is a reminder of history and of what the colony has experienced: ‘There’ll be too many flights to keep up this nighttime curfew. War brought changes, you know, but peace created a whole new world.’ But on the other hand it symbolises the fact that Hong Kong itself is standing at a crossroad of history: ‘We faced the night sky together. In the distance, the lights of the runway flickered into blackness.’ Hong Kong is not only a colony of Britain: like Kai Tak International Airport, small and odd in architectural design though it seems, the colonial experience links this small city to the international world. Like Rose and all the flights at the airport, Hong Kong, facing the transition of 1997, is waiting for take-off and for arrival at a new history.

But forming part of this auspicious scene is the Chung King Mansion, a simulation of the awkwardness of Hong Kong at the cross-roads of historical change. This mysterious building haunts the imagination of the young Ai Lin like a dream. It becomes a symbolic landmark representing multicultural interaction as a result of colonial rule:

I go past Chung King Mansion’s dingy, cavernous mouths. Two American sailors are going into the building. Their white uniforms gleam like the teeth on the toothpaste commercial on TV. Aren’t they afraid of getting their uniforms dirty in there?

[…] As I near Chung King Mansion, I slow down. Coming down the steps of that building is the strangest looking person. She has orange hair, and wears a short *cheongsam* with a stiff high collar and very high heels. There’s
something unreal about her, like she’s a doll that’s come to
life…. 16

Chung King Mansion, like Tsimshatsui, represents the colonial and
hybrid lifestyle of Hong Kong. However, Xu Xi heightens her description of
the place, and the orange haired prostitute becomes a symbol of the
problematic history of the territory, pointing to the corruption and
degradation that goes with the superficial colonial prosperity. Hong Kong,
symbolised by the orange haired prostitute, is entrapped in an embarrassment
imposed by history. She wears a ‘short cheongsam with a stiff high collar’ to
emphasise her Chinese cultural origin and oriental virtues and beauty in order
to impress her western clients. 17 Nevertheless, she is betrayed by her orange
hair. Her vanity and desire to be assimilated to a western culture are revealed.
As a result, she is ‘the strangest looking person’, representing the mixed
history, which haunts both Ai Lin and Hongkongers.

Inability to resolve the significance of space as well as the meaning
of incestuous love haunts Ai Lin’s mind subconsciously and drives her to the
edge of insanity. It is not until the end of the novelette, when she returns to
her home in Hong Kong after over twenty years, that she is able to come to
terms with her fear. She can finally understand and face the traumatic
experiences of her childhood. She is able to see and admit the reality and the
‘ugliness’ of her home behind the vanity and self-deception:

When we walk into the lobby of Far East Mansion, I am
struck by how much like home it feels. The tallest building
in all Kowloon, right in front of the harbour - how proud
my father had been of this building, of its grandeur, its
façade swelling out on the lower floors like a pregnant
woman. I am glad he is not alive to see the extent of the
waterfront’s encroachment of the harbour at Tsimshatsui
East, and the usurping of his building’s place of
importance….

It was a surprise, this building,’ Don says as we wait for the
lift. ‘Ugly architecturally, and the kind of location you’d
expect some developer to snap up and turn into a more
profitable enterprise. Hard to believe it was once
residential.

Never really was. My dad would be the last to admit it, but
there were home factories and offices and even a brothel on
the fourteenth floor when I was a kid. 18
She is relieved of her childhood fear as she manages to see the repressed truth and ugliness of the place instead of the grandeur and superiority of the building impressed on her by her father. Ai Lin is at last able to admit and accept the ‘shame’ of the impurity of the building with its mixture of ‘home factories’, ‘offices’ and even a ‘brothel’ together with residential apartments. What she sees is not only the ugly reality of Far East Mansion, but at the same time something, which reflects the reality of rapidly growing Hong Kong. It reveals the density of the city, the diligence of the people in defining a working space regardless of the environment; and their toughness, flexibility and adaptability in coping with the growth and the needs of society. Chung King Mansion has been the creation of Ai Lin’s unconscious and her repressed fear. It is a symbolic place onto which she projects all the hatred, shame and disgust, which she feels about her home, Hong Kong, Tsimshatsui and Far East Mansion. It is only when she has understood herself, accepting the imperfection of her place, that she is capable of appreciating the value of her city, and developing a sense of attachment to it as a home.

Apart from this, the colonial landscape seems to be described in such a way as to reveal the colonial subjects’ attachment to the period when the territory was under British rule. Churches and schools are an obvious representation of culture and ideology. Xu Xi has tactfully chosen these cultural markers to demonstrate the institutionalisation of colonial power in the colony. These colonial establishments take up physical space in the territory and also dominate the psychological space, becoming deeply rooted in the mentality of Hongkongers. Hence, the colonial landscape and all the European colonialist institutional establishments in the territory continue to mark the landscape and the memory of the colonised subjects. They are the best revelation and evidence of the territory’s history and experience. So, instead of showing two contradictory pictures of nostalgia towards the remote Chinese ancestral history and entanglement with the colonial past, Xu Xi actually defines the cross roads at which Hong Kong people stand during the decolonisation of their home city. Past and history, like the landscape and architectures in the city, lack uniformity. The people face and confront a problematic past, finding difficulties in choosing between colonial and pre-colonial history.

3. Symbolic Diaspora

On the surface, English writings in Hong Kong demonstrate the multicultural and transnational identity of Hong Kong; but, if we read the imperfect linguistic assimilation emblematically, these writings represent the writers’ view on the diasporas Hong Kong experiences. Xu Xi’s novels are symbolically diasporic while Louise Ho’s poems have a subtle tone of isolation and loneliness. From Xu Xi’s point of view, Hongkongers may have
experienced the same sense of exile as Chinese-Americans. Even though Hongkongers may not have been physically uprooted like the Chinese-Americans in Amy Tan’s and Maxine Hong Kingston’s novels, they are politically, intellectually, culturally and linguistically exiled and alienated. The law of bilingualism well represents the exiling of Hong Kong linguistic identity. Owing to the history of colonisation, Hong Kong has been obliged to adopt English institutions and an English legal system. This blemish of colonisation is perpetuated by the use of English language in law; even the enforcement of bilingualism can never undo English domination in the ex-colony. Given the pre-eminence of the use of Cantonese within the Chinese community, the tension between the two linguistic selves of Hong Kong is greatly intensified. Hong Kong becomes seriously divided between its English practical public self and its private, Cantonese existential self. The bleakness of a sense of self-exile and rootlessness is experienced by Hongkongers even though they are physically ‘at home’.

Louise Ho faces a dilemma in her writing in that she finds her poetic integrity is threatened by her locality. She has been entrapped in the conflict between her poetic self-manifestation and the receptiveness of her audience. Unlike Xu Xi who resolves to represent her city to a broad-based global readership, Ho mainly addresses the audience from the local community. Many of her poems, especially those which depict Hong Kong as background, use the first person ‘we’. The ‘we’-persona carries a significant meaning in positioning the poet in her home city. On one hand, the pronoun ‘we’ shows the inclusiveness of her works and the design of the poet to represent and include her fellow Hongkongers’ views in her poems; on the other hand, it also reflects the bond between the city and herself: she is part of the community. Her means of self-expression, that is, using English as the medium of writing, is incompatible with the needs of this Cantonese speaking community. This discord reduces the authority of her poetic voice and even isolates her from her audience and readers. She exclaims in ‘Writing is Bleak’ that ‘[w]riting in this language in this place/ [i]s doubly bleak’. This tension is not easily resolvable as it is the fundamental conflict between her role as a poet and as a Hongkonger. She experiences conflict between her Romantic poetic leaning towards a spontaneous outflow of her emotion, and her ‘mission’ as a local writer which she thinks of as her obligation rather than her liking to record the political changes of the city: ‘to fret/ [o]ver the right word/ [o]r the heart/ [i]n the right place’ given that she is writing in her ‘local habitation’ for it and about it.

Once again, Louise Ho expresses in another poem the devastation of being a poet, especially a local one, and proclaims that ‘poetry is a compromise/ between what the soul desires/ and what the pen cannot give’. It is not only a compromise between the mind and the words, it is also an endless confrontation, negotiation and concession between the various
expectations of readers and the intent of the author: ‘for the healthy/ life is a poem,/ for the critic/ ecstasy lies in the next article’. The expectation of the readers and the subject of her poems thwart her from writing freely. Taking politics, social issues and readership into consideration, she becomes a ‘poet/ who shuffles from kitchen to loo/ biting [her] nails not knowing what to do’. The burden of being a ‘local writer’ threatens her poetic integrity, disables her creativity and even endangers her whole identity as a poet writing in English.

Xu Xi also confesses in her essay ‘Writing the Literature of Non-denial’ that she experiences a sense of cultural exile even when she is at home in Hong Kong:

Writing contemporary fiction in English as a Hong Kong person serves up a creative conundrum. Am I, at some level, rejecting the Cantonese literary heritage of my native city? Does it not affect the creative process, enhancing or infecting it with ‘foreign’ influences inherent in contemporary English, further muddled by the weight of national and world literatures in the English language? Is my voice ‘authentic’ in any way, or is my writing merely a fringe literature, reflecting a minority perspective that simply cannot be considered the ‘real Hong Kong’? Or worse, do I get relegated to gwailo ‘foreign devil’ Hong Kong literature, a voice for those who are ‘belongers’ only because of a residency status conferred alike to non-Chinese newcomers, long-term residents, as well as those who can claim actual birthright, all in the name of laissez-faire capitalism?

I am of partial Chinese ancestry, the lesser part being Indonesian. Pearl S. Buck cannot make this claim, but her Chinese literacy is far better than mine. Maxine Hong Kingston, on the other hand, can make a pure bloodline claim of ancestry, yet no one would mistake her for a Chinese writer, least of all the Hong Kong Chinese. I was born and raised in Hong Kong, and lived both a young and middle-aged adult life here in between sojourns and residencies in the West and elsewhere in Asia. The result is that my creative process is simultaneously constrained and heightened by ethnicity and culture.

She feels that because of her multicultural heritage she is estranged from her home city. She expresses her self-doubt about her role as a writer, and also about the intentions of her writing. In this essay, Xu Xi responds to
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accusations of authenticity in the representation of colonialism and Hong Kong in her novels. She reveals the frustration that she faces as an Anglophone writer in Hong Kong, and as a Chinese writer who writes in English. To her, to be loyal to her Chinese culture and ethnicity is more of an obligation imposed on her than a sentiment, which she genuinely feels. She reveals this feeling through her protagonists in the novels:

‘[… ] you must always be proud of being a Chinese no matter where you are. Because Chinese people are smart and successful, and don’t ever forget that...’

Like Kingston’s mother, Ai Lin’s mother also tries to impose on her children a Chinese ethnic identity by telling them ‘the dynasties’ and indoctrinating them with Chinese culture. To speak Chinese language and to learn Chinese culture are gestures of loyalty, a demonstration of one’s Chineseness and patriotism rather than a form of practicality. Ai Lin’s mother makes children study Chinese in order to show others that they are Chinese. Ai Lin is forced to study Chinese at school even though she is not good at it and it is not a compulsory subject. She fails all of her Chinese exams and is almost held back from progression because of the poor Chinese results. Chinese language and identity are an inflexible confinement to her. Moreover, Xu Xi finds Chinese a burden which threatens her creativity and authorial autonomy. She cannot fully locate her voice and her subjectivity when she has to adjust continually between the English voice and the Chinese voice of the characters in order to suit the ear of her audience from various backgrounds. She feels the tension between the problem of language and her creative development as ‘a ‘local’ Hong Kong novelist [who] is, by literary, political, geographic and even social definition, Chinese’, since she accepts that her work should reflect ‘[her] country’s literary tradition, history and social condition.’ Writing in English, a ‘foreign language’ in Hong Kong, displaces her from the conventional Chinese literary setting of her city, and threatens her identity not only as a local writer but also as an ethnic Chinese.

Like Ai Lin’s failure to pass her Chinese exams, Xu Xi’s inability to write about Hong Kong in Chinese is a disempowering experience. While Ai Lin is labelled as a ‘jaahp jung’ because of her fluency in English, the authenticity of the representation of Hong Kong in Xu Xi’s novels is challenged due to the writer’s decision to write in English. The Indonesian-Hong Kong Anglophone writer finds herself in the same situation of facing the clash between her Chinese innate identity and her adopted English tongue as Maxine Hong Kingston, and many other overseas Chinese writers. However, she finds the problem that she is facing is far more perplexing and the criticism more severe. Kingston’s identity as an ethnic minority writer is less ambivalent. Possessing a Cantonese mind and Cantonese ears inherited
from her mother as well as her facility in the English tongue developed in America place her in a legitimate position to write about the Diaspora. It gives her recognition both as a Chinese writer in the Anglo-American world, and as an Anglophone writer in the ethnic Chinese community, at home and overseas without any discrepancy. Ironically, Xu Xi is trapped in a paradoxical situation as she feels a strong sense of displacement even when she is at home. And this feeling of marginalisation is not simply the result of the failure to gain recognition from the Chinese speaking readership in Hong Kong. She finds her English inadequate as a means of full communication with her Cantonese-speaking readers. She sees ‘[her] linguistic environment [as having] limited scope’:

The problem [is] that the English I ‘heard’ from these characters was second language fluency, and as such, limited in expression. Their Cantonese would be the utterances of adults, but writing in English did not mean I wanted to translate Cantonese. Another problem was that as the influence of British culture waned, British did not resonate accurately in the voices of fictional local characters, unless it was a British person or British-educated local speaking English.27

This problem of language is symbolically represented by the motif of food in *Hong Kong Rose*:

Dinner was a bland black mushroom soup, rice with an indifferent chicken and overcooked mustard greens. This was followed by watery custard for dessert. Their Chinese servant, complete with a white and black samfoo and waist length pigtail, served Western style, with an array of silverware too elaborate for the meal. 28

Local Cantonese culture, just like the Chinese dishes in Lies household, loses its essence and becomes bland, indifferent and tasteless, through the attempt to serve it in a Western style. By the same token the local culture, just like an authentic local dish such as hotpot favoured by Rose’s family, is ‘indecent’, too elaborate and wasteful in its preparation to suit Paul’s Westernised taste. The local Anglophone writer feels that she is linguistically exiled even though she writes at home. To make the situation worse, while Rose is accused of being too close to America, and Ai Lin is a *wah kiu* and Westernised girl without an English name, Xu Xi, as a cultural transmitter, an Anglophone writer in the Chinese speaking community of Hong Kong, faces a rejection of her English
voice. The English speaking writer notices the ‘impurity’ in her English when compared to authentic English. Her English voice is a mixture of two national Englishes: British and American, as well as South-east Asian ungrammatical English and sometimes, though not very often, Chinglish. She fails to express the local voice in English, and also finds that her multicultural voice is unable to represent any single place and culture with which she is connected. She is trapped at the margins of East and West, regional and local. Xu Xi’s feeling of displacement is not the result of a physical exile; rather, it is a cultural exile and a mental diaspora caused by the rootlessness of Hong Kong culture and her own cultural heritage.

But again, in her novels, Xu Xi adopts a post-colonial perspective in examining colonial Hong Kong. She succeeds in revealing the turbulence that the whole society and its ideology have experienced in this decolonising period by placing the years between 1974 and 1987 in the foreground and depicting her male protagonist as a lawyer in order to represent what is problematic about colonial rule in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the author reserves her right to comment on the result of this decolonisation by giving a ‘non-ending’ to her novel. Indeed, Xu Xi does not finally accept the marginality of herself as an Anglophone Hong Kong writer, or the rootlessness of Hong Kong identity. In keeping with the hopeful ‘non-ending’ of her stories, she suggests that Supergirl and Peter Pan have no nationality and ‘nothing that matters does’. She sees beyond the marginality and displacement of her multi-lingual and cultural background, and resolves to turn this diasporic situation into an empowering force of creativity. Through the giving up of the ‘nationality’ of her heroine Supergirl, her creative work is no longer limited by the history, culture, tradition, politics and language of her city. Finally, her creativity is not confined by any categorisations of local literature, world literature, or English writing and Chinese writing. It is only through giving up the nationality of her work that she can gain total creative autonomy.

By the same token, Louise Ho has become more enlightened if not optimistic in facing these misunderstandings from the audience and tension created by her background and multiplicities. In New Ends, Old Beginnings, Louise Ho makes neither the slightest attempt to resolve the conflicts between her different roles, nor to harmonise these incompatibilities by categorising them into various sections in a wish of integrating them into one consistent style, as she did in her previous book. In this second volume, she exhibits the strength of the looseness and lack of unity of style in her poems resulted from her scattered identity, and preserves this fragmentation as the unique style of her works. Discomfort may still be there, but all bitterness and frustration are gone: ‘Out of all that and more emerges/A structure of meaning in words/ Sometimes known as poetry.’ In spite of the ‘disjointed sinews’, ‘twisted guts’ and all the obstacles that threaten her poetic integrity,
the resolve and confidence of a poet are shown in the ease of her tone, spontaneity and casualness of her style and precision of her language. She takes pride in the variety of her identities and turns this into her advantage. She leaves the juxtaposition of all these fragments of various selves to fill up and mend the gaps and tensions created and torn by labels imposed by critics and readers. She expounds this idea in a light-hearted, playful ‘singsonging’ way in ‘Hopscotch down the corridor’:

   Fill the parasitic gaps
   With guttural plosives
   Grind your aesthetic principles
   On the fulcrum of necessity
   Measure Li Po’s moon
   And compare it with Donne’s sublunaries
   Come and join the fray
   Ducdame ducdame

The poet has come to the resolution that there is no boundary for her assertion of her creativity and her poetic integrity is not to be restrained by forms, cultures, languages and identities. Not only does she use her imagination and language to transcend the confinement of the physical world, as Donne and Li Po do, but she also uses creativity to transcend the rigid inflexible cultural, linguistic and generic boundaries, and moves fluidly between Li Po, the grand master of Chinese poetry who is famous of his talent, the fluidity of his style and yet the poignancy of his language, and John Donne, the poet of metaphysical poems. She is aiming to present an utmost form of art in her poetry.

Notes

2 Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, ‘Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity and the Politics of Difference’ in Cultural Anthropology, vol. 7, no. 1, 1999, p. 9. Gupta and Ferguson claim that ‘Colonialism […] represents the displacement of one form of interconnection by another. This is not to deny that colonialism or an expanding capitalism does indeed have profoundly dislocating effects on existing societies. But by always foregrounding the spatial distribution of hierarchical power relations, we can better understand the process whereby a space achieves a distinctive identity as a place.
Keeping in mind that notions of locality or community refer both to a demarcated physical space and to clusters of interaction, we can see that the identity of place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organised spaces with its cultural construction as a community or locality.

4 Louise Ho, ‘Hong Kong at the Crossroads’ in Incense Tree, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2009, p. 30.
6 ibid. In the article, Xu Xi makes the observation that some Hong Kong executives she met in US ‘have even insisted on bringing their rice cookers, because the foreign food was so unpalatable.’
7 Xu Xi, Chinese Walls, Chameleon Press, Hong Kong, 1994, p. 82.
8 Louise Ho, ‘Foreword’ in Xu Xi & Mike Ingham (eds), City Voices: Hong Kong Writing in English 1945 to the Present, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2003, pp. xiii-ix.
9 ibid.
10 E W Said, ‘Invention, Memory, and Place’ in Critical Inquiry 26, Winter 2000, pp. 175-92, (81-2). In this article, Said comments that geography is ‘a reflection […] on the mapping, conquest, and annexation of territory both in what Conrad called the dark places of the earth and in its most densely inhabited and lived-in places, like India or Palestine…. In the modern era Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe is the essential parable of how geography and conquest go together, providing an almost eerie prefiguration of historical figures like Clive and Hastings in India, or scientific adventurers and explorers like Murchison in African decades and decades later. These experiences enable complicated memories for natives and (in the India case) Britshers alike; a similar dialectic of memory over territory animates the relationship of French and Algerian accounts of the 130 years of French rule in North Africa. We should never have left or given up India or Algeria, say some, using strange atavistic sentiments like the Raj revival—a spate of TV shows and films like The Jewel in the Crown, A Passage to India, Gandhi, and the fashion of wearing safari suits, helmets, desert boots—as a way of periodically provoking nostalgia for the good old days of British supremacy in Asia and Africa, whereas most Indians and Algerians would likely say that their liberation came as a result of being able after years of nationalist struggle to take hold of their own affairs, re-establish their identity, culture, and language, and above all, reappropriate their territory from the colonial masters. Hence, to some extent, we witness the remarkable emergence of
Anglo-Indian literature by Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and many others, reexcavating and re-charting the past from a postcolonial point of view, thereby erecting a new postimperial space.’

12 ibid.
13 Xu Xi, *Chinese Walls*, p. 5.
14 Xu Xi, *Hong Kong Rose*, p. 85.
15 ibid, p. 86.
16 Xu Xi, *Chinese Walls*, p. 5.
17 ibid.
18 ibid, pp. 125-6.
19 Louise Ho, ‘Writing is Bleak’ in *Incense Tree*, p. 8.
20 ibid.
21 Louise Ho, ‘Poetry is’ in *Incense Tree*, p. 9.
22 ibid.
23 ibid.
26 Xu Xi, ‘Writing the Literature of Non-denial’, p. 221.
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**Catherine Wong** received her PhD from the School of English, University of Liverpool. Currently her research and writing is devoted to Diaspora Studies and Postcolonial Anglophone literature.
The Jewish Diaspora from France to Montreal:  
Situational Identity and Multi-centred Diasporas

Robert A. Kenedy

Abstract
French Jews have been leaving France in order to resettle in Israel, the United States, and Canada. Throughout the interviews with 40 Jews from France, many respondents said that Montréal was a city where they could freely practice Judaism, converse in French, and maintain their distinct French-Jewish identity. Using the concept of situational identity, the challenges faced by these emigrants are examined in terms of how their predicament of a multi-centred Diaspora contributes to feelings of belonging. Many of those interviewed discuss their parents’ journey from North Africa to France in the 1960s and their own migration to Canada between 1999 and 2006. The findings indicate that many French Jews emphasised how their Jewish identity are intertwined with multi-centred Diasporas and situational identity.

Key Words: Diaspora, immigration, Jewish identity, Jews from France religiosity, resettlement in Montréal.

1. Introduction
Beginning in 1999, Jews from France have been resettling in countries such as Israel, the United States, and Canada. The main reasons for leaving France often include safety, security, and wanting to openly practice Judaism (Bénédicte and Dreyfus, 2004; Wasserstein, 1996). One of the main destinations in Canada for French Jews is Montréal, where these Francophone Jews benefit from Québec language policies as well as the established Montréal Jewish community. Throughout the interviews with 40 Jews from France, respondents commented on the desirability of living in Montréal as a place for practicing Judaism, converse in French, and ultimately maintain a distinct French Jewish identity.

France, Jewish Identity, and Diasporas
To fully comprehend the importance of studying this recent Diaspora of Jews from France, it is historically significant to note that France was the only country in post-1945 Europe where the Jewish population increased from 300,000 in 1937 to 530,000 in 1994 (Wasserstein, 1996, p. 3), and the total population is estimated at being between 550,000 and 600,000 (Dreyfus and Laurence, 2002). France has been seen as an example of a
European country where Judaism, relative to the rest of Europe, has thrived (Pinto, 1994); that is, until the late 1990s.

There has been a ‘...growing number of verbal and physical attacks on Jews not only in France, but also in Britain, Belgium and elsewhere in Europe’ (Bénédicte and Dreyfus, 2004, p. 1). One of the most significant deaths ‘...[o]n February 13, 2006 [involved] Ilan Halimi, a 23 year old French Jew...who was tormented and ultimately killed...because he was a Jew’ (Humans Rights First, 2006, p.1). French police ‘...confirmed the anti-Semitic nature of the crime’ (Ibid). Some cite more traditional sources of anti-Semitism in France, such as the recent rise of the extreme-right wing’s expression of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel attitudes (Musicant, 2003), while others focus on ‘...the changing nature of French society’ (Dreyfus and Laurence, 2002, p.1). More specifically, anti-Semitism is often linked to ‘...the growing tension between the large Jewish and Muslim communities in France and the growing frustration of the economically disenfranchised Maghrebin [their emphasis] (North African) youth’ (Ibid, p. 1), which was also clearly expressed during our preliminary interviews with certain Jews from France who have resettled in Montréal. Respondents who we interviewed often commented on the perceived indifference of French authorities to anti-Semitism, as well as the lack of integration of mainly North African youth. They also discussed how they feel safer and more secure in Canada.

Jewish identity is a complex and controversial topic that is discussed in both academic and popular discourse (i.e., Birnbaum, 2000; Gordis and Ben-Horin, 1991; Myer, 1990; Rubin-Dorsky and Fishkin, 1996; Weinfeld, 2001). Among the French Jews who were interviewed, experiences of having to leave France strengthened their religious identities as practicing Jews. Some Jews also discussed the further Diasporic potential of having to leave Montréal if they faced similar issues to the ones that prompted them to leave France. This shared feeling of being in a continued predicament, always ‘ready to leave if necessary’, seems to give this group of French Jews a stronger focus on their Jewish identity and a sense of solidarity as a Diasporic and cosmopolitan community. As a result of the shared experiences among these French Jews, this sense of solidarity sometimes manifests through formal or informal association and a differentiation from non-Jews. Lipset and Raab (1995) refer to this as ‘tribalism’. The sense of ‘we-ness’ associated with the Jewish identity is fostered by close interpersonal interaction between Jews, friendships, other social networks, participation in formal Jewish organisations, and segregated residential patterns. There is also an awareness of a shared history, distinctive forms of communication and/or educational channels, a distinctive language (usage of the revived Hebrew, the Ladino language among Sephardim, or the revival of the Yiddish language among Ashkenazim), observing kosher customs, understanding a certain sense of
humour, eating typical Jewish foods, or paying acute attention to certain items in the news. In short, there is a diverse set of elements that are all part of a common culture. These cultural elements combined with a sense of religiosity, a shared history, and identification with the nation of Israel, result in a wide variation in individual Jewish identities.

According to Pierre Birnbaum (2000), French Jewish identity is based on a strong national identity, the Holocaust, a shared religiosity, a shared history, and the nation of Israel. In terms of citizenship and ethnicity, many of the French Jews interviewed mentioned Israel as a Diasporic religious homeland and France as their country of citizenship. The difference between the identity of Jews in France and North America, according to Birnbaum (2007), is the strong nationalistic element, which is a central component of Jewish identity in France, but is not as strong in Canada.

This chapter explores the dialectic of anti-Semitism and group solidarity. The lack of security, general threat of violence, and specific incidences of violence that French Jews have experienced has shaken their French nationalism as an ethnic group and strengthened their solidarity as Jews in France. When they move to Canada, that nationalism returns, and their group solidarity becomes not just a matter of being Jewish but of being French Jews.

2. Situational Identity and Multiple Centred Diasporas

Situational identity is based on Goffman’s (1959) notion of multiple identities that are socially created and negotiated (Kenedy, 2004/5) and is applied to this research in the context of understanding multiple identities (e.g., being Jewish - feeling more Sephardim or Ashkenazim, a citizen of France, French, or possibly feeling like an immigrant) that are socially constructed (Goffman, 1959) and re-worked through the resettlement experience. It is also based on a contextualisation concerning the way individuals perceive themselves and their particular context (Simmel in Levine, 1974). Situational identity is applied in order to understand the transitional aspect of leaving France and resettling in Montréal and how this influences the ways in which French Jews define their awareness of being (historically or otherwise) ‘Diasporic Jews’.

Situational identity is combined with what Shuval (2000) refers to as ‘Multiple Centred Diasporas’ in order to understand the resettlement process and how migrants may live in one place while still having connections to their country of origin. The connections that Jews from France perceive are often associated with Zionism and Israel, North African Jewry (if this is their ancestral home), or other types of Jewry. Theoretically, it is important for us to understand the connection between situational identity (Kenedy, 2004/5) and how these Jews negotiate their present identities. It is also important to
understand how they realign their past identities in France with their experiences of resettling.

3. Methodology

Qualitative data was gathered and analyzed based on operationalising variables such as situational identity, Multiple Centred Diaspora’s, Jewish identity, religiosity, resettlement, and other demographic variables (i.e., education, occupation, income, marital status, family size, and sex). The semi-structured interview schedule included open and closed-ended items that were conducted mainly in French, with interviewees responding in both French and English. The 40 interviews took place in Montréal between March 2006 and March 2009. Each interview lasted approximately 40 to 80 minutes and took place in a variety of settings such as a Jewish Community Centre, restaurants, respondent’s homes or workplaces, and other locations selected by the respondents. Out of the 40 French Jews interviewed (23 men and 17 women), 30 of them were permanent residents of Montréal and 10 were students. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed for the purpose of facilitating analysis.

4. Findings

All participants discussed the importance of their Jewish identity regarding their immigration and resettlement in Montréal. Some of them mentioned ‘Multiple Centred Diasporas’ in terms of their parents or themselves leaving parts of North Africa and settling in France, then having to move to Montréal. Jewish identity, religiosity, and other issues arose that related to being Francophone Jews. Cultural and religious factors were the main components of their Jewish identities. Ethnic identities were also embedded in these cultural and religious components for all participants. The quotes below are based on the participants’ responses in both French and English.

A. Multiple Centred Diasporas

Many of the French Jews that were interviewed focused on their experiences of being born in France and how they, like their parents who were born in places like Algeria and Tunisia, had to leave their birth countries and resettle elsewhere. The theme of ‘Multiple Centred Diasporas’ was evident in the interviews, as it related to the resettlement process and how migrants may live in one place while still having connections to their country of origin. The multiple connections and identities are related to how Jews from France perceived connections to North African Jewry (if this was their ancestral home) or other types of Jewry. Having connections to past experiences are evident in this participant’s life:
We are Sephardic Jews…I remember when my father told me in France that this was not my country, now we have made the same journey as my parents, for the same reasons, and it is the same cycle…(Transcript of Interview with PF3)

Several respondents focused on how they, like their parents, felt they had to leave France in order to survive. There was the clear sense that they had gone through an unexpected life experience that forced them to leave France. Many respondents made it clear that they felt as though they did not have many options, but had to do as their parents and grandparents did in the 1960s when they left North Africa:

The Arabs killed my family in Algeria, my parents were the only ones to survive...now we left France because of our children for their security and it is sad that this exists in our generation, that we were expelled from our own country. (Transcript of Interview with PM21)

Many of those interviewed compared France to Canada. While France was seen as a place where anti-Semitism was still a problem, Canada was perceived as a destination that was more welcoming. As one respondent states:

Yes, like my father left Tunisia, I left Paris for Montréal. From generation to generation it is bizarre that nothing changed but not really because anti-Semitism has never left France. (Transcript of Interview with PM15)

Overall, there was an acute awareness amongst those interviewed that they had to repeat their parents and grandparents experiences of leaving one country and resettling in another. Both their Jewish identity and their parents and grandparents experiences of having to leave a country for religious and ethnic reasons resonated in all of the interviews, connecting many themes throughout our analysis. Montréal was often noted by the respondents as being selected as a safe place to be Jewish and French; and a place that Francophones would feel safe and not encounter the same problems as they did in France or as their parents and grandparents did in North Africa.

B. Situational Identity

Many of those interviewed discuss their resettlement experiences and the differences between living in France and Montréal. They also discuss their multiple identities of being ethnically French, linguistically
Francophone, and mainly Sephardic Jews. They often focus on the transition of juggling these identities in a Québécois society where being a Francophone from France is an asset, but also a challenge when they are resettling in a mainly Anglophone Ashkenazi part of Montréal. This transition affected their sense of being ‘Jewish’ in their chosen city of resettlement. Still, it seems as though their situational identity is quite liminal in terms of adjusting to their resettlement community. It is often the religious connection and being able to freely practice Judaism in Montréal that makes life easier for them. Many French Jews reported feeling a stronger attachment to their Jewish identity has made their move to Montréal less demanding, as evident in this respondent’s answer:

The French and Jewish, for me it is the same thing, but sometimes I miss the food, the way my life was in France...here although it is difficult to adjust my life has more meaning because I feel so much more Jewish here (Transcript of Interview with PF12)

Often, those we interviewed discussed finding their ‘place’ in the Montréal Jewish community and experiencing a transitional liminality in terms of where they belong. This respondent notes, ‘In France I was a French Jew, in Montréal we are French [from France]... I am not certain at all of my identity because I consider myself a Francophone Jew’ (Transcript of Interview with PM14). This theme of ‘transition’ is evident in the interviews in terms of an awareness of being Sephardic Jews who are learning through their migration experiences that they left France with a definite identity, but have had to adjust, as noted in this statement: ‘I am a Sephardic Jew, that never changed because of my migration, I am the same person now that I was in France, just wiser now’ (Transcript of Interview with PF22). Many of the French Jews who have settled in the Montréal Jewish community found that their Jewish identity could be more freely expressed without any threats. Many of those interviewed said their Jewish identity, was strengthened. This respondent explained: ‘French and Jewish, that is my identity, but it is stronger because of my immigration because here it is easier to be what I am…’ (Transcript of Interview with PF16).

Overall, there is a clear context for securely being part of the Jewish community in Montréal that has made the religious aspect of resettlement reinforcing. These French Jews felt there were even more opportunities to be ‘Jewish’ creating a transition that reassured many of those from France that moving to Montréal was a good decision for them and their family. One respondent recounted: ‘Yes I feel more Jewish here because it’s easier. In France, I was scared to practice but here Jews don’t know how lucky they are to have what they do’ (Transcript of Interview with PF14). As many French
Jews reported, ‘… in Montréal I am more observant than in France because here we have everything and all the means to succeed in our mission to be French Jews’ (Transcript of Interview with PM20).

5. Conclusion

This article contextualises French Jews and French Jewish identity, going well beyond the traditional measures of what it means to be Jewish. It provides an alternative to the debate over the conflicting labels of Jews as being an ethnic, versus a religious, versus a cultural group. Jewish identity is not fixed but situational. In using these participants as an example, it is clear that French Jews have difficulty in using any single term to define them. By applying the concepts of situational identity and Multi-Centred Diaspora in the context of making sense of the French Jewish identity, this analysis reveals that their collective history and shared memory have both played enormous part in defining this modern Jewish community.

All participants cited anti-Semitic attacks and/or the danger to their Jewish identity as the primary reasons for immigration. This study has provided evidence that the current trends of anti-Semitism in France, and the violent attacks within the French Jewish community, have indeed played a crucial role in the decision to migrate. The establishment of a more religious, practicing Jewish identity, and the changes that occurred in this religious identity were also evident in all interviews.

The participants thought that attacks against Jews in France would not end any time soon. Future research investigating the migration of Jews from France to Israel and North America should be completed in order to fully assess the situation leading to the immigration of these particular Jews. While there may be overall sample limitations, as well as other theoretical limitations, this research does suggest a relationship between Jewish immigration from France, Jewish identity, and a new anti-Semitism which is very alarming. While it may be possible to suggest that the immigration of French Jews to Montréal may be a limited phenomenon, the comments and conversations that took place throughout these interviews suggest that this trend is just beginning and will continue for years to come.

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Robert A. Kenedy is an Associate Professor of Sociology at York University.
The Narrative of Cultural Identity: An Opening for Collective Action among the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in Toronto

Kalyani Thurairajah

Abstract

Since January 2009, the members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora have staged several protests around the world in a concentrated effort to bring attention to the ethnic conflict that has been ravaging the island of Sri Lanka for over two decades. Although the members of this diaspora are dispersed around the globe, Canada, particularly Toronto, is believed to be the home of the largest Sri Lankan Tamil population outside of Sri Lanka—a diaspora that is estimated to have a population of over 200,000 people. The participation of this diaspora in the multiple protests that have been held in Toronto has ranged from hundreds to tens of thousands. These protests used the frame of ‘genocide’ in order to mobilise support and resources from both the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Toronto, as well as the wider community. However, despite the use of a ‘genocide’ frame, the make-up of these demonstrations revealed a substantial proportion of the participants protesting for a separate Tamil State (Tamil Eelam), and demanding that the Canadian government lift the ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam that proclaims them to be a terrorist organisation. This chapter explores how protests that had utilised such a strong frame to mobilise support was able to transform into protests that were also focused on secession. It is argued that when members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora united in protest, the frame of genocide acted as a hook that triggered the mass recollection of the narrative of their Sri Lankan collective cultural identity. The chapter explores this narrative and the extent to which it is conveyed to the greater population by using newspaper articles and websites that covered the protests that occurred on January 30, 2009, March 16, 2009, and April 27, 2009.

Key Words: Collective action, cultural identity, Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora.

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1. Introduction.

I’m here to help raise awareness among people who are not Tamils about the genocide in Sri Lanka. Not only is the government killing our people, it is also killing our culture, our tradition, our language.

an 18-year-old participant at the March 16, 2009 protest.¹
Since January 2009, the members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora have staged several protests around the world in a concentrated effort to bring attention to the ethnic conflict that has been ravaging the island of Sri Lanka for over two decades. Although the members of this diaspora are dispersed around the globe, Canada, particularly Toronto, is believed to be the home of the largest Sri Lankan Tamil population outside of Sri Lanka—a diaspora that is estimated to have a population of over 200,000 people. The participation of this diaspora in the multiple protests that have been held in Toronto has ranged from hundreds to tens of thousands. One source estimated that over 100,000 members of the Sri Lankan Tamil community participated in the March 16, 2009 protest in downtown Toronto.²

All reports made by both the participants and the organisations that were involved in mobilising support for this protest focused on the ethnic war in Sri Lanka, and the plight of the Tamil population. The most prevalent frame that was used to mobilise resources and garner support for these protests focused on the concept of ‘genocide’, proclaiming that the current situation in Sri Lanka is an example of genocide against the Tamil population. Several organisations used this frame to mobilise the members of the diaspora. The organisations that utilised this frame emphasised the plight of the Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka, without drawing attention to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which, according to the Canadian government, is a terrorist organisation.

Despite the lack of mention of the LTTE, the Toronto protests found participants carrying flags that were associated with the Tamil Tigers, posters of the leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Pirapaharan, and protesters demanding that the Canadian government remove the LTTE from its list of officially recognised terrorist groups. How did a protest that was organised around the frame of genocide and that was focused on demanding that the Canadian government step in and help rescue the civilians caught in the midst of the ethnic conflict, turn into a protest that was also in favour of the Tamil Tigers? This chapter will examine how the concept of frames is insufficient in explaining the extent of mobilisation and participation in collective action by a diaspora, and that instead, one must examine the cultural identity of the people. This chapter argues that the frame of genocide was a hook, triggering participants into a collective recall of the narrative of their Sri Lankan Tamil cultural identity, and that it was this narrative that provided the opening for collective action. The protest became a platform for remembering their shared history, and the narrative of their collective identity became a unifying force among the members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Toronto, mobilising them to act. The chapter will focus on the three protests that occurred in Toronto (January 30, 2009, March 16, 2009, and April 27, 2009). It will draw support from the campaigns used by three of the main organisers of these protests, as well as various newspaper articles. The chapter will also
examine the effectiveness of a cultural identity narrative in gaining support from those who are not members of the diaspora, and will discuss some possible future directions of the research.

2. The Sri Lankan Tamil Population

Sri Lanka, despite its tiny size, is multicultural. It consists of the Sinhalese, who predominantly practice Buddhism, and make up the majority of the population and who reside in the south of the country. It also consists of the Tamils, who reside in the east of the island as well as the northern peninsula, and who are predominantly Hindu. There are also Muslims, and Burghers, whose ancestors were Portuguese and Sri Lankan. There are several different factors that contributed towards the instigation of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. They are complex, and it is difficult to isolate any one factor as being more significant than the others. For the purposes of this chapter, a very simplistic explanation will be used—discrimination.

During the British reign, there was a disproportionately high number of Tamils participating in civil service, and other elite positions within the government. Therefore, upon gaining independence from the British in 1948, the Sinhalese population highlighted the discrimination they had faced and the favourable position that the Tamils had enjoyed, and demanded that the government rectify the situation immediately. This demand led to changes in the language laws, whereby English was replaced with Sinhalese as the language of the government, which dramatically decreased the number of Tamils who were able to keep their positions in public service. There were also changes in the admission policies at the university level. For example, in 1974, standardisation of grades was introduced, which had the effect of requiring Tamil students to acquire a higher cut-off mark than their Sinhalese counterparts in order to be accepted into a university program.

These changes created a shift in the positions of the Tamils, and forced them to exclaim that they were being discriminated against. They demanded that the government take action. These demands were initially staged as sit-in protests. However, these protests were not very successful, adding to the level of frustration of Tamil youths who were experiencing a lack of occupational and educational opportunities. Their frustration eventually led them to demand a separate nation. The government attempted to make changes in their policies in order to decrease the level of discrimination faced by the Tamils, but it became a case of ‘too little, too late.’ Once the idea of separation was planted, it flourished among certain sectors of the Tamil population. Several groups of educated militant youths rose to the surface, and took up arms to fight for what they believed was the Tamil cause. Eventually only one such militant group was left standing: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.
During the British rule, wealthy members of the Tamil elite were able to gain admittance into universities in England. Most would return with degrees and search for employment opportunities in Sri Lanka. Following the changes in the educational policies, and the subsequent difficulties in attaining employment in Sri Lanka, however, those who had the educational backgrounds decided the best course of action was to immigrate to countries that would recognise their qualifications. The first wave of Tamil immigrants were predominantly educated professionals from wealthy families, who left Sri Lanka to establish lives in English speaking countries, such as England, and the United States. It was not until the 1980s that Sri Lanka experienced a mass exodus of its Tamil population. Following the intensification of violence in 1983, many Tamils fled Sri Lanka. Canada soon became the home to tens of thousands of Tamils, giving rise to the emergence of the largest Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the world.

3. Diasporas and Collective Identity

The concepts of collective identity and shared narrative are particularly salient to members of a diaspora. It is imperative to note the difference between collective identity as applying to a diaspora, and the collective identity of a group that is involved in collective action. These two terms are not synonymous, and they are not mutually exclusive. Individuals who belong to a diaspora have a collective identity that is based on their shared understanding of their past and their membership in this community. At times, this collective identity may be referred to as their racial, ethnic or cultural identity. Although these terms are sometimes used interchangeably in research, they are not synonymous. While some researchers use the terms interchangeably, others make no specific mention to culture in defining one’s ethnic identity, while others have proclaimed that cultural identity is a dimension of ethnic identity. As the nuances between these terms (racial, ethnic, and cultural identity) make it difficult to distinguish between, this chapter will consistently use the term ‘cultural identity’, which can be defined as the attachment that individuals feel towards their ‘social’ group, and for the purposes of this chapter refers synonymously to the collective identity of the diaspora.

When referring to collective action, however, collective identity is defined differently. This collective identity refers to the identity of the group that is engaged in the collective action, and is not necessarily tied to race or nation, but can be tied to the networks (i.e. place of residence, political support, etc.) to which the participants belong. The collective identity of a movement can be fluid, and needs to be strategically flexible in order to encourage further support and participation from the larger community. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that whenever a group comes together in protest it develops a collective identity that is representative of the
protesters, and the protest, but that in the case of the diaspora, they had a collective *cultural* identity that, although may share similarities with the collective identity of the group, remains distinctly different.

4. **Frames and Collective Action**

   ‘Frames’ are utilised to construct the meanings of the causes for which social movements and collective action stands, and are used to mobilise support and resources.\(^{19}\) When the frames are credible and salient to the current context, they are more effective in mobilising resources for the movement or action. The specific nature of the social movement and collective action will determine the type of frame that would be most effective for the cause. In the case of the Tamil protests in Toronto, the most salient frame that was used was that of ‘genocide.’ This frame was meant to appeal to anyone who was opposed to the genocide of the Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka. Although it would strongly appeal to a large proportion of the Tamil community, it would also appeal to those who were generally opposed to war and genocide, as opposed to being *specifically* opposed to the genocide in Sri Lanka, such as ‘Stop the War’, and ‘Rwandans Against Genocide.’\(^{20}\) This frame is an example of how organisers may attempt to mobilise support from a group that had the collective identity of being anti-genocide. In effect, this frame should be able to draw support from Sri Lankan Tamils and non Sri Lankan Tamils alike.

5. **The Protest**

   There have been several demonstrations of protests in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), ranging from marches to fasts, to student organised demonstrations. The protests in Toronto are just one example of the many that have been staged across Canada and around the world following the recent developments in Sri Lanka’s ethnic war. Data for this chapter will be drawn from newspaper articles that covered protests occurring on: January 30, 2009; March 16, 2009; and April 27, 2009. They were organised by several different groups, but for the purposes of this chapter, three specific organisations will be discussed: The University of Toronto Tamil Students’ Association, the Canadian Tamil Congress, and CanadianHART (Canadian Humanitarian Appeal for the Relief of Tamils). The websites for all three organisations framed the situation in Sri Lanka as genocide\(^{21}\). These three organisations not only explicitly label the deaths of the Tamils in Sri Lanka as genocide, but also overtly state the importance of advocating on behalf of the Tamil population. All three organisations urged the Sri Lankan Tamil members of the diaspora to move forward in collective action, and appeal to the Canadian government to step in and assist in ending the genocide.

   The protest on January 30, 2009 is estimated to have drawn over 40,000 participants.\(^{22}\) As mentioned earlier, the protest on March 16, 2009
drew over an estimated 100,000 participants. And there were thousands present at the protest staged on April 27, 2009. All three occurred in downtown Toronto, and lasted for several hours. In fact, the protest on April 27th was not a one-day event, but a protest that was staged over several days. The effectiveness of the ‘genocide’ frame was revealed in the testimonies that were shared by participants of all ages.

In the protest on January 30, 2009, there was a great deal of attention focused on the deaths of the Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka. At the protest on March 16, one participant, aged 43, proclaimed that he was involved in the protest because he wanted to ‘bring awareness of the genocide [emphasis added] going on in Sri Lanka. It has been systematic genocide for 61 years and we want all Canadians, including non-Tamils, to stop it.’ On April 27th, the focus on genocide still had not waned.

The effectiveness of the ‘genocide’ frame cannot be questioned when one considers how strongly it was adopted by the participants at the protests, and how it was able to mobilise support from such a large cross-section of the Sri Lankan Tamil community. Despite the strength of this frame, however, the message of ‘genocide’ was arguably not the most salient at the protest. In fact, one may argue that for as many activists that were protesting against genocide, there appeared to be even more participants protesting in favour of Tamil sovereignty, and in support of the Tamil Tigers. Frames typically only offer a slice of the situation. The use of a general frame can be very useful in garnering support from a wider community that would not necessarily share a common history, or would be able to truly appreciate the specific history of the cause. In the case of the diaspora, however, the history is not a general one of genocide, but a more specific one of Sri Lanka. It is this very history—the shared memory of their homeland—that unites the members of the diaspora. Although the intent of the frame is to focus on the issue, a diaspora, by its very nature, will be unable to look at one page or one chapter, when there is an entire book of history they are familiar with. Therefore, when these protests occurred, and the frame of genocide was used to encourage activism among the members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Toronto, it not only encouraged participation, it also triggered a mass recall of the narrative of their history and shared cultural identity.

Despite the focus on the genocide frame by the three organisations, and the lack of mention of the LTTE or an independent nation for Sri Lankan Tamils, tens of thousands of activists who attended the protest waved the Tamil Eelam flag, and carried signs advocating for Tamil Eelam and the LTTE. How did a protest that was to be centred on the ‘genocide’ in Sri Lanka transform into a protest in ardent favour of secession that demanded that the ban imposed on the LTTE by the Canadian government be lifted?
It is believed that this transformation was inevitable. The members of this diaspora, when brought together in collective action, even with the primary intent to protest the ‘genocide’ in Sri Lanka, would inevitably protest for secession. Although it may have been the frame of ‘genocide’ that brought the members of this diaspora together, and although they may have actively acknowledged that they identified with their collective culture, it was not this acknowledgement that promoted the change in the direction of the protest. Rather, I argue that once they were pulled together, the stories of their history began to be shared amongst one another, and it was this narrative of their collective cultural identity that evoked the passion and frenzy that was observed among the Sri Lankan Tamil protesters.

6. The Narrative of the Tamil People

The three organisations did not explicitly discuss the LTTE, nor did they overtly support an independent Tamil Eelam, but they all outlined a history of Sri Lanka that highlighted the atrocities faced by the Tamil population. These organisations did not speak about the injustices of Sri Lankans, but rather the plight of the Tamils. When discussing Sri Lanka’s Independence Day, the Canadian Tamil Congress refers to the event as a ‘Day of Mourning.’ The University of Toronto TSA also shared their understanding of the history of the ethnic conflict, and the role of the Tamils in this war. The CanadianHART organisation through their Halt Genocide website expressed the tyrannical view they have of the Sri Lankan State.

These three organisations express their understanding of a chapter of Sri Lanka’s history, and the experiences of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, but chapters of the history that were not discussed were still demonstrated at the protest, such as independence and the Tamil Tigers. These chapters, although not provided by some of the main organisers of the protest, were present at the event because members of the diaspora knew the narrative—had read the chapters through their own lived personal experiences, or through the narratives that had been passed down to them from their parental or grandparental generations.

A 22-year-old graduate student, who attended the protest in January and had left Sri Lanka as a child, mourned the possible loss of her culture. Another protester, a psychologist who had been working with the Tamil population for years spoke of the collective suffering of the Tamil population. Another participant shared his understanding of the role of the Tamil Tigers in the ongoing conflict, and why he was motivated to participate in the protest: ‘We want the Canadian government to help stop the fighting, the genocide...Every day children are dying...The LTTE is the only source to protect the Tamils. The LTTE is the only voice of the Tamils.’ The protest on April 27th, revealed further support for how narratives have been passed down through the generations, and that the narrative of the
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The narrative of cultural identity of the Sri Lankan Tamil population has not been lost as a result of immigration. These participants were interviewed separately at different points in the ‘human chain’ that was created by the protesters. They were from different social, educational and economic backgrounds. They were a diverse group, yet they were all drawn to participate in this protest, and when interviewed, they all shared a similar story about the ethnic conflict, and the importance of the survival of their Tamil culture. The testimonies of the participants in the protest reveal strong similarities in terms of their opinions regarding a separate Tamil nation, and their support for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam as a means of establishing Tamil Eelam (the desired separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka). It was not the survival of the Tamil Tigers that was the focus of the protest, but rather the efforts of the Tigers in achieving a goal that was believed to be the most ideal conclusion to a tragic narrative—the development of a separate Tamil state.

Although it may have been the frame of ‘genocide’ that captured their attention, it was the narrative of the collective cultural identity of the Sri Lankan Tamils that they strived to reveal to the world through the protests. The frame, arguably, acted as a trigger. It reminded them of their own personal stories of injustice, or the stories of their parents, their friends, their neighbours. And although the details of each narrative may be unique for each participant, the themes were the same, and it was this common history of their cultural identity that was echoed throughout the protest, although it may have been different chapters of this narrative that were emphasised by the various groups of protesters in attendance.

7. Making an Implicit Narrative Explicit

The narrative of this diaspora’s cultural identity stretched back to the formation of Sri Lanka, the invasion of the British, the centralisation of power in a Sinhalese-majority government, and the ensuing discrimination and violence. It was a narrative that recalled how the rebel groups were born, and how the Tigers came into power, and the strides that the LTTE made towards creating an independent Tamil State. It was a narrative that appeared to suggest that the only way for the ‘genocide’ of the Tamils in Sri Lanka to end would be for them to have a separate state, known as Tamil Eelam. The frame of ‘genocide’ triggered the recollection of this narrative, evoking an emotional fervour within the Sri Lankan Tamil protesters. However, the narrative that impassioned the members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora was an implicit one, and was not conveyed adequately to the general Torontonian public.

The public appeared confused about how a protest that was meant to be opposing genocide had turned into one that appeared to be in support of a recognised terrorist group. There were several comments from the larger
community that was opposed to the protests, and that critiqued the Canadian government for allowing these protests to continue in the streets of Toronto. An editorial published following the protest on March 17th admonished the protests, claiming that Canada had a double-standard with respect to displays of support for terrorism, and posed the question of whether a protest that was in support of al-Qaeda would have been tolerated by the city of Toronto. Another editorial likened the protest that occurred on April 27th to a mob, and pointed out the frustration and inconvenience that was caused to the greater Toronto public due to the road blockades and the traffic jams that were caused by the protesters, while the authors of another editorial wondered what was being accomplished by a protest that was repelling the support of the larger non Sri Lankan Tamil community. There were also hundreds of comments posted online opposing the protests as a result of the presence of the LTTE flag. In reaction to these editorials and online comments were several angry and emotional responses from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, lamenting the perceived lack of compassion from their Canadian peers. One woman wrote an impassioned letter to the Toronto Star, expressing her anger towards those who did not support the message of the protest. These reactive comments all shared one thing in common—they all appeared to be in a state of disbelief that the Canadian community did not understand the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils, and they were flabbergasted by what they perceived to be callous and heartless comments.

However, it is not surprising that there was lack of congruity between the message that the Tamils were attempting to convey, and the message that the greater community heard. I argue that the very narrative that strengthened the collectivity of the protesters, and impassioned these demonstrations, was a narrative that was not adequately shared with those who were not present at the protests or members of this community. To the diaspora, it was logical to believe that a protest about the genocide of the Tamils in Sri Lanka would also be a protest for the establishment of a separate Tamil state. This was logical because they knew the narrative, and they were able to follow the story from the beginning to anticipated end. But this was not a story that the larger community understood. To those who viewed the protests from the outside, it was outrageous and incomprehensible that participants who claimed to be opposed to genocide and the killing of innocents would simultaneously be supporting a terrorist organisation that is believed to have invented the ‘suicide bomb.’ The larger community did not know the narrative, and they could not understand some of the fervent and dangerous behaviour that the protesters demonstrated, including the impromptu blocking of a major highway in downtown Toronto. In order to be effective in garnering support from those who are not members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, it is imperative that the narrative that was implicitly triggered by the frame of genocide be made explicit to the
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greater Canadian and international community. Without providing an explanation of the history of Sri Lanka, and the culture of the Tamils, this diaspora cannot be surprised or hurt that their message is not being understood or that their cries are not being heard. The frame of genocide was able to act as a trigger because they were already members of the diaspora, and therefore, all they needed was something to assist in the mass recollection of the narrative of their collective cultural identity. However, this frame was not a trigger for all participants, as there were people who were not members of this diaspora present at the protest (i.e. Stop the War, and Rwandans against Genocide). To assume that the frame of genocide would be a trigger for everyone in attendance at the protest is unreasonable, and to believe that those who do not have a personal connection to the history, or who do not have a knowledge of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka would be able to make the leap from protesting genocide to supporting secession via a recognised terrorist organisation is also not logical. What may make intrinsic sense to the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora needs to be externalised for their greater community. In order to gain the support, or at least the understanding of the wider population, it is the responsibility of this diaspora to explain the past, and to illustrate the history. Once triggered into the mass recall of the narrative of their cultural identity, the members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora need to be able to convey this story to the greater public and explain why a protest against genocide of Tamil civilians on some level can be synonymous to the protest in favour of a Tamil Eelam.

8. Conclusions

The protests that occurred on January 30, March 16, and April 27, 2009 by the members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Toronto are examples of people uniting not only under a common frame, but under a shared narrative. It is believed that the frame that was utilised by the three main organisations was instrumental in triggering the recollection of the narrative of the collective history and cultural identity of this diaspora. The recollection of the narratives of their cultural identity and shared history provided the opportunity for the participants to band together in collective action. However, not all protesters were in support of the Tamil Tigers, nor were they in agreement of the role that the LTTE would play if a separate Tamil Eelam was to be established. However, they all shared the narrative of how the LTTE was formed, and there seemed to be a general agreement among the members of the diaspora who attended the protest that in order for the chapter of genocide to end in the narrative of the Tamil people, a chapter of secession needed to begin.

The frame of genocide is believed to have acted as a hook that triggered a mass recall of the narrative of the collective cultural identity of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. However, as a collective group of protesters,
it is believed that these participants were not wholly aware of the shift or the process by which the narrative became the focus of the protest. In order to be more effective as a social movement, there first needs to be an acknowledgment from within the diaspora of the fact that they had moved towards protesting a narrative rather than a frame. Once this shift is acknowledged, it will assist in increasing group unity, and then they can begin to effectively tell their story to the wider population. Therefore, in order to garner maximal support, the members of the diaspora first needs to recognise the emergence of this collective cultural narrative, and then they will be better equipped to effectively narrate their story to the greater public.

The quote at the beginning of the chapter is from a young woman claiming that the genocide in Sri Lanka was about the death of their culture. The protests that have been occurring around the world by members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora are a testimony of a group’s ability to unite under the banner of shared history. Although it was the chapter of genocide of Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka that brought them together, it was their shared understanding of their collective past, and their determination to tell the story of their desired future that allowed them to stay united in protest. Whatever the outcome of this ethnic conflict, and however the story may unfold, the members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora are committed to ensuring that the narrative of their cultural identity continues to hold strong within their community, and perhaps soon they will also learn how to tell their provocative and poignant narrative to the international community.

Notes

2 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
11 Cheran, op. cit.
12 Ibid.
16 Miville et al., op. cit.
21 In the mission statement provided by the Canadian Tamil Congress, they state that one of their mandates is ‘to participate in the alleviation of suffering


24 Ibid.

26 E Mathieu, & I Marlow, ‘Tamils pledge to stay put; As thousands flock to downtown rally, some say they’ll block the roadway for days.’ *The Toronto Star*, April 28, 2009, GT-4.


30 Taylor, op. cit.: ‘This is not going to end until the government has killed every single Tamil…Everything will be lost, our traditions are already getting lost. How can we celebrate Diwali (the Hindu festival of light) when 20 people are dying every day?’

31 ibid.

32 Ferenc, op. cit.

33 E Mathieu, ‘‘Until we get a solution, we are not going to go.’ A young voice rouses Toronto’s Tamils; Tamil Community member at the helm of local rallies inspires the crowds to get their message out to Ottawa.’ *The Toronto Star*, April 28, 2009, GT-1.

34 For example, refer to: Anonymous. ‘Halt the Tamil tragedy.’ *The Toronto Star*, April 28, 2009, A14; Mathieu and Marlow.


38 For example, refer to: Anonymous. ‘Halt the Tamil tragedy.’ *The Toronto Star*, April 28, 2009, A14; Mathieu and Marlow.


40 T Sinnathamby, Letter to Editor. *The Toronto Star*, April 30, 2009, A22: ‘I am sick and tired of the comments being posted for this article [re: ‘Tamil protests continues’ on thestar.com on April 28, 2009] and the many others I’ve seen since we’ve been protesting and rallying. For all the Canadians who have been complaining and telling us to ‘go back to our country,’ a good majority of us are citizens and therefore are justas Canadian as they are.’

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**Kalyani Thurairajah** is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at McGill University (Canada). Her research interests are primarily focused on the cultural identities of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in Canada.
Shopping Around for Diasporic Identities: Brand Names, The Cultural Industry and the Politics of Consumption in the Work of Wayson Choy and Gautam Malkani

Jonathan Rollins

Abstract
Code-switching, as articulated by Mary Louise Pratt, refers to the spontaneous and fluid switching between languages or cultural systems as a strategic act of resistance. It is a way to ‘lay claim to a form of cultural power: the power to own but not be owned by the dominant language.’ I argue that this concept informs the role played by mass culture in the work of Wayson Choy and Gautam Malkani. Choy focuses on the so-called ‘hyphenated’ or compound experiences of hybrid, culturally entangled ‘huáqiáo’ characters (members of the overseas Chinese Diaspora), and their attempts to articulate a sense of identity and belonging within mid-twentieth-century Canadian culture. The code-switching that is most significant in Choy’s work is not the constant shifting between or combination of languages but, rather, the boundary crossing between Chinese and North American cultural systems. Both he and his young Chinese Canadian characters use the products of the Culture Industry, particularly Hollywood cinema, as pre-made models for living and re-imagine themselves as ‘Canadian,’ rewriting and inserting themselves into mainstream Canadian or, more accurately, North American culture. Gautam Malkani explores contemporary acts of code-switching in his 2006 novel, Londonstani. His characters, largely young members of the Indian diasporic communities of Greater London, negotiate a collective identity through acts of ‘branding.’ They identify themselves as a community (referred to as ‘desi’), using consumer goods and products of the Culture Industry as identity markers, and combine Panjabi language and culture with Western consumer culture to articulate an interstitial third space for themselves that transgresses the simple binary of ‘here’ and ‘there’ or East and West. As is true for Choy’s characters, Malkani’s desi code-switching is a complex, multi-laminated act of appropriation that can become almost indistinguishable from and, indeed, entangled with acts of passive consumption and cultural colonisation.

Key Words: branding, Choy, code-switching, culture industry, desi, diaspora, identity, liminality, Malkani.

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‘Code switching,’ as articulated by Mary Louise Pratt, refers to the spontaneous and fluid switching between languages or cultural systems as a strategic act of resistance. It is a way to ‘lay claim to a form of cultural power: the power to own but not be owned by the dominant language’. Code-switching is employed as means of articulating a place or a sense of belonging that is ambivalently both within and beyond a community’s (or nation’s) mainstream cultural identity. Such interstitiality seems to coincide with Stuart Hall’s articulation of the diasporic experience: ‘I know both places [Jamaica and England] intimately, but I am not wholly of either place. And that’s exactly the diasporic experience.’ This is the starting point of code-switching - the liminality that defies simple binary logic of here vs. there, and confronts and/or dissolves dualities through constant, fluid appropriation and border crossing.

An understanding of such cross-cultural code-switching informs what Wayson Choy refers to as the ‘intercultural’ nature of his writing. It also sheds an important critical light on his strategic use of popular or mass cultural texts. Choy focuses on the hyphenated experiences of the Jiānàdà huàqiáo (that part of the Chinese Diaspora living in Canada) and their attempts to articulate a place for themselves. In his fiction, as well as in his creative non-fiction, code-switching operates in the constant shifting between various forms of Chinese and English, and also in the shifts between Chinese and North American cultural codes. Choy uses the products of the so-called ‘Culture Industry’ to negotiate an identity that is Chinese and Canadian/North American. Thus, in addition to their familiarity with Chinese cultural narratives - the stories they hear at home, the Chinese comic books they read, the Cantonese operas they attend as children, Choy and his young Chinese Canadian characters also speak the language of Hollywood cinema, contemporary music, celebrity fan magazines, and radio programmes. These products of the Culture Industry provide pre-fabricated, mass-marketed models for mainstream identities and hold the promise of easy assimilation through mimicry.

Whereas Choy’s examples are drawn largely from mid-twentieth-century Vancouver and its Chinatown, Gautam Malkani explores more contemporary acts of code-switching in his 2006 novel, Londonstani. His characters, largely young members of the Indian diasporic communities of Greater London, negotiate a collective identity through acts of ‘branding.’ They use the flexible signifier ‘desi,’ a term that is translated roughly as ‘countrymen’ or ‘brown countrymen’ and which refers specifically to the diaspora. As members of the so-called ‘urban youth culture,’ the desi youth of Londonstani use consumer goods and products of the Culture Industry, in addition to traditional ethnic markers, as badges of identity. This combination of South Asian languages and cultures, as well as Western consumer culture, used to articulate an interstitial third space for themselves between
mainstream British society and the culture of home, transgresses the simple binary of ‘here’ and ‘there’ or East and West. As is true for Choy’s characters, Malkani’s desi code-switching is a complex, multi-laminated act of appropriation that is fraught with ironies and contradictions and that can become almost indistinguishable from and, indeed, entangled with acts of passive consumption and cultural colonisation.

While Choy and his characters appear to fall victim to the allure and false promise of such mass marketed, ready-made belonging, it is a mistake to write them off dismissively, as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer would, as victims or dupes. By contrast, given their uncritical surrender to the culture of conspicuous consumption in *Londontani*, it is difficult to let Malkani’s characters off the hook quite so readily. The defiance of their code-switching is too often a borrowed posturing, acquired like a downloaded music file; if it is defiant, it looks like someone else’s defiance. If it is political, it’s someone else’s politics, ‘put on’ like a newly purchased D&G jumper or a pair of Nike trainers. Much of their code-switching involves a kind of lipsynch act, drawn largely from the bling-culture of gangsta rap. While code-switching yields hybrid identities, in both Choy and Malkani’s work it seems to start off with a shopping trip to load one’s identity basket full of mass-produced consumer items and other mass-culture products.

Part of the blame for the tendency to read interaction with the Culture Industry as an exercise in victimisation lies at the feet of the Frankfurt School, specifically Adorno and Horkheimer.\(^4\) It was they who examined the processes and products of mass culture and lumped them together under the pejorative epithet ‘the Culture Industry,’ arguing that, as consumers of its products, we are transformed from subjects into objects through exposure to its conformist-inducing propaganda.\(^5\) The problem of indoctrination into a socially useful passivity or conformity is complicated and amplified by the social and cultural marginality of the consumers in question and transformed into what Homi Bhabha refers to as colonial mimicry. This mimicry is the product of a colonial exigency that the colonised imitate the coloniser, coupled with the proviso that such imitation will always be imperfect - the Other that is ‘almost the same, but not quite.’\(^6\) It is easy to find this kind of mimicry in Choy’s texts. In *The Jade Peony* (1995), the cinema teaches ‘only sister’ Jook-Liang that she should devote herself to becoming Shirley Temple, or at least Shirley-Temple-like. It teaches ‘third brother’ Sek-Lung to imagine himself as a soldier-hero in the tradition of WWII-era Hollywood war movies. And exposure to cinema plants in Choy himself certain ‘cowboy ambitions,’ with Hollywood’s screen-cowboys functioning as his role models.\(^7\)

Such consumption of cultural texts can lead to a manufactured or pre-fabricated sense of belonging to the larger community (as if to say, we sit in the same movie theatres together and idolise the same stars; thus, we are
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part of the same community). However, the experience can also be accompanied by an increased awareness of one’s isolation, marginalisation, or difference - that is, to repeat Bhabha’s phrase, an awareness that dressed as a Chinatown-cowboy (having purchased the requisite gun and boots and hat), one is ‘almost the same, but not quite.’ Choy and his friends are effectively socialised by the Culture Industry, the result being that ‘all boys in Chinatown wished they were cowboys. However, with this obsession comes the realisation that to be one of the ‘Good Guys’ you needed to be white. In a self-alienated moment, he confesses he wished that he didn’t look like a Chinese boy8 and becomes, in his own words, a ‘banana’9 - yellow on the outside, white on the inside. ‘I was completely lost to the movies’ he exclaims,10 losing himself in the contradiction of media messages that are simultaneously assimilationist and exclusionary or racist.

However, while Choy and his characters may at first glance appear cowed into passivity and self-alienation by Hollywood’s pre-fabricated narrative models, other aspects of their intercultural negotiation begin to emerge on closer inspection. Pratt argues that the ‘bilingual verbal culture [and bi/multicultural fluency of the code-switcher] lays claim to a form of subaltern cultural power: I own both your language and mine, the minority speaker says; both are mine to combine and recombine as I choose.’11 Choy offers an example of such combination (one of many in his work) in his memoir Paper Shadows, he describes his re-creation of a Disney puppet. He has been given a hand-puppet that is a mass-produced replica of Dopey, his favourite dwarf from Disney’s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Choy explains:

I treasured Dopey as much as I treasured my Chinese opera puppets. I adorned the Disney creation with a Chinese warrior’s cape by safety-pinning one of Mother’s embroidered handkerchiefs around his thick neck. In his right cloth palm, I taped a thin bamboo skewer Mother had used for cooking, and tied a miniature hand-made pennant to it. Though his eyes remained sky-blue, Dopey was now as Chinese as I wanted.12

This is an important intercultural moment in which the individual appropriates a code or text (or here, a mass-produced item) and (re)uses it according his/her own agenda through DIY improvisation. The process is entirely under his control and the product is interculturally hybrid - defying cultural purity on two fronts and refusing easy categorisation - the object is no longer Disney’s Dopey as it was originally manufactured, nor is it truly a traditional Chinese warrior but rather both and neither simultaneously.
Compare this with Hall’s articulation of diaspora experience or identity as one of neither here nor there but both and neither at once. Malkani’s characters face similar challenges and opportunities in their interaction with the Culture Industry. However, while the defiance of cultural code-switching is certainly on the menu, it surfaces not in quiet moments of critical introspection and self-analysis or DIY puppet reconstruction as in Choy, but as a kind of drag act or new version of colonial mimicry wherein the colonial power is no longer Britain or any other geopolitical body but global consumer culture. Here, defiance is a slogan on a heavily-marked up designer T-shirt. As Naomi Klein puts it, these global teens are ‘willing to pay up to fit in.’ This seems to be conformity masquerading as defiance, or counterculture as fashion choice.

The desi ringleader Hardjit and his crew of wannabe ‘ganstas’ use their consumerism and the specific shopping choices involved as a collective branding that delineates community and belonging not within the national identity of Britain but within a post-national or globalised ‘urban youth culture.’ This allegiance to an elite superculture of exclusive brands and labels over what they refer to as an antagonistic, ‘burnt-out’ national culture marks an important difference between Choy’s mass-cultural identity shopping and that of Malkani’s diasporic youth. The latter do not embrace the culture of mainstream society with assimilationist longing but, rather, confront it with contempt, defy it, and reject it as irrelevant. They not only reject the assimilationist ambitions of their parents but demand a mirror image of colonial mimicry, wherein to be a ‘gorafied’ desi is bad but to be a desified gora is good.

Moreover, while cultural identity is certainly defined in terms of ethnicity, it is more significantly expressed in terms of consumption. When Hardjit, the leader of this particular group of desi youth, confronts a ‘coconut’ (a fellow South Asian turned ethnic traitor through assimilationism), he does so with reference to this coconut’s consumer choices. This so-called coconut’s social performance is deemed too British and not desi enough because of his ‘poncified’ English accent and the ‘poncey’ novel and newspaper on his dashboard. But, more importantly, he is also inadequately desi because of the kind of car he drives (Peugeot 305), the non-designer clothes he wears, his hairstyle, and the kind of music he listens to - ‘Britpop’ as represented by Coldplay and Radiohead.

This rejection of British mainstream culture reaches a level of social ‘disengagement’ and voluntary ethnic segregation that members of the establishment, such as former teacher Mr. Ashwood, find pathologically disturbing. Yet when this teacher confronts Hardjit and Co. on their voluntary segregation and so-called countercultural shopping-basket posturing, they accuse him of being racist, asserting that they are simply ‘bondin wid [their] bredren’ and using their own ‘mother tongue.’ The
ensuing argument stands as one of the novel’s most significant deliberations on the politics of code-switching and identity construction. Ashwood clarifies his position - he is more than pleased to see them use their ethnic mother tongues and to ‘mix up Hindi with Urdu and Punjabi to create [their] own second-generation tongue.’ What he finds problematic is the appropriated and, therefore, somehow inauthentic English ‘code words’ from American hip hop that make them look like ‘some kind of Asian mafia.’ Both sides have valid arguments. The English of American popular culture is not their mother tongue. Yet it is their ‘own’ language in so far as they appropriate it and become fluent in it, using it to ‘talk back’ or to give voice to their own feelings of social marginalisation; that is to say, defying in the voice of another. Here, Hardjit and his crew are code switching, using English in a way that makes Mr. Ashwood uncomfortable, which precisely constitutes the ‘defiance’ inherent in code-switching: to act as a rebellious gesture, not to reassuringly make the mainstream culture feel comfortable and safe.

Can the subaltern speak? asks Gayatri Spivak. The answer here seems to be yes, but we don’t like what he’s saying or the way he’s ‘sayin’ it (‘innit’). Moreover, just how ‘subaltern’ are these youth if they’re driving BMWs and wearing designer clothing? And are they really speaking for themselves or are they, in fact, parroting empty de-racinated slogans like ‘Da gansta, da kill n da dope dealer’ marketed by a multi-billion dollar industry as CEO-approved counterculture? The problems that this exchange presents are multiple and complex. One of the many ironies in Londonstani is that while their posturing seems to be defiant and certainly makes their elders uncomfortable (the profanity, the misogyny, the homophobia, xenophobia, and general anti-intellectual, anti-social nature of the language are cited as offensive), Hardjit and his friends are, in fact, unwittingly compliant as mouthpieces or living advertisements of the Culture Industry and participants in an endlessly repeating pattern of consumption. In the words of Klein, they are a product of youth-culture commodification or ‘marketing that thinks it is culture.’ For the youth in Londonstani, cultural and generational identity is a ‘pre-packaged good’ and that their ‘search for self had always been shaped by marketing hype’ - a product of ‘brand expansion’ wherein branding is effected not on only on physical space (the body/clothing, the ‘crib’, the car, etc.) but also through a colonisation of interior mental space through commodified identity construction.

Again, to reiterate the question posed for Choy, is that all there is? Cynical commodification of identity by the Culture Industry, the fashion industry, the automotive industry, etc. and passive consumption by the commodified individual seeking to eek out a sense of self amid the shopping? Malkani offers a glimmer of hope. In his April 2006 article ‘What’s Right With Asian Boys,’ he argues that, unlike the narrow definition at work through most of Londonstani, desi has now come to refer to a
loose subculture rather than a rigid ethnicity, desi beats\textsuperscript{21} is not exclusively Asian. Tune in to any of the above broadcasts or walk into Bombay Bronx [club] and you will not be greeted by a sea of brown faces. [...] desi subculture gives kids a more porous identity. It is derivative in a positive sense that fosters social cohesion and inclusiveness - everything and everyone seems to blend together like the records being mixed up at Bombay Bronx ('What's Right With Asian Boys?')

In the interview I conducted with Malkani in September 2008, he suggested that Jas, the novel’s narrator, represents this mature phase of desi culture, in which the self-effacing colonial mimicry of the parents, and the insecure, siege mentality self-segregation of the next phase of diasporic identity formation represented by Hardjit and his friends are displaced by a more radical code-switching that goes beyond ventriloquism and isn’t hampered by the ghettoised baggage of rigidly ethnocentric identity. Jas’ performance of desi identity is more inclusive and more transgressive in its willingness to ‘cross the line’ than Hardjit’s - his ultimate transgression is that he dares to date a Muslim girl, incurring the wrath of the novel’s various insular communities. By the end of the novel, Jas has begun to practise what might be called, to quote ethnologist Michel de Certeau, ‘the art of being in-between.’\textsuperscript{22}

SPOILER ALERT: The problem is that Jas is not Jaswinder (the novel’s other ‘Jas’) but white Anglo-Saxon Jason Bartholomew-Cliveden, desi not by birth but by a deliberately staged cultural and social performance. What is Malkani’s point? That the great hope for the future of British multicultural society is actually an impostor? A great white desified gora hope? No, while Jas’ ‘real’ identity is an interesting plot-twist, what this revelation does is to de-stabilise the identity marker and make identity slippery, playful yet risk-laden, and performative, thereby illustrating Malkani’s point that one is not limited in one’s performance by skin colour, mother tongue, religious allegiance, place of birth, etc., and that ‘desi’ designates an inclusive, porous identity. In interview, Choy describes this is the sort of identity as a product of the interactions that take place when ‘the young and the people who may be at the edges of their culture start ‘interculturally’ exchanging things.’\textsuperscript{23} If Stuart Hall is to be believed - that cultural identity is fluid and in a constant state of flux, and that diasporic individuals continually re-negotiate their identities, then ‘desi’ as Malkani uses it, as a free-floating signifier to suggest a shifting and even contradictory intercultural performance, serves well to denote that particular diasporic identity.
Pratt suggests that code-switchers tend to be liminals or hybrid selves in the threshold between cultures. Choy’s own cultural interstitiality is mirrored by Kiam-Kim, the protagonist in his novel *All That Matters*; Kiam-Kim crosses back and forth between worlds - across the fence or porch railings between his house and that of his Irish-Canadian neighbour and best friend next door, or across the invisible enclosure around Chinatown, aware of the borders/divisions but also defying them. With their ability to ‘dance and jump’ over such borders (borrowing the phrase from Ariel Dorfman - another consummate code-switcher), liminals like Choy and Kiam-Kim, along with Jas in *Londonstani*, challenge reductive visions of identity performance, seeing the world with the benefit of multi- or intercultural vision. They send a defiantly mixed message: I am an outsider, but I am on the inside; I speak your language and know your stories, but I use them to tell my own stories. This is the assertion to the dominant or mainstream culture. The message to the culture of home (Chinatown) is similarly defiant: I know your stories and yet they do not contain me completely, they cannot put me in my place; I wander beyond Chinatown [or Hounslow] because I do not only belong there, inside that enclosure. The code-switching becomes a way of articulating a culturally liminal identity in the overlapping spaces between Chinatown and Hollywood, between Chinatown and the Vancouver beyond it. The result is, in Choy’s own words, a living example that ‘There were others ways to be Chinese’ (*PS* 242) and, conversely, other ways to be Canadian. Similarly, Malkani uses the conflict between Hardjit’s version of desi identity and Jas’s (as well as Arun’s) to suggest that there are other ways to be desi.

**Notes**

9 Choy, *Paper Shadows*, p. 84; Davis, p. 277
15 Malkani, p. 123.
16 Malkani, p. 125.
17 Malkani, p. 125.
18 Malkani, p. 122.
19 Klein, p. 66.
20 Klein, p. 66.
21 A ‘fusion of bhangra, RnB, Bollywood, UK garage and US hip-hop is a genre of its own’ (Malkani, ‘What’s Right With Asian Boys?’).
22 M de Certeau qtd. in Klein, p. 78.
23 Davis, p. 279.

**Bibliography**


**Jonathan Rollins** is Assistant Professor at the Ryerson University in Toronto. Dr. Rollins’ current research interests include comparative readings of popular and literary cultures, and the politics of cultural liminality.
Section II

Engagement with Homeland
Introduction

Laura De Pretto

When people move from a country to another, there is often a part of them that remains with their homeland. Regardless of whether migrants leave relatives and friends behind in their home country, there will always be a link between the place they left from and the place they arrived to. Sometimes this link is only palpable in people’s roots, that unavoidably somehow shape their personality. But, some other times, this link constitutes a way to communicate with the country of origin, both in the case in which they left their loved ones there, and in the case in which they remain bound to ‘their people’ in a more general assumption, to their land itself. And this link inevitably influences their loved ones, their people, and their country. Whether or not this could be of help for those who remained, and in which ways, is described from different perspectives in the three chapters of this section.

Money remittances are, in the majority of the cases, the most tangible sign of someone who has gone away. And this money always carries a meaning that goes beyond its immediate economic value. Like in the case of Chinese people in Xinyi who, as illustrated by Cheun Hoe Yow, adopt the Honk Kong cultural model, because, besides the strong mass media’s influence, most of remittances received from their emigrated compatriots originates from those who moved to Honk Kong, even though these do not represent the majority of Xinyi emigrants. But, in the eyes of Xinyi people who remained, they represent the most successful ones.

Or in the case of Quy Nhơn, in south Vietnam, where money remittances and gifts from overseas relatives seem to be the creator of a ‘site of emergent imaginaries’, in the words of Ivan Small. This money stimulates imaginings about the lives of the people it comes from, and the possibilities it can give in terms of goods it can buy, and, ultimately, about the possible new identities that people who remained in Quy Nhơn often wish to assume following in their loved ones’ steps.

These are two instances that clearly show how money remittances always have consequences beyond their actual material use in the lives of people who receive them. But what if we were to look at the same phenomenon at the macro-level, from the point of view of the countries of origin? Remittances can be employed as useful tools for the development of the countries of origin, as long as the money is not uniquely sent straight to private people (the poor relatives), but are also invested for a real sustainable growth of the territory.
Such investments must be thoughtfully directed to compensate the loss of human capital that migration always causes even though remittances by themselves cannot fully compensate for such loss. Social and cultural capital can produce economical capital, while the opposite process is not so straightforward; that is why investments should focus on the first two. Moreover, people who return temporarily or permanently to their home country cannot only invest in social and cultural capitals, but also bring along innovative ideas, work experience and new knowledge and skills, that may lead to a culture of entrepreneurship. In this case we are no longer referring to money remittances, but to social and cultural remittances.

Even when not willing to permanently return ‘home’, some diasporas show however a strong interest in participating in the development of their homeland. This is the case of the high skilled Jamaicans in Toronto, described by Janine Rose. An interesting argument emerges at this point and this refers to the fact that it is possible to acknowledge that sometimes sending money could even bear negative consequences. This is the case, delineated in Janine Rose’s chapter as well, of people who quit their jobs in favour of making a living solely out of remittances, leaving their positions to over skilled people, thing that, with a domino effect, promote brain drain. Once again, non-economic remittances are considered a privileged way for the homeland development.

The above are only some of the reflections that can be inspired by the following three articles, which approach the multifaceted theme of the diasporas’ commitment with homeland.
Breaking up a Diasporic Homeland:
Xinyi as a Qiaoxiang in Post 1978 China

Cheun Hoe Yow

Abstract
This chapter starts with a brief sketch of the formation of Xinyi as a qiaoxiang as a result of different phases of migratory trajectories and also an examination on Xinyi’s socioeconomic landscape in China’s reform that commenced in 1978. It continues to explore more critical issues revolving around Xinyi as a diasporic homeland: responsibilities towards returned sojourners and families with diasporic ties, conferment of honorary citizens on diaspora, and diasporic engagement in donations and investments. It also compares and contrasts two major individuals of Xinyi diaspora, before it ends with findings from a questionnaire conducted in Xinyi as an analysis of the local diasporic conditions and mentality.

Key Words: Chinese diaspora, homeland, migratory trajectories

1. A Diasporic Homeland with Chinese Emigration History
The formation of Xinyi as a diasporic homeland is a result of three major phases of migratory trajectories: (1) overseas migration of capitalists and labour to British Malaya, from the 1880s to 1949, (2) running away of kinsfolk from political hardship to Hong Kong, from 1949 to 1978, and (3) leaving for family reunion in Hong Kong since 1978. Two of the dividing years are of historical importance to China’s politics and emigration. 1949 is the founding year of People’s Republic of China, leading to Chinese diaspora distancing from the new communist regime for a least three decades. 1978 is the year when China promulgated open door policy and economic reform, heralding an era of connecting with Chinese diaspora with old linkages and in new ways.

Xinyi has two remarkable features when compared to other qiaoxiang areas in China. First, the history of massive overseas migration of Xinyi people commenced late and was comparatively short; it started in the 1880s and ended before 1949. Second, the distribution of Xinyi diaspora overwhelmingly concentrated in Malaysia and Singapore, a unique case not found in other localities in China. Concerning migration to Hong Kong, however, Xinyi shares a similarity with the Pearl River Delta region in
Guangdong, in that their natives migrated to Hong Kong after 1949 and the movement stretched beyond 1978.

According to the estimate in 1988, Malaysia and Singapore were the two largest countries of residence for Xinyi diaspora; both combined to have 157,935 people and constitute 95.2 per cent of the diaspora. Thailand was the third largest with 6,321 people. With the exception of these three countries that are closely linked together geographically, other countries in Asia, North and South Americas, Europe, Africa, and Australasia had no numerically significant presence of Xinyi diaspora; the population of Xinyi natives and descendants in each never exceeded 500.1 The importance of Singapore and Malaysia in terms of number continued into 1997 when the two countries combined to have 478,974 Xinyi diaspora, accounting for 89 percent out of the population dispersed in foreign countries as well as Hong Kong and Macao.2

2. A Destitute Economic Site that Sends Internal Migrants in China

Initiated in 1978, China’s open door policy and economic reform has its main objective set on creating wealth and modernity to the nation and people. The market economy and modernization agendas were experimented first in Guangdong, in the hope of tapping into the province’s prolonged history of emigration and multiple diasporic linkages. Over the three decades into the reform era, however, economic benefits and social opportunities have never spread evenly in Guangdong, or elsewhere in China.3 Among the many qiaoxiang areas Guangdong, some become rich while some remain impoverished. Xinyi represents a qiaoxiang with poor conditions and bleak future in economic terms, while successful cases of qiaoxiang’s economic transformation include Panyu and Dongguan.4

In order to attract investments, Xinyi advertises itself as being endowed with abundant natural resources such as tin and jade and well-built agricultural bases of litchi, longan, hawthorn, banana, yellow olive, rosin, herbs, bamboo products and chicken.5 The reality, however, is that in the post-1978 period Xinyi has floundered in sluggish economic growth. In fact, Xinyi was identified as one of the poor areas in Guangdong. The provincial and local governments made efforts in the late 1980s to ensure that all the population in Xinyi had a minimum of warmth and food (wenbao) and in the 1990s to get this locality well off from poverty (tuopin zhifu).6

The gross domestic product (GDP) of Xinyi merely reached RMB3,664 million in 1995 from RMB195 million in 1978.7 In 1995, its per capita GDP was merely RMB3,377 and the actual utilisation of foreign capital only secured US$4 million. Its economy was not much export-orientated, with US$37 million export in 1995. In 1995, each employee and
peasant in Xinyi respectively received income of RMB5,337 and RMB2,179 and a Xinyi resident could only save up RMB1,466.4

Xinyi remains primarily an agricultural economy. In 1995, the primary sector made the largest contribution (RMB1,445 million) to its GDP. Although the contribution of its secondary sector (RMB1,349 million) was close to that of the primary sector, these two were in fact intimately interrelated as many industries in Xinyi were processing the primary resources and agricultural products. The proportion of the three sectors in Xinyi was 39:37:24. The majority of the Xinyi residents were engaged in agricultural activities. In 1995, 86 percent (917,417) of its population (1,068,844) were identified as agricultural. 68 percent of the total labour forces involved in the primary sector, while 20 percent worked in the secondary sector and 12 percent in the tertiary sector. Meanwhile, Xinyi did not experience any significant degree of urbanisation as the majority (89 percent) of the people still resided in xiang (village) rather than zhen (town).9

Two major factors are detrimental to Xinyi’s economic takeoff, one geographical and one institutional. Situated in the western inland part of Guangdong, the mountainous Xinyi is remote from the economic centre of gravity, the Inner Pearl River Delta region spanning from Guangzhou southwards to Zhuhai in one direction and to Shenzhen in another. The hilly landscape impedes betterment of infrastructure within Xinyi and the long distance obstructs connections to Hong Kong, the prime source of investments and an outlet to global capitalism.10 The nearest seaport is Maoming port, founded in 1992 in Shuidong Economic Development Zone,11 which faces stiff competition from other large ports along the coast of the province. On the other hand, Xinyi was slow in receiving attention of the provincial government that in the 1980s focused its reforming effort on the Pearl River Delta region and the Shantou special economic zone. It was as late as in 1992 that Xinyi was granted permission to have preferential policies, comparable to what were already given to the Pearl River Delta region, to invite foreign capital.12

What strikingly distinguishes Xinyi from other rich qiaoxiang areas is that Xinyi is still sending its people away as labour. Contrary to pre-1949 period directions, the movement this time is not overseas, but overland to elsewhere in Guangdong with demand for labour. Peasants leaving Xinyi and working in Chinese towns and cities are part of the phenomenally massive migrant works in China. The sluggish economic growth, coupled with the considerably large population (1,069,000 in 1995), engendered labour surplus in Xinyi and thus out-migration. The majority (estimated to have been 100,000 in 1993) of the out-migrants moved to the those qiaoxiang areas which have thrived rapidly (Dongguan, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Zhongshan, Taishan, Enping, Kaiping, Lufeng, Guangzhou) and the neighbouring counties (Yangjiang and Yangchun).13 In addition, there were 50,000 who
migrated to Hainan Island and Leizhou Peninsula to participate in reservoir construction and farmland activities. A similar number of peasants went to settle in such counties as Danxian, Baisha, Qiongzhong in Hainan, and Xuwen in Zhanjiang.14

3. Local Government Taking Over to Help Poor Guiqiao and Qiaojuan

Given the impoverished economic conditions in Xinyi, a critical issue pertaining to qiaoxiang studies is concerning who help the poor guiqiao (returned sojourners) and qiaojuan (families with diasporic links). The case of Xinyi shows that the overseas kinsfolk did not much lend a hand to the local people to overcome problems of daily life; it was instead the local government that assisted them to be independent of diaspora for livelihood.

Xinyi did receive remittances from its diaspora in the post-1978 period. The amount soared to US$460,683 in 1978 from US$297,263 in 1977. It increased to US$836,970 in 1983 but declined to US$543,722 in 1986.15 A further analysis, however, suggests that the amount received did not have significant implications on the daily life of the guiqiao and qiaojuan. It was estimated that in the late 1980s the guiqiao and qiaojuan in Xinyi totalled 178,458.16 To take 1986 to study, on average each guiqiao or qiaojuan merely received US$3.04, or US$0.25 per month, that year. From another perspective, the inflow of remittances probably confined to a few people, thus not benefitting many residents.17

While diasporic remittances could not help much, the local government took up the responsibility to assist those guiqiao and qiaojuan mired in adverse conditions. The Program to Support the Poor Areas was initiated in Xinyi in 1987 to include all the poor households and individuals, whether or not of guiqiao and qiaojuan.18 In 1991, a more specific program was adopted to help poor guiqiao and qiaojuan in Maoming metropolitan region, where there were 524 guiqiao households (2,929 individuals) identified as impoverished, the majority of which were located in Xinyi and Gaozhou. The metropolitan government, through different Qiaoban offices at local level, provided non-interest loan for them to develop their family operations in agriculture, aquaculture, and petty handicraft industries; gave relieves to cover medical treatment and daily expenses; and help the aged.19

The active involvement of government in the betterment of livelihood of Xinyi guiqiao and qiaojuan stands a sharp contrast to two patterns associated with other old qiaoxiang areas in the post-1978 period. Xinyi is different from Panyu, representative of the pattern of those rich localities, where guiqiao and qiaojuan, like other local people, have become well off because of the successful economic transformation.20 Xinyi is also distinguished from Taishan and Kaiping, emblematic of the pattern of those localities which have not developed much and where qiaojuan are...
Only economically privileged because of diaspora remittances from North America.\textsuperscript{21}

4. Disappearing Chinese Overseas: An Analysis of the Xinyi Honorary Citizens

Xinyi only awarded one batch of honorary citizen in 1995. Like what commonly practiced in other qiaoxiang areas, the objective of the conferment of the Honorary Citizens was also to appreciate the contribution of those who responded significantly to the economic reform and open door policy, either through donation or investment or both.\textsuperscript{22}

A collation of the bio-data of the Xinyi honorary citizens strikingly reveals the absence of Chinese Overseas, though Xinyi had the majority of its diaspora residing in Malaysia rather than Hong Kong and Macao.\textsuperscript{23} Out of the total 51 people conferred, 22 were residents in Hong Kong, one in Macao, and 28 from elsewhere in China (exclusive of the two post-colonial territories). Among the 28 honorary citizens who hailed from elsewhere in China, the majority came from Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Dongguan, reflecting the emergence of new riches in Guangdong. Out of the 23 honorary citizens who were residents in Hong Kong and Macao, 17 (74 percent) were had their ancestral roots in Xinyi. Meanwhile, out of these 23 people, 19 (82 percent) appeared as merely making donation and only 4 (17 percent) did make productive and business investments beside donation.\textsuperscript{24}

The above analysis reveals that Xinyi has feeble overseas connections though its ties to Hong Kong were relatively stronger. In particular, the absence of Malaysian Chinese from the honours list mirrors the weakening locality fidelity and the fact that Xinyi was too far and not conducive for investments. This, however, does not suggest that there has been no Malaysian or Singaporean at all who invested and donated in post-1978 Xinyi. As will discussed in the subsequent sections, there were some but the money made by them was not as significant as the Hong Kong compatriots. Where the Hong Kong residents alone are concerned, the fact that there were only a few who made productive and business investments reveals that economic rationale is clearly the prime concern for anyone to involve in such activities in one’s diasporic homeland.

5. Donations for Public Welfare: A Traditional Huaqiao Response

Hong Kong residents emerged as the biggest donors in Xinyi. According to an internal document, from 1978 to 1997, Out of the total 15 items and projects, 13 engaged Hong Kong residents as main donors, while one involved Macao resident and one Singaporean. Given the largest diasporic concentration in Malaysia, it might be surprising that there was no presence of Malaysian in the public welfare projects. My informants in Malaysia revealed that the common practice for the Malaysian Xinyi people
has been that they donated, not in a very large amount of money, primarily to schools only when they paid visit back to their ancestral homeland. There has so far been no remarkable project launched and generated by Malaysians as main donors. Also, the accumulative amount of the random donations made by the Malaysian Xinyi people was by no means comparable to those made by Hong Kong residents.

The reduced reliance of Xinyi on overseas donations is also reflected in the restructuring of funding sources of the Xinyi Huaqiao Middle School in the post-1978 period. This middle school was founded in 1957 with the donations made by Xinyi people in Malaysia. It was closed down in 1966 when the Cultural Revolution erupted. It was not until 1981 that the school was reopened at the request of the Xinyi Qiaolian with the reason to take care of the education affairs of qiaojuan. In an interview conducted in January 2001, the headmaster, Deng Chongke, disclosed that the operation of the school was merely lightly dependent on overseas donations during the reform period. The annual funding, he explained, was primarily derived from two major sources: the government (RMB1.5 million) and the fees collected from students (RMB3 million). Throughout the period from 1981 to 2000, the school only received donations of RMB1 million. He predicted that in future the amount collected from the school itself would increase but that from donations would decline.

The post-1978 pattern of donation in Xinyi, though the major source was Hong Kong, resonates with the traditional response of huaqiao in the pre-1949 period, which paid great attention to the education welfare in their diasporic homelands. According to Appendix 1, out of the total 15 projects, apparently the largest proportion was associated with education - building or expanding kindergarten and elementary and middle schools, establishing book reading centre and science centre to transmit knowledge, and setting up foundation to award teachers and students. One project was to support financially an emergency centre at hospital, one for foundation of public security, and one for road construction. This donation pattern in Xinyi was traditional in nature where diasporic Chinese homelands are concerned.

6. Foreign Capitals for Factories and Trade: Insignificant Impact

Hong Kong compatriots have appeared not merely as main donors, but also major investors in post-1978 Xinyi. It was estimated in 1998 that 80 percent of the foreign investments made in Xinyi was derived from Hong Kong and Macao, though the Xinyi people in this two territories only made up 4.3 percent of the diaspora.

All of the total five sanzi enterprises that were approved in 1987 and 1988 and operating in Xinyi were the cooperations between China and Hong Kong. Hong Kong capitals accounted for the largest proportion or all of the investments in each of these enterprises. Records show that from 1989 to
1995, Xinyi managed to secure foreign capital.\textsuperscript{28} There was a remarkable rise in 1992 both in the utilisation of foreign capital on contract basis and actual utilisation of the capital, as a result of the celebrated Southern Tour of Deng Xiaoping that year. Hong Kong capitals still dominated this period from 1989 to 1995.\textsuperscript{29} My informants in Malaysia and Xinyi told that the only one investment involving Malaysian capital was made by Huang Rongwen in 1998, around RMB400,000, to open an estate of longan and litchi in Dongzhen, his home village.\textsuperscript{30}

However, the inflow of foreign capitals in Xinyi, as mentioned in the previous discussion, was not substantial enough to trigger off robust economic growth, industrialization, and urbanization, as in other localities in the Pearl River Delta region in Guangdong. One noteworthy point is the more frequent employment of the term of \textit{qiaozhi} in the primary and secondary sources on Xinyi. In contrast, \textit{waizi} (foreign investment) was more commonly used in the literature on rich \textit{qiaoxiang} areas where the foreign-invested companies and factories, in most cases, were expected to make money for the investors.

How \textit{qiaozhi} worked in Xinyi is evinced in the case of Xinyi Nanqiao Art & Craft Limited Company, which made use of the local jade to produce handicraft. Its owner is Zeng Zhizhao, who utilized RMB30,000 given by his father, resident in Malaysia, as start-up capital to open this company in 1985. His business has expanded and ventured into wooden furniture and electrical appliance industries, yielding in 1998 a total of RMB51 million worth of products and around US$5 million worth of export.\textsuperscript{31} Interestingly, his products were not sold to Malaysia, where the available family ties could help to establish business network; his consideration was that the Malaysian consumer market was not big enough. 90 percent of his export went to the United States of America, and the remainder to Singapore and Poland. The market in the United States was actually secured as a result of the agreements he made with a few American Chinese, originating from Taishan and Enping, at Guangzhou Trade Fair held from 1985 to 1995. He thus sent his son to open and run an outlet in California.\textsuperscript{32} This case shows that diasporic capitals are a potential resource for economic development in ancestral homeland. But what is more important, to dispel the myth associated with Chinese business networks, is that this case reveals that the pre-existing family and kinship ties do not necessarily translate into business. Economic rationale, such as market demand, is to be factored in before a new connection, whether or not through family members, is forged.

In Xinyi, it would be an exaggeration to assume that \textit{qiaozhi} constituted the largest proportion of investment. By 1998, out of the total 2,351 \textit{qiaoshu} enterprises in Xinyi, 1,268 (53.9 percent) involved in the secondary and tertiary sectors, while 1,083 (46.1 percent) engaged in the primary sector. Out of the total investment of RMB568.9 million, \textit{qiaozhi} only
amounted to RMB13.83 million (2.43 percent) while the capital invested by qiaoshu was RMB43.06 million. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the qiaojuan and qiaoshu were eligible to apply for the government non-interest loan, under the program helping the poor, to open and run their enterprises.

7. Douglas Lee and Liang Guanghua: Malaysian Glory and Hong Kong Success

In order to demonstrate how Xinyi has been linked to its diasporic kinsfold, this section focuses on two persons, Douglas Lee Kim Kiu (Lee Jianqiao, born 1923) and Liang Guanghua (born 1943). Respectively, they represent what Malaysian Chinese and Hong Kong people have done in Xinyi’s socioeconomic landscape in post-1978 China.

Douglas Lee is the eldest son of Henry Lee Hau Shik and a grandson of Li Jianlian. Li Jianlian played a crucial role in the history of overseas migration of Xinyi people in the 1910s and 1920s, while Henry Lee participated actively in the Malaysian political arena before and after its independence in 1957. Douglas Lee was born in Cambridge, received part of his secondary education in Hong Kong and Guangzhou, but eventually completed his education in Malaya after he left China in 1937 when the Japanese invaded the nation. After China was reopened in 1978, he went back to his ancestral hometown, Xinyi, first in 1986, two years before his father died in Malaysia. During the first visit, he donated RMB40,000 to the Xinyi Huaqiao Middle School and have since been back to his ancestral homeland very often to attend big events and ceremonies. He is highly respected among the local officials and people, not really because of the contributions he made to Xinyi, but mainly because of the high political and social achievements he made in Malaysia. Commencing from 1945, after Second World War, he helped his father for years in tin mines, and later opened his own business in construction and banking sectors in Malaysia. He was a council member from 1952 to 1955, a high-ranked member of Malaysian Chinese Association until 1959, and joined in 1974 Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, another Chinese-based political party. Among Chinese communities in Malaysia, he assumed many high positions in such organisations as the Guangdong Association and the Xinyi Association.

During an interview conducted in August 2000, Douglas Lee discussed his personal views on remittances, donations, and investments, reflecting indeed the sentiment of Chinese diaspora who are rooted more deeply in the countries of residence. The most important thing he thought he should do in Xinyi was to help better the education institutions. He has, based on economic rationale, been looking for any opportunity to invest in Maoming that is more economically promising than Xinyi. However, Malaysia is the most preferred place for him to make productive and business investments as it is, since he is living here, easier for him to supervise the
Cheun Hoe Yow

operation. Malaysia is also his most preferred place to donate to social welfare as, he said, his roots and descendants are in this country. Where his kinsfolk in Xinyi is concerned, he has been helping one of his cousins, not by sending remittances, but through giving him part of the rental collected from his family houses in Xinyi.

While Douglas Lee has concentrated a great proportion of his political and economic activities in Malaysia, Liang Guanghua exemplified a growing participation and contribution of Hong Kong Chinese in Guangdong and Xinyi. A native from Dongzhen, he left for Hong Kong, where over the years he accumulated wealth in the paper industry. He was the president of the Hong Kong Commerce Chamber of Paper Industry and the president of Hong Kong Xinyi Association. In the 1980s, he opened paper factories in Dongguan, which witnessed a relocation of a lot of processing plants from Hong Kong and Taiwan. In the 1990s, he donated generously to elementary and middle schools, to road and bridge construction, and to foundation of public security in Xinyi. It was estimated that in the 1990s the donation he had made in Xinyi amounted to over RMB5.6 million. In 1995, he was conferred as a Xinyi Honorary Citizen.35

Thus, in the memory and perception of Xinyi people, Douglas Lee and his father emblem a glory that Chinese diaspora can possess by taking part in the local arena in Malaysia. Indeed the overseas legend of Henry Lee and Douglas Lee has been told and retold to the students in the school opening and during important ceremonies of the Xinyi Huaqiao Middle School.36 Nevertheless, it does not mean that Malaysia has a predominant influence on the daily life of the local people in Xinyi. As discussed earlier on, the donations and investments made by Malaysians were relatively insignificant, compared to those by Hong Kong people. In fact, as the next section reveals, the local people only knew Malaysia a little bit and hence received less modern ideas and cultural influence emanating from Malaysia. Liang Guanghua, on the other hand, symbolises the success of Hong Kong people that have greater implication on Xinyi, through donations and investments. Meanwhile, the people in Xinyi, like elsewhere in Guangdong, observe and attempt to follow the Hong Kong modernity, lifestyle, and popular culture that are transmitted daily through mass media.


A questionnaire was administered to a total of 40 people in two towns, Zhenlong and Chidong, in Xinyi in January 2000, with the purpose of analysing qiaoxiang conditions and mentality in the local population. Zhenlong was selected as it is the hometown for Li Jilian who triggered off the massive migration of Xinyi people to British Malaya in the 1910s and 1920s. Chidong was chosen because it has the largest number of kinsfolk
living overseas and qiaojuan. In 1988, Chidong had 17,324 Chinese overseas and 19,640 qiaojuan, while the figures that Zhenlong had were respectively 2,699 and 3,216.37 Both towns remain agricultural, though gradually shifting from self-sufficient to commercial. Zhenlong markets litchi, vegetables, banana, fish, and livestock while Chidong sells longan, cinnamon, and chicken. It was estimated in 1995 that peasants constituted 91.1 percent (47,077) of the total population in Zhenlong, while 96.5 percent (56,781) of the population in Chidong were agricultural. Comparatively, Zhenlong has been more advanced than Chidong in export. From 1989 to 1995 Zhenlong exported a total of US$2 million worth of agricultural processed products, mainly made of bamboo and rosin.38

The questionnaire was administered to 17 males and three females in Zhenlong and 15 males and five females in Chidong. The majority of them had family members or relatives overseas; there were eight close qiaojuan in Zhenlong and seven in Chidong, and six distant qiaojuan in Zhenlong and eleven in Chidong. There was one guiqiao in each town. Five in Zhenlong and one in Chidong did not have any external connection. Numerically strong family ties were with Singapore and Malaysia as well as Hong Kong and Macao. Ten in Zhenlong and 20 in Chidong had family members and relatives in Singapore and Malaysia. Ten in Zhenlong and four had family members and relatives in Hong Kong and Macao. Few had connections with North America; only three in Zhenlong and two in Chidong had relatives in North America.

The bulk of the interviewees worked in agriculture and agriculture-processing industries; the only difference is that the majority, 14 out of 20, in Chidong engaged in self-sufficient agriculture while there was none in Zhenlong in the activity. In Chidong, two worked in commercial agricultural and one in agriculture-processing industry. In Zhenlong, nine involved in commercial agriculture and seven worked in agriculture-processing industries. While only two in Zhenlong engaged in industrial sectors, there was no industrial worker in Chidong. Only two in Zhenlong and three in Chidong earned their living in commerce. None in Zhenlong and Chidong worked in the service sector. In terms of family monthly income, the majority of the family of the interviewees in Zhenlong, 17 out of 20, earned less than RMB3,000, and 14 out of 20 in Chidong had their income below RMB2,000.

Of all the interviewees in Xinyi, only two in Zhenlong received remittances; the amount received made up 20 percent and 100 percent of the daily expenses, respectively. The overwhelmingly majority of the interviewees in Xinyi did not obtain remittances for daily expenses, except that few occasionally received ‘red packet’ money, usually amounting to RMB100 to 200, during the lunar calendar New Year. The Xinyi people, most engaged in agricultural, did not face the problem of warmth and food as desperate as in the pre-1949 period. Furthermore, they could still call for the
help from the local government under the program helping the poor. Indeed, the non-reliance on remittances renders the **guqiao** and **qiaojuan** in Xinyi less distinguishable economically among the local population. Like other people, many of them were peasants and some were hawkers and traders.

How did the people in Xinyi observe and get information about foreign countries as well as Hong Kong? Table 1 reveals that only a few of the interviewees relied on the extended family members and relatives to know about Singapore and Malaysia (SM), Hong Kong (HK), and North America (NA). Nor did institutions like Qiaolian and Qiaoban, personal visit, and the Internet had any significance as means to understand these places. The majority of them made use of mass media like newspaper, television, and radio to know about SM (15 in Zhenlong and 10 in Chidong), HK (16 in Zhenlong and 18 in Chidong), and NA (19 in Zhenlong and 19 in Chidong).

The mass media in Xinyi, as in elsewhere in Guangdong, gives most detailed coverage about HK, less about NA, and the least about SM. Given the importance of mass media to the bulk of the interviewees in Xinyi, it is not surprising, as shown in Table 2, that the majority of them knew more about HK and least about SM. Where HK is concerned, the majority in Zhenlong (16) and Chidong (13) claimed to have general knowledge about the territory. Where NA is concerned, more than half in Zhenlong (11) had general understanding and the bulk in Chidong (14) simply knew the area a little bit. As regards SM, the majority in Zhenlong (16) and Chidong (17) had a little knowledge about the two countries.

The majority of the interviewees in Xinyi were reluctant to leave their place. As Table 3 shows, 18 in Zhenlong and 18 in Chidong chose to remain in Xinyi to work. Meanwhile, Xinyi was the most preferred living place for 18 in Zhenlong as well as in Chidong. Only two in Zhenlong preferred to work and live in other better-off places in Guangzhou and Dongguan. In Chidong, two liked most to work in and one liked most to live in Malaysia; the interviewees concerned had very strong family ties to this country. In the context of Xinyi, there has been no desperate urge to work overseas in the stabilised post-1978 period than in the chaotic pre-1949 period. A considerable number of Xinyi people did, in the post-1978 period, go and work for better payment elsewhere in Guangdong, but most of the local people were quite well informed that Malaysia did not encourage the immigration from China and Singapore only welcomed talents and experts.

Most interviewees not merely did not receive remittance for daily expenses, but also were considerably independent in terms of financial planning and their own family affairs. As Table 4 shows, half (10) in Zhenlong and the majority (12) in Chidong, would make use of their own saving if they need a large sum of money to do business. In Zhenlong, to do business, four would seek help from the local family members and relatives, while three would look up assistance from HK and another there from SM. In
Chidong, four would look for such local resources as bank loan, while one would ask for the help from HK and three from SM. To get oneself or one’s children to study overseas, nine in Zhenlong and 14 in Chidong would depend on their own saving. In Zhenlong, only three would seek help from local family members and relatives, and few also would resort to the help from SM (4), HK (3), and NA (1). In Chidong, only three would try to get bank loan and another three would resort to the assistance from SM.

Since most of the interviewees were not financially linked to overseas and Hong Kong, it is not surprising that diaspora did not have much influence on their own family affairs. Table 5 shows, most in Zhenlong (18) and all in Chidong (20) would seek resolution from the local family members and relatives, instead of those residing overseas and in Hong Kong, should there happen to be a dispute in their own family.

Although most people in Xinyi were, in terms of family affairs, financially independent, they did hope the Chinese overseas and Hong Kong compatriots could do something for the Xinyi community. However, as Table 6 shows, in the perception of the interviewees, there were no much differences as to what role and contribution were hoped to be played by the Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia (SMC), Hong Kong (HKC), and North America (NAC). An interesting phenomenon revealed is that the majority in Zhenlong preferred investment in factories and the bulk in Chidong more welcomed donation to social welfare. The difference was mainly because Zhenlong was a place relatively connected to the outside world and the residents there were more informed about the benefits that could be generated by investment. On the other hand, Chidong was more backward and needed more urgently the betterment of public welfare. Just as what a peasant said, all they wanted was simply a road built to lead their children to go to school more conveniently.

9. Conclusion

Along the stretching migratory trajectories, historical and personal, diasporas explore and confront a plethora of critical issues associated with places of origin and residence as well localities they have experienced during the process of travelling and traversing. This study focuses on places of diasporic origins, with Xinyi examined as one of the qiaoxiang areas in China. It shows that socioeconomic landscapes of diasporic homelands are constantly on the status of changing, contingent on linkages with and involvement of diaspora apart from political and institutional factors.

The foregoing discussion reveals that during China’s reform era, which started in 1978, Xinyi turns old and barren as a qiaoxiang. In Guangdong, while other qiaoxiang areas have moved rapidly on the track of industrialization and modernization, Xinyi remains very much an economic site with poor conditions and bleak future. The considerably gloomy
economic setting has driven Xinyi people to work in other Chinese towns and cities, joining the massive migrant workers in China. Transnational migration, however, never resumes in Xinyi in significant numbers. The people in Xinyi tend to look inwardly for resources, from the local government, their own economic activities, and their kinsfolk working as migrant workers in China.

As a diasporic homeland, Xinyi experiences more disintegrative forces than integrative. It finds no avenues to revitalize connections with Malaysia and Singapore, where its large majority of diaspora reside, as the first generation migrants are dwindling and their descendants are losing identification with the ancestral homeland. It keeps the linkages with Hong Kong, where only small numbers of Xinyi people are staying. Clear embodiments of the disintegrative forces are the slump in remittances for family expenses, compared to the times preceding 1949, and the limited donations for social welfare and investments in manufacturing and trade sectors. Even the local government needs to shoulder the responsibilities of helping returned diaspora and families with diasporic ties, as part of the agendas assisting the whole local population. All these signs point up that Xinyi is breaking up as site for diasporic imaginaries, connections, and involvements.

Table 1: What is/are the source(s) you use to know about Singapore and Malaysia (SM), Hong Kong (HK), and North America (NA)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zhenlong</th>
<th>Chidong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family members and relatives living in the given place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper/television/radio</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiaolian/Qiaoban</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Visit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: To what extent do you know Singapore and Malaysia (SM), Hong Kong (HK), and North America (NA)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zhenlong</th>
<th>Chidong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fully know it</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know it very well</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know it a little bit</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know it at all</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3: Where do you like most to work and live?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Zhenlong</th>
<th>Chidong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working</td>
<td>Living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remain Same</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Better-Off Places in China</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Malaysia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: From which source do you seek resolution if you need a large sum of money to do business, and get yourself or your children studying overseas?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Zhenlong</th>
<th>Chidong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Study Overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your own saving</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local family members and relatives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members and relatives in Hong Kong</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members and relatives in North America</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members and relatives in Singapore/Malaysia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan from bank</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5: From which source do you seek resolution if you have a family dispute?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Zhenlong</th>
<th>Chidong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local family members and relatives</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members and relatives in Hong Kong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members and relatives in North America</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members and relatives in Singapore/Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: In your opinion, what is the most important contribution the Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia (SMC), in Hong Kong (HKC), and in North America (NAC) should make?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Zhenlong</th>
<th>Chidong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SMC</strong></td>
<td><strong>HKC</strong></td>
<td><strong>NAC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment in factories</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donation to social welfare</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittance to family members and relatives</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restore ancestral hall</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>SMC</strong></th>
<th><strong>HKC</strong></th>
<th><strong>NAC</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investment in factories</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donation to social welfare</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remittance to family members and relatives</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restore ancestral hall</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

The selection of 1978 and 1995 is because they are the only two years where the statistics are available.


The same geographical problems also confront the mountainous areas primarily encompassing the north, northwest, and northeast parts of Guangdong. Ezra Vogel noted in the late 1980s that the most serious inequalities in Guangdong were those between mountainous areas and other localities, and out of the 30 poorest counties, 27 were mountainous. This remains true in the years after 2000 when the provincial government adopted measures to encourage the enterprises in the Pearl River Delta region to help, through capital and experience, the mountainous areas. See Ezra F. Vogel, *One Step Ahead in China*, Chapter 8, pp. 251-274; *Nanfang Ribao*, 25 November 2000.

*Maoming touzi zhinan* 1999, pp. 36-37.


Chen Qizhu, et al. (eds), *Xinyi xianzhi*, p. 892. In her studies on Taishan and Kaiping, Woon Yuen-fong remarks on the presence of migrant works from Xinyi, in addition to those from Gaozhou, Yangchun and Yangjiang in Guangdong and from Nanning and Yongning in Guangxi. See Woon Yuen-fong, ‘Labor Migration in the 1990s: Homeward Orientation of Migrants in the Pearl River Delta Region and Its Implications for Interior China,’ *Modern China*, vol. 25, no. 4, October 1999, pp. 496-497.

Chen Qizhu, et al. (eds), *Xinyi Xianzhi*, p. 892.

Liang Jiyi (ed), *Maoming huaqiao zhi*, p. 29. Regrettably the statistics of remittances received after 1987 are not obtainable. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to believe that overall the amount received was declining.

A questionnaire I conducted in 2000 revealed that a considerable large portion of the Xinyi diaspora surveyed in Malaysia and the majority in Singapore did not remit money to their ancestral homeland.

18 Huang Chunfu and Liang Qicheng et al. (eds), *Xinyi nianjian, 1989-1995*, p. 300.

19 In 1991 alone, RMB300,000 was approved to carry out this program Maoming Qiaobao, no. 134, 3 May 1998.


23 In diapsoric Chinese studies, ‘Chinese overseas’ (haiwai huaqiao huaren) refer to people of Chinese descents residing outside Greater China which comprises Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. With the term of ‘compatriots’ (tongbao), the people in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan are regarded different from Chinese overseas and the people in Mainland China.


25 Over 80 percent of the donations received by this school was derived from Malaysia and Singapore. This is understandable as it was the Malaysian Xinyi people who originally founded the school. This, however, does not mean that they were the major donor in the overall education field as well as other public welfare in Xinyi.


27 Chen Qizhu, et al. (eds.), *Xinyi xianzhi* (The Annals of Xinyi County) (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1993), pp. 507-508. Sanzi (literally meaning three capitals) enterprises refer to three forms of ‘foreign-invested firms’: wholly-owned foreign firms, Sino-foreign equity joint ventures and Sino-foreign contractual joint ventures.’ These enterprises mushroomed in Guangdong commencing from the mid-1980s as a result of increased inflow of foreign capitals, primarily from Hong Kong. See Cheng Yuk-shing, Lu Weiguo, and Christopher Findlay, ‘Hong Kong’s Economic
21 See the information, though not detailed, in Huang Chunfu and Liang Qicheng et al (eds), *Xinyi nianjian, 1989-1995*, pp. 162-163. That Hong Kong residents were the predominant investor throughout the two decades after 1978 was reconfirmed during my interviews with the Xinyi local officials from December 2000 to February 2001.
22 See also *Maoming Qiaobao*, no. 156, 15 August 1999.
26 *Maoming Qiaobao*, new no. 126, 15 May 1998; Chen Qizhu and Liang Qicheng (eds), *Xinyi Qiaolian wu shi nian* (Fifty Years of Xinyi Association of Returned Overseas Chinese), Tianma Tushu Youxian Gongsi, Shenzhen, 2001, p. 299.
27 Interview with Xinyi officials in January 2001. See also Liang Jiyi (ed), *Maoming huaqiaozhi*, p. 69.
28 Interview with Deng Chongke, the school’s headmaster, 20 January 2001.

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**Yow Cheun Hoe** is an Assistant Professor at Nanyang Technological University of Singapore. His academic interest is in Chinese diaspora, particularly topics pertaining to relations between Chinese overseas and China, Chinese migration and new migrants, and Chinese writers and their works.
Beyond the Sea: Geographies of Mobility and Memory in Quy Nhon, Vietnam

Ivan Small

Abstract
The contemporary moment of economic transition and globalization in Vietnam is marked by increasing returns of former refugees and their descendants for visits, investment, philanthropic work, and resettlement. An exile diaspora community is transitioning into a transnational one. The re-establishment of kinship networks and the changing nature of the informal aid flows that accompany them are interactive sites in which new cultural imaginaries develop between Vietnamese and their overseas Vietnamese (Viet Kieu) counterparts, expanding horizons of identity, desire, and possibility. What is the role of the ‘gift’ in catalyzing such imaginaries and relationships? Using the lens of remittance economies, from which most Vietnamese transnational exchanges begin, this chapter traces the dynamics of various socio-cultural processes emerging from and mediated by this particular gifting trajectory. The chapter argues that between physical spatial immobility and global monetary mobility is revealed a space for creative awareness and desire for transformation that takes diverse cultural forms depending on its realization or frustration. As much of the current scholarship on remittances focuses on their economic, rather than socio-cultural, impact, this analysis seeks to bring the study of remittances into social, cultural, and historical perspective and relevance, broadening analysis beyond traditional political economy studies. Drawing on ethnographic case studies from fieldwork conducted in the coastal town of Quy Nhon, Viet Nam, this chapter interrogates the rich body of anthropological literature on gifting and social relations, examining notions of origins, reciprocity, obligation, identity, agency, and memory.

Key Words: Diaspora, displacement, gifting, globalization, migration, mobility, remittances, social imaginaries, transnationalism, Vietnam.

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1. The Imaginative Setting
Anthropological discussions of ‘imagined worlds’, described by one author as a ‘negotiation between sites of agency and globally defined fields of possibility’ (Appadurai 1996) are common but often vague and unsatisfactory attempts to reference the psychological by-products of
heightened trans-cultural flows during an era of ‘globalization.’ In Vietnam imagined worlds abound, finding their catalyst in numerous sources ranging from the global media to foreign investment to diasporic returnees. This chapter examines a particular economy reflecting the intersection of remittances and imagination as encountered in the south central coastal area, with a focus on the coastal city of Quy Nhon. It argues that an important element of the imaginary catalyst - beyond transcultural flows - lies in a fundamental contradiction in the neoliberal ethic - the lack of equivalence between flows of money and goods and that of people, and explores its relation to horizons of personal and collective dreaming and displacements characterized by mobility, hope, frustration, and chance.

In Vietnam, after Ho Chi Minh City, the most significant flow of remittances is to coastal areas. (Pfau & Long 2008) During the late 1970s and 80s thousands of refugees fled the country using small fishing boats - those with access to such boats were more easily able to leave. The rickety wooden boats, meant for offshore fishing, were commandeered for long multiple day journeys to neighbouring countries such as the Philippines or Malaysia, yet often arrested by the Vietnamese coast guard, running short of fuel and supplies, capsizing, or attacked by sea pirates before reaching their destination. Although the casualty rate was extremely high, thousands of Vietnamese followed friends and family to take the risky journey on the high seas - those who made it usually ended up in refugee camps such as Palawan in the Philippines where they would wait months or even years to be processed for resettlement in a third country or in some cases sent back to Vietnam. The present day result of this fishing boat exodus is a multitude of Vietnamese coastal communities with strong ties to diasporic networks and remittance support, particularly along the central coast. Throughout this region, one finds intriguing spatial and mnemonic relationships to a once porous and transcendent border and horizon - the sea.

Quy Nhon, the capital of Binh Dinh province, is located in a desert like coastal region marked by dry rocky land, fishing villages, and sand dunes, as well as scattered Cham ruins serving as reminders of the historical southward migration of the Viet people at the expense of the prior inhabitants. The city’s current population count is about 300,000. Quy Nhon was historically not only a fishing community but also a strategic military post during the Vietnam War. Today, the city’s peninsular location by the Eastern Sea (Bien Dong a.k.a. South China Sea) is marked by a large number of remittance recipient neighbourhoods along the streets close to the water on either side of the town and in the surrounding fishing villages. Similar to other smaller towns and cities, the material effect of remittances on recipient households in Quy Nhon is more apparent than in Ho Chi Minh City - their homes often noticeably newer and fresher looking as overseas money has been invested in their upgrade and expansion. Yet ‘Nha Viet Kieu’
remittance households, literally: homes of overseas Vietnamese) are rarely ostentatious - whenever I saw a particularly large and decorative new house and inquired about it I was told that the occupants were government officials or managers of state owned companies, rather than families with overseas relatives. Upgrading or buying a house for relatives is a common use of remittance funds. Upgrading usually involves the destruction of the previous structure and rebuilding on top of it, typically ranging $15,000-20,000, whereas buying a new house with the land ranges $60-$80,000 I was told. As many informants noted, these remittance purchased homes benefited remitters as much as the recipients, serving as vacation homes away from home whenever the Viet Kieu family returned to Vietnam.

Research permission access was more difficult to gain in Quy Nhon, when I was finally invited in March 2008 the local provincial authorities chose an initial sample of households for me to interview. In most cases however, the initial formal interviews served as entrées into repeated social interactions that expanded to other topics and contacts. Following up to socialize with my informants usually took me to places outside of the house (where the first meetings were usually held) and away from the government officials that initially accompanied me. The two areas of town that my informants would often choose to meet were cafes by the ocean (bien) and cafes near ‘the airport’ (san bay). The airport was not actually an airport but the town’s only ‘mall’ - a hangar like assortment of supermarkets, bars and coffeeshops, clothing and book stores, and even a nightclub, bordered on both sides by broad boulevards popular with motorbike cruisers. Before 1975 it had been the main airport, which had since moved further north to occupy a former military airstrip. Nonetheless the space still retained the reference to flight in local parlance. It seemed an interesting coincidence that these areas of socializing were also spaces of historical departure by boat and by plane.

In these interactions, two particular themes emerged that will be explored in this chapter: mobility, and chance.

2. **Mobility**

One day some fishermen from Nhon Ly, a fishing village in the jurisdiction of Quy Nhon but about 10 kilometres outside the town centre, invited me out on their boat to explore the surrounding area. We loaded up with fishing gear, water, beer, and dried squid to snack on. As Thanh, a 29 year old fisherman with a wife and child whose older brother went to the U.S. in the 70s, started up the engine and guided the boat away from the other colourful blue and red wooden fishing boats docked off the coast and headed out towards the sea beyond the rocky coastline, he extended his hand out to the horizon and said, ‘keep going that way and America is there.’ I asked him if many people had gone there, he said yes, more than 60% of the families in Nhon Ly village had a relative abroad who had fled by boat (vuot bien).
Motioning back to the village behind us, he pointed to one of the districts by the sea on the north side of town. ‘That area over there, almost everyone has someone who went by sea - you can see the big houses they build now with the money sent back.’ When I asked why so many people in that particular area had left he said, ‘before they were poor, so they would go. Now they are rich. Many of them no longer need to fish.’ I asked if those people who left often came back, Thanh said, ‘yes, many of them do, but some never do. But it’s easy for them to go back and forth now. For us, we’ve not yet been anywhere. Going to Vietnam from America is easy, but going to America from Vietnam is very hard.’

Thanh went on to explain how those with boats were able to flee the country during the period of 1976-1982, at that time other countries ‘accepted Vietnamese when they arrived.’ Groups of people would pick and leave with some family or a group of friends, one of whom had access to a fishing boat even if a tiny one. I was told young people were particularly inclined to attempt the journey; it was a kind of adventure - risky, but with great unforeseen rewards at the end. One would go to the Philippines or Hong Kong or Malaysia and then wait for a country such as America, Australia, or France to sponsor them to a third country where an unimaginable new life awaited. ‘But then the door closed’, Thanh said, and the sea route was no longer an option. One was stuck: the chances and dreams of mobility although still alive were no longer as tangible, even for those willing to take a risk.

Memories and aspirations of mobility are a theme that pervades substantive remittance economies. There is a strong correlation between reception of remittances and reflections on mobility. Many other families I met in Quy Nhon and elsewhere who had relatives abroad were interested in finding a way to either personally, or have a child in the family, go overseas. In their hopes for migration people spoke of not only economic opportunity but also escape from stifling norms and expectations and finding an environment in which they could realize new personal potentials. Ha, a middle aged woman with an adolescent daughter, said, ‘it is difficult being a woman in Vietnam because everyone judges how you behave. You have to get married early otherwise you’re unmarriageable (e). I want my daughter to be educated in a different environment (moi truong) so that she can develop and have opportunity.’ This woman had sent one of her two daughters to live with a sister in Florida, where she attended high school and was preparing to apply for college. The purpose of overseas education for the daughter was not necessarily to return with new skills, but to perhaps escape from Vietnam permanently through subsequent job opportunities, marriage prospects, or a variety of other chance circumstances that one cannot possibly predict. In the meantime Ha’s family was also planning a move to Saigon, where there
would be more employment options and education opportunities for their other daughter.

Many other informants said they would be willing to give up stable and respected professions in Vietnam in order to traverse to an unknown world of opportunity and risk. ‘If they let me go (the American government) then I’ll go!’ declared a man named Hai who had applied for emigration a number of years ago and was still waiting to hear. Most times when I asked informants what they hoped to do if they moved abroad, they said they didn’t know, but their contacts would surely help them find something. ‘I have relatives and friends there, they’ll help me figure everything out once I arrive,’ said Thanh, a middle aged man who had applied for family sponsorship to go to the U.S. There was always the folk wisdom security that any Vietnamese can ‘do nails (manicure work) and make easy money’ in America. Indeed popular wisdom about manicure work and easy money abroad was a theme I would hear time and again during fieldwork.

3. Chance

The unknown overseas horizon that so many informants were eager to explore leads to the second theme, which was that migration and by extension much of life, often seemed to be viewed as a matter of certain chance. As one man described it, ‘some people took a risk to change their life. Some people accepted their life.’ Many of the remittance recipients I met had themselves attempted to leave on previous occasions but were unsuccessful. The boat refugee journey was risky - many were lost at sea or attacked by pirates en route, many more were caught by the local police, often resulting in a prison or hard labour term for the offender and/or their family. Minh, a slightly elderly man who taught English at the local university, said that he had been on many boats that had tried to escape - each time he was invited to go for free, whereas others would have to pay for their passage in gold bars (three often referenced as the standard fee), because he would be able to translate should a foreign freighter pick them up at sea. There was even a secret acknowledgement of this arrangement with the local police, who each time the boats were caught let him go with a fine/bribe. The last time he tried to escape, however, was with his wife and daughter, after which he was sentenced to a year in prison. Hai, another middle aged man with whom I sat having coffee and watching music one night, spotted one of his friends from the labour camp they had both been assigned to after trying to flee by boat. He said at the time they were young teenagers, and any chance they got they tried to go: they had tried three times. It was a ‘youth movement (phong trao), or something to keep up with (dua doi). There was a tendency (khuynh huong) of sorts, to try and escape abroad . . . but it was also because times were very hard (kho), there wasn’t enough to eat for the whole family so the young and able would leave.’ He said however ‘now the
Beyond the Sea

4. Imagined Selfhoods and Transformative Social Horizons

Migration, therefore, is for many imagined as a journey for the fulfilment of not only economic opportunity, but often an identity that may remain unrealized in Vietnam. There is an awareness of differentiated social, cultural, political, and economic structures and how one’s chance to negotiate them affects the future self. Vietnamese life overseas is a comparatively unknown future, but one invested with great hope of social transformation. Many Vietnamese spoke about how a foreign environment could bring out latent traits in the Vietnamese character. The transformation is most fully displayed and realized when a migrant returns home to visit, contributing to an emerging transnational social ideal. Hai talked about his relatives who returned to Vietnam - ‘They’re the same mostly, but a bit different - their skin is lighter, they’re more polite, they get sick easier.’

Yet the achievement of cultural and financial capital and difference through overseas living had its price. Most informants I spoke with believed that life abroad, while endowed with opportunity, is isolated and difficult - explaining why so many Viet Kieu (overseas Vietnamese) return on a regular basis. ‘Over here life is (suong) happy - exclaimed a sixty year old retired fisherman with a son in Brooklyn who escaped by boat twenty years ago and now sends back $200 monthly to support his parents. Riding on the back of my motorbike as we went out to eat and drink (nhau) with his family one night, he pointed to the rows of seafood restaurants lined along the water with groups of mostly men eating, drinking, and toasting with loud outbursts of ‘Do’ (informal southern declaration of cheers). ‘The Viet Kieu don’t drink (nhau) like this, but the Viet Cong (Communists) do. Vietnam may be poor but life is good.’ He went on to say that with a little money from his son he no longer had to fish, and could now afford to live in the city, pay for medical expenses, and treat his friends. He said, ‘I prefer life here because it is familiar - I have friends nearby and people to talk to. Over there, what would I do? But I do wish I could visit my son to see what his life is like.’

The migratory horizon of social transformation and subsequent return is represented by the networks of remittance money across which such
imaginaries flow. Remittances index mobile, transformative flux increasingly able to overcome the structural limitations of both ‘here’ and ‘there’. In doing so they heighten personal observations of and in many cases anticipation of actual transnational body mobility as displayed by Viet Kieu and sought after by many Vietnamese for whom remittances tease their own desire to travel to and see their source. ‘Money is best,’ said Na, answering a question about whether she preferred money or material gifts from her overseas relatives, ‘because with it you can do anything.’ This sense of money as enabling social transformation reflects new capitalist perceptions of class mobility that remain ambiguous in a Vietnamese late socialist societal structure. There is a large and growing disparity between rich and poor in Vietnam in which a strong middle class - typically embodying economic and social mobility - has yet to find a securely defined place. On the one hand there is the multitude of small family owned businesses participating in the burgeoning market economy. On the other there are large enterprises, formerly or still state owned, partnering with foreign investors in which inside connections and privilege are paramount to successful accumulation practices. Establishing medium enterprises and a solid middle-income sector still remains a challenge however. (Arkadie & Mallon 2003, Gainsborough 2003)

Remittance recipients often fall into a still small and emerging Vietnamese middle class - rising from poverty through the help of overseas relatives but without the social capital and connections to take further advantage of Vietnam’s ‘market economy with a socialist orientation’. Although capitalism is most visible in places like Saigon, in Quy Nhon there are timid ‘build it and they will come’ hopes for future neoliberal transformation through capital investment in new industry and tourism projects. Across the newly built Thi Nai bridge from the city lies the Nhon Hoi industrial zone, a fishing village area now zoned for not only factories, but also beach resorts, residential districts, and shopping centres. An official from the Binh Dinh tourism authority explained, ‘Right now there is little manufacturing industry and the tourism sector is small: hotel occupancies are only 40% for example and the road system is not very developed. But that is all changing, come back in 50 years and Quy Nhon will be totally transformed.’ Anh, an older man with daughters in Australia and other relatives in America and Europe, eagerly took me out on his motorbike one windy day to look at the newly constructed road to Nhon Hoi, lined with billboards painted with images of suburban office complexes, homes, and cars, while another map parcelled the zoning of the area into industrial and residential districts. Yet at present it remains a performance of hypothetical: currently a lonely, largely empty supermarket and billiard hall, on a wide dusty road still under construction, are all that exists of this future capitalist pleasure and production utopia. As foreign investment wanes in the new global economic downturn, local Quy Nhon residents lack the capital to ensure the project realizes completion.
Large scale capitalist social transformation still remains outside the ability or control of waiting middle class Quy Nhon residents, for whom paltry remittance flows from overseas neoliberal utopias are only a tease of what could be but can never be grasped within the limitations of Vietnam’s still undeveloped system of capitalism under late socialism. The realization of Quy Nhon’s developmental dreams depends on corporate remittance infusions from as yet unknown foreign investors. In the meantime desires for continued social and class momentum are displaced onto an idealized overseas capitalist landscape where dynamic upward class mobility is imagined to be indiscriminately accessible.

5. Monetary Agency

Remittance recipients reflect their aspirations for mobile and transformative middle class subjectivity in their stated desires to not only spend money, but also earn and send it to others. One constantly hears comparative references to how much one earns in a day in America versus how much things cost in Vietnam. The power of money earned there but spent here teases the imagination of many remittance recipients who would if given the chance prefer to be on the generating side of the money relationship. ‘I want to go to America so I can send money back’ said one unemployed remittance recipient who related her dreams of running a cleaning service in the United States. This desired performance of transformation through remittance giving may be understood as a desire to emulate the mobility and agency of money as a mediator of exchange relations. Successful migrants are perceived as possessing heightened agency as represented in the money they direct and sometimes follow across the route of original departure. They display their power to control and direct the gift and its representation. The preference for remittance sending is personal courier networks: it has become a general expectation that a returnee to Vietnam will carry gifts and money for other friends and family, thus personalizing the financial gift exchange. If personal networks are unavailable, remitters still prefer private services providing home delivery to the anomy of banks or money transfer companies such as Western Union. Remittances are usually accompanied by a small note from the sender indicating their remembrance of the recipient, and followed by a phone call or email from them to confirm the arrival of the gift. This ability of money to travel, to return, to represent the agency of the sender, and to mediate relations with the receiver, demonstrates the highly transformative and mobile dynamics of imaginative remittance economies.

A proverb about money related by an informant says - ‘Money wanders everywhere, one cannot control it.’ (tien la phu du) In a post renovation (doi moi) Vietnam where remittances take easy monetary form and arrive from all parts of the globe overnight at one’s doorstep, the
expanded flows and efficiency of in-bound remittance services contrast with the inefficiency and seemingly far-fetched gamble of un-transparent and bureaucratic emigration processes. On a return trip to Saigon from Quy Nhon one month, I ran into Minh, one of my informants from Quy Nhon, waiting to take the same flight to the city. He said he was accompanying his nephew to Saigon for his visa ‘interview’ at the U.S. consulate there, wincing as he remarked how ‘hard’ and unpredictable these performances were. Daily, large crowds gather across the street from the U.S. consulate in Saigon - mostly family members awaiting the outcome of ‘the interview’ of someone inside: that mysterious event that defies understanding or advance preparation. The visa interview is the final step in the emigration process in which applications are processed or denied. Many informants showed me the various forms and papers they have filled out for emigration, at times exhausting every possible visa channel from spousal to student to family reunification, as well as documentary evidence of their transnational relationships including letters and remittance receipts. Again, the theme of chance emerges centrally in this process - one cannot anticipate the event or its outcome, it therefore becomes a spectacle to all who sit on the plastic stools across from the consulate waiting while patiently sipping coconuts and coffees.

6. Magic, Mystery, and Gambling

The tension between desire for the agency of mobility and the mysterious obstacles to migration that prevent it are increasingly displaced into a magical culture of chance supported and represented by remittances. In Quy Nhon, freshly painted and restored Whale God temples (Ong Nam Hai, elsewhere in East Asia known as Ong Heo but in Vietnam also known as Ca Ong or sometimes Ong Ca) can be found in various districts. The whale god is a traditional god worshipped by fishermen who provides a good catch and good weather to keep the fishermen safe at sea - the whale is said to support a sinking boat in a storm by perching it on its back, risking its own life in doing so. Ong Nam Hai temples are common throughout the south central coastal area - in the Van Thuy Tu whale god temple in Phan Thiet, enormous bones from beached whales going back hundreds of years are stored in honour of the selfless sacrifice they made for fishermen. Many in the fishing community, including fish sellers, participate in paying tribute to this deity. In more recent years, many former refugees who left on fishing boats from Vietnam and successfully made the sea voyage also send money back to support the temple of this whale god in gratitude for his assistance. On Xuan Dieu Street in Quy Nhon, a newly restored Ong Nam Hai temple carries a plaque honouring the temple’s main benefactor - ‘a Vietnamese immigrant in America’ who gave $26,000 to help rebuild the temple, catalyzing a host of smaller donations from both Viet Kieu and locals. Each spring, various
coastal communities open the temple (lang) of Ong Nam Hai to the public to celebrate the deity (Le Hoi Ong Nam Hai, Nghinh Ong). The festival scene is carnival like, with food stalls, merry-go-rounds, and children playing everywhere. Hat Boi, a traditional Vietnamese opera, marks the event in which members of the community squat in the courtyard to watch while the male elders of the fishing communities, sitting on the platform of the temple behind the stage, take turns going to the front to beat the drums, attaching money to the sticks and tossing them to the performers to express their appreciation. ‘Those who have money get to play the drums - it is fun’, explained one observer. Some of the most active drum players and hence benefactors receive their money from Viet Kieu relatives, and it is common for the festival organizers to collect money, usually about $50-$70 per person, from overseas former fishermen to support the temple. ‘The Viet Kieu have more money so they can help support maintaining the temple and supporting the festival, which gets no government assistance. The local people donate their time to perform and organize’ explained one of the festival committee organizers. Here money is equated with time, both seen as personal gifts to the community. The festival culminates in the drum-playing elders wearing traditional outfits (ao dai) joining the Hat Boi performers, dressed as traditional deities including Ong Dia (Mr. Earth) and King Tran Hung Dao to pay obeisance (cung) to the gods at the altar.

Yet the whale god does not serve everyone - while successful Viet Kieu pay homage to their safe sea journey through remittances, in other homes, pictures of those lost at sea stare blankly out on ancestral altars or not at all. Sometimes families try to identify appropriate death anniversary (dam gio) dates for them based on approximate dates of departure and probable decease, but for the most part such lost migrants are forgotten in terms of traditional cultural rites: the circumstances of their death outside normative structures of remembering. ‘My father left us behind in 1981 to take his chances on a boat, he was never heard from again. There is no death ceremony (do), he is forgotten in our family because we don’t know what happened to him,’ related one woman.

The whale god, in the end, signifies chance - a life gamble that some win and others lose. Nha Viet Kieu / remittance households are often criticized by neighbours for their card playing, gambling, and drinking. Walking with a resident of Quy Nhon city in a neighbourhood near the water where many of the homes were Nha Viet Kieu, she pointed out to me the various families lounging in their pyjamas in the open living rooms, drinking and playing cards, saying ‘see, look at these people, they don’t want to work or do anything, they just live off their overseas money.’ A similar neighbourhood in Danang, also located near the water and from which many refugees escaped, has even taken on the designation ‘Xom Do’ or dollar village, because of the large numbers or residents who live off overseas
dollars. In the village of Xuan Hai in Phu Yen province, whose skyline is dotted by a number of taller houses newly re-built with remittance money, makeshift tents scattered along the beach providing shade from the hot afternoon sun are filled with groups of boys, girls, men, and women playing cards, a popular pastime after a night of fishing. Drinking beer with one such group, they said I should buy the next round of ten beers to continue the party. When I asked why, they related a local proverb: ‘Viet Kieu who return to Vietnam have to treat, if they don’t, they’re not Viet Kieu.’ (Viet Kieu ve Viet Nam phai no. Viet kieu ve Viet Nam khong no thi khong phai Viet Kieu.) In this case, money as an index of generous intention, not merely blood, is what allows overseas Vietnamese to be re-included in the social life of the community.

Indeed, such modes of play and gamble that stereotype Nha Viet Kieu (Viet Kieu homes) and Xom Do (Dollar Village) neighbourhoods are fairly representative of the floating social world of waiting, chance, and escapism in which many remittance receivers with their deferred migratory and transformative desires exist. One resident of Danang’s Xom Do said he had been waiting for seven years for his application to emigrate to the U.S., in the meantime carrying on a small tailor job that kept him occupied and provided some steady income, supplemented the remittances that came in to support his family, and kept up work appearances for his overseas relatives as well as local government officials and neighbours. As was explained to me in the fishing village of Nhon Ly, ‘those with Viet Kieu remittances often stop fishing, because it is a hard life - you have to work all night and the work is heavy and dangerous. Instead they do small jobs around town - it is an easier life and they can afford to do so because their income is supplemented by their overseas relatives.’ Such jobs include selling general merchandise from one’s home, or selling food or drinks at the local market.

7. Hierarchies of Mobility

In anthropologist Marcel Mauss’s description of *The Gift*, the ‘hau’ or spirit of the gift’s giver is carried and represented by the thing given, always seeking return to the source. This ‘hau’ might be described as similar to the agency of the giver and is reflected by the characteristics of the money they direct to the recipient. Is there reciprocity however? In some cases no, there are those who say ‘we are poor we have nothing we can give them.’ Indeed, such gifts are often seen as an expected expression of sentiment or gratitude in the absence of personal interaction, allowing the Viet Kieu to continue to participate in the community they lost through migration. But if pushed on the gifting question, most remittance receivers did eventually acknowledge the in-kind gifts they often offered, or the treats they often tried to send when a returning relative or friend of a relative went back abroad.
Yet the international remittance gift is difficult to reciprocate because the form of the return gift does not have the mobility of money. The desire of remittance recipients to counter-gift often fails because of the return gift’s inability to travel on the same terms as the money received. Commonly in the form of locally produced items such as dried seafood or shrimp, especially in the case of coastal communities where they are produced and endowed with sensory memories of home (Seremetakis 1996), return gifts rely on personal networks willing to carry such items back to the remittance senders. Such requests are in fact often refused, as food items are not easy to carry on international flights. ‘Sometimes my relatives don’t want the dried squid (muc kho) I give them, because they say they can’t take them on the airplane,’ noted Lan, a resident of Quy Nhon with relatives in California. Unlike the senders, who can seemingly conjure immediate agency of giving through the variety of personal networks, private and black market remittance services, and formal financial services at their disposal, remittance recipients remain dependent on the acquiescence of mobile social networks in which they are only partial participants to carry return gifts back to the original gifter. The immediate 24 hour delivery time of the Vietnam bound remittance contrasts with the waiting and dependency on social favour required by the counter-gifter, whose obligation to return, if felt, is hampered and defamiliarized by the structural and practical obstacles to mobility represented in the types of gifts one can afford to return. Only money, and in particular, money from the outside - foreign currencies such as green American dollars - can flow freely. Money becomes master in this unequal dialectic of representative exchange, its characteristics taking the place of the absent sender. Hierarchies of power, agency, and failure more akin to Mauss’s potlatch descriptions thus emerge in place of the Durkheimian solidarity and symmetry usually emphasized in gifting theory.

The gifting process itself therefore highlights the circulatory mobility of money and juxtaposes it against the relative chance and difficulties of bodily mobility. With the emergence of long distance diasporic gifting networks, the space between giver and receiver represented by invisible boundaries that money can pass but bodies cannot becomes a productive site of emergent imaginaries. The increasing prevalence of telephone and internet communication technologies, especially in households with overseas relations where the technological hardware for communication was itself often a gift from abroad, means that overseas migrants can regularly perform for their kinsfolk the personal transformations they have undergone overseas - enabled by money earned and spent on education, fashion, material items, even spouses (Viet Kieu men returning to marry local women is a common occurrence). In contrast, the parallel performances of Viet Kieu remittances to relatives are comparatively modest amounts intended for ambiguous Vietnamese middle class subsistence. Such
remittances are small, sporadic, and declining in the current economic downturn, drawing awareness to the global nature of the current financial crisis. Furthermore remittances intended for immediate families are almost always expected to be shared with neighbours and friends. As one man put it ‘if you get $100 then you take everyone out to nhau (eat and drink) for four days.’ The result is the common adage that ‘money is bottomless, there is never enough’ (tien la vo tan, biet bao nhieu cho du) by both remittance senders and receivers. Remittance money sustains life, but is insufficient to satisfactorily transform it, due to limits of quantity and environment.

Yet money teases the possible eventuality of controlling not only its reception and consumption but also its generation. Remittance exchange disrupts social norms and expectations, drawing awareness to the limitations and margins of one’s environment and the possibilities that lay beyond as represented by transformed yet still familiar overseas kin. This is spatially highlighted in coastal communities, existing at the visible edge of the constructed nation-state where an oceanic horizon spreads out, teasing the residents who each evening stroll its margins to the possibilities of what lies beyond. The remittance gift that freely flows, carrying a certain ‘hau’ that desires return home, highlights structural differences as manifested in the perceived agential capacities of the exchange participants. The frustrated desire of remittance recipients to participate in the gift’s journey - a journey that the remittance giver represented by the gift has already traversed - is therefore displaced into diverse imaginaries in which the characteristics of the gift medium of money itself, as manifested in a capitalist global economy, become central to notions of self and other as experienced through exchange.

Notes

1 Anderson (1991), Appadurai (1996), Mankekar (1999), etc.
2 In Saigon a prevalence of other economic activities often results in remittances only a minor flow of income among others for working age households.
3 Boat refugee flows largely ended by the 90’s, after which those wishing to leave the country were processed through the Orderly Departure and Humanitarian Operation Programs (ODP, HO) and able to fly directly to countries of resettlement. Many continue to wait years after submitting their paperwork requesting emigration.
4 Substantive economies as inclusive of the social formations accompanying market exchange, discussed by Karl Polanyi (1968).
5 This hope of emigration seemed less immediate among others I spoke with who did not have overseas kinship networks.
Recent structural facilitation of remittance flows in Vietnam include an elimination of a 5% remittance tax in 1997, expansion of remittance institutions in 2002, and VN Politburo Resolution 36 of 2004 affirming overseas Vietnamese as integral to the nation.

Many remittance recipient families encountered owned small businesses - cafes being especially popular - that turned only marginal profit.

As opposed to the material manifestations of the past: before the 1990s remittances were often sent in the forms of commodities, medicines, etc. that could then be exchanged in the marketplace (Dang 2000).

Native American gifting rituals characterized by competition, rivalry, excess, and destruction observed in the Pacific Northwest.

Bibliography


Ivan Victor Small is a Ph.D. candidate in cultural anthropology at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Field research for this chapter was conducted between 2007 and 2009 with the support of Fulbright-Hays, the Cornell University Graduate School, and the Cornell Southeast Asia Program.
Understanding Motivations for Transnational Engagement: Diaspora Supported Development - The Jamaican Case

Janine Rose

Abstract
Diaspora-supported development or the involvement of emigrants in home country development projects or activities is becoming increasingly important in a context where neo-liberalization has accelerated the underdevelopment of sending regions that are positioned as human resource niches within the global system. So, government actors in important sending countries such as Jamaica have attempted to facilitate this process by attempting to implement strategies, such as return and cyclical migration programs, which enable the participation of migrants in home country development. An analysis of these strategies, in light of the results of a preliminary study involving Jamaican nationals residing in the Greater Toronto Area, show that participation in this process is not only influenced by conditions or experiences in the receiving country but also the home country. This, however, may be mediated by gender as motivations to participate in this process are conditioned by experiences of discrimination and marginalization for men, a factor which appears to be less significant for women. Further, the study suggests that the feasibility of this process and the extent to which individuals will become involved in it is also dependent on the nature of mechanisms used to facilitate their participation. This chapter will demonstrate the following: the significance of spatial experiences in the emergence of this type of transnational engagement and the importance of incorporating these considerations in the operationalisation of national development framework which include initiatives or decision-making processes supported by the diaspora.

Key Words: Diaspora, diaspora-supported development, international migration, Jamaica, remittances, Toronto.

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1. Introduction
The increasing migration of Jamaican nationals to major destination countries such as Canada, the United States and Britain has contributed to the growth of a large diaspora community that is concentrated in the metropolitan centres including Toronto, New York and London. More significantly, emigration from Jamaica has received increasing attention due
to the fact that approximately 80-85% of its skilled and tertiary educated labour force has migrated producing a brain drain of highly skilled and educated nationals necessary for fuelling economic dynamism and progress. But although members of the Jamaican diaspora remain physically dispersed throughout various polities, they remain socially, politically, culturally and economically part of [or connected to] the nation states from which they migrated. These connections involve the movement of individuals, artefacts, ideas and institutional collectivities between the communities of origin and destination thereby constituting a transnational space that is often productive for both sending and receiving places. Consequently, the Jamaican government and international organizations such as the IOM have sought to leverage these flows, transfers or linkages as development resources which can be used as the basis or means to facilitate programs or strategies intended to alleviate some of the conditions which influence the brain drain and the migration of Jamaican nationals more generally. Some of these strategies are based on cooperation between developed and developing countries and have been utilized and suggested in other parts of the world. The most popular compensatory strategies have included attempting to leverage family remittances for development through negotiations with financial institutions to lower remittance-sending costs. But for this chapter, there will be a focus on more programmatic efforts intended to elicit the support of the Jamaican diaspora whether through brain circulation evident in return of talent programs or the remote mobilization of diaspora resources through the diaspora foundations or home town associations. These policy options comprise the process of diaspora-supported development, that is the process by which migrants support the development and growth of their countries of origin through direct and indirect linkages which emerge from resources circulating between the diaspora and their home communities. Additionally, the literature that discusses the migration-development nexus and migrant contributions to the development of their home countries has typically talked about different ways that migrants contribute to development (the most popular being remittances), as well as the level of these transfers in terms of frequency and dollar amounts. But we have heard less about the importance of the immigration experience for understanding involvement in home country development particularly in programmatic forms or organized contexts, that is through a project or program that is not based on obligation or an expression of kinship between families in the home and receiving countries. Specifically, using interviews with Jamaican immigrants, this chapter explores the extent to which the nature of the immigration experience in Toronto shape motivations to become involved in home country development project or programs.
2. **The Jamaican Community in Toronto**

The end of the Commonwealth Immigration Act, which encouraged nationals from former British colonies to migrate and take up residency in the United Kingdom, in the 1960s in conjunction with ‘dramatic shifts in Canadian immigration policy during this period, led to the formation of a large Jamaican community in Canada.’ Specifically, the Canadian Immigration law of 1962 stipulated that the selection of new immigrants would be based on criteria such as the level of educational and occupational attainment. Additionally, Jamaicans were the largest group in Caribbean migration streams to Canada with as much as 17,522 Jamaican nationals being destined for the workforce in 1990-1996 of which 11,087 were either students or entered the workforce with skills. Further, the Jamaican community was noted to be the largest Caribbean group in Canada after Trinidadians and Barbadian immigrants according to census data from Statistics Canada. Additionally, most Jamaicans arrived between 1971 and 2001 and most of them live in Ontario. In 2006, ‘Ontario was home to 197,540 Jamaican nationals with the substantial majority residing in Toronto.’ Additionally, more than 79,000 Jamaicans or individuals of Jamaican heritage or descent currently reside in Toronto and they comprise approximately 3% of the total metropolitan population with the majority being between the ages of 15 and 44. More significantly, the creation of a large Jamaican community in Toronto and the nature of life in the city have produced a transnational community and transnational social field which are significant for the adjustment and emotional security of this immigrant community.

The Jamaican community is diverse, in that it includes highly skilled and educated immigrants who are professionals with stable employment as well as unskilled migrants in more precarious jobs particularly newcomer Jamaicans who encounter struggles in the labour market. As a result, the types of connections which are considered to be of development potential tend to be dominated by one group or the other. Specifically, family remittances tend to be sent by Jamaican nationals with households that are in need whereas professional and highly skilled and educated Jamaicans tend to come from more stable households and therefore are less likely to be dependent on remittances for basic household needs. Furthermore, highly skilled and educated nationals are less likely to send remittances as they and their families in the sending country tend to be financially stable. Consequently, highly skilled and educated nationals are looked upon for their technical skills or to contribute to brain circulation through cyclical and return migration programs. The Jamaican government has sought to draw on different types of flows or transfers which have emerged out of the connections which the Jamaican community has maintained with their country and communities of origin. So, it is important to recognize that the
type of contributions that Jamaican immigrants can potentially make to the
development of their home country will also be shaped by their place within
the migrant community specifically by class as well their educational,
occupational and immigration status. Additionally, the factors motivating or
impeding participation in home country development as well as the extent to
which a specific type of diaspora contribution can be mobilized to effect
change may vary from individual to individual within this group. These
factors will be explored using data from primary sources.

3. Methodology
The data for this project was derived from a qualitative research
design involving in-depth interviews that allowed for an exploration of the
extent to which the participation of Jamaican nationals in home country
development initiatives can be understood as being embedded in a broader
network of transnational activities or connections. Additionally, potential
interviewees for this study were recruited based on a purposive sample of
Jamaican immigrants who reside in the Greater Toronto area. Specifically,
this sample was derived from a group of 15 individuals who were recruited to
complete surveys on migrant participation amongst Jamaicans residing in
Toronto in 2007. The 2007 survey was done as part of my Masters project
which involved a preliminary exploration of motivations for participation in
home country development projects in Jamaica. So, the subsequent group of
participants can be described as being part of a purposive or reputational
sample derived from the group of Jamaicans recruited for the 2007 project.
Further, three men and three women were selected from the 2007 sample to
participate in interviews for this study although it should be noted that new
participants (specifically, two Jamaicans) were recruited where former
participants were not available. This project was based on a small exploratory
study and thus the generalization of the findings is limited. More importantly,
this study should be viewed as a preliminary illustration of trends and
perspectives of Jamaican immigrants on the participation of nationals
overseas in home country development.

4. Profile of Participants
The interview participants are Jamaicans who have all attained some
education at the tertiary level, specifically, four of the interview participants
had completed or done some studies at the graduate level while two of the
participants had completed a Bachelors degree. Additionally, all of the
participants had legal status in Canada, specifically, three of the respondents
were permanent residents while the other three were Canadian citizens and
were between the ages of 25 and 52.

Further, one respondent arrived in Canada in 1975, while the others
arrived between 1993 and the year 2006. Four of the respondents were born
and spent most of their lives in Jamaica while two of the respondents can be classified as 1.5 or 2nd generation (although it should be emphasized that the participants did not self-identify in this way) as one migrated to Canada with her mother at the age of 5 while the other participant was born in Canada but spent most of his childhood and adult life in Jamaica. He re-migrated to Canada in 1999 at the age of twenty-three. All of the participants were employed in full or part-time work, resided in the Greater Toronto Area but 3 of the participants were still in school at the time of the interviews while the other three were not.

Face to face interviews were conducted but in most cases I found that telephone interviews were more convenient for the participants. The interviews lasted for an average of 45 minutes to an hour and, where needed, supplementary information was requested via email or by telephone. The interviews probed for demographic data such as: year of immigration; reasons for migration; highest levels of education and immigration status as well as the various ways in which they remain connected to Jamaica specifically the nature of their transnational connections; the extent to which they participate in home country development initiatives and factors which motivate or deter their participation in these initiatives. *Please note that pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the participants.

5. Factors Influencing Participation

The results of this exploratory study indicated that factors influencing motivations to participate in the process of diaspora-supported development is shaped by the everyday lives and experiences of Jamaican immigrants in Toronto including the connections they maintain with family and friends in Jamaica. Many of the participants explained that they are motivated to contribute to development because of the nature of their life in Toronto. Specifically, experiences with systemic and institutional discrimination, which excludes nationals trained overseas from attaining employment opportunities that suit their skills and qualifications in the labour market, racial discrimination as well as the fact that they have family and friends in Jamaica as home influences the desire to support Jamaica’s development or progress. This is evident where participants such as *Natalie explained that her motivation partly comes from her commitment to being Jamaican. She said: ‘At the end of the day, I am a Jamaican first... I would like to see the best that my country can achieve. I would be doing something for my country and I would be with my family.’

This response points to the emotional significance of home not only in the lives of Jamaican nationals overseas but also in relation to the creation and maintenance of transnational connections and linkages that can have development significance in the communities and countries of origin. This is explained or conceptualised as linear transnationalism by Itzigsohn and
Saucedo specifically that transnational activities are influenced by ties, such as remittances and return visits, which link families to countries of origin.

Motivations to stay connected and contribute to development in the home country, however, are also linked to negative experiences, for many Jamaican immigrants, in Toronto. Specifically, another participant, *Liska, states that:

I feel a strong attachment to Jamaican and my [Jamaican] culture. You know when you find solace or comfort in your culture? I find solace in saying that I am a Jamaica. Even when people called us nigger; we would say [we have] a country to go back to. There is no issue of race [there]; I don’t have to prove that I am a human being you have to constantly prove yourself [here]. In Jamaica, I don’t feel like that, I don’t feel like that at all.

Still, the fact that Toronto is an exclusionary gateway for immigrants not only translates into racial but also systemic institutional discrimination which ‘directly or indirectly promotes... [the] differential advantage or privilege to people of different races and results in the unequal participation of minorities in a variety of systems including employment.’ This is evident in *Annette’s explanation of how she thinks her experiences in Canada have shaped or motivated her willingness to participate in the development or improvement of the Jamaican society.

Annette: In Canada it is difficult, you come with all this education and qualifications and it is hard to pick up a good job.[So]‘contributing to development is [important] so that I can build up Jamaica and go back home one day].’

Clearly, Toronto as a place has shaped transnational practices but more importantly motivations influencing the willingness to contribute to the development process in Jamaica. More specifically, although Canada as a country ‘recognizes human rights, maintains a broad social safety net and promotes an open door policy toward immigrants,...discriminatory and exclusionary practices still endure.’ These exclusionary practices not only inhibit incorporation but at the same time shape the formation and intensity of transnational linkages in the daily lives of Jamaican nationals in Toronto. These ties are not only material but also emotional in that immigrants ‘look back to the [home] country as where they really belong, psychologically, socially and culturally.’ Additionally, these experiences reinforce Jamaica as home and Canada as a place of work and study thereby emphasizing the importance of maintaining links with Jamaica in ways that prove to be significant for the development of the island.
It should be noted that no significant differences in gender were identified but there were important differences in the responses of 1.5/2nd generation participants. For *Liska, a black Jamaican who was raised and spent most of her life in Canada, her motivations for maintaining linkages of significance to Jamaica are significantly related to experiences of discrimination. This is in contrast to *Jackson, another 1.5/2nd generation participant of Chinese/Indian descent, who was born in Canada but, in contrast to *Liska, spent most of his life in Jamaica. Further, *Liska felt that her experience with racism in Canada has significantly shaped her configuration of Jamaica as home and her need to contribute to its development. Whereas Jackson felt that the denial of opportunity to Jamaican newcomers is one immigration experience which has influenced his willingness to participate in the development of the Jamaican society.

Jackson: The denial of opportunity because of a lack of working experience...annoys me. When you see a place that is messed up, you just want to try and make what you perceive as home a bit better so that maybe you can go back instead of staying here.

Therefore, it can be said that *Liska’s willingness to maintain connections and contribute to development in Jamaica is shaped by her experiences with racism and discrimination in Canada, whereas Jackson, who has had a shorter history in Canada but is an educated Jamaican who re-migrated for more educational and employment opportunities, had more issues with the exclusionary nature of Toronto’s labour market.

6. Factors Deterring Participation

The nature of Toronto as a place is not only important for understanding motivations for participation in development initiatives but also the barriers preventing participation in this process. An understanding of these issues is important for configuring mechanisms or processes which mobilize diaspora support for development effectively. Additionally, it can be said that this is particularly important for harnessing technical remittances, encouraging brain circulation as well as the transfer of collective remittances. Further, when participants were asked if there were any barriers that prevented them from participating in development projects or initiatives they cited reasons such as financial constraints; lack of time to invest in these initiatives, a lack of trustworthy channels of participation and the corrupt nature of home country politics. Some of these barriers, while common to everyday life, are often related to the specificity of life for immigrants of colour in Toronto. Specifically, the majority of the participants were either upgrading their educational qualifications or were dealing with difficulties in the labour market, all of which are critical for economic mobility particularly for immigrants of colour.
With regard to factors deterring participation in the process of diaspora-supported development, Latoya, a graduate student stated: ‘first of all I have no money so I couldn’t just up and do it.’

Another participant, *Liska* said: I am studying and working so I am not able to get involved in projects or go down [to do that kind of work].

Jackson also felt that the, ‘The organizations that have set up something like that (i.e. diaspora-organizations that facilitate transnational development projects) are not trustworthy.’

Whereas for Gary, financial support is more important, he said:

Because it’s [that is, development initiatives] happening in Jamaica, I would like to book my ticket and go [to Jamaica]. But I am financially unable to do it at this time. Other than that, it is really difficult now.

So, it can be said that only nationals which have been successfully incorporated into Canadian society will be able to participate in programs which seek to elicit the support of the diaspora. Conversely, in order to incorporate a broader spectrum of Jamaican nationals in this process Toronto, that is, not only the elite within the Jamaican community or nationals involved in diaspora organizations, then considering issues such as supplementing the cost associated with participation in this process and constructing mechanisms that consider the needs and priorities of Jamaican immigrants will be important. In this case, it would be financial security during participation in this process as well as making educational opportunities available to participants (much like what is seen in the Return of Talent Program). In the same way, most participants, despite their commitment to participate in the improvement of the Jamaican society, prefer to participate in these development projects while maintaining their base in Canada. Most of the participants explained that this was because they had their families in Canada and the fact that advancing their education in Canada would make it easier to garner the financial resources need to support development projects. So, participation in this process is not only resource dependent but needs to be configured transnationally in order to be attractive and more effective.

7. Conclusion and Areas for Further Research

Motivations for participation in home country development initiatives are produced out of the reinforcement of Jamaica as home through transnational connections and the specificity of life in Toronto. Therefore, the significance of transnational identities and practices for understanding motivations for participation in the process of diaspora-supported development suggests that transnationalism as a conceptual framework is
significant in policy work or research in this area specifically for understanding the emergence of diaspora-supported development.

Also, research needs to be more cognizant of the different ways that migrant participation in home country development has been conceptualized in the literature. Development rhetoric about migrant activities emerged out of the significant (but especially financial) linkages which immigrants maintained with their home country. It is important to note that such connections existed before attempts to further harness their potential by making them programmatic and therefore it is important to not privilege organized contributions over those that are not. This will allow one to recognize the diverse contributions that immigrants can and will potentially make to the development of their home country. Moreover, the fact that the Jamaican diaspora is a diverse migrant group research indicates that such differences should be taken into consideration when evaluating the process of diaspora-supported development. Specifically, the extent to which the diversity of the group in terms of ethnicity, class etc influences the nature of contributions to development or connections to the home can be used to interrogate the nature of their participation in home country development as well as the extent to which specific contributions have been represented, included or excluded in conversations about this aspect of the migration-development nexus.

Additionally, the literature on migration and development needs to allow for a more qualitative engagement with the voices of immigrants whose connections to their home countries are of development significance. Migrant contributions or connections are not only important for economic growth and development in sending countries but also have emotional significance for communities and the people involved. Therefore, it is important to recognize the real-life experiences of individuals involved in activities which are of development significant to home communities by using a language and methodology which communicates or reflect the particularities of diaspora involvement in home country development as well as the specific realities which contribute to the emergence of these activities.

Finally, research in this area would also benefit from a large scale study that explores the nature of motivations (if any) on the part of unskilled immigrants or those who are dependent on precarious work for income as the assumption is that they are more concerned with their own personal and household needs and are less interested in programmatic efforts to contribute to development. This will allow scholars to explore assumptions about the extent to which social location and identity (within specific immigrant group) are factors which influence potential for transnational engagement. Further, a comparative study that investigates how immigration experiences and consequent connections and contributions to the home country vary across groups would also be useful for examining the extent to which immigrant
experience and migrant contributions to home country development varies over time, by immigration group and across contexts.

Notes

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Janine Rose is currently a graduate student pursuing a PhD in Geography at York University. Her research interests are related to migration and development, identity formation and immigrant transnationalisms. Her current research is focused on Jamaican immigrants in Toronto.
Section III

Us and Them
Introduction

Gloria Macri

Identities are not formed in isolation, but in the complex interplay between the self and ‘Others’. Communities are thus not just self-imagined with respect to the similarities between group members, but also in terms of ‘difference’ and separation from ‘Others’. By focusing on the symbolic boundaries between groups, rather than on the content enclosed within these borders, social sciences can adhere to an innovative way of looking at cultural, ethnic or diasporic identities.

Moreover, identities are not affixed to a given group. The post-modern perspective implies that identities are being constantly constructed and re-constructed, negotiated and performed as a never-ending project. This implies that ethnic or diasporic boundaries will shift too as a result of the continuous symbolic struggle for congealing identity.

This ‘struggle’ is invariably about staging a difference, making authenticity claims with regards to one’s own cultural identity, or, in a Foucauldian perspective, it is a discourse of power.

How diasporas define themselves especially in relation to other groups is relevant from many points of view: on the one hand it enables us to understand what are the key identifiers which diasporic people use in shaping their identity narratives. On the other hand, on a more practical note, understanding identities from a relational point of view casts a different light on our understanding of diversity and integration in a society and this will further shape new ideas, discourses and policies regarding immigration and inclusion.

The section reveals several instances of diasporic identity construction focusing on the ‘Us vs. them’/ ‘We vs. Others’ dialectics. We embark on a journey around the world, following a route marked by diasporic signposts and cross-references.

The section begins with a chapter discussing the rather unique stance of the Finns living in Åland, who are forced to construct a diasporic identity within a (former) province of their own country. Starting from the assumption that identity is formed in interaction with the significant others, Anna-Liisa Kuczynski endeavours to answer the question of what does it mean to be a Finn on the island and how are these identities constructed in a society which is strongly Sweden-oriented. Interesting issues emerge in relation to the meaning of home as well as the role of language, social ties and the media in the articulation of Finnishness.

Our next chapter brings to the fore the interesting problematic of the Finnish Diaspora in the Russian region of Ingria, focusing on the Ingrian
Finnish in the process of re-migrating to Finland. Anu Yijälä and her colleagues present us with a glimpse of a diasporic group facing the conundrum of multiple potential identities and identifications. While many studies focusing on diasporic identities adopt a post-migration stance, this chapter poses a distinctive twist as data is collected from migrants prior to their actual spatial relocation. The aim is thus to portray how these ‘future’ migrants relate to their multiple ‘homes’ and ‘host’ societies.

The following chapter embarks on a study of identification, as an on-going process of a diasporic group to understand themselves in relation to ‘Others’, a study of the continuously flowing boundaries between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. Gloria Macri’s chapter looks at the way members of Romanian Community in Ireland narrate and perform their ethnic identities in the ‘virtual’ space, acquiring the dimension of an online diaspora. Interesting findings emerge in relation to the many aspects of the ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’ dichotomy, as Romanians build their identification narratives in relation to being European, or Irish, diasporic and so on.

The next three chapters emphasise the issue of authenticity in the identity discourse. One chapter focuses on the socio-political context and conditions surrounding the forging of a new Taiwanese identity. Shih-Chi Kao brings to our attention how the different stages of Taiwanese history have shaped the unique Taiwanese identity formation. In each stage, the identity has always been constructed in relation with the political ‘others’ such as mainland China or the Japan, concluding in recent years with the shaping and rise of a unique Taiwanese identity, which, as Kao concludes is based on an imagined new nation.

Marc Scully’s chapter investigates the construction of authenticity in the shaping of an Irish diaspora identity in England. While existing studies have tended to de-localise culture and identity, this research gives us an insight into the role that Irish localities might play in the construction of an authentic identity discourse.

The next chapter engages in an exploration of Gypsies, Irish Travellers and the New Travellers’ identities. Margaret Greenfields’ research revolves around the questions of authenticity which arise in the construction of each of the group’s sense of who they are with respect to nomadic practices, language, family roles and many other key identity markers.

The section concludes with a chapter by Douglas Maynard et al. that seeks to categorise the main factors responsible for migrants’ integration. While it was typically assumed that integration was ‘a migrant’s duty’, the authors highlight the key factors that are likely to impact on the degree of inclusion in the host society and the policy implications that this model might have. These aspects range from individual, to relational and finally systemic factors.
These chapters pose new issues and invite us towards new ways of looking at identities, as ‘relation’ not solely ‘reflection’, thus pointing us to possible new avenues for research.
Immigrants in their Own Country: Negotiations on Dimensions of Finnishness in the Åland Islands

Anna-Liisa Kuczynski

Abstract
Being an autonomous province the Åland Islands have a special status in Finland. The self-government was offered in 1920 and affirmed by the League of Nations in 1921. The Act on the Autonomy came into force in 1922. By this legislation Swedish was granted an official status in the administration and as the language of education in schools maintained by public funds. Finns, here meaning Finnish speakers, have existed in Åland for a long time. During the last two decades their number has increased and is now 5% of the total population of 27,000 people. After The Act of Autonomy, the situation of Finns changed. In a way they became a minority inside a minority. Their wish for receiving more advanced classes in Finnish for their children came to be in conflict with the Act of Autonomy and was denied. Yet it was corresponding to the Declaration of Human Rights concerning minorities. The controversial issue discussed is in relation to what the minority is defined. In my chapter I will discuss, how the Finns experience their Finnishness in Åland. In which way can one communicate the Finnishness or negotiate on it? According to the social constructionist view the identity is being formed in interaction with the significant others. What does it mean to the Finns that the significant others for the most part consist of members in the monolingual Swedish-speaking society? Yet the Finnish language can be assumed to be one of the most important symbols of Finnishness on the islands. My presentation is based on an analysis of interviews with Finns living in Åland.

Key Words: Åland Islands, autonomy, Finnish language, Finnishness, identity, minority, monolingual, Swedish language.

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1. Introduction
Finland has two official languages Finnish and Swedish. The Swedish speaking minority consisting of about five percent of the population is concentrated to the coastal areas and to the archipelago. Only the province of Åland is monolingual Swedish with a self-government. In this chapter my aim is to find out how a small Finnish speaking group inside a minority copes with their daily life. Is it possible to communicate one’s Finnishness or
negotiate about it, and in which ways? According to the social constructionist view the identity is formed in interaction with the significant others. What does it mean to the Finns in Åland that their significant others for the most part consist of members of the mono-lingual Swedish-speaking and often very Sweden-orientated society? Yet the Finnish language can be assumed to be one of the most important symbols of Finnishness on the islands.

This presentation is based on an analysis of 12 qualitative in-depth interviews with Finns speaking Finnish as their mother tongue living on the Åland islands. A semi-structured questionnaire was used with the following themes to discuss: family history and its meaning to the interviewee, language usages in the family, contacts and contact arenas, language and identity (articulations), and encountering the Åland society. The majority of the informants were women married to Ålanders or Swedish speakers from the Finnish mainland. In three families both spouses were Finns. The informants had lived on the islands for 20-30 years, some even for 40 or 50 years, only one had stayed less than 10 years. The reason for moving to the islands had been a marriage or an opportunity to get work. All of the informants knew Swedish in some extent except one when they moved to Åland. The majority of their children were born on the islands. Here I’ll comment some of the results and leave the theoretical frame of reference, a possible diasporic or translocal identity, to a further discussion.

2. Background, Åland as a Community

The autonomy of Åland goes back to the events after World War I and Finland’s declaration of independence in 1917. Before that Finland had been under the Russian rule as an autonomous Grand Duchy since their war with Sweden 1808-1809. After Finland’s declaration of independence a movement towards a reunion with the old motherland Sweden arouse in Åland. Finland then offered the province a self-government in 1920, which was affirmed by the League of Nations in 1921. The Act on the Autonomy came into force in August 1922. By this legislation the Swedish language was granted an official status in the administration and as the language of education in schools maintained by public funds. However, in matters concerning a Finnish speaking citizen himself he has the right to use Finnish in court and with other state officials. One important part of the Autonomy legislation is the right of domicile, a kind of regional citizenship giving a right to vote and to be eligible in local elections, to own real property and to exercise a more extensive trade or profession. Since the amendments in 1991 one of the preconditions for the right of domicile is a satisfactory proficiency in Swedish language.

Finns, here meaning Finnish speakers, have existed in Åland for a long time. During the last two decades their number shows an increase from 1128 in 1990 to 1369 in 2007, which means around five percent of the total
population of 27 153. The majority of them are women (908): almost two
times the number of Finnish speaking men (459). Around 40 % of all people
in Åland are living in Mariehamn, the only town and province capital.6

Before 1922 the Finns in Åland clearly represented the language
majority from the Finnish mainland, but after the Autonomy Act the situation
got more complicated. In a way the Finns became a minority inside a
minority. When their number increased, the Finns in Åland indicated their
wish for receiving more advanced classes in Finnish for their children. They
meant that the voluntary Finnish classes in school were given too late and did
not correspond to the level of knowledge in Finnish the children already had.
Often the children changed their language totally later on. As known the
language is one of the main symbols of identity and affinity.7 Here the appeal
came to be in conflict with The Act on Autonomy and was denied, yet it was
corresponding to the Declaration of Human Rights concerning minorities.
The controversial issue discussed is how and in relation to what the minority
is defined.8 Opinions in the province are divided, too, about the benefits of
knowing Finnish. The private sector has expressed their needs for employees
proficient in Finnish, while the issue for the public sector is problematic.9

As typical for small communities, the locals in Åland are used to
know each other and also relate to each other in some way. When meeting a
person they cannot recognize, they want to find out the person’s family
connections. One of the informants had in a local newspaper seen an
anecdote about how long time one could keep Ålanders from not asking
about family and relatives. She remembered seven seconds mentioned as the
record!10 To the informants Ålanders therefore seemed to be very curious
about other people. Some of the Finns experienced this as a kind of social
control and a definition of their position in the community. At the same time
they felt themselves as outsiders or not included in the local networks, which
they saw as being hard to get inside.11 One of the informants put it as follows:

A: For them, Ålanders, it is very important to know, whose
child you are, that they can place you somewhere.
Q: In some families?
A: Yes, that they can know. When you come from the
mainland so I think they feel embarrassed because they
cannot place you anywhere here. /…/ They use to say here
that you cannot be an Ålander if you don’t have a family in
the fourth generation living here. /…/ They consider you as
an outsider, you cannot get inside…
Q: The community?
A: Yes, you cannot get in. Okay, the people, they are kind
in a way, but still you feel as an outsider.12
Small communities also have positive traits: in Åland one can feel safe knowing that nothing can happen without someone in the neighbourhood having observed it. The curiosity was seen by some informants as an expression of caring and responsibility for the neighbours, which evoked feelings of trust and security.\textsuperscript{13} The children were e.g. always observed by some people and the mothers got reports from other parents on where and with whom they had been. People could also warn the children about doing something stupid.\textsuperscript{14} The small size of the community was thus seen both as a disadvantage and an advantage.

3. The Meaning of the Childhood Family and Home

Most of the informants saw their childhood family and their Finnish roots as important in some extent. I asked during the interviews, if the informants put value on the objects and photos they had or had inherited, and if they used to tell stories about persons or events in the family. The value of both the objects and the photos always depends on how the viewer sees and interprets them. The inner world of the interpretations can be created through the existing materials to a combination of facts and fiction with no need to separation between them.\textsuperscript{15} For some informants the photos and objects did not have a special meaning, while they in others evoked strong memories, activated thoughts and both positive and negative feelings connected to places and persons significant for them. On informant reflected as follows:

Q: Do you have photos from your childhood and childhood home?
A: Yes I have, plenty of them, yes. To a large extent from the childhood and of the very persons who were so important to me.
Q: How often do you look at these photos and think of the persons?
A: Honestly, I must say, I see them very seldom.
Int.: They are not displayed?
A: No, because I get so melancholy and depressed.
Q: So you don’t want to have them displayed?
A: No.
Q: Do you ever want to look at them, when could it be, that kind of occasion?
A: Some times, when I really get that kind of feeling, when I am all alone. I then put on a certain kind of music and then the idea springs up that now I want to look at them…\textsuperscript{16}
Through looking at the photos the persons could go back to their past and understand the meaning of their roots. Thus these had become a part of their personal history and in that way even a part of their self-concept.17

Concerning stories about old events or about family members the interviews revealed a rather big importance of them. Recollections of old stories about family and childhood can be seen as creating affinity between the family members. Some of the stories about the relatives and the family traditions can become institutionalized as common use within the family. They are told either for an amusing purpose, as it had happened in one case18 or sometimes as a warning example19. Even when the informant in another case didn’t remember the events she was told to have participated in, or she had experienced it in a different way, she had accepted it as a fact.20 Thus the focus is no more in the personal memory but in a way the recollection merges into the collective recollections as a part of them.21 The stories then become a part of both the family’s collective memory and the personal history of the members creating a feeling of togetherness between them.

4. Language(s) Spoken at Home

In the three families with both spouses being Finnish the home language was normally Finnish, too.22 In one case when discussing children’s school matters or hobbies the language could shift into Swedish. Apparently the children had learned these vocabularies in Swedish. Even in a fourth family the parents spoke Finnish in spite of that the husband’s mother tongue was Swedish. With the children the father had always spoken Swedish.23

In two families the only home language was Swedish. In one family the Finnish mother had not been allowed to speak Finnish with the children, in the other it was a voluntary choice. In the first case it depended on the attitudes towards Finnishness being very negative in Åland in the 1950ies. Today the situation might have been another as the informant assumed.24 In the other family the Finnish mother paid regard to the father’s work with weeks away from home; speaking Finnish with the children would have made them strangers to their home coming father who did not know Finnish at all.25

In two families both parents spoke their mother tongue with each other and to the children. Theoretically the languages had an equal position, but not in practice, because most often the children preferred to answer in Swedish.26 To allure them to speak Finnish was not always easy:

A: It is so hard for my children to understand that there are such people who don’t understand even Swedish. So I have some motivation problems with the Finnish language. That’s why it is so very important that my relatives visit us,
especially those with small children. There are no better language teachers than small children!27

In the remaining families the common language was Swedish yet the Finnish parent speaking more or less Finnish with the children. In one case the Finnish mother had been persistent and just continued speaking Finnish though her husband and his family had been against it.28 In all families the children used to speak Swedish with each other. Here a principle of practicality is functioning; Swedish is the language the children know best.

When contemplating the informants’ language situation at home it is obvious that the Finnish language held a big importance for the most of them. As the mother tongue it is still a part of their personality and identity29 manifested e.g. by some informants who continued to speak Finnish with their spouses in spite of speaking Swedish outside the home. The importance of Finnish was especially obvious in that all the Finns with one exception had wished that their children would learn Finnish. Even in the case of the mother not allowed to speak Finnish she had initially begun to do so. Many parents saw it nevertheless as a hard task because of the surrounding society being Swedish. Even the attitudes towards Finnish could be experienced as negative, because Finnish was seen as a threat to the Swedish language.30 It also had a lower status in Åland than Swedish. Visits to mainland Finland or of Finnish relatives were therefore of importance as noted in the quote above.

5. Contacts with other Finns and Meeting Arenas

Most of the daily contacts of the informants were in Swedish with native Ålanders. As a rule the fellow employees in the workplaces were or had been Swedish speaking, yet many also had some Finns as workmates, some of them even as personal friends.31 When working in private companies or in the service sector contacts with other Finns had been a rule, but also in the public sector the contacts with Finns were a fact every now and then, though the language then was Swedish with some exceptions, which were not seen as appropriate.32

The private contacts of the informants varied, being both with native Ålanders and with Finns. Some of the informants had very few contacts in general; some again had lots of them with people and families from both language groups. In some cases the private contacts were mostly with Swedish speakers in Åland and with family members in the mainland or elsewhere.33 Some informants had Finns as their best friends in spite of other contacts, too.34 Even if the language is not the main reason for how people get friends, it can be one of the contributing factors:
Q: You told that your best friends, your very best friends are Finnish speaking. Do you have any Swedish speaking friends?
A: Well, yes, but... after all, you can say that there are friends and friends.
Q: But a really true friend?
A: My really true friend, well, she is Finnish, yes she is. That you are like... you cannot get... But with her, we are so bosom friends and I have another such friend, too. And when you compare these and the others, so they can never get to the same level. It is like... it is difficult to explain, a friend... Okay, you can be a friend so that you talk and say hello, meet some times and so, but in my opinion, you must really feel it, too.35

Some informants used to meet their Finnish friends or family members in their summer houses in Åland or in the mainland, even if workplaces and private homes were the vast majority of all meeting arenas. Vacations as a rule gave opportunities to visit friends and relatives in the mainland or elsewhere.36 At other times the telephone or e-mail was an important contact tool. One informant noted that when the opportunities to get in contact with other Finns were not so good in Åland, the contacts had to be actively maintained with the mainland friends and relatives.37

One possibility to meet other Finnish speakers was offered by membership in different kinds of associations, one of them being Ahveniset (meaning Finns in Åland). Surprisingly only two informants had been active members of the society.38 When asked about the reason the answer given was that the association had hardly any activity today. Ahveniset was founded in the early 1970ies, the main reason being inadequate school lessons in Finnish given to children, who already knew the language. The association tried to change the situation but in vain.39 In so doing it met negative attitudes in Åland and got a negative stamp.40 Obviously people did not want to be negatively stamped by a membership in that kind of, as they thought political association. Ahveniset still tries to promote the children’s knowledge of Finnish by organizing a private Finnish club for children at 3-6 years, among other things.41

Contacts with other Finns varied largely. Some informants could meet other Finns daily at the same workplace even if speaking Finnish was restricted. Contacts of members of one’s own ethnic and linguistic group can be interpreted as a dimension of togetherness with them.42 The fact that most of the contacts with fellow countrymen were with relatives and friends in the mainland can also be seen as a consequence of personal reasons. To be a friend requires other qualities than just the same language, even if it can be a
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contributing factor. That’s why all the informants had Swedish speaking friends, too. However, for many informants Finnish is the language of their heart and speaking it created a special feeling of the same kind of belonging. 43

6. Articulations of Finnishness

Articulations of a Finnish identity are here studied among other things by language registration, choice of the children’s names, and use of mass media. The question of language registration was justified, because after several years living ‘in Swedish’ many of the informants knew Swedish well using it daily outside and/or at home. Yet they still considered themselves as Finnish speakers commenting that the possibility being Swedish never had crossed their minds. 44 In one case the informant’s husband had considered all family members as Swedish speakers filling in even the wife’s language as Swedish in the census form. She had never protested it. 45 The procedure can have something to do with the family’s denial of her speaking Finnish with the children. Due to the school language being Swedish the children’s Swedish was much stronger than their Finnish. Yet in one case even the children were registered as Finnish. Both parents had come to Åland without any knowledge of Swedish. 46 Therefore it seems consequent that the children were registered as Finnish, too.

There are several reasons for how parents choose the names of their children. Giving names with a family tradition the parents want the children to remember their roots. In only one of the three Finnish families the children had got totally Finnish names. 47 In the two other families both Swedish and Finnish names had been given 48; likewise in the majority of the families with mixed language background. Sometimes the name got the written form in Swedish, because the family lived in Åland. 49 Obviously the mixed names were kind of a compromise between the parents who in that way respected each other’s background. In three families the choice had been totally Swedish names. 50 In all of them the husband being an Ålander had made the choices. In the two cases Finnish names were out of question even if one mother had had a Finnish suggestion as well.

It seems that the choice of the children’s names had been a very intimate question and the majority of the parents had respected each other’s feelings by giving the children both Swedish and Finnish names. In doing so they maybe also wanted to remind the children of their bilingual background. In some cases only Swedish names given could be interpreted as a question of power exercise.

The use of mass media shows a considerable variation, too. Ålanders themselves are used to watch TV-programs mostly from Sweden. In addition, all the informants used to watch even some Finnish programs on
TV, most often news. Switching between channels did happen in many families like in this one concerning news:

A: In the morning I usually start with Finland’s [channel] one, then I switch to [the channels] two and four from Sweden, and if I have time left I see the news on three from Finland. That’s my morning. In the afternoon or in the evening I usually see the Finnish six o’clock news on channel one, after that the news in Swedish from Finland. And then, if I have time, the ABC [news], which gives the local weather. It is the local [Swedish] news, which comes after the main news from Sweden.\(^{51}\)

Some informants used to listen to Finnish radio programs. In one case the Finnish radio could be on all the time\(^ {52}\), but the local radio was popular as well, because it had a better audibility than the Finnish from the mainland. In addition some informants subscribed to Finnish newspapers or periodicals or read them in the Internet.\(^ {53}\) The more liberal one of the two local newspapers was popular, too, likewise the main Swedish newspaper in Finland. It is understandable due to the mixed language backgrounds of the spouses in most families. The local mass media again was needed to keep oneself in touch with the local news. Of the three Finnish families just one subscribed to the main Finnish newspaper but to the local ones as well.\(^ {54}\) In another family just periodicals were read in Finnish and in the third the informant did not read any newspapers at all. He felt he had got enough of living in Åland and was not interested in what happened there. Instead, he was a large-scale consumer of Finnish books.\(^ {55}\)

As a conclusion of the discussion above it can be seen that the language registration revealed something about the informants’ self concept as still being Finnish speakers. They saw Finnish as their mother tongue in spite of the dominant use of Swedish in most families. It was also a matter where they, with one exception, did not need to pay attention to the other parts of the family. Concerning the registration of the children it was already a matter strongly influenced by the surrounding society. The mixed names of the children and the varying use of the mass media in the families with mixed linguistic background both indicate the spouses’ mutual space given to each other’s identifications. Maybe it also indicates a feeling of an already double belonging of the informants as it could be interpreted in the two Finnish families. In the third Finnish family the feeling of Finnishness was clearer.

7. **Encountering the Åland Society**

As mentioned before the encountering of the Åland society could be experienced by the Finns as both positively and negatively. Some informants
still remembered how the children were called ‘half Finns’ by other kids or how Finns were stamped as inferiors, which the family in Åland could just be ashamed of. Speaking Finnish outside the home could be like a red rag getting cheap shots from the Ålanders. Even if much has changed, the same undervaluing attitudes can still exist and be experienced, but in a more latent way e.g. in some insulting jokes and story telling at work places. Even an Ålander could experience the negative attitude towards Finnish. One informant took it personally when one of her colleagues was insulted at their workplace in the public sector, when she as an Ålander planned to learn Finnish:

A: /…/one girl at my work wanted to attend a course in Finnish, and usually courses of this kind are paid by the employer, but in this case, no way. They even wrote about the case in the local newspaper!
Q: Really?
A: Yes. A course in Finnish language under no circumstances! I felt it was so sad, really sad.
Q: How did they explain it then?
A: That this [Åland] is monolingual and such a language is not needed here. I just gnashed my teeth, not needed! One must always translate now this, now that behind the scenes.

Most informants had the opinion that it is just a small minority of Ålanders who have negative attitudes towards Finns and Finnishness today. The vast majority of them have a positive picture of them. Unfortunately the minority is rather loud, Ålanders themselves often being ashamed of them.

Positive experiences of being Finnish existed as well. Some informants had got good jobs due to their knowledge of Finnish. The usefulness and profits of the knowledge of Finnish at work, within administration e.g. as unofficial contact canals to the mainland or as translators or interpreters were mentioned as well. Unfortunately the tasks were just seen as a part of the job with no financial compensation. This reveals the ambiguous attitudes towards Finnish in Åland. On one hand Swedish is the only accepted language in the society, but at the same time the benefits knowing Finnish cannot be denied.

Both positive and negative experiences during the varying length of staying in Åland surely had their impact on how the Finns felt their situation there. Only one informant told she felt more as an Ålander being almost one of them. Two informants could feel at home both in Åland and in the Finnish mainland. The majority of informants saw their home, meaning the dwelling place and the family around, being in Åland, but they still felt
themselves as Finns, not as Ålanders, which they saw they never could become. In some cases the feeling of being in some way an outsider could be one contributing factor to the situation.

8. Diasporic or Translocal Identity?

Can the situation of Finns in Åland be seen as an immigrant situation when living in one of the provinces in the own country? However, the province is different from the other provinces in its legal and language structure.

The analysis of the interview material revealed the importance of the childhood home of the Finnish informants in Åland. They still have emotional connections with relatives and friends in the mainland and visit them quite regularly. Importance of the Finnish mother tongue is obvious in spite of its lower status in Åland and that the daily life for the most part is in Swedish. Feelings as outsiders exist in some cases meaning not feeling at home even if the dwelling place is in Åland.

Can the different social realities in this case study be defined as varieties of translocal life instead of transnational life which has been one of the criteria for diasporic identity? The concept of ‘translocal’ could be justified by the fact that there are no national borders the Finns in Åland are crossing when living simultaneously in contexts encompassing different linguistic, institutional and social networks on the autonomous islands and in the Finnish mainland.

Notes

2 Ethnological Archives at Åbo Akademi University, Turku, semi-structured interviews on being Finnish in Åland, 2005.
3 B Mattsson-Eklund, Alla tiders Åland. Från istid till EU-inträde (Åland of all times. From Ice Age to EU admission), Mariehamn, Ålands landskapsstyrelse, 2000, passim.
5 ibid., chapter 2. The right of domicile shall be granted on application to a citizen of Finland 1) who has taken up residence in Åland, 2) who has without interruption been legally domiciled in Åland for at least five years;
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7 See e.g. Y Lindqvist, ‘Hur ‘de andra’ har varit och upplevts som annorlunda’ (How ‘the others’ have been experienced as different) in A-M Åström, B Lönnqvist, Y Lindqvist, Gränsfolks barn. Finlandssvensk marginalitet och självhävdelse i kulturanalytiskt perspektiv (Bordelander people. Finland-Swedish marginality and self-vindication in cultural analytical perspective), Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, Helsingfors, 2001, p. 185 and S Österlund-Pötsch, American Plus. Etnisk identitet hos finlandssvenska åttingar i Nordamerika (American plus. Ethnic identity among Swedish Finn descendents in North America), Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, Helsingfors, 2003, p.115.


10 woman, b.1949, 28 years in Ål.

11 e.g. woman, b.1948, 29 years in Ål., woman, b.1958, 16 years in Ål., man, b.1965, 9 years in Ål.

12 woman, b. 1946, 31 years in Ål.

13 e.g. woman, b. 1958, 16 years in Ål.

14 e.g. woman, b. 1949, 28 years in Ål.


16 woman, b. 1938, 42 years in Ål.


18 woman, b. 1932, 47 years in Ål.

19 cf. K Wolanik Bostrom, Berättade liv, berättat Polen. En etnologisk studie av hur högutbildade polacker gestilar identitet och samhälle (Narrated life,

20 woman, b. 1928, 55 years in Ål.

21 See P Korkiakangas, ‘Muistoista tulkintaan - muisti ja muisteluaineistot etnologian tutkimuksessa’ (From recollections to interpretation - memory and recollection materials in ethnological study), in P Korkiakangas, P Olsson & H Ruotsala (eds), Polkua etnologian menetelmin (Paths to ethnological methods), Ethnos-toimite 11, Ethnos r.y, Helsinki, 2005, p. 135.

22 Man, b. 1945, 35 years in Ål., man, b. 1947, 27 years in Ål., woman, b. 1949, 28 years in Ål.

23 woman, b.1949, 18 years in Ål.

24 woman, b. 1928, 55 years in Ål.

25 woman, b. 1932, 47 years in Ål.

26 woman, b. 1946, 31 years in Ål., man, b. 1965, 9 years in Ål.

27 man, b. 1965, 9 years in Ål.

28 woman, b. 1938, 42 years in Ål.

29 See e.g. K Liebkind, ‘Två modersmål - en identitet’ (Two mother tongues - one identity) in KT Skolstyrelsens informationsblad, 1987, no. 3-4, p. 22.

30 Bring, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

31 e.g. woman, b. 1946, 31 years in Ål., woman, b. 1948, 29 years in Ål.

32 e.g. woman, b. 1946, 31 years in Ål., woman, b. 1949, 28 years in Ål., man, b. 1965, 9 years in Ål.

33 e.g. woman, b. 1928, 55 years in Ål., woman, b. 1932, 47 years in Ål., man, b. 1947, 27 years in Ål.

34 e.g. woman, b. 1948, 29 years in Ål., woman, b. 1949, 28 years in Ål., man, b. 1965, 9 years in Ål.

35 woman, b. 1946, 31 years in Ål.

36 e.g. woman, b. 1938, 42 years in Ål., man, b. 1947, 27 years in Ål., woman, b. 1949, 28 years in Ål., man, b. 1965, 9 years in Ål.

37 woman, b. 1949, 28 years in Ål.

38 man, b. 1945, 35 years in Ål., woman, b. 1949, 28 years in Ål.

39 man, b. 1945, 35 years in Ål.


43 See K Lundström, Bland purfinnar och papperssvenskar. En studie av hur finsk gemenskap görs (Among true Finns and Swedes on paper). A study on how Finnish togetherness is made), C-uppsats, Etnologiska institutionen, Lunds universitet, viewed on 18 May 2009,
Even if the official language in Åland is Swedish, people can define their language belonging themselves.

woman, b. 1928, 55 years in Ål.
man, b. 1945, 35 years in Ål.

ibid.

man, b. 1947, 27 years in Ål., woman, b. 1949, 28 years in Ål.
woman, b. 1949, 18 years in Ål., man b. 1965, 9 years in Ål.
woman, b. 1928, 55 years in Ål., woman, b. 1938, 42 years in Ål., woman, b. 1958, 16 years in Ål.
man, b. 1947, 27 years in Ål.
woman, b. 1946, 31 years in Ål.
woman, b. 1938, 42 years in Ål., woman, b. 1946, 31 years in Ål., man, b. 1947, 27 years in Ål., man b. 1965, 9 years in Ål.
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e.g. woman, b. 1928, 55 years in Ål., woman, b. 1938, 42 years in Ål., woman, b. 1949, 18 years in Ål.
e.g. man, b. 1965, 9 years in Ål., woman, b. 1949, 28 years in Ål.
woman, b. 1946, 31 years in Ål., woman, b. 1948, 29 years in Ål.
woman, b. 1928, 55 years in Ål.
woman, b. 1938, 42 years in Ål., woman, b. 1946, 31 years in Ål.

Bibliography


Anna-Liisa Kuczynski is part-time lecturer and researcher in Ethnology at Åbo Akademi University (the Swedish university in Finland). Her main interest areas are cultural encounters, ethnicity and identity.
Pre-Immigration Profiles of Potential Ethnic Migrants from Finnish Diaspora in Russia: A Social Psychological Study

Anu Yijälä

Abstract
This study, which is based on the base-line data of a larger longitudinal research project on adaptation and integration of ethnic migrants (INPRES), explores ethnic and national identities and remigration plans among potential Ingrian Finnish returning migrants (and their family members) from Russia to Finland (N=325). The Finnish Diaspora in Russia mostly consists of descendants of Finns who emigrated between the 17th and the beginning of the 20th century to rural Ingria, a historical province between Estonia and Finland near present-day St. Petersburg. The group maintained its ethnic distinctiveness until the end of the 1920s when the Soviet Union began to persecute it, deporting Ingrian Finns from Ingria and killing many. As a consequence, Ingrian Finns started to conceal their Finnish background and Finnish identity was maintained only in interaction with the family. Massive remigration to Finland started in 1990 following the disintegration of USSR and a decision by the Finnish government to consider Ingrian Finns as remigrants. However, the immigration process has been difficult since the Ingrian Finns often lack Finnish language skills and are commonly regarded as Russians by the Finnish population. The goal of this survey study was to examine the social psychological characteristics of Ingrian Finns planning to return to their country of ethnic origin. While most studies look at immigrants only once they have moved to a new country (i.e. post-migration stage), this chapter focuses on the pre-migration stage as experienced by potential ethnic migrants. In addition to studying the cultural identities and values of the remigrants, the chapter looks at the motivations and expectations migrants have regarding the forthcoming relocation, as well as their pre-migration attitudes towards culture maintenance after immigration and contact with future hosts.

Key Words: Acculturation, Acculturation attitudes, Ingrian Finns, Pre-migration

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1. Introduction

The study focused on the pre-migration stage as experienced by 325 potential migrants of Finnish background from Russia to Finland. The main goal of this survey study was to examine the social psychological characteristics of Ingrian Finns planning to return to their country of ethnic origin. In addition to studying the cultural identities and values of the remigrants, we concentrated on the motivations and expectations migrants had regarding the forthcoming immigration, as well as their pre-migration attitudes towards culture maintenance after immigration and contact with future hosts.

While most studies look at immigrants only once they have moved to a new country (i.e. post-migration stage), this chapter highlights the fact that individuals begin the acculturation process equipped with a number of characteristics which are demographic, psychological and social in nature. In empirical research, these characteristics are typically addressed retrospectively and controlled for when studying the post-migration acculturation and adaptation of immigrants. This is understandable since, in most cases, it is highly complicated or even impossible to collect information about migrants before they move to a new country. Nevertheless, many of the socio-psychological determinants of immigrant adaptation studied in the post-migration stage actually start to form prior to migration. This is why we saw it extremely important to explore the ethnic and national identities, acculturation attitudes, and remigration plans among potential Ingrian Finnish returning migrants (and their family members) from Russia to Finland already prior to their actual relocation to Finland, and, later on after living in Finland for about a year. However, this chapter focuses solely to the pre-migration context.

2. Background of the Study

The pre-migration stage may in some cases or types of immigration be relatively short (e.g., refugees) and in some cases relatively long (e.g., ethnic migration). This chapter focuses on the pre-migration stage as experienced by potential ethnic migrants (also called repatriates, returning ethnic migrants, or remigrants) from Russia to Finland. In most of the cases, this stage has taken several years, which has led us to the assumption that pre-acculturation took place at least to some degree.

Before the 17th century Ingria, located in present-day North-West Russia and Estonia, was very sparsely populated area. The remigrants of this study are mostly Ingrian Finns, descendants of Finns who emigrated century to rural Ingria between the 17th century (when Ingria was affiliated as part of Sweden-Finland) and the beginning of the 20th century. A smaller group consists of the descendants of Finns who emigrated from Finland to the territory of the former Soviet Union (FSU) mostly during the 1920s and
1930s, either directly from Finland or via Canada and the USA. In addition, one small group of remigrants consists of the descendants of Finns who immigrated to parts of Russia other than Ingria between the 17th and 18th centuries as well as those who emigrated to the FSU after World War II. The incentives of the state not to have to pay taxes nor go to army in case of moving boosted the willingness of the Finns to move to Ingria, and the movement that began 1618 grew substantially during the following decades. Even if Ingria become under Russian rule on 18th century, still on 1920’s approximately 120 000 Ingrians living that area spoke fully Finnish and had their own Lutheran churches and schools using Finnish language as their everyday language. However, during the World War II, approximately 63 000 Ingrians were send back to Finland, as they could not be regarded as fully Russian citizens during the war. After the end of the World War II, Russia insisted that these Ingrians should repatriated back to Russia. 55 000 Ingrians left Finland believing that they would be going back to their home area in Ingria. However, many of these Russian Finns were relocated to Siberia and other parts of the FSU during and after the World War II, which led to ethnic dispersion, nationally mixed marriages and monolingualism in Russia. For decades, Finns who lived in the FSU were isolated from the contemporary Finnish society and had practically no chance to maintain their own Finnish identity. The political opening of the FSU at the end of the 1980s and finally its collapse in the early 1990s allowed Finns living in Russia to rediscover their Finnish identity. Since 1990, Russian nationals of Finnish descent, as well as their relatives (spouses and dependants) have had the right to apply for Finnish repatriate status in order to migrate to Finland.

With the introduction of legal repatriate status in 1990, a large wave of ethnic remigration began from Russia to Finland, increasing the proportion of total immigrant population in the country from 0.01% to 2.5 % in 17 years. Today, ethnic and other immigrants from Russia constitute the largest immigrant group in Finland (approx. 50 000, i.e., 40 % of the total immigrant population). At the moment, there are still approximately 15 000 potential ethnic migrants (including their family members) willing to emigrate from Russia to Finland. Finnish authorities require remigrants to satisfy certain selection criteria including proof of their Finnish ethnic background (official documents registering their nationality as Finnish or proving that at least one parent is/was registered as having Finnish nationality). To then obtain a residence permit, an applicant either has to demonstrate sufficient Finnish language competence in an official language competence test developed by the Finnish authorities specifically for (Ingrian) Finnish returnees (IPAKI) or to complete an immigration training programme in Russia which includes courses on Finnish language and
culture. The participants of the present study were recruited among people taking part in these immigration training courses.

3. Methods

A. Participants

The participants of this study were potential migrants from Russia to Finland. The survey data used in the analyses formed the base-line data of a larger longitudinal research project on adaptation and integration of ethnic migrants (INPRES). The base-line sample consisted of altogether 325 potential migrants (60.5% (n = 196) females and 39.5% (n = 128) males). The mean age of the participants was 43.1 years (SD = 14.4 years) ranging between 19 and 85 years. The majority of the participants were married or cohabiting (69.5%) and had children (76.6%). The participants were well-educated: only 15.1% of the respondents had no education beyond secondary school, while 44.7% of the respondents had attended high school or university and 39.1% had attended or completed professional college. On average, the participants had studied for 13.6 (SD = 3.4) years. Most of the participants (61.2%) had full-time employment, and only 3.4% were unemployed/temporarily dismissed.

Most of the participants (65.5%) lived in Petrozavodsk (the capital of the Republic of Karelia) or in other cities and villages in the Republic of Karelia, and about one third (34.5%) lived in St. Petersburg and other cities and villages close to it in the Leningrad area. Most of the participants (70.9%) were ethnic Finns (with at least one parent of a Finnish ethnic background). One third (29.1%) of the sample were not of Finnish descent (i.e., spouses of or kin to ethnic respondents (n = 78) or other relatives of the ethnic Finns planning to join them in Finland (n = 15)). These people were mostly of Russian (24.1%) but also of Ukrainian (0.3%), Belorussian (0.6%), and other (4%) ethnic backgrounds. However, Russian language was the mother tongue for the vast majority (73.8%) of the participants. One third (27.7%) reported being bilingual with the Finnish language as their second mother tongue. The majority (86.2%) had previously studied the Finnish language; most of them in the context of the reception programme, and only 10.2% reported having no Finnish language skills at all. The participants had applied for the repatriate status approximately 12.1 (SD = 3.5) years ago (time to prepare for remigration ranging between 1 and 31 years). Only 13.9% were planning to remigrate alone; 28.4% were planning to remigrate with their spouses, 29.9% with their spouses and at least one minor child (i.e., less than 18 years old child) ; 3.4% were planning to remigrate with at least one minor dependant and the rest (24.4%) of the participants with their spouses, adult children, and/or other relatives. The majority of the participants (85.8%) had visited Finland before and almost all of them (91.4%) had friends and/or relatives already living in Finland.
B. Data Collection Procedure

The baseline data of the INPRES project was collected during April and May 2008 in Russia by using questionnaires in Russian. A large part of the data (N = 192, 59.1% of the respondents) was collected at Finnish language courses organized by Finnish authorities (the Ministry of Interior) for potential migrants as a part of their immigration training programme. All the participants attending the courses at the time of data collection were surveyed, and the teachers of the courses were asked in advance for permission to collect data during classes. In addition to the people taking part in the language training, the questionnaire was also sent to those potential migrants (N = 206) who had already passed the language test and were in the last phase of the pre-migration process, waiting to be officially granted a place of residence in Finland. This group of potential migrants was identified using the register of the Consulate General of Finland in St. Petersburg and reached through a postal survey. The participants were advised to return the questionnaires in pre-paid envelopes to a Russian post office box opened by the researchers for this purpose. Altogether 49 participants (15.1% of the total sample) answered the postal survey questionnaires (a response rate of 25%).

In both cases (i.e., language courses and the postal survey), the respondents were also asked to take additional questionnaires to their homes to be filled in by their spouses or other relatives who were planning to join the respondents to Finland. For those attending language courses, these additional questionnaires were to be returned to a member of the research group during the following Finnish language lesson or, at the latest, when registering for the language test. For those participating in the postal survey, the additional questionnaires were supposed to be sent back in the same envelopes as the respondents’ own materials. Altogether 84 potential migrants (25.8% of the total sample) answered these additional questionnaires. The response rate for this subsample is difficult to evaluate as there is no information on the number of relatives planning to remigrate to Finland but living in separate households.

C. Measures

All the measures used in this study were either developed for the INPRES project or taken directly or with modifications from existing scales, as described below. All response options represented Likert-type scales. Each of the measurements has been described in more detail along with the results of the study below.

4. Results

A. Previous knowledge of the country of immigration

Pre-departure information of the future host country and its culture increases predictability of the life changes related to transition and this way
may reduce uncertainty. This knowledge may be attained for example through media, books, interacting with people from or prior experience in the country of immigration. There is also some empirical evidence that previous knowledge of the future host culture facilitates immigrant’ post-migration adjustment\(^5\).

The participants were asked on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all - 5 = very much), how much they knew about life in Finland. The measure covered the following domains: financial issues, legislation, culture and society, people, dealing with the authorities, studying, working and finding day care for children. A composite score was created by counting together those items that were relevant to each respondent (i.e., four most important items of the eight presented). Cronbach’s alpha of the scale equalled .91.

On average, participants’ knowledge of Finland was slightly below moderate (mean 2.85). The participants labelled the strongest area of knowledge being ‘people’ (3.32), contrasting the least known ‘legislation’ (2.30).

B. Motivations to Move and Expectations of the Life in Finland

There are many reasons behind the decision to work abroad. These can be split up into motivations and expectations. The former can be separated into three theoretically distinct sub-categories: (1) Preservation, which includes physical, social and psychological security; (2) self-development, which refers to personal growth in knowledge, skills and abilities; and (3) materialism, which coins striving for financial wealth\(^6\). Expectations affect how stressful situations are evaluated, i.e. whether adaptation difficulties come as a surprise or not. So there is a need for accurate information prior to relocation both on culture and on the future work environment. However, the mismatch between expectations and reality can be divided into overmet and undermet expectations\(^7\). Whereas when expectations are overmet, so to speak that the situation is e.g. less difficult than anticipated, this leads to greater satisfaction, while undermet expectations may have negative implications for the relocation process.
Table 1. Participants’ current situation in Russia/expectations of life in Finland

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<tr>
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<th>Current situation in Russia</th>
<th>Expectation of life in Finland</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Occupational position</td>
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<td>2. Work conditions</td>
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<td>3. Career opportunities</td>
<td>2.73</td>
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<td>4. Living conditions</td>
<td>2.98</td>
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<td>5. Economic circumstances</td>
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</table>

What did the participants of the study then expect of their future in Finland? As it can be seen from Table 1, in general, the participants kept significantly higher expectations when evaluating their future life (i.e., occupational position, work conditions, career opportunities, living conditions, economic circumstances, psychological well-being, hobbies and leisure and public health care) in Finland compared to their present situation in Russia. More specifically, only friendship relations in Russia were thought to be better than they would be in Finland. In addition, there was no difference what it comes to family relations - indicating perhaps that the participants already had family members in both countries.

To find out about participants’ motivations for moving to Finland, we modified a measure originally introduced by Tartakovsky and Swartz measuring motivations for self-development, materialism and culture preservation. Self-development was measured by a 3-item subscale (e.g. ‘Interest in experiencing different cultures.’), materialism on a 4-item subscale (e.g. Desire to raise my standard of living.’), and culture preservation on a 8-item subscale (e.g., ‘Desire to be reunited with relatives living in Finland.’). Culture preservation was further divided in two different domains: 3a. preservation related to reunion of the family in Finland (3 items), and, 3b. preservation related to the perceived threat in Russia (5 items). The participants rated the statements on a 5-point scale (1 = absolutely unimportant - 5 = very important).

The most important motivation for moving to Finland for the participants was materialism (mean 3.99), almost as important was self-development (3.84). Reunion of the family was rated the third most important motive whereas perceived threat in Russia did not motivate that much the participants to move to Finland.
C. Cultural Identities

Every person has to answer the question of ‘Who am I?’. According to the Social Identity Theory introduced by Tajfel and Turner, the individual puts the answer in terms of group memberships and resultant relations to others. A person can regard him- or herself e.g. as ‘a Finn’ and/or ‘a Russian’, ‘mother’ or ‘father’, ‘an Ingrian-Finn or a non-Finn’. The knowledge of these multiple memberships and the attached value and emotional significance build the individual’s self-concept. It is the core argument of this theory that the individual strives for a positive concept of the self; a positive evaluation of the perceived ingroup - in contrast to the relevant comparison group - is accordingly an obstetrician for a positive evaluation of the self. As van Knippenberg summarizes, the stronger the identification with a certain group, the stronger the group’s demands and specifications affect the individual’s behaviour and attitudes. It is furthermore shown e.g. in the research by Mlicki and Ellemers that different layers of group memberships do not have to be in mutual competition but can be instead positively correlated. In their research, Mlicki and Ellemers monitored both a high national identity of Polish citizens and an emphasis of the European identity among the same people. This draws a complex picture of coexisting identities and puts forward the question of how to achieve a person’s well-being through a positive self-concept.

To measure the participants’ cultural identities we combined and modified two existing measures, Mlicki and Ellemers’s National identity measure and Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s American identity measure. The two 6-item subscales measured the degree of the respondents’ Finnish identification (Cronbach’s alpha = .96) and Russian identification (Cronbach’s alpha = .93), containing both cognitive (e.g. ‘I consider myself as an (Ingrian) Finn’) and affective (e.g. ‘I am proud of being an (Ingrian) Finn’) components. The response options ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The participants of the study identified themselves more strongly as Finns (mean 3.84) than as Russians (3.27). What is really surprising here is that, contrary to recent studies on multiple identifications and their positive relationships, these identities in question seemed to exclude each other to some extent since we monitored relatively high negative correlation between these two identification variables (r= -.46, p<.001).

D. Cultural Distance

Cultural distance terms how similar or different a person thinks his or her home country is in cultural aspects compared to the country of immigration. Perceived cultural similarity is one way of framing this. As many previous post-migration studies have shown, perceived cultural similarity is
positively connected to attraction which stands for a positive evaluation of the host nation both on an interpersonal and an intergroup level.

Using a modification of the Perceived similarity scale\textsuperscript{19}, the participants were asked to rate how similar or different they think their home country and Finland are compared in five general domains (culture, values, child rearing, people in general and gender roles). The answer options were ranging 1 = very similar to 5 = very different. As we assumed, the participants of this study felt that as a country, Finland is clearly dissimilar to Russia (mean 3.57).

E. Multicultural Ideology and Attitudes Toward Finns

Support for a multicultural ideology has also been related to immigrants’ acculturation. As empirical findings of the previous studies have shown, the more an individual supports multiculturalism, the more she/he is willing to combine her/his own cultural background with the host country culture (integration acculturation attitude). However, as Arends-Tóth and Van De Vijver\textsuperscript{20} found in their study on Turkish-Dutch immigrants in the Netherlands, immigrants’ support for multiculturalism was related to the integration strategy with regard to public domains, but in the private context, such as at home, they preferred the separation strategy (i.e., were oriented to maintaining their own cultural heritage). In this study, in the case of ethnic migration, we assumed that the participants support for multiculturalism would be relatively high.

Participants’ support for a multicultural ideology was assessed using a modified version of Arends-Tóth & Van De Vijver’s\textsuperscript{21} adaptation of the Multicultural ideology scale originally developed by Berry & Kalin\textsuperscript{22}. The scale included items such as ‘Immigrant parents must encourage their children to retain the culture and traditions of their homeland’. Items 6 and 10 of the original scale were omitted from the scale as they had been shown to have poor loadings in previous studies\textsuperscript{23}. Respondents used a 5-point scale to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement (1 = strongly disagree - 5= strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha of the scale equalled .62.

To assess participants’ attitudes towards Finnish people we modified the Outgroup attitudes-scale introduced by Liebkind, Nyström, Honkanummi, and Lange\textsuperscript{24}. Participants responded to 8 items presented by choosing the favoured answer option on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree - 5 = strongly agree).

The results show, that the participants were relatively strongly oriented towards supporting multiculturalism (mean 3.92). We were also interested of those attitudes that the participants held towards Finns. It seems that the overall attitude of the participants towards Finns was overly positive (mean 4.6).
F. Acculturation Attitudes

In addition to identifications with different groups and attitudes towards members of the host society, cross-cultural adaptation is related to acculturation attitudes. In Berry’s widely used framework, acculturation attitudes refer to two dimensions: the immigrants’ desire to maintain their original culture in the new country, and the desire to be in contact with members of the host society. Based on these two dimensions, four distinct acculturation strategies can be formed: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. The integration strategy refers to a situation where an individual is oriented both towards preserving his/her own heritage culture as well as towards being a part of the new culture. Assimilation can be defined as an immigrant’s willingness to have contacts with the dominant culture at the expense of losing his/her original cultural characteristics, whereas separation refers to a strong need to preserve one’s own ethnic culture while avoiding contact with hosts. Marginalisation, on the other hand, is defined as a tendency to detach oneself from both cultures.

Numerous empirical studies in several countries have clearly shown that integration is the most commonly preferred acculturation strategy in contrast to marginalization, the least preferred option. Furthermore, integration is often shown to be related to the best adaptation. It should be noted that individuals may adopt different strategies in different areas and stages of life. For example, a person may actively seek assimilation in the work environment while favouring separation or integration (e.g. by choosing to use one’s native language) at home.

To measure participants’ acculturation strategies we modified a measure previously used by Rohmann and her colleagues. The participants’ attitudes towards culture maintenance were measured by a three-item subscale (e.g., ‘I think it is important that immigrants from Russia to Finland maintain their culture in Finland’), with response options ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (Cronbach’s alpha = .73). The participants’ attitudes towards contacts with hosts after immigration were also measured on a three-item scale (e.g., ‘I think it is important that immigrants from Russia to Finland have Finnish friends’). The last, reversed item (‘I think that immigrants from Russia to Finland should stick to their own kind’), however, was excluded from the subscale because of a substantially decreased Cronbach’s alpha (for a similar solution, see Zagefka & Brown 2002). The alpha of the remaining two items equalled .56 ($r = .39$).

As hypothesized, integration was the most preferred acculturation strategy among the participants. Of 314 respondents, 210 (66.9%) preferred integration over assimilation (20.1%, $n = 63$), separation (8.3%, $n = 26$), and marginalization (4.7%, $n = 15$).
Table 2. Acculturation strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginalization</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G. Values

Values can be defined as trans-situational goals that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or group. According to this definition, values are concepts or beliefs that act as standards of what is most desirable when evaluating events, behaviours, and persons. Values differ from attitudes in that they transcend specific situations, are ordered in a person in a hierarchy of importance, set standards of desirability, and are less numerous and more central to personality than are attitudes. One of the most influential models of values is the two-dimensional taxonomy of personal values advanced by Shalom Schwartz. Schwartz’s cross-cultural research program conducted in a steadily growing number of countries (now 77) has revealed a nearly universal set of values differentiated by motivational content, and has provided almost universal support for the structure of relations among these values. At the level of the individual, people in most cultures distinguish between at least ten basic values. Schwartz has labelled these universal value types as: Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, Security, Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-Direction, and Universalism.

To measure the participants’ cultural values we adopted a short, 21-item version of Schwartz’s Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ Schwartz et al., 2001) also used in the European Social Survey (ESS, 2008). In addition, we added two items in order to assess participants’ own stance on perceptions of the work values (see: Helkama 1999). Participants rated on a 5-point scale (1 = not like me at all - 5 = very much like me), whether the items corresponded to the image they had of 1. themselves; 2. of a typical Finn and, finally, 3. of a typical Russian. Cronbach’s alpha of the measure was = .67 for Openness to change; .68 for Conservatism; .71 for Self-enhancement; and .69 for Self-transcendence value types.
Table 3. Participants’ values and estimation of those of a typical Finn/Russian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values:</th>
<th>Typical Finn</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Typical Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Transcendence values:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Universalism</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Benevolence</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Enhancement values:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Achievement</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Power</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conservation values:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conformity</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tradition</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Security</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Openness to Change values:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Self Direction</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Stimulation</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonism value</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work values</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important values for the participants were Universalism (mean 4.10) and Work values (4.09), whereas Power (2.32) and Stimulation (2.86) values were not regarded as important. What is particularly interesting here is that what it comes to Universalism, Conformity, Tradition, Security and Work values, the participants saw themselves as being between of the corresponding values of the Finns and Russians.

H. Well-being and Stress

To measure the participants’ subjective physical, mental and emotional health status, we used the General Well-Being Index (GWBI) by Gaston & Vogl36. The 22-item measure contained the following three dimensions: General mood/affect (13 items), Life satisfaction (6 items), and Physical health (3 items). Participants responded to the items by choosing the best answer option on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all - 5 = very much). The Cronbach’s alpha was .91 for the General mood/affect subscale; .82 for the Life satisfaction subscale; and .71 for the Physical health subscale.

To measure the stressfulness of the relocation, the participants were asked to rate the severity of this process compared to other stressful events and/or situations in their lives. The 7-point scale (1 = not severe at all - 7 = most severe event I have faced) was developed by Terry37 and the introductory question (‘how stressful would you rate...’) was introduced by Aldwin & Revenson38. By continuing the introductory question in a ways which fitted to the context of our study, three items (e.g. ‘Leaving your
present country of residence’, ‘Moving to Finland’) were developed by us. The Cronbach’s alpha of the measure was .87.

According to the results, it seems that most of the participants can be described in terms of good general well-being (Table 4). There was not much difference between the different dimensions of well-being, however participants scored highest on general mood/affect (mean 3.92) whereas physical health got the lowest scores (3.65).

Table 4: Participant’s general well-being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General well-being index:</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General mood/ affect</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life satisfaction/ vitality</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical health/ no somatic complaints</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What comes to relocation stress, the participants average level of stress was a bit below the scale midpoint (mean 3.58), showing that the participants did not stress too much of moving to Finland.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the pre-migration stage of potential migrants from Russia to Finland. Based on the results of this study we could form a general kind of ‘pre-migration profile’ of the Ingrian Finns preparing to their move to Finland. The participants of the study identified more strongly as Finns than as Russians, and these two foci of identification actually correlated negatively. Also many of the values of the participants were situated between their perceptions of the values of a typical Russian and those of a typical Finn. Participants also held extremely positive attitudes towards Finns. However, unfortunately it must be acknowledged that the same is not always true what it comes to the attitudes of the Finns towards ‘Russians’ as the Ingrian Finns quite often are regarded.

The most common acculturation orientations of the participants were integration and assimilation, which also partly reflected their relatively strong support for multiculturalism. Even if the participants did not know so much of Finland and how the society is functioning, still they clearly showed preference for Finland and expected their standard of living to rise after moving to Finland. Generally, it can be stated that the participants felt well and they did not see the move to Finland as very stressful. This is understandable as most of the participants had been waiting the permission to move for a long time and now were excited of getting closer to the final stage of their immigration process.

In addition to studying the pre-migration factors like in this study, we see it important to continue following how these factors may evolve and change after the actual move to a new country. Therefore, the following aim
of the longitudinal INPRES project is to study how these different variables affect the post-migration adjustment of the participants of the study. This will allow us gain essential information of the most important factors affecting the successful adaptation of this particular group of immigrants to Finland. We believe that only this way we can fully understand the nature of the remigration process from Russia to Finland and, according to the specific needs of the remigrants, also support them during this enormous life change they are experiencing and going through.

Notes

2 E.g. Jasinskaja-Lahti op. cit. and also Kyntäjä, E. Ethnic remigration from former Soviet Union to Finland - patterns of ethnic identity and acculturation among the Ingrian Finns. Yearbook of Population Research in Finland, vol. 34, 1997, pp. 102-113
3 Statistics Finland, 2007
4 ibid
8 Tartakovsky, E., & Schwartz, S. H., op.cit
10 ibid
11 ibid
14 ibid
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15 Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A., op.cit
16 Mlicki, P. P., & Ellemers, N., op.cit
21 ibid
27 See Berry et al., 2006. See also Sam & Berry, op.cit
28 See Berry et al., 2006


Schwartz, op. cit

ibid

ibid

ibid

See Gaston & Vogl, 2005

See Terry, 1994


Bibliography


**Anu Yijälä** is a PhD student in the University of Helsinki. She is currently working as a researcher in two different research projects on immigrant adaptation to Finland, of which both are longitudinal including quantitative pre-migration and post-migration stage assessments.
Who Do They Think They Are?
Online Narratives among Romanian Diaspora in Ireland

Gloria Macri

Abstract
Focusing on identity as a dynamic process, this chapter looks at the way members of Romanian Community in Ireland (RCI) narrate and perform their ethnic identities. The concept of ‘identity’ is strongly criticised for being too ambiguous and torn between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ meanings, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers. Thus this chapter embarks on a study of identification, as an on-going process of understanding themselves in relation to ‘Others’, a study of the continuously flowing boundaries between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. In a European context where Romanians are often portrayed as second class citizens by the media, an investigation into the strategies that they use in order to define themselves and others is an interesting and challenging task. For an ethnic minority community, the Internet (and in particular online discussion forums) represents a useful source of information as well as a practical tool for keeping in contact with friends and family. This chapter investigates the messages posted on the Online Forum of the Romanian Community (Ireland) (RCI) Interesting findings emerge in relation to the many aspects of the ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’ dichotomy, as Romanians build their identification narratives in relation to being European, or Irish, diasporic and so on.

Key Words: Diaspora, identity, Internet, narrative, Other, Romanian.

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1. Introduction
Identity has emerged as a central topic in the literature of several disciplines and fields. In particular in the field of migration studies, research on identity and belonging has flourished over the last two decades probably because, as Mandaville argues, diasporas often lead a more intense search and negotiation of identity due to the fact that they are experiencing separation from the ‘natural’ setting of the homeland.

In spite of its extensive use in both theoretical and research literature, identity is very much a criticised concept. Stuart Hall who has widely discussed issues of cultural identity asserts that the ‘old’ essentialising take on identity has given way to a post-modern approach of identity, an identity that is fragmented and dynamic. However, Brubaker and Cooper
argue that identity has now become an ambiguous and ‘infinitely elastic’ concept incapable of performing serious analytical work: ‘If identity is everywhere, then it is nowhere’.

One main question emerges at this stage: if post-modern identity encompasses just about anything from cultural values to everyday consumption (food, media etc.) and it is also continuously changing, then does this destroy the rationale for talking about identities? The existing literature does provide some answers to the above enquiry: the fact that identities are not static, but dynamic realities does not mean that there are not periods and contexts when identities are stable enough so that they can be analysed.

The study presented in this chapter is part of my wider PhD research programme that focuses on mapping the identity narratives of the Romanian diaspora living in Ireland. In the wider research context I am seeking to address some of the gaps in the identity literature, by adopting a constructivist approach to identity, one that focuses not solely on the ‘content’ of the diasporic identity (its cultural values, rituals, beliefs, belonging etc.), but also on the boundaries with other groups. It is at the boundaries that symbolic space is negotiated and identities are fiercely debated, constructed and re-constructed. Thus, Bauman’s assertion that: ‘We are ‘US’ only in so far as there are people who are not ‘US’’ is of key importance as we examine the reflections of the Romanian diaspora in Ireland around their identity and the identities of ‘relevant Others’.

This chapter presents only certain aspects of my research, aiming to look at some of the relevant groups that Romanians use when they talk about their identities. Secondly I am interested in how the Romanian diaspora’s identity is constructed in relation to the identities of the ‘Other’ groups? Finally I will look at any evidence of changes over time, in particular the shifting of boundaries between groups over the last five years?

2. Methodology

Ethnographic research fits best with the objectives of the overall PhD research. Besides interviews and focus groups, the research methodology includes social observation and participation in events organised by the community. For the material presented in this chapter, I have used the social observation method to investigate the interactions between the users of the online forum of the Romanian diaspora in Ireland. I have also used content analysis to examine the messages posted on forum and their meaning in relation to the topic studied.

The forum is a rich source of information about Romanians as a community, the ways in which they see themselves and others. It allows access to information over a long time-span (2004-2009), thus including many key moments in the life of the community. Another key aspect is that
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on the forum, identity unfolds naturally, like in everyday life, through stories and experiences, without answers being prompted by specific questions.

There are however some limitations to the amount and quality of information which can be obtained from the online forum. First of all, because conversations are not researcher-directed, the forum cannot ‘answer’ all the research’s questions about the topic. Secondly, there is little information available about the profile of the respondents which would allow us to correlate their responses with their particular personal context. However in spite of these limitations, the forum is undoubtedly a valuable source of information as it provides an arena where lively debates spark and fierce identity negotiations take place.

In relation to the sampling procedures used in processing the information from the forum messages, many difficulties emerged. First of all, on a discussion forum where a part of members are ‘old acquaintances’, sharing a common ‘online history’ together, it became clear that some of their answers and attitudes were, in most cases, influenced by past events on the forum which they would only briefly make reference when they post a new message. The second main concern with regards to sampling was the patterns of conversations taking place of the forum: even the thread titles which appeared as mostly unrelated with the idea of identity/identification contained valuable insights for the analysis. This is particularly important as it bears close resemblance to the way identity unfolds itself in all activities of everyday life. In conclusion it emerged that the best solution was to include all messages in the analysis.

Thus, data presented in this chapter runs over a period of five years (2004-2009), totalling a number of 1,718 discussion threads and 16,960 posts (16th April 2009). This is particularly useful for the analysis as it includes many key moments in the life of the Romanian community in Ireland (RCI), such as becoming an EU member, the Citizenship referendum etc. and their implications on the pattern of settlement, integration and identity strategies.

3. The ‘Us’ and the ‘Them’ in Romanians’ Identity Narratives

Before I begin discussing the multiple facets of diasporic identity as they unravel in the online diasporic space, it would be interesting to look first at what the forum represents for the members of diaspora themselves. Consistent with previous research scholarship, findings indicate that a key task of the RCI forum is to provide a source of information and advice for migrants as well as pre-migrants.

However users see the forum as representing much more than just information. For some it is a source of Romanianness as they argue that the forum is accessed most likely ‘because it is in Romanian rather than solely because it offers information’ (c). The forum is also perceived as an essential space for debate, a ‘round table’ where Romanians discuss about their lives in
Ireland and the ‘fate’ of the motherland. From the discussions and messages posted, this online space seems to be assigned another key role by its users: in the context of a perceived generalised lack of trust and solidarity within the ‘offline’ community, the forum helps creates a sense of unity of Romanians as a group and it gives them an opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions in an environment where they feel excluded or disrespected by others: ‘[…] the role of this forum is to at least slightly bring us together and to feel a little respected between ourselves if others don’t respect us’ (v9).

These findings are consistent with data from similar research arguing that internet and in particular discussion forums play a complex role in articulating diasporic identifications and feelings of belonging. On the forum, ‘identity talk’ is everywhere. Messages posted there give us an insight into how Romanians define themselves; who are the ‘others’ and how are they defined?

### 4. Who are ‘We’ and Who are ‘The Others’?

Some positive aspects emerge from the forum about what it means to be Romanian and these facts are very much in line with old, known myths about: Romania’s scenery; the students who won prizes in international Maths and Physics competitions; famous sport performers (Nadia Comaneci, Hagi and Ilie Nastase) etc.

In the forum users’ views, Romanians as a nation are constantly unhappy and very jittery, reacting in many situations ‘just like a ticking bomb with a short fuse’ (h); they are selfish and indifferent, lacking patriotism and civic spirit. Romania as a country gets its share of negative reviews as well: it is a country where nothing changes/ nothing good happens. Corruption, dirt, traffic, low salaries transform their homeland into a nerve-wrecking and morally corrupting country that sends its citizens into a ‘forced symbolic exile’ as far away form it as possible because ‘anything is better than in Romania’:

> If I would have stayed for yet another year, I think the system would have pushed us towards the nut-house […] Financially speaking, most of my and my wife’s colleagues are successful lawyers, businessmen, with villas and holiday homes, but I am 100 times happier in Ireland because I can be a moral person and to succeed with my own resources, without help from the system, meaning bribe, relations etc.10

While this image that some Romanians hold about themselves is mainly extrapolated from their personal experiences, it is reinforced by negative media portrayals throughout Europe and thus acquires the
dimensions of a generalised sense of inferiority about who they are and how they are perceived by others: ‘we are the laughing stock of Europe’.

This strongly embedded inferiority complex emerges even stronger when Romanians compare themselves with ‘other’ groups that they use as main reference points when they talk about their identities. One example is their constant comparison between ‘homeland’ and ‘hostland’. Ireland is presented by many users in a very positive light and its role in allowing migrants to realise their opportunities is highlighted:

Here, every Romanian started from the bottom level, but in one year we all had jobs that in Romania we would have never dreamt about and that is not only our merit, it is the Irish system that allowed us to integrate […] and I guess that all Romanians here should thank Irish for giving them an opportunity that no other country could give them.11

Ireland is perceived as even more welcoming than other countries where Romanians live:

A fiend of mine, an English teacher that lived in Italy before coming here, was shocked by the opportunities available in Ireland. He mentioned that if in Italy you were working as cleaner at Fiat you were so popular that you could give autographs to other Romanians.12

Some criticism about Ireland and the Irish is ‘allowed’, but it mainly reflects the key problems that Irish society and public opinion is very much aware of: poor public transportation, poor and under-funded medical system, litter in the streets; binge-drinking etc. Heavy criticism however of Irish and Ireland is viewed by the forum members as sign of being ungrateful for what Ireland has done for them.

Fascination for ‘the Occident’ has deep roots in the Communist regime when civilisation, progress and ‘hope’ equalled with ‘the West’. The same feelings persist very much until today, being particularly reinforced by a perception that East of Europe is the target of multiple negative stereotypes and associations in the public opinion. Thus, Romanians feel that not only do they have to assume the ‘shame’ for being Romanian, but also the equally demeaning one: Eastern Europeanness.

The feeling of inferiority Romanians feel about their identities persists even in the references that Romanians make in relation to other diasporic communities. In their view, others can maintain better their language and culture. For example, Pakistanis, Latvians, Indians in Ireland organise Sunday classes for children to teach them their homeland culture.
The same initiative had been unsuccessful within the Romanian community in Ireland. Other diasporic communities are also believed to have better websites which is considered by the forum members as a huge merit as in their view, a website is just like a presentation card of the community [diasporic group], its image and culture.

Coping with such negative thoughts and feelings about their identity as well as the pessimistic view about any future solutions to improve the image of the Romanians, the diaspora has so far adopted to a great degree the ‘head in the sand’ strategy and tacit acceptance of their status. This led, to the extreme, to situations when discriminatory remarks and treatment of the Romanian diaspora were accepted by some community members as a ‘well-deserved’ punishment. Moreover, some users perceive that by the very condition of being a migrant, one is doomed to assume a secondary status in the host society.

An alternative type of strategy was also encountered on the RCI forum in response to the inferiority feeling for being Romanian. This second strategy is based on targeting and denouncing those members of the community which the users believe to create most of the problems. In this way, they are ‘playing the justice game’ where the ‘judges’ adopt a morally superior position and distance themselves from the ‘Guilty. Unfortunately in many cases this leads to the diaspora adopting itself discriminatory practices oriented towards other groups (blamed as scapegoats).

One exemplification of this situation is the relation between Romanian diaspora and the gypsy (or Roma) group. Two main opposing views have been identified: some users view the gypsy phenomenon as the ‘overwhelming’ cause for the negative image associated to being Romanian, due to their high visibility: skin tone and dress style, selling the ‘Big Issue’ magazine etc.). A growing number of users feel in exchange that Roma is an ethnic minority officially recognised throughout Europe, but that the people’s ignorance in making the difference between the cultural heritages of both groups leads to frustration in both groups towards this lack of differentiation.

These particular identity strategies mentioned in the previous paragraphs are by no means specific to the Roma [gypsy] group. Similar attitudes have been directed towards other groups of Romanians coming from poorer parts of the country (such as Moldova in the East part of the country, which is not to be mistaken for the independent country Moldova). Romanians originating from this region are sometimes blamed by the public opinion for all the crimes the media brings forward (In Ireland as well as in other European countries where Romanians live, such as Italy and Spain).

5. Changes in Identity Discourses

One of my hypotheses was that there are shifts over time in a diaspora’s identity narratives and the importance played by certain groups in
negotiating and defining the borderline of these identities. Research findings confirm this hypothesis and multiple illustrations emerge from the messages on the forum.

The changing migration patterns over the last five years in Ireland have brought to the surface a new category of migrant: the skilled IT worker. The rise in the number of migrants in this category was a result of the particular needs of the Irish labour market and the introduction of a new type of Visa for IT jobs which was made available to the Romanian migrants.

Recently, more and more of these new migrants make their voices heard on the RCI forum. Their opinions in many respects seem to significantly depart from those of the ‘established’ forum members. In relation to what it means to be Romanian, this new type of users feel less ashamed of who they are and more willing to prove even if only through their personal example, that Romanians are no second-class citizens.

For them, success that comes at the price of denying your roots and your identity in the desire to be integrated as much as possible in the Irish system is not something that they are ready to accept:

[If Ireland was so great] then we wouldn’t have to hide behind non-Romanian passports or work illegally. I’m not going to comment on the fact that Ireland offers great opportunities, but in most of the cases you have to lose a part of your identity and I would never be able to make such a big compromise because there are many countries where you can go and work without having to hide where you come from.13

Another change that is easily visible on the forum is the attitude Romanians have towards the European Union membership. Initially [2004-2005] there was a great degree of optimism when Romania was preparing its candidacy to become a full member. Diaspora was getting its hopes up that this would be the end of work and immigration restrictions and humiliations, an end to their problematic image Romanians have in Europe as well as recognition of their merits. EU membership was in their view a powerful label that could patch and heal our historically wounded pride. However towards the end of 2006, came the announcement that the country was not yet ready to join and thus the accession date was postponed by at least one year. This led to growing feelings of frustration and rejection in the Romanian diaspora in Ireland. The very humble position of the Romanian state during negotiations as well as the perceived unequal treatment in comparison with the other EU states (in particular the 10 newest additions), have all been factors that contributed to re-enforcing even stronger negative feelings about being Romanian.
To a certain degree the same perceptions are still in place today (more than two years after accession) as some users on the forum argue that we are still marginalised in a structure where equal rights should be the leading philosophy: ‘[we are] the other corner of EU’.

What can be noticed however is an emerging trend where the forum members seem to accept the fact that all [EU] countries have good and bad citizens (‘all forests have dried stumps’). Moreover they agree that in order to be a respected European nation we have to respect ourselves and convince all the others to respect us as well. And this needs to be a process we all participate to as nobody will this battle for us.

I am upset when we get angry on those that criticise our country, but we talk about our country worse than the others do. When you have such opinions about ‘your own’ we don’t have to be surprised that others see us the way they do.14

6. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted some key aspects of the overall PhD research. It has shown how members of the Romanian diaspora living in Ireland negotiate symbolic identity spaces in relation with ‘the Others’ and their identities. While the negotiations of the borders between these groups are essential for defining the group’s identity, borders are not fixed or frozen in time.

Findings presented in this chapter detail the ‘relational’ aspect of the Romanian diasporic identity, looking at how their identity narratives are constructed in opposition with ‘Other’ groups. Future data collection will further explore these relations, but also focus on the identity ‘content’ of the Romanian diaspora living in Ireland, referring mainly to the group’s cultural values and beliefs. Research is also going to highlight the main factors that lead to changes in the identity in the case of the Romanian community living in Ireland.

Notes


See Brubaker, R. & Cooper, F., op. cit


**Gloria Macri** is a Scholar of the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences based at Dublin City University. Her research is focused on the study of migration and identity, in particular the narratives of identity and belonging in the Romanian diaspora in Ireland. Her research interests include among others topics such as: media and identity, diasporic media, and social capital.
Taiwan: Republic of China or Republic of Confusion

Shih-Chi Kao

Abstract
In 1949, at the end of the Chinese civil war, Chiang Kai-Shek’s Chinese nationalist party, the Kuomintang (the KMT), retreated to the island of Formosa (today’s Taiwan), imposing absolute control, that is, a period of Martial Law which was to last 38 years, the longest period of Martial Law in modern history. In 1987, the lifting of Martial Law by Chiang Ching-Kuo (the son of Chiang Kai-Shek) offered the people of Taiwan a new freedom, and since that time, Taiwan has matured into a robust and vibrant democracy. The nationalist monopoly ended in 2000 with the electoral success of the Democratic Progressive Party (the DPP) led by perceived independence ideologue Chen Shui-Bian. However, socio-political change has not necessarily dispelled all thought of conflict with Mainland China, which recently passed the ‘Secession Law’, declaring any bid for independence to be an aggressive act. Is the threat of conflict an inescapable feature of China-Taiwan relations? Taking into account the fact that human responses are explained in terms of their antecedents - their stimuli, the analysis traces the ways in which the people of Taiwan have responded to the ongoing uncertainty and confusion that has marked their relations with Mainland China in recent times.

Key Words: cultural identity, ethnicity, diaspora and politics in Taiwan, national identity, Taiwanese identity.

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1. Introduction
Among the discussion forums convened by international communities, extensive debate surrounds Taiwan; that is, whether it is a nation, a state or perhaps a ‘nation state’. When considering Taiwan’s not only sensitive but also controversial political, social and cultural circumstances, and the fact that it does not opt in favour of Mainland China, the answer to the question of where Taiwan stands cannot be seen as clear-cut. In recent years, there has been a rapid rise of Taiwanese self-identity consciousness among the people of Taiwan due to the successful social reforms, such as democratic transformation and communication development. As a result, the dispute surrounding the notion of Taiwanese nation-‘alias’ has potentially reached its peak. In basic terms, it can be perceived as a strong indication of the controversy that rages over Chinese or Taiwanese-
Taiwan

oriented nationalism, and who in fact has sovereignty over Taiwan Island. In the Taiwanese, all the above questions evoke a sense of uncertainty and confusion.

2. The Creation of the Taiwanese Identity

Any discussion of 'the' Taiwanese identity cannot avoid its historical background, interrelated socio-cultural circumstances, and the dominant political and ideological issues of the time. I will now proceed to summarise each stage of the formation of Taiwanese identity.

A. The Early Settlement (before 1895)

Prior to 1895, Taiwanese identity was at this time based more upon a regional or provincial identity rather than on unique identity separate from Mainland China. In other words, the Taiwanese people had as yet no conscious sense of being 'Taiwanese'. During this time, Taiwanese identity was still regarded as part of Chinese identity.

B. Japanese Occupation Period (1895 - 1945)

Throughout the Japanese occupation period, while on the one hand the people of Taiwan attempted to maintain their Han Chinese identity in response to the Japanese assimilation policy (i.e. identified themselves as Chinese people from Mainland China), on the other, the oppressive political regime instituted by the Japanese colonial powers furnished the people of Taiwan with an opportunity to shape a new cultural, historical and political solidarity of their own. Around this time, Taiwanese identity could be seen simply as a nationalist ethnic ideology, resistant to Japanese colonial administration. At the same time, a unique native 'Taiwanese nationalism' had started to emerge.

C. Post-Japanese Colonialism Period (1945 - 1987)

In 1949, the KMT Chinese government retreated from the Mainland China to Taiwan. During this period, the confusion surrounding the political and ideological division (Chinese Communist Party vs. KMT and China vs. Taiwan) bewildered and alienated the local Taiwanese population. On the one hand, the people of Taiwan saw themselves as victims of the ongoing political oppression of the KMT and its corrupt government. On the other hand, they contended with both the internal (unwelcome invented traditions, permanent settlement and armed conflict associated with the KMT) and external (international isolation) factors that coexisted in society. Taiwanese identity, which at this point, could be seen as ethnic, with undertones of a political ideology ranged against the political domination of the Chinese mainlanders, began to take on an even stronger ethnic quality, which was essentially anti-mainlander in character.
D. Post-Martial Law Period (1987 - late 1990s)

The success of the democratic reforms of the mid-1980s (resulting in the rapid development of civil society, including the expansion of a public sphere and mass media) saw Taiwan shift from ethnic nationalism (based on the formation of a cultural identity) to civic nationalism (oriented towards the perfecting of a political system and with emphasis on inclusive citizenship rights). At the same time, the number of discussions centering on ‘Taiwaneseness’ and studies vis-à-vis Taiwanese culture, history, religions and languages, dramatically increased. Concomitant with the growth if a new democratic awareness, the people of Taiwan began to concern themselves with - and pay much more attention to - Taiwan’s own future. Taiwanese identity, in fact, had become a Taiwanese-oriented nationalist ideology (Taiwanese national identity) pitted against the traditional Chinese nationalist ideology, both culturally and politically. Confusion surrounding the Taiwanese people’s identity escalated, due to the disorientation of cultural and political identity that affected both the Chinese and the Taiwanese in general.

E. ‘New’ Taiwanese Era (late 1990s - present)

In March 2000, the outcome of the presidential election held in Taiwan drastically changed the island’s political landscape. For the first time in the history of the Republic of China, a member of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Chen Shui-Bian, became President of Taiwan. This overwhelmingly political transition not only signalled the future consolidation of democracy on the island but also suggested the actuality to both Taiwan and Mainland China that in all possibility, the Taiwanese people would now make a bid for independence. It is generally believed that at this point, the generation of ‘new’ Taiwanese arrived, through the strong promotion of real ‘Taiwanisation’, i.e. a widely held belief among the people of Taiwan that not only had Taiwan the qualifications to become a sovereign nation but its people had earned the right to enjoy their unique Taiwanese identity - to change symbols, to rewrite Taiwanese history, and to support their Taiwanese cultural values.

3. The Definition of New Taiwanese Identity

The phenomenon of ‘New Taiwanese’ identity has come to represent (a) an infusion of ‘native Taiwanese’ into all different levels of representative authority and society; and (b) a progressive force opening an active dialogue relevant to indigenised/localised Taiwanese-ness in society, by extension considering Taiwan’s special political and cultural circumstances. As Daniel Lynch suggests, it often occurs that the core principle of the process of creating a ‘new Taiwanese’ identity is to a large extent to write a new ‘Taiwanese history’, which is a history that is designed
explicitly to be distinct from that of China. In other words, certain political discourses, previously denied the majority of local Taiwanese people by foreign colonisers and the KMT regime, are now obtainable and feature as discussion subject matter. President Lee Teng-Hui first defined ‘New Taiwanese’ identity in 1998. He is believed to have been one of the most influential political characters in Taiwanese history in relation to the formation of the ‘New Taiwanese’ identity. Lee states:

All of us who grow and live on this soil today are Taiwanese people, whether we be aborigines or descendants of the aborigines or descendants of the immigrants from the mainland who came over centuries or decades ago. We all have made equal contributions to Taiwan’s development in the past and share a common responsibility for Taiwan’s future. It is a non-transferable duty for each one of us, the ‘new Taiwanese people’, to convert our love and affection for Taiwan into concrete actions in order to open up a grander horizon for its development. It is also our responsibility to establish a magnificent vista for our descendants.

Huang suggests that the new Taiwanese identity is simply the ‘consciousness of being Taiwanese.’ For him, new Taiwanese identity is a natural progression of a group of people, growing up in Taiwan and living in Taiwan, considering themselves to be uniquely Taiwanese with a great emotional connection to the land of Taiwan. However, he points out that, in fact, quite often the Taiwanese independence ideology is adapted to work with the idea of new Taiwanese identity in order to achieve the politically-related goals of certain political parties. This is a dangerous act that could result in social instability between different ethnic groups and even in war between Mainland China and Taiwan.

4. The Rise of New Taiwanese Identity

In recent years, a shift in Taiwanese political and social structure has engendered in the people of Taiwan a growing interest in the emerging construction of ‘new’ identity. Chinese national cultural discourse is slowly being replaced by new Taiwan-centred discourses, such as ‘the Taiwanese Life Community’, ‘the Priority of Taiwan’, and the more recent ‘Name Taiwan: Taiwan’. This movement, which is focused on Taiwanese awareness, is strongly related to the tendency of the Taiwanese authority to actively support a coherent identity based on the hypothetical homogeneity of the new nation (or an imagined community). Indeed, the notion of a new Taiwanese identity has rapidly given rise to - and prompted discussion
among the people of Taiwan, who commonly believe that the general acceptance of a new Taiwanese identity should accelerate the process of national integration on the island. Inter-ethnic equality will basically be secured through democratic consolidation. In other words, the Taiwanese people are beginning to imagine themselves as a united social group, having transferred the concentration of national construction from ethnic differences to equal citizenship in the democratic era. Political slogans employed by the ruling authorities highlighting the Taiwan Strait’s relations with Mainland China over the last decade provide a clear example. From the early 1990s, slogans such as ‘One Country, Two Systems’, ‘Two Systems in One China’ and ‘Special State to State Relationship’ to the more recent ‘Two States’ and ‘One Country on Each Side’, have demonstrated that the Taiwanese people are bent upon formalising their own distinct cultural and political identity.6

The March 2000 Taiwan presidential election drastically changed Taiwan’s political landscape. For the first time in the history of the Republic of China, a member of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Chen Shui-Bian became President of Taiwan, winning thirty-nine per cent of the vote. This peaceful political transition was not only marvellous at: it signalled the future consolidation of democracy on this island of almost twenty-three million people. But it also brought home the reality that Taiwan and Mainland China must now face, i.e. the possibility of a Taiwanese bid for independence.7 The implications of this turnabout of political power are, that instead of negotiating with the Chinese authorities in order to achieve a political settlement of the divided Chinese problem, President Chen has decided on special negotiations on a state-to-state relationship in his dealings with Mainland China-related issues. At the same time, his administration has launched a ‘silent revolution’, promoting Taiwanese nationalism. There is a widely held belief that not only has Taiwan the qualifications of a sovereign nation but its people have the right to enjoy their unique Taiwanese ethnic identity, i.e. to change symbols, to rewrite Taiwanese history, and to support their Taiwanese cultural values. The election of a true ‘native son of Taiwan’, combined with President Chen’s 20th March 2000 Inaugural Speech titled ‘Taiwan Stands up: Advancing to an Uplifting Era’, has led the people of Taiwan to believe that real ‘Taiwanisation’ has officially begun.8

5. R. O. C - Republic of Confusion?
So, are Taiwanese people still confused by their perceived identities? In seeking the answer to this question, it is not difficult to find the clues. First, there is the difficulty of determining their actual identity. As suggested previously, the formation of identity is a continuing course of action taken by each individual ‘collectively’. There is definitely no single ‘fixed’ identity because identity is dynamic in relation to other significant elements, such as the specific political and cultural circumstances of a given
Taiwan certainly makes its own unique case. A propos of the configuration of Taiwanese identity, discourse tends to focus on the associated racial, ethnical, cultural and national (nationality) aspects as well as on the specific historical and political reflections of the people of Taiwan, who see themselves as predominately ‘Taiwanese’, rather than ‘Chinese’. In recent years, the increased rate of emergence of the concept of ‘new’ Taiwanese identity and its widely-adopted implementation in Taiwanese society, which strongly emphasises the people’s great love for the land of Taiwan and its distinctiveness, has somewhat ‘intentionally’ neglected any potential connection to initiatives of ‘Chineseness’.

The complexity of the existing political and nationalist ideologies and beliefs in Taiwan is easy to discern. As I have suggested earlier, the former President Lee Teng-Hui heavily influenced the nature of Taiwan’s political landscape. His determination to develop a unique ‘Taiwan nation’ with its own national identity was unmistakable. However, as a result of his actions, the political environment in Taiwan became more than a little ‘confused’; in other words, the dividing line between the different political ideologies ceased to exist. For example, as a former chairman of the KMT, Lee overtly supported Chen Shui-Bian and his party, the DPP, after the year 2000 President election. Lee also strongly encouraged the formation of a new political party, the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), to carry on the belief of Taiwanisation and a genuine Taiwanese ‘localisation’. When Lee harshly criticised the KMT, the ‘Lee-Bian alliance’ was at last exposed. The general public’s scepticism surrounding Lee’s true impulses and strategies vis-à-vis pro-Taiwanese independence slowly revealed itself. So any suggestion of a ‘happy family’ did not last long. Upon seeing Chen’s ‘hesitant’ stance regarding constitutional reform and his ultimate goal of Taiwan ‘becoming independent’, Lee frankly expressed his strong disappointment and misgivings vis-à-vis Chen’s leadership and decision-making for the future of Taiwan. In return, Chen lambasted Lee’s past mistakes in the political decision-making process, the consequences of which the people of Taiwan suffer today. Lee and Chen’s de facto political relationship slowly and irrevocably foundered.

A further incident highlighted the complicate nature of Taiwan’s political environment. In early 2005, the KMT Chairman, Lian Zhan, was invited for a ‘peaceful-visit’ by the Mainland China government. He arrived in China on April 26th 2005, marking a tremendously significant historical moment. After more than fifty years political separation, the KMT and the Communist party finally met up ‘again’. While on the one hand, this ‘journey of peace’ signified much-anticipated improved relations between the two sides of the strait, on the other, this perceived ‘China-fever’ catapulted Taiwanese society into political chaos, causing split judgements vis-à-vis both the KMT’s intentions and Chen’s approved of such a visit.
consequence, a very divided and confused public gave vent to both positive and negative opinions, and heated discussion was rife in every corner of the social sphere. Strong argument surrounding what was seen as the KMT’s readiness to ‘sell out’ Taiwan: Chen’s crisis of leadership became apparent, and it was not difficult to grasp exactly why and how the people of Taiwan could become so confused, so trapped in the middle of this seemingly ever-changing political turmoil with its associated political ideologies. However here, there is one point I see as necessary to make clear: no matter in which direction the different political parties and their associated nationalist ideologies vacillate between pro-unification and/or pro-independence, the ultimate objective here is that a ‘Taiwanised’ ideology, with all of its related aspects, will continue to be popular among the people of Taiwan. There is no confusion about this. And it is this phenomenon, which is without doubt widely realised and utilised by each political party, that reifies the determination of the people of Taiwan to achieve their goal of ‘Taiwanessnes’.

Notes

3. Susan Greenhalgh provides an interesting insight into the idea of ‘being Taiwanese’. For her, ‘being Taiwanese’ means focusing on family, community and religious bonds to become upwardly mobile through entrepreneurship into the commercial and industrial elite. ‘Being Mainlander’ means abstaining from specific ties of kinship and community and using contacts with people in the bureaucracy, along with a higher education, to eventually secure individual status in the bureaucratic elite”. Her idea is debatable, however, for it gives a different dimension to consideration of the notion of ‘being Taiwanese’. See S Greenhalgh, ‘Networks and Their Nodes: Urban Society in Taiwan’, China Quarterly 99, 1984, pp. 529-552.
5. On 6th of September, 2003, up to 150,000 people from around Taiwan marched on the Presidential Office in Taipei, to campaign to change the country’s official name to Taiwan. Basically, the campaign aimed to change country’s name from Republic of China to ‘Taiwan’ or ‘Republic of Taiwan’.
The first three slogans were created during the presidency of Lee Teng-Hui (1988-2000), a former member of KMT, who is believed to have had a very significant influence on the political development of Taiwan. As for the last two slogans, they were introduced by Chen, Shui-Bian, the President of Taiwan since the year 2000. He is a member of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). See Cheng-Feng, Shih, ‘Ethnic Identity and National Identity: Mainlanders and Taiwan-China Relations’, a paper presented at the International Studies Association 43rd Annual Convention, New Orleans, March 24-27, 2002.

In the 2000 presidential election, Chen was the only major candidate who was not formally committed to Taiwan’s eventual unification with the mainland. According to the political principle and ideology of the DPP, independence is the final destination for Taiwan’s future.

The concept of Taiwanisation is not new. It actually started after President Lee Teng-hui embarked on amending the Constitution in the early 1990s. It is similar in meaning to indigenization, localization, Taiwanism and ‘Bentuhua’. Basically, to a large extent, they are analogous ideas, but differently expressed by politicians, the media and average general public. Here, I will adopt Yu’s definition of Taiwanisation. According to Yu, Taiwanisation is a political process, especially for native Taiwanese people trying to maintain and protect Taiwan’s future. In particular, focus is on the idea of independence. See Kien-Hong, Yu, ‘The Politics of Taiwanisation (II): The Road to A New Identity’, in G W, Tsai and Kien-Hong, Yu (eds.), Taiwanisation: its Origin and Politics, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore, 2001, pp. 29-30.


Shih-Chi Kao

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Shih-Chi, Kao is Scholar in Residence at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Currently his research is focused on transnational and intercultural communication, and communication and social, economic and political development.
Local Identification and Authenticity: Among the Irish Diaspora in England

Marc Scully

Abstract
Drawing on my PhD research, this chapter will explore constructions of Irishness among the Irish diaspora in England with a specific focus on narratives of ‘authenticity’ and the ways in which local identities may be employed in these. While narratives of Irishness as a diasporic identity that is not necessarily bound have become more prominent in recent years, this has been accompanied by a growing concern with what it means to be ‘authentically’ Irish. This is particularly the case in England, where multiple waves of migration, the influence of factors such as age, class and gender, and the emergence of a specific, hybridised second-generation Irish culture has resulted in the Irish population in England becoming more diverse than ever before. Given that the historically oppositional nature of Irishness and Englishness has precluded any high-profile equivalent of the Irish-American hybridised identity from being articulated, it has been argued that many Irish people, particularly those who are second-generation Irish, have come to identify with the city rather than the nation. While research has demonstrated the prevalence of identities such as London-Irish, Liverpool-Irish etc. there has been less focus on how local Irish identities that refer back to localities in Ireland are constructed and maintained. This chapter traces moments where local Irish identifications may be more important than national identifications among members of the Irish diaspora in England, and through this builds an argument for the importance of the local in diasporic identity. I also argue that local identifications may provide a way of affirming an ‘authentic’ identity in a scenario where meanings of Irishness have become contested.

Key Words: authenticity, Diaspora, hybridity, Irishness, local identities.

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1. Introduction: Irishness as Diasporic
The notion of an ‘Irish diaspora’ has become so rooted in public and academic discourse, that it is easily overlooked that both the concept and the use of the term ‘diaspora’, as opposed to ‘emigrants’ or ‘exiles’ is a relatively new one. However, this does not necessarily imply a transformation in the understanding of Irishness abroad or Irish identity more generally. It can legitimately be argued that many writers, especially those concentrating on
historical aspects of Irish migration, have simply taken the word ‘diaspora’ as a useful and fashionable terminological description rather than interrogating the implications a diasporic reading of Irishness might have for contemporary Irish identity.

The same may be said of popular uses of the term. In other words, ‘diaspora’ simply becomes a catch-all term for Irish migrants and those of Irish descent while Irishness itself is assumed to be the preserve of the (ethnically bound) nation, whose exported version of Irish identity is to be viewed as the correct, ‘authentic’ one. Such a viewpoint does not allow for the possibility that different Irishnesses might be constructed outside the nation-state without reference to contemporary Ireland. For example, while the regularly quoted figure of the Irish diaspora as being 70 million strong might be regarded as representing a ‘broad church’ of Irishness, this is not necessarily the case, as Catherine Nash has pointed out:

The figure of 70 million people of Irish descent worldwide seems to conjure up an uncomplicated notion of pure descent in the generations that followed migration or, alternatively, that all ethnicities in a postmigration family tree are overridden, ignored or subsumed within the Irish line. Identity, it seems, is a matter of naturally and simply being Irish and Irish alone if an ancestor came from Ireland … Thus, the easy invocation of the diaspora in terms of numbers of people of Irish descent can promote notions of a simple, single and enduring ethnic identity that the concept of diaspora, at least in its most critically theorised versions, is meant to dispel.¹

It can be argued that the figure of 70 million is often seen less as a diasporic community, and more as a target market. Worldwide commercialised versions of Irishness as a commodity, aimed at profiting upon the recent popularity of Irish culture (described as ‘Riverdance revivalism’ by O’Boyle) explicitly promote the slogan that ‘anyone can be Irish’, thus both de-territorialising and de-ethnicising Irishness.² However, this is a form of Irishness that can only be bought into through the consumption of certain products, rather than claimed. Relatedly, there has been a growing discourse within Ireland that conceptualises the diaspora as a resource that can be drawn upon at times of national economic need in return for legitimising their sense of Irishness.³ Thus, a transactional relationship is envisaged between Ireland as nation-state and the Irish Diaspora.

Somewhat ironically, while the notion of an Irish diaspora has gained in currency since it was first popularised in the mid-nineties, the various meanings it has taken on differ from the way it was first presented to
a wider audience. On a public level the term was introduced by President Mary Robinson (1990-97), who made ‘Cherishing the Irish Diaspora’ one of the themes of her presidency, addressing the Joint Houses of the Oireachtas (the Irish Houses of Parliament) on the topic. In this speech, she appealed to Irishness as a ‘concept’ rather than a nationality, and suggested that:

It can be strengthened again if we turn with open minds and hearts to the array of people outside Ireland for whom this island is a place of origin … If we expect that the mirror held up to us by Irish communities abroad will show us a single familiar identity, or a pure strain of Irishness, we will be disappointed. We will overlook the fascinating diversity of culture and choice, which looks back at us. Above all we will miss the chance to have that dialogue with our own diversity, which this reflection offers us.5

Robinson, then, attempts to prise open the category of Irishness beyond that which is nationally bounded in Ireland, while simultaneously seeking to highlight the diversity of Irishness in Ireland. Gray has claimed that Robinson’s reconceptualisation of Irishness as diasporic in this speech and others was representative of an emerging ‘progressive’ discourse of diaspora in 1990s Ireland, one that was characterised in terms of pluralism, hybridity and newness.6

Much has been made of the possibilities this conception of the diaspora has in ‘freeing’ notions of Irishness beyond the various homogeneities associated with it, in terms of class, ethnicity, religion and territoriality. In other words, seeing Irishness as diasporic and hybrid deconstructs essentialised versions of Irishness rooted in the ‘homeland’, while simultaneously contributing to a more progressive nation-state. As Anthias7 has critically described such viewpoints, ‘merely to occupy the space of the ‘hybrid’ constitutes an emancipatory human condition’.

Of course, neither academic nor public discourses of diaspora necessarily reflect how diaspora is lived by those who have migrated or their descendants. The task of the researcher, therefore, is to distinguish between diasporic theories, discourses and practices.8 For example, in challenging the above, almost utopian discourse of the Irish diaspora, Gray draws on her own research among diasporic Irish women and concludes that:

The contradictions of life in diaspora, the pain of displacement, as well as its opportunities, the work of maintaining diasporic identity, keeping in touch, reproducing Irish culture in distant places and negotiation of Irish identity in intimate relationships … point to a set of
experiences that contemporary discourses of Irishness as diasporic can scarcely touch.

It must also be recognised that ‘progressive’ discourses of Irishness as diasporic, while recognising the cultural diversity of the diaspora, overlook the extent to which Irishness is contested within the diaspora itself, in ways that do not necessarily refer to the territorial ‘homeland’ of Ireland. Drawing on Avtar Brah’s assertion that ‘all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common “we”’, Mary Hickman has argued:

The Irish diaspora is shot through with divisions of power and class. The idea of ‘a global Irish imagined community’ or an ‘Irish diaspora’, suggests communal interests whereas in fact the Irish diaspora is actually fractured (as are national imagined communities) by class, gender and other differences which in many cases reveal deep conflicts of interests among the Irish abroad.

It can be argued then, that while diasporic Irishness may be hybridised, it is not yet fully hybrid, in an unbounded, pluralistic fashion. There are both structural and discursive constraints on the expression of diasporic Irishness, and it is not apparent that it has become fully deterritorialised. Drawing on Nash’s claim that ‘the diaspora sometimes seems less characterised by an ideal balance between plurality and communion … and more by a culture of competitive authenticity’, I argue that the major way in which diasporic Irish identity is discursively bounded is through constructions of authenticity. This has the effect of excluding certain members of the diaspora, particularly those of Irish descent from claiming Irishness i.e. certain forms of Irishness are seen as more legitimate than others, and there is not equality of access to the symbols and public expressions of Irishness across the diaspora.

For example, modern public discourses of Irishness abroad tend to privilege a particular subgroup of relatively transnational, middle-class migrants. Perhaps not coincidentally, at a similar time that Irishness began to be constructed as diasporic, a public discourse arose around the youthful Irish emigrants of the 1980s and 1990s, that constructed them as a ‘new wave’ of Irish migrants: ‘a people set apart from their predecessors and their peers by their spirit of adventure and enterprising spirit’. By and large, they were seen as being middle-class, well-educated and with the ability to return to Ireland regularly, therefore being constructed as a ‘transnational elite’. While there is some demographic truth to this depiction, it’s likely that it has been overemphasised and tended to overshadow the fact that migrants from
socially disadvantaged backgrounds remained a significant strand of Irish emigration

2. The Irish Diaspora and Contestation of Irishness in England

The majority of the migrants in the 1980s and 90s migrated to Britain and more specifically to South-East England. Here, they encountered the children of earlier waves of Irish migration, particularly those of the cohort that emigrated in the 1950s, who in many cases had a strong Irish identity of their own, arising from their upbringing in Irish communities, particularly around such areas in London as Cricklewood, Kilburn and the Caledonian Road. London, therefore, acts as a peculiar type of Irish ‘diaspora space’, where these different cohorts of Irish people encountered each other, without necessarily recognising the Irishness they saw in the other. A number of commentators have argued that in order to preserve their self-image as an ‘economic emigrant aristocracy’, the ‘young elite workers’ who migrated in the 80s and 90s distanced themselves both physically and discursively from established Irish communities in England. Physically, this was done by, to a large extent avoiding Irish pubs, clubs and centres associated with older migrants in favour of social networks facilitated by telephone contact, newsletters, and more recently, websites and e-mail. Discursively, as argued by Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, this was done by constructing themselves as the ‘true heirs of the national community’ and the only ones who could legitimately speak of and for the category ‘Irish’.

This social group presents itself self-reflexively as the transnational generation, inhabiting a temporary bodily relocation outside of Ireland, while making frequent visits home. Its accomplishment of itself as nationally authentic within the cultural storylines available to it depends on its active disidentification with the second generation, which it positions as culturally recidivist, retelling ‘the same old story’ of nationalist Ireland to which the second generation, as non-national, is seen as making illegitimate claims. … the elite workers are central to constructing and circulating around the Irish diaspora in Britain an internal cultural script positioning the second generation as ‘not properly Irish’.

Thus, a certain conception of diasporic Irish identity in England is privileged, through the construction of one form of Irishness as ‘authentic’, to the detriment of others, particularly second-generation Irishness. While a number of discursive strategies are employed by the second generation Irish in order to combat accusations of inauthenticity, what I wish to focus on is
this chapter is the adoption of local identifications as a means of doing this. As illuminated by the Irish2Project, which was conducted in various locations in England and Scotland by Mary Hickman, Bronwen Walter, Sarah Morgan and Joseph Bradley, many second-generation Irish people guard against accusations of inauthenticity by adopting local-national hyphenated identity labels, such as London-Irish, Birmingham-Irish, Liverpool-Irish etc. This was seen as ‘a way of articulating allegiances to more than one domain, conjoined as their ‘second generationness’ and contingent on their locational specificity’\textsuperscript{17}. Many participants in the Irish2Project claimed to identify equally strongly with Irishness and with the city of their birth, while not particularly identifying with Englishness, which might be said to be both a factor in and a product of the absence of a prominent ‘British-Irish’ or ‘English-Irish’ hyphenated identity. This then, is a specific type of hybridity, with the use of the local serving to further complicate the concept. Also, it must be noted that the kind of hybridity adopted in these cases tends rather more towards the defensive than the emancipatory.

In this chapter, I wish to further examine the ways in which second-generation Irish people construct a diasporic Irish identity for themselves that is authenticated by reference to local, rather than national Irishnesses. This will serve as an illustration of the ways diasporic concepts of Irishness intersect, collide and exist alongside notions of authentic Irishness, in a way that simultaneously seems to confirm and refute the pluralistic nature of diaspora. Also, I argue that this focus on the local represents something of a reterritorialisation of diasporic identity, but one that refers specifically to the local, rather than the nation-state. While making reference to the role of local urban identifications within England, I also wish to examine the role of local identifications that are situated in Ireland, something that has been under-researched to date.

3. **Methodology**

Over the course of 2008, I have conducted 30 individual interviews and 4 group discussions with a variety of people of both Irish birth and descent in England. The main sites of my research have been London, Birmingham and Milton Keynes. In addition, since late 2006, I have made note of constructions of Irishness in the Irish ‘ethnic press’ in England as well as attending a number of public events of Irish interest in an informal participant observation capacity. This all comprised an effort to trace moments of continuity and contestation along what Wetherell has termed the broader ‘horizon of discourse’\textsuperscript{18} relating to Irishness in England.

The extracts presented in this chapter are taken from interviews with second generation Irish people in London and Birmingham (all the names have been changed to respect the anonymity of the participants). Participants were encouraged to speak about their own personal life experiences of
Irishness, in keeping with a narrative-discursive approach to interview data, in which speakers are taken to employ ‘established and recognised resources to construct an identity which also refers to the unique circumstances of a particular life’19 (Taylor, 2005, p. 48). In addition to this, in analysing the data, I have attended to the ways in which Irishness as a concept is constructed through rhetoric.

4. Hybridised Local ‘English’ Identities

As already noted, the use of hyphenated identity labels, such as London-Irish, Mancunian-Irish and Liverpool-Irish, have become an available means for second-generation Irish people to articulate their own specific city-based Irish identities, and thus defend them against possible charges of ‘inauthenticity’. I was therefore interested as to how this label might be employed among my own participants and how this would relate to their identification with both Irishness and the city of their birth.

The first extract comes from an interview with one of my London participants: Kate, a woman in her 40s. Kate’s ‘London-Irish’ identity was very much situated in her involvement in the London-Irish music scene of the early 1980s, spearheaded by The Pogues. Campbell has written of the significance ‘of The Pogues’ post-punk reconfiguration of Irish ‘folk’ music, which articulated a peculiarly Diasporic (London) Irish experience at a time when it was neither popular nor fashionable to be Irish in Britain’;20 something of particular relevance to the second generation.

Extract 1:
Kate: that whole scene … was very much about saying we’re Irish but we’re not paddies, we’re London-Irish, and it was a very different identity to being first generation.

The London-Irish music scene then, for Kate, is constructed as being very deliberately about articulating a type of Irishness that is situated in London and is explicitly differentiated from the ‘Paddies’, the first generation migrants. This then, is a very specific form of positioning - one that seeks to claim Irishness, but disassociate itself from the possible negative connotations associated with being a ‘Paddy’. Kate goes on to elaborate on the distinctiveness of London-Irishness as reflected by the music scene at the time:

Extract 2:
Kate: I’ve got a bit of a collection of kind of Irish hybrid music, you know, ska bands playing traditional Irish tunes but reggae style, you know so there’s-there was a lot of cross fertilisation going on which was really exciting and
you had people like The Pogues who were angry young Irish men if you like, John Osborne of the music scene, you know, and er in a way that say punk wasn’t cause it was like very ethnic, you know punk was angry about everything but I think with The Pogues singing it was very much ‘we’re Irish and proud of it better believe it but we’re not, but we’re not the same as the Irish, the first generation Irish’

Marc: And in what kind of ways do you think that distinction was drawn?
Kate: Erm, weren’t going to take any crap you know I think that was a clear message was you know ‘we’re here, we’re here to stay’
Marc: Cause you were born here in the first place kind of thing?
Kate: Yeah, yeah we’ve as much right to be here as anybody else, but you know the famous Norman Tebbit cricket test, I’d always support Ireland when they were playing

By drawing attention to her collection of Irish hybrid music, Kate situates the music of the Pogues as being ‘ethnic’; on a par, and interacting with other minority ‘ethnic’ music in a multicultural London. London-Irishness therefore is defined both by opposition, and by collaboration. She constructs London-Irishness as being something that is opposed to both the assimilationism exemplified by the ‘Tebbitt test’, and also to the ‘low profile’ that may have been adopted by the migrant generation at the time in the hopes of avoiding discrimination. Rather the second generation ‘weren’t going to take any crap’. At the same time, the level of musical ‘cross-fertilisation’ reflects an eagerness to make links with other minority groups and diasporas in London. This, then may be taken as an example as a kind of a grassroots multiculturalism in an urban environment, as well as how Irishness was performed in the ‘diaspora space’ that was 1980s London.

London-Irishness as an identity that is constructed and adopted as a reaction to the estranging features of other identities is also present in other narratives of adopting a London-Irish identity. For example, the extract below is from Sinéad, another second-generation woman in her 40s, for whom a London-Irish identity had become salient due to her involvement in the Irish sport scene in London:

Extract 3: Sinéad: If you had an London-Irish footballer doing very well say playing for London ... then you’d get a lot of people, say other players on the pitch from the other
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team might say something to them ‘oh well you’re just a plastic anyway’ or you’d get people on the side line shouting and things and that really upset me actually coz I think that I felt they were hitting at me and I thought, God you know you guys come over here-you had no work, people try and help you, you know, give you somewhere to stay give you some work and then you go, you turn round so I almost become very London-Irish which is quite bizarre really.

For Sinéad then, her own adoption of a London-Irish identity is constructed as having been in solidarity with ‘London-Irish’ footballers, who were having their Irishness brought into question via the use of the ‘Plastic Paddy’ label. She describes herself as having felt both personally insulted that those born in London wouldn’t be considered Irish, and struck by the lack of gratitude of the Irish-born towards London. Adopting a London-Irish identity in this case, is constructed as a reaction against these perceived attitudes. For Sinéad, it is an identity that has persisted, as we explored later in the interview:

Extract 4:
Marc: I mean now you would describe yourself as London-Irish?
Sinéad: I think I would because I never want - I don’t think I ever wanted to differentiate myself as London-Irish but a few things that were said and done, a few things that have happened to London-Irish people, it makes you feel ‘okay well we need to fight-maybe fight your corner a bit more’ so I don’t think I ever wanted to be a London-Irish person but somehow it’s evolved.

Although there are similar themes running through Kate and Sinéad’s positionings of themselves as London-Irish, particularly the association of ‘not taking any crap’ and ‘fighting your corner’, there is less of a sense of actively constructing a new, exciting hybrid diasporic identity in Sinéad’s narrative. Rather, by emphasising her claim that she never wanted to be London-Irish, she suggests that it is an identity that she has felt obliged to adopt out of solidarity with other London-Irish people.

It should be pointed out here that because of their cultural activities, both Sinéad and Kate move in spheres where the ‘London-Irish’ label is particularly salient; Sinéad due to her involvement with a London representative team in Irish sports and Kate due to her involvement in a musical scene that combined Irish traditional music with London punk
sensibilities. It should not be assumed that the hybridised ‘London-Irish’ label is adopted by all the second-generation Irish in London. Indeed, some of my other participants were less enthusiastic about adopting the label, or in one case, had used it in the past, but now simply described herself as ‘Irish’. Meanwhile, other participants did not feel they could label themselves Irish, hyphenated or not, and rather described themselves as being ‘of Irish descent’. Therefore, diasporic Irishness is simultaneously regarded as something that can be claimed uncomplicatedly, something that can only be claimed in a hybridised manner, and something that cannot be claimed, but can be related to. This acts as a reminder that a local-national hybrid identity should not be seen as a universally applicable panacea to the difficulties of second-generation identification. As pointed out by Nazroo & Karlsen, while local identities may appear universally accessible, there will be internally and externally imposed constraints on access to them.21 Agency is not unlimited, and there will be structural and contextual factors that make the adoption of a hyphenated identity more or less salient.

Bearing that caveat in mind, the second-generation people from Birmingham who took part in my research all worked in a community organisation which specifically described itself as being ‘Birmingham-Irish’, so the hyphenated identity was one that was readily available. The various ways in which the identity is invoked remain illuminating, however. For example, the extract below is from an interview with Eileen, a woman in her 50s:

Extract 5:
Marc: But it is kind of, the Birmingham-Irish term is one that you use as that kind of hyphenated term
Eileen: Yes, and I think it’s, you know; to include maybe, to make people feel included like my son, ‘erm who are of value to the community and who, you know … proud of their Irish roots but are not a hundred percent Irish then if you put the term ‘Birmingham-Irish’, then it’s a lot more inclusive isn’t it?

In this case then, Eileen appears less eager to claim the ‘Birmingham-Irish’ identity on her own behalf then on behalf of her son, and by extension on behalf of all those who identify with Irishness, but may be of mixed descent. The Birmingham-Irish label is constructed as an inclusive one, that allows those who are not ‘100%’ biologically Irish, to claim Irishness and a sense of belonging in the community. Again, however, the question of equality of access to Irishness is reinforced here. While the hybridised diasporic identity expands Irishness sufficiently to include people like Eileen’s son who are of mixed descent, it exists alongside a discourse
that suggests that claiming Irishness is dependent on a kind of ethnic purity, of being ‘100% Irish’. There is, therefore, something of an ideological dilemma present in this account between two versions of diasporic Irishness, one that is hyphenated, pluralist and inclusive and another that is essentialised and biologically determined. This provides another example of how the diasporic is problematised by the ‘authentic’.

While a focus on the hybridised diasporic identities adopted by second-generation Irish people in England, serves as a useful illustration of the kind of discursive problems that arise around ‘authentic’ diasporic Irishness, it remains only half the story. With the exception of Patricia O’Connor’s research among the Irish in Australia22, previous work on the Irish abroad has tended to overlook that many members of the diaspora effectively identify with two localities as well as (potentially) two nations. The local Irish area where migrants or their descendants originated plays a prominent position in both personal narratives and public displays of Irishness, as evidenced in the following extracts.

5. Localised Irish Identities

Extract 6:
Finbarr: No, there are some families who—who’d definitely [Marc: yeah] the children are Irish you know and ‘erm whereas in our case ‘erm they don’t consider themselves Irish, but there was a thing that used to bug me years ago when people say ‘oh my father is f-fro i-is Irish’ and you say ‘oh, what part?’ ‘oh I don’t know’ [Marc: right] I used to think that was terrible [Marc: yeah] you know so all our children have been over to summer after summer for twenty years back to [village name] you know [Marc: yeah] so they know the shops, they know some of the people, they know everything

As Extract 6, taken from an interview with Finbarr, a retired Irish migrant living in Milton Keynes, illustrates, local Irish identifications are often central to perceived positive—‘authentic’ diasporic Irish identities. Finbarr expresses his irritation at second-generation Irish people who are unaware of the locality in Ireland from which their father originated, comparing this with the familiarity his own children have with his native village. Given that this follows on from a discussion about whether second generation migrants call themselves ‘Irish’, the implicit argument appears to be that knowledge of the locality one’s parents originated from is a prerequisite for claiming Irishness. Thus, ‘diasporic’ Irishness remains anchored in knowledge of the homeland, where the homeland is specifically conceptualised in terms of the local as well as the national.
While Finbarr is a migrant, this construction of knowledge of the local as an important aspect of Irishness is also apparent in the narratives of second-generation Irish people, as in the example below, again taken from my interview with Kate:

Extract 7:
Marc: Hmm, at the same time would you say you have a sense of being from Galway as well as being from Ireland or?
Kate: Erm, yeah I guess it’s-I suppose Galway I spent where I spent most of my time when I was a kid [Marc: hmm] so if I had to—yeah I mean I could go into Galway city and still I’d know my way round [Marc: hmm] and when my parents moved there they lived in Galway city so [Marc: ah okay, yeah] I know Galway city quite well so I would identify with Galway as the part of the country I know best [Marc: hmm] yeah yeah
Marc: Like, does, in terms of talking to other, whether its other London-Irish people or Irish people over here [Kate: hmm] does the, erm topic of locality come up very much?
Kate: Oh yeah where are you from, where are your parents from [Marc: yeah] that’s the first question really [Marc: yeah] so yeah and I would say Galway [Marc: yeah, yeah] y’know I would always say Galway [so yeah]
Marc: [It’s] the first question so it’s almost—it’s almost like a password in a way is it?
Kate: Yeah it is I guess, is I guess because I notice my mum and one of the first things she said to you was where are you from [Marc: yeah] and even when on this course these people I’ve met in the last few weeks it’s [Marc: hmm] all been about ‘and where are your parents from again?’ and you know turning out that one of the guys on the course the older guys is from Galway and knew my dad and [Marc: hmm] he knew my dad’s brother, [Andy], I went to school with his sister de-de-de-de and different people from different parts of Ireland—oh yeah it’s one of the first questions still [Marc: yeah] definitely yeah [Marc: okay] basically I think you’re trying to find out do you know someone they know [Marc: yeah] where’s the connection you know lets [Marc: yeah, yeah] find the connection yeah
While Kate seems a bit unsure about describing herself as being from Galway, she goes on to describe the near-inevitability that determining the locality of her Irish origins will arise in conversation and the role this plays in acting as a point of connection between Irish people, a pattern also noted by O’Connor. It can perhaps be surmised that for second-generation Irish people, demonstrating knowledge of Irish localities serves to position them as authentic within a conversation with other Irish people, and has a ‘levelling’ effect on the conversation, serving as it does to establish mutual Irishness. Of course, the ‘password’ element of this knowledge serves to exclude those who may not possess it - as with other aspects of diasporic Irishness, this serves to simultaneously expand and bound the category ‘Irish’.

It should be noted that when speaking of ‘locality’ this is often articulated in terms of counties. There are structural as well as discursive reasons for this, given that diasporic Irish cultural/welfare services were generally arranged around a network of County Associations, particularly in the 1950s and 60s. The membership of these associations is now aging and dwindling, but they still have a certain public profile insofar as St. Patrick’s Day parades in UK cities tend to be arranged around them. It is notable, although it might be less so to those without the necessary local knowledge, that at public Irish events abroad, county allegiances are, often quite literally flagged, through the prominent display of county colours on banners, sports jerseys etc. Given the inclusive discourse of ‘everyone can be Irish’ associated with such publicly-funded celebrations, these displays may be seen as an assertion of an extra layer of knowledge and authenticity. ‘While everyone may be Irish, some are more Irish than others’, so to speak.

What is debateable is whether diasporic county identity is necessarily dependent on the existence of the Associations, or whether it is a social phenomenon in its own right. Based on both my research, and on my own experience, I am inclined towards the latter view, which I believe is evidenced in the following extract, which followed a conversation with Eileen on the presence of county banners at the St. Patrick’s Day parades, which she described as important in fostering a sense of belonging:

Extract 8:
Marc: Yeah. I wonder does it get more, more or less important as you go down the generations? ‘Erm, when you talk, not with the people who’ve migrated themselves, [Eileen: mm] but their children and grandchildren, for them to actually be able to point to a place on a map and say ‘That’s where I’m from in Ireland’.
Eileen: ‘Erm, I think, like my son [Marc: mm] will automatically go for Wexford [Marc: yeah]. I mean he does
know that my mother came from Mayo but the links are with Wexford [Marc: mm]. ‘Erm, but he’s a great sort of sport enthusiast [Marc: yeah] and he’s got a; I mean, on his bedroom window he’s got ‘erm a sticker on each pane of the Wexford team [Marc: ah, okay], ‘erm, the hurling team [Marc: yeah], and he’s also got a signed photograph of them all as well [Marc: oh, okay], and that’s in his bedroom [Marc: yeah]. You know, he’d never ‘erm, I mean he’s never taken it down; it’s been up there donkey’s years, but you know he would never take it off the window [Marc: mm]. ‘Erm, you know, the purple and yellow [Marc: yeah, yeah]; its there; so I don’t know. I, I think even, even kids [Marc: mm] like to feel a belonging.

Marc: Yeah. And that he can point to Wexford like himself [Eileen: Mm, yeah, yeah. I think so; I think if they’re, you know; if they’re looking at a map of Ireland [Marc: mm] it’s, it’s big [Marc: yeah], you know, there’s all those counties, so to have one to say ‘actually my, my granddad came from there’ [Marc: yeah] then I think that’s something for them to focus on.

Marc: Mm, yeah. It’s ‘erm, yeah I suppose something to kind of grab on to [Eileen: Absolutely, absolutely, because otherwise it becomes faceless [Marc: yeah, yeah], but all of a sudden it means something

In giving the example of her son, whose identification with Wexford (and in particular the Wexford hurling team) gives him a sense of familial belonging that Ireland itself is too large and ‘faceless’ to provide, Eileen highlights the importance of localised county identities in terms of claiming Irishness. Implicit in this is that Ireland, the nation is not sufficient on its own to facilitate a sense of belonging, as well as suggesting that those who possess knowledge of their local origins have greater potential for belonging.

It is important to note here that I am not making a case for the local superseding the national in terms of diasporic Irishness. Rather, I am suggesting that in cases where Irishness is contested, the articulation of local identification may add an extra layer of legitimacy to claims of Irishness. This, of course, has added implications for constructions of Irishness as diasporic. Drawing on Nash once more:

This competition over authenticity is not only between the ‘rooted’ and resident in Ireland and the diasporic but within
the overseas ‘extended family’. Making the trip to Ireland marks a deeper commitment and deeper connection. Finding the place of origin not only commemorates an ancestral connection to Ireland but is the basis of a personalised sense of difference from the mass of ‘Irishry’.

My contention is that publicly claiming and celebrating the place of origin plays a similar role in diasporic Irishness to that of finding the place of origin, insofar as establishing ‘a personalised sense of difference from the mass of ‘Irishry’’ is, somewhat paradoxically, a means of establishing a further claim on authentic Irishness and affirming membership of the Irish diaspora on a rhetorically sounder footing.

6. Conclusion

What I have set out in this chapter are ways in which constructions of Irishness as a progressive, inclusive diasporic identity are problematised by discourses of ‘authentic’ Irishness, which occasionally manifest themselves through the adoption of localised hybrids. Hybridity is therefore something of a double-bind, insofar as it simultaneously expands and limits who Irishness can be claimed by, and the manners in which it can be claimed. While I do not mean to suggest that this emphasis on the local means that a deterritorialised Irishness cannot exist, it is perhaps, more complex than might originally have been thought. In order to obtain a greater understanding of the discursive processes that contribute to these multiple belongings and exclusions, I would argue that along with attending to the role of local, multicultural spaces in shaping diasporic Irishness in England, a greater focus is required for the ways in which these identities might be rooted in local points of origin in Ireland. This can be applied to studies of diaspora more generally, as there is a tendency at times to treat the ‘homeland’ as something of a ‘black box’ and to equate it unproblematically with the nation (if not the nation-state). A study of the localised aspects of diaspora is not an argument for ignoring the role of the nation, but rather an argument for understanding the increased levels of belonging and exclusion that locality might represent.
Notes

1 C Nash, Of Irish descent: origin stories, genealogy, and the politics of belonging Syracuse University Press; Syracuse, N.Y., 2008, p.43
4 An example can be found in the following webchat with popular economist David McWilliams available at http://www.rte.ie/tv/thegenerationgame/webchat.html
9 B Gray, ibid, p.181
12 C Nash, ibid, p.73
Hickman, ibid
16 Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, ibid, p.391
22 P O’Connor, ‘The Multiple Experiences of Migrancy, Irishness and Home among Contemporary Irish Immigrants in Melbourne, Australia’, In: Geography, University of New South Wales; Kensington, 2005.
23 ibid
24 Nagle, ibid.
25 Nash, ibid, p.73

Bibliography


Marc Scully


Marc Scully is a Third Year PhD Student in the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Open University. His interests include discursive social psychology, national and ethnic identities and migration.
Romany Roots: Gypsies and Travellers in Britain
Sustaining Belonging and Identity over 600 Years of Nomadising

Margaret Greenfields

Abstract
This chapter draws upon data gathered from an interconnected series of accommodation, service use and social relationship studies (involving in excess of 1000 participants) undertaken between 2005 and the present. Participants in the research included English (Romany) Gypsies, Irish Travellers and New Travellers resident both in caravans and in ‘bricks and mortar’ [conventional housing] accommodation. The data sets have been mined to explore Gypsies’ and Travellers’ sense of identity as both British/Irish and as members of distinct minority ethnic communities who frequently experience discrimination and being ‘othered’ by surrounding populations, regardless of the duration of their residence at, or connections to, a given locality. Respondents frequently dwelt on the strength of their identity as a Gypsy/Traveller, with a strong tendency to reify ‘nomadism’ and other cultural markers associated with ‘authenticity’. The majority of participants expressed a clear consensus of opinion on the importance of specific cultural traits, which marked an individual out as a member of the community, with notions of how identity should be performed featuring strongly in discourse pertaining to Gypsy/Traveller identity. Participants’ perceptions of core elements of Gypsy/Traveller identities and ways of performing Gypsy/Traveller-ness is presented and the argument made that the currency of ‘authenticity’ draws upon a relatively static conceptualisation of Gypsy/Traveller behaviours which may be inappropriate within the context of hybridised identities and increasing sedentarism. Further themes include intra-and inter-ethnic social relationships, participants’ sense of connectedness to and alienation from both British/Irish and Gypsy/Traveller society and the role of social exclusion, nostalgia and the (sometimes contested) desire to create a pan-Roma identity within the framework of postmodern British society.

Key Words: communities, diaspora, Gypsies, identities, Irish Travellers, New Travellers, nomadism.

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1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to consider the methods utilised by Gypsies and Travellers to maintain their distinct socio-ethnic identity within the rapidly changing post-modern world, where residential and employment practices which are seemingly inextricably bound up in the conceptualisation of a ‘nomadic’ identity are increasingly difficult to perform. In considering the relationships between Gypsies and Travellers and their neighbouring communities the duration of residence in Britain for these minority communities (both as a whole and for individual families) appears to have little impact on perceptions of ‘otherness’ as reported by both Gypsies and Travellers and surrounding sedentary populations. Indeed it is the importance placed upon an over-arching ethnic identity as a ‘travelling person’ (even when the individual is in fact housed and sedentary) which forms the central core of this chapter. To illustrate the arguments made pertaining to Gypsy and Traveller intra-and inter-ethnic social relationships and participants’ sense of connectedness to (and alienation from) both British/Irish and Gypsy/Traveller society, this chapter draws upon data from a series of accommodation, service use and social relationship studies (involving in excess of 1000 English (Romany) Gypsies, Irish Travellers and New Traveller participants resident both in caravans and in ‘bricks and mortar’ [conventional housing] accommodation) undertaken between 2005 and the present.

2. Gypsies and Travellers in Britain

Clark notes that Gypsies and Travellers are amongst the oldest and yet most invisible minority ethnic communities in Britain. Romany Gypsies, a people of Indic origin whose language (Romani) still retains strong links with Hindi, are, according to Mayall first recorded as entering Britain in the early Sixteenth Century. Since that time, and despite the repeated enactment of draconian legislation (at times aimed at enforcing expulsion from the Kingdom on pain of death, imprisonment or torture) the population has retained a constant presence in Britain, with numerous records of both housed and travelling populations of Gypsies, typically engaged in entertainment and/or seasonal farm labour. Until the early-mid 20th Century the majority of this population resided in caravans or wagons and travelled for seasonal work purposes, albeit it has been noted that administrative records (e.g. poor relief applications and Census data) indicate that many families experienced intermittent movement in and out of conventional housing in response to employment opportunities, illness or severe weather conditions.

Irish Travellers are known to have nomadised between Ireland and Britain as early as the mid-Seventeenth Century with an increasing population of Irish Travellers making their homes in England and Wales (and to a lesser extent Scotland) from the late Nineteenth Century onwards. Power
records that significant waves of Irish Traveller settlement appear to have occurred in the 1950s, associated with post-War employment opportunities⁶. Other authors, when commenting on the increase in Irish Traveller migration to Britain since the 1990s, have indicated that such relocation may also be in response to the decline in acceptance of ‘alternative’ lifestyles which are perceived of as conflicting with the development of a modern ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy. The re-invention of Ireland as a modern economic powerhouse in recent years has the potential to result in considerable sedentarisation pressures and renewed racism and hostility towards nomadic peoples⁷.

Despite the superficial similarities between both ethnic groups both Gypsies and Travellers express strong cultural preferences for intra-community marriage as a way of maintaining cultural boundaries. GTANA evidence however indicates that there are limited but increasing instances of inter-marriage between the two populations and also members of sedentary people who have no history of travelling. Where marriage occurs between someone from the sedentary community it would appear that partnership with a Gypsy/Traveller tends to leads to immersion within that culture for the gorger/country person rather than acculturation of the nomadic spouse⁸.

Over the past twenty years Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers (and since early 2009 indigenous Scottish Travellers) have, in respect of their distinct histories, cultures and practices been recognised as Minority Ethnic communities in law, As considered in some detail by Cemlyn et. al. they are thus subject to (limited) protection from racism and discrimination under the Race Relations Acts⁹. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) has estimated that there are 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers living in the UK ¹⁰. Based upon the best available statistics, Clark and Greenfields conclude that the percentage of those who live in housing may be as high as two-thirds, with some families having been resident in conventional accommodation for several generations¹¹.

A number of frontline service provision agencies and academics with direct experience of case work agree that whilst evidence exists that some respondents, (particularly the elderly and those with health problems) have willingly exchanged the hardship of roadside or site life for running water; convenient modes of heating and conveniently located laundry equipment, the pace of transfer from sites/nomadising into public sector housing has frequently been driven by the shortage of authorised (lawful) sites, difficulties gaining planning permission for private sites, and the virtual outlawing of nomadism following the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act.¹²

Several studies (for example, Niner and Clark and Greenfields) have reported Gypsies and Travellers referring bitterly to the fact that ‘it isn’t possible to travel any longer’ or ‘they won’t let us live how we want’¹³. In some localities in which the author (and other colleagues) have worked, as
many as 75 per cent of housed respondents to GTANAs reported having moved into ‘bricks and mortar’ due to site shortages and a lack of suitable alternative accommodation.

Despite the relentlessly pro-sedentarist nature of policy towards Gypsies and Travellers throughout the Twentieth Century, recourse to a repertoire of adaptive responses and coping mechanisms have allowed many members of these communities to resist assimilation by retaining a relatively unchanged set of values and doggedly maintaining cultural continuity whilst resident on ‘permanent’ residential caravan sites. Of those Gypsies and Travellers resident in housing, (largely in publicly owned estates), many have reformulated an approximation of ‘traditional’ community life through the activation of close-knit networks of kin living in close proximity.

Sibley, in one of few efforts to theorise the urbanisation of Gypsy communities, notes that what distinguishes the culture of peripheral groups such as Travellers from the dominant culture is a conception of continuity, and adaptation to structural changes in order to ensure cultural survival. This, he argues ‘implies the existence of a cultural boundary that serves to absorb or deflect pressures exerted by the larger society’. As Cemlyn et. al. noted in their extensive study of inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers, whilst marginalised road-side dwellers are subject to extremes of social exclusion, for all members of these communities who dwell in caravans on sites (whether ‘authorised’ public or privately owned) a complex interplay of factors exists which reinforces the separate-ness and mutual lack of understanding and trust which exists between them and the surrounding sedentary populations.

It is this conceptualisation of ‘community’ and the practices involved in ‘performing Gypsy/Traveller-ness’ in ways which sustain an adherence to (one form of ?) identity, despite centuries of residence in Britain and regardless of participants’ accommodation type or patterns of travel, which are the focus of this chapter. Most importantly, based upon the uniformity of findings pertaining to the importance of an over-arching set of Gypsy/Traveller values (see below) we may (somewhat tentatively), begin to unpick the question of whether a supra-national set of loyalties and identities exist and if so, how these fit with self-identification as a citizen of Ireland or England/Britain.

3. Gypsy-Traveller Identities and ‘Authenticity’

Regardless of whether they were resident on sites or in housing, the vast majority of interviewees indicated an exceptionally strong attachment to a supra-national ‘Gypsy’ or ‘Traveller’ identity. Thus we experienced young people resident in housing (and whom it subsequently transpired were of significantly mixed heritage and whose families had been ‘settled’ for over forty years) reiterating proudly that ‘I’m a Traveller, me’ and their peer group
who were often also the children of inter-married, long-housed couples - ratifying their membership of the community and the authenticity of their identity whilst simultaneously referring to the fact that ‘my Dad is a Gorger’ or ‘my sister’s Dad’s Mum’s a Traveller and our Mum is a Traveller so we are too’, raising parallels with discourse around identity-politics and selection of primary identity amongst children with ‘visible’ dual-heritage/mixed race origins.¹⁸

In discussing the variables which exist across the various Travelling/nomadic communities it is important to establish that all of the groups represented in the research (viz: Romany Gypsy; Irish Traveller and New Traveller) have distinct sets of characteristics and behaviours which have been afforded prominence within the collective ideal of ‘Traveller-ness’. Adherence to, and performance of, these cultural markers (when coupled with accepted membership of the ethnic/social group), accordingly marks one out as a member of the community with greater or lesser cultural capital and ‘authenticity’ and moreover allows space to consider the fluidity of individual social positioning within the given ethno-social group. Thus an individual who has impeccably Romany ancestry with high degrees of social capital may (for example) behave in a way which is regarded as anomalous and lose status or be perceived of as somehow ‘less authentic’ whilst still recognised as a community member. In such cases, the ‘non-approved’ behaviour will typically become the subject of pointed jokes, grudging acceptance as a result of the individual’s status, or be stolidly ignored and never spoken of by other community members¹⁹.

Conversely, actions or opinions which are perceived of as strongly contrary to culturally approved behaviours may lead to an individual being ostracised, (as discussed by Cemlyn, et. al., when referring to the plight of many Gay and Lesbian Gypsies and Travellers), subjected to considerable family and community pressure to amend their lifestyle or in effect be expelled from the community. An alternative sanction consists of the scathing denunciation of someone as a person who has ‘become Gorjified’ or alternatively, through the dredging up of old memories, as someone who was never a full member of the community as a result of mixed ancestry.

Somewhat surprisingly, given the variations between the nomadic groups considered, and indeed the preponderance of housed families and individuals interviewed, one key finding which held true across all Gypsy and Traveller communities (and broadly speaking through all age groups although somewhat less strongly for younger people with mixed Gypsy/Traveller and sedentary heritage) was the centrality of the notion of ‘travel’ and ‘nomadising’ to identity. This reification of ‘travelling’ persisted, regardless of the extent of respondents’ personal experience of such ‘cultural markers’, and/or type of accommodation. with ‘travel’ or ‘nomadism’ holding the same synecdochal relationship to Gypsy/Traveller within the
imagination of members both of those communities and surrounding sedentary populations. Thus, a shared paradigm exists, albeit with distinct, nuanced and oppositional stances pertaining to the social and cultural capitals which accrue through practicing nomadic habits, even if this only occurs at certain times of the year or has long ceased to be undertaken on a regular basis, either through choice, or resulting from the severe restrictions imposed by modern legislation.

Within and between Gypsy/Traveller communities a further layer of complexity can frequently be found pertaining to tensions over which community is more ‘authentic’ with the time frame since last period of nomadism, extent of prior ‘travelling’ and history of own or relatives’ residence in caravans or birth ‘on the road’ frequently utilised in support of claims to cultural capital. Ethnic tensions and pressure over access to resources were at times apparent in the narratives of participants in GTANAs, and thus Romany Gypsies would frequently refer to the perception that Irish Travellers ‘come over here in the last twenty years and give us a bad name’ and Irish Travellers would identify the limited travelling patterns of many sited Gypsies ‘spend all their time on a site moaning about what they used to do and not done no travelling for a lifetime’ as indicative of a debased connection to their ethnic roots and knowledge of their own and other travelling people’s history. By and large, both ‘ethnic’ Gypsy/Traveller communities were scathing of and hostile towards New Travellers, constructing a narrative which denied any independent history of travelling of that group.

Thus within the discourse of ‘ethnic’ Gypsies and Travellers, ‘hippies’ have offensively taken on the mantle of authentic Travellers, brought the traditional nomadic communities into disrepute by their poor behaviour and breach of moral codes and through the visibility and size of New Traveller nomadic groups in the 1980s, led to swingeing legislative changes which have impacted negatively on Romany and Irish Travellers. Temporarily uniting in their dislike of New Travellers, Gypsies and Travellers will often put aside their own differences and competing claims to authenticity to denounce New Travellers as privileged imposters claiming the status of ‘nomads’ on the basis of a life-style choice and utilising an imagined inauthentic identity to enhance their status and access to resources at the expense of other communities history and reputation. Accordingly, we find interviewees referring to the fact that;

I am an Irish Traveller - I and my family we wouldn’t want to live with that lot nor have nothing to do with them - they’re not like us. They are dirty and they all take drugs and sleep about and people see them and think that we are
all the same but you would be a disgrace to your people if you acted like that\textsuperscript{20}.

In response, New Travellers point to their own emerging history of nomadism, respect for and adoption of many crafts and skills which have been abandoned by ‘ethnic’ Travellers and assert that they are ensuring continuity of nomadic practices which would otherwise cease. Interestingly, when denying the negative interpretations placed of their family and social practices, New Traveller respondents tended to make a plea for common humanity and tolerance, rather than asserting the superiority of their way of life: ‘people - we are all just people like them’ or ‘there are good and bad in everyone - they have their ways, we have our ways’\textsuperscript{21}.

Regardless of genuine differences in cultural practices between the groups, so successful has this distancing and privileging of the ethnic narrative been, that press reports which when discussing Gypsies and Irish Travellers qua nomadic groups are typically uniformly hostile, will often refer to ‘the real Romanies’ reporting on their hygiene, moral and cultural practices in an approving manner, in contrast to that of less ‘authentic’ groups. Somewhat ironically New Travellers who adopt ‘authentic’ practices (and long abandoned types of accommodation formerly used by ethnic Gypsies and Travellers), can reap the benefits of public tolerance as:

they let us alone, we are picturesque with a horse and bowtop, nobody will bother you stopped on a Green Lane or big verge for a day or so - they want their photos taken and look at your wagon and off they go happy.\textsuperscript{22}

This double-bind of perceptions of authenticity which exoticises certain practices was confirmed by ‘ethnic’ Gypsies and Travellers who report that their culture is ‘not just wagons and horses, [but] that is what the gorges want to see - that is safe - not who we really are. They don’t want to know the rest of it’\textsuperscript{23}

If nomadic practices form a central strand of the identity of Gypsies and Travellers how then do residents of housing position themselves and establish their authenticity in the absence of an established pattern of travel, or residence in caravans? Whilst for New Travellers the absence of a common ethnic origin proves problematic in such circumstances, other ‘travelling’ groups are confident in their intra-community connections and the fact that their ethnic status can be transmitted but never lost. Thus whilst a personal history of ‘travelling’ was considered highly desirable, demonstrating authenticity and cultural commitment, it is but one strand of the narrative of identity. We therefore find young [housed] people declaring that: ‘I hate it when people say ‘I was a Gypsy’ [or] ‘my nan was a Gypsy’
[or] ‘I am a Gypsy because I live in a trailer’. In contrast, other respondents stress their connections to caravan-dwelling families as evidence of social capital: ‘We’ve got lots of family living on sites in the East counties - don’t really see much of them and they don’t travel much but they are on a site’.

In contrast, Irish Travellers whether in housing or on sites appear less challenged by notions of authenticity than are other groups. Indeed it was highly unusual to find a member of that population who did not have experience of travelling for work with family members and thus nomadism was taken for granted. Significantly, and indicative of the highly endogamous nature of the community, many Irish Travellers, even when born in Britain and raised in housing, still spoke Cant fluently or with as strong a Traveller accent as newly migrated members of their community and frequently moved seamlessly between housing and caravans and between England and Ireland, residing and travelling with diverse family members in both countries.

For both Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers however, and regardless of duration of residence in any given area, a significant finding across all projects was the lack of meaningful social contact and communication between the majority of interviewees and the surrounding ‘settled’ population, even when participants had some relatives who were of dual heritage (e.g. inter-married Gypsy/Traveller and ‘gorger’[non Traveller] backgrounds), or the interviewee resided in housing, often amongst relatively diverse populations. Thus housed Gypsies and Travellers broadly speaking referred to contacts with settled peoples in places of employment or school but rarely within the ‘domain of the personal’. Typical comments included ‘we don’t mix with them’ or ‘they were OK until they found out who we were, then it was another story they knows you are a Traveller and blame you for everything’. Narratives of suspicion towards, and hostility from, sedentary populations were common, and yet conversely, young housed Gypsies and Travellers in several locations emphasised the imitative practices of their non-Gypsy/Traveller peer group who were labelled ‘wannabees’ for adopting recognised cultural markers of Gypsy/Traveller lifestyle:

People say ‘oh they’re Travellers that, Travellers this, Travellers the other’ [speaking in a derogatory manner about Travellers] but really deep down inside they’d love to be a Traveller, ‘cos they dress up like Travellers, they wear gold earrings and they talk like us.

4. **Performance and Markers of Identity**

As noted above, people of both Romany and Irish Traveller ancestry identified certain styles of dress and language as clear cultural markers which identified someone as a member of their community. The authentic
performance of such behaviours was jealously guarded, with considerable discourse around fluency in Cant/Gammon or Romani, and the quality, age and style of jewellery or other adornments which could confer status on an individual or alternatively lead to indications of ‘gorjification’. Thus too, performance of culture specific markers could be perceived of as a form of resistance to hostile surrounding populations and repressive state regimes or ‘mainstream’ agents of sedentarism and assimilation, such as schools30.

Linguistic codes and the use of Romani and Cant or Gammon terms in general English language dialogue were regarded as highly significant in establishing the credentials of both the speaker and the listener. It was notable that researchers were frequently asked if they spoke one of these languages and then treated to a demonstration of the respondent’s knowledge of certain phrases and key terms. Thus possession of the ‘language’ even if only to a limited extent was demonstrated by Gypsies and Travellers of all ages, and individuals whose knowledge of the languages was slight tended to automatically volunteer explanations of this limitation in their repertoire of cultural capitals. ‘We went into houses when they closed the site maybe twenty years gone - people don’t talk the old way so much now but we know the jib of course we do - and I understand lot more than I talk’

Perhaps most striking was the clear consensus of opinion on specific cultural traits, behaviours and appearances which marked an individual out as a member of the community, as someone who could be automatically identified by other Gypsies and Travellers even if able to ‘pass’ to outsiders. Thus phrases such ‘you know one as soon as you see another Traveller - see him walking out that shop? He’s one, and her over there’ were common.

For ‘ethnic’ Gypsies and Travellers notions of how ‘family’ should be performed (specifically pertaining to gender roles which were strongly proscribed and advocated life long and early partnership formation, female virginity at marriage, the bearing of several children, male breadwinning, women’s responsibility for home, cultural and physical hygiene and providing care for the family and respect for elders) were considered a core social and cultural value. As Greenfields considers in depth, the importance of practicing such behaviours is perceived of as fundamental to being a respectable Gypsy or Traveller, someone who has social ‘personhood’ and who can thus be contrasted to other surrounding populations who have lost their value. Accordingly despite inevitable erosions, respect for and adherence to such values appears to remain relatively unchanged across generations31. Indeed one GTANA explored what features of Gypsy/Traveller lifestyle were the most important to respondents seen as marking them out from surrounding communities. The importance of ‘family’ and (a reified sense of) ‘possessing Gypsy blood’ were identified by slightly more respondents than those who reported ‘travelling’ as the dominant feature of the community identity32.
Analysis of GTANA evidence indicates that amongst Irish Travellers a complex interplay of nationality and ethnic identity can be found. Whilst Irish Traveller identity was foregrounded at all times, notions of culture, land, nomadism and kin-groupings shift depending upon the context of debate. Thus for example an Irish Traveller might identify themselves firstly as a Traveller, then in relation to their family group ‘we are Connors and Cashes’ then refer to their habitual connections to Kilkenny (for example). In contrast, Romany Gypsies would reiterate both their traditional family travelling patterns and their connections to specific kin-groupings and locations, with their ethnicity only cited to contrast themselves to other travelling groups. So for example a person might explore their connections to other Lee or Dark; Black or Penfold families and then identify that they were (for example) ‘Kent Lees’ or ‘Dorset Penfolds’ perhaps drilling down further to refer to historical family residence in ‘Shave Green compound’ or note that ‘we travel in the Fens’.

For both ethnic groups however, regardless of which narrative, (national; locational or ethnic) was foregrounded, a dominant theme consisted of reiterating both the value and primary importance of family and kin networks as a mechanism for retaining an unique culture within a hostile world. However, in a rapidly changing world where Gypsy and Traveller families frequently report becoming dislocated as a result of planning and other regulations, a danger exists that ‘bonding capital’ can be weakened and the all-important kinship structures which support identity can fragment. Thus it is, that in the concluding section of this chapter, we contemplate the politically constructed project of a trans-Roma/Traveller identity - specifically designed to enhance social, political and economic inclusion of travelling peoples with the intent of retaining a strong, largely self-governing, vibrant culture.

5. Gypsies, Travellers and Landscapes of Imagined Diasporas

Almost by definition, to be a member of a diasporic community a connection to a homeland (real or imagined) must exist. Yet for the nomadic communities considered above, certain difficulties exist - predominantly both lack of an identified place of origin and the diverse nature of ethnic Gypsy/Traveller communities. Yet, as Vermeersch (amongst others) has noted, political expediency coupled with a focus on much needed development work and access to grant-funding throughout Europe has led to a series of attempts in the past twenty years to formulate a Pan-Roma identity with the intent of both improving the situation of all nomadic groups and enabling the voice of a stateless and marginalised people to be foregrounded in policy discourse. Whilst the plight of both Roma in Europe and travelling peoples in Britain is severe, with significant levels of social exclusion and persistent failure of the State to improve their situation from generation to generation, it is questionable, in the light of significant national and ethnic
differences whether seeking to formulate an international network which
engages East European Roma and Irish Travellers and other non-Roma
travellers in European countries is an effective approach to marginalisation.

Critics of the pan-Roma project such as Kovats argue that such a
model simply marginalises such communities further from their home
nations, explicitly politicising the romantic myth of the Indic people and
telling the tale that home-grown democratic mechanisms will continue to fail
them. Additionally, he claims that dangerously, such political strategies can
play into the hands of racists who suspect that the loyalties of
Roma/Gypsies/Travellers lie outside of their home nation states, in a repeat
of the accusations levelled against Jews for time immemorial. Further
difficulties exist in the case of the UK in particular as Romany Gypsies often
report little sense of commonality with East European Roma (not least
because of the (forced) abandonment of nomadism by European Roma many
generations ago in contrast to the focus on travelling in British discourse). An
additional barrier to development of a shared project of identity in the UK
lies in the fact that neither New or Irish Travellers can claim any form of
kinship with Roma beyond mutual experiences of discrimination and racism.

Quite apart from the concerns voiced by political scientists, the Pan-
Roma project is not uncontested, both within Roma communities and
between other distinct populations of travelling peoples. Whilst the power of
such political mobilisation is firmly held in the hands of an elite of Roma
academics and politicians, (largely based in Central and Eastern Europe),
tribal, community and micro-ethnic loyalties frequently threaten to shatter the
often fragile balance which exists, with a multiplicity of small fractious
groupings constantly forming and imploding across Europe as economic and
social conflicts occur, often fuelled by the political power-brokering of
funders and European Union agencies.

Although, as Acton demonstrates in his classic edited collection on
Roma and Gypsy politics, such conflicts and liaisons are nothing new, the
startling nature of this newly constructed imagined landscape of identity lies
in the reversal of other conceptions of diaspora. Accordingly what we see in
this latest attempt to construct a pan-Roma identity is not a dispersal
outwards of peoples from a homeland but the conscious political in-gathering
of a network of peoples and ethnicities and the construction of a narrative of
nation. Accordingly, should this project succeed, a diasporic identity will
come into being which uniquely possesses no formalised (lost) link to the
mythologised land of Romanistan which some dreamers, schemers and
idealists would wish to construct.
Notes

1 Direct quotations from Gypsy and Traveller participants are, unless otherwise indicated, drawn from this large data set. The location of participants (e.g. by area of the UK) and interviewer reference codes are not provided given the plethora of sources utilised. Findings have been drawn from the following data sets: Six Gypsy Traveller Accommodation and other Needs Assessments from across the South of England in which the author has participated; a study of barriers and solutions to young Gypsies and Travellers considering health and social care careers (M. Greenfields, *A Good Job for a Traveller?*: Exploring Gypsies and Travellers’ Perceptions of Health and Social Care Careers. High Wycombe: Buckinghamshire New University/Aim Higher South East); and the nation-wide review of the situation of Gypsies and Travellers at December 2008: S. Cemlyn, M., Greenfields, S., Burnett, C, Whitwell, & Z. Matthews, Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities: A Review. London, Equality and Human Rights Commission. 2009. In addition, data on housed Gypsies and Travellers is drawn from two relatively small-scale qualitative studies in South East and South England and a third (on-going) project in London being undertaken by the author in collaboration with David Smith of Canterbury Christchurch University. The third phase of the ‘housed Gypsies’ project focuses on Irish Traveller respondents to explore whether their employment and social practices are similar to the other groups or if residence in an urban environment and greater diffusion of population impacts on behaviours and identities. In total, in excess of 1000 questionnaires; transcripts from eighteen focus groups and full literature reviews on diverse topics pertaining to the social inclusion/exclusion of Gypsies and Travellers, were available for data mining. Within this chapter, in recognition of the fact that varied sources of information are considered, and that the questions asked are not identical in each study, nor necessarily replicable, the themes of identity and the cultural reification of certain traits associated with Gypsy/Traveller ‘authenticity’ are treated to a broad brush approach.

2 C Clark, ‘Who are the Gypsies and Travellers of Britain?’ in C Clark and M. Greenfields, (eds), *Here to Stay: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain*. Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press. 2006, pp 22-27


4 Mayall, ibid., and see further D. Kenrick, *Gypsies: from the Ganges to the Thames*. Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press. 2004.
8 Gorger is the Romani word for someone who is not of Romany Gypsy origins. The equivalent term used by Irish Travellers is country person (or countryman/woman) regardless of whether the person spoken of is an urban dweller.
11 C Clark and M. Greenfields, (eds), Here to Stay: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain. Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press. 2006,
14 A considerable number of authors, for example Richardson, 2007 op.cit, Cemlyn et. al. 2009, op. cit.; Niner, 2003, op. cit. have discussed the adaptive social, economic and cultural practices practiced by Gypsies and Travellers which allow for resistance to change and retention of cultural and social boundaries. Such deliberate resistance is frequently misunderstood by ‘outsiders’, often to the frustration of agencies who repeatedly report that Gypsy and Traveller communities are ‘hard to reach’ or do not comprehend the benefits of take-up of services.
15 M Greenfields and D. Smith, ‘Travellers, Housing and the (Re) construction of Communities’ in Geographies of children, youth and

16 D. Sibley, Outsiders In Urban Societies. Oxford, Basil Blackwell. 1981 p14. With particular reference to the challenges faced by Gypsies and Travellers who have migrated to the city he notes ‘it is apparent that economic and institutional factors have combined to bring Travellers into the city on a more permanent basis without altering the essential elements of their world-structure’ (1981: 76).

17 Key elements which impact on the ability to develop meaningful social relationships between Gypsies and Travellers and the local sedentary populations are numerous and multi-faceted. ‘Sedentary’ in this context (and elsewhere within this chapter unless explicitly stated otherwise) is taken to mean non-Gypsy/Travellers resident in conventional housing and excludes housed members of Gypsy/Traveller communities. Perhaps the most significant barrier to regular, casual inter-ethnic contact is the geographical location of many ‘gypsy sites’. A combination of public hostility to the provision of ‘Gypsy sites’ in localities which adjoin conventional housing space and the highly politicised nature of planning (zoning) requirements which specify which type of development may occur in any given area (see Richardson, op. cit., CRE, op. cit.) have led to a situation where the majority of authorised Gypsy sites are located in liminal areas which are isolated from access to public services and may indeed be on land which would be regarded as highly unsuitable for other residential use. R. Home, The planning system and the accommodation needs of Gypsies in Clark & Greenfields, 2006 pp90-107 discusses the marginalisation and neglect of the public health needs of members of the nomadic community which has led to public site provision in locations which are in close proximity to sewerage works; under motorways or on contaminated land. Recent Government guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments: Guidance. London, DCLG. 2007, now requires that land deemed unsuitable for housing is equally unsuitable for the provision of residential and transit sites for Gypsies and Travellers, yet only limited progress has been made in identifying suitable alternative locations. Hence a shortage of sites persists as local authorities face hostility from local populations and/or delay in exploring suitable options which could provide appropriate accommodation settings. Further elements which militate against the development of social relationships between Gypsies and Travellers and sedentary populations are the socially mandated preference for endogamous marriage, residential proximity, kin-based employment and social activities which creates a
cultural barrier which may be hard to breach regardless of place of residence or type of accommodation dwelt in.

A significant and emerging body of literature exists on the nature of hybridized ethnic and social identities amongst children of mixed ethnic parentage. Whilst the majority of such literature explores identity formation and choice amongst children of mixed Caribbean (for example B. Tizard, B. & A. Phoenix *Black, White or Mixed Race? Race and Racism in the Lives of Young People of Mixed Parentage*. London, Routledge. 2002) or South Asian (see M. Song *Choosing Ethnic Identity*. Cambridge, Polity Press. 2003) and ‘White’ heritage, L Platt in *Ethnicity and Family* Colchester, Institute for Social and Economic Research. 2009 reports on the significant increase in family formation amongst people from cross-cultural and intra-ethnic groupings. In noting the dramatic increase in such diverse families and the relatively un-researched inter-ethnic family network formations amongst diasporic populations in Britain, Platt reports that one in ten children now live in a mixed-race family. Although Gypsies and Travellers are not explicitly referred to in any of the existing literature Findings from the GTANAs however may lead to the inference that young people from Gypsies and Travellers who live in housing are significantly more likely to live in a dual-heritage household (albeit predominantly of ‘White’ heritage) than the headline figure cited by Platt.

See M. Greenfields, *The impact of Section 8 Children Act Applications on Travelling Families* Bath, Unpublished PhD Thesis. 2002 for consideration of family breakdown and parenting patterns amongst New Travellers for a fuller discussion of this behaviour pattern. Greenfields, writing about social control of behaviour seen as aberrant (M Greenfields ‘Families, Community and Identity’ in Clark & Greenfields, 2006, op. cit. pp28-57 and ‘Gypsies, Travellers and Legal Matters’ ibid pp133-181) refer to mechanisms of social isolation to avoid conflict. For descriptions of ‘joking’ behaviour or a refusal to discuss specific topics as a way of indicating a breach of social norms we are predominantly reliant upon anecdotal evidence and reports from community members and practitioners.

Cant (or Gammon) is the language of Irish Travellers, little known by other communities and largely unwritten, it used in inter-personal communication in the same way as Romani by English (Romany) Gypsies.
It was noteworthy that even when families had been ‘settled’ and resident in an area for one or two generations, the majority of (or preferred) social contacts reported by many respondents, took place within their own ethnic group.

See note 1.

See note 1.

Typical cultural performances include wearing heavy gold jewellery such as large earrings and chains - a source of conflict within schools where a significant number of respondents referred to their children being sent home as being in breach of dress codes if they wore such jewellery. In a number of cases the cultural significance of performing Gypsy/Travellerdom through dress code and ornamentation was cited in the context of Sikh children wearing turbans and Kara (steel bangle) and Muslim girls’ ability to wear Shalwar Kameez at school. That codes pertaining to jewellery were rigidly policed on health and safety grounds in most schools was regarded as a sign of prejudice against Gypsies and Travellers by many respondents and cited in evidence of the fact that their minority ethnic status was neither respected nor honoured by ‘the authorities’.

M Greenfields, Families, Community and Identity’ in Clark & Greenfields, op. cit. 2006. pp28-57. Despite the slow pace of change and retention of ‘moral codes’, some evidence exists of limited but increasing support amongst Gypsy and Traveller families for part-time female employment as long as family and domestic needs are prioritised Cemlyn et. al., 2009 op. cit. Chapter 2.2 and Greenfields, 2008, op. cit.


It was noteworthy that for Romany Gypsies, (probably because of the difficulties in recent decades of retaining a nomadic way of life in England and thus that that respondents frequently reported more fractured history of travelling than the more recent migrant Irish Travellers) discourse often centred on nostalgia for a lifestyle which had largely ceased some forty years previously with the advent of greater mechanisation and decrease in intensive manual employment. Thus, regardless of their age or personal experience of travelling, respondents typically made comments which related to the loss of their traditional culture: ‘they don’t let us travel no more’ ‘it isn’t how it used to be - they want to stop us being Gypsies - take away our way of life’ being continually interposed with a disassociation from the agendas and values of mainstream sedentary society and reiteration of oppositional strategies which enable Gypsies to retain their unique culture within a hostile world.

Robert Putnam in his seminal text ‘Bowling alone: America’s declining social capital’. Journal of Democracy. 6 pp. 65-78. 1995, discusses the
impacts of merely engaging in social relationships with people of the same ethnic, religious or social origins. Whilst the connections between the individuals/groups strengthen and provide a network of support in a range of practical, emotional and political ways (bonding capital) a concurrent decline in ‘bridging capital’ occurs as individuals are engaged in fewer networks or social contacts with people or communities from dissimilar backgrounds. Putnam argues that whilst access to a combination of both kinds of social capital, (bonding and bridging) strengthens both individuals and communities, where intra-ethnic groups and bonding capital increases to the exclusion of bridging networks, than greater ethnic tensions occur.

35 Romany Gypsies have certain similarities to the Rom/Dom/Lom populations of the rest of world not least in use of certain linguistic terms and patterns of speech (collectively identified as the Romanes/Romani language albeit with numerous dialects) which are firmly rooted in a combination of archaic Hindi, ancient Persian and Turkish and which bear witness to the wanderings of their community prior to reaching Britain in the early Sixteenth Century (see further Kenrick, 2004, op. cit.). Irish Travellers in contrast have a more obscure origin, variously claimed to be pre-Celtic indigenous peoples of Ireland mixed with the dispossessed Irish people who were cleared from their lands by absentee landlords and the great famine of the 19th Century (for a further discussion on this population’s origins see Power, 2004 op. cit., S. Gmelch ‘From Poverty Subculture to Political Lobby: The Traveller Rights Movement in Ireland’, in Ireland From Below. C. Curtin and T. Wilson (eds), Galway, Galway University Press. 1989, pp. 301-319; Helleiner, 2003 op. cit. and McVeigh, 1997, op. cit.). Whatever their roots, Cant/Gammon (both variants of Shelta) is a distinct language bearing similarities to both Irish Gaelic and dialect spoken in Ireland at least as far back as the Seventeenth Century. New Travellers although a new phenomenon in the history of travelling people are also acquiring specific terms and dialects as they become more inward facing and embedded into distinct endogamous communities. New Travellers may be members of ‘other’ diasporic communities - including interviewees of dual British/Caribbean heritage, Jewish/Romany and many of Irish, Scottish or English backgrounds - their lack of a single recognisable ethnic origin and the hostility of longer-established communities explicitly excludes them from inclusion into a portfolio ‘ethnic’ Traveller identity.

Romany Roots

38 See Kenrick, 2004. op.cit. for a detailed discussion of the history of East and Central European Roma populations.
39 See Kovats. op. cit and Vermeersch op. cit. for a fuller discussion on political linkages, strategies and fractures over the previous twenty years.

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**Margaret Greenfields** is currently a Senior Lecturer in Social Policy at Buckinghamshire New University. She has worked with Gypsies and Travellers and other minority ethnic communities for over twenty years, specialising in research and community development practice in the fields of health, education and social justice.
The Inclusion of Global Migrants:
A Model and Suggestions for Research and Policy

Douglas C. Maynard and Melanie Graham

Abstract
Individuals and families migrate from one region of the world to another for many reasons, including financial opportunity, work or military assignment, family reunion, or escape from war, political unrest or natural disaster. Migration may be considered voluntary or involuntary, and temporary or permanent. All global migrants, however, must negotiate the often-daunting challenge of integrating into that new home region. Inclusion occurs when all members of a social group are allowed and encouraged to fully engage in the life of that social group and share their diverse talents, worldviews and backgrounds. In this chapter, we discuss inclusion as it relates specifically to human migration. We argue that inclusion requires a joint commitment from both the migrant and the communities that make up her new home. Such inclusion is likely to be at once challenging and rewarding. Migrants may experience inclusion to varying degrees across four primary spheres of life - school, work, community, and political. A host of factors are likely to affect the extent to which inclusion is desired and achieved. Individual-level antecedents include language proficiency, personality, and prior experiences (e.g., trauma, history of migration). Environmental characteristics include community size, location, and composition, the presence or absence of a diasporic community, and openness to diversity and public opinion toward foreigners. Also important is the interaction between the person and environment (e.g., similarity between cultures and languages, current relationship between home and receiving countries or regions). We discuss these factors in detail, as well as the individual and social outcomes of inclusion, in the form of a new model of global migrant inclusion. Finally, we will use this model to describe potential policy implications and to suggest future research directions, which we believe will be most fruitful when interdisciplinary in nature and grounded in the everyday experiences of migrants.

Key Words: exclusion, Immigration, inclusion, marginalization, migration.

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1. Introduction

When an individual picks up and moves to a different part of the world, he or she faces an uncertain future. The circumstances of the move will affect the degree and nature of this uncertainty. Some may wonder how they will find work, or where they will live, whereas others may have guaranteed employment, or may be planning to live with family or friends already in the new home. The experiences of immigrants, refugees, international students, and expatriates are all surely different in many ways. But for all, migration is a life-altering event guaranteed to have unknowns, even if it is also exciting or hopeful.

One of these unknowns is the experience of inclusion or exclusion in the various spheres of that person’s new life. Of course, inclusion is not just an issue for global migrants. We all hope to be accepted and be given the opportunity to participate fully in our schools, in our jobs, in our community, and in civic life. It is our contention, however, that the inclusion or marginalization of a global migrant is perhaps the most central and important aspect of the post-migration experience, the one that most fundamentally shapes the person’s life.

In this chapter, we will discuss a model that describes the various factors that affect inclusion, and the effects of inclusion on the individual and those around him or her. We are providing a handout of this model for your perusal. We see this as a way of organizing our thoughts rather than a stab at ‘truth,’ and look forward to discussion afterward.

We will start by defining inclusion and why we believe it to be so important. The primary focus of the talk will be on the personal, environmental, and interactive factors that precede inclusion or marginalization. To give an illustration of the model, Melanie will describe how it might apply to the specific case of families living abroad due to an expatriation assignment. Finally, we will wrap up with some suggestions for research and policy.

2. What is Inclusion and Why is it Important?

So, what is inclusion? Let’s take a quick look at two definitions.

Frederick Miller and Judith Katz, in their book *The Inclusion Breakthrough*, see inclusion as a perception that one belongs, is respected and valued, and is supported in a way that allows you to do your best work. The other definition comes from Institute for Inclusion, a think tank devoted to fostering inclusion across the globe. They define inclusion as ‘engaging the uniqueness of the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, capabilities, and ways of living of individuals and groups when joined in a common endeavor.’

Notice that the Miller and Katz definition identifies inclusion as something that you feel. The Institute for Inclusion, on the other hand, views inclusion as an action - something you do to promote the inclusion of others.
Rather than choose one approach, we argue that both have merit. In other words, we feel that there are observable indicators that suggest a climate of openness, but that we also must take into consideration one’s subjective experience of inclusion or exclusion. Consistent across these two definitions, however, is the notion that inclusion helps meet one’s basic need of belonging with others and allows for an individual to grow and reach one’s potential.4

The importance of inclusion for every individual is clear, as research has linked it with positive outcomes in all spheres of a person’s life, from education and employment to physical and psychological health.5 Communities, schools, and organizations also have much to gain by committing to inclusion, although real, sustained change can be painful and slow. Organizations that are able to embrace inclusion, for example, are more innovative and responsive to changing business demands.6 Apart from the potential gains, we believe that it is simply the right thing to do.

While inclusion is equally important for everyone, it is a particular challenge for global migrants. Being in a new culture with a different language, norms and customs presents obvious challenges. Most migrants have a limited social support structure in place in their new home, if indeed they have one at all. Coworkers, neighbors, and fellow students may be ignorant of their home culture and customs and may engage in either explicit or implicit stereotyping and prejudice.

Additionally, some exclusion is built into naturalization laws, including limitations on voting, holding elected office, serving on juries, and holding employment with the federal government.7 This exclusion is most evident and severe in the case of undocumented workers and illegal immigrants.

Finally, we also argue that inclusion is something that occurs because of the active engagement of both the individual and her social environment. In this way it is akin to two people shaking hands, which can only take place with the deliberative action of both individuals.

3. Factors that Affect Inclusion

Let’s now focus on the antecedents of inclusion, found on the left-hand side of the model. Rather than bore you with a point-by-point explanation of these factors, we will instead describe overarching themes that we believe carry special significance.

A. Individual Factors

Certainly, psychological factors such as personality, developmental stage, and cognitive ability play an important role. Psychologists have investigated a number of personality traits that would help a migrant connect with others and handle the challenges of adjusting to a new environment.
Two that come to mind are openness to experience - which is one of the famous 'Big Five' personality factors - and tolerance for ambiguity.

Learning and adjustment also come more naturally to children and adolescents than to adults; in fact, learning and adjustment are a big part of what the first two decades of life are about. This is most obvious in the case of learning a new language. Being fluent - or at least proficient - in the predominant language makes it easier to establish new relationships, do well in school, and tap into informational networks, which in turn will result in greater employment opportunities and social support.

Personal history with inclusion or exclusion affects how we interpret our current situation, and in some cases can help to perpetuate similar experiences, for better or worse. For example, if I have experienced prejudice and marginalization in the past, I likely have the expectation that I will face it in the future as well. Both verbal and nonverbal communication are open to interpretation or misinterpretation, especially when the parties come from different cultures. We have a natural tendency to view social events in ways that confirm our pre-existing beliefs about others, so predicting a negative interaction may well actually create one.8

Two particular beliefs surrounding one’s migration seem to us particularly noteworthy - whether it feels voluntary or involuntary, and whether it is expected to be temporary or permanent. The act of migrating is sometimes voluntary, as with most international students, and sometimes forced, as is the case for many refugees.

Perhaps more often, it is both. Most individuals will experience a mix of both pull factors such as job prospects, quality education, or family abroad, and push factors, such as negative conditions at home.9 The individual may be more proactive in making connections with native residents when the move is seen as relatively voluntary. As Anne Fadiman, writing about Hmong refugees in California, puts it, 'involuntary migrants, no matter what pot they are thrown into, tend not to melt.'10

Also important is how the move is viewed within the context of one’s larger life story. Does the person see this as the one and presumably only major migration experience in her life? Has the person experienced a series of moves, perhaps because of a parent’s job or military assignments? Is the current move seen as temporary or permanent? One’s own situation with regard to past and future moves is sure to affect the motivation to connect with others. For example, those who are used to the process of migration are likely to have learned effective strategies navigating a new physical and social environment. On the other hand, those who move regularly may see their current home as temporary. As a result, they may choose not to expend significant effort in getting involved in social organizations, interacting with neighbors, spending time outside work with colleagues, and so on.
Interestingly, someone who experiences inclusion despite initially seeing the move as temporary may lead to a desire to stay permanently. Baruch and colleagues found that foreign MBA students studying in the UK or the USA were more likely to stay after receiving their degrees when they adjusted well to their new life, received social support from host country students, and had strong family ties in the host country.¹¹

B. Environmental and Systematic Factors

Next, we look at environmental and systemic factors. Many of these factors reflect the structure, climate, and demographic profile of a community, school, organization, or wider society. Open structures, tolerant environments, and heterogeneous groups of people tend to support the inclusion of newcomers. That said, diversity does not guarantee inclusion, and, on the flip side, a social climate of openness and inclusion can exist within a relatively homogeneous community.¹²

What determines whether the social climate is inclusive? Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems model serves as a particularly useful framework for understanding inclusion as a reciprocal, interactive process.¹³ Bronfenbrenner described the environment as consisting of four nested contexts - namely, micro, meso, exo, and macro - that range from the immediate settings in which people live (such as family) to more distal contexts that indirectly influence individuals (such as governmental policies and dominant ideologies). This model is particularly important for understanding the lives of non-native residents given that life circumstances often catapult immigrants, migrants, and refugees into a complex system of legal, political, and cultural contexts that directly and indirectly play a role in their lives.

These systems are both bidirectional and dynamic. This is demonstrated nicely in the case of public opinion toward immigration, which is often seen as a threat to the welfare and available resources of native-born individuals.¹⁴ Public opinion is shaped by events and experiences ranging from a terrorist attack on home soil to high unemployment rates in regions near national borders. Indeed, in times of perceived national threat, attitudes toward immigrants tend to become more negative.¹⁵

The resulting sociopolitical climate in turn influences the inclusion or exclusion of migrants through national and regional policy change as well as individual and group interaction.¹⁶ Archival research has revealed that common use of ethnic slurs toward particular groups of immigrants coincided with lower rates of country admission and naturalization for those groups, suggesting a direct link between how native-born citizens feel about a given ethnicity and how the government treats them.¹⁷

Cycles of nationalist or nativist sentiment in the host country also affect attitudes and behavior toward migrants. Nationalism revolves around
the perceived superiority of one’s nation, whereas nativists conceive of a geographical group, such as a community or society, as comprising only of those born there. People who espouse nationalism or nativism experience greater perceived threat from immigrants and hold more negative perceptions of them. Interestingly, patriotism by itself, defined specifically as affection for and pride in one’s nation, seems to be unrelated to rejection of immigrants.

C. Interactive Factors

Third is the interaction between the individual and the environment. The notion of person-environment fit has received a great deal of attention in social and organizational psychology as an important predictor of individual behavior and well-being. For global migrants, the similarity between one’s previous and current situations is especially relevant.

Several streams of research have suggested that, to the extent that home and host features such as language, social organization, religious beliefs, and culture share common features, the transition will be simplified and inclusion more possible. For example, an immigrant suffered less occupational downgrading - in other words, having to settle for a lesser job in one’s new home - when her home country was similar to the host country in terms of language and economy. And among immigrant Taiwanese children in the United States, greater English proficiency was associated with the formation of friendships with native children. Finally, foreign MBA students were more likely to settle in the host country after graduation if the cultural distance with the home country was relatively small, presumably because of the easier adjustment process.

Racial similarity can play a role as well. In the school, for example, a child of obviously different ethnicity can stick out and such children are often at risk for race-related teasing and bullying. Perhaps partly as a result of this, immigrant children tend to cluster with others of similar ethnicity, and this tendency is especially pronounced for proportionally small groups of immigrant children, relative to the size of majority group. This suggests that at some point, both the in-group and the out-group may consensually engage in social separation for different reasons, although this does not guarantee that such an arrangement is in the best interests of either group.

Another person-situation factor is the presence of personal social networks that a migrant has access to upon arrival in her new home. This is closely tied to the primary reason for moving. Those moving to reunite with family members already abroad have at least some social ties waiting for them. However, there has been a shift from immigration for the purposes of reuniting families, toward more economic, opportunity-focused immigration, especially among highly trained professionals, such as scientists and scholars. This type of immigration may be associated with a smaller or...
weaker network of friends, family, and acquaintances in the host country, at least during the first few months or years. Whether this isolates someone or encourages them to make new connections with locals may depend upon other factors, such as personality. For example, extraverts may relish the opportunity, whereas introverts may seal themselves away.

Social networks back home retain their importance as well. New and not-so-new technology now allows for quicker and more regular communication with friends and family left behind. This can be a double-edged sword. For example, Hai-yun - one of the co-authors of this chapter - is a graduate student from Taiwan studying at our institution in New York. She admits to having isolated herself from fellow graduate students during her first few months in the United States, partially because of the ease with which she could keep in touch with friends from home through Internet tools such as Facebook and Skype.

D. Time

We want to draw particular attention to the importance of time. An individual’s experiences and psychological states continue to be shaped by the migration experience, although its impact may slowly become more subtle as time passes. Also, some factors may be more important right after migration, whereas others may have delayed influence. As such, we are intrigued by how the flow of time influences engagement and acceptance of global migrants.

Some might argue that a certain level of inclusion can be expected as a migrant spends more time in the host country as a neighbor, fellow classmate, or coworker. Trust may develop out of a common environment, particularly when natives and non-natives share experiences and goals. Indeed, time in country does seem to eventually help global migrants manage the challenges they face. High school drop out rates are lower for immigrant teenagers who have been in their new country longer, as compared to newer arrivals. In the work context, while migrants may experience underemployment relative to their education, experience, or skill level upon arrival, most seem to obtain more appropriate employment in time.

For those arriving at a country that speaks a language different from their own, eventual proficiency in this new tongue comes with practice. However, effort is required to see such improvement, and there may be various reasons why a migrant may choose not to invest such effort, such as the presence of a diasporic community, time constraints due to work and family obligations, or the belief that the move is temporary.

Time can play a more sinister role in schools, communities and organizations where marginalization has been allowed to exist. Exclusion that goes unchallenged has a tendency to become institutionalized in both explicit policy and implicit codes of conduct. While a migrant may gain a deeper
understanding of the language and customs of his new home with time, any prejudice faced early on is likely to persist. So, as with diversity, time alone does not guarantee inclusion.31

4. The Case of Expatriates

To illustrate how these ideas might play out with a particular type of global migrant, we will briefly discuss the types of issues that expatriates and their families might experience while living abroad due to an international work assignment.

Most expatriates are relatively well-educated and financially secure. For many, the decision to move was seen as a voluntary, positive choice, with career benefits and an exciting opportunity to live in a new culture.32 It might be surprising to learn, however, that expatriates often feel as though they were coerced into accepting their assignment. To decline, for whatever reason, might be seen as going against the company’s norms and expectations. In many organizations, expatriation is seen as a rung on the advancement ladder that cannot be skipped. Even if the employee wants to take the assignment, their partner and/or their children often have misgivings about moving.

Many of these misgivings result from labor policies of the host nation that foster marginalization or exclusion. For example in many nations, it can be extremely difficult for a foreigner to obtain working papers without the aid of a sponsoring corporation. This prevents expatriate couples from having two working adults and outwardly marks them as different from their neighbors. It also serves as a subjective or psychological source of marginalisation as it is a reminder of the temporary stay in the host country and forms a psychological barrier between the expatriate’s spouses and the local community.

A more objective barrier is formed when the person and environment are forced to interact. Many expatriates receive limited training with respect to the host country’s language and culture. Lack of understanding of transportation systems and local customs can convert everyday tasks such as buying food or picking up mail into daily stressors. Many corporations fail to inform their employees about seemingly minor policies or regulations - such as when to put out the trash, when it’s legal to mow the lawn, or what qualifies as a traffic violation - and this can cause clashes with the neighbours or the authorities. Feeling different, conspicuous, and incompetent, expatriates may resort to socializing only with other expatriates, further diminishing inclusion. Expatriates and their families also arrive with few if any friends or even acquaintances to rely upon, and may spend free time using technology to stay connected to those back home.

The short-term nature of most expatriation assignments means that any investment in integrating into the community must be weighted against
the temporary projected benefits. Most expatriates are contracted to stay somewhere from 2 to 5 years. As we’ve discussed, whether an individual proactively attempts to interact with nationals on the job and in their communities seems to depend a great deal on personality, language proficiency, and cultural awareness.

We have painted a fairly gloomy picture of the expatriate experience. Such problems are not experienced by every expatriate family. Those families who make a true effort to learn the local language, go out into the community, and do not look at their social world as incomprehensible have much higher rates of success as expatriates and more contentedness as a family. Nevertheless, many expatriates and their families do struggle quite a bit. It is instructive to think how much more challenging this transitional period is likely to be for other types of migrants, who usually do not have the economic means and guaranteed employment and housing that expatriates typically enjoy.

5. **Suggestions for Research and Practice**

We finish with a few recommendations for future research and policy. We start with two suggestions for research based upon the themes we have highlighted. First, we have talked about how the post-migration experience is one that unfolds over time. As such, the best research on global migrants will incorporate the element of time, especially through longitudinal designs.

Second, recall that inclusion can be viewed as either an action or as a subjective experience. Perceived inclusion may better predict psychological outcome variables such as self-esteem and life satisfaction. On the other hand, indicators that social groups are engaged in inclusion-promoting activities are likely to be associated with a sense of organizational justice. Research that incorporates measures of both action and perception would be especially valuable.

As for practical recommendations, as we’ve mentioned, the inclusion of migrants is challenging, especially when the pre-existing climate is one of prejudice and marginalization. By default, humans mentally represent members of groups to which we do not belong in simplistic and often negative ways. Research in social cognition shows that negative implicit associations persist, even when we are able to change explicit attitudes and behaviours.33

We encourage the development and funding of programs that incorporate the research findings we have discussed today. For example, it is clear that for many global migrants, language barriers prevent the establishment of relationships with native residents and complicate daily life activities. Language exchange programs can not only help migrants approach
proficiency in the language of their new home; they can also create new connections between diverse groups.

When the first author was studying Spanish in Argentina several years ago, the language centre had frequent exchange meetings where locals learning English and foreigners learning Spanish would get to know each other, speaking in English for half of the meeting, and in Spanish for the other half. Programs such as this could be designed to bring natives and migrants together, fostering not only language proficiency, but mutual engagement and understanding. We know that exposure with a formerly unfamiliar group produces a more nuanced, complex view of that group. As exclusion and marginalization are easier when one thinks about a group in very simplistic ways, efforts to increase positive contact between groups can only help.34

The development of programs aimed at increasing inclusiveness need to consider the target audience and their particular needs. Immigrants, refugees, and expatriates arrive under very different circumstances. Efforts must also consider how particular cultures, languages, and belief systems will present both unique challenges and unique opportunities. Well-meaning approaches that treat all global migrants as having similar needs and problems are unlikely to be successful.

In conclusion, we view inclusion as a joint venture between the individual and his or her social environment, a venture that is particularly relevant to the experience of global migrants. Despite the many potential challenges, there is much to be gained from mutual engagement. Our hope is that the ideas we have presented will stimulate further dialogue and inquiry in this area.

Notes

1 For a copy of the model, please contact the first author at maynardd@newpaltz.edu.
6 Miller & Katz, op. cit.
12 Miller and Katz, op. cit.
14 Pratto & Lemieux, op. cit.
16 Bouchard & Chander, op. cit.
18 Esses et al., op. cit.
20 Akresh, op. cit.
22 Baruch, Budhwar, & Khatri, op. cit.
23 Tsai, op. cit.
30 Abrams, Hogg, & Marques, op. cit.
34 Rice & Mullen, op. cit.

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Douglas C. Maynard is Associate Professor of Psychology at the State University of New York at New Paltz, New Paltz, New York, USA. His research interests include underemployment and overqualification, employment issues of global migrants, and nonverbal communication in the employment interview.

Melanie Graham holds a Bachelor of Arts in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the State University of New York at New Paltz, New Paltz, New York, USA. Her interests include employee expatriation and repatriation.
Appendices

Individual Factors
- Personality traits
- Development
- Language proficiency
- Family structure
- Prior history and experiences
- (In)voluntary nature
- Perceived permanence of move
  etc.

Interactive Factors
- Cultural similarity
- Language similarity
- Family/social networks
- Nature/history of relationship between home and receiving countries/cultures
  etc.

Environmental/Systemic Factors
- Current level of diversity
- Diversity climate
- Public opinion re: immigration
- School/organizational structure
- Community features
  etc.

Degree of Inclusion
Objective Indicators
Subjective Experiences

Individual and Family Outcomes
- Mental health and life satisfaction
- Acculturation
- Identity
- Social support
- Financial/employment stability
  etc.

Outcomes for Others
- Intergroup relations
- Organizational effectiveness
- Public opinion
- Opportunities for growth and learning
  etc.

Time in Country

Douglas C. Maynard and Melanie Graham
Section IV

Uncovering and Exploring Diasporas
Introduction

Laura De Pretto

Sometimes we happen to encounter groups of people that we wouldn’t, at a first glance, perceive as diasporic, even though they fit the criteria usually attributed to a diaspora. On the contrary, some other times, we give ourselves the right to define ‘diaspora’ a group of people solely on the bases of the shared origins of its members (which perhaps they wouldn’t even always recognise), and we don’t pay enough attention to its internal differences.

In this session of the e-book, we decided to place three contributions that can give some examples of these nuances in the notion of diaspora.

Some diasporas are unheard, undiscovered, because they are new or they bear several distinctive features. This is the case of diasporas into virtual worlds, as it has been analysed in the research conducted by Herrera and Margitay-Becht, who studied the on-line role playing game World of Warcraft. The authors investigated this phenomenon not only in consideration of groups of people who ‘migrate’ from real life to cyber spaces. They point to the fact that, inside the same cyber spaces, there are also groups who deliberately chose to frequent a certain server instead of another, to use a distinct language and to adopt for themselves particular names (referring to their own culture), in order to create sub-crews and, thus, a sense of community and social identity within the same virtual realm. Besides, people also make an inverse migration from World of Warcraft to a wide number of websites where they can discuss about the game, and even, sometimes, to real world meetings, where they get together and can share their gamers’ experiences.

While virtual diasporas are only recently emerging and therefore there is still little awareness around them, other diasporas are ‘unknown’ because they have been intentionally forgotten and no effort has been made to promote the diasporic culture in the new land. Andrew Harvey, in his study, analyses the case of the Australian diaspora in Paraguay. The author illustrates how almost no interest was shown towards this diaspora on the part of the Australian institutions in terms of support or cultural events, to the point that this diasporic group is hardly ever recognised in Australia.

Vice versa, we must pay attention not to apply to easily the diasporic label to any groups, as their internal differences may be very ample. Victoria Clifford explains this by bringing the example of the Urdu-speaking ‘Bihari’ minority in Bangladesh. This group not only varies internally due to the fact that some members live inside camps and other outside, but also its components show to have different conceptions of their origins. Uncovering
new diasporas in this case could mean first deconstructing a diaspora, for discovering many distinct ones hidden under one generic label. In the case in question, the rather complex history of such group of people determines a number of inner dissimilarities that makes the definition of the diasporic group quite controversial. In fact, we are here in front of a lost common point of origin, which is widely recognised in the literature as the essence of any diaspora.

These different views towards the origins are due, among other factors, to ghettoization in camps of some members of the minority. Living in the camps causes differences in the spoken Urdu, in the practice of the same religion, in some more or less conservative ideas, in social status, in self or other attributed labels. So, in this article, it is argued that the place of settlement, instead of the roots, shape identities in this case.
Cyber-Diasporas: The Affects of Migration to Virtual Worlds

Dana R. Herrera, Andras Margitay-Becht & Jovina Chagas

Abstract
Since 2004, eleven million people have established and maintained diasporic communities without leaving their home countries: the player population of the massively multiplayer online role-playing game World of Warcraft. While real-life populations will migrate to actual geographical locations, immigrants to virtual worlds redefine traditional notions of place, space and belongingness. This chapter argues that the on-line life of citizens inhabiting the Warcraft universe is a significant example of a diasporic community. As they become enculturated within the game universe, patterns of behaviour emerge which suggest that players will build community structures of ‘collective membership’ within the virtual world. Because players simultaneously inhabit a real-life place (the ‘homeland’) and a virtual world space (the ‘diasporic community’), we explore the emergent tensions between ‘real-life’ and ‘on-line life’ at the intersections of identity, nationality, citizenship, belongingness, and migration. Virtual worlds redefine the field of diaspora studies in light of technological and new media advances that allows people to conceive and participate in communities that have no physical location. Our chapter addresses these issues with examples gathered through extensive virtual and real-life ethnographic fieldwork conducted in two continents and two virtual realms.

Key Words: computer, diaspora, gaming, identity, virtual worlds, Warcraft.
virtual world of the massively multiplayer online role playing game (MMORPG) *World of Warcraft* and how, in light of technological and new media advances, virtual worlds are redefining the field of diaspora studies as more people conceive of, imagine, and participate in communities that have no physical boundaries or locations.

1. **Technology and Diasporas**

Technological advances add new dimensions to the processes of uniting, maintaining, exploring, examining, and discussing real-life diasporic communities. The introduction of affordable cellular phones and text messaging, for example, positively impacts relationships between overseas Filipino workers (OFW) and their families. As Pertierra, et al. observe, the nearly instantaneous exchange of text messages or the possibility of hearing a loved one’s voice at any given moment help alleviate separation anxiety; they also examine how the exchange of local news and gossip with Filipinos away from home strengthen community ties that might otherwise be frayed by the long distances. For the nearly eleven million OFW, and the countless numbers of people who comprise the international Filipino diaspora, other technological avenues of community building and cultural exploration exist as well. Ignacio’s *Building Diaspora: Filipino Cultural Community Formation on the Internet* deconstructs how members of the Filipino diaspora negotiate issues such as identity, gender, postcolonialism, and nationalism via active participation on newsgroups and websites. These examples, however, illustrate how particular technologies operate as tools for facilitating communication and community building of a particular, real-life diasporic group. Other critiques suggest that various technologies are being used for creating virtual spaces which themselves represent a type of diasporic movement.

In *Give Me That Online Religion*, Brasher suggests that the on-line presence of religious groups might be considered ‘the ultimate diaspora’ as ‘global religious organizations have established an official presence in cyberspace, planting the flag of faith just as explorers of old staked out the terrain for themselves.’ A URL marks a territory and boundaries are maintained with a webpage. In Brasher’s examples, religious groups maintain a distinct community within the space of the World Wide Web, nurturing an identity that is based on the practices and histories of real-life groups. Reports suggest that in 2004 at least 82 million Americans and untold numbers worldwide were turning to these online religious resources, indicating that the diasporas of various congregations were successfully attracting the faithful and seekers alike. Cowan’s *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet* points out, however, that some thriving religions communities have developed online - without any real-life meetings, congregations, or buildings. Cyberspace is the only place where these groups
exist as a whole. Thus, from the examples of Filipino diaspora to virtual religion, technology increases the community building of real-life diasporic movements. More significantly (for the purposes of this chapter), ever improving computer hardware, more sophisticated software and a growing number of internet users are forcing social scientists to reconsider community spaces and diasporic places. As examples of Appadurai’s ‘-scapes,’ these intersections between technology and the diasporic movement of people reveal how boundaries are shattered by these flows:

By *ethnoscape*, I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree… By *technoscape*, I mean the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology and the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and information, now moves at high speed across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries.  

These intersections can further be examined through Gupta and Ferguson’s complementary analysis of the changing landscapes of ‘home,’ ‘homeland,’ ‘space,’ and ‘place,’ for migrating and displaced populations:

The partial erosion of spatially bounded social worlds and the growing role of the imagination of places from a distance, however, themselves must be situated within the highly specialized terms of a global capitalist economy. The special challenge here is to use a focus on the way space is imagined (but not *imaginary*) as a way to explore the mechanisms through which such conceptual processes of place making meet the changing global economic and political conditions of lived spaces - the relation, we could say, between place and space.

Indeed, changes in the global economic structure has, throughout the years, further challenged how home(land)s and hosts, spaces and places are constructed and inhabited. Ironically, Gupta and Ferguson’s work was published in 1997, the launch year of *Ultima Online*, which was one of the first highly successful virtual world on-line games. In the years since cautioning against so-called ‘imaginary’ spaces, advances in computer technology and telecommunications have made it possible for persistent
virtual worlds to exhibit cultural, social and economic parallels to real-life
that are recognized as scientifically valid areas of study. The boundaries
between imagined/imaginary, real-life/ virtual life blur as some people's
participation in MMORPGs (re)cast them as nationals of a real-life country,
citizens of an on-line world, and members of a diasporic community in both
realities.

2. Ethnographic Observations of a Virtual Culture

On its release date in 2004, the massively multiplayer on-line role
playing game World of Warcraft (WOW) shattered single day PC game sales.
Today, Blizzard Entertainment boasts in a myriad of television, web, and
print advertisements that eleven million gamers from around the world
migrate to Warcraft's virtual world of Azeroth for adventure, wealth, and
fame. Blizzard operates WOW on a subscription-based model; after
purchasing the requisite software for the computer, for 14.99USD\(^{13}\)/12.99EUR\(^{14}\) a month, gamers are granted access to the network
of servers that host the Warcraft universe.

Once inside the virtual world, people begin customizing an avatar
based on 1) in-game factions (the Horde and the Alliance faction are
enemies), 2) races (Horde: Orc, Undead, Tauren, Troll, Blood Elf or
Alliance: Human, Dwarf, Night Elf, Gnome, Draenei) and classes (Priest,
Rogue, Warrior, Mage, Druid, Hunter, Warlock, Shaman, Paladin, or Death
Knight). Cosmetic changes are also allowed as players choose from a palette
of hair, skin, and facial features. Later, each player-avatar also has a choice of
professions such as mining and engineering. Game play consists of a series of
progressively more difficult quests through which gamers hope to earn gold
and specialized weapons and clothing for their avatar. Generally, WOW
depends upon cooperative game play by several gamers to complete the most
difficult (and most rewarding) tasks.

To provide a credible backdrop for the quests and encourage
immersive game play Blizzard producers have created an elaborate
mythology replete with warring factions, betrayals, romance, alien invasions,
and other complicated storylines that have sometimes taken years to develop.
As with other real-life cultures, the origin myths and history of the Horde and
Alliance take time and effort to untangle. The recent introduction of the
Death Knight, for example, did more than give players another class to
explore; the subsequent world events added more nuance to the story line and
hinted at other future events as well.

Beyond plots and narratives, Warcraft programmers have also
introduced cultural norms and values that govern avatar behaviour. Members
of the Horde, for example, cannot speak to Alliance players; in-game chat
literally occurs in a different language if one attempts to converse with
someone from the opposing faction. Hunters are a class that can train combat
pets to fight by their side; like in real life, these pets must be fed from the Hunter’s supplies. The in-game avatars have the option to eat food to gain special abilities. Capital cities are teeming with the professions (tailor, cook, engineer, alchemist), population (adults, teenagers, children), and social hierarchies (monarchs, lords, knights, farmers) that one might see in any fantasy setting. As homage to real-life, Warcraft writers also reference current events for Azeroth holidays. The in-game ‘Spirits of Competition’ featured a series of limited time quests and activities for players with special rewards upon completion; this sixteen day long event coincided with the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China. In short, WOW designers have built the virtual world of Azeroth with a robust culture, a ‘complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [gamers] as a member of [virtual] society.’

Interestingly, however, due to hardware limitations and Blizzard’s own attempts to maintain a particular type of order within the World, the eleven million WOW players do not have opportunity to interact with each other. The world of Warcraft is divided into a series of realms and servers. As explained by Blizzard:

A realm is a game world that exists only for the few thousands of players within it. Each realm is a complete version of the game world, but each realm has its own player characters that are tied to that particular realm. You can interact with all the players on your realm but you cannot interact with players on other realms...there are over 200 North American realms alone. More realms will continue to be added as necessary...We have established an optimal number of players per realm. This number is in the thousands, but manageable enough to foster a sense of community and to prevent overcrowding.

The realms span four areas of the United States, Europe, Korea, and China with further subdivisions taking place within those realms along language lines. Within the European realms, for example, players have a choice between English, German, French, Spanish, and Russian servers. Therefore, while the overall lore and mythology of the world is the same, multilingual translations of the in-game dialogue are designed to serve specific populations.

On the surface, then, the world of Warcraft is persistent; it exists at all times for eleven million people to enjoy the same cultural phenomena, albeit in a different language. Underneath these carefully constructed sets of rules, however, our ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation
reveals the ruptures of these well-defined virtual territories. While some realms contain players who self-select the entry point for immersion according to the boundaries of language and actual geographic space, other gamers who are bilingual in real-life cross into this virtual world and remake their communities and values into their own image.

3. **Diasporas In and Out of Virtual Worlds**

Our observations are based on the fieldwork of the primary authors (Herrera and Margitay-Becht). Since January 2008 we have conducted participant observation within the *World of Warcraft* on European realms that are advertised as English language; on one realm (pseudonym ‘AB’) our avatars were Alliance while on a second realm (‘RH’) we chose Horde. It is important to note the context in which we collect our data. Due to the virtual boundaries imposed by Blizzard observations made by Chagas, for example, are said to be relevant to the United States realms where she conducts research; Herrera and Margitay-Becht’s observations of European realms are specified as such. Data comparisons between specific servers are classified as cross-cultural comparisons since the player norms and valued generated by each community is specific to each server site.

During fieldwork, the immersion of the authors equals if not surpasses that of the average American player. According to a March 2009 Nielsen Report the *World of Warcraft* players spent more time in-world than any other PC game; an average of 653 minutes a week. As one of our informants said as he lamented the amount of time he spent on *WOW*, ‘This is why they call this game War-crack.’ On the ‘RH’ realm, players were routinely observed spending as much as twelve hours a day online. In some cases, players were involved in some of the longer quests which required anywhere from three to ten hours to complete. Others were involved in any of the myriad of possible activities available for players to engage in: fishing, cooking, duelling other players, etc. However, underlying all of the activities was, in fact, the socializing. The in-chat window displayed public conversations occurring between any number of players at any given time, offering insights as to the layered identity of the gamers.

Each player brings with them into the game: an identity developed through the socioeconomic lens of their particular culture. As they become enculturated within the game universe, patterns of behaviour emerge which suggest that players build structures of ‘collective membership,’ characteristic of diasporic communities, within the virtual world. For the rest of the article, we will focus exclusively on the Hungarian diasporic communities within the ‘HR’ and ‘AB’ realms and how these players choose to maintain their sense of collective identity within this virtual culture; some comparisons to the real-life diaspora of the Filipino people will illustrate the similarities between the two groups.
Mendoza’s *Between the Homeland and the Diaspora: the Politics of Theorizing Filipino American Identities*, for example, deconstructs the postcolonial models of identity formation among American born Filipinos. In her analysis, Filipino American’s ‘cultural strategies of self-reclamation and empowerment’ include (re)constructing narratives of memory to the homeland, grappling with a sense of one’s place in a host culture, while developing a self-identity rooted in personal (mis)understandings of history. While Filipino diasporic communities have had decades to struggle with these issues, *Warcraft* players are (after almost five years in existence) exhibiting similar strategies.

Considering each player’s in-game avatar, for example, ultimately reveals what a gamer chooses to express about who they are. Players identify personally with these avatars, becoming emotionally passionate and referring to them with the personal pronoun ‘I.’ The virtual lives they lead through these avatars is, in essence, a complete second life and identity. Observations on both ‘AB’ and ‘RH’ servers suggest, for example, that the choice of a name steeped in Hungarian legend or constructed from Hungarian language puns is a deliberate reference to one’s Hungarian identity. It signals and references (what could be) a common cultural background for players who might not otherwise ever see the ‘real’ person behind the avatar. When Filipino author Herrera, for example, chose an avatar name on server ‘AB’ which hinted at a Hungarian identity, she was sent private messages or spoken to on the public chat by others speaking Hungarian on a twice-weekly basis. Replies that she did not actually speak Hungarian were met with puzzlement or amusement. Preliminary observations suggest that the use of one’s native language as a community building technique on-line remains a successful method of guaranteeing that ‘we’ collectively network with those ‘like us.’

Other examples of linguistic cross-cultural server comparisons within *WOW* suggest that the intent behind acronyms such as ‘WTB’ (‘want to buy’) or ‘LFM’ (‘looking for more’) are commonly understood regardless of the dominant language of the server. However, server specific jargon emerges within the local population. Offering congratulations to players on the American servers observed by Chagas were rendered as ‘Congrats.’ Yet for Herrera and Margitay-Becht on the European ‘RH’ server, ‘Congratulations’ was shortened to ‘grats,’ deliberately misspelled as ‘gratz,’ and finally reduced to ‘GZ!’ Another example refers to the use of ‘yes’ or ‘no’; on ‘AB,’ (+) and (-) are used while on ‘RH’ the shorthand of ‘y’ and ‘n’ are acceptable. These specific dialects of each server reflect generally shared idioms and slang that transcend cultural boundaries.

As noted earlier, however, although realms are divided up by language, bilingual players will gravitate to servers with known populations of specific players. Thus, specific realms will develop their own
combinations of modified ‘gamerspeak’ combined with whatever other slang and international languages are used on the forum. ‘AB’ for example was once characterized as an unofficial Swedish language realm. Our participant observation on ‘AB’ during 2007 revealed a declining population of self-identified Swedes and an increase in Hungarian players (as revealed by their bilingual conversations in English and Hungarian). By spring of 2009, ‘AB’ had become almost exclusively Hungarian with very few others self-identifying as belonging to another group. (Through mid-2008 and 2009, the multicultural population on ‘HR’ has remained consistent.) Thus, servers can be said to house diasporic settlements of Hungarian communities which self-select to associate with one another and maintain their cultural identity in the host culture of Azeroth.

To strengthen communities within the diaspora, Filipinos have demonstrated a propensity for joining and maintaining voluntary associations; Filipino American historian Fred Cordova remarked, ‘It has been said that whenever two Pinoys [Filipinos] had gotten together, they formed a club.’

Guilds are the voluntary associations within WOW that generally band together for mutual benefit: completing quests that require groups of ten or twenty people or socializing via the private guild chat channel. Author Herrera, for example, belongs to a guild that is organized under simple rules of 1) ‘Be kind to others in the guild’ and 2) ‘English only.’ Rather than accidentally excluding others, the Guild Masters (leaders) decided that a common language would facilitate conversations and by extension, open the doors of the guild to a variety of people. Conversely, no less than three Hungarian guilds advertise on a regular basis for recruitment on ‘RH’. During a one-week random sample (fifteen hours of game play), these guilds were noted as typing in Hungarian language messages asking for specific classes and levels of experience no less than four times an hour. Interestingly, several requests were followed with an English language apology ‘sorry for the language.’ These guilds effectively limit memberships to Hungarian only. While there are undoubtedly Hungarians who do not belong to guilds or Hungarian specific guilds, statistics indicate that one Hungarian guild membership is approximately 102; another lists 196 members. Because guild names and character names are listed directly above the avatar head, players constantly advertise their preferred cultural grouping within game.

Other examples of such community building/ community tensions should be noted as well. While on the North American servers author Chagas is currently researching the emergence of regional or national identity references in gamer discourse, the European realms are more obviously predisposed to players grouping themselves into specific communities. Swedish, German, British, Italian, and Polish communities have all been observed negotiating cultural practices to maintain, challenge, and reinterpret
their on-line identity. Appeals to national pride or insults based on social location have also been noted as rivalries between communities based on perceived countries of origin have emerged.

Perhaps the most interesting example of a virtual diaspora, however, has been out-of-game community building by World of Warcraft players in general and the Horde and Alliance factions in particular. Outside of the Azeroth and separate from the Warcraft program itself, countless websites, discussion forums, mailing lists, videos, blogs, and podcasts bring WOW gamers together to discuss their lives in the other world. These gamers inhabit multiple spaces and once outside the game participate in communities where building solidarity means calling upon the memories and experiences in the shared ‘homeland’ of Azeroth. Once away from the computer and in ‘real-life’ gamers can further their WOW experience by purchasing books and other merchandizing or participating in Blizzard Entertainment’s annual gaming convention, BlizzCon. At these conventions or in any context where two WOW gamers meet the discourse follows an inevitable pattern of questions: ‘What faction?’ ‘Which server?’ and ‘Which class?’ In real-life WOW players have been labelled as ‘refugees,’ ‘geeks,’ or ‘addicts’ but there is a very real sense of space, sense and community with roots in the so-called ‘imaginary.’

Acknowledgements

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Notes

10 A Appadurai, op. cit., p. 33-34.
11 A Gupta and J Ferguson, op. cit., p. 41-42.
15 With apologies to anthropologist E.B. Tylor, his famous unedited quote reads ‘Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.’
19 S Lily Mendoza, op.cit., p190.
20 E Castronova, op.cit., p. 45.
21 ‘Gamerspeak’ refers to the language used by those who play video games. More specifically here for this research purpose, it is the language used by those who play in virtual worlds. It usually references a game’s events, characters, or actions. In-world language play creates a rich lexicon of words that have completely different meaning than used in mainstream communication. For example, ‘to farm,’ in a virtual world does not mean a player pulls out a tractor and begins to till a field; instead, it indicates a player who sits at the same location of the virtual world, constantly killing the same monster over and over again to gain multiple copies of the same loot that the
monster drops. The language play partly arises out of the need for gamers to quickly and accurately reference the happenings in the virtual world.


Bibliography


**Dana R. Herrera** is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Saint Mary’s College of California (USA). Her current scholarly interests include Filipino immigration, Game Studies, and the life histories of people who are the first in their family to attend college.

**Andras Margitay-Becht** is an economist and computer scientist currently working at St. Mary’s College of California. His interests include agent-based social simulation, cross-disciplinary social research and the use of technology and virtual worlds in social sciences.

**Jovina Chagas** is a student and researcher at St. Mary’s College of California.
The Utopian Diaspora: Australians in Paraguay

Andrew Harvey

Abstract

This chapter argues that the experiment of the Australians’ diaspora in Paraguay forms an important but neglected chapter in Australian history. Only two books, an occasional play, and no significant films have represented the ‘New Australia’ experiment, a paucity of coverage which is the result of both a deliberate forgetting and an underinvestment in national cultural institutions. The contrast with the Welsh government’s continuing support of Welsh settlements in Patagonia is striking, and the chapter examines the reasons behind these contrasting approaches and the cultural significance of Paraguayan collective amnesia.

Key Words: Nationalism, identity, Australia, Paraguay, utopia, diaspora.

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Class war was manifest in Australia in the 1890s. The shearsers’ strikes had divided the nation: pastoralists wanted the ability to hire labour at will on free contracts, while the shearsers and associated workers wanted guaranteed employment, wages and hours. Governments were close to the pastoralist interests, while the shearsers ‘were armed and mobile’.\(^1\) One of the loudest advocates for the shearsers’ interests was William Lane, a fiery well-read journalist with a knowledge of Das Kapital and a vision for the future. The shearsers lost most of the battles, and Lane decided to exit the war stage left - far left. As the strikes were broken and workers suffered through drought and rising unemployment, the Australian Labour Party was born. Lane, though, wanted a more radical solution to the struggle than mere political franchise. Inspired by Edward Bellamy’s utopian vision outlined in his popular novel of the time, Looking Backwards, Lane led an expedition of two hundred ambitious souls to the shores of Paraguay in the Royal Tar in 1893.

The Australian settlement in Paraguay represents the many paradoxes of individual and collective identity. The Bulletin famously labelled the expedition ‘one of the most feather-headed expeditions ever conceived since Ponce de Leon started out to find the Fountain of Eternal Youth, or Sir Galahad pursued the Holy Grail’.\(^2\) This cynicism served to bond the initial group of settlers together, but the nature of the bond was not always clear.
Paraguay seemed an appropriate place to establish a socialist utopia. The historical experience of the Jesuit community in Paraguay was world renowned and provided some precedent for Lane and his followers. From the late sixteenth century the Jesuits lived relatively harmoniously with the local Guarani Indians in large settlements around the Missions province, learning the Guarani language and teaching their religion and social customs to the Indians. Despite their religious overtones, the settlements were in some ways early socialist experiments, with goods held in common and principles of mutual respect adopted. The legend of these harmonious settlements had spread, and William Lane had doubtless read accounts such as Voltaire’s description of Paraguay in *Candide*:

I’ve been there all right! said Cacambo. It’s a wonderful way of governing they have… Los Padres own everything in it, and the people nothing - a masterpiece of reason and justice.3

The putatively harmonious heritage of Paraguay had certainly shattered quickly after the Jesuits were expelled. Indeed, by the time the Australian settlers set sail in the *Royal Tar*, the country had been decimated by the Triple Alliance War. The War was a belligerent venture by Paraguayan dictator Francisco Lopez to subdue Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay simultaneously. Despite valiant fighting by Paraguayan troops, over 90% of the nation’s men were killed. The country was soon known as the Land of Women; more importantly for William Lane, it was now a Land of land. The Paraguayan government’s eagerness to repopulate its territory contributed to a number of strange expeditions, with settlers arriving from Japan, Sweden, Germany and beyond. Some of these legacies remain, for example the strongly Japanese town of La Abeja (the beehive). Others, like the attempt to establish an Aryan settlement at Nueva Germania (New Germany) were not so successful. In the 1890s though, it was a sympathetic Paraguayan government which welcomed and supported the Australians.

New Australia was to be a socialist utopia, but one whose leader and several others were devoted Christians. It was a workingman’s paradise, but one in which women were equal. Embedded in the nomenclature was also evidence of a nationalist project. The settlers gave up the prospect of establishing a utopian society in their homeland, yet many became more nationalistic than most Australians at home. Others neglected their Australian legacy completely and simply became naturalized Paraguayans. Sometimes these apparent paradoxes of identity were found within families. Rose Cadogan wrote longingly of her dream to ‘scent the wattle blooms once more’4, while her son, Leon, became one of the most celebrated Paraguayans of all time and never set foot in Australia. Leon’s son Roger, who now runs
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the Leon Cadogan Foundation, is even more emphatic: ‘I am the worst person to talk about New Australia and my father had no interest in it - William Lane was mad but my father was a free thinker’.

The socialist, Christian, temperance, feminist, reactionary, nationalist principles of the settlement were never easy to reconcile. In the settlers, these complex and at times contradictory principles led to confusions of identity and internal conflict. Unsurprisingly, within a year a schism had developed and a group left New Australia to establish a new settlement at Colonia Cosme, on the confluence of two rivers some distance from the original camp. The settlement’s failure as a socialist utopia was soon manifest, yet its legacy remains and over two thousand Para-Australians now live in Paraguay. Many settlers and descendants have made impressive contributions to both countries, yet while their stories are reasonably well-known in Paraguay, the very existence of the historic settlement remains something of an Australian secret.

This chapter examines the Para-Australian episode by focusing on the Cadogan family, whose example raises many of the central questions of politics and identity of this chapter in history. Initially, a comparison of Leon Cadogan and Mary Gilmore, the most famous Para-Australian in Australian history, is also instructive. Their experiences in New Australia were both pivotal to their contribution to Australian and Paraguayan societies, but their cases are very different. Mary Gilmore was feted in Australia, knighted by the Queen, and her words remain etched on the Australian currency. Her link to Paraguay, however, remains largely unknown. Leon Cadogan, meanwhile, remains anonymous in Australia despite his peerless contribution to anthropology. His absence in the Australian pantheon reflects a broad and ongoing collective amnesia about the Australian experiment.

The case of Mary Gilmore provides a useful introduction into the politics of identity in the Para-Australian context. As Mary Cameron, she became the first female member of the Australian Workers’ Union and joined the radical Australian socialists in Paraguay. As Mary Gilmore, she became a mother, famous poet and social activist. Finally, as Dame Mary Gilmore she became a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire and a staunch wartime nationalist. Having once departed her country to join a communist utopia in Paraguay, she returned to Australia and became one of its most ardent defenders, an advocate for King and Country.

The patriotic words of Dame Mary Gilmore remain etched on every Australian $10 note: ‘No foe shall gather our harvest, Or sit on our stockyard rail.’ Mary is remembered as a poet, teacher, historian, activist for Aboriginal and social causes, and nationalist. Her poems of the Second World War in particular (eg No Foe Shall Gather Our Harvest and Singapore) are fondly recalled as a stirring, Churchilian riposte to the axis forces. Mary’s time in Paraguay, however, remains a chapter erased from the national
consciousness. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that Mary’s time in Paraguay informed her later views. She did not consider the experiment a failure, and her experience of communal living in Paraguay strengthened the beliefs in social justice which she maintained throughout her life. Her subsequent nationalism reinforces that many of the Paraguayan settlers considered themselves, even at the time, to be more Australian than mainland Australians. In this there is likely some parallel with the experiences of Northern Ireland, where British identity is most fiercely asserted.

A similar paradox is evident in the life of Leon Cadogan, perhaps the most famous descendant of the Australian settlers in Paraguay. Leon’s parents joined the expedition’s founder, William Lane, on the Royal Tar’s voyage to Paraguay in 1893. His mother, Rose Cadogan (nee Summerfield), was a first wave feminist, a social agitator, and a woman for whom race was an important descriptor of identity. Before her departure for Paraguay, Rose had been an eminent political figure, involved with the union movement and the Australian Socialist League. Echoing the words of Dan O’Connell, Rose Cadogan had famously told one socialist gathering, ‘I will not preach calmness to you…No! No! Agitate! Agitate! I hope I’ll die with that word on my lips.’

Her journey to Paraguay was influenced by the leader of the New Australia movement, William Lane, but also by a desire to escape the racial politics of Australia. Like many Australians at the time, Rose believed the nation was being threatened by a wave of immigrants used as cheap labourers, and that the squalor in which these labourers lived was threatening local jobs and lowering the prestige of the nation. In 1898 under her maiden name of Summerfield, Rose claimed in Sydney’s Worker magazine that ‘as a race surely we are demoralised enough without mixing with an inferior one’. Ten years later, she left for Paraguay with her second husband, Jack. They arrived in Paraguay in 1908, just as William Lane was giving up on his utopian dream.

From Paraguay, Rose became nostalgic about her homeland and perceived that New Australia faced many of the same problems as Old Australia. In particular, Rose struggled to relate to the native Guarani Indians. Shortly after settling in Paraguay, she claimed:

> It is a fine country, but, owing to the ignorance, indolence, and superstition of the natives, it is a poor place to live in, and anyone may do better in any part of Australia. One regrets that such good workers in the reform cause should be buried among strangers and retrogrades.

Remarkably, her son would devote most of his adult life to protecting these ‘strangers and retrogrades’. Rose herself, indeed, was not as
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racist in her actions as her rhetoric sometimes suggested. As Whitehead outlines, Rose Cadogan was successful for example in prescribing medication for many native Paraguayans in her daily life. Race, however, was evident whenever nationalism was articulated. This was part of a further complication in the history of the settlement. New Australia was to be socialist, but it was also by definition a project of nationalism, and in practice a project of religion, as Lane and other founders were devoted Christians. Identity in the settlement was a complicated beast. Rose Cadogan defined her identity by gender, class, race, and also by nation. It was race, in fact, which informed her national identity, and the move to Paraguay only solidified her belief in the pre-eminence of the Australian race.

By 1915 she wrote wistfully:

Tho’ noble streams and lovely sights
Enchained my senses for a while,
Not all the thousand fond delights
My love from thee could e’er beguile, Australia.  

Rose held a strong sense of identity, and it was clearly defined by notions of the Other. Rose described herself as a freethinker, a moniker also proudly adopted by her grandson. The Other, however, was omnipresent in Rose’s thinking, whether in the guise of religion (Rose was a vociferous member of the Australasian Secular Association), alcohol (she wanted dipsomaniacs secluded from society), capitalism (‘Let the harlot Competition fashion out some other plan’), or race (she spoke of the ‘almond-eyed slaves’ of China). Nationalism provided an umbrella under which these identity politics could be accommodated.

The case of Rose Cadogan can in some ways be explained through the theories of Zygmunt Bauman, who has written extensively on the impacts of nationalism on identity. Bauman’s analysis explains the strong nationalist tendencies inherent in societies such as late-nineteenth century Australia: ‘Drawing the boundary between the natives and the aliens, between the prospective nations and its enemies [is] an inseparable part of the self-assertion of the national élite.’ The strength of the nation lies in its homogeneity and in the unity of its cause. Paradoxically guaranteed yet always needing to be defended, the nation reprojects the other to deal with its inner incongruities, and focuses its self-defence on locating strangers within. Thus, ‘Nation-building, that quest for a uniform world without difference or contingency, turns out ambivalence as its productive waste’. Yet if the politics of Rose Cadogan were at times less than subtle, it was her socialism rather than nationalism which was passed on to her most famous son.

Leon Cadogan inherited none of his mother’s nationalism. He heard her Irish songs and stories, attended a German school, read English novels,
studied French and Spanish, and most importantly, learnt the Guarani language from an Indian called Aguero who would look after him while Leon’s father and stepbrother were away working on yerba mate plantations. By the age of twenty Leon had command of five languages. He had been born into a world of diversity, and it was likely that this background helped him to acknowledge the validity of the local Indians, and to reject some of the grand narratives preached by the New Australia settlers.

Leon’s fame stems from his work with the Indians, and his ceaseless mission to ensure the preservation of their dignity and identity. Like Australia, the Paraguay in which Leon grew up was a racist society, and the local Indians were not considered human let alone equal. Leon grew up in Paraguay because his parents had shared Lane’s view that the new settlement should be British, and that any miscegenation would dilute the purity of the group. The colony was explicitly racist, and presaged the White Australia Policy which would subsequently be enshrined in legislation back in their homeland following federation in 1901. Leon, however, grew up to be one of the most famous anthropologists in the world, and devoted most of his life to convincing Paraguayans that their native Ache and Guarani Indians were worthy of respect. On reflection, Cadogan would note that ‘My first task was to convince as many people as possible that the Indian is a human being.’

As mentioned, Leon first encountered the Indians through his father, who used to work in the forest on the yerba mate plantations, and through a workman named Aguero who introduced him to some of the Guarani myths and legends. As an adult, Leon married a Paraguayan woman and, after a brief sojourn to Buenos Aires, began to develop his interest in anthropology while living in Villarrica, a town between New Australia and Colonia Cosme. As Souter outlines:

He made a close study of the Guayaki [or Ache], a primitive [sic] Guarani tribe in the hills behind Villarrica; he published a book of mythical Guarani texts in Brazil, and many ethnographical papers in Paraguay, Uruguay, Mexico and Brazil; and in 1950 he was appointed Curator of Indians for the Department of Guaira.

Anne Whitehead notes that there were four distinct groups of Guarani Indians who had remained largely outside the Paraguayan melting pot, including the Ache-Guayaki and the Mbya-Guarani. Leon learnt the little-known Mbya language and represented many of these Indians as head of the Villarrica criminal investigation office. As he began translating for the Indians and formally defending them, Leon began to become trusted until eventually he was taught about the ayvu rapyta, the source of the Mbya-Guarani language and mythology. This was his major anthropological
breakthrough. Leon began composing a Spanish-Mbya-Guarani dictionary and writing about the Mbya, and became inducted into the Mbya tribe, where the name ‘dragonfly’ was bestowed upon him.

The Ache-Guayaki tribe were in a similar position, outside of the protection of Paraguayan law and regarded as little more than animals. Cadogan began learning their language also and compiling an Ache-Guayaki dictionary. At the same time, he began compiling his magnum opus on the Mbya-Guarani people, *Ayvu Rapyta* (The Basis of Human Language). Whitehead highlights that this was a very prolific period for Cadogan, but when the dictator Stroessner created a Department of Indian Affairs in 1958, Cadogan was overlooked for the job and, much worse, the government moved the Ache Indians to a reserve, where they quickly began contracting diseases.19 Cadogan had a heart attack. He died in 1973, after which the Ache were all but exterminated. The Mbya tribe is stronger, but Cadogan’s work lies in the revelation of the Mbya mythology and lives on with many of the Paraguayan mestizo. It also continues to inform the work of anthropologists worldwide.

Cadogan was confirmed as one of the hundred most important Paraguayans of the millennium. On the anniversary of his death, the *Ultima Hora* newspaper provided the following tribute: ‘Si para un Guaraní la historia de su vida es la historia de la palabra, la historia de León Cadogan será la historia de la palabra guarani redimida’ (If for a Guarani the history of his life is the history of the word, the history of Leon Cadogan will be the history of the Guarani word redeemed).20 He was frequently quoted by anthropologists such as Levi-Strauss and remains a towering figure within and beyond that discipline. Nevertheless, like the other descendants of the Australian settlement, Leon Cadogan remains relatively unknown in Australia. His is perhaps the most prominent example, but there are thousands of other stories which have been omitted from the national narrative. One of oddest diasporas in the world is also one of the most neglected.

Not far from Colonia Cosme lies the Japanese settlement at La Abeja. In La Abeja, Japanese is still taught in some schools and the Japanese government provides some support for student and teacher exchanges. Further south in the Argentinian province of Patagonia, the Welsh settlements receive £87,000 a year from the homeland to provide Welsh language teaching for communities in Gaiman, Trelew, Dolavon and Trevelin, to sponsor Welsh museums and monuments, and to support exchanges for students and teachers in Patagonia and Wales. In Colonia Cosme, there is some discussion about whether the local school might be named after Mary Gilmore. If it is, the naming will be no thanks to the Australian government, which provides no financial support to Para-
Australians and no visa exemptions for descendants of the colony whose parents and grandparents fought for Britain in the World Wars.

Why then is the memory of Leon Cadogan and the other Para-Australians so neglected within Australia, and does it matter? There are perhaps several reasons for the amnesia. One reason is the lack of self-promotion. Leon Cadogan’s son, Roger, was quoted as saying, ‘My father used to say he was proud of coming from those Australian socialists. But he was really a true Paraguayan.’21 Roger now runs the Leon Cadogan Foundation, but has deliberately kept the charity low profile and out of the range of even google. ‘You are looking at the Foundation’, he assured the author in 2008, ‘there is me, and there is my assistant here. I am not the Rockefeller Foundation’, he laughed.22

Yet the lack of recognition of the settlement within Australia has deeper roots. From the outset the expedition was derided as feather-headed, and also as anti-nationalist. The fact that the utopian socialist dream failed within a few years of its establishment is perhaps manifest in a lingering sense of embarrassment or even hostility towards the Para-Australians. Paraguay was a venture on foreign soil unrelated to war, and war remains the essential building block of early Australian identity, most notably defined by Gallipoli. The Paraguayan experience was a much more complex case of identity than the Manichean conflict of Gallipoli. Within Australia, the descendants of the Paraguayan settlement are not viewed as true Australians in any official sense, and this is partly because their identity is, and has always been, a pastiche of Australian, British and Paraguayan influences. As Taylor notes, ‘Lane at one time hoped that New Australia would prove the precursor of so large a settlement of Englishmen in Paraguay as to make that country eventually... an outpost of the British Empire.’23 New Australia was settled before the Australian identity was solidified by a much more famous failure at Gallipoli. For many of the settlers, as for many on the homeland, Australian and British identity were effectively the same thing, and to be Australian meant to support the Empire. Indeed, many of the settlers fought for Britain in both wars, yet their descendants are unable to gain Australian citizenship. To be Australian, Paraguayan and British is a curious thing, but this is precisely the nature of the identity felt by descendants such as Roddy Wood, whose grandfather liaised with Henry Lawson, whose father fought for the British Empire, and who is equally at home singing Slim Dusty songs or Paraguayan ballads.24

Perhaps because of these rich but unclassifiable identities, no Australian government has sought to honour the work of Cadogan and others, nor bend the rules of citizenship to allow some of the Para-Australians to return ‘home.’ There is no Australian embassy in Paraguay, and there is no public money being used to support the naming of the Cosme school in Mary Gilmore’s honour, nor the construction of any other museum or monument.
either in Paraguay or Australia. In fact there is an official reticence to engage with the Para-Australians, supported by the ongoing tyranny of distance - few Australians still could place Paraguay on a map.

The reticence to acknowledge the Para-Australians may relate to a deeper question of national identity. The narrative of Australian history is entrenched. While the Keating government and the Mabo decision sought to re-assert the place of Indigenous Australians in the national narrative, the dominant theme remains that Australia is a nation of immigrants. A foreign diaspora, bordering on a colonial settlement, does not easily fit into the established story. History declares that Australia is an island nation whose identity is forged by migrants, a melting pot in which the cultures of many countries coalesce in one nation. The complexity of the exported Paraguayan model is not helpful to this narrative.

If the case of the Para-Australians seems unAustralian, or at least unconforming to a recognisable national stereotype, there is a further reason for the entropy. Lack of investment in cultural capital is a potentially powerful source of the national amnesia surrounding this curious episode. It is reasonable to imagine that if a similar episode had occurred in French history, various films, books and plays would have dealt with the subject. Australian author Don Watson has noted that Australians are not very good at telling their own history, and has traced this partly to a paucity of public resources in culture and entertainment.25 There is certainly an absence of will, yet there is an absence of the means to document such histories.

Whatever the sociological and historical reasons, Australian ignorance of this important chapter of history is arguably damaging to the objective of self-knowledge. The Paraguayan episode began before Australia was born, yet for the nation to remain unknowing of such episodes is to remain, as Cicero might note, forever a child. By neglecting an important element of complexity about the Australian story, in which thousands of national citizens were involved, something is forgotten and lost. Gallipoli remains the identitary cornerstone of a nation yearning to be forged in war, and to be defined by an Other. Yet the Paraguayan episode was not only a fascinating chapter of Australian history, but one whose legacy endears and with which Australian governments could yet engage. Over two thousand descendants still live in Paraguay, and their contribution to both the Australian and Paraguayan stories is noteworthy. Recognition of this fact would enable great Australians and global citizens like Leon Cadogan to be acknowledged by the nation. Perhaps even more importantly, actively supporting and engaging with the Para-Australian diaspora would shed light on the complexity of Australian history and enable a more mature appreciation of national identity.
Notes

2 cited in Souter, op. cit., epigraph.
4 Souter, op.cit. p. 231.
5 (interview Oct 08).
7 R Summerfield, quote in *The Worker*, Sydney, 3 September, 1898.
8 R Cadogan, quoted in *The Worker*, Sydney, 23 November 1901.
11 Interview of Roger Cadogan by the author, Asunción, October 2008.
13 ibid, p. 110.
14 Whitehead op. cit.; Souter op.cit.
15 L Cadogan quoted in Whitehead, op. cit., p. 491.
17 Ibid., p. 233.
18 A Whitehead, op. cit., p. 489.
19 AWhitehead, op. cit, p. 494.
21 Whitehead, op. cit., p. 500.
22 Interview of Roger Cadogan by the author, Asunción, October 2008
24 Conversations between Roddy Wood and the author, Asuncion and Cosme, September 2008

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Andrew Harvey is Director of Regional Operations at La Trobe University. His PhD was on nationalism in the United Kingdom and he has travelled extensively throughout Latin America.
Conceiving Collectivity: The Urdu-speaking Bihari Minority and the Absence of Home

Victoria Redclift

Abstract
What makes a Diaspora Diasporic? Is it a shared sense of culture, of experience, of home? Ongoing research in Bangladesh into the ‘Urdu-speaking Bihari’ minority explores the role of space and settlement in the formation of Diasporic identity. Research finds a community that conceive of themselves as a unit of collective membership, but one with very little to unite around. A community divided along cultural, political, linguistic, generational and socio-economic lines. Of the estimated 1.3 million Urdu-speaking Muslims that migrated to Pakistan following the country’s creation in 1947 more than one million migrated to the region of East Bengal in present day Bangladesh. Only 300,000 are thought to remain, 160,000 of whom have been living in temporary ‘camps’ set up by the ICRC since the War of Liberation in 1971. The remaining 140,000 live outside the camps, integrated, to varying degrees, within majority Bengali society. As a linguistic community they do not speak a common language. As a cultural community they practice ‘culture’ in different ways. As a social community the divisions of class, money, opportunity and status are deeply felt. As a political community they are without a common political identity or equal access to political participation. As a Diaspora they do not share a sense of home. Through the experience of space, settlement and segregation this chapter analyses the role of culture, politics, language, generation and class in dividing and uniting Diasporic groups, and questions the significance of a sense of ‘home’ in understandings of the term.

Key Words: Bangladesh, citizenship, Diaspora, identities, integration, migration, minorities’ rights, segregation.

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1. Introduction
In the context of ‘diaspora’ discourse a collective sense of ‘homeland’ or geographical origin has long claimed definitional centrality. The ‘yearning for another place’ so often depicted could be real or imagined, historical or mythical, but its symbolic significance is widely documented. The assumption that this is shared by all members has been insufficiently interrogated. Floya Anthias’ 1998 contribution however, represented a point
of departure. She argued that the concept ‘deploy a notion of ethnicity which
privileges the point of origin in constructing identity and solidarity’ and in
the process fails to articulate differences with regards to the roles played by
class and gender. She suggested that by treating each ‘diasporic group’ as a
unity inter and intra-ethnic processes were ignored. Not only may migrations
have occurred for different reasons but different countries of destination may
have provided different social conditions, opportunities and exclusions.

My research explores some of the ‘intra-diasporic’ issues of
difference and diversity that have been neglected. The population I have
chosen is a paradigmatic case of the historical aftermath of colonialism and
the displacements of population that resulted. This chapter takes Anthias’
arguments one step further, suggesting that countries of destination provide
social conditions, opportunities or exclusions differentially to individuals
within the ‘diaspora group’, significantly altering relationships to real or
imagined ‘homelands’. I have drawn on an ethnographic methodology and
have been influenced conceptually by approaches from linguistic politics and
the study of historical memory to analyse the long-term consequences of this
experience. While class, status and social position is foregrounded, other
areas of intra-group difference are examined, and the experience of place,
settlement and segregation found to be a powerful dis/unifying force. I argue
that a more nuanced understanding of ‘diaspora groups’, and their diverse,
abstract and often ambiguous relationships to ‘home(s)’, is crucial to
furthering the debate.

1. The Politics of Bangladesh and Pakistan and the Formation of
Diaspora

The ‘Urdu-speaking community’ in Bangladesh could be considered
a ‘linguistic diaspora’. The descendants of over one million Urdu-speaking
Muslims who migrated from India to East Bengal (then East Pakistan)
following the country’s creation in 1947 they are distinguished from the
Bengali-speaking majority largely through language. Many had fled
violence in North Indian states such as Bihar (as well as Uttar Pradesh, Orissa
and others), and the label ‘Bihari’ has been used in reference to the
descendents of these migrants in the region ever since. Controversially
sharing certain linguistic and cultural similarities with the ruling (West
Pakistani) Punjabi elite these migrants gained increasing influence in the new
state. They ‘came to be known as conduits of the West Pakistani
‘colonialists’, who were not to be trusted’. Cultural, linguistic and political
tensions culminated in the Liberation War of 1971. Following the country’s
Liberation, the entire Urdu-speaking community were branded enemy
collaborators and socially ostracised. Thousands were arrested or executed,
while others, having been dispossessed by the state and fearful for their lives,
were forced to flee. A once strong sense of ‘Diasporic unity’ was now
constructed in different terms. ‘The community’ had been displaced for a second time, but now ‘within’ the land that had become their ‘home’. They were once again ‘othered’ but not as a result of their own actions (emigration) as much as the events that took place around them.

Many of those who had lost land, jobs and family members found themselves in temporary camps set up by the International Committee for the Red Cross. It is estimated that around 160,000 remain today in the camp-like ‘settlements’ established immediately after the war. Disenfranchised, isolated and lacking leadership, for thirty-six years after the War they were labelled ‘Stranded Pakistanis’ and left in limbo. Since 1971 however a proportion of the population have begun to establish themselves outside the camps. Around 140,000 ‘Urdu-speakers’ are now thought to live outside, ‘integrated’, to varying degrees, within majority Bengali society. With the advantage of a non-camp address and increasing cultural and linguistic integration with the Bengali majority, some of these individuals have been accessing rights of citizenship previously denied them. As a result, social and economic divisions are growing between the camp and non-camp based communities. In May 2008 the High Court of Bangladesh finally granted the entire community citizenship, and prospects for acceptance, integration and rehabilitation appeared to be improving. However, thirty eight years since the War of Liberation they are a ‘community’ divided along cultural, political, linguistic, generational, socio-economic and spatial lines.

2. **We, the Urdu-Speaking Community, Insiders, Outsiders and Those In-Between**

According to dominant public discourse ‘a community’ of ‘Urdu-speakers,’ ‘Biharis,’ ‘Mohajirs’ or ‘Maowras’ or ‘Stranded Pakistanis’ were disenfranchised on the grounds of their support for a national enemy (Pakistan), and as the result of an ethno/linguistic identity that had become problematic. When asked what defines ‘the community’ in relation to the Bengali majority however Urdu-speakers themselves disagree. Some invoke a shared experience of migration, a shared history (‘We migrated from India; that is what makes us different’, Emran, 37), others a linguistic heritage (‘I think it’s about our language...There is only one fact, language’ Yusuf, 90). For some it is inherited culture, ‘ethno-racial’ characteristics, or a combination of all these things (‘The main things are language, culture and height’, Afsar, 26).

In part these differences of opinion reflect growing distance within the community. Not only are some Urdu-speakers still living in the slum-like ‘camp’ settlements (‘insiders’) while another group has more recently moved outside (those ‘in-between’), but a third group of Urdu-speakers also exists. These people are neither camp-dwelling nor previously camp-dwelling and they can be found occupying an entirely distinct social position (‘outsiders’).
This group were able to retain their houses after the war and have therefore remained ‘integrated’ among Bengalis ever since. They carry the same ‘ethno-linguistic’ identity but the discrimination suffered by those that ended up in the camps has almost completely passed them by.

Our family never lived in the camps, our grandfather owned this house. (How were you able to keep it during the War?) We had two houses before the War, one house was lost but my grandfather was a contractor in the Pakistani army and he had lots of Bengali friends so we were able to save this house (Noor, ‘outsider’, 19 yrs).

...we had some Bengali friends who were in a good position in the Government so they saved us…When the Pakistani army came I helped some Bengalis, that’s why they helped me during the War. Only four people in this street retained their houses, it used to be 100% Urdu-speaking... (Ali Reza, ‘outsider’, 44).

3. Space, Politics and Citizenship
In 1972 the camp community were surveyed by the ICRC, asked to choose between settlement in Bangladesh or so-called ‘repatriation’ to (‘West’) Pakistan, a country most had never seen. Homeless, destitute and fearful for their lives in an unsympathetic country the majority opted for ‘repatriation’. Some left under the agreements of 1973 and 1974 but the process gradually petered out. While their cultural and linguistic association with Pakistan was always problematic, it was actually this expressed desire to be taken to Pakistan (to be Pakistani) that ultimately disenfranchised the camp population. A small but powerful political group formed within the camp with the primary purpose of achieving continued ‘repatriation’. The camps are therefore understood by wider society as a collective political voice that is ‘pro-Pakistani’, despite internal political divisions. Consequently, the majority of those Urdu-speakers who have always lived outside the camps consider the camp population themselves as in some way to blame for their current position. ‘Us’ and ‘them’ are powerfully invoked:

Camp-dwellers are very innocent. They have no connection to Pakistan, they came from India. Our fault is still some believe we are Pakistani. We have explained many times that we are from India, the country who liberated this land, so I can claim a partnership after this Independence. The fault was that they were speaking Urdu and Pakistanis
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speak Urdu, so this created a false link (Ali Reza, ‘outsider’, 44).

It’s the Government’s opinion that people who live in the camp aren’t citizens but those outside are. Those that lived in the camps built the barrier themselves, calling themselves Stranded Pakistanis (Shamama, ‘in-between’, 38).

Those who retained their houses on the other hand, retained their civil status, as they merged virtually unseen into the local Bengali majority.

I never asked for my rights from anyone. The Government gave them to me automatically. I have always had a passport and have travelled to Bangkok, Malaysia, India, Pakistan and Singapore….I have always been living outside that is why I got the facilities of a citizen (Parvez, ‘outsider’, 50+).

Many of the Urdu-speakers who have their own properties they have always been registered (as voters)….When you are in the camp you have no opportunity citizens have…(you) can’t get into school, or get a commissioners certificate for a job. But outside the camp you always get these facilities. Many in the camp use a fake address to get them (Shamama, ‘in-between’, 38).

Which came first, disenfranchisement, social ostracism or Pakistani sympathy? This is difficult to determine, but unsurprisingly fundamental inequality of civil status has dramatically altered the composition of ‘the community’.

4. The Cultural Status of Language

Not only do those living outside the camps speak better Bengali than those inside (again in some sense both cause and effect), but many also have a very different relationship to the one thing that is meant to connect the whole community - Urdu. While those that have always lived outside the camps speak, to varying degrees of ‘purity’, a fairly standardized Urdu, ‘The language of the camp is a language of its own’ (Osama, ‘outsider’ 53). In the camps they speak a mixture of Bodguri (an Urdu-based regional dialect of Bihar), Bengali, and even some Hindi. It is a language that is referred to by those in the camps as ‘Urdu’, but is not considered by many that live outside to be so. The younger generation of elite Urdu-speakers who have always
lived outside refer particularly condescendingly to this strange ‘bastardised’ form:

They don’t speak Urdu in the camps anyway. Or not proper Urdu. They speak some kind of South Indian dialect I think’...‘No, something from Bihar...a kind of ‘Bodgepuri thing? (Pappu and Shayester, ‘outsiders’, 19 and 24).

The cultural status of language is clearly powerful. Some from the camps themselves speak equally disparagingly of their own language:

No, no we are not practicing Urdu. It’s a kind of hodgepodge of languages! (Tuni, ‘in-between’, 27).

In the camps we are speaking the Urdu which is valueless. It is Urdu ‘dust’, ‘rubbish’ (‘dhula’)… they (those outside) can’t understand us...and they say my Urdu is valueless (Salma, ‘insider’, 18).

Language itself forms a barrier between and within an apparently ‘linguistic community’.

Despite its troubled past, among literary circles outside the camps, Urdu in its ‘pure’ form, associated with North India and Pakistan, is still revered. Urdu poetry recitals (Mushairas) are common and linguistic heritage is valued. This cannot be said of younger ‘Urdu-speakers’ however, the majority of whom no longer read or write the language; many continuing to conceal their linguistic heritage.

Lots of literary people’s children don’t read Urdu. They (the parents) have some fear (that they will not be treated equally) and so they started sending them to learn Bengali (Osama, ‘outsider’, 53).

Another language has been embraced by this generation. While Pakistan and the Urdu language have complicated associations in Bangladesh, India’s national language, ‘Hindi’, is free of many of the battle scars:

(What language do you speak?) ...Aaaah Hindi - my parents are from Bihar, India. My father knows Bangla but he feels more comfortable with us in Hindi. (Is this not Urdu?) Most Hindi channels on TV are in Urdu. All
Bollywood songs are 90% Urdu, but they call it Hindi (Noor, ‘outsider’, 19).

I feel embarrassed to speak Urdu because the Pakistanis were the losers and they speak Urdu too...If I say that I am Indian, I can speak Hindi well, it’s something of a relief (Shabana, ‘outsider’, 26) (her father adds) Bengali people hate Urdu but love Hindi. And yet they can’t tell the difference! (Md Ali, ‘outsider’, 50+).

For young people in Bangladesh India is aspirational; a world power representative of global fashion, media and modernity in all its forms.

5. **Culture and Religion**

When they first arrived in East Bengal, ‘Urdu-speaking’ migrants were respected as ‘Mohajirs’, religious refugees who had migrated in the search of an Islamic ‘homeland.’ On the surface religion was the very thing ‘Urdu-speakers’ shared with their Bengali hosts15. However having brought them together in East Bengal religion has also become a dividing force. Both communities are Muslim, both predominantly Sunni, but certain religious festivals, are practiced differently in line with the cultural heritage of each. Religion is both a marker of sameness and difference.

Where culture begins and religion ends is also a source of considerable contestation. ‘Urdu-speakers’ in the region have always been regarded as a particularly religious community and the camps sites of religious conservatism and ‘anti-Shia’ sentiment. Yet a lack of education in the camps causes many of those more ‘Bengalised’ Urdu-speakers who have moved outside to accuse them of practicing religion in the ‘wrong’ way; blurring the boundaries between ‘religion’ and ‘culture’. The festival of Moharram is an interesting site in which to examine these complex dynamics.

We are celebrating Moharram in a different way to the camp dwellers, we are praying to the Almighty. In the camp they beat drums, sing songs, make a Tajia. In our religion we are directed to pray to the all mighty but the camp dwellers are less educated and they cannot understand the religious customs. So they have stopped celebrating as Allah says (Md. Ali, ‘outsider’, 50+).

Biharis who are living outside they do not want to show that they are Urdu-speakers. That is why they celebrate the cultural program less...Biharis who are living inside they are celebrating Moharram in the wrong manner. They are
beating drums and that is very wrong (Chanda, ‘in-between’, 25).

As those that leave the camps leave behind many of their ‘Bihari’ or ‘Urdu’ cultural practices they begin to celebrate Moharram privately simply as a month of prayer, as Bengalis observe the festival. Here ‘Islamism’ in some sense therefore resembles ‘Bengalisation’; inter-ethnic bonds grow as intra-ethnic solidarity weakens.

6. Social Conservatism vs. ‘Progressivity’

Traditional understanding of the camps as sites of religious conservatism is clearly muddied. However, a related social conservatism defined by an entrenchment in the past, and an ‘over-identification’ with an indefinable lost home is commonly articulated. Where this home is located is not necessarily clear but an un-willingness to let go of it is thought by many Urdu-speakers who live outside the camps to have created a world of restrictive social control. One of the areas in which this is most clearly expressed is in relation to the position of women:

Living outside is kind of pleasure. Those who live outside enjoy their freedom, beside family, nobody give you guidance. Whereas the camps are a strict social community...In the past, we (girls) faced problems moving outside the camp...outside the camp women will always enjoy more freedom. (Why do you think this is so?) This is because the older generation in the camps are from Bihar and they have an old concept of cultural practices and want this to be continued (Shabnab, ‘insider’, 20).

In Geneva camp my sisters were not allowed to move freely. They could not make friends there. In camp area if a girl and boy talk camp dwellers mind, they are not accepting relations between girls and boys which is a kind of barrier. This is not true outside the camps, (where there is) easy access to socializing, making friends. Those who are living outside the camp they are educated and they have a different social status. People who are living in the camp are following Bihar’s conservative cultural practices. They do not want to move out from their own cultural barrier. The level of education has not increased among the camp-dwellers. Those who move out are the more progressive people. I can understand what’s right and wrong and think
that friendship between boys and girls is natural (Emran, ‘in-between’, 37).

7. Class and Social Stratification

Spatial segregation also represents social stratification. Those ‘in-between’, who have in recent years made enough money to move out of the camps into rented accommodation outside have felt this social shift first hand:

Camp-dwellers are treating us differently (since we moved outside), they think Shamama is rich now. Bengalis (also) think that ‘if Shamama managed his rented house he has wealth’, so it will increase your value. ‘He has dignity now because he lives outside. His landlord knows he must have some money that is why he is ok with it’…It’s a big problem to get a flat in Dhaka…If we say we are from the camp they do not allow us to rent their flats…It’s about their society, they are not able to mix with Bengali educated society. They cannot maintain their status with the locals…some think ‘if they have lived in the camps they won’t know about hygiene etc, they might not look after the house’… (Shamama, ‘in-between’, 38).

Many of those that have always lived outside feel as detached from the camp community as they do from poor Bengali society.

I do not have friends in the camp, because we are wealthy and have ‘better society’ (‘acchi mahol’). I know some of them who are very poor…some of them cannot even speak Bangla… (Shabana, ‘outsider’, 26).

In my family we have some cross marriages with Bengalis. It’s good to merge with the locals. Better than Bihari people who are uneducated and illiterate (Parvez, ‘outsider,’ 50+).

(Have you ever been to the camps?) Of course not, why would I? (laughs) I don’t have any time for those people. They’re called Maowra you know. (pause) I’m sorry… I’m not a humanitarian. I look after myself, that’s how we do things here. (Have you ever called any of them Maowra?) I’m ashamed to admit it, but yeh, I have. One time I had some of them fixing my car and I knew it was the brake,
but they kept saying no it was the exhaust, and I knew, I know a lot about these things, and I was getting annoyed so I shouted the same thing in Urdu. And then they listened, and decided it was the brake! They gave me a cheap deal and the job was done. So I said to them right, so you Maowra you’ll listen to another Maowra but no-one else. (So you’d call yourself a Maowra too?) No, I’m not a Maowra, I mean no-one would call me that. (Why?) Because I have too much power (Jalal, ‘outsider’, 29).

8. Place, Labels, Ethnicity and Identity

The label ‘stranded Pakistani’ helped to cement the camps externality in the country’s national psyche (and throughout the country’s legal system) for thirty-six years, turning spatial divisions into national ones. Individuals too express their own identities in these spatial terms. Inside the camp they are an ‘ethno-linguistic’ minority, outside they are Bangladeshi. As Emran (‘in-between, 37) explained, ‘Before I moved outside the camp I had many names, Bihari, Stranded Pakistani, Maowra. Now to other people I’m just Bangladeshi’.

The significance of these spatial divisions is highlighted by those individuals who we might describe as ethnically Bengali but who understand themselves as ‘Bihari’ due to the context of their social community. Salima’s story highlights the identificational resonance of place/settlement, and the way in which it intersects with language and local community:

When I came here before my marriage I was totally Bengali. I couldn’t speak a word of Urdu and since coming here I have completely switched! (She laughs) Now it’s difficult to understand Bangla rather than Urdu. Now I’m more fluent in Urdu! (Laughs again). When I first came to the camp I was teased for not speaking Urdu. They said things in Urdu but I didn’t understand. The one word I understood was ‘Bangali’. They were calling me ‘Bangali, Bangali… At that time I didn’t feel like an Urdu-speaker I felt like a Bengali but as I came here and was teased so much, I struggled so much to learn Urdu. And after 2/3 years hard work I got Urdu and the teasing stopped. And now I feel like a Bihari (Salima, ‘insider’, 40).

Ethnic, cultural and linguistic boundaries are clearly highly opaque, and informed by the realities of a local environment. As one individual
explained, ‘When a person leaves the camp he leaves his culture there…’ (Emran, ‘in-between’, 37).

9. The Absence of Home?

In many cases, with more to unite around ‘inter-ethnically’ than ‘co-ethnically’ a once important ‘diasporic home’ now occupies an elusory position. The label ‘Bihari’ is probably that most commonly used among all social strata, the very word descriptive of a majority diasporic homeland. The geographic location or ‘home’ it originally denoted however has all but disappeared:

They think of themselves as ‘Bihari’ but only 4/5% of the camp population would actually describe themselves as ‘Indian’ (Syed, ‘in-between’, 30).

I would call myself Bihari. ‘Hay Bihari Pakistan, hay Bihari Pakistan’ (a traditional lament relating to Pakistan’s refusal to accept them)...I wouldn’t call myself Indian because people are always saying we are Pakistani, why should I alone call myself Indian? If I say I am Indian will India take me? No (Farhana, ‘insider’, 70).

Historical associations in part explain this. Much of the older generation in the camps feel complicated about India due to memories of the devastating communal violence they experienced there. Immediately after the War of 1971, and in part as a result of fear and exclusion, they chose to identify with a ‘home’ (Pakistan) that further excluded them, disenfranchised them even. Ever since, they have been lost in the limbo of India/Pakistan/Bangladesh and whatever their citizenship status now, many will remain in some sense ‘homeless’ for the rest of their lives:

Now I am nowhere, have no identity, (I am) not Bihari, not Bangladeshi, (I am) nothing (Roshanara, ‘insider’, 65).

We don’t have any nationality: we’re not Indian, not Bangladeshi, not Pakistani, so we don’t have an identity… (Rashed, ‘insider’, 42).

The majority of the younger generation in the camps have never seen India (or Pakistan for that matter) but have instead spent their lives ‘trying’ to be accepted in Bangladesh. The ‘silencing of trauma’ is well-researched and after years of communal violence, a brutal war and a double displacement many youngsters don’t even know where their parents came
from let alone the true tragedy of their story\textsuperscript{21}. This generation may also describe themselves as ‘Bihari’ but their home, as well as their ‘homeland’ is the camps of Bangladesh\textsuperscript{22}:

I am very much Bangladeshi. I don’t want to talk about language. I speak Bangla because I’m Bangladeshi. I was born here so I am a citizen of Bangladesh...it is just my right, the ID card doesn’t matter, I am very much Bangladeshi regardless (Roki, ‘insider’, 18).

Notably however, outside the camp, association with India (and as we have seen, the Hindi language) has become possible again. In contrast, among this integrated section of the population pride in the original ‘diasporic home’ may be coming back. ‘Bihar’, as a state has no cultural kudos\textsuperscript{23} and Pakistan is tainted by War, but India as a country is modern, trendy and sophisticated:

When I say my mum’s from Bihar people frown upon it still....When people say to me ‘if your mum is Bihar is she Pakistani?’ I say ‘Do you know where Bihar is?’ Have you looked on a map? It’s in India!’ It shows that the perception of an association between Biharis and Pakistan is still very much there. Bengalis don’t have a problem accepting Hindi but they do have a problem accepting Urdu (Shayester, ‘outsider’ 24).

Hindi is very common in Bangladesh. It is true also; we migrated from India so we are Indian rather than Pakistani. I sometimes tell my friends I am Indian and speak Hindi; I create an identity for myself (Shabana, ‘outsider’, 26).

Paradoxically the notion of India somehow distances these individuals from their ‘Bihari-ness’, and from Pakistan and the War, and instead they are associated with Bollywood movies, global fashion and modernity. In some sense class, status, and the ‘luxury’ of memory they bring, have given many of the more successful, ‘integrated’ Urdu-speakers the chance to explore their geographic and cultural roots.

10. Conclusion

In many ways the ‘Urdu-speaking community in Bangladesh’ does not match up to much that is associated with the concept of ‘Diaspora’. My investigation reveals a case in which ongoing attachment to the ‘referent-origin’\textsuperscript{24} has been blurred, and internal connections are varied and multiple.
Different collective representations of this migrant population have not only formed elsewhere but under local conditions also. Within one city they are a group constructed as much in terms of singularity as solidarity.

Postmodern approaches have made substantial contributions to widening ‘diaspora’ discourse. However in the attempt to define ‘diaspora’ ‘not by essence or purity but…hybridity’ the continued emphasis on a collective point of origin has situated the nation-state once again at its heart. Difference is indeed celebrated, but too often premised on absolutist notions of ‘collectivity’ (the ‘illusion of community’ to use Dux’s term) that is insufficiently addressed. Anthias notes that within the academic debate ‘the lack of attention to issues of gender, class and generation…is one important shortcoming’. However other areas of intra-group division are significant too and my research finds place/settlement a powerful variable of opposition. Identities have been constituted in spatial terms and in the camps years of disenfranchisement and the silencing of trauma have cut them off from their geographical roots:

What unites the (camp) community isn’t language, India, history…it’s the camp. A camp identity is stronger than anything else. It is this identity that is labelled ‘Bihari’, that’s why it’s become a term of abuse’ (Syed, ‘in-between’, 30).

We are residents of the camp, we are camp people’ (Faizur, ‘insider’, 35).

In many ways ‘diaspora’ discourse has privileged ethno-racial links of origin and ‘home’ over inter-ethnic relations of space, place and locality. Physical proximity is formative of cultural communities too, and can generate powerful bonds of mutual engagement. To neglect these not only undermines restrictive power relations intra-diasporic groups may conceal, but also the potential for inter-ethnic alliances. What binds a large proportion of ‘the community’ here therefore is not an attributed origin but conditions of settlement and segregation. While in part reflective of a deeply-rooted intra-ethnic socio-economic hierarchy, it is at the same time enabling of trans-ethnic alliances that should not be foreclosed. The importance of more nuanced understandings of ‘collective origin’ to diasporic populations is critical not only in maintaining space for inter-ethnic dialogue but also in understanding how identities and inequalities are conditioned and expressed.
Notes


3 Shuval, 2000 p. 44


5 F.Anthias, ‘Evaluating Diaspora: Beyond Ethnicity?’ Sociology, vol. 32, 1998, pp. 558. ‘Diaspora formulates a population as a transnational ‘community’. The assumption is that there is a natural and unproblematic ‘organic’ community of people without division or difference dedicated to the same political project(s)’ pp.563.

6 Twelve months fieldwork conducted between 2006 and 2009. I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Fredrick Bonnart Braunthal Trust as well as RMMRU, Al Falah Bangladesh and the Shamshul Huque Foundation.

7 Ghosh, 2004; Talbot, 1996


9 Ghosh, 2004. p.40. As suspicion mounted, the words of Major Ziaur Rahman, the future president of Bangladesh, sealed the community’s fate: ‘Those who speak Urdu are also our enemies because they support the Pakistan army. We will crush them’ (S.H.Hashmi, The governing process in Pakistan 1958-1969. Aziz Publishers, Lahore, 1987.)
12 ‘Mohajir’ was the term applied to the faithful that accompanied the Prophet from Mecca to Medina in AD622. It was more commonly used in reference to ‘Urdu-speakers’ in the years following Partition, defining them by a label that commanded considerable respect.
13 A term of abuse largely nowadays only used in reference to camp-dwellers.
14 An estimated 163,000 in total by 1992 (C. Abrar, A Forsaken Minority: The Camp-Based Bihari Community in Bangladesh. RMMRU, Dhaka, forthcoming.)
15 ‘Look, we have separate languages but we have the same blood running throughout our bodies. Every Muslim has the same blood’ (Laila, ‘insider’, 37).
16 Similarly, the label ‘Bihari’, with its seemingly innocuous regional reference, brands them as outsiders to such a degree that it is considered ‘a swear word in Bangladesh’ (Syed, ‘in-between’, 30).
17 Obviously the word ‘ethnic’ is relational, as is the criteria that will determine whether or not it will be used (G. Baumann, Contesting Culture: Discourses on Identity in Multi-Ethnic London, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996). How descent is defined is socially constructed and in Bangladesh it is thought to be determined paternally.
18 Although there have been attempts to replace it with the label ‘Urdu-speaker’, considered more politically neutral. Despite its own misleading reference (to the state of Bihar as opposed to North India more generally) and pejorative usage, camp dwellers in particular identify strongly with the term.
19 This correlates with the first phase of research I conducted in 2006 in which under 10% of the camp population referred to themselves as Indian.
20 Many still greatly distrust the Hindu population, and lost family and friends in the violence before they fled.
21 The ‘ethnic myth of common origin, historical experience and...geographic place’ (Vertovec, 1999, p.3) so often noted, has been erased.
22 The two are frequently confused, both in the academic literature and conversations with interviewees. A distinction between ‘current residence’ and ‘sites of real/imagined origin of emotional/metaphysical connection’ is however significant.
23 ‘Whiteness’ is desirable all over the world and ‘Urdu-speakers’ from Delhi, UP, and West Pakistan gain a certain kudos in relation to darker skinned, shorted ‘Biharis’. Bihar’s tragic history of famine, poverty and violence has done little to improve its cultural status.
An example of differences formed elsewhere is Pakistan, where the label ‘Mohajir’ (with its religious connotations) has been retained in reference to Urdu-speaking Muslims who migrated from India after Partition.


The very focus it was thought by some to move beyond (see for example P. Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness, Verso, London, 1993, p.6).


In an increasingly interconnected world the ability of transnational communities to share more than physical ones has been well recognised (see J. Shuval and E. Leshem, Immigration to Israel: Sociological Perspectives, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 1998; J. Shuval, ‘Migration to Israel: The Mythology of Uniqueness’, in International Migration, vol. 36, issue 1, 1998) but the ‘limits of those transtate communities’ (Dubois, 2008 p.57) is not.

Bibliography


Victoria Redclift is a PhD candidate at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Her thesis is entitled ‘States of Exception and the Creation of Political Space: Integration, Discrimination and Citizenship in Bangladesh.’
Postface

Catherine Wong

In this book, we have tried to study, explore and re-define the notion of Diasporas as a postmodern discourse. The term diasporas, nowadays, does not simply refer to those relocated and displaced ethnic groups; it is sometimes, though imprecisely, used synonymously with other critical theoretical terms such as transnationalism and globalization. However inaccurate the cross-referencing may appear to be, these critical terms, with similar moments of historical emergence and intellectual trajectories, reflect intellectual’s attempt to understand geopolitical and cultural alignments of their rapidly changing world since the two World Wars and Cold War.

Bringing together the writings and research papers of scholars across disciplines of Anthropology, Sociology, Law, Politics, Economics, Arts and Humanities, with differing cultural and inter-national backgrounds, this book has attempted to capture this new global reality into the intellectual context, transcend the boundaries and recreate a transcultural, multicultural and interdisciplinary environment in order to facilitate the continuation of this intercultural, pluralistic diasporic dialogue in this virtual reality.

This book set off with the revisiting of the origins of this long-historical conception. In section one ‘Diasporic Feelings and Belonging’, we put the emphasis primarily on the geographically and culturally displaced ethnic communities and studied various diasporas as human forms of movement across geographical, historical, linguistic, cultural and national boundaries. Readers have been encouraged to re-examine concepts such as identity, nationhood, citizenship and belongingness which diasporic subjects have been engaging and negotiating with in the host society where they have relocated. Section two ‘Engagement with Homeland’ shifted the focus from the analysis of such diasporic psychological attachment to homeland and its cultural expression, to the study of the diasporic subjects’ actual physical and economic engagement and involvement in their home country’s developments.

One of the fundamental principles of this book is to assess the new and the transformation, and therefore, in the last two sections, we have tried to assess the phenomenon from new perspectives. ‘Us and Them’ is an attempt to provide an extra dimension to the studies – a diaspora is not just an object to be assessed and analysed – this section has given the diasporic groups the space for their narratives, to narrate and negotiate their politics with their host. Instead of winding this book up trying to find an unequivocal answer to this critical issue, ‘Uncovering and Exploring Diasporas’ seemed to have ended our discussion without a definite conclusion. While our readers have been introduced to the cyber migration as a new form of diasporas, we should
never overlook the moral hidden behind this apparently ‘non-concluding’ section. We must always remain alert and open-minded that there are other emerging forms of human movements and relocations yet to be discovered.

As such, Diaspora remains a living and developing concept, a negotiated critical notion as well as an experienced form of transnational migration with possibilities awaiting discovery and boundaries exploration. We have seen beyond the marginality and displacement of the diasporas and are looking forward to discover the potentials in turning this diasporic situation into an empowering force of creativity as well as an alternative to the existing paradigm of identity.