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American Social "Reminders" of Citizenship after September 11, 2001: Nativisms and the Retractability of American Identity

Abstract

My discussion considers how crisis dramatically changes social relationships and interaction patterns within a multicultural context. Specifically, I note the inherent social asymmetry of multicultural configurations, thus rendering it vulnerable for the dominant ethnic/racial group, the *ethnocracy*, to exact symbolically and materialistically punitive measures against minorities during periods of national crisis. I situate my discussion of dramatically changed social interactions in the post-September 11, 2001 period, when the attacks on the World Trade Center towers triggered nativism against Arab Americans, or any group phenotypically similar to the construction of "Arab." I note how this nativism is not new but is a historical and consistent articulation of the ethnocratic stratum that retracts the American identity and notions of citizenship away from minorities during times of national crisis. The discussion concludes with how American multiculturalism is still full of unresolved ethnic and racial symbolisms that hark back to nineteenth century attempts by the White power structure to idealize, culturally and phenotypically, the constitution of an "ideal" American.

Keywords

Racism; Nativism; Multiculturalism; Ethnocracy; Ethnicity; Identity; Citizenship

The event of September 11, 2001 has brought Americans to yet another historical crossroad. Our shocked population immediately grieved, searched for consolation from its citizenry, and attempted to heal. Others, however, searched for scapegoats. In the meanwhile the state apparatus began to prepare for war. The "first war of the twenty first century" as the Unites States president referred to it, would be pitched on television in the following weeks. The political discourse of the United States, constructed by President Bush and his jingoists, henceforth viewed the engagements to ensue as part of its foreign policy to eradicate terrorism.

In the domestic sphere, however, the events following 9/11 unearthed historical tendencies of the United States' dysfunctional legacy involving mistreatment of American minorities during national crises. As such, I hope to examine how events following 9/11 functioned to highlight historically unresolved issues related to ethnic/race relations and notions of citizenship in the United States. The cultural reading I hope to provide should present some of the disenchantments regarding the

history of American nation construction, that is, I hope to demonstrate how ethnicity and race—beyond the aesthetic and atmospheric cultural diacritica that are its outputs—have *material consequences*, sometimes grave.

Ethnic and race identities, then, are large cultural repositories that collect histories. Cultural histories, narratives, and denials are frequently dumped into its reservoirs where its constituents, in turn, churn out new hopes and new histories. Ethnicity and race, then, are the most visceral collective units that make visible multicultural dynamics that are frequently in contestations with one another, creating new modes of interaction and perspectives on Americanism.

Decades ago, however, scholarly address of ethnicity in, say, nation construction, tended to view ethnic and racial articulations as nuisances—as "impediments to effective state-integration" (Connor 1972: 319). If there was an address of ethnic diversity, it was formulated in a manner that does not make it theoretically or technocratically problematic for integration (Connor 1972). Such is the nature of the modernist paradigm insofar as ethnic and racial identities are concerned: it assumes that actors of antagonistic identities will normatively and ultimately defer to the state's construction of nation through assimilation. Conditions around the world, however, point to the consistent staying power of ethnic identity and its accompanying symbolisms. This pattern was also observable in the United States in the weeks following 9/11. Indeed, modernization has not withered away ethnic identity in the context of diversity. The opposite behooves consideration: modernization has strengthened the internal colonial tendencies of the dominant group when national crises threaten its hegemony.

My discussion aims to make visible how the media insinuates and how the public acts on "commonly shared dispositions" of the dominant White society (Bourdieu 1984; Adkins and Grant 2007). In the one month following September 11, I extrapolate considerations from: (1) two news reports on CNN and MSNBC that reported on racist backlashes against minority Americans with (2) a popular well-intentioned public service announcement from the Ad Council that urged unity among Americans. Although superficially the narratives from the two contexts appear as diametrically opposite events, the combined synergy of their implications is still based on a White Americancentric attitude that minorities are "less" American than those of phenotypically European stock.

The aforementioned problem must be addressed so that an honest assessment can be made that US multiculturalism is highly asymmetrical in configuring social interaction *and* unresolved in terms of how multicultural politics are articulated. Moreover in terms of global implications for understanding asymmetrical multiculturalism overall, it can remind and warn all citizens on the destructive tendencies inherent in any ethnic/racial group when they have a monopoly on all forms of socio-cultural capital and control of socio-political institutions. My article attempts to make exigent this reminder given that the vast majority of states around the world are multiethnic (Gurr 1993).

In the case of the United States, the diacritica of US multiculturalism after 9/11 reveals how American society is still configured along "spatial segregation" where "most people spend the majority of their time socially interacting with people of their own race and little time with others of different racial or ethnic groups" (Moor and Pierce 2007: 173). Robert Putnam (2007) noted that in America, this pattern has reduced societal trust and social solidarity among different groups. More interestingly, not only is there a high level of distrust directed against "other" groups, but distrust of people belonging to *their own ilk*. For Anthony Giddens commenting on

Putnam's findings, "diversity seems to encourage social isolation, not enrichment" (Giddens 2007: 86).

This pattern, if not already explicit to most people, will be when in times of national crisis, bitter cultural articulations emerge and sometimes violently intensify the already segregated configuration of American interaction, dramatically changing social relationships. Due to the lingering urgency perennially tied to memories and implications of 9/11, I have opted to address the media articulations first before considering some theoretical models that can "read" the implications of the media articulations.

Backlash

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, notions of who constituted being an "American" fell into disarray. As the hegemonic construction of "nation" harnessed patriotic sentiments that would be channeled for geopolitical justice, these same sentiments indirectly or directly—depending on one's political orientation—contributed to the domestic emergence of hate crimes directed against Arab, Muslim and South Asian Americans fitting the phenotypical imagination of what an "Arab" or a "Middle Easterner" might look like. Indeed, there was an increase in hate crimes in the United States directed against male Sikhs—who are neither Arabic nor Muslim—due to their wearing of turbans. One victim, a forty-nine year old Sikh man by the name of Balbir Singh Sodhi, was shot to death on September 15, 2001 in Mesa, Arizona, by Frank Silva Roque.

> On Saturday morning, Balbir Sodhi went to Costco where he had been named Businessman of the Year. Costco had sold out their American flags. While there, Sodhi spotted a Red Cross Fund for victims of September 11 and donated around $75, all the money he had in his pocket at the time. Then he went back to the gas station because the landscapers were coming. Sodhi was beautifying the spot with flowers and a lawn. The landscapers spent most of the morning working on the area around the station. They called Sodhi out to take a look at their work.
>
> Frank Silva Roque, 42, who worked for Boeing's helicopter division and had recently moved to Mesa from Alabama, drove up to the gas station in his pickup truck. Instead of stopping at one of the pumps, he drove straight up to Balbir Sodhi and shot him with a .380 calibre firearm. Three rounds hit him in the back. When police arrived at Roque's mobile home he yelled, 'I'm an American patriot, arrest me and let the terrorist go wild.' (Thayil 2006)

Before the police arrested Roque he had already shot at a Lebanese clerk and riddled an Afghani family's home with bullets.

In the following days Frank Sesno, Washington Bureau Chief for CNN reported:

> SESNO: It is an ugly, yet sadly predictable undercurrent following last week's terror and destruction [Images of rowdy teen with flag screaming]—expressions of hate directed against Arab Americans: a mosque in Cleveland rammed by a car [Images of car being towed out of damaged mosque], an Iraqi pizzeria in Massachusetts torched [Images of worker, perhaps owner, cleaning up]… One watchdog group has catalogued more than two hundred incidents so far. The FBI is looking into more than fifty specific complaints. [Muslim woman speaks]: 'There have been some

> women who have been attacked and many of my family members and friends have advised me to change the way I dress.' (CNN 2001: September 18)

NBC reported:

> There's outright fear in the Arab community. Another mosque in Washington was attacked today. In Detroit, an Arab American newspaper is getting hundreds of hate calls: [actual voicemail message is played] 'I hope every Arab-born dies, slimy piece of shit race.' In suburban Chicago police broke up an angry mob of three hundred outside a mosque. Today, fourteen year old Aliyah Salima hides behind closed curtains and locked doors-she saw those 'ugly' Americans: [Aliyah speaks] 'I was scared they would hit me with a flag pole, beat me with my own flag.' (MSNBC 2001: September 22)

Yet in this period of post-9/11 America, where certain articulations of collective pain was violently fused with nationalist anger, a sector of American civil society surprisingly emerged to produce what is, on the surface, a visual anthem celebrating America's multicultural diversity.

The Ad Council produced the well intentioned "I'm an American" public service announcement (PSA) that aired ten days after 9/11, for duration of three to four months. The vast majority of Americans have seen this fifteen to twenty-second PSA on television, where individuals in different settings proclaim they are "American" while a warm fiddle melody nurtures a folkloric mood in hopes of invoking a sense of togetherness. The individuals in the ad were mostly American minorities, that is, phenotypically non-Whites, with a few personalities proclaiming their "Americaness" with a heavy foreign accent. In essence the PSA was the first visually condensed celebration of America's multicultural population, stripped of propagandistic voiceovers by politicians or school officials. Indeed, upon seeing this PSA I awaited to record its future airing—there were certain cues about the PSA I felt I was just on the verge of understanding.

According to ad executives and Roy Spence, President of the Texas-based ad agency GSD&M that designed the PSA for the Ad Council, it was "the most important work we have ever done" (Ad Council 2004: 28). The Ad Council noted in its 2004 report "Public Service Advertising that Changed a Nation":

> Photographers filmed scores of Americans of every background and age imaginable in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Reno, Dallas, Austin, and Raleigh. By the time the spots were completed, over 100 people had donated their time and talents. (2004: 28)

After the PSA aired, Judy Trabulsi, one of the co-founders of GSD&M noted, "I would say the campaign received easily over 500 emails. Maybe it's closer to 1,000. It's just totally amazing that almost three years later there is still so much interest in a spot that ran for maybe three or four months in 2001" (Ad Council 2004: 28). Ad Council President and CEO Peggy Conlon noted: "It was a tremendous collaborative effort that shows how quickly the ad industry can respond when it is needed most…The unprecedented volunteer effort by the advertising industry was our gift to America" (2004: 29). Indeed, the Ad Council and GSD&M still celebrate that teachers, human resources executives all covet copies of the ad so as to "incorporate it into diversity training" as well as for "everyday Americans who want it

for inspiration" (2004: 29).

Therefore, following September 11, we have what *appear* to be two conflicting trajectories in how nation-construction occurred in the United States: (1) racist backlash was meted out among ethnic minorities of the United States, especially if they phenotypically appeared Middle Eastern. The first trajectory is based on the overlooked site of domestic conflict where American ethnic minorities are rendered vulnerable to hate crimes committed by members of the *ethnocracy*—the dominant ethnic/racial group that controls social and political capital—with the latter group engaged in the extrajudicial punishment of the former (Stavenhagen 1986, 1996; Brown 1994); (2) the second trajectory includes the ethnocracy's attempt to convince all Americans and American minorities (as in the Ad Council's "I'm an American" PSA) that the latter's citizenship status and legitimacy are indeed sound because they really do belong to the multicultural tapestry that comprises the American cultural tapestry.

There are some important implications that can be drawn from these dynamics. Although the aforementioned trajectories appear diametrically opposed (that is, at the level of lived experience is the racist backlash directed against Americans who phenotypically appeared Middle Eastern, and at the level of political and cultural discourse, the desire to generate unity), in reality the cultural implication is the same: they are both, in fact, derivative of how "American" is still constructed along a Eurocentric theme and therefore, the American identity is *retractable* from its ethnic minorities during times of crisis.

Atavisms of Nativisms

As I attempt to make visible the patterns of prejudices in the United States' post-9/11 multicultural experience, I attempt to answer why and when the processes of retracting the American identity occurs, as well as identify its trajectory and the group that engender the process. The retractability of American identity during times of crisis is an important and anomalous socio-cultural feature that must be made visible because the asymmetrical nature of multiculturalism, and more importantly, its consequences, are rarely addressed in the narrative of the American experience. By asymmetrical multiculturalism I intend to convey the view that there is an inherent inequality in how citizenship is experienced through multicultural relationships, and that this inequality exhibits a key attribute: the inequality is relatively obscured in times of national stability, thus allowing multicultural articulations to prioritize an expression that celebrates diversity *through relativism*. In times of national crisis, however, some constituents of the ethnocracy will abandon its relativistic stance by situating cultural groups on a hierarchical scale, to be followed by the retraction of American identity from minority cultural groups.

My discussion of multiculturalism during crisis can be seen in opposition to scholars that only sloganeer the benefits of diversity as a *multicultural constant*. Multiculturalism in crisis activates within the individual of the collective group a strong primary identification, skewed toward ethnic and racial nationalism. My assertion, then, is diametrically opposed to the ideas of Amartya Sen explicated in his important 2006 work, *Identity and Violence: the Illusion of Destiny*. It is imperative that I explore and critique Sen's assertions, which ultimately are faulted in only one area: his celebration of an individual's hybridified identities without considering how crisis can nullify them. Only when this task is achieved can we move forward toward discussing nascent primary identities that arise during times of national crisis, especially those that emerged following September 11, 2001.

Amartya Sen's Celebration of Diversity

Multiculturalism is an important narrative and strategy for social coexistence. It is employed nationally in pluralistic societies and globally in diplomatic discourses to celebrate the importance of tolerance and diversity. Acknowledging multiple identities in each one of us and within the group thus celebrates the fluidity of human beings, and not the insular construction of people based exclusively on just ethnicity, religion, class or gender.[i] The implication inherent in such a perspective is clear: that we should not be led down one living mode that is subsumed under an absolutist identity. Amartya Sen in his important work warns us about embarking on such a path, lest we engage in an insular politics of exclusion by not embracing the diversity in others as well as in ourselves.

For Sen, each individual is a compilation of a variety of group cultures based on residency, geographic origin, gender, class, politics, profession, sport interests, and social commitments, to name but a few. It is the interaction of these various affiliations that give us our rich identities. Indeed, Sen argues, "none of them can be taken to be the person's only identity or singular membership category" (2006: 5). Sen, a self-acknowledged Smithian, celebrates the choices that individuals have: "It is…hard to believe that a person really has no choice in deciding what relative importance to attach to the various groups to which he or she belongs" (2006: 5). Sen is impassioned in his plea for readers to see the diversity inherent in each of us. Celebrating one's different affiliations and not an overarching single affiliation also prevents oppressive and prejudicial elements from pigeonholing an actor or a people into narrow cultural compartments across the present and across time (for example, India is *not* only a Hindu civilization according to Sen). For Sen even within "one" culture there is heterogeneity, hybridity, and an implied continuous amalgamation of shared beliefs.

Most importantly, by approaching diversity inherent within each individual, Sen documents the contributions made by individuals of different affiliations toward not only their own cultures, but toward different cultures across the present as well as across time. Culture cannot be seen as "an isolated force independent of other influences" and the assumption that culture is a hermetically sealed repository of shared meanings and way of life is "deeply delusive" (2006: 113). Sen emphasizes this point as he discusses the fluidity of "Indian" culture and contrasts it to the "one culture" view that India is a Hindu civilization:

> Muslims are not the only non-Hindu group in the Indian population. The Sikhs have a major presence, as do the Jains. India is not only the country of the origin of Buddhism; the dominant religion of India was Buddhism for over a millennium, and the Chinese often referred to India as 'the Buddhist kingdom.' Agnostic and atheistic schools of thought—the Carvaka and the Lokayata—have flourished in India from at least the sixth century B.C. to the present day. There have been large Christian communities in India from the fourth century—two hundred years before there were substantial Christian communities in Britain. Jews came to India shortly after the fall of Jerusalem; Parsees from the eighth century. (Sen 2006: 47-48)

Moreover:

> Being a Muslim is not an overarching identity that determines everything in which a person believes. For example, Emperor Akbar's tolerance and

> heterodoxy had supporters as well as detractors among influential Muslim groups in Agra and Delhi in sixteenth-century India. (Sen 2006: 65)
>
> When…Akbar, the Great Mughal, was making similar pronouncements on religious tolerance in Agra from the 1590s onward (such as, 'No one should be interfered with on account of religion, and anyone is to be allowed to go over to a religion that pleases him'), the Inquisitions were quite extensive in Europe, and the heretics were still being burned at the stake. (Sen 2006: 50)

As a result:

> In partitioning the population of the world into those belonging to 'the Islamic world,' 'the Western world,' 'the Hindu world,' 'the Buddhist world,' the divisive power of classificatory priority is implicitly used to place people firmly inside a unique set of rigid boxes. (Sen 2006: 11)

Sen's sentiments are thus for a multicultural coexistence based on cultural liberties, where one can freely choose his or her associations and affiliations over inherited and unchosen cultural scripts that are made to take precedence, i.e., become a primary identity ahead of other social affiliations (though Sen reminds us that the merits of cultural diversity must depend heavily on "how that diversity is brought about and sustained"; 2006: 116).

A Critique of Sen

Sen's assertions that there is or should be for individuals choice in affiliating with cultural pluralities is an ideal that, in American multiculturalism, only attainable consistently for a certain social stratum: the dominant cultural group in power that has a monopoly on political capital to dictate nation-construction. I also fundamentally disagree with Sen's assertion that "important as culture is, it is not uniquely significant in determining our lives and identities…race, gender, profession, politics, also matter, and can matter powerfully" (2006: 112). My contention is that certain social circumstances will activate the articulation of ethnic consciousness to be a primary identity that incorporates race *and* gender, for example, as key components of a total politicized ethnicity. I make this argument as a response to how Sen tends to mechanistically treat ethnicity, race, gender, and political affiliations as separate categories.

I also reject the distinction that race is a biological phenomenon whereas ethnicity is a symbolic, and thus, cultural one. The experience and consequence of race in America is, after all, experienced phenotypically as *visual ethnicity* and thus, must be construed as a socio-cultural and socio-political phenomenon. I also derive my perspective from Pierre Van Den Berghe's criticism on the position that frequent usage and interpretation of cultural markers by ethnic groups thus qualifies ethnicity as a purely symbolic phenomenon (Van Den Berghe 1996).

Although Van Den Berghe concedes that ethnicity can be a primarily symbolic articulation, this feature is exhibited only when ethnic groups live in regional proximity with one another over time, thus diluting the genetic and phenotypical markers that would otherwise set them apart. That is, if there are long periods of exogamy, conquest, or the condition of being conquered, the resulting populations in neighboring ethnic groups will "look…much alike" (Van Den Berghe 1996: 58). Only

when there are visual similarities will cultural markers such as language be more effective than genetic or phenotypical markers for differentiating between cultural communities, or *ethnies*:

> Norwegians and Swedes…could never be racists toward one another, even if they wanted to. They have to listen to one another before they can tell who is who. The Nazis tried to be racists with the Jews but their biological markers worked with perhaps 10 to 15 percent reliability. In practice, they used mostly cultural markers: circumcision, synagogue attendance, the Star of David, denunciations, surnames, etc. They actually had a very difficult time picking out the Jews from their Gentile neighbors, especially in the assimilated Jewry of Western Europe (Van Den Berghe 1996: 61).

Van Den Berghe also notes that *when* phenotypical markers "do a reliable job" of differentiating between groups, the exclusive use of the markers for discernment, and in a less-than-desirable scenario, prejudicial punishment, takes precedence. European colonization of the world is an example where the great distances involved in territorial acquisition inevitably activated this phenotypical awareness, which was ultimately articulated biologically to justify and reinforce ethnic stratification and the belief in racial superiority. In other words, phenotypical discernment and consciousness is "activated" between groups that are phenotypically different, such as between the Zulus and Boers of Africa: "you could shoot at 500 meters and never make a mistake" (1996: 61).

> Facial features (notably eye, lip and nose shape), hair texture and physical stature are also used where they are diacritic… In Rwanda and Burundi where the Hutu-Tutsi-Twa distinction is marked by large group differences in height, stature is widely used as a criterion. It works better in Rwanda where a rigid caste system hindered interbreeding, than in the more fluid social structure of Burundi, but in both cases, the physical distinction was used as a quick and dirty basis for sweeping genocidal action. (Van Den Berghe 1996: 61)

Since ethnic communities in the US exhibit both phenotypical and cultural differences, US multiculturalism is a socio-cultural imbroglio, historically conflict-prone, with many of its actors prone to hyper-discernments of the "other." Yet this process must be seen in terms of degree as groups that control socio-political institutions are more prone to exhibit an insidious articulation of this discernment, while the subordinated group/s tend to utilize the discernment for defensive purposes.

Given this context, we must answer an important question provided to us by Sen: is multiculturalism just a series of configurations that are continuations of "all the preexisting culture practices that happen to be present at a point in time (for example, new immigrants may be induced to continue their old fixed ways…and discouraged—directly and indirectly—from changing their behavior pattern at all)," or one where there is no undermining of one's choice to affiliate, assemble, and diversify one's identities beyond one or two key primary identities (2006: 116)? As aforementioned, my current response insofar as minority populations are concerned points to the former, with an added consideration: minority group members who continue "their old fixed ways" do so as a defensive posture resulting from their experiences with participational and institutional discrimination. Moreover, this mode is one that is *selected* under exigent social circumstances.

Although Sen concedes that the freedom to choose one's identity "in the eyes of others can sometimes be…limited" he neglects how systemic crisis, the failure of institutions and infrastructure—and national crisis, a political emergency threatening the construction of an overarching union—can severely alter human relationships for the long term, limiting actors' choices and his or her menu of identities as lived modes (Sen 2006: 31). That is, hypothetically speaking, a fourth generation Japanese American, or *yonsei*, who is card-carrying member of the Sierra Club and a member of the California Teacher's Association are not helpful identities if there is a race conflagration directed against them. And since September 11, a phenotypically Arab American may find a large segment of the American population dismissive of his Christian background,[ii] Oxford education, or his or her other superfluous affiliations. In the context of crisis, it is in the interest, then, for the actor of the ethnic minority group to choose a return to a primary identity where, as Barth argues, its boundaries "define the group [and] not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (1969: 15). Indeed:

> Where there is less security and people live under a greater threat of arbitrariness and violence outside their primary community, the insecurity itself acts as a constraint on inter-ethnic contacts. In this situation, many forms of interaction between members of different ethnic groups may fail to develop, even though a potential complementarity of interests obtains. Forms of interaction may be blocked because of a lack of trust or a lack of opportunity to consummate transactions. (Barth 1969: 36)

Sen's relativism fails acknowledge the power of an ethnocratic stratum in constructing multicultural configurations. Stavenhagen's concept of ethnocracy argues that the ethnic/racial group with the most political, economic and cultural power will attempt to dominate other ethnies in the image of its own and through its institutional structures "impose its own particular ethnic interests on the whole of national society" (1996: 197). Brown defines the ethnocratic state as "where the state acts as the agency of the dominant ethnic community in terms of ideologies, its policies and its resource distribution" (1994: 36).

Brown lists three main tendencies of the ethnocratic state: First, the majority ethnie is disproportionately and overwhelmingly granted access to state elite positions, the civil service, and armed forces. Moreover, "where recruitment…from other ethnic origins does occur, it is conditional upon their assimilation into the dominant ethnic culture" (1994: 36-48). Moreover, Brown notes that "the state elites use these positions to promote their ethnic interests, rather than acting as either an 'autonomous' state bureaucracy or as representatives of the socio-economic class strata from which they originate" (1994: 36-48). But Brown was not the only one to notice this ubiquitous pattern of multicultural asymmetry. In 1987, Weiner noted some basic features of multicultural societies:

> In country after country, a single ethnic group has taken control over the state and used its powers to exercise control over others… In retrospect there has been far less 'nation-building' than many analysts had expected or hoped, for the process of state building has rendered many ethnic groups devoid of power or influence. (Weiner 1987: 36-37)

Second, the ethnocratic state positions its own values at the top of a *vertical* multicultural scale, and constructs its history in a hegemonic fashion. Although

ethnocratic states often claim a sort of universalism, the ethnocentric assumptions underlying their domestic policies render the state neither "ethnically neutral nor multi-ethnic, but…mono-ethnic" (Brown 1994: 36). Finally, ethnocratic states utilize the outputs of their institutional structures, "its constitutions, its laws and its political structures" to reinforce a monopoly on power for the ethnocratic polity (Brown 1994: 37). Overall, politics in an ethnocratic state is based on the "introduction of values and institutions of the ethnic group into the peripheral communities" (Brown 1994: 38).

The implicitness or explicitness of what peace activist John Brown Childs terms as a *politics of conversion* and the politics of exclusion (if the conversion fails) indicate that multicultural affiliations are not exclusively a product of individual choices, i.e., the personally selected affiliations of individual Americans did not construct the multicultural diacritica we have in the US today nor in its past (Childs 2003: 21-22). Instead, the current US multicultural discourse is a product of ethnocratic nation construction. This packaged top-to-bottom multiculturalism is further employed by the ethnocracy as a euphemistic political cloak to hide the failure of integrationist policies: this is the latent essence of US multiculturalism.

It is the ethnocracy and its control of major social institutions, particularly law enforcement and quasi-military and military governmental institutions, which renders US multiculturalism as skewed, asymmetrical, riddled with inequalities, and prone to ethnic and sectarian violence. One only needs to examine nativist backlashes against ethnic communities during national crises. Indeed, the ethnocracy is *most visible* as a complicit stratum in maintaining an asymmetrical multicultural configuration when it retracts the American identity away from its minority ethnies during such a crisis.

Sen's neglect of ethnocratic tendencies during national crises means his conceptualization of multiculturalism is segmented. Moreover, Sen's arguments are not inviolable once we examine how national crises can significantly alter social relationships, potentially reconfiguring and filtering out superfluous identity affiliations so as to generate a "safety zone" within one key primary identity. Barth is thus correct in noting that the "processes whereby ethnic units maintain themselves are thus clearly affected…by the variable of regional security" (1969: 37).

US ethnocratic tendencies during systemic and national crises, and nation-construction via the retractability of American identity from actors of minority nations, reinvigorate the need to revisit the tenets of the internal colonial thesis. Defined by Michael Hechter in his 1975 work *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in National Development, 1536-1966*, internal colonialism is a process where the "core of the nation state comes to dominate the periphery politically and exploit it materially" (1975: 9). Under the structural constraints of internal colonialism:

> There is crystallization of the unequal distribution of resources and power between the two groups. The superordinate group, or core, seeks to stabilize and monopolize its advantages through policies aiming at the institutionalization of the existing stratification system. (Hechter 1975: 9)

What is most impressive about Hechter's analyses is his anticipation of the consequences of internal colonialism upon minority ethnie actors in ostensibly egalitarian societies:

> In societies having an egalitarian ideology it is rather difficult for persons in disadvantaged ethnic groups to imagine that poverty has befallen them

> entirely by chance… Perhaps they will come to think their material disadvantage occurs precisely on account of their ethnic distinctiveness…they will not have far to look for evidence supporting this perception because discrimination abounds against all such groups… Peoples' reactions to this dilemma…for whom escape is impossible, will tend to identify on the basis of their ethnic distinctiveness. (1978: 299)

Hechter also reminds us that the concept is not new:

> Despite its current popularity, the concept of internal colonialism is not a new one. V.I. Lenin was, perhaps, the first writer to use this notion in an empirical investigation of national development. Several years after, Antonio Gramsci discussed the Italian *Mezzogiorno* in similar terms. More recently, Latin American sociologists have made use of this concept to describe the Amerindian regions of their societies. (Hechter 1975: 9)

Havens and Flinn defines internal colonialism as "*structural* [italics added] arrangements typified by a relatively small dominant group which controls the allocation of resources, and a large, subjected mass composed of various groups…blocked from means of social mobility" (1970: 11). The authors further explain:

> It emphasizes that these dualisms exist as a result of the exploitation of the subjected groups. The dominant group is not a source of structural change, but, rather, a preserver of the structure in order to reap the benefits of such a set of social relations. (Havens and Flinn 1970: 11)

Thus, like a colony:

> members of the subject people are given to believe that they can improve their positions through individual effort and merit, providing that they learn the dominant culture, develop the attitudes and values displayed by members of the dominant group, and acquire skills useful to members of the ruling class. (Geschwender 1978: 82)

Carmichael and Hamilton's 1967 work *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation in America* provides another reading of internal colonialism on American minority ethnies engaged political and cultural struggles against ethnocratic hegemony. Moreover, Carmichael and Hamilton's perspective is still relevant today because it continues to explain how even in an ostensibly pluralistic American body politic, the ethnocratic power structure "quickly becomes a monolithic structure on issues of race" and "when faced with demands from black people the multi-faction whites unite and present a common front" (1967: 7). Carmichael and Hamilton's adaptation of internal colonialism along racial lines is prescient because it addresses decades later what scholars currently exploring immigration and its consequences have uncovered: immigration trends perceived as threatening to an overarching construction of union will compel some ethnocratic constituencies to regain control of its imagined universe by proliferating nativist nationalisms (Chavez 2001; Brettell and Hollifield 2000; Sanchez 1997; Cornelius, Martin, and Hollifield 1994; Castles and Miller 1993).

Sassen shares similar perspectives when she describes globalization as a process that includes the denationalization territory, but notes "it is opposite when it comes to people, as is perhaps most sharply illustrated in the rise of anti-immigrant

feeling and the renationalizing of politics" (1998: xxviii). Therefore, internal colonialism could be understood along these criteria: (1) it relegates minority ethnies to subordinated citizens; (2) as well as denying them proportional representation in the political structure; (3) they are constructed as scapegoats during times of crisis; and finally, (4) they are punished through public policy and nativist violence. Ethnocratic discrimination is thus a total consolidated trajectory that affects interactional, cultural, political, and economic lives of minority ethnies.

The asymmetry in US multicultural configuration and its concomitant ethnocratic tendencies are not acknowledged explicitly in the narrative of US multiculturalism. As such, when members of minority ethnies are in turn discriminatory toward members of the ethnocracy, the dynamics are elevated to the same degree as ethnocratic discrimination and termed *reverse racism*. This of course, is a fallacious juxtaposition, since history has shown that ethnocratic antagonisms against minority ethnies, due to former's monopoly on social institutions and domestic policy, exhibit the potential for a greater degree of oppression—a feature that non-ethnocratic discrimination cannot match institutionally, structurally, or in public policy.

Ethnocratic labeling of minority ethnies' antagonisms as reverse *this* or reverse *that* presumes a level playing field where all discriminations are equal. This relativistic orientation toward US multiculturalism overlooks the degree of difference in the logistical capacity for different groups to incite and propagate conflict. Because the ethnocracy controls socio-political institutions, it also controls the reproduction of institutional oppression. During national crises, it controls the retractability of American identity from its minority ethnies. The vast majority of American minorities that have immersed themselves in the American experience cannot claim that their history was ever completely free from negative domestic policies and behavioral hostilities directed against them at one time or another.

Therefore, I find it quite surprising that Sen can view multiple identities in such a relativistic and atmospheric way, overlooking the fact that many peoples, especially those in the United States, will have a primary identity—most often ethnic—that they *choose* to be most important for them as a defensive mechanism. For the ethnocracy, the primary identity metes out punishment. For the minority ethnies, the primary identity functions as a defensive mechanism to address the historical backlash that occurs against them intermittently, yet consistently, in US *demotic* history. Indeed, if there is one defining unresolved domestic cultural issue in US history, it has been the way the ethnocracy has "dealt with" different minority ethnies during crisis.

Although I concede with Sen that there are certainly for many individuals a "variety of motivations…with various affiliations and commitments," the key is how these various motivations and affiliations are intimately linked to choices in the social context that may or may not accommodate them (2006: 21). That is, there needs to be a situational context and temporal dimension in terms of how we view choices. There will be, at times, structural demands and events that curtail choices, prompting the actor to align with imperatives of the collective, frequently based on his or her ethnie, and thus "narrowing" (I prefer to view it as "specifying") his or her menu of identities, likely down to two, or even one affiliation. Such a state exists under crisis. Choices that individuals and groups have "pulsate" in accordance to societal stability. Yet Sen appears to treat rational choice and collectivism as mutually exclusive phenomena: the former is in tandem with the capacity to contain a multiplicity of identities while the latter more resistant to it.

Sen would find the latter collectivism, if in the form of ethnic identification, to be counterproductive, reactionary, isolationist, and because of its monoculturalist expression, potentially conducive to fomenting, at the very least, communal divisiveness and at worst, sectarian violence. In *Development as Freedom* Sen notes that ethnicity is too "narrow" an identity (1999). For Sen, even analytically situating an actor in his or her ethnic collective neglects "the relevance of the person's plural social relations, seriously underestimating the richness of the multiple features of her social situation" (2006: 178).

Like most development scholars Sen appears to still be working within a mainstream development paradigm where the unit of analysis is still the health of the nation-state. Identity politics that emerge from narrow constructions of identity, which Sen considers to be combative with one another, may serve to destabilize the state, the guarantor of a modicum of stability. Stavenhagen suggests that scholars like Sen "prefer to ignore the issue precisely because it may question the premises of the nation-state" (1986: 91). As a result, Sen fails to see how (1) a primary ethnic identity and its concomitant collectivist orientation can be a result of rational choice that (2) engenders ethnic collectivism to function as a political instrument.

Nativism, Historical Identification, and Ethnocracy

To facilitate a discussion regarding the tensions of United States multiculturalism requires us to relegate Sen's overly hopeful views aside and re-invoke three concepts by classic and prescient thinkers on ethnicity and race: John Higham and his examination of *nativism* and Milton M. Gordon and his examination of *historical identification* (Higham 1963; Gordon 1969). Higham and Gordon's analyses are further enhanced when fused with the propositions by contemporary development and political scholars, Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1986, 1984, 1996) and David Brown, both of whom will contribute greatly to our understanding of multicultural asymmetry through their discussion of the concept of ethnocracy. The analytical fusion of aforementioned concepts thus functions as heuristic devices for making visible the precarious nature of multiculturalism sentiments and relations during crises.

Higham's important 1963 work *Strangers in the Land* delineates a unique type of discrimination known as *nativism*. Whereas "racism" refers to the discrimination toward a group due to beliefs about the racial inferiority of that group, nativism refers to the dominant group's discrimination of a minority group based on its "foreign (i.e., 'un-American') connections" as well as its institutions and ideas (1963: 3-4). Whereas racist discrimination includes discrimination of groups perceived to be foreign, it is not exclusively based on this theme since discrimination can be directed to groups already assimilated in American life (via language for example), as in the case of anti-Black discrimination. Nativism, however, is flexible, and is a sentiment that changes as certain minority groups become what Higham describes as "irritants" to shifting "conditions of the day" (1963: 4).

Higham identifies three forms of nativism, further expanded upon by Sanchez (1997). The first was anti-Catholicism, "nurtured in Protestant evangelical activism, which deemed Catholics as incapable of the independent thought characterized as critical to American citizenship" (1997: 1019). The second and third forms, however, are more pertinent to the scope of our discussion: antiradicalism, as exemplified by the notions that foreigners were a threat to the stability of American institutions, and a racial nativism that Anglo-Saxonized the "origins of the American nation" (1997: 1019).

Higham argues that the third form of nativism based on an Anglo-Saxon construction of American identity ideologically crystallized into beliefs regarding what America *should be,* and not what America *should not be*—the latter of which thematically characterized the first two nativist atavisms. Thus, even at a time before race and ethnicity became firmly ensconced in the identity politics generated by the Civil Rights discourse, influential Americans were already celebrating its primordialist pedigree. For example Higham noted that in 1837 Horace Bushnell, a prominent American theologian at the time, warned Americans to protect:

> their noble Saxon blood against the miscellaneous tide of immigration, and in the 1850s there were occasional suggestions that a Celtic flood might swamp America's distinctive Anglo-Saxon traits. But on the whole, racial nationalists proclaimed an unqualified confidence in the American destiny. Sometimes they explicitly averred that the Anglo-Saxon would always retain predominance over all comers. (1963: 5)

Although an Anglo-Saxon theme still continues to characterize post 9/11 nativism, its salience was preceded by different historical atavisms where legacies of anti-Catholic and anti-radical traditions had "opened channels through which a large part of the xenophobia of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries would flow" (1963: 11). From this position, a more incisive assessment of multiculturalism must take place in order to understand why there is such staying power to atavisms of nativism.

Although Higham described the historically nativist tendencies of the American experience as a perennial one, nativist vacillations rise and fall according to how crisis situations intensify national feelings. For Higham, nativism represents periodic outbursts of frustration against the failure of assimilation as well as the dominant group's fear of minorities' "disloyalty" against the dominant culture and its history. Such minority groups are frequently the most recently arrived immigrants who are at the prototypical stage of some form of rudimentary assimilation. The point that needs to be underscored, then, is that national crisis is an important societal mechanism which alters multicultural relationships by shifting it toward what Gordon called *historical identification* (1969: 54).

Gordon's important contribution of historical identification in *Assimilation in American Life* would highlight *when* different cultural groups *did not* assimilate toward a dominant culture. For Gordon, historical identification was but one (and the least frequently occurring) of three forms of social interaction. Gordon argued that members of the same ethnic group within the same class interact most frequently. However, if and when interethnic interaction did occur, it would still occur within the confines of the same social class. This second form of interaction he designated as *participational identification*, which Gordon explained as when "a person of the same social class but of a different ethnic group…shares behavioral similarities but not a sense of peoplehood" (1969: 53). The key characteristic of participational identification is that in times of relative stability, interethnic interaction characterizes a relatively healthy multiculturalism. Structural and cultural separations that do exist between ethnic/racial groups exist in a latent or weakened form.

The line of Gordon's arguments suggests that during times of national crisis in the United States the ethnic/racial group becomes the dominant locus of identification, i.e., the ethnic/racial group is the mechanism which allows for historical identification. The structural separations between cultural groups are intensified and solidified. Historical identification, then, occurs when there is a need for "those of the

same ethnic group but…different social class" to share a "sense of peoplehood" (1969: 53). For Gordon, the sentiment that most compels people to historically identify across class lines is based on the expression "I am ultimately bound up with the fate of these people." The key point, however, is Gordon's stipulation that historical identification represents a function of the "unfolding of past *and* current historic events [italics added]" (1969: 53). Higham would be the scholar who argued that the unfolding of the past and present occurs through a politics of exclusion, nativism.

Three important cues can be derived from a fusion of Higham and Gordon's analyses of multicultural configurations: (1) during times of social stability, nativism is relatively muted; (2) during national crisis, nativism is a form of historical identification that emanates from the ethnic/racial group with the most political capital; (3) nativism affects the degree of assimilation during times of national crisis; and (4) nativism is activated as a form of cultural protectionism during national crisis to sustain the political and cultural hegemony of the dominant ethnic/racial group, the ethnocracy.

During crises in the United States the discourse of nativism validates Americans who possess a White heritage. Indeed, the well-intentioned "I'm an American" PSA is but a poor attempt at multicultural understanding insofar as how servility is implied: the images appear as if ethnic minorities were queued up to articulate a message where the proclamation of "I'm an American" paralleled a means of begging for their identity back. I couldn't help but wonder what stratum of American society they were proclaiming this message to. Who did they have to remind?

Consider that White Americans did not repeat this process six years earlier during the 1995 aftermath of Timothy McVeigh's bombing of Oklahoma City's Murrah Building. The Ad Council was nowhere to be found: White Americans did not have to go on national television to remind all other Americans that they were American. Instead news reports included vitriolic and hostile phone messages left at Muslim organizations, blaming the group for being responsible for the tragedy. Moreover, the public did not seek out European Americans to mete punitive measures against them, i.e., there was not a White equivalent of Balbir Sing Sodhi: the American identity of the former group was never questioned nor retracted. This is the privilege the ethnocrac*y* is accorded in maintaining asymmetrical multicultural production. In this context, it is important for us to always be conscious regarding Leo Chavez's points in *Covering Immigration*, as to whether "America is defined by its racial/national origins—British and northwestern European" or whether America is still "a nation of immigrants that is defined more by the principles that guide it and are learned by immigrants" (2001: 17).

My response to Chavez is that the notion of "America" is still primarily defined by the former, through its ethnocracy, the social stratum with the most social, cultural and financial capital, and the one that controls the institutions of the state. The staying and reproducing power of ethnocracy, defined by Stavenhagen as the "ethnic group…[that] attempts to impose its own particular ethnic interests on the whole of the national society," can thus be analyzed by how it articulates discriminatory and punitive actions against ethnic minorities (1996: 197). Stavenhagen employed the term on a global scale under the auspices of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and was able to make visible consistent patterns of ethnocratic injustices many multicultural states. For Stavenhagen, there exists a need to have ethnic minority-specific development strategies, especially if these communities are experiencing ethnic cleansing (1986, 1996). Unlike Stavenhagen, I deploy the concept of ethnocracy at the level of American civil society and its grass

roots. I attempt to demonstrate that both the televised news media and localized communal hostilities are articulations of American identity that reproduces the privileges and powers of its ethnocracy. As such, the term is an excellent mechanism for viewing the asymmetrical nature of multicultural configurations in the United States.

According to Stavenhagen in *Ethnic Conflicts and the Nation-state* and Brown in *State and Ethnic Politics in South-East Asia*, the asymmetrical nature of multiculturalism is a condition skewed by its ethnocracy. Moreover, Stavenhagen and Brown's views suggest that if one were to observe multicultural societies within the continuum of time, different ethnocracies will emerge. Thus the implication by both authors is that *any* ethnie that becomes ethnocratic will have a greater tendency of meting out abuse. A quintessential manifestation of this dynamic can be seen in Iraq today where the Sunni ethnocracy has been dismantled while the Shia (much more so than the Kurds) are in the process of establishing and inculcating their cultural system upon Iraqi society. Certainly the *de jure* status of Iraqi society is that of a democratic state, but the hyper-power now possessed by the Shia group constitutes them as the *de facto* ethnocracy of the country.

Therefore, the identification of an ethnocracy is not meant to be a political camouflage that indirectly implicates one ethnic or racial group in a static social, cultural and political context. The process aims to make the ethnocracy a heuristic device for understanding asymmetrical multicultural power politics. That is, any cultural group with control of institutions and all forms of social capital will be most prone to displaying and imposing their power. The point to be underscored is that nativist retractability of identity harnesses the *de facto* ethnocratic monopoly of social, cultural and political capital that allows this stratum to be punitive at a historical juncture of its own choosing, i.e., to be able to engage in and reproduce a politics of exclusion against its ethnic minorities when crisis activates xenophobia.

In the context of the United States, ethnocratic power can construct cultural and social obstacles that entrench minorities, especially recent immigrants, at a cultural and linguistic ground zero, making it difficult for them to assimilate (Rumbaut 1997). Chavez suggests that nativism's ability to historically establish assimilative obstacles functions as a method by which the dominant group can attend to how immigrant actors are to be "dealt with." Chavez further argues that nativists "view today's immigrants as a threat to the 'nation,' which is still conceived as a singular, predominantly White American, English-speaking culture," a sentiment which parallels Higham's contentions (2001: 8). Countering this dynamic are ethnocratic accommodations that are relatively more favorable toward groups that emerge from the geographical womb of Europe.

> Minority groups…differ in rate at which they do achieve some degree of acculturation and assimilation. Historically, such national origins groups as the Scandinavians, the Germans, and the Scots and Welsh moved up quickly and with little friction. Other national origins groups, such as the Irish, Italians, Greeks, and Slavs, faced stiff resistance and moved slowly… Racial groups experienced the greatest resistance. They were subjected to greater degrees of prejudice and discrimination and have moved most slowly of all. (Lemay 2005: 37)

The retraction of American identity against non-Euro or non-English-speaking Americans can emanate from the institutions of state, from civil society, or from public interaction. In different contexts, the retraction of American identity is a

convenient consciousness of hate and xenophobia that efficaciously identifies a scapegoat. In the context of post-9/11, it would be in the realm of public interaction as well as through one organ of civil society, the Ad Council, which engaged in or contributed to nativism, respectively. But there are historical precedents to the retractability of American identity from minorities, at two levels.

The first is at the participational level of communal interaction where nativism punishes undesirable Americans, as in the 1982 murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit by two autoworkers who were laid off due to the ascent of the Japanese auto industry, and both of whom who thought Chin was Japanese. Chin had been out with friends celebrating his bachelor's party when he was taunted by Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz. One of the murderers, Ronald Ebens, yelled, "It's because of you little motherfuckers that we're out of work!" Ebens and his stepson Michael Nitz subsequently followed Chin out of his bachelor's party at *Fancy Pants*, a Detroit strip club, and bashed Chin's leg and shortly after, his skull, with a baseball bat. Neither Ebens nor Nitz served one day in prison. Instead each was fined $3,000. A civil rights trial against both parties resulted in the acquittal of Ebens and Nitz. The murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi,[iii] whose tragic story was used to begin this discussion, is another prime example among many. In the context of post-9/11, however, this can readily be seen in the case of anti-Arab American sentiment:

> Consider the well-known example of the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Many in the media and most American believed an Arabic or extremist Muslim group was responsible for the bombing. Only when federal authorities arrested Timothy McVeigh, a Christian Identity believer, did the nation think otherwise… Close to 200 violent incidents against Arabs had been reported. Another incident of scapegoating included TWA Flight 800. It exploded shortly after leaving JFK airport in New York on July 17, 1996. Again, until federal authorities assessed mechanical failure as the cause of the explosion, rumors within the media persisted that some Arab group had committed an act of terrorism. (Lemay 2005: 70)

The next level is institutional: for example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which was passed to protect White workers from Chinese laborers in California and Executive Order 9066 of 1942, the latter of which placed Japanese Americans into concentration camps and "were not required by military necessity" but fostered by "widespread ignorance...as well as fear and anger at Japan" (Kitano 1997: 256); the passage of Proposition 187 by California's conservative stratum which, along with the Illegal Immigration Act and Immigrant Responsibility Act, was directed at the immigration "crisis" constituted mostly by Mexican and Central American immigrants; and the 1998 elimination of California's bilingual education via the passage of proposition 227, affecting the growing first generation Latino community most significantly as well as other immigrant groups. Further legitimating the processes of deculturation, the man behind Propositions 227, Ron Unz, commented that America's cultural success is based on *assimilated* immigrants (Hornblower 1998).

Another example can be seen in the period up until Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941. During this period, there was already Italian American fascist organizations with daily and monthly newspapers that espoused their views, sympathies and connections to Italian fascism. Lemay notes that Italian Americans who joined a Fascist organization took an oath: "In the name of God and Italy, I swear to carry out the orders of my Duce and to serve with all my strength, and if

necessary my blood, the cause of the Fascist Revolution" (Le May 2005: 255). During this same period Nazi ideology has become inculcated in American life in groups such as the Nazi front organization, the American Fellowship Forum.

Two years before Pearl Harbor, American Nazis staged a massive rally at Madison Square Garden in New York City, which 22,000 people attended, the "single most striking display of Nazism in the history of the United States" (Lemay 2005: 261). Yet there was not an equivalent Executive Order 9066 that amassed in the same numbers of explicitly pro-fascist German and Italian Americans, even though evidence against the latter two groups' seditious politics was overwhelmingly more abundant than that which could similarly be incriminated against the Japanese American population.

Conclusion: the Implications and Interpretations of Asymmetrical Multiculturalism

The retractability of "American," which has historically occurred in United States as punitive public policy toward its ethnic minority populations, continues to contribute to multicultural tensions in different incarnations. How have ethnic minority populations generally reacted to past forms of nativisms? In the case of newly arrived Asian and Latino immigrants, Sanchez argues that there is, at the very least, a "newfound ambivalent Americanism" (Sanchez 1997: 1019).

Alejandro Portes argues that second and third generation immigrant groups exhibit *linear ethnicity* and *reactive ethnicity*. Linear ethnicity refers to an immigrant actors' reproduction and "continuation of cultural practices learned in the home country" while reactive ethnicity pertains to a relatively "adversarial stance" by immigrants that react to experiences of being "lumped together, defined in derogatory terms, and subjected to the same discrimination by the host society" (Portes 1995: 256). Portes' preliminary findings, however, are limited to his analyses of immigrant children of Haitian, Mexican, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean and Cuban communities. Nonetheless, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean and Cuban youths, return to "community-mediated opportunities" through ethnic enclave markets and ethnic churches that "consolidate its attachment to the immigrant community and hence pull them away from rapid acculturation" (Portes ibidem: 257). This finding echoes results from a study conducted fifteen years earlier where Portes and his colleagues documented that Cuban and Mexican immigrants' experiences with discrimination had resulted in a more "critical appraisal of the host society" (Portes 1980: 200). As a result of this perception, ethnic identification by the Cuban and Mexican community are credited with the formation of Latino enclave economies in Florida and Texas, respectively.

> We find it particularly noteworthy that the better the immigrants understand the host country, language and the more they endorse its values...the more skeptical they are of the realities of that society and of their actual condition within it. The socialization process suggested by these findings is not one that necessarily leads to integration and consensus building, but one which can produce an increased awareness of an inferior economic and social position and, hence, *a defense of common interests through ethnic solidarity*. (italics added; Portes 1980: 200)

Portes' reactive ethnicity, or what Manuel Castells parallels with his concept of *resistance identity*, are useful concepts that identify the presence of concentrated

sites of cultural awareness and resistance to ethnocratic attempt at deculturation. In his work, the *Power of Identity*, Castells demonstrates that resistance identity can take many forms and is a cross-cultural phenomenon. Indeed, at one historical period or another, oppressed American groups have resisted through political, cultural and radical means. Reactive and resistance identities are counter assimilation tools—even more so during periods of nativism—generated by "actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to those permeating the institutions of society" (Castells 1997: 6).

What I have attempted to demonstrate in the context of post-9/11 United States is that when the ethnocracy exerts its hegemony during times of national crisis, it does so through nativism and the retractability of the American identity from its ethnic minorities, which can have life and death consequences. As such, the notion that all racisms are equal as exemplified in the simplified concept of "reverse discrimination," overlooks this unique asymmetrical pattern of discrimination and the ethnocratic capacity to mete out qualitatively more severe punitive measures against its ethnic minorities.

The retractability of the American identity from ethnic minorities makes visible the problematic anatomy of United States multiculturalism. First, it renders impossible an assumed trajectory of assimilation toward any cultural ideal, a view that defined the assimilation discourse of the 1950s and 1960s. More significantly, in the context of national crisis, we see the pattern of linear ethnicity—initially posited to be one type of cultural articulation by ethnic minorities that resist racism—now exhibited by the ethnocracy itself to resist ethnic minorities. Moreover, historical assessments by Higham, Gordon, Stavenhagen, Brown and Portes suggest that this pattern will continue to define America's multicultural terrain, especially as national crises activate atavisms of nativist backlash and the ethnocratic retractability of minority identity.

Second, a key pattern that can be discerned as a collective coping mechanism by American groups is that of continued autonomizing tendencies by ethnic and racial actors through their ethnic communities. Assimilation, if it occurs at all, will take the form of what Portes termed *segmented assimilation* where those who most closely approximate the ethnocracy phenotypically will be given vertical access to social capital and where ethnic minority groups assimilate with one another horizontally. As such, multiculturalism—if situated in a context intimately tied to experiences and memories of national crisis—will become an even more fragmented social and ideological configuration that continues to be diametrically opposed to pluralistic and relativistic celebrations of ethnic diversity.

During times of national crisis, multiculturalism can become messy, filled with tensions and violence, and entangled with inequalities and the histories of competing groups. The dominant group in society, then, most readily achieves interpretations of a superordinate identity. This conceptualization, however, is highly asymmetrical, as national crisis has made visible in the post 9/11 context. Middle Eastern and/or Muslim Americans, as well as South Asians in America, are now learning what other ethnic minority immigrants have already experienced in their relationship with the ethnocracy: that the American dream is at best, tentative during times of stability and at worst, retractable from them during times of national crisis.

It is hoped that the cues and definitions generated in this discussion will point to how identity groups need to focus not only on how state public policy has historically generated discrimination against ethnic minorities, but also on how various

apparatuses in civil society and at the grass roots level are also complicit in the retraction of identity. My attempts at incorporating different definitions and concepts to view multicultural asymmetry is thus a direct critique on not what previous assumptions of assimilation entailed but what it excluded. Additionally, my preferred reading that American nativism is a historical tendency is based on the hope that readers will not feel that post-9/11 attempts by the ethnocracy at nation-construction is a phenomenon that is "too close" to view fully in a socio-historical perspective. Given the recognition of this situation, it should be remembered that non-state actors belonging to the ethnocracy and their reactions to national crisis could be as inimical to others' way of life as state-sanctioned punitive policies. To neglect this tendency of asymmetrical multiculturalism only continues the reproduction of ethnocratic hegemony.

Endnotes

i I agree with William Safran's sentiments that the ethnic phenomenon contains overwhelming conceptualizations that "range from middle-level to grandiose and from commonsensical to contradictory," see William Safran, "Introduction: the Political Aspects of Language," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol 10: 1-14 (2004), p. 1. Nonetheless my intentions are not to explore the semantics of what Gabbert (2006), p. 88, designates as the *ethnonyms*; instead, I am examining the material consequences of multicultural coexistence. See Wolfgang Gabbert, "Concepts of Ethnicity," *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (April 2006), pp. 85-103.

ii Over 70 percent of Arab Americans are practicing Christians (Lemay 2005: 69).

iii Even a decade prior to September 11, 2001, Margaret Gibson's 1989 ethnographic study of Sikh immigrants in a northern California town revealed that "white residents are extremely hostile toward immigrants who look different and speak a different language…Punjabi teenagers are told they stink…told to go back to India…physically abused by majority students who spit at them, refuse to sit by them in class or in buses, throw food at them or worse; see Margaret A. Gibson, *Accommodation without Assimilation: Sikh Immigrants in an American High School* (Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 289.

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