

Multiculturalism in American Public Opinion

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Multiculturalism has emerged to challenge liberalism as an ideological solution in coping with ethnic diversity in the United States. This article develops a definition of political multiculturalism which refers to conceptions of identity, community and public policy. It then analyses the 1994 General Social Survey and a 1994 survey of Los Angeles County to assess the contours of mass support and opposition to multiculturalism, testing hypotheses concerning the role of social background, liberalism–conservatism and racial hostility. The main conclusions are that ‘hard’ versions of multiculturalism are rejected in all ethnic groups, that a liberal political self-identification boosts support for multiculturalism, and that racial hostility is a consistent source of antagonism to the new ethnic agenda of multiculturalism. There is strong similarity in the results in both the national and Los Angeles samples.

Sparked by the civil rights movement and fuelled by the influx of immigrants from Latin America and Asia, multiculturalism has emerged to challenge liberalism as an ideological solution for balancing unity and diversity in America. At the core of multiculturalism is an insistence on the enduring significance of ethnicity in shaping political identities and interests. Proponents of multiculturalism hold that membership in a ‘societal culture’ with its own language and history is necessary for the individual’s dignity and self-realization.¹ They are convinced that ‘the universal, *individual* rights promised by liberalism are insufficient protection for the survival of minority cultures’ and for the ability of their members ‘to decide what kind of life is good for them’.² Minority cultures need special recognition and *group* rights to withstand the forces of assimilation that undermine the sense of identity and well-being that individuals derive from membership in prosperous and respected communities.³

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¹ C. Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

² S.M. Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 12.

³ Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* J. Raz, ‘Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective’, *Dissent*, 41 (1994), 67–79.

In the United States, some observers believe that this challenge to liberal individualism has had great influence on the broader society. Michael Lind asserts that 'multiculturalism is not just a proposal, but the *de facto* orthodoxy of the American regime'.⁴ Similarly, Jacoby states that government officials, college administrators and corporate executives, among other leaders, all declare their commitment to multiculturalism.⁵ Whatever the validity of these claims regarding elite attitudes,⁶ they may not apply to the preferences of ordinary citizens. Yet public opinion is likely to shape the future of multiculturalism's political project, if only by placing limits on the actions public officials can safely contemplate. Indeed, the question of the proper role of ethnicity in the allocation of public benefits has penetrated the electoral arena in several states. In California, for example, voters have chosen to designate English as their 'official' language, restrict the access of illegal immigrants, predominantly Hispanic, to most public services, abolish most state affirmative action programmes, and reduce the scope and duration of bilingual education programmes.

This article examines the contours of popular support for and opposition to multiculturalism in the United States, focusing on the issue of group consensus and conflict. After reviewing some of the leading ways of conceiving multiculturalism tailored to the American context, we address these main empirical questions:

1. What is the extent of ethnic cleavages in opinion? Since multiculturalism seeks to preserve the cultures of minority groups in the face of pressures to assimilate to the customs of the majority, a familiar hypothesis is that there are substantial ethnic group differences reflecting the impact of competing interests.⁷
2. What is the likely trend in support for multiculturalism? Specifically, since this doctrine is a relatively new ideology most widely discussed in university settings, one hypothesis is that the younger and better-educated cohorts within the public are a relatively sympathetic vanguard group.
3. What is the degree of coherence or structure in public thinking; that is, does multiculturalism constitute a mass 'belief system' with tight linkages between general principles and specific policy preferences?⁸

⁴ M. Lind, *The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. 97.

⁵ R. Jacoby, *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

⁶ Neither of these authors provides systematic evidence of elite opinion or the precise meaning they attribute to the term 'multiculturalism'.

⁷ L. Bobo, 'Group Conflict, Prejudice, and the Paradox of Contemporary Racial Attitudes', in P. Katz and D. Taylor, eds, *Eliminating Racism* (New York: Plenum, 1988), pp. 85–114; L. Bobo and J. R. Kluegel, 'Opposition to Race-Targeting: Self-Interest, Stratification Ideology, or Racial Attitudes?' *American Sociological Review*, 58 (1993), 443–64.

⁸ P. E. Converse, 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics', in D. Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent* (Glencoe, NY: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 206–61.

4. How do attitudes towards multiculturalism engage the prevailing partisan and ideological divisions within the electorate, with special reference to contemporary liberalism and conservatism? This question bears on the structure of possible coalitions supporting multiculturalism's policy agenda.

After describing group differences in opinion, we present a multivariate analysis estimating the relative influences of social background, political ideology and animosity towards minority groups on opinions about multiculturalism. In developing this model, we draw on previous theorizing about the foundations of beliefs about racial policies. Bobo and Kluegel focus on racial differences in opinion and emphasize the potency of competing group interests.⁹ Sniderman and Piazza stress the role of liberal and conservative principles as the main foundation of public opinion on matters of race among whites.¹⁰ Sears and Kinder and Sanders emphasize the significance of racial resentment and prejudice in shaping how Americans respond to policies aimed at benefiting blacks.¹¹ The analysis undertaken below aims at extending our understanding of the scope and consistency in the causal influences of group interest, ideology and animosity towards minorities on preferences regarding ethnic politics.

MEANINGS OF MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism is a contested concept which has been used to refer not only to ethnic, gender and sexual identities but also to a wide range of policy proposals, many dealing with education.¹² We confine our attention here to multiculturalism as a political formula – as a normative conception of political identity and national community with a derivative policy agenda.

Multiculturalism *as a fact* refers to the presence of people of diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds within a single polity. This demographic heterogeneity generally is a result of the conquest of a territory or of large-scale migrations. Multiculturalism *as an ideology* is a political response which assumes that differences in culture, in the sense of a coherent cluster of beliefs, values, habits and observances, accompany this demographic diversity.¹³ In Canada, where

⁹ Bobo and Kluegel, 'Opposition to Race-Targeting'.

¹⁰ P.M. Sniderman and T. Piazza, *The Scar of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

¹¹ D. O. Sears, 'Symbolic Racism', in P. Katz and D. Taylor, eds, *Eliminating Racism* (New York: Plenum, 1988), pp. 53–84; D. Kinder and L. Sanders, *Divided by Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹² D. T. Goldberg, 'Introduction: Multicultural Conditions', in D. T. Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 1–41; C. Willett, *Theorizing Multiculturalism: A Guide to the Current Debate* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998); P. McLaren, 'White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism,' in Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism*, pp. 45–74.

¹³ T. Turner, 'Anthropology and Multiculturalism: What is Anthropology that Multiculturalists should be Mindful of It?' in Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism*, pp. 406–25; K. A. Appiah, *Identity Against Culture: Understandings of Multiculturalism* (Berkeley, Calif.: Doreen B. Townsend Center

the term 'multiculturalism' was coined, it became government policy in 1971 to support the preservation of the distinctive heritages of all the country's minorities. The assumption was that this would sustain the psychological well-being of individual members of these groups as well as enrich society as a whole.¹⁴ In the United States, by contrast, the *official* recognition of minority cultures is far from a settled national objective, and even some supporters of 'multicultural' measures such as bilingual education defend them mainly as temporary measures on the road towards cultural integration.

One can array the many formulations of multiculturalism on a continuum from 'hard' to 'soft', or 'radical' to 'liberal'.¹⁵ The unifying thread running through the varied multiculturalisms is their commitment to a 'politics of difference', that is, to the merit and viability of preserving different, equally valid ways of life within a political system.¹⁶ A critical distinction between the 'hard' and the 'soft' versions is the stance taken towards concrete measures to institutionalize the ethnic principle in politics. Because 'hard' multiculturalism poses the main challenge to classical liberalism and to existing American policies, we focus our attention on this perspective.

'Hard' multiculturalism is an encompassing ideology maintaining that 'the very purpose of politics is to affirm group difference'.¹⁷ Animated by anti-colonialism, hard multiculturalism insists that liberal individualism is egalitarian in theory, but ethnocentric in fact. McLaren, for example, decries efforts to create a common culture as a 'homogenizing egalitarianism' designed to impose 'Euro-American' norms on ethnic minorities in order to perpetuate the cultural and economic advantages of the white middle class.¹⁸ The assertion of ethnic identity and demands for cultural recognition are thus necessary for redressing the entrenched inequalities embedded in a system of 'internal colonialism'.¹⁹ Hard multiculturalism views policy choices according to their

(*F*note continued)

for the Humanities, 1994); P. Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth Century America* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*.

¹⁴ J. W. Berry, R. Kalin and D. M. Taylor, *Multiculturalism and Ethnic Attitudes in Canada* (Ottawa: Minister of State for Multiculturalism, 1977).

¹⁵ D. Ravitch, 'Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Plures', *American Scholar*, 59 (1990), 337–54; Goldberg, 'Introduction: Multicultural Conditions'. What we refer to as 'hard' multiculturalism has been described as 'particularistic', 'radical', and 'illiberal'. Cf. Ravitch, 'Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Plures'; D. Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); K. A. Appiah, 'On Toleration', *New York Review of Books*, 44 (1997), 30–6. By contrast, these writers use 'pluralistic', 'moderate', and 'liberal' as synonyms for 'soft' multiculturalism.

¹⁶ Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*; Raz, 'Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective'.

¹⁷ Miller, *On Nationality*, p. 132.

¹⁸ McLaren, 'White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism'.

¹⁹ R. T. Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1993).

presumed impact on the standing of one's ethnic group.²⁰ Since 'colour-blindness' and a 'neutral' state simply perpetuate the status quo, group representation is the legitimate basis for allocating benefits.²¹

Our conceptual and empirical analyses distinguish between three components of multiculturalism – its theory of personal political identity; its image of the national community; and the policies designed as practical applications of these ideas.

Identity

Hard multiculturalism holds that an avowal of 'one's ethnic particularity is an *essential* part of a strong sense of identity'.²² To be true to oneself, one must be permitted, if not encouraged or forced, to be true to one's culture.²³ This view has much in common with social identity theory in social psychology, which assumes that a positive group identity plays an important role in maintaining self-esteem and other forms of healthy psychological functioning.²⁴ Whether people choose to define themselves primarily in ethnic terms is an empirical question; however, hard multiculturalism construes ethnicity as the *preferred* basis of identity.²⁵ And grounding the individual's sense of personal dignity and esteem in the status of his or her ethnic group closely aligns the boundaries of political interest with membership in racial or ethnic communities.

National Community

In the American context, the society envisaged by hard multiculturalism should be contrasted to the symbol of the 'melting pot'. This latter popular catchword projects the image of diverse cultural streams acquiring a common identity, whereas multiculturalism regards the maintenance of multiple cultures within a political community as a normative ideal.²⁶ It portrays America as a mosaic with each distinctively coloured tile contributing equally to the value of the

²⁰ M. Gerson, *In the Classroom: Dispatches from an Inner-City School that Works* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

²¹ I. M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990). Though in the academy this viewpoint has a variety of supporters, in practical politics those expressing it tend to be minority group activists.

²² S. Rockefeller, 'Comment', in C. Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 87–98, p. 97, emphasis added.

²³ Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*.

²⁴ M. B. Brewer, 'The Social Self: On Being the Same and Different at the Same Time', *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17 (1991), 475–82; H. Tajfel and J. Turner, 'The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior', in S. Worchel and W. Austin, eds, *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986).

²⁵ R. M. Merelman, 'Racial Conflict and Cultural Politics in the United States', *Journal of Politics*, 56 (1994), 1–20.

²⁶ Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity*.

whole. Hard multiculturalism insists that no race, language or culture – particularly ‘Western’ culture – should have a privileged status in the United States, and conceives of the nation as a confederation of ethnic groups with equal rights rather than as a community of autonomous individuals bound together by universal norms.

In contrast to this focus on race and ethnicity in hard multiculturalism, how many and which groups in a multi-ethnic society deserve cultural recognition or political protection are matters of dispute among theorists at the soft or liberal end of the multiculturalist continuum.²⁷ For example, Taylor and Kymlicka would deny official recognition to immigrants as opposed to indigenous peoples; Parekh would not.²⁸ In practice, it is politics, not anthropology, that decides which groups a government chooses to privilege. When Horace Kallen envisaged the United States as a union of distinct nationalities that would endure indefinitely, he focused on the ‘intrinsic’ differences between European immigrants.²⁹ Today, these diverse ‘old ethnics’ tend to be lumped together as ‘whites’ or ‘Euro-Americans’, for whom a subcultural identity is an option.³⁰ Contemporary multiculturalists use the ‘ethno-racial’ categories of affirmative action policy to designate whites, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and Native Americans as the five constituent ethnic pillars of the United States.³¹

Some scholars argue that this ‘racial pentagon’ is a result of instrumentalist strategies on the part of ethnic activists.³² Whatever the truth of this, it is important to note the role of the government in creating these racial categories and in providing incentives for their maintenance. The term ‘Asian-American’, for example, was coined by young activists on college campuses in the 1960s and reflected the similarity of treatment of people of Japanese, Chinese and Korean origins. This usage was subsequently institutionalized when government agencies regarded these diverse groups as part of a single unit for reporting purposes and for the allocation of economic and political resources.³³ Once treated as a homogeneous entity by members of the majority ethnic group, minorities may realize the strength of numbers and, for

²⁷ S. Tempelman, ‘Constructions of Cultural Identity: Multiculturalism and Exclusion’, *Political Studies*, 47 (1999), 17–31.

²⁸ Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*; W. Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); B. Parekh, ‘Discourses on National Identity’, *Political Studies*, 42 (1994), 492–504.

²⁹ H. M. Kallen, ‘Democracy versus the Melting Pot’, *Nation*, 100 (1915), 190–4, 217–20.

³⁰ R. D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990); M. C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

³¹ D. Hollinger, *Postethnic America* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

³² Hollinger, *Postethnic America*; D. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

³³ Y. L. Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University Press, 1992); M. Omi and H. Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

strategic reasons, adopt 'the language of dominant-group categorization' as 'the language of subordinate-group self-concept or resistance'.³⁴

Policy

The normative vision of the national community as a confederation of ethnic groups with 'unique' identities and equal status validates the idea of group rights in the distribution of important public benefits.³⁵ Multiculturalism regards the liberal precept of non-discrimination on national, racial or ethnic grounds as inadequate for achieving equality for minority groups.

In the United States, the failure of the civil rights movement to overcome entrenched racial inequality despite ending legal discrimination fuelled the rise of cultural nationalism and a push for race-conscious policies in the black community in the late 1960s.³⁶ Massive immigration from Latin American and Asia then enlarged the groups with an interest in multiculturalism's programme of redistribution. And in the post-colonial era, the international legitimacy of the principle of self-determination gave moral authority to demands for cultural recognition.

As a result, a policy agenda supporting multiculturalism emerged. Its central tenet is state action to promote the equal standing of minority groups. Accordingly, multiculturalist proposals include, among others, affirmative action policies, the right to educate one's children in one's native language, the recognition of the customs of different groups in law, public support for autonomous cultural institutions, and the allocation of public space to accommodate the different preferences of the country's diverse ethnic groups.³⁷

MULTICULTURALISM VERSUS LIBERALISM

The contemporary version of classical liberal theory differs from multiculturalism in holding that 'the individual – and not the family, community, or state – is the singular unit of society'.³⁸ Individuals, not groups, have equal rights and entitlements, and the state takes a neutral stance towards the 'ways of life' promoted by particular cultural groups.³⁹ Classical liberalism accommodates cultural pluralism by advocating mutual tolerance and non-discrimination, with

³⁴ S. Cornell, *The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 146.

³⁵ Merelman, 'Racial Conflict and Cultural Politics in the United States'; Lind, *The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution*.

³⁶ N. Glazer, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 93–5; J. D. Skrentny, *The Ironies of Affirmative Action: Politics, Culture, and Justice in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

³⁷ Raz, 'Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective'; Parekh, 'Discourses on National Identity'.

³⁸ D. Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 425.

³⁹ H. K. Girvetz, *The Evolution of Liberalism* (New York: Collier Books, 1963); M. Walzer, 'Comment', in Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, pp. 99–103.

the maintenance of distinctive customs left to *voluntary* associations and *private* conduct rather than to state activity.⁴⁰

Classical liberal theorists thus defend a politics of equal dignity founded on a difference-blind treatment of members of particular racial, ethnic or national groups.⁴¹ Indeed, there is a tension between liberalism and nationalism, in that the very idea of a nation involves drawing boundaries between members of the universal human community.⁴² An ethnically inclusive conception of national identity is one traditional liberal response to this philosophical dilemma.⁴³ Whatever one's ancestry or background, to be an American one has only to adhere to the national creed of individualism, equality and democracy.⁴⁴

Multiculturalist and liberal conceptions of civic identity do have several elements in common. In fact, several prominent theorists of multiculturalism explicitly call themselves liberals, defending a cultural group's right to survive because this would promote the liberal ideal of individual moral autonomy and self-development.⁴⁵ Glazer even confines the meaning of multiculturalism to a demand for cultural recognition by groups that have 'fallen below the horizon of attention' in American education.⁴⁶ He claims that 'we are all multiculturalists now', in the sense that there is general acceptance of the need to respect group differences and to revise the school curriculum to increase attention on the positive contributions of minority groups to American history. He explicitly distinguishes this 'soft' variant of multiculturalism from 'hard' policies that allocate jobs, college admissions and other benefits on the basis of race, ethnicity or gender.⁴⁷

Both multiculturalism and liberalism repudiate nativism, another historically prominent image of American nationhood.⁴⁸ Nativists maintain that only certain

⁴⁰ It should be noted, though, that earlier liberal thinkers such as Locke, Jefferson and Mill remained ethnocentric in maintaining that non-Western cultures were inferior and, therefore, less deserving of tolerance and respect. See U. S. Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁴¹ Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*.

⁴² J. Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in the Liberal State* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

⁴³ S. P. Huntington, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981); P. Gleason, 'American Identity and Americanization', in S. Thernstrom, A. Orlov and O. Handlin, eds, *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 31–58; A. M. Schlesinger Jr, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: Norton, 1992); J. Citrin, E. B. Haas, C. Muste and B. Reingold, 'Is American Nationalism Changing? Implications for Foreign Policy', *International Studies Quarterly*, 38 (1994), 1–31.

⁴⁴ Lind, *The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution*.

⁴⁵ Raz, 'Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective'; Tempelman, 'Constructions of Cultural Identity: Multiculturalism and Exclusion'.

⁴⁶ Glazer, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*, p. 14.

⁴⁷ Glazer, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*, p. 12.

⁴⁸ J. Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925*, 2nd edn (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988); R. M. Smith, 'Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America', *American Political Science Review*, 87 (1993), 549–66.

groups, principally Anglo-Saxons, possess the moral qualities and cultural values that are inherently American.⁴⁹ Historically, they called for a deliberate programme of ‘Americanization’ to cleanse immigrants of their pasts and produce close conformity to the cultural majority.⁵⁰ In contrast, multiculturalism and liberalism are egalitarian in spirit.

Some critics of liberalism portray its stress on individual rights and state neutrality as intellectual cover for the hegemony of dominant groups.⁵¹ They argue that a *laissez-faire* attitude towards alternative cultures inevitably results in the reinforcement of prevailing hierarchies. Moreover, liberal tolerance is bounded, not absolute; liberalism has no place in the polity for non-liberal cultures.⁵²

For their part, defenders of liberalism maintain that the strong articulation of group differences advocated by ‘hard’ multiculturalism erodes social solidarity and risks separatism.⁵³ They also warn that the official recognition of illiberal cultures would threaten the fundamental liberties of their members, particularly women, even if multiculturalism acknowledges a formal right of exit from one’s original cultural group.⁵⁴

We have been contrasting multiculturalism and liberalism as philosophical positions. In the vocabulary of contemporary politics, though, the term ‘liberal’ obviously has a different meaning. In America today, those called liberals often downplay individualist tenets to advocate a broadened definition of equality that encompasses economic and social, as well as legal, conditions in order to improve the standing of racial and ethnic minorities.⁵⁵ It is those labelled conservatives, particularly the libertarian element, who now embrace the rhetoric of individualism and even colour-blindness. These shifts in ideological labelling must be kept in mind when considering the empirical connections between multiculturalism and liberalism—conservatism in current opinion.

⁴⁹ P. Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America’s Immigration Disaster* (New York: Random House, 1995).

⁵⁰ Gleason, ‘American Identity and Americanization’.

⁵¹ M. Jackman, *The Velvet Glove: Paternalism and Conflict in Gender, Class, and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); S. Steinberg, *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1995); M. Marable, *Beyond Black and White: Transforming African-American Politics* (London: Verso, 1995); Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.

⁵² Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*; Tempelman, ‘Constructions of Cultural Identity: Multiculturalism and Exclusion’. Kymlicka’s liberal multiculturalism also denies the right to organize their lives according to their own ideas of the good to groups whose ideas are non-liberal. See Tempelman, ‘Constructions of Cultural Identity’.

⁵³ Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America*.

⁵⁴ Walzer, ‘Comment’; Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Raz, ‘Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective’.

⁵⁵ Sensitivity to the aspirations of minorities that experience discrimination and political domination has led many contemporary theorists to attempt a synthesis between the values of individual rights and group representation. See Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in the Liberal State*; J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*.

MULTICULTURALISM IN MASS OPINION

We turn now to the main empirical question of our research: the extent to which the principles and policies advocated by multiculturalism find support in the American public. The main body of data for this study comes from the 1994 General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.⁵⁶ This national survey included a number of questions comprising a 'multiculturalism module'. The items probe whether people prefer to define themselves as members of a single national community or as members of particular ethnic groups. They also inquire about policies with the goal of improving the standing of minority groups. The specific issues are immigration policy – an important mechanism for fostering cultural diversity; language and education policies; and ethnic preferences in political representation and professional jobs.

As far as possible, the survey provided respondents with options from different points along the continuum from soft to hard multiculturalism. Nevertheless, we make no claim to have adequately sampled the full range of positions. Clearly, too, any single poll provides just a momentary and partial snapshot of public opinion, and the observed degree of support for multiculturalism will reflect the particular items and response options employed. Having said that, we believe that our questions faithfully capture the main themes in the ongoing American debate over language, immigration and group representation policies. In addition, the findings reported here generally are confirmed by data from the 1992 American National Election Study and the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS).⁵⁷

The 1994 GSS employed a split-sample design, and our report generally is confined to the 1,474 respondents of the total sample of 2,992 who were asked the questions in the 'multiculturalism module'. Because the sample included very few respondents of Hispanic or Asian origins, the analysis of ethnic differences in national outlook is confined to a comparison of the black and white respondents, an unfortunate necessity mitigated by the fact that blacks seem to be 'the main engine for multiculturalism'.⁵⁸ However, many of the GSS items were previously used in the 1994 Los Angeles County Social Survey, which did include a substantial number of Hispanic respondents, as well as a smaller number of Asian origin.⁵⁹ We therefore draw selectively from this local survey

⁵⁶ J. Davis and T. Smith, *The General Social Survey Codebook* (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1995). Due to space limitations, the question wordings of the survey items are not provided here. However, they are available on request from the authors.

⁵⁷ Citrin, Haas, Muste and Reingold, 'Is American Nationalism Changing?'; J. Citrin and B. Duff, 'Alternative Symbolic Meanings of American National Identity' (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, Montreal, Canada, 1998).

⁵⁸ Glazer, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*, p. 95.

⁵⁹ D. O. Sears, J. Citrin, S. Cheleden and C. Van Laar, 'Cultural Diversity and Multicultural Politics: Is Ethnic Balkanization Psychologically Inevitable?' in D. Prentice and D. Miller, eds,

to probe the complexity of ethnic cleavages in opinion and the prospects for a 'rainbow' coalition uniting America's three main racial minority groups. Los Angeles is an excellent case study of multiculturalism 'as a fact'; it is an extraordinarily diverse community frequently described as an ethnic cauldron.

NORMATIVE CONSENSUS OR ETHNIC CONFLICT?

Because multiculturalism seeks to improve the political, economic and cultural standing of blacks and other ethnic minorities, a natural hypothesis is that members of these groups will be more likely than whites to support this ideological perspective. And, since ethnic minorities comprise an increasing proportion of the American population, such a result would signal growing support for multiculturalism in the future. Table 1 addresses this issue by describing the opinions of the 1994 GSS and 1994 LACSS samples, broken down by the respondent's ethnicity.

Political Identity and Patriotism

Most Americans express a positive sense of national identity. Respondents were asked, 'With respect to social and political issues, do you think of yourself mainly as a member of your ethnic, racial, or nationality group, or do you think of yourself mainly as just an American?' A large majority (90 per cent) of the GSS sample rejected the emphasis on ethnicity advocated by multiculturalism and chose the more inclusive 'just an American' identity.⁶⁰ In addition, 86 per cent said they were either extremely or very proud to be an American. The tendency to choose a national rather than an ethnic self-definition prevailed among a majority of all ethnic groups, though minorities clearly were more favourable to the multiculturalist emphasis on the primacy of ethnicity than were whites.⁶¹

National Community and Cultural Pluralism

Multiculturalism rejects the idea of the melting pot as the proper path towards national integration. The 1994 GSS study asked respondents whether it was

(Footnote continued)

Cultural Divides: The Social Psychology of Cultural Contact (New York: Russell Sage, 1999), pp. 35–79.

⁶⁰ In a follow-up question in the GSS survey, 58 per cent said they viewed themselves as 'just an American' on 'all' political issues.

⁶¹ Further evidence of the higher level of group consciousness among ethnic minorities comes from the 1995 Los Angeles County Social Survey. Respondents who said they thought of themselves as 'just an American' were asked the follow up question: 'Which of the following is most true for you: just an American or both American and (white, black, or Hispanic, depending on one's background)?' Over half the blacks and Hispanics who initially called themselves 'just Americans' opted for a dual identity, defining themselves, in a sense, as hyphenated Americans. See Sears, Citrin, Cheleden and Van Laar, 'Cultural Diversity and Multicultural Politics'.

TABLE 1 *Public Opposition to Multiculturalism, by Ethnicity**

	National Opinion (1994 GSS)			Los Angeles Opinion (1994 LACSS)				
	Total	White	Black	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
<i>General Multiculturalist Beliefs:</i>								
Just an American on all or most issues	83%	91%	50%	56%	81%	50%	36%	49%
Extremely or very proud to be American	86	88	75	65	79	73	44	58
Groups should blend into larger society†	38	39	37	54	51	53	60	50
Agree ethnic organizations promote separatism	70	74	53	70	78	66	65	63
<i>Ethnic Representation:</i>								
Leader background doesn't matter for representation	65	67	56	63	65	59	63	57
Choose Congressional Representatives based on ability	91	94	73	85	92	82	77	91
Choose teachers based on ability, not ethnicity	92	94	82	91	94	87	90	89
Admission to professions should be based on ability‡	94	96	85	–	–	–	–	–
Choose history teachers based on ability, not ethnicity	44	47	32	47	54	45	40	49
<i>Immigration and Immigrants:</i>								
Decrease immigration level	66	67	67	55	58	65	45	41

Immigrants should wait for benefits	67	67	72	52	58	64	38	39
Immigrants not likely to increase economic growth	68	71	56	40	59	39	33	42
Immigrants likely to increase unemployment	89	89	94	73	71	79	70	74
Immigrants likely to reduce unity	73	72	82	68	63	72	68	65
Immigrants pushing too hard for rights	59	60	64	53	45	44	63	33
Immigrants should work way up on their own	82	85	70	72	84	60	74	58
<i>Language and Culture Policy:</i>								
Support official English law	63	67	47	58	72	69	30	73
Oppose bilingual education	32	36	15	35	51	40	13	41
English only in public schools	36	37	29	30	37	27	22	49
Native language through high school	16	14	22	12	6	14	19	6
Ballots only in English	37	40	24	35	53	35	17	32
Ethnic history is getting too much attention	26	31	6	16	24	11	10	18
<i>n</i>	1,474	1,136	181	857	279	231	264	47

*Percentages refer to the sum of anti-multicultural options on each item, e.g., responses of ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agree that ethnic organizations promote separatism are summed to generate the percentages reported here as ‘Agree ethnic organizations promote separatism’.

†These figures sum responses 5 to 7 on a seven-point scale which had ‘blend as in a melting pot’ and ‘maintain one’s original culture’ as the polar opposites; 29 per cent of respondents chose the middle option.

‡This item was not asked in the LACSS.

better for the country's different ethnic groups to 'blend into the larger society' or to 'maintain their distinct cultures'. The question format called for placing oneself along a seven-point continuum, with these response options defining the poles. Table 1 reports just the proportion (38 per cent) of the entire sample favouring the melting pot position; 32 per cent opted for the cultural maintenance option, and 29 per cent said 'neither'.⁶² This close division of opinion appeared among *both* whites and blacks. The fact that a large segment of the public takes a middle position when given the opportunity suggests that many Americans do not regard assimilation into the American mainstream and maintaining elements of one's ethnic heritage as mutually exclusive.

Hard multiculturalism explicitly calls on the state, although not the state alone, to undertake the preservation of cultural differences. But sympathy for cultural pluralism does not extend to support for official actions to ensure its preservation. In our sample, only 11 per cent of those rejecting the melting pot option (and so, just 4 per cent of the total sample) agreed that 'it is up to the government to help racial and ethnic groups maintain their original cultures'.⁶³ There is also widespread concern about assertions of ethnic distinctiveness: 70 per cent of the GSS sample overall, and 53 per cent of the black respondents, agreed that 'political organizations based on race or ethnicity promote separatism and make it hard for us to live together'. In the 1994 LACSS sample, at least 60 per cent of the members of all ethnic groups agreed that such organizations are divisive.⁶⁴

Multiculturalism, in both its hard and soft incarnations, stresses the need for schools and colleges to teach more about the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities, and national policy has, in fact, moved in this direction. The public tends to favour this kind of exposure to cultural pluralism: 50 per cent of the GSS sample said that there is now about the right amount of attention paid to ethnic minorities in history classes, with another 24 per cent asking for more such material. On this issue, blacks were substantially more likely than whites to favour the multiculturalist position calling for more attention to minority cultures in the schools.

Ethnic Representation

The legitimacy of group representation and the validity of ethnic preferences are central to hard multiculturalism. However, Table 1 shows that there is stronger opposition to the idea of formalizing group representation than to the other facets of the multicultural policy agenda we examine. Hard multicultural-

⁶² These figures reflect combinations of response categories 1 to 3 and 5 to 7 respectively.

⁶³ By the same token, only 22 per cent of those respondents advocating the melting pot (and so, 8 per cent of the overall sample) said that 'it is up to the government to help racial and ethnic groups change so they blend into the larger society'. These figures are not reported in Table 1.

⁶⁴ This was an agree/disagree item. Though worded in the 'anti-multicultural' direction in the GSS Survey, it was one of a series of similar items where the direction varied, making response bias less of a worry.

ism emphasizes the binding nature of a common ethnicity, but 65 per cent of the 1994 GSS sample disagreed that 'people generally are best represented in politics by leaders of their own racial or ethnic background'. Given the oft-cited ethnic divide in opinion on policy questions that visibly touch on group interests and solidarity, the consensual opposition to group rights in political representation is noteworthy.⁶⁵ Despite the promise of more legislative seats for their own ethnic groups, minority respondents generally disavowed the principles of 'descriptive' representation.⁶⁶ In the national sample, 73 per cent of the black respondents (compared with 94 per cent of the whites) disapproved of requiring Congress to mirror the ethnic composition of the population. In the Los Angeles sample, at least 75 per cent of the members of all four ethnic groups disagreed with this proposal.⁶⁷

Similarly large majorities spurned communal representation among public school teachers or professional school students. The idea that only someone from a particular ethnic group should teach the history of that group was more acceptable: only 47 per cent of the white respondents in the GSS and just 32 per cent of their black counterparts were unequivocally opposed to such a policy.

Language

Language is a potent ingredient in the formation of a common identity, and in the United States learning English has long been viewed as crucial for national integration.⁶⁸ To lose one's original language, however, is to forfeit access to an earlier collective identity. Multiculturalism challenges the symbolic hegemony of English in the United States in order to safeguard the vitality of ethnic traditions.⁶⁹ Demands for language rights, in turn, have sparked a reactive 'English-only' movement.⁷⁰

By a margin of 63 to 28 per cent, respondents in the 1994 GSS favoured a proposal to designate English as the official language of the United States. However, many evidently do not view this preference for English as posing a choice between forced assimilation and ethnic particularism: just 37 per cent of the GSS sample agreed that ballots should be printed only in English in localities with large numbers of non-English speakers.

⁶⁵ Sniderman and Piazza, *The Scar of Race*; H. Schuman, C. Steeh, L. Bobo and M. Krysan, *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997); S. A. Tuch and J. K. Martin, *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and Change* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997); Kinder and Sanders, *Divided by Color*.

⁶⁶ H. F. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

⁶⁷ In the 1993 National Black Politics Study, 74 per cent of the sample (all black respondents) disagreed with the statement 'blacks should always vote for black candidates when they run'.

⁶⁸ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*; Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity*.

⁶⁹ The case study for Taylor's oft-cited defence of multiculturalism is Quebec, where the survival of a 'distinct society' is deemed to justify the provincial government's actions to require the use of French. See Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*.

⁷⁰ J. Citrin, D. P. Green, B. Reingold and E. Walters, 'The "Official English" Movement and the Symbolic Politics of Language in the United States', *Western Political Quarterly*, 43 (1991), 85–108.

Opinions about bilingual education similarly reflect the dominant tendency to recognize the benefits of a common national language. In the GSS sample, 68 per cent expressed generalized support for the idea of bilingual education, but their preference was for programmes aimed at speeding the learning of English rather than at maintaining the use of one's original language. Blacks expressed more sympathy for bilingual education than whites, even though this policy is intended to benefit recent Hispanic and Asian immigrants, with whom they compete economically.⁷¹ Hispanics understandably are more strongly in favour of language rights than other ethnic groups, but their modal position also favours the transitional rather than the cultural maintenance model of bilingual education.⁷²

Immigration

America is a self-styled nation of immigrants, but current attitudes towards immigration, a source of new claimants for cultural recognition, pose an immediate problem for the multicultural project. Fully 66 per cent of the 1994 GSS sample felt that the current level of immigration should be decreased, while only 6 per cent favoured a higher rate of immigration. Beliefs about the impact of more immigrants coming to this country also were negative: 73 per cent of the GSS respondents felt that it would make it 'harder to keep the country united'.

A majority of the public rejected the notion of preferential treatment for immigrants, whatever their background: 82 per cent of the GSS sample felt that today's newcomers should 'work their way up without special favors from the government', just like their Italian, Irish and Jewish predecessors. Table 1 also shows that 67 per cent of the GSS sample favoured a waiting period of at least a year before *legal* immigrants gained access to most government benefits, a proposal similar to the legislation introduced after the 1994 congressional elections.

Blacks and whites are quite similar in the strength of their desire to reduce immigration, their approval of a waiting period before immigrants are eligible for government benefits, and their negative perceptions of the impact of immigration on national unity. This conforms to the results of numerous other studies.⁷³ As the results from the Los Angeles data show, Hispanics, and to a

⁷¹ Lind, *The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution*.

⁷² J. Citrin, B. Reingold and D. P. Green, 'American Identity and the Politics of Ethnic Change', *Journal of Politics*, 52 (1990), 1124–54. The question regarding bilingual education gave respondents a choice among the three alternative programmes school districts can adopt: an English immersion programme, a transitional programme that teaches students in their native language for a few years, and a cultural maintenance programme that provides native-language instruction throughout high school. These are the policy alternatives available to school districts under the 1971 Bilingual Education Act.

⁷³ J. S. Lapinski, P. Peltola, G. Shaw and A. Yang, 'The Polls – Trends: Immigrants and Immigration', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 61 (1997), 356–83.

lesser extent Asians, are more likely than either blacks or whites to favour higher levels of immigration and to view the economic or social impact of immigration positively.

A Multiculturalist Vanguard?

As a relatively new ideological defence of the aspirations of minority groups, multiculturalism may be more likely to appeal to the younger and better-educated segments of the public, who generally are more tolerant on racial issues.⁷⁴ If this is the case, then, cohort replacement and rising levels of formal education might lead to growing support for this new conception of American identity over time.

Table 2 compares the beliefs of respondents in the 1994 GSS categorized by age and education.⁷⁵ Consensus across age and educational groups is the dominant finding. On the survey items regarding American identity and group or communal representation, for example, a large majority of every age group takes the same, anti-multicultural side. Those over 60 years old did tend to support the ideal of the melting pot more strongly than did respondents under 30. The elderly also were more worried about the impact of ethnic political organizations, more hostile to language rights, and more likely to say that schools are paying too much attention to the history and experiences of ethnic minorities.

These modest differences in opinion by age may reflect the residue of the early socialization of older Americans in a less diverse and more chauvinistic society.⁷⁶ Other things being equal, this would imply a continued drift towards greater acceptance of cultural pluralism, alongside a continued insistence on the principle of equal treatment of individuals. But these age differences do not augur a massive shift towards multiculturalism in the near future.

This conclusion is generally reinforced by the somewhat surprising agreement among people with different levels of formal education. The results in Table 2 belie the journalistic image of a well-educated vanguard group sympathetic to multiculturalism. In the 1994 GSS survey, differences between respondents with postgraduate degrees and those with a high school education or less tended to be minor. To cite just two examples, 87 per cent of the best-educated group compared to 89 per cent of those without a high school degree disapproved of having Congress mirror the ethnic make-up of the country. In addition, roughly identical proportions of both college graduates and

⁷⁴ Schuman, Steeh, Bobo and Krysan, *Racial Attitudes in America*.

⁷⁵ To conserve space, we do not report the equivalent Los Angeles County data. Those results are virtually identical. See D. O. Sears, J. Citrin, S. Vidanage and N. Valentino, 'What Ordinary Americans Think about Multiculturalism' (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, 1994).

⁷⁶ D. Kinder and D. O. Sears, 'Public Opinion and Political Participation', in G. Lindzey and E. Aronson, eds, *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 3rd edn, vol. 5 (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1985).

TABLE 2 *Group Differences in Opposition to Multiculturalism (1994 GSS)**

	Age					Education				
	Under 30	30–39	40–49	50–59	60 or Over	Some High Sch	HS Grad	Some College	College Grad	Post Grad
<i>General Multiculturalist Beliefs:</i>										
Just an American on all or most issues	75%	81%	84%	84%	90%	80%	85%	83%	84%	83%
Extremely or very proud to be American	80	82	84	92	92	89	88	85	82	82
Groups should blend into larger society†	31	36	40	41	46	37	40	36	41	39
Agree ethnic organizations promote separatism	60	71	69	70	77	72	71	73	67	63
<i>Immigration and Immigrants:</i>										
Decrease immigration level	59	68	64	65	70	68	73	68	56	45
Immigrants should wait for benefits	58	68	63	67	76	71	70	70	62	51
Immigrants not likely to increase economic growth	65	64	64	77	72	60	75	69	65	56
Immigrants likely to increase unemployment	91	93	87	92	84	89	91	92	88	80
Immigrants likely to reduce unity	73	72	65	76	79	80	81	71	65	52
Immigrants pushing too hard for rights	47	56	53	66	75	75	68	57	44	35
Immigrants should work way up on their own	76	81	79	85	90	88	86	85	78	64

<i>Ethnic Representation:</i>										
Leader background doesn't matter for representation	62	61	68	64	69	66	65	63	66	65
Choose Congressional Representatives based on ability	85	91	92	91	94	89	91	92	93	87
Choose teachers based on ability, not ethnicity	90	93	92	90	94	91	94	92	94	85
Admission to professions should be based on ability	93	95	95	91	96	91	95	96	95	92
Choose history teachers based on ability, not ethnicity	43	44	42	44	51	41	46	42	47	46
<i>Language and Culture Policy:</i>										
Support official English law	50	61	58	67	78	57	65	66	67	52
Oppose bilingual education	24	28	36	35	40	31	32	30	41	30
English only in public schools	32	32	32	37	48	39	38	35	35	30
Native language through high school	16	17	14	17	14	24	18	14	8	12
Ballots only in English	29	32	36	38	49	36	39	36	39	31
Ethnic history is getting too much attention	11	25	25	28	42	28	29	28	25	16
<i>n</i>	255	372	294	216	302	225	485	363	201	162

*Percentages refer to the sum of anti-multicultural options on each item, e.g., responses of 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agree that ethnic organizations promote separatism are summed to generate the percentages reported here as 'Agree ethnic organizations promote separatism'.

†These figures sum responses 5 to 7 on a seven-point scale which had 'blend as in a melting pot' and 'maintain one's original culture' as the polar opposites; 29 per cent of respondents chose the middle option.

respondents with just a high school education felt that all ethnic groups should 'blend into the larger society as in the idea of the melting pot'.

Overview

The survey evidence presented here shows that a majority of the American public oppose the articulation of ethnic identities in a form that *competes* with, rather than *complements*, the older liberal ideal of a common civic identity. The pervasive tendency is to identify oneself as 'just an American' rather than as a member of a particular racial or ethnic group. This preference for an inclusive nationalism coexists with the widespread acceptance of pluralism in cultural practices. The public's attitude towards minority customs is neither harsh nor dogmatic. Even among supporters of the melting pot idea, there is almost universal rejection of forced 'Americanization' and substantial support for bilingual policies to help newcomers learn English. What the public does reject is hard multiculturalism's seeming elevation of the *pluribus* over the *unum*.

At the level of norms and symbols, the traditional liberal image of national identity prevails among Americans of all ethnic backgrounds.⁷⁷ The tendency of minority groups to be more favourable towards multiculturalism than whites is present, but surprisingly modest. Ethnic cleavages are more pronounced when it comes to specific policies rather than general principles, but the nature of these differences varies from issue to issue. The position of blacks on immigration policy, for example, illustrates the obstacles in the formation of a stable 'rainbow' coalition of minorities.

Coherence of Multiculturalist Beliefs

Among political elites, attitudes towards multiculturalism seem to reflect a considered ideological stance, with generalized beliefs about the moral significance of group identities guiding opinion formation across a range of specific policies. But does such structured thinking prevail among the mass public? To explore this, we first grouped the items according to whether they referred to generalized beliefs about political identity and nationality or to specific policy domains. Looking first at feelings about national identity, we observe relatively little coherence among respondents in the 1994 GSS sample. Table 3 shows that the average correlation (Pearson's *r*) among responses to the items concerning how one thinks of oneself when deciding political questions, whether ethnic minorities should blend into the larger society, and the impact of ethnic political organizations was only 0.12. The vertical links between more diffuse beliefs and opinions about specific policies also were weak: the average

⁷⁷ Citrin, Haas, Muste and Reingold, 'Is American Nationalism Changing?' J. L. Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

correlation between these broad questions about the ethnic basis of political and cultural identity and the items regarding specific policies was only 0.16.

Consistency between beliefs within specific policy domains is greater. The average correlation of items grouped within the ethnic representation, language and immigration domains was 0.26, 0.31 and 0.27, respectively. However, Table 3 shows that constraint *across* issues was more modest. For example, a composite seven-item Immigration Index and an Ethnic Representation Index comprised of the items listed in Table 1 have a correlation of only 0.15.⁷⁸ Moreover, although we do not report the full set of results here, the strength of the vertical linkages is similar in every ethnic group, with one main exception. Support for the multiculturalist conception of national identity is more tightly linked to acceptance of group representation among blacks (0.46) than whites (0.16), another indicator of the greater salience of ethnic identification outside the majority group.

Despite the ongoing, contentious elite discourse, multiculturalism does not yet seem to be recognized by the general public as a coherent set of values with broad application to specific policy positions. What this suggests is that although positive affect towards symbols of American nationhood is pervasive, these feelings of national identity are not consistently engaged by domestic political conflicts in ways that powerfully shape preference formation.⁷⁹ The emergence of multiculturalism as a mass 'belief system', or even an ideology-by-proxy, would seem to depend on the degree to which ethnic political conflict is salient, the way in which these conflicts are framed and negotiated, and the sanctioning of multiculturalist solutions on the part of legitimate authorities.

THE POLITICS OF MULTICULTURALISM

Notwithstanding the philosophical conflicts between multiculturalism and classical liberalism briefly outlined above, in contemporary American politics multiculturalism draws its support from the left, which supports state activity to achieve a broadened definition of equality. In addition, racial issues play a critical role in shaping Americans' partisan affiliations and ideological self-definitions.⁸⁰ Among political leaders, Democrats and self-identified liberals are more likely than Republicans and conservatives to support the

⁷⁸ These indices were developed on the basis of exploratory factor analysis, first of the entire set of multiculturalism items and then of the within-domain groups. We do not report the factor analysis results here for reasons of space. In the case of the more general multiculturalism items, interrelationships were so modest that in the multivariate analysis to follow we do not use a combined index but consider the items separately as predictors. In constructing indices, all items were standardized using *z*-scores and the indices were created by simple addition of these standardized scores. The items comprising the indices, mean inter-item correlations and reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) are presented in the Appendix.

⁷⁹ Citrin and Duff, 'Alternative Symbolic Meanings of American National Identity'.

⁸⁰ E. G. Carmines and J. A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); T. B. Edsall and M. D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1992).

TABLE 3 *The Coherence of Multiculturalism*

	General Beliefs	Representation	Immigration	Language
Panel 1: Constraint within Issue Domains*				
General Multiculturalist Beliefs	0.12	0.16	0.15	0.16
Ethnic Representation		0.26	0.15	0.19
Immigration and Immigrants			0.27	0.21
Language Policy				0.31
Panel 2: Constraint across Domains, as measured by scales†				
General Multiculturalist Beliefs	(0.36)	0.33	0.23	0.27
Ethnic Representation		(0.68)	0.15	0.30
Immigration and Immigrants			(0.72)	0.36
Language Policy				(0.64)

*The issue domains refer to the grouping of items presented in Table 1. For example, ‘General Multiculturalist Beliefs’ refers to the four separate items under the heading ‘General Multiculturalist Beliefs’ in Table 1. Entries are mean inter-item correlations within and across the domains indicated. For example, 0.12 is the mean correlation between the four items in ‘General Multiculturalist Beliefs’, and 0.15 is the mean correlation between the eleven items comprising ‘General Multiculturalist Beliefs’ and ‘Immigration and Immigrants’.

†All items were standardized using z-scores, and then within each issue domain, the standardized scores were used to create a simple additive index. Entries in the parentheses are Cronbach alphas; the other entries are Pearson’s correlations between the various scales.

demands of the varied minority groups and organizations that join them in advocating multiculturalism. Does mass opinion reflect these ideological divisions among intellectuals and political activists?

This question is addressed as part of a more general analysis of the motivations for supporting multiculturalism. We undertake multiple regression analyses to test the following propositions: (1) a *group interest* hypothesis holding that all else being equal, minorities will be more likely to support multiculturalist positions than whites; (2) a *socialization* hypothesis holding that the greater exposure of young and well-educated cohorts to favourable information regarding multiculturalism makes them more likely to endorse this doctrine; (3) an *ideological* hypothesis holding that, given the increasing support of contemporary liberals for equality defined in terms of results, they will be more likely than conservatives to support multiculturalism; and (4) a *racial hostility* hypothesis holding that those prejudiced against members of minority groups will be more likely to oppose multiculturalism. These models also investigate whether generalized beliefs about personal political identity and the ideal national community significantly influence preferences within specific policy domains.

The models estimated include race, age, gender, education and region as controls. In this regard, a finding that ethnic minorities are more likely than whites to support multiculturalism, even with the mediating effects of social background variables controlled, would be consistent with, if not fully persuasive of, an argument for the role of group interest.⁸¹ The effects of age and education in the multivariate model would speak to the influence of prior socialization.⁸² Political ideology is measured with a single question about liberal versus conservative self-identification. And finally, two separate conceptualizations of racial hostility are employed. Ethnic stereotyping is measured by an index constructed by subtracting the 'laziness' scores given blacks, Hispanics and Asians from that given whites and summing these differences. The four-item Racial Hostility Index includes items tapping generalized anti-black affect and perceptions that blacks do not uphold traditional individualist values.⁸³ The two measures have a correlation of 0.31.

⁸¹ Bobo, 'Group Conflict, Prejudice, and the Paradox of Contemporary Racial Attitudes'.

⁸² Age and education are constructed as dummy variables, with respondents divided into those below 30 or those older, and college graduates or those less educated, respectively.

⁸³ The items referred to the respondents' degree of admiration for and sympathy with blacks as a group; their opinion on whether government was paying too much, the right amount, or too little attention to blacks; and their reaction to the statement that blacks should 'work their way up without special favors', just as the Jews and Irish did. In a factor analysis of a larger number of questions dealing with race, these four items comprised a single factor. The adjusted alpha reliability for this scale was 0.71. These items are included elsewhere in a scale of 'symbolic racism', but here we make no claims about their reflecting any particular form of racial hostility. See D. O. Sears, C. Van Laar, M. Carillo and R. Kosterman, 'Is it Really Racism? The Origins of White Americans' Opposition to Race-Targeted Policies', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 61 (1997), 16–53.

TABLE 4A *Determinants of Support for Multiculturalism: Social Background, Ideology and Racial Attitudes*

Variable†	Melting Pot (Beta)	Political Identity (Beta)	Ethnic Representation (Beta)	Immigration Policy (Beta)	Language Policy (Beta)
<i>Social Background</i>					
AGE (under 30 = 1)	0.08*	0.07*	0.03	0.15**	0.14**
EDUCATION (college = 1)	-0.03	0.11**	0.04	0.08*	-0.05
RACE (black = 1)	-0.00	0.40**	0.28**	-0.21**	-0.00
SEX (female = 1)	0.03	0.03	-0.05	-0.03	0.08*
REGION (South = 1)	0.03	-0.07#	-0.04	-0.01	0.04
<i>Ideology</i>					
IDEOLOGICAL SELF-ID	0.14**	-0.01	0.09*	-0.00	0.06
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	0.00	0.02	0.08#	0.06	0.06
<i>Racial Attitudes</i>					
ETHNIC STEREOTYPING	-0.03	-0.00	0.04	0.10*	0.11**
RACIAL HOSTILITY	0.13**	-0.02	0.12**	0.30**	0.26**
<i>Multiculturalist Beliefs</i>					
POLITICAL IDENTITY			0.04	0.00	0.04
MELTING POT			0.21**	-0.01	0.13**
Adjusted R ²	0.04	0.16	0.25	0.12	0.19
Sample size (n)	692	696	584	659	652

†All variables are coded with the hypothesized pro-multicultural response high. Thus in ideological self-id liberal is coded high, the tendency towards racial stereotyping and symbolic racism is coded low. Coefficients reported are standardized regression coefficients.

*Significant at 0.05 level

**Significant at 0.01 level

#Significant at the 0.10 level

Sample: 1994 General Social Survey, white and black Respondents

TABLE 4B *Determinants of Support for Multiculturalism: Social Background, Ideology and Racial Attitudes*

Variable†	Melting Pot (Beta)	Political Identity (Beta)	Ethnic Representation (Beta)	Immigration Policy (Beta)	Language Policy (Beta)
<i>Social Background</i>					
AGE (under 30 = 1)	0.03	0.13**	0.03	0.07#	0.14**
EDUCATION (college = 1)	0.11**	0.08*	0.01	0.07#	-0.04
RACE (black = 1)	-0.06	0.24**	0.08	-0.12**	0.05
RACE (Hispanic = 1)	0.01	0.38**	0.17**	0.24**	0.35**
RACE (Asian = 1)	-0.00	0.13**	0.06	0.10**	0.03
SEX (female = 1)	-0.05	-0.01	0.07#	-0.02	-0.02
<i>Ideology</i>					
IDEOLOGICAL SELF-ID	0.02	0.06	0.05	0.03	0.01
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	0.05	-0.01	-0.03	0.10*	0.09*
<i>Racial Attitudes</i>					
ETHNIC STEREOTYPING	0.08*	-0.03	0.05	-0.04	0.06#
RACIAL HOSTILITY	0.10*	0.11**	0.11*	0.12**	0.04
<i>Multiculturalist Beliefs</i>					
POLITICAL IDENTITY			0.11**	0.09*	0.16**
MELTING POT			0.07#	0.07#	0.04
Adjusted R ²	0.03	0.15	0.07	0.12	0.23
Sample size (n)	706	700	610	664	670

†All variables are coded with the hypothesized pro-multicultural response high. Thus in ideological self-id liberal is coded high, the tendency towards racial stereotyping and symbolic racism is coded low. Coefficients reported are standardized regression coefficients.

*Significant at 0.05 level

**Significant at 0.01 level

#Significant at the 0.10 level

Sample: 1994 Los Angeles County Social Survey

Table 4A presents the results for the GSS study and Table 4B reports the equivalent analyses for the 1994 LACSS study, with all attitudinal variables coded in the liberal, racially tolerant and pro-multiculturalism direction.

The first two columns in these tables suggest that generalized feelings about the national community (Melting Pot item) and one's political identity (Just an American item) do not yet strongly engage the dominant social and ideological cleavages in American politics. The explanatory power of our statistical model for the Melting Pot item is minimal and the higher level of explained variance for the Just an American item is almost entirely a function of the predictably stronger tendency of blacks (and Hispanics) to choose either a hyphenated or ethnic identity. Younger cohorts, liberals and respondents with low scores on the Racial Hostility Index are more likely to prefer the maintenance of diverse cultures to assimilation into the melting pot – providing support for the socialization, ideological and racial hostility hypotheses stated above – but these relationships, though statistically significant, are relatively weak. Neither party affiliation, ideological outlook nor racial attitudes significantly influences respondents' preferences for an ethnic, as opposed to a national, political self-identification. Only group interest and socialization seem to play a role in determining one's political identity.

The somewhat higher explanatory power for the Ethnic Representation (0.25) and Language Policy (0.19) measures reinforces the earlier conclusion regarding greater firmness and coherence in popular thinking about specific policies as compared to the more general beliefs. Presumably it is in these domains where interest groups and politicians have provided cues about 'who' or 'what' goes with 'what', as compared to the more general beliefs. The finding that beliefs about whether or not ethnic groups should blend into the mainstream (Melting Pot item) do significantly affect opinions about group representation and language policy hints at the existence of a vertical link between generalized values and more specific issue positions. But, by contrast, in the GSS sample, identifying oneself as 'just an American' is unrelated to preferences in any of the three multiculturalist policy domains.

On policy issues, race does matter, but in a limited and nuanced way. In the national sample, blacks are more likely than whites to endorse the hard multiculturalist principle of group representation, which one would expect given the group interest hypothesis. But after the mediating effects of social background, ideology and racial attitudes are taken into account, blacks, unlike Hispanics or Asians, are *more* likely than whites to favour a restrictionist immigration policy. If group interest is the underlying factor in these results, it appears that this motivation sometimes pushes minority groups in the *anti*-multicultural direction.

The coefficients for age provide limited support for the socialization hypothesis. Respondents under 30 are indeed more favourable to soft multiculturalism, as assessed, for example, by the Immigration and Language Policy items. But, significantly, they are no more likely to support the harder notion of ethnic representation. In the policy domains, the independent effect

of formal education is confined to immigration, the issue with arguably the weakest logical link to hard multiculturalism.

A liberal political self-identification does increase support for the principle of equality of results, as captured by the Ethnic Representation scale. Overall, the impact of political ideology on support for multiculturalist policies is statistically weaker and more restricted than the effect of animosity against minority groups. The Racial Hostility Index has statistically significant effects on all three policy indices, and the Ethnic Stereotype Index has an additional influence on opinions about language and immigration policies in the national data.⁸⁴

One hotly debated question is whether racial animosity has effects on whites' policy preferences independent of group interest and ideological principles.⁸⁵ On this point, it should be noted that in the 1994 GSS data, liberalism–conservatism does not predict scores on the Racial Hostility Index.⁸⁶ More importantly, Tables 4A and 4B show that Racial Hostility retains its statistically significant effects after controlling for political ideology, although, once again, the magnitude of these effects is quite modest.

The Language Policy and Immigration Policy scales refer to issues engaging the interests of Hispanics and Asians, not blacks. Interestingly, the Racial Hostility Index, which refers solely to feelings about blacks, has stronger effects on these variables than does the Ethnic Stereotype Index, which assesses negative images of all three ethnic minorities. One possible reason for this result is that attitudes toward blacks – a familiar 'object' – are so heavily conditioned that they also are engaged by ethnic issues with closer associations to other minority groups.⁸⁷ This preliminary account of the determinants of attitudes

⁸⁴ These results are unchanged when one substitutes measures of economic, social and racial liberalism–conservatism for the self-identification item as measures of political ideology.

⁸⁵ P. Sniderman and P. Tetlock, 'Symbolic Racism: Problems of Motive Attribution in Political Analysis', *Journal of Social Issues*, 42 (1986), 129–50; Sears, 'Symbolic Racism'; Bobo, 'Group Conflict, Prejudice, and the Paradox of Contemporary Racial Attitudes'; Kinder and Sanders, *Divided by Color*.

⁸⁶ Sears, Van Laar, Carillo and Kosterman, 'Is it Really Racism?' Sniderman and Tetlock object that some of the items included in measures of racial hostility are very close to the racial policy dependent variables, such as when an item asking about whether the government is paying too much attention to blacks is used to predict support for affirmative action programmes. See Sniderman and Tetlock, 'Symbolic Racism'. For this reason, we re-ran the analysis reported in Table 4 by purging the Racial Hostility Index of the 'government attention' item when we were predicting support for Group Representation and removing the 'Work their way up like the Jews and Irish' when we were predicting Immigration Policy scores. This procedure seemed appropriate given the verbal content of the items making up these measures and their 'closeness' to the independent variables in question.

The results of this purging procedure were to diminish the size of the Racial Hostility coefficients as might be expected. Nevertheless, these coefficients remained significant (although in the case of Group Representation, the purged index had a statistically significant effect among white respondents only). Moreover, the coefficients for political ideology barely shifted.

⁸⁷ Sears, Citrin, Cheleden and Van Laar, 'Cultural Diversity and Multicultural Politics'; C. Wong, 'Group Identity, Group Affect, and Opinions on "Ethnic Issues"' (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Portland, Oregon, 1995).

towards multiculturalism needs elaboration, and subsequent models should incorporate more direct measures of the respondent's interests and values. It is, however, noteworthy that there is a broad similarity in the attitudinal bases of public opinion on traditional racial policies and the newer issues on the multiculturalist agenda.

CONCLUSION

Viewed as a theory of national identity, multiculturalism fails to resonate strongly in American public opinion. The liberal conception of national identity remains dominant in American public opinion, and the 'harder' the multiculturalist proposal, the less likely it is to win popular support. In this regard, ethnic differences in outlook are modest at best. And while the cohort under 30 years old expressed less hostility to multicultural principles and policies than older segments of the public, we did not detect a highly cohesive 'forerunner' group of the young and well-educated that consistently favours the multiculturalist point of view.⁸⁸

However, animosity towards minority groups is a source of opposition to multiculturalism. For many whites, one symbolic meaning of multiculturalism seems to be special and unjustly favourable treatment for other ethnic groups. From a purely political perspective, this underscores the strategic dilemma of the Democrats in national elections, since significant elements among the party's activists are sympathetic to giving minority groups special recognition and representation, whereas the more conservative rank and file tends to spurn this approach.⁸⁹ Moreover, the preferences of voters in the several minority groups diverge from issue to issue; they do not consistently unite in opposition to the white majority.

If public opinion matters, the staying power of a model of American identity giving priority to difference-blindness and cultural unity, buttressed by the persistence of prejudice among some, is bound to constrain the freedom of political leaders to adopt group-conscious remedies for ethnic inequalities.⁹⁰ As to the balance of popular support for competing conceptions of national identity in the future, much will depend on how events and elite discourse affect the salience and meaning of ethnic group identity for the public. Both hard multiculturalists and nativists make ethnicity the centrepiece of how they conceive of the American nation. Should this common element of their competing messages begin to dominate the public debate, conflicts over ethnicity might become even more central to American politics, and perhaps more severe. In such circumstances, the multiculturalist emphasis on preserving group differences might well stimulate a stronger backlash.

⁸⁸ It should be underscored that this conclusion refers primarily to whites. Our data cannot speak to the possibility that multiculturalism is particularly strong among 'vanguard' elements of ethnic minorities.

⁸⁹ Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*.

⁹⁰ W. J. Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

APPENDIX: CONSTRUCTION OF INDICES

Ethnic Representation Index

OWNETH, CONGETH, TEACHETH, SCHLETH, WHOTEACH, ETHHIST*

Mean Intercorrelation 0.26

Standardized Item Alpha 0.68

Language Policy Index

ENGOFFCL, ENGBALLT, BILINGED, ENGTEACH

Mean Intercorrelation 0.31

Standardized Item Alpha 0.64

Immigration Policy Index

LETIN, IMMFARE

Mean Intercorrelation 0.25

Standardized Item Alpha 0.40

Ethnic Stereotyping Index

WORKBLKS, WORKASNS, WORKHSPS

Mean Intercorrelation 0.32

Standardized Item Alpha 0.58

Racial Hostility Index

BLKGOVT, SYMPTBLK, ADMIRBLK, WRKWAYUP

Mean Intercorrelation 0.38

Standardized Item Alpha 0.71

*These are the GSS variable names for the items used to create the indices.