

- 18) Do you consider the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Yasser Arafat to be your national representative? 19) Do you consider the Palestinian National Congress your legitimate government? If yes, what do they do for you? These two questions go back again to the issue of Palestinian nationhood and also address for the first time, Palestinian statehood. These questions are aimed at discovering whether the Palestinian people feel they are adequately and fairly represented by what their leadership does and claims and how they view the Palestinian government-in-exile.
- 20) During the Gulf War, did Arafat's alignment with Saddam Hussein change your perception of his leadership? Of your situation? This question deals with a specific policy and is another way of addressing leadership representation of the Palestinians. I was also interested if individually, Palestinians felt threatened or frightened because they were in this country and its reaction to Arafat.
- 21) A great deal has been written about the *intifada* from inside Palestine/Occupied Territories, how do you feel about the *intifada*? I wanted to find out if Palestinians in Diaspora felt connected to or a part of this movement and how they viewed it from the outside. I also wanted to know what they knew or had been told about what was actually occurring in the Occupied Territories. In some interviews I used the term Palestine and in others I used Occupied Territory. Each has a different bias.
- 22) Do you think the Palestinians should participate in the upcoming peace talks? Why or why not? This question had to be changed fairly early on. I only asked it once before the peace conference commenced (it moved a lot more quickly than anyone anticipated). The question was then changed to: What is your opinion of the Palestinian participation in the peace talks? Do you feel you were adequately represented? I wanted to know if they viewed the peace talks positively or not. Also, there had been disagreement within the Palestinian leadership whether or not to attend because of all the stipulations placed on the Palestinian delegation by the Israeli government. I wanted to know how the Palestinians viewed the decision by leadership to attend anyway. This is an important question since the Palestinians in Diaspora were not represented in the delegation and the right of return is a big question in any settlement.
- 23) What are your hopes for the future? What do you think the future will bring? This two-fold question was meant to get at both their personal hopes and what they think is in store for the Palestinian nation with or without the peace talks.

BOOK REVIEWS

Richard D. Alba. *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990. xvi + 374 pages.

Richard Alba is interested in discovering whether ethnicity is still a salient feature of American life or if European-Americans are doomed to become "un-hyphenated Americans." Regardless, Alba is sure that a fundamental transformation of ethnic identity is taking place among white Americans. Alba uses survey data from a random sample of residents in the core counties of the Albany-Schenectady-Troy metropolitan area (the "Capital Region") of New York. 524 randomly chosen respondents were interviewed concerning their ethnic ancestries, identification with their ethnic origins, ethnically related experiences, and social relationships and activities. Ethnic groups surveyed, in order of size, were: English, German, Irish, French, French Canadian, Italian, Scots, Dutch, Polish, and Native Americans. More respondents were third generation immigrants (40%) than any other category.

The study found that the majority of white Americans still define themselves in ethnic terms. Alba notes that there are discrepancies between the ancestries reported by respondents and their ethnic identities. He hypothesizes that this is due, in part, to the complex interplay between personal ethnic identities and collective or aggregate ethnicity. Alba also suggests that it reflects differences between "objective" and "subjective" realities (ethnic identity being a subjective response to actual ancestry). Responses seemed to indicate a long-term decline in the role of ethnic identities among whites due to complex ancestry, distance from original immigration, and uncertainty about ethnic background. However, Alba noted the salience of ethnicity by the highly educated, and hypothesizes that ethnic identity becomes a form of "cultural capital."

Alba focuses on food, language, and customs as forms of cultural expressions. Few respondents still spoke their mother tongue, while consumption of ethnic foods was quite frequent. Women often cooked not only the ethnic food of their family, but the ethnic food of their husband's family as well (even when he was of a different ethnic background than she). Nevertheless, Alba questions whether food is enough to maintain ethnic identity:

it is difficult to see the cultural expressions of identity as more than a fragile and thin layer alloyed to a larger body of common American culture, with its complex class and place variants (p. 121).

Alba's concern is that ethnic identity cannot survive without social structures to sustain it. Women, (due to their greater involvement in the family), the highly educated, and young adults are more likely than others to engage in ethnic experiences, but is it only a matter of "an ethnicity of last resort" as Gans would say?

The rising rates of inter-ethnic marriages is cited as a trend which, while not diminishing ethnic identities among respondents, is seen as leading to a trend where ethnic identities will be stressed less and less for subsequent generations. In other words, ethnic identity diminishes because it is not passed on to subsequent generations. Personal and voluntary expressions of ethnic identity are quite different from those based on structural institutions or collective action.

In Chapter 6, Alba turns to ethnic social structures, particularly friends and organized groups. He discovered more similarities in ethnic backgrounds among friends than within marriages. The majority of the respondents have one or more friendships with people whose ethnic backgrounds at least overlap their own. He argues that ethnic organizations are imperative for the maintenance of ethnic identity, but found membership in them dwindling. He also discovered that only 11 percent of the respondents live in areas of ethnic concentration (two or more standard deviations above the mean). He maintains that this lack of connection with a community leads to the individualism of ethnic revivals.

Alba concludes that there is an objective decline of ethnicity that is demonstrated by the convergence of life chances in education and employment among members of different white ethnic groups, a decline of cultural indicators such as language, and increasing rates of intermarriage. However, this decline in objective differences is not matched by a fading of ethnic identity "constructed on the basis of the European origins of ancestors" (p. 291). Two-thirds of the respondents claim ethnic identities, and half of the respondents believe that ethnic backgrounds are at least moderately important. Alba found an "absence of any decline in ethnic identity across cohorts... from older to younger white Americans" (p. 307). He argues that rather than the elimination of ethnic identity, Americans are forming a new identity as "European-Americans." Ethnic identity becomes a way of claiming oneself as "American" based on a shared history of immigration.

Charles Hirschman (1991), in his review of *Ethnic Identity*, understands Alba's study to indicate that "there is very little left of ethnicity for white Americans" (p.181) and that "the minority of 'real' white ethnics that still remain might soon be considered an endangered species" (p. 182). I don't agree that those are the points that Alba is trying to make. Alba concludes that ethnic identities are being transformed, not eradicated altogether. Hirschman, like many others, rejects the importance of symbolic ethnicity. Symbolic ethnicity, while not as visible as ethnic behaviors, contributes to our ability to construct meanings for ourselves and kin. It is a way of placing ourselves in a network with others.

Alba does an insightful job of demonstrating the factors associated with ethnic identity and its maintenance, but virtually leaves out the role of women. He notes that women are more likely to have ethnic identities due to their connection with the family. Families, according to Alba, are important transmitters of ethnic identities. However, when friendships with co-ethnics are analyzed, Alba dismisses the importance of friendship ties with kin. He removes friends who are family members, and only concerns himself with non-kin

friends. In doing so, he obscures the importance of women in maintaining both kin ties and ethnic identities.

REFERENCES

Hirschman, Charles. 1991. "What Happened to White Ethnics?" *Contemporary Sociology*. 20: 180-183.

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