Field Note: Building Walls

“Traveling on the Indonesian island of Bali, I saw a brick-making facility and stopped to visit. Boys and women were building bricks by hand, in the hot sun. I watched young boys scoop wet mud from a quarry by a creek into their wheelbarrows. They poured the mud into wooden forms. Once the bricks began to dry and harden in the sun, someone had to turn the bricks repeatedly to prevent them from cracking. The woman in Figure 5.1 worked ten hours a day, six days a week, turning, stacking, and re-stacking bricks to prevent them from cracking. For her work, she earned about 45 cents (U.S.) per hour.”
Key Question

What is identity, and how are identities constructed?
What Is Identity, and How Are Identities Constructed?

• Geographer Gillian Rose defines **identity** as “how we make sense of ourselves.”

• We *construct* our own identities through experiences, emotions, connections, and rejections

• **Identifying against** other people: define the “Other,” and then we define ourselves in opposing terms
“Races” are the product of ways of viewing minor genetic differences that developed as modern humans spread around the world.
What Is Identity, and How Are Identities Constructed?

Race

• Many of societies’ modern assumptions about race grew out of the period of European exploration and colonialism

• Racism

• What society typically calls a “race” is in fact a combination of physical attributes in a population

• Skin color is not a reliable indicator of genetic closeness
Field Note

“We were traveling in Darwin, Australia, in 1994 and decided to walk away from the modern downtown for a few hours. Darwin is a multicultural city in the midst of a region of Australia that is largely populated by Aboriginals. At the bus stops on the outskirts of the city, Aboriginals reached Darwin to work in the city or to obtain social services only offered in the city. With a language barrier between us, we used hand gestures to ask the man in the white shirt and his son if we could take their picture. Gesturing back to us, they agreed to the picture. Our continued attempts at sign language soon led to much laughter among the people waiting for the next bus.”
Race and Ethnicity in the United States

• Unlike a local culture or ethnicity to which we may choose to belong, race is an identity that is more often assigned.
• U.S. racial categories are reinforced through residential segregation, racialized divisions of labor, and categories of races recorded by the Census Bureau and other government and nongovernmental agencies.
• Because of immigration and differences in fertility rates, the United States is increasingly “nonwhite.”
• How Americans define “race” is changing.

What Is Identity, and How Are Identities Constructed?
Data from: United States Census Bureau, 2010.

Data from: United States Census 2008.
What Is Identity, and How Are Identities Constructed?

Residential Segregation

• Geographers Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton: residential segregation is the “degree to which two or more groups live separately from one another, in different parts of the urban environment.”

• Five measures of segregation: evenness, exposure, concentrated, centralized, clustered.
Figure 5.5
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What Is Identity, and How Are Identities Constructed?

Identities across Scales

• Different identities at different scales:
  • Individual: brother, sister, student
  • Local: residents of a neighborhood
  • Regional: Southerners
  • National: American
  • Global: Western, free

• Appropriate identity is revealed at the appropriate scale.
What Is Identity, and How Are Identities Constructed?

The Scale of New York

- New York has a greater number and more diversity of immigrants than any other city in the United States.
- **Succession**: New immigrants to a city often move to low-income areas being slowly abandoned by older immigrant groups.
- Many new immigrants focus on the streetscapes, creating businesses to serve their community and reflect their culture.
Recall the last time you were asked to check a box for your race. Does that box factor into how you make sense of yourself individually, locally, regionally, nationally, and globally? What impact might it have on how other people view you?
Key Question

How do places affect identity, and how can we see identities in places?
How Do Places Affect Identity, and How Can We See Identities in Places?

Figure 5.8
New Glarus, Wisconsin. The town of New Glarus was established by immigrants from Switzerland in 1845. The Swiss American town takes pride in its history and culture, as the flags at the New Glarus Hotel Restaurant demonstrate. © Don Smetzer/Alamy
How Do Places Affect Identity, and How Can We See Identities in Places?

- Geographer Gillian Rose: “Developing a sense of place”

Ethnicity and Place

- **Ethnicity**: people are bounded in a certain place over time.
- *ethnos* = “people”
- Ethnic identity is greatly affected by scale and place.
How Do Places Affect Identity, and How Can We See Identities in Places?

Chinatown in Mexicali

• Mexicali Chinatown was crucible of Chinese ethnicity in the Mexicali Valley throughout much of the twentieth century.

• Now plays an important symbolic and functional role in preserving group identity and consciousness.
THE DIVERSITY AND EXTENT OF CHINESE BUSINESS IN MEXICALI'S CHINATOWN OF 1925

- Chinese Laundry
- Chinese Bunkhouse
- Chinese Compound
- Chinese Shacks
- Chinese Adobe
- Other Chinese Structures
- Cabaret, Dance Hall or Beer Garden

Figure 5.9
How Do Places Affect Identity, and How Can We See Identities in Places?

Identity and Space

• **Space**: “social relations stretched out”

• **Place**: “particular articulations of those social relations as they have come together, over time, in that particular location.”

• **Gendered places**
How Do Places Affect Identity, and How Can We See Identities in Places?

Sexuality and Space

• Glen Elder, Lawrence Knopp, and Heidi Nast: *queer theory*

• Gary Gates and Jason Ost: *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas*

• Concentrations of same-sex households in the United States are in cities with well-established gay and lesbian neighborhoods.

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In the 2010 census, the government tallied the number of households where a same-sex couple (with or without children) lived. Study the map of same-sex households in New York by census tract in Figure 5.10. How would the map change if sexuality were one of the “boxes” every person filled out on the census?
“It’s July 26, 2011, and I happen to be in New York City the weekend just after the State of New York legalized same-sex marriages. I cut it close getting to the airport so I could catch the first part of the annual Gay Pride parade. The parade, which started on the edge of the Chelsea neighborhood at 36th Street, traveled down 5th Avenue toward where I took this photograph near Union Square and ended in the West Village. Always a boisterous, celebratory event, the parade has a special feel this year as celebrants cheer what many describe as one of the great civil rights victories of the current era.”
Key Question

How Does Geography Reflect and Shape Power Relationships Among Groups of People?
How Does Geography Reflect and Shape Power Relationships Among Groups of People?

- Power relationships can subjugate entire groups of people, enabling society to enforce ideas about the ways people should behave or where people should be welcomed or turned away
- Jim Crow Laws
- Belfast, Northern Ireland
How Does Geography Reflect and Shape Power Relationships Among Groups of People?

**Figure 5.12**

**Belfast, Northern Ireland.** Signs of the conflict in Northern Ireland mark the cultural landscape throughout Belfast. In the Ballymurphy area of Belfast, where Catholics are the majority population, a woman and her children walk past a mural in support of the Irish Republican Army. The mural features images of women who lost their lives in the conflict, including Maureen Meehan, who was shot by the British Army and Anne Parker, who died when the bomb she planned to detonate exploded prematurely. © AP/Wide World Photos.
How Does Geography Reflect and Shape Power Relationships Among Groups of People?

Just Who Counts?

• Women continue to be paid less than men
• *The World’s Women 2010: Trends and Statistics*
• Regional variations in agriculture employment

**Figure 5.13**
*South Korea.* The women in this photo sat near one of the ancient temples in southern Korea, selling the modest output from their own market gardens. This activity is one part of the informal economy, the “uncounted” economy in which women play a large role. © Alexander B. Murphy.
“One of the leading causes of mortality and morbidity among children under the age of five in developing countries is waterborne disease. My research has focused on building an understanding of the factors that contribute to the vulnerability of young children to this significant public health problem.”
Vulnerable Populations

• Geographers use mapping and spatial analysis to predict and explain what populations or people will be affected most by natural hazards such as earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, and tsunamis or by environmental policies.

• Vulnerability is fundamentally influenced by geographically specific social and environmental circumstances.

• Through fieldwork and interviews, geographers can see differences in vulnerability within groups of people.
Women in Subsaharan Africa

• Much of Subsaharan Africa, especially rural areas, is dominated numerically by women.
• Women produce an estimated 70 percent of the region’s food, almost all of it without the aid of modern technology.
• In East Africa, cash crops such as tea are sometimes called “men’s crops” because the men trade in what the women produce.
• Uganda was a leader in affirmative action for women.
• Rwanda is the first country in the world where women hold more than 50 percent of the legislative seats.
Concept Caching: Kanye, Botswana

© Harm de Blij
Figure 5.15
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“I am filled with admiration for the women carrying water on their heads up the bank from the Niger River. Other women are at the water’s edge, filling their buckets. These women are performing a daily ritual requiring incredible endurance and strength. Once they carry their buckets to their dwellings, they will likely turn to preparing the evening meal.”
How Does Geography Reflect and Shape Power Relationships Among Groups of People?

Dowry Deaths in India

• In an arranged marriage, the dowry is the price to be paid by the bride’s family to the groom’s father.
• In extreme cases, disputes over the dowry have led to the death of the bride.
• Power relationships place women below men in India.
• Family Courts Act passed in 1984 to provide support for women who feared dowry death.
Dowry Deaths in India

• The practice of dowry deaths is not declining in India.
• The number of love marriages is on the rise and many couples in love marriages are meeting online.
• The number of divorces is also on the rise, with 1 in 1,000 marriages ending in divorce in India today.
• Just as some statistics point to an improving place of women in Indian society, other statistics confirm India still has a preference for males overall.
Shifting Power Relations among Ethnic Groups

- Urban geographers, John Frazier, Florence Margai, and Eugene Tettey-Fio: Race and Place: Equity Issues in Urban America
- Areas with multiple ethnicities often experience an ebb and flow of acceptance over time.
- In California and in much of the rest of the United States, the “Asian” box is drawn around a stereotype of what some call the “model minority.”
- The myth of the model minority: “paints Asians as good, hardworking people who, despite their suffering through discrimination, harassment, and exclusion, have found ways to prosper through peaceful means.”

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Shifting Power Relations among Ethnic Groups

Power Relations in Los Angeles

• Geographer James Curtis: southeastern Los Angeles County is today “home to one of the largest and highest concentrations of Latinos in Southern California.”

• **Barrioization:** describes a change that saw the Hispanic population of a neighborhood jump from 4 percent in 1960 to over 90 percent in 2000.

• April 29–30, 1992: Riots in Los Angeles after the verdict in the Rodney King case led to deaths, injuries, and about $1 billion in property loss.
THE CHANGING ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES 1960–1980

- **White**
- **Asian**
- **Black**
- **Hispanic**
- **Mixed**

**Community Boundary**

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Figure 5.19
Geographers who study race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality are interested in the power relations embedded in a place from which assumptions about “others” are formed or reinforced. Consider your own place, your campus, or your locality. What power relations are embedded in this place?
Additional Resources

• Gay and Lesbian Atlas
  www.urban.org/pubs/gayatlas/

• Racial and Ethnic Segregation in the United States, 1980–2000
  http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/resseg/papertoc.html

• Murals in Northern Ireland
  http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/mccormick/intro.htm