SHERROW O. PINDER

AMERICAN MULTICULTURAL STUDIES

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Introduction: The Concept and Definition of American Multicultural Studies

Sherrow O. Pinder

This book seeks to bring together foundational works of scholars writing within the framework of multicultural studies, a fairly new and exciting area of study that is developing across disciplines. Rather than representing a discipline in itself or a single ideological position, this collection of essays responds to the need to open up a rich avenue for addressing issues of race, gender, ethnicity, cultural diversity, sexuality, and education in their varied forms. Although this grouping reflects a diversity of concerns, substantial thematic overlaps are found between sections and essays, all of which are oriented toward a single broad objective, that is, to develop new ways of addressing how multicultural issues, in their discursive sociocultural contexts, are inextricably linked to operations of power. Power produces certain forms of consequential epistemologies and extends and legitimizes the interests of those served by the effect of such operative power (Butler, 1997). In other words, power is despotic; it fastens marginalized individuals and groups to the image of the "other" that positions and upholds them, especially their social position in the United States. French philosopher Michel Foucault has taught us that power must remain imprecise since this very imprecision is the very state of its existence.[1] His American counterpart, the postcolonial scholar Homi K. Bhabha (1998), understands power as "a tyranny of the transparent" (p. 21) that necessarily and essentially prompts the question of how to relinquish power. Since "there are no relations of power without resistance" (Foucault, 1980, p. 142), power cannot be

separated from the complexity of power itself or, in the words of Foucault, "the polymorphous techniques of power" (Foucault, 1980, p. 142).

In thinking about the range and reach of American multicultural studies, the authors in this book address both continuing and key current issues in American multicultural studies. The book is divided into seven sections in order to address each subject separately and emphasize different aspect of the themes and questions that are important. For example, John Tawa, Karen L. Suyemoto, and Jesse J. Tauriac point to the need for race relations in the United States to move beyond the Black–White paradigm because such a paradigm excludes Asian Americans. Their essay is oriented toward understanding "Blacks and Asian relations outside of a Black–White paradigm" while, at the same time, it demonstrates how Black and Asian relations have been influenced by Whiteness as domination and non–Whiteness as subordination. By revisiting race relations in the United States, Kevin Johnson's expressive comments that non–Whiteness "often frames non-dominant cultures outside the American cultural psyche as 'aliens' to American cultural identity" reintroduces into the discussion the tensions between an American cultural identity (majority) and multicultural identities (minority), which is another way of capturing the multifaceted meaning of Black as it should be reconfigured within the Black–White model of race relations in the United States. In a word, Black signifies non–Whiteness. A good illustration of this understanding is when a Chinese laundryman quickly places a sign that reads "Me Colored Too" on his laundry window the night of the Harlem riot, during World War II, to affiliate himself with the Black rioters (Wu, 2002, p. 19). This does not prevent Tawa and his colleagues from pointing out the "complex interactions between minority groups such as the interactions between Blacks and Asians." In considering, for example, the "triangulated threat theory" that they employ, the attempt to aptly capture the interactive dynamics of Blacks and Asians in relations to each other and to the majority group is precocious. When Chinese, Blacks, and other non–White groups identify themselves and each other as colored (non–White), they are appealing to a common political identity. In other words, the term *colored* was invented out of the prevailing codes of racial discourse and reinvented as signs of grouping and unity among non–Whites, supposedly sharing familiar experiences that are historically structured "by the psychic representation and the social, economical, and political reality of America's racism" (Pinder, 2010, p. 64). The signifying system of racism with its conception of "essential differences" remains a fundamental factor for positioning Blacks, Asians, and other racialized ethnic groups as "other." However, more recently, concepts such as "model

minority" and "honorary Whites" have surfaced, which only serve to generate incessant conflicts within and among racialized ethnic groups.

The sections in the book are inescapably arbitrary and, to some degree, minimize or overstate the relations between the authors' ideas and recurring themes. However, I think that the structuring of the book will help readers in acquainting themselves with the meticulous concerns and queries that impel the different approaches presented. The first section of the book is explicitly concerned with theorizing and expanding on some of the issues that have helped shape and define American multicultural studies as inter-disciplinary as well as multidisciplinary. Babacar M'Baye, for one, in critiqu-ing Afrocentrism, makes clear that it is important not to think of the movement "as irrelevant, out-dated, essentialist, and anachronistic." And if one does, according to M'Baye, it is "an easy way of dismissing Afrocentrism." Furthermore, one would "fail to inscribe the movement in its proper his-torical and intellectual context." In order to put Afrocentrism in its rightful context, M'Baye uses "the effective approach that Tunde Adeleke employs in his book, *The Case Against Afrocentrism.* By interpreting 'Afrocentric essentialist thought' as 'a comprehensive and dynamic agency in Black his-tory' while 'underscoring the contradictions and limitations' of this ideol-ogy,'" Afrocentric thought is not rejected but demystified, interrogated, and brought directly into the sphere of politics.

M'Baye's epigrammatic exposition of Afrocentrist and postmodernist discourses of Blackness and Black culture is underscored by a convincing analysis that focuses on the changeable influence that race and ethnicity have had on such nonmainstream critical approaches to diversity in American society. It is commonplace to speak of diversity. And even though most mainstream Americans would agree that diversity is a defining characteristic of American society, it is quite another thing, to borrow from Will Kymlicka (1995), "to be swamped by it" (p. 104). Whites, for example, in many cases, do feel "swamped" when Blacks, Mexicans, First Nations, Chinese, and other racialized minorities move into "their" neighborhoods. The resulting "White flight" from those neighborhoods is visible.[2] As Joe R. Feagin (2006) notes, around the 1970s, many Whites started to move from large cities with an increasing Black, Asian, and Latino American population "to Whiter suburban and exurban areas or into guarded-gated communities in those cities" (p. 238). This is a good manifestation of how White privilege works to create an unbridgeable social gap between Whites and non–Whites.

One helpful way of understanding Whites' attitudes about racial diversity, for example, is analyzed in Christopher B. Zeichmann and Nathanael P. Romero's essay through "Bourdieu's theory of habitus," which explains how individuals "are socialized into patterns of interaction that combine to

form . . . [their] 'habits of thought and practice' constituted and reconstituted by societal dominant norms and values that are racist." Whites, by enthusiastically identifying with these given norms and values that are racist, which is a process of racist "acquired identification," a term used by Paul Ricoeur (1992), allows for Whites to recognize themselves through such a process (p. 121). Here identification, because of its psychoanalytic significance, carries an ontological and an epistemological valence that shapes the dominant "I." According to Kevin Johnson, "The formation of the 'I' in intrapersonal subject formation is homologous to the formation of the 'I' at the cultural level. . . . Once a cultural 'I' is formed, a whole host of rules, rituals, proprieties, customs, and/or norms are established to refine and define culture." Because culture is an important part of who we are as human beings and because it shapes the ways in which we give meaning to our world, it matters.

In fact, the very concept of diversity has its meaning only in terms of a system of oppression that serves to exclude subordinate groups from positions of power. Cultural membership is important, then, for an individual's well-being because it provides him or her with an anchor for self-identification and the security of belonging to a cultural group. However, if a particular cultural group, for whatever reasons, is not generally respected, then the dignity and self-respect of its members will also be in dire danger. It is the task of the liberal state to promote such policies as multiculturalism and cultural pluralism so that nondominant cultural groups can be recognized and celebrated. This is important because it not only propels us to take into consideration a typically liberal defense of certain group-differentiated rights but also "it provides the spectacles through we identify experiences as valuable" (Dworkin, 1989, p. 228).

Even though multiculturalism and cultural pluralism have allowed for the celebration and recognition of nondominant cultures, Kulvinder Arora, in her essay "Multicultural Rhythms: Musical and Racial Harmony," is critical of multiculturalism and its strategy to recognize cultural differences. Arora points out that "[t]he emphasis on cultural essentialism, which advances the celebration and cultural recognition of non-dominant ethnic groups, provides for a type of multiculturalism that celebrates culture at the expense of an understanding of race as structuring American society." Culture is an identity marker that continues to be the determinant of social distinction. Notwithstanding that the very conceptualization of culture has changed, culture is mostly associated with marginalized groups and is given a certain kind of essence. Arora shows how "Funkadesi's music, by offering a dynamic rendering of inter-cultural fusion, challenges the notion of cultural essentialism," and shows that cultures are always in a state of flux and are opened to negotiation and renegotiation. In other words, cultures are totally

imbricated with rights and materiality. And given that there is a constant struggle for nondominant groups to re-create themselves outside of the norms of the mainstream culture, their cultures' understood meanings are continuously changing and continue to be challenged and disputed. What we have here is a form of cultural hybridity that makes the mainstream uncomfortable. Hence, cultural borders must be enacted so as to separate the dominant culture from the nondominant cultures. Furthermore, in terms of gender arrangement, because the cultural practices undervalue the position of women in society as a whole, what we have within the rubrics of multiculturalism is the endorsement and continuation of the otherness of the "other." In fact, Cynthia S. Bynoe and Sherrow O. Pinder seem to have seen this sufficiently when they criticize multiculturalism's "quest for cultural recognition and celebration of non-dominant cultures" as ill equipped in addressing the otherness of the "other," in this case women. Hence, Bynoe and Pinder's aim in their essay is to point out that "for women, multiculturalism and the politics of cultural recognition promote a 'double bind.'"

Cindy LaCom is one of the most energetic in theorizing and reframing disability studies within multicultural studies. It is not a secret that ableism operates through an absolute sense of culture so powerful that it works to stigmatize people who are "disabled" and places them into separate spaces that must be understood as mutually impermeable. And since, as LaCom makes clear, "disability informs and is informed by cultural notions of success, of independence, of time, of productivity," when living in an ableist society, which associates disability with "lack," "it is imperative that disability be considered and integrated in multicultural studies, where we work so hard to consider how race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, and religion might shape one's place in the world." The exclusion or negation of the voices and concerns of "disabled" people, according to LaCom, do not spare us from participating "in a kind of ableist colonization of people with disabilities." The continuing struggle to uncover and uphold a genuine voice in a culture that normalizes ableism is a theme that runs throughout LaCom's work.

By taking into consideration how racialized otherness, as a site of constitutive impropriety and exclusion, is manifested within the United States to uphold Whiteness, our understanding of multicultural studies is sharpened, extended, and broadened. The section on race, in part, highlights this concern. More specifically, it focuses on how race is constituted and contested through multifaceted hierarchies of power, over the whole social framework of America's culture. The alternation of race as the problem and those who, as the French postcolonial scholar Frantz Fanon (1967) puts it, are marked by race has now become the standard means through which race is pushed

outside of America's history and integrated into the realm of accepted, unavoidable actions so that discourses of colorblindness and postracial can become fashionable. The discourse of race, its ontology, and the articulation between them are the interconnected features of a single political and theoretical problem that must be addressed. With all of this in mind, Jennifer Asenas, in her essay, "The Political Efficacy of Nonviolence in *Eyes on the Prize*: Creating Activist, Complicating Tactics," explains that "the history of racial struggle in the United States is a matter of rhetoric as much as of information; stories about what happened, who was responsible, and how racism, for example, should be addressed are elemental political acts." Asenas's move from history to memory in a way that reclaims the marginalized history of African Americans is clearly manifested within the remit of *Eyes on the Prize*. Asenas, especially, pays considerable attention to the many ways in which nonviolence is "useful when protesters can enlist the sympathy of White liberals." Her reading and rereading of nonviolence as "the primary way to carve out political agency by controlling and politicizing the context of violence that African Americans were already enduring and as a method of gaining self-respect" is necessary for locating nonviolence within a system of unrestrained state violence. Asenas significantly provides several accounts of nonviolent actions such as "the lunch-counter sit-ins and the Freedom Rides" that were "met with substantial violence."

The power to abandon any historical dimensions of the lives of racialized ethnic groups remains a fundamental achievement of racist ideology in the United States. Race cannot be sufficiently comprehended if it is unconnected or distracted from other social relations such as gender, class, ethnicity, or sexuality. This does not mean that race should be reduced or substituted for ethnicity as such. Both Nicole Amber Haggard's and Mariangela Orabona's essays call attention to the specific intersection of gender and race. "Sensing Race and Gender in Contemporary Postcolonial Art," as the title of her essay states, Orabona, by using the artworks of African American artist Kara Walker, examines the cultural representation of the raced and gendered body as "a form of resistance to normative cultural representation." By focusing on the "specificity of race-and-gender in interracial relationships," Haggard demonstrates how "Hollywood's representation of interracial relationships truly connects to the changing face of sexism and racism in American culture." In fact, the "new racism," or what Fanon labels "cultural racism" (Fanon, 1964)[3], is coded within a cultural logic so that culture is substituted for race. Now we talk about poor single mother welfare recipients, for example, with an invidious racist subtext.

As is evident in Bynoe and Pinder's essay, gender functions as an act of cultural inscription that is inevitably positioned within our society. Therefore,

how gender expectations and roles are played out in particular cultures is important. In fact, in terms of gender configuration, because the cultural practice devalues the status of women in society as whole, what constitutes gender inequality, in terms of culture, remains fundamental. In the section on gender, whether gender identity is linked to other identities such as race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality is discussed. Yvonne Sims, in her essay, "*J'ai deux amour*: Josephine Baker and the Duality of Identity in the United States and Paris, France," explores the conflicting attitudes of "Blackness" and "womanhood" in the United States and France, more specifically, Paris. The French feminist Simone de Beauvoir (1964) once asked the metaphysical question, "What is a woman?" (p. 13). What we get from Beauvoir's question is that the West's concept of "woman" is erroneously portrayed as having a certain kind of essence. Because women are constructed as White men's "other," "an imperfect man," this essence is perceived as "inessential as opposed to essential" (p. 16). Transcending Beauvoir's conceptualization of the category "woman," Sims, taking her cue from Evelynn Hammonds's understanding of the "West's metaphoric construction of 'woman,'" reasserts that "White is what woman is; not-White is what she had better not be." In the same vein, Thelma Pinto's essay, "Claiming Sarah Baartman: Black Womanhood in the Global Imaginary," is exemplary of the kind of critical reflections on the constructions of Black womanhood. Pinto's discussion describes with precision the construction of Black womanhood as occurring "at the intersection of multiple identities influenced by the legacy of the Sarah Baartman trauma." And given that gender is reproduced through the understood privilege of Whiteness, "Whiteness," as Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (1998) explains, "often functions as an ontologically neutral category" (p. 353) that renders it unmarked and unraced.

With meticulous examination, Mariam Esseghaier, in her essay, "'Assimilation in a Bikini': The Unveiling, Reveiling, and Disciplining of Rima Fakih," shows that in the United States, even though a seemingly "multicultural mentality" is being promoted and largely accepted, "an East versus West understanding of the world" still prevails. Esseghaier observes how Rima Fakih, the first Muslim-Arab woman to win the Miss USA title, is unveiled, reveiled, and reviled by the American media to maintain her as a racialized "other." Racial otherness is looked on as un–Americanness (Pinder, 2011). Esseghaier draws on the "distinctions between who is an American, who is not, and how the borders between American and un–American are drawn and sustained in ideological formations." In fact, "American = White." And given that American = White, non–Whites are always looked on as different, as foreigners and therefore not American (Pinder, 2010, p. 70). In fact, Esseghaier demonstrates how Fakih, before,

during, and after the Miss USA pageant, "was constructed in opposition to the runner-up—a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, all-American, Morgan Elizabeth Woolard, from Oklahoma." Sarah Kanbar's chapter, in contrast to the understanding of foreignness as un–Americanness, analyzes how the Syrian American identity was constructed, "during a time when being a 'hyphenated American,' was frowned upon in the United States." And even though Syrian Americans were able to imagine themselves to be Americans, Johnson, quoting Pinder, writes: "all hyphenated Americans are cultural hybrids, living in two different cultures, one American and White, and the other, a sub-culture and non–White, producing 'a hybrid subject, almost the same but not quite, almost the same but not White,' whose identities are shaped as 'outsiders within.'"

Even though this book presents readers with a clear distinction between race and ethnicity, the racialization of ethnicity, reinscribing rather than confronting the formidable inequalities that accompany racial difference cannot be dismissed. Racialized ethnic groups, including First Nations (Native Americans), Blacks, Chinese, Mexicans, and Japanese have been and, to a large extent, still are subject to the inescapability of American racism. The dominant culture, simply assumed to be unmarked, tries on no account to speak its own name, which is the basis of its power. In the section on ethnicity, Wendy M. K. Peters, in "The Indigenous Soul Wounding: Understanding Culture, Memetics, Complexity, and Emergence," draws upon the lived experiences, both past and present, of First Nations, or what she calls First Peoples. Peters, in sensing the past in the present, issues of poverty, for example, puts forward, "are but symptoms that evidence an interrelated complex of conditions long recognized by indigenous elders as a soul wound." Instrumental in understanding the lives of First Nations, Peters's explanation and definition of soul wound, "as a common thread that weaves across much of the pain and suffering found in most of the Native communities," which, for Peters, has "shaped the lived experience of the First Peoples of North America and Hawaii" is a continuous theme in her work.

Other essays in this section, for example, look at the representation of racialized ethnicities in cinema, the media, and literature. Cynthia Lytle, through the use of Nora Okja Keller's novels *Comfort Woman* and *Fox Girl*, explores the role of language in the construction and representation of multiracial identities of "children who have a Korean mother and a White or African American father." Paola Bohórquez demonstrates "the place of language among the various markers of ethnic and cultural identity" and shows how it "can be further specified by considering that language 'is above all a means of cultural construction in which our very selves and sense

are constituted.'" The constituted self or the "twoness," as W. E. B. Du Bois (2003) calls it (p. 5), leads to racial in-betweenness, which still signals non–Whiteness. Non–Whiteness is seen through what Fanon (1967) calls the "corporeal malediction" of one's unavoidable non–Whiteness (p. 111), bearing witness to the existential dilemma that inhabits the very core of one's sense of "self." In Lytle's essay, "The Power of Language in the Construction and Representation of Mixed-Race Identities in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Women* and *Fox Girl*," Beccah, a character in the novel *Comfort Woman*, is the daughter of Akiko (whose real name is Soon Hyo), a Korean woman, and Richard, a White American man. According to Lytle, "Beccah continually fights against the foreignness of her mother and her own 'guilt by association' through the embracing of her Caucasian Americanness." Eventually, Beccah comes face to face with Akiko's life as a "comfort woman" after Akiko dies. Lytle demonstrates, "By performing the death ritual of preparing her mother's body, Beccah accepts what she has long denied: the language and culture of her mother." Lytle's essay not only generates room for a good discussion that engages largely with the question of multiracial identities, it also effectively allows us to question whether and to what extent there is room for the hermeneutic self, one's understanding of oneself through self-interpretation.

Given that sexuality is constructed in terms of "difference," it is important to scrutinize the social, political, and personal consequences that stem from this construction. Some of the essays provided in this section focus on the meanings and implications of heterosexism and how it oppresses gays, lesbians, bisexual people, and transgendered and transsexual people. They look, for example, at arguments against Proposition 8. Henry Zomerfeld and Kyeonghi Baek's essay and Sean Robinson's essay, both highlighting that "legislation providing same-sex marriage equality such as the protests against Proposition 8 in California, which would have banned same-sex marriage in that state," are important. However, Zomerfeld and Baek, for good reasons, are more concerned with investigating why African American churches and their ministers were not at the forefront in the debates and struggles for same-sex marriages.

Seeing that heteronormativity can be viewed as hamstringing homosexuality, broader issues of "institutionalized passing" such as marriage, as a way to pass as heterosexual, gesture toward what Elizabeth Renfro's essay, "'I Do,' Therefore I am: Marriage as Institutionalized Passing," offers as an innovative and complex response to the challenges that marriage, the union between a man and a woman, poses, especially for women. Here is how Renfro explains it: "Marriage has historically provided a mechanism for distinguishing 'real,' proper people from improper people," and the "proper

body's physicality is tamed, controlled [and] brought into moral status by 'true love.'" Indeed, this is not just any love, but a love that positioned one woman above all other women and silently weighs her down with domestic, reproductive work. Hence, taking from Mara Marin's essay, marriage "needs to be reformed in order to advance gender equality and, [at the same time,] challenge heteronormativity."

Helen Lindberg, in her assessment of "*Mut'ah* as Social Contract," sees women, for example, as "rational subjects with the ability or possibilities of conducting their own lives and own choices, especially, regarding marriage and reproduction." The opposite holds true for women who are positioned within the nuclear family unit. Reproduction, as oppressive for women, has already been well argued in a variety of different ways by many feminists. While there is no need to rehearse these arguments in great detail here, the burden of women's reproductive role, giving men a sure advantage by granting them the opportunity and power to establish and uphold the organization of society that would advance their interests, needs to be emphasized. In fact, heteronormativity, what is in essence cultural when we treat it as nature, is important for sustaining women's reproductive role as, to quote Renfro, "the 'central organizing principle of sexuality' and sexual orientation" in order to perpetuate and uphold a cultural hegemony that is habitually heterosexual.

Marin, in her essay, "Marriage as Commitment: A Revisionary Argument," shows "that if marriage is viewed as 'commitment,'" it can, in part, "promote gender equality and challenge heteronormativity," which is trapped in the matrix of androcentrism. Marin's question, "How should we transform what we take marriage to mean in order to prevent it from supporting gender subordination and heteronormativity?" seems to resonate with Renfro's understanding of Western practice of marriage as functioning as "what Judith Butler terms the powerful yet rarely consciously unpacked 'norms of cultural intelligibility by which [gender roles] are defined.'" Is there, then, an ethical space in which marriage can be reclaimed, refigured, and transformed beyond Western practice of marriage? We can attempt to answer this question, in part, by drawing from Lindberg's examination of *Mut'ah*, a fixed-term marriage and custom practiced within the Islamic community. Lindberg explicates that "the practice of *Mut'ah* demands core rights for each of the contracting parties, the woman as well as the man, entering the temporal marriage." Lindberg's characterization of the *Mut'ah* in terms that it is often misconstrued as women "being evicted from the realm of agency" is expressive of her twin commitments to draw on the aporetic differences that manifest themselves in categories such as gender or race and to argue, with tremendous amount of justification, why it

is paramount that we "move away from the narrative of Muslim women as oppressed and voiceless." Even though some constraints might present themselves, Muslim women are capable of "autonomous choices" and, thus, by establishing relations with oneself and with others, they are constituted as ethical subjects (Rabinow, 1991, p. 334). Indeed, Bynoe and Pinder show the complexity of cultural practices, which fall prey to cultural hierarchy, structuring human existence with a string of dialectically related dualities, for example, superior and inferior, civilized and uncivilized, and caution us especially against the problematic conjecture that Western culture is more egalitarian than non–Western cultures. Hence, it is frequently noted in Lindberg's work that *Mut'ah*, for example, cannot simply be analyzed by Western norms and values that immediately deem it "oppressive to women." In fact, we should move away from the dominant and nondominant cultural relations—Western culture (us) against non–Western cultures (them)—that follows a certain kind of Eurocentric logic, determining in advance that Western culture, because of its purported naturalness, is necessarily superior and, hence, must function in such a way so as to marginalize the nondominant cultures. This is one of the main challenges that Bynoe and Pinder set out to meet in "Multiculturalism, Women, and the Need for a Feminist Analysis."

In America, there is a new emphasis on cultural diversity, or "America's cultural manyness." Cultural diversity is a radical break from America's past, in which the focus was on assimilation into the White hegemonic culture, or "America's cultural oneness," which is defined and understood as that of Whiteness. Unlike European Whites, for racialized ethnic groups, including First Nations, Blacks, Chinese, and Mexicans, assimilation is unreachable because they are not White. Hence, promoting cultural diversity in America's public sphere is important because it breaks away from America's past of assimilation to the dominant norms. Given that some scholars have argued that cultural diversity is a threat to "America's cultural oneness," what exactly does cultural diversity mean for "America's cultural manyness"? In the section on cultural diversity, Alan Ashton-Smith, in his essay titled, *"Multi Kontra Culti*: The Gypsy Punk Counterculture," with uncommonly vigorous thinking, shows that gypsy punk, "in its amalgamation of different forms of music and culture, its appropriation of elements from an array of cultures and languages, and its self-conscious awareness of influences such as punk and traditional 'gypsy' music, might be thought of as being postmodern itself," which is important for cultural diversity. Ashton-Smith concludes that *Multi Kontra Culti* "is an alternative set of values for the production of culture and music in a multicultural age." In a different way, Eduardo Barros-Grela's essay,

"Chicano Visualities: A Multicultural Rewriting of California Spatialities," gives a key role to the ways visuals are important in adding to the concepts of multiculturalism and cultural diversity. Barros-Grela Grela uses, "as an example of the confluence of rhizomatic urban development and visual expression of multiculturalism," Asco, a Chicano street performance group whose name means "nausea" or "disgust" in Spanish, to highlight the "recent manifestations of Californian visual expressions to articulate the machineries of both centripetal and centrifugal inertias with rhizome-like tendencies of multicultural identification production."

The underrepresentation of speech and language impairment (SLI) research in multicultural scholarship is apparent. In the section on education, Nicholas D. Hartlep and Antonio L. Ellis's unwavering concern in their essay, "Rethinking Speech and Language Impairments within Fluency-Dominated Cultures," is that "Multicultural education textbooks frequently center on issues of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and/or cultural diversity. Rarely, if ever, do readers of these texts have the opportunity to read research conducted on students who suffer from speech and language impairment." One reason for the lack of such a research, as Teresa L. Cotner explains, "is the result of hegemonic cultural norms that has created and sustained a mere marginal role for integrated and multicultural" SLI issues "in the big curricular picture." As Sean Robinson, in "Multicultural Studies and Sexual Diversity: A Postmodern Queer(y) for All," points out, "A curriculum that is 'mainstream-centric' has negative consequences for all." For this precise reason, we are obliged to find new ways of elaborating our critique of the educational practices in the United States and of rethinking the relationship between education and cultural diversity. In other words, how can we extend and refocus multicultural studies to include issues of such concern as SLI? In searching for an answer, Cotner ponders the fact that we need "to develop a culture of interdisciplinarity and a discipline of interculturality." And even though the educational curriculum tries to include issues that are important for a multicultural education, Robinson suggests that often there are "additive approaches to multicultural education." Seeing that, according to Christine Dobbins and Mark Malisa's discussion of the role that educators do play in shaping "the nature and course of the curriculum," it is necessary then for the curriculum to broaden its focus and to seriously take on issues such as SLI and truly be, to borrow from Cotner, the "powerful pedagogical practices and proponents of social change." A multicultural curriculum is truly multicultural when issues such as SLI are rigorously addressed. It is precisely for this reason that Dobbins and Malisa's suggestions for promoting "a just and multicultural United States, especially in the field of education," cannot be ignored.

While there is no escape from multicultural studies, there is also no limit to the contexts in which grappling with issues that are critical to multicultural studies can be productive. From this standpoint, this book cannot address the whole range of topics that continue to define and shape multicultural studies. Nonetheless, my hope is that people of all backgrounds find in this work useful information and enlightening interpretations of what it means to live in a multicultural society. Most importantly, this book introduces readers to a more critical way of looking at race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, cultural diversity, education, and other issues that are important to American multicultural studies.

Jürgen Heinrichs, in his essay, "Can We? Visual Rhetoric and Political Reality in American Presidential Campaigns," writes: The "Obama presidential campaign had stirred people to imagine a better world." "Hope" is a theme that is echoed in the Obama snapshot among the images that Heinrichs has selected as illustrations. According to Heinrichs, "how images are utilized, how they draw from historical traditions and how they engage the day's contemporary social and political realities" are "the very arenas in which meaning constitutes itself." Perhaps it is not too much to *hope* for a future in which we are no longer frightened by differences. Stuart Hall (1993), a few years ago, observed that "the capacity to live with difference is . . . the coming question of the twenty-first century" (p. 361). In other words, differences, without seizing them as forces in a struggle for power, are the future of the United States. Precisely for this reason, Whites, for example, cannot proclaim themselves as unresponsive to race politics and pretend that the United States, as Jenny Heijun Wills points out—because Barack Obama, an African American man, holds the highest position of power—is colorblind and postracial. Wills, in her paper "Transnational and Transracial Adoption, Multiculturalism, and Selective Color-Blindness," shows that "transnational and/or transracial adoptees have paradoxical relationships to the notions of color-blindness and postraciality, thus illustrating further how racial hierarchies are persistent."

In addition, gender issues have to be broadened to include the interlocking nature of race with other identity markers such as class, sexuality, physical and mental abilities and disabilities, and ethnicity. In the name of diversity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity, we cannot ignore, for example, ableism, xenophobia, racism, sexism, and homophobia that are present in our society. We are living in a time of divergence and differences. Needless to say, thinking about the abovementioned invariable systems of oppression and marginalization is not entirely dissipated unless we work individually and as a collective body to resist all forms of oppression and marginalization. American multicultural studies, in its present orientation, provides a