

**“SUSTAINING FAITH TRADITIONS:
RACE, ETHNICITY, AND RELIGION AMONG THE LATINO
AND ASIAN AMERICAN SECOND GENERATION”**

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Fifty years ago, Will Herberg theorized that while incoming immigrants were expected to change many aspects of their lives in becoming Americans, including nationality, language, and culture, religion was an exception. The religious freedom offered in America meant that immigrants could maintain the most important part of their identities; one need not change religion to assimilate. Today, European immigration is less numerous as those individuals coming from Latin America and Asia. Specific religious denomination has been replaced with terms like “spiritual” and “non-practicing,” which transcend faith traditions. In *Sustaining Faith Traditions: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion among the Latino and Asian American Second Generation*, Carolyn Chen and Russell Jeung edit a collection of studies to create a cohesive picture of how race and religion intersect in the lives of second generation Hispanics and Asians. Herberg’s thesis about religion and ethnicity is used as a framework from which the authors advance their own thesis. Chen and Jeung believe religion is no longer the most prominent factor determining social identity. Instead, the authors believe that race and ethnicity help mold religious experiences.

The collection of articles presents four trajectories in which race, religion, and ethnicity can work together. The first of these is religious primacy, the one trajectory which seems to agree with Herberg’s thesis. It states that one’s religious affiliation takes precedence over ethnicity or race-based self-identification. The authors point to examples in the Latino community regarding Christians and Catholics. The most interesting chapter in this section, though, is Kim and Leavitt’s study looking at the marriages of Asian Americans and Jews. In a scenario Herberg never could have imagined, they explain how it becomes easier for couples to pass on their religious faith to their offspring over their sense of ethnic identity.

The second trajectory is that of *racialized religion*, which looks at the crossroads between race and economic class on religion. With historical racism

and lack of future economic security, members of minority communities band together when it comes to religion. People of the same race will go to churches and religious institutions where a majority of the members are all Hispanic or "Chicano." This is best exhibited in Edward Flores' chapter on the correctional institution in California. In a state where one in six Latinos are said to be jailed at least once in their life, the Hispanic community in the state comes together under their shared religious faith.

The third trajectory discusses the hybrid of ethnicity and religion and the area where the two meet. This section discusses how one's connection to their ethnicity is able to greatly intensify their religious commitment. Examples looking at both the Korean and Filipino American communities exemplify how a person's ethnic affiliation does not marginalize them. In fact, it can allow them to become more in tune with their religious faith through group worship by people of the same ethnicity. This effect is best shown in Jerry Z. Park's chapter on Korean American students at major universities. Already grouped together due to their studies and campus-based organization, they end up becoming more devoted to their Protestant faith than before.

The final path touched upon is family-based traditions. This path is arguably the most different from what Herberg had envisioned in the past. It discusses how the line among family, ethnicity, and religion all blur together, causing the 2nd generation to become more connected to their familial traditions than branching out and identifying with the greater community. Religious beliefs become an insulating factor, only intensified by family and ethnicity; best displayed by Jeung's study on Chinese Americans.

Overall, the book is a strong collection of studies that questions the way we look at religion, race, and ethnicity, and the relationship among them. The articles offer compelling cases that update Herberg's thesis and reexamine a dated concept of *immigrant*. We find that models only looking at religion no longer accurately portray the contemporary immigrant experience. In reality, race and ethnicity play a major role, leading to a spectrum along which the four trajectories lie. Cheng and Jeung's work contributes to Herberg's thesis regarding immigration for the 21st century.

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