

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES: RACISM & ETHNICITY

Lecture Outline

- Definitions of ethnicity
 - Primordial
 - Constructed / invented
- Significance of ethnic residential space & ethnic economic enclaves
 - Neighbourhood typologies based on ethnicity
- Defining 'race' & racism
 - Consequences of race – segregation & exclusion

Ethnicity & place

Defining Ethnicity

- Definitions of ethnicity commonly point to group of people with common ancestry and shared culture
- Classic definition by sociologist Max Weber:
 - "We shall call 'ethnic groups' those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration" (1968, 389)

Ethnicity as a Construction or Invention

- *Constructed primordial ethnicity*
 - also known as *emergent ethnicity*
- Ethnicity interpreted as being rooted in kinship, family & folkways of groups – *primordial affinities* – but expression of this identity (its forms, power and significance) rooted in structures and opportunities made available to groups by the broader society

Ethnicity as a Construction or Invention

- Is a perspective that is interested in specific contexts – economic, political, social, or structural – and how these influence the expression of identity
- e.g., Structural conditions could include:
 - Occupation
 - Institutional affiliations (churches, unions)
 - Where groups live & in what concentrations/proximity
 - Characteristics of neighbours & neighbouring

Meanings of Ethnicity in Canada

- Canadian gov't has historically been interested in ethnic *ancestry*, although approach has often been narrow & rigid
 - An exercise in cataloguing people
- Focus on ancestry and not how people define their *own* ethnic identities
 - Also is challenge of overlapping and intersecting dimensions of identity



Map indicating the proportional representation of the Chinese *ethnic* community in Vancouver, 2006

Source: Vancouver Sun,

Ethnicity & Local Scales: Neighbourhoods

- Are they working-class neighbourhoods or are they sub-societies and colonies within the larger society?
- Are ethnic neighbourhoods created by people who find larger Canadian society an unwelcoming space?
- Do people gather in such neighbourhoods by choice in order to preserve cultural affinities (e.g., language, religion)?

Ethnicity & Local Scale: multiethnic neighbourhoods

- Many neighbourhoods in Canadian cities defined by their pluralism
 - multiethnic neighbourhoods
- Traditional notion: an ethnic "Village" – e.g., Little Italy, Chinatown

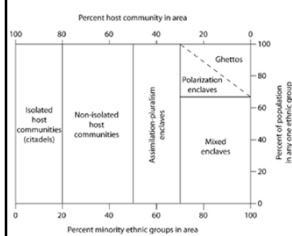
Public Spaces and Ethnicity

- For many communities, the use of public space contributes to how groups articulate ethnicity *and* how other social groups understand difference
 - Churches, mosques, synagogues, temples
 - Shopping streets and shopping malls come to define the psychic if not geographical core of an immigrant neighbourhood or community → but this has changed dramatically in post-war period (especially in context of multiethnic neighbourhoods)
 - Can become significant point of conflict and contestation

Place & ethnicity

- Neighbourhoods & role of residential community in promoting (preserving) ethnic identity
- Ethnic economies of niches & enclaves
 - Niche: occupations or forms of self-employment that are used by members of an ethnic group for economic survival
- Enclave economy: integrated set of niche activities
 - Forms self-contained economic system
 - Weak ties to dominant economy
 - Businesses owned by one ethnic group;
 - Labour force & support networks provided by other co-ethnics
 - Encourages labour market segmentation

A typology of neighbourhoods



1. *Isolated host communities*
 - Host society at least 80% of population
2. *Non-isolated host communities*
 - Host society 50-80% of population
3. *Assimilation-pluralism enclaves*
 - Greatest ethnic mix
 - Host society a minority (30-50%)
4. *Mixed minority enclaves*
 - 70% population from minority groups
 - No group more than twice size of all other minority groups
5. *Polarized enclaves*
 - One minority group at least twice as large as all other minority population
 - Accounts for 46-100% of total pop.
6. *Ghettos*
 - One minority group forms at least 60% of population AND
 - 30% of relevant group in entire city lives in such areas

TABLE A. THE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ETHNIC GROUPS ACROSS THE SIX CATEGORIES OF THE CENSUS TRACT CLASSIFICATION: CHICAGO, 1980-2000

Type	White			African American		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Pluralism	2.4	2.9	5.9	5.5	5.9	7.8
Mixed	0.2	0.3	0.5	1.8	2.7	3.5
Polarized	0.1	0.1	0.4	1.5	0.6	1.7
AA	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.7	0.3	1.4
H	0.9	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1
A	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ghetto	0.7	2.0	3.3	81.4	76.7	72.3
AA	0.7	1.0	1.2	81.4	75.3	70.9
H	0.0	1.0	2.2	0.0	1.4	2.0
A	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nonisolated host	18.2	17.6	27.1	6.0	9.8	11.0
Isolated host	85.4	76.9	62.7	3.7	4.2	3.6

Type	Hispanic			Asian Pacific		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Pluralism	15.1	13.4	16.2	9.1	10.7	15.3
Mixed	4.6	4.3	4.7	0.3	2.7	3.9
Polarized	29.0	1.6	1.8	3.6	2.3	3.0
AA	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.4
H	20.0	1.4	1.1	0.1	0.0	0.5
A	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.3	2.1
Ghetto	4.1	35.9	41.6	1.5	2.2	4.0
AA	4.1	32.2	37.1	0.0	1.1	1.4
H	0.0	32.4	38.6	1.5	1.1	2.6
A	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nonisolated host	22.3	24.6	22.7	26.9	34.0	42.7
Isolated host	24.8	19.9	13.0	58.6	48.0	31.1

Note: Isolated figures give the percentages for the polarized enclave and ghetto according to which ethnic group predominates each: AA = African American; H = Hispanic; A = Asian Pacific.

Source: Johnston et al. 2003. "And did the walls come tumbling Down? ..."

Example of change over time in levels of spatial concentration -- Chicago

Geographies of racism

Defining 'race'

- 'Race' is a very controversial marker of human difference, usually based on biological distinctions or physical criteria such as skin colour, hair colour
- Concept of 'race' reflects erroneous belief that racial categories have some self-evident meaning, that all people can be simply & easily slotted into one 'race' or another, and belies the fact that 'race' itself is a social construction rather than biological fact

Measuring visible minority status in Canada

- Racial minorities are categorized by “visible minority” status – self-identification
 - Belong to one of 13 visible minority categories
 - “Visible minorities” are non-Aboriginal individuals who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in skin colour
 - Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, Visible Minority not included elsewhere, Multiple Visible Minorities, and Other (i.e., non-visible or ‘white’).

‘Race’ and Power

- Important: racial definitions almost always defined and imposed by a powerful social group on other groups – power not necessarily numerical, but in terms of control of economic, political and social institutions
 - As such, ‘race’ is an ideological construction

Racism as ideology

- Biological definitions of ‘race’ are extremely problematic
- Racism – an *ideology* that attributes social, economic and behavioural characteristics of individuals to a racial classification system
- Racism - *practices* of ascribing particular attributes to ‘racial’ groups that are erroneously believed to be biologically distinct
 - Social and psychological characteristics are causally correlated to physiological markers
 - Moreover, judgements of worth are linked to presumed biological markers

Racism and Culture

- 'Race' is a situationally specific concept
- Racism relies on ideas, attitudes and dispositions, norms and rules, linguistic, literary and artistic expressions, architectural forms and media representations, as well as the practices of institutions and individuals
- See example in textbook regarding Vancouver's Chinatown (study by Kay Anderson)

Differences with Other 'Ethnic Ghettos'

- Immigrant enclaves never homogeneous
- Most European newcomers did not live in immigrant 'ghettos'
- Black ghettos have remained a permanent and enduring feature of the American city
