



# **Unresolved Identities: Discourse, Ambivalence, and Urban Immigrant Students (SUNY series, Second Thoughts: New Theoretical Formations)**

*Bic Ngo*

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**Unresolved Identities: Discourse, Ambivalence, and Urban Immigrant Students (SUNY series, Second Thoughts: New Theoretical Formations) Bic Ngo**

*Explores the ways that immigrant youth identities are shaped by dominant discourses.*

In her ethnographic study of Lao American students at an urban, public high school, Bic Ngo shows how simplistic accounts of these students smooth over unfinished, precarious identities and contested social relations. Exploring the ways that immigrant youth identities are shaped by dominant discourses that simplify and confine their experiences within binary categories of good/bad, traditional/modern and success/failure, she unmask and examines the stories we tell about them, and unsettles the hegemony of discourses that frame identities within discrete dualisms. Rather than cohesive, the identity negotiations of Lao American students are responses that modify, resist, or echo these discourses. Ngo argues that while Lao American students are changing what it means to be “urban” and “immigrant” youth, most people are unable to read them as doing so, and instead see the youth as confused, backward, and problematic. By illuminating the discursive practices of identity, this study underscores the need to conceptualize urban, immigrant identities as contradictory, fractured and unresolved.

Bic Ngo is Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota and coeditor (with Kevin K. Kumashiro) of *Six Lenses for Anti-Oppressive Education: Partial Stories, Improbable Conversations*.

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