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## Moral Identification: An Alternative Approach to Framing Second-generation Immigrants' Ethnic Identity Ambivalence

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Moral Identification: An Alternative Approach to Framing Second-generation Immigrants'

Ethnic Identity Ambivalence

Benjamin R. Brady

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

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## ABSTRACT

Moral Identification: An Alternative Approach to Framing Second-generation Immigrants'

Ethnic Identity Ambivalence

Benjamin R. Brady

Department of Sociology

Master of Science

Contemporary sociological research on second-generation immigrants living in the United States is lined with questions of ethnic inclusion and transnational participation. Many scholars are interested in how the children of immigrants relate to their parents' ethnic identity while being raised in a new land. Noting that the majority of scholars in this field approach ethnic identity within a social constructionist perspective, in this study I explore the ways that identity ambivalence and ethnic belonging are framed. Specifically, I critically question the ways that an ethnic identity is assumed to be valued and asserted in a constructionist model. After presenting a traditional view of the social construction of ethnic identity, primarily from the work of Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann (2007), I draw out ways that self and identity are framed and highlight key assumptions of an uncommitted self and identity as an objective construction. I trace these assumptions through second-generation immigration literature and critically question how individuals can be shown to experience ambivalence or value an identity if they are conceptually framed as selves who stand apart from their ethnic identity constructions. To better appreciate their ambivalence and convincingly illustrate that one identity matters above another, as a claim for ambivalence inherently assumes, I argue that second-generation immigrants must be understood as strong evaluating, moral selves and the ethnic identities they embody as moral narratives which underlie their self-constitution. In advancing this argument, I look outside of sociology to the work of Charles Taylor (1989) and Charles Guignon (2004) who articulate a view of moral, committed selves. Building from these authors' work, I present moral identification as an alternative framework for understanding ethnic identity. In this moral approach, I delineate the concepts of valuation and moral identification and present them in a framework of identity authenticity and social accountability.

Keywords: social constructionism, ethnic identity, moral self, identification, authenticity & accountability

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Sitting across from me in the Shangri-la Café, holding his lemon tea, Tashi posed an unexpected hypothetical: “If you get a free Tibet, what are you going to do?” “What am *I* going to do?” I questioningly stammered, “I am not Tibetan. Shouldn’t you be the one to answer that question?” About to conclude my first ethnographic field experience, and still unsure about my work, Tashi and I were meeting for a final interview on the eve of my departure from McLeod-Ganj, India. In spite of my reluctance, he pressed me, “You have been talking with many people. What do you think? If Tibet goes free, and if you are Tibetan, do you go back?” My research in India, with Tashi, was an effort to explore the rhetoric of cultural and identity preservation in a context of dislocation. I was focusing on what it meant for second-generation, born-in-India children of Tibetan refugees to relate to their parents’ homeland. For more than two months, Tashi and I had talked almost every day. We discussed World Cup matches, chatted about America, India and Tibet, discussing everything from religion to entertainment. We talked openly about life. Through our visits Tashi became as much a friend as an informant. Only then, however, in Tashi’s hypothetical to me, did I realize that I was assuming that careful preparation and meticulously refined questions on my part would magically elicit equally processed and ready-at-hand responses from Tashi and other interviewees. In his question to me, I recognized that Tashi was no more certain about his answers to my questions than I was. In fact, Tashi’s question opened me to the difficulty of my position. How could I properly understand Tibetan ethnic and cultural identity if Tibetans themselves, at least this Tibetan, had mixed feelings about what it meant to be Tibetan? Where I was only focusing on *my* interpretations of Tashi’s experiences, I had not, until that moment, considered that *his* self-interpretations may be as difficult or complicated.

Later, Tashi explained that he would go back to Tibet if given the opportunity. Yet, he gave considerable pause in contemplating what it would mean to go “back” to a place he had never known. In reflected on our conversation, I have surmised that Tashi’s hypothetical question was an expression of ambivalence, an emotional discord that underlined what it meant for him to be or identify as a Tibetan refugee. His whole life he understood himself as Tibetan. He feels Tibetan. His parents are both from Tibet. Yet, in asking what it means to be Tibetan, he hesitantly responded, “I don’t have the words.” Certainly I am not calling Tashi’s Tibetanness into question. Nonetheless, having been raised and lived his entire life in India, Tashi experiences ambivalence about what it means *to him* to be Tibetan, particularly in terms of how identifying as Tibetan underscores his relationship to his parents.

I present this brief anecdote as a point of departure for this thesis and the question it raises for second-generation ethnic scholars: if ethnic identities are constructed and change, what makes living them compelling? I did not anticipate that it would be a disturbing, emotional question for Tashi to wonder about living in Tibet. Nonetheless, his struggle to clearly articulate how he relates to his parents’ homeland opened me to the realization that most of the classical and recent sociological literature on ethnic identity doesn’t approach ethnicity from the position of an embodied individual. As of 2006, the time of my field research, Tashi has been living in India for more than twenty years. He has lived primarily in Tibetan refugee settlements, not an uncommon reality for the estimated 120,000 Tibetans staying in India (French 2003:288). His entire political, economic, religious, cultural, and ethnic reality is based on the notion that living in India is a temporary condition. For the original refugees who fled from Tibet, India is not their home, but a place of refuge from which to enact an in-exile movement to rally international support to liberate Tibet from China’s cultural sanctions. Yet, as temporary as his refugee life is

rhetorically framed by his parents and other community leaders, Tashi's in-exile impermanence is his embodied reality. His reality and Tibetan self-conception are based on the premise of impermanence. If Tibet were to go free, an improbable, yet hardly unthinkable notion for arguably one of history's most visible refugee groups, Tashi and his ethnic counterparts, those who have been commissioned to preserve their nation's cultural heritage, would likely be beckoned to return en masse to their parents' homeland. Tashi's hesitation about returning is certainly understandable. He has lived his whole life identifying as a Tibetan-for-a-free-Tibet. He has never been a free Tibetan-in-Tibet. He would be asked to leave everything he has known for a life that exists only in a collective imagination.

Tashi's example raises significant questions of authenticity. Can Tashi be or identify as a true Tibetan were he to stay in India? Yet, paradoxically, everything that is real to Tashi about Tibet is in India. How can leaving the known for the unknown be more real, leaving his ethnic enclave in India for an unknown Tibet that is now populated with more Han Chinese than native Tibetans? This is one of the interesting mysteries of identity, the same that underlies Tashi's ethnic ambivalence. Though he may identify as Tibetan, the same as his parents, his Tibetan reality is different than theirs. More than searching for an ethnicity, Tashi was searching for a correct ethnicity. The mystery, then, is how an ethnic identity can be experienced as a moral narrative, a story that affirms a correct way to live. In an in-exile political movement, ideologically being Tibetan clearly means fighting for and desiring to return to Tibet. Where does that leave Tashi who openly expresses the ambiguity of his position?

We have to leave India. We are refugees. When our own land is free, we have to go back. We will go back to the regions where we came from, *Kham*,

*Amdo*...Going back will be difficult. Those who have family, it will be easy.

Those born in India, they have no land in Tibet, no place to call mine, my land.

My primary purpose in this thesis is to develop a theoretical framework that makes identity ambivalence and confusion, such as Tashi's, conceptually accessible. To accomplish this I focus on examining how living and identifying with a particular ethnic group can be experienced as more correct than another.

For many second-generation children of immigrants, self-identity is fundamentally tied to their ability to locate themselves in a narrative of ethnic identity and belonging. Knowing where they belong in terms of their family's ethnicity and ethnic home is directly tied to their future outlook and sense of living an authentic life. The fact that second-generation Tibetan refugees are asked to ethnically identify while living away from their parents' homeland makes their efforts and struggles to do so an excellent case study population for this research. For Tashi, he cannot just claim any identity, for how he lives his identity holds immediate and emotional consequences in his relationships with family, friends and community. Conceptually, identity ambivalence and confusion denotes a moral effort to express not just any ethnic belonging, but to articulate the correctness of his relationship to those with whom he interlocutes. This marks a key difference in how we can frame Tashi's identity ambivalence, one that I draw out in Cornell and Hartmann's (2007) differentiation between identity assignment and assertion. Instead of viewing his struggle as search to assert an ethnic identity, Tashi is attempting to articulate an ethnic identity that he is already living. For Tashi's Tibetanness to be real to him, it must also be compelling to him. I intend to explore the

ontology of identity valuation by examining how an identity construction can be compelling to live.

### **Thesis Argument**

In what follows, I critically examine the social constructionist perspective of understanding ethnic identity, the perspective that is most often employed by second-generation immigrant scholars. After reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of this perspective, I offer moral identification as an alternative theoretical perspective which contributes important individual elements to social constructionist's focus on groups and identity categories. A moral identification approach, I argue, more fully captures how Tashi and other second-generation immigrants' efforts to ethnically identify matter to them as they underlie their self-constitution.

Considering how well-recognized the social constructionist approach has become in ethnic identity literature (Morris 2007; De Andrade 2000), it is necessary to explore the assumptions made within a constructionist framework. Highlighting these assumptions requires a focused look at the relationship between the formation of the self—self-constitution—and identity narratives. In my critique, I argue that the majority of second-generation immigration scholars do not give explicit attention to the assumptions they make about the self and, by consequence, are less able to appreciate their tendency to reify ethnic identity as an objective category. As a result, numerous ethnographic accounts include problematic incongruities between interviewees who express primordial-like experiences of ethnic belonging and the constructionist assumptions employed by their author-researchers. By focusing on moral self-

constitution, I seek in this thesis to bridge this gap between the experience of ethnically identifying and analytically framing identification practices.

Without specifically addressing the assumptions that are made about the individual self, it is common for second-generation immigration scholars to portray the self as a constructor of his or her world. The risk in viewing the self-as-constructor lies in the propensity to incorporate prevalent modern and postmodern perspectives which favor the self as either disengaged or socially uncommitted. I argue that it is conceptually impossible to articulate how Tashi can value and be compelled to struggle over his ethnic identity if he is understood in either of these ways. After pointing out these problematic discussions in various second-generation identity studies, I then relate an uncommitted self to the tendency of reifying identifying practices as objective identity categories. Like the self, an identity cannot be framed as a category that exists apart from an individual and at the same time be shown to inform his or her self constitution. To make sense of Tashi's ambivalence, he must be framed in terms of an identity narrative which he lives. This is the complex task of showing that the meaning in one's world is meaningful because it exists for an individual who cannot be without it. Self and society, in this sense, are mutually occurring and neither should be understood apart from the other.

Cornell and Hartmann (2007) present a detailed account of how ethnic identity categories are negotiated and constructed through processes of identity assignment and assertion. However, they do not give attention to questions of commitment or self-constitution. They assume that ethnic identities matter to individuals as internalized identities which link them to the families and communities to which they belong. This internalization, however, is presented without discussing how or why particular ways of

identifying are compelling and experienced as better, more correct identities than others. In a social constructionist framework the question of what makes it right to assert one identity over another is neither asked nor answered. By moving beyond both primordial essentialism and fluid circumstantialism, constructionist thought supposes a dialectical process that is meant to thread between and incorporate the strengths of both. By framing an uncommitted self that does not embody and live an identity, however, the constructionist perspective cannot sustain what it purports: avoiding objectifying practices. Without analytically linking processes of narrative construction and self-constitution to those who live them, ethnic identity is framed as a thing-in-the-world, set apart and granted its own ontological properties. In this way, a constructionist argument unwittingly returns to the same objectifying assumptions it seeks to correct.

From a social constructionist perspective, therefore, I argue that it remains unclear how to reconcile the experience of feeling compelled by a constructed identity. Instead of returning to a primordial essentialism to make sense of Tashi's confusion and ambivalence, however, I argue that he must be understood as a moral, embodied, and self-interpreting being. In the moral identification perspective I present here, I seek to theoretically combine processes of ethnic identity construction and moral self-constitution and frame them as mutually dependent practices. In this approach, understanding the self and identity as ontologically interdependent phenomena requires: (1) emphasizing an embodied, moral self that is socially committed, (2) highlighting the role of interlocuting others who mediate the social position of a self and its identifying practices, (3) replacing a reified view of identities in favor of identifying practices, and

(4) illustrating how ethnic identity ambivalence entails questions of authenticity and accountability.

### **Social Constructionism and the Second Generation**

To analytically investigate what makes it important to search for and live a correct ethnic identity, I focus my critique of social constructionism to its position in second-generation immigration scholarship. Certainly theoretical questions of ethnicity and ethnic identity are not limited to immigration studies or to the children of immigrants who immigrate with their parents at a young age (1.5 generation) or are born in a new land (2.0 generation). Thus, I focus on second-generation<sup>1</sup> immigrants as one population among others for whom questions of ethnic identification and identity ambivalence apply. For this thesis, I draw upon studies of second-generation immigrants because that is also where my own personal experience and interest lies. I first ventured into intergenerational identity formation and transmission practices while studying Tibetan refugees in India in 2006 and 2007 and later with Cape Verdean migrants living in Massachusetts in 2009. Although this work is primarily theoretical, it is the fruit of empirical questions that were developed through my ethnographic research with the now adult children of refugees and immigrants.

In recent years, increasingly more attention has been given to the intersection of ethnic identity and immigration studies, particularly among the children of post-1965<sup>2</sup> immigrants. The significance of this new second generation (2.0 generation) follows from

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis I do not draw a significant division between the 1.5 and 2.0 generations.

<sup>2</sup> In 1921 President Warren G. Harding signed into law a system of immigration quotas that remained mostly intact until President Lyndon Johnson's Immigration Act of 1965. The restrictive quotas, along with two world wars and the great depression, greatly reduced the number of immigrants coming into the U.S. for over four decades. In 1965, however, policy changes were enacted that changed the conditions of U.S. immigration flows, resulting in an unprecedented and unique era of global migration to the United States.

both their increasing demographic presence, making up an estimated 10 percent of the current U.S. population (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:19), as well as the increasing attention they are receiving in current literary debates, particularly between the perspectives of assimilation (Gordon 1964; Alba and Nee 1997), segmented assimilation (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2006) and transnationalism (Levitt and Waters 2002). In spite of the divided attention that second-generation immigrants receive in each of these approaches, I contend that most scholars primarily frame and discuss ethnic identities as socially constructed categories. Joane Nagel (1994) provides an excellent definition of this perspective. She writes that the constructionist perspective emphasizes,

... the fluid, situational, volitional, and dynamic character of ethnic identification, organization and action--a model that emphasizes the socially 'constructed' aspects of ethnicity, i.e., the ways in which ethnic boundaries, identities, and cultures, are negotiated, defined, and produced through social interaction inside and outside ethnic communities.

By and large, second-generation scholars are uniformly committed to viewing the reality of ethnic categories and identities in this way, as phenomena that are negotiated through social interaction. This theoretical commitment, however, is lost in practice. They frame ethnic identity without discussing how the individuals who negotiate, interact and interpret their worlds live and experience their constructed identities.

In the argument that follows, I show that the reality of a particular ethnic identity is not only situationally dependent, but even more importantly, it is relationally and dialogically dependent (Guignon 2004). A relational identity is in fact not an identity, but a way of identifying that emphasizes an individual's relationship and belonging to other

social beings. In this view, to speak of a social identity is to speak of a shared way of living which can be understood as a social narrative. Following Charles Taylor (1989), a narrative is a moral story that is constitutive of one's world. This is the nature of constitutive language which social individuals embody. Given that multiple and at times opposing narratives exist in the lives of second-generation immigrants, it becomes important to not only discuss the constructed nature of an ethnic narrative, but to also explicate how it informs moral standards of correct living.

### **Moral Self-Constitution**

To portray the ethnic individual from an experiential and moral perspective, I begin with the assumption that sociality is central to being human. The human experience is to find oneself always embedded in a network of social relationships. An individual's first network is almost always based in kin relationships where a child becomes self-aware only after finding him or herself living in a social world that is articulated by members of his or her family and close friends. Thus, to show that an ethnic identity is important involves emphasizing relationships with other individuals, particularly respected family members and elders, who articulate a particular ethnic narrative and its boundaries. Embodying this narrative involves not only living in these relationships, but even more importantly, gaining a sense of selfhood through them. Although I do not give specific theoretical attention to the social body, the hermeneutic tradition which I follow understands selfhood and self-awareness as embodied ways of knowing. Embodiment and self-constitution, therefore, are inseparable processes. The power of constitutive language involves not only one's world, but one's self within it. An individual's world becomes real at the same time he or she develops self-consciousness and is self-

constituted within it. To embody a world view is to value it as a right way of living. Living in and valuing one's world view affirms one's self-constitution in it. Following my argument, the tension and ambivalence in Tashi's ethnic identity cannot not be analytically understood in terms of a divided, multiple or fragmented self, but in terms of a single, embodied, strong evaluating self that attempts to reconcile relationships to multiple and, at times, incongruent moral narratives and sources.

### **Thesis Organization**

In presenting a morally constitutive perspective of ethnic identity, I bring together two, not altogether disparate, but certainly distinct bodies of literature: (1) ethnic identity in second-generation immigration literature and (2) Charles Taylor (1985, 1989) and Charles Guignon's (2004) hermeneutic accounts of moral selfhood. I bring these literatures together to show how a committed and morally constituted self offers an alternative to key assumptions made within a social constructionist framework of ethnic identity. Within immigrant communities, first generation immigrants and their children find themselves constituted by and living multiple and at times ambiguous narratives. In these contexts of immigration, subsequent generations of children are raised in a pluralized, fractured mosaic of possible identifications and face convoluted questions of ethnicity and ethnic identification.

In the first chapter I first present a brief history of the social constructionist perspective of racial and ethnic identities. I rely on this history to emphasize key assumptions that relate to how an individual experiences and lives a constructed ethnic identity. In the next chapter, I critically engage these assumptions, particularly challenging the multiple ways in which the self has been conceptualized in terms of non-commitment and social disengagement. I draw upon numerous examples in second-generation literature to illustrate problematic consequences that follow from

these conceptualizations. Before offering a framework for moral identification as a response to these criticisms, I introduce in chapter three a history of the different conceptualizations of self from the work of Taylor and Guignon. I use this history as a background against which to argue for a committed, moral self. In the last chapter I conclude with a presentation of a moral self in a framework for interpreting Tashi's and other immigrant children's expressions of ethnic identity ambivalence.

## CHAPTER 2 - ETHNICITY AND IDENTIFICATION

In this chapter I lay out the central tenets of the social constructionist perspective of ethnic identity. In doing so, I look primarily to the work of Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann (2007) who skillfully present a one hundred year conceptual history of race and ethnicity in American academics. I begin with this history to highlight the genesis of the social constructionist tradition and emphasize the authors' claim to thread two divergent schools of thought and reconcile their respective weaknesses by combing their strengths in a constructionist perspective. To understand the claims made within a social constructionist approach, it is necessary to do so in light of the positions it is arguing against and purports to correct. After presenting these earlier approaches, followed by Cornell and Hartmann's argument for social constructionism, I retain their belief that a middle ground between essential and circumstantial understandings is necessary, only I argue that they do not fully reconcile primordialism with circumstantialism without appreciating how a socially constructed ethnicity matters if it is not embodied and lived by morally engaged individuals.

Without a discussion of a committed self, I contend that Cornell and Hartmann's (2007) constructionist argument still favors a circumstantialist reading of ethnic identity. "Identities are made," Cornell and Hartmann write, "but by an interaction between circumstantial or human assignment, on the one hand, and assertion, on the other" (p. 83). The authors stress that this construction involves both the passive experience of being "made" by external forces and the active process of a group "making" itself. In this way they claim to correct the circumstantialist perspective by including the logic of a primordialist; they purport to avoid a deterministic "prison of circumstance" (p. 83) by including a creative component to ethnic identity. Cornell and Hartmann, along with the majority of second-generation immigrant scholars, do well to

recognize this creative component in their empirical observations. Yet, without *also* framing the social individual who lives within observed ethnic groups as a morally committed agent, there are no theoretical grounds on which to support a constructionist claim that an individual or group has any preference over which identity to assert. In their presentation, Cornell and Hartmann only assume that people contribute “to the making of their own identities,” without presenting any theoretical discussion as to how or why (p. 212). This assumption certainly follows common, empirically supported sense that it matters to people who they are and how they identify. However, analytically defending such a claim necessitates a view of the self which asserts preexisting identities because they are compelled to do so, as moral beings that embody their self-constituting relationships with other individuals in their world.

### **Ethnic Identity in the United States: A Conceptual History**

#### *Social Evolution and Assimilation*

At the beginning of the twentieth century, as social evolutionary thought was in decline, assimilationist thinking began to dominate discourses of ethnicity. The idea that one’s race was rooted biologically, as social Darwinists suppose, waned as assimilationist thinking gained popularity. This shift was fueled in large part by Franz Boas’s science of culture (Cornell and Hartmann 2007:45). Boas believed that difference is cultural, not biological. Boas’s cultural perspective offered the possibility of understanding ethnicity and race in a fundamentally new way. If social difference is in fact cultural, then the racial separation between people is much more circumstantial than essential. This Cultural Revolution opened the door not only for change, as evolution already allow for organic or symbiotic change, but even more importantly, for melding.

The assimilationist perspective gained ground also in part as the Chicago school and Robert Park in particular began asking what this type of change might look like. From his inquiries, “Park developed his famous race relations cycle: the notion that immigrant groups-- and by implication at least, ethnic or racial populations more generally--typically went through a series of phases as they gradually melted into the larger society” (Cornell and Hartmann 2007:45). Only a few short decades later, however, a series of significant global shifts occurred, disrupting the conditions of the early twentieth century which underlie assimilationist thinking. In the first, following closely after the Second World War, European colonial powers began fading which in turn gave way to a new era of post-colonial order. This loosening resulted in the reemergence of “ethnic, kinship, regional and religious ties,” that were once subdued by colonial administrations (p. 47). The second event, similar to the first, also occurred along a line of ethnic revitalization, only within industrial states themselves. Melting pot metaphors gave way to the gathering momentum of ethnic and racial claims made by marginalized groups that were otherwise thought to be on a pathway to assimilation. Protest movements and minority group allegiances gained momentum, making it clear that they were not lining up to jump into any melting pot. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social conditions began to allow marginalized groups to more uniformly protest against their segregation.

As theoretical assimilationism began to decline, like social evolutionism before it, it gave way to the emerging views of primordialism and circumstantialism. Although uniform in their rejection of assimilationism, these alternative views, as Cornell and Hartmann (2007) refer to them, substantively diverged in their conceptualization of the individual’s relationship with an ethnic group. For the primordialist, ethnic identity is innate and thereby, fixed. For the circumstantialist, it is contextual and fluidly responsive to new environments (p. 44). The

strength in the social constructionist position is its ability to appreciate both. I take up primordialism first.

### *Primordial and Fixed*

Between the split reactions to the decline in assimilationist thought, the divide occurred on the question of whether the malleability of racial and ethnic identities was under or over estimated. Primordialist stake their claim on the latter. “[A]ssimilation came to grief because such ties are far more deeply embedded in the human psyche and in human relationships than we realize” (Cornell and Hartmann 2007:51). Distancing themselves from the cultural arguments that gave rise to assimilationist thinking, supporters of the primordialist perspective hang their argument on the assumption that identity is resistant to change and enduring. Harold Isaacs (1975) contributes to this perspective, arguing that there are eight basic elements which constitute one’s group identity. The power of these elements, he argues, is the result of their primacy, that they are prior to choice and, thereby, resilient to change. Isaacs attempts to address the reality of finding oneself already living in a group, a cultural order, belonging to a kinship group, in a particular place. The impact of all of these “givens” are indicators, he believes, that there are core elements to our identities that subsist, given that they are a primordial element to our being.

The power of the primordial argument resonates with those who wish to focus on questions of identification as belonging, particularly in terms of intense and emotional feelings of solidarity, as Cornell and Hartmann (2007) also note (p. 55). Interaction within a putative group and the feelings of family, intimacy, and communality are those which primordialists emphasize. To evoke primordial attachment in the name of “blood,” for example, is an attempt to express the most intimate feelings which underlie our very humanity. It is in this way that race and ethnicity

retain their import as their meaning is sustained by enduring relationships, even blood relationships. Family and kinship have long remained core pillars that bolster ethnic and racial identities. Horowitz (1985), for example, argues that connections through birth are what make ethnicity meaningful. “The language of ethnicity is the language of kinship” (p. 56-57). The identity created by these elements is recognizably resilient and enduring. Yet, such a fixed conception of identity becomes frustrated in the face of important questions of meaning, origin, change and multiplicity that mostly remain unanswered. It is on this note that another group of scholars also respond to the decline of assimilationism, presenting their position in light of this second set of questions, a position that seeks to retain Boas’s cultural relativism.

#### *Circumstantial and Fluid*

In contrast to primordialism, circumstantialism has remained a pervasive view of ethnicity. In it, ethnicity is understood along the lines of a fluid, situational identity. For circumstantialists, Cornell and Hartmann contend that “it was not the deep roots of ethnic and racial identities that accounted for their persistence, but their practical uses.” These practical uses, “in turn, were derivative of the circumstances and contexts in which ethnic and racial groups found themselves” (p. 58-9). Different than a fixed, innate understanding of racial and ethnic connections, circumstantialists began looking at the formation of boundaries under a more utilitarian logic. Thus, it became centrally important to frame political and economic group advantages that particular racial and ethnic boundaries offer (Glazer and Moynihan 1970:17). In this perspective, contextual, structural factors are the primary response in sociology to the question of why identify in the name of ethnicity or race.

The assumption that race and ethnicity are fluid, malleability constructs of group identity and not fixed, primordial categories follows from the idea that identities are not

independent forces but products dependent on contextual forces. Two main assumptions bolster this view. First, “ethnic and racial groups are largely the products of concrete social and historical situations.” Second, “ethnicity and race have provided reliable bases for organizing labor, expropriating resources, and organizing and justifying inequities” (Cornell and Hartmann 2007:63). Changing circumstances, in short, result in changing relationships and identities. The focus for circumstantialists begins with contextual conditions within which groups are positioned, relative to each other. Only in these positions can they understand a group’s particular interests. Competition and conflict underlie group positionality and, for this reason, race (physical) and ethnicity (behavior) maintain salience by their visibility. In this perspective, assimilation did not sufficiently account for the fluidity of group formation. An ethnic or racial group may never assimilate or become like another group because these group identities are dependent upon greater structural circumstances. Such a situationalist reading of identity suggests that assimilation will occur only when economic stratification is eliminated. Until then, race and ethnicity remain important domains of division, whether division is understood in terms of cooperation or competition. In either case, race and ethnicity are dependent variables, outcomes.

### *Primordialism and Circumstantialism*

In the end, it would seem that both primordialist and circumstantialist accounts are depicting important aspects of racial and ethnic identities. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) depict different aspects of racial and ethnic identities. For them, both perspectives are simultaneously capturing and missing important aspects of the two identity domains. What primordialism misses, circumstantialism was ready to explain. The strengths of a

circumstantialist position, however, sacrificed those of primordialism. Retaining the potency of both, therefore, lies at the center of Cornell and Hartmann's move towards constructionism. They frame their argument for a social constructionist reading of ethnic and racial identity on the idea that there needs to be a middle way between these two poles. Both perspectives essentially ask different questions about the same phenomena. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) argue that both views are important, only in unrelated ways. "These two accounts are in many ways mirror images of each other, the strengths of one reflecting the weaknesses of the other. Each contributes insight where the other seems blind, but we need both sets of insights" (p. 74). In the authors' view, combining the merits of both perspectives at the same time corrects for their respective shortcomings. This corrective synthesis, the authors argue, returns primordialism from fixed, blood tie essentialism and circumstantialism from fluid, instrumentality. An ethnic identity is both fixed and fluid, Cornell and Hartmann suggest, only not in the extreme ways these contrastive positions suggest.

### **The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity**

Cornell and Hartmann (2007) present their social constructionism as a dialectic between stability and change. The construction of racial and ethnic identities must be understood in this way, as a process that is never fully or finally complete. Instead, it is an ongoing process of group formation that slides between moments of thickness or thinness, solidity or fluidity. An identity's relative thickness or thinness speaks to its strength or weakness in forming a we-ness, a more or less comprehensively bound sense of group solidarity built on a narrative of what it means to belong. For Cornell and Hartmann, the interaction between contextual factors (identity assignment) and group

factors (identity assertion) lies at the heart of this dialectic and the identity construction process (p. 83). To flesh out this interaction based constructionism, they characterize the formation of racial and ethnic identity constructions as processes that deviate along dual axes of thickness and thinness and assertion and assignment. The first axis, the thickness or thinness of a group's ethnic identity, refers to how comprehensively it informs and organizes other aspects of the group's social reality. The second axis is a spectrum along which the power to identify varies between one group's ability to assert its own identity and another group's power to assign one to it. "The interaction between external and internal forces is not the same everywhere. Circumstances sometimes play a larger or a smaller role" (p. 83). Black, South African identity offers an example of a thick ethnic identity that for many years was assigned by dominant Whites. It strongly informed most, if not all, aspects of the Black, South African social position. In contrast, Italian-Americans have seen their ethnicity gradually shift from an assigned to an asserted identity, one that thinly "organizes less and less of daily life as Italian Americans have intermarried, moved out of ethnic communities, and entered the mainstream of American society and culture" (p. 85-6). Emphasizing the constructed nature of ethnic identity dismisses a view that all ethnic groups experience their ethnicity similarly, as either always primordial or circumstantial, and highlights the notion that one group's ethnicity may seem as more primordial while another's can be experienced more circumstantially. Instead of focusing on the nature of an ethnic identity, a constructionist approach emphasizes the nature of the formational process. If the conditions of the formation vary across time and place, than it follows that constructed identities will differ both in cultural substance and comprehensiveness.

Interaction between an ethnic group and its social position drives its identity construction along these axes, between external and internal group forces which vary over time. A constructed identity, Cornell and Hartmann (2007) argues, is neither an essential aspect of one's being nor a subjective reality that the individual can take up and put down at his or her own will. I focus on this point to emphasize its centrality in Cornell and Hartmann's overall framework. A socially constructed ethnic identity is an historically contingent identity that moves along spectrums of comprehensiveness and definition, axes which Cornell and Hartmann suggest incorporate the logic of both a primordialist and circumstantialist perspective. Groups contribute to their identities while at the same time contextual factors limit the extent to which a particular group can assert itself in a given social landscape. "The construction of identities takes place in an interaction between, on one hand, the opportunities and constraints groups encounter in construction sites (including relationships with other variously empowered groups) and, on the other, what they bring to that encounter" (p. 212). In terms of an ethnic identity, focusing on this interaction is meant to illustrate change that incorporates both group and contextual factors.

Because reconciling both primordialism and circumstantialism is central to a constructionist paradigm, it is important to flesh out the assumptions that it has retained from each. Primordialism follows an essentialist understanding of actors and institutions. Obviously Platonic, it is a way of understanding the world based on assumptions of realism and objectivism, posited givens in the world (p. 51). A circumstantial perspective came in response to this essentialism and asks how so much observed variance and change between groups can be explained under such a rigid primordialism. Thus, the

circumstantialist looks to the conditions of one's world and raises questions of the power and utility of particular expressions of ethnicity. Under circumstantialism, ethnic identity is attributed an advantageous instrumentality for those groups who are in a position to emphasize their own identity (p. 61). Retaining primordialism makes room for the desire to assert and hold onto a particular ethnicity while circumstantialism explains how this is not always possible.

Together, these two views purportedly balance one another. One cannot simply belong to any ethnic/racial group of his choosing as surrounding groups carry typified and institutionalized ideas of who they are. Therefore, the constructionist argument rests on the position that ethnicity is constructed and reconstructed through recurring interactions between these groups. No group in this case is an island because group members maintain a sense of themselves by seeking to uphold a sense of who others are as well (p. 212). While an immigrant group may relocate and seek to assert a particular identity, for example, its assertion is negotiated in an already existing order within which other groups have structured categories which they desire to sustain. Identities gain their structure, in a constructionist approach, through this power laden interplay. In what follows, I am less concerned with challenging this formulation of interaction and change and instead question the implications of assertion in terms of identity ambivalence. I am primarily concerned with whether a social constructionist approach can make sense of the ways an individual would have to value and live an ethnic identity in order to experience identification ambivalence. In questioning whether he ought to return to Tibet, for example, Tashi was expressing concern about whether he can remain authentically Tibetan if he lives his Tibetanness in a different way than his parents. In the next section I look to the assumptions that a constructionist perspective makes about how individuals face intergenerational questions

of socio-cultural continuity and change, particularly in terms of how a constructionist understands identity assertion.

### **Problematic Assumptions: A Disengaged Self and Objective Identity**

The social constructionist approach which I have presented, primarily from the work of Cornell and Hartmann (2007), is certainly not exclusive to them. The approach is pervasive throughout sociology and has gained a strong hold in numerous subfields within the discipline, including immigration studies. Notwithstanding, Cornell and Hartmann provide an excellent point of departure for an ontological critique of the assumptions which underlie a social constructionist framework. In fact, I read the same macro-structural approach in Cornell and Hartmann's analysis that I seek to address in second-generation immigrant literature generally. My criticism centers on this point: focusing on how fixed and fluid notions of an ethnic group's identity construction are negotiated is only half of the question, the group half. The social constructionist approach deals much less, if at all, with how individuals are constituted and find themselves morally committed to the group narrative. Yet, in arguing that an identity is worthy of being asserted, this group-individual interplay is necessarily assumed within a constructionist framework. If it actually matters to Tashi how he understands himself as Tibetan, then his social identification necessarily informs his self-constitution. If Tashi, or anyone for that matter, ever experiences ambivalence in relating to a way of identifying, then it is clear that a social-individual tension exists. To resist an assigned ethnicity and/or be interested in asserting an alternative ethnic identity necessarily points to a relationship between identification and valuation. In other words, to discuss how one identity is proper to assert requires a discussion of how it is qualitatively better or more correct than another. In this way identification must be understood as valuation. Appreciating this tension and identity valuation requires framing

identity narratives that are supported at a group level, much like that found in Cornell and Hartmann's work, with a focus on self-constitution. The individual needs to be emphasized as one who values and identifies with a social narrative in order for the narrative's social construction to hold any significance in a world of multiple ethnic options. I highlight here the assumptions that social constructionism draws in framing the self, social others and ethnic narratives.

If ethnic identities are constructed, then without a discussion of the self it remains unclear what directs its construction and undergirds the impetus for an individual to value a particular ethnic narrative. Unfortunately, these questions are not taken up by Cornell and Hartmann (2007). I do not intend to cite the authors for not accomplishing a goal they did not outline for themselves. Thus, I do not direct my criticism at a particular depiction of the self in Cornell and Hartmann's account, as they have none. Instead, I challenge how they and other immigration scholars are able to conceptually present ethnic identities that are meaningful enough to generate ambivalence in ethnic belonging. Like Cornell and Hartmann, most immigration scholars who explore questions of transnationalism and incorporation observe ambivalence among second-generation individuals in their relationships with their parents and host society. I illustrate here the assumptions they make about the self and argue that they are not able to conceptually appreciate this ambivalence without framing individuals as moral beings who pursue correct identification.

### **Ways of Viewing the Self**

For Tashi to experience identity confusion, it would seem that he has a real self that matters to him. Though this is certainly one way of framing the self, it is not the only approach. In chapter three I offer a more detailed conceptual history of the self. For now, I briefly present

two ways of understanding the self in order to highlight their presence in the literature I review in this chapter. In the first view, not only does Tashi have a real self, but it resides within Tashi as an essential aspect of who he is. His confusion results from living in a way that contradicts or offends his essential, primal self. Theoretical support for this conclusion follows from an atomistic belief that Tashi lives set apart from society. In this view, Tashi is understood as an individualistically privileged entity who relates to others and society from a disengaged standpoint. Because Tashi stands disengaged from society, his reality is understood in terms of a strong realism. Tashi is real, independent of any other social person or process in his world. His true self is not constructed, but discovered within. Identity shifts, then, are generally seen as movements towards or away from who he really is. Tashi could only direct this movement by looking within and discovering his authentic, interior self.

In contrast to this modernistic realism, a postmodern reading of the self has also become prominent. This latter view raises important epistemological questions that challenge individualistic ways of knowing oneself. In a postmodern perspective, Tashi actually has no real self outside of his social situation. This fluid understanding of the self proposes to correct questions of self-awareness which are sacrificed by the ideal of authenticity. One cannot look within to know his or herself, but to society. To the postmodernist, the constructed nature of society and its institutions point to the illusion of authenticity. Because there is no self without society, notions of permanence and authentic selfhood are rejected. As individuals live in divided and fragmented societies, their selves are believed to also become plural, hybrid and fragmented. In their efforts to correct the problems of a modern, essential self, postmodernists replace it with a socially determined one. In this way, although a self may be socially situated, it remains pluralistically uncommitted to valuing its social world.

In what follows, I address the problems that follow from assuming either a modern, disengaged self or a fluid, postmodern self. Though both views exist in second-generation scholarship and offer distinctly different consequences of social engagement, in both individuals is not shown to embody their ethnic identifications. Although Cornell and Hartmann (2007) do not explicitly argue for either of these understandings, they also do not theoretically address how in their argument identities motivate human action. Looking to Hanson's (1989) work with Māori identity, they note, "Whatever the nature of Māori identity, that identity matters a great deal to Māoris, and they act in its defense. The important thing is to find out why and how that happens" (p. 98). Cornell and Hartmann highlight the importance of addressing commitment but do not address it theoretically. Noting that a Māori identity matters a great deal is not the same as disclosing an analytical connection between the identity narrative and a strong evaluating actor who acts in its defense. Cornell and Hartmann focus on the narrative.

### **Devoid a Moral Self: Examples from Second-generation Literature**

The consequences of not framing the construction of an ethnic identity in terms of a committed, moral self undermine the paradigm's ability to conceptualize actors as moral agents. In my claim that constructionist frameworks fail to account for how an ethnic identity matters to the individual, I do not suppose that the literature is absent a discussion of individuals. It is absent a discussion of actors who are conceptualized as moral agents who embody ethnic identity narratives. Although it is common to refer to the actor as a "constructor" of his or her world, this claim lacks conceptual teeth without disclosing how the individual determines what to construct. Thus the question remains, particularly in second-generation literature where constructions are shown to occur amid ambivalent circumstances, why bother with an identity that is so emotionally challenging or convoluted to construct?

In Neetu Abad and Kennon Sheldon's (2008) study of the acculturation practices of second-generation immigrants, for example, they argue that the children of parents who allow them more latitude in selecting their own cultural identity will be more likely to internalize the parents' natal culture, and by consequence, become more empowered and enjoy a greater well-being. The significance of their research, the authors stress, is based on their view that immigrant children, "typically face a complicated adolescence during which they are expected to be fluent in both their natal and host cultures. The pressure associated with being bicultural may be exacerbated by demands made by their first-generation immigrant parents" (p. 656). Arguing that their findings indicate an association between paternal autonomy support and second-generation well being, the authors conclude, "Our data suggests that second-generation immigrants use these freedoms during transition periods to merge seemingly disparate parts of their identity into a coherent whole" (p. 656). These authors offer a startling example of how one's identity and culture can be framed as entities that exist ontologically distinct from an individual. The children are framed as selves who stand apart from their parents' culture and that of their receiving society. In claiming that a second-generation immigrant can construct a coherent identity from disparate parts, the individual is framed as a disengaged self that merges identities from a socially disengaged standpoint. Such a perspective commits a two-fold error in assuming that (1) an identity exists as a thing that can merge, fragment or become hybrid as well as (2) it assumes that a person is an agent who directs his or her identity construction from a socially detached position. I elaborate on the latter assumption here and return to the former in the next section.

Abad and Sheldon (2008), like many in the field of second-generation identity construction, are directly interested in addressing tension and incongruence in cultural practices and identity formations. By interpreting these questions through a framework that portrays a

disengaged self, they present subjects that are shown to be uncommitted agents who choose between identities. Abed and Sheldon make excellent observations about the struggles and stress that immigrant children face as they often experience incongruent cultural realities between their relationships with their parents and host society. Yet, if their culture is something that they themselves piece together, it remains unexplained how the culture can impose any demand or tension on the children. A disembodied self undermines a social constructionist perspective's ability to show that multiple identities matter or are valued by a second-generation immigrant.

Hala Mahmoud (2009) takes up the question of identity valuation in her work on ethnic identity shifts. She is interested in contrasting internal and external constraints and relating them to the ways in which individuals experience their ethnic identity. She relates her work to that of Rebecca Malhi, Susan Boon and Timothy Rogers (2009) who argue that Canadian women from South-Asia prefer hybrid ethnic identities over unicultural identities. Mahmoud likewise asserts that her study points to the flexibility of ethnic identity. But, if it is flexible, the next logical question, she surmises, is to ask how flexible. "Does this hybrid ethnic identity reflect the individual's true, authentic identification with this hybridity?" (p. 285). Mahmoud is taking on modern and postmodern distinctions in self understanding. "In the course of positioning, is there a starting point or preferred identity that mediates shifts between various positions? Or is it a boundless, loose process with no constraints?" (p. 285). Although she is asking the right questions, recognizing the shortcomings of earlier ethnic identity research, Mahmoud is still doing so within a framework that fails to disclose and is not critical enough about the assumptions it makes about the self. Mahmoud engages the emotion and importance of ethnic identification from the position of an uncommitted self. In fact, Mahmoud gives very little ontological insight into the relationship between the self and identity. To explain how some

identities are preferred over others, she seeks to correct constructionist fluidity by returning to a discourse of deep interiority.

Clearly, Mahmoud (2009) argues, there seems to be a preferred or core identity in a context of multiplicity (p. 285). Authenticity is still an important question, she implicitly shows, in spite of social constructionists' tendency to favor a plural self. Yet, in substantiating it, she points to intra-personal domains of identity formation. "This dynamic of *identity formation* and the fact that ethnic identities are entrenched in this highly individual process sheds light on the complex subjectivity involved in ethnic self-identification." (p. 287). Resorting back to individual, psychological processes of identity formation, Mahmoud (2009) recognizes that an uncommitted, multifaceted self fails to account for authenticity, and for this reason, she favors a modern reading of a non-social, authentically interior self, one akin to that of the romantic tradition. A socially uncommitted, internalized identity, she writes, is conceptualized as an *intrapersonal* identity domain.

[T]he present account will develop the argument that identity is actually more constrained than the apparent flexibility we might witness in everyday interactions suggests. By acknowledging a distinction between the intrapersonal and interpersonal domains, it will be argued that there is usually a deeper level of identification, a core sense of self that is not reducible to the vicissitudes of conversations" (p. 285).

Mahmoud unwittingly seeks to save the multifaceted self in social constructionism by returning it to a discourse it was meant to correct. By returning authenticity to the "internalization of value systems and social meanings into their psychological worlds," Mahmoud replaces one problematic reading of the self with another (p. 291). In the end, Mahmoud is still unable to

theoretically account for both a meaningfully authentic *and* malleable account of identity.

Presented as elements of an uncommitted self, agency and meaning in a constructionist arguments remain theoretical snares that are tenuously conjoined in the same framework. In the introduction of what is one of the most comprehensive volumes of second-generation transnationalism and ethnic identity, the editors, Peggy Levitt and Mary Waters (2002) comment on the shared concern the volume's collaborators had with, "how social actors construct their identities and imagine themselves and the social groups they belong to when they live within transnational social fields and when they can use resources and discursive elements from multiple settings" (p. 8). Accounting for social actors as constructors and imaginers of themselves, who can use or employ (social) resources in their own self-construction, analytically dislodges individuals from an embedded position in their worlds. In this language, social construction reads more as disengaged, preference directed agency found in rational choice theory. This is clearly an agent-friendly perspective, yet comes at a heavy cost of neglecting meaning. For any identity category to be meaningful, its goodness or worth must have intentionality towards me, prior to my selection of it. It makes a degree of sense to view realities as social constructs, as the world can always be other. A construction clearly requires a constructor the same as a narrative assumes a narrator. Yet, social identities and categories should not be understood as creations *ex-nihilo*. Constructions are based on some, already present, already articulated cultural narrative. Understanding the self as an entity that constructs or imagines itself, as Levitt and Waters (2002) suggest, does not address the individuals' self-constitution in relation to those narratives. In the postmodern language of "imagining," we are left to assume that the second-generation constructors are theorized as disengaged, even disembodied actors who construct, yet with little information about direction or guidance in how

or what they construct.

Levitt and Waters' (2002) text is organized into three sections, the third of which includes five chapters dedicated to a transnational perspective of second-generation experiences. The last chapter in this section, written by Yen Le Espiritu and Thom Tran, provides an example of how a disengaged actor is framed as a self-constructor. In their study, Espiritu and Tran (2002) are concerned with university age, Vietnamese Americans living in San Diego. They argue that the transnational environment which they describe these second-generation immigrants living in contributes to feelings of ambivalence and questions of belonging to both Vietnam as their "home" and the Vietnamese as their "people." The authors present excellent interview narratives that impeccably capture this ambivalence. They conceptualize a symbolic transnationalism in which "young Vietnamese Americans imagine Vietnam, their perceived responsibilities toward the country, and the critical role that the representation of Vietnam plays in the construction of their ethnic identity in the United States" (p. 370).

In the interviews with their research participants, the authors focus on the differences in how their participants relate to their immediate homes and symbolic homelands. They note that many expressed primordial-like attachments to their ethnic identities that they locate in a distant land. In spite of living all or most of their lives in the U.S. (87 percent asserted that the U.S. was their home), many felt that Vietnam continued to be their homeland. One participant stated that "I want to go there because it's a part of who I am" (p. 393). For another, "Vietnam is not my country because I don't live there. But the people are my people. [...Americans] can't relate to who I am; they don't know who I am" (p. 393). Arguing that these second-generation, Vietnamese Americans construct a self-identity in the intersection between their homes and homelands is significant for Espiritu and Tran. It marks a transnational field. Even more

important, however, what is not captured in this claim is how children of Vietnamese immigrants find themselves in a relationship with a distant place and people that somehow is authentic enough to constitute “who they are.” “I can’t help but being white-washed, you know. I was born here! This is all I know. How can I not be American if I was born and raised here?” (p. 379). The language of “not being able to help but being white-washed” speaks to a pre-reflective, pre-construction intentionality that one’s world has towards the interviewee’s self-constitution. Only a morally constituted self could find two different homes compelling without entirely being able to explain how or why.

Espiritu and Tran (2002) conclude that these young adults felt a strong symbolic attachment to Vietnam, in spite of knowing little about it. At the same time, their symbolic relationship with Vietnam is strained by a more immediate pressure to become like Americans. They are left living in an uneasy relationship with both Vietnamese and U.S. cultures. Explaining this “lived experience,” the authors portray, “Vietnamese Americans [as] ‘self-making’ and ‘being-made’ within local, national and transnational contexts” (386). Though it may be a “lived” perspective, it is not an embodied one. Embodied agency is not self-making, but living as one already finds him or herself being. After laying out an argument showing second-generation immigrants who live amid multiple and conflicting narratives, framing the self as a disengaged constructor contradicts Espiritu and Tran’s participants’ ambivalent assertions of being two incongruent things. In most of the narratives the authors present, identifying as American and Vietnamese did not mark an easy or mutual fit. In fact, 32 percent of their informants identified with both categories despite the incongruities between the two identities. For Vietnam to be part of “who I am” or for Americans not to be able to “relate to who I am” clearly speaks, if not shouts to the insufficiencies of attempting to describe a lived experience that is framed in self de-

centering assumptions.

*Uncommitted Selves and Hybridity*

In an auto-biographic, self-explorative article, Erin Texeira (2000) shares her own identity ambivalence in writing about her family's "racial riddle." In her writing, she unfolds her struggle to understand herself as the born-in-the-U.S. daughter of Cape Verdean heritage and how she felt compelled to explore what she called deep, unspoken racial chasms that divided her family. She writes:

I am beginning to understand that each nation, each family and individual must define itself. We may resemble one another and share blood, but individuals within a family and a culture will assign themselves different labels. The definitions should shift to suit each generation, each historical and personal reality. None will be right or wrong. In my tribe, some are white and some Portuguese. Some are black, African American, Cape Verdean.

More surprising than the perplexity of her riddle is the simplicity of her conclusion. To suggest that "none will be right or wrong" is surprising, especially only pages after disclosing how she felt caught in a journey of self-discovery which she did not intend to begin or expect to be so emotional. Crying at times, frustrated, and even angry at others, Texeira describes herself at the beginning of her narrative as an emotional and committed self and concludes indifferent and startlingly de-centered. To say that an identity should not matter is not the same as declaring that it does not. She took up the question of her racial identity so passionately because it did matter, even without her permission. No amount of postmodern wishing can erase this fact. Texeira rejects these identity narratives on the grounds that she could not establish an objective reality to them. As many before her have done, Texeira tries to reconcile her ambivalence by moving

towards a situational, de-centered reading of herself. Shifting identification acts, however, to suit the particularity of one's situation fundamentally neglects the reality of living in worlds where identities exist primarily because others live them.

The cosmopolitan attitude in Texeira's conclusion is certainly pervasive in ethnic identity literature. However, how can one process or understand turmoil and frustration from such an accommodating perspective? Texeira ends her autobiographical exploration with these words. "I am all those things. I am every attempt at identity politics, every crafty racial maneuver that has come before me, even the ones that make me cringe. I'm all of it. I'm a Texeira." Texeira binds herself to her ambivalence by identifying with the only thing that she can resolutely confirm: she is "Texeira." While her turn to postmodernity itself should not be surprising, given the obvious problems of a modernist epistemology in answering questions of self discovery, what is surprising is the fact that she is willing to so quickly discount her embodied reality she initially began articulating, the same that engendered her decision to question racial identifications by other members of her family. By her own words, she felt something, experiencing herself in racial and ethnic terms that were beyond her own self. Yet, concluding that it would not be right or wrong to identify with particular narratives, Texeira seems at the same time to be declaring that ethnic and racial narratives are neither true nor false. Does experience not teach us otherwise? If no category is real, then, why or how do these narratives and categories contribute to the very chasms in her own family that led her to wonder about her identity in the first place? It may seem to make sense to talk about multiplicity, but once a plural self is used to interpret one's experience, the experience itself becomes muddled in the catch-22 of not being able to address the very reality that underlines one's initial impetus for asking, "what is real?" Taylor's moral self gives us the ability to speak of reality without the simultaneous need to confirm its

objective existence. Texeira's emotion was real because she didn't ask it to be, because she lived it with others in her world.

Where Texeira begins with a question of "which identity," it is unsettling that she settles for all of them. By accepting "all of it," black and white, African, Portuguese and American, she is essentially arguing at the same time that she is none of these things. The unnerving existentialism of Sartre (1969) is on full display in Texeira's conclusion. I do not criticize Texeira for failing to identify her "real" identity. To suppose that questions of identity have a resolute answer misconceives my entire argument. On the other hand, to suppose, as Texeira does, that living uncommitted in a context of multiplicity, where no one identity will be right or wrong, represents the analytically troubled assumptions of being human in a postmodern framework. By accommodating and claiming all of these identities, Texeira cuts herself off from members of her family who identify and value certain identities over others. Certainly anyone can suppose they are anything, that is, until they try to claim it in a world where others live. An identity is capable of developing momentum and salience commensurate to the number of individuals who embody and live it. Dismissing the incongruent complexities of between identities and claiming all of them in the name of "Texeira" does little to address the emotion that divides her family and so overwhelmed her to enter such an intimate exploration of her ancestral heritage.

Since identity is never complete, a point to which Texeira attests, it might initially seem that the postmodern courage of living a de-centered reality makes sense, and in claiming all the categories, Texeira effectively launches an affront on the illusory facade that these categories are objective realities. As Taylor (1989) compellingly argues, however, reality emerges as it is lived. What needs to be dismissed, then, is not the pursuit of valuation, but objective valuation. In this

way, moral authenticity relates not to an outcome, but to a process. If authenticity were an outcome, the aligning of what the group recognizes with the individual's current self-representation, then our lives would be a perpetual crisis of identity alignment. As Texeira shows, one may never arrive at a complete understanding of him or herself, much less of other individuals, and probably never of an entire group. Yet, contrary to Texeira's conclusions, the phenomenological reality of experiencing ethnic identity is not to embody everything that one confronts. Many of the Vietnamese Americans in Espiritu and Tran's (2002) study were not comfortable as either American or Vietnamese. It is not a simple matter of claiming one identity or the other, or both. Texeira's valuation of her kin-based "Texeira" tribe is more a declaration of her lack of conclusion than her lack of valuation. The problem with a postmodern account of plurality is that, from a de-centered, fluidly relational position, it is unclear why the world is multiple in the first place. How can we account for different ways of being if they can be so easily and unproblematically taken up and put down? This is the question of fragmentation and hybridity.

The threat of hybridity is a threat of unity. Margaret Shih and Diana Sanchez (2005) make this point in their discussion of multiracial children and their relationship to their parents. "Parents of multiracial children who are unified in their perception of their children are more likely to instill a unified sense of self" (p. 573). If the parents are unified in their perception of their children's racial identity, then the children also stand a greater likelihood of developing a strong sense of self. Otherwise, the conflicting messages the children receive between their families, community and even peers can be sources of tension. Shih and Sanchez (2005) do well to note the relationship between self and identity, yet problematically suppose that the lack of identity uniformity threatens the integrity of the self. Certainly identity confusion and multiple,

contradictory messages can challenge one's sense of self. But if the integrity of one's self is problematized by identity ambiguity, how can he or she continue to evaluate and care which (or both) of the parents' identities is more correct?

In supporting their claim, Shih and Sanchez (2005) look to Gordon (1964) and Piskacek and Golub (1973) in proposing that lower self esteem and negative self-images result from a fragmented self, the consequence of which "results in the child being less certain in his or her interactions and relationships with others" (p. 573). Shih and Sanchez (2005) attribute identity formation to social engagement, particularly with one's parents. In interpreting this engagement, however, they assume that the self is a dependent variable that is produced through social interaction. In a moral, self-constituting perspective, an identity does not exist in a causal relationship, but in a mutually interdependent relationship with the self.

Supposing that a bifurcated identity and a fragmented self undercuts a child's relationships with others, the authors frame the self as standing *a priori* disengaged from others. To defend the claim that multiracial individuals suffer poor psychological adjustment, as Shih and Sanchez (2005:587) do, the authors need to show that it is not the self that fragments, but that its commitment to valuing a particular way of living is destabilized and made difficult through interlocuting relationships with others. From this view, the problem of negative reinforcement and identity confusion does not derive from the call to change or live differently, but the lack of social resources by which to identify anew. Change is clearly a reality of life. Loss is difficult, but only threatens the integrity of the self when the self loses its ability to interlocute and articulate a new moral standpoint.

In disputing this view of hybridity, I am not supporting a view that the world is actually much simpler and neater than these authors suppose. Shih and Sanchez (2005) are correct to

argue that identities are remarkably profound. George Fouron and Nina Glick-Schiller (2002) also do well to highlight this fact. Pointing to previous authors who “tend to see racial and ethnic identifications as fixed in time and singular,” Fouron and Glick-Schiller indicate that these authors ingenuously suppose “a person develops only one racial, ethnic, or national identity and tends to keep it as he or she matures.” They refute this view, arguing that, “as young people [second-generation immigrants] mature they develop multiple, overlapping, and simultaneous identities and deploy them in relation to events they experience at home, at school, at work, in the country of their birth, and in the country of their ancestry” (p. 176). In a later chapter in the same volume, Milton Vickerman (2002) supports this conclusion, defending the importance of hybridity in ethnic literature. He shows that over 60 percent of his West Indian respondents report intermingling a sense of American-ness with their West Indian identity (p. 353). I don’t dispute that it is compelling for Vickerman’s respondents to assert that they belong to multiple groups, the same as it seems reasonable for a 25-year-old man in New York to claim no race. ““Oh God I don’t feel like I’m any race; I just feel like I’m me. It sounds so cliché but I do. I usually bubble in Hispanic if it’s there and I always cringe when I do so” (Kasinitz et al. 2008:73). My primary contention in this section centers on this point: claiming multiple identities is not tantamount to being or having multiple selves. For an author to conceive of identity ambivalence in terms of hybridity, he or she must also analytically reify the identity narrative and attribute to it objective qualities that can split or fragment. If it is the nature of constructed identities to continually change, only a static, objective identity can become hybrid. If a researcher extends identity hybridity to the individual, then he or she necessarily attributes objective qualities to the individual as well. There is nothing hybrid or fluid in the New Yorker’s expression of just feeling like he is himself. The fact that he cringes when identifying as

Hispanic clearly indicates that he values discerning a correct way of living. Identifying across and between ethnic groups does not require assuming that an individual becomes hybrid or plural. Indeed, such a view can never properly speak to how any identity matters. If there is no committed, strong evaluating self that is able to value the goodness of an identity, then how can it cringe at the notion of identifying as Hispanic? From these authors' work it is evident that the problem of hybridity is a problem of never knowing one's true, objective self.

*What Compels Identity Assertion?*

Searching for a proper or even authentic identity entails an effort to identify with a story that already compels you. Lucille Ramos, an informant in Marilyn Halter's (1993) presentation of Cape Verdean immigrant children provides an excellent example of this point. Commenting on the Cape Verdean dilemma of racial/ethnic identification in the U.S., Lucille explains:

When we were young we were Portuguese because that was our mother country, [Cape Verde was a Portuguese colony until 1975] and then we went through the Black part of our lives in the sixties. And now I think we finally know who and what we are, which is Cape Verdean, and it is something special (p. 170-1).

For Lucille's Cape Verdean identification to be special, it must at the same time be a correct identity narrative. The researcher's burden centers on showing how narrative valuation occurs without reverting to an unwanted essentialist view.

Lucille illustrates that ethnic commitment can occur without intergenerational uniformity. Pointing to her father-in-law, she identifies him as, "an extremely dark man, and looking at him there would be no doubt in your mind that this is a Black man." But, having been raised on the islands prior to independence, and now living in the U.S. as an older man in his eighties, Lucille remarks that, "he does not identify as Cape Verdean. He is Portuguese and

Portuguese is White. Do you know the ridicule that a Black man faces when he says, ‘I’m White, I’m Portuguese.’” The kids did not feel that way, she continues. They were raised here. “They’re Black and they’re proud. That came about in the sixties” (Halter 1993:173). This example illustrates well that identification is tied to moral narratives of meaning that are embodied. More than simply claiming or asserting a Portuguese identity, this man lives it regardless of the ridicule. His identification is directly tied to his self-constitution. For him, and many others like him, resisting ridicule only makes sense as a moral stand. The kids do not feel the same way not because they are less moral, but because they value a different ethnic narrative it is sustained through relationships in which the father-in-law does live.

Because the social construction of ethnicity is primarily concerned with detailing the emergence of an identity category, knowing what should be constructed is a key issue. In this way, the problem of constructing is also a problem of knowledge. Because of this, the construction of a group identity is only observable through historical hindsight. To suggest that social actors actively construct their worlds requires a discussion of how they determine what to construct. To associate the construction of an identity with an actor improperly imbues the agent constructor with a disengaged historical omniscience that is analytically unsupportable. In a moral perspective, for a world to be meaningful it must exist before an individual chooses it. Embodied agency and construction, therefore, should be understood in terms of continued construction. Individuals identify until it is no longer right to do so. Disembodied agency runs the risk of viewing actors as living in their worlds as actors who are not morally committed to the worlds and identities they are supposed to so vehemently struggle to understand. An instrumental view of assertion cannot capture why Lucille’s father-in-law would remain so committed to a way of identifying that was unrecognized in his new land.

## **Objective Identity and Identification: Objective Outcomes and Subjective Processes**

Juxtaposing the rhetoric with the reality of immigrant assimilation, Rubén Rumbaut (1997) skillfully examines the discontents of assimilation and the paradoxical adaptations that occur in an immigrant's non-linear pathway into Americanness. In his conclusion, he discounts the straightforwardness of Milton Gordon's (1964) conception of assimilation towards "Anglo-conformity" and rests instead on the novelist Eduardo Galeano's depiction of how contradiction can be celebrated. Galeano (1991) writes:

Every loss is a discovery. Courage is born of fear, certainly of doubt. What it all comes down to is that we are the sum of our efforts to change who we are.

Identity is no museum piece sitting stock-still in a display case, but rather the endlessly astonishing synthesis of the contradictions of everyday life (p. 124-125).

Second-generation authors who take up a social constructionist framework are challenged to unite the contradictions of everyday life with one's ethnic identity if the self analytically stands apart from them. From this criticism also follows another important point: in a constructionist framework it is difficult to retain the subjectivity of a disengaged self. Even though ethnic identity is perceived as an on-going, continually process of construction, using the language of "identity" and "construction" presumes solidified, objective outcomes. I explore in this section the assumptions that lead to this contradiction of terms that follow from a self that stands disengaged from a construction process.

Following from the problem of agency, a socially disengaged or multifaceted self is commonly disconnected from the process of constitution and construction because the constructionist perspective fails to account for how an actor lives the identities he or she claims. This is the error of assuming that a subjective process produces an objective result. The self in a

constructionist argument is commonly and problematically portrayed as an objective product that results from a process of change, a museum piece of modernity that was retained by the identity curators of postmodernity. A self can only become hybrid or fragmented once it congeals. Ice shatters, not water. Whether through an essential or pluralistic approach, a morally disengaged self analytically maintains ontologically problematic, objective qualities.

Addressing the topic of multiplicity entails, for most researchers, questions of identity in terms of boundaries. The fragmentation of groups and multiplicity of these boundaries matters as it brings questions of identity and identification to the foreground. In their work on the Crimean Tatar diaspora, Aydingu'n and Aydingu'n (2007) argue that hybrid identities signify a group's separation from its earlier practices and movement into new and different ways of living. Hybridity, they argue, entails the mixing of cultural identities. In their research, they outline the history of the Tatars of the Crimean peninsula (the most southern point of contemporary Ukraine) who were displaced by Stalin's Soviet Union expansion in the mid 40's and only began returning at the end of the Soviet era some forty years later. In Aydingu'n and Aydingu'n's (2007) argument, the decision of some Tatars to return to their peninsular homeland is indicative of successful ethnic preservation efforts while living for decades in exile. Preserving their ethnicity, however, did not curtail cultural change. For Aydingu'n and Aydingu'n, "hybridisation of cultural identity does not necessarily entail the hybridisation of ethnic identity. In other words, despite cultural hybridity and integration within the host society, individuals or communities may continue to be perceived as strangers or guests" (p. 118-9). Citing Simmel's (1908) conceptualization of strangerhood, Aydingu'n and Aydingu'n (2007) suppose that strangerhood refers to cultural and not ethnic identity. "This reveals the necessity of treating the concepts of ethnic identity and cultural identity separately--only in this way is an understanding of the Soviet

and post-Soviet experiences possible” (p. 119). To account for the difference between Tatar families who were displaced and lived in different regions for decades, the authors suppose that their cultural identity split and became hybrid.

Hybridity, Aydingu'n and Aydingu'n (2007) point out, is one of the most important new concepts in challenging classical understandings of a “field” and the mappability of culture. Yet, in their efforts to map culture and its change across time and place, the authors are ambiguous in describing how culture, ethnicity and identity, all presented as nouns, change in some cases and are preserved in others. The concept of hybridity necessarily assumes an initial coherence which unnaturally splits or fragments. For these authors, these nouns are presented theoretically as processes never completed. Framed in the language of identity, however, Aydingu'n and Aydingu'n treat cultural identity shifts not as continual processes and unintentionally attribute to them an objective state which splits through hybridization. Stated in another way, a process cannot become hybrid, only an outcome, one which presumably would not have changed otherwise.

To capture the Tatar's ability to retain a homeland-centered orientation throughout their displacement, Aydingu'n and Aydingu'n (2007) suppose that despite cultural hybridity, the Tatar's ethnic identity remained intact. Thus, the authors' framework depends upon a conceptual effort to divorce ethnic identity from cultural identity, arguing that ethnic, “social boundaries” are not informed by their cultural, “content” (p. 117). Joane Nagel (1994) and Mary Waters (1990) also make this argument, viewing culture as the complementary content that fills the boundary of ethnicity. Nagel (1994) modifies Fredrik Barth's (1969) imagery of ethnicity as an “organizational vessel” into a contemporary metaphor of a shopping cart which is filled with cultural content (p. 162). Although she is interested in accounting for both ethnic and cultural

identity, calling them, “dynamic, and constantly evolving propert[ies],” she clearly argues that their evolutions do not necessarily occur in unison (p. 152). The boundaries, answers the question, “who are we” while culture, the inner content, answers the question, “what are we” (p. 162). Nagel makes this distinction carefully, illustrating a constructionist dialectic in which these identities can be both optional and mandatory, circumscribed by the circumstance of a particular place and time (p. 155). This relates to Cornell and Hartmann’s (2007) effort to distinguish between a thick and a thin identity. The Tater’s ethnicity remained thick while their previous cultural identity became a much thinner and less comprehensive influence in informing “who they are.”

For Nagel, as much as Aydingu’n and Aydingu’n, separating culture from ethnicity problematically divorces narratives from categories as well as assumes that fluid processes congeal into objective identity categories. Analytically separating content from boundary, ethnicity from culture in this case, commits the error I seek to avoid: presuming that the meaning of a category can stand alone from a meaning imbuing narrative which is embodied and lived. While Nagel’s (1994) argument is primarily theoretical, Aydingu’n and Aydingu’n (2007) are interested in describing the history of a group that was driven from its homeland and culturally adapted to life in a new land. To frame this change as hybridization, however, assumes that although a construction process is fluid and ongoing, the product from that process is objective and non-processual. These authors are clearly attempting to show that the world is real despite not being objectively real. However, without framing the process of construction in terms of socially committed agents, they analytically reproduce the same objective assumptions which they mean to correct.

If process is self-directive, and if one's social or cultural world is meaningful, then an individual cannot stand apart from it. Understanding the self as multiple, hybrid or fragmented analytically displaces individuals from a standpoint in which they can embody any of the cultural identities or objects they supposedly construct. Like Berger and Luckmann (1967) before them, these authors seek to overcome the problems of modernity by employing a model of change in which reality is in one moment constructed externally and in the second internalized through habitual action. Yet, in their efforts to correct a positivistic reading of objective identity, they still conclude with socially constructed objects. On the point of a fragmented or hybrid identity, a constructed object is not dissimilar from an essential object. The meanings that these constructions may hold for specific groups and people must be framed in terms of how the constructed narratives are embodied. Only in this way can a construction be analytically shown to solidify, as experience suggests, without assuming an objective nature.

Brubaker's (2002) effort to critically explore the ontological foundation for understanding ethnicity in terms of groups facilitates our ability to discuss the reality of ethnicity without assigning it an objective reality. He begins by arguing that ethnicity and groups are both under-scrutinized concepts. Ontologically, they are taken for granted. In his view, race, ethnicity and nation should not be seen as, "substances or things or entities or organisms or collective individuals--as the imagery of discrete, concrete, tangible, bounded and enduring 'groups' encourages us to do--but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful and disaggregated terms." The implications of this, he further shows, entails, "thinking of ethnicity, race and nation not in terms of substantial groups or entities, but in terms of *practical categories, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects and contingent events*" (p. 167 original emphasis). Here, Brubaker echoes a

point first made by David Hollinger (1995), “Racism is real, but races are not” (p. 39). Conceiving of the reality of race does not require reifying or positing the existence of races (Brubaker 2002:168). Ethnic group-ness, for Brubaker, maintains the contextuality and fluctuation of processual identification, and construes its reality and power not in terms of its existential reality, but on its potential basis for empowering group-formation (p. 169). Thus, group-making is, “a social, cultural and political project, aimed at transforming categories into groups or increasing levels of groupness” (p. 170-1). Brubaker’s (2002) argument supports my refutation of the objective and analytically detached ethnic and cultural objects found in Aydingu’n and Aydingu’n (2007) and Nagel’s (1994) work and supports my efforts to retain the subjective process of ethnic identity formation without losing the phenomenological reality of experiencing one’s ethnic reality as real. Group formations are constructed by individuals who propagate and associate with meaningful narratives. The reality of the formation is sustained only as it is embodied, not as an ostensible object-in-the-world.

In English, it is common to speak of “having” an identity, the same as one “has” a self. Speaking of these as “things” that one has or possesses, either through inheritance or choice (assignment or assertion), problematically portrays the phenomenological reality of how they are experienced. If we have an identity, how do we make sense of the common experience of feeling like an identity has us? The self, it might seem, following from modernistic thinking, is the “I” or the “Me” that resides underneath, directing all of my identification practices. If identifying is an active, verbal affair, then it follows that the self is that which directs the process, thinking akin to the wizard behind the curtain (Guignon 2004:111). Such thinking is problematic. Guignon (2004) asks, for example, if we identify with our world in terms of some disengaged interiority, why would one pursue the ideal of authenticity which, “makes a very heavy demand on you” (p.

147). Authentic people, he continues, are not necessarily the happiest. Guignon further questions the appeal of authenticity if it were reduced to nothing more than living in a state of happiness. “[I]magine what you would do if a drug were invented that would provide you with nothing but pleasurable feelings for the rest of your life?” (p. 148). In his book, *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley (1932) offers a fictional presentation of just such a world. In his futuristic account of a highly planned and tightly controlled sanctum of civilization, Huxley juxtaposes John (John the Savage) against a world of agency impairing drugs and socializing mantras. He portrays John as an ambivalent and tortured character who is raised outside of the story’s brave and ostensibly civilized world. John is introduced to a culture of pleasure and self-indulgence only after already embodying a different world view. In a long, almost interrogational conversation with the community’s Controller, John questions the civility of a world where ambivalence is answered with soma,<sup>3</sup> a mind numbing drug that John believes holds everyone in a perpetual “holiday” from reality. Eventually, John decides to abandon the world of soma. For him, a world without unhappiness is no world at all. If, (like John), you hesitate to live under such numbing pleasure, Guignon postures, “then you probably feel that there is (or might be) something worthwhile about being authentic that goes beyond whatever good feelings it might bring” (p. 148). Viewing identification as processual belonging follows from Guignon’s articulation of authenticity. What steadies and stabilizes the inner life cannot itself be inner. “[S]teadiness of the inner life can be achieved only through our interactions with others within the social context in which we find ourselves” (Guignon 2004:152-153). Interacting with this world assumes the position of an embodied agent who doesn’t merely have an identity, but identifies in search of authenticity.

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<sup>3</sup> “[T]here’s always soma to calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient and long-suffering. In the past you could only accomplish these things by making a great effort and after years of hard moral training. Now, you swallow two or three half-gramme tablets, and there you are. Anybody can be virtuous now. You can carry at least half your morality about in a bottle. Christianity without tears—that’s what soma is” (Aldous Huxley 1932:265)

Brubaker and Cooper (2000) write of the different meanings that are commonly reified in employing identity in contemporary scholarship. In describing its multiple and incoherent meanings across different studies, the authors firmly state, “We are not persuaded that ‘identity’ is indispensable” (p. 9). It is not obvious to them (or I) why “identity” is believed to capture a sense of a self that social constructionists show to be continuously reconstructed out of diverse, competing discourses. For example, after having spent considerable time studying ethnic identity formation in the Tibetan-in-India diaspora, Anand (2000) writes, “a unified, homogenous Tibetan-in-exile identity is more of a rhetorical device and imaginary construct than some verifiable reality” (p. 272). Anand is interested in how the rhetoric of Tibetanness is employed in sustaining political nationalism and identity representation among displaced Tibetans. If Tibetan identity is an imagined, rhetorical construct, as Anand argues, then it should be seen as something socially and politically constructed. Thus, he argues that identity is both mobile and processual, “a product of constant negotiation and renegotiation among several interrelated discursive and material factors” (p. 284). In his argument, Anand supposes that identity should be seen not as an artifact or an outcome, but as a construction, a process never completed. Yet, what is unclear in this case is why Anand supposes he can frame a reality that is fleeting, unstable, fragmented, and multiple in terms of “identity,” a concept that is also used to appreciate sameness and uniformity (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:7-8). In contrast, Brubaker and Cooper argue that the relationship between categories and the groups which the concept of identity is meant to circumscribe should be understood in such a way to highlight their contingency.

To emphasize this desired contingency, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) introduce three domains of analytic idioms that, “do the necessary work [of identity] without the attendant confusion” (p. 9). They conceptualize these domains as (1) identification and categorization, (2)

self-understanding and social location, and (3) commonality, connectedness, and groupness. The authors carefully present these domains so as not to replace one problematic concept with another. Calling it a multivalent and burdened concept, they argue “identity” has come to mean too much. Therefore, looking for a single, alternate substitute would be fruitless. By accommodating too much, “identity” contradicts too much. The three domain clusters they present are meant to unbundle and parcel out the work that is thickly tangled around “identity.” The similarity in their three domains follows remarkably well with my own focus on narratives and narrative categories. In the same spirit, yet framed in terms of morality, I appreciate the ways in which the concept of identification grounds the individual not only in a narrative, but also in a group of individuals who also live it.

Like Brubaker and Cooper (2000), I intend to avoid the ontological problem of reifying “identity” as a thing-in-the-world and instead discuss social belonging as a process of identifying with one’s world. Accomplishing this, however, it is necessary to bring self and identification together into the same framework. Framing the two related yet differentiated concepts together entails emphasizing that individuals do not possess identities, but identify as they work out who they are through a moral, social locating effort. Emphasizing identification over identity highlights the reality that it is not only possible, but normal to experience oneself both as authentic and maturing (changing). Whether intentional or not, a researcher who does not appreciate the inherent sociality of an identity’s meaning cannot appreciate how one can live authentically but not statically. The next step is to articulate how social identification can also be understood as moral identification.

### CHAPTER 3 - A MORAL, COMMITTED SELF

In arguing that a moral, committed self offers a more appropriate analytic frame by which to approach questions of how narratives and identifications matter, I am not arguing that a meaningful human existence is without seams, bumps or incongruity. To the contrary, I contend that humans are moral beings who pursue authenticity in spite of not always knowing exactly how to find or express it. A key element of humanity, therefore, is to care who one is despite the impossibility of maintaining a stable or fixed constitution in a changing world. Modern legislators and thinkers, Bauman (1993) writes, have pursued in modernity a unitary code of ethics which can be comprehensively composed and then imposed in an earnest effort to stabilize the fragmented individualism of modernity. Their efforts, he continues, have “proved to be in vain,” and the pursuit of rectifying all contradictions necessarily must be abandoned (p. 6). It is evident that a “non-ambivalent morality, an ethics that is universal and ‘objectively founded’ is a practical impossibility; possibly an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms” (p. 10). An authentic identity cannot be stipulated by a complete, non-ambivalent self-understanding. Likewise, even if it were possible for an individual to know himself objectively, he would not, by default, be living an authentic life. Living authentically is to live according to how one’s social world recognizes he or she should. Authenticity is social, not inward or absolute. Tension and ambivalence, likewise, should be understood as moments where one is searching to know how to live or be authentically. They signify the search for authenticity.

The process of self-understanding and identification is perpetually ongoing. As individuals develop and mature, they may find their previous articulations antiquated and no longer relevant or “true.” The self, in this way, can be seen as a moving target. But, as I present in this section, this is not grounds to suppose that a postmodern, multifaceted understanding of

the self offers a better conceptual scheme for addressing questions of meaning and behavior. I hope to highlight the contradiction in immigrant research that addresses questions of tension and ambivalence while at the same time assuming a non-committed, relational self that is thought to be flexible to its circumstance. The idea of identity tension itself follows from the implicit assumption that just because one's world or circumstance shifts it does not follow that it is okay with the individual. In what follows, I critique these accounts by showing that for an individual's multiple and incongruent interpretations to matter, he or she must necessarily embody and live a committed position in relation to a moral narrative.

My criticisms of a social constructionist reading of ethnic identity are not light. By accusing the perspective of failing to appreciate ways that identities are lived, I am at the same time accusing those who adopt a social constructionist perspective of not being able to appreciate why it matters to be and live ethnic. This is obviously a strong claim, especially given the depth of attention that scholars have given to studying race and ethnic identities in sociology. The strengths in Cornell and Hartmann's (2007) work, along with those in the works of other authors I have presented, reframed previous problems in understanding group contextuality. Yet, in asking how group identities are experienced by individuals, it becomes possible to question important underlying assumptions that social constructionists make about group belonging and identity assertion. The challenge that second-generation scholars face, I have shown, is to adopt a framework that appreciates how an ethnic identity can be real enough to inspire allegiance but subjective enough to change across social contexts. In the previous chapter I attempted to illustrate that these conceptual holes exist in a constructionist framework.

In this chapter I look towards a non-sociological body of literature to defend my response to them. I present here a reading of a moral, socially committed self.

Prior to presenting a moral self, however, I first discuss the various ways that self has been understood historically and outline its numerous and contradictory articulations. Following this review, I argue that Charles Taylor (1989) offers the most persuasive: a moral, strong evaluating self. Taylor's reading the self offers significant analytical strength where it does not stand against earlier, opposing ways of understanding the self, but offers a more comprehensive framework which makes sense of all of them. In Taylor's work, the self can be understood in multiple and incongruent ways. Favoring a moral reading of the self, therefore, is an effort to appreciate the complexity of how the modern individual experiences tension by inheriting opposing and incongruent meta-narratives which underlie self constitution. Taylor (1989) emphasizes three--theism, naturalistic science and romantic expressivism. In outlining the genesis of these narrative domains, which he calls moral sources, Taylor defends his postulation that the best position from which to make sense of their pervasive hold in the contemporary world is through a framework of a moral self.

Whether understood in terms of the scientific revolution, the countering romantic movement, or a theistic world view, (or usually in some combination of the three), the modern self has become an internalized self, one that is only accessible by turning inward. In modernity, it is common for individuals to understand themselves as disengaged beings who seek either through rationality (naturalism, scientific), creative expressivism (romantic) or a relationship with divinity (theistic) to discover their true, inner self. I rely heavily on both Charles Guignon (2004) and Charles Taylor (1989) to

develop this argument. Then, I contrast a modernist, internal understanding of the self with that of a postmodern, contextually bound, yet fluid self. Against both the modern and postmodern perspectives, Taylor and Guignon articulate an alternative perspective of a moral self that is constituted through the stories it embodies.

### **The Emergence of a Modern, Disengaged Self**

No framework “forms the horizon of the whole society in the modern West” (Taylor 1989:17). The modern self is prone to experiencing moments of identity confusion and crises. Identity alternatives are worked out through interlocution with various others. At the center of Taylor’s account we see how articulations have fused, transformed and fragmented across time, resulting in the modern frameworks—moral sources—by which the modern self is constituted and articulated today. Bits and pieces of old ideas, Guignon agrees, flood modernity. They are “the scattered debris of past traditions,” patched together in an effort to tell a story that indicates what life is all about. In respect to the self, this story doesn’t make much sense, Guignon continues, without addressing the notion of authenticity (p. xiii).

In presenting the gradual, historic transition from premodern thinking into that of modernity and the enlightenment era, Taylor and Guignon agree that there is certainly no merit in suggesting that the premodern era was anything to be envied or romanticized. Yet, what is gained in the name of science and rationality raises important and potentially grave questions about the self. Guignon suggests that in modernity, what we find is a climate in which self-understanding occurs on extremely precarious grounds. In a premodern outlook, “it was possible to have a fairly strong sense of life’s meaning -- an ability to feel oneself to be part of some overarching scheme of things that ultimately made sense” (Guignon 2004:24). In modernity, this

is lost. The modern individual is left to search for meaning and authenticity in a disenchanted world that no longer provides it.

### *Interiority – Premodernity to Modernity*

For both Taylor and Guignon, their history of the modern self begins with Greek philosophy. Self knowledge, at that time, was an exercise in understanding oneself in relation to a cosmos-centered reality. At that time, knowing oneself and how one should live necessitated an appeal to the cosmic order of things. In this order, one's position was already laid and self-awareness followed only by knowing oneself as an integral part of the order. One's worth, meaning, and goodness were all defined "in a cosmic web of relations" (Guignon 2004:13). Some 800 years later, St. Augustine follows from this line of thought and re-articulates the Greek's cosmocentric order in terms of God, as a theocentric order. Significant in his God-centering efforts, St. Augustine introduces for the first time the dichotomous language of interiority and exteriority. Still building from Plato's earlier articulation of a unified self, St. Augustine seeks to regain the passion that Plato dismissed in favor of reason and supposes that the self can be acted upon by external forces. For St. Augustine, God is found by looking within. One looks within to look upward. (Guignon 2004:17). In addition to finding God, the appeal of an authentic interiority also relates to finding one's true self--a self that is still order dependent, only known and meaningful in a moral order. By articulating a theistic world order over a cosmic one, Augustine introduces the idea of interiority and sets up an important piece in the making of the modern identity.

### *Disengagement*

Although Augustine's view of the self still follows premodern ideals of an ordered self, he provides for the first time a clear articulation of an inner, true self. Still, however, more shifts

would need to follow before Augustine's interiority would become the bounded, encapsulated self in modernity (Guignon 2004:15). The first of these subsequent shifts comes from René Descartes, almost 1200 years after St. Augustine. Writing at the cusp of the intellectual Enlightenment, Descartes is interested in returning to Plato's dispassionate reason while retaining St. Augustine's inward turn. Thinking and reasoning for Descartes are solely internal procedures. In his theory, the subject is an independent self that can know of itself only as it finds itself capable of thinking and reasoning. Reasoning for Descartes is a disengaged effort. In looking inward we no longer find God, but reason which we appreciate through a distancing and 'standing back' effort. The mind, for Descartes, is detached from the body, separating one's real self from his or her body. The self resides in the mind. This mind/body split began an ongoing tradition of reason in which epistemological claims have become superior to ontological.

Discussing how one knows the world is a superior philosophical, and subsequently scientific pursuit than what for Plato and Augustine were primarily ontological discussions. The world and its contents have become disenchanted and as a result it is less meaningful to talk about what the world is than how one knows it. In this disenchanted world view, objectivity becomes paramount, supported by the notion that one's mind that can partition itself from reason inhibiting limitations of a physical body and physical world. The procedure of how one knows itself and its world replace the questions about the rightness or goodness of the order itself. Laws about the world and the individual's place in it are no longer understood by appeals to higher orders but from a disengaged standpoint in which one properly views the world. Plato and Augustine's substantive accounts of rationality have become a procedural account for Descartes. Methods, ways of knowing and discovering truth, are centrally valued, not the goods themselves. Method itself has become truth.

John Locke, who was alive in Descartes day, follows a similar disengaged, rational proceduralism. There is no substantive good in Locke's philosophy, but a "blank-slate" mind that can sort through knowledge from a disengaged position. In this perspective, objective 'truth' can dispose of false knowledge. In Locke's proposed strong realism, not only is there a single reality, but the truth of reality can be observed and discovered if one assumes the correct viewing stance. Scientific naturalism, one of the three primary moral sources in Taylor's accounting of a modern identity, derives primarily from Cartesian and Lockean thinking. This scientific perspective has sustained a view of the self that can only be known by a mind that stands disengaged from society.

### *Affirming the Ordinary*

It wouldn't take long, however, for many to speak against this degree of rationalism, accusing it of oddly and coldly presuming that one can know life before feeling it. Devoid of emotions, passions and feelings, what the scientifically disengaged self lacks, romantics offer a move towards humanism. Before explaining the "expressivist turn" to romanticism, however, Taylor introduces the role that Deism played in mediating a turn from naturalism to romanticism. In the Deist view, to know God is to be a part of His goodness. His goodness, however, is entirely grounded in this world. Therefore, a shift occurs as the ordinary life begins to be cherished and affirmed. God created the earth and left it to man. To affirm God, then, is to affirm the life which one lives, a life found in this world. Creating and maintaining order become paramount in Deism. Rationality in this view is associated not only with knowing but also with reaffirming the order of the world, a rationality which again suggests a disengaged and radically individual subject. Moving ever more towards the radical subjectivity of contemporary modernity, in this articulation of the self a society of atomistic actors begins to emerge.

Deism and its atomistic individualism together lead into a discourse of secularization, a secularized, modern society where God is not absent, but presented in a fractured theism. Descartes' scientific naturalism never fully replaced God, but suggested for the first time a strong alternative to knowing the world without God. Leading up to modernity, God was a given, not presented as an option. It is in modernity that there are alternatives to believing in Him or understanding the order of things in relation to Him. The modern self, therefore, is one that finds itself constituted by multiple, different and even interwoven sources. Having lost God in the radical Enlightenment, Deism tries to retain His presence in His absence. Comparing God's creation of this life with that of a clock maker, God is seen as He who winds a clock that continues ticking long after He has left, left to turn its own natural revolutions. Even though this emotionless rationality is viewed by many as unacceptable, Deism provides a discourse in which the ordinary can be affirmed, preparing the way for an expressivist turn in which humanism and romanticism would become strongly emphasized. Because the Deist found the mundane meaningful, as it came from God, the romanticist too can find meaning in the mundane, only without God.

### *Authenticity Within*

In romanticism, a turn towards self-expressivism, a new form of humanism is articulated. It is a response against the desanctification of nature and seeks to re-enchantment that which was lost. In premodern times, it was the world that was enchanted, mystical and meaningful. In an effort to regain this meaning, romanticism asserts that the warmth and meaning of an enchanted world were not lost, they were merely sought for in the wrong place. They were never in the world, but in us. The inner self is the vessel of authentic humanity. While retaining a strong notion of interiority from scientific rationalism, the romantic self resolutely

dismisses the natural world of cold scientific methodology. “Romanticism’s final story is that we can let science have reality, because we have another reality – a special reality that is in here, within the self” (Guignon 2004:65). The romantic self, Guignon shows, is not the center of the universe, it is the universe. “There is simply no place for anything outside the self” (p. 65). Everything that is meaningful outside of and beyond the self is only an outpouring from one’s inner self. Self-discovery and disclosure result from these expressivist self-manifestations. What in naturalism was an affirmation of objective truth, *the truth*, is replaced in romanticism with a subjective truth, my truth. For the romanticist, locating this inner truth retains Descartes’ disengaged way of knowing. Looking for truth within, an individual looks away from the world and towards him or herself as the only qualified person to discern and locate it. Retaining Descartes disengaged self, however, retains the same problem of knowing. If I am on my own, how will I ever know, for example, if I have mined far enough or discarded enough illusion to *know* myself authentically? Guignon (2004) offers the romanticist answer to this question.

What comes to light as authentic truth ( i.e., subjective truth) is *the activity of self-fashioning or self-making itself*. We just *are* what we make of ourselves in the course of our quest for self-definition. The important thing is the creative act itself, not objective self-assessment or accurate representation (p. 69 original italics).

The radical interiority and individualism that began in liberal rationalism has become a creative individualism that is so inculcated in subjective peculiarity, society itself threatens the self and its ability to express its inner authenticity. The romantic self that desperately seeks harmony with nature, a return to meaning, sees its relationship with society as anything but harmonious. Interestingly, taken to its farthest extent, that which is good and pure in life are those things

which have not been touched by any hand but one's own. Humanity, in other words, has become a self-exclusive project. Self-made humanity is embraced by rejecting made-by-others humanity.

In premodernity, the self was experienced more porous than it is today. "On this older view, my identity as a person is experienced as bound up with the greater context of being in which I am embedded" (Guignon 2004:18). This view sustained a strong sense of belonging to one's world, experiencing the other-in-me. Juxtaposing this against modernity emphasizes the point that this other-in-me has become a threat. Modernity is marked by more rigid boundaries, supported by language of interior and exterior. Now, not only am I me, apart from you, but I experience myself, my me-ness, alone. The freedom of being a radical individual is at the same time the burden of self-disclosure and definition. In premodern societies, the way to be is laid out in the scheme of things, enabling, as Guignon shows, a distinction between what one is and what one ought to be (p. 21). The real self was accessibly known in its social position; by one's social role, others could inform an individual regarding his or her "real self." Authenticity was a matter of being or not being as one should be, a position which was accessible to others.

### *Atomistic Authenticity*

With the emergence of an atomistic self, Descartes' disengaging stance between the mind and body now extends between the mind and society. Initially articulated in terms of knowledge apart from one's embodied experience, the Cartesian duality becomes in modernity an articulation of being, particularly as an authentic self, to be free from society. Freedom is understood in terms of being free from a constraining order or morality that is not self-expressed. In other words, if the ontology of morality is inherently social, as I argue here, morality itself has become a threat. A moral system makes senses and provides a meaning only because it is more than the individual. It is meaningful necessarily because neither you nor I choose it to be. It is a

reality larger than you and I both. Modernity's tensions and contradictions, then, might be seen not as a lack of meaning, but as an abundance of it. Cultural diversity reigns as authentic differences exist in an environment where I can say little about you and you little about me. I celebrate your diversity primarily on the grounds that it is authentically you and inaccessible to me. You are you, removed from me being me, and we coexist in mutual harmony because we only exist within.

### *Conclusion*

These conceptions of disengagement and disembodiment have not been without criticism. Social constructionist arguments, for example, oppose fundamental assumptions upon which authentic interiority and disengaged rationality have been conceptualized. In the next section, I outline these assumptions and present the argument for understanding the postmodern self as a contextually relative and multifaceted self.

### **Postmodernity: Relationality and a De-centered Self**

In modernity, rational and romantic disengagement both rely on the assumptions of radical individuality and a concrete core that is accessed through inward, self-contained processes of cognition and creative expression. The postmodernist positions refutes these assumptions and instead argues that selfhood is inherently a social construct, not only dependent upon society, but indistinguishable from it. This articulation of a relational self dismisses atomistic individuality and an authentic core. In their place, a de-centered, fragmented self is presented, one whose authenticity is celebrated in terms of a courageous acceptance of ambiguous multiplicity.

### *Social Relationality: Moving Away from Individualism*

Arguing that the self is not a distinct individual set apart from society, the postmodernist firmly suggests that selfhood is formed by and within a social world. Society is no longer considered a threat to authentic selfhood, but is its very source. Many have defended this point, arguing that humans are essentially incomplete and lack the instincts or intrinsic function to live and perform as a human in a social world. Socialization, Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue, is a process by which instinctually deprived individuals gain an ability to function in their particular social contexts. These meaningful habits are not naturally internal to the individual and are only internalized through social participation. Geertz (1973) likewise rejects a modernistic belief that a universal human nature underlies human culture. In contrast, Geertz also argues that humans are incomplete beings who are dependent on a culturally constructed reality of symbolic meanings to engage in social behavior. As Geertz emphasizes, “man is in physical terms an incomplete, an unfinished animal... Without men, no culture, certainly; but equally, and more significantly, without culture, no men” (p. 49). Selfhood is a social phenomenon.

Guignon (2004) gives appropriate attention to the postmodernist’s rejection of disengaged individualism. He writes, “Postmodern thinkers concentrate on the way a variety of external forces, unbeknownst to us, work to condition or shape our ways of thinking and acting” (p. 113). After presenting ways in which postmodernists differentiate in their expression of this point, Guignon comments that, “Though postmodern theorists disagree on the extent to which we are capable of remaking this ready-made thing, they agree that being a ‘self’ is always culturally and linguistically conditioned” (p. 118). Framing the self as a social being rectifies some of the distinctly problematic aspects of knowing oneself as a disengaged individual. Yet, in doing so, the postmodern is still unable to answer what it is about the self, if it is plural and multiple, that

is left to matter to the self. How does a self that fragments and so easily moves between plural social orders care which order or identity is his or hers? What in modernity is a crisis of meaning and knowledge (romantic, inward self) becomes in postmodernity an acute effort to regain the power of self-knowledge and awareness by returning the self to its position in society. Meaning, however, is still left precariously vulnerable to postmodernity's de-centered articulation of a social self.

### *Disengagement through De-centering*

Guignon illustrates well that the individualism of modernity is firmly dismissed in postmodern thought. Yet, it is important to highlight that the new contextually relative self that replaces it is still understood as an uncommitted self. Where the modern self stands disengaged from an external, social world, the postmodern self, although dependent upon its social context, remains disembodied and uncommitted to valuing its social position which is typically understood in terms of fragmentation and plurality. In short, the diversity of social contexts results in a fragmented, plural self, committed in numerous and potentially contradictory ways. Guignon expresses this notion in terms of a de-centered self. "One of the core ideas of postmodernism is 'de-centering the subject,' where this means rethinking humans as polycentric, fluid, contextual subjectivities, selves with limited powers of autonomous choice and multiple centers with diverse perspectives" (p. 109). Although in postmodernity the self is understood as inherently social, it still remains in an uncertain relationship with its social world.

The difficulties of understanding oneself in a plural world are amplified exponentially if the self is understood as being fully fluid and receptive to the plurality of the world from which it emerges. Guignon appropriately points out that if self-interpretation is open, then so goes the

ability for an individual to matter to his or her self. Without self-commitment, it remains unclear why it matters to be any particular self at all.

For if I see that every self-description and self-evaluation is arbitrary, having no basis other than contingent facts about what has popped up on my culture I will also realize that my own most basic commitments and defining ideals are ultimately up for grabs, temporary resting places on a road of self-creation that ends only with death (p. 116).

Where postmodernity strives to save the self from the problematic assumptions of individualism, selfhood becomes even further displaced from a committed standpoint. A self that is relative and contextually determined finds no stable center in looking inside or outside. The internal is merely a reflection of the external. Replacing the individual, rational self with a multifaceted, social one displaces inward stability with outward impermanence. Commitment in postmodernity, as Guignon shows, is plural and temporary.

### *Multiplicity*

The de-centered position of the self is directly linked to notions of fragmentation and multiplicity. Because society is multiple, and the self is a social product, the roles and norms which make life meaningful are understood in postmodernity as producing multiple selves (Guignon 2004: 110). Though modernity gave us the idea that it makes sense to think of a real “me” behind these different and multiple roles, an authentic self operating under the mask of roles, postmodernity asserts that it simply is not so. Society, in the modern view, is the costume in which we masquerade, all the while retaining an authentic, naked trueness underneath. For the modernist, the mask is the problem, and the scientist and poet are dually engaged in Scooby-Doo-like detective work, working to unmask reality and expose an authentic actor.

Postmodernity asks if there is good reason to think this (p. 111). Why must one's stand in a diverse world be understood in terms of a single position? In other words, how do we distinguish between the masks and the self?

In exploring the consequences of plural social contexts, Gergen (1991) also traces the self from romantic interiority to postmodern social saturation. "Social saturation [a plurality of relationships] furnishes us with a multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self" (p. 6). He argues that this saturation results in a pastiche self, constructed in fragmented contexts of plurality. The consciousness of selfhood becomes postmodern, he argues, as the self comes to inhabit a cobbled reality of fractured orders, marked by increased fluidity. The more social participation expands, the more, "we no longer experience a secure sense of self," that knows itself in terms of "a bounded identity with palpable attributes" and a stable reality (p. 15-16). This composite reality, Gergen argues, emerges as doubt overwhelms the modernist portrait of selfhood. Along with individuality, the postmodern skeptic doubts and directly questions the authenticity that was meant to direct the individual self and was necessary if one desired to nobly live a dignified life.

#### *Non-essential Authenticity: A Multifaceted Self*

De-centered, a multifaceted self is committed in so many directions that expressing where one stands is also an expression of which issues do not command one's attention. How does an analyst determine, therefore, which context or standpoint is more constitutive of the individual's authentic being? Given the hopelessness of such an endeavor, the postmodernist supposes that reality is, fundamentally, the lack of a firm reality. To be authentic, therefore, is to accept the reality of a non-singular, unstable reality. Postmodern authenticity simply states that there is no real me and it is courageous to embrace and accept this (Guignon 2004: 119).

Guignon articulates the postmodern ideal as, “clear-sightedly and courageously embracing the fact that there is no ‘true self’ to be, of recognizing that where we formerly had sought a true self, there is only an empty space, a gap or lack.” He continues, “The postmodern ideal, then, is to *be* that lack of self with playfulness and ironic amusement (p. 119 original emphasis). To live the good life, postmodernity seems to suggest, is to live in full awareness that neither you nor society are enough to provide a steady reality, something you can trust. To accept such a world view does require a courageous spirit. It requires, however, a return to some of the problematic assumptions from modernity that the postmodernist sought to relieve.

### *Conclusion*

A relational, de-centered conception of the self aims at moving away from key ontological problems embedded in a modernist framework. However, the post modern position still stakes its claim in terms of an uncommitted self. It leaves important questions of meaning and authenticity unanswered. The ambivalence that Tashi experienced in discerning whether he could be fully Tibetan while living in India relates to this point. Although postmodernity rejects the problematic interiority of modern thinking, it still attempts to address issues of selfhood devoid of a committed self. For Tashi’s question about returning to Tibet to matter to him at all, he must understand his world from a position in which it is better to live in a particular way. The multifaceted self in postmodernity is unable to speak to the ambivalence in Tashi’s lived experience of being Tibetan (tension between the good life he values and that which his family wishes him to value).

In concluding his discussion of postmodernity’s self de-centering discourse, Guignon (2004) identifies that the postmodern move is commonly criticized for overly displacing the role of agency, leaving the self all too pawn-like (p. 120). In modernity it was the metaphysical,

disengaged mind and inner nature that was favored. Rejecting this Cartesian, mind-body split, postmodernity reinstates the sociality of the self, only at the cost of agency and authenticity. Accounting for action is sacrificed in order to account for self-knowledge. Relating modernity and postmodernity in this way, along a spectrum of liberation and determination, agency and social situation, both positions problematically discount the common lived experience of mattering to oneself. It is on this point that Guignon presents the conception of “a *dialogical self* as an alternative to both the modern monological self and the postmodern centerless self” (p. 120 original emphasis). The conception of a dialogical self, he believes, responds to the postmodern deficiency to view the self as an agent capable of playing a part in its own game. “This view undercuts postmodernism’s tendency to reduce the self to a mere placeholder in a web of social interactions” (p. 122). As an alternative to modernity and postmodernity, I also seek to present a conception of the selfhood congruent with a dialogical self, morally constituted through interlocution. A dialogical conception of the self retains a language centered approach that emphasizes the phenomenological reality of experiencing oneself committed to valuing particular horizons or standpoints that are shared with others in his or her world.

In relating the discourse of postmodern selfhood with that of social constructionism, I seek to illustrate that constructionist perspective of ethnic identity commonly conceptualizes the self as a multifaceted, uncommitted, and disembodied entity. Taylor’s argument for a moral, embodied self retains the move away from the Enlightenment that postmodernists sought while avoiding the pitfalls of assuming a society in which social agents are uncommitted actors. The courage to face doubt and ambiguity which underlies the postmodernist account is not commensurate to facing the tension and ambivalence in Tashi’s example. Which self amid a multiple array of selves, in other words, embraces and values the postmodern perspective? “If I

am as many different selves as I am voices responding to different contexts, there is no ‘I’ that can be held responsible or take responsibility for commitments undertaken across time”

(Guignon 2004:123). The postmodern position is ontologically self-refuting in this regard. It firmly stakes its position on a position of non-position, impermanence and uncommitted fluidity.

### **An Alternative to Disengagement: An Embodied, Moral Self**

Modernity and postmodernity are not the result of a teleological inevitability. They are better viewed as an interwoven mesh of multiple sources which emerged and fused as they were articulated across thousands of years. Yet, the multiplicity of these sources should not be understood as a disengaged, plural, or uncommitted self, but as a single, committed self that experiences tension and ambivalence as it interprets itself in relation to narratives of disengagement and fragmentation. Compelled at the same time by these contrasting moral sources, today it is common to find expressions of internal authenticity compelling alongside rational appeals to logic and efficiency, all while entertaining postmodern expressions of contextuality and pluralism. Whether grounded in the ideals of theism, rational knowledge, humanistic romanticism, or relational pluralism, there is room for the contemporary individual to find him or herself committed within an array of horizons, the combination of which may not be shared by anyone else, including one’s own family or parents. An embodied perspective holds that individuals’ relationships to these moral sources become known as individuals articulate and express who they are. Through language, self-constitution occurs as individuals articulate their relation to one or more moral sources. In this way, the goods that one values in life are “constitutive goods” which ground and provide not only meaning for the individual, but are the basis of his or her self (1989:92-3). The key for Taylor in presenting these moral goods lies in his point that they are neither universal nor subjective. The purported disengaged self, although

articulating in an environment of alternative sources, still remains committed and engaged, not able to capriciously or haphazardly become any self. Like in any other time, the modern self is a self that experiences and knows itself as it values certain goods that are correct and right to value--embodied goods. Embodying valuation involves being constituted through one's valuation, to find oneself already given over to a particular articulation of right and wrong that is prior to choice and rationality. The difference in today's amalgamation of modern and postmodern thought, different from premodernity, is that these goods are articulated with strangers whose valuation is based on articulations foreign to one's own intimate world. The potential for ambivalence and confusion looms greater.

Arguing that the self is fundamentally moral, Taylor professes that one cannot have a self unless it is a self that is right to be. Taylor's work is an historical effort to illustrate how particular ways of understanding the self have not only come to be, but continue to compel particular articulations of being modern today. The way in which the self is understood has important consequences on how identity is framed. In a very interesting way, Taylor's argument gives shows that in modernity individuals actively assume a position of obscuring and denying morality, a position that is inherently moral if refuting morality is a worthy pursuit. Given that morality is inherently a social good, such an effort is perplexingly self-refuting and self-frustrating. A better perspective, Taylor offers, is to understand the self in terms of how it is compelled by these sources, a self that is neither inherently rational, disengaged or inwardly authentic, but a self that embodies these articulated perspectives in the world. The most fundamental reality of being is to live and self-constitute while strongly evaluating one's world. Knowing oneself is not to choose the sources which command one's awe but to articulate from an embodied position, already finding oneself in a relationship to particular moral goods.

Although I am positioning an embodied self against a disengaged, uncommitted self, I am combining many alternative and even contrasting positions within that of “disengaged.” As shown above, the position of romantic authenticity stands against that of scientific naturalism. In combining them to form a contrasting position against which to present Taylor’s moral self, I suggest that in each of the many articulated formulations by which self has been understood in ethnic identity literature (hybrid, multiple, multifaceted, and transcontextual), what remains constant for each is the view that the self is socially uncommitted. Whether viewed in psychological language as a thing that precedes the encounter and exists within me or as a situational, transcontextual self that shifts across different contexts, both of these conceptions assume an uncommitted self.

#### *A Moral World*

The concept of morality itself seems to assume an implicit notion of authenticity. If it is right to do something, then the act of doing connotes living a correct, authentic way of being. Although I argue the concept of a moral, embodied self is uncommon in sociological arguments, moral orders and cultural value systems are not. Meaning and order have become mainstay points of reference by which culture and society are discussed.

The notion that collective identities and moral orders are fundamental to social thought, action, or life is certainly not new. I offer a few examples from community scholarship. James Scott (1976) writes of the moral economy of Southeast Asian peasants, illustrating a moral order that compels rebellion and subsistence behavior. Peasants, he shows, prefer stability over the prospect of gains. This risk aversion is built into their moral economy which permeates their way of understanding. Rebellion and resistance to colonialism, therefore, is a question of social justice which involves the peasant’s notion of rights. David Hummon (1990) explores the

relationship between community ideologies and identities (p. 40). In his work, he contrasts urban mentalities with those of the village and suburbia. Living in their communities, people develop ideologies by “learn[ing] a shared way of thinking that makes their community the ‘best place to live’” (p. 12). This ideology also informs their self-identification. “Like other forms of identity, community identity answers the question, ‘who am I?’ but does so by countering, ‘where am I?’” (p. 143). Baumgartner (1988) likewise addresses the moral order of suburbia, arguing that suburbanites maintain order primarily through moral norms of avoidance and social distance. Keith Basso (1996), in his long-term work among the Western Apache of Cibecue, Arizona describes the group’s relationship to place, arguing that what people make of place closely connects to what they make of themselves. “We are, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine” (p. 7). He illustrates how meaning imbued narratives are embedded in place and place-names become ways of evoking the wisdom of the ancestors and sustaining correct ways of living (p. 101). Elijah Anderson (1999), in an essay of Philadelphia inner cities presents a depiction of moral life as “Code of the street” which is countered by orders of “decency.” Life is sustained in or problematized in each of these examples by competing moral orders, underlined by normative declarations of correct ways of living. Moral orders inform how these normative ways of life are not only socially directive, guiding otherwise uncommitted individuals, but encompass the constitutive goods by which an embodied self is constituted and finds his/her world meaningful. The morality in shared orders relate to moral narratives which are communicated across generations and sustain ways of living. In terms of ethnic narratives, I seek to show how moral worlds are sustained because are embodied and inform the self-constitution of those who adhere to their normative structures.

### *A Moral Self: Embodiment*

In *Moral, Believing Animals*, Christian Smith (2003) writes that “Human culture is always moral order” (p. 7). “What I mean by moral,” he writes, “is an orientation toward understandings about what is right and wrong, good and bad, worthy and unworthy, just and unjust, that are not established by our own actual desires, decisions, or preferences.” (p. 8). To be human, he argues, is not only to live in a moral order, but to “enact and sustain [it]” (p. 11). He goes on to call this way of living “the liturgy of moral order.” (p. 149). As liturgy, Smith shows that morality is embodied, enacted, performed and represented in narrative. Through ceremony, it imparts the form by which morality is sustained. Liturgy is helpful in this context, given its ties to worship, a practice perceived to affirm the worshiper at the same time s/he honors and respects sacred ceremony. Selfhood, then, necessarily must address the question of meaning in terms of commitment. As Abbey (2001) shows, “Being a self is existing in a space of issues, to do with how one ought to be, or how one measures up against what is good, what is right, what is really worth doing. It is being able to find one’s standpoint in this space, being able to occupy, to be a perspective in it” (p. 180). Although not directly referencing religious practice, the language of liturgy appropriately conveys what it is to be an embodied individual whose constitution entails embodied commitment within a specific social context.

The language of embodiment is central to hermeneutic philosophy which centrally appreciates the concept of “experience.” In contrast to Cartesian dualism, knowledge is not relegated to mental exercise. As Bourdieu keenly suggests, our practical, experiential reality underlies our knowledge claims. Bourdieu focuses on the embodiment of reality in a tradition where it otherwise it receives little attention. “Fundamental to his thinking is the idea that human existence is embodied. Living through our bodies positions each of us to experience the world

immediately and uniquely” (Parker 2000:40). Nick Crossley (2001) addresses Bourdieu’s work and asserts that the poignancy of his focus on the body is even more pronounced if tied back to its phenomenological roots. Emphasizing the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962), Crossley dismisses Descartes’ theoretically unsupportable dualism and argues for an embodied self that experiences life pre-reflectively. He argues that perspective is grounded in perception, language, and behavior which are all experienced prior to reflective consciousness (p. 3). Understanding the self in embodied terms also underlies Taylor’s argument of a moral, strong evaluating self that not only lives in, but evaluates his/her world according to the individual’s articulation of the good life. In presenting Charles Taylor’s moral, committed self, I emphasize that he follows from a line of hermeneutics that shares common, ontological ground of a committed, embodied self. Although Taylor is not singular in suggesting the embodiment of selfhood and identity, his articulation of a moral, strong evaluating self clearly builds on this phenomenological tradition.

Taylor stresses that an embodied perspective highlights what it is to be human and committed to social goods: reflection and cognition are performed from embodied, socially engaged positions. Abbey (2001) confirms Taylor’s embodied perspective of the self, writing, “In our ordinary ways of being in the world, humans are creatures with bodies who find ourselves in a world where we have to act and meet practical demands” (p. 179). Taylor’s appraisal of naturalistic epistemology points to social science’s continual avoidance of an embodied human subject (Calhoun 1991:232-3). Discourse on categories, structure and models that delineate and order causal variables came to replace the human subject in social, scientific knowledge. In an effort to rescue selfhood and identity from its troubled position in modern thinking, Taylor presents a Heideggerian inspired view of moral sources and constitutive

language which he argues frame the foundation of human ontology. Humans are self-interpreting beings whose reality and self-constitution are social, dialogical processes. (Taylor 1988:299)

*Self Constitution: Articulation and Horizons*

At the center of Taylor's moral self is the idea that identity is an orientation to the good. He seeks in his theorizing to articulate that humans are qualitative beings who seek after the good (1989: 27). An identity, therefore, is in fact an articulation or identification of where one stands. This standpoint implies a horizon within which one makes value judgments about the world. In this statement, two key, inextricably interrelated concepts come together—Taylor's notion of strong evaluation—making value judgments—and that of horizons which he adopts from Hans-George Gadamer (2002: 287). In the first, Taylor emphasizes that articulating where one stands is tantamount to evaluating the goodness of that position, a point which necessitates the second, finding oneself committed and positioned within a horizon or moral framework.

Strong evaluation is not on the order of choice. It involves, "discriminations of right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower, which are not rendered valid by our own desires, inclinations, or choices, but rather stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged" (Kitchen 1999:35). One doesn't choose to value his or her world, but finds that to live in it he or she cannot help but value certain articulations above others. Taylor clarifies this in highlighting that articulating one's position is not to choose a position, but an attempt to describe where one finds him/herself already positioned. It is not choosing from a disengaged, uncommitted stand which valuations are worth making. In Taylor's words, these frameworks are "answers to questions which inescapably exist for us, independent of our answer or inability to answer." Therefore, orienting oneself in a space is a compulsory task. Everyone exists in a moral space, a horizon, "independently of one's success or failure in finding one's bearings" (p. 30).

Knowing what one strongly values, hence, is not necessary to being morally committed. An individual cannot stand back and *know* the story he or she is living. In this view, socialization is not a conscious practice of reality transmission. Much more complexly, one is socialized into a world that only becomes real as he or she articulates it. This articulation, however, is a search to express one's relationship to aspects of one's world that are real because they are embodied and already being lived. In other words, social commitment entails being compelled by a world that one values before he or she is aware of their valuation. This embodied valuation is what drives individuals to articulate and constitute themselves as they search to make sense of a reality they are already living. An individual's identifications, therefore, may not always be clear or straightforward

Seeking to orient and identify oneself is a process of articulating, "the goods which command our awe". These goods, Taylor (1989) writes, "function in some sense as standards for us" (p. 20). While these goods exist as standards for us, they are not Platonic forms which we discover through articulation (in the sense that to dis-cover is to pull the illusory mantel off of the true, underlying form). Articulation is not a process of discovery but of constitution. The good comes into being through our endeavoring to understand our relationship to it. This, in my view, is the most fundamental, yet difficult point in all of Taylor's work. He is attempting to address the troubling question of who or what comes first, society or self. Modernity stakes its claim on a socially prior self while post modernity declares that the self is socially dependent, the result of its social context. In the first, the self is characterized by disengagement--it cannot be anything *out there* as it is prior to and *not* material. In the second, the postmodern self is really no self at all, but is an incomplete, instinctually deprived animal that survives and functions only in and through society (Guignon 2004: 114). For Taylor, both of these positions are problematic.

In establishing his theory of the self on terms of expressive language, he presents a conception of the self and society that emerge, through articulation, at the same moment.

In the very moment of attempting to orient and locate oneself, a perpetual process of identification (p. 28), a person at the same time creates his/her world. Knowing one's self, therefore, is not making the world meaningful as is supposed in the social constructionist argument, but is finding oneself already embodying particular goods, the meaning of which exist beyond the self. Again, knowing oneself and socially identifying is not discerning which goods one wants to value, but it is valuing goods that one cannot help but value. One's horizon is tantamount to having a language in which particular goods have been constituted and continue to be articulated. It is in this way that articulating the goods one values is at once identifying one's horizon. Language is key for Taylor. Reality exists in narratives which are only real to an individual when he or she articulates them.

Constitutive goods and one's relationship to them become real in the moment they are expressed. Taylor contends that an individual's sense of the good is essentially tied to one's sense of his or herself. Seeking to clarify this point, Taylor (1989) offers an analogy of orientation as both having a map and locating oneself on it. "Our orientation in relation to the good requires not only some framework(s) which defines the shape of the qualitatively higher [the map] but also a sense of where we stand in relation to this [locating the 'x' on the map which marks, 'you are here']" (p. 42). Constituting reality through language implies already having a map, a contrasting point to another possible analogy, the symbolic interactionist self as cartographer. Map making suggests that one can use language instrumentally, what Taylor refers to as being a weak evaluator. While he concedes that weak evaluation is certainly possible, the moral realist position opposes that of both relativistic constructionism and strong realism. Both

of these positions assume the employment of language as a tool, implying respectively that reality can be discerned, evaluated and constructed or represented instrumentally. For Taylor, language at the same time provides a map of the moral goods in one's world and facilitates a person's locating efforts within it, particularly in relation to the goods she values as well as those which other strong evaluators—interlocutors—articulate.

Supportive of our orientation to the good and linguistic expression of it are the moral sources to which we find ourselves compelled. These sources are again not posited, universal criteria. They become and maintain their reality through expression. Hence, a moral articulation and a moral source are one and the same for Taylor. In making this claim, he is pointing out that it makes sense to dismiss the relativism that appears in some poststructural and postmodern accounts of reality and adopt a realist stance towards the human experience, albeit a weak, moral realism. Although reality shifts over time, for Taylor it is not relative; it is contingent to its articulation. Here, we begin to understand that we cannot be the relativist, uncommitted self as it leaves questions of meaning and reality ultimately contingent and beyond the self to whom they are meant to matter the most. "Personal identity is more than just self-consciousness: we are not simply aware of ourselves; we matter to ourselves in basic ways" (1992: 237). Language is not relativistic as it sustains a particular, social world-view. As we self-constitute, we learn a particular language that is shared by others and embody their world view and find ourselves committed to it. We only reflect upon our social commitments after finding ourselves committed to them. "Language is never a wholly individual matter" (Abbey 2001: 191). In sociology, socialization is commonly known as a process of value normalization and internalization. Taylor nuances this understanding and shows that it is a process inherently dependent on language. We gain a sense of ourselves as we articulate the reality of the world we embody and are committed

to valuing. There is no distinction between an expression and that which it is meant to express. A hermeneutical perspective has long sought to break the problematic distinction between subject and object, denouncing the idea that there exists an object beyond one's linguistic expression of it. The body should not be considered the object of a subjective mind.

Describing self-constitution as he does, it might seem that Taylor leaves no room for change and self-development, what we might call maturation. I believe that the reverse is true; Taylor gives us a conceptually powerful position from which to address questions of change. Building on Gadamer's work, Taylor (2002) further develops his idea of horizons to show that change occurs when two parties interlocate while positioned in differing moral frameworks. Through dialogue, one or both individuals may find their previous articulations called into question. This is the power of interlocution: the articulation of another individual always holds the potential to affirm or call into question another's horizon. This is because, as Abbey (2001) appropriately points out, "The individual can never be fully or finally understood" (p. 155). Humans are fundamentally interpreting beings and self-interpretations clearly change. Thus, articulation is not only a process of self constitution, but it is a perpetual process of continual identification. Interlocution should to be understood as a process of horizon affirmation and fusion, both of which are fundamental aspects to perpetual self-constitution.

Taylor's theory of self-embodiment is particularly salient for discussing ethnic identity and questions of identity assimilation in the context of immigration following his conceptualization of interlocution and horizons. To understand the tension and ambivalence that the children of immigrants experience in knowing who they are or where they stand in relation to articulations of ethnic identity, it is problematic to address this tension by conceiving of the self

as multiple, multifaceted or otherwise disengaged. Doing so refutes the analyst's ability to empirically support the proposition that there is tension in the first place.

The complexity of Taylor's theory lies in his efforts to describe how it makes sense to be constituted by a relationship to a good that is neither inherently real nor relativistically fluid, but is sustained through self-constitution. In this way it becomes clear why Taylor (1989) supports his contrast of a moral self against that of a modern disengaged self. The genesis of disengagement only became "real" as the language of disengagement was developed and slowly articulated over time. As self-interpreting beings, one may interpret his or herself in terms of disengagement, inward authenticity or uncommitted fluidity, but in them will ever fail to fully reconcile or account for the phenomenological reality of embodiment. Through a paradigm of morality, Taylor can speak to the reality of embodiment and also account for the positions of modernity and postmodernity in the same framework. Thus, Taylor's position is conceptually able to address the experience of authenticity and valuation in ethnic identity literature that are beyond the conceptual range of a social constructionist framework.

## **CHAPTER 4 – ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK: MORAL IDENTIFICATION**

### **Interlocution: Narratives and Narrators**

Through the last two chapters I have sought to re-introduce the “problem of identity” as a problem of moral identification--the ongoing process of articulating stories through which an individual understands his or her relationship with others. Highlighting identification as a process shows that it not only matters that a story makes sense, but that it is your story. Only in this way would a second-generation immigrant bother to deal with questions of transnationalism or assimilation. If authenticity is merely an illusion as pluralists suggest, or confined to the guarded interiority of a disengaged, non-social self, then questions of ethnic assimilation or stratification are either capricious or so individually subjective that they are inaccessible to other parties. In either case, the sociologist would have little to say. But that is not the reality one observes. Social relationships are surprisingly emotional and individuals’ identifying practices clearly affect others. The world is filled with myriad interlocuting story-tellers who call out for others to listen. What is the difference, then, between the ethnic stories that immigrant children heed and those they tune out? My simple, yet complex answer is this: they identify with those who articulate a story which they already embody. Tension and ambivalence, then, result from interlocuting with others who articulate stories that call those they already live into question.

From Taylor and Guignon, I have shown that focusing on dialogical relationships between embodied interlocutors offers an important critique to understanding ethnic identity. For a narrative to remain meaningful, however, I build from Taylor and Guignon and argue that it must be linked to an interlocuting narrator. The goodness of a story, therefore, is fundamentally tied to its effect on how an individual is socially recognized in his or her relationships with others. Only in a discourse of social recognition can a discussion of identity authenticity exist

that avoids uncommitted assumptions about the self. Where Taylor (1992:23) and Guignon (2004:ix) are engaged in retrieving the ideal of authenticity, I aim to extend it to moral practices of ethnic identification. This entails focusing directly on a discussion of social accountability in which interlocutors (narrators) become part of one's moral valuations and are given moral positions of articulation from which horizons are sustained or fused. Identifications become more or less moral in terms of how it is more or less correct to identify with and value particular individuals as appropriate interlocutors.

### *Embodying Narratives*

Patricia Fernández-Kelly (2008) offers an excellent example of the power of narrative in self constitution. In her Bourdieuan reading of second-generation identity she frames questions of segmented assimilation and second-generation identity construction in terms of the immigrant parents' *habitus*.<sup>4</sup> Using the metaphor of a map,<sup>5</sup> Fernández-Kelly argues that it symbolizes a story of belonging that Fátima, a teenage, second-generation immigrant lacked. "Fátima...was uncertain as to where she fit in the racial mosaic," that is, until she revealed her racial confusion to her mother. At that point Fátima's mother took out a map, pointed to the Dominican Republic, and unproblematically told her daughter, "That's where we come from—it's a great country. Next time people call you names, don't take it personally; educate them; show them where you come from!" (p. 117). While for Fernández-Kelly the metaphor served to introduce her argument that immigrant parents' embodied knowledge is transmitted as cultural capital to their children, capital which helps them to succeed in their new land, speaking of the parents' *habitus* in this

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<sup>4</sup> Fernández-Kelly defines Bourdieu's *Habitus* as a mediator between structure and agency. It is a scheme of "Unselfconscious practices of individuals" that are anchored in the body and its routine "Constituted by a system of dispositions or enduring and learned schemes of perception, thought, and action that are neither fully voluntary nor wholly involuntary" (p. 128).

<sup>5</sup> "Back pocket map" - a map that Fátima, a second-generation daughter, carried with her in her back pocket to show where she is from. The power of the metaphor lies in the reality that the map oriented and centered Fátima. "Now I knew who I was and I couldn't wait to tell everyone else" (p. 117).

way facilitates another possible argument. The parents' moral valuations that are anchored by their *habitus*, which Bourdieu describes as involuntary, are also involuntarily transmitted and embodied by their children. How else, for example, could a simple map of the Dominican Republic engender such an awakening within Fátima? "It was like thrusting a pebble into the pond of Fátima's consciousness" (p. 129). Although Fátima needed the map to articulate her pride in the Dominican Republic, the articulation resonated with her because it was not taught to her in that moment; she already embodied it. It resonated with her because she embodied a positive relationship to her mother.

The *habitus* in this example relates less to class standing as it does to unconscious, difficult-to-articulate feelings that are seemingly and all-of-a-sudden clarified in a single expression. The map was the expression. Certainly another girl in a similar situation of discrimination and identity ambivalence may not respond as well or at all to her mother offering her a map. Even if Fátima went to all her other born-in-the-U.S. Dominican friends and said, "look, we can be proud now, we have a home country," it is unlikely that few, if any, would understand how the paper full of colored shapes she was waving in front of them changed anything at all. Fátima didn't choose to be assuaged, but was relieved as her mother articulated in a way Fátima could not what it was that made her "her." Fernández-Kelly's take-home message from this example is appropriate. Fátima, along with many of the youth in her sample, "define their achievements as a means to honor and compensate their parents for their hard work and make good on the family name" (p. 133). By honoring her mother Fátima is at the same time respecting the narratives which her mother articulates. Horizon fusions and self-constituting re-articulations follow from this respect for interlocutors. For Fátima to embody a narrative of

Dominican pride, she also must honor a relationship with a narrator who articulates this narrative.

### *Embodying Narrators*

Fernández-Kelly's story of Fátima and her mother illustrates in a simple way the point I hope to clarify here: if a narrative is moral, then the narrator should also be understood as a correct or moral narrator. As was the case for Tashi, Fátima lives in a world of multiple narratives. To understand how these contradictory narratives maintain their salience in their self-constituting articulations requires a framework which appreciates the goodness of a narrative as well as the narrator. Given that the worth or authenticity of a narrative is impossible to establish objectively or empirically, it is in its connection to a narrator that a narrative maintains its worth. In many cases, in fact, the correctness of a narrative requires little or no justification, given that it is attributed to a narrator. The power behind, "because I said so" or, "I am your mother, that is why" is telling of this point. Fernández-Kelly writes, "As part of the lived experience of immigrant children, family narratives become the mainstay of active recollection and a powerful tool in achievement" (p. 134). Framing intra-familial and intra-ethnic relationships is theoretically necessary to ascertain how second-generation immigrants find their parents' or neighbors' narratives from a distant land compelling.

The horizons or moral standpoint in Taylor's theory are experienced and known only as stories. Thus, knowing oneself is to contextualize oneself in a story. "I am black" is a vacuous statement, until it is contextualized as a racial statement. Storying "blackness" in a context of 400 years of slavery in the United States makes it meaningful in a far different way than to comment on the temporary condition of how one looks after working a shift in a coal mine. The meaning in the stories is always founded on how they mediate social interaction. Through

interlocution, “the very language through which we articulate our moral frameworks and identities is always simultaneously relating us to others” (Smith 2003 :235). A story is meaningful only as it places us in relation to others with whom we tell and live our stories. It is in this way that authenticity is maintained and extreme relativism avoided. Artists, for example, depict and portray representations and interpretations of reality in their work. Van Gogh painted a whimsical and beautiful rendition of a star filled sky. Undoubtedly worth millions, the authenticity of his painting, “Starry Night,” is not attributed to an objectively realism of his rendition of night stars, but in the originality of his work. The authenticity of a painting resides in its relationship to the author, not to some certification that what the author depicts is a direct representation of an objective reality. The original, authentic “Starry Night” is only verifiably authentic in its relationship to Van Gogh. Worth and value are tied to authorship. The same with art, literature, and the stories we live, the authenticity of self-constituting narratives can only be substantiated in their relationship with an interlocuting narrator.

A moral, embodied self, then, should also be understood as a self that is only known by its relationships to interlocuting narrators. Formulated in this way, a moral self can experience ambivalence as contrasting narratives are mutually authenticated by interlocutors who hold similarly high authority in one’s world. What happens, for example, to a child’s ability to discern truth when his or her parents disagree? Embodying narratives is at the same time embodying a moral relationship with others who narrate and embody them. The morality of the narrator, like the narrative, follows from the point that there will always be interlocutors who occupy socially privileged positions of respect. Once static in premodernity, in modernity these hierarchies still exist but are more vulnerable and contested, thus making the morality of narratives ever more problematic. Parents, even if not in disagreement with each other, still may compete with

teachers and coaches. The moral order of interlocution, once disenchanting and subjected to discourses of individuality, is opened up to a much more public and ambiguous social world.

Much of Bauman's work, in response to modernity and postmodernity addresses this question of trust within interlocution. In *Postmodern Ethics*, Bauman (1993) gives us a reading of what it is to move beyond modernity in a much different way than the postmodernity described above. Building from Emmanuel Levinas, Bauman presents an argument that addresses my question here: from whence do alternative horizons gain intentionality towards us? How do other people's world views challenge our own? Taylor writes (2002), that every encounter with the other potentially leads to a horizon fusing moment. For Bauman, it is the other's moral worthiness that is always qualitatively superior to my own. As I interlocate with another, they can face me and challenge my story, calling me to respond, re-articulate, and live a story in which I am for them. Bauman offers an ethic of never arriving at a stable identity formation, framed by Levinas' portrayal of the morality in the face-of-the-Other. Society and our social identity, for Bauman (1993), it is a response to the perpetual cognitive dissonance one encounters living among others. "We believe others to be trustworthy and suspect at the same time" (p. 116). The help we get to deal with and manage this dissonance and vulnerability is social--the stories we tell about others. But, because the stories can always be called into question, "Society supports the moral self," Bauman concludes, "much like the rope supports the hanged man—norms being the rope and reason the rope maker" (p. 116). My interlocutor calls upon me to speak and "always has the right to contest what is said of her/him and, indeed, to contest whatever is said" (Hendley 2000: 3). Steven Hendley (2000) comments that for Levinas, the "'magisterial' character of speech" essentially follows from one's moral relationship with the speaker; it is, "the way in which my interlocutor presents her/himself as interlocutor, as

irreducible to anything said insofar as s/he always maintains the right to say more, to comment of what is said” (p. 3). Narratives are always potentially called into question by the complex fact that there are always “Others,” poised to call my articulation into question. Carol Rambo (2005) illustrates this reality in her auto-ethnographic effort to relate to her grandmother. Rambo writes that over time she experienced herself ambivalently as her story of herself was always intertwined with the life of her grandmother, a relationship that was by no means straightforward. “I love my grandmother. She was elegant, smart, and resourceful; both admired and respected. I disliked my grandmother. She was high strung, petty, and mean” (p. 582).

So I am like her. I am not like her. I am related to her. I exist in relation to her. I exist in reaction to her. I am something other than this relation to her. She has made her impression on me. I am impressed by her. I am unimpressed with her. She is in me, I am of her, she is other, she is neither me nor other, but something else. She is a story I carry with me. The lines of her story are still etched in my mind. I continue to draw and paint, carefully erasing old lines, laying down new ones, always in a continuous process of exploration, correction and adjustment (p. 583).

Rambo concludes by acknowledging that her own self-interpretation has both been forged and changed across time, always contextualized in her relationship to her grandmother.

James McBride (1996) illustrates Rambo’s point of other-in-me in describing his relationship with his mother. Not written as a scholarly work, as was Rambo’s, McBride’s account is a memoir of his mother and an introspective autobiography of his search for his racial identity that intertwined with his mother’s. McBride begins, “Here is her life as she told it to me, and betwixt and between the pages of her life you will find mine as well” (p. xvii). Confused for

most of his young life, McBride wondered about his racial identity. Born to an African American father and a Jewish, white mother, “I was light-skinned or brown-skinned, and girls thought I was cute despite my shyness. Yet I myself had no idea who I was. I loved my mother yet looked nothing like her” (p. 91). Commenting that besides his mother, all his other familial role models in his life were black, he was left to wonder where that left him in a racially bifurcated society. Further compounding his ambiguity, McBride’s mother perpetually dismissed his questions, emphasizing instead educational status over race (p. 92). The effect of his mother’s response, McBride writes, however, more heightened than assuaged his racial ambivalence. His inability to place himself racially with key narrators (particularly his mother) problematized his own ability to identify and articulate who he was in relation to this issue. He writes, “The question of race was like the power of the moon in my house. It’s what made the river flow, the ocean swell and the tide rise, but it was silent power, intractable, indomitable, indisputable, and thus completely ignorable” (p. 94). McBride’s example supports well the idea that self constitution, narrative and narrator all come together and cannot be easily separated. Commenting on his mother’s admonition to get to know Jesus before he dies, McBride retorts back, “*If it takes as long to know Jesus as it took to know you, I think, I’m in trouble.* It took many years to find out who she was, partly because I never knew who I was” (p. 261 original emphasis). He concludes, “There were two worlds bursting inside me trying to get out. I *had* to find out more about who I was, and in order to find out who I was, I had to find out who my mother was” (p. 266 original emphasis). McBride does not write that he lived with a black self and a white self, both coexisting in some uncommitted, mutual indifference. Instead, he describes his struggle to understand himself, as a single, committed man who sought desperately to understand how his commitment (his

relationships) to different narrators made it seem like he lived in different worlds, alternative horizons of competing narratives.

From Fátima, Van Gogh, Rambo and McBride, I have attempted to illustrate that attention to narrators supports a discussion of how a narrative becomes moral and is authentically lived. By depicting the mutual embodiment of narrators and narratives, I intend to show how the morality of narrators and narratives combine in the principles of authenticity and accountability. When you, I, or another articulates, we are indelibly stamping our articulation with our authorship, autographing where we stand on an issue. Make no mistake, to address interlocutors as narrators does not suggest that we select others to author the story of our choosing. We do not select those with whom we interlocate from a disengaged evaluative position. Our agency is embodied as is our relationship to narrators. We interlocate only after we are living a story. Our interlocation, therefore, is always from a standpoint in relation to the goods we already value.

The morality of interlocation and moral accountability signifies that if I articulate a new story, my fusion has inevitable consequences for your story. Holding each other accountable to our articulations, therefore, is a stabilizing effort, one that can be both intentional and unintentional. If I value your interlocation, then your articulation influences my self-constitution. Likewise, my articulations also have intentionality towards you in terms of the stories we either share and mutually affirm or do not share and call into question. In the context of immigration, a child's deviation from the story his or her parents narrate holds direct consequences for the parents' own storied selves. McBride's mother's narration was not disinterested, but interested in disaffirming the salience of race. To affirm her son's racial identifying efforts would have disaffirmed her own story of denouncing race. The difficulty in determining whether McBride's mother acted wisely nor not, holding to her story instead of responding to the call of her son,

speaks directly to the potential ambiguity and ambivalence of identification. The stories we live are as moral as those who may wittingly or unwittingly call them into question. In this way, sustaining the story one already embodies as well as embodying a new story can both be highly emotional and confusing experiences.

My primary goal in presenting a moral self in relation to ethnic identity has been to prepare a framework in which to discuss questions of authenticity and offer an alternative perspective in which second-generation immigrants' questions of identity and ambivalence can be understood. I have asserted a need to look beyond modern and postmodern conceptualizations of the self to accomplish this. In this final section, I conclude by showing how an embodiment-focused alternative to these two major schools of thought is able to preserve the questions of permanence captured by romanticist authenticity while at the same time appreciating the culture and contextual factors encapsulated in a comparative-historical based rejection of an inner universalism. In short, I seek to appreciate the experience of stability, wholeness and permanence while accepting the reality of change and self-maturation. I argue that by understanding authenticity in terms of accountability to others supports this moral conceptualization of selfhood.

### **Social Recognition: Authenticity and Accountability**

#### *Moral Authenticity*

For the romanticist, authenticity is idealized in a search to recover a sense of oneness and wholeness that is lost in Enlightenment naturalism (Guignon 2004:51). Postmodernity, however, rejects wholesale the notion of authenticity. By framing an individual in relation to moral narratives and narratives it becomes possible to reengage questions of authenticity without the self-isolating assumptions of modernity. A moral reading of authenticity holds one's social world

as meaning providing, not a meaning imposing reality, a fundamental reframing of what it means to be free. “Modern humanity finds that there is no higher end than freedom, where this is seen as the unrestricted ability to choose whatever one wants” (Kitchen 1999: 44). For Guignon however, a modern, disengaged view of liberation *from* the constraints of the world does not make analytic sense. Freedom only makes sense when you have something *for* which to be free (p. 45). Moral authenticity returns a conversation of freedom and selfhood into a discussion of one’s place in society, in which roles and positions are not only necessary, but fundamental. For the romanticist, the freedom to live is the freedom to gain undistorted access to one’s own self. The postmodernist rejects this thinking as illusion. The moralist, in contrast to both, states that the authentic self can neither stand alone nor finally and fully free in his or her world. An embodied, moral position understands agency and social action as an enabling freedom to be, different from a modern discourse of liberation (freedom not to be).

Authenticity as freedom *from* ways of being makes little sense. Thus, the ideal of moral authenticity is founded in its ability to enable life and provide a way to live. If every embodied horizon is taken to be constraining then living can only be understood as a burden. But this is not the human experience. In life one experiences an array of emotions which exist because individuals attempt to discern who they are not only in terms of who they are not. Stanley Raffel (2002) makes this point well in juxtaposing Emmanuel Levinas to Jean-Paul Sartre. “Unlike Sartre’s idea that we can do whatever we want so long as we are willing to take responsibility for it, there is the idea that a valid human self is not totally free because it cannot help but be conscious of responsibilities, the face of the other that cannot be ignored” (p. 192). This idea, Raffel notes, follows from Levinas’ (1969), “my arbitrary freedom reads its shame in the eyes that look at me” (p. 252). Freedom for Levinas is not social liberation but social responsibility.

To ask if one's identifications are authentic is at the same time to ask who is in a position to verify if they are. Such questions beg a standard and measure, some fixed point of reference by which to ascertain correctness. The standard, it seems, has to be fixed in order to apply to multiple persons. Yet, if it is fixed, then if we ever arrive, we could never leave or change without also becoming less authentic. In this view, once one's identity incarnation is the correct one, it would have to be the last. Viewing moral authenticity as embodied, in contrast, suggests that the self can be authentically stabilized, even as it changes, because it embodies a living authenticity. Framing an individual's relationship to an ethnic narrative in terms of verbal identifications instead of static, objective identities enables this analytic exercise. It is possible to analytically conceptualize change without calling "who one is" into question.

Standards of authenticity do not lie in static categories or narratives, but in the valuation of a category or narrative by other social actors. Experiencing one's self as a being that can authentically change, therefore, requires understanding oneself in terms of these relationships. "Being authentic is not just a matter of concentrating on one's own self, but also involves deliberation about how one's commitments make a contribution to the good of the public world in which one is a participant" (Guignon 2004:163). The moral authenticity entails personal integrity and responsibility, but also has social dimensions, including, "a sense of belongingness and indebtedness to the wider social context that makes it possible" (p. 163). Emphasizing being through becoming, congruent with a moral conceptualization of selfhood, the question is not whether change, but correct change, mature, positive change.

Since we cannot do without an orientation to the good, and since we cannot be indifferent to our place relative to this good, and since this place is something that

must always change and become, the issue of the direction of our lives must arise for us (Taylor 1989:47).

The path that change takes is individual, as it involves each person differently. It is not individualistic, however. It is social where its correctness or authenticity is always worked out in a never ending series of interlocuting events.

Keith Basso (1996) illustrates social authenticity in his description of moral and social communality among Western Apaches. Correct living is taught and maintained in Apache society through stories that are grounded in physical space and given “place names.” Older Apaches invite young members of the community to travel with them, so they can “speak to them about the places they see and visit” (p. 133-134). Living physically spread from each other, social cohesion is maintained as moral narratives are sustained in shared place names. “If you live wrong, you will hear the names and see the places in your mind. They keep on stalking you, even if you are across oceans.” Basso emphasizes that the names are good, “They make you remember how to live right, so you want to replace yourself again” (p. 59). The authenticity of these stories is maintained as the preservation and transmission of social narratives reinforce shared valuations. Basso emphasizes this point in his conclusion, stating that sense of place, “and its social and moral force may reach sacramental proportions, especially when fused with prominent elements of personal and ethnic identity” (p. 148).

Basso provides, in fact, an excellent transition from authenticity to its counterpart, accountability, by showing that emplaced stories are used not merely for social control, but are seen by the Apache as keys to self-becoming through self-replacement. If someone “is not acting right,” an informant tells Basso, “People don’t like it! So someone goes hunting for you--maybe your grandmother, your grandfather, your uncle, it doesn’t matter. Anyone can do it. So someone

stalks you and tells you a story about what happened long ago” (p. 58). The power of the story is likened to that of an arrow. The Apache “hunt” and “shoot” with stories. Stalking, in this way, “mak[es] you want to replace yourself” (p. 58). You become someone new as you embody the morality transmitted in the story. The ontology of a moral story, as an articulated standpoint, suggests a certain visibility. A moral narrative, to be effective, must be known and shared. They are embodied primarily because they are accessible. What is more, they are sustained as their value is supported through social hunting, akin to that portrayed in Basso’s work. This returns my argument to the point that authenticity assumes accountability because the stories are only moral as they are shared. “It seems that the person who is inauthentic is not just betraying herself, but is betraying something we regard as essential to all of us. We feel that the inauthentic person is letting us all down” (Guignon 2004:159). The continuity of the story results in holding others accountable to live according to narrated articulations of the good life.

It is common for subsequent generations of ethnic communities to express a sense of loss from not having learned their ancestor’s language. Whether it is speaking a language, performing ritualized customs, honoring traditions, or remembering “place names,” what is meaningful in each of these is not limited to the cultural artifact itself, but even more, the relationship with others which they facilitate. Because one lives a story before he or she is aware of it, it becomes only possible to gain a better sense of what that story is and how one values it as he or she talks about it with others. Discerning who is like me and with whom it is appropriate to ask these identity exploring questions is telling of the relationship between authenticity and accountability. Knowing who the authorities of meaning in one’s world are is at the same time locating *and* identifying moral narrators who held one accountable to shared stories. “To take a stand on what matters is always at the same time to be engaged in the shared undertakings [...] of a larger

community” (Guignon 2004:134). Our identity conferring identifications, Guignon, continues, “are answerable to, the shared historical commitments and ideals that make up our communal life-world” (p. 155). Moral authenticity is sustained in particular, meaning-providing social relationships.

*Accountability: Responsible to Narrators*

In his account of the 1972 Buffalo Creek flood in West Virginia, Kai Erikson (1976) presents survival stories and post-flood sentiments from victims to discuss what it is like to live outside of a moral order. In reflecting on his interview narratives, Erikson writes, “What makes these data so frustrating is that one reads and hears the same remarks again and again, almost as if a script had been passed around the creek.” Yet, “The survivors are scattered all over the area and do not keep in close touch with one another.” The only reasonable conclusion, Erikson surmises, “Is that the second trauma [the loss of community] involves a syndrome as general and as encompassing as the first [individual loss of home and property], and that we are dealing with a phenomenon stretching across the whole of the community” (p. 198). In the Buffalo Creek flood, 4000 of the 5000 inhabitants lost their homes. Their physical upheaval led to a spatial relocation that fixed in time the trauma of that day. Surviving members of the towns who were located along the creek plain were randomly scattered into trailer camps where no one knew their neighbor. Essentially frozen in time, personal trauma and feelings of self loss are directly related to their loss of community. “They came to feel that they are not whole persons because they have no confirmed place in the general drift of humanity” (p. 214). Remarkably, the individuals were disabled not because the waters washed away their memories or moral narratives, but the sociality in which those norms were authenticated and sustained. Many expressed that in losing their social communality they felt like they lost themselves. Narratives were no longer

meaningful because people no longer had each other with whom to live them and hold each other accountable.

Different than Durkheim's conception of anomie, the relocated denizens of Buffalo Creek recognized their movement away from pre-flood moral norms. "Local standards as to what qualifies as deviation remain largely intact, even though a number of people see themselves as drifting away from that norm." (Erikson 1976:207). Even though these norms were embodied, the moral accountability which made them meaningful was lost. This loss, Erikson concludes, is the trauma of community disruption at its greatest. People living together do not make a community, but people sharing a valuation of life to which they hold each other accountable and responsible is. "When one's communal surround disappears, and with it a feeling of belonging and identity, one tends to feel less intact personally" (p. 233). Moving to a new social community in a different city or town is never an easy moment. There, one finds a different way of life, a different story that is being lived and is sustained by different social actors. After February 26, 1972, the community of Buffalo Creek was dislocated so severely, their relocation amounted to moving to a world where there was no coherent story.

'Well, I'm disorganized. It's like I lost my life and I've never been able to find it again. That's the way I feel. I want to find it. I try to find it, but I don't know how. In a way, I gave my life up in the flood, and it's like I'm not repented. Since then, everything has been disorganized. I can't organize anything anymore' (p. 218).

Living a correct story requires sharing it. It organizes life in a way that is utterly beyond one's own ability to do it alone. Because the collective trauma of Buffalo Creek disabled the responsibility community members had to each other, many felt like they lost themselves. In the

same way self-constitution is tied to how one values his or her world, valuations too are tied to others who also embody the same narrative.

If morality were a two sided coin, on one side authenticity describes a sense of worth and on the other accountability confirms and stabilizes the worthiness of the stories being lived. To experience oneself as incomplete, like the man in Erikson's (1976) study, is best conceptualized as lacking a moral authenticator. The concept of moral accountability answers for us the question, "To what extent can I tell my story if others do not?" Because a moral story must be shared to be experienced as a compelling way to live, the truth to that story lies not in one's own telling of it, but in his or her relationship with others who also live it. Neither person assigns the story its worth yet both are constituted by it and hold each other accountable to it. The position of narrator is at the same time a role of moral accountability.

Although understanding our relationships with social others in this way significantly diverges from common sociological and psychological accounts of individuality and otherness, I believe that it offers a more nuanced analytical project by which to appreciate the significance of identification acts and frame ethnic identity ambivalence and tension among second-generation immigrants. We depend upon others, "to stop the slippage of identity" (Sakamoto 1996:123). These others solidify meaning in the how one identifies and lives because, "identity cannot be totally indeterminate and open if it consists as part of the symbolic order, whose whole purpose is to fix some meaning over the chaos of the real" (p. 123). All humans are fundamentally dependent on others for their worlds to not only be meaningful, but real. Likewise, identification depends upon a moral other. Expressions of self-understanding are made in response to others' accountability producing intentionality. Their subjectivity exists only in their responsibility for the Other (Levinas 1985:100).

Ethnicity is one of the most enduring identities. Likewise, some of the most enduring stories one embodies are articulated as ethnic stories. It is a story that involves family, ancestors, tribes and country. It is commonly interwoven with racial, national and religious stories. As I have intimated, ethnicity is a central organizing identity for those who are born away from their parents' homeland. In short, ethnicity matters because, like the other stories one lives, it facilitates a search for self-understanding and identification by delineating an individual's relationship with interlocuting others (commonly elder others). It is through these relationships that authenticity bolstering virtues of pride and respect are found. Ethnic identity ambivalence, I have sought to highlight, can be more fully appreciated in a framework that accounts for relationships of interlocution, even multiple and sometimes incongruent relationships with respected interlocutors. Although not all identifications are marked with ambivalence, neither are all ambivalent identifications limited to the second generation or to immigrants. I have focused on their experiences here to provide helpful, explicit examples by which to present an alternative way of framing the social construction of ethnic identity. Although a constructionist argument recognizes the social interplay between identity constructing interactions, it is not enough to show that one's world is socially constructed; it also has to be embodied and lived to matter.

## **Conclusion**

By critiquing ethnic identity in second-generation immigration literature through a hermeneutic reading of the self, I argue that a better approach frames ethnic identity as a process of moral identification which is embodied and lived. I look to second-generation immigration literature to make this critique for two reasons. I began with Tashi because I knew Tashi. My interests and research experience began with and have developed from personal field research among dislocated populations and the now adult children who were raised within them.

Secondly, questions of immigration and social incorporation are, if anything, only gaining in importance. As the current dispute continues in the State of Arizona, for example, over how the state should legally and pragmatically address its concern with illegal immigration, questions of race and ethnicity remain central in policy disputes. The question of how to enforce immigration laws without committing racially prejudicial and discriminatory acts clearly speaks to the centrality of this issue. The assumptions we make about racial and ethnic identities hold significant consequences in terms of how we understand and relate to people who we view in terms of a racial or ethnic narrative. My contribution to these questions derives from the point that demonstrations, marches and protests over issues of immigration continue not because those involved have the most enlightened understanding of what it is to live a racial or ethnic life, but that their identifications are moral and matter to them. I offer this moral perspective to identification as I believe it clarifies key assumptions made about racial and ethnic identities in immigration scholarship. The second generation stands as one possible and particularly relevant field in which to take-up this discussion.

Because I have described a phenomenon that is not limited to immigrants or refugees, it is worth noting that this critique may extend to other dislocated and socially marginalized groups. Eva Marie Garroutte (2003), for example, writes about the “scuffles” over American Indian identity in a discourse of racial authenticity. In her work she shows that discerning who *real* Indians are and knowing how to verify their authenticity are concerns that are also gaining importance. Joane Nagel (1998) confirms this point, showing a marked increase in claims for American Indian ethnicity in census reports during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This “ethnic renewal,” Nagel notes, does not involve so much a reorientation in identity as a reorientation in how one views and relates to their ancestors. Individuals who pursue ethnic

renewal experience, “a resurgence of ethnic pride meant to not only redefine the worth and meaning of their ancestry, but also involved in laying a new claim to that ancestry by switching their race on the census form from non-Indian to Indian.” (p. 172). In a moral identification approach, identifying as Indian is tantamount to identifying with those who are perceived as the sources of one’s ethnic authenticity—the story tellers.

In addition to the possibility of extending moral identification to non-immigrant social groups, this approach also relates to important discussions within immigration literature, including assimilation and acculturation. As I showed in Cornell and Hartmann’s historical presentation of social constructionism, questions of cultural assimilation and incorporation into host societies have maintained centrality in immigration scholarship for over a century. A moral identification approach also participates in this discussion, only in different language. By arguing that ethnic identity ambivalence is better framed in terms of one’s relational and not situational context, I have favored the language of interlocution and self-constitution instead of assimilation and socialization. My selection of language is not intended to obfuscate or dismiss these important discussions, but conversely, to affirm that they are worth having. I attempt to clarify them by drawing out important assumptions that are made by those who assume that assimilation and socialization can be understood exclusively at the macro-sociological, group level. In reading this thesis, I challenge the audience to reconsider the language they use in terms of the conceptual baggage assumed within it. In describing the experiences that second-generation immigrants and other individuals face, it is imperative that social researchers appreciate the experience of authenticity and how individuals’ claims are sustained or refuted through relationships of moral accountability. In this modern era, as Bauman (1993, 2001) succeeds in pointing out, we live in and among multiple, competing and at times incongruent narratives

which pre-reflectively command our attention. Therefore, discussions of cultural change, assimilation, social incorporation and socialization need to include an analysis that appreciates individuals as moral identifiers and reject reifying assumptions that privilege groups and identities with stand-alone ontologies.

I am not the first to begin this critique and the field of race and ethnicity is certainly not devoid work by those (Stanfield II 1993; Morris 2007) who argue that current sociological treatment of these concepts is lacking. My work relies upon Brubaker and Cooper (2000) and Brubaker (2002) who present timely responses to ethnic identity and ethnic group formation in sociology. To their arguments I have added Taylor and Guignon's work on the self. This reframing adds a moral dimension to Brubaker and Cooper's shift from identity to identification. Where identification as an analytic concept avoids reifying assumptions and emphasizes the ongoing process of becoming, moral identification presents this process within a discourse of social accountability and authenticity. In this way it becomes possible to avoid analytic pitfalls and to account for lived experiences. Ambivalence exists because who we are matters to us in an inevitable way. We cannot help but interpret and value our worlds in terms of where we stand in relation to the good. Methodologically accounting for this process of identification and valuation involves framing individuals in relation to the social narratives they value *and* the narrators who affirm them. Valuation, thus, is directly tied to one's self-constitution. One only values a narrative he or she already embodies and lives. Thus, the authenticity or correctness of the narrative is worked out through interlocution with others. Moral identification appreciates a valuation of both the narrative and the narrator.

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