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Reader's Guide

In this chapter, we will consider how relations between America's **ethnic groups** have changed over time, and what this means in terms of elections, institutions and public policy. Next, our focus will come to rest on **multiculturalism** - a major policy response to ethnic diversity which has proven extremely controversial. Furthermore, we will try to gauge the impact of these dynamics on American **national identity**. Finally, we will look at the traditionalist backlash against multiculturalism. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first treats pre-1960s developments. The second investigates issues and policies arising from that critical decade, and concludes with a look into the future of multiculturalism and ethnic relations in America.

Introduction

Few aspects of American politics remain untouched by ethnic - including **race** - relations. Part IV of this book has considered a number of issues which pit traditionalists against liberal Americans in symbolic conflicts known as the 'culture wars.' Gun control, abortion, religion, and the rights of women and gays all manifest this tendency. Moreover, these rifts have implications for American institutions. Often, traditionalists claim to espouse the 'will of the silent majority', and hence seek to legitimise themselves through populist democracy. On the other hand, liberals - including white progressives and their ethnic allies - have often been in the minority on cultural issues. In addition, they have tended to wield little power outside the **nation**'s larger cities. (See table 25-1) Thus they have relied for legitimacy on the American constitution, and have often sought entry points into the American polity that circumvent the majoritarian and territorial power centres of Congress. The judiciary, bureaucracy, print media and political action committees thereby loom large in liberal (and ethnic minority) attempts to guard against what they perceive to be the 'tyranny' of the majority.

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These fault lines run sharply through American ethnic and race relations, as well as through the related attempt to weave these groups together into one nationality. This has its origin in the history of settlement in the United States. For example, white Protestants and African-Americans (blacks) account for most of the rural and small-town population while 'newer' immigrants from Catholic Europe and

Asia form a significant proportion of the metropolitan population of the northeast and west coasts. Continuing demographic change - natural increase, internal and external migration flows - forms the background against which we will confront the history of American ethnic (including race) relations. To begin with, the chapter examines the pre-1960s history of relations between the principal American racial categories and their component ethnic groups. The pre-1960s era was largely a period in which white Protestants of British, Irish and Dutch descent dominated the institutions of American government. They defined the nation's identity and boundaries and populated the upper echelons of the educational, military and corporate worlds. However, such dominance was not without challenge from a vociferous group of Pluralist liberals and their urban allies from marginalised ethnic groups. They coalesced around institutions like the Democratic party, Catholic church and AFL-CIO labour union. When the veil of white Protestant domination lifted in the sixties, some, nursing bitter memories, moved to lay the foundations of what came to be known as multiculturalism.

The 1960s were indeed a revolutionary decade, but Vietnam and Watergate were only the most immediate outward manifestations of more deep-seated changes occurring beneath the surface of American life. In terms of ethnic relations, a number of important Supreme Court decisions combined with key pieces of Johnson-era legislation to vault the nation forward into new cultural frontiers (or the wilderness - as the opponents of these changes would have it!) Just as the clout of the newly liberated ethnic minorities reached its peak, however, cracks appeared within the ranks of the Left. This split ethnic minorities along racial lines, leading many white ethnic minorities (or 'ethnics') to become increasingly conservative. One of the principal irritants for white ethnics was the emerging policy of multiculturalism, with its emphasis on race-driven policy. Accordingly, we look next at what

multiculturalism, a slippery term even among academics, actually means. Here we find that it is popularly used to refer to at least two distinct phenomena. Namely, a) the *demographic fact* of having many cultures living in the same territory, and b) the *public policy* of using proactive programmes to raise the status, wealth and power of members of targeted minority cultures (usually based on gender or race).

In this chapter, we will focus on *ethnic* cultures, rather than those of gender, sexual orientation or disability. This is because most of the fundamental conflicts surrounding multiculturalism are concerned with ethnic cultures. Furthermore, we are most interested in multiculturalism as *public policy*, though we will certainly address issues of demography. In policy terms, multiculturalism impacts upon the three major social realms of culture, polity and economy. Multiculturalism as *cultural* policy involves issues as diverse as the language and content of education; university admissions policies; the proclamations of leading politicians about national identity; immigration, census-taking and naturalisation practices; and legal/constitutional decisions about non-Western cultural rituals. Multiculturalism as *political* policy is implicated in debates about congressional redistricting; selection of party leaders, committee chairs and candidates; minority representation on the courts, executives and cabinets of the various levels of government; and minority access to (or, for opponents, 'capture' of) various parts of the federal bureaucracy. Finally, multiculturalism as *economic* policy (known as **Affirmative Action**) is extremely controversial, with the chief battles taking place over preferential hiring, federal and state contract compliance, and diversity training.

The reaction against multiculturalism from both traditionalists and classical or 'neo'-liberals has grown steadily since the 1980s, so we will change tack to trace their arguments and actions over the past quarter century. We find that the 'backlash'

against multiculturalism originates largely, but not entirely, from white America. Here we highlight the role played by grassroots organisations like U.S. English and the Federation for American Immigration Reform. We also chart the opposition from sections of the influential (and largely Catholic or Jewish) East Coast intelligentisia. Finally, we note the stalemate between multiculturalists and their opponents, as reflected in the policies of the Clinton and Bush administrations. In conclusion, we take a look at the recent past and future of American ethnic relations, and what this says about the trajectory of American national identity for the twenty-first century.

Ethnic Relations and Politics Before 1965

Colonial Period

The American population at independence in 1776 was about 20% black (mostly slaves residing in the Southeast, but with a small northern free population). The rest of the population was largely white and relatively homogeneous: 60% were English, 80% British and 98% Protestant. Of course, key differences of region and religious denomination provided important touchstones of community. For instance, New England was dominated by those of East English 'Puritan' ancestry and Congregationalist religious background who maintained strict Calvinist traditions. The middle states of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania were more diverse, including English Quakers, Congregationalists, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, Germans, Dutch and Swedes. The Southeast from Washington, DC to Florida was populated by a mixture of black slaves, an aristocratic Anglican planter elite and rural whites of Scotch-Irish or English origin who became largely Baptist or Methodist in religion.

To some extent these differences correlated with voting patterns: New Englanders and the Scotch-Irish strongly supported the Revolution while Loyalist support was widespread among the southern Anglican elite and in the heterogeneous middle Atlantic states.

1776 to 1932

The small American population of just 4 million began to grow through large-scale immigration from the 1820s onward. This was the start of a human movement from Europe across the Atlantic that would total close to fifty million people. The inflow from the 1820s until the end of the Civil War in 1865 was almost entirely British, Irish and German - the three largest European groups in the modern U.S. (See table 25-2) The north and midwest were the principal destinations. Irish Catholic immigration was especially important for the politics of the period, stoking the reactions of the native Protestant working-class, who encountered labour competition with the Irish in the expanding cities of the north. In response, Protestants organised as the Native American Party in the 1840s, which came to be known as the 'Know Nothing' movement a decade later due to its secretive ways. The Know Nothings won about a quarter of the vote in 1856 and were on course to win the Presidency were it not for the rising slavery issue which split the party into its northern and southern factions.

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Later, unlike Canada and Australia, immigration was more diverse - particularly in the period 1885-1925. This era saw a surge in immigration from southern and eastern Europe, which was primarily concentrated in the major cities. We should also remember that the country's population was primarily rural or in small-towns under 2500 people until the mid-twentieth century. (See table 25-3) Immigration therefore led to a major divergence between the overwhelmingly 'WASP' (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) rural and small-town majority, and the polyglot northern cities where Anglo-Protestants were a minority. For example, while just 8 percent of American-born whites in 1890 lived in cities over 100,000 population, fully 1/3 of foreign-born whites did so. (Easterlin 1982: 20) Thus while a city like Toronto in Canada was nearly 80 percent British in origin in the 1930s, cities like New York and Chicago were less than a quarter 'WASP.' The American working-class was therefore mostly immigrant, white and Catholic, while the American elite and rural population was largely old-stock Protestant. Moreover, almost all old-stock Protestants felt threatened by their overall numerical decline. (See table 25-4) Together, these dynamics explain the ethnic politics of the 1885-1932 period, in which elite Protestant 'Progressives' and the rural Protestant masses joined together in a coalition against the interests of the ethnically-mixed cities. This culminated in two key pieces of Protestant legislation: the 1920 Volstead Act, which prohibited the sale and consumption of alcohol, and the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 which stipulated that the national origins of the immigrant inflow must match the existing population stock.

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The original population of the United States was native Indian and Eskimo. However, incursions by white settlers after the French and Indian Wars of 1756-63 began to decimate the native population through disease and war. The major push westward from the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 until Custer's Last Stand in 1876 completed the process by which the native population's influence was reduced to insignificance. Native Americans are over-represented in rural districts, particularly in lightly-settled Western states and in Oklahoma, where many southeastern tribes were deported in the early nineteenth century. Meanwhile, two other groups were annexed by the new United States of America in 1776: **Hispanics**, in the Spanish colonies of New Mexico and California, and French-speaking Acadians ('Cajuns') and Creoles in Louisiana.

The last, and most important non-immigrant group was the African-origin population, which made up 20 percent of the total in 1776 and resided almost entirely in the rural South. Few blacks could vote and hence proved a relatively silent force in American politics after Independence. Nevertheless, two factors would change this equation. First came the rise of northern anti-slavery, which increased in volume from the 1830s until the Civil War. Northern occupation forces officially enfranchised the black population of the South, and a brief renaissance of black empowerment ensued. Soon after the troops left, though, white southern elites reasserted control and instituted a form of segregated race relations based on the so-called 'Jim Crow' laws. These edicts, upheld by the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, allowed southern state and local governments, as well as businesses, to maintain separate (and usually inferior) facilities for blacks as opposed to whites. Meanwhile, the sharecropping system and

poor information tied blacks to their agricultural employers while literacy tests, registration requirements and physical intimidation kept blacks away from the voting booth. Thus even in black majority counties like Lowndes in Mississippi, whites assumed complete control of government posts and policy.

On the West Coast, where few blacks resided, the source of low-cost labour came from the importation of Chinese workers, almost entirely male, from the Canton region of southern China. Arriving with the 1848-9 gold rush, many more came to California under the terms of the 1868 Burlingame Treaty which allowed for the use of contract labour. By 1880, ten percent of California's population was of Chinese origin. Nonetheless, labourers of British and Irish background pressed for restriction, often rioting against and harassing the Chinese. Backed by the labour-led Workingmen's Party of Denis Kearney (an Irish Catholic), California pressure eventually defeated the determined opposition of the northeastern Republican elite, who favoured Chinese immigration. The result was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

Ironically (and this shows the shifting alignments of the period), southern planter elites - including Ku Klux Klan founder Nathan Bedford Forrest - favoured Chinese and European immigration to keep agricultural wages down. (Gyory 1998) This was not without reason: the immigration restriction acts of 1882 and 1924 led to unprecedented demand for southern blacks (and poor whites) to move north and west. For African-Americans, this marked the beginning of the 'Great Migration' of millions of their community out of the South from 1925 until the immigration laws were amended in 1965. In all, close to half the southern black population left. Typically, migratory routes followed the Mississippi River up to Memphis, Tennessee, and then to booming northern industrial cities like Chicago and Detroit. This marks the first

time that blacks began to settle in large numbers in neighbourhoods near the centres of northern cities (like Harlem in New York) - a residential pattern which holds to this day. Unsurprisingly, black culture of the period, like blues music or the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, often described this great odyssey of liberation. Politically, this new group of voters pledged their loyalty to the party that had ended slavery and (generally) supported the rights of blacks: the Republicans. This 'traditionalist' black support for the Republicans contrasted with the Democratic sympathies of their competitors, namely white southerners and northern white Catholics.

Ethnic Politics, 1932 to 1964

The population pattern established from the 1840s, and especially after 1885, continued to explain white voting patterns into the late 1960s. In other words, the country's whites were divided into three groups: northern Protestants - who usually voted Republican, southerners - typically Democrats, and northern Catholics - also mostly Democrats. Blacks, meanwhile, tended to back the Republicans, but began to defect to the Democrats due to FDR's support for public spending and fair employment practices. This alignment held relatively steady through Roosevelt's New Deal administration until the 1960s. It was also reflected in the Democratic party leadership. For example, in 1960, the Democrat John F. Kennedy, the nation's first Catholic president, chose Lyndon Johnson, a southern Protestant, as his running mate. More importantly, Kennedy did not move to legislate for black civil rights in the South due to the power of the Democrats' large southern white contingent.

<u>Key Points</u>

- In the Colonial period, religious denomination and region were usually more important for politics. However, some ethnic groups were politicised while most racial minorities were mostly disenfranchised.

- For a century and a half after 1820, ethnic politics became highly significant. This often pit Catholic or Jewish immigrant groups in the northeastern cities against rural Anglo-Protestants.

- Non-white ethnic groups were generally barred from playing a role in the political system until well into the twentieth century. This changed with the 'Great Migration' of southern blacks to the northern cities during 1925-65.

- In the first half of the twentieth century, African-Americans tended to vote Republican for traditional reasons. Northern Protestants also supported the Republicans. White Catholics, Jews and Southern Protestants backed the Democrats.

- The support of white Catholics, Jews and Southerners was critical to the success of the Democratic alignment of 1932-68.

Multiculturalism and National Identity to 1965: *E Pluribus Unum*?

A nation's identity frequently involves a vision of how subgroups like ethnic minorities or different regions are connected to the nation as a whole. On American banknotes, for instance, one can find the latin phrase *e pluribus unum*, meaning 'from the many, one.' The American nation's identity was generally defined, for some two centuries, by northern white Protestants. Whether writers, historians or statesmen, they mostly hailed from the elite denominations (Episcopalian, northern Presbyterian, Unitarian). This is reflected in the vast over-representation of these sects among the nation's presidents. This group generally saw the nation in two competing ways.

First, as a 'universal' **civic nation** which welcomed immigrants from every land and defined itself as a haven for those oppressed by political tyranny. This story has its origins in the flight of the Puritans from Royalist tyranny in England in the 1620s. Second, as an **ethnic nation** which practised a more purified form of Protestantism, and was of more purely Anglo-Saxon (as opposed to Norman) ancestry than the English in Britain. This second story also encompassed a myth of the American as westward pioneer, which began to be immortalised in Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* in the 1820s.

These views usually coexisted within the same individuals, leading to what the nineteenth century writer Ralph Waldo Emerson called an attitude of 'double-consciousness.' (See table 25-5) These traditions were often reconciled through the belief that the United States could assimilate the newcomer into a 'WASP' mould and thereby Americanise her/his Catholicism, foreign language and even non-whiteness! Accordingly, the American government made every effort to 'Americanise' newcomers. This project took on coercive tones after World War I with the '100

percent' Americanisation drive in which foreign customs were systematically degraded.

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The Origins of Multiculturalism

By 1910, however, 'Liberal-Progressives' like John Dewey, Jane Addams and Israel Zangwill had pioneered a new vision of a two-way melting pot which recognised the contributions of both natives and immigrants but sought to supersede both. Along with the old 'WASP' assimilation and two-way melting-pot came a third creed, Pluralism. (See table 25-6) Pluralism, the ancestor of multiculturalism, was first espoused in 1915 by an American Jew, Horace Kallen. Kallen believed that Dewey's project of a universal melting pot neglected the human instinct to bond with those of similar ancestry. In his words, 'men cannot change their grandfathers.' Kallen's ideas also appealed to romantic Anglo-Americans like Randolph Bourne, who popularised Kallen's ideas during 1916-17.

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With time, Kallen's vision of America as a non-territorial federation of ethnic groups faded. In its place came a small 'p' pluralism which blended the ideas of Kallen and Dewey, becoming the mainstream ideology of American liberals until the 1960s. Symbolised in the thinking of Robert Park of the University of Chicago, this theory agreed that ethnicity has value and that immigrants should not be forced to assimilate.

However, the new pluralism rejected the idea that 'men cannot change their grandfathers.' Hence it felt that, so long as the immigrant was welcomed fully into the mainstream of American life, s/he would lose her/his ethnic attachments over three or four generations. (Gleason 1992) The American ethnic historian John Higham refers to this approach as one of 'pluralistic assimilation', and stresses that it is fundamentally different from the multiculturalist theories of today. Of course, the version of national identity which *actually* dominated in school history texts and official proclamations from the 1920s to the 1960s ignored pluralism. In truth, it represented a blend of the old anglo-conformity with Dewey's two-way melting-pot.

Key Points

- American national identity reflected the outlook of the dominant, northern 'WASP' elite prior to the 1960s.

- American identity combined a civic focus on universal symbols like the Flag and Constitution with an ethnic focus on the story of westward Anglo-Protestant settlement.

- Immigrants were expected to assimilate to the WASP matrix of the English language and Protestant religion. This is known as anglo-conformity.

- The anglo-conformity model was challenged after 1905 by cosmopolitan liberals like John Dewey and Israel Zangwill - who coined the term 'melting pot.' They believed in a new American nation born of universal cross-fertilisation.

- Multiculturalism has its origins in the Pluralist thought of Horace Kallen and Randolph Bourne during 1916-17. These writers wanted the United States to be a federation of ethnic groups.

The Sixties: A Watershed Decade

The decade of the 1960s proved extremely significant for all aspects of American cultural politics. The tumultuous changes in American gender, religious and sexual relations form part of this story. Changes in ethnic relations comprise another dimension of this cultural-political earthquake. The sixties is legendary for a number of major events, notably the Vietnam War and anti-war protests; and the Woodstock rock festival and hippie movement. However, many of the most important changes were more gradual, and originated in the 1940s and 50s. In terms of ethnic relations, three critical influences may be identified: a) the Civil Rights movement; b) Immigration Reform; and c) Multiculturalism.

The Civil Rights Movement

The civil rights movement refers to a grassroots campaign to guarantee equal rights for African-Americans under the law and in practice. The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) had been founded by white liberals and their black allies as early as 1909. The major organisation of mainline Protestantism,

the FCC, also backed the idea of equality for blacks after 1910. Together with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) from 1942, they pressed the American government to live up to the promises of equality contained in the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments of the Constitution. Nonetheless, this campaign came to little until the late 1940s. Even the federal government and military were segregated up to this time! From the mid-1940s onward, though, pressure slowly built as white liberals and black activists coordinated their activities. Throughout the 1940s, many northern and western states passed fair employment practice laws which helped increase black employment in government and skilled trades. In 1948, President Truman de-segregated federal workplaces (including the military) by executive order, and in 1954, the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case ruled that the 'separate but equal' provisions of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case of 1896 violated the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth amendment. (See table 25-B) This meant that states - especially in the South - would no longer be able to justify laws which enforced segregation along racial lines. A year later, a bus boycott was launched in Montgomery, Alabama, after an African-American woman, Rosa Parks, was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white person. From this point on, the civil rights movement was in full swing. The Greensboro Woolworth's sit-in of 1960, freedom riders of 1961 (who fought to register black voters in Mississippi) and a number of high profile Ku Klux Klan murders and bombings marked the zenith of the struggle. This culminated in the 1963 march of 250,000 people on Washington, DC in which Reverend Martin Luther King delivered his famous 'I have a Dream' speech.

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The public relations effect of the Civil Rights movement, broadcast on television and radio nationwide, helped to galvanise white public opinion behind the cause of racial equality. For instance, in a 1944 poll, 52 percent of whites endorsed the idea that 'white people should have the first chance at any kind of job,' by 1972, just 3 percent did. Southern whites, however, formed a solid rump of opposition to Civil Rights in the 1960s. Furthermore, Southern representatives were particularly effective due to their over-representation in Congress (especially as committee chairs). Recall that their influence formed part of the deal which allowed southern whites and northern Catholics to unite under the banner of the Democrats. The power of the Southern Democrats ('Dixiecrats') stayed the hand even of liberals like John F. Kennedy. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 shook up this crumbling alliance, and in 1964, the Democrat Lyndon Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act. This was followed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Republicans and Democrats acted in a bipartisan manner to support both bills, which only drew opposition from Southern representatives. Together this legislation called for the enforcement of equal access for African-Americans in terms of voting, education, housing, public facilities, business and other facets of public life.

Changing Racial Voting Alignments

These symbolic steps, together with the increasing identification of liberal Democrats with the Civil Rights drive, helped to swing the black vote away from the Republican party. In fact, between the 1950s and the 1970s, the number of blacks who identified themselves as 'very liberal' in surveys rose from 25% to over 60%. The social welfare provisions of Johnson's Great Society administration, which

inaugurated programmes like Medicaid and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), also helped it win black support. The Democrats were thus more willing than the free-enterprise Republicans to entertain new black social demands. These included greater social provision for deprived inner-city areas and support for the new affirmative action policies. This strategy proved so successful that in the past quarter century, roughly 85 to 90 percent of African-Americans have voted Democrat. Meanwhile, southern whites, feeling betrayed by Johnson, turned to the Republicans. The turning point was the 1964 election, in which Johnson defeated fellow Texan and right-wing Republican Barry Goldwater. Goldwater, seen as more sympathetic to southern sympathies, lost badly in the election. However, the inroads he made among the southern white electorate marked the end of Democratic power in the once 'solid South.' Today, southern whites provide the Republicans' strongest group of supporters.

The sixties also brought about shifts within other groups of voters. Younger, well-educated northern WASPs became more liberal, while northern white Catholics began to defect to the Republicans. This was partly caused by the influx of African-Americans to the northern cities, where they competed for jobs and housing with the white Catholic working class. Furthermore, in the late sixties and seventies, Democratic policies unpopular among northern whites, like affirmative action and busing, hastened the change in political behaviour. Clearly, the northern Catholic/southern white backbone of the Democratic alignment of 1932-68 was starting to crack.

- The 1960s represents a watershed decade in American ethnic relations. Most of the key changes of the period originated in the 1940s and 50s, but took off in the sixties.

- The Civil Rights movement played a key part in this change. This mass movement united black ethnic leaders and white liberals in a battle to win political and civil rights for blacks in segregated southern states.

- The Civil Rights movement helped bring about an end to segregation in the South and establish Fair Employment Practices commissions nationwide to enforce non-discrimination at federal and state levels.

- The success of the Civil Rights movement alienated many southern whites from the Democratic Party, but helped to win black support. After 1964, the Democrats lost their once-predominant position in the South.

- When the Civil Rights movement moved to enforce integration in northern cities through affirmative action and busing, this alienated many traditional white Catholic Democrats, who began to switch to the Republicans.

Immigration Reform

The second major 1960s policy change to affect American ethnic relations was a change in American immigration laws. As we saw, by 1924, Asian immigration had been essentially stopped, while European immigration into the United States was based on a quota system designed to favour established groups like the British and Irish. In addition, immigration from Mexico, which began to increase during World War II, was controlled through mass deportations. Some of these, like 'Operation Wetback' in the 1950s, led to the expulsion of over a million people. Yet, attitudes were changing. Opinion polls showed that Americans were becoming more tolerant of increased immigration during 1945-65. After the Second World War, the ban on Asian immigration was lifted for foreign policy reasons - though the Asian quotas for China and Japan were restricted to several hundred people per year. More significant, therefore, were the tens of thousands of Hungarian and Cuban anti-communist refugees admitted outside their quotas in the late 1950s. Pressure from liberal Democrats like Harry Truman or John F. Kennedy helped to drive this change, but conservative northern Republicans and southern Democrats - many in key committee positions - allied to block changes that would have made American immigration policy 'colour-blind.'

The Role of the Supreme Court

As in the case of Civil Rights, the Supreme Court played a key role in liberalising policy. The conflict revolved around the **malapportionment** of population between districts. Thus congressional districts for state and federal

legislatures remained relatively fixed, even as immigration and a domestic move to the cities changed the balance of population. For example, in 1962, Los Angeles County had 40 percent of the population of the state but only one of the 40 seats in the California Senate! Similar examples could be drawn from all states. At the federal level, matters were not quite as extreme, but the overall effect was similar. Thus one urban New York congressional district had a population of 800,000 while a rural one in the same state had just 91,000. This pattern gave great advantage to the white-Protestant dominated rural districts and helped a conservative coalition retain influence in a diversifying nation.

However, a series of Supreme Court cases during 1962 to 1964 altered this pattern. The newly liberal, activist Court ruled that congressional districts must contain roughly equal numbers of voters - with districts to be re-drawn as the population changed its residence. The results were dramatic: the Democrats gained the electoral boost needed to see through their liberal policies in the sixties. In addition, rural Southern committee chairmen lost control to representatives from the more liberal urban northeast. (See table 25-7) The combination of reapportionment and the (related) rising influence of liberal Democrats from immigrant districts helped to usher in the Hart-Celler Act of 1965.[1] This law removed the old national origins quota system and replaced it with a colour-blind law that recognized only economic and humanitarian criteria.

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The 'Browning of America'

This change helped to unleash a wave of non-European immigration. For instance, just 25 percent of immigrants in the 1950s were nonwhite (mostly non-quota Latin Americans). By the eighties, however, 80 to 90 percent of the inflow came from outside Europe. Together with a rising volume of illegal immigration from Mexico, and higher immigrant fertility rates, these movements transformed the composition of the American population. This demographic change has been nicknamed the 'Browning of America'. Whereas the nation was 85 percent non-Hispanic white in 1960, it remained just 69 percent white in 2000. By 2050, whites will be a minority for the first time in the nation's history. (See table 25-8)

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Immigration flows post-1965, as with the 1880-1925 stream, are highly concentrated by region. Immigrants today tend to move to cities and suburbs in the northeast, Florida and California. In high-immigrant states, the rate of population change is dramatic. In California, for example, 85 percent of the population was non-Hispanic white in 1960. Yet today, whites comprise a minority (47 percent), and only a third of the under-5 population! Partly in response to the previous trends, native-born whites (and some blacks) have been moving out of high-immigration metropolitan areas like New York and Los Angeles into more homogeneous interior ones like Denver (Colorado), Las Vegas (Nevada) and Atlanta (Georgia). Many of these outmigrant whites, notably in the East, are Catholics and Jews who once voted Democratic. However, this has changed considerably. The recent influx of Hispanics

and Asians has reinforced the trend of Catholic Republicanism which began in the 1950s. Indeed, New York Republicans like former mayor Rudolph Giuliani and governor George Pataki rely on the white Catholic vote.

The Political Loyalties of the New Immigrants

The largest new immigrant category are the Hispanics - now over ten percent of the national population (1/3 in California), and Asians. Yet one should be cautious before jumping to any firm conclusions about the allegiance of these voters. Racial categories like 'Hispanic' and 'Asian' have arguably less meaning than even the diverse 'white' label. In South Florida, to take a bellwether case, 'Hispanics' are divided into Cubans, Mexicans (or 'Chicanos') and numerous Latin American groups like the Dominicans. Cubans tend to be middle class and Republican. Mexicans and Dominicans tend to be working-class and vote Democratic. In California and Texas, the Hispanic population is mostly Mexican, working-class, and Democratic. Asians, on the other hand, are divided between the well-established, American-born Japanese, the well-to-do Chinese, Hindus and (some) Arabs, and less well-off groups like the Filipinos and Vietnamese. Overall, Hispanics vote relatively Democratic (though less than blacks), Asians are slightly Democratic (though less than Hispanics), and whites are relatively Republican. (See table 25-9) Within these racial categories, though, it is important to bear in mind that differences of ethnic group, region, and class are very important.

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- Like civil rights, immigration reform was a 1960s policy with great ramifications for American ethnic politics.

- The Supreme Court played a key role in immigration reform with its ruling that congressional districts must be reapportioned. This broke the power of a conservative coalition of Republicans and southern Democrats.

- The Hart-Celler Act of 1965 led to a dismantling of immigration policies which selected applicants on the basis of ethnicity. Together with wider global shifts, this has caused subsequent immigration to be overwhelmingly non-European.

- Immigration and differentials in ethnic birthrates caused the white share of the American population to drop from 85% in 1960 to 69% in 2000. This share will fall below 50% by 2050.

- The two main racial categories to gain from this 'Browning of America' are Hispanics and Asians. However, both of these labels conceal significant ethnic diversity.

- Regional concentrations of Hispanics and Asians in California, New York, New Jersey, Texas and Florida enhance their electoral power. Most Hispanics (apart from Cubans) vote Democratic, while Asian voters tend to float more between the parties.

- Whites and some blacks have tended to leave high-immigration cities on the coasts for smaller interior cities in the West and South. Whites have also become more Republican in response to the new immigration.

Multiculturalism: The Demographic Reality of Cultural Diversity

Many ideas come to mind when Americans use the term 'multiculturalism.' This complexity finds an echo in Canada, Australia and continental Europe. The first meaning of the word 'multiculturalism' refers to the *demographic fact* of many cultural groups occupying the same territory. In other words, cultural diversity. These groups need not be ethnic in nature, but could include cultures based on sexual orientation, gender, region, or lifestyle. On this definition, every inhabited space in the world is multicultural. However, it is true that certain spaces, like the five boroughs of New York or London, England (inside the M25), are more multicultural than others. Generally speaking, large cities tend to be more multicultural than smaller centres, while areas which attract migration are often more multicultural than areas which produce out-migrants. The great immigration waves of 1885-1925 and 1965-2000 can thereby be described as having increased the ethnic multiculturalism of the American nation. Likewise, the post-60s differentiation of American society caused by sexual and gay liberation and the rise of popular subcultures has added another, trans-ethnic, layer of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism as Public Policy

In addition to describing the demographic fact of cultural diversity, multiculturalism is also used to describe a particular kind of public policy which is the subject of intense controversy. (See table 25-C)

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Contemporary Multiculturalism: Cultural

We can distinguish three spheres of multicultural public policy: cultural, political and economic. Multiculturalism policy often seeks to rectify cultural (or symbolic) inequities so as to improve the self-esteem of formerly stigmatised groups. Instruments of change can take the form of education policy; proclamations and speeches from leading politicians about national identity; immigration, census and naturalisation practices; and legal/constitutional decisions about non-Western cultural rituals. In terms of education policy, American legislators have attempted to rectify inequalities between black and white state schools by busing black pupils into white schools (and vice-versa). In addition, the history and civics curricula have often been rewritten to portray deprived groups like African or Hispanic Americans in a more positive light and expand the amount of space devoted to their contributions to the nation. Frequently, this historical revision also involves a more negative and reduced treatment of established groups (ie. Anglo-American), thereby generating majority-group animosity. Language is also an issue: in California, many Hispanic activists wish to see public schools teach their children a bilingual programme in both Spanish

and English. Meanwhile, some African-Americans have fought to replace standard English teaching with what they claim is the more authentic and expressive black English vernacular (BEV).

This process of revision began with Congress authorising an ethnic heritage studies programme in 1972, but truly came into its own with the fully revised California and New York curricula of 1987. The early 1990s witnessed major battles in New York City over the introduction of a more radical curriculum which also sought to upgrade the contributions of gay and lesbian Americans. By the early 90s, multiculturalism had made its mark on virtually every state in the Union. Proponents of multiculturalism claim that this effort has led to a more realistic portrait of the nation while opponents counter that the new curriculum is as distorted in its way as the old. In actual fact, revision is very much a matter of degree. There clearly was a need to redress the short shrift given to, and poor portrayal of, Asians, native Americans, African-Americans and Hispanics in WASP-dominated school texts like David Muzzey's *American History* - read by half the nation's schoolchildren during 1911-61. On the other hand, some school districts in selected African-American areas have endorsed a controversial **Afrocentric** curriculum. Though often moderate, in extreme cases, Afrocentrism has advocated both anti-Semitism and falsehoods like the black origin of Egyptian and biblical civilisations. Other radical multiculturalists have dismissed European writers as 'dead white males' with little to say to non-whites and women.

In other spheres, multiculturalism finds expression in symbolic activities like official proclamations, when a president or governor might make mention of the nation's 'diversity' or rename a street after an important minority figure like Martin Luther King. Diversity has become a watchword even at induction ceremonies for

new immigrants, and the census was reorganised in the 1980s to record the five main racial classifications of African, Hispanic, Asian, European and Native American. Finally, there is disagreement over the degree to which American society shares common values which should condemn or prohibit certain cultural practices. Some of these involve less confrontational symbols like the wearing of Sikh turbans by police officers or Muslim headscarves by schoolchildren. Others involve more serious issues: arranged marriage, the wearing of ceremonial weapons in public, female circumcision, animal sacrifice. Most multiculturalists would draw the line of tolerance at these practices - but some would not. Overall, multiculturalism policy stresses the significance of group rights for minorities owing to their deprived and marginal position within American society.

Contemporary Multiculturalism: Economic

While multiculturalism policy at the cultural level has led to heated debate in educational circles, economic multiculturalism - or affirmative action - has been an important battleground in many political campaigns. Affirmative action is a branch of multiculturalism policy that seeks to rectify economic inequalities based on race. It can take the form of preferential hiring and admissions policies, or government **contract compliance**. These are significant in the American context, because, while white ethnic groups perform at relatively similar levels, black and Hispanic Americans earn significantly less than whites. The situation for lower-echelon African-American males is particularly difficult. On the one hand, there has been a growth in the black middle-class, with the proportion of black households earning over $50,000 rising 46% during 1970-90. University-educated black women even

earn more than their white counterparts. On the other hand, black unemployment (already twice that of whites in 1960) is now closer to three times the white rate. Whereas blacks comprised a roughly representative share of the prison population in 1930 (20%, as against 80% for whites), blacks now form half the prison population (as against just 40% for whites). In fact, in many inner-city areas, a majority of young African-Americans between 18 and 30 have had a criminal conviction. Together with a soaring rate of out-of-wedlock births, these trends point to a social crisis within the poorest third of the African-American community. (See table 25-10)

How to rectify this situation? Since the early seventies, one answer has been to guarantee blacks and other minorities a proportional share of desirable jobs, particularly in government. This is sometimes achieved through moral suasion rather than affirmative action, in the form of informal pressure to hire more minorities. At other times, however, public policy is brought to bear on the issue, and government departments and businesses are provided with minority hiring targets to meet. For example, a police department may be asked to increase the proportion of its staff that are non-white so that the department reflects the population composition of the region it polices. Universities may be ordered to admit minority students (even if under-qualified in terms of grades) to meet diversity targets. And while private businesses cannot be forced to hire minorities, pressure may be brought to bear on private government contractors - those who wish to sell services to state or federal governments. This form of affirmative action is known as contract compliance, and affirmative action in this area is administered at the federal level by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFCC). Sometimes, governments may also use **minority set-asides** which stipulate that a fixed proportion of contracts must be given to minority-owned businesses.

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The rise of affirmative action is one of the more complex phenomena of our time. The term was first used in the 1930s in the context of taking affirmative action against racial discrimination, and its meaning remained unchanged until the mid-60s. However, the Civil Rights coalition of white liberals and black leaders began to turn to a more pro-active definition of affirmative action soon after the non-discrimination provisions of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts were attained in 1965. They even garnered the support of prominent Democrats like Lyndon Johnson. (See table 25-11) As the 1960s progressed, the desperate state of poor northern blacks was expressed through a series of race riots in northern cities. In this atmosphere, the non-discrimination focus of federal agencies like the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) became committed to results-oriented policies. However, they were limited by the law and the non-discrimination remit of the Johnson administration. A plan by the city of Philadelphia to force construction contractors to hire a proportional share (30%) of minorities was thus killed by the city controller, who feared that the plan violated federal contract law.

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The true turning point occurred with the election of Republican Richard Nixon to the presidency in 1968. Though officially against multiculturalism, Nixon realised that if he revived the Philadelphia Plan, he could pit the white labour movement (which opposed quotas) against black affirmative action campaigners to split the

Democrats. The result was a tactical manoeuvre that revived affirmative action and launched it at the federal level. After this 1969 legislative hurdle, progress was swift as the federal bureaucracy put the new law into effect. In 1970, the Department of Labor ordered all federal contractors to submit written affirmative action plans. A year later, the liberal Supreme Court of Justice Warren endorsed lower court rulings stating that minority preferences did not violate the Civil Rights Act. Finally, in 1972, the EEOC's remit was broadened to include state governments and educational institutions.

The practice of affirmative action gradually became institutionalised as minority groups became established players within federal government departments concerned with affirmative action. (See table 25-12) Later, in the 1970s, the affirmative action agenda broadened to include women and non-black minorities. Some contend that affirmative action played a role in raising black average incomes, especially during 1965-75. Others argue that these increases would have occurred with or without the policy. Most agree, however, that the policy has helped well-educated blacks the most, but has had a limited effect on the fortunes of poor blacks. This does not mean that the policy failed, for it may well be the case that without it, the lot of both middle and lower-class African-Americans would be worse. However, all of this may be immaterial. Anti-affirmative action forces began to organise, and 1980 represented the high-water mark of success for affirmative action. From then on, as we will see, the policy either stalled or experienced setbacks.

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A third pillar of multiculturalism policy is political multiculturalism. This refers to the drive to ensure minority representation in the institutions of government. Presidents, governors, and mayors; membership of cabinet, Congress, committees, the White House staff, and party executives; and representation on the Supreme and District Courts are all areas of contestation. Most controversial is the attempt to increase minority representation through **affirmative redistricting**. Here the U.S. is certainly more radical than other western societies like Canada or Britain. (See table 25-D) Much of the energy behind this policy was provided by the Supreme Court. Specifically, the *Thornburg v. Gingles* (1986) decision held that a minority group can claim a 'discriminatory effect' if 'its preferred candidates are usually defeated as a result of bloc voting by a white majority.' (Canon, Schousen and Sellers 1994: 24) In combination with 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act, these provisions provided for 'affirmative redistricting' to create districts whose makeup is as close to 65% non-white as possible.

The new directives had an immediate impact in states where minority groups constitute a significant proportion of the population, but are too geographically dispersed to dominate a seat based on 'one person, one vote.' In many areas, black districts were mandated by the Justice Department. One district, known as 'I-85', connected two pockets of black voters at either end of a section of North Carolina interstate highway 85, running for a few hundred yards along either side of the road to avoid white majority areas in between. Though challenged by the Republicans, this district was deemed constitutional by the Supreme Court in 1992. Yet, as with

affirmative action, the momentum behind this variant of multiculturalism has begun to encounter stiff resistance.

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<u>Key Points</u>

- There are two common meanings for the term multiculturalism. One refers to the demographic fact of cultural diversity, the other to a particular public policy.

- The degree of demographic multiculturalism in the United States has increased dramatically due to immigration and post-sixties lifestyle differentiation. This is especially evident in the large coastal metropolitan areas.

- In terms of public policy, multiculturalism can take a cultural, economic or political form. Cultural forms of multiculturalism include bilingual education, ethnic studies programmes and a multicultural revision of history.

- Cultural forms of multiculturalism began in force in 1972, and gained ground with high school curriculum changes after 1987 which rapidly spread nationwide.

- Affirmative action developed quickly after 1970 due to the activism of some departments in the federal bureaucracy. The Supreme Court legitimated this with its key *Duke v. Griggs Power* (1971) ruling.

- Contract compliance, minority set-asides and preferential hiring/admissions are the most common forms of this policy.

- There is a debate over whether Affirmative Action achieved greater equality for blacks. Some claim that the impact has either been minimal or restricted to middle class blacks, while others maintain that positive gains for blacks have been achieved.

- Political varieties of multiculturalism policy try to ensure proportional minority representation in the institutions and leadership positions of government. One controversial form of this has been the policy of affirmative redistricting.

Multiculturalism in Retreat, 1980-2001

The Backlash Against Affirmative Action

The 'bread and butter' realm of economics most frequently dominates American elections. Thus affirmative action (economic multiculturalism) was the first pillar of the policy to be exposed to the winds of majoritarian democracy. Public opinion polls from the seventies through to the nineties were contradictory: they showed that a majority of both blacks and whites favoured programs designed to help blacks succeed. On the other hand, a majority of both races also opposed the use of quotas. Furthermore, support for the idea of government assistance for blacks began to fall from the 70s. (See table 25-13) Emboldened, opponents of affirmative action

went on the offensive. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 marked the beginning of the majoritarian comeback. Though the laws survived, Reagan's attorney-general Edwin Meese let enforcement of affirmative action lapse and curtailed the multicultural activism of the Department of Health, Welfare and Education. Black conservative and affirmative action opponent Clarence Thomas became head of the EEOC.

More importantly, the five Republican appointments to the Supreme Court of 1981-92 began to take their toll. Four of the five - Justices O' Connor, Scalia, Kennedy and Thomas, oppose affirmative action. Together with Chief Justice Rehnquist, they formed an anti-affirmative action majority, and began to move against the policy. The landmark case in this regard is *City of Richmond v Croson* (1989). Richmond, Virginia's plan for a 30 percent minority set-aside was struck down because the Court determined that the city had provided insufficient evidence that discrimination persisted in the local construction industry. Citing a generalised 'systemic' discrimination in an industry was no longer considered adequate reason to use quotas. The Court further ruled that any policies of racial preference must be subject to 'strict scrutiny' by the Court. Few laws survive this high standard, thus the Court's decision heralded a cloudy future for affirmative action. The Republicans continued to chip away at affirmative action by successfully watering down the 1990 Civil Rights Act with a provision that discouraged the use of quotas. After 1992, President Clinton tried to hold the line on affirmative action by conceding to a 'mend it, don't end it,' approach. Nevertheless, the direction of policy had been severely circumscribed by the Supreme Court.

The Attack on the Multicultural Vision

Nathan Glazer, a longstanding foe of multiculturalism, recently suggested that, like it or not, 'we are all multiculturalists now.' Glazer was writing about the success of the multicultural curriculum and its seemingly irresistable energy in the New York City school system of the 1990s. However, the mainstream nature of Glazer's critiques also suggest that the arguments of those opposed to the policy had come of age. If one looks closely at the picture nationwide, it is evident that the juggernaut of multiculturalism has experienced important setbacks for almost two decades. In the the late 80s and 1990s, for instance, cultural and political multiculturalism came under assault from a several quarters. Intellectually, a chorus of anti-multiculturalist elite writers with liberal and/or Jewish backgrounds like Glazer, Allan Bloom, Arthur Schlesinger and Seymour M. Lipset (to name just a few) began to inveigh against curriculum revision and racial preferences.

Political action at the grassroots level also took flight. Arguably the most important mass movement has been the campaign for Official English. Bilingual education had been given a strong push post-1970 by an increased foreign-born population and the determined action of the federal Department of Education. In reaction, during 1981-1990, ten states in the South and Midwest adopted Official English by statute, a move that was engineered by conservative political elites.

Meanwhile, in 1983, a grassroots organization, U.S. English, sprang up to advance Official English measures in states with more liberal political elites. As a consequence, Official English measures were placed on the agenda of state legislatures outside the South and lower Midwest. During 1986-88 in Florida, Arizona, California and Colorado, Official English laws were defeated in the state

legislatures. However, all of these states have a **popular initiative mechanism**, which allows measures to be brought to a referendum as long as these are endorsed by the required number of signatories. Public opinion in these states favoured the idea of English Only, so the referendum process allowed the citizens of these states to force their legislatures to pass measures declaring English to be the state's official language. By the year 2001, twenty-six states adopted English as their official language and U.S. English enrolled almost 1.2 million members.

Interestingly, many of the leading figures in the counterattack against multiculturalism are from ethnic minority backgrounds. U.S. English president Mauro Mujica is a Hispanic immigrant from Chile and its founder, Senator Hayakawa, is of Japanese origin. Likewise, the head of the American Civil Rights Institute (ACRI), which opposes affirmative action in universities and the economy, Ward Connerly, is black. To some degree, this is symbolic, allowing such organisations to maintain respectability. It is undoubtedly the case, though, that Official English is supported by a significant proportion of ethnic minorities. Proposition 63 (California's Official English bill)[2] vote, for example, showed 72% of whites, 67% of blacks and 58% of Asians in favour of the measure, though a majority of those identifying as 'liberal' were opposed. Similar trends appeared in Arizona.

Similarly, in 1997, California's bitterly-contested Proposition 209 was passed with broad-based support (though strongest among whites and weakest among blacks). This measure compelled California to abandon racial preferences in hiring and university admission. The result in 1998-9 was that the proportion of Hispanic and black students in the University of California system plummeted while white and Asian enrollments increased. Many California legislators, as well as the American Civil Liberties Union, National Education Association, and other bodies fought to

retain the state's affirmative action policies. More recently, a new pro-affirmative action movement, BAMN, has materialised to counteract the ACRI.

Despite their successes, U.S. English and the ACRI have failed to attain similar victories at the federal level. Bob Dole, among others, came out strongly against multiculturalism and affirmative action in 1995. Though an Official English bill (Dole-Canady), backed by Newt Gingrich, passed 259-169 in the House, it later died in the Senate. A revamped 1998 bill was likewise defeated 238 to 182 in favour of a bipartisan amendment that would merely 'promote the teaching of English.' The struggle continues, however, as U.S. English is currently working on a similar bill for the 106th Congress.

Demographic Multiculturalism Under Threat?

We have seen how multiculturalism policy is heavily contested, but is it the case that the demographic fact of multiculturalism has proceeded unopposed? To a degree, it is certainly true that no major section of the American political elite has elevated non-white immigration or the 'browning of America' into a high-ranking federal issue. This contrasts somewhat with the situation in Australia or in European countries like Norway, France, Switzerland and Austria. Yet if one scratches beneath the surface to the popular level, it becomes evident that a reaction against changing demographics forms part of the backlash against multiculturalism. Opinion polls clearly demonstrate rising opposition to immigration since the late 1960s. A majority of Americans - between 60 and 80 percent - now favour lower levels of immigration. African-Americans (probably due to labour competition) are most in favour of reducing immigration, followed by whites, Asians and Hispanics. The domestic

migration patterns of white and black Americans - away from high-immigration areas - reflect this new mood.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), which has over 70,000 members, has provided a grassroots focal point for immigration restriction since 1978. At the state level, a number of similar organisations also exist, and have scored important political successes. In California, for instance, grassroots immigration restrictionist organisations won an important referendum victory when voters approved Proposition 187. This initiative, endorsed by Governor Pete Wilson and 59% of state voters, sought to cut off public assistance to illegal immigrants, and was later declared unconstitutional by the state's district court. A majority of whites (64%), African-Americans (56%) and Asians (57%) backed the bill, but just 1 in 3 Hispanics voted in its favour. Even so, this demonstrates considerable cross-community support for this stringent measure.

At the federal level, immigration restriction has not proceeded very far, partly due to the Republicans' desire not to alienate Hispanic voters. This is especially important for the strategy of moderate Republicans like the Bush brothers. After 1996, their more liberal approach won out over the culturally-conservative wing of the party represented by Bob Dole and Pat Buchanan. Recently, President George W. Bush has even made noises to Hispanic voters about reforming the Immigration and Naturalisation Service so as to expedite the processing of Mexican Americans' naturalisation claims. He has also pursued good relations with Mexico and given little succour to the immigration restrictionist lobby. With the Democrats unwilling to carry the issue forward either, an imminent reduction in the current immigration intake of 1 million per year looks unlikely.

Key Points

- Many pillars of multiculturalism came under increasing attack after 1980. Affirmative Action was the first aspect of this policy to encounter effective resistance from conservatives.

- The Reagan administration began to curtail the activities of federal bureaucrats on the Affirmative Action front after 1980, thus letting enforcement lapse. The Republicans also chose five new Supreme Court justices during 1980-1992.

- The new Supreme Court began to rule against Affirmative Action in the landmark *Richmond v. Croson* case in 1989. Racial preferences now had to satisfy the high standard of strict scrutiny by the Court, and could not use 'systemic' arguments.

- Cultural forms of multiculturalism also suffered a setback as half of American states adopted Official English laws from 1981 to 2001. In many states, this occurred through popular initiatives spearheaded by groups like U.S. English and the ACRI.

- A number of organisations like FAIR, and politicians like Pat Buchanan, have attempted to harness the popular mood in order to reduce the nation's immigration levels, but this has not managed to gain the support of elite Republicans.

- The backlash against multiculturalism appears to have reached a stalemate, with moderate Republicans and Democrats compromising on a mild, quota-free version of multiculturalism.

Conclusion

E Pluribus Unum. American national identity today continues the time-honoured struggle to forge unity out of a diversity of ethnic and other cultural groups. The struggle to integrate white and black; Catholic and Protestant; country and city; and capital and labour once defined the national conversation. Today, immigration and cultural fragmentation have added to the task. Hispanic and Asian 'new immigrants', more assertive African and native-American communities, as well as gays, women and those with disabilities are all pressing their claims for group rights. For some thinkers, this provides a golden opportunity to realise a new multicultural form of social organisation. For others, growing diversity poses a threat to national unity that must be curtailed through an emphasis on assimilation to shared values. Some critics even advocate reducing immigration.

In this chapter, we have traced the fractious history of relations between ethnic groups in America and the larger 'races' which encompass these. We saw that in the colonial period, politics largely revolved around region and religious denomination. Later, with the influx of Catholic Irish and Germans to the north, politics began to assume a more ethnic colouring. This intensified with the arrival of southern and eastern Europeans in large numbers around the turn of the last century. The pattern of a white Protestant countryside arrayed against the large, ethnically-mixed cities of the northeast became important. Acts restricting the immigration of Chinese (1882), other

'Orientals' (1907) and southern/eastern Europeans (1924) highlighted the victory of the white Protestant forces.

Meanwhile, the political voice of black America began to be heard as millions of their number left their agricultural quasi-serfdom in the Old South for the northern cities during 1925-65. Originally, these African-Americans voted strongly Republican for both traditional reasons (Lincoln and his Republicans ended slavery), and because the Republicans tended to be more sympathetic than the Democrats to black civil rights. With the rise of the Civil Rights movement in the late 1940s and 1950s, however, it became clear that many leading white liberals were aligned with FDR's New Deal Democrats. The New Dealers were also more likely to pursue the public spending policies favoured by many blacks, thus a gradual shift in black voters' allegiances (toward the Democrats) took place.

The decade of the 1960s marks a watershed in the history of American ethnic relations. The Civil Rights movement hit its zenith during this decade, crowned by Martin Luther King's march on Washington of 1963 and the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts of 1964 and 1965. Following closely on from this emancipation was the rise to prominence of white ethnics. Kennedy became the first non-WASP president in 1960, and in 1965, the restrictive 'national origins' quota immigration laws were repealed. The multicultural movement, which called for a revision of the American story (as told in its classrooms and on its political podiums) gathered steam toward the end of the decade. So too did the 'affirmative action' crusade for racial and gender preferences in university admission, hiring and government contract allocations. In addition, the Supreme Court began to play a more active, liberal role, with a series of landmark decisions which favoured de-segregation (1954), reapportionment (1962-4) and affirmative action (1971).

The political fallout from this critical, liberal decade was considerable. To begin with, the multiculturalism movement gained significantly. Multiculturalism has two principal thrusts. The first concerns the demographic fact of having many cultural groups living in the same territory. The second meaning of multiculturalism relates to public policy. Taking demographic multiculturalism first, the rapid rise in non-European immigration after the reforms of 1965 - which has reduced the white population from 85% to barely two-thirds of the total population in forty years - is highly significant. Whites are now a minority in California and will be a minority in the U.S. by 2050. Hispanics have been the principal demographic gainers, and their regional concentration in California, Florida, Texas, New York and New Jersey has rendered them an important political force. African-Americans have drawn closer to the Democrats (80-90% of this group have voted for the party since the 70s), while many northern Catholics and southern whites defected to the Republicans post-1968. Hispanics, apart from the Cubans in Florida, tend to vote Democratic - though less decisively than blacks. Asians tend to split their votes between the two main parties.

Public policies of multiculturalism may act either in the economy (i.e. affirmative action on jobs, admissions and housing), in politics (i.e. minority representation in Congress and in positions of influence), or in the culture (i.e. bilingual education or a multicultural curriculum). Multiculturalism as public policy surged ahead on all fronts from the late sixties. In the economic sphere, affirmative action policies - spearheaded by an activist bureaucracy and legitimated by the courts - became institutionalised after 1970. Politically, the representation of blacks in Congress was accelerated in the 1980s by the use of affirmative redistricting and through pressures to include minorities in positions of influence. In cultural terms, the revision of school and university history, literature and civics curricula proceeded

apace, especially after 1987. This became especially controversial with the introduction of an Afrocentric curriculum in several New York school districts in the same year.

From 1980, however, the advance of multiculturalism policy began to be rolled back. Here, Republican control of the presidency from 1980 to 1992, in combination with its appointment of five Supreme Court justices, was vital. The enforcement of Affirmative Action was emasculated under Reagan, and in 1989, the Supreme Court raised the standards required to justify any racial preferences policy. Rumblings of discontent also began to resound from high-profile writers and academics, who took aim at what they perceived to be the illiberalism of multicultural education. The Official English movement gathered force as well, drawing the support of over a million Americans and driving forth Official English statutes in over half the nation's states.

The battle over multiculturalism seems to have been fought to a stalemate as we enter the 21st century. Pluralistic assimilation, in a form Robert Park might recognise, appears to be the compromise for post-Civil Rights America. On the one hand, more radical demands of multiculturalism in terms of curriculum revision and affirmative action are unlikely to be realised. On the other hand, there is no returning to the 1950s. The national education curriculum will probably remain sensitive to its portrayal of minorities. Similarly, employers and state governors are aware of the need to increase minority participation in education, housing and employment. This status quo highlights the balance between traditionalist and liberal forces that in many ways cuts across lines of race or ethnicity. This equilibrium is mirrored in the country's institutions: the Supreme Court and the Republican party are relatively hostile to multiculturalism. The Democrats, sections of the federal bureaucracy and

some important PACs favour it. Meanwhile, leaders of both parties have tended to moderate their demands.

Finally, the current situation reflects a post-sixties sea-change in America's self-identity. Many now recognise that the U.S. can no longer define itself as a white nation, but must embrace the stories and vantage points of once-marginalised groups. They understand that racial minorities are a significant and growing force in the political process. However, according to a recent multi-partisan workshop and report entitled *Becoming American/America Becoming*, the upsurge of diversity makes it all the more urgent to find points of unity and common understanding. The events surrounding September 11th seemed to provide some teeth to this abstract plea, rallying the nation behind polyglot New York and the American 'civilising' mission. It remains to be seen whether this represents but a pause in the post-sixties fragmentation of the nation or whether it will restore a sense of unity not felt since the height of the Cold War.

Questions

- How have ethnic voting alignments changed over time, and why?

- Why has immigration become an important issue?

- What does multiculturalism refer to in the American context?

- Provide some examples of struggles over cultural representation? How and why did these develop?

- What is affirmative action? Do you support the policy?

- Do the ends of attacking discrimination and inequality justify the means of racial preferences?

- Why did multiculturalism lose momentum after 1980?

- 'Multiculturalism as public policy is dead in America.' Do you agree?

Further Reading

Immigration, Anti-Immigration and Ethnic Politics

1. Juan F. Perea (ed.), *Immigrants Out!: The New Nativism and the Anti-Immigrant Impulse in the United States* (New York, N.Y. & London: New York University Press, 1997). A useful collection of writings on the current immigration restriction and Official English movements.

2. David Jacobson (ed.), *The Immigration Reader: America in a Multidisciplinary Perspective* (Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). A useful overview of the immigration debate is provided in this edited volume. See especially chapters 3-5, and 16-19.

3. Higham, John, *Send These To Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975). A classic examination of ethnic politics, particularly the struggle between urban white ethnics and rural white Protestants.

4. Hacker, Andrew, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (New York, NY: Ballantyne Books, 1995). Another landmark work which provides a detailed statistical picture of the socioeconomic differences between black and white America.

5. King, Desmond, *Making Americans: Immigration, Race and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). A recent book which traces current debates over national identity and multiculturalism back to the battles against racism and immigration restriction which took place in the 1900-1924 period.

Multiculturalism Policy and Its Critics

6. Smelser, Neil J. and Jeffrey C. Alexander (eds.), *Diversity and its Discontents: Cultural Conflict and Common Ground in Contemporary American Society* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999). An excellent collection of both conservative and liberal pieces on the politics of multiculturalism and immigration.

7. Glazer, Nathan, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). A well-written, oft-quoted work which provides a useful history of the Multicultural movement from a moderately 'anti' perspective.

8. Goldberg, David Theo, *Multiculturalism: a critical reader* (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 1998). A useful edited reader, whose writers advocate a more left-liberal approach than Glazer. See Part I in particular.

9. Post, Robert and Michael Rogin (eds.), *Race & Representation: Affirmative Action* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996). One of the best collections of writings on this important subject. Of outstanding note are articles by Post, Hollinger, Duster, Fredrickson, Hochschild, Kirp, Waldron and Zinn.

10. Schlesinger, Arthur M. Jr., *The Disuniting of America* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., [1991] 1993). A short, sharp and insightful critique of the multiculturalism project by this famous Kennedy-liberal and 'consensus' historian.

Web Links

US Department of the Census, Population and Housing tables:

http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/tablist.html - Provides information on the American population's ethnic and racial characteristics, by nation, state and region.

U.S. English: www.us-english.org - Detailed site of the leading campaigner for making English the official language at federal and state level.

Federation for American Immigration Reform: www.fairus.org - The principal organisation of the drive to reduce American immigration levels. This comprehensive address also contains numerous links to historical, statistical and opinion survey data.

American Civil Rights Institute: www.acri.org - Important, California-based organisation opposed to Affirmative Action, whether as racial or gender preferences. Headed by University of California regent Ward Connerly.

BAMN (Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action and Integration and to Fight for Equality by Any Means Necessary): www.bamn.com - A recent, impressive forum for those campaigning in favour of Affirmative Action, especially in California.

National Education Association (NEA), bilingualism issues:

http://www.nea.org/issues/bilingual/ - One of the forces behind multiculturalism in education, the NEA's site also provides some important discussion of the issues surrounding bilingual education.

Multicultural Pavilion: http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural/ - One of the leading pro-multiculturalism websites. Contains a wealth of information on American multiculturalism, notably in the sphere of education and culture.

Notes

1. For instance, the chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on Immigration until 1963 was Francis Walter (R-Penn.), a defender of the National Origins scheme and co-sponsor of the restrictive McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. He replacement in 1964 by the reformist Michael Feighan (D-Ohio) smoothed the way for passage of Hart-Celler.

2. Proposition 63 has been followed by Proposition 227 (passed June 2, 1998), entitled 'English for the Children,' which aims to severely curtail bilingual education.

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Gleason, Philip. (1992), *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press).

Gyory, Andrew. (1998), *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press).

McKeever, Robert & John Zvesper. (1999), *Politics USA* (London: Prentice Hall).

Tables

- Table 1 must be printed out on a colour printer - to which I lack access, so is not included
- Other graphs may be converted from patterns to colour for better effect.

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[1] For instance, the chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on Immigration until 1963 was Francis Walter (R-Penn.), a defender of the National Origins scheme and co-sponsor of the restrictive McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. He replacement in 1964 by the reformist Michael Feighan (D-Ohio) smoothed the way for passage of Hart-Celler.

[2] Proposition 63 has been followed by Proposition 227 (passed June 2, 1998), entitled 'English for the Children,' which aims to severely curtail bilingual education.