ETHNICITY AS PROVENANCE: IN SEARCH OF VALUES AND PRINCIPLES FOR DOCUMENTING THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

BY JOEL WURL

ABSTRACT: This article adds to a recent strand of archival literature that challenges traditional definitions of the principle of provenance by extending it to encompass ethnic communities. Understanding cultural groupings as a manifestation of provenance has several ramifications for archival work. It can assist archivists in overcoming the historical tendency of filiopietistic approaches to documenting ethnic groups and can help to avoid oversimplified conceptions of cultural diversity. Perhaps most notably, it calls into question the conventional archival values of ownership and custody. The author argues that the framework of custodianship should be replaced by one of stewardship as archivists work to build effective documentation of ethnic communities.

Human value systems are generally constructed over years or decades, but sometimes they are jolted into clarity by unforgettable, even unsettling moments. In 1992, I was asked to deliver a keynote presentation for the Society of California Archivists annual meeting in Pasadena on the subject of documenting diversity. The date, more precisely, was May 1, 1992, two days after the acquittal of three Los Angeles police officers in the Rodney King beating trial. I flew into the Ontario, California, airport the evening before and rented a car. The drive between the airport and the hotel in Pasadena was remarkably eerie. Smoke was plentiful and the freeways were all but empty. The Pasadena streets were quiet, nothing at all like what was going on not many miles away. Even so, arriving at the hotel felt a bit like finding sanctuary. I wasn't sure why at first; my personal safety was never at issue. I would soon realize that it was my emotional and moral condition that was shaken to the core.

That realization started to hit me just about the time I was to take the podium. I looked at my paper—an assessment of past, present, and future considerations in administering archives on immigration and ethnicity—and it suddenly seemed sterile and meaningless. I prefaced my talk by verbalizing how anachronistic and academic it felt for us to be contemplating the issue of documenting minority cultures when just down the road, society was breaking apart along racial and ethnic fault lines. Although I wasn't sure it made sense to proceed, I did, and the conference went forward successfully.[1]

But something was snapping inside me as I tried to reconcile what seemed then to be a complete disjunction between the supposedly noble career I had chosen and the critical needs and challenges of the real world outside the cozy walls of a Pasadena hotel.

I was facing a crisis of confidence, one that had me thinking I might have been mistaken about the importance of archives. My job of acquiring, preserving, and making accessible the informational remnants of immigrant groups seemingly had little to offer in the task of building a more tolerant and just social infrastructure. Clearly, archives had no power to prevent the seething discontent and devastation that had taken place in LA those several days.

Or had they? It wasn't until a few weeks later that I learned of an incident that occurred at the apex of the riots that yanked me out of my funk for good. Looters and arsonists had worked their way to the south LA neighborhood of the Southern California Library for Social Studies & Research (SCL), a major repository on contemporary social justice movements and underrepresented communities. Standing guard, building manager Chester Murray encountered a group that announced its intention to burn down his building. Murray responded by telling them the library contained the history of African-Americans, Latinos, and working class people and persuaded them to leave it alone. Many of the surrounding buildings were damaged or destroyed, but not the library.[2]

I use this self-reflective parable as the entree point for this essay not just because it is an inspirational touchstone, nor even because I think of it as the kind of episode that can, for any archivist with a social conscience, ignite a passion for the work we do. Rather, I do so chiefly because it provides a sharp-edged illustration of how some of the following concepts and principles play out in real time with real people and very real consequences at stake.

The SCL was saved due in part to the bravery of one man but significantly also due to a realization on the part of those bent on destruction. The facility contained something important to them, probably something they hadn't been fully aware of before then. In fact, it contained a partial antidote for what drove them to act out in the first place. It comprised documentation not only *about* underrepresented communities but more importantly *of* those communities. Not just the ongoing power of history but the core question of who *owns* that history surfaced in one fateful flash point that illuminates some important lessons to draw on in considering how—and of course why—various cultural communities might be documented by archivists and others.

Unlike previous writings on this subject, the following commentary does not deal primarily with issues of methodology, nor does it provide a typology of archival records generated by ethnic groups.[3] Rather, it focuses foremost on matters of principle and values. This is not to denigrate the importance of practical applications. It is simply my conviction that deeper reflection on the conceptual framework buttressing archival decisions will lead more coherently to techniques of implementation. If we are charged with building archival resources on particular cultural groups, it matters little how we do this if we haven't really wrestled with the broader questions of why and with whose authority. And if, as Elisabeth Kaplan has so forcefully expressed, "we collect what we are," a more conscious grasp of our own value systems and conceptual vantage points is essential to judicious professional decision making.[4] A precursory disclaimer

is in order: Most of these observations emanate from my experience in documenting the phenomenon of immigration and its aftermath. While I would like to believe that some of these ideas resonate for other social or cultural groups not borne of a migration process, I fully realize that distinctions could well supersede similarities.

Ethnicity as Provenance

In an obscure but compelling essay published more than two decades ago concerning the Canadian government's policy of multiculturalism and its impact on ethnic library and archival activity, the late historian Robert Harney inserted the following observation: "The remarkable fact is that after ten years of a multicultural policy in Canada and a century of rhetoric of being a 'nation of nations' in the United States, the ethnic dimension of man is still not seen as valid provenance."[5] This statement, which was elaborated on only sparingly in Harney's article, haunted me for a number of years while I pursued the challenge of documenting American immigration. Its meaning and wisdom are only now becoming more apparent. How does one come to regard ethnicity as a form of archival provenance, and, more importantly, what are the implications of this idea?

Answering these questions requires exploring some definitions of two increasingly elusive concepts: provenance and ethnicity. Provenance is a term that at first glance appears to have clear parameters. In the words of Richard Pearce-Moses, author of the Society of American Archivists' glossary of archival terminology, "Provenance is a fundamental principle of archives, referring to the individual, family, or organization which created or received the items in a collection."[6] At its core are the notions of origin, context, and integrity. As archivists learn early on, the originating source of archival material is something to be respected and represented in the way such material is gathered and made accessible. But the textbook definition of this most basic of professional tenets really pertains to the scenario of how one confronts a body of archival information on a processing table. It envisions a reactive behavior—*I have a set of items in a collection in front of me, how do I respond in order to make them comprehensible to others?* Because of this conventional focus on discrete materials, we tend to avoid the richer, more nuanced, and more expansive connotations embodied in the idea of "originating source." Several archivists, most notably colleagues from Canada, have been challenging the profession to widen its understanding of provenance to encompass entities not conveniently bounded by the walls of a government agency, a set of business bylaws, or a household.[7] Human beings operate in collective fashion and develop collective identities that, while perhaps more complex and not so neatly contained as the more distinct organizational or familial entities, are nonetheless corporate and corporeal. Recent writings by Jeannette Bastian provide especially compelling case studies in helping to understand how provenance can coalesce around such larger social groupings. Her article, "In a 'House of Memory': Discovering the Provenance of Place," illustrates how a prominent New Hampshire artist colony, over time, took on a collective character that could not be understood as simply the sum of the individual participants who occupied it. The colony became more than a physical gathering

place for artists; it became a place of "collective remembering" and, as such, a form of provenance that commanded attention in the way archival sources were developed and described.[8] Likewise, in recounting her experiences as librarian and archivist in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Bastian witnessed the consequences of a too-narrow definition of provenance in the form of cultural amnesia. Because the governmental records of the Virgin Islands had been accumulated by U.S. and Danish colonial authorities, they had been removed to those nations, out of reach of the people they documented. As Bastian's book, *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost its Archives and Found its History,* shows, it was only through nurturing a wider understanding of provenance, encompassing the subjects as well as the literal producers of records, that necessary strides could be made in restoring local access to previously invisible evidence.[9]

This reasoning, in my view, applies similarly to the social environment we might label "ethnic community." But making this claim requires some consideration of the term ethnicity. A crisp, commonly agreeable definition of ethnicity is elusive at best. This is partly due to the relative newness of the term in learned discourse on social behavior. Although the actual word origins trace far back (derived from the Greek "ethnos," meaning "nation"), it was not until the 1930s that American social scientists and commentators began employing it as a descriptor for group belonging.[10] As a consequence of fervent scholarly interest in cultural identity over the past two decades, numerous attempts have been made to capture the essence of a shared contemporary meaning for the term. Through these attempts, several common conclusions have emerged: (1) ethnicity is a social construct of group affiliation, not something inherently or genetically predetermined; (2) ethnic groups share a sense of common origin, embrace a distinctive history and destiny, and develop a sense of unique collective solidarity; and (3) ethnic identity, on both an individual and group level, is dynamic and mutable over time.[11] Among various efforts to encapsulate a definition, one of the more agreeable calls ethnicity "a collective consciousness of kind ... based in common memories, experiences, and cultural repertoires."[12]

We have come to understand that ethnic groups are not absolutely foreordained on the basis of bloodlines or other intrinsic qualities but are the product of complex social interaction. Nor are they static or rigid. Even in the case of groups formed by incoming immigrant populations, the contours of community belonging and function are constantly being shaped and reshaped in a complicated and challenging dance with host societies. Yet what sometimes gets missed in this assessment of ethnicity as a product of social formulation is the basic reality that ethnic community life does, nonetheless, *exist and persist* (albeit not in universal manner or magnitude among various communities). Calling something a social construction does not mean it is a "fiction," a sometimes alternative descriptor. Human beings do, indeed, come together around common languages, geographic origins, modes of cultural expression, religion, cuisine, and more, and develop ways of behaving as an integrated social system—again, a collective. As we contemplate the task of fully representing the experiences of immigrant peoples and their descendants in the archival record of this nation, we have to begin with this fundamental awareness that ethnicity is manifested in interpersonal

and interdependent frameworks—frameworks that need to be understood and respected as embodiments of provenance.

Failing to perceive ethnicity as provenance can lead to some unfortunate results in the archival arena. As one writer reminds us, provenance is, foremost, "a principle of organization built around context."[13] Without a full appreciation for the contextual whole of ethnic community development, efforts to document this dimension of society can take on a fragmentary and narrow approach. When ethnicity is not viewed as provenance, it tends to be viewed simply as a subject area or "theme," like education, labor, sports, or the arts.[14] This paradigm of archival selection overlooks the rich reservoir of information originating deep within community infrastructures in favor of scattered products about communities, often generated by those on the outside looking in. It also runs a considerable risk of being grounded in distorted, if not damaging, preconceptions of ethnic identities and community experiences.

Operating with a clearer sense of ethnicity as a form of provenance poses a fundamental challenge to traditional archival perspectives of custody and ownership, a point I will return to. By the same token, it enables us to break free from the limiting constraints of the classical definition of provenance that is wedded to discrete, visible sets of physical documents and other materials. Documenting immigrant and ethnic life effectively, I believe, requires archivists to traverse some of the boundaries they tend to place on what constitutes archival evidence and to look more closely instead at the ways ethnic communities actually convey information. As a case in point, a University of Minnesota Ph.D. student is currently researching the local Hmong community and its forms of cultural and literary expression against the backdrop of the common pronouncement of the Hmong as a "preliterate" people prior to their refugee migration. As he notes, this type of conclusion and terminology can have a marginalizing or "exoticizing" effect in shaping how a community is perceived. It can also hinder a more authentic examination of the ways Hmong may have expressed literary inspirations through different constructs and the ways in which literature in the more traditional sense has evolved in their newer host environments.[15] Archivists, likewise, need to cultivate an openness of thought to how ethnic community life is actually transacted, through communication structures that might not be familiar to the shelves of our repositories. It is only through an appreciation of ethnic communities as environments of originating context that we can liberate ourselves from constricted thinking about the evidence of ethnicity.

Ethnicity's Relational Contexts

In using this expanded meaning of archival provenance as an analytical tool, it's important to consider that contexts do not exist in singular fashion. Ethnicity is certainly a significant organizing force in human development, but it coexists with other broad contextual forces. One of these is time. Are archives the stuff of history? Are they authentic markers of the past? How we think about time and the place of archives within it is vitally important to the work we do. The distinctions between past and present, which on a surface level sometimes seem so clear and profound, are on a deeper

level quite congruent. As novelist E. L. Doctorow once put it, "history is the present. That's why every generation writes it anew."[16]

Archivists who have come to share this insight on the "here and now" function of the past have encouraged us to adopt a mindset that explains the work we do not as preserving history but as facilitating memory. A leading exponent of this idea is Brien Brothman of the Rhode Island State Archives. In an extremely nimble essay published in 2001, he paints a contrast between the traditional construct of archivists as keepers of history vs. archivists as keepers of memory: "Memory's archivist is interested in the past's residue as material for promoting integrated knowledge, social identity, and the formation of group consciousness; history's archivist is interested in finding records and, in them, uncovering evidence to develop a linear narrative about a past that is ours, *yet different from us* [italics mine]."[17]

This is a delicate but highly meaningful conceptual distinction that resonates quite loudly in the arena of ethnic identity and group consciousness. In a "memory" construct of archives, the past is never really separate from what is active and immediate, and documentation, no matter its physical age, is always inextricably tethered to an ongoing process of collective remembering. Ethnic communities, as we've already noted, are dynamic social systems in a persistent state of formulation. "Things that have gone on before," be it yesterday or a hundred years ago, are active ingredients of group consciousness and composition at any given point in its evolution. If we fail to grasp this in an archival setting, we risk treating the past and its remnants as disengaged from the present—as nostalgia or, worse, as grist for filiopietistic, celebratory, or romantic portrayals of immigrant and ethnic community life. The national landscape of ethnic archives is already dotted with enough outcomes of this approach to documenting particular communities.[18] A discerning perspective on the present day's uses and potential misuses of a living past is one of the most valuable tools any archivist of ethnic societies can possess.

Along with the context of time, ethnicity needs to be positioned as part of a varied menu of social groupings that compose collective identity. Rarely, if ever, do human beings maintain a single identity or locus of affiliation. Because identity is largely a volitional process, we tend to align ourselves with a multiplicity if groupings, any of which, depending on given circumstances, we might claim as an identity marker—our professional guilds, our religions, our political parties, our sexual preferences, to name but a few. And of course individual ethnic identities themselves are far from monolithic, with many people affirming and expressing a "consciousness of kind" with more than one group. Indeed, ethnic groups often take on layered identities, as reflected in subcommunities (e.g., Arab American Moslem or Christian; pre- or post-Solidarity Polish Americans) or in pan-ethnic structures (e.g., Vietnamese and/or Asian American; Dominican and/or Latino). The latter observation also introduces the element of race, which further amplifies the complexity of identity formation. While I do subscribe to the position that race, too, is a social construction and not a biological imperative, I can't overlook the reality that racial thinking in this country most often ascribes this particular identity for us. Yet even our seemingly encrusted template of racial categorization shows signs occasionally of its permeability and its flaws as an instrument for comprehending our population, as evidenced by the inclusion

for the first time of the "mixed" race check box on the 2000 Census. And to add yet another shade of nuance to identity, a large number of today's immigrants live transnationally, nurturing economic, professional, familial, and other relationships in both their homelands and their communities of residency in the U.S.[19]

The point here is that identity of any kind cannot be approached for any purpose, including archival, in isolation. Doing so runs completely counter to the reality of human behavior on an individual or a collective level. And if ethnicity is provenance, so, arguably, are other environments of social affiliation. The fact that these may often overlap, intersect, and even push against each other makes for a messy organizational chart of human activity. But society truly does not sort itself out in neat corporate compartments, and as archivists, we need to learn to brace ourselves accordingly. In more practical terms, we cannot approach the task of documenting immigrant or ethnic groups from a mindset that ethnicity is the only or even the pre-eminent form of identity that members of a community may exercise. The consequence of this myopia is a body of archival material that exudes ethnocentrism in the way it is accumulated and described. It also leads to ill-conceived efforts to capitalize on what may seem an opportune moment to "do diversity" informed by an oversimplified conception of the definitions and boundaries of ethnic communities.[20] Such impulsive projects, well meaning though they might be, are likely to be temporary, fragmentary, and disconnected from the actual people and institutions they purport to represent in archival holdings

Ethnicity, Archives, and "Ownership"

This very real danger of disconnection between archival programs and the communities they aim to document leads to what is perhaps the most pivotal implication of understanding ethnicity as provenance. The archival principle of provenance insists that the contextual source of documentation be respected in the way material is developed and administered. In the domain of ethnicity, I believe that the meaning of "respect" goes hand in hand with the matter of cultural ownership. If there is any one facet of documenting immigrant and ethnic communities that sets this realm of archival activity apart, it is this issue of jurisdiction.[21] For archivists to comprehend this fully and sympathetically, it will be necessary to reconsider one of our most deeply ingrained professional values.

Archives are often portrayed in common parlance (often by ourselves) as "repositories of history" or "houses of memory"—places of honor or intrigue to which archivists hold the keys. This popular image has long-standing origins. In another thought-provoking article, Jeannette Bastian traces the evolution of the archival principle of custody, which equates the very definition of archives with the idea of material possession. Bastian finds practical indications of this precept as far back as the ancient Assyrian and Egyptian civilizations; however it is not until the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that this is elevated to the level of principle, reinforced in the writings of archival theorists Hilary Jenkinson and, later, Theodore Schellenberg.[22] Custodial assumptions have been key underpinnings of archival programs in the United States up to the modern era. A

1992 handbook from the National Archives and Records Administration affirms this in defining custody as "guardianship or control of records, including both physical possession (physical custody) and legal responsibility (legal custody). ..."[23] The inviolability of custody in the administration of archives has undergone recent challenges, as some colleagues have envisioned archival constructs comprising distributed responsibilities and decentralized holdings. For the most part, though, this emerging paradigm has been nurtured in the domain of electronic records, and it has precipitated a strong counterdefense that reflects the resilience of custodial thinking.[24]

In the world of ethnic archives, however, custodial principles need to give way to a different framework of jurisdiction and responsibility. In short, *custodianship* needs to be replaced by *stewardship*. In the custodial approach to archives, property is relinquished by the originating source; possession is taken both physically and legally by the archives. At the moment of transfer, from the perspective of the collecting institution, the importance of the material to the originator diminishes in comparison to its importance for external researchers. The material is now owned by the repository; the attention given to it is aimed at a largely imagined group of potential users, most of whom are not seen as being affiliated with the originators.

A stewardship ethos encompasses a very different set of relationships between stakeholders and materials. It is characterized by partnership and continuity of association between repository and originator. In a stewardship approach, archival material is viewed less as property and more as cultural asset, jointly held and invested in by the archive and the community of origin. Material may be gifted to a repository but with the expectation that in many respects, the relationship between donor and archive is just beginning. The goals of stewardship are preservation and access to information, wherever it might be physically held, while intentions or claims of possessing the largest or most valuable yield of material for a given community are both irrelevant and hollow. Because the universe of potential source material emanating from and pertaining to any community is limitless and ranges so far beyond the boundaries of formats conventionally regarded as archival, stewardship recognizes the misleading futility of referring to a repository's holdings as anything more than a selection of potentially useful sources.[25]

Accepting the premise of ethnicity as provenance and, consequently, adopting a principle of stewardship may seem to speak primarily to archival programs directly borne of ethnic communities. In such settings, the kind of symbiotic, ongoing "ownership" connection between archive and originator described above unfolds most naturally. There, the challenge lies not so much with recognizing the necessity and virtues of this relationship, but with internalizing the previously mentioned implications of ignoring ethnicity's relational contexts (ethnocentrism, nostalgia, romanticism, and filiopietism). In the case of repositories not conceived by ethnic communities—what we routinely term mainstream institutions—the first task of any immigrant or ethnic documentation effort is to awaken to this paradigm of cultural provenance. Without a deep absorption of this socioarchival reality, such efforts can never be sustainable and effective. They can never be seen by the communities they endeavor to reflect as anything meriting true participation or assistance in time of need.

Documenting ethno cultural communities—both from within and outside of the communities themselves—is not a new development. Much excellent work has been undertaken in repositories throughout the country, where one can see the application, though seldom consciously expressed, of the values and perspectives outlined above.[26] However, much more is needed in the way of thoughtful case study reporting that not only describes what has been done but that reflects on the philosophical underpinnings of an institution's mission. At a time of profound demographic transformation, once again due in large part to international as well as internal migration, the archival community faces an enormous challenge to ensure that the record of society truly represents the people who compose it. This will require, among other things, enlarging the professional discourse on documenting subcultures, both by imparting practical experiences and by probing the overarching value systems from which they originate.[27]

And this brings us full circle to the spring of 1992 and the tense encounter at the doorstep of the Southern California Library for Social Studies & Research. That a courageous staff member could persuade angry rioters to leave the building alone is not only cause for relief, it is a powerful illustration of what it means when an archival institution "gets it." History is filled with accounts of protest mobs destroying sites of records that were seen as representing authoritarian rule. Such were not records of the people but of the regimes—information used to control, distort, intimidate, and punish. One can easily imagine a similar fate befalling an institution in south-central LA perceived not as a steward of the living memory of the community but as an instrument of the establishment. Could it be, ultimately, that solutions to a more harmonious and equitable social condition lie, in part, in developing and strengthening documentation of minority cultures? The answer, it seems to me, is a resounding yes, as long as the work is done in ways that ensure the full and free engagement of the documented. If so, this is the kind of outcome that, indeed, merits sentiments of inspiration and passion for the archival mission.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Joel Wurl is a program officer in the Division of Preservation and Access, National Endowment for the Humanities. From 1985 to September 2006, he served as curator and head of research collections for the University of Minnesota's Immigration History Research Center. An early, much more limited version of this paper was first presented at a MAC meeting in the spring of 1999; a more complete version was presented at a seminar of the Center for Information as Evidence at UCLA in April 2005. The author would like to thank instructor Anne Gilliland and the students of the UCLA Department of Information Studies for their encouragement and feedback, which contributed to the final revisions of this essay.

NOTES

1. The conference program is available on-line at the Society of California Archivists Web site. The presentation was published as Joel Wurl, "Re-covering the American Mosaic: Some Reflections on Ethnic Archives, Past, Present, and Future," *Westwords* (Society of California Archivists, 1993).
2. This remarkable story was reported in the lead column, "We're Still Here: Community Defends SCL," in the summer 1992 issue of the SCL newsletter *Heritage*.
3. The professional literature on documenting ethnic communities is still quite small in quantity and formative in nature. I partially chronicled this historiography in a yet-unpublished presentation, entitled "Transplanted Heritage: The Legacy and Lessons of Documenting the American Immigrant Experience," for the 2004 International Congress on Archives, in Vienna, Austria. Among the key works of the past two decades are: R. Joseph Anderson, "Managing Change and Chance: Collecting Policies in Social History Archives," John Grabowski, "Fragments or Components: Theme Collections in a Local Setting," and Thomas Kreneck, "Documenting a Mexican American Community: The Houston Example"—all of which are included in a special issue of *American Archivist* 48:3 (1985), devoted to minority community documentation; Joel Wurl and Rudolph Vecoli, eds., *Documenting Diversity: A Report on the Conference on Documenting the Immigrant Experience in the USA*, (St. Paul: Immigration History research Center, 1991); Stephen Sturgeon, "A Different Shade of Green: Documenting Environmental Racism and Justice," *Archival Issues* 21:1 (1996); Elisabeth Kaplan, "We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archivists and the Construction of Identity," *American Archivist* 63:1 (2000): 126–151; Jeannette Bastian, "A Question of Custody: The Colonial Archives of the United States Virgin Islands," *American Archivist* 64:1 (2001): 96–114; and Bastian, *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost its Archives and Found its History* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2003).
4. Kaplan, "We Are What We Collect," is a particularly rich examination of the establishment and uses of archives by an ethnic community in the furtherance of cultural identity for deliberate cultural and political purposes.
5. Robert Harney, "Ethnic Archival and Library Material in Canada: Problems of Bibliographic Control and Preservation," *Ethnic Forum* 2:2 (1982).
6. Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology,* Archival Fundamentals Series II (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005).
7. See, for example, Tom C. Nesmith, *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance* (Metuchen, NJ: Society of American Archivists, Association of Canadian Archivists, and Scarecrow Press, 1992); *The Principle of Provenance: First Stockholm Conference on Archival Theory and the Principle of Provenance*, September 2–3, 1993 (Sweden: Swedish National Archives, 1993); Laura Millar, "The Death of the Fonds and the Resurrection of Provenance: Archival Context in Space and Time," *Archivaria* 53 (Spring 2002): 1–15; Terry Cook, "The Concept of the Archival Fonds: Theory, Description, and Provenance in the Post-Custodial Era," in *The Archival Fonds: From Theory to Practice*, ed. Terry Eastwood (Ottawa, 1992): 52–64.
8. Bastian, "In a 'House of Memory': Discovering the Provenance of Place," *Archival Issues* 28:1 (2003–2004): 9–19.
9. Bastian, *Owning Memory.*
10. David Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), contains extended etymologies of both "ethnicity" and "race" and the evolution of how these concepts have differed in meaning over time.
11. The vast scholarly literature on ethnic identity, especially since the mid-1980s, is impossible to portray fully here. Some prominent examples include: Richard D. Alba, ed., *Ethnicity and Race in the USA: Toward the Twenty-First Century* (London, Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1985); Kathleen Conzen, David Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the USA," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12 (Fall 1993): 3–41; Nancy Foner and George M. Fredrickson, eds., *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004); Philip Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Karen Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness*; Werner Sollors, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Sollors, ed.,

Theories of Ethnicity: A Classical Reader (New York: New York University Press, 1996); and Mary Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Among the many definitions found on the Web, an especially helpful one (and the source of some specific word choices in my outline of conclusions) is from a somewhat surprising source—a glossary of terminology from the New Zealand Ministry of Economic Development, Industry, and Regional Development, at http://www.med.govt.nz/irdev/econ_dev/population/2003/2003-07.html (1 October 2006).

12. Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Comment: We Study the Present to Understand the Past," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18:4 (1999): 121.
13. Bastian, "In a 'House of Memory'," 15.
14. The approach of applying a topical formula (incorporating ethnicity) to collection analysis and development in geographic-based collecting institutions is illustrated in Judith E. Endelman, "Looking Backward to Plan for the Future: Collection Analysis for Manuscript Repositories," *American Archivist* 50:3 (1987): 34–55, and David P. Gray, "A Technique for Manuscript Collection Analysis," *Midwestern Archivist* 12:2 (1987): 91–103.
15. Mitchell P. Ogden, "Hmong Postliteracy: Hmong (American) Literacy Practices and Literary Production" (presentation, University of Minnesota program celebrating the establishment of an Asian American Studies program, Minneapolis, MN, March 31, 2005).
16. Quoted in George Plimpton, *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988). The remainder of the quotation reads: "But what most people think of as history is its end product, myth."
17. Brien Brothman, "The Past that Archives Keep: Memory, History, and the Preservation of Archival Records," *Archivaria* 51 (2001): 62.
18. A number of the early writings on immigrant and ethnic archives point to a prevailing concern about overly filiopietistic approaches to documenting ethnic cultures. See, for example, Nicholas V. Montalto, "The Challenge of Preservation in a Pluralistic Society," *American Archivist* 41:4 (1978); Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Diamonds in your Own Backyard: Developing Documentation on European Immigration to North America," *Ethnic Forum* 1:2 (1981); and John Grabowski, "Fragments or Components: Theme Collections in a Local Setting." *American Archivist* 48:3 (1985).
19. The changing nature of racial frameworks throughout U.S. history, especially as applied to the foreign born, is the primary focus of Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness,* and his earlier writings, including *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London & New York: Verso, 1991). Among the growing volume of scholarly examinations of transnationalism, an especially valuable work is Nancy Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). As her book notes, the frequent attempt to set up transnationalism as a point of distinction between newer and older immigration is a matter of considerable debate.
20. A pointed commentary on archival responses to widespread political and public focus on multiculturalism is Richard J. Cox, *Closing an Era: Historical Perspectives on Modern Archives and Records Management* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000): 104–114. Kaplan, "We Are What We Collect," is the most extensive and persuasive discussion to date of the dubious ramifications of archival efforts that endeavor to promote the virtues and inviolability of ethnic identity above all else.
21. The argument for jurisdiction being the main distinguishing feature of the realm of ethnic archives was a primary focus of my essay "If One Were to Build an Ethnic Archives Collecting Program" (presentation, Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, Montreal, 1992). A recent discussion of the centrality of the question of authority in documenting cultural communities and some of the practical ramifications is Mark A. Greene, "The Messy Business of Remembering: History, Memory, and Archives," *Archival Issues* (forthcoming, 2005).
22. Bastian, "Taking Custody, Giving Access: A Postcustodial Role for a New Century," *Archivaria* 53 (2002): 81–82; see also Bastian, "A Question of Custody."
23. Quoted in Bastian, "Taking Custody, Giving Access," 86.
24. See Bastian, "Taking Custody, Giving Access," 88–90, for a summary of the key contributions to the evolving re-examinations of custodial practices and the ongoing debate.
25. A case study of the context and development of a stewardship arrangement between an ethnic community and mainstream repository is found in Joel Wurl, "Documenting Displacement: The Migration of Archival Sources from Post-WWII East European Émigré Groups," *Archival Science* 5:1 (2005).

26. See, for example, Richard Nancy and Joan Krizack, "Preserving the History of Boston's Diversity," *Provenance* 17 (1999): 23–45; New York State Archives, *A Guide to Documenting Latino/Hispanic History and Culture in New York State,* Publication Number 67 (Albany, New York: State Education Department, 2002); and Esperanza B. de Varona and Diana Gonzalez Kirby, "Documenting Cuban Exiles and the Cuban American Experience in South Florida," *Provenance* 17 (1999): 85–100.
27. In 2005, the Society of American Archivists identified the issue of "diversity" as one of three paramount concerns and areas for targeted attention in its strategic vision for the archival profession. A statement produced by SAA Council and circulated via the SAA newsletter, *Archival Outlook,* and at the 2005 annual conference noted that "the relevance of archives to society and the completeness of the national record hinge in part on the profession's success in ensuring that its members and their holdings reflect the diversity of society as a whole."