

FOLKLIFE IN CONTEMPORARY MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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New demographic, political, economic and ecological realities have recently joined on a global scale to bring cultural issues to the fore. Talk about “culture” — usually consigned to the back sections of newspapers, to academic circles and to abstract critical discussions — has recently emerged as a major subject of current events requiring serious and broad consideration.

In the United States the 1990 Census will reveal the continuation of a trend toward an ethnically diverse population. Sometime in the middle of the next century most Americans will be identified as of African American, Asian American, Hispanic or other “minority” background. The “majority,” already a broad and varied category of European Americans, will have become the “minority.” The implications of this demographic shift, already well along in some areas of the United States, has sparked debate on the public use of languages other than English, culturally appropriate educational strategies and models and standards of American national unity.

At the same time, the economic position of Japan challenges American models of production and management. Economic differences are being discussed in cultural terms, with reference to underlying ideas about social organization, attitudes toward work, and the comparative values placed on individual and group achievement. Culture is at the cutting edge of economic production — even in the industrialized world.

Matters of national unity and cultural diversity have continued to be major, central issues in Brazil, Canada, China, India and Indonesia, among others. But perhaps nowhere are they more pressing than in the U.S.S.R. Political *perestroika* has meant cultural restructuring as well, with diverse ethnic, religious, regional and tribal groups asserting their identities, values and institutions in opposition to the dictates of the centralized state. The quality and character of daily life — the locus of cultural policy in its true sense — is now a matter of vociferous debate.

Environmental crises, especially our ability to create but not to solve them, have prompted new examinations of the cultural survival of indigenous peoples and

long term sustainable development (*Cultural Survival Quarterly* 1982 6(2), 1984 8(3), 1987 11(1)). The ongoing, systematic destruction of the tropical rainforest for industrial and agricultural purposes contrasts sharply with its use by its original human inhabitants. Indigenous people of the rainforests generally have developed systems of knowledge and resource use that conserve both nature and culture. Traditional, local relationships with an environment, be it rainforest, wetland, mountainous region, sea coast or other area, are most often more ecologically sound than those of advanced industrial society.

These events and trends are both sobering and humbling. They remind us that grass-roots, people's culture — folklife — a residual category for many decades if not the entire century, is an important force in the world today, directly affecting demographic, political, economic and ecological change. These events also suggest a future in which folklife will attain greater recognition and legitimacy in an increasingly multicultural nation and world.

FOLKLIFE AND THE IDEOLOGY OF MODERNITY

Expressive, grass-roots culture, or folklife, is lived by all of us as members of ethnic, religious, tribal, familial or occupational groups. It is the way we represent our values in stories, songs, rituals, crafts and cooking. Whether the legacy of past generations or a recent innovation, folklife is traditionalized by its practitioners; it becomes a marker of community or group identity. Folklife is a way that people say, “This is who and how we are.”

Folklife is as contemporary as it is historical: it is the languages and dialects we speak, the clothes we wear and the other ways in which we express ourselves. It is gospel music performed by African American choirs, Anglo-American foodways, stories taxicab drivers tell, group dances done at Jewish weddings, whistle signals of Salvadoran men, Missouri fiddling sessions and the practical knowledge farmers have of weather; it is

Italians playing *bocce*, Vietnamese curing by rubbing, Puerto Ricans playing the *plena*, Ojibway Indians harvesting wild rice, Pakistanis eating *dal* and *chapati*. While implicating the past, these traditions are as *contemporary* in their expressivity and function as abstract painting, computer synthesized music and microwaveable food. Traditional Virgin Islands scratch band music and calypso singing, *kallaloo* cooking and mask making are contemporary with top 40 hits, fast food and the tourist industry. In Senegal, saying *namaz*, singing praise songs, dancing the *sabar*, participating in *lambe* wrestling, and practicing metal smithing, cloth dying and hair braiding are part of contemporary lives.

Folklife is often and wrongfully associated in the popular mind with incomprehensible song and stilted dance, doll-like performance costumes, and antiquated, naive arts and crafts. Despite the advertising label, folklife is not a large troupe of choreographed, acrobatic, finely tailored youth prancing to glorious orchestral music in romanticized and theatrically inspired visions of peasant life. Nor does folklife properly refer to historical re-enactments of bygone crafts or to other anachronistic performances in which individuals pretend to be others situated in a distant time and place. This tendency to think of folklife as theatrical recreation of the past disparages it, divorces it from its contemporary existence.

The devaluation of grass-roots, peoples' culture grows from a desire to see ourselves as "modern." This desire, as many social historians have noted, is rooted in the practices of the industrial revolution and their ideological consequences. Industrial manufacture — with its rationalization of production to maximize profit — meant relying on those applied sciences that fostered innovative technological development and giving primary legitimacy to systems of value based upon or well-suited to an economic calculus. In the 19th century, many older forms of knowledge, systems of values, technologies and skills that were not useful to factory manufacture, to American and European urban life, and to a growing class of professional scholars, were delegitimated.

An example of this is the official devaluation and delegitimation of medical systems, such as the Greco-Roman-Arabic humoral system, or "Ionian Physics." This system of medicine practiced from the Mediterranean to south Asia had a rich pharmacopeia, an experimental tradition, colleges and training centers, a long-lived, vibrant literature, and tens of thousands of trained physician practitioners serving both urban and rural communities. Yet it was devalued by British colonial officials. Because they held power, not a necessarily or demonstrably better science, they were able to decertify local practitioners and institutions. The result was that medical treatment by indigenous physicians was lost to many, particularly in rural areas. The

relatively few locals trained in British medical schools either returned primarily to cities or stayed abroad. The denial of other, in this case, was also a denial of one's own history. Hippocrates himself, the fountainhead of Western medical practice, practiced the humoral system. Greco-Roman scholars developed the system's pharmacopeia and theory, which, preserved and expanded by Arab physicians, was still taught in European universities well into the 19th century.

Concurrent with the monopolistic assertion of singular, exclusive ways of knowing and forms of knowledge, European and American nations invested power in institutions that transcended traditional loyalties. Allegiance to family, clan, religious sect and tribe might be seen as primordial bases of nationhood, but they had to be ethically superseded for the state to function. This transformation was understood as a fundamental shift in the nature of society by seminal theorists of the late 19th century — from mechanical to organic forms of solidarity by Emile Durkheim, from community to association by Ferdinand Tönnies, from status to civil society by Lewis Henry Morgan, from feudalism to capitalism by Max Weber and Karl Marx. The success of this transformation can be seen in the permanency of its non-folk forms of organization — universities and school systems, judicial courts, parliaments and political parties, businesses and unions — which came to define particular fields of social action. Less formal types of organization — church, home, family, elders, neighborhood, club — receded in importance.

The success of American and European efforts to develop state institutions — and thereby to overcome the past by devaluing it — were mistakenly taken to justify the ethical superiority of colonizing powers over peoples of Africa, Asia, Oceania and South America. An ideology of social and cultural evolution postulated necessary correspondences among technological development, social organization and cultural achievement. In the view of late 19th century social science, technologically advanced peoples were better organized socially and superior culturally. Modernity was opposed to tradition and was associated with political power; it was thought to be characteristic of more sophisticated, higher class, adult-like culture, while tradition was associated with powerlessness and thought to be associated with a simpler, lower class, child-like culture. According to this ideology, the purpose of education, development and cultural policy was for the supposedly deficient, tradition-bound peoples (both foreign and domestic) to follow in the technological, social and cultural footsteps of the advanced and modern.

This view has always been and continues to be challenged. Technological "progress" does not mean "better" for everyone. Technological superiority may indeed mean more efficient production. But it can also mean more efficient destruction. Witness our modern

ability for nuclear annihilation. Witness the devastation and pollution of the environment with efficient forest cutting machines and powerful but toxic synthetic chemicals. Witness the breakup of social units, cultural forms and ethical values resulting in part from television, video and computer games.

The comparative efficacy of social systems is difficult to measure. While modern states are often judged positively for their nuclear families, social and geographic mobility and diffuse systems of authority, these forms have a cost. High divorce and suicide rates, urban crime, drug problems, mid-life crises and alienation are in part the prices paid for the type of society we live in.

It is difficult if not impossible to say that one culture is better than another. All cultures provide a system of symbols and meanings to their bearers, and in this function they are similar. All cultures encourage self-perpetuating, guiding values and forms of aesthetic expression. All cultures encode knowledge, although the ways in which they do so may differ. And when one set of cultural ideas replaces another it is usually a case of knowledge replacing knowledge, not ignorance.

The relationship between ethics, power and technology is also problematic. Progress on technical and social fronts has not been uniform, even in Europe and the United States. Wide discrepancies continue to exist in the accessibility of technological benefits and social opportunities. Within the U.S. and Europe and around the world, the point is easily made that political or coercive power is not necessarily associated with righteousness. Modern states have inflicted ethical horrors upon each other — the world wars, for example, do not bespeak of advanced and civilized values. Nor do institutions such as slavery, colonialism, concentration camps and apartheid visited on the so-called “less developed” or “inferior” speak well of ethical or cultural superiority, as Frederick Douglass, Mohandas Gandhi, Elie Wiesel, Martin Luther King, Jr., Lech Walesa and Desmond Tutu have clearly demonstrated.

AMERICAN UNITY AND DIVERSITY

Since the early part of the 20th century, American popular culture has represented this country as a “nation of nations” that employs a “melting pot” or similar crucible to blend or eliminate differences and produce national unity. Henry Ford actually devised a ritual pageant for workers at one of his plants which involved an “Americanization machine.” At an appropriate phase of their assimilation, Ford would have workers — mainly from central and eastern Europe — dress in their various national costumes, march onto a stage waving their national flags, and enter the machine. The latter was a large and elaborate stage prop replete with smoke, control levers and gauges. Workers would emerge from this crucible of factory experience dressed

in American work clothes and waving American flags. For Ford, Americanization worked, and industry was its engine.

Many Americans (Glazer and Moynihan 1963) have long been aware that the “melting pot” was an inadequate metaphor for American society. For in this melting pot, American Indians were long invisible, African Americans were excluded, and the cultures of others were ignored despite their persistence. Other metaphors — the American salad, stew, patchwork quilt and rainbow — have been offered as alternatives. But now and in the coming decades Americans will have to confront their own diversity as never before. The demographic shift, combined with heightened consciousness of civil and cultural rights will challenge Americans to devise new models of nationhood.

Despite such challenges, the ideology of cultural superiority still looms large. International development policy is typically conceived in this mode, although “grassroots-up” and various types of community and “appropriate” development strategies represent alternatives that take into consideration locally defined goals, values and institutions. Political efforts to define cultural policy in America have, in some cases, taken a monocultural track — “English-language only” initiatives in several states, for example. Some national institutions have also promulgated a monocultural view of American society, stressing the overriding importance of a singular, national, homogeneous core culture. For example, a few years ago, the National Endowment for the Arts issued a report *Toward Civilization* (1988), that promotes arts education as the received wisdom of an elitist Euro-American art history. Folk and non-Western accomplishments and aesthetic ideas are largely absent.

The spurious argument about the need for a standard American culture has been made most forcibly by Alan Bloom (1987) in *The Closing of the American Mind*. On one hand Bloom disparages as weak and irrelevant the types of cultural differences expressed by Americans:

The ‘ethnic’ differences we see in the United States are but decaying reminiscences of old differences that caused our ancestors to kill one another. The animating principle, their soul, has disappeared from them. The ethnic festivals are just superficial displays of clothes, dances and foods from the old country. One has to be quite ignorant of the splendid ‘cultural’ past to be impressed or charmed by these insipid folkloric manifestations... And the blessing given the whole notion of cultural diversity in the United States by the culture movement has contributed to the intensification and legitimization of group politics, along with a corresponding decay of belief that the individual rights enunciated in the Declaration of Independence are anything more than dated rhetoric. (Bloom 1987:192-93)

If such differences are as irrelevant and superficial as Bloom believes, why are they such threats to his monolithic version of national unity? Raising xenophobic fears Bloom says,

Obviously the future of America can't be sustained if people keep only to their own ways and remain perpetual outsiders. The society has got to turn them into Americans. There are natural fears that today's immigrants may be too much of a cultural stretch for a nation based on Western values. (*Time* 1990 135(15):31)

Bloom and others think that attention to diversity should be minimized. Education and public discourse based on diversity would not assimilate "minority" populations to the "mainstream." Multiculturalism as a policy would, Bloom fears, undercut national unity.

On the other side of the debate are those who argue that institutions should broaden their practices to include the wisdom, knowledge, languages and aesthetics of the many peoples who have contributed to the growth of the nation. Too often the history books and history museums have left out the accomplishments of "minority" peoples. For example, American Indian tribes had created governments, civilizations and humanitarian values long before European conquest — yet they have historically been represented in textbooks as savages. African American contributions to American history — from the development of rice agriculture in the U.S. southeast to the creation of technological inventions — have generally been absent from museums. The sacrifices of Chinese Americans, who laid the railroad track that crossed the nation in the 19th century, are removed from public historical consciousness. The contributions, insights and wisdoms of many of America's people have simply been ignored in mainstream representations of history and culture (Stewart and Ruffins 1986, Garfias 1989, Tchen 1990). In response to Bloom, several scholars argue that ignoring diversity in the guise of intellectual or moral superiority has led to a divided nation and bodes ill for the future (*The Graywolf Annual Five* 1988). Failure to accommodate diversity contributed to the destruction of numerous American Indian peoples, to the institution of slavery and continuing discrimination against African Americans, and to the forced internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Internationally, historical attempts to enforce a monocultural nationhood and segregate or destroy alternative cultural expression has resulted in National Socialism and the Holocaust in Hitler's Germany, Stalinism in the

Soviet Union, apartheid in South Africa, and civil wars in Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Nicaragua and a host of other countries. Indeed, there is broad national and international consensus that cultural rights — to worship or not as one chooses, to have one's own beliefs, to express one's own ethnic, cultural or tribal identity, to speak one's own language and to sing one's own song — are central, universal human rights.

Acceptance of human cultural rights does not mean the end of supra-local or supra-regional political unities. Nations and larger federations can have political, legal and moral frameworks that enshrine cultural freedoms. But cultural dominance of one group over another need not be a basic condition of contemporary nations, especially democratic ones. European nations, which as colonial powers squabbled over a divided world, will in 1992 unite — despite the centuries-old differences of language, culture and history that separate them. The prospect of a united Europe, where many people are already multilingual and multicultural, has yet to resonate with Americans. But demographic changes taking place in the United States, coupled with an



In an increasingly diverse America, people from "minority" cultures contribute to the many sided discourse that is national culture. At the 1989 Festival, Earl Nyholm, an Ojibway from Michigan, and Wright Bowman, a Hawaiian, discuss questions of form, function and social values in relation to their respective boat making traditions. (Photo by Dane Penland, Smithsonian Institution)

increased consciousness of issues of representation — resulting largely from the Civil Rights Movement and those that followed — assure that discussions of cultural unity and diversity will grow in frequency and importance.

CULTURAL PLURALISM: FROM LOCAL TO NATIONAL LEVELS

In many communities across the country, institutions are developing strategies for dealing with culturally diverse neighborhoods, student populations, and work forces. They are trying to resolve the tension between the right to sing one's own song and the need to speak with one's neighbors. In California, 42 percent of the total state population and slightly more than half the students in public schools are of "minority" background. The challenge in education is to adjust curricula, staff, and teaching methods and materials to meet their students' needs in facing the future. Educators who envision a multicultural America have diversified their staff to present the cultural perspectives of a broader range of the population and to provide positive role models for students. Innovative language learning programs, multiple points of view in history, art and music, and imaginative use of community resources and expe-

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BAILEY'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL — CULTURAL PLURALISM IN THE 1990s

Bailey's Elementary School and its community is an example of how issues of cultural pluralism may be addressed at the local level in the coming decade. It is a community I know, as resident and PTA president.

Bailey's Elementary School is located in the Bailey's Crossroads area of Fairfax County, Virginia. It is a public school with about 530 students from 43 countries speaking some 22 different languages. About 40 percent of the children speak Spanish as their mother tongue. The other most often spoken native languages in the school are English, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Urdu, Arabic and Korean. Of the 70 native English speakers, about half are European American, half are African American. The staff, including teachers and administrators is also quite diverse. The cultural diversity of the students and their families is apparent in neighborhood grocery stores, churches and mosque, and flyers in store windows.

Cultural diversity is matched by economic diversity. Many parents are recent immigrants from rural areas of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Bolivia, living in relatively low rent apartments and working in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, as landscaping and construction laborers, housekeepers, child care providers, and servers at fast-food restaurants. More educated and professionally trained immigrants from Latin America are underemployed, as they support their families while seeking certification or language training that would enable them to exercise their occupational skills. Also in the apartments and nearby in smaller homes, live various other immigrants, mainly from south and southeast Asia. Some started as refugees, earned money in jobs and businesses and bought their own homes. Further away but within a half-mile from the lower rent apartments are luxury apartments, some the dwellings of foreign diplomats, and more expensive residential areas, some with homes in the \$200-300,000 range and others with homes worth more than \$1 million.

Teachers, students and indeed most parents are proud of the diverse nature of the school that is reflected in its books, lessons, field trips and cultural events. Some of the academic programs build upon and address the diversity of student backgrounds. As an example, the school initiated a Spanish language partial immersion program. In mixed classes of native English and native Spanish speakers, 40 first graders learn math, science and art in Spanish and language

arts, social studies, music and physical education in English. The English speakers help the Spanish speakers for half the day; they switch roles for the other half. This approach has facilitated language learning in both sets of children, consistent with a body of educational research indicating that such immersion programs result in increased abilities in both native and target languages for all students.

The program has spawned other positive side effects. For one, it helped hold more affluent native English speaking parents and their children in the school by offering a special high quality enhancement program. At the same time, it helped legitimate the knowledge that Spanish speaking students, new to the community, could contribute. Instead of being marginalized and told they were deficient, the Spanish speakers could exhibit leadership roles in class and help their English speaking classmates learn. Role reversal by both sets of students seems quite healthy. Additionally, Spanish speaking teenagers from nearby Stuart High School became involved in the Bailey's program. Some of these teenagers, coming into a high school in 11th or 12th grade from Latin America with little English speaking ability, were, understandably, alienated in their classes. Some were on the verge of dropping out. A timely arrangement between the Bailey's and Stuart Spanish language teachers brought the high schoolers into the classroom on a regular basis to help teach, tutor and mentor the first graders in the program. This has now proved to be a great success. The high school students feel they are making a valuable contribution. The first graders get more attention and help in their studies. Instead of encouraging marginalization and stigmatization of people on the basis of language and class, the program has used culture as a resource for everyone's education.

Yet, in this neighborhood, in one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, the school is seen as a threat, or a problem by a vocal and sizable minority of older homeowners. They decry the "decline" of the school, complaining about the "lack of White faces" and the wrongheadedness of the Spanish language partial immersion program. The community, they assert, is "decaying" as a result of the alien presence — this despite the fact that the apartments were built well before the suburban subdivisions. Long time residents complain about soccer games, the "loud (Latin) music" played in public, the lack of "neighbor-

liness" or "grounds keeping" exhibited by immigrant residents. Many of these people and others, including apartment dwellers, are also worried about alcoholism, crime, undocumented and unemployable immigrants, and other issues bearing on the quality of life. These are legitimate causes of concern, but the challenge is always to separate them from racism, fear and the spurious interpretation of facts. These feelings, based in prejudice, lead some people to see a threat to the American way of life, just because the kids at school are from working class families, have a different color of skin, or speak a different language.

It is interesting to note that in McLean, only a few miles from Bailey's, very affluent European American parents are on a waiting list to enroll their children in a Japanese language partial immersion program. Learning Japanese is not perceived as a threat to American education, but rather as a state-of-the-art program sure to give kids a competitive advantage in the world. The value of the Japanese language program vis-à-vis the Spanish program has nothing to do with the intrinsic grammars, poetics or linguistic attributes of the languages themselves. Instead, language and other cultural expressions may sometimes be valued, and devalued, rather transparently, according to the perceived social status of their bearers. With the support of the county, teachers and administrators at Bailey's are working to use cultural differences in a positive, equitable way to encourage the flowering of ideas and talents from each of its students for the benefit of all its students.

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periences characterize educational strategies which recognize cultural pluralism as both educational context and resource.

In the workplace, some industrial psychologists and sociologists have seen their task as the management and control of an increasingly diverse labor force. Some strategies entail minimizing expressions of diversity, while others more creatively encourage the development of new forms of occupational culture.

On national and international levels there are strong forces for cultural homogenization. If all consumers can be trained to have the same tastes, for example, product and market development become easier and more predictable. Diversity is more cumbersome and troublesome to large multinationals when a myriad of differences in taste, attribution of value, and motivational goals inform consumer choices. International marketers would prefer unanimity — today, generational, tomorrow, global — on what the "real thing" is and how to become identified with it.

On the public side, the United States has no Ministry of Culture, no coven of government bureaucrats to craft and promulgate the nation's culture. We do not have a national language, a national costume, a national dance, a national food. If we did have a singular national culture, what would it be? National cultural institutions have long played a role of encouraging the peoples of the United States to create their own cultural expressions in the context of larger frameworks of free speech and cultural democracy. The National Endowments do this through granting programs. The Smithsonian Institution has recently played a leading role in encouraging cultural pluralism, seeing it as a healthy extension of democratic and populist practices which ultimately strengthen the nation. The Smithsonian has made cultural pluralism in its audience, its exhibits, its research, its ideas and its staff a high priority for the 1990s.



Education in various types of settings conveys knowledge and aesthetics of diverse cultural traditions. At the 1989 Festival, Leodegario Reyno instructs children on the methods of coconut leaf weaving developed by Filipinos in Hawai'i. The Festival is an educational process different from the classroom and usual museum setting. It relies upon human interaction and stresses oral, manual and sensory means for transmitting insight. (Photo by Richard Strauss, Smithsonian Institution)

ISSUES IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

According to some interpreters of culture, the world is becoming more homogeneous. The spread of mass, popular commercial culture with a discrete set of television programs and formats, fast food, top music hits, designer jeans and other fashions, and a standard repertoire of consumer goods seems to have engulfed the planet. Modern technology — from television and radio to videocassette recorders, communications satellites, modems and fax machines — has seemingly reduced distances between the earth's peoples. We can send our voices and images around the planet in a matter of seconds.

Many cultures, as Alan Lomax (1977) has ably noted, are in moral and aesthetic danger as a result of this globalization of American mass culture, and as a result of the continued valorization of elite forms of culture.

The power and frequency with which mass culture penetrates everyday life can suggest to people that local, grass-roots culture is not valuable. Publicity attending the purchases of masterpieces for multi-million dollar sums can give people the feeling that their own creations are relatively worthless. Some people stop speaking their local language, discontinue their art, music, foodways and other cultural expressions in the belief that imitating either mass or elite forms of culture is a route to a better position in the society. Old time music, storytelling, traditional dance, and boatbuilding cease, as do traditional forms of mutual support; a culture begins to die.

Cultures need to be conserved. Just as we mourn biological species when they become endangered and die out, so too do we mourn cultures that die. For each culture represents scores of traditions built up, usually over many generations. Each culture provides a unique vision of the world and how to navigate through it. Cultures are best conserved when they are dynamic, alive, when each generation takes from the past, makes it their own, contributes to it and builds a future. Cultural change and dynamism are integral to culture. Cultures were not created years ago to persist forever in unchanging form. Cultures are continually recreated in daily life as it is lived by real people.

For this reason, as Breckenridge and Appadurai (1988) suggest, the world is increasingly becoming at once more culturally heterogeneous as well as more homogeneous. New variations of being Indian, for example, arise from cultural flows occasioned by the immigrant experience, tourism and reverse immigration. A Hindu temple, housed in a historic building, is established in Flushing, New York; fast food restaurants featuring an Indian spiced menu are built in New Delhi. New contexts occasion creative applications of tradi-

tional forms. New culture unlike that previously in New York or New Delhi is created.

Technology aids this process. Cheap, easy to use tape recorders, video cameras and the like begin to democratize the power of media. Anyone can make a recording or a film, preserve and document their cultural creation and share it with others. A videocassette recorder can be used in India to view Rocky V, but it can also be used to view a home video of a Hindu wedding sent by relatives living in New York.

The main issue in a monocultural society — whether relatively small and homogeneous or large and totalitarian — is that of control. Who has the power and authority to make culture, to promulgate it and have people accept it? Historically, in colonial situations, the colonizers have tended to dictate cultural choices and definitions of public and state culture. Those colonized accept in general terms the culture, language, garb, or religion of the powerful, and then continue their own ways in various forms of resistance. In this sense, those colonized, subjugated or out of power are often more multicultural than those in power — for it is they that are forced to learn two languages, to dress up and down, to participate in the “mainstream” as well as in their own culture. Individuals from the disempowered learn to be successful in both cultures by code switching — playing a role, speaking and acting one way with the out-group, another way with one’s own people.

Increasing cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity calls for increased ability to participate in a variety of cultures — national, religious, occupational, tribal, ethnic and familial — on a daily basis. Code switching and compartmentalization are part of everyday life. For example, mainstream forms of language use, comportment and dress may be used in school or at work during the day, but may be replaced by a different dialect and style back home in the evening. Religious culture and occupational culture may be compartmentalized by an anthropology professor who teaches evolution during the week and Genesis at Sunday school. As our identities are increasingly multiple — as mothers, as workers, as household heads, for example — and as these identities are continually brought into juxtaposition, people will with greater awareness participate in and draw upon a multiplicity of cultures. Most Americans already eat foods from a variety of culinary traditions — though our palates are generally more multicultural than our minds. And in daily life we are liable to use a variety of languages — including not only “natural” languages but also those of word processing, mathematics and technical fields. One dimensional views of ourselves and others as being members of either this culture or that culture will seem increasingly simplistic, irrelevant and unimaginative. Individual management of a multiplicity of roles and the cultural forms associated with them will offer new creative potentials for person-



Forums for cultural interchange may unite people who share a common past, enriching their own cultural and historical identity. French fiddlers from western France, Louisiana, Quebec, New England and North Dakota, separated by centuries of musical and cultural history are united on the National Mall at the 1989 Festival. Says Louisiana Cajun fiddler Dewey Balfa, “If it wasn’t for the Festival I’d have to travel around the world for a generation or two to hear this richness and variety of French music.” (Photo by Dane Penland, Smithsonian Institution)

ality development, as well as, no doubt, new difficulties.

Socially, multiculturalism is a fact of life in many communities. Increasingly, formal institutions must respond to the consequences of a multicultural society. Educational and research organizations will have to facilitate skill in multiculturalism. As geographic distance and boundaries become more easily traversed, we will simply have to achieve greater cross-cultural and intercultural fluency than we now possess. Monoculturalism, even amongst the most powerful, will be untenable. To be successful, Americans will have to learn about the Japanese, the Soviets, the Chinese, the Muslim world, and many others. And Americans will need greater self-knowledge if we are to deal with the increasing diversity of our neighborhoods and institutions. Cultural monologues will be out, dialogues or multilogues in, as we get used to the idea that there are different ways of knowing, feeling and expressing. As differences in perspective are institutionalized, our museums, schools, workplaces and other organizations will become richer, more multilayered and complex, informed by alterna-



Cultural groups brought into contact find and explore resonances in their traditions. At the 1988 Festival, Italian and Portuguese Americans from Massachusetts paraded their saints on the Mall to the accompaniment of brass marching bands, much as they do in Boston. Salvadorans, also on the Mall as part of the Washington, D.C. Festival program, made floor drawings in sawdust for the saints to process upon — a Latin American tradition. A mutually reinforcing and enlightening dialogue between the two traditions occurred as the groups "figured out" how to participate in each others' culture. (Photo by Dane Penland, Smithsonian Institution)



Cultural resonances may transcend great historical and geographic distances. Russians have a repertoire of traditional greeting songs for saints which they rarely use. At the 1988 Festival, when Italian and Portuguese Americans from Massachusetts paraded their saints past the Soviet program, the Russians broke into appropriate song and festive dance, then some cried and embraced the paraders. (Photo by Laurie Minor, Smithsonian Institution)

tive, juxtaposed and newly synthesized varieties of aesthetic and conceptual orientations.

The authority to speak and to know will be increasingly more widely distributed. Those who are traditionally studied, observed and written about may reverse roles. This is illustrated by the experience of Tony Seeger, a cultural anthropologist and curator of Smithsonian Folkways Records who did his fieldwork in the Brazilian rainforest among the Suyu Indians. On his first trip in 1971, he recorded Suyu songs and narrative in an effort to understand why the Suyu sing. His book, *Why Suyu Sing* (1987), is a masterful, scholarly attempt to interpret the significance of song in that culture. When Seeger returned to the field in 1980, the Suyu had acquired tape recorders of their own. They were recording and listening to their own songs, as well as those from afar. As Suyu themselves became cultural investigators, they recorded the banjo picking Seeger and wanted to know why he also sings.

The role of the Festival of American Folklife in an increasingly diverse and multicultural society is to promote cultural equity, which is an equitable chance for all cultures to live and continue forward, to create and contribute to the larger pool of human intellectual, artistic and material accomplishment. The Festival fosters a general sense of appreciation for cultures so what they speak, know, feel and express may be understood. The Festival is a collaborative engagement that fosters dialogue or multilogue between community, self and others. Rather than encourage monocultural competitions, the Festival creates the time and space for cultural juxtapositions, where bearers of differing cultures can meet on neutral ground to experience the richness of making meaning, as well as the similarities that make them all human.

The Festival rests upon a moral code that affirms the cultural right to be human in diverse ways. People of different cultures must not continually find their culture

devalued, their beliefs delegitimated and their kids being told they are not good enough. For official standards come and go very quickly and are often tied to a particular history and exercise of power. Rather, we should respect the generations of knowledge, wisdom and skill that build a culture, and the excellences nurtured therein, so that, as Johnetta Cole, cultural anthropologist and president of Spelman College says, "We are for difference. For respecting difference. For allowing difference. Until difference doesn't make any more difference" (Cole 1990).

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The Festival of American Folklife, like all events, is a moment in history. Here, the king of Ghana's Ga people meets a Rastafarian from Jamaica. Separated by an ocean and several hundred years of history, this 1989 meeting on the Mall engendered interpretations and emotions for both groups of people. (Photo by Rick Vargas, Smithsonian Institution)



New and rich types of cultural creations and negotiations are likely to arise from the juxtapositions of cultures and their exemplars. Marie McDonald is one of Hawaii's foremost traditional lei makers. Although there is a traditional lei for royalty, Marie had never made one, as the last Hawaiian king died in 1903. She decided to make such a lei to honor the visit of the Ga king to the Festival site in 1989. After making the royal lei, negotiations via walkie-talkie enabled Marie and the Ga king to decide on how the lei would be presented. After consultation with his advisors and holy man, the king decided to follow Hawaiian custom, receiving the lei over his head and a kiss from Marie. This was followed by a handshake. (Photo by Jeff Tinsley, Smithsonian Institution)

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