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978-0-521-82883-3 - American Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism
Jack Citrin and David O. Sears
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American Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism

The civil rights movement and immigration reform transformed American politics in the mid-1960s. Demographic diversity and identity politics raised the challenge of *e pluribus unum* anew, and multiculturalism emerged as a new ideological response to this dilemma. This book uses public opinion data from both national and Los Angeles surveys to compare ethnic differences in patriotism and ethnic identity as well as in support for multicultural norms and group-conscious policies. The authors find evidence of strong patriotism among all groups and the classic pattern of assimilation among the new wave of immigrants. They argue that there is a consensus in rejecting harder forms of multiculturalism that insist on group rights but also a widespread acceptance of softer forms that are tolerant of cultural differences and do not challenge norms, such as by insisting on the primacy of English. There is little evidence of a link between strong group consciousness and a lack of patriotism, even in the most disadvantaged minority groups. The authors conclude that the United States is not breaking apart due to the new ethnic diversity.

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*We dedicate this book to our wives, Bonnie McKellar and Carrie Sears.
Their care and support made its completion possible.*

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Preface

This book has both psychological and professional origins. On a personal level, what it means to have a national identity and how minority and majority groups coexist were daily questions for Jack Citrin as he grew up in a family of Russian Jewish refugees in China and Japan. Landing in the United States with a student visa in the mid-1960s, he moved from immigrant to citizen in 1978, feeling grateful to a country in which one could quite readily belong yet understanding that his skin color and unaccented English helped make this possible. The first Sears in what is now the United States shows up on the tax lists in Plymouth Colony in 1633, although little is known about him. In contrast, there are compelling family legends about David O. Sears's maternal great-grandmother Anna O'Keefe who fled the Irish Potato Famine as a teenager in the 1840s and found work in the Lowell cotton mills. Among other things she provided his middle name. Later generations of Sears's family progressed from farming to academia, yielding descendants with blessedly secure, classically "American" social identities. Perhaps a by-product of this security has been a deep concern about the treatment of minorities in a nation committed so early and so publicly to equality.

On a professional level, this book uses the important demographic changes in postwar American society to pursue our long-term research agendas. We regard ourselves as students of the psychology of politics, although one of us comes originally from the discipline of political science and the other from psychology. But throughout our careers and several earlier collaborations, our primary focus has always been on understanding the underpinnings and political consequences of public opinion. We also have shared an interest in symbolic politics theory as a conceptual starting point in analyzing public responses to societal changes and public events. Citrin has been a longtime student of American political culture, with a particular interest in political disaffection and system support and, more recently, in the future of national identity in a globalizing world. Sears has long done research on both sides of the American black–white racial divide, from black activism and political violence to white resistance to civil rights and racial equality.

The specific story developed here can be said to begin in an important way in the 1960s. That tumultuous and fascinating decade produced some momentous political successes as a result of direct attacks on the system of formal racial inequality that had marked American society almost from its inception. One residue of the 1960s was a civil rights ideology that interpreted those successes as resulting from the recognition and privileging of collective racial identities, something of a change from traditional American individualism. A second residue was a largely unnoticed set of reforms in immigration policy that later had equally momentous but unanticipated societal effects, most notably in a dramatic new wave of immigrants, both legal and illegal, especially from Latin America and Asia.

These two historic changes converged in the 1980s and 1990s with an evolved form of the civil rights ideology that has often been described as “identity politics.” It extrapolated the lessons many felt they had learned in the 1960s about the necessity for the recognition of racial differences and for collective action on behalf of minorities beyond the singular case of African Americans to many other mobilizing groups in American society – most notably ethnic groups such as Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans – but to other relatively less advantaged groups as well, such as women, the elderly, homosexuals, the disabled, and the mentally ill.

The lesson drawn by some from the civil rights era, if it may be called that, is that advancing equal treatment of disadvantaged groups requires the explicit identification of particular group cultures and official efforts to recognize and represent them in public life. The heightened group consciousness in many of these mobilized new minorities was accompanied by, we suggest, a common multiculturalist political ideology that centers on subgroup identities and privileges the promotion of those groups’ interests. We conceive of multiculturalism as an alternative formula to the individualist conception of American identity and the emphasis on assimilation that undergirded earlier views of how to accommodate waves of immigration. Underlying our empirical analysis is the question of how deeply this multiculturalist ideology has penetrated the mass public in terms of its thinking about the organization of society along ethnic lines, about individuals’ own identities, and about their policy preferences in domains relevant to race and ethnicity. Central to this analysis is the question of whether a common national identity has been undermined by multiculturalism’s emphasis on the validity of enduring ethnic differences, as many critics of multiculturalism maintain. Put simply, we wondered whether the new ethnic reality of American society would have consequences that radically differed from those of earlier waves of immigration and, among other things, how this new and more complex pattern of ethnicity would interact with the long-standing racial divide that America is yet to overcome.

As with any long and ambitious study (and this one has taken longer than either of us ever expected), the authors owe much to the efforts of others along the way. First and foremost, we have relied on a number of surveys carried out principally by three different organizations, to which we owe great debts of

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gratitude. One is the American National Election Studies (ANES), the sine qua non resource of studies such as ours. Several of the questions on which we have relied were first developed in the 1991 ANES Pilot Study based on a proposal from Citrin. We were also fortunate enough to be able to include a Multiculturalism Module in the 1994 General Social Survey (GSS), for which we are grateful to the GSS's then Board of Overseers, on which Sears served, and especially to its chair, Peter Marsden. Thanks to the support of Tom Smith, the principal investigator of GSS, we were able to include these and other items in later surveys. We also are grateful to our colleagues who collaborated with Sears in designing the Los Angeles County Social Survey (LACSS), Franklin Gilliam, John R. Petrocik, and Jim Sidanius, for incorporating our themes in those studies. For the data collection itself, we owe special thanks to the late Eve Fielder, then director of the UCLA Survey Research Center; Michael Greenwell, then director of the CATI facility; Madelyn de Maria, assistant director of the UCLA Institute for Social Science Research; and the many paid and student interviewers who put in long hours telephoning residents of Los Angeles County. Subsequent to data collection, the LACSS data were skillfully and accessibly archived by Libbie Stephenson, head archivist at the UCLA Social Sciences Data Archive, making it possible for the data to be accessed by our analysts at both UCLA and UCB, as well as at other institutions.

At the data analysis stage, we benefited from a large number of truly gifted and loyal research assistants. They are Sharmaine Vidanage Cheleden, P. J. Henry, Jocelyn Kiley, Amy Lerman, Morris Levy, Michael Murakami, Chris Muste, Kathryn Pearson, Victoria Savalei, John Sides, Christopher Tarman, Nicholas A. Valentino, Colette van Laar, and Matthew Wright. Matt and Morris were especially instrumental in the home stretch of data analysis and presentation. We also owe a great debt to Marilyn Hart for many years of help with manuscript preparation and to Katherine Nguyen and Maria Wolf for pulling everything together in such organized fashion at delivery time. Finally, we are most grateful to Lewis Bateman of Cambridge University Press and to Dennis Chong, our series editor and valued friend, for their almost infinite patience and continuing support for this project.

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Prologue

The monumental legislative changes of 1964 and 1965 that changed American history forever are the catalysts for this book. In 1964, as a response to the growing strength of the civil rights movement, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act. In 1965, the Voting Rights Act put a dagger in the heart of the two-caste racial system in the South, a system that had existed for the more than three centuries since African slaves were first imported to North America. In 1965, the Hart-Celler Immigration and Nationality Act, on the surface tinkering only modestly with prevailing immigration priorities, unexpectedly opened the flood-gates to massive influxes of non-European immigration over the course of the next half century.

The consequence of immigration reform has been a rapid rise in the cultural diversity of the nation, mimicking a similar surge a century earlier. Those changes reshaped an overwhelmingly white nation with relatively small minorities of African Americans and Native Americans deliberately kept largely out of sight of the mainstream. In 1965, the United States began on a path that will, a few decades from now, turn it into a nation with no majority racial or ethnic group.¹ Just as important, accompanying this demographic change have been new political movements demanding greater equality not only for African Americans but for Latinos and Asian Americans as well.

What is the consequence of these changes for national unity? Nations are defined by “common sentiment,” by what members of a community think of

¹ Much that is written on the subject focuses on the famous ethnocultural pentagon of whites, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. It is sometimes the convention to differentiate the terms “racial” and “ethnic” in referring to these groups. We make no such distinction, given the social construction of all those categories, and use the two terms interchangeably.

themselves and what makes them belong together.² Nation building thus involves inculcating a sense of common identity. How to do this in a culturally heterogeneous society is the challenge of *e pluribus unum*. What, then, is the glue that holds America together? With historical answers as a backdrop, this book's purpose is to determine how the American public thinks about the linkages between ethnicity and the nation's identity in a society whose composition and political culture have changed radically in the past fifty years.

Our focus, then, is on the exacting task of balancing unity and diversity. But that task is not a new one for the United States but one that has faced the nation from its beginning. In the first census of 1790, those of English stock dominated, making up 49 percent of the total population and 60 percent of the whites. Blacks were 19 percent of the national total, and Germans, Scotch-Irish, Irish, Swedes, Dutch, and French made up the rest.³ George Washington pronounced in 1783 that "America is open to receive not only the Opulent and respectable Stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions."⁴ Heeding the message, waves of immigration made a "settler" country ever more culturally and religiously diverse. Indeed, America has come to call itself "a nation of immigrants," treating the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island as icons of national identity.

In practice, most of the early settlers were Protestants from the British Isles. Nevertheless, the founders rejected defining American identity in such ethnic terms. True, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin believed in the importance of a common culture founded on British political values and English as a common language.⁵ But they knew there would be other immigrants and simply assumed that newcomers would assimilate.

As a result, a normative conception of national identity, which we label *cosmopolitan liberalism*, was articulated. The core principle of cosmopolitan liberalism is the equal treatment of individuals. Everyone should be subject to the same rules and requirements. Discrimination on the basis of national origin was in principle anathema, but so too was the idea that membership in a particular ethnic group entitles one to special exemptions or rights.⁶ The state should be difference-blind; that is, neutral to the ethnocultural identities of its members.⁷

² Wayne Norman, "Theorizing Nationalism (Normatively): The First Steps," in *Theorizing Nationalism*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Albany: State University of New York, 1999), 53.

³ This is the standard estimate based on the U.S. census's approximate calculations. See Peter Schuck, "Immigration," in *Understanding America*, ed. Peter Schuck and James Q. Wilson (Polity Press: New York, 2007), 361.

⁴ Quoted from Daniel Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 51.

⁵ Summarized in Jack Citrin and Matthew Wright, "The Politics of Immigration in a Nation of Immigrants," in *New Directions in American Politics*, ed. Raymond J. La Raja (New York: Routledge, 2013), 238.

⁶ Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁷ Brian Barry, *Justice as Impartiality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

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In principle, if not always in practice, then, this is an inclusive narrative that defines Americanism on the basis of a “civic creed” emphasizing democracy, constitutionalism, and individual rights. Immigrants would become Americans once they learned English and absorbed these values. The imagined national community of cosmopolitan liberalism embodied Ralph Waldo Emerson’s credo: “America has no genealogy. Its family tree is not easily traced.”⁸

With the first massive wave of immigration, however, an alternative set of norms about American identity emerged in the form of *nativism*. As Rogers Smith writes in *Civic Ideals*,⁹ this ethnocentric tradition has waxed and waned, but in the nineteenth century its influence resulted in new and racist immigration and naturalization laws, culminating in the national origins system that lasted from 1924 until the civil rights era after World War II. The ideal immigrant for nativists was an Anglo-Saxon Protestant; if others were admitted, they should undergo a program of Americanization that could force them to shed their native customs.¹⁰ Coercion, not just gradual change, would sustain the “*unum*.”

Although nativism ostensibly was aimed at foreigners, its most glaring and enduring form of prejudice, of course, has been the ideologies and practices that assigned African Americans to a lower caste, first through slavery and then through the Jim Crow system. These institutions are incompatible with cosmopolitan liberalism, so their survival for more than a century and a half – what Gunnar Myrdal called the “American dilemma” – testifies to the limits of that original universalistic image.¹¹

The long nativist moment ended with the pivotal 1960s legislation. Together, the end of racial discrimination in law and an ethnically neutral immigration regime can be viewed as the apogee of cosmopolitan liberalism. Nevertheless, in the sharply changed political context of the late 1960s, some, like the cultural nationalist faction of the civil rights movement, rejected cosmopolitan liberalism as a failure. Instead, they proposed what became the essential elements of *multiculturalism* as the normative foundation for justice and solidarity in a multiethnic nation-state.¹² As all commentators agree,¹³ multiculturalism is a concept with a wide range of meanings. As a demographic concept, it refers to the presence of more than one cultural group within a single polity. This

⁸ Quoted in Tichenor, *Dividing Lines*, 53.

⁹ Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. Public Law* (Chelsea, MI: Yale University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

¹¹ Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1942).

¹² Two classic statements are Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) and Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, edited by Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

¹³ Paul Kelly, “Introduction: Between Culture and Equality,” in *Multiculturalism Reconsidered*, ed. Paul Kelly (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2002), 4.

phenomenon is a feature of virtually all modern societies. As a normative ideology, multiculturalism is a theory of how states should deal with demographic diversity.

All versions of multiculturalism defend the equal recognition of ethnic cultures and the necessity of group-differentiated policies. They all regard the individual as formed in the crucible of a particular culture whose dignity and preservation is essential to his or her freedom in choosing how to live.¹⁴ If the state does not prescribe rights and provide resources that sustain minority “ways of life,” the privileges and power of the cultural majority will be reinforced, and minorities will be forced to choose between assimilation and marginalization. Multiculturalism thus endorses the maintenance and strengthening of group identifications and the equality of all cultural traditions, without necessarily embracing every cultural practice as acceptable.¹⁵ It flatly rejects nativism as racist. But it also rejects some core precepts of cosmopolitan liberalism. It generally regards equal treatment as inadequate protection for cultural differences and, in some more extreme variants, as mere cover for de facto discrimination. So, at a practical level, the core thrust of multiculturalism is to promote the recognition of ethnic and racial groups, value their unique cultures, provide for their equal representation, and, as much as possible, work toward their equality, not merely before the law, but in access to the universal desiderata of modern life. It therefore promotes group-conscious policies instead of difference-blind equal treatment.

In sum, we distinguish cosmopolitan liberalism, nativism, and multiculturalism as alternative normative solutions to the problem of reconciling ethnic and racial diversity with the idea of a shared nation. Nativism’s solution for the integration of increased diversity is an active program of Americanization. Cosmopolitan liberalism’s solution relies on equal treatment, equal opportunity, and freedom of association. Multiculturalism’s perspective on integrating new groups into a nation long dominated both culturally and politically by the descendants of northern Europeans is to reexamine the balance between ethnic and national identifications. As a result, as the title of this volume indicates, we ask whether the growing diversity of American society, and ideological responses to it, gnaw away at a common national identity and patriotic sentiments.

These normative debates pitting liberalism against multiculturalism form the background of our inquiry. But our primary concern is with the pattern of public support for these alternate ideological forms of the relationship between the nation and its racial and ethnic subgroups. We believe public opinion is an underexamined piece of the puzzle of *e pluribus unum*, a foundation for social cohesion and national unity that has received less scholarly attention than has the thinking of political elites.

¹⁴ Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*.

¹⁵ See Jeffrey Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1994), chapters 4 and 5 for a discussion of this issue.

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We attend in particular to the political identities and attitudes of the mass public. On the one hand, we examine those that relate centrally to race and ethnicity, such as ethnic group consciousness, group-interested policy preferences, and opinions about multiculturalist norms and the policy positions that flow from them (although usually from other sources of support as well). On the other hand, we consider attachment to the nation in terms of patriotism and national identity. Then we look closely at whether ethnically oriented dispositions conflict with and compromise those that are nation-oriented. We examine each major ethnic group separately because the very essence of multiculturalism and identity politics is the disparate tendencies of diverse ethnic and racial groups.

In doing so, we try to understand the sources of the mass public's political thinking about race and ethnicity as it exists on the ground. We argue that academic discussions of cultural diversity in America are often oversimplified. Today's ethnic and racial groups are not static silos, destined to remain separate and unchanging, in a fixed racial hierarchy. Rather, diversity is dynamic. Moreover, America's historic black–white dualism may not be the most useful model for understanding the trajectory of incoming immigrant groups. In this vein, we empirically contrast three leading psychological models of how intergroup relations work in practice. Each is, of course, an ideal type, and so has some of the flavor of mythology as well as attempting to model reality.

One is the *assimilation* model best known through writings about the European immigrants of a century ago. These newcomers to the United States often faced resistance from the existing population and usually possessed fewer resources in terms of language, capital, education, job skills, and income. Initially, of course, true assimilation – either cultural or economic – was the exception, not the rule. Differences in national origin persisted for decades in the form of enduring hyphenated-American ethnic groups, frequently living in neighborhoods dominated by their own national group, maintaining some fluency in their original languages, marrying within the group, and often creating institutions parallel to those of the broader society. But a century later, much of that separateness has disappeared through pervasive residential dispersion, linguistic acculturation, waning ethnic identification, intermarriage, and upward mobility.

We examine whether or not today's immigrants – heavily from Latin America and Asia – are following the same path. In applying the assimilation model to the current era, we are cognizant that, relative to that heavy wave of European immigration of a century ago, the new immigrants are relatively recent arrivals. The heaviest immigration in that earlier era occurred over roughly a forty-four-year span, from 1880 to 1924. The current rush of immigration began in 1965, nearly fifty years ago as this is written. The two spans of time are similar in length. But at the comparable moment to the present, in the late 1920s, the Italians, Poles, Russian Jews, Greeks, and their brethren were quite distinctive and unassimilated. Applying the assimilation model should not assume that

Latinos and Asian Americans today look as assimilated as the descendants of those long-ago European immigrants do now, nearly a century after that wave of immigration slowed to a trickle.

The assimilation model does not account as well for the trajectory of African Americans as for the European immigrants across the past century. Realistically, blacks then and now have remained more separate from and more disadvantaged than the majority whites by such indicators as residential segregation, the level of intermarriage, and continuing gaps in socioeconomic status, education, morbidity, health, and other domains of well-being. Therefore, the assimilation model may work better for such heavily immigrant groups as Latinos and Asian Americans than it does for African Americans, suggesting a *black exceptionalism* model of ethnic group differences as an alternative. This presupposes a stricter and less permeable color line facing blacks than those immigrant groups, notwithstanding the common descriptions of Latinos and Asians as also people of color. It also presupposes the greater weight of centuries of disadvantage on the vast majority of African Americans than on new immigrants.

Finally, many social psychologists who specialize in intergroup relations are drawn to various elements of what we describe collectively as a *politicized group consciousness paradigm* of Americans' thinking about race and ethnicity, especially among minorities. This paradigm prioritizes such variables as categorization along group lines, group hierarchies, politicized in-group identity, antagonism toward out-groups, and intergroup competition as central elements of human psychology. This approach views racial and ethnic minorities as having especially strong ethnic identities, a sense of common fate with fellow group members, and perceptions of discrimination against their own group. These psychological foundations, we suggest, underlie the normative precepts of identity politics and multiculturalist ideology, particularly resonating with its emphasis on privileging ethnicity as a primary social identity.

We are interested not just in where the American public is today, but in the direction it may take in the future. As a result, we also test what we label a *vanguard* hypothesis. Here, we build on the literature identifying generational effects, stimulated by Karl Mannheim years ago.¹⁶ He proposed that “generational units” of young people might be affected in common by “the times” (or, in German, the *zeitgeist*). Public and scholarly attention to cultural diversity and to multiculturalist ideologies has gained prominence only in the past thirty years or so. Exposure to these phenomena has been most widespread in our colleges and universities. The vanguard hypothesis proposes that there may be especially high levels of ethnic group consciousness, support for multiculturalism, and waning of national identity and patriotism among the young and college educated of all ethnic and racial groups.

¹⁶ Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” in *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*, by Karl Mannheim, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (Orlando, FL: Mariner Books, 1955).

Prologue

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So, our study is a work of political psychology, focusing on public opinion. Our method is the sample survey. Much of our data is taken from representative national surveys such as the American National Election Studies (ANES) or General Social Survey (GSS). These surveys are excellent for tapping national opinion, especially that of whites. They are less useful for understanding the thinking of people of color, so central to our interests, because of the small numbers of such people generally interviewed in national surveys. For the opinions of African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans, we turn for the most part to the Los Angeles County Social Surveys carried out annually for almost a decade in a metropolitan area that ranks at the top in the nation, or very close to it, in cultural diversity. But we buttress this analysis of ethnic differences when possible with findings from the more recent 2008 or 2012 ANES studies, which have much larger numbers of African-American and Latino respondents than did previous ANES studies.

The data we present in this book are drawn from a variety of surveys conducted over a period of years rather than from a single survey, which, however well designed, constitutes a snapshot taken at a single point in time. Our approach thus resembles a kind of meta-analysis, searching for consistency in the results of many studies using multiple measures. In addition, we deliberately adopt a somewhat old-fashioned analysis, emphasizing description based on simple cross-tabulations before embarking on more rigorous multivariate tests. And even there we eschew the “kitchen sink” model of massive equations that present themselves as the Holy Grail with no omitted variables. Admittedly, this leaves us open to the charge of failing to establish genuine “causal” relationships, if such an achievement ever was possible through multiple regression analysis. We are convinced, however, that the simpler portrait we attempt to draw here – one that does, after all, insist on testing for the statistical significance of relationships – provides nuanced and accessible evidence of public opinion on the political challenges of multiculturalism in contemporary American politics.

To anticipate the results briefly, we have reassuring news about national attachment. Americans’ patriotism remains strong and pervasive. We do find that whites are generally more devoted to the symbols of the nation than are minority groups. But African Americans, the most disadvantaged of America’s racial groups, are highly patriotic by any standard. The patriotism of Latinos, also quite disadvantaged, is closely dependent on their immigration status. The American-born are considerably more patriotic than the foreign-born. That is true even of the Mexican Americans who Samuel Huntington worried were a threat to American unity¹⁷ and who dominate the Latino population in the Southwest and California and increasingly are spreading throughout the nation.

¹⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We?: Challenges to American Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), chapter 8.

Perhaps most importantly, U.S.-born Latinos are just as patriotic as whites.¹⁸ This suggests that, over time, Latinos' overall attachment to the nation will grow as their numerical center of gravity moves toward the U.S.-born and away from immigrants. Surprisingly, partisan cleavages overshadow ethnic divisions about patriotic sentiments, with white conservatives and Republicans substantially more enamored with symbols of the nation than white liberals and Democrats. Young whites, rather than minorities, stand out as the least patriotic, yielding partial support for the vanguard hypothesis. So if the American *unum* indeed is crumbling or breaking apart, it is due more to partisan and generational polarization than to ethnic diversity.

In surveying the literature, we distinguish between a liberal “soft” version of multiculturalist policies and a more radical “hard” variant. Both defend group-conscious policies. However, the scope and content of their proposals differ. Soft multiculturalism focuses on the symbolic recognition of different groups to affirm their value and acceptance of their differences and on modest adjustments of traditional policies to accommodate the special needs of minority groups along the road to integration, such as the use of bilingual ballots to allow heavily immigrant groups to achieve proportionate political representation. Hard multiculturalism, on the other hand, assumes that the differences among ethnic groups are stronger and more persistent and emphasizes the major costs of assimilation to those called upon to adapt. In that view, both justice and social peace require formal group representation, exemptions for cultural minorities in domains such as family law, and policy-making negotiations among parties resembling a quasi-confederation.¹⁹

To make a long story short, we find widespread acceptance of soft multiculturalism, even among whites. In contrast, we find general opposition to hard multiculturalism, even among ethnic minorities. Not surprisingly, then, the “harder” multiculturalist proposals advocated by some political theorists do not achieve much visibility in the mainstream political agenda in the United States.

What about our three political-psychological models? First, is there evidence of strong ethnic group consciousness in America's largest minority groups, driving separate policy agendas favoring their own ethnic interests? High levels of aggrieved group consciousness, as reflected in especially strong racial identity, a sense of common fate with fellow group members, and perceived discrimination and blocked opportunities against their group, are common only among

¹⁸ This confirms earlier studies by De la Garza, Citrin, et al. See Rodolfo de la Garza, Angelo Falcon, Chris F. Garcia, and John A. Garcia, “Latino National Political Survey, 1989–1990” (ICPSR 6841); Jack Citrin, Amy Lerman, Michael Murakami, and Kathryn Pearson, “Testing Huntington: Is Hispanic Immigration a Threat to American Identity?,” *Perspectives on Politics* 1 (March 2007): 31–48.

¹⁹ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); and Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Prologue

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African Americans. Each minority group does support public policies most congruent with its own presumed interests. But there is little sign of a “people of color” coalition that gives steady support to all minority groups’ interests against whites.

Second, one fear swirling around debates over immigration is that new immigrants are not likely to gradually acculturate to America or assimilate to the mainstream. Mexican Americans, who dominate the Latino population, are sometimes especially targeted as likely to remain more separate than did those fabled European immigrants because of their large urban ghettos, the proximity of Mexico, and the ease of moving back and forth across the border.²⁰ To repeat, we believe that the heaviest waves of Mexican immigration have come too recently to have reached any stable equilibrium level of assimilation as yet. Nevertheless, we find numerous indications of integration among southern California Latinos already. Nativity matters, as the assimilation model assumes. As noted earlier, U.S.-born Latinos are considerably more patriotic than are the foreign-born. They are more likely to identify as “just American” or as both American and ethnic than as purely ethnic. They show less group consciousness. They are less likely to see value in remaining separate as opposed to blending into the broader society. Such findings suggest some limits to the quasi-essentialist interpretation of American ethnic groups found in some politicized group-consciousness perspectives, portraying them as persistently inhabiting somewhat separate silos. Nevertheless, assimilation is a slow process, and, as our data confirm, it occurs across generations more often than within a new immigrant’s lifetime.

Third, the black exceptionalism model hypothesizes that African Americans have always faced a uniquely powerful color line, one that is not completely impermeable but that continues to be difficult to crack. Despite their linguistic assimilation and their significant and ongoing contributions to a common popular culture, many blacks are excluded by the legacy of the past from the level of integration into the mainstream that voluntary immigrant groups have undergone, and, we argue, are continuing to undergo. Indeed, of all the major ethnic and racial groups blacks have, on average, by far the strongest levels of aggrieved ethnic group consciousness. Young blacks are especially likely to have strong group consciousness, suggesting enduring obstacles to interethnic cooperation.

What of the potential incompatibility of national and ethnic attachments? Does identity politics, based on high levels of ethnic consciousness and group-interested political preferences, constitute a centrifugal force, a kind of “divide-and-rule” form of politics that undercuts cooperation and mutual sacrifice on behalf of the nation as a whole? Hearteningly, we see only limited evidence of any such collision of identities, even among the most disadvantaged minority groups, blacks and Latinos. In fact, the correlation between their strength of patriotism and of ethnic identity is persistently nearly zero, rather than negative,

²⁰ Huntington makes this argument forcefully.

as might be expected from some versions of the politicized ethnic consciousness model. Immigrants generally favor hyphenated identities, which our evidence suggests appear to serve as transitional way stations in self-definition, positively associated with both patriotism and the strength of ethnic identity.

From a normative point of view, we find it encouraging that most Americans appear to be accepting of what we have called soft multiculturalism, encompassing recognition and tolerance of difference and support for policies that ease the integration of today's minority groups into the broader society. That acceptance should help dampen intergroup conflict and ease social cohesion in an increasingly diverse society. However, the commitment of the general public, including ethnic minorities, to cosmopolitan liberalism's principle of individual rather than group rights seems intact. Hard lines between ethnic groups, like the "one-drop" color line historically dominant in the United States, would seem to us to foster stereotyping, discrimination, and intergroup conflict.

Finally, despite the influx of so many immigrants, patriotism remains at a higher level in the United States, indeed higher than in most other advanced industrial democracies.²¹ The fly in the ointment, as it has been for almost 400 years, is the persisting disadvantage experienced by African Americans. Their response is in some respects predictable: a high level of aggrieved group consciousness, as noted earlier, and high levels of support for government policies that aid blacks as a whole. In another respect, their response is more surprising and encouraging for the unity of the nation: high levels of national attachment and patriotism.

FORESHADOWING

We conclude this prologue by outlining what comes next. Chapter 1 introduces the history of earlier debates over national unity and the challenges posed to it by massive immigration in the contemporary era. Then it introduces our three normative models for offering alternative ways of accommodating diversity while maintaining public attachment to the nation as a whole: cosmopolitan liberalism, nativism, and multiculturalism. The writings of leading advocates and critics of multiculturalism are reviewed, going over some of the groundwork introduced here and laying out the distinction between hard and soft multiculturalism.

Chapter 2 introduces our three psychological models of race and ethnicity in America: politicized group consciousness, immigrant assimilation, and black exceptionalism. It also discusses the more general psychological issues surrounding the individual's management of plural identities. It concludes by laying out our basic empirical methodology, describing the surveys we rely on, and presenting some descriptive demographic statistics about the different racial and ethnic groups we compare.

²¹ Tom W. Smith and Seokho Kim, "National Pride in Comparative Perspective: 1995/96 and 2003/04," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 18 (2006), 127–36.

Each of the next seven chapters of the book addresses a separate central empirical question regarding public opinion. Chapter 3 presents our definition of national identity, distinguishing self-categorization, emotional attachment to the nation, and ideas about the nation's norms and boundaries. It poses three broad questions: How patriotic are Americans, what variations are there among them, and what does it mean to be an American? The first entails measuring patriotism and national pride. The second examines variation between ethnic groups and tests the vanguard and immigrant assimilation hypotheses. The third question entails an exploration of the content and character of American national identity and pride. Is American nationality defined in civic terms potentially achievable by all, such as citizenship and political beliefs, or in primordial ethnic terms such as race, religion, or nativity?

Chapter 4 examines ethnic consciousness. It begins by examining perceptions of the severity of ethnic group conflict within the nation. It then presents measures of politicized ethnic group consciousness in terms of its constituent parts: strength of ethnic identity, perceived common fate, and perceived discrimination. It estimates the prevalence of each in the four main American ethnic groups we examine in this study. It also offers a composite index of aggrieved group consciousness. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the sources of strong ethnic identities within each ethnic group, testing the politicized group consciousness, assimilation, black exceptionalism, and vanguard hypotheses.

Chapter 5 describes public opinion about multicultural norms concerning the role of ethnicity in American political life. We examine beliefs about ethnic essentialism and attitudes toward the official recognition of ethnicity, assimilation, and the basis for the political representation of racial and ethnic groups. We assess the prevalence of a coherent ideology about multiculturalist norms. Then we test for the psychological origins of support for multiculturalism. Does it stem from strong ethnic group consciousness among minorities? Does it wane with the assimilation of post-immigration generations of Latinos? Is it especially strong among the young and better-educated vanguards?

Chapter 6 takes up the possible collision of national and ethnic identities, especially among minorities. Does strong ethnic consciousness compromise national unity by weakening national identity, as some fear? Do hyphenated identities reflect in equal measure the intertwining of ethnic and national identity? Do post-immigration generations show assimilation in terms of increasing attachment to the nation in preference to ethnic identity? We test whether patriotism is positively associated with whites' ethnic identities and negatively associated with those of ethnic minorities. We conclude by examining whether support for multiculturalist norms compromises strong national identity.

Chapters 7 and 8 analyze opinion toward important policies that form elements of multiculturalism's agenda, defined in terms of race-targeted, immigration, and language policies. We first assess areas of consensus about both soft and hard multiculturalist policies across the main ethnic and racial groups. Then we turn to ethnic differences in attitudes toward those group-conscious policies,

examining the possible roots of such group cleavages in divergent group interests, intergroup competition, and differential assimilation. We examine the coherence across domains of multiculturalist policy preferences as we did with multiculturalist norms. Finally, we examine differences in the associations of patriotism and ethnic identity with policy preferences across ethnic groups and issue domains, focusing particularly on the dividing line between racial issues and those relating to cultural unity.

Chapter 9 considers where contention about American identity and multiculturalism fits within the broader range of prevailing partisan and ideological battle lines in American politics. In the general public, are beliefs about American identity becoming increasingly polarized along party lines? Do preferences about group-conscious policies, such as affirmative action, immigration, and language, align themselves with the standard major partisan cleavages on economic and social issues?

Finally, Chapter 10 provides a summary and conclusion to the book. Of particular relevance is the pattern of ethnic cleavages on the attitudes and beliefs examined, for this indicates whether and when the politicized group consciousness, assimilation, and/or black exceptionalism perspectives best explain divisions of opinion. We also consider in each case the probable future trend in popular outlook, as suggested by the vanguard hypothesis about differences across generational and educational lines.