

Ethnic Boundary Theory

Large and Small-Scale Ethnic Boundaries
Boundary Marking & Boundary Shifts
Twilight Of Ethnicity
Symbolic Ethnicity
“Ethnic Options”



Ethnic Boundaries

Large-Scale (Mostly “Racial”) Ethnic Boundaries



Small-Scale (Often White) Ethnic Boundaries



Boundary Marking & Boundary Shifts

- **Boundary Marking:**

Occurs when ethnic distinctions are maintained [by group members, not outsiders] by language, food, culture, or other “markers” that identify group members to each other and to outsiders.



Chinese Union



Teo-Chew Association



Chinese American Student Association



Hong Kong Student Union

- **Boundary Shifting:**

Individuals: Occurs when individuals **cross** an ethnic boundary (**culturally** and **structurally**).

Groups: Occurs when boundaries become less salient or **shift** (e.g., occupational segregation) or previously recognized distinctions are removed or **blurred** (e.g., phenotypic changes)

Does Ethnicity Still
Matter For Whites?

Robert Park: Because of “straight-line” (CCAA) assimilation of white people.

Richard Alba: Because of a “twilight of [white] ethnicity” leaving social class, not ethnicity, as the key determinant of outcomes.

Emile Durkheim: Because of a shift from “mechanical solidarity” to “organic solidarity”. Ascription now matters less than achievement.

No!

Herbert Gans: The vestigial value of “Symbolic Ethnicity”

Heritage Festivals • Homeland Tourism • Ancestral Language Class



Factors Which Increase Identification

Generational Component

Socioeconomic Status

Intact Families

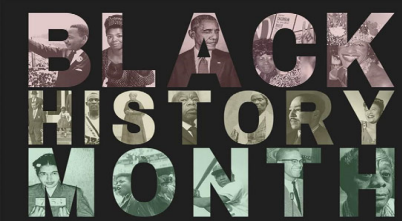
Country Of Origin



Mary Waters: Whites are still capable
of taking advantage of their
“Ethnic Options”

Does Ethnicity Still
Matter For Whites?

Yes!



Do some non-Whites have ethnic options?

Is Cuban-Irish Senator Ted “Rafael Edward” Cruz Hispanic enough? Will his children with Heidi (Nelson) Cruz be Hispanic?



What about SES? Can it affect how much ethnicity matters?

Do you celebrate your ethnic heritage month in any meaningful way? Do your parents?



Does Ethnicity Still Matter?