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Source: *Michigan Sociological Review*, Fall 2014, Vol. 28 (Fall 2014), pp. 1-34

Published by: Michigan Sociological Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43150994>

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A Theoretical and Empirical Foundation for the Study of Suburban and Rural Ethnic Economies in the United States

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ABSTRACT

International migration has spread beyond the urban United States into suburban and rural communities that are struggling to adapt to their changing populations. Many immigrants and ethnic minorities in these suburban and rural areas have started businesses that are transforming local economies, sometimes even revitalizing failing business districts. Many theories that explain how and why immigrants develop ethnic economies are implicitly urban in orientation, assuming the existence of densely populated urban neighborhoods that facilitate ethnic business cluster development. Although scholarship is beginning to create new concepts that identify the features of nonurban ethnic economies, little scholarship helps researchers and policy makers theorize the types of ethnic economies that may grow in one nonurban area over another. Combining perspectives from sociology, geography, economics, and urban planning, this article provides a theory of how ethnic economies will grow in U.S. suburban and rural regions. The article includes an explanatory typology of nonurban ethnic economies as well as hypotheses and operationalizations that scholars can use in empirical research to determine outcomes for ethnic business clusters and the communities surrounding them.

I would like to thank Douglas Massey, Alejandro Portes, Martin Ruef, three anonymous reviewers, and participants in the Princeton University Center for Migration and Development Graduate Student Workshop for their invaluable comments on prior drafts of this manuscript.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic economies include “the ethnic self-employed and employers, and their co-ethnic employees” (Light and Karageorgis 1994:649). Workers in ethnic businesses—meaning those firms that operate within the boundaries of the ethnic economy—use shared co-ethnic identity to facilitate economic activities, such as raising start-up capital or learning trade skills.¹ Examples of ethnic economies include the panoply of Cuban-owned and operated businesses in Miami (Portes and Bach 1985), the heavily service-oriented Dominican business cluster in New York City (Gilbertson and Gurak 1993), and the collection of gas stations run by Lebanese immigrants in Detroit, MI (Abdulrahim 2009). A wealth of research has analyzed ethnic economies in traditional immigrant gateways, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, and Houston (Nee and Nee 1973; Waldinger 1986; Light and Bonacich 1988; Rajiman and Tienda 2003; Valdez 2011). Nevertheless, immigrants and ethnic minorities are rapidly moving away from these parts of the United States to new immigrant destinations, including many rural and suburban parts of the country (Marrow 2005; Massey and Capoferro 2008; Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2008). The immigrants and ethnic minorities moving to rural and suburban areas are creating vibrant business clusters, sometimes revitalizing local economies that are shrinking from population loss or enduring increases in poverty (Wood 1997; Grey and Woodruff 2005; Zarrugh 2007; Li 2009; Furuseth 2010:54; Liu and Abdullahi 2012; Kneebone and Berube 2013).

This article takes existing, urban-oriented theories of how and why ethnic economies grow and adapts them to a suburban and rural U.S. context. Although theories explaining ethnic economy growth are not inherently urban in orientation, they have often been applied to U.S. ethnic economies using assumptions that imply an urban condition. This is understandable, since almost all U.S. ethnic economies have historically existed in large cities. Today’s ethnic economies, however, are rapidly spreading into parts of the suburban

¹Ethnic economies should not be confused with immigrant economies. The former are defined by the co-ethnicity of owners and workers, while the latter are defined by entrepreneurial ethnic minorities who hire working-class workers of a different ethnic minority group. An example of an immigrant economy is the Chinese garment factory owners who hire Mexican workers (Light, Bernard, and Kim 1999). Immigrant economies are outside of the scope of this article.

and rural United States, in which traditional ethnic economy theory requires translation. After discussing the need for the revision of existing ethnic economy theory for nonurban, U.S. ethnic economies, I present an explanatory typology of nonurban ethnic economies from which testable hypotheses are derived. I then provide operationalizations of each theoretical concept so that each hypothesis can be tested empirically. In the conclusion, I describe some future directions and limitations of adopting the explanatory typology in empirical research.

TRADITIONAL ETHNIC ECONOMY THEORY AND ITS LIMITATIONS

Ethnic economies arise when there are market opportunities for ethnic entrepreneurs. These market opportunities commonly come in the form of ethnic, volatile, or abandoned markets (Waldinger et al. 1990). Ethnic markets comprise ethnic minorities who demand goods and services not supplied by mainstream businesses. These can include ethnic groceries or travel services. Volatile markets are those in which demand is unstable and fluctuating, such as the garment or construction industries (Waldinger 1986). Abandoned markets include consumers whose needs are underserved or outright ignored by mainstream businesses. For instance, Korean-owned grocery stores serve low-income African American neighborhoods in Los Angeles because large supermarkets choose not to locate there (Light and Bonacich 1988). It is important to note that regardless of the market opportunity that encourages ethnic economies to grow, the ethnicity of the customer base is not a defining feature of an ethnic economy. The ethnic economy can serve co-ethnic and nonethnic markets equally.

Ethnic entrepreneurship and worker participation in the ethnic economy do not merely appear as a result of demand. Supply factors also affect the degree to which business owners and workers join the ethnic economy (Light and Gold 2000:16–18). As business acumen accrued in the home country increases, the higher is the likelihood of successful entrepreneurship among immigrants in the host country. Nevertheless, any amount of skill accrued in the home country may be insufficient for success in mainstream industries in which immigrants compete directly with native-owned businesses and workers. Immigrants may qualify for bank loans less often, have less knowledge about how to navigate the bureaucracy of credit agencies,

and suffer from more discrimination than do native-born entrepreneurs (Waldinger et al. 1990). Ironically, these same conditions may encourage the growth of ethnic economies.

Blocked mobility is a powerful spur to business activity. Immigrants suffer from a variety of impediments in the labor market: unfamiliarity with language in the host country, inadequate or inappropriate skills, age, and discrimination. Lacking the same opportunities for stable career employment as are enjoyed by the natives, immigrants are more likely to strike out on their own (as ethnic entrepreneurs) and to experience less aversion to the substantial risks that this course entails (Waldinger et al. 1990:32).

The combination of blocked mobility and business aptitude can push immigrants and ethnic minorities into supporting one another through the use of rotating credit associations and other forms of social capital designed to promote economic opportunities within the ethnic group itself (Light and Gold 2000; Kim 2007).

The supply and demand factors mentioned thus far help predict ethnic economy growth equally in cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Nevertheless, nonurban areas differ from cities in ways that range across geographic, political, economic, demographic, and urban planning factors.² In terms of geography, suburban and rural population densities are almost always lower than those observed in cities, and ethnic businesses in suburban and rural areas may not concentrate in one neighborhood like they often do in urban areas (Li 2009:46). Perhaps more striking is the fact that, even though prior literature has generally associated ethnic economy growth with hostility from native-born consumers and business owners, nonurban ethnic economies are sometimes actively encouraged to grow by local governments. At least one rural town is using microcredit loans to help Somali entrepreneurs create businesses and jobs (Chicago Council on

²Some scholars treat suburbs as bedroom communities of central cities, finding that suburban ethnic economies are extensions or satellites of central city ethnic economies (Logan, Alba, and McNulty 1994; Portes and Shafer 2007). Nevertheless, scholars are increasingly discovering suburban ethnic economies that operate distinctly from those found in associated central cities (Wood 1997; Vergera et al. 2008; Li 2009). These suburban ethnic economies are often spread across large regions, not confined to one or a few densely populated neighborhoods, as they might be in a central city. In this sense, suburban ethnic economies may be more akin to rural ethnic economies, which is why I group suburban ethnic economies with rural ones and collectively call them nonurban.

Global Affairs 2013:12), and another actively courts ethnic businesspeople as liaisons between government officials and the local immigrant community (Griffith 2008). These forms of political acceptance and encouragement are virtually unheard of in the literature on urban ethnic economies.³

In terms of economics, as the size of an ethnic group in a locality increases, the size of the ethnic economy increases as well because members of an ethnic group often constitute both a key consumer base as well as a captive labor pool (Evans 1989). Not surprisingly, small suburban and rural towns are likely to have small ethnic communities, so the ethnic economies should be smaller. Smaller ethnic economies also suggest that nonurban ethnic economies lose out on the benefits of economic agglomeration that occur among urban economies (Glaeser 2010). Unlike in densely concentrated urban ethnic economies (e.g., Portes and Bach 1985), rural areas offer fewer co-ethnic businesspeople from which to learn business tips and tricks. The social networks of nonurban ethnic businesspeople can also be highly overlapping, limiting the amount of new business information attainable through ethnic community ties (Deakins, Ishaq, and Smallbone 2007). This also inhibits nonurban ethnic economies from branching out into many industries, unless nonurban ethnic businesspeople are able to supplement their sources of capital with appreciable amounts from elsewhere, including high-capital international investors (Li 2009).

In terms of demographics, labor replenishment can facilitate the growth or maintenance of ethnic economies into the future. As business owners or workers leave the ethnic economy, others looking to join must exist in order for the ethnic economy to avoid shrinking in size (Portes and Manning 1986). In some cases, ethnic business owners frequently move out of the ethnic economy and look to sell their business to an enterprising co-ethnic buyer (Light and Bonacich 1988). These business owners may struggle to find a co-ethnic buyer in nonurban areas. Particularly in isolated rural areas, ethnic firms can struggle with labor replenishment to such a degree that the closing of even one business may irreversibly harm the ethnic economy's ability

³It should be noted, however, that small towns with a homogeneous electorate are more able than cities to pass ordinances intended to shut down immigrant-owned businesses (Greco 2008; Romero 2009). These types of ordinances often make it illegal to hire an undocumented worker or require that municipal services be conducted in English only.

to provide economic mobility opportunities for everyone working in it (Deakins and Freel 2012:69).

Finally, in terms of urban planning, a new form of ethnic economic activity—ethnic property development—is transforming certain suburban and rural areas from declining business districts into bustling hubs of ethnic economic activity (Light 2002). As Oh and Chung explain in their comparison of ethnic property development in a prominent urban Korean ethnic economy in central Los Angeles (versus a prominent suburban Chinese ethnic economy outside of Los Angeles),

[Unlike among Koreans,] the numerical dominance of the Chinese in a smaller municipality has helped them to maintain strong influence in local elections [Chinese] officials serve a wide range of government units and commissions from the school district board of education to the business improvement district advisory committee. The greater horizontal and vertical integration of Chinese officials throughout the local governance may put co-ethnic pro-growth advocates in a more secure position when promoting various development projects. (2014:9)

Ethnic property development can be far more pervasive and effective in nonurban areas and can result in thriving ethnic economies unencumbered by the political and economic battles with native-born communities that frequently plague urban ethnic economies (Portes and Manning 1986; Light and Bonacich 1988; Yoon 1997).

To summarize, urban and nonurban ethnic economy development can differ in terms of spatial dispersal, political acceptance, size, industrial diversity, labor replenishment, and property development. As a result of these differences, scholars are beginning to identify new forms of community and economy growing in suburban and rural parts of America. One concept, "ethnoburbs," involves suburban communities

... characterized by both vibrant ethnic economies, due to the presence of large numbers of ethnic people, and strong ties to the globalizing economy, revealing their role as outposts in the emerging international economic system. Ethnoburbs are also

multi-ethnic communities, in which one ethnic minority group has a significant concentration, but does not necessarily comprise a majority. (Li 1998:482)

Participation in ethnoburban economies is mainly accomplished voluntarily rather than as a response to blocked mobility (Li 2009:45), although the macroeconomic turn away from manufacturing and toward service and finance has altered certain economic opportunities in ethnoburbs (Li 2009:30–33). The voluntary nature of ethnoburbs comes from the fact that many groups capable of ethnoburb creation have the economic and political power to choose which suburban location to use as their ethnic business district (Li 2009:46), a feature not found among ethnic groups that have created urban ethnic economies. Although not the case with the ethnoburbs, the location of many urban ethnic economies is often the result of segregation (Fischer and Massey 2000) or ecological succession (Aldrich 1975). For instance, Little Havana in Miami, an acclaimed ethnic economy noted for its ability to promote economic mobility among participants (Portes and Bach 1985; cf. Sanders and Nee 1987), was formerly a Jewish residential area, and Cubans moved in at the same time as upwardly mobile Jews were moving out and into the suburbs (Lin 1998:323).

"Heterolocalism" is another concept that describes the spatial dispersal of ethnic communities across suburban and rural areas. In spite of the dispersal of the ethnic community, strong ethnic ties are maintained through the use of modern telecommunications and community institutions, including businesses (Zelinsky and Lee 1998). Like ethnoburb formation, heterolocalism is described as a choice made by the local ethnic group, although that choice is encumbered by "the tightness of the local housing market, the availability of appropriate economic niches, and the diversity of the local ethnic context" (Zelinsky and Lee 1998:285).

Despite these conceptual advances, which have revolutionized the spatial analysis of ethnic economies in nonurban areas, few hypotheses have been developed to help scholars theorize when an ethnoburban or a heterolocal economy might develop in suburbs and rural towns receiving large numbers of international migrants for the first time. Policy makers are consequently at a loss for how to anticipate ethnic economy growth and reap the benefits of these businesses for all local residents. It is necessary that academic scholarship go beyond concept building and theorize outcomes for ethnic economies

and the social mobility of their participants. In other words, the introduction of new concepts, such as ethnoburbs and heterolocalism, must be synthesized with the political, economic, demographic, and urban planning factors previously discussed that mediate ethnic economy growth. The next section will turn the differences between urban and nonurban ethnic economies highlighted in this section into empirically testable propositions about outcomes for nonurban ethnic economy growth.

TOWARD A THEORY OF NONURBAN ETHNIC ECONOMY GROWTH

The many differences between ethnic economies in urban and nonurban areas noted above can be reduced to three fundamental conditions that help determine the type of ethnic economy that may grow in one place over another. These include the prior entrepreneurial experience of the ethnic group, the context of reception that its members face from the native-born majority, and the size and spatial concentration of the local co-ethnic community. An immigrant group that brings more entrepreneurial experience with it when it migrates tends to have greater success at developing vibrant ethnic economies in the host society (Waldinger et al. 1990: Ch. 1). The entrepreneurial experience of the group can be thought of more concretely as the proportion of group members that had business experience in the home country. Entrepreneurial experience is important because it helps ethnic business owners quickly adapt to the conditions of the host society and its economy.

Different groups evince different entrepreneurial aptitudes. Some Korean immigrants come to the United States with start-up capital in their pockets, intending all along to start a business in the United States (Yoon 1997). Mexicans, on the other hand, often come to the United States as labor migrants, and more entrepreneurial Mexicans may be liable to stay in the home country and run businesses there (Portes and Bach 1985). Even within some ethnic groups, entrepreneurial experience may vary to the point that ethnic economies take on different forms and include different industrial profiles in different regions. The migration streams of Chinese immigrants to the United States, for instance, have varied by region: Southern California contains many high-capital Taiwanese immigrants, while the New York area includes many lower-capital Mainland Chinese immigrants

(Li 2009). As a result, Los Angeles's Chinatown has many more ties to the global finance and real estate industries, while New York's Chinatown has more ties to traditional ethnic economy industries such as garment manufacturing and restaurants.

The "context of reception" refers to coherent patterns of treatment of immigrant groups by governments and community members that enhance or inhibit the life chances of newcomers (Portes and Böröcz 1989:618). A positive context of reception can help facilitate ethnic economy growth through the encouragement of business development by local officials, while a negative context of reception can hinder ethnic economy growth through acts such as the passage of anti-immigrant ordinances. At the same time, a positive context of reception can ease the incorporation of immigrant workers into the mainstream rather than the ethnic labor market, while a negative context of reception can promote the types of blocked mobility that encourage ethnic economy development. At the least, despite the conflicting effects of context of reception on ethnic economy development, there is a strong relationship between the context of reception and ethnic property development because the local political structure must accommodate ethnic political entrants to facilitate acts such as rezoning and licensure that benefit ethnic business owners (Oh and Chung 2014).

The size and spatial concentration of the local co-ethnic community help determine the type of ethnic economy that may emerge in a locality as well. A larger co-ethnic community can support a larger collection of ethnic businesses (Evans 1989) and is more likely to provide the opportunities for labor replenishment that sustain strong and stable ethnic economies. The spatial concentration of the local co-ethnic community is independent of the co-ethnic community's size, yet a spatially concentrated community can yield similar outcomes to a large community. A spatially concentrated co-ethnic community has been argued to provide a "protected market" for ethnic entrepreneurs (Aldrich et al. 1985), meaning that ethnic entrepreneurs can easily exploit a concentrated co-ethnic community as a consumer base, leading to a stronger and more vibrant ethnic economy.

One can turn the dimensions across which ethnic economies vary into an explanatory typology. An explanatory typology is "a multidimensional conceptual classification based on an explicitly stated theory" (Elman 2005:296). While a descriptive typology would merely provide a taxonomy of ethnic economies, an explanatory typology can outline causal patterns that can be empirically verified.

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The rows and columns can be thought of as independent variables, while the cells can be thought of as dependent variables. An explanatory typology is almost always an oversimplification of reality, omitting factors that may bear on the phenomena of interest to preserve parsimony. Fortunately, typologies can be revised and expanded as empirical research evolves. In this article it is my contention that a critical mass of case studies exists that can help scholars develop a typology of nonurban ethnic economies. Rather than claim to provide an exhaustive discussion of every study of nonurban ethnic economies ever done, I aim to build a research program that can be updated and adapted as scholarship on nonurban ethnic economies moves forward.

Figure 1 presents two explanatory typologies of the ethnic economies that will likely result when entrepreneurial experience, context of reception, and size and spatial concentration vary among each other. The top portion of the figure refers to urban ethnic economies, while the bottom portion refers to suburban and rural ethnic economies. The first striking fact about the urban typology is that ethnic economies generally do not exist under conditions of positive context of reception. Received wisdom claims that ethnic economies grow in response to blocked mobility (Waldinger et al. 1990) or, at a minimum, ethnic economy growth is met with resistance from nonethnic businesses (Portes and Manning 1986). This scenario is vastly different than the active courting of ethnic businesses that may occur in nonurban areas (Griffith 2008; Oh and Chung 2014). The second striking fact is that several of the cells are the same in the urban and nonurban conditions. My intention is not to replace traditional ethnic economy theory but rather to build upon it and adapt it for the study of suburban and rural ethnic economies. The remainder of this section will explain each cell in the urban and nonurban typologies and provide examples from the literature that show how each ideal type works in practice.

Figure 1: Typologies of Urban and Non-Urban Ethnic Economy Development in the U.S.

		Urban			
		Prior Entrepreneurial Experience of Ethnic Group			
		High		Low	
		Context of Reception		Context of Reception	
		Discriminatory	Positive of Neutral	Discriminatory	Positive of Neutral
Existing Co-Ethnic Community	Small and/or Spatially Dispersed	<i>Niche or Middleman</i> Koreans of New York City Min (2008)	----	<i>Failed</i>	----
	Large and/or Spatially Concentrated	<i>Ethnic Enclave</i> Cubans of Miami Portes and Bach (1985)	----	<i>Mixed Formal and Informal</i> Haitians of Miami Stepick (1989)	----

Non-Urban

Prior Entrepreneurial Experience of Ethnic Group				
	High		Low	
	Context of Reception		Context of Reception	
		Positive of Neutral		Positive of Neutral
	Discriminatory		Discriminatory	
Existing Co-Ethnic Community	Small and/or Spatially Dispersed	Niche Indian Motel Owners in Non-Urban Ohio Dhingra (2012)	Heterolocal Vietnamese outside Washington D.C. Wood (1997)	Failed Fostered Mexicans of Marshalltown, IA Griffith (2008)
	Large and/or Spatially Concentrated	Ethnic Enclave Vietnamese of the Gulf Coast Bankston and Zhou (1996)	Ethnoburban Chinese outside Los Angeles Li (1998)	Informal Salvadorans of Long Island, NY Mahler (1995)
				Peripheral Filipinos outside of San Francisco Vergara Jr. (2008)

In each cell, each ethnic economy type is in italicized font. An example of each ethnic economy, along with a reference on that ethnic economy, is given in each cell as well. Dashes indicate that, according to prior theory, urban ethnic economies are unlikely to occur under a positive or neutral context of reception.

NICHE ETHNIC ECONOMIES

As discussed previously, a niche that is underserved or abandoned by mainstream businesses provides an opportunity for ethnic entrepreneurs to exploit (Waldinger et al. 1990:126). In urban areas, ethnic entrepreneurs who are discriminated against and who do not have a large co-ethnic community nearby can become "middleman" minorities (Portes and Manning 1986). Middleman minorities are those ethnic groups that insert themselves between elites and masses to absorb the mass's hostility toward elite businesspeople (Bonacich and Modell 1980). They do this because they expect to make a profit and sojourner quickly with their earnings. Many examples of middleman minorities have existed throughout history, from Jews in German cities (Becker 1956) to Koreans in African American neighborhoods (Min 1996). Little to no evidence of "middlemanning" in the suburbs or rural parts of the United States exists, although there is no reason why middlemanning could not occur there. In fact, the start-up costs for entrepreneurs in an urban ethnic niche to extend their business into a nonurban area can be much lower than for a local businessperson in the nonurban area who starts a comparable business. Established entrepreneurs in the niche already know how to run the business and have access to preexisting sources of capital. They just need to find the right business opportunity, which can often be found in nonurban areas, where costs are lower and competition is less.

Indian motel owners dot the rural and suburban landscape of the United States, and they frequently include co-ethnic owners and employees, even though the local co-ethnic labor supply is sometimes too small to draw upon. Social capital within Indians' co-ethnic social networks helps them obtain financing and labor from other locations, or at least allows them to learn of opportunities to start and run motels in a new area (Dhingra 2009:326–27). The local ethnic community in these areas is initially too small to demand many ethnic goods and services, so the ethnic economy concentrates in the motel industry instead (Dhingra 2009). Vietnamese immigrants follow a similar path when they start and run nail salons in suburban or rural areas (Walker 2003:31).

Despite the considerable experience that certain groups have running businesses in ethnic niches, these groups may encounter sharper racial discrimination when they enter nonurban areas. "Long-time residents of economically struggling towns have been known to specifically blame Indian motel owners for their town's conditions,"

for instance (Dhingra 2012:106). This sort of hostility can prevent ethnic groups from having a larger presence in the local economy, polity, and community of nonurban areas.

Hypothesis: For all nonurban ethnic economies, as the prior entrepreneurial experience of the ethnic group increases, as the context of reception its members face becomes more negative, and as the local preexisting co-ethnic community becomes smaller, the more likely it is that the ethnic economy will become a niche ethnic economy.

ETHNIC ENCLAVE ECONOMIES

There are three hallmarks of an ethnic enclave economy: spatial concentration of ethnic firms, vertical and horizontal integration of firms within the ethnic group, and a sizeable ethnic entrepreneurial class. The goods and services produced in enclave economies, moreover, often play a significant role in the mainstream economy (Wilson and Martin 1982). The prototypical ethnic enclave economy is the Cuban enclave in Miami (Portes and Bach 1985). Ethnic enclave economies share many characteristics with ethnoburban economies. Nevertheless, enclave economies are different from ethnoburbs in that enclave participants can be forced into working in the enclave economy through racial discrimination or a lack of job opportunities elsewhere in the economy. Participation in ethnoburban economies, on the other hand, is largely voluntary (Li 2009:45).

Enclave economies are rare, even more so in nonurban areas, which are less able to sustain the large concentrations of labor and capital necessary to develop enclaves. No perfect example of a non-urban ethnic enclave economy exists, but Carl Bankston, III, and Min Zhou argue that the Vietnamese fishing community of coastal Louisiana exhibits some elements of an enclave economy.

Vietnamese fishing enterprises may be understood as part of an ethnic enclave economy in two essential aspects: They have access to low-cost labor within the ethnic group, and they trade heavily with business people in other groups. Virtually all Vietnamese boat captains have exclusively Vietnamese crews, who work for shares of the catch. The growing rep-

resentation in fishing occupations helped the Vietnamese to achieve self-employment in related businesses. (1996:49)

Vietnamese participation in Louisiana fisheries began when refugees resettled in the Louisiana area after the Vietnam War. Many Vietnamese quickly took to job openings in boating and extractive industries along the Gulf Coast because they had prior experience running their own fishing boats back in Vietnam (Bankston and Zhou 1996:48). From working as fishermen at shrimping companies owned by the non-Vietnamese, many went on to run their own boats, and some went on to own shrimp processing plants and buying facilities (Bankston and Zhou 1996:50). The seafood harvested by Vietnamese fishermen and shrimpers makes its way into Vietnamese-owned grocery stores and restaurants in nearby New Orleans (Airriess 2006:27). The larger, more established community of New Orleans, in other words, helps provide a retail market that likely encourages the growth of firms on the Louisiana coast. Additionally, Vietnamese shrimpers raised the ire of white fishermen, who refused to allow Vietnamese shrimpers to dock on Louisiana's Gulf Coast. Incidents involving the Ku Klux Klan were not unheard of either (Tang 2003).

There are reasons why the Vietnamese fishing community of coastal Louisiana does not exhibit features of an ethnic enclave economy. Spatial concentration, for instance, does not characterize these firms. Classic ethnic enclave economies, such as Miami's Little Havana (Portes and Bach 1985) and New York's Chinatown (Zhou 1992), are bounded into dense urban neighborhoods. Nevertheless, it is still possible for an ethnic enclave economy to exist in a nonurban area. The agricultural Japanese of California during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not spatially concentrated either, even though they exhibited features of an enclave economy (Portes and Manning 1986).

The Vietnamese fishing community of the Gulf Coast has thrived despite discrimination, with the help of an entrepreneurial aptitude and proximity to a larger community in nearby New Orleans. Although not a perfect example of an ethnic enclave economy, the community exhibits several important features of one and highlights how it is possible for ethnic enclave economies to exist in nonurban areas.

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Hypothesis: For all nonurban ethnic economies, as the prior entrepreneurial experience of the ethnic group increases, as the context of reception its members face becomes more negative, and as the local preexisting co-ethnic community becomes larger, the more likely it is that the ethnic economy will become an ethnic enclave economy.

HETEROLOCAL ETHNIC ECONOMIES

Like the Vietnamese ethnic economy of coastal Louisiana, the heterolocal community of Northern Virginia, immediately outside Washington, DC, began to grow after the end of the Vietnam War. Vietnamese initially came to this area in the 1970s as refugees sponsored by members of the Department of Defense. Chain migration brought subsequent waves that led to the creation of numerous business districts, the first of which began in 1972 (Wood 1997:65). Many of the initial refugees had prior education and business experience accrued in the home country, and along with later waves, they have created a spatially dispersed ethnic economy that includes establishments from food wholesaling and restaurants to accounting and light manufacturing firms (Wood 1997:61). Despite the low-density suburban landscape that highlights strip malls over city blocks, the Vietnamese community of Washington, DC's Virginia suburbs has been able to create a vibrant internal economy.

Nonetheless, the Vietnamese of coastal Louisiana forged ties with the larger Vietnamese community of New Orleans in a way that the Vietnamese of Northern Virginia have not appeared to do with their surrounding co-ethnic communities. The heterolocal Vietnamese firms of the Washington, DC, suburbs have few noted ties to any other large, nearby Vietnamese community.⁴ Another major difference between the Vietnamese ethnic economies of Louisiana and Northern Virginia is that the Vietnamese firms of Northern Virginia are tolerated by the local population much more than is the Louisiana fishing community. Much of this tolerance is because the Vietnamese refugees of Northern Virginia have connections to the Department of Defense, headquartered nearby, and the surrounding region's residents have experience dealing with international migrants of other ethnicities as well (Wood 1997).

⁴Despite a lack of business ties connecting Vietnamese firms in Northern Virginia to other nearby Vietnamese communities, ethnic consumers from all over the East Coast travel to shop at those firms (Wood 1997:70).

I argue that aspects of the heterolocal Vietnamese economy of Northern Virginia should extend to other heterolocal ethnic economies across America. Many Vietnamese immigrants had prior business experience accrued in the home country, and many were actively encouraged to settle there by local authorities. Finally, the ethnic economy took off even while the size of the Vietnamese community was in its infancy. I turn this reality into the hypothesis below.

Hypothesis: For all nonurban ethnic economies, as the prior entrepreneurial experience of the ethnic group increases, as the context of reception its members face becomes more positive, and as the local co-ethnic community becomes smaller, the more likely it is that the ethnic economy will become heterolocal.

ETHNOBURBAN ETHNIC ECONOMIES

As previously discussed, ethnoburbs are spatially clustered suburban residential and business areas in which an ethnic group comprises a large, but not complete, portion of the local population. In addition, the ethnoburb has an internal division of labor and has many ties to the larger global economy. The prototypical example of a U.S. ethnoburb is the Chinese community of Monterey Park, CA, situated outside of Los Angeles. In Los Angeles itself, the first Chinese-owned business was founded in 1861 (Li 2009:63), and the Los Angeles Chinatown grew soon afterward as a result of the housing and employment discrimination faced by the Chinese in other parts of the region (Li 2009:66–69).

Unlike this downtown Chinatown that began in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Chinese ethnoburb in Monterey Park was started by upwardly mobile Chinese who were moving out of urban Los Angeles. The ethnoburb grew “through the deliberate efforts of individual Chinese people and key business leaders operating in the context of various international, national, and local arenas in a new era, in a new locality” (Li 2009:79). Indeed, “the creators of ethnoburbs are able to choose potential locations because of their economic strength” (Li 2009:46). In other words, leaders in the ethnoburb had political and economic ties to powerful actors and used them to wield influence over spatial development. In the case of Monterey Park, the city was an ideal location because it attracted both migrants from abroad as well as those from Los Angeles.

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This story highlights three aspects that benefit ethnoburban growth. First, many ethnoburbs start near preexisting ethnic communities, including others, such as the Chinese ethnoburb outside of San Francisco and the Indian ethnoburb outside of New York City (Li 2009:174). Second, prior business experience and high human capital can help the political and economic strategies of those who try to create ethnoburbs. Third, discrimination stemming from the majority is politically and economically insignificant.⁵ I turn these statements into the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis: For all nonurban ethnic economies, as the prior entrepreneurial experience of the ethnic group increases, as the context of reception its members face becomes more positive, and as the local preexisting co-ethnic community becomes larger, the more likely it is that the ethnic economy will become ethnoburban.

FAILED ETHNIC ECONOMIES

In an environment in which an ethnic group has little entrepreneurial experience, the co-ethnic community is small or nonexistent, and the context of reception is hostile, it seems impossible that an ethnic economy can survive. There are few co-ethnic ties to exploit and to use as a buffer against the hostility of the local native-born community, on top of the fact that the co-ethnic community has too little prior business experience to succeed in entrepreneurship. I can provide no example of a failed ethnic economy, since they are unlikely to be reported in the academic literature. Nevertheless, I offer a hypothesis, as follows.

Hypothesis: For all nonurban ethnic economies, as the prior entrepreneurial experience of the ethnic group decreases, as the context of reception its members face becomes more negative, and as the local preexisting co-ethnic community becomes smaller, the more likely the ethnic economy is to fail.

⁵The Chinese of Monterey Park did face significant discrimination in the 1980s, but the community's political and economic power helped quell nationalist reactions (Li 2009:92–97). Not all ethnic groups can command political and economic resources to fend off discrimination in the way that ethnoburban communities can.

INFORMAL ETHNIC ECONOMIES

A group that lacks entrepreneurial knowledge and is discriminated against will likely be unable to navigate the legal framework for starting a formal business. Nevertheless, if the local ethnic community is large, it can still provide a significant protected market (Aldrich et al. 1985). This is particularly true in densely populated urban areas but matters as well in suburban and rural areas. The ethnic economy under these circumstances will likely be informal, although many ethnic entrepreneurs will have ties to the formal economy through suppliers and oftentimes through income supplemented by part-time jobs based in the formal economy. The combination of densely populated urban areas and economic ties between the informal and formal sectors of the economy may even lead to the growth of a set of small-scale service retailers in the formal sector, as has occurred among Haitians in Miami (Stepick 1989).

Informal economic activity comprises "all income-earning activities that are not regulated by the state in social environments where similar activities are regulated" (Castells and Portes 1989:12). This can include anything from sewing garments "off the books" to babysitting a child for cash. What makes nonurban informal economic activity different from urban informal economic activity? Suburban and rural parts of America often lack the public spaces—the sidewalks, city squares, etc.—that help urban areas teem with potential customers (Miller 1995:395). Nonurban informal ethnic economies, therefore, must rely more on personal networks and less on the local community at large to find clientele.

Consider this series of vignettes of informal economic activity. The first two come from ethnic entrepreneurs in a Mexican neighborhood in urban San Jose; the latter two come from ethnic entrepreneurs in a Salvadoran community on suburban Long Island. (I have added the bold emphasis in each vignette.)

Elena, a thirty-eight-year-old immigrant from Guadalajara, Mexico ... started her career in the informal sector by **selling music tapes in the streets door to door** Over time, she hired four other vendors **The parking lots and corners of major Hispanic shopping centers, as well as Mexican neighborhoods, were the main places where Elena and her**

vendors sold their merchandise. (Zlolinski 1994:2325)

Arturo is a twenty-eight-year-old Mexican immigrant from Puebla, who came to San Jose in 1986 with his wife His brother, who had come to San Jose with him, was **selling *paletas* (popsicles) in the street** and convinced Arturo to join him. In 1987, Arturo started work as a *palatero* (popsicle vendor), and has done so every year since then **Arturo obtains the *paletas* and the mobile cart to carry them from a factory located in downtown San Jose** There is no formal agreement between the company and the vendors, nor do the latter pay any taxes on their profits, which are paid in cash. (Zlolinski 1994:2326)

When Amalia Sandoval's son was born in 1990 with a heart defect, she could no longer work cleaning rooms at a hotel where she had been employed. With the help of her friends, Amalia began sewing Salvadoran-style clothes for sale, party dresses in particular. She had been a seamstress in her home town in El Salvador and the skill came in handy on Long Island where it was difficult to find this style ... in the stores. **Originally, her clientele did not extend beyond the large apartment complex where Amalia lived, but after a few of her dresses had been debuted around town at dances and weddings, she had difficulty filling all her orders on time.** (Mahler 1995:59–60)

... Around two dozen men who enjoy legal status have begun working as informal personal couriers, traveling back and forth between the United States and El Salvador bringing letters, packages, and remittances. Known as *viajeros* ... **[one example] operates out of his sister's apartment; a few days before he leaves for El Salvador, streams of clients come by to give him their goods to send home** (Mahler 1995:60)

No doubt many urban informal ethnic entrepreneurs rely on personal networks to find clients,⁶ but in nonurban areas, personal networks may be necessary for the survival of informal ethnic businesses. Moreover, the lack of public spaces, such as the streets that host tape vendors and *palateros* in San Jose, may limit the informal business opportunities of which nonurban ethnic entrepreneurs take advantage. The availability of public spaces is unique to each research setting and cannot be predicted by theory a priori. Nevertheless, I provide a hypothesis that will help scholars in their empirical work on the matter.

Hypothesis: For all nonurban ethnic economies, as the prior entrepreneurial experience of the ethnic group decreases, as the context of reception its members face becomes more negative, and as the local preexisting co-ethnic community becomes larger, the more likely it is that the ethnic economy will be informal.

FOSTERED ETHNIC ECONOMIES

If there is no large, spatially concentrated community nearby, and if the few local ethnics have little entrepreneurial experience, then the growth of an ethnic economy in a nonurban area must be fostered and promoted by the local government and nonethnic community. Otherwise, barriers such as lack of access to capital and a potentially hostile business environment may thwart forms of ethnic entrepreneurship that cannot exploit a nearby, large co-ethnic community.

As Mexican immigrants moved to Marshalltown, IA, to work in local meatpacking plants, they replaced a dwindling population:

Many of Marshalltown's leaders view new immigrants as a source of vitality, in stark contrast to the aging native population. This is in line with Iowa state policy: The governor and several agencies and organizations have actively promoted a pro-immigration position, establishing task forces to examine workforce, housing, health, and other state needs that

⁶Zlolinski, who provided the two examples from the Mexican community in urban San Jose, provides a third example: a dentist who finds clients through word of mouth only (1994:2327).

could be taken care of in part by increased immigration. (Griffith 2008:187)

A portion of fostering the immigrant community involves bringing ethnic entrepreneurs into the community power structure to better address the needs of the local immigrant population. “Formal leaders of the town, such as the police chief or the mayor, typically rely on the Jalisco entrepreneurs [i.e., the local Mexican entrepreneurial class who originally immigrated from Jalisco, a state in Mexico] as informal cultural liaisons, brokers, and translators in cases where problems between new immigrants and local residents have occurred” (Griffith 2008:204). Local Latino businesspeople have also advised native-born businesspeople on how to better interact with the Latino community (Griffith 2008:204–05), a strategy that no doubt helps the businesses owned by the native-born population to grow as well.

The ethnic entrepreneurs assisted the new community with finding its place, and local businesspeople encouraged their presence to facilitate their own economic growth. The Mexican ethnic economy in Marshalltown is small—it includes only about six to seven businesses (Griffith 2008:203)—but the positive context of reception allows the low-capital group to sustain ethnic businesses. Consequently, I offer this hypothesis for researchers:

Hypothesis: For all nonurban ethnic economies, as the prior entrepreneurial experience of the ethnic group decreases, as the context of reception its members face becomes more positive, and as the local preexisting co-ethnic community becomes smaller, the more likely the ethnic economy is to be fostered by the local population.

PERIPHERAL ETHNIC ECONOMIES

With a positive context of reception and low entrepreneurial experience, an ethnic group will likely choose work in the mainstream economy over the ethnic economy. A large co-ethnic community will still demand ethnic goods and services, but the opportunities to work in the mainstream economy will likely offer more remuneration than could be gained by exploiting any local ethnic market. Filipinos offer a good example of an ethnic group in America that has low entrepreneurial experience, a positive context of reception, and a large representation in America’s suburbs (Alba et al. 1999:450). Almost all Filipinos in the United States know English, and Filipino immigrants to

America rarely accrue entrepreneurial experience before immigrating. Hence, their entrepreneurship rates are low (Min 1986).

A case in point involves Daly City, CA, a suburb south of San Francisco. Despite a Filipino population of 100,000, the Filipino ethnic economy is largely invisible, lacking clear business districts (Vergara 2008:25). The heterolocal Vietnamese community of Northern Virginia has also been called “invisible” as a result of its spatial dispersal (Wood 1997:70), but the Filipino businesses of Daly City have few interconnections, and there exists little distinction even within the local ethnic community.

... Explaining the invisibility of Filipinos [in Daly City] is the matter of how Filipinos physically inscribe themselves onto the landscape. Signs written in Chinese or Vietnamese in Monterey Park and Alhambra, or distinctive architecture in San Francisco’s Chinatown, contribute to a general inscription of difference that mark them as ethnic enclaves, whereas Daly City ... simply blurs into the homogenized suburban mass. Signs on Pinoy establishments are without fail written in English; the rare Tagalog (i.e., “foreign”) word refers either to a Philippine town or to food. (Vergara 2008:42)

In Daly City there is a shopping mall known as the center of the Filipino community—the Serramonte Mall. “Except for the food,”

Serramonte Mall is not much different from suburban shopping malls throughout the country Only 2 of the 130 businesses are specifically Filipino—Manila Sunset, a restaurant in the food court serving standard (and greasy) Filipino food, and the relatively new Tatak Filipino, a souvenir store. (Vergara 2008:32–33)

Filipino entrepreneurial activity, in other words, is in many ways marginal both to the mainstream economy and local ethnic demand. There is also little room for growth since many new group members can incorporate themselves into the mainstream economy.

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Hypothesis: For all nonurban ethnic economies, as the prior entrepreneurial experience of the ethnic group decreases, as the context of reception its members face becomes more positive, and as the local preexisting co-ethnic community becomes larger, the more likely the ethnic economy is to be a marginal one.

OPERATIONALIZING THE THEORY

The theoretical concepts laid out above are helpful as theory, but the types of ethnic economies laid out must be operationalized as testable concepts so that the theory can be used in empirical research. Figure 2 presents the typology of nonurban ethnic economies in terms of operationalized variables bearing on geographic, economic, and political outcomes. Geographically, ethnic economies range from spatially concentrated to spatially dispersed economies. Some ethnic economies, such as heterolocal ones, are defined by their spatial dispersal. Others, such as fostered ethnic economies, may be dispersed because rural communities are frequently small and spread far apart. Although there is no clear cutoff at which a lower spatial concentration turns into spatial dispersal, one can use point pattern analysis (Diggle 2003) to measure the spatial dispersal of ethnic firms and then compare these values to those of nonethnic firms in the same region and ethnic firms in comparable regions.

Economically, the types of ethnic economy can be operationalized in terms of the diversity of industries in which ethnic firms operate. The more economically successful and robust an ethnic economy, the more industries in which the ethnic economy will likely operate. Although economic success can also be measured in terms of profits, there are many factors that bear on profits that are unique to a given empirical situation. More generally, scholars can analyze the industrial diversity of an ethnic economy as a means to compare success across ethnic economies. A niche economy, for example, occurs in one industry, and an enclave economy includes a mix of retail, manufacturing, and other firms. Industrial diversity can be measured using a Herfindahl Index of industrial concentration (Rhoades 1993). It is important to note that industrial diversity does not simply increase with co-ethnic community size and spatial concentration. For example, heterolocal ethnic economies are industrially diverse but spatially dispersed. Heterolocal economies are often successful because they spread themselves across several municipalities; they are

Figure 2. Operationalizations of Non-Urban Ethnic Economy Types and Associated Outcomes

		Prior Entrepreneurial Experience of Ethnic Group					
		High		Low			
		Context of Reception			Context of Reception		
		Discriminatory	Positive or Neutral	Discriminatory	Positive or Neutral		
Existing Co-Ethnic Community	Small and/or Spatially Dispersed	Outcome	Niche	Heterolocal	Failed	Fostered	
		Geographic	Spatial Dispersal	Spatial Dispersal	----	Spatial Dispersal	
		Economic	Industrial Concentration	Industrial Diversity	----	Industrial Concentration	
		Political	Tact Conflict	Low Impact	----	Open Cooperation	
	Large and/or Spatially Concentrated	Outcome	Ethnic Enclave	Ethnobarban	Informal	Peripheral	
		Geographic	Spatial Concentration	Spatial Concentration	Low Visibility	Spatial Concentration	
		Economic	Industrial Diversity	Industrial Diversity	No Identifiable Industry	Industrial Concentration	
		Political	Open Conflict	Coopation	Punitive	Low Impact	

unlikely to compete with any one group of native-owned business owners who can seek redress from any one municipal government. Niche economies, on the other hand, can conflict with other business owners in the niche as well as customers who disapprove of how visibly the ethnic group concentrates in the niche (Portes and Manning 1986; Min 1996).

Politically, different ethnic economies are defined by a variety of political outcomes, none of which can be easily quantified. Ethnoburban and fostered ethnic economies are likely to be associated with positive political relations with the local community, an outcome that rarely, if ever, occurs in urban areas. Ethnoburbs are so commercially powerful that they can co-opt local governments and their economic development plans (Oh and Chung 2014), while fostered ethnic economies are somewhat differently courted and encouraged by municipal governments, although they do not have a politically powerful ethnic business class (Griffith 2008). At the other extreme, ethnic enclaves are Ethnic enclave economies are consequently in open conflict with other businesses, and business competitors may use political channels to impede ethnic enclave success (Portes and Manning 1986). Similarly, niche ethnic economies can face hostile reactions, such as boycotts or hate crimes, but the political and social impact of niche economies is often smaller than that observed in enclave economies. Furthermore, despite notable exceptions such as the Korean greengrocers of New York City, conflict in niche economies generally occurs on a more interpersonal or firm-level scale (Min 1996, 2008).

Unlike the aforementioned types of nonurban ethnic economies, heterolocal and peripheral economies are likely to garner little political reaction. As mentioned earlier, heterolocal ethnic economies have little political impact on any one municipality because they are spread out. Peripheral ethnic economies, on the other hand, likely have little political impact because their status is peripheral for both co-ethnic and nonethnic community members. Finally, when discovered by the state, informal economic activity can be punished severely. Mexican fruit vendors in the informal economy, for example, are regularly subject to crackdowns and anti-vending ordinances that make it difficult for an ethnic economy to prosper. Fruit vending may be one of the few avenues available to some Mexican immigrants in terms of earning a living, so informal fruit vendors continue to ply their trade despite the intolerance they regularly face from the local government and native-born community (Rosales 2013).

Few large, quantitative data sets of suburban and rural ethnic economies currently exist that can easily test this theoretical scheme. Listings in ethnic business directories or general business listings, such as that of Dun and Bradstreet, may come closest to an appropriate data set, but the optimal data must be able to demonstrate how and why ethnic economies grow over time. This requires the implementation of many case study analyses from which general empirical conclusions can be drawn. Fortunately, case studies have already been done on ethnic economies in a variety of nonurban settings (e.g., Wood 1997; Grey and Woodrick 2005; Zarrugh 2007; Li 2009; Furuseth 2010). If ethnic economy scholars work together on case studies using the framework laid out in this article, then their findings can be aggregated to test and improve the framework.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have adapted ethnic economy theory to the suburban and rural ethnic economies growing throughout the United States. Although ethnic economy theory is not inherently urban in orientation, almost all empirical research on ethnic economies in the United States presumes a densely concentrated ethnic population living and working in a region that has a varied and expansive industrial base (e.g., Nee and Nee 1973; Waldinger 1986; Light and Bonacich 1988; Raijman and Tienda 2003; Valdez 2011). New forms of ethnic economies are developing outside of U.S. cities, and although geographers have identified new ways of conceptualizing these ethnic economies (Zelinsky and Lee 1998; Li 2009), no one has yet identified the mechanisms by which nonurban ethnic economies develop and grow. The explanatory typology, conceptual operationalizations, and testable hypotheses provided in this article should help guide research on nonurban ethnic economies so that scholars and policy makers can better determine how successful ethnic economies will be at helping promote the incorporation of ethnic minorities into local communities, economies, and politics.

The theoretical scheme laid out in this article arguably represents an important advance in our ability to understand ethnic economy development in suburban and rural areas. Moving forward, however, scholars should take heed of two limitations. First, despite the strong distinctions this article highlights between different types of ethnic economies, types of ethnic economies sometimes blend together. Informal ethnic economies, for instance, are rarely devoid of

any formal economic establishments, such as restaurants or grocery stores (Light and Karageorgis 1994). Similarly, ethnoburban economies may be associated with businesses outside of the ethnoburb, lending the ethnoburb a more heterolocal character. The theoretical scheme presented here should not be taken as a set of social facts but rather should be seen as a list of ideal types that provide an adequate representation of social life to facilitate more nuanced empirical research. Second, the theoretical scheme was unable to capture every influence on ethnic economy development. The structure of the labor market, a local setting's ties to economic globalization, the types of regulations that governments impose on businesses—these are just a few of the larger political and economic forces that the explanatory typology in this article did not discuss. The typology instead focused on features of the ethnic economy and the local ethnic community. The framework in this article is merely a starting point for future research and should be expanded upon and revised with time.

Despite the large research enterprise necessary to turn this theoretical scheme into empirical conclusions, the task is an urgent one. Suburban and rural municipalities are struggling with the rapid growth of their immigrant populations as well as increased poverty rates and, in some cases, a shrinking population and economic decline (Rogers 2002; O'Hare and Johnson 2004; Greco 2008; Singer et al. 2008; Kneebone and Berube 2013). Immigrants tend to have a higher self-employment rate than do native-born Americans (Light and Karageorgis 1994), and immigrant-owned businesses are a potential means of promoting economic development, socioeconomic mobility, and harmonious community relations in suburban and rural areas. The time has come for scholars to move beyond merely identifying the types of ethnic economies forming in the suburban and rural United States to move on to theorizing why and how they take the shape that they do.

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