The More Things Change . . . American Identity and Mass and Elite Responses to 9/11

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This article examines conceptions of American national identity by contrasting Americans’ responses to the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941 with their responses to the terrorist attacks in 2001. Examinations of official rhetoric, mass media statements, and public opinion after Pearl Harbor and after 9/11 reveal changes as well as continuities in the relationship between conceptions of national identity and responses to experiencing threat in the face of diversity. Lingering ascriptivist views have been awakened by 9/11, yet this narrow image of American identity is being directly challenged by a more inclusive incorporationist tradition. This clash of symbolic conceptions of national identity results in divergence between elite rhetoric and mass opinion, with elites promoting incorporationism and ordinary citizens displaying the reawakening of ascriptivist norms.

KEY WORDS: American identity, elite and mass opinions, symbolic politics, 9/11

Within 10 weeks of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which authorized the exclusion of any and all people from “military areas” along the West Coast. Despite the ethnic neutrality of the order, Japanese residents and Japanese Americans were the only ones excluded from these military areas and subsequently interned. The “mass evacuation” was officially terminated in December 1944, although camps for those who refused to take the infamous loyalty oaths remained operative until mid-1946. Roughly two-thirds of the 120,000 people interned during the war were American citizens (Murray, 2000).

Since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 (9/11), the attack on Pearl Harbor and its aftermath have again become prominent features of American national consciousness.¹ At one level,

¹ A Lexis-Nexis search of “Pearl Harbor” in major newspapers for the 4 weeks following 9/11 yields 666 hits. The same search for the month preceding 9/11 yields 100 hits, most of which refer to the
people are recalling the shock and fear that came with the sudden realization that their worlds had been instantly changed forever. Similarly, people are recalling the patriotism that the attack evoked and the subsequent determination of the American people to work together to defend the nation and its ideals, an effort that forged the "greatest generation." At the same time, people are also recalling the internment camps and the mistreatment of many innocent people, practices that grew out of a combination of fear and prevailing understandings of American national identity. Taken together, these national recollections are useful for helping citizens navigate these newly uncertain times. They serve as both an inspiration and a warning, for they portray a nation simultaneously at its best and worst. These recollections are useful from a scholarly standpoint as well. When compared to responses to 9/11, they illustrate the extent to which our efforts to deal with the combination of threat and diversity have changed and the extent to which they have remained the same.

To understand these changes and continuities, we need to examine how people conceive of American national identity, the extent to which these conceptions have evolved since the Second World War (WWII), and the relationship between national identity and policy preferences, particularly under conditions of threat. My goal here is to provide these examinations. In particular, I analyze changes and continuities in the role that ethnocultural and incorporationist conceptions of American identity have played and continue to play in the reactions of political leaders, the media, and ordinary Americans to these domestic attacks. The analysis focuses on three comparisons. First, elite responses to 9/11 in the form of presidential rhetoric, policy proposals, and media coverage are compared to similar responses to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Next, quantitative and qualitative public opinion data collected before 9/11 are compared to trends emerging since then, including views on immigration and ethnic profiling. Finally, the relationship between current mass and elite opinions is explored.

The analysis documents both changes and continuities in the relationship between conceptions of national identity and responses to experiencing threat in the face of diversity. On the one hand, lingering ethnocultural conceptions of American identity have been awakened by the attacks. On the other hand, this narrow image of "what it means to be an American" is being directly challenged by the incorporationist tradition. Examples of this counterbalancing force include George W. Bush's immediate plea for Americans to avoid ethnic profiling and intense media commentary promoting a multiethnic conception of American identity. The prominence of this clash of traditions illustrates an important break with the past.

motion picture *Pearl Harbor*, which was released in late spring, and to a cable television series about an army division in WWII called *Band of Brothers*, which began running only days before 9/11.

2 The "greatest generation" is the name given to the WWII generation in a best-selling book, called *The Greatest Generation* (1998), by news anchor Tom Brokaw.
Attempts to understand these developing patterns are informed by contributions from research on symbolic politics and on the relationship between elite and mass preferences. Scholarship on agenda-setting and opinion leadership indicates that opinion convergence should exist between elected officials and the majority of ordinary citizens once an issue achieves high salience, regardless of which actors are seen as the leaders and which are seen as the followers. Symbolic politics studies, on the other hand, suggest that on issues dealing with race, ethnicity, and identity, electoral incentives may inhibit convergence. These divergent possibilities about how masses and elites respond to major political developments frame the investigation that follows. In line with previous symbolic politics findings, particularly Mendelberg's analysis of racial discourse (2001), I find that changes in societal norms over the past several decades have led us to the current context where ascriptivist norms appear to be shaping the views of ordinary Americans more than they are shaping the rhetoric of political leaders. This disjuncture leads to the clash of traditions described above and is a product of the dynamism that has characterized conceptions of American identity over the past several decades.

Ethnicity, American Identity, and Policy Preferences

Symbolic Politics

The present study fits within a broader line of inquiry in political psychology research that focuses on the relationship between symbolic predispositions, such as national identity, and policy preferences. This scholarship posits that national identity is an abstract symbolic attachment and demonstrates that abstract symbolic attachments are often strong predictors of policy preferences. These attachments are a mechanism through which people determine what they want, what is possible, what to fear, and who they are (Edelman, 1964/1985). Simply put, political symbols wield power over policy preferences because they are functional. By using them, individuals become better able to navigate the political and social world. Political symbols make the complex seem simple and provide prescriptions for bringing order to a disorderly world (Elder & Cobb, 1983). As such, abstract ideas about national identity shape the needs and desires of American citizens as far as public policy is concerned (Citrin & Duff, 1998; Citrin, Reingold, & Green, 1990; Frendreis & Tatalovich, 1997; Schildkraut, 2001a). A thorough investigation of responses to the terrorist attacks, therefore, requires us to look to the roles played by different ideas about what it means to be an American.

We have recently seen a growing interest in studying and dissecting American identity. This interest has been driven, in part, by (1) real and dramatic changes in the ethnic makeup of the U.S. population, (2) the mid-1990s surge in nativist sentiment and legislation, and (3) the maturation and normalization of the rights revolutions that started in the 1960s. This confluence of factors has led people to question what being American means and to be concerned about the implications
of rapid ethnic change for a unified sense of nationhood. These questions and concerns have been festering for some time, but 9/11 has finally brought them to the fore. Many people believe that, as Stanley Renshon (2001) wrote, American national culture has over the years been “decoupled from ethnicity, separated from religion, and detached even from race” (p. 258). As others have shown, however, this decoupling has often existed more in rhetoric than in practice (see, e.g., Mills, 1997; Stevens, 1995). The place of race, ethnicity, and religion in determining what people think it means to be an American is still very much an active debate.

The complex, contested, and passionate debate about the relationship between ethnicity and national identity draws on multiple ideological traditions in the United States. A wide-ranging analysis of this relationship would include a discussion of liberalism and civic republicanism in addition to ethnoculturalism and incorporationism. Such a wide-ranging treatment will not be provided here, however. Instead, I focus on the latter two traditions, primarily because of the dynamism each one possesses and the tension between them—a tension that has been under way for the past several years but has recently reached new prominence.3

Ethnoculturalism. Although ethnoculturalism—the idea that American identity is defined by white Protestantism rooted in Northern European heritage and ancestry (Smith, 1993, 1997)—has been widely criticized and challenged over the years, it continues to play a powerful role in shaping what people think of as “American.” Much like the automaticity that characterizes the staying power of racial stereotypes despite “knowing better” (Devine, 1989), the stereotypical image of an American as a white Christian has been overlearned and shapes the thinking of many people toward non-whites in the United States, even as they condemn its rigid exclusivity (Schildkraut, 2001a).

Clearly, ethnocultural beliefs and practices are not as prevalent today in the United States as they once were. Slavery has long been abolished, Jim Crow laws are a thing of the past, women and minorities now have the right to vote, and national origin quotas have been removed from immigration laws. Additional evidence of ethnoculturalism’s decline is the decrease over time in the public’s willingness to express or endorse openly racist beliefs, as documented by public opinion polls (Schuman et al., 1997). However, opinion data still reveal that many people are willing to delineate American identity along ascriptive lines. People no longer say that blacks should be denied the full range of rights and opportunities available to others, but they do say that some people are just not able to be called “American” because of ascriptive characteristics. For example, in the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS), 55% of the respondents said that being a Christian is either somewhat or very important in making someone a true American, and 70% said the same about being born in America. Statements from white focus group participants also point to a fair amount of support for this limited idea of who is and is not American. Although people did not openly state that members of certain

3 For more on the multiple conceptions of American identity, see Smith (1993, 1997).
ethnic groups could never become Americans, their words revealed a tendency to assume that people who do not fit into ethnoculturalism's ideal type are foreigners. The focus groups show that observing the traditions of one's ancestors and maintaining cultural distinctiveness often trump citizenship when white Americans delineate the boundaries of American national identity (Schildkraut, 2001a).4

So why the continued prevalence of ascriptivist tendencies? Recent work by Conover and colleagues (1999) provides some guidance here. They argued that it is difficult to conceive of the concept of "citizen" without the influence of ethnoculturalism. Citizenship, like any other group identity, entails distinguishing group members from non-members. As social identity theorists have shown, people have a tendency to form ingroups and outgroups and to discriminate accordingly, whatever the group identity may be (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). People make distinctions based on physical appearance because they find it cognitively easy to do so. The salience and meaning of group membership diminish when people are surrounded only by other members of their group. In order for the concept of "citizen" to make sense, people use their racial and ethnic communities as a proxy for their political community in determining boundaries. Combine this argument with Devine's (1989) demonstration of the automaticity of overlearned stereotypes, and it becomes easy to see why the tendency to use race and ethnicity to define national identity is so resistant to change. The added component of a horrific domestic attack carried out by people of Middle Eastern descent introduces a pervasive sense of threat that buttresses this ethnocultural tendency even more (see also Volkan, 1994).

**Incorporationism.** Cracks in the ethnocultural tradition do exist, though, and the past several decades have seen the rise and growing acceptance of a rival conception of American identity, one that is rooted in the nation’s immigrant legacy and cherishes cultural diversity. The term I use to describe this immigrant-based conception of American identity is "incorporationism." This understanding of American identity is not focused on the similarities between minorities and whites in terms of their rights to citizenship; rather, it is about celebrating ethnicities and providing a forum in which such celebrations can take place. Incorporationism is not a cover for ethnoculturalism. It does not celebrate the idea of the melting pot while espousing a homogeneous society in which all members look, sound, and worship alike. Nor does incorporationism favor the extreme scenario of complete cultural divisions. As Zolberg and Woon (1999) wrote, "extreme differentialism and extreme assimilationism are equally ruled out" (p. 30) as political doctrines. The challenge of finding a balance between those two extremes is a matter of tangible political struggles; the ideal, however, allows for both.5

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4 More information on the focus groups, which I conducted in New Jersey in 1998, is available upon request.

5 Some readers may question why I do not use the term "multiculturalism" to describe this conception of national identity. "Incorporationism" is an underused term with no specific prescription regarding the appropriate level of assimilation. Debates about the proper role and extent of assimilation needed
Although the mythology of the United States as a “nation of immigrants” is not new, the extent to which it now shapes ideas about American identity and guides policy is. Higham (1993), for example, documented the rise of “the politics of difference” in the United States and described it as a distinctly modern struggle, one that is still making only “halting” progress against the notion that white males form the core of American society (p. 199). And Hollinger (1995) wrote of the “sheer triumph, in late-twentieth century America, of the doctrine that the United States ought to sustain rather than diminish a great variety of distinctive cultures carried by ethno-racial groups” (p. 101). Horace Kallen was an early proponent of this understanding of “what it means to be an American,” although he called it “cultural pluralism.” He was writing in response to the Americanization movement, which he criticized for trying to eliminate cultural differences instead of trying to instill respect for democratic principles among the new arrivals. And he likened American society to an orchestra, arguing that harmony rather than unison should be the ultimate aim (Kallen, 1924). Kallen’s ideas did not get much formal political recognition in his time. He was writing during the age of literacy tests for admission to the country, strict immigration quotas, the banning of foreign languages in public schools, and of course the Jim Crow South. The essence of his arguments did not mature and become a true rival conception of American identity until decades later.

Some recent survey and focus group data indicate that many Americans endorse an immigrant-based conception of American identity. In a national survey called “Looking for America,” conducted by Wisconsin Public Television (1997), respondents were asked whether they agreed that certain characteristics make the United States different from all other countries. Eighty-two percent of the respondents agreed that “the blending of many different cultures into one culture” makes the United States different from all other countries. In the 1994 GSS, respondents were asked to place themselves on a 7-point scale, where 1 meant that it would be better for America if different racial and ethnic groups maintain their distinct cultures and where 7 meant that it would be better if the different groups would change so that they would blend into the larger society. Thirty-one percent of the sample scored between 1 and 3, favoring the maintenance of distinct cultural traditions; 37% scored between 5 and 7, favoring a more uniform population; and the remainder scored a 4, perhaps favoring a certain degree of variety along with a certain degree of homogeneity. As Citrin and colleagues (1994) wrote, this pattern in an immigrant nation shape how people interpret this conception of national identity; they do not define it. A vocal left promotes multiculturalism in the form of rejecting assimilation, and an equally vocal right decries this movement, maintaining that an immigrant nation can only survive with an assimilationist agenda. A more mainstream conception of a multiethnic society, one that celebrates America’s immigrant tradition and seeks to work out a balance between manyness and oneness, is more widely endorsed (Alexander & Smelser, 1999; Tyack, 1999). The term “incorporationism” covers these different perspectives that are all rooted in a reverence for the immigrant tradition in the United States.

The data set and codebook for this survey, USPSRA1997-COLUMBUS, were obtained from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at the University of Connecticut.
reveals that “many Americans may not consider maintaining one’s ethnic heritage and blending into the larger society as mutually exclusive” (p. 16).

When asked what makes us American, participants in focus groups routinely replied by mentioning the extent to which one will be surrounded by different cultures in America, a simple fact of everyday life that is seen as both praiseworthy and unique to this country. Regardless of their own ethnicity, participants strongly identified with the nation’s immigrant tradition, describing the joys and wonders of living in a diverse society and lamenting that they have largely become out of touch with the culture of their ancestors. They see cultural diversity as distinctly American and are wary of too much assimilation, although, in support of Citrin’s claim, they believe that a certain degree of assimilation is necessary (Schildkraut, 2001a).

Summary. Symbolic notions of American identity are consistent and strong predictors of policy preferences. Two rival conceptions of that identity, ethnoculturalism and incorporationism, are particularly relevant to domestic debates about how to deal with terrorism. Incorporationism centers on the immigrant legacy of the nation, emphasizes the immigrant experience as a shared one, and sees American society as a multiethnic one that occupies a space somewhere in between the two extremes of cultural erasure and separatism. After 9/11, this tradition is challenged by new concerns about immigration and a possible “enemy within.” At the same time, 9/11 has also demonstrated the power that this tradition has amassed in the years between 1941 and 2001. The inherent tensions between incorporationism and ethnoculturalism are now surfacing in a clash of traditions that was largely absent in responses to the attack on Pearl Harbor. In the sections that follow, I document this contrast and show how both of these traditions are shaping mass and elite responses to 9/11.

Opinion Leadership

Before getting to empirical details, we must consider the roles played by the two sets of actors under investigation here—elites and masses—in this clash of traditions. We have learned over the years that the media, elected officials, and citizens influence each other’s beliefs and behaviors in very complicated ways. Scholars studying elite/mass linkages have been driven by the empirical puzzle such relationships present, but they are also driven by normative questions that such paths of influence can raise. These normative concerns involve the nature of representation, accountability, manipulation, and mobilization. In other words, it is important to untangle the specific roles that different political actors play in shaping responses to crises like 9/11 because doing so will further illuminate how political developments unfold under conditions of diversity and threat.

Research on agenda-setting, opinion leadership, nationalism, and symbolic politics is useful in this regard. Several agenda-setting and opinion leadership studies argue that public opinion and elite action on salient issues converge, even
though they may differ in their explanations of which actors serve as leaders and which actors serve as followers. Some studies suggest that elite policymaking and rhetoric shapes mass opinion (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Zaller, 1992); other studies maintain that elite movement on salient issues follows rather than precedes changes in public opinion (Monroe, 1979; Page & Shapiro, 1983) or that convergence exists because of electoral accountability (Uslaner & Weber, 1983). Finally, other works argue that the relationship among elite opinion, mass opinion, and policy outputs is reciprocal rather than unidirectional (Hill & Hinton-Andersson, 1995; Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000).

Realistically, there are cases where policymakers take the lead, cases where ordinary citizens take the lead, and cases where opinion-sharing dominates. The question then becomes whether there are systematic patterns that determine which issues follow which trajectory. Research on symbolic politics and nationalism suggests that on issues dealing with ethnicity and identity, issues that have loomed largely post-9/11, majority opinion lags behind movement in elite discourse and actions.

Much scholarship on nationalism argues that elites indeed take the opinion-leading role in shaping understandings of the national identity. In these studies, national identity is often described as dynamic and arbitrary, with different understandings being mobilized by elites, who act in response to political events and technological advancements (Anderson, 1991; Brubaker, 1996; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990; Hutchinson & Smith, 1994; Snyder & Ballentine, 1996). The current American context differs from many contemporary examples of fluid national identities in that the elite efforts appear to be mobilizing the masses away from ethnocultural definitions of the national identity rather than toward them, but it is similar in that public officials seem to be ahead of the masses in their promotion of the transformation. The initial steps in this transformation indeed were rooted in empowered minority voices, which influenced official rhetoric. In line with theories of nationalism, the rest of society at large has since begun to adopt the new inclusive norms, but it has been slow to do so because of the enduring power of racial and ethnic stereotypes, which become even more powerful in the face of threats to the nation (Volkan, 1994).

Convergence can emerge on issues that address racial and ethnic concerns, but dominant societal norms affect the speed and likelihood. In The Race Card (2001), Mendelberg showed that when inegalitarian norms prevail in society, elites and masses are both unconstrained in basing their attitudes and behaviors on their inegalitarian beliefs, resulting in convergence. When egalitarian or inclusive norms take hold, however, elected officials become constrained in their words and actions; violating powerful norms of acceptable discourse would spell electoral doom. Ordinary citizens do come to accept the new norm, but such acceptance can be slow to evolve and does not necessarily displace the lingering adherence to racial stereotypes. As such, public opinion surveys are able to document strains of inegalitarianism that are less evident in analyses of elite rhetoric.
Whether the story described by Mendelberg applies to attitudes and policies that affect non-black minorities in the United States has yet to be determined. Characteristics of the current environment suggest it is likely. As mentioned above, the late 20th century has seen the advancement of an incorporationist norm in American society. Many Americans endorse this norm even though it conflicts with their lingering ethnocultural conceptions of American identity. Mendelberg’s work leads us to expect that this simultaneous adherence to contradictory notions of national identity can lead to elite and mass responses to 9/11 taking on different trajectories. It would be unwise for an elected official to violate the new norm in an explicit fashion. Doing so would certainly alienate minority voters and would offend many white voters as well. Ordinary citizens, on the other hand, do not face the same constraints. Combining these arguments leads to the expectation that analyses of elite and mass responses to 9/11 will reveal a clash of traditions, with elites promoting incorporationism more than ethnoculturalism and with ordinary citizens displaying the reawakening of ascriptive norms. Similarly, we should find more convergence between elites and masses during the WWII era than we do today.

Change and Continuity Among Political Leaders and the Media

Political Leaders

It has been established that ascriptive understandings of American national identity continue to retain power that lurks beyond the awareness of many Americans even though they are formally condemned. The most obvious example is the tendency of white Americans to assume that a member of a minority group, particularly if he or she has an accent, is not an American (Schildkraut, 2001a; Takaki, 1999). Key questions to investigate are whether 9/11 will awaken this lingering ethnoculturalism and bring a return of nativist sentiments and policies, and whether such awakening will occur among both elites and masses. I begin the empirical investigation with an examination of elite rhetoric and behavior. As Delgado (1999) wrote, nativist discourse and actions tend to emerge among political leaders when the nation experiences social and economic upheaval, often taking two forms: (1) restricting immigration to keep foreigners, “usually ones of darker coloration,” out, and (2) “enacting measures aimed at making things difficult for those [foreigners] who are already here” (p. 247). An initial reading of elite responses to 9/11 suggests we may be headed down these two familiar paths, for they reveal a desire to both restrict immigration (possibly along ethnic lines) and “make things difficult” for those already here.

7 Also see Schildkraut (2001b) for a comparison of elite and mass discourse on official-English legislation that shows that members of Congress who support making English the official language are less likely than ordinary Americans to invoke ascriptive interpretations of American identity.
An example of such desires includes a proposal in Congress that would restrict eligibility for student visas. This proposal is watered down from its initial version, but will still give critics of ethnoculturalism pause. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) originally proposed a moratorium on all student visas. By the time her bill was introduced, however, this measure was substantially changed. As currently written, the bill prohibits granting student visas to people from countries that the federal government considers to be sponsors of terrorism [Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Syria, Cuba, and North Korea (Schemo, 2001)], except when a background check demonstrates that the applicant does not pose a security risk to the United States. The visa application process for students from all other countries is essentially unaltered, save for some new requirements on the part of educational institutions and the INS. As with Executive Order 9066, this bill does not call attention to a particular ethnic group, but creates the potential for ethnicity-based policy implementation and institutes new restrictions based on one’s country of origin.

Another government effort that signals an ethnocultural approach to policy-making is the attempt by the FBI to interview more than 5,000 men who recently came to the United States from countries in the Middle East. Although ostensibly carried out in the name of national security, such efforts have yet to yield useful information (at least none that has been reported). Moreover, they recall the FBI arrests of more than 2,000 Japanese immigrants who had been identified as leaders in their communities after the attack on Pearl Harbor. These local leaders were the first internees (Murray, 2000, p. 3). Although today’s interviewees are not officially suspects, they surely fear that their performance during the interview can change that quickly. As any law-abiding driver who has ever noticed a patrol car in the rear-view mirror and instantly thought “I hope they don’t catch me doing anything wrong” can attest, simply interacting with law enforcement authorities can feel adversarial. The personal and psychological stakes in the case of recent immigrants being interviewed by the FBI are certainly higher than those of a driver who fears a speeding ticket. These practices are also sure to affect how Middle Eastern immigrants and citizens who do not fall under the dragnet feel toward U.S. law enforcement authorities and American society in general.

Despite these instances of political elites using ethnicity as a proxy for threat—practices that risk the continued alienation of minorities who are already particularly aware of ethnoculturalism’s enduring power—there are signs that the responses of political leaders are tempered with an incorporationist notion of national identity that elite responses to Pearl Harbor lacked. For example, when President Bush delivered a speech to a joint session of Congress and the nation on 20 September 2001, he repeatedly stated that the U.S. response would not be directed toward Muslims or toward the Afghan people and sought to clearly

8 The bill was introduced in early November and was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. The text of the bill, S.1627, is available at http://thomas.loc.gov.
distinguish between terrorists and Arabs. Moreover, he implored U.S. citizens to make the same distinctions:

I ask you to uphold the values of America, and remember why so many have come here. We are in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. No one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith.9

These repeated and specific mentions of Muslims and Arabs stand out, especially when compared to FDR’s State of the Union address on 6 January 1942, just 1 month after Pearl Harbor. In this speech, FDR made only one plea to avoid discrimination, and he framed his vague request in strategic and instrumental terms:

We must be particularly vigilant against racial discrimination in any of its ugly forms. Hitler will try again to breed mistrust and suspicion between one individual and another, one group and another, one race and another, one government and another.10

Elsewhere in the speech, FDR referred to the European enemy as “the Nazis” and “the Fascists,” whereas he referred to the Pacific enemy as “the Japanese.” Failure to distinguish between Japanese leaders and civilians characterized the discourse of other elected officials as well. For example, days before FDR issued Executive Order 9066, Fletcher Bowron, mayor of Los Angeles, warned of a “‘prearranged plan wherein each of our little Japanese friends will know his part in the event of any possible attempted invasion or air raid’” (Daniels, 2000, p. 49). And pejorative terms such as “Jap” and “Nip” were ubiquitous at many levels of elite discourse (Chappell, 1997, p. 26). This rhetoric fits with the policy reactions to Pearl Harbor, where internment signaled that every person of Japanese descent on the West Coast, citizen or not, should be considered a threat to national security.11

Contrast this to today’s reaction when Rep. John Cooksey (R-La.) argued in a radio interview that “a person ‘wearing a diaper on his head’ should be subject to more scrutiny when traveling on airlines” (Alpert & Walsh, 2001). His remark was condemned by the editorial page of the Washington Post and by columnists in his

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9 In all, Bush devoted 274 words of this 3,023-word speech to invoking incorporationism or distinguishing between Muslims and terrorists. Text of the speech can be found at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html.

10 This one plea accounts for only 40 of the speech’s 3,401 words. Text of the speech can be found at www.theamericanpresidency.net/1942.htm.

11 Earlier in his career, and in line with prevailing norms of the day, FDR wrote an article called “Shall We Trust Japan?” (published in the 1923 issue of Asia) in which he described Japanese people as “non-assimilable” (Robinson, 2001, p 38). At the time it was published, FDR was a private citizen, not an elected official. He briefly left politics after the Democrats lost the 1920 election with him as the party’s nominee for Vice President. Then in 1921, he contracted polio. During his recovery, according to Robinson (2001), he “undertook numerous writing projects” in order to “keep his name before the public in anticipation of an eventual return to politics” (p. 33), a return that came in 1928 when he became the governor of New York.
home state’s Times-Picayune of New Orleans. Fellow Louisiana Republicans criticized the remark but stopped short of asking Cooksey to apologize. He did apologize later for the diaper remark but maintained his support for ethnic profiling (“An Ugly Appeal,” 2001; Ritea, 2001). To date, Cooksey’s comments are the only ones by an elected official that so blatantly recall the prevailing norms of an earlier era. Instead, members of Congress waited only 4 days after 9/11 to introduce a resolution that condemned “bigotry and violence against Arab-Americans, American Muslims, and Americans from South Asia in the wake of terrorist attacks” (H.Con.Res.227), a resolution that breezed through both houses. And by the end of October, both houses passed a bill that authorizes the president to provide educational and health care assistance to women and children in Afghanistan (S.1573). These responses are surely driven by the need to secure the aid of states in the Middle East in the fight against terrorism, but they are also driven by newly prominent domestic norms that reject the use of ascriptive characteristics when deciding to confer rights on individuals.

During WWII, official rhetoric and public consciousness made a distinction between “good Germans” and Nazi soldiers, whereas all Japanese were characterized as treacherous and barbaric (Dower, 1986). Today, the government’s rhetorical response mirrors the former, with the Afghan people constantly portrayed as victims of the Taliban regime. In addition to the congressional actions mentioned above, this image has been communicated through Laura Bush’s radio address on the plight of Afghan women (and the subsequent media coverage of that address) and through CNN’s near-continuous play of Beneath the Veil, a documentary about life in Afghanistan under the Taliban that was originally aired in August 2001 but was then shown repeatedly after 9/11.

Media

The CNN documentary is only one of several examples of how incorporationism has altered media reactions to diversity under conditions of threat. One of the more notorious magazine articles to appear in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor ran in Time magazine and was titled “How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs.” The article described how one could distinguish Chinese and Japanese people:

> There is no infallible way of telling [Chinese and Japanese people] apart. Even an anthropologist, with calipers and plenty of time to measure heads, noses, shoulders, hips, is sometimes stumped. A few rules of thumb—not always reliable… Japanese—except for wrestlers—are seldom fat; they often dry up and grow lean as they age. The Chinese often put on weight. The Chinese expression is likely to be more placid, kindly, open; the Japanese more positive, dogmatic, arrogant. Japanese walk stiffly erect, hard-heeled. Chinese, more relaxed, have an easy gait, sometimes shuffle. [Time, 22 December 1941, quoted in Takaki (2000, p. 111)]
Presumably the purpose of an article like this one would be to arm citizens with knowledge needed for vigilance. An equivalent article today might be one that described how to tell a Muslim from a Sikh in order to avoid being suspicious of the wrong people. As of this writing, however, no mainstream media outlet has run such an article, even after a Sikh gas station owner was killed by a white American, who apparently thought the man was Arab (Anton, 2001). A Lexis-Nexis search did turn up an article called “Telling Friend from Foe” in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the goal of which was to identify a handful of terrorist organizations, including al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hezbollah, as “foes,” and to identify Muslims, Arabs, and Sikhs as “friends” (Kelly, 2001).

During WWII, media commentators said we need not worry that bombing cities in Japan might kill innocent civilians because there was no such thing as an innocent Japanese civilian (Chappell, 1997, p. 107). The *Los Angeles Times* ran an editorial arguing that even U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry could not be trusted (Daniels, 2000, p. 51). In contrast, the *Los Angeles Times* editorial page in late September 2001 called on moderate Muslims to condemn terrorism and publicly acknowledge that the United States has allowed moderate Islam to have a voice that it does not have elsewhere (“Islam and Democracy,” 2001). Regarding discrimination and civil liberties, another September editorial warned, “At this moment, when Americans are especially vulnerable to fear, it is important to recognize the importance of liberty and resist any efforts to use calamity as the rationale to further erode rights” (“Freedom Trumps Fear,” 2001). An editorial from October even highlighted a new kind of patriotism, one that seeks to learn about Islam: “The evolved patriots are not just buying American flags; they’re also overwhelming Amazon.com with orders for books on Islam, Afghanistan, and foreign policy” (“A New, Nuanced Patriotism,” 2001). In other words, the patriotic desire to protect the flag and “what it stands for” is now characterized by new understandings of “what it stands for.” It stands for a people that are careful not to label members of a particular ethnicity as terrorists, and for a land that welcomes members of those ethnicities and allows their culture to thrive in a way that their own homelands may not.

To look for more systematic patterns, I conducted a content analysis on editorials from the *Los Angeles Times* that ran in the 13 weeks following Pearl Harbor and in the 11 weeks following 9/11. All editorials addressing racial and ethnic components of the conflicts were selected for the analysis, as were any editorials that addressed civil liberties, including freedom of the press, rights of the accused, due process, and government secrecy. Table 1 presents the coding options and the patterns of media discourse during these two periods.

The data show that in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, nearly 32% of the editorial paragraphs advocated ethnic-profiling or promoted an ascriptive conception of American identity, compared to zero after 9/11. The WWII-era editors were unwilling to refer to Japanese Americans as Americans, preferring to call them “descendants of enemy aliens.” These editorials were often accompanied by
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>After Pearl Harbor</th>
<th>After 9/11</th>
<th>Number of paragraphs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnoculturalism, neutral</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnoculturalism, promote</td>
<td>31.72</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnoculturalism, reject</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporationism, neutral</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>9.72</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporationism, multicultural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporationism, melting pot</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil liberties, neutral</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil liberties, protect in wartime</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>27.08</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil liberties, restrict in wartime</td>
<td>13.79</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other paragraphs</td>
<td>34.48</td>
<td>32.64</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 145)</td>
<td>(N = 144)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson $\chi^2(9) = 110.6613$

*Note.* Cell entries represent percent of paragraphs; editorials referring to domestic policies that touch on issues of race, ethnicity, and civil liberties in wartime were selected for analysis.

cartoons depicting Japanese people with buck teeth, thick glasses, and spying eyes and ears. In contrast, 20% of the post-9/11 paragraphs highlight incorporationism in some form, versus only 2% of the WWII-era discourse. Today’s editorials refer to the United States as a nation of immigrants (neutral incorporationism), celebrate diversity (multicultural incorporationism), and highlight the evolving ethnic nature of American identity (melting-pot incorporationism).

Not surprisingly, civil liberties were a significant concern in both eras, with editors in the earlier era more willing to accept restrictions on free speech and due process. In both eras, due-process concerns that did not refer to ethnicity-based policymaking and implementation were coded as referring to civil liberties. The concerns addressed in this category also cover the rights of the accused, freedom of the press, and government secrecy. Then, restricting the liberties of some for the good of the whole was accepted, although regretfully. Today, editors highlight the liberty-for-safety trade as dubious.12

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12 A similar analysis was conducted on editorials from the *New York Times* (results not shown). In that paper, arguments in favor of protecting freedom of the press dominated in both eras. That paper’s chief concern, then and now, was its own ability to criticize the government and the need for the government to share its information with the public. In the WWII era, roughly equal proportions of paragraphs promoted and rejected ethnoculturalism. The paper did not advocate internment, nor did it condemn it. Indeed, only one editorial mentioned internment at all, and it appeared 2 weeks after Executive Order 9066 was issued. This lack of attention could be due to the paper’s home on the East Coast or to a lack of concern about the treatment of Japanese Americans. The one editorial addressing evacuation said that pledges of loyalty from German American groups could be taken to represent the views of all German Americans, whereas the federal government needed to be vigilant over innocent Japanese Americans in order to catch spies.
This analysis provides further confirmation of the sea change in elite rhetoric about the role that race, ethnicity, and religion play in delineating the boundaries of national identity. These examples reflect incorporationism’s contestation of ethnoculturalism in the statements of elected officials and editorial writers. But do such statements correspond to the reactions of most American citizens?

Change and Continuity Among Citizens

Public opinion data sets from 1941 are hard to find, which makes it difficult to say much about public opinion in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor. Evidence does suggest that the pejorative stereotypes and characterizations of all Japanese people, even U.S. citizens, as the enemy were endorsed by a majority of Americans (Chappell, 1997). Survey data collected throughout the past few decades (mentioned above) reveal the continued presence of the ethnocultural conception of American identity that promoted such blanket suspicion, despite its official condemnation. According to symbolic politics research on racial discourse (Mendelberg, 2001), this latent ethnoculturalism, combined with the powerful incorporationist messages coming from elite sources, should lead to contradictory impulses and to more support for ethnocultural practices than elites have been advocating.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that support for restricting overall levels of immigration rose sharply after 9/11. In an October 2001 Gallup poll, 58% of respondents said that immigration should be decreased; this result agrees with Delgado’s (1999) observation that the desire to close the borders is a common reaction to social and political stress. Just 1 year before, only 38% of respondents felt that immigration should be decreased, the second lowest level of support for decreasing immigration on record since Gallup started asking the question in 1965.13

But debates about the proper level of immigration are perennial, and support for restrictions fluctuates even under more normal conditions; other policy issues are unique to the nation’s new wartime consciousness. In a Time/CNN poll taken shortly after 9/11, 31% of respondents said they would favor allowing the federal government “to hold Arabs who are U.S. citizens in camps until it can be determined whether they have links to terrorist organizations.”14 Similarly, 32% of respondents in a Newsweek poll said that the United States “should put Arabs and Arab-Americans in this country under special surveillance.” This latter question even compared such surveillance to internment during WWII.15 In an ABC

13 Question wording and percentages are available from Gallup (www.gallup.com/poll/topics/immigration.asp).
14 Question wording is available from Polling the Nations (http://poll.orspub.com).
15 “In response to the (World Trade Center and Pentagon) terrorist attacks, do you think the United States should put Arabs and Arab-Americans in this country under special surveillance, or that it would be a mistake to target a nationality group, as was done with Japanese-Americans after Pearl Harbor?” Wording from Polling the Nations.
News/Washington Post poll taken 1 month after 9/11, 44% of respondents said they support giving police the power to stop anyone “who appears to be Arab or Muslim” at random, 28% said that being Arab or Muslim should be an important part of the profile of a suspected terrorist, and 39% said that they have personally been more suspicious of people they “think are of Arab descent.” Given the obvious social undesirability of these responses, it is likely that the number of people supporting them is actually higher. These figures recall the findings of a government-sponsored survey released weeks after Pearl Harbor that found that up to 43% of the respondents felt that pre-internment efforts to monitor subversive activity were insufficient (Robinson, 2001, p. 101).

In a survey conducted in October 2001 by the Kaiser Family Foundation, the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and National Public Radio, a split sample yielded a finding concerning profiling that highlights contemporary clashes between lingering (and reawakening) ethnoculturalism on the one hand and newer incorporationist norms on the other. One-half of the sample was asked:

It has been reported that some police officers stop motorists of certain racial or ethnic groups because the officers believe that these groups are more likely than others to commit certain types of crime. This practice is known as racial profiling. Do you approve or disapprove of the use of racial profiling by police?17

The other half of the sample was asked:

Since September 11th, some law enforcement agencies have stopped and searched people who are Arab or of Middle Eastern descent to see if they may be involved in potential terrorist activities. Do you approve or disapprove of this kind of profiling?

In the first version, 21% approved of ethnic profiling. In the second version, 66% approved. This stark difference suggests that diversity in the face of threat is a powerful combination of factors that makes ethnoculturalism acceptable. Trends in public opinion have pointed to a lurking, latent ethnoculturalism that faces explicit condemnation along with a growing acceptance of an incorporationist conception of national identity. Incorporationism promotes opposition to the type of profiling described in the first question. Yet responses to the other survey questions described above reveal preferences that are more explicitly ethnocultural than pre-9/11 norms would have allowed and hearken back to the mass suspicion of Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor.

It will still be some time before analysts are able to use opinion data to make strong causal claims about reactions to the 9/11 attacks. One obstacle is that the questions described above, particularly the items about support for internment,

16 Data and codebook are available from ICPSR.
17 Question wording is available from the Kaiser Family Foundation (www.kff.org).
were not asked until after 9/11, leaving no real baseline for comparison. And it might be too soon after the attacks to have a clear picture of emerging trends. Another obstacle is that few post-9/11 surveys are publicly available for analysis, and of those that are, items regarding relevant independent variables are often lacking. That said, individual-level analysis could still help us to identify emerging trends and relate them to existing understandings about opinion formation. One of the few publicly available post-9/11 public opinion surveys is the ABC News/Washington Post poll mentioned above. It does not include general items regarding conceptions of national identity, which limits its utility for the present study, but it has enough information to provide insightful analyses nonetheless.

Respondents were asked whether they support or oppose giving police powers to stop and search (1) anyone, at random; (2) anyone who fits the profile of a suspected terrorist; and (3) anyone who appears to be Arab or Muslim, at random (question order was randomized). Support for these options was 50%, 85%, and 44%, respectively. The third option is the most problematic from an incorporationist perspective, and its high level of support demands investigation. A probit analysis of opinions on all three options was conducted with the following independent variables: age, education, party identification, liberal/conservative ideology, race (white, black, Hispanic, or other), being a Muslim (n = 4), knowing any Muslims, approval for Bush’s job performance, approval for bombing in Afghanistan, fearing another attack on the United States, fearing being a victim of a terrorist attack, claiming to have a good understanding of Islam, and claiming to have a favorable opinion of Islam.

The results, shown in Table 2, indicate that education makes a person less likely to support giving police powers to stop Arabs or Muslims at random. This finding is expected. Previous analyses have shown education to be a strong and consistent influence on whether a person endorses ethnocultural conceptions of American identity (Citrin & Duff, 1998; Citrin et al., 1990; Schildkraut, 2001a). More generally, people who are more politically aware tend to have views similar to political elites, or as Zaller (1992) wrote, “exposure to elite discourse appears to promote support for the ideas carried in it” (p. 11). If we accept that education serves as a proxy for political awareness and exposure to elite discourse, then we should expect to see that people with more education are less likely to accept policies that allow for ethnic profiling. Education also makes people concerned about protecting the civil liberties of everyone; it is the strongest predictor of opposition to allowing police to stop anyone at random. Again, given the elite concern with protecting civil liberties established earlier, this finding fits within existing understandings of the relationship among education, elite rhetoric, and policy preferences.18

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18 It also fits within established findings on the general relationship between political knowledge and support for civil liberties and tolerance (see, e.g., Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; McClosky, 1964).
Table 2. Predicting Support for Police Powers and Suspicion of Arabs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Support police powers to stop and search:</th>
<th>Suspicious of Arabs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anyone</td>
<td>Fits terrorist profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.24 (0.25)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.86*** (0.25)</td>
<td>-0.42 (0.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>0.24* (0.13)</td>
<td>-0.09 (0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>0.07 (0.16)</td>
<td>0.09 (0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-0.17 (0.26)</td>
<td>-0.31 (0.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>-0.001 (0.22)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race</td>
<td>-0.18 (0.24)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>1.11 (0.81)</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t know anyone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>0.20* (0.12)</td>
<td>0.10 (0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush approval</td>
<td>0.51 (0.34)</td>
<td>1.18*** (0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombing approval</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.35)</td>
<td>-0.26 (0.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about more attacks on U.S.</td>
<td>0.19 (0.21)</td>
<td>0.28 (0.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about being a victim of attack</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not understand Islam</td>
<td>0.24** (0.12)</td>
<td>0.38*** (0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable opinion of Islam</td>
<td>0.02 (0.12)</td>
<td>0.05 (0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.28*** (0.11)</td>
<td>0.35*** (0.13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\chi^2 = 54.87 \quad 47.92 \quad 78.11 \quad 102.80
\]

\[
N = 783 \quad 782 \quad 781 \quad 786
\]

\textit{Note.} Standard errors are in parentheses. All independent variables are coded to have a range of 1.

*\textit{p} < 0.1, **\textit{p} < 0.05, ***\textit{p} < 0.01.

The results also show that having a favorable view of Islam makes a person less likely to support profiling, while approving of the way Bush is handling his job as president makes a person more likely to favor profiling. Given Bush’s high ratings in the wake of the attacks (in this survey, 77% of respondents strongly approve of the way Bush is handling his job as president and 17% approve somewhat, a total of 94%), widespread support for profiling should perhaps not be surprising. Why approval ratings lead to support for profiling is the next obvious question, one that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article.¹⁹

Contrary to many symbolic politics analyses, self-interest—measured by the fear that one or one’s family and friends will be the victim of a terrorist attack—is also a strong predictor of support for profiling, more so than fearing another attack against the United States (43% of respondents expressed fears about being a

¹⁹ An ordinary least squares regression (results not shown) indicates that partisan identification and race shape approval for Bush; Republicans and whites are more likely than Democrats and blacks to approve of Bush’s job performance. Neither of these factors are significant in the probit analysis, indicating they have an indirect influence on support for profiling.
victim). In most analyses of public opinion, measures of self-interest fail to perform well in terms of predicting policy preferences, despite their intuitive appeal. Sears and Funk (1990) explained that short-term and personal interests are more likely to shape opinions when the costs and benefits associated with a policy are both clear and substantial and when political leaders expressly politicize self-interest. Costs and benefits, however, are rarely clear or substantial, and Americans in general are not inclined to blame the government for their personal (mis)fortunes (Feldman, 1982; Sniderman & Brody, 1977). This combination of factors usually works against the ability of personal cost/benefit calculations to affect policy preferences.

In our current context, the stakes are high (dying, or losing a loved one), and many Americans travel by plane, know people who do, or know people who live near Manhattan or Washington. Moreover, people not only look to the government to protect them from terrorists, they need government to do that job; combating terrorism lacks the “attribution problem” (Mutz, 1998, p. 101) that often prevents people from connecting their own interests to government action. Whereas people can look to individual-level actions to improve their income, to combat stereotypes, or to fight drug addiction, counterterrorism efforts do not lend themselves to individual initiative. No other viable options for catching terrorist plots in the making really exist. Additionally, Mutz (1998) found that when perceptions of personal situations and assessments of the well-being of the nation are similar, and when the issue at hand receives heavy media coverage, self-interest shapes political judgments more than collective interest does. With this research in mind, the significant coefficient on perceptions of self-interest begins to make more sense. The stakes are clear and substantial, the situation is squarely within government’s purview, media coverage of the attacks could not have been more intense, and perceptions of personal threat and collective threat are united for many respondents ($r = 0.41$). Under these conditions, self-interest is more likely to have an impact on policy preferences. People who fear being a victim are looking to government to do something, anything, even if it means engaging in the liberty-for-safety exchanges of earlier eras.

The same model was used to analyze whether people admit to being more suspicious of people who look Arab (Table 2). As before, people are more likely to admit to this suspicion if they express approval for Bush, fear that they may be victims of a future attack, and have an unfavorable view of Islam. Not knowing any Muslims and identifying as conservative also contribute to suspicion. Here we also see an effect for race, but in an unanticipated direction—blacks and Hispanics are more likely than whites to be suspicious of people who look Arab. More systematic analyses about how the terrorist attacks are shaping black and Hispanic views of Arabs and Muslims are clearly needed.\(^{20}\)

\(^{20}\)Additional models were run in which support for giving police the power to stop anyone at random—perhaps a measure of general concern for civil liberties—was included as an independent variable. Support for this measure was a strong predictor of support for allowing police to stop anyone
A tentative conclusion from these initial models is that a person who supports the administration, is less educated, is unfamiliar with Muslims and/or Islam, and is afraid of becoming the victim of an attack will be likely to support policies that make life difficult for a particular ethnic group. Elsewhere, ethnocultural understandings of American identity have been shown to increase support for policies that make life difficult for members of particular ethnic groups (Citrin & Duff, 1998; Citrin et al., 1990; Schildkraut, 2001a). Lacking specific measures of ethnoculturalism, the most that can be said at this point is that it is likely that the independent factors listed above contribute to an awakening of the ethnocultural conception of American identity, which in turn gains increased influence over policy preferences and results in greater support for ethnic profiling and even internment. In time, we will be able to test this claim more thoroughly.

As the immediate sense of threat wanes, it is likely that support for ethnocultural policies will subside as well and that ordinary citizens will resume the process of adopting elite messages advocating inclusion, tolerance, and a multiethnic conception of American identity. According to Gallup, the percentage of people saying they fear being the victim of a terrorist attack was, by mid-October, down to 43% from a high of 58% immediately after the attacks. By January 2002, a Pew Research Center poll found 38% of respondents voicing this fear. And with the 2002 elections nearing, Bush’s approval rating is likely to continue to slide as criticism of his domestic policies is sure to loom large in campaign discourse. As of this writing, his approval rating is still remarkably high—74% in Gallup (March 2002) and 69% in Pew (January 2002)—although it is down more than 15 points from its peak. As the probit analysis shows, when fear of personal threat and Bush’s approval ratings are lower, so is support for ethnocultural practices. Therefore, as the immediate shock of the 9/11 attacks fades, we might expect to see a return to pre-9/11 patterns regarding the ethnocultural and incorporationist conceptions of American identity, assuming, of course, the absence of another attack.

In the meantime, the current state of affairs is characterized by less convergence than studies of mass/elite opinions would lead us to expect. Although those studies differ in their designation of leaders and followers, they tend to agree that high salience brings agreement between mass opinion and elite rhetoric and behavior. Page and Shapiro (1983) noted that fluctuating opinions are less likely to be matched by policy changes, and it is likely that we are in a period of unstable preferences. Also, it is undeniable that incorporationism’s gains in recent years are

who fits the profile of a terrorist (coeff. = 0.89, p < 0.01) and to stop anyone who appears to be Arab or Muslim (coeff. = 1.36, p < 0.01); it also led to a greater likelihood of being suspicious of people who look Arab or Muslim (coeff. = 0.38, p < 0.01). Taken together, these results suggest that people who are willing to restrict the rights of everyone are more likely than others to support restricting the rights of a few; it is not the case that people are in favor of subjecting everyone to more scrutiny while rejecting ethnic profiling. The only substantive change in other variables in these new models is that support for Bush became insignificant in predicting support for police use of ethnic profiling.

21 See Zaller (1992) for an analysis of “two-sided information flows” and attitude change.
due in large part to the efforts of social movements that originated from previously powerless groups. Models of opinion-sharing, or reciprocal relationships, might therefore also apply here, but in a very specific manner, with opinions rooted in a small sector of society affecting elite rhetoric, which then alters the views of the rest of society.

The story as it has developed thus far, however, also supports the argument that issues addressing ethnicity and identity are perhaps different from other issues studied in research on mass/elite convergence. As studies of nationalism suggest, elite actors appear to be the mobilizing agents of the incorporationist response, at least the most visible ones as far as the majority of Americans are concerned. At the same time, the enduring power of ethnic stereotypes—particularly the over-learned image of Americans as white English-speaking Christians—is reawakened in the face of threat and is clashing with new, inclusive societal norms. This interpretation of events is an extension of Mendelberg’s analysis of racial attitudes and discourse. Even in the face of awakened ascriptive tendencies, we are in an age when ascriptive sentiments do not go unchallenged. These challenges come from political leaders, the media, ethnic leaders, and ordinary citizens who have truly adopted more inclusive ideas about American identity.

Another lesson from Mendelberg’s study is that highlighting the contradictions in people’s opinions—highlighting that their preferences go against norms of acceptable discourse and practices—should lead to a decline in their support for ascriptivist policies and in the desire of elected officials to appeal to ascriptivist beliefs through implicit means. As it turns out, politicians and the press have been quick to point out that ethnic profiling, individual acts of retaliation, and mass suspicion are not “the American way”; these responses have probably prevented mass reactions from relying on ethnoculturalism even more.

Conclusions

The automaticity of the ethnocultural impulse to assume that a member of a minority group is not an American has been a feature of the thought processes of white Americans for some time. The nation has made great gains in recent years in delegitimizing the idea that only whites of Northern European ancestry can be considered American and in promoting a multiethnic understanding of American identity, yet the old stereotypes remain. In peacetime, these stereotypes are harmful to the nation because of the ethnic tensions and alienation they promote. Even without terrorist attacks, the persistence of the old stereotypes is worrisome, particularly as the demographic makeup of the nation continues to diversify. The wholly new state of affairs ushered in on 9/11 renders the questions of how whites view their fellow non-white citizens and how those non-white citizens view their relationship to the nation even more pressing.

After 9/11, ethnoculturalism’s impact on how people feel about public policy appears to be strengthened; it has again become acceptable to many people to curtail
the rights and opportunities of those who do not fit into the dominant cultural type. It also appears that mass and elite responses to the attacks are taking different trajectories. Elite rhetoric demonstrates a much more dramatic break with reactions to the attack on Pearl Harbor than do the survey responses of ordinary Americans. Domestic developments now are clearly not as ethnocultural as they were during WWII, and it does not seem like they will be. The United States is a much more diverse place than it was then. A variety of sociopolitical developments in the intervening years have normalized new understandings about what constitutes American identity and have restricted the range of ethnicity-based policies that will be tolerated. Moreover, the media have been shown to have a powerful effect on public opinion [see, e.g., Iyengar & Kinder (1987)], and so far, the media have been the most prominent and consistent mainstream voice of incorporationism.

According to Takaki (2000), WWII and internment led some Japanese Americans to renounce their citizenship—even some who had never been to Japan—whereas it led others to “claim their identities as Americans” (p. 143). Some 30,000 Japanese Americans served in the military during the war, and some even fought in areas where they had family (p. 161). Today, the FBI finds itself in need of people who can translate from Arabic, Pashto, Farsi, and Uzbek into English. Trust and pride in American society and its institutions are essential for creating the desire for that kind of work. When ethnoculturalism prevails, it hinders the development of pride and trust among the nation’s many non-white citizens whose help is needed. If incorporationism triumphs, it is likely we will see more of the “new, nuanced patriots” extolled in the Los Angeles Times, and they will be of all ethnicities and faiths. It is too early to tell whether mass and elite responses to 9/11 will enhance or diminish the place of incorporationism in our belief systems and whether ethnoculturalism will continue to recede as it had been doing for many years. But incorporationism’s progress to date has undoubtedly prevented attempts to find domestic threats now from being modeled on our attempts from 60 years ago.

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