

Boston's Emerging Ethnic Quilt: A Geographic Perspective

by

James P. Allen and Eugene Turner

Department of Geography

California State University, Northridge

Northridge, CA 91330-8249

Email: james.allen@csun.edu

Presented at the Annual Meeting of the
Population Association of America, Boston, April 1, 2004.

Note: The 15 full-color maps that are integral to this presentation
can be viewed as the Boston Ethnic Atlas on Professor Turner's web site:

www.csun.edu/%7Ehfgeg005/eturner/gallery/Bostonatlas/Bostonatlascover.html

Introduction

The greater Boston area has become a leading destination for immigrants. New arrivals have settled on a landscape whose older, more central residential neighborhoods have been evolving spatially and ethnically for over 150 years.

Research purpose. Where do different ethnic groups live within the Boston area at present? Census 2000 data document an emerging ethnic quilt, with distinct patterns inherited from the past together with the distributions of more recent immigrants. We use maps to show the neighborhoods or census tracts in which selected ethnic groups are living as of 2000. This is a descriptive, exploratory study, not one seeking explanations.

In contrast to most urban research of this nature, our focus is not on the larger aggregations—White, Black, Latino, and Asian. This is because the social networks of different ethnic groups, especially the more recent arrivals, are somewhat distinct, resulting in distributions that become blurred when groups are aggregated into the more widely used census categories. Thus, we map in terms of nationalities or ancestries. Only at the end is there a map of the predominant aggregate census groups.

Our interpretations are based primarily on immigrant spatial assimilation theory (e.g., Logan and Alba 1993; Allen and Turner 1996). Four factors seem to be particularly important in understanding the distributions: (1) areal variations in the price of housing; (2) group differences in economic resources; (3) the desire of many immigrants to live near others of their group; and (4) the desire of most people to distance themselves from poorer neighborhoods and, in some cases, from people of other groups. In addition, ethnic distributions established decades ago exert an inertial effect, proximity to employment is valued, and discrimination in the housing market

continues to restrict the settlement of minority groups in the Boston area (Munnell, Tootell, et al. 1996).

Methods. Rather than examine most every ethnic group counted in Census 2000, we selected twelve important groups within the Boston Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA). That area covers most of Boston's older and newer suburbs but not Worcester, Lowell, Lawrence, or Brockton (Table 1). Our maps use 100-percent-count data to treat the three largest Asian groups—Asian Indians, Chinese, and Vietnamese—and the three largest Hispanic groups—Dominicans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans. In addition, we used sample ancestry data to map Brazilians, Cape Verdeans, and Haitians, whose numbers were the largest of recent non-Asian and non-Hispanic immigrant groups. Lastly, we treat three of the largest and most important European ethnic populations in Boston's history—the English, Irish, and Italians, as represented in the first-reported ancestry data.

To produce the maps we electronically downloaded tract-level census data from the Census Bureau site at www.census.gov and merged these with boundary files in ESRI's ArcGIS mapping program. Adobe Illustrator was used to finish the maps. Our maps do not cover the entire Boston PMSA, which is somewhat awkwardly shaped. Rather, we designed all maps so they could illuminate patterns within both Boston city and its major suburbs. Thus, this presentation provides a geographical glimpse of some of Boston's residents in their neighborhoods but not the usual statistical analysis of variables.

For background we did find of great value certain books and articles written in recent years about Boston and its people (Bluestone and Stevenson 2000, Chung 1995, Gamm 1999, and Melendez and Uriarte 1993). We also found newspaper articles in the *Boston Globe* and *Boston Herald* that helped us understand the meaning of certain group concentrations.

The Context of Ethnic Distributions

Before looking at the actual distributions, we have set their context in terms of a few comparative characteristics of the groups (Tables 1 and 2). We also include a map of city locations and a second map showing variations in socioeconomic status as measured by median household income. All these orient us to differences between groups and places, and they are helpful in suggesting factors that may have influenced the distributions.

Table 1

Selected Boston Populations and Change 1990-2000

| | Boston PMSA | | Boston city |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---|
| | Population 2000 | Pct. Change 1990-2000 | Population as Pct. of Group's PMSA Pop.2000 |
| Total Population | 3,406,829 | 18.7 | 17.3 |
| Asian Indian | 30,167 | 140.1 | 14.7 |
| Chinese | 69,343 | 59.3 | 27.8 |
| Vietnamese | 21,907 | 141.2 | 49.4 |
| Dominican | 25,178 | 86.4 | 51.6 |
| Mexican | 14,381 | 83.5 | 28.7 |
| Puerto Rican | 58,178 | 29.7 | 47.2 |
| Brazilian | 22,597 | 332.1 | 15.9 |
| Cape Verdean | 20,419 | 106.8 | 53.3 |
| Haitian | 36,503 | 77.3 | 52 |
| English | 370,564 | -8.2 | 7.1 |
| Irish | 826,756 | -0.7 | 11.3 |
| Italian | 524,570 | 8 | 9.3 |

Sources: U.S. Census, 1990 and 2000.

Notes: Groups other than Asian and Hispanic-origin are based on total ancestries reported. Asians in 2000 are Asian alone.

Table 2

**Ethnic Populations, Boston PMSA 2000
Selected Characteristics**

| | Percent Foreign-born | Percent 4-year College Grad. | Med. Household Income, 1999 |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Total Population | 14.9 | 39.5 | \$55,153 |
| Asian Indian | 73.7 | 80.4 | \$72,273 |
| Chinese | 69.5 | 49.4 | \$50,943 |
| Vietnamese | 77.9 | 16.6 | \$41,174 |
| Dominican | 71.8 | 10.1 | \$24,759 |
| Mexican | 34.3 | 36.1 | \$44,747 |
| Puerto Rican | 47.1 | 13.2 | \$26,388 |
| Brazilian | 84.3 | 15.8 | \$38,284 |
| Cape Verdean | 41.4 | 11.3 | \$36,910 |
| Haitian | 67.7 | 15.2 | \$39,054 |
| English | 2.7 | 47 | \$62,764 |
| Irish | 2.3 | 41.1 | \$62,558 |
| Italian | 4.7 | 32.9 | \$56,588 |

Notes: Four-year college graduate is based on population age 25+.
For Puerto Ricans, foreign-born includes those born in Puerto Rico.

Recently Arrived Ethnic Groups

Asian Indians. Many people in this group are connected with high-tech industries or run their own businesses. Asian Indians have the highest percentage of college graduates and highest household income of all the groups we examined. Their high incomes make it possible for many to live in outer suburbs. The location of many high-tech companies in the periphery of Boston, many near Route 128, may also have influenced the residential choices of some Asian Indians. In

Burlington, the leading suburban center, Indians comprise 75 percent of the tenants in a single large apartment complex that they have dubbed “Indiatown” (Rodriguez 2000). In Cambridge and Boston, the distribution suggests many Asian Indians are students or professors at Harvard, M.I.T., and Boston University.

Chinese. The highest percentage Chinese tracts occur in and near Boston’s Chinatown, an enclave that began in the nineteenth century as a Chinese ghetto of worker housing, laundries, and later, restaurants (Murphey 1952). Now it is an increasingly multiethnic Asian center for personal and professional services, shops, and restaurants, which serve Boston-area Asians more than tourists (Chung 1995). Its central location means that Chinatown’s future is threatened by pressures from developers (Talbot 1999).

Quincy is, for many Chinese, the first step up economically from Chinatown yet still easily accessible to Chinatown (Chung 1995). Reflecting the growing importance of Quincy as a center for both Chinese and Vietnamese, in 2003 the Chinese Super 88 Supermarket chain chose Quincy for their first store in suburban Boston (Atkins 2003). Also, many Chinese live in the more distant suburbs west of Route 128, where a dispersed population has not deterred Chinese from organizing community activities such as language training for children (Heaney 2003).

Vietnamese. Vietnamese are very highly clustered. Half of the Vietnamese in the Boston PMSA live in the city of Boston, and most of these live in Dorchester—an area with many older moderately priced, triple-decker apartment houses. Such a residential concentration is probably related to their fairly recent arrival in Boston, the refugee origins of many, and the fact that over 75 percent are foreign-born. Modest Vietnamese businesses have appeared in the Fields Corner area of Dorchester, where a new community center was opened in November 2002 (Aguilar-San Juan 2003). For Vietnamese the new center is an important meeting place and ethnic symbol; it

should help distinguish them in the eyes of Bostonians from the better known Chinese with their symbolic focus in Chinatown.

Some Vietnamese live in other parts of Boston, and many ethnic Chinese from Vietnam have businesses in Chinatown (Aguilar-San Juan 2003). Outlying towns like Malden, Lynn, Quincy, and Randolph are home to some others, reflecting a suburbanization that can be expected to increase in the future.

Dominicans. Migrants from the town of Miraflores in the Dominican Republic began arriving in Boston in the late 1960s, and transnational connections between Boston and that town remain strong (Levitt 2001). A 20-block section of Jamaica Plain, once dominated by Irish, became the main settlement concentration. Nearby Franklin Park is the scene of occasional Caribbean music and dance festivals (Young 2001). Most Dominicans in Jamaica Plain lack the educational attainment that would prepare them for good jobs. Over half clean office buildings at night, resulting in a very low median income (Levitt 2001, 52). Outside Boston, many Dominicans live in the central part of Lynn, the old shoe-manufacturing town; but the highest percentage concentration of Dominicans is in the poor Point neighborhood in Salem, once home to French Canadian mill workers (Lupo 2002).

Mexicans. Although Mexican immigrants have traditionally headed for Texas, California, or the Midwest, Boston has become a destination (Rodriguez 2001). Many residents of the little town of El Refugio in the Mexican state of Jalisco have followed the route pioneered in 1972, when a Mexican-American sailor stopped by El Refugio to visit his future wife's parents but then took her away to East Boston to live. Both new immigrants and remittance payments sent back home help maintain strong links between the village of El Refugio and Boston. Migrants from various places in Mexico, as well as Central America, often settle first in East Boston because of its low rents (MacDonald 2003).

Waltham may represent a step up economically from East Boston, although other factors are probably important in explaining the Mexican settlement there. Moreover, both Chelsea and Waltham contained fewer than 700 Mexicans in 2000. This means that many of the 14,000 Mexicans in the PMSA are living outside the residential concentrations that are accentuated on the map. A greater dispersal of Mexicans compared to Dominicans and Puerto Ricans would be expected theoretically because of the Mexicans' higher average educational attainment and income.

Also, the map shows Mexicans living at and near M.I.T. and Harvard University. This is not surprising considering that 64 percent of the Mexican residents of Cambridge ages 15 and older are enrolled in college or graduate school (U.S. Census Bureau 2003).

Puerto Ricans. Arriving first in New England as farm and orchard workers in the early 1940s, Puerto Ricans in Boston were soon working in a range of more menial jobs, often in manufacturing, as in the aging shoe factories of Lynn. Twenty-five years ago Boston's Puerto Ricans were described as transient, working here for only a few years in order to return home and buy land (Fitzpatrick 1980). In 2000 their very low median household income and the fact that almost half of Boston's Puerto Ricans had been born on the island suggest a continuation of that transnational movement, with little progress up the economic ladder in Massachusetts.

Within Boston, Puerto Ricans live not only in the same Jamaica Plain neighborhood as Dominicans but also in the large apartment complex at Harbor Point adjacent to the University of Massachusetts' Boston campus. Puerto Ricans also live in parts of the South End, where activists fight against the loss of low-cost housing through gentrification (Montague 2000). Puerto Ricans in Chelsea have helped give that city a Latino plurality, and the Wonderland Entertainment Complex in nearby Revere frequently pulses with Latin beats.

Brazilians. Because Brazilians quadrupled their numbers in the Boston PMSA during the 1990s, it is not surprising that this group has the highest percentage foreign-born (Tables 1 and 2). Brazilians commonly work as domestic servants and in restaurant kitchens, but many others are porters and maids in hotels (Margolis 1994, 50, 286). Their work in more menial jobs is probably related to the undocumented status of many, who typically enter the U.S. “without inspection” from Mexico.

Framingham has become the strongest Brazilian enclave, with many immigrants starting businesses that have helped rejuvenate the formerly declining Framingham Center (Cambanis 2001). In general, opening a small store is an economic path taken by many Brazilians, much in evidence in the Allston-Brighton section of Boston with its numerous food stores stocking Brazilian specialties (Downs 2002). In Everett and Malden some new arrivals begin working as building cleaners and later open house cleaning or painting companies (Medaglia 2002).

Cape Verdeans. People from the Cape Verde Islands, former Portuguese possessions off the west coast of Africa, have been moving into southeastern Massachusetts towns for well over a century. In the 1950s some began to settle in mostly Black sections of Boston—Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester (Rogers 1980). Like Haitians, Cape Verdeans have their own national ethnic and Catholic identities. Yet, they are generally viewed as Blacks by American Whites and have presumably experienced discrimination by Whites. Thus, many have come to identify with American Blacks. Such dual ethnic and racial identities are expressed geographically in that Cape Verdeans, Haitians, as well as Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, have slightly different neighborhood concentrations within the mostly Black and Latino sections of Boston between Dorchester and Hyde Park.

The very low percentage of college graduates suggests the economic difficulties facing Cape Verdean immigrants (Table 2). Today, many Cape Verdean women in Boston—together with

Haitians, Brazilians, and Latinas—clean office buildings Downtown (Rodriguez 2002). Some Cape Verdeans live in Boston’s moderately priced suburbs, such as Randolph and Braintree, but the percentage living in Boston’s suburbs is relatively low.

Haitians. Haitians first arrived in Boston in the 1960s, moving from both New York City and from Haiti itself (Fontaine 1976). Immigration has continued, with two-thirds of Boston’s Haitians foreign-born. Over half of Haitians in the metropolitan area live in Boston city, but Cambridge, Somerville, and Waltham also have enclaves, mostly in low-income areas. There is also a Haitian settlement in the more distant town of Randolph—a modestly priced suburb accessible both to Boston and to the Haitian community in Brockton, just south of Randolph.

In Boston itself Haitians are most concentrated in Mattapan and Hyde Park, and the presence of Haitians has rejuvenated local Catholic parishes, which had contained mostly Irish parishioners before their departure in the 1950s and 1960s (Gamm 1999). The many Haitians, Jamaicans, Dominicans, and other West Indians living in a fairly large section of Boston have given much of the area between the South End and Hyde Park a Caribbean character, evident especially in food and music.

Many Haitians are health-care workers, employed frequently as nursing assistants in nursing homes (Diaz 2003). Some eventually become nurses. Haitians have been politically active, electing one of their own as a representative in the state legislature. When in early 2004 Archbishop O’Malley celebrated Mass in the Creole language, the first time this had been done by any Boston archbishop, Haitian hearts swelled with pride (Dade 2004).

Long-Established Ethnic Groups

English ancestry. This ethnic group, sometimes referred to as Yankees and sometimes as WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants), dominated Massachusetts and New England culturally, politically, and economically until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Then Irish numbers were becoming large so that Irish politicians began to be elected, leading ultimately to Irish economic success. As the populations of Irish, and later other Catholic groups, grew in Boston and a range of manufacturing cities, many Yankees retreated to suburbs on the urban fringe.

An English-ancestry association with the countryside and less urban places remains today. It presumably results from both the continued English-ancestry predominance in those rural areas of Massachusetts that had few jobs to attract Irish and later immigrants and the continuing retreat of many affluent English-ancestry urbanites to more bucolic settings. To illustrate, English-ancestry percentages are highest in less urban and smaller places, such as Sherborn, Marblehead, and Concord, the latter hidden on the map by the legend box. Although not presented here, other maps show English-ancestry percentages are particularly high on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket.

In the Boston area, there is a slight tendency for people of English ancestry to live in more prestigious and expensive neighborhoods, such as Beacon Hill, Back Bay, Brookline, and in Cambridge, the area near Harvard University.

Irish ancestry. Because this ancestry group in the Boston PMSA now numbers more than twice the English-ancestry population, it's not surprising to see that the population of many areas is roughly between a third and a half Irish. The best-known in-town Irish area—South Boston—is still Irish in its leading ethnicity, and the same is true for Charlestown and Roslindale, West Roxbury, and the western side of Jamaica Plain. To the east Irish percentages are lower as the neighborhoods become more ethnically and racially mixed.

The strong tendency of many Irish to remain in these older neighborhoods and not move to suburbs may relate to the identity and loyalty of people to their family's specific Catholic territorial parish (Gamm 1999). Such a cultural influence seems to have retarded Irish retreat to the suburbs, in contrast to Jews and the mostly Protestant people of English ancestry, who found it easier to depart from their neighborhoods.

Suburban Irish are most strongly represented in Boston's South Shore region, especially between Cohasset and Marshfield and west toward Brockton (beyond the coverage of this map).

Italian ancestry. In contrast, people of Italian ancestry have tended to move north of Boston, a pattern that continues to the edges of Lowell and Lawrence (not shown on the map). This slight ethnic difference in general suburban distribution may result from the blurring over time of earlier work-related Irish and Italian distributions. It may also reflect the cumulative effects of thousands of social networks, partly ethnically based, that guide people toward some suburban areas as more desirable than others. The North End of Boston, famous today among Bostonians for its Italian restaurants, still stands out as Italian, though not as strongly as East Boston, Everett, Revere and other cities.

Predominant Ethnic Group

This summary map identifies the numerically largest of the four major ethnic classifications—Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. The intensity of the color indicates the relative strength of the predominant group.

The fact that the dark green representing the White population characterizes so much of the map of greater Boston is striking. Yet it is not surprising considering that Whites comprised 80 percent of the total Boston PMSA population in 2000, down from 86 percent in 1990. Cambridge

and Somerville and the Brighton section of Boston have significant non-White immigrant settlements, as do the outlying towns of Randolph and Framingham. However, in all census tracts in these areas Whites still outnumber any single other group.

The Black plurality area stretching from Hyde Park through Mattapan and Dorchester to the South End is powerfully evident.² The fact that Haitian and Cape Verdean distributions within Boston city are substantially embedded within the predominantly Black racial area illustrates geographically the importance of the Black-White social divide. In the early phases of their settlement in Boston, it seems likely that most Cape Verdeans and Haitians were able to obtain housing only in Black sections of Boston. The distribution has presumably been reinforced over the decades by chain migration, by continued prejudice and discrimination on the part of Whites, by the lower cost of housing in this area, and perhaps also by the cultural preferences of the immigrants themselves.

In only three tracts in Jamaica Plain do Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Hispanics outnumber any of the other large groups. The strongly Latino character of Chelsea's population is clear, as is the Latino presence on the west side of East Boston, traditionally Italian. To the north the Latinos in Lynn and in Salem's Point neighborhood represent ethnically strong, highly localized distributions.

In contrast to the most concentrated ethnic areas, the lighter shades of color on the map indicate areas of greater mixing. For example, several light green areas in Boston city—including Dorchester Center on the east and the area around Franklin Park to the west—are less than 40 percent White and have median household incomes in the low-average range. Such neighborhoods may remain stable in their ethnic make-up, but most similar neighborhoods in other American cities have witnessed the departure of Whites, leading to higher minority proportions and substantial re-segregation as minority areas. What is happening now in these

highly diverse neighborhoods can provide an important window toward understanding the evolution of Boston, and perhaps also, American cities in general.

This map of Predominant Ethnic Group accentuates the spatial separation between groups. The level of Black-White separation in Boston is actually typical of large metropolitan areas, as is indicated by values of the index of dissimilarity, a frequently used measure of ethnic residential segregation or separation (Table 3). In the Boston PMSA the index yields a value of 66 out of a possible 100, which would represent the situation of Whites and Blacks living in completely separate census tracts. The value of 66 is two points lower than the average for metropolitan areas of over one million and three points lower than the 1990 value for Boston (Houston, McConville, et al. 2001).

Table 3

Group Residential Separation (D): Boston and U.S. Average

| | <u>Boston PMSA</u> | <u>Average of Metros > 1 Mil.</u> |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Black-White Separation | 66 | 68 |
| Hispanic-White Separation | 58 | 54 |
| Asian-White Separation | 45 | 43 |

Hispanics and Asians are slightly more residentially separated from Whites in Boston than in the average of other large metropolitan areas. Boston’s Hispanic-White separation increased 5 points since 1990 is probably due to Boston’s small Hispanic population (5.4 percent of the PMSA) and rapid Hispanic increase in their major enclaves. However, Boston certainly does not appear exceptional in its levels and patterns of residential segregation.

Conclusions

Although these maps offer a richly detailed spatial perspective on contemporary Bostonians, they do not enable us to answer precisely the question posed by Peter Morrison in the title of this session: Do the people of Boston and their spatial arrangement represent a microcosm of the nation?

The cumulative effect of kinship and friendship ties linking migrants and families between countries and neighborhoods has resulted in expected differences in ethnic composition between Boston and other American metropolitan areas. The distinctiveness of Boston's ethnic composition can thus be explained primarily by the vagaries and inertial effects of chain migrations from a range of countries. Nothing in this regard suggests that Boston is other than a typical American metropolitan area.

What is more interesting and significant is the spatial patterning. Calculations of group residential separation using the index of dissimilarity show that greater Boston is similar to the other large metropolitan areas. Also, our maps indicate that many ethnic concentrations occur in suburbs, not just in older central cities as predicted in traditional immigrant settlement model. This finding is consistent with our maps of ethnic populations in greater Los Angeles (Allen and Turner 1997; 2002) and with the research of Logan, Alba, and Zhang (2002) on the New York and Los Angeles metropolitan areas.

Although our purpose was not to measure statistically the ethnic concentrations in Boston, the distributions we mapped do suggest that the settlements of Boston's groups are not essentially different from those of other large metropolitan areas. In this regard, Boston does appear to be a microcosm of the nation.

Notes

1. Maps of English, Irish, and Italian ancestry are based on first-reported ancestry. In our opinion these provide a better indicator of ethnic group size than total ancestry responses for long-established and highly intermarried ethnic groups. To achieve consistency between 1990 and 2000 data, however, Tables 1 and 2 are based on total ancestry responses.

2. In preparing this map, we used the 100-percent counts of Hispanics and the 100-percent counts of single-race-only data for Blacks, Asians, and Non-Hispanic Whites. This means that those Hispanics who reported themselves racially Black were counted as both Hispanic and Black. We think this is an appropriate use of the race and Hispanic data for the purpose of this map, which is to display the numerically largest group in each area. For other purposes, researchers may wish to avoid any double counting of individuals by excluding, for example, Black or Asian Hispanics from the Black and Asian counts.

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James P. Allen and Eugene Turner for permission to reprint a version of the map "Haitians in Boston, 2000" from James P. Allen and Eugene Turner, "Boston's Emerging Ethnic Quilt: A Geographic Perspective" (paper presented at the Meeting of the Population Association of America, Boston, MA, April 1, 2004). In this first model, Haitians in Guadeloupe, the United States or Canada regard themselves first and foremost as members of the same supra-local group. Their subjectivity emerges out of a single, if complex set of globally circulating rhetorics, musical forms, religious practices, political projects" (Brodwin, this volume). Brodwin's second model makes local experience primary.

1995. A Geographic Glimpse of Central Texas and the Borderlands: Images and Encounters. 13. Castner, Henry W. 1995. Discerning New Horizons: A Perceptual Approach to Geographic Education. Placing ethnic geography into a larger framework of diversity studies, Carol Rosen develops a conceptual model with five pedagogical goals for teaching ethnic geography. The seventeen chapters in Teaching American Ethnic Geography draw from an eclectic array of perspectives but all, in their own ways, expand on important concepts of ethnic geography and share innovative teaching methods. We believe melding the ideas in this anthology with the currency and power of the geography standards will be a winning combination for teaching. Only RUB 193.34/month.

Geographic perspectives"global interactions 2. STUDY. Flashcards. The shared identity of an ethnic group which may be based on common ancestral roots or cultural characteristics such as language, religion, diet or clothing.

Ethnoscape. A cultural landscape constructed by a minority ethnic group, such as a migrant population. Expatriate. Someone who has migrated to live in another state but remains a citizen of the state where they were born. Financescape. A modern landscape of tower blocks and offices that incorporates state-of-the-art architecture, and which is usually designed to impress by reaching greater heights than the surrounding district. We use this perspective to highlight process thinking, complex social realities, and relational practice as means by which to better develop theory on the internationalization of EMFs. Our emergent approach emphasizes the need to view EMF internationalization as deeply situated in multifaceted contextual influences, as influenced by path dependence and as manifested in practice. These three relational tenets (contextuality, path dependence, and practice) are central to our geographic relational approach's ability to generate new challenging research questions for understanding EMF internationa