



Living on the Edge

Everyday Lives of Poor Chicano/Mexicano Families

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The growth of multiculturalism in the U.S. academy has been fueled, in part, by the development of respective fields of study on those originally excluded from the canon—people of color, women, and gays and lesbians. Afro-American Studies, Asian-American Studies, Chicano Studies, Feminist Studies, Queer Studies, Puerto Rican Studies, and their respective variant titles (as well as departments and research institutes on white ethnics) were initiated within the context of the social movements of the late sixties and early seventies. Led by so-called radicals, there was debate over the inattention to social problems—poverty, racism, the Vietnam War, sexism, homophobia—by the social sciences and how academic work seemed out of touch with the profound contradictions existing in society. The impetus for change had come from the Great Society legislation, the civil rights movements—especially in providing access to educational institutions—and the nationalist, counterculture, feminist, and gay movements. Often led by students, faculty, and staff who engaged in strikes, fasts, and demonstrations demanding new programs, we in Ethnic Studies embarked on a concerted effort to make intellectual work “relevant,” to analyze the pressing problems in our communities. The generation of knowledge itself—the construction of paradigms, the very research questions asked, and by whom—were all seen as reflections of power and privilege.¹

Once established as academic programs or departments, the initial work of scholars working within Ethnic Studies often was to critique the then dominant theories, which, as was fashionable at the time, looked for internal cultural explanations of the social problems experienced by Chicanos.² Highly influenced by Marxism, early critics made challenges to structural functionalism and its variant, cultural determinism, with their ahistorical disregard for the structural bases of the oppression of people of color.³ Within Chicano Studies, many of us saw our work as asserting the importance of race in theorizing about the Chicano experience—which meant framing and contextualizing the structural basis of racial inequality. With this project at hand, a generation of scholars began looking at history to understand how contemporary patterns of institutional racism and sexism were set in motion in historically specific ways.⁴

Now, in the early nineties, as the numbers of homeless and people experiencing poverty increase in the wake of the Reagan-Bush economic policies, the field of poverty studies has burgeoned once again. As during previous times when cultural analyses held sway, there are theoretical approaches to studying poverty that hold up the importance of internal cultural features of the poor. In studies that have been largely outside of Ethnic Studies discourse and placed within mainstream academic venues, the culture of the poor—particularly their values and behaviors—is being emphasized over structure and power. I will argue that such an approach limits our understanding of those currently living in poverty, particularly women and immigrants from Latin America.

Poverty Studies in the Nineties

Do “strong family values” determine how Mexicans adapt to living in poverty? Some researchers argue that in contrast to poor Blacks, Mexicans are more “stable” because poor Mexicans are more likely to live in nuclear families; because teenage pregnancy is a source of opprobrium, so if girls get pregnant, young men are pressured to marry and form nuclear households; and because extended family ties are important and, for cultural reasons, the main source of support for poor people.

Richard Taub argues that poor Mexicans in Chicago have very strong values about work, which include appreciating those who have two jobs, having women do industrial homework to increase their income or make crafts or garments at home to sell for extra income, and realizing that for women, hard work includes being responsible for housework after a day on the job.

Moreover, Mexicans (presumably immigrants, although he does not specify) expect men to be breadwinners, but also realize that men will be tired and often drink after work, and may engage in extramarital affairs.⁵ The African Americans that he interviewed, on the other hand, specify that they resent being asked to perform work when it's not part of their job description, are critical of exploitative working conditions, and angry about the lack of promotions. Clearly, Taub is comparing two populations in different structural positions (immigrants and a subordinated racial group) and arguing that they have different cultural values. They may indeed have divergent value systems, but that can only be ascertained if they are asked the same questions, which does not seem to have been done. Part of Taub's evidence is that within a four-block area within a Mexican barrio in Chicago where he did ethnographic research, there were fifteen bridal shops, bakeries, caterers, and florists who specialized in weddings, but there is no such proliferation in Black neighborhoods. When he interviewed people, they agreed that a couple *should* get married when the woman gets pregnant.⁶ With this data, Taub concludes that Mexican Americans have an intense commitment to the marital bond and to work, whereas Blacks do not, presumably because of cultural differences between the two populations. The implicit conclusion is that if Blacks just had different attitudes, they would have better lives.

Taub's and others' work falls within the dominant theoretical approach about the "urban underclass" that has become prominent in the social sciences. The term itself was coined by journalists and there is debate about who constitutes the underclass.⁷ Probably the most influential formulation is that of William J. Wilson, a self-avowed liberal who aims to counteract conservative formulations that emphasize individual attributes within a culture of poverty.⁸ Wilson focuses on the poor located in urban ghettos, who, because of severe racial segregation, are predominantly Black. He argues that because of restructuring in the economy with plant closures and deindustrialization in rust belt cities, Black men in the inner cities face chronic joblessness. With the departure of industry from major cities and the rise of the service sector, the remaining jobs provide low pay and few possibilities for promotion. Without the ability to support their families, fewer couples get married when women become pregnant. Accompanying the movement of capital out of the inner city came the flight of the Black middle class to the suburbs, followed by the exodus of stable working-class Blacks. Closely associated with the remaining socially isolated, impoverished neighborhoods are "concentration effects," where the sense of community is replaced by social disorganization. Those who remain in the inner city form an urban "un-

derclass," made up of mainly poor single mothers—particularly teenage mothers—who rear children isolated from mainstream norms and behavior, and unemployed men.

Although Wilson claims he "draw[s] attention to the structural cleavage separating ghetto residents from other members of society and to the severe constraints and limited opportunities that shape their daily lives,"⁹ he and other underclass theorists focus on the behavior and deduced values of the poor.¹⁰ Thus, to understand high Black male unemployment, researchers do not interview employers about their perceptions of Black men, but unemployed men themselves, who then get cast as young men not developing a strong "work ethic" and losing their sense of masculine "honor"—valor, respect, appearance, and independence—which is rooted in Southern aristocratic tradition.¹¹ Rather than interrogating a firm's relocation policies about uprooting work sites or suburban tax benefits for relocating factories out of rust belt cities into the sun belt (or abroad), the inner cities are portrayed as bleak social spaces, where men "hang out" on the streets, engage in drug use to numb their feelings of powerlessness, and resort to crime to provide some income. Without discussion of the cutbacks in funding for agencies providing birth control and the controversy over parental consent for abortions for teenagers, adolescent females are presented as objectified and as being duped into sex with young men and then ending up on welfare.¹² Instead of documenting those programs that aim to involve ghetto parents in schools or offer innovative curricula, children are seen as having few "positive role models" with the departure of bourgeois Blacks. The influence of grassroots or community-based organizations—which address issues ranging from stopping gang violence to providing education regarding sexually transmitted diseases—is left unrecognized, without analysis of these groups' abilities to affect local policies or provide resources for the poor. Members of the urban underclass are portrayed as having lost all human agency or ability to contest the problematic features of poor neighborhoods, and similar dysfunctional attributes of wealthy or middle-class neighborhoods (such as drug use or the rise of white teenage pregnancies) are ignored, implying that social problems are exclusive to ghettos.

Embedded in the underclass approach are moral judgments about women's sexuality and men's work ethics. "Shiftless" men and "welfare queens," the putative models of individuals who are out of control, underlie much of the discussion of "family values" in relation to poverty. This view sees socialization, particularly the inculcation of the work ethic and of values about controlling one's sexuality, as taking place within families (or occasionally

churches), where women and men are taught "proper" behavior and encouraged to marry.¹³ The assumption is that if women would just control their sexuality, they would not be in the predicament of having illegitimate children and being pushed into dependency on the state. Moreover, this view assumes that if men would only hustle for stable jobs and form conventional households of nuclear families, they would not fall into poverty.

The ideological nature of this argument can be seen in the conservative media harangues that use underclass imagery to denounce the poor. In almost the same breath, media pundits bemoan the culture of poverty among welfare recipients and worry whether the "brown hordes" of Mexican and Central American immigrants, with their high fertility rates, will soon deplete American jobs and social services.¹⁴ Recurrent pummeling of the immigrant poor also comes from state officials. California governor Pete Wilson's attacks on immigrants and welfare cheats, and the 1994 California initiative that would "Save Our State" from immigrant inundation, are part of a long history of blaming immigrants for the structural dislocations that plague this country. The cultural trope "Just say no" has taken on a political meaning far beyond Nancy Reagan's original slogan against drug use, as Blacks and Latinos are advised to change their behavior.¹⁵ The influence of the media on people's behavior can be seen in the debate between Vice President Dan Quayle and the fictional television character Murphy Brown. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that about three hundred thousand births were unreported, apparently the result of parents lying to surveyors and either not admitting they had a child or claiming they were married when they were not. It took months before the Census Bureau was able to verify this underreporting through other sources, and the bureau attributes this "glitch" to the Quayle-Brown debate.¹⁶

The focus on value orientations and the behavior of the poor is problematic in several respects. The most obvious is that for these underclass theorists, poverty gets collapsed into family structure. They ignore the high number of families that include at least one employed adult, the so-called working poor. In 1991, 28 percent of Latino families, 22 percent of white families, and 12 percent of Black families below the poverty level had at least one adult who worked full-time during the whole year.¹⁷ Clearly, finding the right mate will not preclude being poor. Focusing on family values ignores the fact that not all poor people engage in dysfunctional behavior or have weak family values.¹⁸

Moreover, socialization about marriage and sex also takes place in peer groups, in schools, and, especially for youths living in poverty, "on the

streets,"¹⁹ and lack of access to family planning may have more impact regarding bearing children out of wedlock than do women's desires. The assumption that pregnant teenagers would be better off within the bounds of marriage is belied by the high divorce and separation rates of young couples and by domestic violence rates that increase when men feel pressured through job loss or the increase of responsibilities beyond their means to meet them. This view also ignores the relationships that poor unwed fathers do have with their children, including the labor and other resources provided by his kin,²⁰ and it ignores the women who, despite strong family values, are abandoned by men who migrate in search of work.

The portrayal of inner city men is problematic, ignoring the intense activities for "getting paid," which range from finding legitimate employment to eventually moving into real jobs after brief experiences with street crime in neighborhoods where opportunities are few.²¹

This perspective on families of the poor also assumes that single women with children are heterosexual and would want to marry men, when some single mothers prefer to have sexual relationships and rear children with other women. It is difficult to estimate the number of women who are in these circumstances. A significant number of lesbians are experiencing their own "baby boom" and should be considered in the discussion of single parents. It is now clear that lesbian mothers often experience poverty, and must construct their own support systems and communities,²² and some autobiographical writings illustrate the social isolation of lesbians from their extended families.²³ Like their heterosexual counterparts, lesbian single parents will suffer from "welfare reform" that is based on assumptions that the real problem is women's lack of conformity with "family values" and then pushes them off social programs and into the nexus of support networks.

With its jump cut to values and behaviors of the poor, the underclass perspective replicates the flawed "culture of poverty" argument of previous eras.²⁴ Yet the underclass framework has set the terms of debate in studies on Chicanos and Latinos living in poverty. Wilson himself suggested that "Hispanics" would show a steady increase in joblessness, crime, teenage pregnancies, female-headed families, and welfare dependency that characterize the underclass, while his followers simply lump Blacks and "Hispanics" together.²⁵ They ignore the scholars who show that the demographic profile of poor Chicanos is varied and does not match that of the "underclass," even those who live in the most poverty-stricken neighborhoods.²⁶ More important, an underclass perspective ignores the regional political-economic con-

ditions that produce poverty. Wilson apparently has disavowed the term "underclass," yet his conservative followers use the politically charged image of welfare cheats to argue for policies that would push women into the labor force or training programs with limited child care to support their children before they are left without social benefits, and denigrates those who resist this path. Thus it becomes critical for us to provide alternatives to the "poverty of discourse about poverty."²⁷

Latinos in Poverty

Indeed, Latinos have high and growing poverty rates. In California, approximately 22 percent of Latino families lived in poverty in 1992, compared to 22 percent of Blacks, 18 percent of Asians, and 7 percent of Anglo families.²⁸ Like their counterparts in different racial categories, households of Latina single mothers and their children are more likely to be poor.²⁹ Pérez and Martínez state that "the relationship between gender and poverty is critical to the discussion of Latino poverty, because almost one-half of all Hispanic poor families (45.7%) are maintained by a woman."³⁰ It behooves us to pay attention to the dynamics—economic, political, or cultural—that push increasing numbers of Latinas into single parenthood and that make supporting their children very difficult.

Female-headed households are a critical component of Latino poverty, but they are only one part of the story. When Latino men and women are included in the same national sample, we find consistent differences, with women generally having higher incidences of poverty, lower incomes, lower-paying jobs, higher unemployment rates, and higher incidences of domestic violence, all of which push them into dire living conditions.³¹ In their random survey of Latinos in California, Hayes-Bautista and his colleagues found that the poverty rates among a sample of predominantly immigrants remained significant even by those of the third generation born in the United States, and that women consistently had higher poverty rates than men within each generation.³² Clearly, large numbers of Latinos do not escape the bottom of the social structure and find the American dream by moving out of poverty.

Table 1. Latino poverty rates by generation and gender

	First generation		Second generation		Third generation	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Poverty rate	34%	43%	27%	36%	20%	35%

Perhaps because of assumptions that Mexicans are culturally distinct, researchers, in their rush to focus on family values, often ignore the structural changes that Wilson points out. Some researchers of the Chicano/Latino population have used the logic of the underclass model to argue its inverse—that poor Latinos have "good" values and behavior. Their evidence for this conclusion is often inferences made from people's statements on surveys. For example, Testa and Krogh found that Mexicans had strong cultural norms against premarital sexual relations and that they initiated sex later than Blacks; therefore Mexicans' "higher levels of conventional marriage compared to blacks would appear to be related to slightly longer delays in the initiation of sexual activity."³³ But, of course, having sex and getting married are entirely different things.

Others find sociodemographic patterns and ask questions about family values, then leap to the conclusion that values determine behavior. Hayes-Bautista and his colleagues conducted a large random survey of Latinos in California. They found that Latino males have high labor force participation rates, and, despite consistently high unemployment rates, do not leave the labor force as "discouraged workers." Compared to Blacks and whites, Latinos receive the lowest amount of cash derived from income-transfer programs such as Social Security, welfare, and unemployment and other social programs.³⁴ Latinos in their sample are more likely to form nuclear households than Anglos, Blacks, or Asians.³⁵ Hayes-Bautista and his colleagues conclude that since Latinos have large families, they are "quite committed to fulfilling their parental roles and assuming familial obligations," and when Latinos agreed that extended kin are important, they were seen as "imbued with rich family values."³⁶

These findings are very useful, but their interpretations are ahistorical and provide no context for making sense of their data.³⁷ They ignore the fact that undocumented immigrants are not eligible for welfare (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), food stamps, Social Security, unemployment compensation, or supplemental security income, despite their paying state and federal income taxes and state sales taxes.³⁸ Many immigrants avoid social services because they can jeopardize their amnesty status; they fear that applying for benefits will lead to deportation.³⁹ Moreover, Latinos have had a disproportionately higher increase in the percentage of families headed by women during the 1980s.⁴⁰ Hayes-Bautista and his colleagues also ignore the forces that created a decline of nuclear families in all groups over the past decades (e.g., Asians had immigration restrictions on women, so nuclear households have been impossible for some). They also do not take into con-

sideration the structural changes occurring in California, including the flight of manufacturing in historically Black neighborhoods, or employers' discrimination against Blacks and Asians, which may have more to do with higher Latino employment than their own values.⁴¹ In their zeal to refute the underclass model for Latinos, these researchers imply that Blacks or other groups do not have strong family values or a work ethic, and, ironically, they ultimately reinforce the model itself.

It is important to note that the high official rate of intact nuclear families among Mexicans masks the fluidity of family life and can be misleading. Indeed, recent ethnographic research shows that the "intact" nuclear family among Mexican immigrants can range from fictitious common-law marriages where "husbands" are in name only and women are very independent, often providing the sole economic support for the household, to cases where the women occasionally reside in Mexico, or where they cannot leave abusive marriages.⁴² Other "intact" Mexican families include farmworker women who, because of employment discrimination in the United States and indigenous cultural norms rooted in Mexico, only migrate with male sponsorship and thus are pressured into remaining with their spouses.⁴³

Nuclear families also include undocumented immigrant women and female "conditional residents"—those allowed to remain in the United States provided they stay wedded to their citizen or legal permanent resident spouses—who are at particular risk for spousal abuse once they settle in the United States.⁴⁴ These women sometimes find themselves married to men who use the threat of deportation as a weapon in the abuse of their wives. These men experience the conditions that often push men to abuse—high unemployment, layoffs, or low income, exacerbated by alcohol or drug use—and stresses associated with migration itself, such as anxiety about family members left at home, thefts from "old-timers" in new locales, or crowded living conditions.⁴⁵ The number of immigrant women coerced into remaining with abusive spouses is difficult to estimate, but various reports suggest that the population of abused immigrant women is disproportionately large. Data from a random sample survey of undocumented Latinas in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area indicates that 60 percent report that they are battered by their spouses; agencies that provide resources to victims of domestic violence report that extremely high percentages of their clients are conditional residents.⁴⁶ The women forming this "hidden population," as it is being labeled, are often economically, linguistically, and psychologically dependent on their spouses. Like their fellow battered women

who are citizens, women conditional residents are likely to experience a severe decline in resources if they leave their batterer spouses.⁴⁷ Furthermore, immigrant women migrate from Latin American countries not only to flee economic misery and political repression, but to *escape* domestic violence, sexual assault, or incest, often at the hands of their own partners or relatives.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, "strong family values" are often missing from Latino families as well.

The idea that Latinos have "good, stable nuclear families" says more about the discourse about poverty than about the conditions in the United States and Latin America under which migrants live. Moreover, it is not simply the type of data that is crucial. Some critics suggest that the shortcomings of underclass theory stem in part from the "difficulties inherent in using census data to measure a complex social reality."⁴⁹ As we have seen, underclass theory can be supported with ethnographic, census, or survey data. We could dismiss this as being faulty research, but there is an underlying ideological message: Mexicans are becoming the new "model minority," and our "good values" are being pitted against Blacks and others in poverty.⁵⁰ This kind of thinking is insidious and must be challenged.

We must be careful not to cast our analyses as value judgments (in this case positive ones), for this puts us in an analytic black hole: Mexicans' or Latinos' "rich" values are derived from their culture—and we are back full circle to cultural determinism. This perspective begs the question: if Latinos have such upstanding values and "stable" families, why are they disproportionately poor even by the third generation? Moreover, the policy implications of this thinking are benign neglect—just leave them alone because they're good citizens, or keep those policies that support positive values. What about those poor Latinos and Latinas who do use welfare and other social services? Do we condemn them as having dysfunctional values and unstable families? What about those who need social services but avoid applying because of language barriers or their fear of being deported?

Clearly we need an alternative perspective, one that analyzes the history of placement of groups in the local political economy, that provides some context for understanding differences between immigrants and U.S.-born Latinos, Asians, and Blacks who generally are concentrated in low-wage jobs, have few benefits or opportunities for occupational mobility, and in some cases are being displaced by technology or runaway shops. We need comparative historical analyses of the processes that concentrate certain populations in or push them out of particular sectors of the economy.

Regional Analyses

The current economic situation is one of structural change, in which fragmentation of the labor process, global integration of production sites and markets, and permanent layoffs of white- and blue-collar workers in the United States are part of the strategies for firms to remain competitive. The effects of these changes in late-capitalist enterprises, however, have been different for particular racial populations or regions. Mercer L. Sullivan states, "Despite the fact that economic restructuring has occurred nationally, its effects have not been uniform. Both African Americans and Latino Americans have suffered disproportionately from economic restructuring, but there are significant differences among minority communities in how they have been affected and how they have responded."⁵¹

To understand these processes, we must move to perspectives that capture the heterogeneity of Latinos, while noting common structural experiences. Each Latino group has its own history in different regions of the country, where particular structural processes—conquest and subordination, waves of migration and settlement, the specific nature of industrialization and urbanization, and discrimination toward racialized others—have produced particular configurations of segregation and economic vulnerability as lived experience. This segregation can be seen in Latino participation in regional labor markets, in settlement and housing patterns, in migrant streams as people move in search of work and community, and in particular groups' participation in regional or local politics. The case studies in Moore and Pinderhughes, Morales and Bonilla, and others demonstrate that the causes of Latino marginality in one sector of the economy may not be replicated in other regions.⁵²

Once we focus on regions, I believe that we need to socially locate people, that is, examine groups' social makeup, including their entrance into the United States. Obviously, Cubans who were welcomed as political refugees into an ethnic enclave with established small-business owners had a different experience than undocumented Mexican migrant laborers in the same region.⁵³ For each region we need to understand whether there are significant numbers of citizens versus undocumented immigrants, note the gender composition and labor market opportunities of migrants and settlers, and pay attention to salient features of race relations, including discrimination against those with distinct racial features, and how their meaning changes over time. We should take note of other bases of internal differentiation, including generation, age, language use, or sexual orientation.⁵⁴ Juan Vicente

Palerm argues, for example, that immigrant farmworkers in California are increasingly diverse, and over the decade of the 1980s through the early 1990s, at least five types developed: "old, middle, new, recent," and a collection of specialized workers who follow specific crops (e.g., *los lechugueros*), who are regular sojourners from Mexico.⁵⁵ Examining the experiences of subcategories of Latinos should illuminate how some people are restricted to marginal sectors of the economy while others can experience some mobility in the labor market.

Moreover, looking at fine-scaled internal differences leads to more nuanced understandings of how Latinos' experiences reshape structural processes. For example, even among the most economically vulnerable immigrants there are differences based on time of migration. Immigrants who arrived a decade ago find different labor market opportunities than do more recent immigrants.⁵⁶ Mexican immigrants often establish "niches" within particular industries or occupations (say, citrus picking or as busboys) that contrast with American-born Mexican Americans, and may preclude the entrance of succeeding cohorts of Mexican immigrants.⁵⁷ Leslie Salzinger shows how Central American women immigrants, through the formation of work cooperatives that help "professionalize" domestic work, influence the creation of an upper tier of the housekeepers' labor market with better pay and working conditions.⁵⁸ Thus it is important to examine in detail how immigrants, U.S.-born Chicanos, and other Latinos are integrated into a regional economy, and the implications for their being forced into poverty. Paying attention to the bases of the heterogeneity of Latinos, while grounding this in structural changes, will provide a historicized analysis.

Besides regional analyses with attention to gender differences, households should be an important unit of analysis for understanding Latinos living in poverty. Even though Latinos have varied placement in labor markets, racial differences, different migration histories, and so on, they have similar patterns of using extended kin as sources of social support—for finding resources such as jobs, housing, training, or day care and for getting emotional support. Thus it is important to understand how Latino households are structured, how household structure changes in concert with different economic circumstances, whether households function in a similar manner in all Latino groups, and whether particular types of households are more vulnerable to being poor. Rather than posing a polarized analysis showing that Blacks are different from Latinos, I suggest that we examine particular regions to understand whether and how Latinos and Blacks have had different experiences of segregation (in housing and in the labor market), discrimina-

tion, and poverty. Then we can move on to an examination of how these structural forces are experienced in daily life and how the participants perceive their circumstances and manage the daily travail of being poor.

Poor Chicano and Mexicano Households

Carlos G. Vélez-Ibañez and James B. Greenberg's work on "binational" Mexican families provides a good point of departure for understanding intra-familial dynamics within poverty-stricken Chicano populations and how these families adapt to poverty.⁵⁹ They find that Mexicans living in conditions of poverty form "household clusters," networks of households that revolve around a nuclear family of grandparents or another key relative, with other kin and their households forming "peripheral" households. These household clusters contain "funds of knowledge," ranging from skills related to car repair to how to heal illnesses without resorting to doctors to information about dealing with social services. These funds of knowledge, transmitted through "thick" social relations with kin, enable Mexicans to share the burden and cope with poverty. Key features of household clusters include the exchange of goods and services, and ritual celebrations, where knowledge is shared. Vélez-Ibañez and Greenberg argue that the economic and political context of the border facilitates the establishment of these households, and in the case of Tucson, Mexican households span the U.S.-Mexico border. Their work confirms others' findings that Chicanos are "familistic," that is, that they place a high value on living close to relatives (more so than Anglos), that kin are an important source of resources and social exchange, that Chicanos often migrate with the help of kin, and that they believe extended family members are the best source of emotional support.⁶⁰

Palerm also argues that a significant portion (13 percent) of his sample of Mexican farmworker families constitutes "binational" families—those who maintain occupied homes on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border:

Families settled on the U.S. side of the border continue to provide a bridgehead for both new immigrants and seasonal migrants from Mexico. In fact, a large proportion of the seasonal migrants . . . were temporarily contained within the household structure of U.S.-settled families. Settled family members, moreover, continue to return to their home communities in Mexico, not only to visit kin and friends, but also to oversee farms and businesses owned there. Wage remittances to Mexico continue to characterize the behavior of the California-based farm workers; they not only assist and support family members living in Mexico, but also pay for home and farm improvements and invest in local businesses.⁶¹

These families often find that their kin networks in Mexico can provide greater emotional and material support than those in the United States, especially for women.⁶²

How do Mexican immigrant or binational households differ from those that include U.S.-born Mexican Americans? Hurtado and her colleagues found that there are important differences between first-generation immigrants (born in Mexico) and second-generation (born in the United States but parents born in Mexico) and third-generation (born in the United States and parents born in the United States) Chicanos.⁶³ Those from the first generation are more likely to value living close to relatives than those of the second or third generation. Keefe and Padilla, on the other hand, find that in the Santa Barbara region this familistic behavior *increases* by the third generation because Chicanos have more relatives living in the area than Mexicans of the first generation.⁶⁴ Clearly, the role of extended kin in providing support to low-income Chicanos and Mexicanos is important, but needs further analysis.

Poverty in Albuquerque

Phillip B. Gonzáles argues that the historical causes of poverty in Albuquerque stem from the incorporation of rural Hispano villages, whose inhabitants were made vulnerable to labor market restructuring in a peripheral economy. Albuquerque went through four major restructuring phases beginning in the late nineteenth century: the city shifted from an obscure frontier outpost to the state's commercial center with the construction of the railroad; World War II fueled the development of regional air bases and weapons development and atomic research facilities, which became major employers; the Cold War saw the expansion of military-related manufacturing; and, beginning in the late sixties, there was an expansion of manufacturing primarily based on electronics and garment industries. During each of these phases, the Mexican-American population experienced neighborhood poverty in different ways. In the first phase, rural villages with their traditional cooperative labor practices were incorporated into the city of Albuquerque. Between 1941 and 1960, Mexican Americans from other southwestern states and from Mexico settled in the village areas. Beginning in the 1960s, the Mexican-American population continued to disperse throughout the city, even into neighborhoods long reserved for whites. Albuquerque was never a large settlement area for Mexican immigrants, primarily because of the lack of major industry. Only during the late 1980s did a significant

number of Mexican immigrants begin to settle in Chicano barrios. Gonzáles argues that during each historical period, in different neighborhoods of the city, restructuring meant different experiences of poverty for Mexican Americans.⁶⁵

In researching Albuquerque's electronics and apparel industrialization, my colleagues and I found that the location of production facilities within a primarily service economy and the recession of the early 1980s set up contradictory forces.⁶⁶ Relying on a gender division of labor already in place throughout the wage and skill hierarchy of the electronics and apparel industries worldwide, managers hired women to fill the large number of assembly jobs that were created as part of each new plant's production process. Mainly because managers of Albuquerque's electronics and apparel factories employed women who had high-school education or even some vocational training from the local community college, immigrant women did not form a large part of the labor force. Mexican-American women made up a greater proportion of the high-school-educated labor force in Albuquerque, and were recruited to these jobs in higher numbers than Anglo, Black, or Indian women. In a deliberately antiunion strategy, managers of these factories paid higher than minimum wages—our informants averaged between five and six dollars an hour—and provided good benefits that included medical insurance, maternity leaves, paid holidays, and, in some cases, profit sharing. We found that women's work in these factories brought important changes in family life as women became coproviders, mainstay providers, or, in the case of single parents, sole economic providers for their families.⁶⁷

At the same time that women were recruited to electronics and apparel jobs in Albuquerque, jobs in mining, the oil industry, construction, and transportation were declining or subject to seasonal layoff. Thus men were increasingly economically vulnerable as unemployment rose during 1982 and 1983, and Hispanic men had higher unemployment rates than white men. Thus Hispana women had moved a step up within the working class, while sometimes their own spouses had skidded down. Those families fortunate enough to have women working in electronics or apparel industries, then, were low-income, since they relied on women's wages for family support. Yet these families were above the poverty level, and, with the women's excellent job benefits (particularly medical insurance), experienced some economic stability.

There are indications that the phenomenon of increased male dislocation in the economy may now be more widespread than in the 1982–83 re-

cession when we did our research. In one recent survey of national unemployment rates, Latino males had higher rates than females.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, the restructuring of the economy often means that industries expand in one area of the globe only to contract in another. These gendered dynamics, where women are able to secure stable industrial jobs (albeit low-paying) while men are subject to high unemployment, are found along both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.⁶⁹

I will discuss the experiences of one woman from our Albuquerque study who was the exception to the rule, in the sense that she was the only female Mexican immigrant we interviewed. Upon migrating to Albuquerque, Marta Astorga was able to secure a job in an apparel factory. Her experiences illustrate the links between poverty and political economy, the importance of kin as support networks, the perceived differences between Mexican immigrants and Chicanos, and the dangers of jumping to conclusions about cultural values.

The Case Study

A mestiza born in Durango, Mexico, forty-one-year-old Marta Astorga was a single head of family with three children, ages ten, eight, and six. Like so many other unskilled men in Albuquerque's economy, her husband could not find steady employment until he moved to another city. Marta was a sewing operator at a large nonunion factory in Albuquerque that was highly segregated by race/ethnicity and gender. She estimated that 97 percent of her coworkers were women, and the majority were Chicanas. Because of Reagan's recession, Marta had been working short weeks, sometimes able to get only twelve hours of work a week to support her family. Moreover, she claimed that there was discrimination, so that operators who were the "favorites" of the supervisor—that is, Mexican-American women—would get the better jobs.

Five months before our interview, Marta was forced out of the labor force because of her many problems at work: her machine kept breaking, causing her to lose wages and slow up the production line for others; her eyes became inflamed from the dust and chemicals, which further slowed her pace; and her supervisor was not supportive. After several written warnings, Marta was pressured to quit. She believed that if she had spoken English well, she might have been able to keep her job. Hesitantly, she observed: "Lots of times they don't give the heavier work to the Chicanas because they know that the Chicanas will cry and they don't want to do the heavier work."

And the Mexicans that don't understand much, so as not to argue and lose time, do not protest against it as much." She did not state the obvious—that immigrants would be more vulnerable in a depressed labor market, so they did not contest the discrimination. Marta had not adjusted to her new unemployed status and called herself "a housewife, I think." She seemed somewhat disconcerted when describing her circumstances, almost as if she couldn't believe how things had become so bad.

Marta's family is the product of the economic restructuring and demographic changes of the 1980s. She and eventually many of her extended kin migrated to Albuquerque from Juárez, Mexico, in search of work, to "better" themselves. Initially Marta claimed she had immigrated with a visa and that she felt free to occasionally visit her mother, four siblings, and their families on the other side of the border. Yet when I tried to ask about the circumstances of her immigration, she became tense and did not want to discuss it in detail, implying that she might have come "without papers" or that her visa had lapsed. She believed that her factory job was good because it had provided health benefits and, when working full-time, enough wages to support her children and to bring out a sister, who then provided day care while Marta worked.

After losing her factory job, Marta's search for another job was unsuccessful in Albuquerque's depressed labor market. To support her three children, she was working one or two days a week cleaning house for a wealthy Anglo family, earning wages of \$30–\$60. Her ex-spouse sent money about four times a year, with each payment averaging about \$150. Marta survived by budgeting her income scrupulously, making clothes for her children and some for herself. And, she observed, "We eat lots of beans." She was behind on her rent, had no insurance of any kind, and was struggling to pay off her medical and dental bills. She rented a tiny house on the edge of town from her employers, who did not press her for the back rent.

Marta's ex-spouse would return for occasional visits of a few days or a few months. Marta knew that he was living with another woman in a nearby state and had "several families," but did not know his address or how many children he had. She was very angry with him but made it a point to say she was not separated or divorced. Marta spoke wistfully of the early days of their marriage, when she had been happy, and would not represent herself as a single woman.

Marta epitomized traditional family values: she believed that men should support the family, that men should earn more than women, that women should stay home with the children when they are little, and that she missed

some of the best experiences of her children's early development because she was away from them while working. She had contested this traditional configuration somewhat. When she was married, Marta performed a double day—doing housework and child care after her long day of wage work—and she believed that this was an "injustice." Her contestation, however, had remained repressed. Unlike other single parents in our study who had children to support, Marta, without a steady job, was not ready to denounce her children's father.

Marta did not receive welfare or even food stamps, nor, because she had "quit," any unemployment benefits. Besides her meager wages from domestic work, Marta relied on seven siblings living in Albuquerque who provided occasional gifts of food or clothing for the children. Her kin, especially her sisters and sisters-in-law, also provided emotional support and were the source of weekend socializing and entertainment, as well as frequent phone calls.

Despite her bleak situation, Marta was no demoralized victim. She hoped to return to the regular labor market for the higher wages and medical benefits it offered and realized that working boosted her self-esteem: "Since I started working, that's when I found out that I can be useful and that I can fend for my own self. That I shouldn't let myself be mistreated by other persons, that I should feel worthwhile for my own self. I feel more confident, and I have learned so much. It was so hard, but I learned." She found the hardest part of her life "being alone," raising her children and trying to make ends meet without a spouse. Ever practical, Marta looked blank when I asked what the government could do to help families like hers. She apparently did not see government aid as an option for her because of her legal status. Her former company, however, was another story: "They [the managers] could switch all the people who have been working there for too many years to jobs that are not as hard, especially for older people. They aren't useless. It's simply that they've been on the job for too long. But they're tired now. It's impossible to keep on going so much, especially in a place like that. It's very hard." Nevertheless, Marta hoped to leave the informal sector and was looking for another factory job because of the higher pay: "I have to keep looking for work."

Marta Astorga indeed lived on the edge and struggled to make ends meet with very few resources. The culture of her daily life was one of isolation and fear of freely seeking institutional support because of language barriers and her unclear legal status. Although she did not live in a binational household herself, she was integrated into a household cluster and maintained close

contact with kin in Mexico who apparently did. Marta was managing with the help of emotional support from and material exchange with her kin, who spanned both sides of the border. Despite her strong family values, she was unable to find a good job that would bring her household out of poverty.

Conclusion

Marta Astorga's life is similar to the lives of thousands of women on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border who struggle to support their children with very few labor market options. These women endure the transcultural process of men leaving and establishing new households when they cannot find work; they must create nurturing social relations for themselves and their children. In many ways, Marta's life is the product of economic restructuring and demographic changes that Wilson deems as important. Like thousands of other immigrant women, she had migrated north in search of work, then experienced economic dislocation when her spouse could not find a job in the secondary labor market and she lost her own job in recessionary conditions. The informal economy, with its extremely low pay and lack of benefits, except for those provided through the paternalism of her employers, was her only recourse. Marta is also like the respondents in Hayes-Bautista's survey—someone who has "strong family values," avoids social services, and makes sure that her children are educated. Yet she is neither welfare queen nor model minority. Marta's "traditional values" include deference to her wealthy Anglo benefactors, repression of her anger toward her ex-spouse, and reliance on self and kin rather than on institutional support, such as job-training opportunities, or even food stamps. With these kinds of material changes, Marta could have supported her children and perhaps even eventually fulfilled her desire for a nuclear family by reuniting with her spouse on the basis of her steady employment.

In the current debate over the causes of poverty and the "underclass," there is no public policy advocate for Marta Astorga and other immigrant families in similar circumstances.⁷⁰ Moreover, in their rush to denigrate the values and behaviors of female single parents, underclass theorists have not fully contextualized the experiences of all types of poor people or considered why some women end up in single-parent households despite strongly supporting family values.

Clearly, poor Mexicans like Marta Astorga present a challenge to academics who now realize that our multicultural society includes many different types of families, households, cultures, and experiences. As we attempt to

understand the "new immigrants" and their relations with already settled populations of varied cultural expressions, it is critical that we not fall into the American bog of family ideology, based on myths of the homogeneous nuclear family as the norm. Poor people have always lived flexible lives, migrating in search of work, living with extended kin, taking in boarders, doubling up with friends when they become homeless or need temporary help. The nuclear family of breadwinner pop and cookie-baking mom does not even typify white middle-class families. In refuting the underclass model, we must present careful analyses of local political economies, of how some groups have found labor market niches and others have been marginalized. In short, institutional discrimination and exclusion based on race, ethnicity, class, and gender—not family values—explain the persistence of poverty and create the context for how Mexicans adapt to being poor. Just as the underclass model has been problematic for understanding Blacks in poverty, we rush to cultural models about Latinos in poverty at our peril. Structural and cultural analyses of international and local levels will be necessary to understand Mexicans who are poor.

Notes

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1. See Raymond V. Padilla, "Chicano Studies at the University of California, Berkeley: En Busca del Campus y la Comunidad" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1975); Carlos Muñoz, "The Quest for Paradigm: The Development of Chicano Studies and Intellectuals," in *History, Culture and Society: Chicano Studies in the 1980s*, ed. Mario T. García et al. (Ypsilanti, Mich.: Bilingual Press, 1983).

2. For an overview of how these political contestations affected theories pertaining to race, see Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York and London: Routledge, 1986).

3. Estevan T. Flores, "The Mexican-Origin People in the United States and Marxist Thought in Chicano Studies," in *The Left Academy: Marxist Scholarship on American Campuses*, vol. 3, ed. Bertell Ollman and Edward Vernoff (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986), 103–38.

4. For a full discussion of the paradigm shift in the social sciences within Chicano Studies, see Tomas Almaguer, "Ideological Distortions in Recent Chicano Historiography: The Internal Colonial Model and Chicano Historical Interpretation," *Aztlan* 18: 1 (1989): 7–28. See also Patricia Zavella, *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), 6–11.

5. Taub fails to describe any background information about his informants, to indicate when he is referring to Mexican immigrants or informants born in the United States, or to specify how many individuals he has interviewed. He does indicate that he is unsure how representative his sample is for Mexicans in Chicago. See Richard Taub, "Differing Conceptions of Honor and Orientations toward Work and Marriage among Low-Income African-Americans

and Mexican-Americans" (paper presented at the Chicago Urban Poverty and Family Life Conference, University of Chicago, 23 August 1991).

6. See also Mark Testa and Marilyn Krogh, "Nonmarital Parenthood, Male Joblessness and AFDC Participation in Inner-City Chicago" (final report prepared for the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, November 1990).

7. For an excellent genealogy of the term and how it has become popularized, see Adolph Reed Jr., "The Underclass as Myth and Symbol: The Poverty of Discourse about Poverty," *Radi- cal America* 24 (January 1992): 21-40.

8. William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Pub- lic Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). A MacArthur prize fellow, Wilson heads the Center for the Study of Urban Inequality at the University of Chicago.

9. William Julius Wilson, "The Underclass: Issues, Perspectives, and Public Policy," in *The Ghetto Underclass: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. William Julius Wilson (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1993), 1-24, 2.

10. Some of the debate over the underclass can be found in Michael B. Katz, ed., *The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), and Bill E. Lawson, ed., *The Underclass Question* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

11. Testa and Krogh, "Nonmarital Parenthood"; Taub, "Differing Conceptions of Honor."

12. With the authority provided by using the ethnographic present and ignoring variability, Elijah Anderson validates the political rallying cry for "personal responsibility" by presenting young men's quest for "getting over" and the logic of young women's "irresponsibility" as con- suming mothers. See Elijah Anderson, *Street Wise: Race, Class and Change in an Urban Com- munity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 112-37.

13. L. B. Schorr, *Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage* (New York: Anchor Press, 1988); Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*.

14. For one example of this hysteria, see Michael Meyer, "Los Angeles 2010: A Latino Sub- continent," *Newsweek*, 9 November 1992: 32-33.

15. The "True Love Waits" campaign launched in 1993 by the Southern Baptist Convention sex-education program hoped that up to five hundred thousand teenagers would sign cov- enants vowing to remain chaste until marriage. See David Briggs, "No Sex Till Marriage, Teens Vow: Campaign Hopes to Sign up 500,000," *San Jose Mercury News*, 24 September 1993.

16. See "Family Values Skewed Census Data: Political Debate Left 300,000 Births Unre- ported, Government Survey Says," *San Jose Mercury News*, 3 January 1994.

17. Sonia M. Pérez and Deirdre Martínez, *State of Hispanic America 1993: Toward a Latino Anti-Poverty Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: National Council of La Raza Report, 1993), iii (figures rounded).

18. Rina Benmayor, Rosa M. Torruelas, and Ana L. Juarbe present a wonderful ethnographic study about Puerto Rican women welfare recipients who enroll in a literacy program and then, through writing about family life, experience gratifying changes in how they perceive them- selves and their neighborhoods. See "Responses to Poverty among Puerto Rican Women: Identi- ty, Community and Cultural Citizenship" (Report to the Joint Committee for Public Policy Research on Contemporary Hispanic Issues of the Inter-University Program for Latino Res- earch and the Social Science Research Council, 1992).

19. Diego Vigil, *Barrio Gangs: Street Life and Identity in Southern California* (Austin: Uni- versity of Texas Press, 1988); Joan W. Moore, *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Home- girls in Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

20. Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1974).

21. Mercer L. Sullivan, "Getting Paid": *Youth Crime and Work in the Inner City* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).

22. Ellen Lewin, *Lesbian Mothers: Accounts of Gender in American Culture* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cor- nell University Press, 1993).

23. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spin- sters/Aunt Lute, 1987); Cherrie Moraga, *Loving in the War Years, lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (Boston: South End Press, 1983).

24. For very early formulations, see Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1965); Oscar Lewis, *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty—San Juan and New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965); and William Madsen, *Mexican Americans of South Texas* (New York: Holt, Rine- hart, and Winston, 1964). For critiques, see Adolph Reed Jr., "Equality: Why We Can't Wait," *Nat- ion*, 9 December 1991: 733-37; Adolph Reed Jr., "The Underclass as Myth and Symbol"; Douglas S. Massey, "Latinos, Poverty, and the Underclass: A New Agenda for Research" (Social Science Research Council-commissioned paper, 1992); Stack, *All Our Kin*; Charles A. Valentine, *Culture and Poverty: Critique and Counter-Proposals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

25. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, 35; Schorr, *Within Our Reach*, 17.

26. David E. Hayes-Bautista et al., *No Longer a Minority: Latinos and Social Policy in Califor- nia* (UCLA: Chicano Studies Research Center, 1992); Joan Moore, "An Assessment of Hispanic Poverty: Is There a Hispanic Underclass?" (Working Paper, Tomás Rivera Center, 1988); Refugio I. Rochin and Adela de la Torre, "Economic Deprivation of Hispanics" (Working Paper, Tomás Rivera Center, 1989); Fernando M. Treviño et al., "The Feminization of Poverty among His- panic Households" (Working Paper, Tomás Rivera Center, 1988).

27. Reed, "The Underclass as Myth and Symbol," 21.

28. Hayes-Bautista et al., *No Longer a Minority*, 13.

29. Diana Pearce, "Women, Work, and Welfare: The Feminization of Poverty," in *Working Women and Families*, ed. Karen Wolk Feinstein (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1979), 103-24; Treviño et al., "The Feminization of Poverty among Hispanic Households."

30. Pérez and Martínez, *State of Hispanic America 1993*, 12.

31. *Ibid.*, 12-15.

32. Hayes-Bautista et al., *No Longer a Minority*. These researchers surveyed 1,086 Latinos, of whom 84 percent were of Mexican origin and 15 percent from other Latin American countries. They use "Latino" to refer to the entire sample. See also Aída Hurtado et al., *Redefining Califor- nia: Latino Social Engagement in a Multicultural Society* (UCLA: Chicano Studies Research Cen- ter, 1992), 7 and 53.

33. Testa and Krogh, "Nonmarital Parenthood," 99.

34. Hayes-Bautista et al., *No Longer a Minority*, 166; also see Testa and Krogh, "Nonmarital Parenthood," 83.

35. By 1980, 47 percent of Latinos formed nuclear households, compared to 38 percent for Asians, 25 percent for Anglos, and 22 percent for Blacks. See Hayes-Bautista et al., *No Longer a Minority*, 19.

36. *Ibid.*, 17. I am not contesting the finding that Latinos are more likely than whites or Blacks to reside in intact nuclear families or less likely to use social services. Rather, I am ques- tioning the interpretation of those findings. Hayes-Bautista writes: "In spite of such socially re- sponsible behavior in both the public and private spheres, Latinos are the most likely of any group to live in poverty" (*ibid.*, xi; emphasis mine). This implies that groups other than Latinos living in poverty do not have socially responsible behavior, and it implies that the behavior of the poor themselves, rather than the behavior of and decisions by employers, teachers, or gov- ernment officials, leads to poverty. For a review of the literature on Latino families, see Aída Hurtado, "Variations, Combinations, and Evolutions: Latino Families in the United States," in *Latino Families: Developing a Paradigm for Research, Practice, and Policy*, ed. R. E. Zambrana and M. Baca Zinn (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, in press).

37. In another project, Franklin J. James compared seven census tracts in Denver with poverty rates exceeding 40 percent to understand "the possible roles of concentration effects, job market conditions and other factors in producing poverty and deprivation among neighborhood residents" ("Persistent Urban Poverty and the Underclass: A Perspective Based on the Hispanic Experience" [paper prepared for a conference on persistent poverty convened at Trinity University, San Antonio, by the Tomás Rivera Center, 8 April 1988], 18).

38. The only public services that undocumented immigrants can receive are emergency medical care, prenatal care, and K-12 education. See Estevan T. Flores, "Research on Undocumented Immigrants and Public Policy: A Study of the Texas School Case," *International Migration Review* 18:3 (1984): 505-23.

39. Immigrants whose status was legalized under the 1986 amnesty program are disqualified from Aid to Families with Dependent Children or Medi-Cal for five years after obtaining legal, permanent residency.

40. The overall percentage of families headed by females was highest for Blacks, at 47.7 percent, followed by 29.3 percent for Hispanics and 17.4 percent for whites. However, between 1980 and 1985, the increase in female-headed families was 50.7 percent for Hispanics, followed by 22.6 percent for whites and 14.2 percent for Blacks. It appears that Latinos and whites are catching up to the high rates of Black single parents, regardless of their values. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Report*, Series P-60, cited in James, "Persistent Urban Poverty and the Underclass," table 12.

41. Melvin L. Oliver, James H. Johnson Jr., and Walter C. Farrell Jr., "Anatomy of a Rebellion: A Political-Economic Analysis," in *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993), 117-41.

42. Julie Goodson-Lawes, "Changes in Feminine Authority and Control with Migration: The Case of One Family from Mexico," *Urban Anthropology*, Special Issue on Latino Ethnography 22: 3-4 (1993): 277-89; Adelaida Del Castillo, "Negotiating the Structure and Cultural Meaning of Sex/Gender Systems: Mexico City's Women-Centered Domestic Groups," *Urban Anthropology*, Special Issue on Latino Ethnography 22:3-4 (1993): 237-58. For descriptions of domestic violence in a migrant Mexican-American family, see Fran Leeper Bus, ed., *Forged under the Sun/Forjada bajo el sol: The Life of Marla Elena Lucas* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

43. Alicia Chavira-Prado did research on Tarascan Indian migrants from Mexico who engaged in chain migration between Cherán, in the state of Michoacán in Mexico, and Cobden, in southern Illinois. See Alicia Chavira-Prado, "Work, Health, and the Family: Gender Structure and Women's Status in a Mexican Undocumented Migrant Population," *Human Organization* (spring 1992): 53-64; Alicia Chavira-Prado, "The Female Undocumented Experience" (paper presented at the Association of Latina and Latino Anthropologists-sponsored session, "Rompiendo Barreras de Género: Social Constructions of Gender in U.S. Latino Communities," American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings, San Francisco, November 1992).

44. Michelle J. Anderson, "A License to Abuse: The Impact of Conditional Status on Female Immigrants," *Yale Law Journal* 102:6 (1993): 1401-30.

45. For a discussion of these problems, see Ramón "Tianguis" Pérez and Dick J. Reavis, trans., *Diary of an Undocumented Immigrant* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1991).

46. Anderson, "A License to Abuse," 1403.

47. Legislation has been proposed that would allow female conditional residents to file their own applications for status as permanent residents. As of September 1994, such legislation has not passed. See Carolyn Jung, "Enduring Abuse to Get Legal Residency: Immigrant Women Hostages to Husbands," *San Jose Mercury News*, 3 January 1994: 1.

48. Lourdes Arguelles and Anne Rivero, "Violence, Migration, and Compassionate Practice: Conversations with Some Women We Think We Know," *Urban Anthropology*, Special Issue on

Latino Ethnography 22:3-4 (1993): 259-76; Rosalía Solórzano-Torres, "Female Mexican Immigrants in San Diego County," in *Women on the U.S.-Mexico Border: Responses to Change*, ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Susan Tiano (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 41-60.

49. Joan Moore and Raquel Pinderhughes, eds., *In the Barrios: Latinos and the Underclass Debate* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1993), xv.

50. In an otherwise careful critique of underclass theory, Moore and Pinderhughes observe: "By contrast with [William Julius] Wilson's portrayal of the decay of the black family and other institutions, Latino institutions were generally viable" (ibid., xvi).

51. Mercer L. Sullivan, "Puerto Ricans in Sunset Park, Brooklyn: Poverty amidst Ethnic and Economic Diversity," in *In the Barrios*, 1-26, 3.

52. Moore and Pinderhughes, *In the Barrios*; Rebecca Morales and Frank Bonilla, eds., *Latinos in a Changing U.S. Economy: Comparative Perspectives on Growing Inequality* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1993). See also Louise Lamphere, ed., *Structuring Diversity: Ethnographic Perspectives on the New Immigration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Louise Lamphere, Patricia Zavella, Felipe Gonzáles, and Peter B. Evans, *Sunbelt Working Mothers: Reconciling Family and Factory* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Robert Lee Maril, *Poorest of Americans: The Mexican-Americans of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989). For two excellent case studies of racial differences in Los Angeles and the multiracial rebellion following the acquittal of Rodney King's assailants, see Melvin L. Oliver, James H. Johnson Jr., and Walter C. Farrell Jr., "Anatomy of a Rebellion," and Manuel Pastor Jr., *Latinos and the Los Angeles Uprising: The Economic Context* (Claremont, Calif.: Tomás Rivera Center, 1993).

53. Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach, *Latin Journey: Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

54. Patricia Zavella, "Reflections on Diversity among Chicanas," *Frontiers, a Journal of Women's Studies* 13:2 (1991): 73-85.

55. Juan Vicente Palerm, "Farm Labor Needs and Farm Workers in California, 1970-1989" (Report for the State Employment Development Department, U.S. Department of Labor, 1991), 5.

56. Leo R. Chávez, *Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991).

57. Wayne Cornelius, "Mexican Immigrants in the San Francisco Bay Area: A Summary of Current Knowledge" (Research Report Series 40, San Diego: University of California, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1982).

58. Leslie Salinger, "A Maid by Any Other Name: The Transformation of 'Dirty Work' by Central American Immigrants," in *Ethnography Unbound: Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis*, ed. Michael Burawoy et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 139-60.

59. Carlos G. Vélez-Ibañez and James B. Greenberg, "Formation and Transformation of Funds of Knowledge among U.S.-Mexican Households," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 23:4 (1992): 313-34. See also Carlos G. Vélez-Ibañez, "Ritual Cycles of Exchange: The Process of Cultural Creation and Management in the U.S. Borderlands," in *Celebrations of Identity: Multiple Voices in American Ritual Performance*, ed. Pamela R. Frese (Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1993), 119-43.

60. M. Jean Gilbert, "Extended Family Integration among Second-Generation Mexican-Americans," in *Family and Mental Health in the Mexican American Community*, ed. J. Manuel Carlos and Susan E. Keefe, monograph no. 7 (Los Angeles: Spanish-Speaking Mental Health Research Center, 1978), 25-48; Hurtado et al., *Redefining California*; Susan Emley Keefe, "Urbanization, Acculturation, and Extended Family Ties: Mexican Americans in Cities," *American Ethnologist* (spring 1979): 349-65; Susan Emley Keefe, "Real and Ideal Extended Familism among Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans: On the Meaning of 'Close' Family Ties," *Human Or-*

ganization 43:1 (1984): 65-70; Susan E. Keefe, Amado M. Padilla, and Manuel L. Carlos, "The Mexican American Extended Family as an Emotional Support System," in *Family and Mental Health in the Mexican-American Community*, 49-68; Susan E. Keefe and Amado M. Padilla, *Chicano Ethnicity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Joan Moore, "Mexican Americans and Cities: A Study in Migration and the Use of Formal Resources," *International Migration Review* 5:3 (1971): 292-308.

61. Palerm, "Farm Labor Needs and Farm Workers in California," 89.

62. Goodson-Lawes, "Changes in Feminine Authority and Control with Migration."

63. Hurtado et al., *Redefining California*, 20.

64. Keefe and Padilla, *Chicano Ethnicity*.

65. Phillip B. Gonzáles, "Historical Poverty, Restructuring Effects, and Integrative Ties: Mexican American Neighborhoods in a Peripheral Sunbelt Economy," in *In the Barrios*, 149-72.

66. Lamphere, Zavella, Gonzáles, and Evans, *Sunbelt Working Mothers*.

67. Coproviders earned wages nearly equal to those of their spouses, while mainstay providers were the primary breadwinners in their families. We also have a category of secondary providers, which includes wives who earn less than their spouses.

68. Pérez and Martínez, *State of Hispanic America* 1993.

69. María Patricia Fernández-Kelly, *For We Are Sold, I and My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); Vicki L. Ruiz and Susan Tiano, eds., *Women on the U.S.-Mexico Border: Responses to Change* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987).

70. The National Council of La Raza suggests policy interventions such as equalizing educational outcomes for Latinos, ending housing and labor market discrimination against Latinos, making work "more rewarding" through increased minimum wage levels or better benefits, or increasing entitlement programs. See Pérez and Martínez, *State of Hispanic America* 1993.

PART V



Multiculturalism and the Production of Culture



Machine Talk

STEVE FAGIN

As with many of the presenters at the conference, I have the problem of condensing a much longer piece—in my case, a two-hour video, *The Machine That Killed Bad People*. The tape endures this fate in its own unique style, which, as is the California manner, I will “share” with you.

First of all, people get the wrong impression when seeing a segment of the tape. They presume “Oh yes, I’ve seen a bit. I’m sure if I saw the whole piece all of this mishmash would be a seamless coherence.” No such luck. The piece works in a fragmentary style, trying to emulate the way television constructs meaning through fragmentation. The viewer is held together, or in the language of theory “is constructed,” in the manner in which the caramel holds the chocolate and peanuts together in a Snickers bar, only then to bind the same elements to your teeth. Second, the order of the fragments works as a complex chain of commands. One opens the mind like one cracks a safe: three to the right, two to the left, five backward, spin the dial, and “Open Sesame!”—the mind is open to suggestion. TV functions this way, opening up the phatic, dysfunctional channels of our minds.

It is this need for ordering that insists that the piece be two hours long. Most independent videos range from 3 to 11 minutes long, in order to deal with the normal exhibition context of the art gallery or museum. I truly see the piece as being as short as I could make it. I often boast that it’s like Roger

Bannister when he just broke the four-minute mile saying 3 minutes, 59.4 seconds: my tape is not 2 hours, it's 1 hour, 59 minutes, 42 seconds.

I should also point out that the piece is experimental, and by this I mean it's working on a question, exploring options. I see this as the responsibility of the independent arts. I must confess that this type of work is best when it comes out of a character affliction, not an ambition. One should never start off trying to be experimental; it ends up being kitsch like Dalí. One should be like Raymond Roussel, an artist I've done a piece on, trying only to make "the most popular piece in the world," or be like Victor Hugo, or, in my case, Steven Spielberg, ending up shocked at people's incredulity.

A lot has happened since the piece's inception with the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship in February 1986. As it was happening, I thought, "What an extraordinary event I am watching!" The exclamation heralds the crossing of a great historical divide: the transition from Chicago 1968 and the truly narcissistic baby boomer motto "The whole world is watching." I remember "watching" in Istanbul (pass the opium, please!) with about as much social engagement as I could muster, seeing friends of mine being beaten. The space traversed from Chicago to Manila lurches from empathy to interactivity. As my piece was being completed in 1989, the 1986 overthrow of the Marcoses (what's called the EDSA Revolution in the Philippines, the first revolution to be named after a traffic jam) was beginning to be perceived as the prototypical TV revolution on an international scale. The event was being reconstructed as the pilot episode for the second-most popular show of that season, *From China to Ceausescu*, with Ted Koppel as the series host. Only the Simpsons were more popular.

As a prelude to showing my piece, and to bring you back to those thrilling days of yesteryear, I will give you a series of suggestions on how one might have watched some of the telehistorical events that have occurred between now, November 1992, and the completion of the piece in December 1989, challenging the baby boomer conceit that all events should be watched as if we were still in 1968 (even though I must concede my own nostalgia for opium in Istanbul).

I should make it very clear that I think the only history worth watching occurs on cable television, with Ted Turner emerging as a twenty-first-century Herodotus. I hold this to be immutable. I'll start with the most recent event, the presidential election, surfing stations. C-Span was definitely the station of choice, with Ross Perot dancing like Henry Fonda in *My Darling Clementine* into a visual sunset. Patsy Cline's song "Crazy" plays the whole time as people come in and out of frame, such a romantic gesture—

but the gesture goes on and on, durational TV turning the charming into a repetition compulsion. I start off humming along to Patsy Cline's "Crazy" and end up trapped in a labyrinthine chase film. Patsy Cline has been transformed into Joseph Lewis, no longer "crazy about you" but just plain "gun crazy." I begin to wish C-Span would have commercials. I need to go to the restroom.

The campaign itself, having taken so long (sort of like an academic job interview), had to be watched on different stations at different times of day. In the morning, with coffee, the networks, but as an amendment to my prohibition against anything but cable news I say, like Lot leaving Sodom, "Listen, but don't turn to watch." The insipid patter of *Good Morning America* gives a bottom beat worthy of the brilliant Cuban bassist Cachao. In the afternoon one had to be mobile, catching the syndicated shows: *Oprah*, *Donahue*, *Geraldo*. At night, the Arkansas Ornette Coleman Bill Clinton knew that it was either Arsenio on Fox or Rome itself, CNN. Even Bush figured this out, appearing on *Larry King Live* the Friday prior to the election.

Our next step backward comes to rest on Hurricane Andrew. Of course one would have watched the Weather Channel, but against the grain of its intention, without channel surfing. The Weather Channel, which I believe to be the most-watched cable station, is viewed on the average for thirty seconds per hit. The network's pacing assumes this and so they want people to switch the station. I must admit I watch this station only seasonally, in the winter, when living in California encourages my sadistic side to enjoy the Michelin snow reports from the East.

It is from the Weather Channel that I draw my model of history—much different from the Marxist dialectic (easterly winds) being assumed by many of the presenters in this conference. In my model of history, one is dominated by a bunch of gadgets, predictions that try to predict through means more folkloric than scientific. Once the storm is sighted and named, the process becomes a bit more ritualistic. If people have ever been involved in a hurricane, the response of people is quite the opposite of what I would have assumed. No one panics. Instead, people's lives become meticulous. Maps, tracking devices, shortwave radios, inch by inch, step by step, but then the hurricane hits and all becomes unpredictable. It stops, starts, jumps, and one just rides it out. I do think history works like this. We can know something is going to break, all the circumstances are right, but we cannot assume effects, only opportunities. Systems will hover off the coast, the Holy Roman Empire can last on the verge of collapse for five hundred years, gradually losing

its holiness, its Romanness, its empireness, until all at once, it collapses into chaos, a black hole.

Likewise, dictatorships like Ceausescu's or Marcos's can hold on to power in their last stages for such a long period of time that it becomes a managerial style in itself. Capricious and erratic, but with the logic of the last-stages-style of management. When things crack, like a hurricane hitting land, everything becomes unpredictable. Where is the power going to turn next? It is this moment in history, the contact with land, that I am interested in engaging. Looking for a northwest passage but feeling like I'm going over Niagara Falls in a barrel.

Next event, the Rodney King uprising. This was best watched on local cable. Again, since I'm in southern California, I was able to watch the local Los Angeles stations. Now, this event was a beautiful study of dissonance being recuperated. During this type of brought-to-you-live event, one becomes painfully aware of the training of the local newscasters. All they know how to narrate is a five-alarm fire. Regardless of the origin and direction of the event, it eventually seeps to this level. At first, everything is a bit off: the wrong person is being interviewed, dark figures are running in and out of the frame, passers-by are contradicting the on-the-spot reporter. It is very interesting to observe how, over time, they turn it into one of the few stories they have been trained to tell, and when the eleven o'clock news comes on, it's all so comfy. Another fire story. Logo, then traffic copter view of "raging flames," cut to center frame, well-lit summary of damage to retailers, and finally talk to an eyewitness for fifteen seconds, the camera cutting before they even make eye contact with the camera. The coverage from eight to eleven, however—what a difference! Random camera movements, people competing to tell different types of stories, and the newscaster groping for a lead. It's truly extraordinary to watch it tilt and turn, a couch-potato game of pinball unraveling before your sour cream cherry-flavored bag of chips.

The Persian Gulf War. As stupid as it might sound, the only place on my eighty-three-channel TV set I could find people of color being slaughtered for no apparent reason was on ESPN. The Buffalo Bills were killing "the grey and black." The Raiders were being slaughtered. The Bills were using their "hurry-up" offense, the score was around 60 to 3 after a quarter, and I switched back to CNN to the TV moment of the war that first Saturday, before live coverage was thereafter quarantined. An oral virus was sweeping the airwaves, much more lethal than anything the Iraqis would ever release. It was during the coverage of a Scud attack, the camera frantically scanning the sky in a manner much more disorienting than anything from Michael Snow's experimental film *La*



Région Centrale. The newscaster, trying to talk through a gas mask, is looking like a character from a Soviet constructivist play, with costumes by Rodchenko. Bobbi Battista, hysterically shrieking into her knocked-askew-by-the-gas mask earplug that they had overheard from Dan Rather's assistant that there was a gas attack. This roller-coaster ride of rumor and disinformation is circulating like an oral tear-gas attack, the best experimental theater I've seen in years. It was like a new installment of a Wooster Theater Group performance. This was the last day this type of coverage appeared on the network. There were no more live Scud broadcasts after that.

The last events leading back to my tape are the TV revolutions of 1989: Berlin, Prague, Budapest, modeled after the Edsa Revolution in the Philippines. I must concede this was the last great moment of the major networks, watching before bed, horizontally, between one's toes. I'm sure that there has been some type of study that has shown that Ted Koppel's hair really looks sexy when seen between one's toes. The thing I most remember about this coverage was the radical time difference among the performers. It was always daytime for the people on screen during *Nightline*, or they were about to have breakfast, being awakened in the middle of the night. Truly, these events took place in a hybrid time more like a dream than waking life.

To the piece itself, *The Machine That Killed Bad People*. The piece grew

out of an epiphany, which, like all wisdoms of that genre, is now on the verge of becoming a cliché. While watching the overthrow of the Marcoses it became apparent that there was no longer a conceptual separation among event, televising, and watching; the spatial separation had been imploded and now constituted a single complex multispatial/multitemporal event. During the Gulf War, many "well-meaning" people voiced their horror over the observation of this style of event: earth-shattering spectacle, televised, controlled by rumor and the intimacy of the frame. Television had revealed its disposition: a wanton creature not good for modern dance or *Masterpiece Theatre*, good only for assassinations, touchdowns, revolutions, and earthquakes. These are hypertraumas and dramas of the present tense.

Unlike these well-meaning people, I was not appalled by this observation. It seemed a squandered sentiment, as useful as being appalled by a thunderstorm. Instead of critiquing this mode of television, I wanted to study its scale and force and see if I could learn to ride, then change, its course. I saw the format as powerful and I wanted to figure out how to use it and alter the effect, keep the intensity but change the meaning. Too many papers in this conference have talked of resistance to spectacle, putting the cross in front of the vampire, or simply watching from the outside and saying "I told you so" over and over again, a rosary-stroking gesture that is often called critique. So I jumped in and tried to create a network of my own, trying to cross Bertolt Brecht with Ted Turner; I couldn't do any more harm than efforts to convert spring wheat into winter wheat: no one was going to starve to death because of my less than noble experiment. I wanted to tangle with this postmodern octopus, the CNN-ification of the planet.

Before showing some of the tape I would like to talk a bit about the different responses I've had to the piece among the Filipino communities. I've had basically two diametrically opposed responses. When I've shown it to intellectuals who were raised in the Philippines, the response has been intensely supportive. There is an appreciation of the piece's effort to acknowledge a complex Filipino identity, where there is no essential Filipino waiting to be released from imprisonment in First World pop culture. The brilliance of Filipino intellectuals is their ability to perform their identity not by some form of raw expressivity, but through subtle toning: irony, self-deprecation, and black humor allow them to resolve the seeming paradox of both embracing and liberating themselves from U.S. popular culture. Are Filipinos neocolonialized? "Yes, then no" or "No, then yes," depending on the individual. So these sophisticates have been a source of great support for my piece. On the other hand, when the piece has been viewed by young Filipino-

American college students, they have been disappointed or even angered. Why all the emphasis on Filipino involvement with U.S. culture? Where are the pure Filipino values they wish to embrace? I try to indicate to them that the piece is about the extraordinary twists and turns of this involvement, what's called the special relation that is the Filipino-U.S. liaison.

With regard to the formal strategies of the piece, the inspiration lies in work done in the 1930s. If one figure were to be singled out it would be the Portuguese-American novelist John Dos Passos, and his magnum opus *U.S.A.* In Dos Passos, the newspaper was seen as the complex site of how people construct their narrative relation to events through a patchwork quilt of visually simultaneous, self-canceling stories. Just look at the formal richness of a newspaper page: pictures, large and small typeface, stories all over the place, obituaries juxtaposed with statistics about the comparative literacy in developing nations. What an experimental form in terms of its grammar, though the semantics are reductive and most often conservative. The form encourages the opening up of the imagination and then its contraction. This is the issue that interested me. I wanted to transform this type of experimentation done in the thirties to the narrative image-site of the present: cable television. I worked off of cable television formatting, trying to take advantage of its grammatical resourcefulness, the way things are told and how they're juxtaposed, and redress the semantic redundancy and conservativeness. If an image-grammarian were to study my piece in the twenty-third century, it would be perceived as typical.

I'm going to show parts from all four sections of the piece and then take questions. I'll take the questions à la Donahue, and have someone go around the audience with a mike. It's that time of late afternoon when our appetite for truth has shifted: we no longer crave soap opera but the syndicated talk show. Our midday meal is dominated by melodrama, high tea by confession.

The following is excerpted from the script of *The Machine That Killed Bad People*:

Manila, December 7, 1972

Thousands watched on live television as she was carried off, her beige terno soaked in blood. Dr. Robert Chase, a hand expert from Stanford University flown in to consult, said he believed the First Lady survived due to her expertise at ping-pong. "She threw her arm up and danced back when he came forward, and that was part of her ping-pong capability."

It was in Leyte that she, Imelda Romualdez Marcos, had first heard of



Europe. Brought by her widowed father to live in the family home, already nearly falling down. Her nun half sister told her the story of the opera singer Maria Malibran. As a little girl, her father, a famous tenor, had forced Maria to sing in the role of Desdemona in Rossini's *Othello*. This would be her debut. Her father told her that if she didn't sing perfectly he would strangle her to death. The critical scene of the opera occurred, his hand on Maria's throat. She couldn't tell if it was Desdemona being strangled to death by her jealous husband, or her own father trying to kill her. She sang perfectly.

Ten years later, Maria, now the most famous soprano in Europe, learns that she has but a few months left to live. She has only one request. Before she dies she wishes to play the lead in *Othello*.

Imelda arose, the morning after the assassination attempt, in the manner of the hysteric who, after a hectic day of being beaten, tortured, and defeated by her symptoms, awakes refreshed.

She had dreamed of mermaids, but this image was replaced by a more troubled one. Huge stones took shape before her, carved with strange etchings. It was a temple and a tomb, a royal tomb. A white vapor rose up from one of the pillars. It took the shape of a queen, a miracle of beauty. The woman smiled at Imelda and took her hand. Her hand slipped from the

beautiful vision's grasp. Imelda tried to shout; she heard loud voices calling to her. At this moment she rejoined the living.

Later in the day, still watching the events broadcast in an endless loop on the television, she remained puzzled. Why had Ver's security, standing by, not rushed to her rescue? Ver politely explained that his men had wished to remain out of camera range, to give her center stage.

It was the custom in the Romualdez household to gather in the sala after supper for an evening of music. Don Vicente played the piano, one daughter played violin, and Imelda sang. After the Americans had retaken Leyte, several would gather to hear this pure voice soar over the accompaniment of the piano and violin. Eventually this was brought to the attention of Irving Berlin, touring the liberated South.

Although her range of songs was more distinguished, from the Abelardo Kundimans to selections from *The Desert Song*, Imelda sang to Berlin "You Are My Sunshine." She had been told this was the anthem of the American liberation. Despite Berlin's praises, Imelda decided not to pursue a singing career.

The tragedy of the twenty-first of August.

Marcos's trusted watchdog, General Fabian Ver, still lying on his back, his aides thinking him sound asleep, listened to their squelched laughter as they still told that joke. "No, you have it the wrong way 'round. Galman first committed suicide, then murdered Aquino."

They laughed.

All that remained on the tarmac to mark the bodies were thinly drawn chalk outlines, Ninoy's partially obscured by a muddied footprint. The body of Galman had been hastily removed, his blood both still wet and dried.

Eighteen bullets had pierced the body, entering both front to back and back to front. The Aquino corpse had but one bullet hole through the back of the neck. He had worn the same body armor as the American president.

General Ver turned onto his belly. He had dreamed of a battle, lasting not even a minute. Suspended in midair, their knives flashing. The slash in midair made thrice the damage as the one on the ground. He thought, "In the air they are angels, on the ground, merely fowl."

He returned.

The saving grace of the assassination was that it had been so perfectly bungled. He imagined the American ambassador saying, "Surely the work of amateurs." He would nod and mumble not even a word, but the letters N.P.A.

Cockfights.

The half-sleep reminded Ver of blue grass.

Kentucky.

Trained in torture, by experts, he bristled at their taunts. "Nothing but barbarism," they would say. He would smirk and remind them that "the cock had lost to the eagle by one vote when THEIR republic had selected its national symbol."

As he lay there, eyes fixed on the ceiling, he lost control. The Romans had derisively called cockfighting the Greek diversion.

The laughter had subsided.

His aides, fallen silent, turned toward him to listen, and he overheard his own voice saying into thin air, "Cocks are birds, it is us that have brought them down to earth."

This letter, dated December 17, 1951, was recently discovered quite by accident in an attic in Detroit, Michigan. At this time it would be best to withhold the author's name. We can, however, tell you a bit about him. He was Oliver North's hero and after his tour of duty in the Philippines he went on to Vietnam and finally Central America.

It has been said about him—no, about a character in a novel based on him—that he was determined to do good. Not to any individual, but to a country, a continent, a world.

Well, here's the letter.

Dear Dad,

Thanks so much for your letter dated October 13. Sorry to be so slow to respond but things take so long here, and I was off in the jungles of Luzon. But even there I heard that the Yankees had won the World Series; most everyone here, even the Flips, root for the Yanks. It didn't surprise me that the Yanks had won—what else is new?—but I was shocked to find out they had beaten the Giants. What the heck happened to the Dodgers? Well, your letter really filled me in on that. I must confess I took a certain unsavory pleasure in the way you described the excruciating details. I, like you, wondered why Dresson had put Branca in, after the Giants had murdered him all year and Thomson himself had hit a homer off him in game one. My favorite part of your letter, even more than the overpunctuated rendition of Russ Hodges saying over and over again, "The Giants win the pennant, the Giants win the pennant, the Giants win the pennant." Did it really need four exclamation

points each time? Was the postgame interview with Dresson, him saying, without any punctuation in his voice, "I called the bull pen and they said Erskine just bounced a curve, Roc ain't ready, and Branca's throwing hard." He would have been better off consulting a numerologist. How can you put someone in, with the pennant on the line, who's wearing a big fat thirteen all over their back? Well, at least that turncoat Durocher lost the series.

As to some of your questions, yes, I'm still playing the harmonica and no, I don't like the Europeans any better; they seem so tired and cynical. They don't seem to see the importance of all this: oppression, communism, atheism . . . To them it seems like a mah-jongg game. I think they just come over to our officers' club because they think it's safe from the hand grenades. They are so easily amused, eating fried chicken and taking drugs. It's really true, the fate of the world is in our hands and we just have to round the Filipinos into shape. My advertising experience comes in handy and this seems to be the terrain that we can turn this thing around on. Magsaysay is a bit stupid, but at least he listened and does what we tell him. And the song I wrote, "Mambo, Mambo Magsaysay," is all the rage.

Sometimes this war makes me feel like a kid again back in Detroit. Often it's games and pranks that work. I concocted this eye of God scheme, borrowing it from the Egyptians—a little ancient history never hurt. We would, in the middle of the night, paint these evil eyes on the houses of suspected Huks. It would really scare the Huk out of them. Also, we have thought of a rather clever use of aircraft. We broadcast from the other side of the clouds, over loudspeakers, telling the natives not to feed the Huks. This voice of God seems to work better than the Voice of America.

Well, I guess by the time you receive this letter it will be a white Christmas. Here in the jungle, it's just green and more green. But at least it's a Christian country. They really carry on about Christmas. It seems to start up a week after the Fourth of July, reach full throttle Labor Day, and a crescendo level from Thanksgiving to Christmas Eve. It sure is festive, a bit too festive, almost pagan. Now I understand what McKinley meant when he said we had to Christianize them.

Wait till next year.

Your loving son

P.S.: Tell Mom to send some of her cookies; the desserts here are just too sweet. Also, around here you can't find any serious reading—only novels, plays, and poetry—so send me something, anything. I trust you.



Question and Answer

sf: I'll leave out the spectacular climax for another time, because time is up. That's the trouble with dealing with a two-hour piece in this context, so if we could have the lights, I'll try to expand or relate to something by taking questions. There's a mike that's supposed to come around.

r: I'd first like to introduce myself. I'm Rachel and I left the Philippines in 1984, right after Aquino left, uh, was assassinated. Again, the diaspora of Filipinos coming to the United States at that time trying to escape the economy, whatever we were afraid of, but the feeling that I got from this is, sort of, in between outrage. I'm angered because there is no narration.

sf: In fact, there's nothing but narration. The whole piece is governed by a series of stories. There's simply not a box narration. I mean, the most hideous narration in the world is actually NPR, and when I was talking about TV, the one thing I neglected to say is that the one channel I never look to for knowledge is PBS. On National Public Radio they say, "This person is going to say this," and then they say it. Instead, there's basically this cluster of different stories told over images, some of which I pull in one way, some of which overlap in other ways. Others contain others which resist. There's nothing but versions of narration. There's simply not a metanarration. The piece is an effort to take a cluster of discourses in narrations on many different levels and see if they could be juggled for politics. I suggest that politics should not be a universal, metadiscursive clarity but rather a constructed, rough-edged relation to differences.

v: I have to question who you're targeting as an audience because I don't know much about the Philippines, except for what I've read in the newspaper and then some stuff in journal magazines. If you're trying to target a general audience, which I assume that everyone is in here, I don't think that the message that you're trying to convey is coherently put together. It's very mumbo-jumbled and, frankly, I feel like it's very disorganized and I'm disappointed. I didn't get a lot out of it. Can you sort of explain this on a more general level and not use, like, artistic or whatever training that is behind the video? Because I don't understand.

sf: I think the point of this type of piece is really to say that to assume that there's a passive audience that you're supposed to target like some position on the dartboard is a mistake. I think the effort of experimental work is to try to construct a type of experimental text that raises types of

questions in ways that enable people to open up to be able to organize information in different ways and, as I said before, the effort of the piece is to deal with the complexity without reducing it and still produce direction. The point with this type of work is to move away from some universal notion of video as a medium addressing an already existing monolithic audience. It's a question of expertise, I think, and not elitism, education and not arrogance, and a logic on another level as opposed to mumbo-jumbo.

List of Completed Works by Steve Fagin

Virtual Play: The Double Direct Monkey Wrench in Black's Machinery (1984)
An 80-minute video on Lou Andreas-Salomé.

The Amazing Voyage of Gustave Flaubert and Raymond Roussel (1986)
A 75-minute video on Flaubert and Roussel.

The Machine That Killed Bad People (1990)
A 120-minute video on the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines.

Zero Degrees Latitude (1993)
A 60-minute video concerning the impact of North American evangelism in Ecuador.

All works available through Drift Distribution in New York and Video Data Bank in Chicago.



"It's All Wrong, but It's All Right"

Creative Misunderstandings in Intercultural Communication

GEORGE LIPSITZ

Popular culture provides opportunities for escaping the parochialisms and prejudices of our personal worlds, for expanding our experience and understanding by seeing the world through the eyes of others. But popular culture can also trap us in its own mystifications and misrepresentations, building our investment and engagement in fictions that hide the conditions of their own production—the contexts of power, hate, hurt, and fear that give rise to seemingly neutral cultural texts. Gender, ethnicity, and race often serve as devices for building dramatic tension or supplying texture and meaning to cultural texts, but these representations can serve both progressive and reactionary purposes.

In its most utopian moments, popular culture offers a promise of reconciliation to groups divided by differences in power, opportunity, and experience. Commercial culture puts people from diverse backgrounds in contact with one another, creating contrasts that can call attention to existing social divisions as well as to the potential for eventual unity and community. But intercultural communication in popular culture can also create new sources of misunderstanding, misreading, and misappropriation that exacerbate rather than remedy social divisions.

Intercultural communication, like all communication, involves some measure of miscommunication. We can never really know how the world

looks or sounds through the eyes and ears of others; we use metaphors to convey our experiences because of the impossibility of communicating our experiences to someone else directly. As scholars from many disciplines have argued in recent years, the inevitability of representation always involves the need for metaphors that make direct, unmediated, and perfect communication impossible. But although we can never know the exact dimensions, resonances, or consequences of any act of communication, we nonetheless have to make choices about cultural messages by analyzing their impact on our understanding of the world and our ability to act in it.

Critics of commercial culture often condemn the properties of mass media that encourage consumers to expropriate cultural creations for inappropriate purposes. Long ago, Walter Benjamin noted how the mechanisms of mass production ripped cultural practices from the sites and circumstances that gave them meaning, marketing them as mere novelties for uncomprehending consumers. Certainly these propensities account for the seamy history of exploitation and appropriation of folk cultures around the world by the culture industry, for the ways in which forms of expression connected to concrete social issues in particular places have circulated around the globe stripped of their local meanings.

On the other hand, many of these commodities have drawn the investment and engagement of consumers because their moral and political messages have gained even more power when applied to a new situation. Certainly the role of reggae music from Jamaica in articulating the aspirations of the African diaspora and the appeal of "magic realist" literature by Central American writers for European and American postmodern readers stem in part from the moral and political power of Caribbean and Central American strategies of signification and grammars of opposition to explain new realities for audiences encountering an increasingly cosmopolitan world. Even when listeners and readers have been ignorant of the exact original and local meanings of reggae or magic realism, they have often displayed advanced understanding about how they could use resonances of an "unfamiliar" culture to "defamiliarize" their own culture and then "refamiliarize" themselves and others with it on the basis of the new knowledge and critical perspectives made possible by cultural contrast.

The complexities of intercultural communication in popular culture compel us to look carefully at what might at first appear to be misunderstandings and mistakes. People who appear to be "mistaken" about another culture sometimes really know things that cannot be represented easily because their knowledge is illegitimate by existing standards and paradigms.

Especially on issues of identity involving nation, race, gender, sexuality, and class, "mistaken" ideas often contain important insights. Without minimizing the very real dangers of cross-cultural appropriations and misunderstandings, we must nonetheless be open to the kinds of knowing hidden within some "incorrect" perceptions.

Intercultural communication has been a foundational reality for North Americans for four hundred years. European exploration and settlement entailed the conquest, enslavement, and genocide of peoples of color, and vicious racial stereotypes in popular culture about Indians, Mexicans, Asians, and Blacks have functioned to obscure historical crimes and turn guilt and repression into entertainment and ideological domination. On the other hand, grassroots panethnic alliances have often given rise to popular culture products that present a utopian picture of potential interracial and interethnic cooperation. Culture in the United States has always been intercultural, and we can learn a great deal about both the promise and the peril of cross-cultural dialogue by exploring the cultural questions that have confronted specific cultural consumers and producers in our history.

Consider, for example, the case of eight-year-old Veronica Bennett (later Ronnie Spector of the vocal group the Ronettes) singing for her family in a flat in Spanish Harlem on a Sunday afternoon in 1951. One of her uncles put an electrician's light in a Maxwell House coffee can to make a "spotlight," and her father moved the coffee table to the middle of the room to make a "stage." Bennett recalls:

That light seemed to focus all the warmth in the room on me as I belted out Hank Williams's "Jambalaya" in my eight-year-old voice. "Jambaylie, cold fish pie, diddly gumbo," I sang, with no idea what the words meant or if I even had them right. But when I looked around the room and saw all my aunts and uncles smiling and tapping their feet to keep time, I knew I must have been doing something right. In the middle of the song I stopped singing and improvised a little yodel. I was trying to imitate what all the cowboy singers used to do. And that was the beginning of the "whoa-oh-oh-oh-ohs" that would become my trademark as a singer.¹

Bennett mangled Hank Williams's lyrics in her rendition, changing "crawfish pie" into "cold fish pie" and substituting "diddly gumbo" for "filé gumbo." Her admission that she didn't know and didn't care what the words meant seems to provide strong support for critics concerned about the distracted and incomplete reception of intercultural messages in popular culture. Certainly, few people would imagine the maximally competent audience for Hank Williams's country-and-western song to be Ronnie Bennett's

interracial family in Spanish Harlem. But further investigation reveals some interesting dimensions to Bennett's choices in singing this song.

Ronnie Bennett grew up as the daughter of an African-American/Native American mother and a Euro-American father. Her mother's sister Susu married a Puerto Rican, making Ronnie's cousin Nedra a mixture of African American, Native-American, and Puerto Rican ancestry. This extended family lived in a neighborhood that "had Chinese laundries, Spanish restaurants, and black grocery stores." At school, Black children teased Veronica about her light skin, calling her "skinny yellow horse" and yelling "Hey, half-breed, get your ass back to the reservation."² She later recalled:

The blacks never really accepted me as one of them. The white kids knew I wasn't white. And the Spanish kids didn't talk to me because I didn't speak Spanish. I had a little identity crisis when I hit puberty. I remember I used to sit in front of the mirror, trying to decide just what I was. Let's see now, I'd think. I've got white eyes, but these are black lips. My ears—are they white ears or black ears?³

Bennett appropriated "Jambalaya" from Hank Williams, who was no stranger to the kinds of cultural questions that confronted Veronica Bennett. Williams grew up in a white working-class family, but received his first vocal training and guitar lessons from black street singers Big Day (Connie McKee) and Tee Tot (Rufus Payne). Williams habitually described himself as "part Indian," and his band, the Drifting Cowboys, included a Native American and a Mexican American. He wrote "Jambalaya" by taking the melody from the Cajun song "Grand Texas" and adding to it English lyrics that he thought sounded Cajun.⁴

So when the African-American, Native American, and Euro-American Ronnie Bennett sang "Jambalaya" for her Puerto Rican, African-American, Native American, and Euro-American family, she was imitating a version of a Cajun song written and recorded by an Anglo-American singer who thought of himself as a Native American trained by African Americans, and who played in a band with a Mexican American and a Native American. The "whoa-oh-oh-oh-ohs" that Bennett took from "cowboy singers" and that became her trademark vocal signature as the lead singer of the Ronettes, came from Euro-American efforts to imitate the African-American musical sensibility expressed through changes in pitch and use of "impure" tones.⁵

Ronnie Spector may not have known the correct words to "Jambalaya," but her attraction to it reflected more than a simple misunderstanding. It functioned efficiently to evoke the kind of mixed subject position in music that Bennett had experienced her whole life. From one perspective, her ren-

dition of the song might seem ignorant or incompetent, but from another it can be interpreted as an uninterrogated and perhaps unexpected form of intelligence and competence in finding a song that turned cultural contradictions into a creative expression of cultural hybridity.

Similarly creative "misunderstandings" about popular culture pervade an important scene in Cheech Marin's film *Born in East L.A.* An Immigration and Naturalization Service officer questions Marin's character, Rudy, to see if he is a U.S. citizen or an undocumented alien. Rudy protests that he was "born in East L.A.," so the officer tests his familiarity with U.S. culture, asking him the name of the president of the United States. Flustered by the question, Rudy replies, "That's easy, that dude that used to be on *Death Valley Days*—John Wayne." Rudy's failure to identify Ronald Reagan marks him as "incompetent" in his civic knowledge. But, of course, his conflation of Ronald Reagan with John Wayne reveals a larger truth: that Reagan's masculinist and paternalist politics and image "played" John Wayne for the American public.

In another scene in *Born in East L.A.*, Rudy attempts to teach some Mexican conjunto musicians "the most famous rock-and-roll song ever." He starts to play "Twist and Shout," but the other musicians hear the chord progressions and start singing "La Bamba." Rudy gets exasperated by their "incorrect" response, but the similarity between the two songs teaches the audience (if not the characters in the film) that Chicano identity is already sedimented within what might seem like a uniformly Anglo U.S. popular culture. In a film devoted to exploring the heterogeneous and composite nature of Chicano identity, it is appropriate that Rudy identifies "Twist and Shout," a song written for a Black singing group by Jewish songwriters who admired and attempted to copy Puerto Rican dance music, as his own, while missing its similarity to Mexican music. After the band shares "Twist and Shout" and "La Bamba," Rudy introduces them to other music that reveals the composite and dialogic nature of Chicano culture—a version of Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze," where they bill themselves, in an interlingual pun, as "Rudy and His New Huevos Rancheros," and "Roll Out the Barrel," a Czech song that Rudy sings in German (which he learned in the military) but whose polka form brings to the surface the similarities (and interactions) between German/Czech and Mexican music in the United States.⁶

Wayne Wang employs similar strategies of creative misunderstanding in his film *Chan Is Missing*. While searching for Chan, cabdriver Joe tries to draw on his cultural roots by "thinking Chinese," while Joe's nephew and partner Steve is more "American" in his approach. But neither approach suc-

ceeds in understanding Chan, who is not only Chinese, but also likes to dance to mariachi music at the Manila Town Senior Center. Chan is Chinese, Chinese-American, and intercultural; no one narrative, however perfectly understood, can contain or explain him.

Japanese-American poet Lawson Fusao Inada presents another creative misunderstanding in his prose poem "Fresno," where he reflects upon the Asian-American, Armenian-American, and Mexican-American neighborhood in which he was raised. Inada talks about African-American music as the glue that held together these diverse groups. He remembers that for young people in Fresno Black music was the "lingua franca" that "enfranchised" and "conferred citizenship" on those who proved knowledgeable about it.⁷

On the surface, Inada's identification seems disastrously incorrect; how could identification with America's most disenfranchised group confer cultural citizenship on immigrants and their children? But taken less literally, his poem illumines a greater truth, what Albert Murray calls the "inescapably mulatto" nature of American culture. The Black music that Inada and his classmates regarded as quintessentially "American" was and continues to be one of the nation's great achievements, even if the credentialing institutions of society fail to recognize it as such.

Another kind of music offers an important insight in Oscar Zeta Acosta's *Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*. The author wonders why the song "A Whiter Shade of Pale" holds such portent for him as he becomes more deeply involved in Chicano activism during the late 1960s. He hears it again and again on the radio, and it seems to speak directly to him. "The song moves me deeply. It reminds me of Luther's 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,'" he writes.⁸

Acosta never explains the importance of "A Whiter Shade of Pale," but in his confusion he leaves some clues. Of course, one possible connection comes from the song's psychedelic imagery and the massive quantities of hallucinogenic drugs that Acosta's book suggests he was taking. But "A Whiter Shade of Pale" also combines European forms—the melody is from Johann Sebastian Bach's "Air" from his Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D Major—with African-American styles (the soul ballad tradition exemplified in the singing of Sam Cooke) in a way that resonates with Acosta's presentation of Chicano identity as a mysterious and always surprising entity forged from dialogue between Euro-American, Afro-American, Spanish, Indian, and Chicano sensibilities. Acosta's references to "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" also contain musical accuracy since many of the devices employed to build a sense of majesty in "A Whiter Shade of Pale" appear frequently in Lutheran

hymns. Acosta is not simply "confused" or "incompetent" about "A Whiter Shade of Pale," but rather his confusion brings to the surface things that he knows but cannot articulate except through his identification with the song.

Ethiopian-American film scholar Teshome Gabriel offers an example of yet another kind of creative misunderstanding in a story about an African friend of his who grew up believing that Pete Seeger was Black. Gabriel's friend knew that the folksinger participated in the civil rights movement, that he sang freedom songs, and that he included Paul Robeson among his personal friends. When the African's view of Seeger's ethnicity got him involved in an argument after he came to the United States, his adversary showed him a picture of Seeger that clearly showed him to be white. But the African remained adamant. "I know that Pete Seeger is Black," he replied. "Why should I change my mind just because I see his face?" In this instance, blackness becomes a political position, something determined more by culture than by color. Although the African is factually wrong about the meaning of Seeger's identity within the context of U.S. culture, his "misunderstanding" also contains at least a strategic grain of truth.⁹

One can well understand how these kinds of "misunderstandings" allow people of color to see "families of resemblance" that reframe their separate experiences as similar, although not identical. But what about the danger of misunderstandings incorporated into Euro-American appropriation of the cultures of aggrieved populations? For example, Jefferson Starship's Marty Balin told an interviewer in 1983 that "I grew up with the beat era; when I was twelve years old, I'd go down to the clubs and watch John Coltrane and Miles Davis. I didn't know what I was doing, but I could feel something happening."¹⁰

Balin's recognition that he didn't know what he was doing seems to confirm the views of critics who stress the limits of reception and the barriers to intercultural communication. Part of what Balin didn't know at the age of twelve was the way that his experiences as a listener had been influenced by the history of Euro-American appropriation, colonization, orientalism, and primitivism. But, given the segregated nature of U.S. society, the censoring apparatuses of the culture industry and the state, and the systematic miseducation carried on by institutions of instruction, something else had to be happening in Balin's response to jazz at the same time. His sense that "something was happening" may also have been a recognition of the inadequacy of his existing language to know exactly how and why Coltrane and Davis affected him, how their music broke through the walls erected to keep them unknown to him, and how subversive their thinking might be to the culture

in which he was raised. At the very least, it provided him with the inspiration to do more looking and listening, to see music as a potential site for the kinds of exciting and profound changes in human relations that Balin helped along in his capacity as a member of one of the leading bands of the 1960s counterculture.

Just as artists and audiences have been influenced positively by "creative mistakes," so too have artistic products themselves been enhanced by imperfect cultural exchanges. Artists from aggrieved communities have often profited from less than perfect knowledge about the exclusionary rules devised from within other cultures. Their "ignorance" of the intentions of others to exclude them has often served as an impetus to creativity; not knowing they were supposed to fail enabled them to succeed. Los Angeles Chicano artist Harry Gamboa Jr. remembers learning about art museums only after he had been painting for years. His inspirations and models came mainly from comic books, neighborhood graffiti, advertising, and prints used on calendars. When he discovered that museums exhibited "art," he took his drawings to the curator of the most prestigious local museum. They were rejected on the spot. Later, Gamboa went through more conventional channels, but got the same result. "We tried to get our work inside the museum, just like all the other Chicano artists in town," he recalls in reference to the origins of the guerrilla art group "Los Four." Gamboa and his friends found the art museum uninterested in their work, "so one night, we went over there and spray painted our names on the outside of the building. We felt that if we couldn't get inside, we would just sign the museum, and it would be our piece."¹¹

Gamboa and Los Four titled their tagging of the museum "Pie in De-Face," and their action generated enthusiastic support among community artists and audiences because it articulated accumulated resentments about exclusion from the establishment definition of "culture." This action succeeded, at least in part, because from the start Gamboa "failed" to learn the lesson his society was trying to teach him—that "art" didn't include him. By remaining "ignorant," he positioned himself perfectly to challenge rather than accept that judgment.

Technical "misunderstandings" can also often be productive for artists. In the 1920s, Bix Beiderbecke could make changes on the trumpet and cornet that no one else could master because he taught himself the instruments and learned all the "wrong" fingerings. The way he fingered the instrument would have been a detriment to skillful playing for most music written within the Western symphonic tradition, but within jazz it enabled Beider-

becke to perform maneuvers that came easily to him but that seemed highly skilled to most other artists and to audiences. Similarly, Black jazz musicians in turn-of-the-century New Orleans often confounded classically trained musicians who tried to play with them because they played in so many "hard keys." They had no self-conscious intention of playing "difficult" music, but, like Beiderbecke, they were self-taught, and the black keys on the piano felt easier to play because they were physically farther apart on the keyboard. Consequently, they developed a style of playing in keys like F sharp, making extensive use of what other musicians had been taught to ignore or to treat as forbiddingly difficult. But these keys were only "hard" to those whose training started them in the key of C and others more commonly employed in the Western classical tradition.¹²

Charlie Parker's "mistakes" proved equally instructive. When he entered his first "cutting contest" (a bandstand battle where musicians tried to out-play each other), Parker didn't know about playing in key and was laughed off the stage. He took his saxophone with him to the Lake of the Ozarks, where he spent an entire summer teaching himself to play in every key—an education that better-schooled musicians might see as wasteful for someone in a dance band, where three or four keys were usually all that was required. But the ability Parker developed gave him exceptional resources as a musician, which he explored more fully in his years as a leader in bebop composing and playing. In a similar fashion, Roeland Roy Byrd, known professionally as Professor Longhair, used to confound nightclub owners by insisting on an upright piano rather than a grand piano. Most musicians considered the grand to be the superior instrument, but Longhair liked to kick the baseboard of the piano to help create the polyrhythms that made his playing so exceptional. His choice of instruments certainly added to the delight of his audiences, if not to that of club owners and their insurance companies when they discovered the damage that his kicks did to these instruments.

By calling attention to these creative mistakes, I am not dismissing the serious consequences of cultural appropriation and exploitation. Neither am I claiming that all or any people have perfect competence in decoding the materials they encounter through popular culture. I am not saying that it is better not to know than to know. We still need cultural studies scholarship that is grounded in history, that is ideologically attuned to understanding the limits of any one artist's or audience's subjectivity. But I do want to argue that people may know a lot even if they don't know the history of the literature they like or the names of the notes they play and hear, and that their imperfections as consumers of intercultural communication do not necessarily

render them oblivious to effects of power or to the resonances of hate, hurt, and fear in the cultural creations they enjoy. People are more curious, more ingenious, and more intersubjective than their roles as consumers and citizens acknowledge or allow. Consequently, they often fashion fused subjectivities that incorporate diverse messages about who they are. Often, they make mistakes and they distort what they see and hear. Sometimes they do violence to others by stealing stories and appropriating ideas. But they also display a remarkable ability to find or invent the cultural symbols that they need.

It is important to document the harm done by uncomprehending appropriations of cultural creations, to face squarely the consequences of mistakes in the reception, representation, and reproduction of cultural images, sounds, and ideas. But the biggest mistake of all would be to underestimate how creatively people struggle, how hard they work, and how much they find out about things that people in power never intended for them to know.

Notes

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1. Ronnie Spector (with Vince Waldron), *Be My Baby: How I Survived Mascara, Miniskirts, and Madness or My Life as a Fabulous Ronette* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), 5.
2. *Ibid.*, 1–2.
3. *Ibid.*, 10.
4. Richard Leppert and George Lipsitz, "Everybody's Lonesome for Somebody: Age, Gender, and the Body in the Music of Hank Williams," *Popular Music* 9:3 (October 1990).
5. Spector describes her vocal maneuver as a "yodel," but while it gestures toward the yodeling tradition, it doesn't involve the full form as expressed in the music of yodelers like Elton Britt or Eddie Arnold. Instead, it involves the changes in pitch, impure tones, and instrumentalized-sounding vocals that cowboy singers appropriated from African-American music.
6. See Rosa Linda Fregoso, "Born in East L.A.," *Cultural Studies* 4:3 (October 1990).
7. Lawson Fusao Inada, "Fresno," American Studies Association meetings, Costa Mesa, California, 8 November 1992. Author's notes.
8. Oscar Zeta Acosta, *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 35.
9. Teshome Gabriel, "Every Individual Is a Crowd," presentation at the University of California, San Diego, 12 April 1991.
10. Marty Balin, "Starship Interview," *Trouser Press* (March 1983).
11. "Interview with Harry Gamboa, Jr.," in *Murals: Sparc's Southern California Chicano Mural Documentation Project* (Santa Barbara: University of California, Santa Barbara Library, Special Collections, n.d.), 1.
12. Burton Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 102, 104. Irving Berlin also never learned to read music and preferred to use these hard keys while composing at the piano.



Imagining Los Angeles in the Production of Multiculturalism

LISA LOWE

Ridley Scott's science-fiction thriller film *Blade Runner* (1982) portrays Los Angeles in the year 2019 as a ruined, deteriorating city in postindustrial decay, a grand slum plagued by decaying garbage, dirt, ethnic ghettos, and radioactive rain. In composing this dystopic setting, the film represents L.A. as a pastiche of Third World, and particularly Asiatic, settlements: the storefronts are marked by neon Chinese ideograms, the streets filled with Chinese, Latino, Egyptian, and Cambodian faces. Everyone is talking "cityspeak," which the blade runner Deckard's voice-over narration describes as "a mishmash of Japanese, Spanish, German, French, what-have-you . . . I knew the lingo." Overlooking the city is a "Japanese simulacrum," a huge advertisement that alternates the image of a seductive Japanese woman's face and a Coca-Cola sign, a portentous emblem of future Japanese economic hegemony in the "city of angels."¹ The portrait of L.A. as a metropolis congested with poor Asian, Latino, African, and Arab immigrants projects the future of the First World as the Third World. In *Blade Runner's* version of the twenty-first century, it is no longer necessary to travel out to see "the world"; "the world" has come, and now inhabits, indeed possesses, Los Angeles. At the same time, the film's predominant intrigue—a narrative in which the blade runner Deckard serves the law by hunting down replicants, but ultimately, in fleeing with his replicant lover Rachel, subverts the law that would

maintain the dominance of humans over androids—thematizes and critically opposes the very erasure of differences (the indistinguishability of machines and human beings, of species, race, and economic status) performed by the film's collapse of racial and economic difference in the representation of L.A. as ethnic ghetto. In other words, *Blade Runner's* representation of a Third World invasion of L.A. does not perform a univocal homogenizing of difference, conflict, and otherness, but rather this representation is somewhat contested; the construction of Los Angeles as multicultural dystopia is put into question by the narrative in which Deckard comes to identify with the plight of the subordinated replicants, no longer seeking to kill them, but rather wishing to provide for their escape.

Against *Blade Runner's* gloomy threat of multiculturalism, I wish to pose a more celebratory, but no less problematic, vision of Los Angeles as multicultural metropolis: the city represented in the September 1990 Los Angeles Festival of the Arts. For sixteen days, the festival represented the city as benevolent host to 550 performance events by artists and performers from twenty-one countries of Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America; as with *Blade Runner*, it may not be possible to constitute the festival as a univocal object. Part of the multiplicity of the festival-object is due to the sheer plenitude of performances, the uniqueness of the geography, the impossibility of having been at all sites, in all neighborhoods, at all times. My comments about the festival are directed more at a multiplicity produced by the variety of competing narratives that structured the presentation of events; among the different narratives vying for authority in the festival, I briefly address four, which I term, for convenience, the narratives of authenticity, genealogy, heterogeneity, and opposition. These narratives overlap and conflict, and I propose that it may not serve our inquiry to attempt to reconcile the narratives, or to determine one as dominant; rather, it seems that it is at the sites of conflict and antagonism between these different narratives that we find the most interesting, and most suggestive, moments in the production of multiculturalism.

I will be arguing that although film and festival representations register the increase of immigrant, racial, and ethnic populations in Los Angeles, both images of multiculturalism are problematic; neither topos reckons with the material differentiations of heterogeneous and unequal racial, ethnic, and immigrant communities in Los Angeles (or to extend our scope, in the state of California, where demographers declare that we are nearing a time in which more than 50 percent of the population will be Asian, Latino, African-American, and other "minority" populations). To the degree that

multiculturalism claims to register the increasing diversity of populations, it precisely obscures the ways in which that aesthetic representation is not an analogue for the material positions, means, or resources of those populations; this is not so much a question of posing the figural against the literal, or the metaphorical against an essentialized notion of the "real," as it is a revelation of an undialectical confusion of historically differentiated spheres.² Although the concept of multiculturalism registers the pressures that demographic increases of immigrant, racial, and ethnic populations bring to all spheres, these pressures are registered only partially and inadequately in aesthetic representations; the production of multiculturalism instead diffuses the demands of material differentiation through the homogenization, aestheticization, and incorporation of signifiers of ethnic differences. Multiculturalism levels the important differences and contradictions within and among racial and ethnic minority groups according to the discourse of pluralism that asserts that American culture is a democratic terrain to which every variety of constituency has equal access and in which all are represented, while simultaneously masking the existence of exclusions by recuperating dissent, conflict, and otherness through the promise of inclusion.³ Multiculturalism is central to the maintenance of a consensus that permits the present hegemony, a hegemony that relies on a premature reconciliation of contradiction and on persistent distractions away from the incommensurability of different spheres.⁴ In this sense, the production of multiculturalism at once "forgets"—and in this forgetting, exacerbates—a contradiction between the concentration of capital within a dominant class group and the unattended conditions of a working class increasingly comprised of heterogeneous immigrant, racial, and ethnic groups.⁵

Both *Blade Runner's* and the L.A. Festival's images of multiculturalism are, in a sense, driven by the increased presence of Third World people in Los Angeles; yet where *Blade Runner* produces a dystopic image of a decaying city engulfed, taken over by, Asians, Africans, and Latinos, the L.A. Festival presented the city as an aestheticized utopia of Third World artists. Multiculturalism in the L.A. Festival is represented as a polyvocal symphony of cultures; it is as if the festival's importing of selected "world" artists serves to "innoculate" L.A. against unmanaged "alien" invasions of the sort imagined by Scott's *Blade Runner*. A narrative of authenticity stressed the role of the city as a "curator" whose task was the salvaging and protection of pure cultural objects threatened with extinction in their native lands; this narrative identified originary places and moments of authentic culture (such as the Mayan, Chinese, or Aboriginal), located outside of the city, both temporally

and geographically "other" to the contemporary "fallen" milieu of Los Angeles. This narrative of authenticity surrounded, for example, the presentation of the Kun Opera, exiled from communist China and protected by the city; or the Court Performers from the Yogyakarta Palace of Java, whose performance was described as "the first time a Javanese court ensemble . . . and this range of repertoire, has been seen outside Indonesia"; or the Balinese gamelan players, Maori haka war dancers, and Ecuadoran folk musicians, which the festival described as "resisting the disintegration of their culture in the face of rapidly accelerating westernization of their Pacific homelands." In this sense, "Los Angeles" was constituted as the Western curator/ethnographer who no longer needed to venture out to meet the exotic tribes, because these cultures could now all be brought to Los Angeles.

At the same time that these authentic cultures were constituted as distant and beyond the local sites of Los Angeles, a concomitant genealogical narrative tied L.A. to the ancient Chinese, Mayans, and Aborigines. The program stated, for example: "Seen side by side, a new reality comes clear—that many of the ideas, traditions, and practices of our colleagues are shared by the artists living and working in Los Angeles today . . . the Festival celebrates humanity and the cycles of life: the remembrance of *our* ancestors, *our* hopes for the future." Yet, in conflating Third World artists and the general population of the city, the precise relationship between Okinawan dance and Black gospel music, for example, was "fudged," glossed over. The festival's staging of theater, dance, and music performances from Thailand, China, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Mexico, Central America, Chile, Panama—adjacent to work by artists from within the city of Los Angeles itself—also enunciated to some extent this genealogical narrative pronouncing the identity and continuity of "global" and "local" cultures. The festival program read:

1990. We've arrived at the last decade of our century and it's a new world out there. With 85 languages spoken in the L.A. school system, it turns out that most of that new world is alive and living right here in this city. . . . We are living on the verge of the "Pacific Century." . . .

This is a festival of new stories for a new America existing in a new world. . . . It's a delightful opportunity for Los Angelenos to travel to places where they don't usually go, to feel the presence of the multiple cultures that co-exist in our sprawling city. . . . After all, who owns culture?

Built upon the notion of connecting traditional non-Western cultural performance with the contemporary residents of Los Angeles, the city became a living museum; the Chicano/Latino, Chinese, Japanese, African-American,

Thai, and Korean neighborhoods were opened up as locations for the performances by artists from Mexico, China, Japan, Africa, Thailand, and Korea. These connections foregrounded new contrasts, invented new hierarchies, suggested new cultural mixtures and constellations. And as the final question "After all, who owns culture?" implies, the juxtapositions were aimed at thematizing the shift in hegemonic rule of Western art and culture toward a newly invented syncretism of "Pacific culture." However, the production of multiculturalism as a *representation* of a changing cultural hegemony must be distinguished from shifts in the existing hegemony itself; the synthetic production of multiculturalism unravels, and may be best contested, at the moments when the contradiction between the representational economy of ethnic signifiers on the one hand, and the material economy of resources and means on the other, becomes unavoidably clear. That is, what the claim to "new stories for a new America" made dangerously invisible is that to most African Americans, Asians, or Latinos living and working in Los Angeles today, on the other 349 days of the year it may be very clear indeed *who* "owns" culture: it is pronounced in the official language all must learn to speak; it is declared if you can't afford to buy the garments that you are employed to sew; it is evident if your call to 911 fails to bring emergency assistance to your neighborhood.

Antagonistic to the narratives of authenticity and genealogy—both of which we might say are developmental narratives that depend on notions of continuity, progression, and conversion—was a concurrent narrative of heterogeneity, whose formal characteristic was juxtaposition, pronounced in apparently random contrasts between the ancient and the postmodern, the arts of the street and the arts of the theater, "high" and "low," the Latin and the Asian, the developing worlds and the overdeveloped worlds. A collection of events at Griffith Park one weekend, for example, featured twenty different acts on five simultaneous stage locations in the park: Cambodian singers, Flamenco dancers, Japanese puppet theater, mariachi bands, a Balinese children's choir—all performed at once. In relying on the structure of heterogeneous juxtaposition, this narrative tended to erase the history of each performance, by leveling the nonequivalent statuses of each particular form, genre, and cultural location. Afro-Brazilian dancers, zydeco bands, performances of Aboriginal myths and legends, and Hawaiian hula were all accorded the same relative importance. "Los Angeles" was represented as a postmodern multicultural cornucopia, an international patchwork quilt; while the means of representation were the very uneven, unassimilable differences among these diverse acts, the important signified was a notion of Los Angeles as multi-

cultural spectacle. In the process, each performance tradition was equated with every other, and its meaning leveled and generalized to a common denominator whose significance was the exotic, colorful advertisement of Los Angeles. Despite tensions between the narratives of authenticity, genealogy, and heterogeneity, all of these narratives may risk, in different ways, erasing and occluding the "material" geographies of L.A.; neither topos reckons with the practical relationships between heterogeneous and economically unequal racial, ethnic, and immigrant communities in Los Angeles, a city that is already the home to more people of Mexican descent than any other city outside Mexico, more Koreans than any other city outside Asia, and more Filipinos than any city outside the Philippines. There is a tendency, to varying degrees, to level the important distinctions and contradictions within and among racial and ethnic minority groups according to a pluralism that effectively continues to privilege the centrality of dominant culture. As Hal Foster argues, pluralism promotes a form of tolerance that leaves the status quo unthreatened; the margins are absorbed into the center, the heterogeneous is domesticated into the homogeneous.⁶ It is pluralism's leveling of the material, and not simply aesthetic unevennesses of racial, ethnic, and immigrant cultures, as well as its erasure of exclusions, that I believe risks the depoliticization of multiculturalism. In this sense, it is the productive conflict and irresolution between pluralist and antipluralist narratives that mark, in my view, the most interesting moments of the festival.

Thus, while the aestheticizing and pluralizing tendencies of these narratives are problematic, it also seems clear that none of these narratives monolithically "colonizes" the radically nonequivalent populations and locales each seeks to include and represent; in this sense, the leveling of Asians, Latinos, and African Americans (each itself a contradictory grouping, crossed by differences of language, generation, class, national origin, gender, religion) is also at certain moments challenged by important pressures from resisting, or oppositional, narratives. The oppositional narrative made some use of the juxtapositions from the narrative of heterogeneity, but in the oppositional narrative, the contrasts were inflected differently; attention was drawn to the inequalities between cultural objects by attaching, when possible, the object to some cultural context of production and reception, thereby making the history of the object explicit. For example, narratives of resistance were made possible in the staging of the Thai Likay performers at the Wat Thai Temple in North Hollywood, or in the placement of the African Marketplace near West Central L.A.; that is, these stagings generated interesting connections between cultural performance and

local communities and geography. In this way, a Black American community was attached to African cultural forms in a relationship that was not based on identity, but that was not entirely discontinuous either. In addition, disparate communities were introduced to one another—for example, relationships were articulated between the Thai and gay communities in North Hollywood. Where the narrative of heterogeneity could have juxtaposed and equalized the Korean shaman with mariachi bands, an oppositional narrative worked to attach the Korean shaman to the Korean-American community by staging his arrival in a Korean-American strip mall, suggesting a degree of dialectical relationship between object and community. Yet, ironically, while shamanism has an important history in Korea, many Korean Americans in Los Angeles are Christian, a disjunction occluded by the narrative of heterogeneity.

The eruption of riots in Los Angeles in 1992 following the verdict that freed four white policemen accused of beating a Black man, Rodney King, is a most vivid example of the contradiction between multiculturalism as the representation of the liberal state and the material poverty and disenfranchisement that are the conditions of those represented. Although the U.S. media consistently attempted to construct the riots as a racial conflict between Blacks and Koreans, the looters enraged by the King verdict were not only Blacks, but also Chicanos, Latinos, and working-class whites; all violently objected to the denial of brutally racialized economic stratification. I wish to locate a radical critique of multiculturalism in the 1993 documentary film *Sa-I-Gu* by Christine Choy, Elaine Kim, and Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, which deals with those events.⁷ The film powerfully disrupts a developmental, genealogical narrative that assimilates an ethnic immigrant into the capitalist economy. The very different articulations of the Korean immigrant and Korean-American speakers contradict a notion of the homogeneous authenticity of immigrant groups. Thus, the film radically challenges the liberal myth of pluralist inclusion, both on the level of the speakers' testimonies and in terms of the interrupted, particularist form of the film itself.

Sa-I-Gu collects together heterogeneous interviews with Korean immigrant and Korean-American women speaking about the Los Angeles crisis in the aftermath of the King verdict.⁸ The film is not a narrative, but a series of clips of Korean immigrant workers, shopkeepers, owners of grocery stores, liquor and convenience stores, laundries—women who speak about their losses and their disillusionment. Their testimonies are contradictory, unsynthetic, unhomogeneous. They speak about the lack of support from the Los Angeles Police Department and the National Guard during the up-

risings. They speak about the shock of working long hours in order to eke out a living. They speak about losing sons, husbands, livelihoods, and opportunities. The film opens with an interview with the mother of Edward Jae Song Lee; Lee was shot and died during the crisis when he was mistaken by a store owner for a looter. Her testimony focuses on mourning the loss of her son, as well as her disillusionment with the promises of capitalism, inclusion, and protection by police or government. She says: "At the time, I thought it was one man who shot my son. But if I think broadly, it is not just an individual matter. Something is drastically wrong." Another woman interviewed states: "I would like to express my feeling about this after the riot. Right now I'm angry at everybody. Or on contrary, I'm angry at myself. Because I don't know to whom to where I should be angry at them. I am totally confused, totally confused." The statements of both of these women articulate the desire to grasp an explanation of the convergence of racism and capitalism, as much as their "confusion" attests to the unavailability of this convergence. Indeed, the Los Angeles crisis, in which Korean Americans became the recipients of violent anger that might well have been "better" directed at white capital in other parts of the intensely spatially segregated city, illustrates precisely how a society can mask the interlocking dominations of racism, patriarchy, and capitalism, not only by ideologically constructing multicultural inclusion, but by separating and dividing its objects—as Black youth, as Korean shopkeeper, as Chicana single mother. It is this isolation of objects that contributes to the fragmentation of social life in the advanced capitalist USA, and this isolation likewise contributes to the fragmentation of political organization against the interlocking dominations. The statement of "confusion" at not knowing where to focus blame implies a desire for an explanation for the convergences of dominations; at the same time, it articulates the difficulty of apprehending or seizing more than a fragment of that convergence. If structured domination and oppositional responses to it remain unavailable to groups and individuals, then domination functions and persists precisely through the unavailability of this structure. Multiculturalism is one ideological representation of the liberal imperialist state that enacts that unavailability. In the film *Sa-I-Gu* a powerful particularism—particular griefs, losses, and anger—demystifies multiculturalist inclusion and moves us toward an interrogation of the convergence of dominations of which multiculturalism is the ideological expression and resolution. *Sa-I-Gu* is a radical objection to multiculturalism and a forceful testimony about the conjunction of capitalism with racism and patriarchy in Los Angeles.

Let me conclude by stressing the importance of oppositional narratives

and practices, and by foregrounding their conflicts with the narratives of authenticity, genealogy, and heterogeneity, conflicts that build pressure against the pluralist tendencies of a produced multiculturalism. If we do not stress these oppositions, the geographies and histories of immigrant settlement in Los Angeles are dangerously obscured, segregation of neighborhoods is masked as spatial contiguity, and racial and class violence between groups is aestheticized in a multicultural juxtaposition of ethnic images. Without these tensions, multiculturalism fails to come to grips with the material inequalities and strata of a city like Los Angeles: the separations, unevennesses of opportunity due to different groups' histories of labor, racism, and poverty.³ The narratives of multiculturalism that do not make these connections, or that do not make space for oppositional critiques, risk denuding racial and ethnic groups of their specificity. Subject to the leveling operations of both postmodern pastiche and pluralism, African, Asian, and Latino cultures become all equally other, are metaphorized as all equally different, all whole without contradiction. These narratives, which suppress tension and opposition, suggest that we have already achieved multiculturalism, that we know what it is, that it is defined simply by the coexistence and juxtaposition of greater numbers of diverse groups; these narratives allow us to ignore the profound and urgent gaps, the inequalities and conflicts, among racial, ethnic, and immigrant groups; they let us off the hook. The suggestion that multicultural discourses might ultimately emphasize, rather than domesticate, the productive irresolution, opposition, and conflict of these various narratives is neither a call for chaos nor a return to traditional Western notions of art and high culture. It is rather an assertion that it may be through contradiction that we begin to address the systemic inequalities built into cultural institutions, economies, and geographies, and through conflict that we call attention to the process through which these inequalities are obscured by pluralist multiculturalism.

Notes

1. See Giuliana Bruno, "Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner*," *October* 42 (summer 1987): 61–74.
2. On the relationship between aesthetic culture and material economy, see David Lloyd, "Analogies of the Aesthetic: The Politics of Culture and the Limits of Materialist Aesthetics," *New Formations* (spring 1990): 109–26.
3. On the logic of pluralism in critical discourse, see Ellen Rooney, *Seductive Reasoning: Pluralism as the Problematic of Contemporary Literary Theory* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).
4. Gramsci distinguishes hegemony from the violent imposition of rule and elaborates it as the process through which a particular group gains consent to determine the political, cultural, and ideological character of a state; pluralism elicits the consent of racial and ethnic groups

through the promise of equal participation and equal citizenship. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971). However, Gramsci defines hegemony as always existing within the context of pressures from subaltern groups, pressures that can be articulated into counterhegemonic formations. For further discussion of how Gramsci's concept of hegemony also includes within it the possible challenges by emergent groups, see Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10 (summer 1986); Radha Radhakrishnan's discussion of the Rainbow Coalition in "Towards an Effective Intellectual: Foucault or Gramsci?" in *Intellectuals*, ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990); and Chantal Mouffe, "Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

5. The description of the "forgetting" of differentiated spheres recalls Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis of the "culture industry": "the idea of 'fully exploiting' available technical resources and the facilities for aesthetic mass consumption is part of the economic system which refuses to exploit resources to abolish hunger" (Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming [New York: Seabury Press, 1972], 139). Benjamin comments also on the production of aesthetic culture as distraction: "Distraction as provided by art presents a covert control of the extent to which new tasks have become soluble by apperception. Since, moreover, individuals are tempted to avoid such tasks, art will tackle the most difficult and most important ones where it is able to mobilize the masses. . . . The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one" (Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn [New York: Schocken, 1969], 240-41). However, for Horkheimer and Adorno, the analysis of the "forgetting" of historical differentiation is part of a critique of mass culture as deception and its undermining of society's emancipatory potential, whereas for Benjamin, technology and mass culture do not in themselves lead to deception or appropriation, but can also be means, as with Brecht, of initiating political action (in this, it might be said that Benjamin portends postmodernism's "antiaesthetic" celebration of mass culture, technology, and the crisis of representation, as means of calling attention to the end of the autonomous aesthetic object, a critique of official representations and narratives, and the possibility of deconstructing the order of representation; see Hal Foster on a "postmodernism of resistance" in the introduction to *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* [Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983]). For a very persuasive discussion of the ideological and utopian functions of mass culture, see Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* 1:1 (1979): 130-48.

6. Hal Foster, "The Problem of Pluralism," *Art in America* (January 1982): 9-15.

7. *Sa-I-Gu*, produced by Christine Choy, Elaine Kim, and Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, Cross Current Media (1993); distributed by National Asian American Telecommunications Association, 346 Ninth Street, 2d floor, San Francisco, CA 94103.

8. *Sa-I-Gu*, meaning "4.29" or April 29 (the date of the Rodney King verdicts), alludes to the history of Korean nationalism, by putting the 1992 attack on Korean Americans in the context of other Korean nationalist struggles. Elaine Kim writes in "Home Is Where the Han Is," in *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprisings*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993): "Situated as we are on the border between those who have and those who have not, between predominantly Anglo and mostly African American and Latino communities, from our current interstitial position in the American discourse of race, many Korean Americans have trouble calling what happened in Los Angeles an 'uprising.' At the same time, we cannot quite say it was a 'riot.' So some of us have taken to calling it *sa-i-ku*, April 29, after the manner of naming other events in Korean history—3.1 (*sam-il*) for March 1, 1919, when massive protests against Japanese colonial rule began in Korea; 6.25 (*yook-i-a*), or June 25, 1950, when the

Korean War began; and 4.19 (*sa-il-ku*), or April 19, 1960, when the first student movement in the world to overthrow a government began in South Korea. The ironic similarity between 4.19 and 4.29 does not escape most Korean Americans" (216). I wish to stress that Korean-American nationalism in the aftermath of the L.A. crisis is not a direct transference of Korean nationalism but a discontinuous rearticulation of it that includes the crucial consideration of the racialization of Korean immigrants in the United States as workers of color. For a powerful discussion situating the racialization of racial, ethnic, and immigrant groups in the United States in the negotiation between dominant institutional constructions of race and the political struggles of social movements, see Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York and London: Routledge, 1986).

9. See Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London and New York: Verso, 1990); George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990). Davis's and Lipsitz's works attach the different histories of racial and ethnic communities to neighborhoods, urban history, labor movements, and community practices, and to popular cultural forms such as rap, rock and roll, low-riding, or graffiti.



A Style Nobody Can Deal With Politics, Style, and the Postindustrial City in Hip Hop

TRICIA ROSE

Multiculturalism—no doubt a complex and contested term—often refers to a process of incorporation of marginal groups' contributions into a mainstream or dominant culture. In this context, multiculturalism is pressed into service to highlight and legitimize the contributions of "others" to invisible yet omnipresent cultures of whiteness. Hence, multiculturalist efforts include revisions to the overwhelmingly white male author-based literary canon to include writers and oral masters of color and women, and rewritings of Christopher Columbus that transform him into an agent of imperialism rather than a heroic discoverer. In other words, the "multi" in "multicultural" frequently refers to multiple "others" knocking on a central gate of power.

Although these efforts have been important in challenging cultural and intellectual hierarchies, there are other modes of cultural dialogue that are not as easily seen from this vantage point. In the cases of contemporary popular culture and the diverse communities of young people who create, consume, and propel it, multicultural exchanges develop in several ways, most notably via day-to-day cross-cultural contacts, identification with mass-mediated images, similar cultural traditions, and shared lived experiences of oppression. In this sort of multiculturalism, a variety of groups are engaged in feisty and congenial dialogues that focus not only on resisting and/or cri-

tiquing dominant institutions, but also on developing forms that grow out of intercultural exchanges.

Hip hop continues to be a rich space for the development and exploration of these interactions. Most heavily (but not exclusively) shaped by multiple sources of Afro-diasporic cultural influences and the postindustrial urban New York terrain, hip hop emerges in the mid-to-late 1970s as a form of cultural affirmation and resistance. Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Cuban immigrants—whose musical and cultural traditions have strong ties to the Afro-diaspora—along with other Caribbean Afro-diasporic cultures, such as Jamaicans and Haitians, were especially important actors in the multicultural development of hip hop. No doubt these "multiple others" are knocking at a central gate, but they are also hard at work in communication with each other, building cultural bridges and new identities that affirm and transform cultural traditions in new environments not only for purposes of staking societal claims, but also for pleasure and regeneration.

Life on the margins of postindustrial urban America is inscribed in hip hop style, sound, lyrics, and thematics.¹ Emerging from the intersection of lack and desire in the postindustrial city, hip hop manages the painful contradictions of social alienation and prophetic imagination. Hip hop is an Afro-diasporic cultural form that attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalization, brutally truncated opportunity, and oppression within the cultural imperatives of African-American and Caribbean history, identity, and community. It is the tension between the cultural fractures produced by postindustrial oppression and the binding ties of black cultural expressivity that sets the critical frame for the development of hip hop.²

Worked out on the rusting urban core as a playground, hip hop transforms stray technological parts intended for cultural and industrial trash heaps into sources of pleasure and power. These transformations have become a basis for digital imagination all over the world. Its earliest practitioners came of age at the tail end of the Great Society, in the twilight of America's short-lived federal commitment to black civil rights and during the predawn of the Reagan-Bush era.³ In hip hop, these abandoned parts, people, and social institutions were welded and then spliced together, not only as sources of survival but as sources of pleasure.

Hip hop replicates and reimagines the experiences of urban life and symbolically appropriates urban space through sampling, attitude, dance, style, and sound effects. Talk of subways, crews and posses, urban noise, economic stagnation, static, and crossed signals leap out of hip hop lyrics, sounds and

themes. Graffiti artists spray-painted murals and (name) "tags" on trains, trucks, and playgrounds, claiming territories and inscribing their otherwise contained identities on public property.⁴ Early breakdancers' elaborate technologically inspired street-corner dances involving head spins on concrete sidewalks made the streets theater-friendly and served as makeshift youth centers. The dancers' electric robotic mimicry and identity-transforming characterizations foreshadowed the fluid and shocking effect of morphing, a visual effect made famous in *Terminator 2*. DJs who initiated spontaneous street parties by attaching customized, makeshift turntables and speakers to streetlight electrical sources revised the use of central thoroughfares, made "open-air" community centers in neighborhoods where there were none. Rappers seized and used microphones as if amplification was a life-giving source. Hip hop gives voice to the tensions and contradictions in the public urban landscape during a period of substantial transformation in New York and attempts to seize the shifting urban terrain, to make it work on behalf of the dispossessed.

Hip hop's attempts to negotiate new economic and technological conditions as well as new patterns of race, class, and gender oppression in urban America by appropriating subway facades, public streets, language, style, and sampling technology are only part of the story. Hip hop music and culture also rely on a variety of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American musical, oral, visual, and dance forms and practices in the face of a larger society that rarely recognizes the Afro-diasporic significance of such practices. It is, in fact, the dynamic and often contentious relationship between the two—larger social and political forces and black cultural priorities—that centrally shapes and defines hip hop.

The tensions and contradictions shaping hip hop culture can confound efforts at interpretation by even the most skilled critics and observers. Some analysts see hip hop as a quintessentially postmodern practice, while others view it as a present-day successor to premodern oral traditions. Some celebrate its critique of consumer capitalism, while others condemn it for its complicity with commercialism. To one enthusiastic group of critics, hip hop combines elements of speech and song, of dance and display, to call into being through performance new identities and subject positions. Yet to another equally vociferous group, hip hop merely displays in phantasmagorical form the cultural logic of late capitalism. I intend to demonstrate the importance of locating hip hop culture within the context of deindustrialization and to show how hip hop's primary properties of flow, layering, and

rupture simultaneously reflect and contest the social roles open to urban inner-city youth at the end of the twentieth century.

In an attempt to rescue rap from its identity as postindustrial commercial product and situate it in the history of respected black cultural practices, many historical accounts of rap consider it a direct extension of African-American oral, poetic, and protest traditions, to which it is clearly and substantially indebted. This accounting, which builds important bridges between rap's use of boasting, signifying, preaching, and earlier related black oral traditions, produces multiple problematic effects. First, it reconstructs rap music as a singular oral poetic form that appears to have developed autonomously (e.g., outside hip hop culture) in the 1970s. Quite to the contrary, rap is one cultural element within the larger social movement of hip hop. Second, it substantially marginalizes the significance of rap as *music*. Rap's musical elements and its use of music technology are a crucial aspect of the use and development of the form and are absolutely critical to the evolution of hip hop generally. Finally, and most directly important for this discussion, it renders invisible the crucial role of the postindustrial city on the shape and direction of rap and hip hop and makes it difficult to trace the way hip hop revises and extends Afro-diasporic practices using postindustrial urban materials. Hip hop's styles and themes share striking similarities with many past and contiguous Afro-diasporic musical and cultural expressions; these themes and styles, for the most part, are revised and reinterpreted using contemporary cultural and technological elements. Hip hop's central forms—graffiti, breakdancing, and rap music—developed, in relation to one another, within Afro-diasporic cultural priorities, and in relation to larger postindustrial social forces and institutions.

What are some of the defining aesthetic and stylistic characteristics of hip hop? What is it about the postindustrial city generally and the social and political terrain in the 1970s in New York City specifically that contributes to the emergence and early reception of hip hop? Even as today's rappers revise and redirect rap music, most understand themselves as working out of a tradition of style, attitude, and form that has critical and primary roots in New York City in the 1970s. Substantial postindustrial shifts in economic conditions, access to housing, demographics, and communication networks were crucial to the formation of the conditions that nurtured the cultural hybrids and sociopolitical tenor of hip hop's lyrics and music.

The Urban Context

Postindustrial conditions in urban centers across America reflect a complex set of global forces that continue to shape the contemporary urban metropolis. The growth of multinational telecommunications networks, global economic competition, a major technological revolution, the formation of new international divisions of labor, the increasing power of finance relative to production, and new migration patterns from Third World industrializing nations have all contributed to the economic and social restructuring of urban America. These global forces have had direct and sustained impact on urban job opportunity structures, have exacerbated long-standing racial and gender-based forms of discrimination, and have contributed to increasing multinational corporate control of market conditions and national economic health.⁵ Large-scale restructuring of the workplace and job market had its effects upon most facets of everyday life. It has placed additional pressures on local community-based networks of communication and whittled down already limited prospects for social mobility.

In the 1970s, cities across the country were gradually losing federal funding for social services, information service corporations were beginning to replace industrial factories, and corporate developers were buying up real estate to be converted into luxury housing, leaving working-class residents with limited affordable housing, a shrinking job market, and diminishing social services. The poorest neighborhoods and the least powerful groups were the least protected and had the smallest safety nets. By the 1980s, the privileged elites displayed unabashed greed as their strategies to reclaim and rebuild downtown business and tourist zones with municipal and federal subsidies exacerbated the already widening gap between classes and races.

Given New York's status as hub city for international capital and information services, it is not surprising that these larger structural changes and their effects were quickly and intensely felt in New York.⁶ As John Mollenkopf notes, "during the 1970s, the U.S. system of cities crossed a watershed. New York led other old, industrial metropolitan areas into population and employment decline."⁷ The federal funds that might have offset this process had been diminishing throughout the 1970s. In 1975, President Ford's unequivocal veto to requests for a federal bailout to prevent New York from filing for bankruptcy made New York a national symbol for the fate of older cities under his administration. The New York *Daily News's* legendary headline "Ford to New York: Drop Dead" captured the substance and temperament of Ford's veto and sent a sharp message to cities around the country.⁸

Virtually bankrupt and in a critical state of disrepair, New York City and State administrators finally negotiated a federal loan, albeit one that accompanied an elaborate package of service cuts and carried harsh repayment terms. These dramatic social-service cuts were felt most severely in New York's poorest areas and were part of a larger trend in unequal wealth distribution and were accompanied by a housing crisis that continued well into the 1980s. Between 1978 and 1986, the people in the bottom 20 percent of the income scale experienced an absolute decline in income while the top 20 percent experienced most of the economic growth. Blacks and Hispanics disproportionately occupied this bottom fifth. During this same period, 30 percent of New York's Hispanic households (for Puerto Ricans it is 40 percent) and 25 percent of black households lived at or below the poverty line. Since this period, low-income housing has continued to disappear and blacks and Hispanics are still much more likely to live in overcrowded, dilapidated, and seriously undermaintained spaces.⁹ It is not surprising that these serious trends have contributed to New York's large and chronically homeless population.

In addition to housing problems, New York and many large urban centers faced other major economic and demographic forces that have sustained and exacerbated significant structural inequalities. Although urban America has always been socially and economically divided, these divisions have taken on a new dimension. At the same time that racial succession and immigration patterns were reshaping the city's population and labor force, shifts in the occupational structure away from a high-wage, high-employment economy grounded in manufacturing, trucking, warehousing, and wholesale trade and toward a low-wage, low-employment economy geared toward producer services generated new forms of inequality. Earlier divisions in the city were predominantly ethnic and economic. "New York," Mollenkopf concludes, "has been transformed from a relatively well-off white blue-collar city into a more economically divided, multi-racial white-collar city." This "disorganized periphery" of civil service and manufacturing workers contributes to the consolidation of power among white-collar professional corporate managers, creating the massive inequalities in New York.¹⁰

The commercial imperatives of corporate America have also undermined the process of transmitting and sharing local knowledge in the urban metropolis. Ben Bagdigian's study *The Media Monopoly* reveals that monopolistic tendencies in commercial enterprises seriously constrain access to a diverse flow of information. For example, urban renewal relocation efforts

not only dispersed central-city populations to the suburbs, they also replaced the commerce of the street with the needs of the metropolitan market. Advertisers geared newspaper articles and television broadcasts toward the purchasing power of suburban buyers, creating a dual "crisis of representation" in terms of whose lives and images were represented physically in the paper and whose interests got represented in the corridors of power.¹¹ These media outlet and advertising shifts have been accompanied by a massive telecommunications revolution in the information processing industry. Once the domain of the government, information processing and communication technology now lie at the heart of corporate America. As a result of government deregulation in communications via the breakup of AT&T in 1982, communications industries have consolidated and internationalized. Today, telecommunications industries are global data transmittal corporations with significant control over radio, television, cable, telephone, computer, and other electronic transmittal systems. Telecommunication expansion coupled with corporate consolidation has dismantled local community networks and has irrevocably changed the means and character of communication.¹² Since the mid-1980s, these expansions and consolidations have been accompanied by a tidal wave of widely available communications products, which have revolutionized business and personal communications. Facsimile machines, satellite-networked beepers, cordless phones, electronic mail networks, cable television expansions, VCRs, compact discs, video cameras and games, and personal computers have dramatically transformed the speed and character of speech and written and visual communication.

Postindustrial conditions had a profound effect on black and Hispanic communities. Shrinking federal funds and affordable housing, shifts in the occupational structure away from blue-collar manufacturing and toward corporate and information services, along with frayed local communication patterns, meant that new immigrant populations and the city's poorest residents paid the highest price for deindustrialization and economic restructuring. These communities are more susceptible to slumlords, redevelopers, toxic waste dumps, drug rehabilitation centers, violent criminals, redlining, and inadequate city services and transportation. This also meant that the city's ethnic- and working-class-based forms of community aid and support were growing increasingly less effective against these new conditions.

In the case of the South Bronx, which has been frequently dubbed the "home of hip-hop culture," these larger postindustrial conditions were exacerbated by disruptions considered to be an "unexpected side effect" of a larger, politically motivated "urban renewal" project. In the early 1970s, this

renewal (*sic*) project involved massive relocations of economically fragile people of color from different areas in New York City into parts of the South Bronx. Subsequent ethnic and racial transition in the South Bronx was not a gradual process that might have allowed already taxed social and cultural institutions to respond self-protectively; instead it was a brutal process of community destruction and relocation executed by municipal officials and under the direction of legendary city planner Robert Moses.

Between the late 1930s and the late 1960s Moses executed a number of public-works projects, highways, parks, and housing projects that significantly reshaped the profile of New York City. In 1959, city, state, and federal authorities began the implementation of his planned Cross-Bronx Expressway, which would cut directly through the center of the most heavily populated working-class areas in the Bronx. Although he could have modified his route slightly to bypass densely populated working-class ethnic residential communities, he elected a path that required the demolition of hundreds of residential and commercial buildings. In addition, throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, some sixty thousand Bronx homes were razed. Designating these old blue-collar housing units as "slums," Moses's Title I Slum Clearance program forced the relocation of 170,000 people.¹³ These "slums" were in fact densely populated stable neighborhoods, comprised mostly of working- and lower-middle-class Jews, but they also contained solid Italian, German, Irish, and black neighborhoods. Although the neighborhoods under attack had a substantial Jewish population, black and Puerto Rican residents were disproportionately affected. Thirty-seven percent of the relocated residents were nonwhite. This, coupled with the subsequent "white flight," devastated kin networks and neighborhood services. Between the late 1960s and mid-1970s, the vacancy rates in the southern section of the Bronx skyrocketed. Some nervous landlords sold their property as quickly as possible, often to professional slumlords; others torched their buildings to collect insurance payments. Both strategies accelerated the flight of white tenants into northern sections of the Bronx and into Westchester. Equally anxious shopkeepers sold their shops and established businesses elsewhere. The city administration, touting Moses's expressway as a sign of progress and modernization, was unwilling to admit the devastation that had occurred. Like many of his public-works projects, Moses's Cross-Bronx Expressway supported the interests of the upper classes against the interests of the poor and intensified the development of the vast economic and social inequalities that characterize contemporary New York. The newly "relocated" black and Hispanic resi-

dents in the South Bronx were left with few city resources, fragmented leadership, and limited political power.

The disastrous effects of these city policies went relatively unnoticed in the media until 1977, when two critical events fixed New York and the South Bronx as national symbols of ruin and isolation. During the summer of 1977 an extensive power outage "blackened out" New York and hundreds of stores were looted and vandalized. The poorest neighborhoods (the South Bronx, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, and Crown Heights areas in Brooklyn, the Jamaica area in Queens, and Harlem), where most of the looting took place, were depicted by the city's media organs as lawless zones where crime is sanctioned and chaos bubbles just below the surface. The 1965 blackout, according to the *New York Times*, was "peaceful by contrast," suggesting that the blackout that took place during America's most racially tumultuous decade was no match for the despair and frustration articulated in the blackout of the summer of 1977.¹⁴ The 1977 blackout and the looting that accompanied it seemed to raise the federal stakes in maintaining urban social order. Three months later, President Carter made his "sobering" historic motorcade visit through the South Bronx to "survey the devastation of the last five years," and announced an unspecified "commitment to cities." (Not to their inhabitants?) In the national imagination, the South Bronx became the primary "symbol of America's woes."¹⁵

Following this lead, images of abandoned buildings in the South Bronx became central popular cultural icons. Negative local color in popular film exploited the devastation facing the residents of the South Bronx and used their communities as a backdrop for social ruin and barbarism. As Michael Ventura astutely notes, these popular depictions (and, I would add, the news coverage as well) rendered silent the people who struggled with and maintained life under difficult conditions: "In roughly six hours of footage—*Fort Apache*, *Wolfen* and *Koyaanisqatsi*—we haven't been introduced to one soul who actually lives in the South Bronx. We haven't heard one voice speaking its own language. We've merely watched a symbol of ruin: the South Bronx [as] last act before the end of the world."¹⁶ Depictions of black and Hispanic neighborhoods were drained of life, energy, and vitality. The message was loud and clear: to be stuck here was to be lost. And yet, while these visions of loss and futility became defining characteristics, the youngest generation of South Bronx exiles was building creative and aggressive outlets for expression and identification. The new ethnic groups who made the South Bronx their home in the 1970s began building their own cultural networks, ones that would prove to be resilient and responsive in the age of high technology.

North American blacks, Jamaicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Caribbean people with roots in other postcolonial contexts reshaped their cultural identities and expressions in a hostile, technologically sophisticated, multi-ethnic, urban terrain. While city leaders and the popular press had literally and figuratively condemned the South Bronx neighborhoods and their inhabitants, its youngest black and Hispanic residents answered back.

Hip Hop

Hip hop culture emerged as a source of alternative identity formation and social status for youth in a community whose older local support institutions had been all but demolished along with large sectors of its built environment. Alternative local identities were forged in fashions, language, street names, and most importantly, in the establishment of neighborhood crews or posses. Many hip hop fans, artists, musicians, and dancers continue to belong to an elaborate system of crews or posses. The crew, a local source of identity, group affiliation, and support, appears in virtually all rap lyrics and cassette dedications, music video performances, and media interviews with artists. Identity in hip hop is deeply rooted in the specific, the local experience, and in one's attachment to and status in a local group or alternative family. These crews are new kinds of families forged with intercultural bonds, which, like the social formation of gangs, provide insulation and support in a complex and unyielding environment and may, in fact, contribute to the community-building networks that serve as the basis for new social movements.

The postindustrial city, which provided the context for creative development among hip hop's earliest innovators, shaped their cultural terrain, access to space, materials, and education. Although graffiti artists' work was significantly aided by advances in spray-paint technology, they used the urban transit system as their canvas. Rappers and DJs disseminated their work by copying it on tape-dubbing equipment and playing it on powerful, portable "ghetto blasters." At a time when budget cuts in school music programs drastically reduced access to traditional forms of instrumentation and composition, inner-city youth increasingly relied on recorded sound. Breakdancers used their bodies to mimic "transformers" and other futuristic robots in symbolic street battles. Early Puerto Rican, Afro-Caribbean, and black American hip hop artists transformed obsolete vocational skills from marginal occupations into the raw materials for creativity and resistance. Many of them were "trained" for jobs in fields that were shrinking or that no

longer existed. Graffiti writer Futura graduated from a trade school specializing in the printing industry. But, since most of the jobs for which he was being trained had already been computerized, he found himself working at McDonald's after graduation. Similarly, African-American DJ Red Alert (who also has family from the Caribbean) reviewed blueprints for a drafting company until computer automation rendered that job obsolete. Jamaican DJ Kool Herc attended Alfred E. Smith auto mechanic trade school, while African-American Grand Master Flash learned how to repair electronic equipment at Samuel Gompers vocational high school. (One could say Flash "fixed them alright.") Salt N Pepa (both with family roots in the West Indies) worked as phone telemarketing representatives at Sears while considering nursing school. Puerto Rican breakdancer Crazy Legs began breakdancing largely because his single mother couldn't afford Little League baseball fees.¹⁷ All of these artists found themselves positioned with few resources in marginal economic circumstances, but each of them found ways to become famous as entertainers by appropriating the most advanced technologies and emerging cultural forms. Hip hop artists used the tools of obsolete industrial technology to traverse contemporary crossroads of lack and desire in urban Afro-diasporic communities.

Stylistic continuities were sustained by internal cross-fertilization between rapping, breakdancing, and graffiti writing. Some writers, such as black American Phase 2, Haitian Jean-Michel Basquiat, Futura, and black American Fab Five Freddy, produced rap records. Other writers drew murals that celebrated favorite rap songs (e.g., Futura's mural *The Breaks* was a whole car mural that paid homage to Kurtis Blow's rap of the same name). Breakdancers, DJs, and rappers wore graffiti-painted jackets and T-shirts. DJ Kool Herc was a graffiti writer and dancer before he began playing records. Hip hop events featured breakdancers, rappers, and DJs as triple-bill entertainment. Graffiti writers drew murals for DJs' stage platforms and designed posters and flyers to advertise hip hop events. Breakdancer Crazy Legs, founding member of the Rock Steady Crew, describes the communal atmosphere between writers, rappers, and breakers in the formative years of hip hop: "Summing it up, basically going to a jam back then was [about] watching people drink, [break]dance, compare graffiti art in their black books. These jams were thrown by the [hip hop] DJ. . . it was about piecing while a jam was going on."¹⁸ Of course, sharing ideas and styles is not always a peaceful process. Hip hop is very competitive and confrontational; it fosters both resistance to and preparation for a hostile world that denies and denigrates young people of color. Breakdancers often fought other

breakdance crews out of jealousy, writers sometimes destroyed murals, and rapper and DJ battles could break out in fights. Hip hop remains a never-ending battle for status, prestige, and group adoration that is always in formation, always contested, and never fully achieved. Competitions among and cross-fertilization between breaking, graffiti writing, and rap music were fueled by shared local experiences and social position and similarities in approaches to sound, motion, communication, and style among hip hop's Afro-diasporic communities.

As in many African and Afro-diasporic cultural forms, hip hop's prolific self-naming is a form of reinvention and self-definition.¹⁹ Rappers, DJs, graffiti artists, and breakdancers all take on hip hop names and identities that speak to their roles, personal characteristics, expertise, or "claim to fame." DJ names often fuse technology with mastery and style: DJ Cut Creator, Jazzy Jeff, Spindarella, Terminator X Assault Technician, Wiz, and Grand Master Flash. Many rappers have nicknames that suggest street smarts, coolness, power, and supremacy: L. L. Cool J (Ladies Love Cool James), Kool Moe Dee, Queen Latifah, Dougie Fresh (and the Get Fresh Crew), D-Nice, Hurricane Gloria, Guru, MC Lyte, EPMD (Erick and Parrish Making Dollars), Ice-T, Ice Cube, Kid-N-Play, Boss, Eazy-E, King Sun, and Sir Mix-A Lot. Other names serve as self-mocking tags or critique society, such as Too Short, The Fat Boys, SiWs (Security of the First World), The Lench Mob, NWA (Niggas With Attitude), and Special Ed. The hip hop identities for breakdancers like Crazy Legs, Wiggles, Frosty Freeze, Boogaloo Shrimp, and Headspin highlight their status as experts known for special moves. Taking on new names and identities offered "prestige from below" in the face of limited legitimate access to forms of status attainment.

In addition to the centrality of alternative naming, identity, and group affiliation, rappers, DJs, graffiti writers and breakdancers claim turf and gain local status by developing new styles. As Dick Hebdige's study on punk illustrates, style can be used as a gesture of refusal, or as a form of oblique challenge to structures of domination.²⁰ Hip hop artists use style as a form of identity formation that plays on class distinctions and hierarchies by using commodities to claim the cultural terrain. Clothing and consumption rituals testify to the power of consumption as a means of cultural expression. Hip hop fashion is an especially rich example of this sort of appropriation/critique via style. Exceptionally large "chunk" gold and diamond jewelry (usually "fake") mocks yet affirms the gold fetish in Western trade; "fake" Gucci and other designer emblems, which are cut up and patch-stitched to jackets, pants, hats, wallets, and sneakers in custom shops, work

as a form of sartorial warfare (especially when "fake" Gucci-covered b-boys and b-girls brush past Fifth Avenue ladies adorned by the "real thing"). Hip hop's late 1980s fashion rage—the large plastic (alarm?) clock worn around the neck over leisure/sweat suits—suggested a number of contradictory tensions between work, time, and leisure. Early 1990s trends—oversized pants and urban warrior outer apparel, as in "hoodies," "snooties," "tims," and "triple fat" goose-down coats—make clear the severity of the urban storms to be weathered and the saturation of disposable goods in the crafting of cultural expressions.²¹ As an alternative means of status formation, hip hop style forges local identities for teenagers who understand their limited access to traditional avenues of social status. Fab Five Freddy, an early rapper and graffiti writer, explains the link between style and identity in hip hop and its significance for gaining local status:

You make a new style. That's what life on the street is all about. What's at stake is honor and position on the street. That's what makes it so important, that's what makes it feel so good—that pressure on you to be the best. Or to try to be the best. To develop a new style nobody can deal with.²²

Styles "nobody can deal with" in graffiti, breaking, and rap music not only boost status and elevate black and Hispanic youth identities, they also articulate several shared approaches to sound and motion that are found in the Afro-diaspora. As black filmmaker and cultural critic Arthur Jafa has pointed out, stylistic continuities between breaking, graffiti style, rapping, and musical construction seem to center around three concepts: *flow*, *layering*, and *ruptures in line*.²³ In hip hop, visual, physical, musical, and lyrical lines are set in motion, broken abruptly with sharp, angular breaks, and yet sustain motion and energy through fluidity and flow. In graffiti, long winding, sweeping, and curving letters are broken and camouflaged by sudden breaks in line. Sharp, angular, broken letters are written in extreme italics, suggesting forward or backward motion. Letters are double and triple shadowed in such a way as to illustrate energy forces radiating from the center—suggesting circular motion—and yet the scripted words move horizontally.

Breakdancing moves highlight flow, layering, and ruptures in line. Popping and locking are moves in which the joints are snapped abruptly into angular positions. And, yet, these snapping movements take place in one joint after the preceding one—creating a semiliquid effect that moves the energy toward the fingertip or toe. In fact, two dancers may pass the popping energy force back and forth between each other via finger-to-finger contact, setting off a new wave. In this pattern, the line is a series of angular breaks

and yet sustains energy and motion through flow. Breakers double each other's moves (like line shadowing or layering in graffiti), intertwine their bodies into elaborate shapes, transforming the body into a new entity (like camouflage in graffiti's wild style), and then, one body part at a time, revert to a relaxed state. Abrupt, fractured, yet graceful footwork leaves the eye one step behind the motion, creating a time-lapse effect that not only mimics graffiti's use of line shadowing, but also creates spatial links between the moves that give the foot series flow and fluidity.²⁴

The music and vocal rapping in rap music also privileges flow, layering, and ruptures in line. Rappers speak of flow explicitly in lyrics, referring to an ability to move easily and powerfully through complex lyrics, as well as of the flow in the music.²⁵ The flow and motion of the initial bass or drum line in rap music is abruptly ruptured by scratching (a process that highlights as it breaks the flow of the base rhythm) or the rhythmic flow is interrupted by other musical passages. Rappers alternately stutter and race through passages, always moving within the beat or in response to it, often using the music as a partner in rhyme. These verbal moves highlight lyrical flow and points of rupture. Rappers layer meaning by using the same word to signify a variety of actions and objects; they call out to the DJ to "lay down a beat," which it is expected will be interrupted, ruptured. DJs layer sounds literally one on top of the other, creating a dialogue between sampled sounds and words.

What is the significance of flow, layering, and rupture as demonstrated on the body and in hip hop's lyrical, musical, and visual works? Interpreting these concepts theoretically, it can be argued that they create and sustain rhythmic motion, continuity, and circularity via flow; accumulate, reinforce, and embellish this continuity through layering; and manage threats to these narratives by building in ruptures that highlight the continuity as they momentarily challenge it. These effects at the level of style and aesthetics suggest affirmative ways in which profound social dislocation and rupture can be managed and perhaps contested in the cultural arena. Let us imagine these hip hop principles as a blueprint for social resistance and affirmation: create sustaining narratives, accumulate them, layer, embellish, and transform them. But also be prepared for rupture, find pleasure in it, in fact, *plan on* social rupture. When these ruptures occur, use them in creative ways that will prepare you for a future in which survival will demand a sudden shift in ground tactics.

While accumulation, flow, circularity, and planned ruptures exist across a wide range of Afro-diasporic cultural forms, they do not take place outside

of capitalist commercial constraints. Hip hop's explicit focus on consumption has frequently been mischaracterized as a movement *into* the commodity market (e.g., hip hop is no longer "authentically" black if it is for sale). Instead, hip hop's moment(s) of "incorporation" are a shift in the already existing relationship hip hop has always had to the commodity system. For example, the hip hop DJ frequently produces, amplifies, and revises already recorded sounds; rappers prefer high-end microphones; and both invest serious dollars for the speakers that can produce the "phattest" beats. Graffiti murals, breakdancing moves, and rap lyrics often appropriate and sometimes critique verbal and visual elements and physical movements from popular commercial culture, especially television, comic books, and karate movies. If anything, black style through hip hop has contributed to the continued blackening of mainstream popular culture. The contexts for creation in hip hop are never fully outside or in opposition to commodities; they involve struggles over public space and access to commodified materials, equipment, and products. It is a common misperception among hip hop artists and cultural critics that during the early days, hip hop was motivated by pleasure rather than profit, as if the two were incompatible. Yet, it would be naive to think that breakdancers, rappers, DJs, and writers were never interested in monetary compensation for their work. The problem was not that they were uniformly uninterested in profit; rather, many of the earliest practitioners were unaware that they could profit from their pleasure. Once this link was made, hip hop artists began marketing themselves wholeheartedly. Just as graffiti writers hitched rides on the subways and used its power to distribute their tags, rappers "hijacked" the market for their own purposes, riding the currents that were already out there, not just for wealth but for empowerment. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the market for hip hop was still based inside New York's black and Hispanic communities. So, although there is an element of truth to this common perception, what is more important about the shift in hip hop's orientation is not its movement from precommodity to commodity but the shift in control over the scope and direction of the profit-making process, out of the hands of local black and Hispanic entrepreneurs and into the hands of larger white-owned, multinational businesses. And, most important, although black cultural imperatives are obviously deeply affected by commodification, these imperatives are not in direct opposition to the market, nor are they "irrelevant" to the shape of market-produced goods and practices.

Hebdige's work on the British punk movement identifies this shift as the moment of incorporation or recuperation by dominant culture and per-

ceives it to be a critical element in the dynamics of the struggle over the meaning(s) of popular expression. "The process of recuperation," Hebdige argues, "takes two characteristic forms . . . one of conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) into mass-produced objects and the 'labelling' and redefinition of deviant behavior by dominant groups—the police, media and judiciary." Hebdige astutely points out, however, that communication in a subordinate cultural form, even prior to the point of recuperation, usually takes place via commodities, "even if the meanings attached to those commodities are purposefully distorted or overthrown." And so, he concludes, "it is very difficult to sustain any absolute distinction between commercial exploitation on the one hand and creativity/originality on the other."²⁶

Hebdige's observations regarding the process of incorporation and the tension between commercial exploitation and creativity as articulated in British punk is quite relevant to hip hop. Hip hop has always been articulated via commodities and engaged in the revision of meanings attached to them. Conversely, hip hop signs and meanings are converted and behaviors relabeled by dominant institutions. Graffiti, rap, and breakdancing are fundamentally transformed as they move into new relations with dominant cultural institutions.²⁷ In 1996, rap music is one of the most heavily traded popular commodities in the market, and yet it still defies total corporate control over the music, its local use, and its incorporation at the level of stable or exposed meanings.

These transformations and hybrids reflect the initial spirit of rap and hip hop as an experimental and collective space where contemporary issues and ancestral forces are worked through simultaneously. Hybrids in rap's subject matter, not unlike its use of musical collage, and the influx of new, regional, and ethnic styles have not yet displaced the three points of stylistic continuity to which I referred earlier; approaches to flow, ruptures in line, and layering can still be found in the vast majority of rap's lyrical and musical construction. The same is true of the critiques of the postindustrial urban American context and the cultural and social conditions it has produced. Today, the South Bronx and South Central are poorer and more economically marginalized than they were ten years ago.

Hip hop emerges from complex cultural exchanges and larger social and political conditions of disillusionment and alienation. Graffiti and rap were especially aggressive public displays of counterpresence and voice. Each asserted the right to write²⁸—to inscribe one's identity on an environment that seemed Teflon-resistant to its young people of color, an environment that made legitimate avenues for material and social participation inaccessi-

ble. In this context, hip hop produced a number of double effects. First, themes in rap and graffiti articulated free play and unchecked public displays, and yet the settings for these expressions always suggested existing confinement.²⁹ Second, like the consciousness-raising sessions in the early stages of the women's movement and the black power movement of the 1960s and 1970s, hip hop produced internal and external dialogues that affirmed the experiences and identities of the participants and at the same time offered critiques of larger society that were directed to both the hip hop community and society in general.

Out of a broader discursive climate in which the perspectives and experiences of younger Hispanics, Afro-Caribbeans, and African Americans had been provided little social space, hip hop developed as part of a cross-cultural communication network. Trains carried graffiti tags through the five boroughs; flyers posted in black and Hispanic neighborhoods brought teenagers from all over New York to parks and clubs in the Bronx, and eventually to events throughout the metropolitan area; and, characteristic of communication in the age of high-tech telecommunications, stories with cultural and narrative resonance continued to spread at a rapid pace. It was not long before similarly marginalized black and Hispanic communities in other cities picked up on the tenor and energy in New York hip hop. Boom boxes in Roxbury and Compton blasted copies of hip hop mix tapes made on high-speed portable dubbing equipment by cousins from Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn. The explosion of local and national cable programming of music videos spread hip hop dance steps, clothing, and slang across the country faster than brush fire. Within a decade, Los Angeles County (especially Compton), Oakland, Detroit, Chicago, Houston, Atlanta, Miami, Newark and Trenton, Roxbury, and Philadelphia had developed local hip hop scenes that linked (among other things) various regional postindustrial urban experiences of alienation, unemployment, police harassment, and social and economic isolation to their local and specific experience via hip hop's language, style, and attitude.³⁰ Regional, and increasingly national, differences and syndications in hip hop have been solidifying and will continue to do so. In some cases these differences are established by references to local streets and events, neighborhoods and leisure activities, preferences for dance steps, clothing, musical samples, and vocal accents. At the same time, cross-regional syndicates of rappers, writers, and dancers fortify hip hop's communal vocabulary. In every region, hip hop articulates a sense of entitlement and takes pleasure in aggressive insubordination. Like Chicago and Mississippi blues, these emerging regional hip hop identities affirm the

specificity and local character of cultural forms as well as the larger stylistic forces that define hip hop and Afro-diasporic cultures.

Developing a style nobody can deal with—a style that cannot be easily understood or erased, a style that has the reflexivity to create counter-dominant narratives against a mobile and shifting enemy—may be one of the most effective ways to fortify communities of resistance and simultaneously reserve the right to communal pleasure. With few economic assets and abundant cultural and aesthetic resources, Afro-diasporic youth have designated the street as the arena for competition and style as the prestige-awarding event. In the postindustrial urban context of dwindling low-income housing, a trickle of meaningless jobs for young people, mounting police brutality, and increasingly draconian depictions of young inner-city residents, hip hop style is black urban renewal.

Notes

This essay is adapted from Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1994).

1. I have adopted Mollenkopf and Castells's use of the term "postindustrial" as a means of characterizing the economic restructuring that has taken place in urban America over the past twenty-five years. By defining the contemporary period in urban economies as postindustrial, Mollenkopf and Castells are not suggesting that manufacturing output has disappeared, nor are they adopting Daniel Bell's formulation that "knowledge has somehow replaced capital as the organizing principle of the economy." Rather, Mollenkopf and Castells claim that their use of postindustrial "captures a crucial aspect of how large cities are being transformed: employment has shifted massively away from manufacturing toward corporate, public and nonprofit services; occupations have similarly shifted from manual workers to managers, professionals, secretaries and service workers" (John Mollenkopf and Manuel Castells, eds., *Dual City: Restructuring New York* [New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1991], 6). Similarly, these new postindustrial realities entailing the rapid movement of capital, images, and populations across the globe have also been referred to as "post-Fordism" and "flexible accumulation." See David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988). For an elaboration of Bell's initial use of the term, see Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

2. My arguments regarding Afro-diasporic cultural formations in hip hop are relevant to African-American culture as well as Afro-diasporic cultures in the English- and Spanish-speaking Caribbean, each of which has prominent and significant African-derived cultural elements. While rap music, particularly early rap, is dominated by English-speaking blacks, graffiti and breakdancing were heavily shaped and practiced by Puerto Rican, Dominican, and other Spanish-speaking Caribbean communities that have substantial Afro-diasporic elements. (The emergence of Chicano rappers takes place in the late 1980s in Los Angeles.) Consequently, my references to Spanish-speaking Caribbean communities should in no way be considered inconsistent with my larger Afro-diasporic claims. Substantial work has illuminated the continued significance of African cultural elements to cultural production in both Spanish- and English-speaking nations in the Caribbean. For examples, see Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Ivan G. Van Sertima,

They Came before Columbus (New York: Random House, 1976); and Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit* (New York: Random House, 1983).

3. See Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).

4. In hip hop, the train serves both as means of interneighborhood communication and as a source of creative inspiration. Big Daddy Kane says that he writes his best lyrics on the subway or train on the way to producer Marly Marl's house. See Barry Michael Cooper, "Raw Like Sushi," *Spin* (March 1988): 28. Similarly, Chuck D claims that he loves to drive, that he would have been a driver if his rapping career hadn't worked out. See Robert Christgau and Greg Tate, "Chuck D All over the Map," *Village Voice*, Rock 'n' Roll Quarterly 4:3 (fall 1991).

5. See John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), especially pp. 12–46, for a discussion of larger twentieth-century transformations in U.S. cities throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s. See also Mollenkopf and Castells, *Dual City*; Michael Peter Smith and Joe R. Feagin, eds., *The Capitalist City: Global Restructuring and Community Politics* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Michael Peter Smith, ed., *Cities in Transformation: Class, Capital and the State* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1984); and Saskia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital: A Study in International Investment and Labor Flow* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

6. I am not suggesting that New York is typical of all urban areas, nor that regional differences are insignificant. However, the broad transformations under discussion here have been felt in all major U.S. cities, particularly New York and Los Angeles—hip hop's second major hub city—and critically frame the transitions that, in part, contributed to hip hop's emergence. In the mid-1980s, very similar postindustrial changes in job opportunities and social services in the Watts and Compton areas of Los Angeles became the impetus for Los Angeles's gangsta rappers. As Robin Kelley notes: "The generation who came of age in the 1980s was the product of devastating structural changes in the urban economy that date back at least to the late 1960s. While the city as a whole experienced unprecedented growth, the communities of Watts and Compton faced increased economic displacement, factory closures, and an unprecedented deepening of poverty. . . . Developers and city and county government helped the suburbanization process along by cutting back expenditures for parks, recreation, and affordable housing in inner city communities" (Robin D. G. Kelley, "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics," in *Race Rebels: Politics and the Black Working Class* [New York: Free Press, 1994], 192). See also Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future of Los Angeles* (London and New York: Verso, 1990).

7. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 213.

8. Frank Van Riper, "Ford to New York: Drop Dead," *Daily News*, 30 October 1975: 1.

9. Philip Weitzman, "'Worlds Apart': Housing, Race/Ethnicity and Income in New York City," Community Service Society of New York (CSS) (1989). See also Terry J. Rosenberg, "Poverty in New York City: 1980–1985," CSS (1987); Robert Neuwirth, "Housing after Koch," *Village Voice*, 7 November 1989: 22–24.

10. Mollenkopf and Castells, *Dual City*, 9. See also Parts II and III of the collection, which deal specifically and in greater detail with the forces of transformation, gender, and the new occupational strata.

11. Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987). Despite trends toward the centralization of news and media sources and the fact that larger corporate media outfits have proven unable to serve diverse ethnic and racial groups, a recent study on New York's media structure in the 1980s suggests that a wide range of alternative media sources serve New York's ethnic communities. However, the study also shows that black New Yorkers have been less successful in sustaining alternative media channels. See Mitchell Moss and Sarah Ludwig, "The Structure of the Media," in Mollenkopf and Castells, *Dual City*, 245–65.

12. See Tom Forester, *High-Tech Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), and Herbert

Schiller, *Culture, Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

13. Similar strategies for urban renewal via "slum clearance" demolition took place in a number of major metropolises in the late 1960s and 1970s. See Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, especially chapter 4, which describes similar processes in Boston and San Francisco.

14. Robert D. McFadden, "Power Failure Blacks Out New York; Thousands Trapped in Subways; Looters and Vandals Hit Some Areas," *New York Times*, 14 July 1977: A1; Lawrence Van Gelder, "State Troopers Sent into City as Crime Rises," *New York Times*, 14 July 1977: A1; Charlayne Hunter-Gault, "When Poverty Is Part of Life, Looting Is Not Condemned," *New York Times*, 15 July 1977: A4; Selwyn Raab, "Ravage Continues Far into Day; Gunfire and Bottles Beset Police," *New York Times*, 15 July 1977: A1; "Social Overload," *New York Times*, editorial, 22 July 1977: A22.

15. Lee Dembart, "Carter Takes 'Sobering' Trip to South Bronx," *New York Times*, 6 October 1977: A1; Richard Severo, "Bronx a Symbol of America's Woes" *New York Times*, 6 October 1977: B18; Joseph P. Fried, "The South Bronx USA: What Carter Saw In New York City Is a Symbol of Complex Social Forces on a Nationwide Scale," *New York Times*, 7 October 1977: A22.

16. Michael Ventura, *Shadow Dancing in the USA* (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher Press, 1986), 186. Other popular films from the late 1970s and early 1980s that followed suit included 1990: *The Bronx Warriors* and *Escape from New York*. This construction of the dangerous ghetto is central to Tom Wolfe's 1989 best-seller and the subsequent film *Bonfire of the Vanities*. In it, the South Bronx is constructed as an abandoned, lawless territory from the perspective of substantially more privileged white outsiders.

17. Interviews by the author with all artists named except Futura, whose printing trade school experience was cited in Steve Hager, *Hip Hop: The Illustrated History of Breakdancing, Rap Music, and Graffiti* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 24. These artist interviews were conducted for my book on rap music entitled *Black Noise*.

18. Interview by the author with Crazy Legs, November 1991. "Piecing" means drawing a mural or masterpiece.

19. See Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Gates's suggestion that naming be "drawn upon as a metaphor for black intertextuality" is especially useful in hip hop where naming and intertextuality are critical strategies for creative production (see pp. 55, 87).

20. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979). See especially pp. 17–19, 84–89.

21. "Hoodies" are hooded jackets or shirts, "snooties" are skullcaps, and "tims" are Timberland brand boots.

22. Nelson George et al., eds., *Fresh: Hip Hop Don't Stop* (New York: Random House, 1985), 111.

23. Although I had isolated some general points of aesthetic continuity between hip hop's forms, I did not identify these three crucial organizing terms. I am grateful to Arthur Jafa, who shared and discussed the logic of these defining characteristics with me in conversation. He is not, of course, responsible for any inadequacies in my use of them here.

24. For a brilliant example of these moves among recent hip-hop dances, see *Reckin' Shop in Brooklyn*, directed by Diane Martel (Epoch Films, 1992).

25. Some examples of explicit attention to flow are exhibited in Queen Latifah's "Ladies First": "Some think that we can't flow, stereotypes they got to go"; Big Daddy Kane's "Raw": "Intro I start to go, my rhymes will flow so"; and Digital Underground's "Sons of the P": "Release your mind and let your instincts flow, release your mind and let the funk flow" (later, they refer to themselves as the "sons of the flow").

26. Hebdige, *Subculture*, 94–95.

27. Published in 1979, Hebdige's *Subculture* concludes at the point of dominant British culture's initial attempts at incorporating punk. My project examines the points of incorporation and responses that come after the initial moment of incorporation to which Hebdige's study is devoted.

28. See Duncan Smith, "The Truth of Graffiti," *Art & Text* 17: 84-90.

29. For example, Kurtis Blow's "The Breaks" (1980) was both about the seeming inevitability and hardships of unemployment and mounting financial debt and the sheer pleasure of "breaking it up and down," of dancing and breaking free of social and psychological constrictions. Regardless of subject matter, elaborate graffiti tags on train facades always suggest that the power and presence of the image is possible only if the writer has escaped capture.

30. See Bob Mack, "Hip-Hop Map of America," *Spin*, June 1990.



Annotated Bibliography

DARRYL B. DICKSON-CARR

As the myriad essays in this volume have demonstrated, the concept we know as "multiculturalism" has many different interpretations and manifestations. Its place in the evolution of global economics and politics is widely debated; as a result, information about how and where we may find examples of multiculturalism is relatively easy to find. On the other hand, discussions of the *origins* of multiculturalism are much less common. Where such discussions are found, scholars of race and ethnicity are locked in debate over where and when multiculturalism first found a foothold in sociopolitical consciousness. I refer the reader to the Introduction to this volume for one history of the concept.

This bibliography does not attempt to cover the entire history of the term multiculturalism or its antecedents and variants. That effort would require a bibliography easily several times the size of this one, and could only serve to overwhelm the reader with confusing choices. Rather, this bibliography surveys a selection of the more prescient and salient documents that explore the basic (and occasionally far more complicated) terms of the debate on multiculturalism and its social purposes. The categories that divide the bibliography are designed to touch upon those areas in American culture where different understandings of multiculturalism have been contested and (to one degree or another) implemented. Furthermore, the texts listed offer a sam-

pling of some of the most common places where different brands of multiculturalism (ranging from corporate "diversity management" training to educational guidelines) are currently found and have been found over the last twenty-five years.

What becomes readily apparent as one surveys the resources listed here is that most discussants of multiculturalism or racial and ethnic matters are making serious attempts to achieve a semblance of social justice, whether that justice be achieved in the political, social, or economic arenas, or at least to make living and working communities appear more egalitarian. In the vast majority of these cases, the authors of a given book or article view *education* as the key to sociopolitical equity for a given racial or ethnic group. This education may take the form of education in the public school system, a university education, or a (re)orientation with the needs of racial/ethnic employees and business partners in the workplace.

Since education is the basic key to multiculturalism's success or failure in the public domain, it might be expected that the most abundant category for materials on multiculturalism is "Multiculturalism in Primary and Secondary Education." This is the area where ideas and discussions of multiculturalisms caused the least anguish and produced the most extensive work. Many of these works are direct or distant descendants of the integration-oriented civil rights era, during which, at least initially, the most pressing issue for politicians and educators was intelligent enforcement of school desegregation. As the civil rights movement became more complicated, however, educators began to perceive that inequities in schools and educational quality were the result not only of segregation but also of prejudices that teachers and administrators may have held against students of color and of the absence of a school system where people of color could have control of their own schools. The latter turned out to be a more radical notion of restructuring the school system, but the former has been served very well by the articles listed here, in which authors frequently demonstrate the many ways that educators have been biased against their constituencies and suggest methods for overcoming or correcting those biases.

As physical desegregation became a slightly more tangible reality in American schools, educators (particularly educators of color) began to reassess the means of making children from disenfranchised racial groups as well as their white counterparts feel more comfortable with one another and with their peers' histories, since the lessons in children's formative years regarding racial, ethnic, and other social matters are probably the most thoroughly entrenched. The period extending from the early 1970s through the

mid-1980s saw a wealth of books and articles on multicultural education that attempted to encourage the changes in education already noted; in recent years (when the debate on multiculturalism has escalated) this wealth has become a veritable flurry. The reader, however, should be aware that most of the work on multicultural education seeks the common end of providing an education sensitive to the cultural situation of children of color. More often than not, differences occur in the strategy for attaining an egalitarian educational system rather than in the general goal itself. This does not mean, though, that it is not necessary to read a variety of texts to understand what needs to be set in motion for multiculturalism to succeed; not all of the strategies mentioned earlier are equally applicable to all parts of the populace, and most could use the supplementary views of alternative texts. In fact, the wisest reading strategy would be to pick texts from different periods (for example, one from the early 1970s, one from later in the decade, one from the early 1980s, and so on), inasmuch as it is helpful to review approaches that may have been discarded in favor of less controversial ideas.

Of further note should be the fact that even multicultural education at the public school level has come under fire in recent years, though not nearly to the degree that its cousin at the college level has. The idea of revising the manner in which colleges teach and hire (and, by extension, *who* they teach and hire and *what* they teach, as well as *how* they teach it) is one of never-ending debate, but the racial portion of this debate began to simmer in the late 1960s (especially at such campuses as Berkeley, the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Howard), when students and professors (many of color) registered some of the first demands for Black Studies and Chicano/Latino Studies departments and courses. Such demands had enormous implications, since the country's universities are generally considered training grounds and test labs for ideas that could affect the rest of the nation. Appropriately, then, the category of "Multiculturalism in Higher Education" signals a tenuous link between the topics of primary education and the others, inasmuch as it covers teaching methods, policy, educational opportunities, and hiring at the university level. A few of the authors that have worked on multiculturalism in primary schools have contributed to discussions of university policy and pedagogy (most notably Donna M. Gollnick). But by and large, the scholars writing about these areas tend not to exchange ideas. Perhaps one reason for this separation of resources is that the most sincere and widespread concern for making American institutions reflect the composition and needs of all levels of the nation's population has reached the university primarily within the last decade. In that time, educa-

tors have made penetrating observations and studies of the university environment and its potential for enacting multicultural policies. Central to the incorporation of multiculturalism into university policies and practices is the issue of affirmative action in all its permutations. Although most of the texts under the higher education rubric touch upon this issue along the way, it is one that needs further exploration, since affirmative action is perhaps the most divisive (and therefore the most crucial) component in the multiculturalism debate occurring within academia's halls.

In fact, multiculturalism-oriented policies in American universities have provided more grist for the antimulticulturalism mill than they have at any other societal level. It should come as no surprise, then, that most of the entries under "The Multiculturalism Debates" focus on the university. These articles or essays represent the more staunchly rhetorical, and (in some cases) even demagogic, voices concerned with American racial matters, especially those that emerged within the last decade in the forefront of the debates. We have culled most of these articles and books from the more "mainstream" portion of the mass media, such as newsmagazines or the more popular academic journals. Within these publications, the multiculturalism debate has engendered the most widespread attention (or notoriety), to say nothing of generating considerable heat. A substantial number of these polemics, however, are in want of serious historical scholarship, whether they be for or against multiculturalism. A curious facet of the debate waged in the popular press is an unsettling tendency for antimulticultural critics to lump multiculturalism in the same camp with Afrocentrism or other ethnocentric theories, even if those theories have demonstrated a marked aversion to being truly multicultural (that is, to looking at history from multiracial points of view). Not unlike the resistance to the physical integration of African Americans into the mainstream university environment, the anti-multiculturalism approach in the polemics marks a stubborn and often poorly thought-out resistance to, even a backlash against, the integration of ideas fostered by African Americans. This trend is especially problematic insofar as the American public is led to believe that the work of Afrocentrists, whether right or wrong, is synonymous with multiculturalism, and this frequently leads to a rejection of multiculturalism at all levels of society, including primary and secondary education. These articles and their authors will probably continue to produce the most controversial statements and wield the greatest influence on public opinion as scholars continue to debate multiculturalism.

A less discussed, though no less essential, area of the multiculturalism

phenomenon is "Multiculturalism in the Corporate World." One of the central demands of virtually all social protest movements, such as those that preceded and emerged from the activism of the 1960s, has been for jobs, or equal access to jobs, for oppressed groups. As the social, racial, and class dynamics of both the United States and the world in the 1960s transformed into those of the 1970s and 1980s, private corporations began to adjust their business policies to accommodate some of the demands and needs of a racially shifting labor pool, one that began to include significantly more African, Asian, and Latino Americans. Given the reluctance of the American workforce to include these groups in everyday operations, corporations were forced, whether by the government or from within, to make greater efforts to cope with a slightly more diverse workforce. These coping mechanisms, however, were and are not necessarily intended to be more inclusive corporate policies; rather, many of them are intended to defuse conflicts within the workforce, to enforce an artificial peace. Additionally, "diversity management" texts generally do not provide much more than cursory histories of corporate multiculturalism. Rather, they tend to act as instructional "textbooks" for implementing specific management methods. And pursuant to those goals, numerous authors (many of whom are full-time consultants) have produced volumes that explain these methods in incredible detail for managers of all levels in order to make their intra- and interbusiness relations run more smoothly through cultural awareness. Notable authors in this vein include Farid Elashmawi, Pierre Casse, and Muriel James. Of further note should be the recent publication dates of these authors' works. "Diversity management" is a relatively young development under the multiculturalism rubric, one that has yet to be extensively interrogated and explored.

On the other hand, the topic of "Multiculturalism in the Humanities," not unlike "The Multiculturalism Debates," has been extensively mined by academics. Given the fact that the focus of pro- and antimulticulturalism discourse has been on considerations of canonicity in literature, curriculum, and program structures in the university and of the infusion of divergent politics into everyday life on the American campus, it makes sense that those academic disciplines most apt to call for and extend these discourses should produce numerous texts on multiculturalism. Most of the works placed under this category fill considerable numbers of pages discussing, undermining, and revising the notion of multiculturalism or complicated issues of race tangential to the current debate. Very few, however, engage the logistical issues of *pedagogy* with the kind of rigor that Betty E. M. Ch'maj's

Multicultural America does. The predominant trend, instead, is to review the past and current policies and politics of integrating different definitions and practices of multiculturalism into the classroom. Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s collection of essays reviewing the controversy over canonicity offers a fair summary of the pedagogical issues on the American campus, while Reginald Martin's interview of author and scholar Ishmael Reed provides an insight into a definition of multiculturalism in the early 1980s. Additionally, the entire January-February 1992 issue of *Change* magazine includes some of the most insightful and practical histories and applications of multicultural pedagogy produced since the controversy around the term arose. Many scholars in this category have formulated their perspectives from different kinds of race theory, which, instead of discussing what multiculturalism might mean or how it might be practiced in general, revolve around *specific* racial and/or ethnic groups and question the very idea of "race" and its history as a social and political concept. Unfortunately, many serious race theorists (and the articles we have culled from them) are ensconced in ethnic or racial studies departments (and journals or presses), such as Black/African-American Studies, Asian-American Studies, or Chicano/Latino Studies programs and departments, which may prevent their work from receiving its due notice from the rest of the scholarly community. Additionally, many of these volumes have been produced within the last few years. This phenomenon is partially attributable to the fact that scholars of race and ethnicity have only recently begun to discuss the relation of racial histories to the concept of multiculturalism.

"Multiculturalism in Society and Public Policy," while a relatively short list, is as important as the education-oriented areas. Here, the majority of texts center on how federal, state, and local agencies and institutions might be able to address the problems that are endemic to particular racial or ethnic groups in the United States. Legislative bodies, welfare systems, the legal profession, and other forms of public social organization find themselves increasingly burdened with demands to accommodate the needs of different social or racial groups that cannot be covered through "blanket" measures. The reaction to this demand takes the form of increased study of the economic and political conditions that lead to certain groups' difficulties with navigating bureaucratic institutions. Such texts as Clausen and Bermingham's *Pluralism, Racism, and Public Policy* or Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States* help to delimit some of the general issues facing public policymakers. The remainder of the texts in this

area, however, tackle more specific institutions and problems, the selection of which shall be left to the reader.

As the reader begins to pick and choose among these numerous rubrics, s/he will notice that the tone of the arguments, as well as the intentions of the proponents and opponents of multiculturalism, shift considerably between areas. For example, the sorts of issues at stake in implementing multiculturalism at the university level tend to be much more complex, or at least more acrimonious, than those at the primary educational level. This is not to say that one is somehow less important than the other by virtue of being less fraught. But whereas the primary and secondary levels are often concerned with pedagogical methods that accommodate a diverse general populace, the college and university levels are often concerned with diminishing resources, whether financial, cultural, ideological, or otherwise, for which a few impassioned groups must continually struggle. One of the principal concerns of corporate multiculturalism, on the other hand, is maintaining control of a potentially and practically volatile workforce.

So when, therefore, we encounter the term multiculturalism at any point in general public discourse or within these texts, we must force ourselves to consider the social realm in which the term appears. To transfer the same sorts of sociopolitical considerations from one area where they have full validity to another could prove to be disastrous and confusing. Although it is simultaneously true that some common ground exists between the various areas, such as the calls for education or affirmative action mentioned earlier, the relationships between each become more complicated beyond these few common points. Only by undertaking thorough and particularistic inquiries into the many uses of the concept and practice of multiculturalism could we discern to what degree it not only is working but *could* work with our support.

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few of the more problematic antimulticulturalism articles and discusses their considerable leaps of logic and lack of proof. Interestingly, Willie is pretty polemical himself, especially at the end of the article, when he makes a very rough transition from his discussion of multiculturalism to political correctness.

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- for Definition" (cultural pluralism and the social scene); (2) "Psychological Background" (how acceptance or rejection of cultural pluralism is acculturated in the United States); (3) "Curriculum Development" (implications of cultural pluralism for curriculum reform). Most of the articles have extensive charts, tables, and graphs to help support their claims.
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Index

COMPILED BY MARTIN L. WHITE

- ABC Fashions (Los Angeles), 332–33
- academy, the (the university): American Indian studies, 49–63; Asian American overrepresentation, 263; Black Studies, 71; Chicano Studies, 362, 363; and class struggle, 328–29; conflict between economic globalization and cultural state affecting, 36; curriculum designers as Euro-Americans, 57; Ethnic Studies, 58, 59, 230, 362, 363; Gender Studies, 58; humanities, 449–50; medical school admission, 113n.77; multiculturalism in, 30, 68–72, 74, 362–63, 447–48; power served by, 120–21, 123n.24; Stanford University, 76, 86–87; University of California, Berkeley, 87; University of California, Davis, 229–31, 235n.38; University of California, Santa Barbara, 87; Western civilization and, 120; Women's Studies, 16n.14, 59, 102, 362; working class absent among debaters of, 318
- Acosta, Oscar Zeta, 408–9
- actually existing socialism, 346, 348–49, 360
- Adorno, Theodor, 350–51, 422n.5
- affirmative action, 105, 106, 114n.77, 183, 448
- African Americans (Blacks): and American Indians, 71; as Americans, 65; and Asian Americans, 47, 244, 263, 273; "black" as a racial category, 179; Black male prison population, 72; Black nationalism, 99–101; Black Power, 99–101, 112n.68; Black soldiers at Dachau and Buchenwald, 116–17; Black Studies, 71; Black women and the warrior ethos, 72–73; Carmichael (Kwame Toure), 100, 101; culture's significance for, 169; disproportionate suffering from economic restructuring, 372; female-headed families among, 384n.40; feminists of color, 103; Ford's use of, 168; gangs associated with, 241; group opportunity called for by, 175; hip hop, 425, 426, 438, 440; and the homogenization process for immigrants, 174; inner-city males, 314, 364–65; IQ controversy, 139; Jackson, 166n.30; in Los Angeles riots, 419; as major American racial grouping, 1; Malcolm X, 43, 346; middle-class flight among, 364; in the military,

- 74; as monitored minority, 240–41; Newton, 99; and New York's decline, 429, 431; as an outlaw group, 73; poverty rate in California, 368; rap music, 427; resistance to ideas fostered by, 448; slavery, 26, 41, 71, 117; state practices regarding, 26; stereotypes in popular culture, 405; treatment while serving in World War II, 277; trial of Du Soon Ja, 238–52; two Americas for, 94–95; as an underclass, 364–68; values about work, 364; working poor, 366. *See also* civil rights movement
- Afro-Caribbeans, 425, 426, 440
- Afrocentrism, 90, 91, 93, 111n.40, 448
- Alarcón, Norma, 210
- Albuquerque, 375–80
- Altwater, Elmar, 347–49, 352
- Amariglio, Jack, 349
- American Creed, 7–8
- American Indian Movement (AIM), 54
- American Indians: African Americans and, 71; Bering Strait theory, 62n.8; boarding school system, 52–53, 209; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 51, 54–55, 62n.14; certification of identity, 54–55, 62n.13; children as translators for, 209; Civilization Fund, 52; colonization and Indian education, 50–54; and Columbus Quincentenary, 222–23; Cornplanter, 50–51; decolonization to precede multiculturalism for, 49–50; distortions and bias in scholarship on, 53–54; ethnic cleansing of, 26; as an ethnic minority, 56; genocide of, 209; Indigenism, 50, 60–61; intellectualism of, 57–58; as major American racial grouping, 1; Malintzin, 209, 210; pending enrollments, 55; politicized reemergence of, 27; politics of Indian identity, 54–56; in Portillo's *Mirrors of the Heart*, 193–95; public school education mandated for, 54; as a race, 53, 62n.8; stereotypes in popular culture, 405; treaties understood as bilateral by, 51
- American Indian Studies, 49–63; multiculturalism and Indigenism in, 56–61
- Americanization, 84, 168–69
- Anglo-Saxon stock, 84–85
- antidiscriminatory law, 168
- antiessentialism, 20, 104–5, 113n.75, 134
- antimiscegenation laws, 27, 272, 273
- antiracism, 3–4, 8
- Anzaldúa, Gloria, 130–31, 132, 135, 137, 138
- apparel industry (garment industry): in Albuquerque, 376; in China, 335–38, 345; commodity chain in, 305, 331–32; globalization of, 345; in Hong Kong, 333–35, 345; in Macau, 338–40; mobility of, 326; retailing, 320; subminimum wage workforce in, 298; in Vietnam, 340–45. *See also* Los Angeles garment industry
- Arendt, Hannah, 127–30, 137
- Argentina, 191–93
- Arkansas, 275–79
- Asian Americans, 263–94; and African Americans, 47, 244, 263, 273; anti-Asian violence, 289; Asian Indians, 27, 181; associations of, 283; attempted exclusion of, 27; civil rights movement's effect on, 282; elitism among activists, 283; Filipino Americans, 27, 180, 270–73, 394–95; in the Heartland, 283–88; immigration restrictions on women, 369; as intermediate racial category, 246; Laotian (Hmong) refugees, 285–88; as major American racial grouping, 1; marriage rules, 273; as model minority, 243–44, 245–46, 283; new immigrants, 283; in New Orleans, 270–73; Orientalism, 243, 246; overrepresentation in higher education, 263; politicized reemergence of, 27; poverty rate in California, 368; racialization of, 180; stereotypes in popular culture, 243–44, 405; two Americas for, 94–95; Vietnam War and, 289; women in the popular imagination, 271. *See also* Chinese Americans; Japanese Americans; Korean Americans
- Asian Indians, 27, 181
- assimilation: American culture of, 173; Americanization, 84, 168–69; as antipluralist, 81; assimilationism distinguished from, 80; people of color not improving their lives through, 108; of white ethnics, 109n.15; whites opposing assimilation of people of color, 95
- assimilationism, 80–83; American melting

- pot as, 88; choice between individual and group identity forced by, 96–97; cultural pluralism and, 77–78, 80–86, 95; Kallen's attack on, 83–86; multiculturalism and, 1, 87, 108; as pillar of conservative cultural rule, 107–8; three main features of, 80–81
- assimilationist pluralism, 81, 88, 90
- Astorga, Marta, 377–80
- Atlantic Richfield, 168
- automation, 300
- "Aztec Myth of Creation, The" (Portillo), 195
- Bakke v. Regents of the University of California*, 114n.77
- Balin, Marty, 409–10
- Barrington, Ill., 280–81
- Bass, Leon, 117
- Bering Strait theory, 62n.8
- Beauvoir, Simone de, 128
- Beiderbecke, Bix, 410–11
- Benjamin, Walter, 350–51, 404, 422n.5
- Bennett, Veronica (Ronnie Spector), 405–7
- biculturalism, 95
- Black Power, 99–101, 112n.68
- Blacks. *See* African Americans
- Black Studies, 71
- Blade Runner* (Scott), 413–14, 415
- Bloom, Allan, 119, 120
- boarding school system, 52–53, 209
- Born in East L.A.* (Marin), 407
- Bracero Program, 205
- Bradshaw, Thornton, 168
- breakdancing, 426, 433, 434–35, 436–37, 439, 441n.2, 444n.29
- Breul, Birgit, 351, 353, 354, 355, 357
- Britain, 44–45, 149, 346, 354
- British Commonwealth, 94
- Brookings Institute, 355
- Brother Rice High School (Chicago), 178–79
- Buchanan, Pat, 184
- Buchenwald, 117
- Buckley, William F., 119
- Bumiller, Kristin, 167–68
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), 51, 54–55, 62n.14
- Burtanog sisters, 271–73
- California: Bakke case, 114n.77; Compton, 440, 442n.6; Encinitas, 260; "Light Up the Border" campaign, 259; in national myths of the West, 204, 208–9; poverty rates in, 368; Proposition 187, 146; San Diego, 253–62; "Save Our State" initiative, 366; Stanford University, 76, 86–87; University of California, Berkeley, 87; University of California, Davis, 229–31, 235n.38; University of California, Santa Barbara, 87; white panic in, 146; whites as percentage of population, 181, 414; Wilson, 366. *See also* Los Angeles
- California Apparel Mart (Los Angeles), 310–11
- "California look," 311
- Callari, Antonio, 349
- Camp Shelby, 275, 276, 277, 278
- Canada, 45, 94
- capitalism: appearing color-blind, 313; automation, 300; centrifugal capitalism and centripetal culture, 28–30; class struggle, 300, 320, 324, 328–29; corporate multiculturalism, 41, 45–46; deindustrialization, 28, 426–27; as fostering the mobility to integrate ethnic groups, 86; incentive, 356; individual powerlessness in face of, 158; industrial, 298–300, 305, 306–7, 313; Marxist critique of, 22–24; Marx on crisis in, 351, 359–60; multiculturalism co-opted by, 329; multiculturalism in social logic of late, 19; multicuture of capitalism in Los Angeles, 309–13; new directions in global capitalism, 297–316; new identity formations expanding with, 21; new tools for crushing labor, 323; otherness and, 350; politicized identity and, 151; politics and the market, 355, 356; postfordist flexibility of, 31, 306–7; postindustrial, 301–9, 425, 427–28, 430, 441n.1; race and gender used by, 318; racism and, 313, 319, 346, 347, 420; state capitalism, 346, 349; state involvement in interests of, 154; strikes, 300, 306, 323; the subject of, 349–50; underconsumption, 300, 308–9. *See also* economic globalization; labor; privatization
- Carby, Hazel, 175
- Carmichael, Stokely (Kwame Toure), 100, 101
- Casañeda, Alfredo, 96, 99
- Catholics, 169, 171

- Chan Is Missing* (Wang), 407–8
 Cheney, Lynne, 8, 16n.16, 111n.41, 119, 121
 Chicago, 279–83, 363–64
 Chicanas/Chicanos. *See* Mexican Americans
 Chicano Studies, 362, 363
 child labor, 320
 children as translators. *See* translation
 China, 297, 313, 333, 335–38, 345
 Chinese Americans: on Asian Indians, 181; asserting identity as Asian Americans, 180; attempted exclusion of, 27; stereotypes of, 243–44; work as social focus of immigrants, 171
 Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, 27
 Choi, Chang Y., 268–69
 “Chola” (Portillo), 197
 Choy, Christine, 419
 Churchill, Ward, 57, 60
 Civilization Fund, 52
 civil rights movement: accomplishments and failures of, 183; as altering the state’s racializing strategies, 27; Asian Americans affected by, 282; Krauthammer on civil rights community, 8; the state as tolerating, 30
 class: class consciousness in America, 176; classless culture, 172–74; class relations more difficult to disentangle in global capitalism, 319; class struggle, 300, 320, 324, 328–29; and gender, 43, 103, 319; in global capitalism, 298, 317–29; in Los Angeles garment industry, 319–22; and multiculturalism, 40–48, 317–18; and race, 43, 44, 65, 173, 319; social stratification, 98; as system of exploitation, 318; treated as a kind of identity, 318
 class struggle, 300, 320, 324, 328–29
 color blindness: capitalism appearing color-blind, 313; in due process, 93; in governmental decision making, 240; not being color-blind required to understand groups in American history, 90; in race trends of 1970s and 1980s, 3; white indifference to racialized dimension of institutional neutrality, 89
 Columbus, Christopher, 424
 Columbus (Colón) Quincentenary, 215–37; Chicanas and Chicanos and, 226–27, 228; Latin American protests against, 222–23; Spanish-language articles on, 218–27
 commodities, 22–24
 commodity chains, 305, 331–32
 commodity fetishization, 23
 common culture: cultural diversity and, 91; cultural particularism and cultural pluralism on, 46; multiculturalism as reprise of, 4–5; seen as defense against excessive difference, 8–9. *See also* core culture
 communication, intercultural, 403–12
 Compton, Calif., 440, 442n.6
 conditional residents, 370, 384n.47
 Connolly, William, 158, 165n.2, 165n.8
 conservative populism, 30
 constant capital, 298, 299, 300
 constructed subject, 131
 core culture: the American creed and, 7–8; in assimilationism, 80; cultural difference transcended by, 91; cultural pluralism opposing, 84; Nash on, 90; separatism rejected by, 93. *See also* common culture
 Complanter, 50–51
 correctional system, 41–42, 71–73
 Cross-Bronx Expressway, 431
 Cuban Americans, 372, 425
 cultural autonomy, 4–5
 cultural diversity: backlash against, 103–4; common culture and, 91; multiculturalism acknowledging, 1, 6–7; multiculturalism maintaining superficially, 44; resting on political unity, 92; Western civilization and, 120. *See also* diversity management
 cultural interaction, 90, 92–93
 cultural nationalism, 99–101
 cultural particularism, 46
 cultural pluralism: assimilationism and, 77–78, 80–86, 95; and common culture, 46, 84; defined, 111n.45; in Du Bois, 109n.5; Kallen on, 83–86; multiculturalism as, 108–9; multicultural pluralism, 95–96; and nationalism in Black Power, 101; and political parity, 105–7; new supremacists on, 86–89
 cultural politics of difference, 138–46
 cultural racism, 84–85, 88–89, 169
 cultural war, 184, 204–5

- culture: American culture of assimilation, 173; biculturalism, 95; centrifugal capitalism and centripetal culture, 28–30; children as translators of, 201–14; classless culture, 172–74; commercial, 403, 404; commodification of, 167; cultural autonomy, 4–5; cultural fragments as new sites of concreteness, 25; cultural interaction, 90, 92–93; cultural nationalism, 99–101; cultural parity, 86, 88, 90, 92–93; cultural particularism, 46; cultural politics of difference, 138–46; cultural racism, 84–85, 88–89, 169; culture industry, 422n.5; economic globalism versus the cultural state, 26–28, 37; intercultural communication, 403–12; multiculturalism and the production of, 387–444; multiculturalism’s cultural turn, 78–79; mistakes in understanding other peoples’, 403–12; as not politically neutral, 47; and politics in multiculturalism, 6–7, 9; popular, 403–12, 424; as psychosocial currencies, 32; state influence on, 71–72; in the workplace, 168–72. *See also* common culture; core culture; cultural diversity; cultural pluralism
 culture industry, 422n.5
 culture of poverty, 73, 79, 364, 366, 367
 Cureton, Ette, 87
 “Curriculum of Inclusion, A” (New York State), 87
 Dachau, 116–17
 Daewoo’s Vietnam factories, 343–45
 Davis, Ray, 114n.80
 deindustrialization, 28, 426–27
 del Castillo, Adelaida, 210
 Deloria, Vine, Jr., 51, 60
 democracy: in American Creed, 7–8; appropriation of, 70–71. *See also* liberal democracy
 democratic pluralism, 96
 deregulation: economic, 28; social, 28–30
 Derrida, Jacques, 128, 129, 133–34
Después del Terremoto (Portillo), 187, 189–91, 197
différance, 128, 129, 134, 137
 differential consciousness, 136–37, 187
 differential racism, 33
 disappeared, the, 191–93
 disciplinary power, 154, 155–56, 158
 diversity management: in corporate multiculturalism, 41; multiculturalism as, 5–6; seen as response to excessive local control, 9; by the state, 31; texts on, 449
 Dominicans, 425, 441n.2
 drug economy, 72–73
 drywallers’ strike, 323
 D’Souza, Dinesh, 116, 119, 120, 121
 Du Bois, W. E. B., 109n.5
 Duke, David, 184
 Duluth, Minn., 285–88
 Durazo, Maria Elena, 325
 Duschene, Marlys, 57
 Du Soon Ja, 238–52
 Duster, Troy, 83
 East Germany. *See* German Democratic Republic
 economic deregulation, 28
 economic globalization: American cities affected by, 428; in apparel industry, 345; cheap labor driving, 301; class relations made more difficult to disentangle, 319; the class question in global capitalism, 298, 317–29; differential effects of, 372; GATT and NAFTA, 326; globalizing and localizing forces in, 304; global multinational corporatism, 38n.11; multiculturalism in context of, 19; new directions in global capitalism, 297–316; race, ethnicity, and gender in global capitalism, 313–14; and the state, 26–28, 37, 301; stripping away liberal democracy’s vision of society, 36–37; in telecommunications industry, 430
 economic recession, global, 309
 educational system: balkanization in, 179; colonization and Indian education, 50–54; after desegregation, 446–47; multiculturalism in, 42, 76, 94–98, 446–47; public school education mandated for American Indians, 54; toleration, pluralism, and diversity encouraged in, 32. *See also* academy, the
 egalitarianism: building from multiculturalism toward, 37; in liberal democratic ideology, 32–33; and liberty in liberal-

- ism, 157; in multiculturalism, 36. *See also* equality
- elections, race card in, 184
- Ellington, James Ernest, 278, 279
- Encinitas, Calif., 260
- English language, 184
- Enlightenment, the, 20, 128
- equality: in American Creed, 7–8; assimilationism militating against demands for, 81; cultural parity, 86, 88, 90, 92–93; cultural pluralism and political parity, 105–7; equity as a primary principle of multiculturalism, 108; and freedom in liberalism, 157; as identity for Kallen, 84; inequality, 24, 79, 322. *See also* egalitarianism
- Espiritu, Yen, 180
- essentialism: antiessentialism, 20, 104–5, 113n.75, 134; in Enlightenment rationalism, 20; essentializing on basis of race and female body, 131; in nationalisms, 104; ontologization of difference and, 133; and politics, 36; Portillo as an essentialist, 193; poststructuralist avoidance of, 22; in resistant texts of minoritized populations, 134
- ethnicity: and class struggle, 328; dominant society's redefinition of, 8; ethnic coalitions, 5–6, 9, 405; ethnic cultures in the workplace, 169–72; ethnicizing of labor, 298, 309; ethnic pluralism, 109n.15; function of in America, 173–74, 175; in global capitalism, 298, 313–14; New York media resources for ethnic communities, 442n.11; occupational identity replaced by, 176; panethnicity, 103, 180–81, 183; and race, 174; revival of, 175–76; social-science views about, 173; Steinberg's iron law of, 92; used as cover for economic dominance, 168; white ethnics compared to people of color, 95
- Ethnic Studies, 58, 59, 230, 362, 363
- European Americans (whites): Anglo-Saxon stock, 84–85; anomie among, 173; antiessentialist understandings of white-majority institutions, 105; assimilation of people of color opposed by, 95; assimilation of white ethnics, 109n.15; cohesion in other groups feared by, 175; crisis of white identity, 181–83; as defining model minorities, 240; as designers of the academic curriculum, 57; female-headed families among, 384n.40; flight from South Bronx, 431; German Americans, 169–70, 431; Greek Americans, 170; Hungarian Americans, 170; Irish Americans, 171, 431; Italian Americans, 170, 171, 431; in Los Angeles riots, 419; as major American racial grouping, 1; minority critique of nationalism rejected by, 99; neutral institutions as pro-white, 81, 89; Newton on, 99; as panethnic group, 183; Polish Americans, 169–70; poverty rate in California, 368; racialization of, 181–83; "white" as term of self-identity, 179; white bias in medical school admission, 113n.77; white ethnics compared with people of color, 95; whiteness as cultural, 79; working poor, 366. *See also* Western culture
- existentialism, 128
- Fagin, Steve: completed works of, 402; *The Machine That Killed Bad People*, 389–402
- family: Asian marriage rules, 273; family values, 363, 365–66, 369, 381; female-headed, 369, 384n.40; household clusters, 374; nuclear, 370, 381, 383n.36
- Fanon, Frantz, 121, 132–33, 169
- farmworkers: diversity among, 373; Tejana, 205–7, 210–11
- feminism: and class struggle, 328; essentialism in, 104; feminists of color, 103; film criticism of, 187; Habermas and, 145; ontologization of difference and, 133; socialist, 103; universalized concept of woman in, 129; U.S. Third World feminism, 135–36, 187
- fetishization, 22, 23
- Filipino Americans, 27, 180, 270–73, 394–95
- flexibility, 31, 306–7
- Ford, Henry, 168
- Fortune Cookies: In Search of Asian America* (Tajima), 263–94
- Frankfurt School, 346, 348–49
- Fraser, James W., 6

- Frederick II, Duke of Hessen-Kassel, 118
- "Fresno" (Inada), 408
- fundamentalism, 44–45
- Fuss, Diane, 131, 134
- FuWah Garment Factory (China), 336–38
- Gadamer, H. G., 143
- Galarza, Ernesto, 208
- Gamboa, Harry, Jr., 410
- Gap, the, 307, 320–21, 335
- Garment Workers' Justice Centers (Los Angeles), 326
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., 90
- GATT, 326
- gay and lesbian movement, 103
- gender: capitalist use of, 318; class and, 43, 103, 319; and class struggle, 328; and culture, 79; division of labor by, 376; in global capitalism, 313–14; in Marxism, 24; and multiculturalism, 40–48; patriarchy, 420; and poverty among Latinos, 368; and race, 43, 103, 133. *See also* homosexuals; women
- Gender Studies, 58
- German Americans, 169–70, 431
- German Democratic Republic (GDR), 346–61; economic depression in, 350; the economy as essentially without value, 353–54; privatization, 352–55, 357, 361n.11; racism in, 358–59; skilled labor in, 351; Treuhandaanstalt, 352–55, 361n.11; women's status in, 357–58; the workers having to change, 355, 356
- German unification, 346–61
- "Germany for the Germans," 358
- Gilder, George, 15n.1
- Gitlin, Todd, 91, 111n.37
- global economic recession, 309
- globalization, economic. *See* economic globalization
- Gordon, Milton, 96
- graffiti writing, 433, 434, 436, 439–40, 441n.2
- Gramsci, Antonio, 23, 38n.7, 421n.4
- Grant, Carl A., 98, 111n.42
- "Great Multicultural Debate, A" (Nash), 89
- Greek Americans, 170
- Greenberg, Stanley, 181–82
- group identification, 85, 96–97, 168, 175
- group life, 85, 88, 92
- group rights, 101
- Habermas, Jürgen, 139, 142, 143, 144–46
- Hackney, Sheldon, 8–9
- Hall, Stuart, 140, 149, 150
- Hamilton, Charles V., 100, 101, 112n.68
- Hanchard, Michael, 64–65
- Harlins, Latasha, 238–52
- Hattiesburg, Miss., 275, 277
- Heartland, the (Midwest), 283–88
- Hebdige, Dick, 435, 438–39
- hegemony, 415, 421n.4
- Hemphill, Lowry, 208
- Hernández, Inés, 210
- hip hop, 424–44; Afro-diasporic cultural influences in, 425, 435, 441n.1; break-dancing, 426, 433, 434–35, 436–37, 439, 441n.2, 444n.29; as competitive and confrontational, 434–35; crews and posses, 433; as a cross-cultural communication network, 440; deindustrialization as context of, 426–27; experiences of urban life replicated in, 425–26; explicit focus on consumption, 438; fashion, 435–36; flow, layering, and ruptures in line in, 436–38; graffiti writing, 433, 434, 436, 439–40, 441n.2, 444n.29; hip hop culture, 433–41; as an identity, 433, 436; incorporation into dominant culture, 438–39; multicultural interactions in, 425; national expansion of, 440; rap music, 427, 434, 437, 439–40, 441n.2; regional identities, 440–41; self-naming in, 435; South Bronx as home of, 430; style in, 435–38; and subway trains, 440, 442n.4, 444n.29; tensions and contradictions in, 426; urban context of, 428–33
- Hispanic Americans. *See* Latino Americans
- Hispanidad, La*, 226, 227, 233n.9
- historical subject, 38n.7
- history, 35, 160–61
- History, National Standards for the Teaching of United States, 89, 111n.41
- Hmong (Laotian) refugees, 285–88
- Holiday, Billie, 43
- Hollinger, David A., 107
- homosexuals: gay and lesbian movement, 103; lesbians, 134, 367; liberalism's strategies regarding, 153; Queer Nation, 103
- Hong Kong, 333–35, 345

- Horkheimer, Max, 346, 422n.5
 Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE), 323, 325
 household clusters, 374
 humanities, 449–50
 Hungarian Americans, 170
 Huntington, Samuel, 30
- identity: class treated as a kind of, 318; crisis of white identity, 181–83; disappearance of sources of, 174, 175–76; as fluid, 194; group identification, 85, 96–97, 168, 175; hip hop as, 433, 436; identity-in-difference, 127, 129, 133, 136; politicized, 149–66; race as fundamental organizing principle of, 179; transnational, 217, 228; “white” as term of, 179. *See also* identity formations; identity politics
- identity formations: expanding with capitalism, 21; as insufficient to ensure greater forms of collective engagement, 37; new formations emerging, 34; paradox of late twentieth-century, 150; reification of, 31; as social hieroglyphics, 25–26, 31; and subject-in-process, 137
- identity-in-difference, 127, 129, 133, 136
- identity politics: and class struggle, 328; as dominant political expression of the age, 163; essentialism and, 104; historical context of, 152; lesbian endorsement of, 134; multiculturalism as more than, 32, 33–34; stalemated argument regarding, 151
- illegal aliens, 254, 257–61
- immigration, 184, 205, 273–74, 327
- Inada, Lawson Fusao, 408
- incentive, 356
- Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, 62n.13
- Indians, American. *See* American Indians
- Indians, Asian, 27, 181
- Indigenism, 50, 60–61
- individualism: in assimilationist pluralism, 90; as civil religion, 23; group life and, 88; liberal democracy as individualist, 96; and universalism in liberalism, 153
- Indonesia, 303–4, 305, 309
- industrial capitalism, 298–300, 305, 306–7, 313
- industrial districts, 305–6, 312
- inequality, 24, 79, 322
- information technology, 301, 304, 307, 430
- Inouye, Daniel, 55
- intercultural communication, 403–12
- International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), 323, 326, 327
- IQ, 139
- Irigaray, Luce, 130–31, 134
- Irish Americans, 171, 431
- Italian Americans, 170, 171, 431
- Jackson, Jesse, 166n.30
- “Jambalaya” (song), 405, 406
- Japan, 308, 309, 313, 345
- Japanese Americans: in American military in World War II, 275, 277; asserting their identity as Asian Americans, 180; attempts to exclude, 27; internment camps, 265, 275–79; political evolution of the Nisei, 282; as a success story, 244
- Jefferson, Thomas, 50, 121
- Jews, 312, 321, 431
- John Paul II (pope), 220, 234n.13
- Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1928, 54
- Jones, Lisa, 5
- Jordan, Michael, 303
- Justice for Janitors campaign, 323, 327
- Kafka, Franz, 130
- Kallen, Horace, 83–86, 97
- Karlin, Judge Joyce A., 238–52
- Kelly School (Carlsbad, Calif.), 258
- Kim, Elaine, 419, 422n.5
- Kimball, Roger, 87
- Kim-Gibson, Dai Sil, 419
- King, Rodney, 29, 115n.88, 146, 392, 419–20, 422n.5
- Kochiyama, Bill and Yuri, 275–79
- Korean Americans: asserting identity as Asian Americans, 180; attempts to exclude, 27; and Los Angeles riots, 419–20, 422n.5; as model minority, 240–41, 243–44, 245; Park brothers in Seattle, 290–92; trial of Du Soon Ja, 238–52
- Krauthammer, Charles, 8
- labor: capitalism's new tools for crushing, 323; cheap labor driving the global economy, 301; child labor, 320; class struggle, 300, 320, 324, 328–29; ethni-

- cizing of, 298, 309; feminizing of, 298; flexibility provided to capitalists by, 300; free labor in China, 337; gender division of, 376; knowledge replacing, 301–2; strategies for fighting back, 323–28; strikes, 300, 306, 323; subcontracting of, 306, 308; as variable capital, 299, 306; work ethic, 169, 171, 269, 365–66; working poor, 366. *See also* unions; workplace
- labor theory of value, 298, 299, 302
- language: children as translators, 201–14; English as national language of the United States, 184; protests over Spanish at UCD, 229–31, 235n.38; Spanish as Spain's legacy to Latin America, 224–27, 235n.24, 236n.41
- Laotian (Hmong) refugees, 285–88
- Latino Americans: Central American immigrant women's domestic work cooperatives, 373; conditional residents among women, 370, 384n.47; Cuban Americans, 372, 425; disproportionate suffering from economic restructuring, 372; domestic violence among, 370–71; family values among, 369; female-headed families, 369, 384n.40; high labor force participation among males, 369; and hip hop, 438, 440; household structure among, 373; in Los Angeles riots, 419; as major American racial grouping, 1; mestiza consciousness, 130, 135; *mestizaje*, 131, 133, 224, 225, 226, 230, 261; and New York's decline, 429; nuclear family among, 383n.36; politicized reemergence of, 27; poverty among, 368–71; Puerto Rican Americans, 425, 429, 431; regional analyses of, 372–74; unemployment rates in men and women, 377; working poor, 366. *See also* Mexican Americans
- law and order, 29
- Lee, Edward Jae Song, 420
- Lee, Harry, 270
- Legamex State Factory (Vietnam), 341–43
- legitimate force, 26
- lesbians, 103, 134, 367
- Levine, Arthur, 87
- liberal democracy: conservative realignments challenging, 28; economic globalization
- stripping away vision of society in, 36–37; egalitarianism in ideology of, 32–33; as individualist, 96; as a market, 21; refusing to pay for its social ideals, 30
- liberalism: abstract character of liberal citizenship, 153; epistemological foundations of, 142–43; equality and liberty in tension in, 157; particularism and universalism in tension in, 153–54; pluralism as based on Western liberal values, 87, 88; politicized identity and, 151; prevailing racial common sense accepted by, 108; *ressentiment* incited by, 157
- “Light Up the Border” campaign, 259
- Limbaugh, Rush, 30, 33, 104
- Linnaeus, 119
- Locke, John, 165n.3
- Lopez, David, 180
- Los Angeles: Atlantic Richfield's move to, 168; downtown, 310; Du Soon Ja trial, 238–52; economic transformation in, 442n.6; Filipino American population, 418; as global city, 304, 310; hip hop scene in, 440, 442n.6; images of multiculturalism in, 413–23; Korean American population, 418, 419; LAMAP, 327; mayoral election, 115n.88; Mexican-American population, 418; port, 333; riots after King verdict, 29, 115n.88, 146, 392, 419–20, 422n.5; school walk-out of 1968, 128; segregation and stratification in, 421; South Central Los Angeles, 29, 184, 332, 439; strikes by immigrant workers in, 323. *See also* Los Angeles garment industry
- Los Angeles Festival of the Arts (1990), 414, 415–19
- Los Angeles garment industry, 309–13, 330–33; California Apparel Mart, 310–11, 321; “California look,” 311; child labor in, 320; class in, 317–22; Garment Workers' Justice Centers, 326; moral case of the workers, 325; networks of trust in, 306; number of workers, 298; power elite of, 311–12, 321–22; subminimum wage workforce in, 298, 320; surplus value in, 320–21; women workers in, 312, 319; workers feeling themselves exploited in, 323

Los Angeles Manufacturing Action Project (LAMAP), 327
 Lubiano, Wahneema, 100, 105, 112n.57
 Lujan, Louis, 330-32
 Lukács, Georg, 23, 38n.7

 Ma, Charlie, 285
 Macau, 338-40
Machine That Killed Bad People, The (Fagin), 389-402
Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, Las (Portillo), 187, 191-93, 196
 magic realist literature, 404
 Malcolm X, 43, 346
 Malintzin (La Malinche), 209, 210
 Manichaeism, 121-22
 Manpower, Inc., 308
 Marable, Manning, 78
 Marcos dictatorship, 390, 392, 394-97
 Marin, Cheech, 407
 Marshall Doctrine, 51
 Marxism: on abstract character of liberal citizenship, 153; actually existing socialism as, 348; costs of abandoning, 22; on crisis of capitalism, 351, 359-60; critique of capitalism, 22-24; as dead and buried, 297-98; developments compromising use of, 19-21; ethnic studies influenced by, 363; on history as tragedy and farce, 35; on industrial capitalism, 298-300; on labor replaced by knowledge, 301-2; on market regulation, 357; multiculturalism's critique of, 317-18; teleology in, 24; as a unifying narrative, 122
 McCarran-Walter Act, 205
 McCausland, Richard, 118
 McConnell, E. G., 117
 medical school admission, 113n.77
 melting pot thesis, 88, 173, 227
 Mercer, Kobena, 5
 merit, 105
 mestiza consciousness, 130, 135
mestizaje, 131, 133, 224, 225, 226, 230, 261
 Mexican Americans (Chicanas; Chicanos): adapting to poverty, 363-64, 374; in Albuquerque, 375-80; binational families of, 374-75; Bracero Program, 205; Chicano Studies, 362, 363; children as translators for, 201-14; and the Colum-

bus Quincentenary, 226-27, 228; diversity among California farmworkers, 373; establishing niches in occupations or institutions, 373; family values among, 363; generational differences among, 375; household clusters among, 374; illegal migrants in San Diego County, 254, 257-61; intact nuclear families among, 370; kin as source of resources, 374-75; "Light Up the Border" campaign, 259; in Los Angeles riots, 419; as model minority, 371; Operation Wetback, 205; politicized reemergence of, 27; poverty among, 374-81; in protests over Spanish language at UCSD, 229-31, 235n.38; rap music by, 441n.2; stereotypes in popular culture, 405; Tejana farmworkers, 205-7, 210-11; two Americas for, 94-95; undocumented immigrants, 369, 372; working women, 363
 Midwest (Heartland, the), 283-88
 Mills, C. W., 24
 Minh-ha, Trinh T., 5
 Minnesota, 285-88
 Minority Discourse, 122
Mirrors of the Heart (Portillo), 193-95
 Mississippi, 275-79
 Mitchell, Linda, 41
 model minority, 240-41, 243-44, 245-46, 283, 371
 Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, 7, 106
 Mohanty, S. P., 122
 Mohonk Proceedings, 52
 monitored minority, 240
 Moral Majority, 30
 Moses, Robert, 431
 multiculturalism: in the academy, 30, 68-72, 74, 362-63, 447-48; affirmative action, 105, 106, 114n.77, 183, 448; America as always having been multicultural, 27-28; on American Indians as an ethnic minority, 56; American Indian studies and, 49-63; antiessentialism endorsed by, 104-5; appropriation of, 70-71; and assimilationism, 1, 87, 108; building on ethnic and women's studies, 102, 362; capitalist co-option of, 329; class and, 40-48, 317-18; and class struggle, 328-29; constructed primarily

as national phenomenon, 218; corporate, 41, 45-46; in correctional system, 41-42, 71-73; as a cultural pluralism, 108-9; cultural politics of difference and, 138-46; cultural turn of, 78-79; D'Souza on, 116; early development of, 76; early occurrences of the term, 94; in educational system, 42, 76, 94-98, 446-47; egalitarianism in, 36; equity as a primary principle of, 108; existing power relations preserved by, 44, 167-68; as fascist, 87; and flexibility of production, 297-316; fundamentalism and, 44-45; gender and, 40-48; *Hispanidad* as, 227; in the humanities, 449-50; and identity politics, 32, 33-34; in images of Los Angeles, 413-23; as incorporating marginal groups' contributions into mainstream culture, 424; of Karlin in Du Soun Ja trial, 239-40; Limbaugh on, 33; in Los Angeles mayoral election, 115n.88; on Marxism, 317; meanings of, 1-10; as mediating capitalism and modern social identities, 21; melting pot thesis, 88, 173, 227; multi-culture of capitalism in Los Angeles, 309-13; as necessary but not sufficient, 37; neoconservatives on, 119-21; in the 1990s, 102-7; as no panacea, 31; particularistic and pluralistic, 42; as a political strategy, 167-77; in popular culture, 424; as premature reconciliation of contradiction, 415; problems and limits of, 77-80; and the production of culture, 387-444; raced identities as those most associated with, 35-36; and racial stratification, 238-52; racism as reaction to, 139; radical multiculturalism, 69-70; as reformist, 82, 86-87; in social and public policy, 450; as a social hieroglyphic, 25-26, 33; social justice as aim of, 446; social logic of, 31-35; in social logic of late capitalism, 19; and sociosystemic politics, 33-34; as spectacle, 45; as stalking horse for cultural separatism, 82; state narratives and, 64-75; as surface promise and deeper symptom, 31-32; transformative, 105-6; unfinished business of, 76-115; and uniculturalism in Germany, 347;

white chair at the multicultural table as empty, 183. *See also* cultural diversity; political correctness
 multicultural pluralism, 95-96
 Murray, Charles, 4

 NAFTA, 326
 Nancy, Jean-Luc, 131-32
 Nash, Gary B., 7, 89-94, 111n.41
 nationalism: Black, 99-101; and class struggle, 328; collective identity asserted in, 150-51; cultural, 99-100; cultural pluralism and, 101; essentialism in, 104; nationalist separatism, 93; and pluralism in Black Power movement, 101; pluralist, 98-101
 National Labor Relations Act, 322
 National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), 324, 326
 national myths of the United States, 204-5, 208-9
 National Standards for the Teaching of United States History, 89, 111n.41
 National Trust (Britain), 354
 Native Americans. *See* American Indians
 Needleman, Jack, 321
 negritude, 132, 133
 Nelson, Cary, 6-7
 neoconservatism, 29-30, 119-21, 217
 New Left, 111n.37
 New Orleans, 270-73
 New Orleans jazz, 411
 new political subject, 132-33, 135-36
 new racial subjects, 180-81
 new supremacists, 86-89
 Newton, Huey, 99
 new world order, 21, 224, 346
 New York City: blackout of 1977, 432; Cross-Bronx Expressway, 431; economic decline in, 428-33, 442n.6; hip hop's emergence in, 428-33; media resources for ethnic communities, 442n.11; Red Apple grocery boycott, 263; South Bronx, 430-33, 439, 443n.16
 New York State, 87
 Nicaragua, 189-91
 Nieto, Sonia, 106
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 152, 157-64, 166n.28
 Nike corporation, 303-4
 Noriega, Jorge, 51, 52

Novak, Michael, 174
nuclear family, 370, 381, 383n.36

Ofrenda, La (Portillo), 187, 196
ontologization of difference, 133
Operation Wetback, 205
Orientalism, 243, 246
Oviedo, Miguel, 225–26

Pacheco, Arturo, 96, 97, 98
Palumbo-Liu, David, 148n.44
panethnicity, 103, 180–81, 183
Park, Michael and Rafael, 290–92
Parker, Charlie, 411
particularism, cultural, 46
particularistic multiculturalism, 42
patriarchy, 420
pending enrollments, 55
People v. Soon Ja Du, 238–52
Perry, Theresa, 6–7
Peteet case, 256
pluralism: assimilationist, 81, 88, 90; as based on Western liberal values, 87, 88; democratic, 96; multicultural, 95–96; and nationalism in Black Power movement, 101; promise of inclusion in, 415, 421n.4; promoting tolerance that leaves status quo unthreatened, 418; seen as instrument of white supremacy, 99; variants of, 93–94. *See also* cultural pluralism
pluralistic multiculturalism, 42
pluralist nationalism, 98–101
Polish Americans, 169–70
political correctness: attacks on, 9, 70; Hackney on, 9; liberal democracy refusing to embrace its ideals and, 30
politics: of American Indian identity, 54–56; cultural pluralism and political parity, 105–7; cultural politics of difference, 138–46; and culture in multiculturalism, 6–7, 9; cultures as not politically neutral, 47; essentialism and, 36; ethnicity's political function, 173–74, 175; and the market, 355, 356; multiculturalism as a political strategy, 167–77; new political subject, 132–33, 135–36; a new progressive politics, 185; politicized identity, 149–66; the race card in elections, 184; racialization of, 183–85;

rethinking race politics, 40–48; Taylor's two modes of, 142. *See also* identity politics; power
popular culture, 403–12, 424
populism, conservative, 30
Portillo, Lourdes, 187–97; completed works of, 195–97; *Después del Terremoto*, 187, 189–91, 197; *Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*, 187, 191–93, 196; *Mirrors of the Heart*, 193–95; *La Ofrenda*, 187, 196; *The Trial of Christopher Columbus*, 195, 233
postindustrial capitalism, 301–9, 425, 427–28, 430, 441n.1
postmodernism, 129
poststructuralism, 22, 128, 129, 145
poverty: in Albuquerque, 375–80; in Chicano and Mexican households, 374–81; culture of, 73, 79, 364, 366, 367; Latinos in, 368–71; underclass theory of, 363–69, 380–81; working poor, 366
power: the academy serving, 120–21, 123n.24; American society unwilling to recognize structures of, 174; disciplinary, 154, 155–56, 158; domination as what all subalterns have in common, 66; in history, 160; in Marxist perspective, 24; multiculturalism preserving relations of unequal, 44, 167–68; overcoming racism without altering structures of, 43; power sharing, 107–8; race and ethnicity used as cover for economic dominance, 168
pragmatism, 175
prisons, 41–42, 71–73
privatization: in Britain, 354; in German Democratic Republic, 352–55, 357, 361n.11; and identity formation, 31; and social deregulation, 30; in Vietnam, 341–42
procedural consensus, 142, 145
Professor Longhair, 411
Proposition 187, 146
public schools. *See* educational system
Puerto Rican Americans, 425, 429, 431
Purdy, Patrick, 289
Quayle, Dan, 366
Queer Nation, 103

race: American Indians as a, 53, 62n.8; American society's refusal to confront, 174; and the American state, 26–28; as any group generally believed to be a race, 65; antiessentialist race consciousness, 104–5; Asian Americans as intermediate category, 246; binary constructions of, 47–48, 245–46; as both real and changeable, 104; capitalist use of, 318; class and, 43, 44, 65, 173, 319; and class struggle, 328; as complex of meanings constantly being transformed, 65; contemporary race relations as consequence of increasing anomie, 172–73; as cover for economic dominance, 168; cultural markers as substitute for, 240; discredited as biological term, 43; dominant society's redefinition of, 8; essentializing on basis of, 131; and ethnicity, 174; expanding significance in American life, 183; five major racial groupings, 1; as fundamental principle of identity and action, 179; gender and, 43, 133; and German unification, 358; in global capitalism, 298, 313–14; liberalism consenting to prevailing racial common sense, 108; in Marxism, 24; multiculturalism and racial stratification, 238–52; new racial subjects, 180–81; the race card in elections, 184; raced identities as most associated with multiculturalism, 35–36; race progressives, 81–82; racial backlash, 172, 175, 181–82, 184, 448; racial composition of America as changing, 181; reification of, 19–39; rethinking race politics, 40–48; Washington's "new race," 88. *See also* color blindness; racialization; racism
race progressives, 81–82
racialization, 179–80; in capitalism, 313–14; civil rights movement altering state strategies of, 27; historic consolidation of "black" and "white," 179; of politics, 183–85; in post-civil rights era, 178–86; white indifference to racialized dimension of institutional neutrality, 89; of whites, 181–83
racism: as abolished in United States, 15n.1; American society's refusal to confront,

174; antiracism, 3–4, 8; attempting to overcome without altering power structures, 43; and capitalism, 313, 319, 346, 347, 420; charges of, 44; cultural, 84–85, 88–89, 169; culturalism shifting attention from, 79; differential racism, 33; dual function in America, 173; in garment industry elite, 321; in Germany, 347, 358–59; growing out of imperialist expansion of Europe, 318; multiculturalism as oblivious to, 3–4; multiculturalism eliciting neoracist reaction, 139; scientific, 53; strategies to make marginalized cultures visible reproducing ideologies of, 40
Ramírez, Manuel, 96
rape, 258, 261
rap music, 427, 434, 437, 439–40, 441n.2
Ravitch, Diane, 6, 46, 91, 93, 119
reason, 20, 128
recession, global, 309
Red Apple grocery boycott, 263
Red Army Faction, 352–53
reggae music, 404
Reich, Robert, 38n.11, 298, 302–4, 305
Reiff, David, 115n.86
reification, 22, 24, 26, 31
ressentiment, 157–64
retailing, 320
revenge, 162, 163
Rodriguez, Richard, 208
Rohwedder, Detlev, 352–53
Roman, Leslie G., 106
Roosevelt, Theodore, 52
Rosedale, Miss., 277
Sa-I-Gu (Choy, Kim, and Kim-Gibson), 419–20
Sánchez-Albornoz, Nicolás, 225, 231, 235n.24, 236n.41
San Diego, 253–62
Sandinistas, 189, 191
Sandoval, Chela, 129, 135–37, 138
Sartre, Jean-Paul, 128, 132–33
"Save Our State" initiative (California), 366
Schiebinger, Londa, 118
Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr., 84, 88, 90, 93, 94, 109n.5, 140
scientific racism, 53
Scott, Ridley, 413

- Second City Theater (Chicago), 280
 Seeger, Pete, 409
 separatism, 93
 Serrano, Nina, 189
 sexism, 44–45; 314
 sexual intercourse, 254–55, 261
 Sheboygan, Wis., 285
 Shils, Edward, 119, 120, 121, 123n.24
 Siebert, Horst, 356
 Sinn, Gerlinde and Hans-Werner, 347–49, 351, 354, 356
 slave morality, 159, 160, 162
 slavery, 26, 41, 71, 117
 Sleeter, Christine E., 98, 106, 111n.42
 Smith, Leonard, 116–17
 Snyder Act of 1928, 54
 social deregulation, 28–30
 social hieroglyphics: commodities functioning as, 23; identity formations as, 26, 31; multiculturalism as, 25–26, 33
 socialism: actually existing, 346, 348–49, 360; socialist feminism, 103. *See also* Marxism
 social stratification, 98
 Solana, Javier, 221
 South Bronx, 430–33, 439, 443n.16
 South Central Los Angeles, 29, 184, 332, 439
 Spain: Columbus Quincentenary, 215–37; position in new world order, 224; Spanish as Spain's legacy to Latin America, 224–27, 235n.24, 236n.41
 Spanish language: children as translators, 201–14; protests over Castilian at ucd, 229–31, 235n.38; Spain's legacy to Latin America, 224–27, 235n.24, 236n.41
 Spector, Ronnie (Veronica Bennett), 405–7
 Stanfield, James, 58
 Stanford University, 76, 86–87
 state, the: civil rights movement tolerated by, 30; as a cultural enterprise by definition, 38n.9; culture used by, 71–72; deregulation, 28–30; diversity management by, 31; economic globalization and, 26–28, 37, 301; fiscal crisis of, 19, 28; in Los Angeles garment industry, 322; multiculturalism in context of fiscal-domestic crisis of, 19; nationalism loosening its attachment to, 151; and particular economic interests, 154; race and the American state, 26–28; state narratives and multiculturalism, 64–75; welfare-warfare state, 154
 state capitalism, 346, 349
 Steinberg, Stephen, 92, 110n.15
 stratification, social, 98
 strikes, 300, 306, 323
 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, 112n.56
 subcontracting, 306–9
 subject: of capitalism, 349–50; constructed, 131; historical, 38n.7; new political subject, 132–33, 135–36; new racial subjects, 180–81; subject-in-process, 137, 138; of value, 350, 357–58, 360
 suburbs, 176, 430
 suffering, 157, 159, 160, 162, 166n.28
 surplus value, 298, 299–300, 320–21
 symbolic analysts, 298, 302–3
 tactical subjectivity, 135, 137, 187
 Tajima, Renee: *Fortune Cookies: In Search of Asian America*, 263–92; list of completed works by, 293–94
 Taub, Richard, 363–64, 381n.5
 Taylor, Charles, 4, 142–45
 Tejana farmworkers, 205–7, 210–11
 telecommunications industry, 430
 Thomas, Clarence, 47
 Thomas, R. Roosevelt, 6, 45–46
 Thompson, Becky W., 106
 Tijuana, 253–54, 256–57
 Toure Kwame (Stokely Carmichael), 100, 101
 traditionalism, 33
 translation: children as translators of culture, 201–14; effect on the children, 208; as occurring under stress and conflict, 207; unequal power relations in, 207
 Treuhandanstalt, 352–55, 361n.11
Trial of Christopher Columbus, The (Portillo), 195, 233
 tribalism, 30, 31, 33
 Tyagi, Sangeeta, 106
 underclass, 364–68, 380–81
 underconsumption, 300, 308–9
 Unimix Industrial Centre (Hong Kong), 334–35
 unions: capitalism's war on, 323; direct action by, 326; organizing problems in Los Angeles garment industry, 322;

- multicultural agenda in, 328; strategies for working with immigrant workers, 324–28
 United States History, National Standards for the Teaching of, 89, 111n.41
 universities. *See* academy, the
 University of California, *Bakke v. Regents of the*, 114n.77
 University of California, Berkeley, 87
 University of California, Davis, 229–31, 235n.38
 University of California, Santa Barbara, 87
 urban underclass, 364–68, 380–81
 variable capital, 298, 299, 306
 Vida (Portillo), 196
 Vietnam, 297, 340–45
 Vietnam War, 289, 291
 Wang, Wayne, 407–8
 Warner, Dale, 183
 Watson, Muriel, 259
 Weber, Max, 23, 26
 welfare reform, 367
 welfare-warfare state, 154
 West, the: Albuquerque, 375–80; Asian Americans in, 289–91; national myths of, 204, 208–9. *See also* California
 Western culture: diversity honored in, 120; multiculturalism as rejecting, 1; pluralism as based on Western liberal values, 87, 88; presumed superiority of Western civilization, 49, 50, 57–58; seen as repository of unchanging values, 9; Stanford's Western Civilization courses, 86–87
 Wheelock, Eleazar, 53
 "Whiter Shade of Pale, A" (song), 408–9
 whites. *See* European Americans
 Wiesel, Elie, 117
 will, 161–62
 Will, George F., 8, 16n.16
 Williams, Hank, 406
 Wilson, Pete, 366
 Wilson, William W., 364–65, 368, 380
 Winant, Howard, 179
 Wing Tai Garment International, 335, 336
 Wintex Garment Factory (Macau), 338–40
 Winthrop, John, 25
 Wisconsin, 284–85
 Wisconsin Plan, 123n.24
 women: in Albuquerque industry, 376; Asian-American, 271; Black women and the warrior ethos, 72–73; Central American immigrant women's domestic work cooperatives, 373; in Chinese garment industry, 336–37; of color, 48, 134, 135; conditional residents among Latino, 370, 384n.47; domestic abuse among Latino, 370–71; essentializing on basis of female body, 131; feminizing of labor, 298; in German Democratic Republic, 357–58; in Hong Kong garment industry, 334, 335; immigration restrictions on Asian, 369; Latino families headed by, 369; lesbians, 103, 134, 367; liberalism's strategies regarding, 153; in Los Angeles apparel industry, 312, 319; at lowest stratum of class structure, 314; mestiza consciousness, 130, 135; Mexican-American women and work, 363; patriarchy, 420; poor women having illegitimate children and going on welfare, 365–68; poverty and Latino, 368; rape, 258, 261; sexism, 44–45, 314; unemployment rates among Latino men and, 377; in Vietnamese workforce, 342. *See also* feminism
 Women's Studies, 16n.14, 59, 102, 362
 Wong, Victor, 266–67, 273, 279–80, 282, 289
 work ethic, 169, 171, 269, 365–66
 working poor, 366
 workplace: collectivism in, 175–76; culture in the, 168–72; First and Third World merging in, 345; racial balkanization in, 179. *See also* apparel industry
 Yáñez, Luis, 219, 221–22
 Yang, Pang-ku, 285–88
 Yasui, Min, 289