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Via Chicago: Ethnic media, new media and the experience of migration and mobility—Steve Jones

It's a pleasure to be here for a variety of reasons, and I'll get to some of those shortly. This is going to be interesting. I have two microphones, I have a voice recorder, we're webstreaming, there's this computer, there's another computer there. I don't think I've ever been quite this digital in my life.

Let me start with a little bit of background first. Kate mentioned that it's going to be the 10th anniversary conference of the Association of Internet Researchers. It's been 15 years since I really started putting together the Cybersociety book, which came out in 1995. And I was thinking about this last night because it kicks off, actually, with a lyric, and those of you who've tried to publish things with song lyrics in them—and this could take me off on a tangent about intellectual property—you know how difficult that can be, right? But to my great surprise, actually, the publisher rolled over on this one, I think because in other parts of the book I'd actually used lyrics to songs to which I owned the copyright. I think they assumed somehow that I owned the copyright to this, which of course was absurd. The lyric is actually from a song by a now long-defunct band called 10,000 Maniacs. And the lyric went like this. It was to a song called "Gold Rush Brides."

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Follow the typical signs, the hand painted lines,
down prairie roads past the long church spire,
past the talking wire from where to who knows.

And that line was important to me about the talking wire because I had, at that point, done a fair bit of reading about the stringing of telephone wire in rural parts of the U.S., which is an absolutely fascinating story. It could be the topic of a whole other talk. But the song itself was actually focused on homesteading in the U.S. On the homestead wives. And the end of it—I guess this is to give us a sense of what homesteading may have been like. The end of that song has the following passage:

In letters mailed back home,
her eastern sisters, they would moan as they would read
accounts of madness, childbirth, loneliness, and grief.

My parents were immigrants. Despite the fact that they changed their name to Jones, they were, in fact, immigrants. And it made me wonder, how did they keep in touch? How did they keep in touch with friends and family at home? How did they learn about the local ethnic community that they joined here in Chicago when they arrived? It was primarily letters that they used. Phone calls were incredibly rare and incredibly expensive. They were usually used to communicate about birth, about death, or other sorts of grand events in life, and then they were incredibly short, of incredibly poor quality—audio quality, anyway—and they had to be made considerably in advance. In other words, you would call the operator, and sometime later the phone in your house would ring, and that would be your call. An operator would make the connection for you. It was not nearly as easy as it is now to make a phone call to just about anywhere. Long-distance calling even in the U.S. was somewhat uncommon. Much of what they did in terms of keeping up with news was to go to the library and simply get the copies of foreign newspapers that would typically take about one to two weeks to arrive via mail, on average, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter.

Then when I was working toward my Ph.D., I ran across a wonderful book called *The Uses of Literacy* by a fellow named Richard Hoggart. It's a key text in British cultural studies, and it really paved the way for much subsequent work, and was extraordinarily influential on people like Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. Hoggart has a passage in that book where he writes about reading rooms in branch libraries in the UK, and I'll read just a little bit of that. Quoting Hoggart:

The strength of sense of home and neighborhood may be seen in those old men who filled the reading rooms of the branch public libraries. They were often the solitaries, men whose families have grown up and left them, whose wives have died or are bedridden, and who are no longer at work. Many come daily to the reading room where it is warm [and there are] seats. The reading rooms themselves have a syringed and workhouse air. The newspapers stretch bleakly around the walls. Heavily clamped, and with the sporting pages pasted over, so as to carefully discourage punters. The magazines lie on dark oak desks across which green-shaded lamps throw so narrow a beam, but the whole of the room, above elbow height, is in permanent shadow by the late afternoon. The shadow helps to soften the insistences of the many notices. Heavy, black on white, all prohibitive and most imperative, which alternate with the newspapers on the walls. In one reading room, I know, there are eight different junctions varying in length from "silence" in letters nine inches high and four inches across, to "No person is allowed to bring reading matter into this room for perusal, but readers must confine themselves to the publications herein displayed." After awhile, the atmosphere is so depressing that you begin to think that "no audible conversations allowed" is an instance of warm-heartedness in the midst of officialdom. A sensible allowance for the fact that so many of the regulars talk to themselves.

Part of the reason that had such resonance for me when I read it was that one of the first stories I remember hearing about the Skokie Public Library was about its longtime head librarian, Mary Radmacher, who preceded Carolyn Anthony, removing the sign that said "silence" in the library and getting a phone line for the library.

Now, I actually hail from a long line of librarians, the most recent one of which is my mother, who earned her Master's in Library Science here—before it was Dominican, but here, nevertheless. I actually told her I was speaking at Dominican, and it didn't register. "Where would that be?" She spent, I believe, 26 years at the Skokie Public Library. I spent about four or five years there working in various capacities from page—I don't know if that designation still exists at the library or not—up to, I think I was given some very ceremonial title of Underassistant Librarian or something like that. And much of what I observed during my years there, both as a patron, albeit with some backstage access, and as an employee, in some ways resonated with the kinds of things that Hoggart was saying. The Skokie Public Library was absolutely extraordinary, and I'm sure it still is, in terms of the sheer scope and variety of its patrons and the sheer scope and variety of its collection of newspapers and other resources that would serve a very, very varied ethnic community.

Now, one of the things that I do wonder about is—and this serves as a foundation for the remainder of what I have to say—in what ways has the ability to access information from almost anywhere, and to be in touch with almost anyone anywhere at any given moment, altered the experiences of both immigration, of being in a new place, and assimilation, of learning about that place. If you think about what it means now, to be an immigrant, strictly in terms of information, of learning the ropes, of learning the lay of the land, and having less contact with friends and family, we've just, in the past 20 years, seen enormous change. Some of this is due to the internet, but some of this is not. Some of this is due to mobile telephony, to cheap long distance. And some of it is, in fact, due to transportation, not necessarily of people, but of goods, because it's possible to relatively inexpensively overnight things almost anywhere in the world.

Now, part of the reason that's been important for me is that one of the key thinkers for me, and one of my mentors, a fellow by the name of James Carey, made what I think is a crucial distinction about communication. Essentially we've divided it into two components, communication as transportation and communication as ritual. Communication as transportation is the easiest one of those two to really grasp, right? It's the moving of messages, and it's the classic model on which communication has been

built: sender, message, receiver. We move messages from one place to another, and we evaluate the quality of that communication by whether or not the message has stayed intact and been understood when it's arrived.

But for Carey, the notion of communication as ritual is much more resonant and much more meaningful because communication as ritual involves the ways we use communication to share a common culture, common understandings, common knowledge. From that standpoint, the library plays an absolutely key role, particularly my parents' generation, for immigrants and ethnic communities. It's served in many ways as a touchstone to home. The mail had some of the same resonance for them too, via the postal service. And in some ways both of those institutions helped to combat a kind of loneliness that is part and parcel, I think, of the experience of moving a long distance away to a culture that is completely new.

Now, the other way in which that term is particularly important, in terms of the kind of research that I'm going to propose towards the end this conversation, is that it is difficult to jump into the middle of conversations that are ritual based because you don't know the lay of the land, you don't know the keywords, you don't know the symbols that are involved. It is literally not knowing the language, not strictly in terms of getting by, of figuring out, you know, where do I get a driver's license or where do I get a job, but also in terms of those things that everyone around here knows. Like where the cheap groceries are, or where you can get the newspaper, or where you get inexpensive clothes, or how you can save on your heating bills. The kind of things about which people generally don't have conversations with strangers or people they just met.

Now, let me take you through a little bit of background on internet research. In most ways internet research itself started out very strongly from a kind of transportation model. Most of the funded research in its earliest days, and here I'm talking the early 70s into the 80s, was based in organizations and an understanding of how knowledge moved around in various corporate or other sorts of institutional settings. There were quite a few studies of email, of sort of the equivalent of instant messaging at the time. I was incredibly fortunate to be an undergraduate at UIUC and using the PLATO system—some of you may remember that. The goal of it, really, was to try to understand how people could efficiently move or send messages back and forth between one another.

What we started to realize into the 80s and later is that there are a lot of factors beyond the technology that have consequences for how that technology is used and how it makes sense in people's lives. What we're still only, I think, in the very early stages of doing, is trying to understand some things about how different cultural attitudes toward technology and toward its use have consequences for the deployment of it in meaningful ways. Kate had mentioned stimulus money that's going towards broadband. Some of this debate took place when the E-Rate was first mooted.

I've been very fortunate to work with Lee Rainie on the genesis of the Pew Internet and American Life Project ten years ago. It's ongoing, it's now become part of the Pew Research Center, and it's essentially dedicated to going out in the field every day, typically using random digital dialing phone surveys, classic kinds of social scientific research methods, and trying to find out who's online, what they're doing online, and talk to them a little bit about it.

Some of the things that are particularly striking about our data from then until now are the changes in use. Here are some of the raw numbers here in terms of internet

use: if you go back to our first aggregation of data in the middle of 2000, we had 47 percent of adults in the U.S. using the internet, and we're now up to 74 percent. And we're creeping toward the same penetration rate that we have for the telephone and television. Without getting terribly morbid, I hope, at this point, really what's driving the increase in use is time. Young people are internet users. The people least likely to be using the internet are senior citizens. All right, so you can do the calculation here and figure out why those numbers are changing. We, as of about four or so years ago, for all intents and purposes have hit the slowly upward creeping slope on the diffusion curve. There has not been much in the way of driving people to use the internet in the last four to five years as there was when we first started doing these surveys for the project in the year 2000. It's somewhat of a shame that we didn't start the project sooner so we could have seen the really rapid rise and seen among which populations that occurred, but so be it.

And you can see some of the other data here—I'm not going to belabor them, if only for lack of time- but you can see where we've made some progress and where we've not made progress to a great extent in other cases. The divides that we've been talking about for the last fifteen years or longer are still there: typically, race, ethnicity, age, gender, income—all of this still shows, but there are disparities. I don't think we need a survey to tell us that, but at least we have a survey to back up what our gut feeling is. Of these, really, income is the one that has remained the most constant—in other words, the most difficult to get a handle on and in some way fix. We've seen some enormous increases in some of these other categories. We've seen some really enormous increases in adoption. But when it comes to income, things have really, really stayed pretty much steady state.

What we haven't talked about very much is a kind of a geographic divide. There's been occasional discussion of it in relation to broadband particularly, but pretty clearly, there are some significant differences between urban, suburban, and rural internet use and computer use, right? So these figures show us what computer use was like between 2000 and 2008. The disparities still exist. There's been an interesting sort of change here though, because urban and suburban computer use has flip-flopped. Given the margin of error here, though, maybe not all that much—maybe they're neck and neck. But nevertheless it's still a significant thing to see.

In metropolitan Chicago, we have some interesting effects here, too. Seventy-one percent of those in an urban area in metro Chicago are using the internet. Seventy-one percent. But in the rural areas of metropolitan Chicago, it's only about half of the population. And there's almost no doubt that's to do with access, plain and simple. It's probably not even due to income. It's probably due to access. We haven't asked the income question in a targeted or a direct way, but that's our guess. It again mirrors what we saw in 2000, but if you look at the 2008 figures, the disparity's actually growing. It looks worse in 2008. In Cook County we're somewhat better than the national average, and in terms of internet use, we've surpassed the national average, right?—if you look all across Cook County. If you look at metro Chicago broken out by the four counties, you see some interesting disparities here, too. In Lake County they're going gangbusters in terms of computer use, right? Cook Country is lagging. So this further reinforces some of our notions about what's going on, geographically speaking. There are similar statistics for internet use in regard to Cook County lagging somewhat compared to the other three counties. And in this case, it is lagging considerably. If you look at 2008 in that middle

column, if you look at these numbers, that's really a pretty remarkable difference between Cook and the other three counties.

What we don't have with any of our data is a way to do a very fine-grained analysis. We really don't know very much about individual neighborhoods or ethnic groups when we ask the standard demographic questions about race. We don't ask about ethnicity. We don't ask about whether or not somebody's an immigrant. We don't ask about how long they've been in the U.S. There's a lot that we don't ask, and part of the reason for that is because we ask a lot of questions. To keep people on the telephone for a very long time, when you're doing survey research, is tricky to say the least. We've been actually very fortunate, and I think it's in no small measure due to the fact that we're representing the Pew Charitable Trusts and not some marketing company or what have you.

But we're still struggling with this. In some ways the real value of what we do at the Pew Internet project is not any individual phone call. It's the fact that we've been doing it now for 9, you know, almost 10 years. And we've been asking a core set of questions, the same, for that period of time. So the comparative data that we have over time is probably the single most valuable asset that we have. I'll have a URL for the project to give you, and I do this in almost every single talk that I give, I encourage people to just go to the site and look at the reports. We make our data freely available, so if you feel comfortable with Excel or SPSS, go download our data and play around with it, because we now have more data than we can actually use. There's not enough time. We have people in an office in D.C. who are mainly tasked with keeping new projects going. We don't really have the time to do stuff with that older data. And there's an enormous data set that's just waiting there to be mined. And people are mining it, but we could probably throw thousands of people at it and find out all sorts of interesting things in so doing.

So why do we need that fine-grained analysis? Well, one reason is that ethnic communities are the ones that I think are using new media in particularly interesting and meaningful ways. And so what I have is a series of quotes from research in the last ten or so years that, so far as I've been able to tell, nobody's taken up as a challenge. Here's a response to a question about whether or not attachment to an ethnic community is a good or a bad thing. Isn't it interesting that our metaphors about immigration are all focused around foods? You know, melting pots, and salad bowls. Is it better to have an attachment to an ethnic community or is it better to assimilate, or is it more a hybrid than a binary that's at stake?

Along these lines, Viswanath and Arora (2000) wrote,

> for the ethnic audience in particular, as a result of [new] communication technologies, geographical and temporal barriers indeed may become less important among different groups [that] information from and about distance areas. Will that, however, mean that other barriers such as social class, ideology and power cease to matter? Does the content and focus of the information available in cyberspace differ from traditional media?

Another way to put it is that we don't really have research that shows the degree to which immigrant groups and ethnic communities have used media before the internet. I

don't mean to impugn the Chicago Public Library on this at all, but I've had discussions with them that have simply not been that fruitful about trying to get at some data about things like newspaper use in various branch libraries where particular ethnic communities are situated. I simply don't have the data at this point. It doesn't seem to be forthcoming. I think it's an important question—so far as I'm aware, this is a somewhat zero-sum game, right? You can only pay attention to so much information, simply given how much time there is in a day. To what information in particular are recent immigrants giving time? To what are they paying attention?

Ananda Mitra has done some interesting theorizing on the topic, and argued that,

> At the end of the 20th century we were witnessing a communication revolution facilitating the movement of people and information across great distances, thus producing a set of unique possibilities, conditions and tensions in the history of civilization. (2005)

In the same article, he

> considers the consequences of this tension of immigrants, who often set up dissonance for themselves by disrupting their sense of space, and then attempt to resolve the tensions by mobilizing the digital realm of the internet.

One of the most interesting things that I've witnessed at UIC, for instance—my good friend and colleague at Northwestern, Eszter Hargittai has some terrific research on this, is that our students at UIC will, as often as not, when they sit down in a cafeteria or other public space where there's Wi-Fi, open up the computer, fire up the browser, and the homepage to which that browser goes is their newspaper from home. From Singapore, from China, from India, from you name it. In some cases there are interesting gender divides here because very often the male students will have sports pages, and it's either cricket or soccer.

This is an incredibly simple observation. And I've had students in research courses do this as a way to learn a little bit about simply doing observations. It was pretty clear that for students at UIC there's a very strong connection to an element of home in a way that would have been impossible for them to have before the advent of this technology. We have no idea what the consequences of this are. We don't know what this means. And I don't mean simply in a very kind of black-and-white good or bad way —is it a good or a bad thing? We simply don't understand where this type of information activity fits in the lives of these students. How is this meaningful? Why do they do this? Is it a way to stay in contact with home? Is it a way to stay in contact with some element of the culture that continues to be important to them?

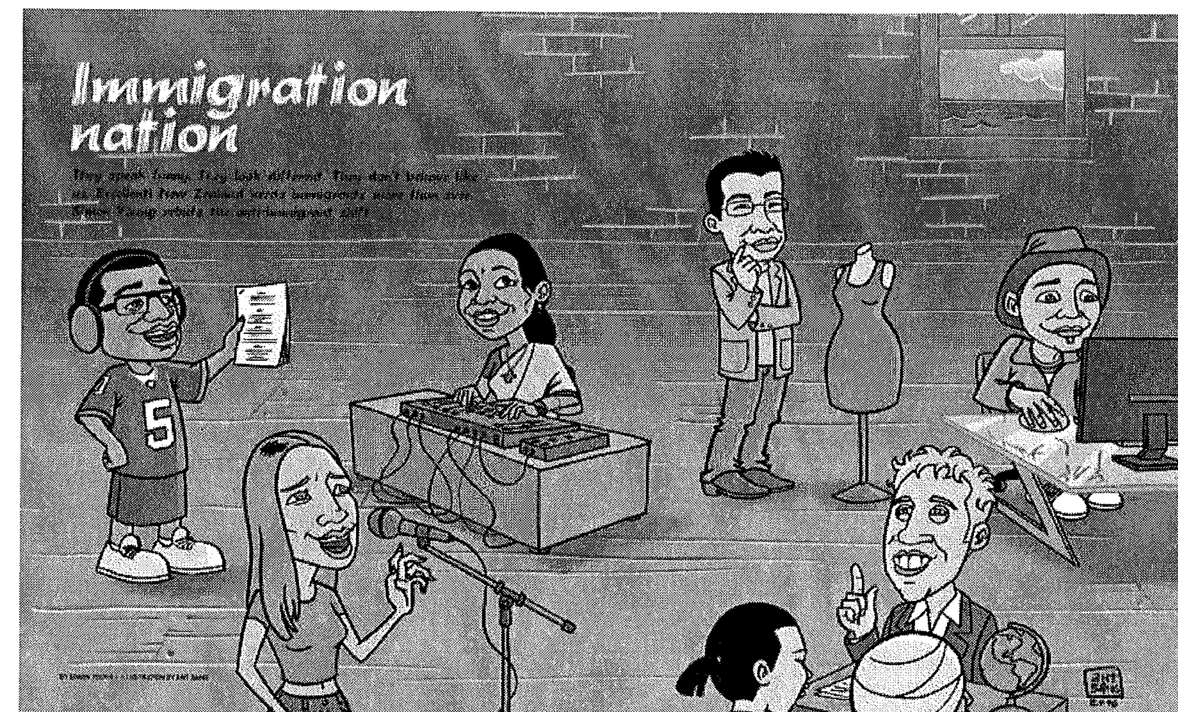
Closer to home in a sense, Mehra and Papajohn (2003) wrote,

> Communities of [Diaspora's] ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but taking strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin are using the internet in significant ways to establish their dual identities via networking across home and host countries.

I'm going to take a swipe at sociology incredibly unfairly, in which I have very little training apart from some graduate-level courses. We still, I think, operate under the notion that people have individual identities, particularly when it comes to ethnicity. Now, they may be, you know, hyphenated identities, but that doesn't mean that they're dual. That's still understood as one identity, like African American. You see this even in the ways that we take census data and you can't check off two boxes. You can't be Hispanic and Asian. You can be one of those. And if they give you, you know, Hispanic-Asian, well, that's one, right? You still don't get both.

So, you know, this notion of dual or more identities is incredibly important, I think, for understanding how these technologies are deployed and made meaningful in the lives of members of ethnic communities, and particularly those who are recent immigrants. And not just immigrants to the U.S. I'm picking on the U.S. because being in Chicago, this is an incredibly fertile area to study this. But I suspect, simply from my travels, that this type of thing occurs all over the world, particularly in urban settings, and particularly in ones that have a great deal of mobility, you know, thanks to air travel, rail travel, the transportation hubs around the world.

So let me close with a few words about where I think we're going to go with this, for better or worse, as a project of study. Where I'm beginning is trying to get a handle on old media. You know, this probably says something about my age and the kind of culture in which I grew up in, but I want to know some things about ethnic newspapers, radio, and television in Chicago. The Chicago History Museum has 245 ethnic newspapers in its index, and that's just astounding. That's amazing. And I'm sure they're missing a bunch. That's an absolutely huge number. We have very little research about who these papers represent, both geographically speaking, what are the geographic areas they cover, but also in terms of their readership. And then because of language issues, we know precious little about their content. So one of the things to do is to try to marshal a group of people to take a look at those kinds of issues and to try to make some sense out of how these ethnic newspapers survived—how they formed, where they were, what they covered, what their circulation was, and very basic information like that. We need to look at radio programs and TV shows too. Some of those persist to this day, and one of the most wonderful things to me is to simply set the radio on the car to scan on the AM dial and listen to the different languages that are available on radio here locally. And then I think we need to look at new media, but—I stressed this before, this is not an internet-only phenomenon—I think we really need to look at the consequences of mobile phones and cheap long distance if we're going to make sense of the kind of things that are going on here.



This image is taken from a New Zealand website that was promoting positive attitudes toward immigrants, trying to kind of combat some of the backlash against immigration. I was particularly struck by what these characters who are all representing immigrants are doing. You have one fellow in front of a computer and another with headphones on. I can't tell what the headphones are connected to. There's no wire—it's wireless headphones, I suppose. It could be somebody else at a mixing board, somebody singing, somebody looking at a dress for fashion design. It's not clear to me what the person in the bottom right is doing, but it would appear that the person to whom they're speaking—I could be wrong, this could be a turban or it could be some other sort of headgear, but it looks like they have a bandage. So I have no idea what's going on here, but that's part of the reason I wanted to show it.

So this for New Zealanders was meant to convey a notion of "immigrant." Now, when I saw this—it's probably been a couple of years—I was immediately reminded of comments that Jim Carey made in the late 1990s, when he was thinking about recent phenomena in globalization. He was talking about the notion that almost all parts of the world are accessible to us, virtually, immediately and in our own homes. And as somebody who was particularly a student of journalism, Jim was very keen on trying to figure out where journalism was heading. And what he, I think, realized at that time, was that even though newspapers are bringing us all sorts of news about the world, what was becoming strange to us, and what was not being covered, was our own neighborhood. Next door.

And in fact, the people next door may be to us a lot stranger than the people who we read about in a place like Accra about which we see reporting. Another way to put that is that the connections that we suddenly have around the world in a lot of ways seem stronger than the connections that we have to people next door in our own neighborhood

or in our condo or apartment building. There are some powerful forces at work here. And so I don't mean to imply that it's simply something about the internet or mobile technologies that has consequences for how members of ethnic groups or recent immigrants relate to a place to which they've moved, or a place in which they live. I think this has consequences for us all. The ways that we understand where we are and our identity and our place within this world are as greatly affected as the sense of identity for those who have just moved to the U.S. or to Chicago. But it doesn't seem so much like it to us because we've not been uprooted. We're here. We've been here. We've been here for a long time, potentially. So we don't notice it as much as somebody who's just recently arrived and is struck by the newness of it all. If there's one thing we can do with it, it is to at least try to look at the kind of information behavior in which we engage through new eyes and see how that has consequences for the ways that we see one another. And not just the world around us, but the very people next door.

Thanks for your attention. I'd love to take questions, hear comments, feedback, suggestions, and so on, since we're particularly in the early stages of getting this project going.

Questions and answers

How do you deal with the skepticism about the criteria that you're examining as things like ethnicity?

I think the way that you deal with it is to keep hammering on the facts on the ground. And you try to do the best possible job you can of collecting empirical data. We are incredibly fortunate not only to have funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts, but to be located in Washington, D.C. and to be routinely asked to meet with policy makers and on occasion to testify before Congress. I don't think this is a kind of skepticism that you overcome with a single argument. I think it's the kind of skepticism that you overcome—I don't mean to use a violent metaphor here—by literally hitting people over the head until they get it. This is probably better for the sociologists or possibly psychologists to speak to, but it is an incredibly difficult point to get across to people who, for whatever reason, don't get it. And I have no magic formula by which to get them to understand other than to keep saying to them over the years: "Look. Here's what's happening. Here's how we know. This is rigorous research, and you have to understand this." And you have to keep coming back to them over and over again and saying it. We spend a lot of time doing that.

Steve, do you think other countries that are further along get it?

I was speaking about this with colleagues in Scandinavian countries where, particularly when it comes to mobile telephony but also broadband, are ahead of, in the aggregate, where the U.S. is, and who also have a somewhat fraught history of bringing in guest workers from other countries. There's an interesting difference because from the get-go, those countries are much less varied than the U.S. So to be Eastern European, to immigrate to Stockholm is an enormously different experience than to immigrate to

Chicago, not just for national reasons, but because the variety of ethnicities and cultures represented here is already so much broader.

So we've been discussing how we can try to even some of the differences. Well, we can do something sort of comparative. We haven't really come up with a very good way to do that. I'd like to be able to impose upon colleagues in South Korea, as well, who experience some of this diaspora, particularly related to labor. We'll see if that happens, but I think the experience here is different than it is in most, if not all other places. Yes, sir?

My name is Charles Benton. Many years ago I was on a tour of branch libraries in Chicago, and I remember vividly going to the branch library in Chinatown and there were lots of people, lots of Chinese immigrants reading Chinese newspapers. It was their only link to the old country and to the language that they knew, and in many cases they did not know English. You mentioned the dimension of language and the importance of language and the relationship between the other languages and English. And is this part of your study? I'd love to have your comments on that.

It probably will be part of it because I think it's inevitable, because it involves additional learning and types of literacies. It's not a dimension that we're looking at initially because part of what we're struggling with is working through the libraries for access. In some cases we're greeted somewhat warmly, and in other cases we're not. When we've done some of the studies on campus looking at college students, it's been interesting to see the degree to which languages other than English are the languages of first choice in conversation among students, particularly when they're seated around the computer and may be playing a computer game or reading news information or what have you. It has to be part of it.

It would be interesting to know of the 249 newspapers you talked about, how many are foreign language newspapers. The overwhelming majority will be in foreign languages.

You can tell simply by looking at their names. They may be using that as a kind of symbolic title in a way, but I suspect that 95 plus percent of the newspapers are in foreign languages. It's interesting that you mention this issue—I want to keep making the point here that this isn't only about ethnicity and immigration. I have a tiny little cottage up in Wisconsin in a tiny little town that, believe it or not, now has a Starbucks, but prior to having that Starbucks, you could not get a *Chicago Tribune*, a *New York Times*. So now that there's Starbucks, suddenly there's a *New York Times*. There's an intertwining here of transportation, of commerce, and again, there is this notion of ritual and culture. Coffee shops have for so long played a key role in bringing people together and bringing information and news. That, in some odd way, continues to be the case. It's perhaps a somewhat more crass and commercialistic version than we might like to be nostalgic about in terms of the history of cafe culture, but it's still somewhat the case. And the library in this small town did get the paper. The few times I'd been there, the papers are hanging on the racks.

When you're doing your research about immigration in the past with newspapers, television, and radio shows versus today with new immigrants and the internet, have you looked at reasons why they immigrated? And those reasons may have to do with why they're looking at these papers, such as the religious persecution in the late 1800s, early 1900s, and specifically in Skokie, the people who came because of religious persecution.

No, because we haven't done the research. We will, absolutely—that's going to be a big part of the content analysis of the newspapers. I think, being incredibly optimistic, that we can get sufficient circulation data to be able to locate readership.

I come from Triton College. I don't have a question; I just wanted to illustrate the fascinating topic that you have been talking about today with my own personal kind of example or story, and stuff. I came to the United States in 1988 and have been here until now. For a long time I was living in a distant community where me and my daughter were the only Yugoslavs living throughout the 80s, and our only contact with our home back home was mail. At that point, a phone minute was about eighty cents, a dollar, a dollar and twenty cents, and that was just way out of our range. So letters, maybe 12 letters a year or so, one way. And at that time, while I was doing research on cultural identity and its establishment, or how it gets created in postcolonial societies in Eastern Europe and Africa, for my dissertation, my own personal identity was disintegrating because in the 90s there was the war, and basically the country disappeared from the face of the earth, and I was a Yugoslav. There were times when there was no communication- my own sense was, actually, I was the American. My only identity was I'm an American here and married to so-and-so, and that was it, because I really didn't know for many years what was going on over there and where I belong and who am I. And that went on for a long time. The internet started coming to me in the late 90s until NATO started bombing Serbia. In one of the heaviest bombed areas was my hometown. Actually, that was the place that was being bombed. That was the time that I knew about the internet, and I was using it a little bit, but then that event, ten years ago today—March 24th is when it started—got me to be really heavily involved with the internet. I was 24/7 on the internet and discovered communities of people, my own people from my hometowns. And we were very often watching the planes—or monitoring the planes from the communities near the Italian bases, and the planes were taking off going to Slovenia, Croatia, and nobody knew exactly where the planes were, and when they were going to drop the bombs and who or where they hit. And I would call my friends, and they were telling me: "Wow," they said, "I'm finding out from you, you know, that our town was hit, and I live two miles from it." And stuff like that.

So that was my first encounter, and as I said, we never had any contact with Yugoslavs or Serbians where we lived, and our first contact was through the internet. Since then, I have drifted away from literature and moved onto the computers and the internet and to me, that has been really, really fascinating. My own identity has been changing dramatically since 2000. To be closer to the Yugoslav and Serbian communities I eventually moved to Chicago where there's about half a million of these people, and our stores, etc., etc.—what you were talking about really resonates quite well with me, and I have a feeling with a lot of other people here. So thank you.

Thank you. Thanks for sharing that story.

I'm Dan Bassill at the Tutor/Mentor Connection. And you said something about this attachment to ethnic communities: we don't know if it's a good or bad thing yet. I've been seeing some articles about social capital, about bonding and bridging and building some understanding there. I didn't really hear you use those terms in what you were talking about, but have you been looking at that type of information in terms of trying to create understanding of what's happening?

I've looked at notions of social capital, community, and social networking, but I've actually somewhat deliberately steered clear of that in relation to this project. I'm sure it will come in at the end. I think it's in some sense inevitable. I don't, at this point, want to engage questions of social capital online in relation to this because I really want to focus more on family and family connections and connections to friends rather than other types of connections. I think that's where the strongest ties are going to be, and that's where the most lasting points of contact are going to be, using whatever media are available. I think the issues of social capital are going to arise within the context of the ethnic community and that's going to take, I think, an incredible amount of teasing out on the ground to understand, because I don't think that's going to be visible, the new media, in ways that it's visible for nonimmigrants. In other words, I don't think we're going to see recent immigrants employing the kinds of tools that have been used so far to build social capital, like name- your-favorite Web 2.0 type of technology. I think those are going to be less meaningful locally and more meaningful on a larger global scale.

I'm no expert in social capital, which is why I've been building a library of articles and research about this. Initially in my looking at it I was thinking of it for the positive aspects of the expanded network that people have, but now I'm looking at what some researchers write about as the potentially negative social capital. In other words, the thicker your community is, the stronger your network is, the less likely you would reach out or be influenced or perhaps use the new learning opportunity. And so as we're talking about things like this, reading some of the literature that's being developed in that field might help in building some understanding of what the internet or computers are doing with this.

Here's one of the things that we don't know. There's a key issue of trust for a recent immigrant, and that has an enormous impact on how one interprets and works with an understanding of social capital. So, you know, I would theorize at this point that there's going to be a link, a sort of correlation, between time in the U.S. and the progression through technologies for the purpose of building social capital and using it. It's purely theorizing at this point because we haven't done this, but within some period of time—a year's a convenient span—in the first year, my sense is that technologies are going to play less of a role in terms of the local community, and face-to-face contact will play a greater role. And then we'll progress through. One of the difficult things in figuring out the issues is that we need to get a handle not only on technologies here, but prior technologies too, and whether or not online social capital built up through technologies

prior to immigration continues in that fashion and still is meaningful or not after the point of moving. I think that's going to be a really interesting thing to see.

Hi, Dianna Wiggins, YMCA. I have a question. As I sit on the train and watch more people reading newspapers on Kindles, and I hear about traditional formats of newspapers throwing in the towel, I'm wondering how we address the access issues. You know, even a Kindle is $350. So what are we going to do about access issues in the future and the digital divide related to these sources only being available electronically?

I take the Metra every day and I've yet to see anyone using a Kindle. But they use iPhones and you name it, all sorts of other stuff. I don't have an answer. I think it'll probably be a good ten years before we've kind of shaken out journalism here as we know it and figured out what the next iteration of it will be. And I don't have a crystal ball. I've worked as a journalist, and one of my degrees is in journalism, and I love getting the paper, but I also think newspapers today pretty much suck. So I'm pretty clearly conflicted on it.

Here's a thing for me: in a lot of cases we're seeing that recent immigrants are already bringing news habits that involve technology with them, so that we in some sense may have missed the boat in looking for recent immigrants who would look for the newspaper in print form. In terms of access, I think the interesting thing is going to be to see how decisions are made. I mean, if you're a recent immigrant and you're trying to get a handle on, you know, gaining a foothold in a new place, in Chicago, and having to make some incredibly difficult budgeting decisions, where is your information budget going to fit among the other things that you really have to pay for? And then we've been hit, obviously, with the current economic situation. Our data have yet to show that people are ceasing to use information services, that they're no longer paying for broadband or that they are paying less—that they are choosing to try to save money on it. So that's going to have to be factored in as well. I don't know that we're going to see decisions about what sort of format—well, I think it's going to be difficult to get people to tell us why they made decisions about which format to get news in, because, like I said, we may have missed that point at which those decisions were made. And I think the answers we might get are going to be like: "Oh, I don't know. That was so long ago." Or: "I don't know—I didn't really think about it." Or simply, "It was more convenient," and I don't think the answers may be as deliberate as they would have been if we would have been at the crux of that moment.

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