



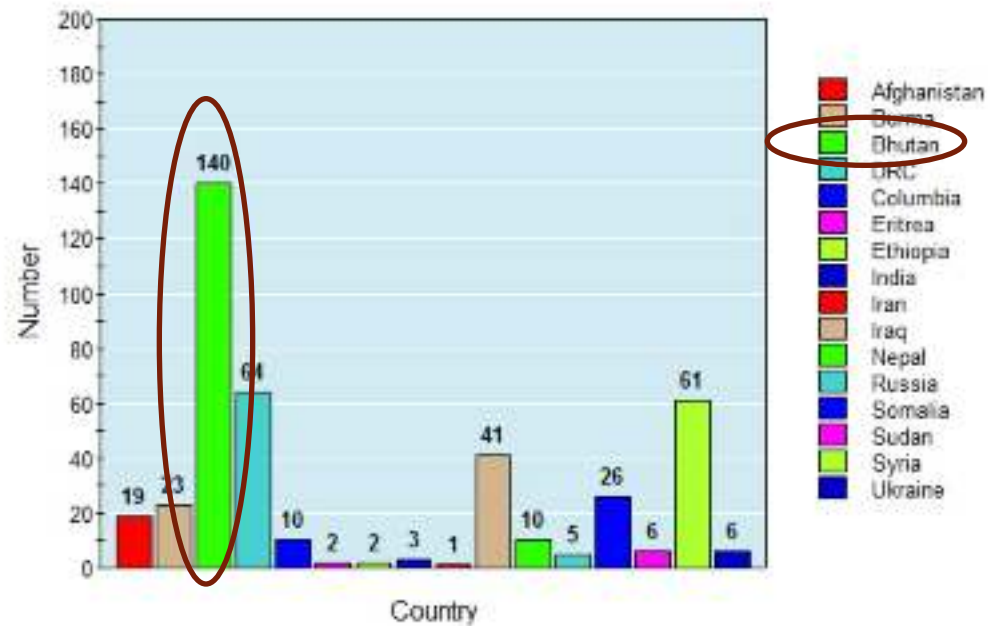
Understanding Collective and Transnational Identity in Pittsburgh (Part II)

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Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Research Fellowship

Recap


Refugees Arriving in Pittsburgh, Oct 2016-Sept 2017



Recap

- ▶ Today, approximately 7,000-8,000 Bhutanese Americans live in Pittsburgh
- ▶ Arrived in two distinct waves
 - ▶ Resettlement from Asia and resettlement within the United States
- ▶ Primarily concentrated in the South Hills





Why is it important to
engage with and
understand refugee
communities today?

Engaging with refugee groups



- ▶ There are currently 65 million displaced people globally in an increasingly globalized world
- ▶ Partnerships and relationships build communities
- ▶ Learning about other people teaches you about yourself



Identity Theory: An Introduction

Defining Identity and Ethnicity

► Start with the dictionary

identity 

noun | iden-ti-ty | ˈɪ-den-tə-tē, ə-, -ˈde-nə-tē

Popularity: Top 1% of lookups

Examples: identity in a Sentence ▼

Definition of IDENTITY

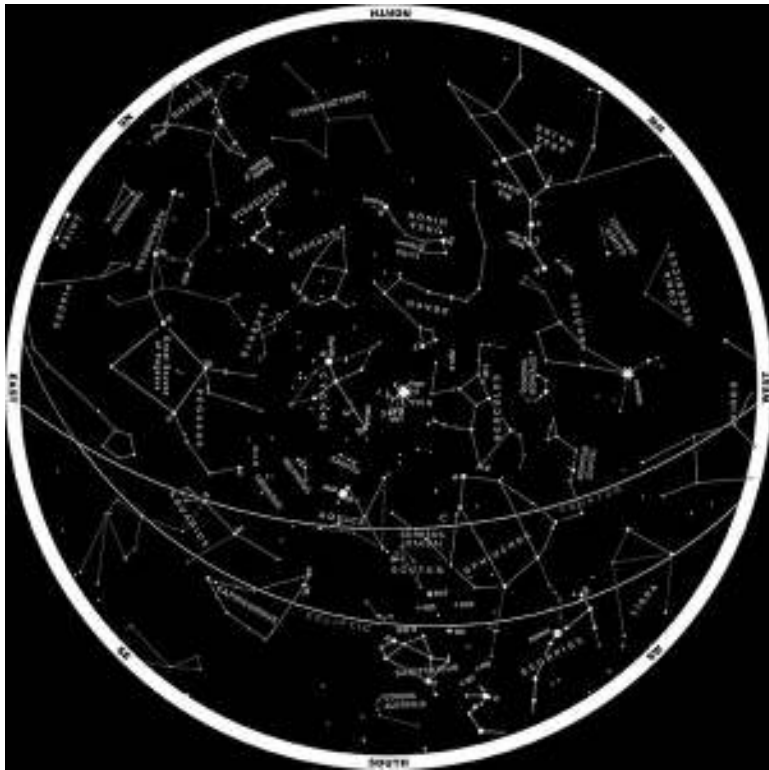
plural identities

- 1 **a** : sameness of essential or generic character in different instances
 b : sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality of a thing : **ONENESS**
- 2 **a** : the distinguishing character or personality of an individual : **INDIVIDUALITY**
 b : the relation established by psychological **identification**
- 3 : the condition of being the same with something described or asserted • establish the *identity* of stolen goods
- 4 : an equation that is satisfied for all values of the symbols
- 5 : **IDENTITY ELEMENT**

Defining Identity and Ethnicity

- ▶ Brubaker and Cooper - Uses of identity
 - ▶ Fundamental, consequential sameness within a specific group
 - ▶ Points to something “allegedly *deep, basic, abiding, or foundational*”
 - ▶ Development of collective understanding
 - ▶ Highlight fluctuating aspects of selfhood

Defining Identity and Ethnicity



“It is useful to treat the notion of identity as the set of points of personal reference on which people may rely to navigate the social world they inhabit, to make sense of the myriad constellations of social relationships that they encounter, to discern their place in these constellations, and to understand the opportunities for action in this context.” – Henry Hale

Defining Identity and Ethnicity

Identity
Ethnicity
Ethnic Identity

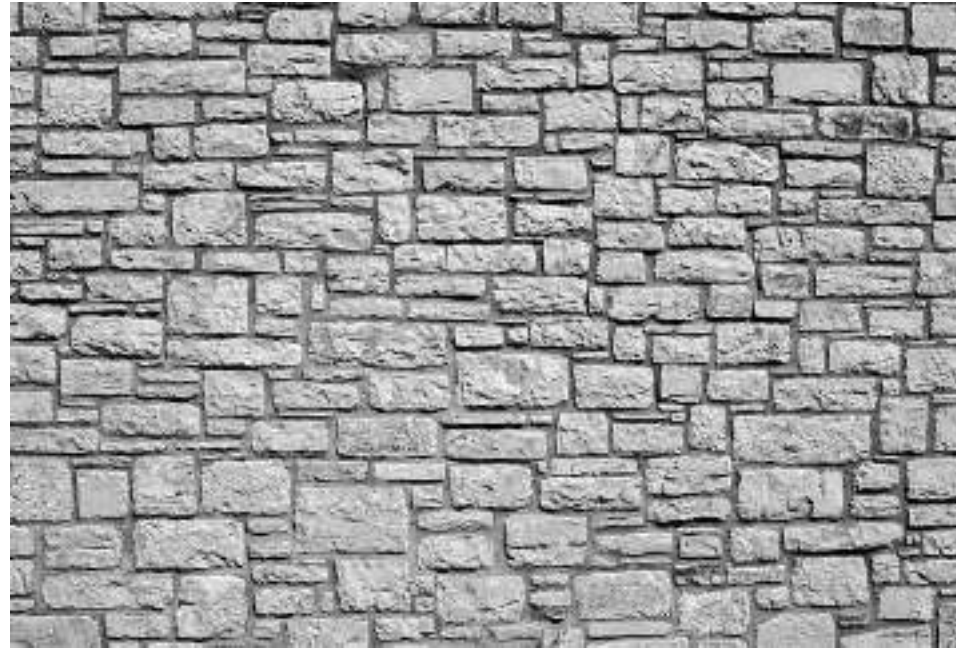
Defining Identity and Ethnicity

- ▶ Hale: Ethnic groups consist of individuals with common points of reference (“constellations”)
- ▶ Bentley: Similar life experiences leading to common dispositions
- ▶ Ancestral descent, culture, language, religion, history, etc.
- ▶ Eriksen: Ethnicity as a “fluid and ambiguous aspect of social life,” can be “manipulated by the agents themselves”

Constructivist vs Primordialist Theories of Ethnicity and Identity

Primordialist

- ▶ Rigid
- ▶ Does not change or adapt
- ▶ Established through history/historical practices
- ▶ “Hard”



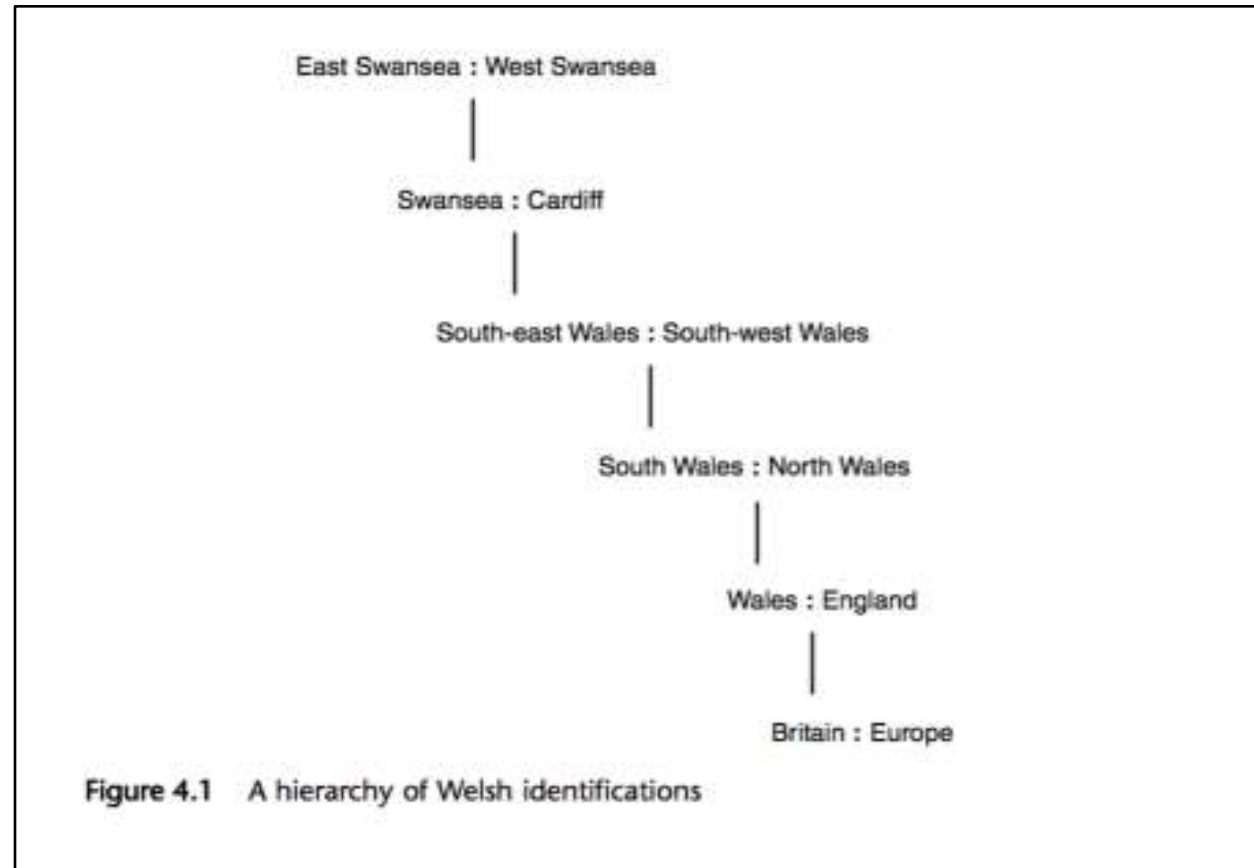
Constructivist

- ▶ Fluid
- ▶ Adaptive
- ▶ Ever-changing
- ▶ “Soft,” “Weak”

Identity – Interaction and Categorization

- ▶ Getting around “hard” and “soft” identity: focus on **relational** and **categorical** identification
 - ▶ People will place themselves in relation to the people around them, depending on levels of sameness and difference
 - ▶ People will classify themselves in groups according to sameness
 - ▶ Categorization/Classification

Identity – Interaction and Categorization



Identity – Interaction and Categorization

How do people categorize themselves?

- ▶ Barth: it “must depend on their exhibiting the particular traits of the culture”
- ▶ Hatoss: it must “reflect their attitudes, emotions, and other imbedded cultural meanings”

Identity – Interaction and Categorization

- ▶ Interaction as a mechanism for categorization
 - ▶ Eriksen: Interactions strengthen group identities
- ▶ *Interaction order*
 - ▶ Goffman: “The consequences of systems of enabling conversation”
 - ▶ Enables individuals to characterize and categorize themselves via interaction and observance



Identity in Context: (Trans)national Identity and Boundaries



- ▶ Community and nationalism
 - ▶ Cohen: Community is a mental construct
 - ▶ Eriksen: Forms of nationalism
 - ▶ Formal nationalism: Associated with the nation-state (bureaucracy, organization, ideology, uniformity, etc.)
 - ▶ Informal nationalism: Associated with collective events in civil society (rituals, holidays, sporting events, etc.)

Identity in Context: (Trans)national Identity and Boundaries

▶ Collective identity

- ▶ Has emotional, perceptual, and behavioral outcomes at macro level
 - ▶ Form specific attitudes, beliefs, and patterns as a *collective*
- ▶ Influences sense of solidarity and unity, intensity of involvement, level of mobilization,

Micro Individual Level

Self-categorization as a member

Importance of belonging
Attachment to the nation
Willingness to belong

Macro Collective Level

Identification with the nation
Awareness of sharing this
identification

Meaning of Collective Identity

- Common fate
- Perception of positive uniqueness and differentiation from other groups
- Coordinated activity
- Sharing beliefs, attitudes, values, norms
- Concern about collective welfare, mobilization and readiness for sacrifice
- Perception of continuity

Content that gives meaning to Collective Identity

Territory
Culture and language
Collective memory
Societal beliefs

Figure 1 Model of national identity.

Identity in Context: (Trans)national Identity and Boundaries

- ▶ Transnational Identity and Boundaries
 - ▶ Boundaries (physical and psychological) establish demarcation between two identity groups, which can establish a relationship
 - ▶ Transnationalism: focus on the relationship, connection, and tension between the old country and the new country
 - ▶ Eriksen: Moral commitments may go on for generations, meaning contemporary is an ongoing process that will never truly result in complete nationalization

Integrating Identities and Cultures

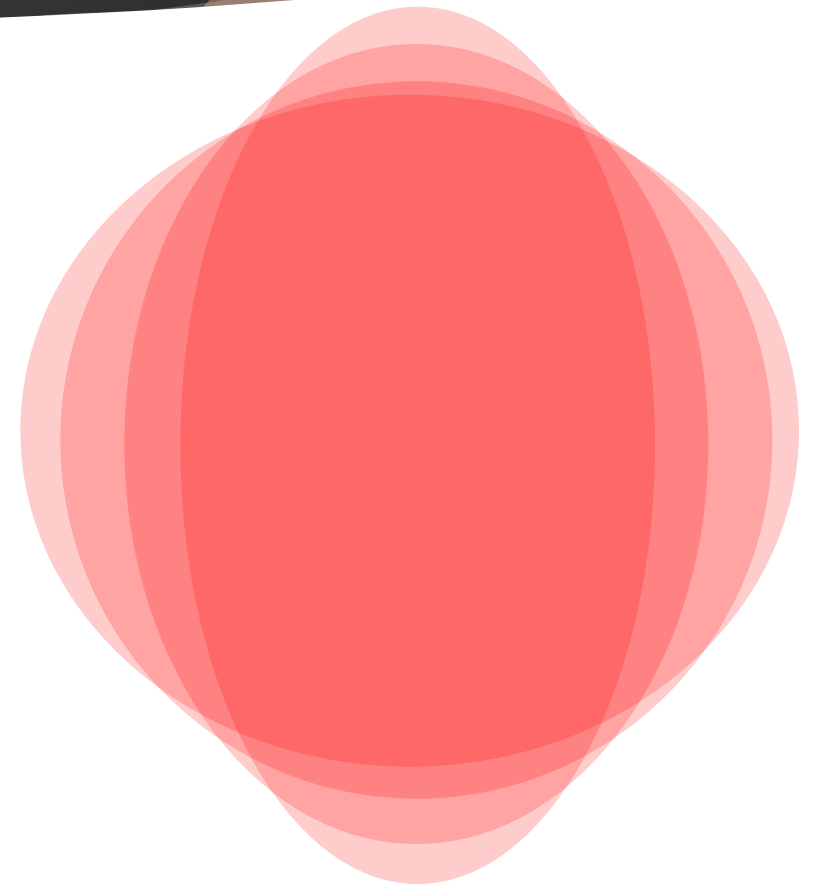
- ▶ Culture and identity is based upon values, and values are shared via transaction and interaction
- ▶ Presence of multiple identities (gender, employment, ethnicity, transnationalism, etc.)
 - ▶ Nested
 - ▶ Cross-cutting
 - ▶ Separate

Table 9.1. Conceptual definition and operationalisation of European identity variables

Variable	General identity	Civic identity	Cultural identity
Conceptual summary	Do respondents naturally think of themselves as Europeans?	Do respondents identify with the European Union as a political institution?	Do respondents identify with Europe as a cultural community?
Targeted elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do I feel European?• How strongly do I identify with Europe?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does it mean anything for me to be a "citizen" of the European super-State?• Do I identify with the symbols of European political integration?• Do I identify with the civic aspects of European integration?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do I identify with Europe as a shared heritage?• Do I think of Europe as a concentric identity level, finding Europeans less close than fellow nationals but closer to me than non-Europeans?

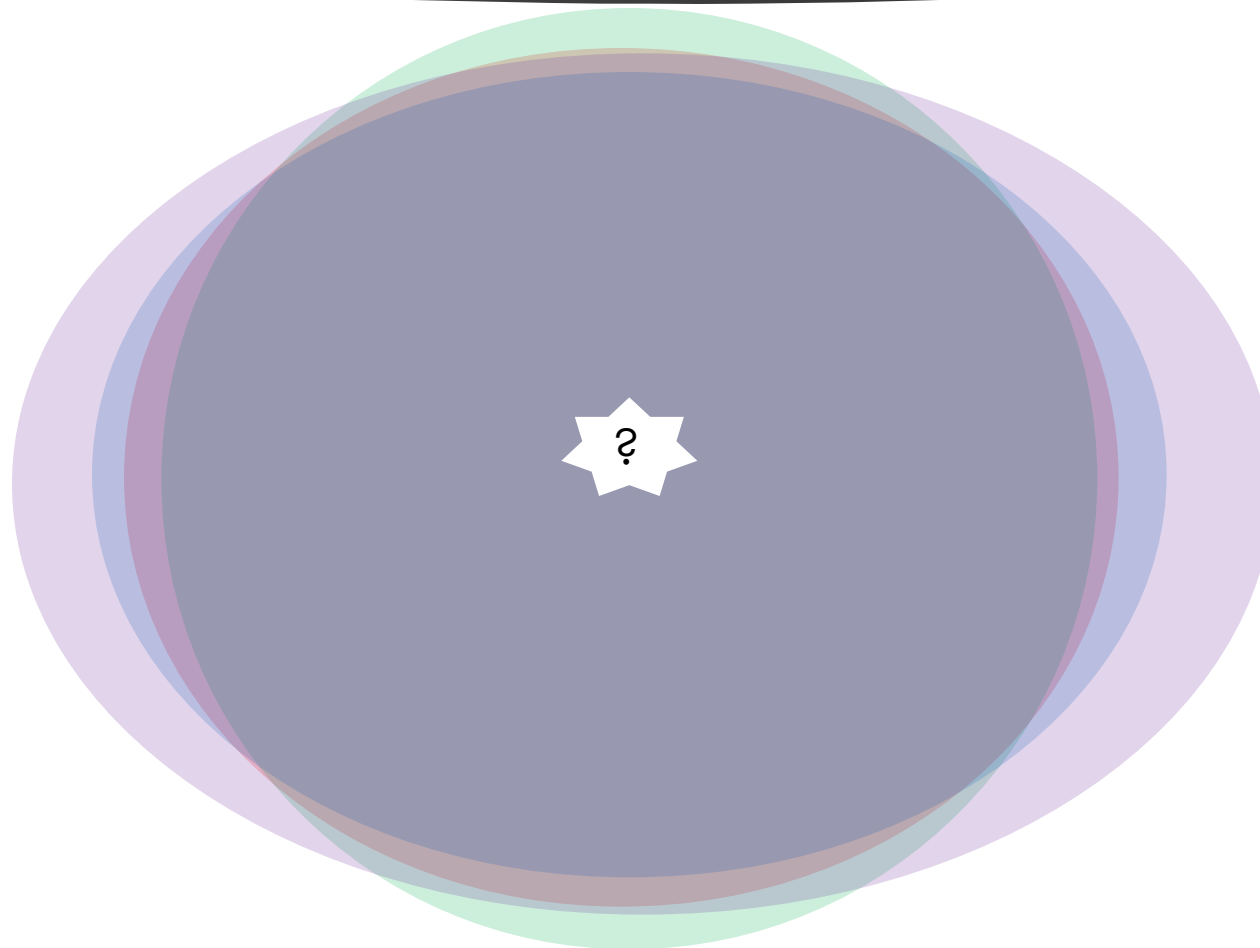
Integrating Identities and Cultures

- ▶ Contending identities through a transnational lens
- ▶ Malkki: Understanding of nativeness complicated “as more and more people identify themselves, or are categorized, in reference to deterritorialized ‘homelands,’ ‘cultures,’ and ‘origins’”
- ▶ Hale: Personal constellation becomes “thicker” when points of references and categorizations become more meaningful and plentiful



Integrating Identities and Cultures

Bhutanese
Nepali-Bhutanese
American
Pittsburgh American



Integrating Identities and Cultures

Where are you from?

Excerpt 2

(continued from Excerpt 1)

Interviewer 2: 024. And what do you say when people ask?

Ajang: 025. Yes, I normally tell them that I'm from this country //and=

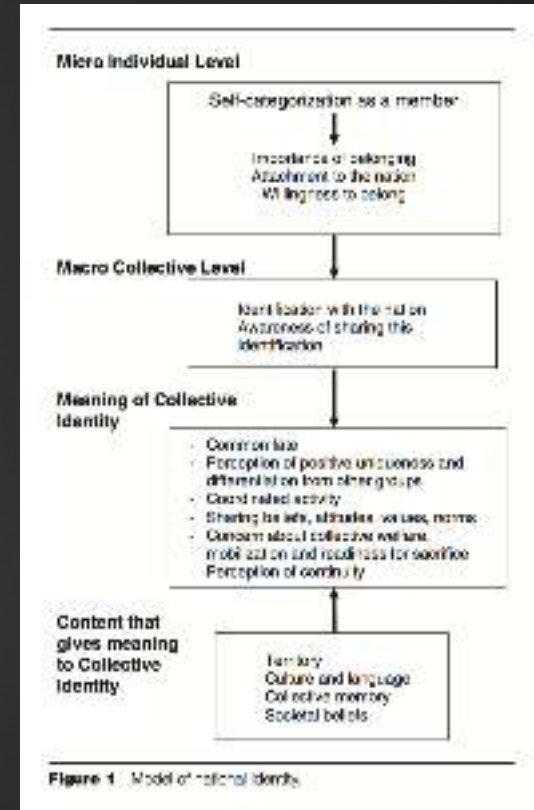
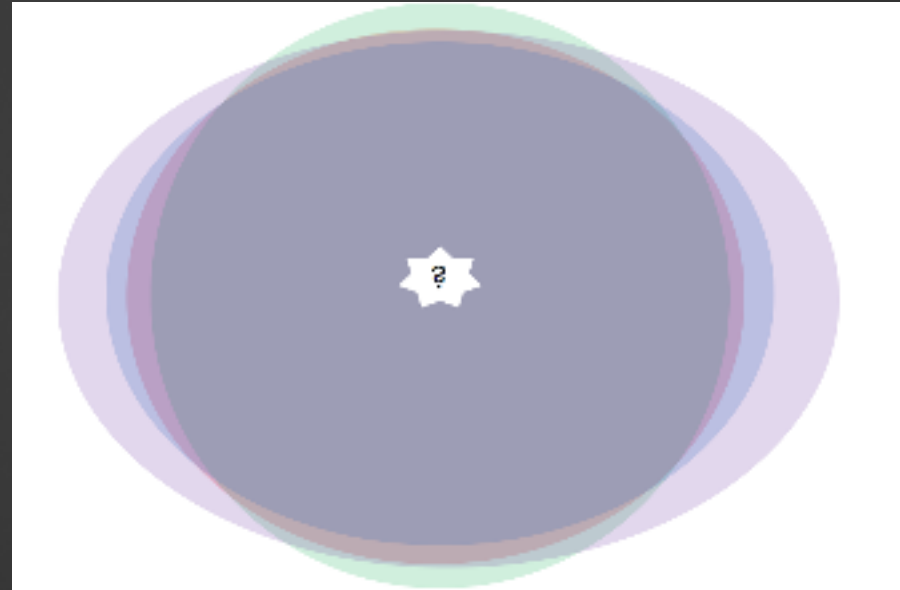
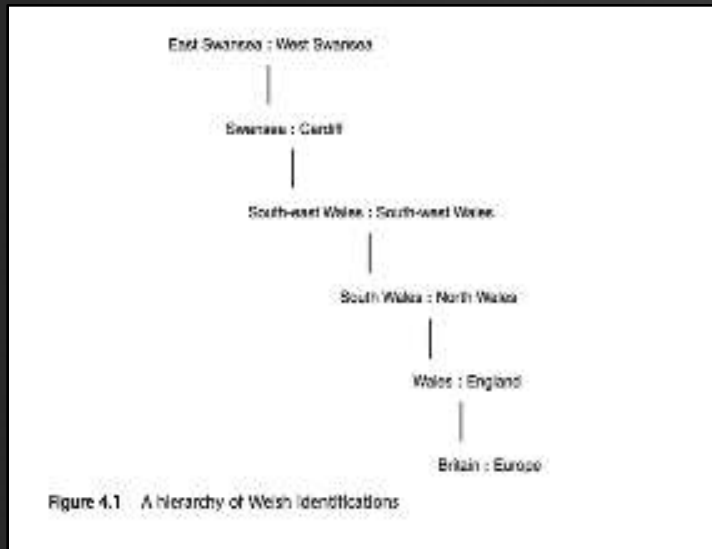
Interviewer 2: 026. =No// say it. What do you say? I ask you, okay where are you from? (. . .)

Ajang: 027. I normally tell them I'm from SUDAN

028. but now I'm AUSTRALIAN.

029. Yes, and they say 'it is all right'.

Putting it all together



Putting it all together

- ▶ How is identity constructed and developed in Pittsburgh's Bhutanese community?
- ▶ How do national and transnational narratives influence collective identity development, particularly among refugee groups?

Creating an Identity Narrative Through a Transnational, Refugee Lens

Bhutan : South Asia

Lhotshampas Bhutanese : Bhutan

Relocated Bhutanese refugee : Lhotshampas Bhutanese

Individual
Categorization

Collective
Categorization

Interactions

Collective identity:

Shared experiences and history, common beliefs, communal practices and rituals, collective symbolization, community organization and mobilization, shared sense of unity

Immigrant : American

Relocated Immigrant : Immigrant

Relocated Pittsburgh immigrant : Relocated Immigrant

Individual
Categorization

Collective
Categorization

Interactions



Thanks for Listening!