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ETHNIC DILEMMAS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: AN OVERVIEW

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The papers which comprise this volume were presented at the Los Angeles Conference on Comparative Ethnicity. Held at U.C.L.A. during the first week of June, 1988, the purpose of this interdisciplinary conference was to convene nationally known researchers to present and discuss research on comparative aspects of ethnicity and ethnic groups. The goals of the conference were to: (1) serve as forum for contemporary research on ethnicity through discussion at the conference and subsequent publication of conference papers; (2) develop a research agenda for comparative ethnic studies in the United States; (3) introduce the intellectual community in Los Angeles, ethnic communities in Los Angeles, and the news media to this research; (4) encourage and foster comparative research activities among active scholars; and (5) introduce the researchers to the diversity of ethnic groups and ethnic related research issues in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Before describing the specific themes and issues which were addressed at the conference and which serve as the central focus of this volume, we focus briefly on recent changes in the ethnic composition of the U.S. population and explain in very general terms why exploring the ethnic question in a comparative context is important.

CHANGING ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE U.S. POPULATION

Over the past two decades the U.S. population has become ethnically more diverse (Allen and Turner 1987) largely as a consequence of changes in world political-economy and immigration laws (Chaney 1979). Between 1960 and 1986, approximately 11 million immigrants were legally admitted to the U.S. (U.S. Department of Justice 1987). In addition to those entering via the hemispheric quota and family/occupation preference systems established in the Immigration Act of 1965 and more recent amendments to this Act (Fragomen 1977), the new arrivals during this period included a significant number of refugees, parolees, and asylees who were fleeing political persecution in their home country (U.S. Department of Justice 1987; Fogel and Martin 1982). Not reflected in the 11 million figure is the substantial flow of illegal or undocumented immigrants into the U.S. While the actual volume remains unknown, it has been estimated that for every one alien apprehended attempting to cross our borders illegally, two reached their intended destination in the U.S. (Bouvier and Gardner 1986). In 1986 alone, according to Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) reports, 1.7 million persons were apprehended by INS border patrol (U.S. Department of Justice, 1987). One useful indicator of the impact of illegal immigration on the size and composition of the U.S. population is the number of illegal aliens applying for amnesty under the Immigration Reform and Naturalization Act of 1986. Nationally, 1.6 million applications were filed, including 910,000 in Los Angeles, and the INS estimates that another 600,000 to 800,000 were eligible but did not apply (Federation for American Immigration Reform 1988).

Between 1980 and 1985, immigration accounted for 28% of the nation's population growth (Bouvier and Gardner 1986). Recent population projections, assuming low fertility and continued immigration based on recent trends, indicate that in the U.S. non-Hispanic whites will become numerically the minority population during either the third or fourth decade of the 21st century. Many of the nation's metropolitan areas, including Los Angeles, are projected to become Third World or minority dominated population centers much sooner, perhaps as early as 1990 (Bouvier and Davis 1982; Bouvier and Gardner 1986).

The so-called new immigration, that is, immigration to the U.S. since 1960, differs in several respects from the pre-1960 pattern (Bryce-Laporte

1982). First of all, the volume is much greater. Between 1961 and 1986, legal immigration to the U.S. averaged 434,000 per year, compared with an average of 206,000 per year during the 1921-1960 period. The gap would be even greater if we had accurate counts of the annual volume of illegal immigration to the U.S.

Secondly, the new immigration has a distinct geography -- both in terms of origins and destinations of the immigrants. With respect to origins, whereas traditionally the largest flow of immigrants to the U.S. was from Europe, the new immigrants have entered primarily from the Asian Pacific Triangle countries. Immigration from this region was prohibited prior to 1965 o¯ the basis of various unfounded theories about the racial or ethnic inferiority and cultural unassimilability of the indigenous population. With respect to destinations, whereas New York was the primary port of entry for the old immigrants, several cities serve this function for the new immigrants. These include Seattle WA, Chicago IL, El Paso TX, Miami FL, and Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Ysidro, CA. Moreover, Los Angeles stands out among these cities and appears to have emerged as the New Ellis Island (Andersen 1983; Woolbright and Hartmann 1987). In large part as a consequence of large scale immigration from Asia, mexico, Central America, Northern Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean over the last twenty years, the city of Los Angeles had become a Third World city by 1980. The fact that only 48%, of the city's population was non-Hispanic white in 1980 led one observer to conclude recently that: "Today everyone in L.A. is a member of a minority group" (Andersen 1983),

Thirdly, the new immigrants are phenotypically and culturally distinct from the old immigrants, who resembled more closely Anglo-Americans in terms of their physical characteristics and cultural patterns; and they have less desire than the old immigrants to fully blend into American society. Most of the new immigrant groups prefer, instead, to preserve and maintain their own cultural heritage and identity. As one second generation Chinese-American put it, "We do not think in American terms of a melting pot... we prefer the metaphor of a rainbow or a salad" (cited in Andersen 1983, p. 20).

Finally, unlike the old immigrants who arrived in this country as predominantly uneducated and unskilled workers, a significant percentage of the new immigrants are well educated and possess professional, technical, and/or administrative skills. Because of their strong educational backgrounds and professional credentials, some of the new immigrants have been able to move directly into both white collar jobs and middle. and upper-middle communities (Herbers 1986). By comparison, it took the old immigrants two-to-three generations to accomplish these feats.

Given these distinguishing characteristics, it is almost unnecessary to state that the new immigration has dramatically changed all aspects of U.S. society, not only our neighborhoods, schools, and work places, but also our social and political institutions. It is necessary, however, to underscore the fact that all of the changes which have occurred have not been positive.

As our nation has become ethnically more diverse over the last twenty years, ethnic group attachments have grown more salient (Yinger 1981). The revival of ethnic consciousness and group identity was spurred by the rising tide of Black aspirations for equality during the 1960s (Oliver and Johnson 1984). The strategies employed by Blacks during the Civil Rights era were subsequently adopted by other native minority groups (Browning, marshall and Tabb 1984). And white ethnics, who were angered by the federally-mandated preferential treatment accorded native minorities beginning in the late 1960s to redress past discrimination, also began to mobilize in an effort to ensure that they, too, would get their piece of

the proverbial American pie (Enloe 1981; Yinger 1981). As a result of this renewed emphasis on ethnic group affiliation as the key to social and economic advancement in America, we now find ourselves confronted with a number of "ethnic dilemmas" which require immediate attention and remediation (Blackwell 1982; Cummings 1980; Glazer 1983).

Consider, for example, the recent resurgence of activity among established white supremacy groups (such as the Ku Klux Klan) and the formation of new ones (such as the Skinheads) whose "primary aim is to overthrow U.S. leaders and establish a white, Christian society" (Gest 1985, p. 68); and the recent proliferation -- both nationally and in Los Angeles -- of crimes of hate against Blacks, Jews, Latinos, and especially people of Asian descent (California Department of Justice 1986; Gest 1985; Johnson 1986). Hate crimes have become so prevalent in the Los Angeles metropolitan area that both the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the Los Angeles City Police Department have begun to systematically record statistics on the incidence of racially or ethnically and religiously motivated crimes. Between 1985 and 1987, according to the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations (1988), there were 431 documented cases of racially or ethnically and religiously motivated hate crimes, which reflects a 13% increase in the number documented during the 1980 to 1984 period. The Commission's records also indicate that blacks have been the main target of racially or ethnically motivated criminal activity and that Jews have been the primary victims of most of the religiously motivated crimes. We should note here that these data probably do not reflect the actual magnitude of the problem in Los Angeles as many such crimes, especially those perpetrated against new and illegal immigrants, probably are never reported to the appropriate authorities.

These and related developments, such as the recent proliferation of ethnic joke books which libel practically all sizeable groups (Elmer and Elmer 1984; also see Shapiro 1988), reflect the growing level of intolerance of ethnic and cultural diversity in American society(Blackwell 1982). Such developments, we would argue, stem partly from increasing inter-ethnic competition for jobs, housing, and such publicly provided resources as education, health, social welfare, and protective services (Oliver and Johnson 1984); and partly from a growing fear among non-Hispanic whites of the prospects of numerically becoming the minority population in the not-too-distant future and of politically being out-voted by a "rainbow coalition" of minorities with a different agenda (Elmer and Elmer 1984).

EXPLORING THE ETHNIC QUESTIONS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Why is it important to explore issues of ethnicity and ethnic groups behavior from a comparative perspective? Traditionally, social scientists have approached the ethnic question by looking at a specific ethnic minority group and its relationship and interaction with Anglo institutions. We believe that US society has become so ethnically diverse (Allen and Turner 1987), and ethnic antagonism so pervasive (California Department of Justice 1986; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1983), that we can no longer afford to continue in this tradition. If we are to fully comprehend the impacts and implications of the changing ethnic composition of our nation, if we are to construct valid social theories about the functioning of our advanced industrial society, and if we are to develop sound public policies to deal with the myriad of social, economic, and political problems confronting our nation, we must begin to approach questions of ethnicity and ethnic group behavior in a comparative context. To continue to address the ethnic question solely in terms of one or

another group's relation to Anglo institutions, in our view, will only fuel the fires of ethnic bigotry and antagonism which are already burring quite fiercely in America. Some of the best ethnic researchers in the U.S. have come to this realization and have begun to produce research that is explicitly comparative.

DESCRIPTION OF THIS VOLUME

The papers which comprise this volume were produced by a group of these nationally known scholars who are engaged in research on comparative aspects of ethnicity and ethnic group behavior. Organized around a series of themes which run through the extant comparative ethnicity literature and which reflect the expertise and current research foci of the conference presenters, the volume is divided into five parts, which are summarized below.

Part I addresses issues related to "Ethnic Assimilation, Segregation, and Neighborhood Change." Although the nation's population in the aggregate has become ethnically more diverse over the last twenty plus years, our cities remain highly segregated (Darden 1986; Massey and Denton 1987; Farley 1985; Garcia 1985; Woolbright and Hartmann 1987). And in cases where more than a token number of recently arriving ethnic minority groups' members have moved into the established communities of either whites or native minorities, inter-ethnic conflict has been the rule rather than the exception (Oliver and Johnson 1984). This "dilemma" is imbedded in a series of questions about the assimilation process and the willingness or unwillingness of various ethnic groups to share residential space with one another.

The papers in Part I of the volume assess the link between acculturation (that is, the degree to which various ethnic groups have adopted the cultural patterns of the host society) and residential segregation (LANGBERG AND FARLEY) as well as the influence of neighborhood preferences (CLARK) and various constraints (DARDEN; ESTRADA), including skin color, on the residential distribution of both non-white (blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asians) and white ethnic groups in U.S. cities and suburbs. Suffice it to state here that the authors' research findings extend significantly our understanding of residential sorting in ethnically diverse, advanced industrial cities like Los Angeles.

Part II of the volume addresses issues related to labor markets and entrepreneurship. The ethnic composition of the U.S. population began to change dramatically precisely at the time the nation's economy was undergoing fundamental structural change, These changes include, on the one hand, the decline of traditional, highly unionized, high wage manufacturing employment (Bluestone and Harrison 1982); and, on the other, the growth of employment in the high technology manufacturing, informal (i.e., downgraded manufacturing and service activities), and advanced services sectors of the economy (Soja, Morales, and Wolff 1983). These shifts have not occurred evenly or uniformly in all regions of the country (Smith 1984), although recent shifts in employment growth and decline in the Los Angeles economy roughly parallel those occurring nationally (Soja, Morales, and Wolff, 1983).

Both nationally and in Los Angeles the recent structural changes in the economy have benefited only selected classes of workers while negatively impacting others (Oliver and Johnson 1984). Recent surveys suggest that, in part as a consequence of sectoral shifts in employment, perceptions of job competition and of inequality of access to employment are very strong, especially among those native minorities and working class white ethnics who were concentrated in the declining heavy 'manufacturing sector of the

economy (Muller and Espenshade 1985). Among these groups, newly arriving immigrants, especially those entering the U.S. illegally, are viewed as the primary sources of competition of jobs in the restructured economy (Fogel and Martin 1982; Brinkley-Carter 1979).

When the question, "Do you think that illegal or undocumented immigrants are taking jobs away from other southern California residents and contributing to the state's unemployment problems, or do you think they are mostly taking jobs other Californians don't want?", was put to a sample of 1,031 southern California residents by the Urban Institute in 1983, nearly one half of all respondents, 59% of the Black respondents, and 42% of the Hispanic respondents indicated that they thought illegal or undocumented immigrants were taking jobs away from California residents. Approximately one fourth of the Asian respondents, and roughly one third of both the white and Hispanic respondents, felt that the illegal workers were taking jobs primarily away from Blacks. Over half of the Black respondents held this view. When ask if they believed that illegal or undocumented workers tend to bring down the overall level of wages in some occupations, two-thirds of the total sample, 81/ of the black sub-sample, and 65% of the Hispanic sub-sample responded in the affirmative (Muller and Espenshade, 1985).

Such perceptions and beliefs appear to lie at the root of much of the racially and ethnically motivated violence which is occurring in the U.S. today (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1983). In no instance has this been more apparent than in the Vincent Chin murder case in Detroit. Mr. Chin was beaten to death with a baseball bat by two displaced auto industry workers who perceived foreign competition, especially from the Japanese, as the principal reason for their joblessness. The displaced auto workers mistook Mr. Chin as a symbol of that competition. However, Mr. Chin was a Chinese-American, not Japanese. More hideous than the act itself, the assailants were acquitted on the grounds that insufficient evidence was presented to prove that Mr. Chin's civil rights had been violated (Jue 1984).

Using a myriad of conceptual, theoretical, and methodological approaches, a number of ethnic researchers have attempted to determine if, and to what extent, immigrant workers are substitutes for native workers and whether the presence of a pool of immigrant labor depresses wage levels in the US economy. Unfortunately no consensus has emerged from the research on either issue, as liberal, conservative, and radical scholars have arrived at divergent conclusions (Chiswick, and Hiller 1985; Muller and Espenshade 1985; marshall, undated; Fogel and Hartin 1982; Borjas 1983; 1987).

The research papers in Part II of this volume cast considerable light on these dilemmas. In particular, the papers (1) examine racial/ethnic differences in employment trends at the national level in the U.S. between 1970 and 1985 (SANDEFUR AND POWERS); (2) determine whether employment patterns of blacks, Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Ricans, and non-Hispanic whites changed during the 1965 to 1980 period and whether migration between 1975 and 1980 affected the likelihood of employment in 1980 (WILSON AND TIENDA); (3) analyze the forces responsible for the growth and expansion of the informal sector of the New York economy (SASSEN); (4) evaluate the impacts of the recent restructuring of the Los Angeles economy on the employment opportunities of both the resident American born mexican, or Chicano, and Mexican immigrant populations (ONG AND MORALES); and (5) assess the comparative progress of Blacks and Cubans in establishing themselves in Miami's changing economy since 1960 and the implications of this for the social and economic well-being of the sub-communities in which these two ethnic groups are clustered (ROSE).

Another aspect of the restructured economy is the growth of self-

employment and entrepreneurial activities. Rather than attempt to enter the primary or secondary labor market, some of the newly arriving immigrant groups have elected to go into business for themselves (Kim and Hurh 1985). This so-called ethnic economy appears to be dominated by the Koreans, Chinese, Cambodians, Arabs, Iranians, Cubans, and West Indians, who specialize in a range of retail and personal services, and, more often than not, target inner city, predominantly Black or Hispanic communities as their primary markets (Cobas 1987). In a number of cities, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland, California, Harlem, New York, Washington, DC, and Miami, Florida, this has caused considerable conflict between the ethnic entrepreneurs, whose businesses tend to be small, family run operations, and the long term residents who view the new immigrants as coming in and taking over their community (Chang 1988; Davidson 1987). Several competing explanations exist for the emergence of the ethnic economy, and several of the papers in Part II of this volume addresses, among other pertinent issues, the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various theoretical constructs (ARNOLD, COBAS, LIGHT).

Part III of this volume addresses issues related to ethnic political and electoral behavior. To realize the importance of ethnicity and ethnic group affiliation in American politics, one needs only to consider a few examples from the current Presidential election campaign. Michael Dukakis emphasizes repeatedly his own Greek heritage and attempts to appeal to Hispanic voters by giving a campaign speeches in Spanish. George Bush, on a recent campaign swing through California, underscored in a speech the need for the U.S. to acknowledge the Armenian genocide undoubtedly to gain the support of our Governor who is Armenian and the rest of the state's large Armenian population. And former Presidential candidate Jesse Jackson campaigned on a platform that emphasized the importance of ethnic minorities and a host of special interest groups (gays, lesbians, women, etc) forming a "rainbow coalition" to unseat the current Republican Administration. These and other strategies appealing to ethnic groups, are employed by each candidate in the hope of luring the voter to his side in order that he may be elected the next President of the United States.

It is apparent from the current literature, however, that political attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and participation vary substantially with ethnicity (Reinhold 1987; Uhlaner, Cain, Kiewiet 1987). The papers on political and electoral behavior explore the role of both ethnic and non-ethnic factors in explaining ethnic differences which manifest themselves in the political arena (GILLIAM; JACKSON; PINDERHUGHES; SHELLEY, HARRIS AND JABLONSKY).

Part IV of this volume focuses on racial/ethnic issues in higher education. Nowhere in U.S. society today are "ethnic dilemmas" more apparent or prevalent than in our higher education system. Our institutions of higher learning have traditionally been centers of innovative and often times revolutionary thinking about racial or ethnic inequalities in society. This was especially true during the Civil Rights era. More recently, however, as the US population has become ethnically more diverse, academic institutions have become the focus of considerable controversy over admissions policies, curriculum diversity, and ethnic minority faculty recruitment and promotion (Biemiller 1986; Manzagol 1988; Oliver, Rodriquez, and Mickleson 1985). College and university campuses have also become "hot beds" of racially or ethnically motivated bigotry. Among the dilemmas or questions that are addressed by the authors are the following.

(1) What factors are responsible for the resurgence of racially and ethnically motivated bigotry and violence on our college and university campuses (FARRELL AND JONES)?

(2) What kinds of strategies can be employed to increase admission, persistence, and graduation rates of Black, Hispanic, and Native American students in predominantly white institutions of higher learning (ALLEN; ORFIELD)?
(3) Are major colleges and universities purposefully limiting the admission of qualified persons of Asian descent (WANG)?

Part V of the book, which we've entitled "Comparative Ethnicity in Society," addresses a number of pertinent dilemmas which have received considerable attention in both the local and national news media. These include (1) the grass-roots response to demographic and economic restructuring in Monterey Park, a middle class Los Angeles Community, where the recent influx of Asians and Asian capital has precipitated a rather fierce political struggle against big developers and ethnic dominance (HORTON); and (2) changes in ethnic street gangs in Los Angeles Chicano neighborhoods (MOORE). Other dilemmas which are addressed in Part V include (3) the economic benefits of assimilation and the costs associated with non-assimilation in U.S. society, with particular reference to persons who identify themselves as American Indians and those who identify themselves as American of Indian descent (SNIPP); and the shared problems of Navajo women of the American southwest and the Basotho women of southern Africa -- problems which are rooted in issues of class, ethnicity, and gender in the respective societies (HARRIS).

Two additional papers are included in Part V of this volume. One summarizes the major outcomes of the final session of the Conference on Comparative Ethnicity -- a roundtable discussion among the conference presenters. From this roundtable discussion, we identify salient policy issues and establish an agenda for future comparative ethnic research (OLIVER AND JOHNSON). The final essay reviews existing surveys, public opinion polls, and both historical and enumerative data that would be useful in future comparative ethnic research; it also discusses the social scientist's role in future government decisions regarding the collection of data on ethnic groups in America (STEPHENSON). Ethnic researchers should find this essay most useful as it serves as a companion to The Index of Machine Readable Data Files for Use in Comparative Ethnic Research, which has been compiled by Ms. Elizabeth Stephenson, Archivist of the Social Science Data Archive at the U.C.L.A. Institute for Social Science Research.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Today, we hear a lot of talk about America's declining "competitiveness" vis a vis other societies and economies. Our growing diversity is often viewed negatively in such discussions. We believe that this volume on comparative ethnicity will challenge these conceptions by confronting the nagging dilemmas that diversity has created within our society, Diversity in the end is a plus, but social scientists and policymakers must identify the conditions under which diversity can be brought to the forefront as one of the strengths of our society. The scourges of racism and economic and institutional insensitivity to diversity must be challenged and confronted in productive and useful ways before the fruits of a diverse society can be enjoyed. We believe that this volume will stimulate such a dialogue among both social scientists and policymakers.

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