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Cultural Citizenship as Subject Making: Immigrants Negotiate Racial and Cultural Boundaries in the United States

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This chapter views cultural citizenship as a process of self-making and being-made in relation to nation-states and transnational processes. Whereas some scholars claim that racism has been replaced by "cultural fundamentalism" in defining who belongs or does not belong in Western democracies, this essay argues that hierarchical schemes of racial *and* cultural difference intersect in a complex, contingent way to locate minorities of color from different class backgrounds. Comparing the experiences of rich and poor Asian immigrants to the United States, I discuss institutional practices whereby non-white immigrants in the First World are simultaneously, though unevenly, subjected to two processes of normalization: an ideological whitening or blackening that reflects dominant racial oppositions and an assessment of cultural competence based on imputed human capital and consumer power in the minority subject. Immigrants from Asia or poorer countries must daily negotiate the lines of difference established by state agencies as well as groups in civil society. A subsidiary point is that, increasingly, such modalities of citizen-making are influenced by transnational capitalism. Depending on their locations in the global economy, some immigrants of color have greater access than others to key institutions in state and civil society. Global citizenship thus confers citizenship privileges in Western democracies to a degree that may help the immigrant to scale racial and cultural heights but not to circumvent status hierarchy based on racial difference.

In the fall of 1970, I left Malaysia and arrived as a freshman in New York City. I was immediately swept up in the antiwar movement. President Nixon had just begun his "secret" bombing of Cambodia. Joining crowds of angry students marching down Broadway, I participated in the "takeover" of the East Asian Institute building on the Columbia University campus. As I stood there

confronting policemen in riot gear, I thought about what Southeast Asia meant to the United States. Were Southeast Asians simply an anonymous mass of people in black pajamas? Southeast Asia was a far-off place where America was conducting a savage war against "communism." American lives were being lost, and so were those of countless Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and others. This rite of passage into American society was to shape my attitude toward citizenship. As a foreign student I was at a disadvantage, ineligible for most loans, fellowships, and jobs. My sister, a naturalized American, could have sponsored me for a green card, but the bombing of Cambodia, symptomatic of wider disregard for my part of the world, made American citizenship a difficult moral issue for me.

Much writing on citizenship has ignored such subjective and contradictory experiences, focusing instead on its broad legal-political aspects. For instance, Thomas Marshall (1950) defines citizenship as a question of modernity, but he identifies it primarily in terms of the evolution of civil society and the working out of the tensions between the sovereign subject and solidarity in a nation-state. Other scholars have pointed to the contradiction between democratic citizenship and capitalism — the opposition between abstract, universalistic rights and the inequalities engendered by market competition, race, and immigration (Hall and Held, 1989; Portes and Rumbaut, 1990). But these approaches seldom examine how the universalistic criteria of democratic citizenship variously regulate different categories of subjects or how these subjects' location within the nation-state and within the global economy conditions the construction of their citizenship. Indeed, even studies of citizenship that take into account the effects on it of capital accumulation and consumption have been concerned with potential strategies for political change to remake civil society (Yudice, 1995). Seldom is attention focused on the everyday processes whereby people, especially immigrants, are made into subjects of a particular nation-state.

Citizenship as Subjectification

Taking an ethnographic approach, I consider citizenship a cultural process of "subject-ification," in the Foucaldian sense of self-making and being-made by power relations that produce consent through schemes of surveillance, discipline, control, and administration (Foucault, 1989; 1991) Thus formulated, my concept of cultural citizenship can be applied to various global contexts (see Ong, 1993; Ong and Nonini, 1996), but in this chapter I will discuss the making of cultural citizens in Western democracies like the United States. Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer (1985) in their analysis of the state as a cultural formation, speak of "governmentality," by which they mean the state's project of moral regulation aimed at giving "unitary and unifying expression to what are in reality multifaceted and differential experiences of groups within society" (1985: 4–5). This role of the state in universalizing citizenship is paradoxically attained through a process of individuation whereby people are constructed in definitive

and specific ways as citizens — taxpayers, workers, consumers, and welfare-dependents.

This notion of citizenship as dialectically determined by the state and its subjects is quite different from that employed by Renato Rosaldo (1994), who views cultural citizenship as the demand of disadvantaged subjects for full citizenship in spite of their cultural difference from mainstream society.[1] While I share Rosaldo's sentiments, his concept attends to only one side of a set of unequal relationships. It gives the erroneous impression that cultural citizenship can be unilaterally constructed and that immigrant or minority groups can escape the cultural inscription of state power and other forms of regulation that define the different modalities of belonging. Formulated in this manner, Rosaldo's concept of cultural citizenship indicates subscription to the very liberal principle of universal equality that he seeks to call into question.

In contrast, I use "cultural citizenship" to refer to the cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish the criteria of belonging within a national population and territory. Cultural citizenship is a dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society. Becoming a citizen depends on how one is constituted as a subject who exercises or submits to power relations; one must develop what Foucault (cited by Rabinow, 1984: 49) calls "the modern attitude," an attitude of self-making in shifting fields of power that include the nation-state and the wider world.

Furthermore, in analyzing the pragmatic struggle towards an understanding of cultural citizenship, one must attend to the various regulatory regimes in state agencies and civil society. Michel Foucault (1991) notes that in modern Western democracies control of subjects is manifested in rituals and rules that produce consent; "governmentality" refers to those relations that regulate the conduct of subjects as a population and as individuals in the interests of ensuring the security and prosperity of the nation-state. A major problem with Corrigan and Sayer's (1985) approach is its restriction to the state sector, ignoring civil institutions and social groups as disciplinary forces in the making of cultural citizens. Indeed, it is precisely in liberal democracies like the United States that the governmentality of state agencies is often discontinuous, even fragmentary, and the work of instilling proper normative behavior and identity in newcomers must also be taken up by institutions in civil society. For instance, hegemonic ideas about belonging and not belonging in racial and cultural terms often converge in state and non-state institutional practices through which subjects are shaped in ways that are at once specific and diffused. These are the ideological fields within which different criteria of belonging on the basis of civilized conduct by categorically distinguishable (dominant) others become entangled with culture, race, and class (Williams, 1991: 2–29).

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Race, Class, and Economic Liberalism

My approach constitutes an intervention into the conventional theorizing of American citizenship solely in terms of racial politics within the framework of the nation-state (Omi and Winant, 1986; Gregory and Sanjek, 1994). What is urgently needed is a broader conception of race and citizenship shaped by the history of European imperialism. African slavery and colonial empires were central to the making of modern Western Europe and the Americas. Encounters between colonizers and the colonized or enslaved gave rise to the view that white-black hierarchies are homologous with levels of civilization, a racist hegemony that pervades all areas of Western consciousness (Memmi, 1967; Fanon, 1967; Alatas, 1977; Said, 1978; Nandy, 1983; Gilman, 1985; Stoler, 1995). These historically specific ideologies, Western European in origin, order human group-ings distinguished by real and alleged biological features into status hierarchies that become the bases of various forms of discrimination and exclusion in Western democracies (Dominguez, 1986; Miles, 1989; Gilroy, 1987; Williams, 1989; 1991; Hall, 1992; Gregory and Sanjek, 1994).

Recently, however, scholars claim that there has been a distinct shift in domi-nant Western European exclusionary practices whereby cultural rather than racial difference is used to justify calls for banning immigrants (Stolcke, 1995). Paul Gilroy, however, maintains that if we take race as a political rather than a biological category, newer discourses of marginalization in Britain focus on the "distinctive culture" of blacks without discarding racism (1987: 109, 149). He calls the discourse of cultural difference a new racism that is more diffused but still racist even though state policies, informed by sympathetic liberalism, combat the kind of crude, neofascist racism that characterized earlier forms of discrimi-nation in Britain (1987: 148–50). What Gilroy fails to mention, from his British vantage point, is how US racial discourses, long interwoven with notions of cultural difference as in Patrick Moynihan's notion of "black pathology," may have influenced the biological cultural shift in discourses of marginal or ineligible citizenship on the other side of the Atlantic.

Thus this race-versus-culture construction of exclusionary discourses is, albeit unintentionally, a red herring. Nevertheless, leading US scholars such as Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986) continue to study the shifting constructions of racial politics without reference to normative performance or schemes of cul-tural assessment. Gilroy cautions that "'race' is a political category that can accommodate various meanings which are in turn determined by struggle . . . racial differentiation has become a feature of institutional structures – legal sub-jectivity of citizenship – as well as individual action" (1987: 38). A fuller understanding of racism and its embeddedness in notions of citizenship requires an examination of racial concepts and their uses in liberal ideologies and cul-tural practices.

Another lacuna in theories of racism and citizenship is the effect of class attributes and property rights on citizenship status (see Harrison, 1991). As we shall see, the interweaving of ideologies of racial difference with liberal

conceptions of citizenship is evident in popular notions about who deserves to belong in implicit terms of productivity and consumption. For instance, in the postwar United States, neoliberalism, with its celebration of freedom, progress, and individualism, has become a pervasive ideology that influences many domains of social life. It has become synonymous with being American, and more broadly these values are what the world associates with Western civilization. There is, however, a regulatory aspect to neoliberalism whereby economics is extended to cover all aspects of human behavior pertaining to citizenship. An important principle underlying liberal democracy emphasizes balancing the provision of security against the productivity of citizens. In other words, neoliberalism is an expression of the biopolitics of the American state as well as setting the nominative standards of good citizenship in practice. In the postwar era, such thinking has given rise to a human-capital assessment of citizens (Becker, 1965), weighing those who can pull themselves up by their bootstraps against those who make claims on the welfare state. Increasingly, citizenship is defined as the civic duty of individuals to reduce their burden on society and build up their own human capital – to be "entrepreneurs" of themselves (Gordon, 1991: 43–451). Indeed, by the 1960s liberal economics had come to evaluate non-white groups according to their claims on or independence of the state. Minorities who scaled the pinnacles of society often had to justify themselves in such entrepreneurial terms. A rather apt example was the 1990s nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court of the United States, a move widely viewed as the token appointment of an African-American to the powerful white-dominated institution. In his confirmation hearings, Judge Thomas painted himself as a deserving citizen who struggled out of a hardscrabble past by "pulling himself up by his bootstraps." The can-do attitude is an inscription of ideal masculine citizenship; its legitimating power was more than sufficient to overcome the ugly stain of sexual harassment that plagued the judge's confirmation.

Attaining success through self-reliant struggle, while not inherently limited to any cultural group, is a process of self-development that in Western democracies becomes inseparable from the process of "whitening." This racializing effect of class and social mobility has evolved out of historical circumstances whereby white masculinity established qualities of manliness and civilization itself against the "Negro" and the "Indian" (Bederman, 1993). Inspired by W. E. B. Du Bois' work on race and class (1977), David R. Roediger (1991) argues that the nineteenth century was the formative period of "whiteness" among the working classes in a slave-owning republic. "Whiteness was a way in which workers responded to a fear of dependency on wage labor and to the necessities of capitalist work discipline" (1991: 13). The revolutionary ideal of masculine independence found in black slavery and "hireling" wage labor was a convenient other. The black population was viewed as embodying "the preindustrial, erotic, careless style of life the white worker hated and longed for" (1991: 13–14). "The Negro" as a "contrast conception" or "counter-race" is a legacy of white-black relations under slavery and Emancipation that "'naturalizes' the social order" (Copeland, 1939: 179).[2]

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Although one need not imagine a contemporary synchrony of views on intrepid individualism, the white man, and deserving citizenship, the convergences and overlaps between hegemonies of race, civilization, and market behavior as claims to citizenship are too routine to be dismissed. Hegemonies of relative racial contributions often conflated race and class, as, for example, in the polarizing contrast between the "model minority" and the "underclass" (Myrdal, 1944), both economic terms standing for racial ones. As I will show, the different institutional contexts in which subjects learn about citizenship often assess newcomers from different parts of the world within given schemes of racial difference, civilization, and economic worth. Because human capital, self-discipline, and consumer power are associated with whiteness, these attributes are important criteria of non-white citizenship in Western democracies. Indeed, immigrant practices earlier in the century also subjected immigrants from Europe to differential racial and cultural judgments (see, e.g., Archdeacon, 1983). The racialization of class was particularly evident in the construction of Irish-American (and Southern European) immigrants whose whiteness was in dispute (Roediger, 1991: 14). This racializing logic of class attributes is applied even to current flows of immigrants from the South and East who seem obviously non-white; discriminatory modes of perception, reception, and treatment order Asian immigrants along a white-black continuum. Although immigrants come from a variety of class and national backgrounds, there is a tendency, in daily institutional practices, towards interweaving of perceived racial difference with economic and cultural criteria, with the result that long-term residents and newcomers are ideologically constructed as "the stereotypical embodiments" of ethnicized citizenship (Williams, 1989: 437).

Of course, these processes of implicit racial and cultural ranking do not exhaust the conditions that go into processes of subjectification as citizens. It is worth keeping in mind that when we attend to the pragmatic construction of belonging, we see that official racial categories are reproduced by everyday American activities of inclusion and exclusion, separating the civilized from the primitive. Constance Perin (1988) has described such attempts at maintaining symbolic coherence in the face of ambiguities and keeping fears at bay as "drawing" lines against the culturally deviant. Racial oppositions are not merely the work of discriminatory laws and outright racists but the everyday product of people's maintenance of their "comfort level" of permissible liberal norms against the socially deviant newcomers who disturb that sense of comfort. Again, such encoding of white-black oppositions in behavioral and discursive strategies also saturates everyday life in other liberal, white-dominated societies, such as Britain and New Zealand (Gilroy, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1993). I will present ethnographic accounts of interactions between key institutions and newcomers, the drawing of lines against Asian others, and the struggles over representations that are part of the ideological work of citizen-making in the different domains of American life.[3] While I will be dealing with the making of immigrants into American citizens, I maintain that the processes of explicit and implicit racial and cultural ranking pervading institutional and

everyday practices are but a special case of similar constructions in Western democracies in general.

New Asian Immigrants in Metropolitan Countries

When I moved from Massachusetts to California in the early 1980s, I was struck by the range of peoples from the Asia-Pacific region at a time when the scholarly literature defined Asian-Americans as people largely of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean ancestry. (Filipinos were then viewed simply as Pacific Islanders.) Global conflicts and economic restructuring were important reasons that the 1980s were an especially turbulent era, bringing a renewed influx of refugees from Latin America, Africa, and Asia into metropolitan countries. It was not unusual to see Mayan Indians, still wrapped in their colorful clothes, working in English gardens or sarong-clad and turban-wearing Laotians shopping in the neighborhood market. The withdrawal of US troops from mainland Southeast Asia and the later invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam caused waves of refugees to flee, by way of refugee camps, to Australia, Western Europe, and the United States. Other waves of war refugees left Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Central America for the same destinations. Concurrent diasporas of an economic nature introduced poor workers as well as wealthy investors from Africa and Asia into Europe and North America. These massive waves of immigrants from the metaphoric south radically challenged liberal conceptions of citizenship in Western Europe and the United States.

The San Francisco Bay area was one of the major sites of resettlement for refugees from all over the Third World, the majority of whom were Southeast Asians.[4] Most arrived in two waves: in the aftermath of the communist takeover of Saigon in 1975 and following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1979. At about the same time, another flow of immigrants, mainly professionals and upper-middle-class people seeking investments in stable markets in the West, arrived from Southeast Asia and India. The combined impact of these flows greatly exceeded that of earlier arrivals from Asia, increasing the Asian population in America by 80 percent to 6.88 million by the end of the decade. Asians are "far and away the most rapidly growing minority in the country" *(New York Times,* February 4, 1991). They have fanned out across the country to establish sizable Asian-American communities outside the Chinatowns of the East and West coasts, spreading to the Southern states and the Midwest. Vietnamese fishing villages in Texas, Cambodian crab farmers in Alabama, and Asian professionals in fields such as electronics, medicine, and mathematics. The number of Chinese restaurants has increased in smaller towns all over the country. In major cities such as Queens, Houston, and Los Angeles, investments by Koreans and Chinese immigrants have raised real estate prices to stratospheric levels (see, e.g., *Wall Street Journal,* January 15, 1991).

The new Asian demographics are so striking that today Asians make up a third of the population of San Francisco and 30 percent of the student body at the

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University of California, Berkeley. Overall, the Bay Area, with a population of over 6 million, has "emerged as the Western Hemisphere's first genuine Pacific metropolis," with one out of every five residents being of Asian background (San Francisco Chronicle, December 5, 1988). The increasing importance of the economic boom in Asia and the influx of Pacific Rim capital as well as boat people into the Western democracies make Asian immigration a highly charged issue that is framed differently from the issue of immigration from other parts of the world.

The changing demographics in California have changed the terms of debate on immigration and multiculturalism not just for the state but for the whole country. What will the United States as a Pacific country look like? Throughout the 1980s, the rising waves of Asian newcomers were exceeded by the influx of Central American refugees and migrant workers (Portes and Rumbaut, 1990: 44–6). Against the background of forecasts that whites will become just one more minority in California by the year 2000, there has been a backlash by political forces controlled or influenced by white voters. In 1986 an initiative was passed declaring English the state's official language; in 1994 another initiative called for the denial of health and educational services to illegal immigrants (mainly from Latin America). Both measures appeared to set limits to the increasing cultural and economic diversity of the state's population.

The measures reflect nationwide concerns about immigration from south of the border as well as from non-European countries. Nevertheless, there is discrimination among different categories of immigrants by national origin and by class. In a stunning move, the regents of the University of California system recently banned affirmative-action programs in admissions and hiring, setting off a national debate on official sponsorship of multiethnic representation in different areas of society. But what appear to be attempts to make all immigrants adhere to standardized, "color-blind" norms are in fact attempts to discriminate among them, separating out the desirable from the undesirable citizens according to some racial and cultural calculus. For instance, politicians such as House Speaker Newt Gingrich have declared affirmative action unfair to whites and Asians (San Francisco Chronicle, July 31, 1995). California's Governor Pete Wilson has been quoted as saying that affirmative action promotes "tribalism," a code word for colored minorities that presumably excludes Asian-Americans (San Francisco Chronicle, July 23, 1995). In the debate, Asian-Americans have been referred to as "victimized overachievers" – "victimized," that is, by other immigrants and minorities presumably not certified as "overachievers."[5] Such discourses "whiten" Asian-Americans while using them as a "racial wedge" between whites and minority "tribals." The fight over affirmative action is an excellent example of "whitening" and "blackening" processes at work, where racial difference or skin color is variously encrusted with the cultural values of a competitive society. As Thomas Archdeacon has observed, "ethnicity is a dynamic force that keeps America's national, racial, and religious groups in constant flux" (1983: 242). The continuing influx of immigrants keeps ethnic formation unstable, merging and diverging in ways that break up racial

components (see Lowe, 1991), but ethnic identities are also inscribed by elite discourses as to where and how different populations are included in or excluded from mainstream society. Indeed, since explicit statements including Asian-Americans in the dominant sector of society have been so rare, very few Asian-Americans protest the image of them as victimized overachievers in the antiaffirmative-action discourses. Despite this silent acquiescence, the image of Asian overachievers is an ideological misrepresentation of the diversity among Asian populations in the country. Indeed, the Californian media have distinguished two categories of Asian-Americans: the "model minority" Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and Vietnam and the new underclass represented by Cambodians and Laotians. The bifurcated model follows the formula of academics and policymakers who use national origin as the basis of ethnic identity among immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut, 1990: 141–2). If, as I have suggested, we think of ethnicities as dynamic formations constructed out of the everyday processes of inclusion and exclusion, how do we account for the bifurcation of Asian immigrants into these two categories? How do different modalities of regulation use gender stereotypes in configuring race, nation, and citizenship privileges whereby differing groups are accorded cultural normativity or deviance in relation to white masculinity?

I will examine institutional practices that differently receive and socialize Asian immigrants depending on their gender, position within racial hierarchies, and class and consumption. Drawing on ethnographic research, I will explore the ways in which Cambodian refugees, on the one hand, and affluent Chinese cosmopolitans, on the other, explore the meanings and possibilities of citizenship in California. By contrasting Asian groups from different class backgrounds I hope to show how despite and because of their racialization as Asian-Americans, they are variously socialized by and positioned to manipulate state institutions, religious organizations, civilian groups, and market forces inscribing them as citizens of differential worth.

Disciplining Refugees in an Age of Compassion Fatigue

The moral imperative to offer refugees shelter has been a hallmark of US policy since 1945, breaking from earlier policies that privileged race, language, and assimilation above concerns about human suffering (Loescher and Scanlan, 1986: 210). During the cold war, refugees from communist regimes were treated with special kindness because of the ideological perception that they had undergone great suffering as symbolic or literal "freedom fighters" (1986: xviii). This policy continued more or less even after the United States ended its intervention to prevent the spread of communism in Indochina, setting off waves of boat people fleeing Vietnam. In 1979, tens of thousands of Cambodians fled to the Thai border after the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea. President Carter, in the spirit of his human rights campaign, signed a refugee act to increase immigration quotas for them. Between 1975 and 1985, almost 125,000 Cambodians

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arrived in the United States. Anticommunist ideology and opportunities for making political capital in Congress dictated a system of "calculated kindness" whereby Southeast Asian and Cuban refugees were favored over those from Haiti, El Salvador, and Chile (1986: 213–15). But the shadow of the US defeat in the Indochina conflict hung over the reception of these war refugees. Furthermore, they arrived at a time when the country was suffering from an economic recession, and many Americans became worried about scarce housing, jobs, welfare needs, and competition from immigrants. Rioting by Mariel Cuban refugees contributed to the image of "difficult migrants" (1986: 217). Compassion fatigue quickly set in, and a climate of antagonism greeted the increasing influx of refugees of color from Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

From the beginning, a political ambiguity dogged Cambodian refugees because of the immigration authorities' suspicion that many Khmer Rouge communist-sympathizers managed to slip through screening by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and gain entry to the country (Golub, 1986; Ngor, 1987). This morally tainted image was accompanied by the perception of Cambodian refugees as mainly peasants, unlike the boat people, who were by and large unambiguously anticommunist Sino-Vietnamese and middle-class, despite significant numbers of fishermen and peasants among them. Cambodians in refugee-processing camps were quickly separated out as destined for lower-class status. At the Philippine Refugee Processing Center, classes trained US-bound Cambodians to be dependent on Americans, who dealt with refugees only from their positions as superiors, teachers, and bosses (Mortland, 1987: 391). One teacher charged that, from the very beginning, training programs were "ideologically motivated to provide survival English for entry-level jobs" in the United States (Tollefson, 1990: 546). Khmers were socialized to expect limited occupational options and taught subservient behavior, as well as a flexible attitude towards frequent changes of jobs which would help them adapt to cycles of employment and unemployment. Thus, the camp training of Cambodian refugees as dependent on Americans and as potential low-wage workers initiated the minoritization process even before they set foot in the country. This ideological construction of Khmers as a dependent minority channeled them into the same economic situations as other refugees from poor countries: "Policy and ideology underlying the [Overseas Refugees Training Program] ensure that refugees serve the same function as African-Americans and Latinos" (1990: 549).

Furthermore, once immigrants arrived in the country, whatever their national origin or race, they were ideologically positioned within the hegemonic bipolar white-black model of American society. The racialization of Southeast Asian refugees depended on differential economic and cultural assessment of their potential as good citizens. Although all relied on refugee aid for the first two years after their arrival, Cambodians together with Laotians and Hmongs found themselves, by acquiring an image of "welfare-dependent" immigrants, quickly differentiated from the Vietnamese, who had arrived in this country out of the same war. Cambodian and Laotian immigrants were ethnicized as a kind of liminal Asian-American group that had more in common with other poor

refugees of color like Afghans and Ethiopians than with the Vietnamese. They were often compared to their inner-city African-American neighbors in terms of low-wage employment, high rates of teenage pregnancy, and welfare-dependent families.

As mentioned earlier, the transfer of racial otherness from one minority group to another in order to draw the lines of social and economic citizenship has a historical precedent in the differentiation between whites and blacks after Emancipation. The symbolic link between blackness and "preindustrial license" was even transferred to Irish immigrants, who were considered by some to be part of "a separate caste or 'dark' race" (Roediger, 1991: 107, 133–4). The ideological formation of whiteness as the symbol of ideal legal and moral citizenship today continues to depend upon the "blackening" of less desirable immigrants; Immigrants situated closer to the black pole are seen as at the bottom of the cultural and economic ranking. A Vietnamese social worker said to me:

> Most of the Khmers are not highly educated. They were farmers and their tendency is to be lazy. . . . So with the income they receive from welfare right now it is easy for them to be lazy. They are not motivated to go to work . . . they find some way to get out of [the training and language program] . . . They do not want to improve their skills here. . . . Maybe the young people will grow up here and become educated and want to change.

This man was partly expressing his frustration over the difficulty of getting the Cambodian refugees to sign up for job training in electronic assembly work, car mechanics, child care, and janitorial work but also revealing his own ethnic bias against Cambodians.

By 1987, well over half of the 800,000 Indochinese refugees in the country had settled down in California, and there was widespread fear that there would be "perpetual dependence on the welfare system for some refugees" *(New York Times,* April 27, 1987). This positioning of Cambodians as black Asians is in sharp contrast to the model-minority image of Chinese, Koreans, and Vietnamese (including Sino-Vietnamese), who are celebrated for their "Confucian values" and family businesses. Although there have been racist attacks on Vietnamese fishermen in Texas and California and exploitation of Vietnamese workers in chicken-processing plants in the South, the general perception of them is as possessed of "can-do" attitudes closer to the white ideal standards of American citizenship.[7] It is therefore not surprising that Cambodians are almost always referred to as "refugees" whereas Vietnamese refugees are viewed as immigrants. Regardless of the actual, lived cultures of the Khmers before they arrived in the United States, dominant ideologies clearly distinguish among various Asian nationalities, assigning them closer to the white or the black pole of American citizenship.

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described below, may seem to reinforce the hegemonic picture of their dependency, but my goal is actually a critique of the effects of the welfare system as it operates now in an increasingly low-waged, service-oriented economy. Earlier generations of poor immigrants have managed to establish basic security for their families through blue-collar employment (Komorovsky, 1967). The welfare system continues to operate by withdrawing support from families with a single wage-earner, whereas for most poor immigrants like the Cambodians, part-time and unsteady low-wage employment are needed to supplement welfare aid. Like ghetto blacks and poor Puerto Rican immigrants, Cambodians are in a continual struggle to survive in a low-wage economy in which they cannot depend on earnings alone and, despite their organizational skills, everyday problems of survival and social interventions often adversely affect family relations and dynamics (Harrington, 1962; Valentine, 1971; Stack, 1974).

Within the refugee population, there are frequent reports of marital conflict, often attributed to the suffering and dislocation engendered by war and exile. However, I maintain that most of the tensions are exacerbated by the overwhelming effort to survive in the inner city, where most of the Cambodian refugees live. Many of the men, with their background in farming and inability to speak English, cannot make the leap into job training and employment in the United States. Their wives often lose respect for them because of their inability to make a living and their refusal to share "women's" household and child-care chores at home. Cambodian customs regarding family roles and gender norms have become if not irrelevant at least severely undermined as men fail to support their families, and wives become more assertive in seeking help. Relations between husband and wife, parents and children have come to be dictated to a significant degree not by Khmer culture as they remember it but by pressing daily concerns to gain access to state resources and to submit to the rules of the welfare state.

Male informants complain that "in America, men feel they have lost value because they are no longer masters in their own families." A *kru khmer* (shaman) who is often consulted by unhappy couples noted that "money is the root cause of marital problems in the United States." Welfare has become a system which provides families with material support and women with increased power and a bargaining position *vis-à-vis* their husbands and children. The shaman explained:

> For instance, most of us who came to the United States are recipients of welfare assistance; the majority of us are supported by the state. It is usually the wife who gets the welfare check but not the husband. She is the one who takes care of the kids. But when she receives the check, her husband wants to spend it. When she refuses, and wants to keep the money for the children, that's what leads to wife abuse.

Some Khmer men lash out at their wives, perhaps to restore the sense of male privilege and authority they possessed in Cambodia. In many instances, they beat their wives in struggles to gain control over particular material and emotional

benefits. Besides fights over welfare checks, the beatings may be intended to compel wives to resume their former deferential behavior despite their newly autonomous role in supporting the children. Many women try to maintain the male-dominated family system despite the threats and abuse. A woman confided:

> There are many cases of wife abuse. Yes, everyone gets beaten, myself included. But sometimes we have to just keep quiet even after a disagreement. Like in my case, I don't want to call the police or anything. As the old saying goes, "It takes two hands to clap. One hand cannot sound itself." I just shed a few tears and let it go. If it gets out of hand, then you can call the police. But the men still think more of themselves than of women. They never lower themselves to be our equals.

This acknowledgment of a shift in the balance of domestic power, linked to dependency on state agencies, indicates that Khmer women do not think of themselves as passive victims but are aware of their own role in marital conflicts. The speaker seems to imply that she tolerates the occasional beating because men cannot adjust to their change in status and she always has the option of calling the police. Like their counterparts among European immigrants in the early-twentieth-century United States, Cambodian women are often caught in their "double position" as victims of wife abuse and guardians of their children (Gordon, 1988: 261); they stand up to their husbands in order to ensure their children's economic survival.

Some women who can manage on their own with welfare aid abandon their spouses. A social worker reported cases involving couples over 65 years old in which the wives kicked their husbands out and then applied for SSI (Supplementary Security Income). Informants told me that there were Cambodian women who, having fallen in love with American co-workers, left their husbands and even their children; this was something, they claimed, that happened in Florida and Long Beach, not in their own community. Speaking of her former neighbors, a woman noted that many Cambodian women had left their husbands because they "look down on them . . . for not working, for not being as clever as other men." They felt free to do so because Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) supported them and their children in any case. In an optimistic tone, she continued, "That's why Khmer women are very happy living in America, because they now have equal rights. . . . We can start up business more easily here. If we want to work, we can pay for day care."

One of the indirect effects of the welfare system is to promote rather complex strategies for manipulating and evading rules, thus affecting household composition. Cambodian households, often composed of mother-child units, routinely pool incomes from different sources, and many households depend on a combination of different welfare checks received by family members and both part- and full-time employment. Through the pooling of income from multiple sources, household heads hope to accumulate savings to buy a home outside the violent neighborhoods in which many live. As has been reported among inner-city blacks, such strategies for coping with the welfare system increase the

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Many Khmers seek to prolong the time they can receive welfare support by disguising the age of children and by concealing their marital status and income-generating activities. In some cases, young girls who become pregnant are allowed to keep their babies so that the latter can receive financial aid that helps to support the entire family. Many girls who get pregnant marry the fathers of their babies but fail to register their change of status in order to avoid revealing that their husbands are working and thus forfeiting their chance to get AFDC for the babies. For instance, Madam Neou[8] lived with two sons, seven daughters, and a son-in-law in her one-bedroom apartment. Her eldest daughter was 18 and pregnant. She had married her boyfriend according to Khmer ceremonies but had not registered her marriage, and therefore she continued to receive her General Assistance (GA) check. Her husband, who worked in a fast-food restaurant, disguised the fact that they were living together by giving a false address. They hoped to have saved enough money by the time their GA stipends ended to move out and rent a home of their own. Thus, although parents try to discourage their daughters from having premarital sex, they also tolerate and support those who do become pregnant. Not all pregnant girls get married or receive their mothers' support. However, those who do marry are taken in to enable them to save on rent and perhaps continue to accumulate welfare benefits so that they can ultimately become an independent household.

Social workers are frustrated by the mixed motivations and strategies that, in their view, promote teenage pregnancy. A social worker complains about Cambodians "working the system" and says that young girls "become pregnant again and again and have no time to go to school." However, it appears that, peer pressure and street culture are primarily responsible for the few pregnancies in girls younger than 16 (well below the average marriage age of 18 for women in Cambodia before the upheavals of war and diaspora). In one case, a social worker intervened and advised a Khmer mother to let her recently married daughter use contraceptives so that she could continue to go to school and have a career later on. However, the girl's husband, who was employed as a mechanic, refused to practice family planning and wanted her to get on welfare. They lived with her mother in exchange for a small monthly payment. The social worker threatened to expose the mother's strategy of combining welfare checks across households, thus exercising the disciplinary power of the state that threatens family formation among people at the mercy of the welfare system and a chronic low-wage market. The withdrawal of welfare support at a point in young people's lives when they are first breaking into the labor market thus compels poor families to scheme to prolong welfare dependency so that they can save towards economic independence. The dual structure of supporting poor mothers, on the one hand, while disciplining chronic underemployment, on the other, contributes to a particular minoritization process of Cambodian refugees that is not so very different from that experienced by other poor people of color (Valentine, 1971; Stack, 1974). Welfare policy promotes the "blackening" of the

underprivileged by nurturing and then stigmatizing certain forms of coping strategies.

An academic cottage industry on refugee affairs, ignoring the disciplinary effects of the welfare state and the low-wage economy, has emerged to provide cultural explanations for the presumed differential economic and moral worth of different Asian immigrant groups. Cambodians (together with Hmongs and Laotians) are identified as culturally inferior to Vietnamese and Chinese and are thus a target for "civilizing" attention by state agents and church groups. In a report to the Office of Refugee Settlement, social scientists elaborated a "socio-cultural" portrait of Khmers (and Laotians) as more "Indian" than "Chinese" among the "Indochinese" (Rumbaut and Ima, 1988: 73) – a term that is itself the creation of French imperialism. This artifact drew upon the anthropological model of the "loosely structured" society (Embree, 1950), noting that Cambodians were more individualistic, prone to place feelings and emotions above obligations, and less likely to use Americans as role models than the Vietnamese (who were more Chinese) (1950: 76) – in other words, Cambodians were more deferential and susceptible to socialization by US institutions than groups that possessed Confucian culture. Cambodians were viewed as "affectively oriented"; their "love of children" and "nonaggressive" behavior seem in implicit contrast to the "more pragmatic" Vietnamese. This moral discrimination among Asian groups becomes a diffused philosophy that informs the work of agencies dealing with immigrants, thus demonstrating that in mechanisms of regulation, hierarchical cultural evaluations assign different populations places within the white-black polarities of citizenship.

The disciplinary approach to Cambodians often takes the form of teaching them their rights and needs as normative lower-class Americans. In the Bay Area, the refugee and social service agencies are driven by a feminist ethos that views immigrant women and children as especially vulnerable to patriarchal control at home. Implicit in social workers' training is the goal of fighting Asian patriarchy – "empowering" immigrant women and "teaching them their rights in this country," as one lawyer-activist explained. Perhaps influenced by essentializing statements that Khmers are "more prone to divorce and separation" than the Vietnamese (Rumbaut and Ima, 1988: 75–6), service workers tend to view the Khmer family as rife with patriarchal domination and violence. At the same time, service agents working with Cambodians frequently complain about their "primitive culture," especially as expressed in male control and a tendency to be swayed by emotions rather than by rationality and objectivity.

This ideological construction often puts Sam Ngor, a Cambodian social worker, in the uncomfortable position of being caught between his sympathy for the plight of Cambodian men and the social worker's implicit unfavorable comparison of them with white men. At a Cambodian self-help group meeting, Sam was trying to explain why a married couple gave contradictory accounts of their conflict. He noted that there was a difference between "oral and literate cultures"; in oral cultures, "people always change their minds about what happened" (presumably, in a literate society they do not).[9] Furthermore, in a

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Indeed, Cambodian men complain that service workers are not only eager to interfere in their family affairs but favor women and children over men in domestic battles. Another social worker notes that "often, among refugees of all nationalities, men have lost their place in society. They don't like to ask for help, and it seems they've lost control over their families. Women tend to ask for help more." Sam added that both the welfare system and affirmative action favored women of color over men, so that the former had easier access to resources and jobs.

Some Khmer women, emboldened by service workers and the disciplining of refugee men, routinely call for outside intervention in settling domestic disputes. In one example, Mae, a woman in her thirties, called the police after claiming that her husband, an alcoholic, had hit her. A few days later she came to the self-help group and wanted assistance in getting him released from jail. She insisted that the policeman had misunderstood her and that she had never claimed that she was abused. Meanwhile, she called her husband in jail, boasting that she would try to "free" him if he promised, when he came out, to stop drinking and to attend the self-help group regularly. Mae's husband, it was reported, charged her with delusions of power: "I think that the judge is the one who will decide to release me, but she thinks she is the one who is controlling the situation. She thinks that by telling the police that I did not beat her she is securing my release." A couple of months later, Mae dropped the charges, and her husband was set free and prevailed upon by the group to join Alcoholics Anonymous. Although the marriage remained rocky, Mae apparently had manipulated the police, the self-help group, and the court system to discipline her husband. A neighbor reported that Mae's daughter said she wanted her mum to be in jail and her dad home. Public interventions in such domestic battles implicitly devalue men of color while upholding white masculinity, as presented by police and judge, as the embodiment of culturally correct citizenship and privilege.

Engendering Religious Modernity

Beyond the domain of the welfare state, institutions such as the church also construct commonsensical understandings of different ways and claims of belonging in Western democracies. Church groups are vital agents in converting immigrants into acceptable citizens, since they have always played a major role in sponsoring, helping, and socializing newcomers to Western culture, whether in the colonies or in the metropolitan centers.[10] In Northern California, the Church of the Latter-day Saints (LDS, or the Mormon church) shapes cultural citizenship by promoting white middle-class masculinity as the standard of civilization and class property to displaced Third World populations. In this

civilizing mission, the LDS church has been perhaps more thorough and successful than other churches which also came to the aid of refugees and poor immigrants flowing north in the 1980s.

Harold Bloom refers to the LDS church as an "American original" in that it is homegrown, post-Christian, and, ultimately a religion of the manly self, one that seeks salvation and freedom through individual struggles rather than through the community (1992: 18–36)." Although ignored or feared by liberals, it is very much part of the religious mainstream and has pervasive influence throughout the United States and increasingly in Europe. Its basic goal is to establish the Kingdom of God in the world by the millennium. It is one of the fastest-growing religions in the world and by the year 2020 may dominate the western United States and large areas of the Asia-Pacific world through mass recruitments of both the living and (through postmortem baptism) the dead (Bloom, 1992: 122; see also Gordon, 1994).[12]

Mormonism promotes a modernity that makes middle-class respectability accessible to the displaced and the poor who are socially ambitious in new metropolitan contexts. Originally a church of outsiders in frontier conditions, the LDS church has become very adept at recruiting outsiders into the mainstream by ordering peoples of color into specific racial, gender, and class hierarchies with the hope of achieving social success as represented by white masculinity. This *modus operandi* depends on the rule of colonial difference, which represents the other as "inferior and radically different" (Chatterjee, 1993: 33) but with the hope of being socialized to dependency on Anglo-Saxon hegemony. Early Mormon doctrines linked depravity and sin with dark-skinned peoples; a history of denying black men ordination to priesthood (crucial to salvation) was ended only in the late 1970s, when the church vigorously expanded its missionizing activities overseas (Bringhurst, 1981). The church's initial hesitation over "African-like" Melanesians soon gave way to a greater flexibility towards peoples of color in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region when it became clear that their recruitment would be the most important part of the drive to become a worldwide, multiethnic religion (IP: 194). This new tolerance for multiracial and mixed-race recruits, however, operates as an alibi for the church's insistent invocation and mapping of barbaric others in relation to white Mormons (Gordon, 1994).

In the San Francisco Bay Area as elsewhere, the LDS church is divided into separate wards for different ethnic/racial groups such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Samoans, Cambodians, and blacks. This mapping of ethnic and racial difference is in relation to moral leadership by white men, who embody American goals of freedom, self-reliance, and individual responsibility. The Mormon masculine ideal is clean-cut, in conservative business suit and tie and often armed with a briefcase. For disadvantaged newcomers, the church must represent a ladder to the American dream, but first they have to learn the steps leading to economic success, moral superiority, and salvation by overcoming the stigma of racialized male inferiority. On Sunday mornings, little Cambodian boys and girls attend Sunday school at the Mormon temple. One teacher wrote "I MUST OBEY" on

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the blackboard right next to a poster of a kneeling Jesus Christ's "Agony in the Garden." Many children and their parents find the church a more effective institution for teaching English than the state-sponsored English as a Second Language classes. Such instruction, especially for the very young, provides the context wherein the church can prize the young away from their parents and culture and integrate them into the structure of white authority.

The church regularly engages in the symbolic violence that uses "primitive" difference as a way to appropriate the moral authority of parents and realign young Cambodians with the church hierarchy. White Anglo-American supremacy is defined in opposition to the pathologized sexuality of subaltern figures as represented by the patriarchal Asian families and unmasculine Asian men. Such native embodiments of deviant sexual norms make them ripe for salvation by the white church. The bishop told me that he had two specific goals regarding his Cambodian converts, both attempts to correct what he considered their dysfunctional heterosexuality. One was to help Khmer women who had had their marriages arranged for them by their parents when they were teenagers in Cambodia. Perhaps oblivious to the irony, he claimed that the church was a critical agent in fighting the patriarchy of Cambodian culture and teaching Asians about marriage as a partnership. His second goal was to promote an ideal nuclear family headed by a white man. A white supremacist ideology not only defines the Khmers as racially inferior and sexually deviant but also suggests their redemption through the conjoining of white (male) and non-white (female) bodies, a particular intertwining of race and sex that, while seemingly promoting multiracial diversity, reproduces white–non-white asymmetry in the Mormon order.

The LDS church appeals to young, displaced people because it sometimes becomes the key vehicle for their making the transition to white middle-class culture. Mormon missionaries not only teach American English but also instruct youngsters in the acquisition of other social and bodily skills that will win respect from Americans. For some young immigrant women, the path is through a white marriage. There is something enormously appealing to refugee girls seeking acceptance in the clean-cut young men in business suits who visit their homes and seek to convert them. Mormonism represents upward mobility into a white world where outsiders will be spiritually accepted, though still as racial others. Young Cambodian female converts report that they like the Mormon teachings of "young women's values," including chastity, modesty, and self-discipline. A young woman I will call Vanna confessed:

> Being Mormon helps me to operate better in the US. When I was in high school, many Khmer girls married in the twelfth grade, about half of them to older Khmer guys whose jobs were not so good. They got pregnant or simply married to get away from strict parents who wouldn't let them out of the house, but they then found that it was worse in marriage. The husbands won't let them out; they are jealous about other guys, and worried about having no control.

The strict Mormon morality is appealing not only because it seems to echo Cambodian values for female virgins but also because it helps Cambodian girls to attain social mobility. By maintaining sexual purity, female converts avoid teenage pregnancy and early marriage to Khmer men, most of whom are working-class. Mormon lessons in balancing self-control with an affectionate personality socialize the young women to old-fashioned American values of emotion-work that prepare them for their future roles as loving wives and mothers. For instance, Vanna said that she was busy attending college and not dating. She wanted to wait and marry a returned missionary (a young Mormon man who has finished serving his two years as a missionary and is considered ready for marriage). "I really like the Mormon idea of being married for eternity. There is less divorce among Mormons. As far as sex is concerned, being Mormon and being Asian are the same – not to have sex before marriage. You have to be morally clean; it applies to the men too." The respectability, sexual allure, and moral purity attributed to white masculinity burnish the image of minority men who have comparable social and cultural capital. Says Vanna:

> It is more than likely that I'd marry a Caucasian. I want someone who is well-educated, doesn't smoke and drink, and who respects me for who I am. I find Caucasian and Chinese men more attractive than Khmer, for example, the tall Chinese guys who look Caucasian, who are light-skinned and more into American traditions like dating, whereas Khmer men hardly do that, like my brothers-in-law.

The latter also had working-class jobs such as glass manufacturing and packaging. In Vanna's eyes, the pursuit of middle-class status appears to be inseparable from marrying white men. Only through a marital relationship with white masculinity can she cross over the obstacles to the privileges of class and American citizenship.

The Mormon church, then, represents a disciplinary system providing an alternative modality of belonging which, more explicitly than state agencies, employs racialized masculinity in structuring class, gender, and citizenship ideals. Even as the church teaches recruits the self-discipline and entrepreneurship of American success, these attitudes are cast within the framework of white patronage or domination. Immigrant subjectivities, especially those of young girls seeking acceptance, are influenced by socializing processes that racialize gender and class through definitions of pathological (Khmer) and normalized (white) gender and sexuality. Thus Mormon Khmers are the latest in a historical process whereby the labor regimes of immigrants produce a conflation of race and class with the result that ambitious members of minorities often marry out of their community into the white community (see, e.g., Yanagisako, 1985). Do affluent Chinese immigrants to California, arriving with capital and credentials, experience other ways of "whitening" and its limits?

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Chinese Cosmopolitans: Class Property and Cultural Taste

In Northern California, the so-called Hong Kong money elite resides in an exclusive community on the flank of the San Francisco Peninsula mountain range. All the homes in this suburb cost over a million dollars. The choicest are set into the hillsides, with mountains as a backdrop and a view of the bay. Mansions in an Asian-Mediterranean style stand amidst clearings where few trees remain unfelled. This was a sore point with locals, along with the fact that many of the houses were paid for in hard cash, sometimes before the arrival of their new occupants. The driveways are parked with Mercedes Benzes, BMWs, and even a Rolls Royce or two.

The *feng-shui* ("wind-water" propitious placement) of the place is excellent. Fleeing the impending return of Hong Kong to China's rule or merely seeking to tap into US markets, overseas Chinese crossed the Pacific to make this former white enclave their new home. Led initially by real estate agents and later by word of mouth, the influx of wealthy Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia has spread to cities and upscale communities all over the state and the country. While many of the newcomers are well-educated professionals who work in the Silicon Valley, an increasing number are property developers, financiers, and industrialists who work on both sides of the Pacific.[13] Their presence has changed the social landscape of suburban California, increasing the number of shopping malls (called "Pacific Renaissance" and "Pacific Rim") and sophisticated restaurants that serve a predominantly Asian clientele (see also Fong, 1994). Thus, in addition to being the destination of Third World refugees and migrant workers, US cities are fast becoming the sites of overseas Asian investment and settlement.

What kinds of processes are making such cosmopolitan subjects into citizens? Although the affluent immigrant Chinese appear to be able to evade disciplining by the state, they are not entirely free of its citizenship requirements, on the one hand, and local mediations over what being part of the imagined American community (or the Northern Californian version of it) is all about. Unlike the vast majority of Cambodian refugees, the Chinese investor-immigrants and professionals are "transnational cosmopolitans" who strategically manage meaning as they negotiate and contest the shifting discursive terrains in the world economy (Hannerz, 1990; Ong, 1993; Ong and Nonini, 1996). However, these self-styled "astronauts" – so-called because they spend so much time shuttling back and forth across the Pacific (Ong, 1993) – are not always as attuned to the cultural norms of particular Californian locales as they are to the transnational opportunities opened up by globalization. Two examples will show that there are cultural limits to the ways in which they can negotiate the hegemonic production of Chineseness in California and the local values about what constitutes civilized conduct and appropriate citizenship.

Family biopolitics and parachute kids

The key motivation and predicament of the transnational strategies of affluent Chinese are their families. Although immigrant businessmen and investors are willing to shuttle back and forth across national borders themselves; locating their children in California is a major priority. These plans are the outgrowth of what, borrowing from Foucault, I have called "family biopolitics" (Ong, 1993). The heads of wealthy Chinese families manifest a biopolitical instrumentality in governing the conduct of family members in the interest of ensuring the security and prosperity of the family as a whole. Family biopolitics constitute members' sense of moral worth in terms of relations within the family. Parents instill in their children self-discipline in education, work, and consumption — habits that foster the steady accumulation of economic and symbolic capital — that contributes to the family's prosperity and honor. For instance, the term "utilitarian familialism" has been applied to the normative and practical tendencies whereby Hong Kong Chinese families place family interest above all other individual and social concerns (Lau, 1983: 73). As part of such family governmentality, the middle and upper-middle classes in Hong Kong and Taiwan deploy family members abroad to obtain universally certified educational degrees and eventually green cards for the entire family. By re-locating some members in California the family maximizes opportunities for overseas business expansion while attempting to evade the governmentality of the home country. However, despite the flexibility afforded them by transnational capitalism, emigrant business families do not fully escape the disciplining of the host country.

At the moment, immigration law has changed to allow for an "investor category" whereby would-be immigrants can obtain a green card in return for a million dollar investment that creates at least ten jobs. On Wall Street there have been seminars on how to obtain US citizenship through real estate investment and acquisition. A sponsor urges Asian-Americans to "think of your relatives in Asia. If they invest $1 million in you, they get a green card and you get a new business" (*Wall Street Journal,* February 21, 1991). The new citizenship law thus constructs the affluent Chinese newcomer as a *homo economicus*, an economic agent who is a "manipulable man, a man who is perpetually responsive to modifications in his environment" (Gordon, 1991: 43). Perceived as economic agents of choice, overseas Chinese immigrants will nevertheless be disciplined by citizenship criteria and manipulated in their deployment of capital. However, even super-rich would-be immigrants refuse to be subjected to such controls on their investments, perhaps because they are ultimately more susceptible to capitalist instrumentality than to state biopolitics.

A more common strategy for gaining residence rights is to send children to US high schools and colleges. For instance, Alex Leong, a middle-aged executive from a Hong Kong-based finance company, confided that his father always told him, "Your future is really going to be outside Hong Kong. So you should be educated outside, as long as you maintain some Chinese customs and speak

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Chinese." Since the 1960s an entire generation of middle-class and upper-middle-class Chinese students from Hong Kong and Taiwan have embarked upon overseas education in the United States, seeking educational certifications and residence rights that will eventually enable their families to settle in the US. Parents visit their children to buy homes, set up bank accounts, and assess the local real estate. Upon graduation the sons may open up a US branch of their family company. Thus, after graduating from Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin business school, Alex joined his father's business by setting up a San Francisco office. Because Alex is not yet a citizen, his parents plan to retire in Vancouver, where residential rights can be purchased with a smaller investment of C$300,000. He expects that eventually they will join him in the Bay Area.

The practice of sending young children to school in Califonia has given rise to another image of affluent Chinese immigrants. Taiwanese parents favor sending children to US high schools because they hope that they will give them a better chance (than in Taiwan) of gaining entry to college, while earning residence rights in the United States. Furthermore, children in the United States provide a chance to invest in property and establish a home base against political instability in Asia. However, sometimes the attempts to coordinate family biopolitics with the disciplining requirements of citizenship undermine carefully constructed plans of business travel, children's education, and managing a trans-Pacific lifestyle. Some 40,000 Taiwanese teenagers have been left to fend for themselves in California while their parents pursue business interests in Asia. Many of these youngsters live with their siblings in expensive homes, sometimes equipped with Asian servants. These so-called parachute kids have the run of the house and manage household finances like adults. One 17-year-old girl, who first arrived when she was 13, has been acting as parent to her younger sisters. Their parents drop by periodically from Taiwan. She is worried that her sisters will be quite lost when she goes to college. Other teenagers have developed a consumerist, laid-back attitude that both critiques and reinforces the *homo economicus* image of their parents. Some youngsters freely spend their parents' large allowances. Newspapers report a Taiwanese brother and sister, both high school students near Los Angeles, spending their free time shopping in malls and frequenting restaurants and karaoke bars. The girl, who dons the latest Valley Girl fashions, calls her father "the ATM machine" for issuing money but nothing else. The boy expresses his resentment more directly: "If they're going to dump me here and not take care of me, they owe me something. That is my right" (*Straits Times*, June 26, 1993). The effect of a transnational strategy of economic and cultural consumption has been to split up the much-vaunted Chinese family unit, with family biopolitics dictated in large part by accumulation concerns that oblige business couples to spend their time overseas while abandoning their children to develop a sense of individualistic rights and bravado. Some of the children have shoplifted, joined local Chinese gangs, or created problems in school, drawing the attention of the social services. By and large, however, it is the disciplining of accumulation strategies that produces a sense of global citizenship and contingent belonging for the business-immigrant family.

Affluent transnational Chinese in California are caught up in the dialectic of embedding and disembedding (Giddens, 1990) in the international economy, a process which enables them to escape to some extent the disciplining of the state because of their flexible deployment of capital but not within the locality where their families are based. The flexibility of Chinese professionals shifting back and forth across the Pacific thus contradicts local notions of belonging as nominative American citizens. Even compared with the proverbial restless Californians, the new Chinese immigrants are footloose cosmopolitans. As the following incident shows, the attenuated sense of a primary link to a particular society comes up against an American class ethos of moral liberalism.

Bad taste or the homeless in an affluent neighborhood?

Whereas poor Asians are primarily disciplined by state agencies, affluent Chinese immigrants, as home buyers and property developers, have encountered regulation by civic groups upset at the ways in which their city is being changed by transnational capital and taste. In wealthier San Franciscan neighborhoods, residents pride themselves on their conservation consciousness, and they jealously guard the hybrid European ambiance and character of particular neighborhoods. In their role as custodians of appropriate cultural taste governing buildings, architecture, parks, and other public spaces, civic groups routinely badger City Hall, scrutinize urban zoning laws, and patrol the boundaries between what is aesthetically permissible and what is intolerable in their districts. By linking race with habitus, taste, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), such civic groups set limits to the whitening of Asians, who, metaphorically speaking, still give off the whiff of sweat despite arriving with starter symbolic capital.

Public battles over race/taste have revolved around the transformation of middle-class neighborhoods by rich Asian newcomers. At issue are boxy houses with bland facades – "monster houses" – erected by Asian buyers to accommodate extended families in low-density, single-family residential districts known for their Victorian or Mediterranean charm. Protests have often taken on a racialist tone, registering both dismay at the changing cultural landscape and efforts to educate the new arrivals to white upper-class norms appropriate for the city. While the activists focus on the cultural elements – aesthetic norms, democratic process, and civic duty – that underpin the urban imagined community, they encode the strong class resentment against large-scale Asian investment in residential and commercial properties throughout the city (see Mitchell, 1996). A conflict over one of these monster houses illustrates the ways in which the state is caught between soothing indignant urbanites seeking to impose their notion of cultural citizenship on Asian *nouveax riches* while attempting to keep the door open for Pacific Rim capital.

In 1989 a Hong Kong multimillionaire, a Mrs. Chan, bought a house in the affluent Marina district. Chan lived in Hong Kong and rented out her Marina property. A few years later, she obtained the approval of the city to add a third story to her house but failed to notify her neighbors. When they learned of her

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plans, they complained that the third story would block views of the Palace of Fine Arts as well as cut off sunlight in an adjoining garden. The neighbors linked up with a citywide group to pressure City Hall. The mayor stepped in and called for a city zoning study, thus delaying the proposed renovation. At a neighborhood meeting, someone declared, "We don't want to see a second Chinatown here." Indeed, there is already a new "Chinatown" outside the old Chinatown, based in the middle-class Richmond district. This charge thus raised the specter of a spreading Chinese urbanscape encroaching on the heterogeneous European flavor of the city. The remark, with its implied racism, compelled the mayor to apologize to Chan, and the planning commission subsequently approved a smaller addition to her house.

However, stung by the racism and the loss on her investment and bewildered that neighbors could infringe upon her property rights, Chan, a transnational developer, used her wealth to mock the city's self-image as a bastion of liberalism. She pulled out all her investments in the United States and decided to donate her million dollar house to the homeless. To add insult to injury, she stipulated that her house was not to be used by any homeless of Chinese descent. Her architect, an American Chinese, told the press, "You can hardly find a homeless Chinese anyway" (*Asia Week,* May 6, 1995). Secure in her overseas location, Chan fought the Chinese stereotype by stereotyping American homeless as non-Chinese, while challenging her civic-minded neighbors to demonstrate the moral liberalism they professed. Mutual class and racial discrimination thus broke through the surface of what initially appeared to be a negotiation over normative cultural taste in the urban milieu. A representative of the major's office, appropriately contrite, remarked that Chan could still do whatever she wanted with her property; "We just would like for her not to be so angry." The need to keep overseas investments flowing into the city had to be balanced against neighborhood groups' demands for cultural standards. The power of the international real estate market, as represented by Mrs. Chan, thus disciplined both City Hall and the Marina neighbors, who may have to rethink local notions of what being enlightened urbanites may entail in the "era of Pacific Rim capital" (Mitchell, 1996).

Other Chinese investor-immigrants, unlike Mrs. Chan, try to negotiate the tensions between local and global forces and to adopt the cultural trappings of the white upper class so as to cushion long-term residents' shock at the status change of the racial other, until recently likely to be a laundry or garment worker. Chinese developers who live in San Francisco are trying harder to erase the image of themselves as "economic animals" who build monster houses, as well as the perception that they lack a sense of civic duty and responsibility. They try to maintain their Victorian homes and English gardens, collect Stradivari violins and attend the opera, play tennis in formerly white clubs, and dress up by dressing down their *nouveaux riches* appearances. I have elsewhere talked about the limits to cultural accumulation of Chinese gentrification in Western metropolitan circles (Ong, 1992). Perhaps realizing the limits to how they can be accepted through these whitening practices, some Chinese investors are for the first time making significant philanthropic contributions outside the old Chinatown. I

interviewed a surgeon who was the first Chinese-American to sit on the board of the city symphony. When he complained about the lack of Chinese contributions to the symphony, I had to remind him that there were hardly music lessons in Chinatown or other poor urban schools.

But the effort to funnel Pacific Rim money upwards continues. Hong Kong-based companies are making generous donations to major public institutions such as universities and museums. Leslie Tang-Schilling, the daughter of a Hong Kong industrialist, married into a prominent San Franciscan family, and a commercial developer in her own right, leads the move to soften the hard-edged image of Chinese investor immigrants. The Tang family name is emblazoned on an imposing new health center on the Berkeley campus. Other overseas Chinese and Asian businesses have donated large sums to the construction of buildings devoted to chemistry, life sciences, computer science, and engineering. An East Coast example is the gift of $20 million to Princeton University by Gordon Wu, a Hong Kong tycoon whose money could perhaps better have benefited long-neglected universities on the Chinese mainland.

Whereas an earlier generation of overseas Chinese tycoons went home to build universities in China, today Asian investors wish to buy symbolic capital in Western democracies as a way to ease racial and cultural acceptance across the globe. Like earlier European immigrant elites looking for symbolic real estate, overseas Chinese donors show a preference for "hardware" (impressive buildings bearing their names) over "software" (scholarships and programs that are less visible to the public eye).[14] The difference is that subjects associated with Third World inferiority have scaled the bastions of white power.[15] Such showcase pieces have upgraded Asian masculinity, layered over the hardscrabble roots of the Asian *homo economicus,* and proclaimed their arrival on the international scene.

Nevertheless, there are limits to such strategies of symbolic accumulation, and white backlash has been expressed in a rise in random attacks on Asians. By placing an Asian stamp on prestigious "white" public space, the new immigrants register what for over a century – one thinks of the plantation workers and railroad men, maids and garment workers, gardeners and cooks, shopkeepers and nurses, undocumented workers laboring in indentured servitude, whether in the colonies or in cities like New York and Los Angeles – has been a space of Asia-Pacific cultural production within the West.[16]

Are the New Asians Asian-Americans?

Through an ethnographic examination of cultural citizenship as subjectification and cultural performance, I argue that the ideological entanglements of race and culture operate both to locate and to marginalize immigrants from the meta-phorical South and East. This approach thus suggests that while "cultural fundamentalism" may have replaced racism in rhetorics of exclusion (Stolcke, 1995), in practice racial hierarchies and polarities continue to inform Western

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notions of cultural difference and are therefore inseparable from the cultural features attributed to different groups. I maintain that the white-black polarities emerging out of the history of European-American imperialism continue to shape attitudes and encode discourses directed at immigrants from the rest of the world that are associated with racial and cultural inferiority. This dynamic of racial othering emerges in a range of mechanisms that variously subject non-white immigrants to whitening or blackening processes that indicate the degree of their closeness to or distance from ideal white standards.

The contrasting dynamics of the subjectification experienced by new immigrants demonstrate the critical significance of institutional forces, both domestic and international, in making different kinds of minorities. Cambodian refugees and Chinese business people did not arrive as ready-made ethnics. Through the different modes of disciplining – the primacy of state and church regulation in one and the primacy of consumption and capitalist instrumentality in the other – Cambodian refugees and Chinese immigrants are dialectically positioned at different ends of the black-white spectrum. The racialization of class, as well as the differential othering of immigrants, constitutes immigrants as the racialized embodiments of different kinds of social capital.

Thus, the category "Asian-American" must acknowledge the internal class, ethnic, and racial stratifications that are both the effect and the product of differential governmentalities working on different populations of newcomers. It must confront the contradictions and instabilities within the imposed solidarity and temporary alliances of what has been prematurely called an "Asian-American panethnicity" (Espiritu, 1992). The two new Asian groups represent different modalities of precarious belonging – one as ideologically blackened subjects manipulating state structures in order to gain better access to resources and the other expressing an ultramodern instrumentality that is ambivalently caught between whitening social practices and the consumer power that spells citizenship in the global economy. They are thus not merely new arrivals passively absorbed into an overarching Asian-American identity,¹⁷ nor can they be easily subsumed within the inter-Asian coalitions that emerged among college students in the 1960s or united simply on the basis of having been treated "all alike" as biogenetic others sharing a history of exclusion (Chan, 1991: xiii). The entanglement of ideologies of race, culture, nation, and capitalism shapes a range of ethnicized citizenship in different fields of power. Given all these factors, the heterogeneity and instability of Asian-American identities (Lowe, 1991) suggest that a dramatic shift in coalitions may cut across racial lines – for example, Asian-Anglo partnerships in business or linkages between Cambodian and other refugees of color in dealing with the welfare state.

I end by resuming to the moral predicament of my own passage into American society. Twenty years later, and only after the birth of my first child (whose father is a fourth-generation Japanese and Spanish-speaking Chinese-American) did I feel ready to mark my long apprenticeship in cultural citizenship by becoming a legal citizen. I continue to view the term "Asian-American" with ambivalence, as much for its imposed racialized normativity as for what it elides about other-

Asians/other-Americans and for what it includes as well as excludes within the American scheme of belonging. One learns to be fast-footed, occasionally glancing over one's shoulder to avoid tripping over – while tripping up – those lines.

The unbearable lightness of being a non-white American means that the presumed stability and homogeneity of the Asian-American identity must, in this era of postcivil-rights politics (Takagi, 1994)[18] and globalization, be open to the highly particularized local reworkings of global forces. In California these forces have been dramatically played out in domestic, racial terms as well as in transnational, class ones, foreshadowing the reconfiguration of citizenship in the West in the new global era.

Acknowledgment

Notes

1 According to Rosaldo (1994: 57), cultural citizenship is "the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity, or native language) with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one's right to belong, in the sense of participating in the nation-state's democratic processes. The enduring exclusions of the color line often deny full citizenship to Latinos and other people of color. From the point of view of subordinate communities, cultural citizenship offers the possibility of legitimizing demands made in the struggle to enfranchise themselves. These demands can range from legal, political and economic issues to matters of human dignity, well-being, and respect."

2 I thank Brackette Williams for discussing these points with me and supplying the references.

3 A recent volume, *Structuring Diversity* (Lamphere, 1991), provides ethnographic cases of encounters between newcomers and US urban institutions. The focus of these case studies is on the integration of immigrants into dominant American society. My approach views such encounters and practices as relations of power that constitute varied minoritization processes and foster different understandings of the cultural citizenship among different groups of newcomers.

4 In 1988, the Bay Area was the third-most-favored destination for legal immigrants, after New York and Los Angeles. Nearly 41,000 immigrants arrived in the Bay Area that year, 60 percent of them Asian (*San Francisco Chronicle*, July 6, 1989).

5 Some Asian-American professionals have protested being put into the position of a "racial bourgeoisie" – a buffer class between whites and other minorities (*San Francisco Chronicle*, August 22, 1995).

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6   Cynthia Wong Sau-ling (1992: 111–21) employs the concept "ethnicizing gender," to describe a parallel racializing process whereby "white ideology assigns selected gender characteristics to various ethnic others," for example, in representations of effeminized Asian men and ultrafeminized Asian women.

7   See Kelly (1980), Nicholson (1989), Welaratna (1993), and Ong (1995a, b) for studies of how, after their arrival in the United States, Southeast Asian refugees are differently socialized in a range of institutional contexts to the requirements of the dominant white culture. Gail Kelly's (1980) concept of "internal colonialism" to describe the "schooling" of blacks, Native Americans, and immigrant communities as a generic colonized labor force is too general to capture the complex and contingent discriminations among different categories of immigrants.

8   All the names of informants are fictive to protect their privacy.

9   The notion of Khmer culture as "oral" – despite a literate history based on Sanskrit, Hinduism, and Buddhism stretching back to the 9th-century Khmer kingdom that built Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom, among other monuments (see Chandler, 1983) – is part of the misconception that Khmers are a "primitive" people.

10 For an example of churches socializing colonized populations to Western values, see Schieffelin (1981); for an example of churches socializing Asian immigrants, see Hirata (1979).

11 Harold Bloom, like others before him (see, e.g., Whalen, 1964), considers the LDS church a post-Christian "American religion" in that it is non-monotheistic, has no absolutely formal creeds, and rejects creationism, believing instead in a maternal and contingent God found within the believer. Its indigenous American roots are reflected in the romantic quest for oneself, freedom, progress, and even immortality (1992: 40–2, 113–15).

12 In the Mormon church, the family rather than the individual is the "unit of exalt-ation." The destiny of the Latter-day Saints is godhood. Baptism for the dead is a way to "save" ancestors, and spirit children are produced by Mormon couples so that these family members can join their living Mormon descendants in the "eternal progression" towards godness (Bloom, 1992: 121–3).

13 Of course, the influx into the United States of poor, working-class Chinese from the mainland and Southeast Asia, many in difficult and illegal conditions, continues. For a feminist perspective on Chinese emigration, see Ong (1995c). With the growing influx of affluent and professional Chinese, the image of the Pacific Rim male ex-ecutive is eclipsing somewhat the image of the Chinese laundry worker and illegal alien (see Ong, 1993).

14 The Malaysian Chinese philanthropist Tan Kah Kee is famous for building Xiamen University and many other public works in Fujian, China, the land of his birth. Today his US-educated children are organizing a campaign to contribute to the chemistry building on the Berkeley campus.

15 Of course, in making donations to public buildings, Asian-American nouveaux riches are merely replicating a long immigrant tradition cultivated by Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants who made good. The Chinese newcomers to the Bay Area are following in the footsteps of the Hearsts, the Aliotos, and the Haases. However, for the first time we are seeing the non-white arrivals scaling the social heights with wealth gained in the international economy and causing reluctant, minimal adjust-ments in the domestic racial hierarchy. For an anthropological study of a major American family dynasty and the symbolic boundaries of wealth, see Marcus

(1992). For an account of the Chinese diaspora within the context of global flexible accumulation, see Ong and Nonini (1996). Finally, for an interesting comparison with another highly successful non-European immigrant community, Cubans in Florida, see Portes and Stepick (1993).

16 I am paraphrasing the title of a volume edited by Rob Wilson and Arik Dirlik (1996).

17 The construction of which, as Sylvia Yanagisako (1993) has noted, is ideologically dominated by the history of male Chinese railroad workers, thus marginalizing or excluding the experiences of women and of other Asian groups.

18 Takagi defines "post-civil-rights politics" as the struggle of multiethnic groups beyond the old black-white framework, marked by the tendency for racial interests to be disguised by social and economic language and for solutions to racial problems to be sought in class terms (1994: 237–9).

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