

# Literature Review on Ethnic Identity and the “Generational” Factor Part One : 1988~1998

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**Abstract :**

This paper is the first of a two-part literature review on the theme of ethnic identity and generational change. It covers the period of 1988 to 1998 and consists of a theoretical discussion of major concepts such as “ethnic identity”, “the generational factor”, and “assimilation” in the context of Ethnic Studies in North America, followed by a detailed review of relevant studies published during those ten years.

**Keywords :** ethnic identity/ generation/ assimilation

## I . INTRODUCTION : search methods

This paper is based on a bibliography search on the theme of ethnic identity and generational change, conducted for the period of 1988 to 1998, using resources available at the University of Toronto Libraries<sup>1)</sup>. The objective is to present a review of studies meeting the following two sets of criteria :

- 1) **Theory :** The studies had to include a clear exposition of theoretical assumptions based on a review of relevant literature, with an analysis of empirical data (preferably from an original research project, but census data analysis was also included), and a concluding chapter which discusses the findings again in the context of a theoretical framework.
- 2) **Theme :** The studies had to focus on ethnic identity as the main subject matter, deal with individuals living in the United States or Canada, consider the factor of generations

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1) This bibliography search was originally conducted to supply lecture material for a graduate seminar at the Robert F. Harney Program in Ethnic, Immigration, and Pluralism Studies at the University of Toronto. 1988 was chosen as the starting point of the search so as to pick up where Isajiw's extensive literature on the same theme ended in his chapter on “Ethnic Identity Retention” (in Breton et al. 1990). As the title indicates, the present paper will be followed by a second one covering the period of 1999 to 2005, which will further update the search findings.

in explaining the variations in ethnic identity among the subjects, and/or offer some longitudinal perspective on the formation and future of that ethnic identity.

The starting point was a search through the Silverplatter Databases<sup>2)</sup> using keywords such as "ethnic/identity/generation", which yielded 130 records. After sorting through these records using their detailed abstracts, 56 were deemed most relevant and kept for further checking. The 'association papers' or unpublished papers presented at conferences were dropped from the list, as well as the four students' dissertations, due to their difficulty of access.

In the second phase of the search, all remaining entries were checked on site at the University of Toronto's Robarts Library<sup>3)</sup>, or through full-text reproduction on the Internet, and evaluated against the above criteria. The bibliography from these studies further produced potential references, and those which fit the 1988-1998 time frame were again checked and evaluated. In order to address the heavily American content of the findings, all issues of the *Canadian Ethnic Studies* and the *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* from 1988 to 1998 were also reviewed.

We will first review the key concepts which provided the parameters of this search, and proceed to review the most relevant empirical studies sorted by subject-matter. Some references that date from before 1988 were included in the discussion when needed, and others are cited in footnotes when deemed of secondary interest.

## II. THEORETICAL ISSUES : Ethnic identity, the generational factor, and assimilation

### 1. Ethnic Identity

Few scholars will maintain today that ethnicity in the North American context is a uniform and static phenomenon. The debate over 'primordialism' versus 'situationalism'

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2) This database "provides access to the world's literature in sociology and related disciplines, both theoretical and applied. The database includes abstracts of journal articles selected from over 2000 journals, abstracts of conference papers presented at various sociological association meetings, relevant dissertation listings from Dissertations Abstracts International, enhanced bibliographic citations of book reviews, and abstracts of selected sociology books published in sociological abstracts (sa) and Social Planning/Policy & Development Abstracts (SOPDA) since 1974. Approximately 2000 journals in 30 different languages from about 55 countries are scanned for inclusion, covering sociological topics in fields such as anthropology, economics, education, medicine, community development, philosophy, demography, political science, and social psychology. Journals published by sociological associations, groups, faculties, and institutes, and periodicals containing the term "sociology" in their titles, are abstracted fully, irrespective of language or country of publications. Non-core journals are screened for articles by sociologists and/or articles of immediate interest or relevance to sociologists" (Quoted from Silverplatter Databases).

3) Robarts Library is the largest library at the University of Toronto, and is the main resource for Graduate students.

was heated in the 1970s<sup>4)</sup>, but there now seems to be a consensus that ethnicity is contingent upon two main components : a) traits which individuals inherit at birth, from being born to and socialized by parents with certain cultural/ethnic backgrounds, and b) circumstances pertaining to society at large, such as historical and political events, the social and economic atmosphere of the time, which make those traits more or less relevant for an individual or a group at any given time. The term often used by scholars in the 1990s is that of ‘construction’ of ethnicity, reflecting a view of ethnicity as a process, in which, as Joane Nagel (1994) describes :

... individuals and groups create and recreate their personal and collective histories, the membership boundaries of their group, and the content and meaning of their ethnicity. (Nagel, 1994 : 154)

It is most important at this point to distinguish between what Nagel calls “two of the basic building blocks of ethnicity” (ibid : 152), namely ‘ethnic identity’ and ‘culture’. Ethnic identity pertains to the psychological processes involved in *defining* group memberships, while culture forms the perceived *basis* for those definitions. In his discussion of the concept of “identity incorporation”, Isajiw (1997) defines identity as :

... the manner in which persons locate themselves psychologically in relation to one or more social systems, and the way in which they perceive others as locating them in relation to those systems. (Isajiw, 1997 : 90)

Isajiw goes on to describe the four components of identity, namely “(1)self-conception and self-knowledge, (2)pathematic, (3)attachment, (4)trust and solidarity” (ibid : 90). Culture, meanwhile, covers internal (tastes, attitudes, goals, norms, values and so on) and external (dress, foodstuffs, language and so on) patterns of behavior (ibid : 88).

Many scholars continue to use ‘ethnicity’ in their writing solely to describe what are essentially the cultural characteristics of an individual or a group, and add further to the confusion by equating ‘ethnic identity’ with the presence of certain observable cultural patterns. However, empirical evidence has shown that while ethnic identity is related to the maintenance of ethnic culture, the two phenomena operate independently from each other<sup>5)</sup>

Another important distinction should be made between the individual and collective levels of ethnic identity. Some scholars are interested in ethnic identity as an individual phenomenon (as defined above), while others focus on ethnic identity in its collective manifes-

4) See for example Barth (1969), Gans (1979), Glazer and Moynihan (1970), Isaacs (1975), Isajiw (1974), Yancey et al (1976).

5) See for example Isajiw’s extensive study of identity retention among ethnic groups in Toronto, in Breton et al. (1990).

tations. The latter will thus seek to explain why certain ethnic groups manage to maintain a wide range of institutions while others cannot, or what causes the emergence of a new ethnic category or the re-energization of existing groups. The resulting studies from such concerns will deal with issues of ethnic group cohesiveness, political mobilization and ethnic labor markets. Individual ethnic identity, in this perspective, becomes one independent variable among others, rather than the main dependent variable under study.

This being said, what happens to an ethnic group as a whole is obviously related to the ethnic identity of its actual and potential members (and vice-versa), and in the empirical research it is difficult to delineate the two levels. The references in this review will include studies which primarily focus on the individual subjects’ ethnic identity, but insofar as they shed light on that phenomenon, studies on ethnic groups as a whole will also be part of our selection.

## 2. The “generational” factor

It is equally acknowledged that different generations may have different bases for their ethnic identities, and that the difference in the cultural patterns should not be necessarily taken as a weakening or disappearance of ethnic identity over time. The original exponent of the generational hypothesis was historian Marcus Lee Hansen, who, in his 1937 address to a Swedish-American association, reassured his audience that the rich cultural heritage brought over by the first-generation immigrants would not be lost, for although the second generation may have neglected it, the third generation will be compelled by “a spontaneous and almost irresistible impulse” to rediscover its history (1990 [1938] : 197). Although subsequently refuted by scholars who took his famous words “what the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember” (ibid : 195) too literally, Hansen’s observations are insightful in that they point to the kind of distinction between ethnic identity and culture which we mentioned above. The interest taken by the third generation in their ancestors’ legacy occurs even though (or precisely because, as Hansen argues) these people have reached parity with other Americans as to their proficiency in English, material possessions, and overall socio-economic status.

Hansen also highlighted the fluctuating nature of ethnic identity, which can go underground for a generation due to peer pressure and discrimination, only to be re-energized by the next generation when those conditions have waned. In a collection of articles compiled by Kivisto and Blau (1990) as an homage to Hansen, one of the contributors, Nathan Glazer, performs an exercise in historical analysis to test Hansen’s thesis using the experience of the American Jews (Kivisto and Blau, 1990 : 104-112). Glazer concludes that Hansen’s insight can be put to good use on condition that the analysis takes into account

the specific historical context in which the experience of the immigrants and their offspring unfolds. Other studies presented later on in this paper will provide good examples of such analyses.

### 3. The problematic concept of 'assimilation'

One last theoretical issue which needs to be discussed is that of 'assimilation', a concept one cannot avoid while examining ethnic identity and its change over time. Few other concepts have come under such severe criticism, largely because it has been linked to the political ideology of 'assimilationism' which arose in North America in the early part of the twentieth century, in the aftermath of massive waves of immigration from Asia and Eastern Europe. Although Robert E. Park tried to sever "questions of is from those of *ought*" (Kivisto, 1989 : 14) when he presented his theory of "Race Relations Cycle" (1950 [1927]), his statement that immigrants would go through the "irreversible" process of "adaptation, competition, accommodation, and assimilation" must have provided a reassuring vision for the American public. Given the appropriate length of time, apparently heterogeneous groups such as immigrants from Asia would eventually blend in to the larger society. The resulting 'melting pot' (another often quoted expression) would ultimately retain to a large extent the characteristics of the majority Anglo-Saxon group, because immigrants would gradually shed their Old World identity in order to become American. In his introductory chapter to *The Ethnic Enigma* (1989), Peter Kivisto suggests that :

[t] he kind of research agenda encouraged by this orientation focused attention on measuring the degree of assimilation that had been achieved at various points in time, relying on such measures as those obtained from social distance scales..., rates of socioeconomic mobility patterns, and rates of exogamous marriages. (Kivisto, 1989 : 14)

Measurements of this kind sought to place various ethnic groups on a continuum from low to high degree of *similarity* compared to the majority Anglo-Saxon group, and was assumed to reflect a converse degree of loss of ethnic identity and ethnic cultural patterns. Notwithstanding the challenge mounted by the model of *cultural pluralism* (or the preservation of ethnic cultures and identities within the host society) on moral grounds, the straight-line assimilationist model has also been criticized on theoretical grounds for its simplistic presuppositions. Although Milton Gordon (1964) can be viewed as a proponent of the straight-line model, his well-known distinctions between various 'dimensions' of assimilation (notably between the 'cultural' and 'structural' dimensions) nevertheless paved the way for the formulation of theories on the variety of ways ethnic groups and their individual members negotiate their place in the host society.

One of the more recent among such theories is proposed by Wsebold W. Isajw in his arti-

cle "On the concept and theory of social incorporation" (1997). One of Isajiw's main criticisms regarding past theories of assimilation is that they assume assimilation and ethnic retention to be reverse processes forming a zero-sum phenomenon (80). Isajiw refers to the fact that much of the empirical evidence gathered over the last two decades does not support a uniform notion of individuals getting rid of ethnic culture, identity, or associations to replace these with the host society's dominant culture, identity toward the host society, or membership in mainstream associations. Assimilation and ethnic retention can indeed work in opposite directions in synchronized fashion (one becoming weakened to the same degree that the other is strengthened), but both processes can be simultaneously energized or, conversely, simultaneously stalled. Isajiw argues that his theory of 'social incorporation' allows for such scenarios to take place, since it is defined as "a process through which a social unit is included in a larger social unit as an integral part of it" and can thus "subsume under it a number of other concepts such as assimilation, integration, identity retention, ethnic rediscovery, and so on without contradiction" (Isajiw, 1997 : 82).

It is interesting to note that although ideological connotations and theoretical shortcomings have eroded the popularity of its use, some scholars have been trying lately to rehabilitate 'assimilation' as a viable concept. In a 1997 article, noted ethnicity scholar Herbert Gans offers some insight as to why there is an apparent (and, according to him, almost entirely unnecessary) polarization in the positions of scholars : those who emphasize that assimilation, mainly cultural, is taking place (the 'acculturationists'), and those who stress that ethnic retention is not decreasing (the 'ethnic retentionists'). Ganz suggests two explanations for this polarization. First, scholars have not made the distinction between 'acculturation' (or becoming culturally American) and 'assimilation' (gaining acceptance into formal and informal nonethnic associations and other social institutions). If they made the distinction, they would see that their empirical evidence points to a similar, basic finding which does not contradict either position : immigrants and their offspring may adopt the host society's culture while still maintaining ethnic social ties. Second, the target groups for the research as well as the researchers themselves contribute to whatever empirical differences that remain after conceptual clarification. Scholars who study the European immigrant groups and thus obtain much of their data from second (or later) generation adults will tend to develop acculturationist theories while those who study more recently arrived immigrants will find more retentionist tendencies among their subjects. Furthermore, researchers who are 'outsiders' and do not have any personal interest in the groups they study will have a different perspective from the 'insider' researchers, who may be personally concerned with the survival of the ethnic groups they study.

It is certain that 'assimilation' is a problematic concept, but for the purpose of this review, the term will appear according to each author's own use in order to avoid confusion.

### III. THE EMPIRICAL STUDIES

We will now review the empirical studies which deal with the theme of ethnic identity and the generational factor, sorted by the type of group or phenomenon that was the subject of the research.

#### 1. The fate of the immigrants of European ancestry

It was the massive waves of immigration in the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries that triggered the initial formulation of theories of assimilation. Problematic as it is, many scholars believe that in the particular case of immigrants of European ancestry the concept of assimilation is still valid in analyzing the process of their adaptation to North American societies. Terms such as 'symbolic ethnicity' (Gans, 1979) and 'twilight of ethnicity' (Alba, 1985) were coined in relation to the disappearance of distinctive social and cultural characteristics among successive generations of white European immigrants in the United States. This perspective has also been prevalent during the decade that concerns us.

One of the most comprehensive studies on symbolic ethnicity<sup>6)</sup> can be found in Anny Bakalian's *From Being to Feeling Armenian* (1993). The author measures the assimilation of third- and fourth-generation Armenians by comparing them with the first and second generations, and how 'traditional' Armenian traits have been lost over time. She concludes that although the later generations are assimilated in most aspects<sup>7)</sup> compared to the earlier generations, the former continue to identify strongly as Armenians: it is just that the definition of Armenianness has changed from one that revolves around traditional traits to one that allows a more symbolic form of ethnicity (pp. 395-396). However, Bakalian cautions that symbolic ethnicity should not be mistaken for a true 'revival' of ethnicity at the behavioral level, for it remains:

... confined to the sidestream, to one's leisure time and private life. By no means should

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6) Waters' *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (1990) also presents an insightful study of symbolic ethnicity among white Roman-Catholic Americans, for whom ethnic identity is about choice and benefit, without the social costs. See also Kivisto (1990): "The attenuated ethnicity of contemporary Finnish-Americans" for another study on symbolic ethnicity, and Winter (1996): "Symbolic ethnicity or religion among Jews in the United States: A test of Gansian hypotheses" for a challenge of the concept.

7) Bakalian uses Gordon's seven dimensions of assimilation (cultural, structural, marital, identificational, absence of prejudice, absence of discrimination, civic) as her dependent variables (pp. 36-37)



one’s ethnic background interfere with one’s economic, social and political integration in the larger society. (p. 395)

The first criticism to Bakalian’s approach is that the loss of ethnic traits should not be simply equated with assimilation. Assimilation is, after all, the degree to which people become similar to the other sectors of the national population and not the degree to which they become less similar to their parents or grandparents. Secondly, Bakalian assumes the loss of *traditional* traits to be a reflection of how assimilated her subjects have become. To assess the validity of this assumption, one would have to compare Bakalian’s sample of third- and fourth-generation Armenians with Armenians of similar age in the homeland. What Bakalian sees as the impact of specifically American assimilatory forces might be only due to a change of values and behavior that takes place with the passing of each generation, regardless of location.

Census analysis has been one of the major tools in assessing the ‘performance’ of various ethnic/racial groups in North America. Groups are compared to one another, the White/British group being the norm every other group is measured against. The degree of assimilation, in the context of census data, is the degree to which a group has become similar to the White/British group in residential and cultural patterns, economic and educational attainment, and so on. Among white ethnic groups, those differences are vanishing quickly, but does this mean that ethnic boundaries do not count any more?

In their analysis of the 1980 Census data *From Many Strands- Ethnic and Racial Groups in Contemporary America* (1988) Lieberman and Waters noted the presence of a significant number of ‘unhyphenated whites’ (9 percent of the entire population) -whites who responded to the census question on ethnic identification by choosing the category “American” instead of one that might reflect the provenance of their immigrant ancestors, and those who were unable to report an ancestry (p. 265). These unhyphenated whites “make up 16 percent of all Americans with at least four generations’ residence in the United States” (p. 266), showing that it will become increasingly difficult (and eventually futile for many whites to report a reliable ethnic origin as the distance from the immigrant generation widens<sup>8)</sup>. The authors predict that this particular segment of the population will continue to expand in the future, assuming that :

... intermarriage will continue at a high level, that ethnic enclaves will diminish, and that there will be a relatively modest degree of discrimination and prejudice against various

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8) See also “The everyday use of surnames to determine ethnic ancestry” (Waters, 1989). 60 descendants of white European immigrants of mixed ancestry are interviewed regarding their use of surnames as a way of determining other people’s ethnic background, as well as how their surname is used by others to identify their ethnic background.



white ethnic groups. In other words, central to the projection is the assumption that ethnic origin among whites will decline as a sociopolitical cause. (p. 258, underline by this author)

Although useful in sketching a broad picture, census data may not be the ideal material to obtain information on the complexity of ethnic identity. Richard D. Alba noted in *Ethnic Identity : The Transformation of White America* (1990, a study on more than 500 white Americans residing in the Capital Region of New York State, that very often the ancestry reported in large-scale surveys is mistakenly equated with ethnic identity.

In contrast to ancestry, identity involves beliefs directly about oneself. Identity is not just a matter of saying, “my grandparents came from Poland,” but of saying in some form, “I am Polish” (although under some circumstances, saying one’s ancestors came from Poland may be understood as equivalent to declaring oneself to be Polish). (p. 38)

Alba’s Capital Region Study carefully distinguishes those two issues in its questionnaire (39-42) and pays particular attention to generational and cohort factors, adding a longitudinal dimension to its analyses. The findings seem to have surprised even the author : “two-thirds of whites present themselves in terms of an ethnic identity, and about half view their ethnic backgrounds as of moderate importance at least” (p. 292), in spite of the fact that the usual markers of ethnic group characteristics (residential patterns, educational attainment, marriage patterns, cultural behavior, and ethnic composition of personal networks) pointed to the decrease in differences among the respondents. Alba admits to having been previously too preoccupied with objective ethnic differences (p. xiii) and although he generally supports Gans’ ‘symbolic ethnicity’ as an apt description of the experience of white immigrant groups, he feels that ethnic identity is not just lagging behind the other manifestations of ethnicity on their way to disappearance. One evidence is the surprising :

... absence of any decline in ethnic identity across cohorts... Indeed there have been hints in the analysis that younger individuals are in some ways more interested in their ethnic backgrounds than their elders” (p. 307).

Alba’s concluding chapter is devoted to the thesis that a new ethnic group identity might be emerging, that of the European Americans, based on their common history of immigration. This thesis questions Lieberman and Waters’ prediction of the unhyphenated whites becoming *the* major trend for the ethnic identity of white Americans, and instead contends that there is an equally strong tendency to make the common experience of immigration the rallying symbol for descendants of a wide range of European immigrant groups (p. 315). This tendency has had a direct impact on the redefinition of the American national identity in terms of its history of immigration. Alba suggests that the sense of honor

attached to the European immigration experience, which highlights the heroic sacrifices of the first generation to ensure a better future for their offspring, provides one of the attractions of the European American identity. Another benefit of this identity is the possibility for whites to mobilize themselves at times of actual conflict over resources such as neighbourhoods, educational opportunities, or jobs, while avoiding “the pitfalls of a merely racial identity” (p. 316). Alba concludes that ethnic identities among Americans of European ancestry are likely to persist, for they have “become ways of claiming to be American” (p. 318).

Ethnic identity can be a means of locating oneself and one’s family against the panorama of American history, against the backdrop of what it means to be American. No longer, then, need there be any contradiction between being American and asserting an ethnic identity. Increasingly, they are accepted as the same thing. (p. 319)

## 2 . The Japanese immigrants in North America

Of the numerous ethnic groups that become the subject of research, the Japanese immigrants who came to North America at the turn of the century, as well as the subsequent generations have become a remarkable source of high quality studies<sup>9)</sup>. Several factors seem to make the North American Japanese an ‘attractive’ subject : a) their visibility as a racial minority (in contrast to the European groups which arrived in the same period), b) their immigration pattern, with most arrivals taking place prior to the Second World War and only negligible numbers in the following five decades, c) their own labels in distinguishing generations (*issei* for first generation, *nisei* for second generation, *sansei* for third and so on), and d) their unique experience of internment during the Second World War, both in the United States and in Canada.

Kaoru Kendis Oguri’s book *A Matter of Comfort-Ethnic Maintenance and Ethnic Style among Third Generation Japanese Americans* (1989) focuses on the nature and content of Japanese American ethnicity. Oguri proposes a theoretical framework for the study of ethnic groups in a plural society, and defines the three main subject matters as :

1. the “what” of ethnicity, which includes a psychological identification with a culturally distinct group, and behavioral patterns which individuals use to identify themselves as well as to be identified by others as being a member of that group ;
2. the “why” of ethnicity, which are the reasons for the maintenance of ethnicity ; and finally

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9) This is not to say that the Japanese are the only ethnic group worth mentioning. It is rather that within the decade that concerns us (probably because of the redress movement in the 1980s), there have been several studies on the Japanese that provided a good basis for comparison.

3. the “how” of ethnicity, which refers to the mechanisms and structures that make the maintenance possible.

Oguri measured the “degree of ethnicity” (p. 175) among third-generation Japanese Americans in two settings, Gardena in Los Angeles County, and the suburban area of Orange County. Using a questionnaire which concentrated on the social nature of ethnicity rather than traditional Japanese folk culture<sup>10)</sup>, she found a variety of identities among her subjects and sorted them into two groups according to the “intensity of ethnicity” (p. 28, underline in original), the “high ethnics” and the “low ethnics”. Although Oguri illustrates with life histories how childhood socialization and choices as adults shape both high and low ethnic identities (pp. 145-168), her discussion deals mainly with the high ethnics, and with the “why” and the “how” of these people’s ethnicity. She concludes that in spite of overwhelming structural assimilation into mainstream society, and although “the homeland culture of their grandparents and great-grandparents is as foreign to them as it would be to any other American” (p. 172), some members of the younger generation maintain strong ties with fellow Japanese Americans because they can enjoy “a sense of comfort which high ethnic Japanese Americans feel when interacting with others like themselves” (p. 3, underline in original). This sense of comfort revolves around shared “rules of human relations” (p. 176) and is the primary basis of the boundary between Japanese Americans and non-Japanese Americans.

The purpose of Oguri’s study is to explain the processes whereby people develop and maintain a strong ethnic identity despite a lack of instrumental incentive, but her approach does not tell us whether her findings are representative of sansei elsewhere in the United States. For that matter, she does not indicate what the proportion is in her original sample of “high ethnics” versus “low ethnics”. Although other scholars have subsequently supported her claim that third- and fourth-generation Japanese Americans in certain areas of California remain highly involved in their ethnic community<sup>11)</sup>, Oguri herself does not mention how she came to that conclusion. Of course, her choice of settings, especially Gardena with its high concentration of Japanese households and businesses (pp. 21-24), would have ensured that a large number of high ethnics be found among the residents. Since those who do not feel a strong urge to stay connected to their ethnic community might have moved out of those areas, they would not have been part of her sample to begin with.

Like Oguri, Tomoko Makabe (1998) deals with the experience of the third-generation

10) For other measurements of Japanese-American ethnic identity, see Matsuo (1992) and Newton et al (1988).

11) Her claim is also supported by Fugita and O’Brien (1991) and O’Brien and Fugita (1991), who studied the same communities at roughly the same period of time.

Japanese immigrants, this time in Canada. However, the difference is that Makabe sought to obtain a cross-national sample, and as a result her findings provide quite a different picture from that presented by Oguri's Japanese Americans in California. *The Canadian Sansei* follows up Makabe's previous work on the first and second generations of Japanese Canadians (1976, 1980). It is based on extensive interviews with subjects all over Canada, and reports the experience of those who grew up in areas with very few other fellow Japanese Canadians, away from large metropolitan areas such as Toronto or Vancouver.

Central to Makabe's thesis is that the experience of Canadian *sansei* was deeply affected by the previous generations' history of wartime internment and the subsequent dismantling of their ethnic community. However, the irony lies in that those events are not acknowledged by the *sansei* themselves as being central to their Japanese identity (pp. 164-165). In her chapter on *sansei* socialization, Makabe shows how the formation of these people's ethnic identity was influenced by their parents' and grandparents' conscientious effort to assimilate into Canadian society. The *issei* and *nisei* also refrained from publicly displaying their ethnic identity and culture after the war, not only because this was coerced on to them, but also because they themselves saw it as the best strategy for survival (pp. 60-86). The *nisei* parents almost uniformly refused to talk about their wartime experience, chose residential neighborhoods with no other Japanese families, and encouraged their children to mingle with non-Japanese friends in order to become like an 'average Canadian'. Except for family and relatives, the majority of *sansei* thus had no way of interacting with other Japanese Canadians while they were growing up, nor did they have the means to learn about their heritage. Ethnic identity, under those circumstances, had very little to grow roots in.

According to Makabe, the presence of Japanese Canadian associations is mostly due to the lifelong efforts of the *nisei* generation, who built these so that their parents and themselves could maintain ties with other Japanese Canadians. It is ironic that having worked so hard to ensure a Canadian upbringing for their children, the *nisei* have to see the membership of their ethnic institutions decline steadily due to lack of interest from the *sansei* generation. Today, the *sansei* have reached such an overwhelming degree of cultural, structural, and identity assimilation that it is very difficult for them to feel a connection to a Japanese community, other than on a symbolic level. It is telling that even the redress movement of the 1980s, which should have been a perfect rallying point for the awakening of ethnic pride, failed to produce a lasting momentum for community revival (p. 179).

Makabe raises the question of why the Japanese Canadians are most likely to vanish as an ethnic group, while scholars in the United States continue to report the apparent blos-

soming of Japanese American communities in certain areas<sup>12)</sup>. She suggests that the Canadian government went further than their American counterpart in their post-war effort to relocate or repatriate the Japanese immigrant population (pp. 24-25), and this policy of dispersion effectively destroyed all possibility for the survival or revival of Japanese ethnic identity in Canada (pp. 176-178).

... So every region and area... lacks a critical mass of Japanese population. ... This factor of 'pure demographics' has no doubt had the strongest impact on the maintenance of ties to fellow ethnics. (p. 127)

With no other Japanese Canadians around to befriend and grow up with, the rate of inter-marriage was bound to increase among *sansei*, predestining the next generation for further assimilation.

Although the initial immigration period and subsequent influx were similar, and both groups endured extreme discriminatory treatment during the Second World War, the Japanese Americans and the Japanese Canadians seem to have followed different paths in the following decades. The comparison between Oguri's and Makabe's studies points to the significance of historical analysis, and draws our attention to the dynamic relation between socio-political events and socialization processes, as well as the connection between individual ethnic identity and ethnic group survival.

### 3. The 'new' ethnics :

One of the most actively studied aspect of ethnicity in the United States in the 1990s is the phenomenon of the post-1965 immigrants and their offspring. A core of American scholars have written extensively on this subject, and suggest that it is in need of new theories and concepts. Once again, we find Herbert Gans (1992) offering his perspective on the matter : he predicts that contrary to the myth of "nearly automatic immigrant success" a scenario of "second-generation decline" is very much a reality awaiting the children of the new, poor and dark-skinned immigrants (p. 1). This theme, presented in Tekle Mariam Woldemikael's study of Haitian immigrants in Illinois (1989), is echoed time and again by scholars such as Alejandro Portes, Mary C. Waters and Ruben Rumbaut, who argue that the differences between these new immigrants and those who came at the turn of the century lie both in the structural (economic, social and political) factors pertaining to the host society, and in the characteristics of the immigrants themselves.

In order to describe the processes through which the new immigrants adapt themselves, Portes and Zhou (1994) use the concept of "segmented assimilation" (p. 75), which refers

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12) Makabe mentions the study by Fugita and O'Brien (1991) cited in an earlier footnote.

to the way immigrant groups assimilate into different sectors of the American society (p. 82). For some groups, the choice to assimilate brings about permanent subordination and disadvantage, rather than social mobility and wealth. Drawing on past research projects, the authors argue that three main factors have produced this type of assimilation : 1) the racial composition of the new immigrants (black, Asian and mestizo) which makes assimilation into the mainstream an unlikely option, beyond a matter of individual choice, 2) the location of their settlements, predominantly in cities, and 3) the structure of economic opportunities available to these people in the present-day United States, where the "gap between the minimally paid menial jobs that immigrants commonly accept and the high-tech and professional occupations requiring college degrees that native elites occupy" is widening, while intermediate managerial jobs (through which formerly the second generation moved up gradually) are disappearing (pp. 76-77, 83). Portes and Zhou suggest that under those circumstances, children of immigrants are becoming more and more vulnerable to assimilation into the norms of the inner-city, and the "adversarial subculture developed by marginalized native youths to cope with their own difficult situation" (p. 83). Identifying with this sector of the American population is bound to bring downward mobility, whereas children who stay "securely ensconced in their coethnic community" have a better chance to capitalize "on otherwise unavailable material and moral resources" (p. 96).

Waters' article "Ethnic and racial identities of second-generation black immigrants in New York City" (1994) gives us a closer look at the processes of identity formation among second-generation West Indian and Haitian Americans. Waters considers the impact of class and race on the ethnic identity of these youths, and her findings show that 1) children in inner-city schools who identify with black Americans are not aware that status as a black ethnic conveys higher social status among whites, 2) children with middle-class parents and/or who attend parochial or magnet schools tend to emphasize their ethnic background and distance themselves from black Americans. Waters thus concludes that the process for the later generations of black immigrants might be the opposite of their white predecessors in that "the more socially mobile cling to ethnic identity as a hedge against one's racial identity" while the "less mobile blacks see little advantage to stressing an ethnic identity in the social worlds in which they travel" (p. 817).

Studies on the 'new' immigrants and their offspring emphasize the impact of "ascription by others" as well as factors of race and class in the formation of ethnic identity. The focus is thus quite different from the study of symbolic ethnicity, where ethnic identity is basically a matter of individual choice.

#### 4 . Construction of new ethnic identities

One last section will present studies in the construction of ethnic identities. Two main themes can be seen : 1) the phenomenon of ‘pan-ethnicity’, and 2) the ‘renewal’ of ethnic communities. Strictly speaking, these are phenomena of the collective level, but they do shed light on the process of individual ethnic identity formation. Pan-ethnicity refers to a new ethnic category which incorporates several ethnic groups that did not previously see themselves as affiliated to one another. Espiritu (1992) and Kibria (1997) speak of ‘Asian-American’ ethnicity, while Portes and MacLeod (1996) report the formation of a ‘Hispanic’ identity. These labels are certainly not new, but the point is that from being used by government officials for convenience’s sake, they have become actual identities for individuals who chose to, or were made to espouse them. The study by Alba cited earlier could also fit into this section, if we consider his “European Americans” as a panethnic category.

Although “American Indian” could be also seen as a pan-ethnic label, it is unique in that it has had a long history in the United States, and in the 1990s saw a surge in people using the term to describe their ethnic identity. In *American Indian Ethnic Renewal* (1996), Nagel presents a historical review of significant events that contributed to the surge of “Red Power” and the re-energization of American Indian ethnic culture and identity. Nagel argues that the Red Power movement, which mainly took place in the 1960s up to the 1980s, redefined the :

... meaning and worth of “Indian” and was the primary reason for the dramatic increases in American Indian self-identification reflected in the US Census. It was the authority, potency, and symbolic force of the Red Power movement that rehabilitated and reanimated American Indian ethnicity, making it one of the most attractive ethnic options in America today (ibid : 247)

Phenomena examined in this section clearly show the importance of distinguishing the dimension of identity from that of culture in the analysis of ethnicity. Without such a distinction, one would be at a loss of how to explain the emergence of new ethnic categories which encompass culturally heterogeneous groups, or the revival of an ethnic identity preceeding the renewal of cultural traditions.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this report was to present a critical and comparative evaluation of the various theoretical frameworks and concepts that are used, as well as issues that are



studied in the current field of ethnic studies. We saw that on the theoretical front, scholars are reviving discussion on the concept of assimilation, and are stressing the need for new theories to analyze the experience of the post-1965 immigrants and their offspring. Scholars are still divided on how to explain the presence of ethnic identities among the descendants of older European groups, some predicting eventual disappearance, others opting for persistence in the form of 'reconstructed' identities. The constructionist approach is also used in the study of 'pan-ethnicity' and movements of ethnic revival, the relation between the political mobilization of ethnic groups and individual ethnic identities.

The literature survey revealed several interesting trends. One is that ethnic identity within an ethnic group is sometimes measured regardless of age or generation. What can we learn from the findings of such a measurement? Even when generations are taken into account, the analysis of the findings can be ahistorical, and therefore does not enlighten us as to the cause of generational differences. Another trend is that the ethnic identity of an individual is still very often equated with his/her observable behavior, such as ethnic association membership, residential area or place of employment. We saw that identity and culture should be analyzed as two distinct concepts. On a more general level, we found that many articles start out with a promising theoretical discussion, only to disappoint at the end by listing the findings without analyzing or discussing them. We were also often misled by the titles of articles : some articles look quite relevant with titles such as "Second-generation (ethnic group name) and identity" when they actually consist of reviews of other people's studies.

As the reader can see, we were highly selective in our review. One criticism might be that only a few of the ethnic groups in North America were represented, but our objective was not to discuss any specific case for the sake of curiosity. Rather, we chose the studies that best illustrate certain processes or the relevance of some factors. It is also true that once we applied the rigorous criteria that we outlined at the beginning of this report, only an astonishingly small number stood the test among the hundreds of studies which we sifted through.

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