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# ETHNOGRAPHY IN COMMUNITIES: LEARNING THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF AMERICA'S SUBORDINATED YOUTH

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The concept of *community* has been central to the American ethos since the settlement of the colonies, both as a fundamental ideal and an actual physical construct grounded in the interconnectedness of place, people, history, and purpose. In the widely read book of the mid-1980s, *Habits of the Heart* (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985), the authors observe that "the community of civic-minded, interlocking families rooted in two hundred fifty years of tradition—does not really exist" (p. 11) for most Americans. Instead, a wide array of organizations and regroupings serve to bond people together and include their individual voices in the "currents of communal conversation" (p. 135). Some of these communities are intentionally identified around their founders' central purpose (e.g., Mothers Against Drunk Driving). Others bear more general labels and are classified together on the basis of general perceptions about their members' shared beliefs and values (e.g., the Christian community, the gay community, the Hispanic community, or the nation as community). Still others seem shaped around a bond that unites some people and differentiates them from others at particular stages of their life (e.g., support groups, computer networks). In spite of the proliferation of what are often either temporarily or loosely aggregated communities, the quest continues for the utopia of the ideal community as a place of roots and connection, linking people to cycles of nature and grounding them in attachments to their neighbors.

Since the beginnings of social science, scholars, as well as the public at large, have quarreled over what makes and sustains *community*. (Arensberg, 1961, remains perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of this concern, particularly with respect to the community as a unit of analysis.) Of particular

debate has been the question of whether or not modernity and urban industrial life within nation states force a fundamental shift away from the agricultural bases of community: shared territory, kinship, close links to nature's cycles, and consensual group solidarity. Ferdinand Toennies (1887/1963) distinguished *gemeinschaft* (community)—with emphasis on clearly defined social structure and loyalties to close personal relationships—from *gesellschaft* (society), or impersonally, even artificially, contracted associations. Emile Durkheim's (1933) analysis of organic and mechanical solidarity stressed that within modern urban society, both psychological consensus and interdependence resulting from the division of labor coexisted as two aspects of the same reality. Yet some social scientists have continued to contend that the larger society and mass communication have replaced communal associations of primary affiliations, while others argue that new "intentional communities," by their interactive nature, achieve the goals of face-to-face, homegrown, territorially based nature communities (Gusfield, 1975; Warren, 1978; Wilkinson, 1986). Pointing to the power of all-inclusive public interests and the ideology of community, B. Anderson (1983) has maintained that nations are communities because their citizens have faith in the "steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" of fellow members moving through "homogeneous, empty time" (p. 31).

What, then, does *community* mean? This question is more difficult to answer as the 20th century closes than is the reshaped question of *who* does community mean? Rare is the contemporary individual who will claim membership in a community based on physical proximity, residence, or even face-to-face contact. Few people live close by groups with which they feel the strongest communal association. Hence, large societal



institutions of all sorts—athletic, ethnic, recreational, occupational, religious, and professional—allow individuals to branch off to create their own subgroups called “communities” that provide emotional and common-interest ties as well as a sense of subjective wholeness.

This chapter considers first a brief chronology of community within American life and the influence of ideals remaining from this history. Next is a quick look through ethnographic portrayals of different kinds of contemporary communities and their ways of socializing individuals into their membership. Without the benefit of early shared learning experiences gained by playing in the same block, walking to the same school, and sharing backyards—as is the case in communities of close spatial connection—members come to association as individuals who must often undergo a self-conscious socialization to new affiliations and self-identities. All of the portrayals in this section include subtexts of members' collective views of learning through formal and nonformal education. Finally, implications of current community life for the future of research, policy, and practice in multiculturalism or pluralism in American education close the chapter.

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### A STEP BACK TO COMMUNITY ROOTS

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In rural parts of the nation during its first 100 years, separate households at distant spots over plains and in isolated mountain hollows held their sense of connectedness by bringing residents together during particular seasons and for rites of intensification—weddings, family reunions, barn raisings, and celebrations of harvests. During the early Industrial Revolution, American villages grew up around mills, and millworker and millowner lived in sight of each other. Laborers, inventors, entrepreneurs, managers, investors, and those who hung on around the town's edges shared common spaces and came together less and less often as a group except during those occasions of sponsorship by the town's industrialists or millowners (Hall et al., 1987; Hareven & Langenbach, 1978; Wallace, 1978).

In ensuing decades, as more and more towns began to dot the countryside, weekend events, such as baseball games, parades, carnivals, and celebrations of school or church affairs, divided along gender, class, and racial lines. Competitions of male teams in local athletic events were sustained in large part by the “benevolent work” of women in local institutions, such as churches, schools, and community centers, which facilitated occasions of public congregation, celebration, and recreation. Wealthier families formed clubs, set on great expanses of land near their residential areas, to provide exclusive recreational facilities for themselves. Blacks and Whites worked, worshiped, lived, and played separately throughout not only the South but also most parts of the United States. In recently admitted states or areas preparing for statehood in the Southwest, Mexican and Anglo families often lived in separate towns despite the symbiotic nature of their economic contributions to the region's development (Camarillo, 1979; Steiner, 1969).

Despite the untenable conditions of slavery and racial division, strong coalitions of community evolved across regions

and in the face of hostile opposition. These came first through the Underground Railroad and later through religious and political affiliations—often covertly and always from a sense of critical human need. In the South slavery created communities spatially based on plantations and, for freed Blacks, in the black alleys of cities such as Savannah and Richmond. As early as the 1830s more than 300,000 free Blacks lived in the United States, many forming strong middle- and upper-class communities that sustained churches, social clubs, libraries, and literary groups, primarily in northern cities. Almost entirely neglected in accounts of American history, these groups shaped key institutions, such as antislavery societies, the Black press, professional groups, and literary journals, that played significant roles in creating the cultural and social landscape during Reconstruction and into the 20th century (DuBois, 1899; Edwards, 1959; Frazier, 1947, 1957; Gatewood, 1990).

Following the Civil War and again during the period between World Wars I and II, migration to northern cities resulted in urban zones occupied exclusively by Blacks (Drake & Cayton, 1945/1962). Poverty and employment in the lowest-paying economic niches helped create ghettos of Blacks who came to compete with immigrants and refugees from Europe in the first half of the 20th century for jobs, local business development, and decent housing. Entertainment, newspapers, radio stations, occupational niches, and union memberships divided along racial, ethnic, and linguistic lines—Black, Italian, Irish, Polish, Scandinavian (Myrdal, 1944; Fishman, 1966).

Immigrant newcomers marked their identities in the architecture of homes and churches, choices of neighborhood stores and wares, and preferences for music, food, and recreational pastimes. In the late 19th century, cities such as New York, Cleveland, and San Francisco developed community schools that taught in the languages of the students until the xenophobia of World War I forced the reduction of publicly supported efforts to retain the linguistic identities of immigrant communities (Fishman, 1966). The explosion of suburbs after World War II further scattered the face-to-face commonalities of old urban neighborhoods, as the second generation of immigrants moved out to shape their lives around their chosen new American identity and to shed much of the language, traditional lore, and values of the “old country.”

### Social Science in the Study of Community and Society

Dynamic changes in the factors that brought people together in American life captured the attention of social scientists from the second decade of the 20th century through the 1950s. At the University of Chicago, Robert Park and his colleagues in urban sociology opened up some of the complexities of the urban community and began the tradition of the detailed case-study and ecological approach to communities that influenced social scientists such as David Riesman (1950), Oscar Lewis (1951), and Robert Redfield (1941). Sociologists described midwestern towns, documenting the increasing social stratification that created separate communities of distinct values and institutional affiliations even for those of the same ethnic and national backgrounds (Lynd & Lynd, 1929; West, 1945).



From the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, a team of researchers scattered across the South to document the varieties of types of communities there (Gilman, 1956; H. Lewis, 1955; Morland, 1958). Other social scientists began to study communities-in-the-making and subgroups such as gangs in urban society, purposefully formed by young and old for mutual protection of urban territory and maintenance of separate identities from other groups in poverty (Thrasher, 1927; Whyte, 1943). By the end of the 1950s the variation in what counted as *community* for social scientists ranged from occupational groupings (such as hospitals; see Becker, 1961/1976) to media-constructed entities (such as "Hollywood"; see Powdermaker, 1950).

Absence of a consensual operational definition of *community* continued to hinder social scientists from reaching any agreement on unit of analysis. Certain obvious, older, traditional requisites of community—such as territoriality, contact with the cycles of nature, and inclusion of more than one generation—were weakened considerably in favor of interactionist perspectives that focused on attachments and common processes of formation and sustenance grounded in communication. The old issue of whether or not community disappears as society expands its influence appeared repeatedly. Throughout the 20th century in the United States, as government bureaucracies seemed to take over more and more matters previously handled informally in face-to-face encounters, social scientists periodically questioned how, and indeed if, little communities could persist with so many forces of government and mass communication at work in the society at large. Some social commentators and scholars saw this intrusion of external "problem solvers" as killing off just what communities needed for their survival: the seeking of collective solutions to their own problems. As controls of the local group over the behavior of its members weakened, communities died and larger frames of reference and temporary memberships took over former loyalties (Gallagher & Padfield, 1980).

#### Little Communities at the End of the 20th Century

The work of anthropologist Robert Redfield in Mexico, perhaps more than that of any other social scientist, brought together conceptual bases for distinguishing among the many types of "little communities" and the conditions of their development and persistence. In the scattered small groups of the Yucatan peninsula (1941) Redfield found what members called "comunidades," and characterized these in ways that foreshadowed what would by the end of the 20th century characterize communities in North America—spatially scattered individuals brought together through communication networks and as face-to-face groups primarily in seasonal rites of intensification. He noted that habits of travel, different occupational patterns, and the mix of separate groups through intermarriage and resettlement would increasingly make of community a *sense* of bondedness rather than a *place* of mutual dwelling (Redfield, 1956/1960).

His views were echoed in work of the 1970s and 1980s that documented the diversity of Americans' responses to the need to build new shapes and formulations of group bondings from

the ashes of the traditional community. Groups, seeing themselves primarily in terms of their occupations and wishing to set apart their specific abilities and interests, included in their reasons for existence not only socialization opportunities for their increased professionalization, but also advocacy and recreational goals (Salaman, 1974). Having much in common with the Underground Railroad community of the 19th century, numerous late 20th-century communities formed themselves around crises, feelings of common suffering and struggle, and the need to regroup outside "ordinary" communities to compete and survive. (Wallace's 1970 study of the rise and rebirth of the Seneca Iroquois through religion is an example of such work, as is Kreiger, 1983, a study of a lesbian community.) "Dying" communities, those attempting rebirth, and those struggling to be born all work to sustain membership and loyalties, and to overcome insecurities that spring from a lack of economic, natural, and human resources (Gallagher & Padfield, 1980, provide 10 studies of such communities beset with such problems as lack of economic and technological resources, ethnic and social class conflicts, and demographic isolation).

As the 20th century ends, membership in a community with no territorial basis or shared early socialization experience occurs at least as frequently as groupings that do bear these traditional features. Shared bonds of national origin, ethnicity, and religion are diminishing for many who find that their primary glue of community is instead a self-conscious sense of purpose and self-interest, as well as socioeconomic class ties and degree of assimilation of or resistance to mainstream values and behaviors. In earlier decades individuals were drawn together through a sense of common history; now a sense of disparate present and diverging future leads to purposeful choices of language, norms, and goals that separate many Americans from the primary-group connections of former generations.

During the civil rights era and through the 1970s, inner cities depended on the power of their subdivisions into zones of similarity in ethnicity, race, language, and religion to make self-affirming declarations (e.g., Black Is Beautiful) and to display pride in their differences. Increase in Black pride soon brought numerous efforts to revive ethnic heritages and to celebrate diversities of history, dress, music, costume, food, and art. Federal efforts, such as the Ethnic Heritage Act, encouraged artists and art institutions to take seriously the promotion of diverse art forms and traditions to widespread public attention (Kilbride, Goodale, & Ameisen, 1990). Professional and college athletics expanded efforts to recruit players from Black and Hispanic communities and to provide new opportunities for financial and educational advancement. Public consciousness about overt discrimination in public spheres, especially employment, real estate, and education, opened new possibilities of social and geographic movement to members of populations formerly subordinated in and excluded from these areas.

Within a decade these societal changes—often effected in the interest of desegregation, civil rights, and affirmative action—brought drastic shifts in allegiances to spatial communities that had previously been *all-Black*, *all-Hispanic*, *all-Polish*, *all-Chinese* (Alba, 1990; Blackwell, 1984). New economic possibilities meant chances for different patterns of residence and recreation; families began to move into new neighbor-



hoods, many of which had only recently been the urban sites to which earlier European immigrants had come from their urban ghettos. Middle-class neighborhoods on the outskirts of cities or in towns across America were no longer predictable from household to household as to culture, race, religion, or language. Friendships came more and more to be formed through work and less through common place of residence. Telephones increasingly provided the interstices of the networks held together by communication. Soon computer networks greatly supplemented the telephone as a communication net that bound together individuals who never saw each other but coalesced around common information needs and goals. As corporations and factories steadily sought regions that would offer cheaper labor and better tax incentives, employees at executive and managerial levels were relocated frequently about the country and found safety in community formations that centered around common interests—recreational, religious, aesthetic, civic, and professional. In addition, "intentional" communities sprouted up, linking themselves together through what they termed "the technologies of cooperation and electronic communications" (see *Communities*, 1992).

In the 1960s and 1970s communities of poverty—especially those of Blacks—had been portrayed as full of pride and a centeredness in their cultural past (e.g., Stack, 1974; Hannerz, 1969). However, the late 1980s brought drastic economic changes that cut in several directions, often contradictory to one other. Numerous factors resulted in a radical decrease in the need for unskilled labor in manufacturing and construction, leaving those without formal education and specialized skills unable to find work except in the low-paying service sector (Wilson, 1987). Communities of recent migrants from Mexico struggled to establish themselves as viable economic neighborhoods with churches and businesses. Yet most were without priests from among their own group or economic entrepreneurs who could establish local businesses of sufficient strength to sustain themselves through hard times. The young turned away from their parents' older ways and tried to find themselves within a youth subculture dictated to by commercial music and entertainment (Moore & Pinderhughes, 1993). Economic migrants and political refugees entering the United States willingly stepped into low-paying jobs providing service within establishments owned by others. A few found small-business niches in the increasingly ethnically mixed and poorest inner-city areas. Many industries found that global competition meant they had to upgrade the workplace to require new technological, computational, and literacy skills of workers; displaced unskilled workers and young workers without education often could find no employment.

These changes brought rapid shifts in inner-city neighborhoods and high-rise projects that had formerly been the province of one ethnic group. By the mid-1980s urban projects often housed as many as 20 different language groups. Drug trafficking and gang violence gave "neighborhood" new meanings fraught with fear and desperation. Groups of youth claimed their own "hoods" (neighborhoods or claimed territories in various parts of the city) with automatic weapons, "beepers" as local communication resources, and fax machines and airline travel as means to stay in touch with counterparts in other

urban areas. Gang life substituted for families that had either disintegrated through alcohol and drug abuse or incarceration, or had been incomplete to start with because of single parenthood, or devolved as powerless to influence the younger generation to hope for a brighter future resulting from hard work and continued education (Hagedorn, 1988; Padilla, 1987). Young men and women found few models in their parents' lives or media representations of their ethnic heritage; instead they sought to form collective identities through gang membership (Vigil, 1993). Sexual codes centered in street norms of gender-based groups, and the value of bearing children tied more to status within these groups than to perceived role in a new generational family unit (E. Anderson, 1990). In place of the local jobs former generations of young people had held as street vendors, newspaper deliverers, and helpers in the kitchens and stockrooms of small family-owned businesses, gang members now found the entrepreneurial opportunities of gangs their only "hood" source of financial support (Padilla, 1992; Rodriguez, 1993). Male gangs shifted somewhat their earlier structures and functions of the 1940s, and they and newly organized female gangs cooperated with social scientists to document continuities and variations across as many as three generations in some neighborhoods (Moore, 1991).

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#### WITH AN ETHNOGRAPHER'S EYE

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But what is happening within these diverse groups that all go under the name of *community*? What holds these groups together, and how do they differ in the education of their members? To act responsibly, social planners have to ask both what is happening and who is calling for responses (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1991, p. 283). Answers to these questions can best come from getting inside these groups and taking a comparative perspective on their historical, structural, and behavioral features. Ethnographers learn about beliefs and behaviors of groups by becoming, to the extent possible, participants and observers of these groups. But as sites of ethnographers' studies, communities and families have been the most difficult social arenas for intense study. By their very definition and rationale of existence, communities do not include outsiders such as researchers; they are not open institutions inviting general membership, and their everyday interactions are guided by unspoken (often out-of-awareness) rules of behavior and language. Writing an ethnography requires long-term immersion, continuing involvement with community members, and some degree of comparative perspective that attempts to distinguish between what is common and what is unique across such groups.

Portrayed here will be five contemporary communities of very different types, each of which has been studied by an ethnographer as insider/outsider over a long period of time. The five are: (a) a Puerto Rican barrio in New York City; (b) a pre-World War II Japanese fishing community in California and its current nonspatial community; (c) a rural-oriented African American community of the 1970s and its current nonspatially based connections; (d) a community-based youth organization in a high-crime inner-city area; (e) and a community of street



youth in a university neighborhood. Taken together, these five do not give a representative picture of all possible types of communities in the final decade of the 20th century. Instead, they focus on groupings shaped in arenas that serve as the source of an increasing proportion of America's public school students. These portrayals offer insider perspectives of subordinated populations—individuals often either ignored or maligned by the public media and public policies, and badly served by the tendency toward aggregate clustering of cultural patterns in current approaches to multicultural education.

### El Bloque: Then and Now

In the late 1970s in Manhattan, el bloque, home to 20 Puerto Rican families with school-age children in three five-story tenements abandoned by their landlords, buzzed on warm days with the sounds of children playing happily around open water hydrants, young men alternately washing and lounging on their cars, and women and young children sitting on the steps leading into the mailbox vestibule (see Zentella, 1981, in press). The general pattern of language was Spanish among parents and elders and often to children, and both Spanish and English among the children. Return trips to Puerto Rico, along with frequent visits from relatives, kept both the language and the sense of link to the island alive for young and old through the end of the 1970s.

Eleven of the families were related in some way to one another, but all of el bloque acted like a large family, with members alternately quarreling and caring for each other, lamenting losses together, and celebrating small victories with vigor. Stops at the local bodega, visits to nearby relatives, and occasional church celebrations punctuated the routine of daily life, which was by no means easy. Sickness, disrupted relations between husband and wife, money shortages, alcoholism, and job disappointments seemed to mark every day for someone there. Few teenagers made it through high school; the local high school had been closed down because of disrepair, violence, and failed programs. Adults worried over the educational futures of their children and the loss of blue-collar jobs for themselves; between 1950 and 1980 New York City lost 59% of its apparel and textile industry jobs. In 1985 Puerto Ricans suffered the highest unemployment rate in the city (17.5%). Of all persons below the poverty line in the city, 47.5% were Puerto Ricans, a poverty rate exceeding that of Puerto Rico, which itself fared worse than any state in the United States (Torres, 1989).

Most adults knew more Spanish than English. Those who used English most were those whose employment brought them into contact with English speakers on a daily basis, but the high unemployment rate of Puerto Ricans in the city meant that very few had this opportunity. Children became English dominant within a year of entering school, even in bilingual programs, but most were able to manage both languages, switching back and forth as needed for particular speakers, situations, or discourse strategies.

By the 1990s the close-knit community Zentella had studied a decade earlier showed the bitter effects of unemployment, drug dealing, violence, and social-service failures (Zentella, in press). Much of the sense of guardianship that families once

had for each other seemed supplanted by the needs of individuals to protect themselves from the ravages of dislocation, unpredictability, and danger that ripped into their lives with regularity.

The immediate signs of loss of community for el bloque came in the displacement of its people. Most of the girls who had played sidewalk games in the 1970s under the watchful eyes of their mothers and often of fathers, relatives, and a network of older fictive kin, now were raising their own children in their parents' apartments away from the block. Their old tenements had been partially destroyed by fires in the 1980s and were slowly and haphazardly being rebuilt by city and federal authorities. The slow pace of the rebuilding, plus the appearance of unoccupied zones given the neighborhood by construction scaffolding as it cut off entrances to buildings and provided hiding places for drug activities and squatters, helped push oldtime residents to accept relocation elsewhere, usually to large city projects. As the apartments were finished, newcomers—formerly homeless—were moved in from shelters by city officials.

By the early 1990s el bloque was more African American in population than Puerto Rican, and few of the residents had been in their neighbors' apartments. The easy availability in the neighborhood of drugs and alcohol fed domestic violence and what often seemed to be open warfare on buildings and cars. Only 6 of the 20 families that had been there in the 1970s remained; 8 others lived within 12 blocks of the old block and sometimes returned to visit. The others had scattered farther afield or were no longer heard from. Several of their children now had surrogate parents or relatives or lived in foster homes. Some of el bloque's young men were headed for jail, sentenced for armed robbery, drug dealing, or domestic violence. All of the young women continued to live with their parents when they had children, because the children's fathers had unsteady jobs—if they had jobs at all—public housing had a six-year waiting list, private apartments were too expensive, and no one would rent to families on welfare.

Those left on the block or those who remembered it from their childhood lamented its passing and perhaps romanticized its former embracing role:

*Una cosa que yo llamo bloque, se sentaba—era como una familia, no como gente separada. Ahora la gente no se conocen. No se quieren ayudar. La mayoría esta en drogas. Los niños de todo el mundo era una familia. Los niños eran de todo el mundo. [Something that I call block, it sat—it was like a family, not like separate people. Now people don't know each other. They don't want to help each other. The majority is into drugs. Everybody's children was a family. The children belonged to everybody.] (Zentella, in press)*

Scattered as they now are—in domestic units that few would acknowledge to be the same as their ideal of a family and in geographic locations they do not yet acknowledge as their own communities in the ways el bloque was—the former second-generation residents of el bloque see themselves adopting and adapting aspects of other identities, both African American and Anglo.

Socialization patterns—including changes in primary agents and directions of learning—shifted in accordance with the dif-



ferent family living arrangements and patterns of peer friendships now available. Many of the young women dress, dance, and sing to the African American styles that surround them, as well as speak with African American vernacular English dialect features. For both lighter- and darker-skinned Puerto Ricans, speaking and acting Black are the natural result of intense contact with African Americans in schools and public housing. (See Brady, 1988, and Flores, 1988, for discussions of the doubleness of African American and Puerto Rican cultural traditions merged in Afro-Latin arts; see *Centro de Estudio Puertorriqueños*, 1992–93, for discussion of the special problems of Puerto Rican youth and their ambivalence with regard to place and culture.) The darker-complexioned often are mistaken for African Americans, and they may identify more closely with that community, especially if they know little Spanish. But when their Spanish surname suggests to newcomers from the Caribbean that they should speak Spanish, local non-Spanish speakers feel they are missing out on something. -

Shifts of self-identification among the young follow the lines of both skin color and place of residence. El bloque residents—both light and dark—who have moved or aspire to move to suburban areas populated by Anglos find that speaking English in ways that label them as “acting White” is a kind of self-protection and insurance for slipping into school networks. A few feel that speaking Spanish might hold them and their children back, because they have adopted the idea that only English is a ticket to a better life. They choose to think of their current interests and occupational goals for their children as providing the communal connections they need to help them in the future. This small minority tend to see themselves as Americans or Hispanic Americans.

Most individuals, even those whose behaviors and speech sometimes proclaim their affinity to things African American or Anglo, speak Puerto Rican English, a dialect that identifies them as second-generation native bilinguals. They also profess allegiance to being Puerto Rican, and see such an identity as distinct from just being “American.” In contrast to their elders, however, speaking Spanish is not an indispensable part of “being Puerto Rican” for them; Puerto Rican heritage is enough. The power of English, generational change, and participation in non-Puerto Rican networks have made the pattern of retention of Spanish spotty, and the young are unwilling to exclude from the Puerto Rican family those of their sisters and brothers who do not speak Spanish.

As the mid-1990s approach, el bloque's children of the 1970s have transferred their allegiance from one block to el barrio (East Harlem) in general, and to a redefined New York Rican or Nuyorican identity in particular. Just as their parents had originally defined themselves in relation to a particular barrio in their island hometown and then became more pan-Puerto Rican in el barrio, the second generation is embracing a larger community than the one in which they were raised, but one less island-linked and more pan-Latino in the greater New York context. Both old and young share a uniform collective memory of their earlier life on el bloque “like a family,” but now that it is not safe to send children to play in the syringe-filled playgrounds of the projects, they find themselves confined to apartments that often house three generations. This

makes the young women more dependent on their mothers than their mothers had been, because in the 1970s their grandmothers were either in Puerto Rico or deceased. Now they rely on their mothers to care for their children while they look for jobs and schools.

In these efforts they meet other young women whose situations are similar to their own. For example, job-training programs become their extended network for a period of time, while they share common goals and common learning situations. Once out of the program, some of these ties remain, but they tend to be more individual than communal. Ties are often bound to technology. Friends keep their networks alive by telephone, preferring to hold to the safety of their own households rather than risk taking the elevators or walking the streets. VCRs bring groups of people together to watch a film at home—more cheaply and safely than at movie houses. Young men were the first to keep in touch through beepers and cellular telephones; theirs is a network that circulates information related to economic entrepreneurship, both legal and underground. Now young mothers carry beepers so they can be reached anywhere in case of a child-care emergency. Information about the latest technology is shared in the extended networks, as is the equipment itself, along with cars, furniture, and job applications. Families respond to the similarities they see in other families struggling to survive and to make sense of the mismatch between opportunities and their hopes for the future.

Puerto Ricans in New York and other major metropolitan areas, such as Philadelphia and Chicago, have experienced many of the same expanding and contracting aspects of community life as those described by Zentella (1981, in press). Latino politics, as well as community development efforts and school reform movements, have reinforced a sense of community cutting across spatial boundaries and residing in common bonds of poverty and family struggles (see, for example, Gonzalez, 1989; Pantoja, 1989). For some, temporary communal memberships come increasingly through shared hardships and opportunities to protest these to an authority, and through newly gained opportunities to try for new housing, employment, or educational opportunities. For example, neighbors in a city who formerly did not recognize each other as living in the same area create a community around a special purpose—increased safety in an elementary school where an intruder has killed several youngsters with an automatic weapon. School councils and community safety committees work to organize collections of individuals into a communal voice to pressure school boards, precinct leaders, or the mayor's office (Caballero, 1989). These efforts, often led by the more upwardly mobile of the neighborhood, provide socialization into literacy, mathematical skills, video production, and a professional manner on the telephone for women and men who never found formal schooling or self-teaching sufficient motivation for picking up these new skills. In another instance, the violent death of very young children in a neighborhood ballpark or nearby alley can lead to reform efforts of “community cleanup” that draw formerly reticent women into increasing public advocacy roles. In the 1990s, union groups made up almost exclusively of immigrant women—whom outsiders formerly believed neither



could nor would protest their conditions of work or lack of health benefits—learned in literacy and English as a second language classes that they could speak out about their needs and begin to reshape their unions' thinking.

### Terminal Island(ers): Community Constituted, Reconstituted, and Mythologized

Located in San Pedro Bay in southern California, at the beginning of World War II Terminal Island was the residence of Japanese families who made their living primarily by fishing (see Yamashita, 1985). In the 1990s no physical traces exist of the former community, yet the Terminal Islanders Club members come together annually for celebrations and renewals of their connections to a common past. The *issei* (first generation) who immigrated from Japan at the turn of the century have disappeared, and their children, the *nisei* (second generation), are in their 70s, watching the *sansei* (third generation) gradually lose any awareness of the early life of their grandparents and parents on Terminal Island.

Between the turn of the century and World War II, Terminal Island was a microcosm of the Japanese villages left behind by the *issei* immigrants. Age and gender status relations held as they had in Japan. The social structure of families as well as that of the commercial fishing industry divided and distinguished man from woman, young from old, one type of fisherman from another. Though many of the trappings of their community seemed like that of other American communities—an elementary school, church, and several social organizations, including a Boy Scout troop—they remained very much outside or set apart, through their physical isolation on the island and through their strong retention of the habits and beliefs of the prefecture from which most of them had come. On Terminal Island, the mixture of old and new came in inexplicable social alignments: the Boy Scouts, sponsored by the Buddhists, met at the Buddhist Hall. Annual Christmas festivities were held in both English and Japanese at the Baptist Mission, where the Japanese Language School also met. Judo training went on at the Shinto Shrine, and the annual Buddhist "Festival of the Dead" took place on the street in front of the Shrine. Beyond the elementary school level, students had to leave the island by the passenger ferry to San Pedro for middle or high school, but almost no friendships formed between Island *nisei* and their mainland counterparts.

By the 1940s language patterns showed some of the same kinds of mixtures. Almost all of the *issei* on Terminal Island knew standard Japanese (*kokugo*), and it was taught in the Japanese Language School. But daily contacts were carried on in *Kii-shu ben*, a dialect marked by informality and English loan words, without the honorifics of standard Japanese. Those who returned to Japan for their education (*Kibei*) and then came back to Terminal Island and used the honorific forms drew derision. Before World War II it was common for *nisei* parents to use Japanese while their children responded to them in English. The children grew up with strong receptive knowledge of Japanese, but were less than fully competent speakers of their parents' mother tongue. The mixture of Japanese and English, with the development of particular vocabulary items, came to have a distinctive form accentuated by the specialized

technical vocabulary related to the fishing industry. Those who returned to Japan as adults found that their form of Japanese learned on Terminal Island was not wholly comprehensible. These features remain in the speech of the Terminal Islanders as part of their sense of group identity. Use of any of these terms or markers of syntax and pronunciation immediately makes a Terminal Islander identifiable as such.

With the outbreak of war in December 1941, it became clear that commercial fishing for the Japanese would end. By February of 1942 all the *issei* fishermen were arrested and evicted, their homes and businesses destroyed and replaced by commercial canning facilities. Most of the Terminal Islanders lived in adjoining blocks in the internment camp at Manzanar. There was little integration with other Japanese for them, and many retained features that marked them as having *shimaguni konjo* ("an island country mentality"). They kept to themselves, excluded as a small enclave within this sea of exclusion and labeled as aggressive, rough, and uncouth.

After the war, some scattered to the East Coast but still remained in touch with those who returned to California. In a curious twist of fate for the *kibei* who had returned to Japan for education before the war, a peculiar vocational contact enabled them to obtain employment with a company in New Jersey and allowed a large number of Terminal Islander families to resettle there together. These individuals had been trained in Japan to be "chick sexers"—to differentiate between roosters and hens just shortly before birth, an important talent in the chicken-raising business. Their skills were in demand and gave them the basis for establishing a subcommunity of their former island. Others who went to New Jersey set up businesses that served those who worked in the chicken business, and still others soon became owners of food markets and other local enterprises to serve their neighbors.

Most, however, returned to California, especially the Long Beach area, where many found work in fish canneries. There they lived in either a trailer camp established as Federal Emergency Housing, in low-cost housing, or in rental units within the area of Long Beach occupied by shipyard and defense-facility workers. The mixture in the poorest sections of town of the Terminal Islanders with others in poverty—Yugoslavian-, Portuguese-, Philippine-, and Mexican-origin families—led to considerable economic competition. The few efforts of the Islanders to take up commercial fishing again were sabotaged by other immigrants who had moved into this occupation during the war. Thus returning Japanese turned to establishing small businesses that contributed goods and services desired by their Japanese neighbors. Others took up gardening and nursery services for the burgeoning Los Angeles residential areas. Many of these businesses have passed from the hands of the original owners to the next generation of Terminal Islanders.

But creating units of organization to sustain the families in their sense of togetherness, now that their physical isolation and common livelihood were gone, came with difficulty. No longer was a Fishermen's Association possible, because no central location for gathering existed; their children were minorities among minorities in the city schools, making celebrations there of New Year's *mochi-tsuki* or Girls Day or Boys Day impossible. Gradually some new units of organization were estab-



lished: the Japanese church, a Buddhist temple, and the Long Beach Japanese Community Hall, all of which provided gathering places for cultural activities.

By the early 1950s the idea of a Terminal Islander reunion came about through the efforts of some *nisei* who often came together to share their memories of "the good old days." Women and men were enlisted to help locate former Terminal Islanders, and the first reunion was finally held in 1970—at a large Chinese restaurant in Los Angeles. The enthusiasm of this occasion led to the formation of the Terminal Club, which in ensuing years has sponsored the annual New Year's party (*shinnen kai*), summer picnics, and annual events such as golfing tournaments for the males. The activity building at the local California Retirement Home, constructed through funds donated from Terminal Islanders, is dedicated to the club.

### Trackton: A Community Connected No More

The residents of Trackton, a working-class community of Black Americans in a rapidly growing town of the Piedmont Carolinas, were ready for the civil rights era and its accompanying proclamations of Black pride (see Heath, 1983, 1990). Textile mills had been the major employer in this region since World War I, competing with agriculture as a primary regional employer. With the lifting of legal restrictions against the employment of Blacks in the mills, and White workers moving out of the mills to what they regarded as more upwardly mobile jobs, Blacks readily took up mill jobs. In the first flush of social services and desegregated education in the 1970s, Black families looked positively on their opportunities for moving up and out of the patterns of poverty and stagnation that had encased their parents and grandparents.

In spite of the availability of public housing, many communities of working-class Blacks preferred to rent the small former mill houses scattered around small communities and in sections of larger towns that often contained several textile mills. Families shared the two-family wooden structures, whose primary identifying features were the wide open front porch and steps that led to the central dirt plaza on which residents parked their cars and children played. While some residents of these communities worked one of the shifts at the mills, others held part-time jobs as domestic laborers, and others stayed at home, "minding" the children of those who worked. Informal hierarchical social structures developed in each of these communities, often with an older male serving as unofficial "mayor," and others falling in line to help maintain social control in the community—over children as well as the adults who occasionally fell into family or neighbor disputes fueled by alcohol. Cars, tools, and household goods were shared with care and caution, each family wary of acquiring too many evident belongings and thereby becoming thought of as chief supplier for the community. Food was the exception, and young and old gave food willingly. And so long as requests did not come too often, return requests or favors were not refused and always seemed to be in balance.

Boys in the community grew up as kings of the plaza, exchanging verbal challenges with adults and older children who taunted and teased them with questions and mock attacks on

their toys or games. Preschool girls rarely figured in central roles in the public roughhousing of the boys on the plaza, instead staying close to the women of the household, who spent as much time as possible on the porches. These girls played with dolls or younger siblings, talking with them and engaging in conversation with the porch sitters by the time they themselves were toddlers.

School-age children of both sexes played together often during the primary years, but as adolescence approached each group separated into specialized activities and private opportunities to talk about members of the opposite sex. Opportunities for reading and writing centered around practical matters: going to the store, reading directions for a new item to adorn a bicycle, helping parents decipher messages from school, and joining in the communal reading of letters from relatives who had moved up north. Church life, especially "meeting time" or revivals in August or homecoming weekends, drew community members together, sometimes for all-day occasions of celebration with friends from surrounding rural areas as well as different parts of town. Here men and women, young and old, separated from one another for various parts of the day. The men told stories and discussed local social and political changes in the wake of new local bureaucracies deriving from the legislation of the "Great Society." The women often worked with the choir director to create new musical performances for choir exchange with regional churches during rotating weeks of "meeting" time. Between such tasks and cleaning up the church kitchen after the midday meal, the women talked of changes in schools under desegregation, new public housing regulations and possibilities, and deaths of older community members since the last time they had held such a large church affair.

Twenty years later, the physical groupings of houses of Trackton's community no longer exist, bulldozed in the late 1980s to make room for a highway expansion. But the houses had been abandoned for several years by most of the original families, whose older members had given up their 1960s goal of independent living and gone into public housing. Many of their older children had left the area and others lived in various parts of town, subsisting on welfare and occasional part-time jobs.

By the early 1980s it was clear that the bottom was falling out of the textile industry in the Piedmont Carolinas. Closure of the mills had been forced by a combination of factors, primary among them foreign competition and the failure of local owners to upgrade equipment to keep pace with regional divisions of textile companies now part of national and multinational conglomerates. Blacks had stayed on in many of the mills until the bitter end, unable in the recession of the time to find jobs elsewhere. When the mills finally closed, most found themselves on welfare rolls for the first time, able to secure only occasional work in the new motels and fast-food restaurants springing up along the recently constructed interstate highways. Families that had managed to survive together in the 1970s broke apart, and public-housing units increasingly filled with mothers trying to keep their adolescents in school and out of harm's way, while taking on the additional responsibility of caring for infants born to their teenagers. Fathers had often either drifted away from the area or into heavy alcohol use.



Almost all of the Trackton youth who had entered school in the early 1970s dropped out of high school in the mid-1980s. They thereby added to their mothers' financial burdens, as they remained at home, unable to find work or to enter the Armed services or regional vocational programs because they lacked high school diplomas.

The young who moved away to major metropolitan areas generally resided in high-rise apartment units of public housing, among strangers who had also set out from rural areas and small towns of the Southeast without high school diplomas and often with infants (Heath, 1990). The communal base of church life both in the region around Trackton and in inner cities began to erode. Many country churches that had been served by circuit preachers closed for lack of support; inner-city churches were cleared for urban redevelopment or relocated to new areas of town where a rising middle class of African Americans increasingly developed and chose primarily to serve their own needs and not those of inner-city populations.

Suspicion, fear, and despair marked social relations in public-housing units, in place of the shared communal guardianship and social control hierarchy of earlier days. Dealing drugs, buying and selling handguns, stealing cars and car parts, and promoting prostitution came to be occupational choices for the young. Growing numbers of young men ended up in juvenile detention centers or jail, while the mothers of their children were left on welfare in public housing, without either the personal network or the motivational resources and modeling of older family members to inspire them to start again with their education or job seeking. As immigrants with different languages, dress, and backgrounds came to be the norm rather than the exception on the floors or in the buildings of inner-city public housing in the Southeast, ethnic differences periodically flared and subsided, as each group worked out survival strategies. For the young, membership in gangs, often ethnically based, promised affiliations and economic opportunities offered by neither families nor community-building institutions such as churches.

*Community* became a concept only minimally associated with affective response, and only as an appendage to the names of major public-housing units, such as "Boyd Hill Community" or "Rayland Project Community." Bonding for young people beyond the ages of 8 to 10 was increasingly not to historical traditions and a collective memory of their parents' past, but to the survival strategies and flourishes of dress, symbols, and language that marked gangs. Most of the adolescents who formed male-female bondings and tried to establish households of their own found that their educational and employment failures forced the girl to stay with her mother's household, while the male remained with his mother or stayed on a casual basis with friends. Young mothers alternated between feeling abandoned and bitter and hoping still for the ideal romance of a man who would stay with them and help take care of the children. The primary group bonding became that of "us women"—the young single mothers in high-rise projects who tried to care for their children apart from the family, church, and neighborhood supports of their own childhood.

## BEST: A Safe Place in a Danger Zone

BEST is not a community that uses space in expected ways; it is not a region or a group of residences. It is only a couple of buildings located several blocks apart along the streets of an inner-city area infamous for gang-related deaths and local drug-war casualties. The same activities take place in both buildings, and a single administration looks over both. BEST is a community youth center, opened in 1963 as an outreach program of a nearby White church (see Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994). Throughout the year, in after-school and summer day programs, BEST serves as community for the youth of the nearby high-risk projects.

The neighborhood of BEST, located in a large midwestern city, provides a counterpart to the more recently built public-housing projects of the Southeast to which some of Trackton's children had gone. The housing projects of BEST's neighborhood were established back in the 1940s and renovated in the 1960s after massive urban unrest had turned their streets into battlegrounds. Here gangs of youth have been power brokers of city neighborhoods since the 1920s, though today's gangs differ considerably because of their links to drug dealing and the intense isolation of youth from older residents of the immediate neighborhood. Unlike the "tough old man" of past gang eras who lived just two apartments down the street, the bosses of "hood" gangs in the 1990s are more likely to be inmates whose communication networks spread across the state and even the nation.

Nearby schools are bullet scarred and have metal detectors at every entry; school personnel try to ban all possible signs of gang membership exhibited by students. Young people learn to walk quickly along the street, careful not to walk too close to a building held by a gang that may not regard them as "homies." Once they reach their own high-rise project buildings, they pass by the local gang members who guard the doors and sometimes use their positions of power to arrange drug deals.

For some children of this neighborhood, leaving school at the end of the day does not mean going home or heading to the streets to gangbang. It means heading for BEST, their home away from home, their surrogate family that provides help with homework, after-school activities, and friends in a safe place shut off from the streets and the projects.

Daily over 100 youngsters between the ages of 8 and 18 go to BEST. For several groups of high schoolers, BEST is their "scholarship" home, a sponsoring agency for cohorts of 20 or so member students who move as a single group through high school as BEST scholars. This special "family within a family" membership avails these young people of a sustaining primary group between ninth grade and high school graduation. The young people go to BEST daily to do homework and projects with their group leader, an adult who has committed to staying with them through their entire "scholar" cycle. Afternoon activities vary: Homework comes first, as older students team up with one or two younger peers, set out their school books, and hear about the week of work and projects ahead. On some days homework takes several hours. On other afternoons the older youngsters can join together in "club" activities in which



they work on supplementary projects on African American, Caribbean, Puerto Rican, and Mexican-origin heroes and heroines, with the goal of preparing a hall exhibit. On other days they plan puppet shows, story-telling, and art programs for presentation in the auditorium to their younger peers.

As the dark shadows of evening begin to fall along the streets down from the high-rise projects, the youngsters collect at the door of BEST to walk home in groups. By 6 o'clock the grade school children have left the buildings, but the junior high and high school students head down the street to a restaurant to get a quick dinner, so they can return to BEST by 7 P.M. each evening with a group of local law students and other adults who are their tutors. These sessions involve not only homework of the day or week from their schools, but also preparations for taking standardized tests, and researching scholarships, employment, and career choices. Values clarification, discussion about appropriate times for standard English, and debate over recent police crackdowns in the neighborhood also come up during these evening sessions. On weekends, tutors and BEST teens join in tennis lessons, art classes, mural projects, and an occasional movie.

BEST socializes its young along the lines of traditional family life. Manners, goals, values, speech, work, play, friendships, and current events circulate through the lives of the adults and young people within BEST's halls. BEST also provides the services often expected of communities in affluent suburbs: a safe place to congregate; library resources; reliable adults to offer advice, help, and discipline; recreational equipment, spaces, and program; and opportunities for occasional aesthetic and athletic events. In addition, BEST constantly creates and sustains a collective memory. Its "graduates"—those who have moved out of the community to jobs and higher education—return often to talk with current BEST young people. Photographs, trophies, and newspaper clippings throughout the buildings announce the achievements of those who have preceded the current generation. Many of the staff have been with BEST since its beginning in the fall of 1963, and their stories of the past bring laughter and tears on many of the informal occasions that take place in the halls of BEST.

Young people of BEST talk of their community there in romanticized terms, crediting it with "saving my life," "making me what I am now," "giving me a chance," "protecting me and being there for me," and "being there for me to trust." The institution is thus a combination of personified agent and glorified place. Friendships, sponsorships, disciplined occasions, interdependent living and learning, and motivation to grow and learn in peace mark BEST, just as they mark community in the traditional sense of something more than a building and a set of associations. The common endeavors and shared outlook, firmly but not obtrusively grounded in the Christian fellowship and ethos of the sponsoring church, ensure that daily needs (ranging from shoes to praise) can be met for youngsters. Like many communities, BEST serves as a transition or border zone between the families and households of the young and the outside world of strangers, new opportunities, and different expectations.

### Homeless City: A "Kid Community" of the Streets

"Spare change?" "Excuse me, sir, can you spare a quarter for a starving kid?" "Ma'am, how about a few cents, so I don't have to sell my body?" "Could you spare some money, so I can buy milk for my kitten?" Along the streets of University Avenue, a 10-block zone near the State University located in a large Pacific Northwest city, young men and women address passersby with these greetings. Scattered strategically at different corners, in supermarket parking lots, and in doorways of video stores and "counterculture" shops, about two dozen teens are at work panhandling by noon on any given day. For six to eight hours they will shuttle back and forth between their chosen posts, collecting their change to a point where they can enter the muffin shop for a cup of coffee, a stop in the bathroom, and a quick facewash. By 8 P.M. several days of the week they are nowhere to be seen, for all of them have gathered at Teen Feed, occasions for a free hot meal at one of the local churches (see Heath, 1992a, 1992b).

Shortly before the doors of the church educational building open, the young people gather outside on the steps to have a final smoke, for rules of Teen Feed prohibit smoking, drinking, or dealing or taking drugs while in the building. Once the doors open they shuffle into a semblance of a line and move to the trays and along the cafeteria line, where they can pick up their plates of steaming hot spaghetti, garlic bread, salad, jello, and cake. Behind the cafeteria line and scattered among the tables of the auditorium are adults from the church and a few students from the university. "Hey, Mellissa, great color on those fingernails! How'd you get those sequins to stick? Did you get over to the office to see about getting your GED?" Such combinations of compliments, teasing, and nudging flow back and forth, as the young people take their seats at bare wooden tables and begin to eat. They run over their plans with each other, bringing friends up-to-date on recent trials with relationships, their latest contact with their parents, brushes with the law, and music they've heard or movies they've seen. Often they discuss plans for trips to San Francisco or perhaps the Oregon coast. They dream of these trips for months. A few save enough money to catch a bus one day and disappear for a few months. But almost always they return, striding in the door of the church sporting a new haircut or hair color and eager to share their adventures with their old friends.

By 10 P.M. on any evening of Teen Feed, they are out the door of the church building and scattering their separate ways. Some head back to their homes, trying once again for a short while to see whether they can live with their parents. Others know where they will sleep—in a now-familiar doorway of a store along Main Street or with a couple of friends who recently got enough money together to rent a room at the transient hotel. A close look at their knots of friendship illustrates the interests and circumstances that both connect and sometimes scatter them.

For a period of more than four weeks, Susie, Mel, and Jennifer were always together (Heath, 1992a). The three of them shared a "squat," the name the young people have given the abandoned buildings two streets back of Main Street. They had



plans to panhandle, save their money, and rent a room together. Once they had a room, they hoped to find jobs. Susie and Jen had arrived in town together after meeting on the streets of a midwestern city. Jen had left home because she "could not stand" what she regarded as "overbearing parents who only want to control my life." They had given her a horse when she was 8 years old, and by the age of 16 she had ridden her way to numerous ribbons and trophies. But at 16 she was tired of the endless competition and was no longer sure she even wanted to go to college. Her parents responded with higher demands and tighter controls. She decided to run away with Susie, whom she had met at school. Susie's life fascinated Jen, for Susie seemed to have had everything Jen lacked in the way of freedom, choice, and experiences. Susie had left home at 13 because "nobody cared." Her older sister had been in a treatment center for cocaine abuse and then in jail, and Susie's single parent, her mother, always seemed either mentally occupied or physically absent, because she was trying "to do something with your sister." Susie took off, frustrated at "always trying to be the good kid." She sometimes returned to her mother's apartment for short stays, but she always left soon: "My sister was going through a lot of shit, and I was the scapegoat. I tried so hard to take care of everyone. Mom used to say stuff like, 'I'll be back in a couple of weeks. Call me every day, and see if I'm back. I've got to take care of your sister.'" When Jen joined Susie on the street, the two decided to travel. They settled for a while in University City, a place Susie had visited a year or so earlier and where she had thought life on the streets was better than in other cities. The university atmosphere made people "more giving, smarter, and not so mean."

Soon after the two arrived in University City they met Mel, who had grown up there. Mel had left home at 14 and had been on the streets two years when she welcomed Jen and Susie in and agreed to teach them how to become "a part of our community here." She taught them the best places to panhandle, the days when unfriendly policemen took their beats, the clerks at the muffin shop who would sneak day-old muffins to the street kids, and the restaurants whose waitresses would not yell when you went in to use the bathroom and just have a cup of coffee. These learning sessions came in informal talks, primarily around the dinner table at Teen Feed and on strolls along Main Street, where strangers would not have distinguished the girls from their age peers who were sophomores and juniors at the local high school. Mel introduced them to others of the "street kid" community, giving them brief biographies of those she knew best and dropping brief warnings about those she did not know or had learned not to trust. The girls shared their very different background stories. Jen and Susie listened to Mel's stories of physical and mental abuse from her stepfather, remembering the forms abuse took in their own families—highly restrictive outings, unpredictable support, and verbal harangues. Susie's sister had told her blood curdling tales of events that took place when she was just an infant: Her natural father had chased her mother around the house with a knife to "drive the demons from her." They asked Mel about her real father and learned that she had lived with him for three months when she was 15, but "he kicked me out, 'cause we had differences, and he was an addict." Before she met Susie and Jen,

Mel's best friend had been a big "mutt," Jupiter, that she had inherited from another street friend who had left the area three months earlier. Mel coached the newcomers on the guys to stay away from, the ones who were homosexual or bisexual, those who had a reputation for liking "kinky sex," and how to get condoms. For the most part the girls had little private contact with boys of the community, who tended to hang in small groups, as did the girls.

For several months the girls were never apart except when they panhandled, finding it more profitable to operate on different sides of Main Street, about a block apart. They always entered Teen Feed as a threesome, taking their places in line with friends and sitting together to discuss their present plans, recent incidents, and "grapevine" news about friends who had "moved on" out of the University area. After three months the threesome gave up their plans to rent a room together, because "we figure we'll never find a place that would take a dog." Mel decided to head for San Francisco as soon as she earned "some extra money to take enough food for Jupiter." Susie found a job through a local counseling and employment agency recommended by one of the Teen Feed adults and moved to a suburb of town, where she was going to live in a youth center and work with a youth coordinator. Jen decided to go back home after her father found her and pleaded with her to come back and try again. Susie commented: "You know it's funny about parents. They can't stand us while we're with them, but as soon as we do something to prove that we might be able to make something out of life by ourselves, they just want us back."

For the short time they formed part of the transient community of the University District, the three girls shared everything from their spare change to the ramshackle abandoned building where they slept. They made definite plans to provide for each other and to build a future together. The realities of disparate needs led them to outgrow each other and to separate. Mel knew she did not want a job, because she would find it too confining. Susie wanted a job to prove to her mother and the world that she could survive on her own. Jen chose to return to her family and to put in place some lessons she had learned from slowing her life down.

In spite of media presentations about the violence of the streets, the "street kids" in University District have created a "community" life. In place before the arrival and after the departure of individual community members were structures of organization, rules of territory and exchange of goods, and patterns of socialization. Teen Feed and the adults and students there provided information, encouragement, conversation, and family-like meal times when young and old came together around "a lot of talk about nothing" (S. B. Heath, 1983). School, church, police, physicians, and other "typical" ministering agents of community were largely absent from the lives of these young. Most had left school around age 14 and depended on their mature looks and experiences to allay suspicions by strangers that they were "school-age." They regarded the church as "a place to eat," and, in fact, many were unaware of any relationship between church teachings and the service that members provided them a few nights a week at Teen Feed. When any of them became sick enough to need a doctor, they went to the emergency room at the hospital; those who had



families in the area went home and hoped that parents would get them help. They read papers they collected from trashcans, knew which clinics had open days for certain kinds of screenings or tests, and frequently checked the bulletin board of the local youth-counseling and employment center to see if possibilities might convince them to move on.

Each one had learned to be a "street kid," adopting and adapting as best they could certain aspects of idealized features of "family"—promises of mutual caring, some regularity of group meals, and generally regular hours of working and sleeping. They had also chosen to leave behind in their current existence features of home life they had detested: control, demands, abuse, and drugs. They had built bonds of shared exclusion and common dilemmas; they had learned how to find places of acceptance. They had spent lots of time telling stories, planning the next step in their lives, and sharing oral and written sources of information. They took advantage of the abilities of the group to get what they needed; for example, Jen could read better than Mel and Susie, so she helped Susie interpret the forms she had to fill out for her job. Among themselves, and occasionally branching out to ask for advice and help from other young people of the street, they managed access to medical services, travel information, and housing and clothing networks. Though for many their time on the street away from their damaged and damaging families was relatively short—often less than two years—they forged a sense of deep horizontal comradeship with each other and, to some extent, with "street kids" in general (as do children of the streets in cities all over the world; see Boyden, 1991; Webber, 1991). The absence of sustained time with caring adults and lack of models for their own rapid transition from child to adult throw them very much on their own resources and often into the temptation of relieving their pain through drugs. But both for those who manage to leave the streets for good and those who keep returning, there is the bond created by inclusion in being ignored by others. For years beyond their own time on the streets, they connect primarily to peers and to those who have also experienced streets as places to call home.

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### THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY

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As the end of the 20th century nears, the demographic profile of the United States suggests that communities such as those portrayed here may persist and even proliferate for some decades to come. Their values and realignments of dependencies and interdependencies suggest strongly that the "habits of the heart" of America have moved its citizens away from the realities of traditional spatial community and into new organizational alignments that create bondings more directly and pragmatically than did the loosely aggregated amorphous communities of the past (Bellah et al., 1985). Groups, ranging from professional affiliations to local youth recreational associations, offer protection of one sort or another and socialize their members into patterns of behavior, language use, and value systems that work for the benefit of individual members and, more vaguely, for the benefit of the group as a whole or for a particular cause or enterprise espoused by the group. Locat-

ing community in people's lives requires understanding of the nature and levels of the network of social relations that provides several different normative frameworks simultaneously (Bender, 1978; Milroy, 1992). This network approach examines sets of social relations at work at the same time and sequentially over the life course of an individual, and considers how the coincidence of normative frameworks within an individual's map of social relations amounts to one's ongoing socialization.

The togetherness of the multiple and somewhat unpredictable forms of communities in the next century will be far less spontaneous and, no doubt, considerably less enduring—in both reality and collective memory—than that of communities that dominated through most of the 20th century. Neighborhoods such as *el bloque*, University City, and the projects that surround BEST and take in former residents of Trackton, incorporate dysfunctional elements of society such as drugs, alcohol, and spousal and child abuse. Individuals in these situations, struggling to meet everyday subsistence needs, have few resources of reform that can bring back into place older bonds based on "little communities" occupying common spatial territory. Therefore, they will no doubt continue to turn to groupings based on needs, communication networks, and selective appeals to common histories and language ties.

Communities have historically served five central functions (Dynes, 1970, p. 84): mutual support, social control, social participation, socialization, and production. Within their provisions of mutual support and social participation, they have met key individual and group needs through interaction, generally assumed to take place on a face-to-face and regular basis. Their socialization and social control functions have ensured not only conformity to certain norms and practices, but also a process of continuation of the information, values, and behaviors of their members through enculturation processes at various points after childhood (Brim & Wheeler, 1966). Their production and distribution functions, though generally linked in the past to food and service, have also increasingly included information and technical services (often linked to further expansion of information and increased communication networks; see Gottschalk, 1975; Scherer, 1972). The array of communities noted here, with the exception of the disrupted community and current collection of individuals of Trackton, all include these key functions. Moreover, the communities described here arose out of crises or critical environmental and socioeconomic changes that thrust on their members and leaders a sense of mutual need, a feeling of loss, and a sense of connection as a way station along the path to improved conditions. In all cases, these communities have only in the past decade come to include individuals of different ethnic groups and language backgrounds. For example, whereas Trackton and *el bloque* were all Black and all Puerto Rican, respectively, the current neighborhoods of those who used to live in Trackton and *el bloque* are ethnically mixed. When BEST began, all the young people there were Black, in the 1990s some Puerto Rican children, as well as immigrant youth, became part of the community. University City's street youth include young people from several different ethnic groups; their elder counterparts, who have their special posts along the street for panhandling, also represent several different ethnic backgrounds.



What do these nontraditional and ethnically mixed communities mean for education and for the late 20th-century movement in the name of "multiculturalism"? The usual answer might be that multicultural education will bring the separate cultures that have always made up the United States population into consideration in the content of classrooms, allowing students to learn about groups other than their own and thereby grow to appreciate them. But such an answer does not adequately take into account the conditions of variety among communities today.

The ethnographic cases here reflect structural and behavioral features of communities from which an increasing percentage of American students will come in the next century. Their diversity is not that usually associated with portrayals in education of "multicultural diversity," but rather comes in diversity of access to mainstream institutions, stable predictable home lives, daily language uses and calls for particular identities, and resources on which to fall back in times of family crisis incited by poverty, illness, and random violence. Many of today's young do not see their community or their identity as that of a single ethnic group, place, or family; instead they pick and choose, change and reshape their affiliations of primary socialization. Multicultural education will be hopelessly caught in cultural lag if it tries to plead for the dignity of cultural differences and respect merely through repeated portrayals of individuals of color who have conquered their oppressive backgrounds to contribute to mainstream society, or in capsule histories of the immigration patterns of certain nationalities. Discussions of African American, Hispanic, Latino, Asian American, or Pacific cultures that present all members of each of these groups as homogeneous and securely locked within the membranes of their ethnic membership and identity as "a community" also reflect an inability to stay in touch with the out-of-school socialization networks of today's youth. Multicultural education must go considerably further than the introduction of new content into literature, social studies, and art and music classes. The history of groups taught under the rubric of "multicultural education" must not present all the struggles as those of the past, with no concurrent attention to recent and contemporary regional, economic, and social stresses and strains carrying strong influence on institutions such as families, communities, community organizations (such as gangs and other youth groups), and occupations.

The term *multicultural* is, more often than not, a collective category for "others"—those outside the perceived mainstream of ethnic background (northern European and British Isles) and Caucasian racial membership. Implicit within such a category is the notion that all those that are multicultural are non-White, defined for what they are *not* rather than for what they are. That which is White and mainstream remains very much the norm against which such projections are made. To speak of "ethnic communities" or even of "multicultural" communities is to perpetuate myths that such communities are, on the one hand, homogeneous across classes, regions, and histories of immigration, or, on the other hand, to suggest that there is homogeneity of culture, language, and socialization within local communities. Yamashita's work (1985) and that of Zentella (1981, in press) make it abundantly clear that such is not

the case, even among individuals who identify themselves as Japanese or Puerto Rican. Numerous other studies of individuals in transition and of communities responding—as those included here did—to social and economic crises and drastic shifts in conditions (Barton, 1969; Dynes, 1970; Erickson, 1976) echo the need to ensure that "multicultural education" not become a consolidating mechanism.

In such a view of education, "others" are categorized together, stripped of their variations and individual differences, and uniformly pictured as victimized and dependent on the White "majority" to come to their aid or provide their models for the future. Preferential endogamy—or choosing to marry within one's own group—as a trend toward continuity (Schermerhorn, 1978, p. xiv) cannot be assumed of all individuals or groups. More and more individuals will be of "mixed" cultures, ethnicities, and identities, and will learn to declare themselves of one or another ethnic group according to current rewards for such declarations. For example, during the 1980s the San Francisco Unified School District learned that parents and high schoolers were shifting their self-assignments of ethnic labels in order to help their argument for entry into magnet schools. The District ruled that an individual could change his or her identity only once every three years. The U.S. Bureau of the Census, national survey organizations, and local school districts present choices of ethnic identity as though they were clear-cut and permanently set along racial and group affiliations; for example, students in state colleges often have to tag themselves as "non-Hispanic White" or "non-Hispanic Black" (Brady, 1988). The offspring of families that include several ethnicities increasingly find themselves negotiating their language, dress, manners, and announcements of affiliation on a regular situational basis in job interviews, arrangements with social service agencies, and dealings with school personnel. For example, the offspring of a Jewish father from eastern Europe and a mother from Mexico may find that she can "prove" her Hispanic identity on school forms only by using her mother's maiden name as her own rather than her legal name—that of her father. Increased intermarriage and geographic mobility mean that the biological bases, cultural values, and communication patterns of ethnic groups (Barth, 1969) can no longer be counted on to create and sustain community. (For discussion of the transformation of identity among White Americans, see Alba, 1990.)

Future research must continue to integrate paradigms, bringing together census data (Farmer, Luloff, Ilvento, & Dixon, 1992), literary and historical representations, and participation observation (Bender, 1978). These must be long-term accounts that draw in every way possible from the knowledge gained by the long-term insider-outsider perspectives of anthropologists, descendants of earlier communities, and individuals who claim several communities of origin through intermarriage, acculturation, and biculturalism (E. Anderson, 1990; Driben, 1985; Yamashita, 1985). Moreover, community studies must increasingly explore the socialization powers of short-term communities, such as refugee camps (Long, 1993), drug-dealing affiliations (Adler, 1985; Agar, 1973), and communities of purposeful intent and endeavor (such as science-fiction readers and writers) linked by distance technologies (Laffler, forthcoming). Community studies can no longer take historical identities as



given; researchers must attend much more to ways that groups and institutions create alternative historical identities for themselves (Dorst, 1989).

As the 20th century ends, more than one quarter of the nation's youngsters are at "serious risk" of never reaching maturity; another one quarter are at moderate risk of leading unproductive lives to the detriment of themselves and others (Dryfoos, 1990; Schorr, 1988). Many of the reasons for this state of affairs among the young of America lie within policies dominated by idealized images of community, family, school, and ethnic homogeneity. Policies and promises have tended to focus on those things the public would like to believe have gone unchanged, and to ignore those that have changed (Wilkinson,

1986). In addition, this reductionism can continue to hide the power of institutions and downplay their possibilities for both benefit and harm (Bellah et al., 1991).

The young of the projected majority of "minorities" entering the workforce at the opening of the 21st century can meet their own potential and the needs of society only if education, health, employment, and housing policies take into account contemporary diversities of communities. Myths, ideals, and dependencies on old social structures and their roles have to shift so that policy makers and contemporary institutions can provide contexts and conditions of learning that will be relevant to the present realities of American communities and facilitate their productive, positive futures.

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