



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the Virginia Heyer Young papers, 1948 - 1998

Celia Emmelhainz

2022

National Anthropological Archives
Museum Support Center
4210 Silver Hill Road
Suitland, Maryland 20746
Business Number: Phone: 301.238.1300
Fax Number: Fax: 301.238.2883
naa@si.edu
<http://www.anthropology.si.edu/naa/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	Virginia Heyer Young papers
Date:	1946-1998
Identifier:	NAA.2010-14
Creator:	Young, Virginia Heyer
Extent:	1.24 Linear feet (3 boxes)
Language:	The collection is primarily in English, with some early materials in Chinese.
Summary:	Virginia Heyer Young's papers document her research among African-American and Chinese-American communities in the United States as well as her field work in St. Vincent in the Caribbean.

Administrative Information

Processing Information

File order and titles have been maintained when possible. Loose photos were arranged by rough date and theme.

Processed and encoded by Celia Emmelhainz, October 2022.

Preferred Citation

Virginia Heyer Young papers, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The Virginia Heyer Young papers are open for research. Access to the collection requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical Note

Virginia Heyer Young was born April 28, 1926 in Vancouver, British Columbia and grew up in Tarrytown, New York. Young received her BA from Sarah Lawrence College in 1946 and her PhD in Anthropology from Columbia University in 1953. At Columbia, she studied under Ruth Benedict. Young became part of Benedict's and Margaret Mead's project on minority and immigrant groups in the US, entitled "Research in Contemporary Cultures."

In the 1940s and 1950s, Young studied political organization and intergenerational structures in New York's Chinatown, and in the 1970s she researched socialization in African American groups in Georgia and in Harlem.

In the 1980s she studied the relationship of individuals to the polity among Afro-Caribbean people on the island of St. Vincent in the British Caribbean, resulting in a book, *Becoming West Indian: Culture, Self, and Nation in St. Vincent*, published in 1993 by the Smithsonian Institution Press.

In 2005, she published an analysis of Benedict's work entitled *Ruth Benedict: Beyond Relativity, Beyond Pattern*.

Virginia Heyer Young died at home in Albemarle County, Virginia on September 11, 2014.

Chronology

1926 April 28	Born in Vancouver, British Columbia
1946	A.B. Sarah Lawrence College
1947-1950	Research Assistant, Columbia (Research in Contemporary Cultures Project, Chinese Culture Group)
1951	Fieldwork in Chinatown, New York
1952-1954	Research Associate, George Washington University
1953	Ph.D. Columbia University (Anthropology)
1955-1956	Research Associate, Cornell (Yorkville Community Mental Health Research Project)
1955-1956	Fieldwork with Hungarian-born Immigrants in New York
1957-1963	"Unemployed during child-raising" (her CV).
1961-1963	Fieldwork with African-American communities in Georgia, USA
1963-1964	Instructor in Anthropology, Fairleigh Dickinson University
1964-1975	Faculty, Finch College, NY
1969	Fieldwork in Harlem, New York
1972	Fieldwork in Windward Valley, St. Vincent, West Indies
1977-1978	Research Associate, Columbia (Program on Gender Roles and Social Change)
1978-1995	Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Virginia
1984, 1986	Fieldwork in Windward Valley, St. Vincent, West Indies
2002-2003	Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Virginia
2014, September 11	Died in Albemarle County, Virginia

Scope and Contents

Virginia Heyer Young papers document her research among minority communities in the United States (including African-Americans in Georgia and Chinese-Americans in New York), as well as interviews, journals, and logs from her field work in St. Vincent, in the Caribbean.

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or National Anthropological Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

Arrangement

The Virginia Heyer Young papers are divided into 4 series:

- Series 1: Chinese and Hungarians in New York City, 1949-1955
- Series 2: African-Americans in Georgia, 1961-1963
- Series 3: St. Vincent, West Indies, 1972-1986
- Series 4: Ruth Benedict's Lectures, 1946-1948 and 1990s

Selected Bibliography

1953. "Patterns of Social Organization in New York City's Chinatown." Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University.
1953. "Relations Between Men and Women in Chinese Stories." In *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, edited by Margaret Mead and Rhoda Metraux, 221-234. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1970. "Family and Childhood in a Southern Negro Community." *American Anthropologist* 72: 269-288.
1974. "A Black American Socialization Pattern," *American Ethnologist* 1: 405-413.
1990. "Household Structure in a West Indian Society," *Social and Economic Studies*, 39(3): 147-179.
1993. *Becoming West Indian: Culture, Self and Nation in St. Vincent*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
2005. *Ruth Benedict: Beyond Relativity, Beyond Pattern*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
2006. "Benedict and Mead at Columbia: A Student Looks Back." In *Living Legacies at Columbia*, edited by William Theodore de Bary. New York: Columbia University Press.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

African Americans
Chinese Americans
Hungarian Americans
West Indians
Women anthropologists

Cultures:

African Americans
Chinese Americans
Hungarian Americans
West Indians

Places:

Georgia
New York City
St. Vincent

Container Listing

Series 1: Series 1: Chinese and Hungarians in New York City, 1949-1955

Scope and Contents: This series includes fieldnotes from research in Chinatown, New York, in 1951; cases recorded by the Chinese Benevolent Association in Chinese, with translations into English; and three unpublished manuscripts related to China or Chinese American culture.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Papers on Virginia Heyer Young, 2009
Box 1, Folder 2	Chinatown field notes, 1951 Notes: Brief fieldnotes from conversations in January-March 1951, which have been placed in order by date. Some news clippings included.
Box 1, Folder 3	Cases from the Records of the Chinese Benevolent Association, (bulk 1941-1948) Notes: These cases from 1941-1948 were documented in Chinese, and a translation has been typed up in English. The files are in original order, with English translations in front of the Chinese original.
Box 1, Folder 4	Pre-Communist Cultural Elements in Communist China, 1953 Notes: Unpublished 1953 paper based on her dissertation research.
Box 1, Folder 5	Thoughts on a Beijing Summer, 1981 Notes: Unpublished paper on life in Beijing, from 1981.
Box 1, Folder 6	Ethnic Culture: The Chinese American Example, 2000-2010 Notes: Unpublished typed manuscript on Chinese American culture, drafted in 2000 and revised in 2010.
Box 1, Folder 7	Unpublished paper on Hungarian Culture, 1960 Notes: Unpublished manuscript on Hungarian-American Culture from 1960, with an editor's letter in reply from 1961.

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Series 2: African-Americans in Georgia, (bulk 1961-1963)

Language: English.
Scope and Contents: This series includes fieldnotes from research with African-American communities in "Georgiatown," in Georgia, USA, in 1961-1963, as well as a typed interviews notes and a handwritten list of data analysis tasks.

Box 1, Folder 8 Georgiatown diary, Part 1, 1961
Notes: Typewritten diary of interactions in "Georgiatown," gathered in 1961 in Georgia, USA. Part 1 of 2.

Box 1, Folder 9 Georgiatown diary, Part 2, 1962
Notes: Typewritten diary of interactions in Georgiatown, part 2 of 2.

Box 1, Folder 10 Interviews in Georgiatown, 1962, 1966
Notes: Typed transcripts of interviews with residents of "Georgetown" in Georgia, taken in 1962 and 1966.

Box 1, Folder 11 Georgiatown data analysis, 1961
Notes: Summary and analysis of household data from "Georgiatown" handwritten on notebook paper. Includes data by named household.

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Series 3: St. Vincent, West Indies, 1972-1986, (bulk 1972, 1984, 1986)

Scope and Contents: This series includes 17 field notebooks from research in Windward Valley, St. Vincent, West Indies in 1972, with short return visits in 1984 and 1986, as well as ephemera, letters, conference papers, photographs, and several local census publications.

Box 1, Folder 13	St. Vincent notebooks, II and III, 1972 Notes: Notebooks from research in St. Vincent, West Indies, labeled II and III, 1972.
Box 1, Folder 14	St. Vincent notebooks, IV and VI, 1972 Notes: St. Vincent notebooks, IV and VI, 1972
Box 1, Folder 15	St. Vincent notebooks, VII and VIII, 1972 Notes: St. Vincent notebooks, VII and VIII, 1972.
Box 1, Folder 16	St. Vincent notebooks, IX and X, 1972 Notes: Notebooks from research in St. Vincent, West Indies, labeled IX and X. 1972.
Box 2, Folder 1	St. Vincent notebooks, Persons and Tapes, 1972 Notes: St. Vincent notebooks on steno paper, partially filled out. One lists "persons" from research and the other describes the content of "tapes" which are not present in this collection.
Box 2, Folder 2	St. Vincent notebooks, Household Survey, 1972 Notes: Notebook recording a household survey of houses in St. Vincent, 1972.
Box 2, Folder 3	St. Vincent topical notebook, 1972 Notes: Notebook recording respondent comments, organized by topic; includes brief household survey/census in the back.
Box 2, Folder 5	St. Vincent steno books, I & II, (bulk 1984-1986) Notes: Steno notebook from Virginia's return trips to St. Vincent in 1984 and 1986. Daily notebook that records travel plans and stray notes.
Box 2, Folder 6	St. Vincent diary I, 1984 Notes: First diary/daily record of Young's return trip to St. Vincent in 1984, organized by date.
Box 2, Folder 7	St. Vincent diary II & III, (bulk 1984-1986) Notes: Second diary from Young's return trip to St. Vincent in 1984, and diary from her second return trip in 1986. The first includes both entries labeled by topic and entries organized by date. The second has entries organized by date and within that by topical heading.
Box 2, Folder 8	St. Vincent ephemera, (bulk 1966-1973)

	Notes:	Includes two documents of demographic data: St. Vincent in Focus: the Road Forward. The Views of the Educational Forum of the people, St. Vincent, West Indies, September 197; Census of Agriculture for St. Vincent, 1972-1973, Printed by UNDP-ECCM Printery, Antigua, 1978.
Box 2, Folder 9	St. Vincent Census, Vol. 1 and Vol. 3, 1981 Notes:	Two publications: 1980-1981 Population Census of the Commonwealth Caribbean: St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Vol. 1 and Vol. 3.
Box 2, Folder 10	Household Structure in a BWI Society, 1981 Notes:	Typewritten paper presented at VASSA in March 1981
Box 2, Folder 11	St. Vincent photographs, (bulk 1972-1986) Notes:	Photographic prints and negatives from Virginia Heyer Young's research in St. Vincent. Includes images of the town and of people and activities, as well as pages from a scrapbook; some are labeled and some are not.
Box 3, Folder 1	Performance and National Identity in St. Vincent, 1991 Notes:	Typewritten presentation at the American Ethnological Society Meeting in 1991.
Box 3, Folder 2	St. Vincent Correspondence, (bulk 1980-1990) Notes:	Ephemera and correspondence from St. Vincent in the 1980s.
Box 3, Folder 3	St. Vincent correspondence, 1993 Notes:	Correspondence with respondents at the point Heyer Young's research was published in 1993.

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Series 4: Notes on Ruth Benedict's Lectures, 1946-1990s, (bulk 1946-1948)

Scope and Contents: This series includes originals and copies of notes from Ruth Benedict's classes in the late 1940s at Columbia University, plus correspondence from the 1990s with her former students.

Box 3, Folder 4	Young's Notes on Ruth Benedict's Lectures, (bulk 1946-1947)
Box 3, Folder 5	Marion's Notes on Ruth Benedict's Lectures, circa 1947 Notes: Notes on Ruth Benedict's course on Social Organization, photocopied from Virginia Heyer Young's cohort mate Marion.
Box 3, Folder 6	People and Culture Notes, 1949 Notes: Comments made on an assortment of photocopied notes.
Box 3, Folder 7	Eric Wolf notes on Ruth Benedict's Courses
Box 3, Folder 8	Recollections of Columbia Anthropologists, (bulk 1997-1998) Notes: Letters to Virginia Heyer Young from her contemporaries with memories of Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead. Includes letters from Ruth H. Landman, David P. McAllester, Richard "Dick" Slobodin, and Leona Bond.
Box 3, Folder 9	Notes from Ruth Benedict's Courses article draft., 1997 Notes: Draft of Anthropology News article entitled A Voice from the Past: Notes from Ruth Benedict's Courses.

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