

Interaction Paper - Rynkiewich Chapter 9 “Caste, Class, and Ethnicity”

Ethnic identity refers to a person’s social identity within a larger context based on membership in a cultural or social group.

Ethnic identity arises through experiences with other people that tend to highlight differences in culture, language, and customs. That means that ethnic identity does not drive entirely from within the ethnic group but in interaction with other groups. A driving factor in the creation and maintenance of ethnic groups is due to competition for scarce resources. From the insider’s point of view, ethnic group is about our culture; but from the outsider’s point of view, it functions to enhance people’s political and economic position in society. An ethnic group or ethnicity is a grouping of people who identify with each other based on shared attributes that distinguish them from other groups. Ethnic churches face two problems: maintaining identity over several generations, and the prospect of never moving into fellowship with other ethnic groups.

In reflection on this topic I consider my children’s situation. They are second generation Chinese American. It is hard to hold them to identify with Chinese culture, but they are not totally fitting in American culture. They do not want to joint with parent’s Chinese church congregation, but they cannot easily find ethnic Christian group in community. For Chinese parents and Chinese American children, we all must reconstruct our ethnic identity in society.

Two questions for further engaging this topic: 1. How to develop a multi-ethnic church?
2. How to continually construct and reconstruct our ethnicity to meet political and economic challenges in society?