

281. "The Monochrome Society." Policy Review. No. 105 (February & March 2001), 53-70.

Various demographers and other social scientists have been predicting for years that the end of the white majority in the United States is near, and that there will be a majority of minorities. CNN broadcast a special program on the forthcoming majority of people of color in America.⁽¹⁾ President Clinton called attention to this shift in an address at the U.C. San Diego campus on a renewed national dialogue about race relations.⁽²⁾ His argument is that such a dialogue is especially needed as a preparation for the forthcoming end of the white majority, to occur somewhere in the middle of the next century. In his year 2000 State of the Union, Clinton claimed that "within 10 years there will be no majority race in our largest state, California. In a little more than 50 years, there will be no majority race in America. In a more interconnected world, this diversity can be our greatest strength."⁽³⁾ White House staffer Sylvia Mathews provides the figures as 53% white and 47% a mixture of other ethnic groups by 2050.⁽⁴⁾ Pointing to such figures, Clinton asks rhetorically if we should not act now to avoid America's division into "separate, unequal and isolated" camps.⁽⁵⁾

Some have reacted to the expected demise of the white majority with alarm or distress. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. decries the "cult of ethnicity," that has undermined the concept of Americans as "one people."⁽⁶⁾ He writes, "Watching ethnic conflict tear one nation after another apart, one cannot look with complacency at proposals to divide the United States into distinct and immutable ethnic and racial communities, each taught to cherish its own apartness from the rest."⁽⁷⁾ He also criticizes diversity and multiculturalism, arguing that "the United States has to set a monocultural example in a world rent by savage ethnic conflict; the United States must demonstrate 'how a highly differentiated society holds itself together.'"⁽⁸⁾

Dale Maharidge, a professor and journalist who has conducted hundreds of interviews concerning race, class, and ethnicity in California, has devoted a book to *The Coming White Minority: California's Eruptions and America's Future*. He reported that sometime between the time of his book in 1996 and the year 2000, California's population will be less than 50% white. As he writes, "'Minorities' will be in the majority," a precursor to the 2050 state of racial composition nationwide, when "the nation will be almost half nonwhite."⁽⁹⁾

Maharidge comments that his interviews, observations, and research have shown that, especially in California,

. . . whites are scared. The depth of white fear is underestimated and misunderstood by progressive thinkers and the media. Whites dread the unknown and not-so-distant tomorrow when a statistical turning point will be reached that could have very bad consequences for them. They fear the change that seems to be transforming their state into something different from the rest of the United States. They fear losing not only their jobs but also their culture. Some feel that California will become a version of South Africa, in which whites will lose power when minorities are the majority.⁽¹⁰⁾

Whites in California have demonstrated their fear of the 'browning' of America by forming residential "'islands' that are surrounded by vast ethnic or transitional communities, as well as deserts, mountain wilderness, and the ocean," demonstrating, Maharidge predicts, "what the rest of America might become."⁽¹¹⁾

Whites and non-whites alike also passed the anti-immigrant Proposition 187, which Maharidge links to these same fears about the end of the white majority. Maharidge warns,

California's electoral discord has emanated from whites. There is ample evidence that white tension could escalate. What will California be like in 2010, when nonwhites make up 60 percent of the population? . . . And how will California's actions influence the rest of the nation as non-Hispanic whites fall from 76 percent of the U.S. populace to just over half in 2050?⁽¹²⁾

In contrast, John Isbister, a professor of economics at the University of California at Santa Cruz, asks us to ponder whether America is too white. He contends,

The decline in the white proportion is a healthy development for the country.... The principal case for a falling white proportion is simply this: it will be easier for us to transform a society of hostility and oppression into one of cooperation if we are dealing not with a majority versus several small minorities, but with groups of roughly equivalent size.⁽¹³⁾

One People

As I see it, both views--that of alarm and that which celebrates the ending of the white majority and the rise of a majority of minorities--are fundamentally wrong because these positions are implicitly and inadvertently racist: they assume that people's pigmentation, or, more generally, racial attributes, determine their visions, values, and votes.⁽¹⁴⁾ Actually, I claim and will show that very often the opposite is true. The fact is that America is blessed with an economic and political system as well as culture and core values and much else that, while far from flawless, are embraced by most Americans of all races and ethnic groups. (To save breath, from here on, race is used to encompass ethnicity.) It is a grievous error to suggest that because American faces or skin tones may appear more diverse some fifty years from now, most Americans who hail from different social backgrounds will seek to follow a different agenda or hold a different creed than a white majority. While, of course, nobody can predict what people will believe or do fifty years hence, there is strong evidence that if they behave in any way that resembles current behavior of white, black, brown, yellow, red or other Americans, they will share the same basic aspirations, core values, and mores. Moreover, current trends, during a period in which the non-white proportion of the population already has increased, further support the thesis that while the American society may well change, whites and non-whites will largely change together.

A fair number of findings, we shall see shortly, support the thesis that American society is basically much more of one color--if one looks at conduct and beliefs rather than pigmentation and other such external, skin deep, indications.

A word about the inadvertent racism involved in the opposite position. To argue that all or most members of a given social group behave the way some do is the definition of prejudice.⁽¹⁵⁾ This holds true not merely when one argues that all (or most) Jews, blacks, or any other social group has some unsavory qualities, but also when one argues that all (or most) of a given group are anti-white, alienated and so on--because some (often actually a small minority) are.

One may argue that while of course there is no direct correlation between race and political conduct, social thinking, and the values to which one subscribes, that there are strong correlations. But is this true? Even if one controls for class differences? Or, is race but one factor among many that affect behavior? And if this is the case, might

it be that signaling out this biological given and unyielding factor, rather than paying full attention to all the others, reflects a divisive political agenda rather than social fact? Above all, are there significant correlations between being non-white and most political, social, and ideological positions? I turn now to findings supporting the thesis that there are many more beliefs, dreams, and views that whites and non-whites of all colors share than those that divide them.

Some findings out of many that could be cited illustrate this point: A 1992 survey finds that most black and Hispanic Americans (86% and 85%, respectively) seek "fair treatment for all, without prejudice or discrimination."⁽¹⁶⁾ One may expect that this value is of special concern to minorities, but white Americans feel the same way. As a result, the proportion of all Americans who agree with the quoted statement about the importance of fairness is a close 79%.⁽¹⁷⁾

A poll of New York residents shows that the vast majority of respondents consider teaching "the common heritage and values that we share as Americans" to be "very important."⁽¹⁸⁾ One may expect this statement to reflect a white, majoritarian value. However, minorities endorse this position more strongly than whites: 88% of Hispanics and 89% of blacks, compared to 70% of whites agree.⁽¹⁹⁾

A nationwide poll finds that equal proportions of blacks and whites, 93%, concur that they would vote for a black presidential candidate.⁽²⁰⁾ Another national poll finds that "over 80% of all respondents in every category--age, gender, race, location, education, and income--agree" with the statement that freedom must be tempered by personal responsibility.⁽²¹⁾

Far from favoring placing stress on different heritages, approximately 85% of parents--85% of all parents; 83% of African American parents; 89% of Hispanic parents; and 88% of foreign-born parents--agree with the statement, "To graduate from high school, students should be required to understand the common history and ideas that tie all Americans together."⁽²²⁾

And far from stressing differences in the living conditions and economic status of different groups, views about the nature of life in America are shared across racial lines. 70 percent of blacks and 60% of whites agree that "The way things are in America, people like me and my family have a good chance of improving our standard of living," according to the National Opinion Research Center's (NORC) 1994 General Social Survey.⁽²³⁾ Likewise, 81% of blacks and 79% of whites report to NORC that "the quality of life is better in America than in most other advanced industrial countries."⁽²⁴⁾ And, roughly 80% of parents surveyed--80% of foreign-born parents, 87% of Hispanic parents, 73% of African American parents, and 84% of all parents--agree, "The U.S. is a unique country that stands for something special in the world."⁽²⁵⁾ Lawrence Otis Graham, an African American author, writing about African Americans, summed up the picture by stating: "...blacks, like any other group, want to share in the American dream."⁽²⁶⁾ The American dream, not some other or disparate one.

Close percentages of blacks (70%) and whites (65%) in a poll conducted in 1994 agree, "The U.S. has made some or a lot of progress in easing black-white tensions in the past 10 years."⁽²⁷⁾ In the same poll, 70% of whites and 65% of blacks say that "racial integration has been good for society."⁽²⁸⁾

Sociologist Alan Wolfe finds in his middle-class morality project, which surveyed whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and "others," that a striking

majority of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, "There are times when loyalty to an ethnic group or to a race should be valued over loyalty to the country as a whole."⁽²⁹⁾

Even in response to a deliberately loaded question, a 1997 poll shows that similarities between the races are much larger than differences. Asked, "Will race relations in this country ever get better?" 43% of blacks and 60% of whites reply in the affirmative.⁽³⁰⁾ (Pollsters tend to focus on the 17% who strike a different position rather than on the 43% who embrace the same one. The difference between 57% of blacks and 40% of whites who do not believe that race relations are going to get better is also 17%.)

While Americans hold widely ranging opinions on *what* should be done about various matters of social policy, people across racial and ethnic categories identify the same issues as important to them, and to the country. For instance, in a 1996 survey whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans concur that education is "the most important issue facing [their] community today."⁽³¹⁾ Similarly, more than 80% of blacks, Latinos, and whites share the belief that "it is 'extremely important' to spend tax dollars on 'educational opportunities for children.'"⁽³²⁾ In another survey, 54% of blacks and 61% of whites rank "increased economic opportunity" as the most important goal for blacks.⁽³³⁾ And 97% of blacks and 92% of whites rate violent crime a "very serious or most serious problem" in a 1994 poll.⁽³⁴⁾

As we can see in Table 1, Whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans agree about areas of life that have gotten worse or harder for "people like [them]" between 1985 and 1995. Between 45% and 55% agree that public schools have worsened; 50% to 60% agree that getting a good job is more difficult; between 48% and 55% within each group agree that finding "decent, affordable housing" is tougher, and between 34% and 48% find it more challenging "for families like [theirs] to stay together."⁽³⁵⁾

Other problems that trouble America's communities highlight points of convergence among the views of members of various racial and ethnic groups. "Between 80 and 90% of black, white, and 'other' Americans agree that it is 'extremely important' to spend tax dollars on 'reducing crime' and 'reducing illegal drug use' among youth."⁽³⁶⁾ In addition, some shared public policy preferences emerge. Among whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans surveyed by the *Washington Post*/Kaiser Foundation/Harvard Survey Project, between 75% and 82% of each group feel "strongly" that Congress should balance the budget. Between 30% and 41% are convinced that Congress should institute limited tax breaks for business; between 46% and 55% concur that Congress should cut personal income taxes; between 53% and 58% agree that Congress should reform Medicare (see Table 2).⁽³⁷⁾ 67% of all parents, 68% of African American parents, 66% of Hispanic parents, and 75% of foreign-born parents--close to 70% of each group--tell *Public Agenda* that the most important thing for public schools to do for new immigrant children is "to teach them English as quickly as possible, even if this means they fall behind in other subjects."⁽³⁸⁾

All this is not to suggest that there are no significant differences of opinion along social lines, especially when matters directly concern race relations. For instance, many whites and many blacks (although by no means all of either group) take rather different views of the guilt of O.J. Simpson. One survey will stand for many with similar findings that could be cited: 62% of whites believe Simpson was guilty of the murder of which he was accused and acquitted, in contrast to 55% of African

Americans who believe he was not-guilty.⁽³⁹⁾ Likewise, concerning affirmative action, 51% of blacks in a 1997 poll "favor programs which give preferential treatment to racial minorities," a much higher percentage than the 21% of whites who favor such programs.⁽⁴⁰⁾ And a very large difference appears when one examines voting patterns. For instance, in 1998, 55% of whites versus 11% African Americans voted for Republican Congressional candidates.⁽⁴¹⁾

Still, if one considers attitudes toward the basic tenets of the American creed, the overwhelming majority of blacks are surprisingly accepting of them. A *Public Perspective* poll from 1998 finds that: "In the United States today, anyone who works hard enough can make it economically," with 54% blacks and 66% whites affirming. A 1994 national survey reports that: "A basic American belief has been that if you work hard you can get ahead--reach your goals and get more." Sixty-seven percent of blacks respond "Yes, still true," an affirmative response rate only ten percent less than whites. Most blacks (77%) say they prefer equality of opportunity to equality of results (compared to 89% of whites). When it comes to "Do you see yourself as traditional or old fashioned on things such as sex, morality, family life, and religion, or not," the difference between blacks and whites is only 5%, and when asked whether values in America are seriously declining, the difference is down to one point.

A question from an extensive national survey conducted at the University of Virginia, by James Davison Hunter and Carl Bowman, asks: "How strong would you say the U.S. decline or improvement is in its moral and ethical standards?" 23% of blacks and 33% of whites said there was a strong decline, but 29% of blacks and 24% of whites said the standards were holding steady, and 40% of blacks and 38% of whites said there was a moderate decline.⁽⁴²⁾ When asked "How strong would you say the U.S. decline or improvement is in the area of family life?" 18% of blacks and 26% of whites said there was a strong decline while 42% of blacks and 40% of whites saw a moderate decline and 31% of blacks and 25% of whites said family life was holding steady.⁽⁴³⁾ Roughly the same percentages of blacks and whites strongly advocate balancing the budget, cutting personal income taxes, reforming the welfare system, and reforming Medicare.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Percentages are also nearly even in responses to questions on abortion and marijuana.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Hunter and Bowman found that "the majority of Americans do not . . . engage in identity politics--a politics that insists that opinion is mainly a function of racial, ethnic, or gender identity or identities rooted in sexual preference."⁽⁴⁶⁾ While there are some disagreements on specific issues and policies, this study finds more similarities than discrepancies. Even when asked about such divisive issues as the direction of changes in race and ethnic relations, the similarities across lines are considerable. Thirty-two percent of blacks, 37% of Hispanics, and 40% of whites feel these relations are holding steady; 46%, 53%, and 44%, respectively, feel they have declined (The rest feel that they have improved).⁽⁴⁷⁾ That is, on most issues, four out of five--or more--agreed with one another, while those who differed amounted to less than 20% of all Americans. There is no anti-anything majority here, nor is there likely to be one in the future.

Similarly, 81% of blacks, like 71% of all Americans, in a 1998 survey think that blacks and whites "generally get along fairly well."⁽⁴⁸⁾ When asked in 1994, "When today's/your children reach your age do you expect that race relations will have improved, will have worsened, or will be about the same as today?" a close 48% of blacks and 51% of whites concur that relations will be better.⁽⁴⁹⁾ The Gallup

Organization finds in 1998 a similar position among whites and blacks (60% of whites and 54% of blacks agree) that only a few white people dislike blacks. Only 5% of blacks and 2% of whites say that "almost all white people dislike blacks."⁽⁵⁰⁾

Notably, nearly half of both blacks and whites want to set racial questions aside as much as possible. In a 1995 survey for *Newsweek*, Princeton Survey Research Associates finds that 48% of blacks and 47% of whites agree that the Census Bureau should stop collecting information on race and ethnicity "in an effort to move toward a more color-blind society--even if it becomes more difficult to measure progress on civil rights and poverty programs."⁽⁵¹⁾

As already suggested, many pollsters and those who write about their findings, tend to play up small differences and downplay large similarities. During my days at Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research we were advised to use the "fully-only" writing device. Thus, we would write that fully, say 9% agreed with whatever we wanted to play up, while only 43% disagreed...). It should hence be stressed that in most of the figures cited above the differences among the races are much smaller than the similarities. On most issues there are no findings that could be considered, even by a far-fetched interpretation, to show a "white" versus a "black" position, nor a single position of any group of people of other colors. That is, none of these findings suggest--in fact, they directly contradict that race determines a person's views, values or votes.

Most interestingly, differences among social groups that include both blacks and whites are often larger than differences among races. For instance, sociologist Janet Saltzman Chafetz concludes her study of such differences with the statement that "in any dimension one wishes to examine--income, education, occupation, political and social attitudes, etc.--the range of difference within one race or gender group is almost as great as that between various groups."⁽⁵²⁾ A 1994 Kansas City study shows that "income differences between age groups in a given race are greater than income differences between entire races."⁽⁵³⁾ While much has been made of the digital divide, Alan Westin--the most systematic surveyor of this field--reports that differences in the use of computers and the Internet are larger between men and women than between the races.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Rather little attention has been paid in this context to the fact that while African Americans are the least mainstreamed group, there is a growing black middle class, many members of which have adopted lifestyles and aspirations similar to those of other middle-class Americans--and which diverge from those of other black Americans. For instance, a 1998 *Wall Street Journal* public opinion poll shows differences within distinct classes of a single race to be greater than differences among those races, on several, albeit not on all, key issues. For instance, 82% of middle class whites and 70% of non-middle class whites report satisfaction with their personal finances (a disparity of 12%), while 74% of middle class blacks and 56% of non-middle class blacks report such satisfaction (a difference of 18%). The differences of 12% and 18% respectively, are higher than the differences in opinion between the races (8% difference between middle class whites and blacks, and 14% difference between non-middle class whites and blacks).⁽⁵⁵⁾ (William J. Wilson is among the scholars who have pointed out the significance of class differences when studying racial differences.)

I am not suggesting that race makes no difference in a person's position, feelings, or thinking. And one can find polls, especially in response to single questions, that show

strong racial influence. However, race does not *determine* a person's response and often, on all important matters, Americans of different social backgrounds share many convictions, hopes, and goals, even in recent years, as we see the beginning of the decline of the white majority. Moreover, each racial group is far from homogeneous in itself. Differences within each group abound, further contradicting any notion of a non-white united majority facing a unanimous white group, a view often promoted by champions of identity politics.

Race: A Social Construction

Many social scientists call into question the very category of race drawn on by those who foresee increasing racial diversity. Alain Corcos, author of several books on genetics, race, and racism, notes that "race is a slippery word," one that is understood in varying manners at various times, one without a single definition we may readily grasp. He writes

Race is a slippery word because it is a biological term, but we use it every day as a social term. . . . Social, political, and religious views are added to what are seen as biological differences. . . . Race also has been equated with national origin. . . . with religion. . . . with language.⁽⁵⁶⁾

The diversity of characteristics by which race is and has been defined points to its unsatisfactory quality as a tool for categorizing human beings. Both anthropological and genetic definitions of race prove inadequate, because while each describes divisions among the human population, each fails to provide reliable criteria for making such divisions. As Corcos notes, they "are vague. They do not tell us how large divisions between populations must be in order to label them races, nor do they tell us how many there are."⁽⁵⁷⁾ Importantly, "[t]hese things are, of course, all matters of choice for the classifier."⁽⁵⁸⁾

Considering the biology of race, Corcos notes that biological divisions do not hold up. "Geographical and social barriers have never been great enough to prevent members of one population from breeding with members of another. Therefore, any characteristic which may have arisen in one population at one time will be transferred later to other populations through mating."⁽⁵⁹⁾ Corcos further chronicles scientific and social scientific attempts to categorize humans into races by such sundry methods as craniology and evaluating skin coloring, nose size and shape, and other physical characteristics. Despite these efforts, "[s]cientists have been unable to classify humanity into races using physical characteristics such as skin color, shape of nose or hair, eye color, brain size, etc. They also have been unable to use characteristics such as blood type or other genetic markers."⁽⁶⁰⁾

Social anthropologist Audrey Smedley, professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, shares these observations. She admits there are apparent biophysical differences among humans, but reminds us that "race originated as the imposition of an arbitrary value system on the facts of biological (phenotypic) variations in the human species."⁽⁶¹⁾ That is, she suggests race is imposed from *without*, not generated from within. Race "was the cultural invention of arbitrary meanings applied to what appeared to be natural divisions within the human species. The meanings had social value but no intrinsic relationship to the biological diversity itself."⁽⁶²⁾

Racial categories are learned rather than innate. Like other cultural traditions such as food, clothing, and musical preferences, racial categories are passed from generation to generation. Psychological anthropologist Lawrence Hirschfeld finds "that children

as young as three have a complex understanding of society's construction of racial categories. Children do not sort people into different races based only on physical differences. . . . [S]ociety's 'racial' assignments provide more of a signature of 'other' than do physical differences. For children, race does not define the person."⁽⁶³⁾

To put these concepts in plainer language: at first it seems obvious that there are black, brown, yellow, and white people. But upon second thought, we realize that there are great differences within each group, even if we choose to focus on, for example, skin color rather than on, say, manners. And, these differences do not parallel one another. That is, persons with darker skin are not necessarily short (or tall), and so on. Race, which has been magnified in recent decades by identity politics, is but one imprecise social category, one that does not define human conduct any more than numerous other social attributes (especially income), and often to a much lesser extent.

Particularly telling is that many groups once considered separate races a hundred years ago, are no longer so viewed today. The classification changed in law, public policy, the press, and in the public mind. Jews, Slavs, Irish, Polish and many other ethnic groups were considered as races in 1910 in the USA. Matthew Frye Jacobson refers to the category of race as "fabricated" in his book. His book is aptly entitled *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*.⁽⁶⁴⁾

"Asian Americans" and "Latinos"?

The very notion that there are social groups called "Asian Americans" or "Latinos" is largely a statistical artifact (reflecting the way social data are coded and reported), promoted by some ethnic leaders, and a shorthand the media finds convenient. Most so-called Asian Americans do not see themselves, well, as Asian Americans and many resent being labeled this way.⁽⁶⁵⁾ Many Japanese Americans do not feel a particular affinity to Filipino or Pakistani Americans, or to Korean Americans.⁽⁶⁶⁾ And the feeling is rather reciprocal. As Professor Paul Watanabe, from the University of Massachusetts, an expert on Asian Americans and himself an American of Japanese descent, puts it: "There's this concept that all Asians are alike, that they have the same history, the same language, the same background. Nothing could be more incorrect."⁽⁶⁷⁾

William Westerman of the International Institute of New Jersey complains about Americans who tend to ignore the cultural differences among Asian nations, which reflect thousands of years of tradition. He wonders how the citizens of the United States, Canada, and Mexico would feel if they were all treated as indistinguishable "North Americans."⁽⁶⁸⁾

The same holds for the so-called Latinos, including three of my sons. Americans of Hispanic origin trace their origins to many different countries and cultures.⁽⁶⁹⁾ Eduardo Diaz, a social service administrator, puts it this way: "...there is no place called Hispanica. I think it's degrading to be called something that doesn't exist. Even Latino is a misnomer. We don't speak Latin."⁽⁷⁰⁾ A Mexican American office worker remarked that when she is called Latina it makes her think "about some kind of island."⁽⁷¹⁾ Many Americans from Central America think of themselves as "mestizo," a term that refers to a mixture of Indian and European ancestry. Among those surveyed in the National Latino Political Survey in 1989, the greatest number of respondents choose to be labeled by their country of origin, as opposed to "pan-ethnic" terms such as "Hispanic" or "Latino".⁽⁷²⁾

The significance of these and other such data is that far from seeing a country divided into two or three hardened minority camps, we are witnessing an extension of a traditional American picture: Americans of different origins identifying with groups of other Americans from the same country, at least for a while, but not with any large or more lasting group.

Far from there being a new coalition of non-white minorities soon to gain majority status (something President Clinton points to and Jesse Jackson dreams about as a rainbow, one that contains all colors but white), the groups differ greatly from each other--and within themselves.

To reiterate, on numerous issues, the differences among various minority groups are as big or bigger than those between these groups and "Anglo" Americans. For instance, while fewer Cuban Americans agree with the statement that U.S. citizens should be hired over noncitizens than Anglos (42% of Cubans compared to 51% of Anglos), other Hispanic groups agree more strongly than Anglos (55% of Puerto Ricans and 54% of Mexican Americans).⁽⁷³⁾ Quotas for jobs and college admissions are favored only by a minority of any of these four groups studied, but Cubans differ from Mexicans and Puerto Ricans more (by 14%) than from Anglos (by 12%).⁽⁷⁴⁾

The fact that various minorities do not share a uniform view, which could lead them to march lock-step with other minorities to a new America (as some on the left fantasize), is also reflected in elections. Cuban Americans tend to vote Republican, while other Americans of Hispanic origin are more likely to vote Democratic.⁽⁷⁵⁾ Americans of Asian origin cannot be counted on to vote one way or another, either. First generation Vietnamese Americans tend to be strong anti-Communists and favor the Republican party, while older Japanese- and Chinese Americans are more often Democrats, and Filipino Americans are more or less equally divided between the parties. (Of the Filipino Americans registered to vote, 40% list themselves as Democrats, 38% as Republicans, and 17% as independent.)⁽⁷⁶⁾

The Lessons of "Non-white" States and Cities

Some social scientists argue that we can learn about the future, in which non-white majorities will prevail, by examining the states and cities in which minorities already comprise the majorities. For instance, Peter Morrison, former head of the Population Research Center at RAND, suggests that one can see the future in cities that have a majority composed of minorities.⁽⁷⁷⁾

One clear way to examine the impact of the rise of non-white majorities is to study election results. They show, as did the survey data cited above, that people of a given racial background often do not vote for a candidate of their color--and above all, that non-white groups often do not jointly support any one candidate of any one color or racial background. Any suggestion that race or ethnicity determines for whom one casts one's vote is belied by the facts. For example, Peter Skerry notes that "when first elected to the San Antonio City Council in 1975, [the popular Henry] Cisneros was the candidate of the Anglo establishment and received a higher proportion of Anglo than Mexican votes cast."⁽⁷⁸⁾

We often encounter the future first in California.⁽⁷⁹⁾ In a 1991 Los Angeles election for the California State Assembly, Korean American, Filipino American, and Japanese American groups each ran their own candidate, thus splitting the so called "Asian American" vote, not deterred by the fact that they thereby ensured the election of a white candidate.⁽⁸⁰⁾

In some cities that contain non-white majorities, we find white, black, and Hispanic mayors alternating, despite only relatively small changes in the composition of the city population. For instance, in Los Angeles, which is roughly 64% non-white (specifically, nearly 40% Hispanic, 14% black, nearly 10% Asian, and .5% American Indian according to the 1990 census),⁽⁸¹⁾ Tom Bradley, an African American, served as mayor for 20 years, until 1993, when the citizens elected Richard Riordan, a white politician. New York City and San Francisco also have in recent years alternated between white and black mayors without witnessing any dramatic changes in the racial and ethnic backgrounds of those who inhabit those cities.

New York City, comprising approximately 29% blacks, 24% Hispanics, and 7% Asians and Pacific Islanders, (nearly 60% non-whites),⁽⁸²⁾ elected the white Ed Koch, then chose the African American David Dinkins, followed by a white mayor, Rudolph Giuliani.⁽⁸³⁾ The roughly 55% minority city San Francisco (approximately 11% black, 30% Asian, 14% Hispanic, and .5% American Indian),⁽⁸⁴⁾ was served by three white mayors from 1976 through 1995, but elected the African American Willie Brown in 1996. Dallas, which is about 30% black, 21 percent Hispanic, and 2% Asian had no African American mayor until 1995.⁽⁸⁵⁾ Philadelphia, long served by white mayors, elected Wilson Goode to serve between 1984 and 1992, the city's first African American mayor. Goode was followed by the white Edward Rendell in this city of nearly 40% blacks, 6 percent Hispanics, and 3% Asians. The fact that cities like D.C. (nearly 66% black⁽⁸⁶⁾) and Detroit (nearly 76% black⁽⁸⁷⁾) tend to elect black mayors is beside the point, because neither comprises a coalition of minorities but one minority, and the only one that usually envisions itself as a single group.

Additionally, Virginia, in which whites outnumber minorities significantly (1.5 million minorities and 4.8 million whites), has elected a black governor. L. Douglas Wilder served from 1989 to January 1994.⁽⁸⁸⁾ In the rural and conservative Second District of Georgia, a two-thirds white voter majority reelected Sanford D. Bishop Jr., an African American Democrat, to serve as their representative.⁽⁸⁹⁾ Washington state, comprising only 4.5% Asian Americans, elected Gary Locke in 1996, putting in office the first Asian American governor in the mainland United States.⁽⁹⁰⁾ While one can find counter examples, the examples listed here indicate that the majority of minorities does not necessarily elect people of color, nor does the white majority necessarily elect white officials. Moreover, I expect more blurring in the future rather than less, given all the various vectors discussed in this analysis.

Intermarriage and the Rise of "Others"

Last but not least, the figures used by those who project a majority of minorities or the end of a white majority are misleading. These figures are based on a simplistic projection of past trends. How simplistic these projections often are can be quickly gleaned from the Census projection that the number of Native Americans will grow from 2,433,000 in 2000, or approximately 1% of the total population to 4,405,000, or approximately 1% of the total population by the year 2050, and to 6,442,000, or approximately 1% of the total population by the year 2100.⁽⁹¹⁾ That is, 100 years and no change.

This tendency to depict the future as a continuation of the past is particularly misleading because it ignores the rapidly rising category of racially mixed Americans, the result of a rising number of cross-racial marriages and a rejection of monoracial categories by some others, especially Hispanic Americans.

One out of 12 marriages in 1995 (8.4%) were interracial/ethnic marriages. Intermarriage between Asian Americans and whites are particularly common; marriages between Hispanic Americans and whites are also rather frequent, while such marriages with African Americans are the least common. In 1998, out-marriage by Hispanics of all generations totaled 16.7 percent, while non-Hispanic Asians out-married at a rate of 15 percent and non-Hispanic Blacks at 5 percent.⁽⁹²⁾

Intermarriage between black and other Americans is less common, but also rising. "In 1990, 84% of all married black people over the age of 65 were in both-black marriages, but only 53% of married blacks under 25 were," according to the Statistical Assessment Service.⁽⁹³⁾ And the Census Bureau finds that over the past 20 years, the number of marriages between blacks and whites has more than quadrupled, increasing from 65,000 in 1970 to 296,000 in 1994.⁽⁹⁴⁾ From 1960 to 1997, the percent of all marriages that were interracial grew from 0.4 percent to 2.3 percent.⁽⁹⁵⁾ Similarly, researchers Douglas Besharov and Timothy Sullivan found that the number of black-white marriages constituted 1.7 percent of all marriages in 1960, but represented 6 percent of all marriages in 1990.⁽⁹⁶⁾ A study from the University of Michigan reports that in the 1940s about 2% of black men married white women, whereas by the 1980s about 8% did so. And while in the 1940s about 1% of married black women had married interracially, in the 1980s that figure had reached nearly 3%.⁽⁹⁷⁾ The number of intermarriages also increases with each subsequent generation living in the U.S. In the mid-1990s, slightly under 20 percent of first generation Asian women were intermarried, as opposed to slightly under 30 percent of the second generation and slightly over 40 percent of the third generation. Slightly under 10 percent of first generation Hispanic women were intermarried, contrasting sharply with percentages in the mid 20s and mid 30s for second and third generation women, respectively. Black intermarriage rates were much lower, even though there was increase over all--no figures were over 5 percent.⁽⁹⁸⁾

The trend toward intermarriage is strongest among the young; 30 percent of married Asian Americans have married outside the group, as have 16 percent of Hispanics and 11 percent of blacks in this age group. "This is the beginning point of a blending of the races," predicts William Frey, a sociologist at the State University of New York at Albany. . . [he added] "that in households racial or ethnic attitudes will soften," he says in *American Demographics* (Nov. 1999), as families realize that they can embrace many cultures without losing any one facet of their identity.⁽⁹⁹⁾

About half of third-generation Mexican Americans marry non-Hispanic whites; even higher numbers of Asian Americans do the same.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Gregory Rodriguez has provided figures on this phenomenon.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

All together, since 1970, the proportion of marriages among people of different racial or ethnic origin increased by 72%. The 1990 Census notes 1.5 million interracial marriages.⁽¹⁰²⁾ Some put the number of children of mixed-race parents at 3 million, not including Hispanic mestizos and black Americans who have European or Indian ancestry.⁽¹⁰³⁾

Another indication of some blurring of the lines among the races in American society can be gleaned from the fact that in the 1990 Census, 4%, or 9.8 million Americans, chose to classify themselves as "others," i.e., not members of any particular racial group. In a Census 2000 practice run, this number had increased to 5.4 percent of the sample.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ The increase from 4% to 5.4% may seem minor but given the size of the population, many hundreds of thousands are involved.

Even if the trends already cited do not accelerate and continue only at the present pace, the figures for 2050 may read something like the following: 51% white; 14% multiracial; 35% minorities. Far from dividing the country still further, the rise of the "others," along with the fact that more and more Americans will be of mixed heritage, with divergent backgrounds, will serve to blur the racial lines. That is, while there may well be more Americans of non-European origin, a growing number of the American white majority will have an Hispanic daughter- or son-in-law, an Asian stepfather or mother, and a whole rainbow of cousins. If one must find a simple image for the future of America, Tiger Woods, or Hawaii, as I see it, seems more appropriate than a view of a country in which Louis Farrakahn and his followers and the Aryan Nation are threatening one another.

Regrettably, identity politics led the U.S. Census Bureau to drop the category of "other" from its 2000 Census. This in turn makes it more difficult for Americans of mixed background, or those who wish to forgo racial labels, from declaring themselves as what I would like to call "All Americans."⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Because the way the Census constructs its categories affects the way many others do--for instance, those overseeing admissions to colleges--the category of other or multiracial Americans may well not gain as fast as it would if the Census followed its 1990 format. This in effect forces at least 10 million Americans into racial categories they seek to shed or modify, and makes American society seem more divided along racial lines than it actually is.

There are strong sociological reasons to argue that the US Census re-introduce a non-racial category. (Others have suggested that this category be named "multi-racial.") Inclusion of such a category would allow millions of Americans who are not, and do not see themselves as, members of any one race to be recognized as people with a blended heritage, reflecting the mixed heritage of America itself.

At issue is how we view ourselves as a nation. Are we going to continue to be divided by race? Or will we welcome the blurring of the lines that divide the races?

The number of Americans who refused a mono-racial category grew from about 2.5 million in 1970⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ to 9.8 million by 1990.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ If the 2000 Census had allowed, it is very likely that many more would have chosen the non-racial category. The main reason: rapidly increasing intermarriages.

These couples' children are the main source of the continued increase in "multiracials." In addition, other Americans object to being racially categorized, or--change their minds during their lifetime. The children of a couple I know--he black, she white--viewed themselves as white in primary school, black as adolescents, and now one passes as white and the other as black. What is gained by forcing such people to officially declare themselves one or the other?

The Census yielded to pressure from identity politics. It releases its data in two forms. One, a straightforward account; the other, "modified."⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ Here it reconfigured the statistics by re-boxing 9.8 million "other" Americans into mono-racial categories!

Informal conversations with colleagues at the Bureau indicated that the Office of Management and Budget (which reviews all official questionnaires), yielded to pressure from several minority leaders. For instance, Ibrahim K. Sundiata from Brandeis University who maintained that the "other" category reflects a drive to undermine black solidarity.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

Other African American leaders worried that the category of "other" would decrease the number of blacks in the nation's official statistics, and thus undermine the enforcement of anti-discrimination statutes and numerous social programs based on racial statistics. The NAACP and the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, have disapproved of watering down non-white groups.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

As Gregory Rodriguez, a social researcher, states,

< blockquote >...some black groups, such as the NAACP and the Black Leadership Forum, a national coalition of the leaders of major civil rights organizations, are encouraging people to check just one box this year. The nuances and complexities of the multiracial future may be too threatening to the stark civil-rights era perspective forged in the segregationist past.⁽¹¹¹⁾ < /blockquote >

Rep. Carrie Meek (D-Fla.) explained: "The multiracial category would cloud the count of discrete minorities who are assigned to a lower track in public schools . . . kept out of certain occupations and whose progress toward seniority or promotion has been skewed" ⁽¹¹²⁾

Whatever the motives, the 2000 Census instead will allow Americans to mark as many racial categories as their hearts desire--as long as they define themselves racially. The battle is already on as to how the results will be counted. African and Asian American groups demand that anyone who marks their race in any combination be counted as fully theirs. The Census has not yet announced its pleasure.

Only if the Bureau were to release the information referring to blended Americans as "multiracial" (or "non-racial," best as "all-American"), would it encourage the nation to view itself as less divided. There are several indications that the country is ready for widespread changes in our social categories and thinking. Georgia and Indiana have already required government agencies to use the multiracial category. In California there is an Association for Multi-Ethnic Americans,⁽¹¹³⁾ and Ohio, Illinois, Georgia, Indiana and Michigan have introduced legislation to create a multiracial category on college applications.⁽¹¹⁴⁾

Further moderation of racial and ethnic leadership

Predicting the political attitudes of leaders is especially difficult, surely as compared to demographic trends. One reason is that these attitudes are affected by many considerations including the conditions of the economy and which party controls the White House and Congress. However, for the following reasons I expect a secular [sic] trend of continued moderation from minority leadership over the next decades. (There will of course be exceptions but I am speaking of the general pattern.) The part of moderation I am focusing on here is the one relevant to the issue at hand; the move from separatism and identity politics to "normal" interest group politics, that implicitly accept the basic societal framework.

One of the main reasons is the relative decline of African Americans in the total demographic and political picture. The Census Bureau has projected that the African American population which currently, in the year 2000, makes up approximately 13% of the total US population, will grow to approximately 15% in 2050, where it will remain steady to 2100.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ In contrast, the Hispanic population, which currently makes up approximately 12% of the total US population, is projected to rise to approximately 24% of the total US population in 2050 and approximately 33% in

2100.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ However, Hispanics are going to grow more rapidly because there is every reason to expect much more immigration of Hispanic origin than from Africa. (One should also note that whatever immigration there is from the West Indies and Haiti these immigrants do not necessarily see themselves as African Americans or even part of one black community.)

The relative increase of the role of Hispanics vs. blacks is significant because so far "minorities" has been largely identified in people's minds with blacks. Indeed very often reference to race relations still evokes the term black and white with other groups not mentioned at all or as a second thought. This will change in the future as Latinos continue to grow in relative size and political awareness and organization.

The difference is especially relevant because blacks have been much slower to intermarry and otherwise be absorbed into the American society than other minorities. And on average their leadership has been less moderate and more given to identity politics than the leaders of other groups. Moreover, black leadership itself tends to moderate. (Compare, for instance, the speeches of Reverend Al Sharpton and Louis Farrakahn in recent years to a decade earlier.) There are numerous reasons for this trend. Not least of them is the rapid increase in the proportion of blacks that are middle class who on average tend to be more moderate than other blacks. The black middle class has grown significantly since the advent of the civil rights movement, and has "quadrupled since the '60s, doubling in the '80s alone."⁽¹¹⁷⁾ In 1998, 40% of blacks defined themselves as middle class.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ And, as Henry Louis Gates has stated, "...we don't have to pretend any longer that 35 million people can ever possibly be members of the same economic class.... Nor do they speak with one single voice, united behind one single leader. As each of us knows, we have never been members of one social or economic class and never will be."⁽¹¹⁹⁾

One may wonder whether Hispanic leadership may be not be driven to less moderate identity politics. This is of course hard to predict. However one notes that there will be also a growing Hispanic middle class and there is no obvious reason to expect that their tendency to intermarry and move up the economic and social will slow down significantly. Asian-American leaders in contrast have tended, on average, to be so local and conservative in their orientation, that they may well move a bit toward identity politics. Such a move so would still leave them rather moderate by comparison to many earlier African-American leaders.

All said and done, while identity politics may well not end, one can expect--with the dethroning and simultaneous moderation of large parts of the African-American leadership of minorities--identity politics to subside to a considerable extent. This would be of considerable significance for the future of the monochrome society because it would serve to make it not merely a demographic trend and one evident among the members of various social groups, but also encompass the orientation of the leadership, which in turns affects the way we see ourselves and each other.

Another reason several African American leaders object to a multi-racial category is that race data is used for the enforcement of civil rights legislation in employment, voting rights, housing and mortgage lending, health care services, and educational opportunities.⁽¹²⁰⁾ They fear that the category could decrease the number of blacks in official statistics, and thus undermine efforts to enforce anti-discrimination statutes and undercut numerous social programs based on racial quotas.

What is a Race Anyhow?

One may wonder if the number of Americans involved is large enough to justify what at first seems like a tempest in a teapot. The underlying reason is that one tends to underestimate the number of Americans who might qualify for the new category because one assumes that only those of a mixed racial heritage may fall into the All-American box. Actually there are considerable differences in color and other racial features within all racial groups, which makes the question of who is in versus out much more flexible than often seems. For instance, many dark-skinned Hispanics who do not see themselves as black, and many light-skinned African Americans who do not wish to pass as white, would be free to choose the new category.

One should also note that those who study race professionally, especially physical and cultural anthropologists, strongly object to the concept of racial categorization. They point out that no single gene can be used to differentiate one race from another; moreover, indicators from blood types to texture of hair vary a great deal both among and within groups considered to be of one race. Indeed, the American Anthropological Association passed a resolution stating that "differentiating species into biologically defined 'race' has proven meaningless and unscientific."

The Merits of a New Category

Dropping the whole social construction of race does not seem in the cards, even if the most far-reaching arguments against Affirmative Action and for a "color blind" society, win the day. However, there are strong sociological reasons to favor the inclusion of a multi-racial category in the 2010 Census.

Introducing a multi-racial category has the potential to soften racial lines that now divide America by rendering them more like economic differences and less like caste lines. Sociologists have long observed that a major reason the United States experiences relatively few confrontations along class lines is that Americans believe they can move from one economic strata to another. (For instance, workers become foremen, and foremen become small businessmen, who are considered middle class.) Moreover, there are not sharp class demarcation lines as there are in Britain; in America many workers consider themselves middle class, dress up to go to work, and hide their tools and lunches in briefcases, while middle class super-liberal professors join labor unions. A major reason confrontations in America occur more often along racial lines is that color lines currently seem rigidly unchangeable.

If the new category is allowed, if more and more Americans choose this category in future decades, as there is every reason to expect given the high rates of intermarriage and a desire by millions of Americans to avoid being racially boxed in, the new Census category may go a long way in determining if America in the next century will be less caste-like and more class-like, a society in which differences are blurred.

Skeptics may suggest that how one marks a tiny box on the 2000 Census form is between ones' self and the keepers of statistics. But, as this sociologist sees it, if the multi-racial concept is allowed into the national statistics, it will also enter the social vocabulary. It will make American society less stratified along racial lines, less rigidly divided, and thus more communitarian.

The Ultimate Question

At stake is the question of what kind of America we envision for the longer run. Some see a complete blur of racial lines with Americans constituting some kind of new

hybrid race. *Time* ran a cover story on the subject, led by a computer composite of a future American with some features of each race, a new rather handsome breed (almond shaped eyes, straight but dark hair, milk chocolate skin). This would take much more than a change in racial nomenclature, but it could serve as a step in that direction.

Others are keen to maintain strict racial lines and oppose intermarriage; these same people often seek to maintain the races as separate "nations." (The term nation is significant because it indicates a high degree of tribalism.) In a world full of interracial strife, this attitude--however understandable its defensive nature in response to racial prejudice and discrimination--leaves at least this communitarian greatly troubled. The more communitarian view seems to be one in which those who seek to uphold their separate group identities will do so (hopefully viewing themselves and being viewed as subgroups of a more encompassing community rather than as separate nations) but those who seek to redefine themselves will be enabled to do so, leading to an ever larger group that is free from racial categorization.

If a multi-racial category is included further down the road, maybe in the 2010 Census, we may wish to add one more category, that of "multi-ethnic" origin, one which most Americans might wish to check. Then we would live to recognize the full importance of my favorite African American saying: We came in many ships but we now ride in the same boat.

Multiculturalism or American Creed?

All this suggests that foreseeable changes in America's demography do not imply that the American creed is being or will be replaced by something called "multiculturalism."⁽¹²¹⁾ Roberto Suro reminds us that we do not need to divest ourselves of plurality in order to achieve harmony.

Americans have never thought of themselves as a single people as the Germans do. Although white, English-speaking Christians of European ancestry have set most of the norms for American society, there is still no sense of a *Volk* (a group that shares a common ancestry and culture and that embodies the national identity.) Ideas, not biology, are what generate oneness and homogeneity in the United States, and so long as faith in those ideas has remained strong, the country has shown an extraordinary capacity to absorb people of many nationalities.⁽¹²²⁾

The American creed always has had room for pluralism of sub-cultures, of people upholding some of the traditions and values of their countries of origin, from praying to playing in their own way. But American pluralism should be bound by a shared framework if America is to be spared the kind of ethnic tribalism of the kind that--when driven to extremes--has torn apart countries as different as Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and has even raised its ugly head in well-established democracies such as Canada and the United Kingdom (where Scottish separatism is on the rise).

The social, cultural, and legal elements that constitute the framework that holds together the diverse mosaic are well known.⁽¹²³⁾ They include a commitment by all parties to the democratic way of life, to the Constitution and its Bill of Rights, and to mutual tolerance.⁽¹²⁴⁾ The mosaic is further fortified by a strong conviction that one's station in life is determined by hard work and saving, by taking responsibility for one's self and one's family. And, most Americans still share a strong sense that while we

are different in some ways, in more ways we are joined by the shared responsibilities of providing a good society for our children and ourselves, one free of racial and ethnic strife, and providing the world with a model of a country whose economy and polity are thriving.

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- More specifically, the following percentages said that each area was "worse" or "harder": public schools--whites 55%, African Americans 57%, Latinos 45%, Asian Americans 47%; getting good jobs--whites 56%, African Americans 60%, Latinos 50%, Asian Americans 56%; finding decent, affordable housing--whites 55%, African Americans 49%, Latinos 55%, Asian Americans 48%; for families like theirs to stay together--whites 45%, African Americans 48%, Latinos 40%, Asian Americans 34%.
36. U.S. Department of Justice, *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1996*, 141-45.
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More specifically, the following percentages of each group felt "strongly" that Congress should take action on each item: balance the budget--whites 82%, African Americans 79%, Latinos 75%, Asian Americans 75%; limited tax breaks for business--whites 39%, African Americans 41%, Latinos 41%, Asian Americans 30%; cut personal income taxes--whites 52%, African Americans 50%, Latinos 55%, Asian Americans 46%; reform Medicare--whites 53%, African Americans 58%, Latinos 59%, Asian Americans 58%.

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