

SOCIAL EYES



A publication featuring sociological work by
Boston College undergraduates

Issue 2, Fall 2010

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We are currently accepting
submissions for the Spring 2011
issue!

Editor's Introduction

We are proud to introduce the second issue of *SocialEyes*, Boston College's undergraduate sociological journal. Since the release of our first issue (Fall 2009), we have expanded in several directions. We have not only streamlined our publication process, but also worked to establish ourselves more fully at Boston College. In addition, we have recruited more staff members, advertised more widely, and had the privilege of being featured in a newsletter by the American Sociological Association, which focused on the benefit of undergraduate research journals. These many achievements have given us a positive outlook for the future of *SocialEyes* and functioned to broaden our audience.

The primary intention of *SocialEyes* is to provide a sociological forum for the wider Boston College community and to recognize the students who have put in the time and effort to examine the wide-range of important and socially relevant issues facing our society. Despite our sociological orientation, the journal is not restricted to formal research papers by sociology students. One of the strengths of sociology is that it is truly interdisciplinary; something we hope this journal will reflect as it moves forward. In order to do so we have reached out to multiple academic departments on campus and advertised ourselves to the student body at large. In addition, we have encouraged more creative submissions including free-writes, reflections, artwork, and poetry in the hopes of creating a more well-rounded and expressive journal.

This newest issue of *SocialEyes* features the original work of five spectacular Boston College students. We appreciate the patience and cooperation they have shown throughout the publication process and we hope they are as excited as we are to see their work in print. Furthermore, this issue could not have been completed without the hard work and dedication of our staff and faculty, who have done everything from editing to advertising and even committed some of their vacation time this summer to ensure the publication of this issue. The help and support of the Sociology Department greatly aided our attempt to reach the wider student body and make this journal sustainable. In particular, we must thank Deb Piatelli, whose enthusiasm and expertise has been a constant presence in the life of the journal. Her guidance and support have been a tremendous resource for us and we sincerely appreciate all that she has done.

We hope you enjoy Issue 2 of SocialEyes!

Co-Editors-in-Chief
Henisha Patel and David Watsula

Not What I Appear: The Racial Formation of a Colombian-Filipino

By Andrew Velásquez

A number of critical race scholars have documented the varied stages and processes different “racial groups” move through in developing a “racial identity” (Tatum 1997). Upon first meeting me, most people assume that I am Latino due to my brown skin. While this is true, that is only a part of my identity. My father was born and raised in Colombia for the majority of his childhood. My mother, on the other hand, was born and raised in the Philippines until the middle of her teenage years. This allows many descriptors to be applied to my race and ethnicity. I have been called Colombian and Filipino, Latino (or Hispanic) and Asian/Pacific islander, or biracial. In this reflection, I draw primarily on Beverly Daniel Tatum’s (1997) work in an attempt to offer a glimpse into the process of my identity construction as a biracial individual in America. This process wasn’t easy. It took confronting others, as well as myself, in order to figure out who I am and how *I want* to be identified.

The process of identity development

For as long as I can remember, I was aware of the fact that I had parents from two very different cultures. Above the dining room table in my home, there is a large world map. Often times, while having dinner, we would have conversations about what life was like “back in the old country.” Depending on which one of my parents was conveying the story to myself and my sister, the stories differed reflecting two totally different lives, sets of cultural practices and customs, foods and different dress, education, and languages (amongst other things).

For the most part, I identify myself more as Latino and in some ways, I *feel* more Latino than I do Asian/Pacific islander. I look “stereotypically Latino¹,” most people assume that I am Latino, and never once in my life has someone walked up to me and asked me if I was Filipino or of Asian descent. When people asked, “you’re Latino, right?” I would almost always respond “yes,” and tend to ignore my Filipino side. It was a matter of convenience, rather than having to explain my cultural history in depth.

Similar to both of my parents, I am bilingual. That being said, I speak Spanish and English, like my father but I was never taught Tagalog, my mother’s first language. As critical thinker Tatum (1997) argues, “language is inextricably bound to identity. Language is not only an instrumental tool for communication, but also the carrier of cultural values and attitudes” (136). Therefore my choice of language as well as being “phenotypically” seen as Latino, has influenced how others have identified me and how I have typically identified myself. Growing up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I was immersed in a very diverse society where there is a large Latino population, and this allowed me to share a common bond with many other people that identify as Latino as well.

Entering into a private high school that was predominately white was a culture shock. There was a large racial divide between students of color and white students. Students of color almost always spent their free time in the area of the school that was dubbed “Little Africa.” Never once in high school did I see a white student spend time there for much more than a few minutes and I cannot recall ever meeting a white student there. This was the first time that my racial identity as a person of color became more apparent and I felt a need to be accepted into a group of my racial peers.

During the first few free class periods I spent in “Little Africa,” I would often hear the words, “what are you?” These experiences were the first time that my racial peers did not just assume I was Latino and took a general interest in my ethnic identity. I was able to delve into the explanation with a sense of ease and explain that I am Colombian and Filipino. It was during these high school years, that I started to form a real sense of pride in my biracial identity. It was also a time where I encountered racial stereotypes from others. Tatum (1997) argues that the *encounter stage* is a period where people of color develop a desire to find support from other people of color that are having similar experiences. With the support of my racial peers, I was able to fight back against the racial stereotypes that I experienced and become more comfortable speaking out against racially charged situations. Though this racially segregated free space in my high school might seem to have a negative connotation (as some argue it furthers segregation and racism), I learned to find pride in my cultures and myself and eventually feel more comfortable and confident in inter-racial spaces. While I always embraced being a person of color, I have found a certain pride that I did not have before: a biracial pride in both my Colombian and my Filipino identities.

The lack of diversity at my university, at first, amazed me. It was much like my high school, which was something I was hoping to avoid. So during my freshman year of college, I elected to live on the Mosaic multicultural floor. The Mosaic floor is a set of two floors in a dormitory that is dedicated to spreading diversity and racial and ethnic understanding by volunteering to live with a diverse group of students. This experience gave me exposure to many people of different cultures and backgrounds than my own. The floor next to mine, however, was composed of students that identified as white (many of whom became my friends). Many of them would often ask me, “Why is there a

multicultural floor? We should have a white floor,” not realizing that they already did and that many of the spaces on campus were “white spaces” (Gallagher 2003). When students that lived on the floor defended the idea of spreading diversity and brought up the topic of AHANA (a support organization for students of color on campus), we would often hear “well, why isn’t there a white student association?” I came to realize that these students did not understand the experiences of students of color on a predominately white campus and the need for “safe spaces” (Tatum 1997) where students can share experiences and gain support. These students did not consider how “being white” enabled them to occupy predominately white spaces in most, if not all, facets of their lives. This privilege is often ignored and misunderstood in our society. Often times, white individuals see their lives as being normative, and do not realize the advantages they have in various sectors of our society. Critical race and feminist scholar, Peggy McIntosh (2010) states, “I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to be oblivious” (100). Hence, these “white privileges” are those things that white individuals receive whether they realize it or not.

When people become aware of my biracial identity, there is typically blatant stereotyping. Often times, I am called Mexican, and this label is often used in a derogatory fashion. Unfortunately, in the United States, there is a negative connotation often associated with Mexican—the assumption that one is an “illegal immigrant” (Tatum 1997). When I was a biology major with a pre-med concentration, I would often hear “Asian jokes” drawn from the “model minority” stereotype (Wong and Halgin 2006) related to how “we are all good at math and science.” Although I am a relatively good student, I have had my fair share of ups and downs in the academic realm. I do not

always perform well in school, and I am by no means good at math or science. In our society, the model minority stereotype encourages Asians to enter these fields whether they feel inclined to do so or not and when they do not succeed they are seen as (and sometimes feel) inferior (Wong and Halgin 2006). When jokes were to be made about being Latino, I was seen as Latino, and when it was easier to make me the subject of jokes by looking at me as an Asian student, then I was seen as Asian.

All this negative stereotyping made me defensive towards people that would make comments about *how I should be*. I would often lash out in order to defend myself. This may seem strange, but this gave me more pride in being who I am. Being different from the stereotypes and finding empowerment in not fitting what others viewed of me, and what others assumed from the color of my skin made me have more pride in being biracial. Now I always take the time to explain to others that I am Colombian and Filipino.² I realize that there is a certain “fluidity” to my identity (Rodriguez, Castro, Garcia, Torres 1991). I am both from the United States, and Colombian as well as Filipino.³ I cannot fully identify as any of these, but tend to consider all of them at the same time.

Tatum (1997) argues that a person of color, upon encountering racism, develops a strong desire to surround oneself with symbols of racial identity and support of racial peers in order to find ways to mediate racial stereotypes. This *immersion stage* has encouraged me to surround myself with cultural symbols and I have shown this through my body art and tattoos that represent who I am. I have four culturally related tattoos that mark me outwardly as being proud of who I am, where my parents come from, and the cultures that I have grown up in. Two represent my Filipino culture: a large dragon on my right shoulder blade (dragons appear throughout Filipino mythology and cultural

symbols) as well as the sun from the Filipino flag placed right above my heart. To represent my Colombian heritage, I have the Colombian national motto on my left shoulder blade and on my right arm, the word, *orgullo*, which is Spanish for pride. These are daily reminders of who I am and where I come from. My racial identity is in the forefront of my mind every day and I am proud to be a person of color.

“To find one’s racial or ethnic identity, one must deal with negative stereotypes, resist internalizing negative self-perceptions, and affirm the meaning of ethnicity for oneself” (Tatum 1997). I feel that I have accomplished this by rejecting the stereotypes around me, and accepting who I am as a biracial individual. It is important for me to be able to express my own racial and ethnic identity because as a society, people tend to be focused on appearance and racial identity. By being able to express my own ethnic identity, it gives way for people to understand me better because my ethnic and racial identities are essential to whom I am as a person.

At this point in my life, I would have to say that I am in the *internalization* stage where I have a sense of security and comfort about myself (Tatum 1997). While I am secure in who I am, it was a process in getting to where I am today. While I readily speak out against racism that is directed towards me, I still feel that it is hard to speak out every time. Race tends to be a very taboo subject and I feel that when I hear or experience racially charged situations, I tend to react more when it is directed toward me or someone I know. I feel that being a person of color, I am often reminded that my “race” adds to my oppression as an individual. I would not say that I have yet reached the *commitment* stage, as I am not actively trying to end racism on a larger scale. I am working hard to be more active in this area.

Yet I am more than my racial and ethnic identities. The matrix of domination (a term coined by critical feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins) comes into play in each one of our lives. There are social hierarchies based on race, gender, sexuality and social class in this country. I am a biracial, male, heterosexual, and come from a middle class family. All of these descriptors work in conjunction with how I am privileged or oppressed by the social hierarchies that are in place in our society. For example, as a biracial person of color I do not have racial privilege. Yet my social class status can often mediate racism. People judge me based on my appearance and unfortunately in America my brown skin disadvantages me. I need support and comfort from other people of color and from white individuals who are attentive to how racism operates within society. I am also a heterosexual male, which puts me in a position of privilege in certain contexts. If we hope to create a society that is more egalitarian, free from discrimination and inequality and improve our encounters with others, we need to develop more in-depth understanding of how privilege (and oppression) operates within society and creates very different lived experiences for each of us.

Notes

¹Latino is a term that is used to describe individuals with origins from Spanish speaking countries. It attempts to bridge many people who have very different cultural customs, traditions and varying ways of speaking Spanish (amongst other things). There is not a Latino culture, because not only do Latino cultures vary from country to country but, they can vary by region to region in the same country. Latinos are a mix of African and indigenous peoples from varying tribes during the Pre-colonial era, and various types of peoples of European descent.

²I have pride in racially identifying as Latino, but the word itself and what it represents to me, and my understanding of it has certain negative connotations. For that reason, I would rather identify ethnically than racially.

³I rarely identify myself as American. The word American in my mind has certain exclusive connotations. Many people in the United States self identify as being American. To them that means being from the United States and more often than not, it is related to being White. But outside of the United States, the term American can also mean people from anywhere in North or South America. I am more ready to say that I am from the United States than I am American, for this very reason.

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**Where Alienation Happens:
The Isolation of Black Students within the Predominately White University**

By Earl Edwards

This paper offers a glimpse into the findings from a larger study conducted in academic year 2009-2010 concerning the experience of Black, male students at a predominately White university. In this study, I explored these experiences through in-depth interviews with ten men and survey data from a third of the Black male population at one university. While my research focused specifically on the Black male student body in one specific university, literature on this topic suggest these findings are analytically applicable to other Black male experiences at predominately White institutions.

Much of the literature focuses on the experience of the Black student in “white spaces” or the general areas of the predominately White university. Critical race scholar Joe Feagin (1991) argues that the predominately White university can create an unhealthy atmosphere for Black students. In his research, he emphasizes the many ways in which stereotypes, both within the classroom and around the campus, affect Black students at predominately White colleges and universities. Feagin (1991) asserts that negative interactions with White students, White faculty members, White administrators, and the campus police can add to the cumulative level of discrimination Black students face on predominately White campuses. Moreover, such experiences with discrimination are likely to lead to social alienation, which Feagin defines as insufficient quality interactions with other members of the social collective (Loo and Rolison 1986).

Psychologist Walter Allen (1992) draws on Feagin's definition of social alienation to explain the reason for poor academic performance among some Black students at predominately White institutions. Allen (1992) states that, when discussing academic performance problems, experiences of isolation (or alienation) and support seem to be the most serious contributors. Allen (1992) also asserts that Black men perform better at historically Black colleges and universities because of the lack of alienation and discrimination Black students endure on such campuses. My research revealed similar findings: that many Black men are indeed underperforming academically and experiencing social alienation as a result of their interactions with White students, faculty, and administrators on campus. However, I also investigated whether Black students experience alienation within the wider Black community on campus. Are Black students finding support within "Black spaces" that counters the alienation they experience in "White spaces?" Below I share some stories describing these men's experiences in "Black spaces" and how these social experiences have influenced their self-esteem and academic performance in college. All participants' names are pseudonyms.

Diversity within the category "Black"

Earl: "How would you describe the Black community on campus? United? Divided?"

Kevin, senior: "Definitely divided. Only in the sense that once you become educated on the different ethnicities, the culture clubs tend to cultivate a division. Because there is Black, but then there is Haitian American, then there is Jamaican American; all of these different ethnicities where at times if somebody is seen as doing something bad on campus or is seen in a negative light on a certain group then sometime[s] people remove themselves from that group [and] tend to make a subset. They are like well that is not what we do as Jamaicans or that is not what we do as Haitians or that is not what we do as Blacks because... So the

division is there in the sense that sometimes they use their ethnicity to separate different ideas... [then it also] goes back to socio-economics and class. All of the [upper] middle class people know the ins and outs of the upper-middle class life. Whose father does this, whose mother does that...all of the middle class and lower middle class are in the same subset, but they are kind of split three ways.”

Only twenty-seven percent of survey participants felt that the Black community was united on campus. In the abovementioned quote, Kevin states that the cultural differences between those students who identify as Black are weighted more heavily than their racial similarities. Kevin explicitly points to the different ethnicities and socio-economic groups that comprise the Black community as contributing factors in its division. Such divisions thus result in an even smaller cohort of people from which Black men can draw support in response to the alienation they experience in White spaces.

Kevin also suggests that the culture clubs on campus (organizations that tend to draw people together from similar lived experiences) contribute to one’s exclusion from the greater Black community. Though Kevin’s opinion is valid, cultural clubs can also act as a place where Blacks further develop their racial identity (Tatum 2003). Serving as a safe zone for Black students to share their experiences living in a racialized society, culture clubs can facilitate quality interaction in non-Black spaces on campus. In *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, Beverly Tatum (2003) explains that most Black college-aged students are in the *immersion/emersion* stage of their racial development. This stage occurs when an individual attempts to learn about his or her heritage by embracing their respective culture. Students, particularly students of color, use culture clubs and ethnic studies courses as tools to develop their racial identity in a positive environment (Tatum 2003). Once students are able to successfully establish a “sense of security about one’s racial identity,” Tatum states, they are able to

feel comfortable establishing relationships across racial and cultural boundaries (Tatum 2003). Hence, while seeming to “cultivate a culture of division,” these spaces can actively contribute to a more inclusive environment if various groups acknowledge differences and commonality.

The mask of isolation

While culture clubs operate as places in which students can share experience and build community, personal and meaningful conversations with other students in more informal spaces can be just as effective. Survey responses reveal, however, that for Black men in college, meaningful conversations are scarce. Fifty one percent of respondents stated that they were not aware of other Black men’s aspirations and thirty one percent of respondents went as far to say that they only discussed women, sports, and/or music with other Black men. In an interview with Kevin, he confirmed these results and stated that though he wanted to have more in-depth talks with Black men, he found it difficult to go beyond those three subjects.

This lack of meaningful conversations could be attributed to a social facade that both Andrew, a freshman, and Jacob, a sophomore, refer to as a mask assumed by Black men in their interactions with each other and with White students. Below, an excerpt from a conversation with both Andrew and Jacob:

Andrew: “I watch myself when I talk. Like when I am around Black people my White friends can see it now because they see me around Black people and they can see me talk. Just the way I carry myself because that is sort of the way I am most comfortable with because I am from the city, the inner-city. When I talk to my White friends I speak proper.”

Earl: “Is that something you are aware of or is that something you just do?”

Andrew: “I am not aware of it but I just do it. Like in different settings I do different things. It is like putting on a mask so you can fit in and not be questioned or judged.”

Jacob: “I think that a lot of it [not having meaningful conversations] has to do with the way the Black guys think they have to act to maintain an image of being a real Black guy. A lot of people act out and don’t really show their true selves and get into issues that are important because people will think that they are corny and people will think this or that about them. Black men wear a mask with their Black peers on campus.”

Sociologist Prudence Carter (2003) describes the experience of Black students in college as people who are constantly switching from one set of cultural norms to another. With non-Black people on college campuses, Black students often employ dominant cultural capital, which consists of the norms of the middle-White class. Meanwhile the non-dominant cultural capital, or “Black” cultural capital, is used with other Black students. Unfortunately, Black cultural capital has come to view academic success and social mobility as White values, thus these topics have little worth in Blacks’ evaluation of other Black men’s authenticity (Carter 2003). In fact, expressing academics as a personal value could leave a Black man vulnerable to being accused of “acting White” and viewed as not “authentically Black.” Many may avoid sharing their aspirations and displaying their academic side to other Black men, ironically, to avoid being excluded from that same community.

Educational and professional aspirations are two other factors found to be indicators of academic success (Allen 1991). The lack of conversations about future ambitions could make obtaining these goals more difficult. If Black men do not know their peers’ goals, they cannot help their peers to achieve them. Furthermore, the individual with

the goal may feel alone, thus making the steps needed to achieve his goal seem even more difficult.

Promisingly, interview participants Chris and Kevin (both seniors) were two men that felt they had engaged in meaningful conversations during college. They attributed the opportunity to engage in such conversation to an on-campus men's group for people of color called, "Dedicated Intellectuals of the People (DIOP)." On this topic, Chris stated:

"Yea my roommates and I always have great conversations. The group, which you know of, Dedicated Intellectuals of the People, DIOP, is a great forum for great conversations. I try hard to hang around people that have conversations that are meaningful because many of the time[s] our conversations are about women and sports. Our conversations reflect our status in the school. We do not talk about academics; we do not perform well academically. We talk about women and sports and that is what we thrive at."

The other interviewees were not a part of this discussion group. Though Chris and Kevin attributed substantive conversations to DIOP, they both acknowledged that the group consisted of only a small number of men and that they wished to talk to more Black men about their experiences. Kevin expressed disappointment when he talked to other Black men, but could not break past the superficial layer of conversation. According to psychologist Anderson Franklin (1993, 2000), such a lack of meaningful conversations can lead to what he labels the "invisibility syndrome."

The invisibility syndrome and the lack of peer-validation

Even though there were a small amount of Black students at her [his mother's] school, at least when she walked past one [another Black student], he would acknowledge her presence. And I know we are in a diverse, not really, setting but you still walk past people and even if you do or do not know them, they don't say anything, at least in my experience. – **Derrick, senior**

The social alienation Black students reported feeling on campus is in line with the phenomena that Franklin (1993) describes as the “invisibility syndrome.” Invisibility syndrome is the “feeling of not being seen as a person of worth due to repeated racial slights” (Franklin, 1993). Above, Derrick’s statement about walking past other Black students and not being acknowledged reaffirms Derrick’s feeling of not being wanted or valued on campus. The Black students interviewed and surveyed reported feeling devalued as people. Ninety-five percent of survey participants stated racial slights occurred often on campus. Some examples of the common racial slights Black students endure on campus were conveyed in the open-ended survey responses:

A Caucasian woman introduced me to her peers as "the cutest little black thing that she had ever seen. –Junior Survey Participant

I’ve had someone yell the n-bomb at me from a high window. – Junior Survey Participant

Friends of friends were playing Madden — a black lineman jumped offside in the game and the kid shouted out "you stupid nigger!" – Senior Survey Participant

The aforementioned discriminatory acts are clear indications that these students are not being seen as individuals but rather a color. The color of their skin represents who they are supposed to be and how they are supposed to behave; these students’ actual personalities do not matter. They are not even seen as individual persons. Racial slights and having to avoid (or conform) to stereotypes can create a hostile environment as well as lower the student’s self-esteem.

In his article, *Invisibility Syndrome: A Clinical Model of the Effects of Racism on Black Males*, Franklin (2000) emphasizes that other Black men are needed to validate a

Black man's selfhood. He calls such interactions vanity checks, where "steps are taken to seek corroboration from other Black men of experiences and treatment at the hands of the racist society" (Franklin, 2000). On predominately white campuses, however, these vanity checks are not occurring because there is little interaction within the Black community itself. Aside from the men who participate in DIOP, students report a lack of conversations that could lead to mutual validation.

Conclusion

The experiences of the aforementioned Black men illustrate the lack of support Black men have in college even within the Black community. Furthermore, few meaningful connections between Black students hide the low level of support from the Black community.

Black students enrolled at predominately White universities need to create communities within their cultural and political organizations to help reconcile the problems they encounter. In addition to planning events, students should include in these spaces opportunities to share their experiences of being a Black student in college. Black students also need to take a more proactive step in helping themselves by improving their academic standards rather than avoiding or conforming to perceived stereotypes. One way to do this is to start organizing study halls within their cultural and political organizations and establishing grade requirements for leadership positions in order to promote academic success. Though students cannot control the actions of their White peers, they can control their own.

While I feel students need to actively help themselves, the majority of the responsibility for alleviating Black men's social alienation is on the university's

administration. The high levels of racist incidents on campus suggest that the predominately White campus is not a welcoming place for Black men. These predominately White institutions must have academically grounded discussions about race and its effects on the whole student body. These discussions should be institutionalized. If the university takes proactive measures to support diversity and eliminate racism by engaging students, faculty, and administration in dialogue about race and promoting community-oriented campus police departments, students will more likely attribute negative encounters to individuals rather than the whole institution; thereby minimizing the impact of social alienation from the university itself.

Black men are at a very vulnerable state in predominately White colleges and universities. They are underperforming academically and are less involved in extracurricular activities. If universities truly want provide an equitable experience in college, they need to address the barriers that are causing their problems. This paper is just the beginning of the dialogues that are needed and long overdue.

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The Prevalence of Teen Pregnancy in Low-Income Communities

By Meg Quick

Although it has seemed to level off in recent years, teen pregnancy continues to be a problem on the forefront of American consciousness. We are constantly bombarded with stories of young girls giving birth long before graduation. According to Kristin Luker's book *Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy* (1996), while only twelve percent of babies are born to teenagers annually, teenagers represent about one-third of all unwed mothers. In her article *From Welfare Queen to Exploited Teen*, Carolyn Cocca (2002) states that seventy percent of U.S. teens report having engaged in sexual intercourse while in high school (57). The vast majority of teen pregnancies, however, occur in working-class or low-income communities. Affluent teens account for less than one-fifth of all teenage pregnancies, while their poor and working class peers account for the remaining eighty percent (Luker 1996). There is little evidence to suggest that low-income teens are significantly more sexually active than their affluent peers. So why is there such a discrepancy in teenage birth rates? This paper will address the common beliefs surrounding teen pregnancy in low-income communities and provide evidence that constructs a different picture of this situation.

While policymakers have argued for years about the troubles faced by teen mothers— they are less likely to finish school, more likely to end up in a low-paying job, and far more likely to receive some type of government assistance—it is far from clear that all of these consequences are solely the result of giving birth at a young age. The birth of a child certainly puts an additional financial burden on a young woman or family, yet many of the women who give birth as teens are already under considerable

financial stress. This paper argues that it is the cycle of poverty that so many of these teen mothers find themselves immersed in that directly correlates to the disproportionately high rates of teen pregnancy and motherhood in low-income communities.

Teenage parents are more likely to come from a single-parent home than teens who do not become parents (Luker 1996). There are multiple ways in which coming from a single parent home can affect a child's sexual activity. Mignon Moore argues in the article *Sexual Intercourse and Pregnancy Among African-American Girls in High-Poverty Neighborhoods* (2001) that "adolescents in unmarried households who witness their parent's dating or cohabitating while they are learning to deal with their own romantic relationships may model their own patterns of sexual activity after those of a parent" (63). A household that includes unmarried, cohabitating adults provides an example of out-of-wedlock sexual activity. This sense of acceptability around teen pregnancy can be intensified if the teen is his or herself a product of an out-of-wedlock relationship. Low-income families, particularly single parent families, often have parents who work long and unconventional hours that could leave teens unsupervised for hours at a time. Adding to this problem of supervision, budget cuts have all but wiped out after-school activities in urban schools. As journalist Ron Stodghill claims in his article *Poor Kids Need a Sporting Chance* (1999): "When kids pour out of school each day in scores of low-income communities, all that awaits them is the street – no soccer, baseball, or ice skating. They just hang out, while their parents pray that dead-end afternoons won't lead to sex, drugs, or violence. Most teenage pregnancies happen between two and five in the afternoon." Perhaps these low-income teens are just engaging in the same behavior their affluent peers would, given the opportunity.

Luker (1996) states that “poor and minority teens are also at greater risk of early childbearing because they live in poor neighborhoods in which virtually all the people are poor and members of minorities, and in which they can see few if any successful role models” (116). By always subjecting the poor to the middle-class microscope, we sometimes forget that the poor often occupy a distinct subculture. As a result, the middle-class expects the poor to adhere to their definitions of morality and appropriate behavior. Teenage pregnancy, which remains fairly rare and often stigmatized in mainstream (read: middle-class) culture, may not be viewed the same way in poor communities. Prevalence oftentimes leads to acceptability, and if low-income teens are surrounded by both adults who were once teen parents and peers who are now teen parents, their own pregnancy is going to be far more acceptable. This is especially true if they do not perceive the other teen parents to be significantly worse off than they are.

Boston College Sociology Professor Lisa Dodson interviewed pregnant teens and teen mothers in the Boston Public Schools for her book *Don't Call Us Out of Name*. Her participants offered multiple reasons for why they get pregnant, “sometimes you don't have [contraception], sometimes you don't think about keeping it on you, and sometimes guys don't want it around” (1998:84). Meanwhile, the previous conservative administration advocated for abstinence-only sex education. Federal law under President Bush actually refused federal funding to comprehensive sex education programs, which combine abstinence with information about contraceptives. While schools and states can privately fund their own comprehensive sex education programs, urban public schools often do not have the additional money to fund sex education programs. Conservatives also cut funding for programs such as Planned Parenthood that provide inexpensive or free contraceptives to low-income women, especially low-

income teens. Many young women who utilize clinics such as Planned Parenthood do not have the luxury of obtaining birth control from private insurers and family physicians, leaving them without much needed contraceptives.

As previously shown, even when affluent teens become pregnant, they are far less likely to carry the baby to term. This can partially be explained by a difference in moral views on abortion, but there are other factors in play as well. Affluent teens today typically have a life plan that involves graduating from high school, some sort of higher education, a career, and then marriage and children. It is unarguably far more difficult to finish high school and to attend college while caring for a child, even with financial support from relatives. Teen parents in affluent communities would also face higher levels of scrutiny from adults and peers. The expected life path for many low-income teens is a far cry from that of affluent teens. College is frequently out of the question, and careers are too often replaced by dead-end jobs. In this sense, affluent teens have far more to lose by giving birth than poor teens do. Many poor teens assume that the birth of a child would not significantly alter their opportunities in life. While a middle-class microscope can conjure up a long list of consequences, many of these are simply irrelevant to poor teens. Because they perceive a greater scope of consequences from their pregnancy, affluent teens would most likely be more open to the idea of an abortion.

Policymakers argue that across the board teen childbearing has a slew of negative consequences for both mother and baby. As Kathleen Harris states in her book, *Teen Mothers and the Revolving Welfare Door*: “Compared to women who delay childbearing beyond their teen years, women who have their first child as a teenager attain less education, work less, earn less, are more dependent on federal aid, have less

support from a husband, have more children, and spend more time as a single mother (1997:1). Officials interpret these statistics to mean that it is the pregnancy and subsequent birth – not any pre-existing circumstances – that cause these young women to attain less education, work less, and become more dependent on federal aid. According to this reasoning, preventing teen pregnancy would in turn decrease the number of people dependent on federal assistance, and in the minds of many, thus decrease the number of people living below the poverty level.

Many policymakers fail to take into account that this sample of teen mothers they are drawing from – with less education and a greater dependency on federal aid – are coming almost exclusively from low-income communities. This approach is framing the experience of poor teen mothers as the experience of teen mothers across the board – and thus framing the pregnancy and birth as the cause of all these women’s problems. Not only does this approach disregard any structural inequality that may put these women at a disadvantage, but by placing the blame on an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, officials are in fact absolving themselves, and middle-class America as a whole, of any responsibility for these women’s struggles.

While it is true that teen mothers receive less education than their peers, it is not necessarily true that teen mothers receive less education than their peers *because* they are teen mothers. Recent studies have shown that young women dropping out of school before getting pregnant is far more common than we think. In his article *Do Poor Women Have a Right to Bear Children?* Christopher Jencks found that teen mothers have often had school troubles long before they became pregnant. “Their grades and test scores have usually been below average, and they are more likely to have been in disciplinary trouble than women who delay motherhood. Many attend schools where

below-average students are written off at an early age” (1995:43). This long list of problems leads many teen mothers to quit school prior to becoming pregnant. Similarly, rather than recognizing the direct correlation between lower levels of education and lower paying jobs, many people attribute these low paying jobs to the birth of a child at a young age. It is not the number of children you have, but your level of education that directly affects the positions for which you are qualified. A teenage mother without a high school diploma is going to be qualified for the same positions as a non-mother with the same education and skills. By focusing on the addition of a baby, policymakers are able to stray away from the greater issue of inequality in our educational system.

Another key point that politicians press is the increased health risks faced by both teen mothers and their babies. It is true that young mothers are less likely to begin prenatal care on time, and that babies born to teen mothers are at greater risk for complications during pregnancy and low birth weights (Luker 1996). The quality of healthcare is a crucial factor in determining the outcome of a pregnancy and a baby’s well-being. There are three primary issues faced by poor women that have the ability to alter their health during pregnancy. First, low-income women often have a difficult time obtaining even the most routine of medical and prenatal care. Healthcare for the uninsured (typically low-income employed women are in jobs with no health insurance) is often restricted to visits to free clinics and the emergency room. Second, poor women typically live in situations more tenuous and stressful than women of other income levels. Third, poor women typically have very limited diets, and are usually unable to afford the vitamin-rich and often expensive foods that are best for a baby’s development (Luker 1996). Luker also discusses how Medicaid can exacerbate these health problems

due to the complicated nature of the eligibility criteria, which can cause poor women to be without benefits until well into the pregnancy (117).

Jencks (1995) argues that with or without pregnancy, most teen mothers are ill-prepared for self-sufficiency. “When a teenager comes from a troubled family, has learned little in school, and has left school without graduating, she is unlikely to be economically self-sufficient no matter how long she delays motherhood” (43). The issue seems to be that public opinion has decided that teen pregnancy sets one up for a certain kind of life, not that a certain kind of life sets one up for teen pregnancy.

One of the biggest problems faced by today’s teen mothers is that far too often morality plays a role in economic policy – particularly in terms of welfare. According to Harris (1997), working-class families are beginning to experience financial insecurity in their own lives. This is creating intolerance for the welfare system and the support it provides to teenage women having children outside of marriage. Also, this insecurity is resulting in a reversion of working-class families to the ideals of education, work, and supporting one’s family as essential to American family life (7). At the time of its creation in the middle of the twentieth century, though, government assistance was geared toward “respectable mothers”, almost exclusively for widows (Luker 1996). We have since come to a point where the majority of women on public assistance are not widows but single mothers – a fact that apparently does not sit well with the American public.

Certain politicians argue that welfare acts as an incentive for poor teens to have children. This argument, presuming that anyone can be fully supported by the state, clearly ignores the vast discrepancy between public assistance and a living wage. Their solution for this teen pregnancy problem is to restrict access to welfare, especially in the

case of teens. The Republican-proposed Contract with America (1995) advocates the elimination of all welfare payments, public housing, and food stamps to children born to unwed teenage mothers. In their book, *Contract with America* (1994), the Republican National Committee explains this philosophy:

Republicans understand one important thing ignored by most Democrats – incentives affect behavior. Currently, the federal government provides young girls the following deal: Have an illegitimate baby and the taxpayers will guarantee you cash, food stamps, and medical care, plus a host of other benefits. As long as you stay single and don't work, we'll continue giving you benefits worth a minimum of \$12,000 a year (\$3,000 more than a full-time job paying minimum wage). It's time to change the incentives and make responsible parenthood the norm and not the exception (75).

There are a few flaws with this reasoning. First, instead of interpreting the fact that federal benefits are higher than minimum wage as the minimum wage being far too low to support a family, *Contract with America* interprets this as federal benefits being too generous. According to the Crittenton Women's Union Economic Independence Calculator, for a young mother in Boston to become economically independent (able to pay for housing, food, utilities, transportation, child care, etc.) she must make \$45,310 annually, or \$21.45 an hour – a far cry from the current Massachusetts minimum wage of \$8 an hour. Second, *Contract with America* fails to mention that were a single mother to marry, she would most likely be ineligible for benefits even if the combined income of she and her husband were not enough to support their family. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, even if this were a realistic deterrent and removing teen mothers from the welfare rolls would decrease the rates of teen pregnancy, what would happen to the teens that are already pregnant, or have already given birth? If conservatives argue that teens are unable to support themselves and their children financially because of low-paying jobs and a lack of education, it is a contradiction to deny them support.

Keep in mind that this removal of benefits would not only affect mothers. It would be their children that would be without the food stamps necessary to eat, a housing subsidy for shelter, or a welfare check for clothing and other basic necessities. Assuming that even the most radical do not believe that the rescinding of welfare benefits would wipe out teen pregnancy entirely, what is the plan? The state and federal government cannot take care of all these children whose mothers cannot support them without some form of government assistance. Would they put all of the children in foster care and orphanages? The only financial difference is that as wards of the state, it would then become the state's responsibility to ensure that these children get the education they need to be contributing members of American society. If this is something the government is willing to invest in, we should be investing in it now.

Policymakers are in fact proposing a band-aid solution for a problem that runs much deeper. By separating teen mothers from the poor youth, they are failing to address the real institutional inequalities that perpetuate the cycle of poverty not only among teen parents, but also among those teens who postpone parenthood as well. Focusing on teen parenthood as a primary cause for poverty—and thus abstinence-only sex education and the denial of welfare benefits as the solution—masks many of the real problems facing America's poor today. These policies are assuming, incorrectly, that our society is operating on an equal playing field, that everyone has equal opportunities, and that if a 'reckless decision' renders a teen unable to achieve the American dream that we so firmly believe in, that is neither the fault of the public nor the responsibility of the public to assist them.

If the government is so concerned with teen mothers not working, then they need to provide the poor with job training so they can adequately support their families

without public assistance. In an effort to convince ourselves that we live in a society of equal opportunity, where anyone can make it if only they push themselves hard enough, and perhaps in an effort to justify our own success as a matter of hard work and willpower, we have unfairly held the poor accountable for their own situations. We ignore the glaring structural inequalities that both cause and perpetuate poverty in the United States. When we convince ourselves that the poor are poor due to some fault of their own, we simultaneously absolve ourselves of the responsibility to help them. It will not be until we step back and allow ourselves to see that the American dream does not exist, at least not for everyone, and that the structural inequalities in our country run so deep that thousands of children each year are in danger before they are even born, that we will be able to make any true progress toward ending poverty.

In conclusion, poverty does relate to teen motherhood—just not in the way it is traditionally framed. Teen pregnancy is frequently a result of a life without opportunity or the ability to move oneself out of their present situation. Young women who become pregnant do not suddenly drop from the honor roll and quit school. Frequently the young women who choose to get pregnant, or who choose not to care enough to actively prevent it, have long given up on any hopes of an education bettering their life. Young women do not get pregnant and suddenly become dependent on federal support. The young women who become pregnant have often been on and off welfare for most of their lives, and would continue to flounder beneath the poverty line even without having a child. Many of the young women who become teen mothers would not have been better off had they waited twenty, fifteen, ten, or even five years to have a child. Many of the young women who become teen mothers are doomed from the start by a system that caters not to their needs, but to the needs of the ever-shrinking middle-class.

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**Longing To Belong:
Exploring Bicultural Ethnic Identity Construction in Chinese Young Adults
in Colombia**

By Catalina Tang

If you grow up with two different cultures and languages, to which society and culture do you ultimately belong? Such is the question of identity facing many bicultural Chinese young adults living in Colombia. While having a bicultural ethnic identity can benefit individuals by providing competence in both cultures, it can also cause conflict and psychological stress (Sung 1985). Bicultural ethnic identity is a topic of great relevancy not only because of the high degree of complexity when individuals are exposed to cultures, but also because it affects their behavior and psychological competence.

Ethnic identity formation has recently become a topic of interest to a great number of researchers, especially in the field of psychology. The process of ethnic identity formation and development in individuals, bicultural, and multicultural individuals is difficult and almost impossible to capture accurately through quantitative measures. Challenges have emerged regarding the consistent use of terminology, theoretical distinctions, and measurements of ethnic identity. Because ethnic identity formation is influenced by a great number of contextual and social factors that are difficult to control and assess, ethnic identity affinity scales can be helpful yet imprecise and inaccurate. Latent variables such as ethnic identity or racial identity are not directly observable and there will always be a certain amount of measurement error because instruments are imperfect attempts to measure complex variables and will underestimate the effects of ethnic identity (Cokley 2007). While ethnic identity

measurement scales have been created and used to assess ethnic identification across cultures, these scales have failed to understand factors such as psychosocial pressures, racial and cultural make up of the community, assimilation versus multicultural policies, and personal experiences of discrimination.

This paper is an excerpt from a larger study conducted over the Summer of 2010 through the McNair program that explored how Chinese young adults living in Colombia negotiate or combine these dual identities and cultures in their daily lives. Using a qualitative approach, I conducted online focus groups and follow-up semi-structured online interviews, to assess the process of bicultural ethnic identity construction. Past research studies in the social sciences field reveal that focus groups have provided opportunities for participants to engage in acquisition of knowledge, insight, and solidarity through collaborative conversations within the focus group, particularly, in the minority groups affected by the issues at hand (Chiu & Knight 1993). My sample consisted of eight young adults between the ages of 18 and 25, born to either a father or a mother of Chinese descent and who have lived in Colombia for the most part of the lives. All of the participants are living in major urban cities in Colombia. Six out of the eight participants are living in Medellin city, and the two remaining participants are young adults living in Bogota and Cartagena. Three participants out of eight are biracial or racially mixed of a Chinese father and Colombian mother, one participant was born and raised in Medellin to both Chinese parents, and four participants were born to Chinese immigrants in China and migrated to Colombia at a young age. Participants were recruited from an online Facebook group.

Background on the Chinese community in Colombia

Chinese immigration to Latin America and the Caribbean was characterized by two major waves of migration that took place between the middle of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century. The first involved a massive agricultural migration, also called, coolie trade or '*Trata Amarilla*' (yellow traffic), and the second wave, parallel to the Chinese Exclusion Act in the United States during the decade of the Great Depression, included free and working-class artisans and traders who migrated to Latin America and the Caribbean (Hu-DeHart 1999; Look Lai 1999).

Whites and blacks were racially identified but the racial construction given to the Chinese was unclear. While free blacks were explicitly identified by race, Chinese coolies were often placed within the white or black racial category or even identified by their coolie's legal status such as '*Asiático libre*' (Asians or coolies serving recontracts), and '*Asiático colono*' (coolies still serving out the original term) (Hu-DeHart 1999). Racial identifications for the Chinese coolies were not made or distinguished from black and white.

In 1976, Ho Ming Chung published an article about Chinese communities throughout all of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Taiwan-sponsored publication recorded the growth of the Chinese population of several Latin American countries. Between 1950 and 1967, Colombia had a population growth from 650 to 1,000 Chinese individuals (Ho 1976). However, Ho did not make clear the source of his numbers nor make any distinction between immigrant or native born, citizen or alien, pure or racially mixed. Differences in the definition of who precisely is counted as 'Chinese' and what appropriate terms should be used, 'overseas Chinese', Hispano-Chinese, 'Anglo Chinese', were major challenges in identifying the Chinese population (Kent 2003).

Because Latin American censuses typically do not count or enumerate people by race or ethnicity, it becomes difficult and challenging to count and find the Chinese community residents in Colombia and Latin America. The Census of 2005 in Colombia only records Indigenous groups as ethnic minority groups in Colombia and does not take into account Chinese ethnic groups as a minority (DANE 2005). As a result, additional state funded programs and organizations that typically aid the transition and adaptation of the Chinese community are not available because their presence is not even recorded in the census.

Most of the Chinese immigrants have settled in major cities and have also established Chinese restaurants as major occupations and primary source of income. A quick search of the yellow pages in Medellin city shows that there are 65 Chinese restaurants (Yellow Pages 2010). There is no exportation of major Chinese products or produce, or implementation of language and culture programs at school or outside of school. The only instances when Chinese community members gather consist of cultural celebrations and banquets such as New Year's, August Moon Festival, and traditional wedding banquets that take place once or twice a year. Chinese young adults grow up in urban communities without many cultural choices to learn more about their culture, history, and traditions, except through their families.

What is ethnic identity?

Definitions across psychological studies have a wide range of definitions of *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity*. *Ethnicity* refers to a characterization of a group of people who see themselves and are seen by others as sharing (a) a common history and culture, (b) similar physical features, and (c) interacting with each other and establishing

boundaries with others (Fleming, Manson, Moran & Somervell 1999; Cokley 2007). Theoretically, the term *ethnic identity* refers to the commitment to an ethnic group and engagement in its cultural practices (i.e. customs, religion).

It is important to draw the distinction between ethnic identity and racial identity. Unlike ethnic identity, racial identity and categories are not sociological constructs connoting explicit behaviors or traits. Instead, racial categories are sociopolitical constructions that society uses to aggregate people on the basis of biological characteristics (Helms 1990). It is important to differentiate these terms since the focus of this study is framed in the bicultural ethnic identity and not racial identity.

Ethnic identity formation

Ethnic identity construction is best understood as a dynamic and constantly evolving process. Individuals participate in a multidimensional process played out by ethnic groups and the larger society. As individuals shape and re-shape their self-definition and culture, ethnic identity formation is closely associated with the issue of boundaries (Nagel 1994). Research has shown that individuals' conception of themselves along the ethnic lines is not static, but rather dynamic, and situational (Waters 1990; Barth 1969). Furthermore, this dynamic process or *layering ethnic identity* is a product of social ascriptions and interactions between the individuals' ethnic identity and the views or ethnic identity perceptions held by others about the individual's ethnic identity (Barth 1969).

One of the most prominent works in identity research is Berry's acculturation model. Berry and his colleagues (1987) proposed a theoretical perspective that assesses the behavioral changes when in contact with two different cultures. Two important

questions derived from this cultural contact arise: (1) is it important to maintain my original cultural heritage? and (2) is it important to engage in intercultural contact with other groups, including members of the dominant culture? According to Berry (1997), if both cultural maintenance and contact are important, the individual is *integrated*; if neither of them is important to the individual, *marginalization* takes place. If the individual is only concerned with maintaining his or her culture, *separation* occurs. And if importance is only given to cultural contact, the individual is *assimilated*. Berry's model provides a strong theoretical framework for assessing bicultural ethnic identity construction through acculturation yet it examines it as a static dual dichotomy. Furthermore, Berry's acculturation strategies serve as a guideline of outcomes in identity negotiations, but fail to explain the extent to which individuals assimilate, what it means to integrate, or how ethnic identity is achieved (Ward 2008). In addition, acculturation strategies are limited to acculturating groups that include migrants, sojourners, refugees, asylum-seekers and indigenous people (Berry 1997) but not bicultural individuals who grow up at the juncture of two different cultures simultaneously or biracials who negotiate between two cultures and identities at the same time.

Biculturalism literature offers a more integrative approach to how individuals negotiate their dual identity depending on socio-cultural factors present in the environments. LaFromboise et al. (1993) proposed the bicultural competence model where six significant factors contribute to the psychological adjustment and well being of the individual while negotiating between both ethnic identities: (1) knowledge of cultural beliefs and values, (2) positive attitudes towards both groups (3) ability to function effectively in both groups, (4) ability to communicate within both cultures, (5)

ability to behave properly within both cultures, and (6) secured social networks within each culture. The model argues that the foundation of bicultural competence is formed with a well-developed and strong sense of both personal and cultural identity depending on the existing socio-cultural resources available, which the acculturation model does not account for.

In addition to the bicultural competence model, LaFromboise and his colleagues (1993) proposed the *alternation model* of cultural acquisition. This model suggests that it is possible to maintain a positive relationship with both cultures without having to choose between them. The model implies that individuals learn to alternate their behavior to fit into cultures in which they participate and encounter in their daily lives (LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton 1993). In this pattern, bicultural individuals are seen to move between their two cultural groups, which do not overlap, but rather continue to be distinguished from each other, and defined differently from one another. Individuals participating in this model will be less stressed and less anxious than those who undergo thorough process of acculturation and assimilation (Guzman 1986). On the other hand, Birman (1994) identified a blended cultural pattern in which individuals adopt a new identity as a combination of both different cultures.

Importance of exploring bicultural ethnic identity

A substantial body of research has been conducted on the topic of ethnic identity and psychological conflict. Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935) drew attention to the complexity of bicultural individuals and argued that individuals who live at the juncture of two cultures, either by being racially mixed or born in one culture and raised in a second one simultaneously, should be considered *marginal people* or those who suffer

from psychological conflict. Sung (1985) found that children who experienced Chinese culture at home and American culture at school felt forced to choose between what was taught at home and what was commonly accepted by American society. In addition, several studies have also found conflict in Native American adolescents who were raised between both traditional and mainstream culture (Garrett 1996; Little Soldier 1985).

A positive development of ethnic identity supports positive outcomes such as mental and physical health, psychological satisfaction, high self-esteem, competent work performance, and school achievement (Dehyle 19992, Liebkind 2001). These positive outcomes resulting from a successful acculturation also depend on factors such as gender, personality, cultural distance from the host society, coping strategies, and experiences of prejudice, discrimination, and ethnic attitudes of receiving society (Berry 1997). The multifaceted process of ethnic identity construction is highly complex because it is influenced by a great number of social factors. Yet it is important to explore the bicultural ethnic identity construction of these individuals who encounter conflict in their everyday lives and are situated in an unequal level in their academics, and psychological well being compared to their Colombian peers from the mainstream dominant culture.

Selected findings

Findings reveal that biracial as well as first and second generation Chinese or Colombians identify themselves with both cultures. Participants expressed the dominance of one culture over the other one with descriptions of feeling “more Colombian than Chinese.” Furthermore, consistent with several past studies, findings reveal that bicultural Chinese young adults identify with both of these ethnic groups

through (1) participation in ethnic activities, (2) interactions with members of a particular specific ethnic group, and (3) individual perceptions and perceptions and acceptance from the host community.

Identifying a dual identity: perceptions of the self and others

When participants were asked under what circumstances they felt Chinese, Colombian, or both, most of the participants agreed with participation in ethnic activities and interaction with people and members of the particular ethnic group as a key factor that strengthens their identification and sense of belonging to Chinese culture:

I feel Colombian everyday when I wake up, on the other hand, I feel Chinese when I go to the Chinese celebrations and all of us gather to celebrate New Year's, August Moon festival, or when simply there's a Chinese wedding or when they open a new Chinese restaurant. (Juan)

Juan, along with all of the participants expressed how participation in these Chinese community-based cultural celebrations strengthens their sense of identification with being Chinese person. Participants living in Medellin city reported participating in ethnic activities with family and friends from the Chinese community such as New Year's and August Moon once a year.

Moreover, parents were main figures of Chinese culture transmission particularly in biracial individuals. A couple of participants expressed lack of participation in Chinese cultural activities as a result of distance and lack of interaction and contact with their Chinese parent. For example, Flor reported lack of involvement in Chinese cultural activities since contact with her Chinese father was lost since he left to the United States. This correlation between parental interaction and involvement in cultural activities

supports previous research studies that stress the role of parents as key points of cultural transmission. According to Padilla (2006), bicultural individuals often learn about the parents' culture in a social vacuum with little environmental support and home becomes the 'cultural focal point' for most transmissions that involve the culture of their parents.

In addition to participation in cultural activities, perceptions of the host community strengthened and decreased their affinity to Chinese or Colombian ethnic groups respectively:

I feel Chinese, because... even if I don't want to, I mean, people look at me and stare at my eyes and my face more than usual and ask me a lot of questions as if I were a strange bug or something... I feel Chinese because I can't stop people from staring at me or asking me questions. (Flor)

Oh... well, I mean, I feel more Chinese because the way people stare at you in the streets, it's something that tells you that you're not one of them and that you're different from them... and that makes one think that one is not from here... and even more when they call you *Chino Cochino* (filthy Chinese). (Carlos)

Flor expresses feeling Chinese because the host community considers her as such merely based on her physical features of "foreigner" and "Chinese" like. Similarly, Carlos' words illustrate how his identification with feeling Chinese is influenced by the way the Colombian mainstream views him. Strange looks and uttered racial jokes not only decrease identification of feeling Colombian, a resident in the community, but also stereotype the concept and image of a typical Chinese person.

Participation in ethnic activities illustrates Berry's acculturation strategies but fails to acknowledge and account for the impact that perceptions of the host community have on participants' identification. When participants express feeling Chinese when engaging in cultural activities, this corresponds to Berry's (1997) acculturation strategy.

Individuals further explore their heritage culture by partaking in cultural activities such as New Year's and August Moon festival. However, it is unclear to what degree these social and cultural activities impact individuals' desire, behavior, and attitudes in maintaining heritage culture. This merely strengthens identification with the Chinese ethnic group. On the other hand, perceptions and lack of acceptance of the host community seems to influence them greatly in not being able to claim themselves as part of the Colombian community, but as a typical stereotyped Chinese person who does not belong.

Social interactions and oppositional values

Participants' responses revealed that membership and sense of belonging to Colombian culture was associated with (1) number and degree of social interactions with their Colombian peers and friends, (2) acquisition of Colombian nationality, and (3) oppositional values and social behaviors from both cultures reflected in the difficulty to communicate with their Chinese parent(s).

Identifications with the culture, food, music, and interaction with Colombian friends and peers made participants feel more Colombian. Two first-generation Chinese participants stated how acquisition of a Colombian nationality increased their sense of feeling more Colombian. Moreover, participants reported that adapting particular social behaviors accepted in the Colombian mainstream community but not in their Chinese culture at home created conflict:

Everyday it's hard for me because the customs and stuff I learn at home are not very reflected in the ones from the outside. I like the customs from here much better, because it's more lay back, lay back because adult Colombians understand you and knows how you feel as opposed to my Chinese parents that have like another totally different mentality or

ideology that I don't like... sometimes I'd even feel ashamed of bringing my friends to my house because my parents don't like it much and treat them differently. (Pablo)

This quote introduces the question of how oppositional values from Chinese culture and Colombian culture force these bicultural young adults to distance themselves from one of them. While Colombian culture is described by participants as a more "laid back" culture, with less strict parents, friendliness, sympathy, politeness, Chinese culture at home presents almost the opposite from these values: strict parents, lack of expression of affection through physical contact etc. Pablo describes how difficult it is to negotiate and fit into these two ethnic groups that present clashing values. However, one could also analyze Pablo's approach by looking at the degree to which Pablo has assimilated and integrated into the Colombian mainstream community.

Consistent with several past studies, a common theme in the young participant's discussions and interview was cultural and social conflict. Participants' responses also demonstrated evidence of potential conflict when maintaining both of these cultures, especially when trying to communicate and interact with their parents at home and finding difficult to fulfill their Chinese socio-cultural behavior and customs expectations:

Sometimes I feel bored. Feeling Chinese and Colombian makes it difficult to talk to my parents. You know how Chinese people are very traditional and they're not as open-minded to things. They tell me to not do this or do that instead, like don't act friendly with guys because people are gonna think other stuff...Then, sometimes when I don't agree with the way they think, I feel a little bit Colombian. (Clara)

Clara's words illustrate how she is expected to fulfill a specific role and behave properly according to her Chinese parents' ideals. Clara's parents' reactions in rejecting her

behavior influenced by Colombian cultural behaviors and values of friendliness create discomfort and negation of Clara's identity.

Participants' conflict and struggle reinforce previous research studies on conflict and psychological stress that biculturalism causes to individuals. When participants share their parents' disapproval in their Colombian cultural customs, values, behaviors, and social interactions, participants are struggling with the expectations of cultural heritage affinity that their parents are imposing on them. Adolescents complain that their parents want them to be frozen in time and in a culture that they only know from their parents (Padilla 2006). This issue becomes much more complex when trying to communicate effectively with both cultures.

In addition to oppositional values and social behaviors and conduct of both cultures, language fluency and proficiency also affected their interpersonal relationships and interactions with their parents:

Well, my Asian physical features are not as noticeable... that's why it doesn't influence much in my life, the only thing that changes is interacting with my dad or Chinese friends, because I don't speak Chinese, it gets a little bit more difficult to have longer conversations and I don't get close to him. (Juan)

Well I think there is actually one thing that influences me is when I'm talking to my parents and I want to tell them something but I don't know how to say it in Chinese – that bothers me because I can't communicate well with them (Maria)

Juan talks about how having being born racially mixed and without having developed proficiency in his father's tongue affects the relationship and level of interaction with his father. Likewise, Clara voices her struggles in communicating effectively with her parents, but not necessarily preventing her from identifying as Chinese or Colombian.

Participants not only talked about feeling “Chinese” but also feeling like a “Fake Chinese” person and not as authentic because of the perceptions of the Colombian mainstream community as “Chinese” and lack of acceptance as “Colombians.” Two representative illustrations follow:

One time I hopped on a cab and the driver asked me: ‘are you Chinese?’ And I replied: ‘my father is Chinese.’ He asked me if I knew how to speak the language, and I replied with a no... and the cabdriver said to me: ‘you’re a *chino chiviado* (fake Chinese person)’ and laughs. (Juan)

I’d say I feel like Chinese and Colombian because normally I’d be walking down the streets and I feel and see that people are staring at me for a longer period of time than they normally would. But when I start to talk, there are a lot of instances when they ask me if I am really Chinese because I speak like a regular person from Medellin, with the accent from Medellin city. We are *Chinos Chiviados* (fake Chinese people) but more Colombian. (John)

Juan and John’s examples illustrate how the perceptions of a typical Chinese person (fluent in Chinese, slanted eyes, etc) from the Colombian host community influence the perception of these bicultural young adults. When John identifies himself as “unauthentic” Chinese person, John is compromising both cultures that he is part of and expressing preference and dominance for Colombian mainstream culture.

Cultural options and visions of a community

Participants’ comments suggest that ethnic and cultural identification is the product of an ongoing interaction with the environment. A high level of cultural identification involves interaction with members of that particular cultural group as well as necessary conditions and resources that can introduce individuals to the specific culture. Chinese Colombians have very few options to learn and live the “Chinese” life. Without access to Chinese products, vegetables, and merchandise, spaces for religious

practices other than Catholicism such as Buddhism, and Chinese language schools, the Chinese young adults living in Colombia make meaning out of small options.

Participants' responses reflect the knowledge of what they would like to see available in their communities and what they would like the Chinese community to improve.

I like Chinese celebrations a lot because you get to see a lot of Chinese people gathered together. But, honestly, the people gossip a lot. Something happens to you and the whole Chinese community finds out about it, they keep on spreading out the gossip and don't help at all. For example, I know some Chinese people that needed money to open a restaurant and a lot of Chinese people found out, they didn't want to lend him money because he was a stranger... (Clara)

Clara's response suggests that there is lack of solidarity in the Chinese community, which makes the process of organizing and coming together as a community even more difficult. Moreover, disintegration and rivalry among community members does not form or contribute to a positive environment where young adults can develop positive attitudes towards their ethnic identities.

In addition to solidarity, several participants agreed with the need for spaces, resources, and variety and options of occupations that can not only facilitate adjustment of first generation but also provide the environment where individuals can learn and live one's heritage and culture:

Chinese people in Colombia should be more open-minded and there's a lot of rivalry among us. I'd love to see the Chinese community expand and have more activities to do. I'd like to see more options in occupations, not only restaurants, they work everyday non stopping, we need it, because they are not used to the culture, they get bored and the only entertain themselves playing mah jong or going to the casinos. (Maria)

In other words, participants' responses suggest that there are limited cultural options available for them to use, learn, and live the bicultural integrated life with Chinese heritage and values. This indicates that Chinese culture is not widely visible nor its history or culture.

In summary, findings reveal that participants' identification with feeling Chinese or Colombian depend much more than the mere interaction and exploration of their culture, but of the attitudes, perceptions and acceptance from both cultural communities. Participants' responses and statements are surprising because do not quite fit to Berry's (1997) acculturation strategies model, instead, their experiences are better captured in the biculturalism literature where social contextual factors determine the degree to which bicultural individuals are likely to adapt or integrate in both worlds. Participants' identification with both ethnic groups is shaped beyond their active engagement in cultural activities available in the community. Although individuals feel identified with both cultures, participants' do not have control over how both communities at home and outside of home perceive them and label them.

Conclusion

This preliminary exploratory study focused primarily on the ethnic identity construction of individuals through their level of interaction with peers of a specific ethnic community and level of participation in ethnic and cultural customs. Further studies should be considered in analyzing gender roles in Chinese young adults living in Colombia. Female young adults expressed how strict their parents were with their social behaviors as opposed to male participants of the present study. In addition, the small size of the Chinese community and the limited occupations--most of the first generation

immigrants from China are limited to working on Chinese fast food restaurants because of language barrier and lack of skills and education – in order to avoid competition and secure profit with customers, they settle in different neighborhoods, which prevents them from building solidarity as a community. Further research should focus on the development of the Chinese community within the urban cities in Colombia and on how issues of limited occupation, socioeconomic status, and economic situation in Colombia affect the organization of the Chinese community.

Peers are a critical part of adolescent environment; youth who are identified with a specific ethnic culture should have more (and more successful) associations with youth who share a similar ethnic culture (Oetting & Beauvais 1991) Chinese young adults have limited options and resources that can allow them to explore more in depth their Chinese history, culture, and identity. More interpersonal relationships with not only those of Chinese descent, Colombian peers, friends, and bicultural Chinese Colombians should be analyzed. Future studies should examine more in depth how dating and interracial dating does or does not affect the identification of bicultural individuals with a specific ethnic culture and how identity, class, race, and gender influence in their decisions in choosing their partners. Other factors such as migration of these bicultural individuals to more heterogeneous societies or homogenous communities should be looked at more carefully: how does their bicultural ethnic identity change when migrating to other countries?

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Environmental Exploitation of Indigenous and Minority People

By Meghan A. Murphy

For centuries, humans have been exploiting the environment for profitable resources. In recent years, scientific research has shed light on the extensive damage people have wrought on the world around us. Environmental movements have sprung up within the last century, urging the conservation of natural resources and spreading awareness of humans' negative impact on the environment. These mainstream environmental advocates largely focus on the loss of species biodiversity, climate change, and the destruction of scenic natural beauty. What about the people who must bear the burden of our greed? The destruction environmental exploitation brings to indigenous and minority groups is often overlooked and ignored. In Western tradition, "nature and society tend to be thought of as separate domains" when they are really "dynamically intertwined" (Gould and Lewis 2008:3). Rather than examine damage of the natural world separately, people should incorporate the damaging impact on certain groups of people into the environmental discourse. The environmental exploitation of indigenous and minority people is a crucial issue that needs to be at the forefront of environmental movements. Drawing on various case studies, this paper seeks to raise awareness about the incredible devastation that environmental destruction brings to underrepresented peoples around the world. I argue that only when their concerns are fully incorporated into environmental movements will these movements reach the height of its strength and potential and end environmental exploitation and destruction around the world.

Oil tycoons: environmental destruction and land

Oil companies are just one of many perpetrators who destroy the environment for profit and exploit indigenous people. In Ecuador, Quechua Indians are struggling to stop oil exploitation of their ancestral lands, arguing, “petroleum development has been a disaster...generating environmental, social, and cultural crises, and ultimately causing the extinction of indigenous people” (Parenti 2005:32). Similarly, the powerful U.S. oil company Texaco has been causing huge problems for the indigenous people of the northern Amazon. It dumped over 18 million gallons of toxic carcinogenic pollutants into the region’s water supply, damaging fishing, hunting, and agricultural sources. Not only did Texaco destroy precious wildlife, but it placed the existence of these people in jeopardy. One advocate describes the native’s plight, saying, “their lands are being obliterated by western corporations whose goal is to transform living nature into commodities, and commodities into dead capital, treating the environment itself as a disposable resource” (2005:33). Through these actions, Texaco is shouting loud and clear that profit is more important than the survival of a distinct culture and group of people.

A comparable event took place in Nigeria. The Royal Dutch Shell Company began drilling in Nigeria in 1958. The indigenous Ogoni tribe never received the compensation they were promised for the oil. Instead, the Ogoni tribe was subjected to a maze of pipelines and open gas flares. Constant oil spills poisoned the surrounding land. The Ogoni sank deeper into poverty and ecological destruction with every passing year, all because Shell and the Nigerian government wanted to make a profit. The militia cracked down on activists, martyring the leaders and effectively stamping out any protests (Lewis 2008). Unfortunately, Texaco and Shell’s enhancement of profit at the expense of

low-income minority and indigenous groups has become a common problem in the modern world.

Another extreme example of environmental annihilation is mountaintop removal in West Virginia. Entire mountains in the Appalachian mountain range are blown up to get at the valuable coal seams within them. This process contributes to an exorbitant amount of pollution in the region, especially airborne debris, which causes many health problems for the people living around them. The remains left over from the explosion are deposited in valleys, a perturbing process known as “valley-filling” (Biggers 2009). Coal sludge is stored behind shoddily built earthen dams, one of which caused a catastrophic spill that polluted waterways, killed aquatic life, and contaminated the water supply of 27,000 people. Erosion is a natural result of mountain top removal and also leads to waterway pollution (Arif 2009). Mountaintop removal needs only a few large machines to do the job efficiently, and thus has replaced a large amount of coal-mining jobs, leading to increased poverty rates. The coal does not even bring any revenue to the people, as jobs are depleted by increased mechanization in the removal process. Mountaintop removal is a prime example of gross environmental injustice occurring even within the United States. Not only is it damaging the Appalachian people’s health and homes, it has “ripped out the roots of the Appalachian culture and depopulated the historic mountain communities” (Biggers 2009) in the process.

Endangered identity: environmental destruction and culture

Environmental exploitation can also lead to the damage of cultural identity. People tend to “organize their relations to their environments through their subjective thoughts, symbols, images, ideas, beliefs, moral requirements, and rituals” (Tavakolian

2008:258). The Achuar people of Ecuador identify specific people and groups with plants and animals native to their region. For example, asocial or shameful members of the tribe are associated with asocial animals, such as the unfaithful male hummingbird. The nature around them became an important symbolic aspect of their culture, used to describe social relationships and specific characteristics. For example, the Koyukon in Alaska have respectful relationships with the animals they depend upon for survival. This respect encourages a sustainable maintenance of plant and animal populations and ensures survival. For both the Achuar and the Koyukon, belief systems regarding their relationships with animals play a key role in their cultural identity.

Native American religious philosophy views nature as sacred (Barbosa 2008). When European settlers razed their forests and depleted the species they depended on, it was not only their physical survival that was harmed. An integral part of their cultural identity was damaged. For example, when the settlers hunted the buffalo almost to extinction, it affected the whole understanding of the scheme of life and the universe for the Plains Indian tribes (Zwonitzer 2006). Today, when species are killed off through habitat destruction or pollution, environmental groups advocate on behalf of the animals themselves. However, tying the plight of the animals together with the damage being done to the indigenous cultures would show the most complete picture of environmental exploitation.

Native American reservations are often targeted for nuclear waste dumps by the federal government and commercial industry. Presently, the small Goshute Indian reservation in Utah is fighting against a commercial endeavor to “temporarily” place nearly 40,000 tons of high-level radioactive waste on the reservation (Kamps 2010). Meanwhile, the tribal members are already exposed to a high level of toxins from

surrounding industries. Magnesium Corporation pollutes the area with acid clouds, Envirocare dumps nuclear waste nearby, Dugway Proving Ground tests nerve gas, and the U.S. Army stores half of its chemical weapons in the area. This “toxic trend” has destroyed any potential for a real economy for the Goshutes. At first glance, the untrained eye would see the land around Tooele County as barren and lifeless. However, the tribal members feel a deep connection with the land of their ancestors, attaching spiritual meaning and traditions to landmarks and the surrounding natural world. Because of the immense health issues related with these toxins, the tribe may eventually be forced to move from their traditional homeland (Kamps 2010).

Federal agencies allow toxic industries to “target impoverished minorities, so long as the polluting corporation compensates the victims with enough money to ‘live with it’ or relocate elsewhere” (Kamps 2010). In this way they are taking advantage of marginalized groups whose economic insecurities leave them with very few different options (Julian 2004). Forcing this upon a tribe potentially destroys traditions and spiritual beliefs associated with the land. In the Goshute tribe, a woman named Bullcreek says that she feels pressured to move away because of the threat to her health and her family’s health. Bullcreek speaks the “endangered” language of the Goshutes, and forcing her away from her tribal community would threaten the survival of the language all the more. The forcing of the indigenous people of the U.S. to accept health burdens, and destroying the environment that they hold to be spiritually and traditionally essential to life, is an unnerving example of environmental exploitation and injustice. Recently, radioactivity, “because of its disproportionate harmful impact on Native Americans over the past 60 years, has been called the ‘smallpox blanket of the Nuclear Age” (Kamps 2010). European settlers gave blankets infected with the smallpox

virus to the Native American tribes to wipe them out and gain their land and resources. The same thing is happening today, as companies overtly target the tribes with pollution and waste. A similar situation is occurring in Canada. First Nations, comprised of the different Aboriginal groups in Canada, often have communities downwind and downstream of expanding industrial agricultural lands, making them susceptible to farming pesticides and fecal bacteria from animal waste (Mascarenhas 2008).

Both the Native Americans and First Nations are being oppressed for material gain. The common attitude held by corporations and the government is that if the native groups don't like it, then they can move. The cultural value of the land is completely dismissed. Big businesses are not just destroying plant and animal species with toxic waste; they are destroying cultural diversity that is indispensable to society as a whole. As a result, environmental exploitation of minorities will eventually devastate the majority of society as well.

Environmental devastation as an issue of class

Most environmental groups would look at Texaco and Shell's actions and raise hell for the damage done to the rare plants and wildlife in that region, and rightfully so. However, the injustice being done to indigenous people is caught up in the outcry, and if it is discovered, not much is done about it. Why is this? The fact is, "the process by which a profit-driven mass culture preempts people's culture is extending all over the world" (Parenti 2005:32). Low-income people, indigenous peoples, and racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be exposed to environmental hazards (Mascarenhas 2008). The quality of the environment a person lives in is usually proportional to their income: a lower income means lower environmental quality, such as air and water

quality. Lower income countries have worse air quality than middle-income countries. The non-white poor in the U.S., such as those living in Appalachia, are exposed to “the worst air quality, the most noise, the lowest quality housing and schools, etc.” (2008:131).

Vast environmental inequalities have been discovered between social groups in the United States, social groups abroad, and between different countries. For example, in the United States three out of every five African American and Hispanic Americans live near uncontrolled toxic waste sites (Mascarenhas 2008). Fifty percent of Asian Americans and Native Americans live in these locations (2008). Mainstream environmentalists tend to focus on the concerns of the white middle-class, such as the clichéd example of Polar Bear survival. While this is all well and good, the divergent experience of low-income minority and indigenous communities is often not brought into the activists’ discussion (Julian 2004). Minorities are often excluded from environmental decision-making, which is lamentable considering they have so much to bring to the table to strengthen and refresh environmental ideals.

Worldwide environmental problems that affect everyone also have a larger negative effect on minority groups. Extreme amounts of environmental destruction and pollution have led to global warming, a phenomena where an increasing amount of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere trap heat from the sun. The rise in global temperature has led to an increase in the occurrence of heat waves. Heat waves are more dangerous to minority and low-income communities in urban areas. These neighborhoods often do not have access to air conditioning and cooler areas such as parks. Urban housing is made mostly with concrete, which traps the heat within the community, offering no relief. This can lead to an escalation of respiratory problems,

cardiovascular complications, and heatstroke (McCormick 2008). A quantitative analysis of population dynamics and environmental hazards in the book *Environmental Injustice in the United States: Myths and Realities* shows that “as the Hispanic population increases, so does the level of hazardous waste, while pollution potential...increases the level of this harm” (Lester, Allen, and Hill 2000:97). In the Western states of the U.S., increasing levels of the Hispanic population correlated with increases in toxic and chemical water pollution, indicating how minorities are often economically forced to live with poor environmental conditions because of low income. These underrepresented populations are being taken advantage of by the waste companies. Minority communities do not have the wealth and political power to do this, and thus must bear the brunt of the environmental downfall. Toxic wastes pollution can cause cancer, damage nerves, and lead to birth defects. Wealthier communities resist the move of polluting industries into their area to prevent a sharp nosedive in their property value. Their affluence enables them to combat potential environmental hazards. Pollution and destruction are “damaging the health of all humankind and leading to total ecological disaster” (Parenti 2005:112).

The promise of environmental justice movements

In India and Bolivia, environmentally oppressed groups rose up in protest and were successful in obtaining justice. In 1973, the Chipko Movement protested flooding and lack of fuel wood caused by extensive logging. Peasants from the Himalayan village of Mandal participated in nonviolent action, lying down between the loggers and the forest. They were successful in stopping the logging, and there were many other replicated protests throughout India. The movement showed an integration of

environmental and peasant ideals; the success of their activism was a direct result of their willingness to combine interconnected visions for one common goal (Lewis 2008).

In 2000, the Bolivian government privatized water in the city of Cochabamba and sold the rights to an American water corporation. Often referred to as the “water war,” citizens in Cochabamba were infuriated and demonstrated against the privatization. Water, a fundamental human right and essential for survival, was being turned into a commodity and sold for a profit (Lewis 2008). Through refusing to pay for the water and organizing mass demonstrations, the people were eventually successful in their endeavors and were able to access water freely. This is an example of the traditional view of culture, where the values, beliefs, and norms of society are changed and enforced from the bottom-up. Although corporations have the power and money to frame issues, the common people have the ability to create meaning and reconstruct the reality in which we live. Most great changes have started from the bottom-up, and the movements in India and Bolivia exemplify their success.

Growing environmental justice movements are striving to bring these issues of oppression to light. Environmental injustice is a clear window into the ongoing racism and classism present in society today. Sociologist Robert Bullard purports that “communities of color...[and] impoverished Native-American reservations face some of the worst environmental devastation in the nation” (Mascarenhas 2008:139). Fortunately, activism for environmental justice is growing. Environmental justice focuses on issues of environmental inequality in the living conditions and policies for minority and low-income groups (2008:129). Unlike the mainstream environmental movement, the environmental justice aspect of these movements focuses on issues in urban communities, rather than issues regarding untouched wilderness. All human

beings have the right to clean air, land, water, and food, and they should not have to choose between keeping these rights and leaving their homes (Julian 2004). Because minority, indigenous, and low-income people do not have as much access to policy-making, they are forced to bear the burden of society's greed for resources, lowering health and quality of life (Mascarenhas 2008). Government agencies also tend to protect the health risks of white and wealthy communities more so than other communities.

A popular acronym used by environmental justice movements is NIMBY, which means, "not in my backyard" (Julian 2004:123). This acronym supports the basic belief that nobody deserves to have their surroundings destroyed, their land polluted, and their health put in jeopardy. Advocates are fighting against having their "backyards" used as hazardous waste dumping-grounds by the rest of society. Environmental exploitation of minority and indigenous people will only come to an end when these groups are able to be equally involved and represented when environmental decisions are made.

Conclusion

Humanity is intrinsically connected with our natural environment. Exploiting the land and resources belonging to indigenous tribes mars their religious and cultural traditions. Burdening the minority with higher levels of toxic waste and air pollution is a sign of political and ethnic inequality. The environmentally oppressed are engaging in a fervent "culture struggle," trying to oppose the majority who impose upon them for their own gain. Environmental exploitation does not just limit biodiversity, but our own cultural diversity. When we damage the natural world, we damage ourselves. Sociologist Michael Parenti (2005) puts it well, saying, "we need to develop ways of

integrating nature, society, and self to show that greed and self-enrichment for the few should not be-and really cannot be-the way to a happy and sustainable society" (123). The future of environmental protection and conservation lies in furthering environmental justice for all.

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Andrew is a member of the graduating class of 2010 in the College of Arts and Sciences. He double majored in Sociology and Hispanic Studies. This piece was originally an assignment for his class, “The Social Construction of Whiteness” and was adapted for submission to SocialEyes. As a biracial individual, he wanted to show others what it was like to form this type of racial identity from his own perspective and experience. He would like to thank Catalina Tang and Professor Deborah Piatelli for helping him bring this piece to a whole new level and all the advice on how to make it better. He would also like to thank his girlfriend, Laura McGarry, for being critical of this paper and helping him look at it from a new perspective, which helped in the editing process.

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Earl graduated in 2010 from Boston College’s School of Arts and Sciences, where he majored in Sociology and minored in History. While at BC, Earl was the President of the AHANA Leadership Council, Presidents of the NAACP, and also the Chapter President of the predominately African American fraternity Iota Phi Theta Fraternity Incorporated. He is currently a Teach for America Corps Member and teaches English and World History to students with mental and behavior disability.

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Catalina is double majoring in Sociology and Linguistics in the School of Arts and Sciences, class of 2011. She was born to Chinese parents in Colombia, South America, and came to United States four years ago to pursue her undergraduate studies at Boston College. Catalina has developed interests in community organizing, social justice, and ethnic identity formation throughout her experiences working in community organizations in Boston Chinatown. This paper is an excerpt from a larger study conducted over the Summer of 2010 through the McNair summer research program that explored how Chinese young adults living in Colombia negotiate or combine these dual identities and cultures in their daily lives. Catalina is interested in carrying on this research and is currently working on a documentary about experiences and stories of immigration and cultural adaptation of the Chinese community living in Colombia. Catalina would like to thank past and current SocialEyes board, Prof. Deborah Piatelli, Gaelle Gourgues, and Prof. Margaret Thomas.

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Meghan is a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences, and is a double major in Sociology and Biology. At BC, she is a club officer for the new student volunteer organization C.A.S.T. (Cancer Affects Siblings, Too), and has gone on two service trips with the Appalachia Volunteers Program. Meghan's paper was the first of a three-part paper for her Introduction to Sociology class with Professor Ritchie Lowry. This is her first publication, combining her interests in Sociology with her passion for the environment.