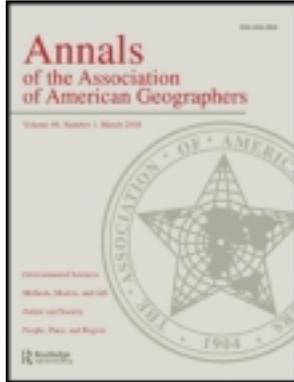


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Helga Leitner^a

^a Department of Geography, University of Minnesota

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Spaces of Encounters: Immigration, Race, Class, and the Politics of Belonging in Small-Town America

Helga Leitner

Department of Geography, University of Minnesota

Small towns throughout the rural upper Midwest have been experiencing dramatic economic restructuring and an unprecedented influx of new immigrants of color, triggering conflicts and tension between almost exclusively white residents and the new immigrants. Analyzing the roots and content of white residents' responses to their encounters with new immigrants in a small town in rural Minnesota, the concept of spaces of encounters draws attention to the relational quality of identities and attitudes and the active role of emotions and spatiality in processes of Othering and racialization, as well as the potential of the encounter to disrupt preconceived boundaries and racial stereotypes. White residents racialize immigrants and space, although the specific form taken by processes of racialization is inflected by individuals' social positionality and place identities and by longer term and broader scale racial stereotypes and dominant discourses about immigration, race, and nation in the United States. The racialization of immigrants defends white privilege and culture; recovers an imagined idealized place, past, and future; and establishes that belonging to the national and local community is conditional on immigrants conforming to white American values and norms—an assimilationist imaginary that runs up against the multicultural and multiracial reality of the town. Residents' reflections on their own racial prejudice and different forms of racism, as well as intimate social relations they forge with individual migrants, hold promise for social relations that transcend differences across racial and cultural divides. *Key Words:* *encounter, immigration, politics of belonging, racialization, small-town United States.*

整个中西部农村的小城镇已经经历了急剧的经济转型和前所未有的有色新移民的涌入，这在几乎完全是白人居民和新移民之间正引发冲突和紧张的局势。通过分析明尼苏达州农村的一个小城镇的白人居民对他们遭遇到的新移民的反应的根源和内容，遭遇的空间概念使人们注意到身份和态度的关系质量，和在异化和种族化过程中情感和空间感的积极作用，以及遭遇对扰乱既定的边界和种族偏见的可能性。虽然白人居民使移民和空间种族化，但是种族化进程所采取的具体形式是由个人的社会地位和地方身份，以及更长远，更大规模的种族偏见和对在美国的移民，种族和民族的主导话语所决定的。移民的种族化辩护白色特权和文化，恢复想象的理想化的地方，过去和未来；并规定属于国家和地方的社会要符合美国白人的价值观和规范——一种想象的同化主义，用来反多元文化和多种族的城镇现实。居民对自己的种族偏见和不同形式的种族主义的思考，以及他们与个人移民之间增强的亲密的社会关系，保持着社会关系跨越种族和文化差异的承诺。*关键词：遭遇，移民，政治归属感，种族化，小城镇的美国。*

Pequeñas ciudades a lo largo del sector norte del Medio Oeste rural han experimentado una dramática reestructuración económica y un flujo sin precedentes de nuevos inmigrantes de color, desencadenando conflictos y tensiones entre casi exclusivamente los residentes blancos y los nuevos inmigrantes. Se analiza el origen y el contenido de las respuestas de los residentes blancos a sus encuentros con los nuevos inmigrantes en un pequeño pueblo en la zona rural de Minnesota, el concepto de los espacios de encuentro llama la atención por la calidad relacional de algunos, las actitudes y el papel activo de las emociones y la espacialidad en los procesos de “los otros” y racialización, así como la posibilidad del encuentro para romper barreras preconcebidas y estereotipos raciales. Los residentes blancos racializan a los inmigrantes y el espacio, aunque la forma específica dada en los procesos de racialización es modulada por la posicionalidad social de las personas y el lugar de identidad, por el plazo más largo y la más amplia escala de estereotipos raciales y discursos predominantes sobre la inmigración, la raza y la nación en los Estados Unidos. La racialización de los inmigrantes defiende los privilegios de los blancos y la cultura, recupera un lugar imaginario idealizado, el pasado y el futuro, y establece que la pertenencia a la comunidad nacional y local está condicionada a que los inmigrantes se ajusten a los valores y normas de los estadounidenses blancos—un imaginario asimilacionista que se enfrenta a la realidad multicultural y multirracial de la ciudad. Las reflexiones de los residentes sobre sus propios prejuicios raciales y las distintas formas de racismo,

así como las relaciones sociales íntimas que forjan con los migrantes son prometedoras para que las relaciones sociales trasciendan las diferencias entre razas y diferencias culturales. *Palabras clave: encuentro, inmigración, política de pertenencia, racialización, Estados Unidos provinciano.*

For thirty years Garrison Keillor's *Prairie Home Companion* public radio show has (re)created and celebrated the image of white, Lutheran, small-town ways of life in the "American Heartland." Through storytelling about everyday life and music, white northern European culture and small-town life are idealized in the fictional town of Lake Wobegon, "where all the women are strong, the men are good looking, and the children are above average . . . and where everybody knows each others' names." Keillor's representation of small-town life, although having obvious entertainment value, is less innocent than it might seem. It intertwines scripts and icons that make up representations of small-town life with specifically white social and moral values: a symbolic association of small towns and rurality with whiteness. Nostalgia for a white rural America renders invisible the thousands of immigrants of color from around the globe who recently have made these towns their new home, turning almost exclusively white towns occupied by residents of European ancestry into multicultural and multiracial places.

Small towns throughout rural America have been exposed to global economic forces and flows of people, experiencing dramatic economic restructuring and demographic change that has been the arbiter of much insecurity and has catalyzed tensions and conflicts between long-term residents and new immigrants (Hubbard 2005; Winders 2005; Fennelly and Federico 2008; Nelson 2008; Nelson and Hiemstra 2008). Formerly distant peoples have been thrown together in these places. In rural Minnesota, refugees fleeing persecution and civil war in Somalia, Cambodia, and Sudan in search of freedom and better livelihoods now live next to documented and undocumented migrants from Mexico and Central America in search of jobs. These, in turn, are the new neighbors of white workers trying to cope with deunionization and plant closings, white small business owners trying to survive against large chain stores, and white family farmers trying to endure the onslaught of agro-industry. The lives of diverse people from different parts of the world, with different social and cultural identities, interests, and power/knowledges and occupying different and unequal socioeconomic positions intersect in place, which becomes the site of encounters.

What happens in these encounters between white residents and immigrants of color in a small town in rural Minnesota? To address this question is not only relevant for the academy, but also helpful for individuals and groups coming to terms with contemporary challenges of living together with difference, which are never unproblematic, especially within the context of insecurity. They incite processes of Othering and racialization, are marred with racism, elicit strong emotions (primarily fear), and result in frictions, conflicts, and contestations. Yet they might also entail negotiations of difference that can lead to the development of friendships between immigrants of color and white residents.

The concept of *spaces of encounters* captures the predicaments of those who find themselves thrown together in such small towns. Although encounters are always relational, I focus on how they are narrated from the perspective of long-term white residents. When white residents were asked about these encounters in focus group conversations, racialization, racial stereotyping, and prejudice emerged as by far the most pervasive reactions. These were not homogenous, however; important differences along class and to some extent gender lines run through the specific forms taken by Othering.¹ Narratives frequently were imbued with strong emotions, as respondents expressed their fears, annoyance, and discomfort associated with encounters with difference, with the specifics of such emotions mediated by individuals' sociospatial positionality (Sheppard 2002). In some instances encounters with difference also created moments of reflection that disrupted preconceived categories and boundaries, leading to the development of friendships between immigrants of color and long-term white residents.

Seeking to understand the complexity, ambiguity, and fluidity of white residents' narratives, I utilize three highly pertinent lines of scholarship: critical whiteness studies, which has sought to illuminate the construction and effects of white racialness; scholarship that has shown the centrality and importance of spatialities in processes of Othering and racialization; and recent work by Ahmed and others that draws attention to the embodied nature of Othering and the centrality of emotions in encounters. The following section summarizes these three strands of scholarship and how these fit my

conceptualization of spaces of encounters. The spaces of encounters examined here enact a politics of belonging; that is, negotiations and power struggles over boundaries that define who belongs to a particular local and national community and place and who does not. This politics of belonging is simultaneously a politics about cultural and racial boundaries, boundaries of place, and entitlements to economic and political resources. All these elements contribute to defining the boundaries between the “we” and “them” and are at stake in these struggles.

Subsequent sections focus on the spaces of encounters in the small town of Devereaux, showing how dominant conceptions of we and “our space” are thought, felt, and enacted in the encounter with immigrants of color. Local residents’ sense of place is intimately tied to the sense of who they are: white Americans defending white privilege, culture, and their place against the outside and outsiders. They draw on broader scale and longer term conceptions of nation, community, and place to racialize immigrants of color as out of place and to set conditions of belonging to the local and national community. Although voiced in different ways, belonging largely is conceived as conforming to white America. Yet some encounters entail moments of reflection that potentially disrupt racial stereotypes and prejudice. Concluding, I consider the implications for prospects of living with difference that go beyond an assimilationist imaginary.

Spaces of Encounters: Othering, Racialization, Emotions, and Space

My framework of spaces of encounters is inspired by recent work in and outside geography on encounters with difference (Ahmed 2000; Fincher 2003; Thrift 2005; Valentine 2008). Encounters with difference have been conceived as confrontations from outside what we already know (Grosz 2001; LaVan 2003). As LaVan (2003, 6) contended, encounters “are necessarily confrontational since we tend not to welcome difference, transformation, and change into the habitation of our habits.” The encounter holds open the possibility of not only inscribing but also disorienting us from the habits, stereotypes, and prejudices toward the Other, creating the possibility for change and transformation. This potential for openness of the encounter—a meeting that might both inscribe and shift existing boundaries between individuals and collectivities—resonated with what I observed.

The past two decades have seen an explosion of scholarship on processes of Othering and racialization, including whiteness and the centrality and importance of spatialities in these processes. Spaces of encounters contributes to this literature by simultaneously theorizing the complex and emerging nature of the factors—race, class, history, space, and affect—at stake and entangled in Othering and racialization, while holding open the possibility of destabilizing boundaries and creating new spaces for negotiating across difference.²

As social constructivists have argued, the representational process of defining an Other, whether somatically or culturally, is at the center of racialization.³ It involves racial categorizations based on ascribing physical and cultural differences to individuals and groups, racializing not only the Other but also the self. “Racialisation is a dialectical process of signification. Ascribing a real or alleged biological characteristic with meaning to define the Other necessarily entails defining the self by the same criterion” (Miles 1989, 75). Processes of racialization are not fixed and inescapable; nor are the realities of racial stereotypes (beliefs about the physical and cultural characteristics or attributes of members of a particular group), racial prejudice (beliefs that a particular group is biogenetically or culturally inferior, usually based on negative stereotypes), or racism (an ideology and practice that justifies exclusion and domination of a group on the grounds of biogenetic or cultural inferiority).

Critical whiteness studies have made visible the social construction of whiteness, uncovering operations of white privilege and advantage. U.S. labor historians catalyzed whiteness studies, bringing race into immigration history (Roediger 1991; Ignatiev 1995; Brodtkin 1998). Roediger (1991) traced the development of a white identity among previously racialized European-American workers such as the Irish, enquiring how they came to consider themselves white and interrogating the sources of white working-class racism. Some scholars emphasize the historical dynamics of capitalist social relations in the construction of white identities and interests; others stress the importance of a racialized state and a racist culture in creating and maintaining white privilege and dominance (Goldberg 1993; Bonnett 1998; Lipsitz 1998) or the connection between race and nation. In *American Crucible*, Gerstle (2002) demonstrated how whiteness is integral to American national identity. Winant (1994) and Kobayashi and Peake (2000) argued that whiteness has become the unspoken and profound sense of what it means to

be American, thereby Othering all other racialized identities. Recent contributions have emphasized the heterogeneous nature of whiteness, emphasizing the important lines of difference running through white identity that reflect how experiences of whiteness are mediated by class, gender, and other identities, as well as place (Hartigan 1999).

Indeed, critical whiteness scholars draw attention to the historical and geographical contingency of whiteness, the racialized production of space, and the role of space in the production and contestation of whiteness (e.g., Frankenberg 1993; Bonnett 2000). Geographic research has strengthened evidence for the historical and geographical contingency of both white identities and processes of Othering and racialization, contributing more generally to theorizing the relationship between social identities and space (Anderson 1991; Bonnett 1996; Delaney 1998; Jackson 1998; Dwyer and Jones 2000; Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Pred 2000; Pulido 2000; Wilton 2002; Hoelscher 2003; Wright et al. 2003; McCarthy and Hague 2004; Mitchell 2004; Houston et al. 2005; Wilson 2005; Nelson 2008). Taking a relational approach, this scholarship posits the mutual constitution of racial identities and space, drawing out different aspects. For example, Anderson (1991) and Pred (2000) have examined the spatial encoding of difference and race. Anderson's (1991) work on Vancouver's Chinatown shows how Canadian state policies institutionalized the racial category of "Chinese" that became inscribed both in material space, through the spatial configuration of "Chinatown," and in people's minds. Pred's (2000) research on cultural racism and racialized spaces in Sweden demonstrates how the social construction of space becomes one with that of race.

Stimulated by the increasing cultural and racial diversity of places outside metropolitan areas, recent work in the United Kingdom and United States has examined rural racism, where spatial metaphors and practices are used in small towns to police the borders of whiteness. In the United Kingdom, Neal (2002) revealed how the association of rurality with whiteness helps account for specific manifestations of racism in rural areas, whereas Valentine and McDonald (2004), studying prejudice toward minorities in three English regions (the rural Southwest, the West Midlands, and London), indicated that not simply place identity but also differences in the cultural diversity of a place might influence the nature of prejudice. In the United States, Nelson (2008) suggested that resistance to the construction of subsidized Mexican farm worker housing in a rural Oregon town can be seen as an attempt to police

the borders of whiteness. As I show, white residents' reactions toward immigrants of color are informed by their understanding of the rural Midwest as a white place and associated conceptions of a white American nation. Residents try to defend their place and associated identities that they feel are under threat from global and mobile forces, conceiving of place as a site with a clearly circumscribed culture and identity, rather than as a site that is open and constantly emerging (Cresswell 2002).

The racial encoding of space and the mapping of race in spatial terms has also been identified in social psychological research. Experimental research by Eberhardt (2007) showed that exposing subjects to images of racialized physical spaces (e.g., those associated with black Americans such as inner cities and rundown neighborhoods) can work as race cues that trigger racial bias, even in the absence of a black person in the image. She suggested that such cue-driven racial biases are critical for understanding how racial stereotypes are spontaneously triggered and reinforced in everyday environments.

Hoelscher (2003) foregrounded the role of whites' cultural productions in creating, maintaining, and reinforcing racial identities and boundaries during the pre-civil rights era in the Jim Crow South. Mitchell (2004) laid open the racial content in struggles between wealthy Hong Kong immigrants and middle-class white Canadian residents over land use and architectural design in upper class Vancouver neighborhoods. Here, moral and cultural assumptions of a dominant white British Canadian identity, in which racial exclusion is persistent and overarching, were contested, and to a certain degree invalidated, by affluent and "self-confident" Chinese immigrants.

Dwyer and Jones (2000, 210), seeking to understand "how whiteness works as . . . a particular way of knowing and valuing the world," proposed a "white socio-spatial epistemology" characterized by essentialized understanding of both identities and space that manifests in the solidification of social and spatial boundaries. They showed how whites engage in various practices of social and spatial distancing to mark the social and spatial boundaries of whiteness that serve to defend white privilege. This ability of whites to distance themselves from the Other, both socially and spatially, is contingent on their sociospatial positionality.

Recent self-styled materialist scholarship on race and whiteness in geography has refocused attention on the embodied nature of racialization and spatialization. Saldhana (2007, 9), drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, Grosz, and nonrepresentational theory, stresses the

enduring importance of phenotype: processes of Othering as embodied practices in space that are achieved through “a shifting amalgamation of human bodies and their appearance, genetic material, artifacts, landscapes, music, money, language, and states of mind. Racial difference emerges when bodies with certain characteristics become viscous through the ways they connect to their physical and social environment.”⁴

With the exception of this materialist scholarship, much of whiteness studies has paid only marginal attention to the emotive nature of Othering and racialization. This omission is curious, given the strong emotions unleashed in encounters with difference. As Feagin (2000, 121) put it, “White thinking about racial matters is often rooted in deep-lying emotions.” Affect is at the center of research drawing on psychoanalysis, however, which understands Othering and racialization as a projection of individual desires, anxieties, and fears.⁵ Sibley (1995) pointed out that emotions such as fear and anxiety emanate both from the individual—from connections between body and the psyche—and through interactions with the social and cultural environment. As Holloway (2003, 697) posited:

One way in which the subject mediates interactions with this social milieu is through stereotypical understanding of good and bad objects and people. . . . Good stereotypes of other people and things can capture a desire for something which the self has lost, an unobtainable fantasy, whereas bad stereotypes represent fear and anxiety of a malign presence from which the subject wants to distance itself.

Ahmed (2004a, 2004b) also drew on psychoanalytic perspectives, focusing on emotions as embodied experiences and the work they do in shaping bodies—individual and collective—creating communities and legitimizing decisions. She suggested that emotions such as fear mediate, in concrete and particular ways, relationships between the psychic and the social, and the individual and collective, arguing that emotions as embodied experiences “are shaped by the contact with objects, rather than being caused by objects” (2004a, 31). In other words, subjects’ feelings toward objects and other subjects are not intrinsic but are shaped by their encounters with them. Further, whether something is thought of as “agreeable or hurtful involves thought and evaluation at the same time it is ‘felt’ by the body. [T]he process of attributing an object as being or not being ‘agreeable’ involves reading the encounters in a certain way” (Ahmed 2004a, 31). She highlighted both the relational quality of identities and the active role of emotions.

Ahmed further argued that encounters are more than unexpected, immediate, face-to-face interactions. “Each encounter reopens past encounters” (Ahmed 2000, 8), involving not only subjects:

but the histories that come before the subject . . . [racism] is a particular form of intercorporeal encounter: a white racist subject who encounters a racial Other may experience an intensity of emotions (fear, hate, disgust, pain). That intensification involves moving away from the body of the other, or moving towards that body in an act of violence, and then moving away. The “moment of contact” is shaped by past histories of contact, which allows the proximity of a racial other to be perceived as threatening, at the same time as it reshapes the bodies in the contact zone of the encounter. These histories have already impressed upon the surface of the bodies at the same time as they create new impressions. (Ahmed 2004a, 31)

Thus, present encounters are shaped by longer histories. As I show, white residents’ face-to-face encounters with immigrants of color in small-town rural Minnesota are framed by the history of U.S. race relations and racial nationalism, as white residents draw on dominant pre-existing discourses of race and nation.

Ahmed’s work provides a useful starting point to gather these strands of scholarship together around the concept of spaces of encounters. Although concurring with her argument that encounters need to consider a longer temporality, I suggest that encounters are also bound up with distinct spatialities, stretching beyond the proximity of face-to-face contact. Encounters are framed by *territorial/place identities*: Towns, regions and nation-states become conjoined with particular national and cultural identities—such as the rural Midwest with the heartland of white America—identities that are challenged by the entry and presence of migrants regarded as culturally and racially different. They are also cast in the *everyday spaces* (supermarkets, houses of worship, residential neighborhoods, factory floors, public space) where they undergo racial encoding. For example, the racial encoding of trailer parks where Mexican immigrants live as “brown” space shapes relations between white residents and Mexicans. Finally, encounters are embedded in *larger scale discourses* beyond that place. In the virtual absence of previous lived local experiences with non-whites, white residents draw on broader scale discourses and from the past to legitimize racial stereotypes and make sense of their fears of the immigrant Other.

Attending to the broader spatio-temporality of encounters also entails attending to their embeddedness in broader relationships of power. These include the

power dynamics and order of globalizing capitalist social relations and state structures, as well as social and racial hierarchies, which shape the distinctiveness of encounters in particular places, and the multifaceted and differentially empowered sociospatial positionalities of those involved. *Sociospatial positionality* refers to and conceives of individuals' identities as relational, in terms of constructions of *inter alia* their class, race, gender, and spatial location, implying that positionalities and encounters are coconstitutive. Encounters frequently reflect and reproduce the positionalities of those involved but also hold open the possibility of positionalities being called into question through the encounter.

In short, spaces of encounters are not simply face-to-face embodied experiences, imbued with emotions, but also structural, and these are socially and spatially mediated.

Researching in Devereaux

This article is based on data collected during a two-year collaborative project on the immigrant experience and immigrant host society relations in a small town in rural Minnesota. The town, which I call Devereaux, has about 20,000 residents and is located about sixty miles from the Twin Cities metropolitan area. In 2001, we conducted ten focus groups with immigrant groups (Mexicans, Central Americans, Cambodians, Vietnamese, Sudanese, and Somalis) and three focus groups with white residents of European ancestry.⁶ These were complemented by intake questionnaires that gathered information on the sociodemographic characteristics and migration history of the participants, observations of public spaces in the town, and informal individual conversations. This article examines how white residents narrate their experiences and understandings of the arrival and presence of new immigrants of color. Focus groups with white residents were designed to be relatively homogenous along class and social status lines and to be gender balanced. Participants were recruited through community organizations (e.g., churches, parent-teacher associations, Rotary Club), workplaces, and individual contacts. The focus groups were held in a community center in the heart of town, lasted approximately two hours, and were audiotaped. We provided transportation and child care for participants as needed and each participant was offered \$30 compensation.

We chose focus groups over intensive interviews because focus groups—with minimal interference from the

moderator—allow open conversation through which participants voice opinions, narrate experiences, and make sense of these in relation to others (Pratt 2002). Focus groups also provide opportunities to observe how opinions and beliefs circulate, are enhanced, and are contradicted through social interaction. The danger that bandwagon effects can occur in focus groups was not a major problem in our case. Indeed, we frequently observed situations where statements made by one participant were interrogated by another. We tried to avoid domination of the focus groups by a small number of speakers, repeatedly encouraging everyone to participate.

Focus group transcripts, intake questionnaires, debriefing notes, and observations were transcribed and entered into the NU*DIST text analysis program, which I used primarily to complement rather than replace repeated close readings of the transcripts. Given the relatively small number of transcripts, questionnaires, and additional documents, the principal advantage of NU*DIST was that it made it easier to connect the information from the different materials collected. For example, it facilitated the attachment of focus group participants' background characteristics from the intake questionnaire (e.g., education, income, length of residency) to their contributions to the focus group.

The analysis of focus group transcripts poses several more or less mundane methodological challenges. Unless a record is kept of the sequence of speakers, it can be almost impossible to reconstruct focus group speakers from the audio transcript. Further, because focus groups are made up of multiple, interactive narratives, a general strategy in analyzing transcripts is to identify dominant emergent themes. Parsing the focus group narrative by dominant themes entails extracting them from the flow and pattern of discussion, running the risk of paying insufficient attention to how the different themes articulate. For example, I separated the theme defending white privilege from that of immigrant cultures and racialized bodies out of place. During the conversation, however, focus group participants frequently switched and made connections between these. Thus, in interpreting the narratives emerging from the focus groups I paid particular attention to relationships between the different themes in the conversations.

Encountering Sociospatial Transformations

During the past two decades, as in many small towns in rural areas of the upper Midwest, Devereaux has

undergone dramatic transformations brought about by economic and political restructuring, the impact of new information technologies on daily life, and late twentieth-century formations of globalization. In terms of economic restructuring, rural America and the upper Midwest are increasingly dominated by the logic of corporate agriculture manifest in decreasing numbers of farms, increased farm size, and the expansion of food production and processing facilities (slaughter, meat packing, and food processing facilities), as well as in the concentration of market power among relatively few agro-corporations dictating terms of employment (Flora, Flora, and Tapp 2000). Population losses due to outmigration (particularly of young college-educated people) have undermined the viability of local services (health, education, etc.), businesses, and the fiscal health of the local public sector (Cantrell 2005). White workers have experienced downward mobility, finding themselves squeezed out of their livelihoods as they lose their jobs through deunionization in the food processing industry (Cantu 1995; Amato et al. 1996; Benson 1999; Fennelly and Leitner 2002).

The influx of immigrant workers and their families between 1990 and 2005 increased Devereaux's population by approximately 25 percent, dramatically altering its racial composition. The Hispanic population of the county in which it is located increased by almost 500 percent. The majority of Latinos are Mexicans, with some Central Americans, who came to Devereaux either directly from Mexico or from other parts of the United States. Refugees from Africa are relatively recent arrivals (since the early 1990s) from Somalia and southern Sudan. Asian residents are predominantly refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia, most of whom have lived in Devereaux since the late 1970s. Prior to this time, Devereaux was almost exclusively white and fairly insulated.

In contrast to the seasonal migrant workers who were a common temporary presence in the past, these new immigrants of color are not only working in town but also settling there with their families. They have become a visible presence, transforming Devereaux's residential, commercial, and public spaces. Trailer parks on the outskirts of town are filled with Mexican immigrants. Other Mexicans, Cambodians, Vietnamese, and Sudanese rent apartments (frequently from absentee landlords) or own modest homes in and around the town center. Somalis, and also Mexican and Central American immigrants, occupy apartments above downtown businesses. Main Street commercial and public

space is no longer the space of white residents and shop owners. Mexican and Somali immigrants have opened shops, filling vacancies and contributing to a revitalization of the downtown business landscape. Immigrant youth and children hang out and meet friends on Main Street, and black- and brown-skinned teenagers congregate in high school parking lots, making their way around town. Somali women in hijabs stroll along Main Street and walk to supermarkets at the edge of town.

White residents of Devereaux, as in many similar communities across the Midwest, thus have experienced dramatic transformations of their livelihoods, communities, and places. For many, immigrants have become symbolic bearers of the loss of the idealized ways of life and community immortalized in Garrison Keillor's *Lake Wobegon*. Sharon, a college-educated woman, reveals:

We used to feel like we knew everybody. I mean, you used to walk around town and you could walk down streets, Main Street, and you knew everybody, you knew all of the faces. And now, you don't know all the faces. And so, I think sometimes you feel a little isolated, or maybe vulnerable, just because you're not familiar with the person's background or their culture or whatever.

Such references idealize past life in Devereaux, presented as a time when people did not have to lock their houses and cars, regularly socialized and had fun together, and lived in peace and harmony. This untroubled past is juxtaposed against a troubled present associated either explicitly or implicitly with the arrival of immigrants. As Ochs and Capps (1996, 24) pointed out, "narratives of personal experience focus on past events, i.e. they are about 'what happened.' However, such narratives link the past to present and future life worlds." Indeed, white residents' accounts of what life once was like in Devereaux are intricately linked with their concerns about their present and their future lives; focus group participants held immigrants, corporations, and government directly or indirectly responsible for the loss of this imagined community and way of life. Underlying expressions of loss and nostalgia was also a fear for their ability to reproduce a particular way of life defined by white American cultural norms, customs, habits and rituals of everyday life, social codes, and conventions (cf. Mitchell 2004). Such narratives also work to erase past conflicts in these places, such as the union busting that occurred during the late 1980s and 1990s, hiding the fractured nature of the category white and making immigrants the scapegoat for conflicts.

Sharon's account, repeated in numerous conversations, shows how feelings of loss of mythical past ways of life and longing for community and sociality are intricately linked to space and place. Time and space fuse in her narrative, as she recounts how the town and its spaces have changed: Loss of the golden age is simultaneously loss of the ideal place, enshrined as "homeland," through which ideas of us and them come to be deeply felt and mapped onto Devereaux. This process is not unique to Minnesota. Scholars have identified links between ideas of rurality, ethnicity, and ethnic purity, in which the rural idyll is mystically constructed as a "white" space (Ageyman and Spooner 1997; Lawson, Jarosz, and Bonds 2008).

Defending White Privilege

Immigrants were not the only targets onto which long-term white residents projected their grievances about the transformation of their place and livelihoods. Focus group participants frequently faulted large corporations and the government for their experiences of loss of economic security and economic hardship, with working-class residents suggesting that these institutions favor immigrants at the expense of local, white residents. For example, in the early 1990s a major food processing plant in Devereaux briefly closed, laid off its white union employees, and then reopened, replacing most of the white workers with new immigrants of color, actively recruited by employers to fill the low-paying, hazardous jobs. Many of the working-class participants who had worked in this plant harbored resentment against the company:

Leanne: It's not [muffled]. It's not fair when you have to hire one over somebody else [new immigrants over indigenous residents].

Andrea: But you have to remember your mom always told you life isn't gonna be fair.

Deborah: Oh, I know it isn't. So, I've learned now.

Moderator: Do they hire people over other people?

Leanne: They [the company] used to. I don't know how much they do it now.

Daniel: I don't think they do it a lot now.

Leanne: Now they don't have to because now it's mainly, that's them [the immigrants] who's working. You know at most of the jobs.

In this and other conversations, working-class white residents voiced their grievances about companies being disloyal to white residents, replacing them with African, Asian, and Latino workers. They are very much aware of the motivations that drive the company's decisions but feel that they cannot do anything about it. Government becomes another substitute target for their grievances, because it is supposed to defend the interests of American citizens, as these quotes from the working-class focus group suggest:

There could be a ninety-year-old couple moved to town, they go down to social service they wouldn't get to 'em. By golly, a truckload of them guys [immigrants] come in, they give 'em what they want, food stamps, and everything else. It's not fair. That's not fair. (Lilly)

Well, I think the government's going overboard with 'em. I mean, they should treat 'em all the same, whether they're Mexican or whatever, wherever they come from. They should all be treated the same. You know, whether they get kicked out of their own country, whether they wanna come over here. You know, but they shouldn't be treated better than we are. We're the ones that are payin' for what they're gettin'. If they're gonna run around act like they're better than we are, we ain't gonna, we ain't gonna appreciate that at all. (Daniel)

Lilly and Daniel portray whites as victims of unjust government practices that favor immigrants, who are perceived not only as having easier access to public services but also consuming more of them. Daniel points out, however, that he does not accept this predicament and perceived injustice.

Narratives of immigrants' favorable treatment by the government are well-known stereotypes, advanced in immigration debates by right-wing and conservative politicians from the local to the national scale (Van Dijk 1993). White working-class residents draw on and reproduce such discourses freely and frequently, corroborating them with invented stories, such as Lilly's. They blame immigrants, but not the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, for "unjust" state practices.⁷ Blaming immigrants allows them to address fears associated with the insecurity brought about by welfare reform that reduced public services and benefits for people in need. Social psychologist Bobo (2001) suggested that belief in the unfairness of extending the welfare state to non-whites cannot be simply located in economic self-interest and uncertainty but is mired in a symbolic racism that represents non-whites' demands and views them as an "unfair imposition on a just and good society" (291). Indeed, as discussed in the next section, discourses about

loss of economic security are buttressed by discourses of the cultural Otherness of the racialized bodies of immigrants, invoked to justify exclusion. As Ignatiev (1995) and others have argued in the context of economic globalization, race trumps class; the investment of white workers in their whiteness keeps them from perceiving affinities with workers from other races.

By contrast, arguing from a privileged social position, professionals and business people generally did not represent immigrants as threats to material interests but as an asset, filling unskilled, low-paying jobs in local industries, as potential customers in their stores, and as adding to the local tax base, exemplified in Phyllis's comment:

In a tight labor market immigrants fill a definite niche. There are some industries that Caucasians and young preppy college students aren't going to work in and we need the economic base to be diversified. We are missing the boat on some of the traditions and traits they bring with them. We are looking to expand small family businesses and a lot of them are bringing knowledge that can expand our economic base, and we need more training to help with small businesses. (Phyllis, college-educated female)

Thus, among professionals and business elites, a discourse of welcome and inclusion emerged that was bound up with immigrants providing benefits to local businesses and the municipality. As I show in the next section, this discourse downplays cultural and racial Otherness and emphasizes the need for tolerance of difference. Yet, it is simultaneously a discourse of racialized tolerance that extends the logic of white class power and privilege, enabling white middle and upper classes to distance themselves from working-class immigrants of color and whites.

Immigrant Cultures and Racialized Bodies out of Place

Although it was not unexpected, I was struck by the keen sense of difference that permeated white residents' narratives about new immigrants: They are not like us, in terms of their culture, behavior, bodily appearance, and language. Scholars have argued that this focus on cultural differences is characteristic of the new racism, "whose dominant theme is not biological heredity, but the insurmountability of cultural differences" (Doty 1999, 588). Cultural and racial differences were not only remarked on but evaluated as inferior and inciting feelings of annoyance, fear, and so on, along with

associated expectations that immigrants should become more like us—adopt white American values and norms (discussed later). Discourses constructing cultural differences as natural, denigrating and marginalizing immigrants, have the effect of representing immigrants as out of place (unless they conform), as well as justifying their exclusion from access to welfare state resources.

Articulations of cultural difference focused on the extent to which immigrants' behaviors were perceived as deviating from or conforming to what focus group participants implicitly constructed as core white American values. These included a Protestant work ethic and entrepreneurship, speaking English, homeownership, family values, and public hygiene, as well as embodied cultural differences such as clothing and bodily behavior closely associated with immigrants' corporeality.⁸ Such judgments frame both positive and negative assessments of immigrants' cultural differences.

With few exceptions, negative stereotypical accounts and assessments of cultural differences dominated the narratives, although how white residents verbalized these varied with social positionality.⁹ White working- and middle-class residents frequently deployed racist rhetoric, and for some there was no pretense to avoid being seen as racist. Indeed, at times racial prejudice was naturalized, as Dale, a middle-class male, reveals:

I think it's us, the people, that, if you're colored, you're prejudiced. If you're white, you're prejudiced against the colored. Automatically. 'Cuz you're born and raised, you can't deny it. . . . Now there's two Irish people in town, immigrants that I got to know pretty well. No problem at all. They're white. But now, if they were black, or yellow or something else . . . I think there'd be uh, reservation there.

Dale suggests that all people are prejudiced, with whites prejudiced against the colored Other. Such prejudice is taken for granted, justified on grounds of socialization, and corroborated by personal experience.

Racist discourses of white working- and middle-class residents were generally associated with everyday encounters with immigrants on the street, in the supermarket, at work, and in the neighborhood, as in the following conversation in the working-class focus group about supermarket encounters:

Lilly: I work a couple days a week at Rainbow, Hy-Vee, Wal-Mart. Somolians'll [*Somalis*] come in there and they'll go up to the freezers and they'll take something out of the freezer, open it up and taste it. If they don't like it, they'll put it back in the freezer just walk away from it.

Leanne: And they will go to the bathroom in anybody's yard.

Lilly: They'll go to the bathroom right in the store.

Leanne: Yes, I heard that.

Deborah: Yeah, I've seen that happen at Wal-Mart.

Andrea: You know, there's things that they need to be taught before they bring 'em here.

Daniel: Right

Leanne: We have indoor plumbing. Maybe where they were that was just, right, but . . . it's pretty convenient.

The incidents recounted here do not simply narrate personal experiences but are generalized to all Somalis. In the eyes of these white residents, Somali immigrants' public behavior violates norms of public hygiene, making it inferior and un-American. They link this to Somali culture and conditions in their home country, expelling the threat of contamination posed by immigrants' behavior in public space by constructing immigrants as deficient, inferior, and out of place. This narration simultaneously legitimizes a racist discourse of exclusion and articulates expectations that immigrants should adapt to American norms of public hygiene if they want to belong.

College-educated professionals and businesspeople, by contrast, generally refrained from racist rhetoric, deploring the negative racial stereotyping and prejudice by other white residents. Yet, as Hartigan (1999) has shown, the absence of racist rhetoric does not imply the absence of racialization or racism. Rather, more educated and well-off whites are better able to control forms of racial signification than are working-class whites for a variety of reasons, including differences in their linguistic repertoire that provide different resources for expressing beliefs. Besides refraining from racist rhetoric, white professionals and businesspeople stressed the importance of appreciating other cultures and the need for tolerance and acceptance of difference. Asked about their perceptions of new immigrants, Joe, a local political leader, responded:

I don't know how else to put this, but this white face is probably not going to work at the turkey plant and we have people willing to come to [Devereaux] and to do the work; I am willing to buy the turkey and eat it, and I have a lot of feeling for the people willing to take these jobs. Acceptance and support are really important.

Such talk about tolerance and accepting diversity, although often sincere and well-intended, conceals un-

equal and racialized power relations. Tolerance talk often "represents a largess of the powerful. It is a form of talk which hastily suggests unity of interests and positive atmosphere" (Wetherell and Potter 1992, 210).

The acceptance and tolerance expressed by white middle and upper classes are in part enabled by their greater ability to distance themselves socially and spatially from immigrants. White skin privilege is unevenly distributed: "The white working class, unlike their bourgeois brethren, cannot easily assume socio-spatial distance from racialized Otherness" (Dwyer and Jones 2000, 215). In Devereaux, the majority of upper class focus group participants resided on the edge of town, in "safe" physical distance from immigrant populations in the downtown and the trailer parks, removing immigrants of color out of sight and mitigating the possibility of encounter. In contrast, working-class whites experience more frequent physical and social encounters with immigrants: on the shop floor, working next to one another, in the local department store, in the neighborhood, and in trailer parks (cf. Valentine 2008).

Dangerous People, Dangerous Spaces

How whites perceive the racialized bodies of immigrants is closely associated with where immigrants are and how white residents imagine these spaces. Two kinds of spaces became the focus of discussion: trailer parks at the edge of town and the downtown and Main Street area. During the past few decades, trailer parks in upper Midwestern small towns have become almost exclusively occupied by Mexican immigrants working in nearby factories and fields.¹⁰ Taco Ville, as white residents often called the trailer parks, are portrayed as a dangerous territory, ridden with criminal activities, where whites fear to tread.

And when you think of Mexican, I'm sorry but I think of drug dealers. I don't want my kids around them. Something might go wrong, or . . . they got lots of activity going on out of all them trailer courts. (Andrea)

Andrea continued to substantiate her discussion of trailer parks as dangerous places by talking about hearing of drug gangs in a particular trailer park and noticing "the cops having to go out there every fifteen minutes."

Perceptions about immigrants as lawbreakers, prone to drug trafficking, fighting, and personal assaults, function simultaneously to construct immigrants and the places they inhabit as dangerous. Space and race fuse in mutually reinforcing ways. The negative image of Mexican immigrants as lawbreakers is reinforced by

negative images associated with the trailer parks where they live, further stigmatizing these as undesirable places.

Fear and danger are not only associated with alleged criminal behavior. For some focus group participants, particularly women, the mere presence of racialized bodies of immigrants in certain spaces elicits fear. These were the most salient gender differences observed in the focus group discussions. Women of different social positions identified downtown and Main Street as having become a dangerous space, with Somali, Mexican, and Central American immigrants living in apartments above storefronts and congregating on Main Street, and immigrant children and young adults hanging out and meeting friends on sidewalks. This behavior is not the norm in Devereaux and receives attention and judgment, as exemplified in the following excerpts from the working- and middle-class focus groups:

Andrea: A lot of people on the streets. Lot of blacks, lot of Mexicans hanging out on the street corners in front of storefronts.

Lilly: There's a lot of (people) that they don't even care to go downtown anymore.

Andrea: . . . a lot of white people.

Leanne: I think they're afraid of 'em too. You know. They don't really know them, so . . .

Sally: Being single, I would not want to walk downtown at night, I don't think.

Sue: Um, I usually walk the south end of town, the southwest end of town, and one time we did walk up this way and came back down through Shadduck and down the trail that way and we walked really fast down Main Street, just simply because of the different nationalities, the Hispanics, I'm sure and, uh, we just didn't feel safe like we do when we walk, even though it's well lit, there was just this weird feeling, I guess, because of it. And maybe it's just not knowing, you know, their . . .

Ed: I think it's your perception. . . .

Vicky: [interrupting] I live down north end of town and it's scary down there.

Ed: But I never get the perception when I'm walking down here at night, but then again I'm a pretty big person [chuckle from group] and, uh, maybe I get people to back off a little, but I don't know. Um, I've never felt really threatened by anyone down here and I don't know if there's any real reason for me to feel that way.

Andrea, Lilly, and Leanne intimate that downtown has become a dangerous space where white people fear to go

because of the presence of Africans and Latinos. Sally, Sue, and Vicky's voices reinforce this theme of fear. But Ed suggests that has not been his feeling and reflects that this might be because he is a large man, thus interpreting women's fear as a sign of their vulnerability. As feminist scholars have pointed out, however, "Vulnerability is not an inherent characteristic of women's bodies, rather it is an effect that works to secure femininity as a delimitation of movement in the public" (Ahmed 2004b, 70).

These conversations also reveal that perceptions of immigrants as dangerous are rarely based on negative personal experiences with immigrants, suggesting that fear is not simply an immediate bodily response to an objective danger. Rather, it is the association of racialized bodies in formerly white-dominated spaces with danger that triggers fears, mediated also by gender. Such negatively charged associations frequently draw on stories and media reports that circulate in town, as Dale, a working-class male, recalls.

I think that there is more trouble in [Devereaux]. Well, you look in the paper, you can see it in the paper. A lot of driving violations. A lot of fights and stuff like that. In other words, you kind of wonder about walking downtown at night. Some nights they . . . how do you think about it?

By referring to media reports, Dale legitimates his statements about both the criminal behavior of immigrants and the encoding of downtown space with danger. Associations of immigrants with danger—an affective disposition of fear of the immigrant Other—thus construct immigrants as an external threat in the whites' midst, drawing on preexisting racialized fear and reinforced by media discourses.

Why Don't They Speak English?

Language is a crucial site of contestation through which white residents and immigrants of color negotiate their relationships with each other and the community. At issue in these negotiations, from whites' perspectives, is immigrants' lack of English language proficiency. White residents suggested that this creates a distance between long-term residents and newcomers, constituting an obstacle for communication. Deborah, in the working-class focus group, articulates:

I mean you go into Wal-Mart . . . I mean, and, when you run into a cashier somewhere, that's one of them, they cannot speak any English and you're trying to get it through to them that there's either been a mistake or whatever the

case may be, you should not have to spend however much time in line doing that. Right?

Deborah does not simply comment on the limits to communication that language differences pose but expresses her dismay and annoyance about having to put up with people in supermarkets who cannot communicate in English. Most focus group participants shared this sentiment, explicitly associating it with the expectation that immigrants learn English quickly: “If they want to live and work here they need to learn English as fast as possible” (Vicky, a middle-class female). In the minds of the majority of focus group participants, English language proficiency is identified as part of what it means to be “American.” In discussing English as a second language (ESL) classes for immigrants, Dale says, “I think instead of English as a second language, it should be English as the first language.”

Indeed, the vocal English-only movement in the United States, and proliferating English-only ordinances enacted by U.S. municipalities, reflect an increasingly outspoken segment of the American population that objects to what they perceive as the rising use of languages other than English in public. Herb, Ed, and Dale in the middle-class focus group commented on and justified this objection:

Herb: If you talk English, talk English to me. If you don't, then learn. This way . . . maybe I'm being selfish in that regard, but if I went to another country where English wasn't spoken, I would have to learn the language.

Dale: Yeah.

Ed: There is a lot of private conversations going on in front of you that don't have to be private conversations. That happens all the time. They'll talk to you in English, I mean, I see this at the store all the time. They talk to me in English, they'd ordered what they wanted in English, they'd be fine with English . . . but when they were talking to each other it was all in Spanish.

Dale: But that's always gone on.

Ed: I know, I know, I know that. I'm not saying that shouldn't be, but you're at the point where you're sitting there going, like are YOU the person they're talking about and that's why we're talkin' Spanish now? [laughter from group]. Because, you know that's the feeling of a lot of people.

Toward the end, Ed voices an unease about the inability to understand what is being said when immigrants converse in their own language, the impression that immigrants are conspiring about them, and a feeling

of being excluded. This is echoed by Deborah in the working-class focus group:

I mean you go into Wal-Mart and behind you is probably five, six, I don't care if it's Mexicans or who, whichever nationality, they're all jibbering and jabbering and you know very well they're talkin' about ya. I mean, it sure makes you feel like it, or whatever. And it's, you know, I mean I just think it's really rude.

Both Ed and Deborah comment on the unease and insecurity associated with not being able to understand, an anxiety that is projected onto the immigrants. Because they do not speak English, immigrants are an obstacle to harmonious relations, thereby producing their own isolation. In other words, the Other is made responsible for removing herself or himself from belonging due to language differences.

Anglo-Conformity as Conditions of Belonging

The racialization of immigrants and spaces not only serves to define boundaries but also buttresses conditions and limitations of belonging (cf. Ehrkamp 2006). For the majority of white residents, belonging is conditional on immigrants becoming like them, through expectations that immigrants adapt to prevailing norms and culture. Drawing on an assimilationist imaginary, belonging requires conformity with white American values and norms—explicit norms that are simultaneously unmarked, ordinary, and taken for granted.

Notwithstanding the consensus among focus group participants that immigrants need to learn English, they diverged in their expectations about how quickly this should occur and their assessment of the immigrants' willingness to learn English. Focus group members without higher education tended to expect immigrants to be proficient in English more or less immediately, whereas those with higher education were more likely to reflect on the immigrant experience of their own parents or grandparents: how they struggled to learn English and spoke their native language at home, about the difficulties they experienced in acquiring a foreign language at an older age, and the need for more ESL classes. Herb, a college-educated male, recalls:

I think it is important to remember, uh, we are in a big hurry here . . . to integrate them into our society. My folks both came from Holland years ago, and they came through the same thing we are talking about here. When my older brothers and sisters were close to going to school, they

were still talking Dutch at home. And my mother and dad decided, hey, we gotta stop this because when the kids get to school they're gonna have to talk English. Well they realized that on their own, but they put up with a lot of ridicule.

These findings confirm studies showing that residents with university degrees are more likely to hold positive perceptions of immigrants (Haubert and Fussell 2006).

Throughout most of the discussions about whether immigrants can belong, white residents, irrespective of their social positionality, placed the burden on non-white immigrants, making them responsible for adapting to American values and ways of life. Some questioned whether immigrants really are willing to make the effort. Jeff, a high school-educated male in the middle-class focus groups, states:

I feel that they [the new immigrants] don't want to let a lot [of their culture] go. But they do need to know English and they do need to immerse still in our culture, but still keep theirs too.

There was a consensus that immigrants are here to stay but that it will take several generations until they will be fully acculturated. As Phyllis, a college-educated female, put it: "The grown-ups probably never assimilate." Even assuming that immigrants meet the conditions of belonging and assimilate, seen as much more likely for the second and third generations, working-class whites expressed fear about immigrants assuming positions of leadership, worrying that they would abuse this to pursue their group-specific interests.

Andrea: I think it kinds of frightens you too to think that they [new immigrants] might get in there [school board, city council, chamber of commerce].

Deborah: It would be kind of scary, but I mean I just can't imagine it would even happen in the next ten to fifteen years. I would hope.

Andrea: I still think we'd be kind of afraid that they wouldn't have our best interests at heart.

Andrea and Deborah are voicing the often unspoken fear of the loss of white dominance, which has been fanned by conservative radio talk show hosts and alarmist academic commentators in the United States (e.g., Brimelow 1995; Huntington 2004). Reminiscent of past nativist appeals, Brimelow calls for barring the immigration of people of color because their cultural deficiencies damage the American fabric and political process, threatening the nation.

Speaking from their position of relative power, well-educated and well-off white residents did not voice such fears of loss of white dominance. Along with tolerance talk, some expressed responsibility for educating immigrants about the norms of American society: helping them to learn English, getting children immunized, having appropriate housing and yards for children to play in, and so on. Their duty, as they saw it, was to provide leadership and guidance that enables immigrants to conform. This suggests a belief that immigrants can belong but again only under certain conditions—a discourse of racialized toleration.

In short, all focus group participants framed belonging in terms of an assimilationist imaginary. While expressed differently, reflecting varying educational and class backgrounds as well as political commitments, they all engage discursively in a selective closure of American culture that solidifies cultural boundaries.

Encounter as a Possibility for Change: Reflections on Othering and Negotiating Across Differences

Notwithstanding the persistence of white racial stereotypes, prejudice, racism, and residents' expectations that immigrants become like them, white residents also inhabited spaces that potentially open up possibilities for change. The space of the focus group itself offered participants an opportunity to reflect on their racial stereotypes and relations with immigrants. Participants in the working-class focus group discussed their fear of immigrants of color and how it is deeply engrained in their fear of the "dangerous black Other."

Lilly: We're not even talking about blacks anymore. We used to always.

Daniel: Oh, yeah. Yeah, African Americans. We haven't talked about them at all tonight.

Lilly: I didn't say it proper.

Andrea: Well I coulda said it worse. Cuz this is [Devereaux], and what do we have, one family of black people?

Daniel: Oh, no. There's about five or six.

Andrea: There was only one when I went to high school. That was my senior year that they moved into town. But you always heard growing up—black are bad, they don't work, they work but they you know steal from ya, they steal ya blind.

Leanne: And you gotta be afraid of 'em cuz they will hurt ya.

Andrea: And now you're more afraid of the immigrants that are coming in instead of the blacks that we've had here. I don't know, it just seems like no one talks about black people anymore. They must be okay and accepted now because there's somebody else not to like.

Here the participants themselves locate their fear of immigrants in deep-seated white racial prejudice, speculating that the racialization of new immigrants may be replacing that of African Americans. This conversation also suggests that, until recently, white racial prejudice in small towns was reproduced in the virtual absence of residents' lived experiences with non-whites. Instead, they draw on and reproduce the racial prejudice that has been part of the history of the American nation, illustrating how it cannot be reduced to local face-to-face encounters in the present. Racial prejudice rehearses already existing national discourses that define the United States as a white, Anglo-Saxon nation.

The preceding conversation opened up space for further reflections on the future prospects of race relations in the town. Several of the mothers in the group with teenage children suggested that, in contrast to their own upbringing, their children are growing up in a very different environment where they are exposed to and regularly socialize with Somali, Sudanese, and Mexican children and youth. In their opinion, these more intimate face-to-face interactions will help their children transgress the racial boundaries so firmly lodged in their own minds and erode racial prejudice. The focus in this research on adult residents made it impossible to examine these claims or perceptions.¹¹ Social psychological research on face-to-face contact and racial prejudice suggests, however, that intimate contact itself does not reduce racial prejudice. This would require certain conditions, such as equal status of the two groups and common goals, which are rarely met in everyday intergroup contact (Allport 1954).¹²

Participants sometimes actively interrogated inconsistencies in their own narratives of immigrant Others. In the working- and middle-class groups, an individual participant would articulate negative stereotypes about a particular group but provide a positive account of an individual member of the group. Such inconsistencies remained unreflected, unless other participants made them apparent. For example, Andrea articulates negative stereotypical beliefs about the criminal behavior of Mexicans in the trailer parks. Her sister Leanne

reminds her that their niece is married to a Mexican and asks, "How can you be friends with a Mexican and at the same time believe all these mean things about Mexicans?" In response, Andrea simply states that she likes him, he is quiet and friendly, and she would trust him with her children. She emphasizes positive individual traits when describing him, retaining nothing of the negative stereotype of Mexicans.

Similarly, Lilly, a white woman who used to work in the food processing plant, holds strong negative stereotypes of new immigrants that she is not shy to express, as documented earlier. At the same time, however, she has formed a close personal friendship with Mexican and Asian coworkers with whom she worked on the evisceration line.

Lilly: There's one little Mexican . . . I am short, but he was shorter. That's short. He came to work, and so when I came to work early and he came up and he was waiting to start working. And he didn't have no coffee or anything so I started talkin' to him and I lent him enough money to go and get a sandwich and a cup of coffee. He's still my best friend.

Daniel: How long did it take you to get it back? Next day?

Lilly: No, his next paycheck. He came and paid me right away.

Lilly heralds the positive attributes of her Mexican friend, while retaining an essentialist negative representation of immigrants. Social psychological scholarship on contact theory provides conflicting evidence about whether positive attitudes toward individual members of an outgroup are scaled up to the outgroup as a whole (Pettigrew 1998). Findings show that instead of scaling positive attitudes up, individuals are exempted from the group stereotype—often referred to as *refencing of evidence* or *subtyping* (Brown and Turner 1991). This suggests that exempting individuals does not erode group racial stereotypes. Goldberg (1993, 128) is more optimistic, however: "Stereotypes have only partial extension, altering and corroding the more familiar agents become with group members."

Participants in the professional and college-educated focus groups reflected on the complex and difficult task of escaping *silent racism*, a term coined by Trepagnier (2007) to describe situations where white Americans might not engage in racist discourse but continue to hold stereotypical images and paternalistic assumptions. Following a conversation about the responsibility of educating immigrants about the norms of American society, discussed earlier, some professionals

critically reflected on their paternalistic attitude toward immigrants.

Joe: Here we are all white folks talking about folks of color. Imagine Native Americans saying I don't know about these white folks. But the Native Americans never had a choice, the whites came with guns. Maybe this sounds like anti-Americanism—I am proud of our country, but I'm not proud of how we got here. Inside me I'm saying maybe I can make things a little better for people who are coming today. Maybe that's my role.

Matthew: You have a good point. I've been in so many communities who have talked about this issue. It's all white people talking about the needs of people of color, but when you try to have a meeting with them and get them to tell us what your needs are, it's hard. You can't get your foot in the door.

Joe and Matthew both caution against the idea that “white folks speak for the immigrants,” with Matthew also voicing frustration at the difficulty of getting immigrants involved in local affairs. This conversation offers an encouraging sign that white residents are interrogating this form of silent racism, even as it highlights once more the difficulty of escaping and avoiding the language and logic of racism.

Conclusion

Spaces of encounters between long-term white residents and immigrants of color in small-town rural Minnesota are problematic. Encounters incite processes of Othering and racialization of immigrants and space, often marred with racism, and elicit strong emotions—primarily fear and anxiety. Associations of immigrants and spaces with danger are not simply catalyzed by face-to-face encounters but also draw on dominant discourses emanating from the past and beyond that place: racial stereotypes and discourses of immigration, race, and nation that are part of the history of racial nationalism in the United States, as well as a racialization that constructs rural space in the upper Midwest as white. The specific form these take is inflected by individuals' sociospatial positionality.

This racialization serves to defend white entitlements to economic and political resources, shore up racial and cultural boundaries, and recover an imagined idealized place and past. It establishes conditions of belonging to the national and local community. Although voiced in very different ways, reflecting white residents' class, educational backgrounds, and political commitments, by and large belonging was conceived as

requiring conformity with white American values and norms. This assimilationist imaginary runs up against the multicultural and multiracial reality of the town, producing a paradox: a fantastically diverse small town that has absorbed the world, the bulk of whose residents resent and have difficulties acknowledging the world now within it.

Even though racialization, racial prejudice, and racism are persistent problems, narratives emerged and relations were forged that illuminate possibilities for positive change. Building friendships with individual migrants, especially, holds some promise for transcending differences and identifying commonalities across racial and cultural divides and changing the category of the “we.” For example, although not necessarily destabilizing the category of whiteness, Lilly's friendship with her Mexican and Asian coworkers begins to include the friends in her “we.” Indeed, despite concerted efforts to defend the place against the intrusion of outsiders, the mere presence of immigrants of color has already transformed the town and its spaces, however reluctantly. Thus, although it is important to document and interrogate white residents' exclusionary tendencies, it is equally important to pay attention to the ordinary everyday relations and practices that emerge across differences, creating what one could call an ordinary multiculturalism characterized by some permeability of social and cultural boundaries in the everyday.

There remains a need for interventions that seek to break down racial stereotypes and racism and deeply held notions of a white America, particularly in light of the proliferation of exclusionary immigration ordinances implemented by state and local governments to deter and keep out unwanted undocumented immigrants (Leitner and Preston 2011; Walker and Leitner 2011). Proponents of such policies steadfastly claim that these have nothing to do with race but are about legality. To date no such local anti-immigration ordinances have been passed in Minnesota. Instead, Devereaux and other Minnesota small towns have experimented with a variety of initiatives to promote greater openness to change and improve relations between white residents and immigrants of color, through welcome centers and diversity coalitions (Downs-Schwei and Fennelly 2007). Such initiatives frequently are framed around multiculturalism, celebrating cultural difference, and promoting cross-cultural understanding. Yet they conspicuously avoid discussions of issues of race or fears of the Other. They also leave unaddressed the political and economic processes that have been undermining the livelihoods of white residents and immigrants alike, contributing to whites' anxieties and fears.

This research suggests that such local initiatives will need to address, head on, issues of race, privilege, and racial discrimination and these political and economic processes. Furthermore, emotions, particularly anxiety and fear, need to be taken seriously in understanding and addressing tensions and conflicts between long-term residents and new immigrants. Bringing these issues into the open is difficult, as Downs-Schwei and Fennelly's (2007) study of such initiatives in rural Minnesota acknowledged. Furthermore, the voices of white working-class residents as well as immigrants of color need to be incorporated into these initiatives. As Otteson (2007) has noted, local initiatives increasingly include immigrants of color but by and large fail to solicit input from white working-class residents.

Furthermore, as Sandercock (2003) has suggested, it is necessary to go beyond the local, to replace dominant assimilationist and multicultural models of living with difference with a model of intercultural coexistence. Intercultural coexistence requires knowledge of and a willingness to learn from and recognize value in the Other, which necessitates moving away from defining national and local belonging based on race and ethnicity toward a belonging based in a shared commitment to political community. It also demands a willingness to address prevailing inequalities of political and economic power and to negotiate fears of the Other (Sandercock 2003).

Realizing such an alternative imaginary for living together with difference is, of course, a gargantuan task under the realities of the contemporary period, in which dominant political discourses and policies fortify social and spatial boundaries, depoliticize racism, and intensify social inequalities. Yet social change is never easy; it is a long-term process that requires hard work and is rife with antagonism and conflict. In a globalized world that will continue to be characterized by the unexpected coming together of previously distanced people, triggering unprecedented encounters with difference, enacting an alternative politics of belonging that entails negotiating and exceeding boundaries, rather than maintaining and fortifying them, is a necessary prerequisite for peaceful, stable, and yet dynamic multicultural and multiracial societies and places.

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Notes

1. Other studies have shown significant differences across generations. These are not explored in this study, which focuses on adults between the ages of twenty-eight and seventy-four.
2. Following Ahmed (2004a), I do not distinguish affect from emotion.
3. Different authors assign different meanings to racialization, emphasizing different aspects of Othering—aspects of physical corporeality and embodiment versus aspects of culture and ideology (for a detailed genealogy, see Barot and Bird 2001).
4. *Viscosity* refers to the holding together of bodies based, for example, on physical characteristics such as skin color or certain types of behavior.
5. *Projection* refers to the capacity “to attribute to other people . . . feelings of various kinds” (Klein 1960, cited in Sibley 1995, 6).
6. Each focus group had five to ten participants, 55 percent female and 91 percent identified as Lutherans and Catholics. Participants ranged in age between twenty-eight and seventy-four, with the majority (about 67 percent) between forty and sixty-four. Ninety-one percent had lived in Devereaux more than ten years, with 50 percent born there. Regarding income level, 21.1 percent had an annual income of less than \$20,000, 37 percent earned between \$20,000 and \$50,000, and 42 percent exceeded \$50,000. The names used here are pseudonyms. Focus groups were organized around such broad themes as sociospatial transformations in town; experiences, perceptions, and contacts with immigrants; and understandings of community.
7. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, often referred to as the Welfare Reform Act, partly eliminated the previously existing social safety net for the poor, reduced assistance, and required welfare recipients to work, in exchange for time-limited assistance.
8. Due to space constraints I only report selected aspects of these. Remarks about immigrants' corporeality cannot be separated from cultural characteristics, however; cultural characteristics become embodied, and bodily characteristics are culturally constructed.
9. One of the most often cited positive cultural differences was the upholding of family values by Asian and Hispanic immigrants. They are seen as embodying and rendering visible values and practices that whites have lost but long for. Although this representation reproduces an “us” versus “them,” this positive cultural stereotype can be incorporated into a discourse of acceptance and inclusion.
10. For a discussion of the role of trailer parks in housing low-wage and racialized workers, see Nelson and Hiemstra (2008).

11. Thomas's (2008) work on immigrant teenage girls of Latina and Armenian descent in a Los Angeles high school suggests that although they profess postracial attitudes (i.e., racial differences do not matter), their narratives are infused with race thinking and racialized resentment.
12. More than half a century ago, Allport (1954) formulated the contact hypothesis, which suggests that interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between minority and majority populations if certain conditions are met, including equal status of the groups, common goals, lack of competition between groups, and authority sanction for the contact. These conditions are not present in many intergroup contacts, however.

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Correspondence: Department of Geography, University of Minnesota, 414 Social Science Building, Minneapolis, MN 55455, e-mail: eqj6139@umn.edu.