Postmodernity and the Geography of Regressive Multiculturalism: A Case Study

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The term 'regressive multiculturalism' might seem to be an oxymoron. For, despite infrequent periods of political discord over its consequences, the notion of multiculturalism is broadly accepted in the United States. Multiculturalism is the endorsement of cultural diversity. The popular comprehension of multiculturalism posits that distinct cultural groups/forms can functionally cooperate, and that it is beneficial to do so. This would hardly seem to qualify as 'regressive' in the traditional sense of the word. But multiculturalism as a policy is ultimately conceived as a benefit to the general citizenry that provides legitimacy and access to the full spectrum of the country's cultural resources, including an understanding of the dominant culture and its formation. In so doing, multiculturalism is thought to improve the social and material circumstances of all groups–especially minority groups who have traditionally been excluded from full political and economic participation (see Goldberg 1997; Gordon and Newfield 1996). But what this article will illuminate is the emergence of a multiculturalism that is culturally inclusive but materially exclusive–and which thus produces a celebration of cultural diversity that maintains the existing disparities in material wealth. This is what is meant by this author's use of the term 'regressive multiculturalism'–and it is the form of multiculturalism that is clearly emerging as the principal mechanism for the inclusion worldwide of formerly excluded minority groups into the state system.

Among the United States' larger cities, San Antonio is the most salient example of 'regressive multiculturalism'. This is because San Antonio combines two factors relatively unique among large urban units. First, it is definitively a 'multicultural' city, with Anglos representing 32 percent of the population, while Latinos represent

59 percent. Second, the city's economy is reliant on a tourism indus-
try that actively features the cultural flavor of a national minority
group–Latinos. Despite these factors, the city manifests the same
racial disparities between Anglo and non-Anglo populations that are
characteristic of the rest of North American society. While the aver-
age per capita income for Anglos is $19,832, it drops precipitously
to $12,140 for Latinos (US Bureau of the Census, 2000). Taken
together, these demographic and promotional factors make San
Antonio unique among large North American cities, while also mak-
ing the city the logical medium when studying the emerging trend
of multicultural inclusion. One must at least consider a policy of
multiculturalism to be problematic if it accommodates both a minor-
ity group's cultural inclusion and material exclusion. Thus, San
Antonio is a harbinger for the emerging trend in contemporary mul-
ticulturalism.

The Genealogy of Regressive Multiculturalism

The emergence of regressive multiculturalism in the United
States is not idiosyncratic. Rather, in the short-term, it is a logical
consequence of the Civil Rights era of the 1960s. In the long-term,
it is entirely consistent with the continuing evolution of consumer
culture that is most intensely evident in developed economies.

Multiculturalism–or to be more specific to the enduring dilem-
ma in the United States, 'multiracialism'[1]–has been, at best, an unre-
alized objective and, at worst, a resisted facet of equalitarianism,
which is the belief that all persons should have equal political,
social, and economic rights in the United States. It has only been in
the last four decades since the Civil Rights initiatives of the 1960s
that non-Anglos have gained the formal guarantees to enter previ-
ously restricted spaces and occupations (see Thernstrom and
Thernstrom 1999 or Smelser and Wilson 2001). Thus, a racially-
inclusive multiculturalism, as state policy evidenced in law (such as
affirmative action or non-discrimination legislation) is a recent pol-
icy. But long-standing cultural and racial hierarchies do not imme-
diately evaporate upon the passing of progressive legislation. So it
is unreasonable to expect that traditional racial hierarchies will have
abated in so short a period of time. The state-guaranteed inclusion

of racial minorities in the 1960s would have to accommodate the de facto racial hierarchies underlying that inclusion. In short, with the collapse of Jim Crow apartheid and the subsequent multicultural initiatives accompanying the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, the system reproducing racial hierarchy needed to evolve so as to accommodate the presumed inclusion, both geographically and culturally, of non-Anglos while maintaining the material foundation upon which contemporary privilege is based. The two formal institutions that affirmed the pre-Civil Rights racial hierarchy were political (apartheid) and economic (segregated marketplace; see Packard 2002). But while Civil Rights legislation outlawed political inequality, it did not address economic inequality. So with the elimination of apartheid and formal racial constraints from economic participation, the 'free' market was left as the principal institution to preserve the status quo within the doctrine of state-sponsored multiculturalism (see Wormser 2003 or Harvey 1989).

An infrequently realized aspect of post-Civil Rights multiculturalism is the opportunities provided for mainstream economic interests. By legitimizing minority participation, multiculturalism exposed a broader spectrum of minority cultural and material resources to the strong demand of the lucrative mainstream market (see de Oliver 1997 and 2001:234-236). So while the multicultural free market might provide non-Anglos unprecedented access to economic opportunities, it also would promote the incursion of mainstream interests into minority spheres of control for newly legitimized cultural resources. The socio-economic power imbalance between mainstream and minority communities means that the benefits gained by integration in the free market would reflect that disparity, corrupting the presumed intent of a genuine multiculturalism. The illegality of using race as a formal marker to distribute social and material resources meant that the control of space, both as commodity and as a expression of privilege, would progressively become more central towards the material reproduction of the social hierarchy within the multicultural free market.

It is important to note that the processes driving the spatial reorganization of San Antonio's economic landscape that are described below are entirely consistent with the primarily post WWII decentralization occurring with rising incomes, growing urban transportation infrastructure, and expanding commodification

of an ever-broadening array of cultural aesthetics that was reshaping the spatial urban hierarchy nationwide. In addition, free market multiculturalism would not have an appreciable impact on the growing trend whereby underprivileged neighborhoods are upgraded by relatively affluent in-comers who displace the lower-income population (often called 'gentrification'; for a good example of this in San Antonio see Holmesly 2003:68-71). Neither did the urban renewal undertaken by commercial interests conflict with free market multiculturalism.[2] De facto multiculturalism's harmonization with these prevailing trends only further illustrates how the free market-sponsored multiculturalism of the post Civil Rights period would not disturb the prevailing spatial and material processes rearticulating the traditional racial hierarchy. But this is particularly of note in San Antonio because the city's economic growth rapidly accelerated with its sponsorship of the World's Fair in 1968, called the HemisFair. Marking the 250th anniversary of the city's founding, HemisFair opened on April 6, 1968, with the multicultural theme "The Confluence of Civilization in the Americas." As reflected in Figure 1, the event was reported to have exposed more than six million visitors to San Antonio and focused international attention on the city and its Latino heritage (Johnson, et al., 1997:23). Thus, the spatial development of the broadly-promoted multicultural landscape of San Antonio provides an excellent example of 'regressive multiculturalism'–especially since, more than simply a progressive perspective to be adopted, San Antonio's multiculturalism was specifically focused on including and improving the circumstance of its featured minority population.

In a free market, development of a minority community under the guise of promoting multiculturalism is unlikely to take the form of high-paying jobs due to the inability of that community to compete in the domestic labor market in terms of educational attainment. In San Antonio this is well-evidenced by the fact that in 2000 7.2 percent of the Latino population had attained a Bachelor's degree as compared to 22.8 percent of the Anglo population (US Bureau of the Census, 2000). Nor can that community effectively compete in the international market for low wage-paying employment given cheap foreign wage rates as well as cheaper transportation costs which accommodate the export of more low wage employment abroad. The most notable expression of this is related

to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has
had substantial impact on Latinos in Texas. The state is second in
certified job loss nationwide to lower wage Mexican competition
(Economic Policy Institute 2001; Kengor 2003). The only resource
which that community has an advantage over competitors is its own
cultural identity. Multicultural development in a competitive free
market will be tourism based on that cultural distinction. Therefore,
it is not surprising that the Bush (Sr.) Administration's research on
multicultural marketing opportunities resulted in the U.S.
Department of Commerce's Tourism Industries Office designating
multiculturalism tourism as its major initiative in 1997. It has pro-
duced a guide entitled *There's a World to See/Sell in America!*
prominently featuring sites and activities linked to marginalized
populations (Hayes, 1997). As stated by Leslie Doggett (1993:8-9),
Special Assistant to the Secretary of Commerce, "this is an oppor-
tunity for communities that have unique cultural, historic, or natural
resources to create jobs and income from the tourism industry even
while other economic sectors are losing jobs." These initiatives are
fully supported by the current Bush Administration.

San Antonio: The Spatial Evolution of Regressive Multiculturalism

It is important to note that the downtown population of San Antonio
was to be included in the multicultural tourist environment being
developed. In addition to personally benefiting from development,
the local population was seen as integral to establishing or preserv-
ing the intimate social fabric. As early as the 1930s, both the old
Mexican core of La Villita and the Mexican market (El Mercado)
were specifically targeted by municipal authorities for restoration so
as to retain their authentic Latino charm and counteract the progres-
sive flight to the suburbs by residents who could afford to do so
(City of San Antonio, 1939:3-11; City of San Antonio, 1972:45;
Noonan-Guerra, 1988:12). These occurred in the wake of a success-
ful campaign to prevent the changing of street names from Spanish
to Anglo names, and the growing popularity of Spanish Revival
architecture.[3] The most important landmark and city symbol was
also to be based on a multicultural theme–the Paseo del Rio

(Riverwalk). Robert Hugman, the Paseo del Rio's founder and chief architect, envisioned a small hamlet where the pace of life was to be "slow and lazy, in complete contrast with the hustle and bustle of street-level modern city life" (Zunker, 1983:40). This development strategy was accompanied by the restoration of the five Spanish missions, which comprised the largest concentration of missions[4] among the former outposts of the Spanish Empire, as well as initiatives to acquire and conserve hundreds of buildings that visually represented a distinctive cultural flavor and contributed to the desired ambience. The city had committed itself to a profile based on an intimate landscape of exotic ethnic flavor and cultural authenticity that represented a contrast to the modern industrial urban landscape associated with Anglo America.[5] And prior to Hemisfair the downtown core zone was part of that development, still integrating Latino communities directly into its fabric. Thus, the San Antonio tourist landscape is officially promoted as part of the "Mexican fiesta lifestyle offering a laissez-faire Tex-Mex outlook on life...[where] its more important to let bidness [sic] slide and have a rip-snortin' good time" (San Antonio...Cities, 1989:vii).

These protomulticultural initiatives in the post-World War II period were concurrent with sluggish economic growth. The sluggish economic expansion exposed the inherent ambiguities of trying to develop a mass-market tourist industry concurrent with a legitimate multicultural landscape. This is because a mass market tourist industry set in an authentic multicultural landscape is hampered by the fact that the population bearing the promoted culture has traditionally born a stigma and is directly present in the immediate landscape. It would not be until HemisFair in the immediate wake of Civil Rights that substantial growth occurred. The National Association of Travel Organizations reported that HemisFair was "the most important travel stimulant" in the nation in 1968 (San Antonio Light, 2/28/69).

HemisFair's Convention Center arena housed the highly regarded Institute of Texan Cultures and the Tower of the Americas. The Convention Center also provided the arena to attract the San Antonio Spurs professional basketball franchise. By 1992, San Antonio was beginning to appear among the top ten travel destinations of the world, as well as regularly being among the nation's top travel destinations. The dual initiatives of developing an intimate
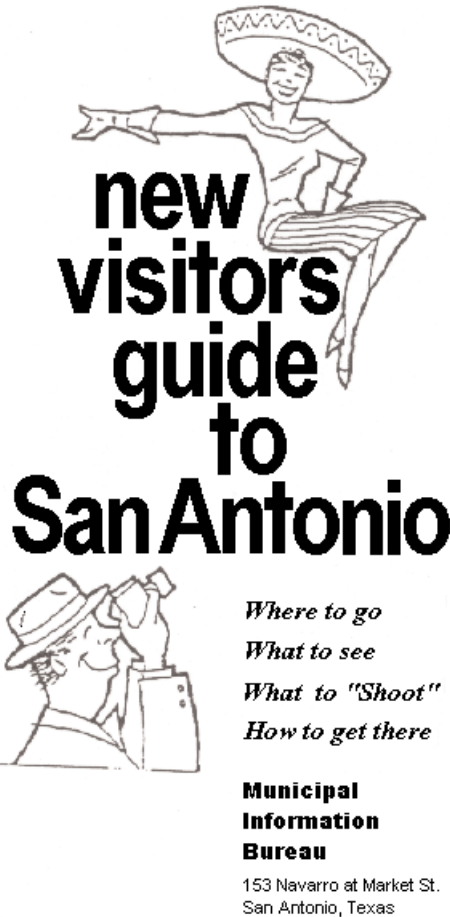
**new
visitors
guide
to
San Antonio**

Where to go
What to see
What to "Shoot"
How to get there

**Municipal
Information
Bureau**

153 Navarro at Market St.
San Antonio, Texas

Figure 1. San Antonio tourism advertisement, reflecting a place of commod-
ified multiculturalism

urban atmosphere that integrated and featured the local minority
community while simultaneously servicing an increasing number of
visitors were strained by HemisFair-related development. These ini-
tiatives were placed into direct conflict with each other by the sud-
den profile the city had gained in the mainstream tourism market
and the popularity of racially inclusive multiculturalism promoted
in the wake of Civil Rights legislation. As the *San Antonio Express*
(6/21/81:1G) said, "Like detergents, new cars and beer, San

Antonio's tourist trade is sold to its consumers, those people from out of town with cameras around their necks."

For a growing mainstream mass market intent on visiting San Antonio's Latin-flavored tourist landscape, the proximity of the city's Latino population to tourists becomes problematic. This is because approximately half of the population of these inner-city Latino environments lives below the poverty line. These inner-city environments disproportionately experience an array of criminality, despair, and structural decay found in many lower-income urban populations nationwide. Such environments tend to promote anxiety and consternation, real and imagined, from the mainstream mass market, and are thus inconsistent with the desirable Latino aesthetics featured in the tourist promotions. As San Antonio's reliance on the mainstream market grew, it needed a configuration of inner city space sporting a Latino theme without the unmediated presence of the immediate population that bears that culture (as reflected in Figure 1). San Antonio produced such a space, and the methodical series of steps that produced it are a logical expression of a community progressively conforming to the multiculturalism of a 'free' mass market of consumers with a manifest racial hierarchy.

The Geography of Multicultural 'Diversity'

This section illustrates the rise of the economic infrastructure of multiculturalism at the expense of a local minority featured in the local multicultural campaign. In view of the market's dominant role as socializing agent, when the aesthetics of a minority ethnic group are presented to the market, it provides a lens through which to see how consumerism articulates multiculturalism while maintaining material disparities between cultural groups.

The formal tracing of the downtown freeway system was a critical feature of commodified multiculturalism, in which a minority group's aesthetics are conveyed to the market free of the immediate communities upon which they are supposedly based. To better serve the nonlocal market, the downtown core of San Antonio was enclosed within a thick belt of freeways (Interstates 10, 35, and 37) during the late 1950s and the 1960s. As can be seen by the freeway interchange in the upper image of Figure 2 taken in the mid-1960s

Figure 2. Interchange for Interstates 10 and 35 in mid-1960s (above) and
mid-1980s (below), San Antonio, Texas (Source: University of Texas at
San Antonio 2005)

(looking southeast to the downtown), I-35/I10 freeways were built around the downtown core. The construction process displaced numerous local inner city residents who did not have the economic wherewithal to resist the project's right-of-way. Nevertheless, Figure 2's upper image shows that there remained a substantial amount of residences and local integration with the inner city neighborhoods outside of the emerging downtown enclave traced by the freeway. The lower image in Figure 2 shows the same interchange in the mid-1980s. Notice how the formation and segregation of the downtown enclave occurs as residences within the freeways are cleared and the thickening transportation infrastructure definitively divides peripheral inner city communities from the downtown. Figure 3 provides a broader view of the emerging downtown enclave (census tract 1101) ringed by segregating freeways. The transportation infrastructure needed to service the outside market
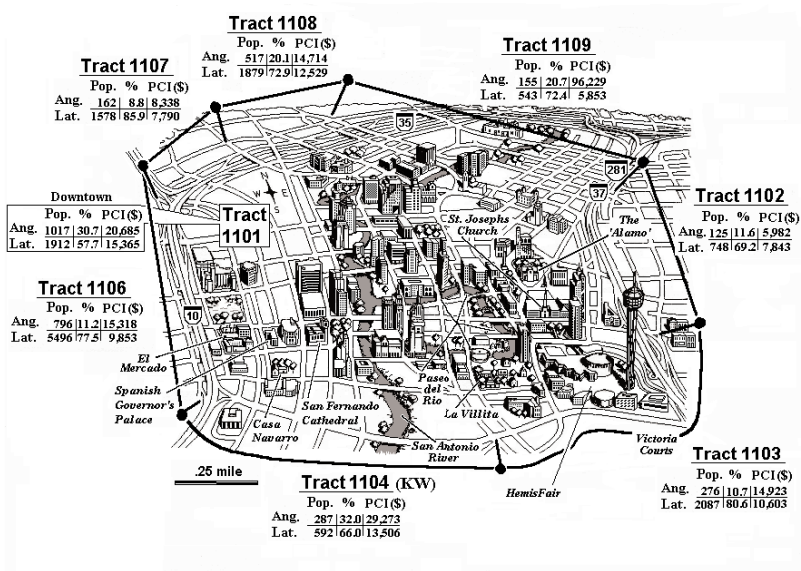

Figure 3. San Antonio, Texas, 2000. Demographic data for the downtown enclave and bordering census tracts: population and percent by Anglo and Latino ethnicity, and per capita income (PCI) (Base Data: U.S. Bureau of the Census: Washington DC, 2000)

segregated the domestic, predominately Latino population, from the focus of the multicultural environment being created. The construction and expansion of I-35 and I-10 freeways resulted in El Mercado, the "People's Market," being blocked off from the Latino Westside and the ostensible "people," the group of commoners closest to the market.

The expansion of multicultural marketing spearheaded by HemisFair overwhelmed the objective to develop and integrate intimate, culturally authentic downtown neighborhoods, as well as the architectural heritage that visually reflected the same. Places lost or displaced by HemisFair alone included manufacturing plants, shops, stores, warehouses, two schools, two parks, and four churches.[6] The fair site also displaced German and Polish zones and a variety of residents who had been joined by Mexican immigrants fleeing the revolution in 1910 (*San Antonio Express-News*, 3/28/93:13A; Fisher 1996:297-317; Vickers 1968:10). HemisFair development promoted an effort to document quickly all historic buildings "in light of the unusually great demolition of historic buildings in San Antonio" (San Antonio Conservation Society D-July 17, 1967:2; D-Sept. 25, 1967:2-3; D-April 5, 1965:2). Proceeding southward through Latino neighborhoods to the immediate south of downtown, the four Spanish missions were highly marketable. In January of 1963 seven miles of new pavement from Roosevelt Park to Espada Mission established a single road to all of the missions, a road which authorities desired to increase to a parkway. Chamber of Commerce Mission Road Committee Chairman Henry Guerra told officials during a bus tour, "We want this right now for tourists. It is the kind of package that would bring the type of tourist volume they have in California." After the corridor was designated San Antonio Missions National Historic Park in 1978, attempts to acquire right-of-way for a parkway produced a rebellion of mission area homeowners who were to be displaced (San Antonio Light 4/26/78). It was clear that San Antonio was surrendering to the sudden power and presence of the lucrative mainstream mass market. By the 1970s developers had essentially taken over city planning and killed initiatives contrary to their goals.

The Latino Westside did not benefit from the enhanced access to tourist commerce provided by the freeway. This is indicated by surveys that reported in 1990 that "Westside businesses appear to

Table 1. San Antonio Westside: Anglo/Latino population and comparative per capita income

	Westside		
	Percent Latino Population	Area Per Capita Income	PCI as % of Anglo city-wide
1980	93.8%	$2772	45.3%
1990	92.3%	$4561	26.6%
2000	94.1%	$8769	31.9%

Note: The Westside includes tracts 1105-06, 1701-04, 1707-09.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1980-2000.

have few market linkages to the rest of the San Antonio economy, as internal market self-sufficiency was dominant" (Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, 1991:8).

According to Table 1, the Westside is overwhelmingly Latino. The table also indicates that the per capital income of the area did increase during the critical period of freeway construction, but that the population's income actually lost ground compared to Anglos in the urban landscape. Neither did the Latino southside benefit from enhanced access to the downtown core. To the east of tract 1101, I-37 precisely segregated the handful of black census tracts from the downtown enclave and specifically separated St. Paul Square, which had been the entertainment zone for blacks in the 1950s. The production of distinct enclaves by placement of transportation infra-structure was carried out by the Major Thoroughfare Plan prepared by the City Planning Department in "an effort, by careful planning, to…preserv[e] present neighborhoods and provid[e] for future logi-cal development. [The b]oundaries of such units should be major thoroughfares which divert traffic around, rather than through the area" (City of San Antonio and Bexar County Urban Transportation Study, 1966:240). In the service of the mainstream market, "divert[ed] traffic" included those local populations who, as the plan was originally envisioned, represented a pivotal component of the city's local multicultural promotions. However, as it became evi-dent in San Antonio, commodified multiculturalism does not require the residential presence of cultural 'others'—just their commodified one.

As can be seen in Figure 3 (portraying the downtown core in 2000), the segregated downtown core of San Antonio is surrounded

by census tracts on the periphery of the freeways where the populations are overwhelmingly non-Anglo (primarily Latino) and impoverished. King William (tract 1104) is one of only two neighborhoods that directly adjoin the downtown core. Like that of the downtown core (tract 1101), the economic and demographic status of King William contrasts with the neighboring tracts that are dominated by impoverished non-Anglos and separated from the downtown consumer enclave by freeways. King William has a small population with a dramatically superior per capita income. While transportation access is clearly a logical consequence of economic development, regardless of the race and social status of affected populations, it is important to note that a proposed expressway envisioned to either rim or go directly through King William was resisted and never built (San Antonio Light, 6/23/66).

As can also be seen in Figure 3, the only small stretch of land inhabited by a Latino population *directly* bordering the downtown core lies within the modest portion of tract 1103 that is contiguous to the southeastern flank of downtown (tract 1101). The pivotal portion of this small area was called Victoria Courts. As indicated in Figure 3, Victoria Courts was located within an area of high poverty, low per-capita income, and low Anglo population. But even this small stretch of Latino population directly bordering the downtown core was targeted for elimination. The author attended a community meeting of the entire south of the downtown area in March, 1998, where the community met with the City Planning Department to decide what direction the entire south of downtown periphery would go in terms of development. A map was distributed reflecting projected modifications. The specific area of Victoria Courts had been projected to be "redeveloped with less density and integrated with adjacent neighborhoods." When the author inquired what *that* meant, one of the officials responded "this doesn't mean the wholesale shipping out of the residents and not caring where they end up…think of this as a positive thing…let's not be negative" (City of San Antonio 1998a and 1998b). By March of 2000 the objections of the last Victoria Courts resident had been overridden in the name of development and the area demolished by the city in April.[7] The residents were scattered to various low-rent and subsidized housing further away from the downtown core.

By the late 1960s a physical place to service the overwhelm-

ingly Anglo mainstream market had been clearly traced by the anatomy of freeways. Despite this fact, Figure 3 reveals that downtown census tract 1101, the tourist core, is *still* dominated by non-Anglos (50 percent Latino). However, Figure 4 suggests the underlying reality by revealing the geography of land-ownership in tract 1101. Despite being within a majority Latino census tract within a majority Latino city, and being the site for most of the Latino cultural affectations promoted by the city, the land in the downtown core is overwhelmingly owned by non-Latinos.[8] The few Latino-
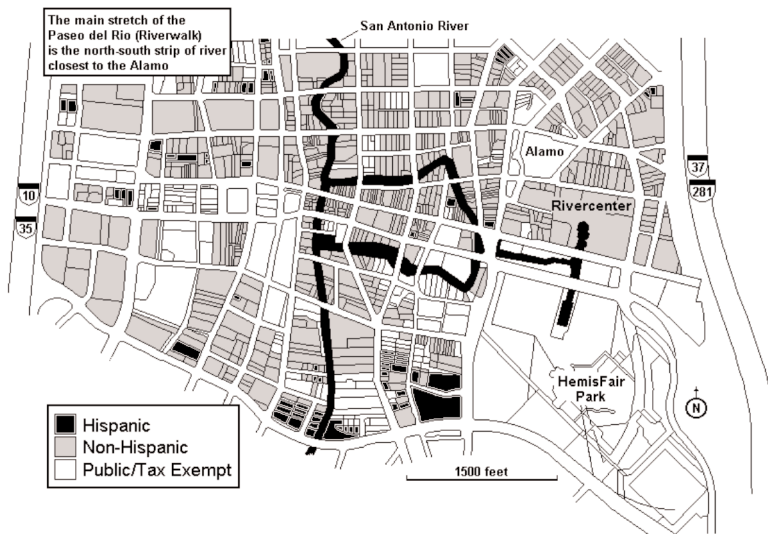

Figure 4. Latino/non-Latino property control in San Antonio, Texas' consumer core; the geographic separation of cultural identity from its source population, 1993

Note: Properties designated as public are primarily tax-exempt parcels not under traditional private control such as parks, churches, and embassies, as well as parcels in municipal or federal receivership.

Base Data: Bexar Appraisal District, (535 South Main, San Antonio, TX, 1992); Texas State Comptroller of Public Affairs, John Sharp, Comptroller of Public Accounts. (Austin, 1993); Bexar County Clerk, Department of Assumed Names (San Antonio, Texas, 1993); U.S. Bureau of the Census. (Washington DC, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990).

controlled properties are peripheral and ill-situated with respect to the lucrative tourist zone.

Numerous other modifications were made to distinguish the downtown area from the rest of the city so as to service the mass market. The restful, intimate environment focused on the Paseo del Rio was in full retreat before the commercial development designed to accommodate increasing numbers of consumers. An artificial channel of the San Antonio River was extended into the Rivercenter Mall complex, completed in 1987. The 'shrine of Texas', as the Alamo is referred to, was integrated into this commercial loop, as the mall opens onto the southeastern flank of the Alamo grounds.[9] The branch channel of the San Antonio River was constructed at the same time to connect physically the two commercial tourist nodes, Riverwalk and Rivercenter, producing one long unified and enclosed commercial promenade tied at both ends to the Alamo by pedestrian corridors. De Oliver (1996, 1997) reveals how the Riverwalk and Rivercenter Malls are functionally and culturally the economic extensions of the Alamo. The integrity of the pre-industrial Catholic heritage of the city was visually depreciated by commercial construction that enveloped St. Joseph's Church, which was engulfed by the end of one of the Rivercenter Mall's anchor stores (see figure 3). The need for parking lots, which had been encroaching on city parks for years, filled in empty spaces in the downtown fabric and converted many more. Popular parks such as Alamo Plaza, Dignowity Park, Madison Square, Travis Park, and San Pedro Park, the latter which was set aside as public land by the King of Spain in 1729, were targeted or altered (see Fisher 1996:261-281).

The displacement of downtown populations as a consequence of multicultural-flavored consumerism merged with the desire to secure the downtown core from antisocial behavior overwhelmingly associated with inner city populations. Using homicide as an indicator of pathologies endemic to impoverished inner city communities, Figure 5 depicts the distribution of homicides in San Antonio during its pivotal period of development. Looking at the downtown area of tract 1101, in white at the center of each map, the progressive clearance of homicides from the downtown—from the inception of redevelopment in the 1930s (at the top) to the 1980s (at the bottom)—can be seen, clearly indicating the removal of environmental elements from tract 1101 that are inconsistent with the pro-
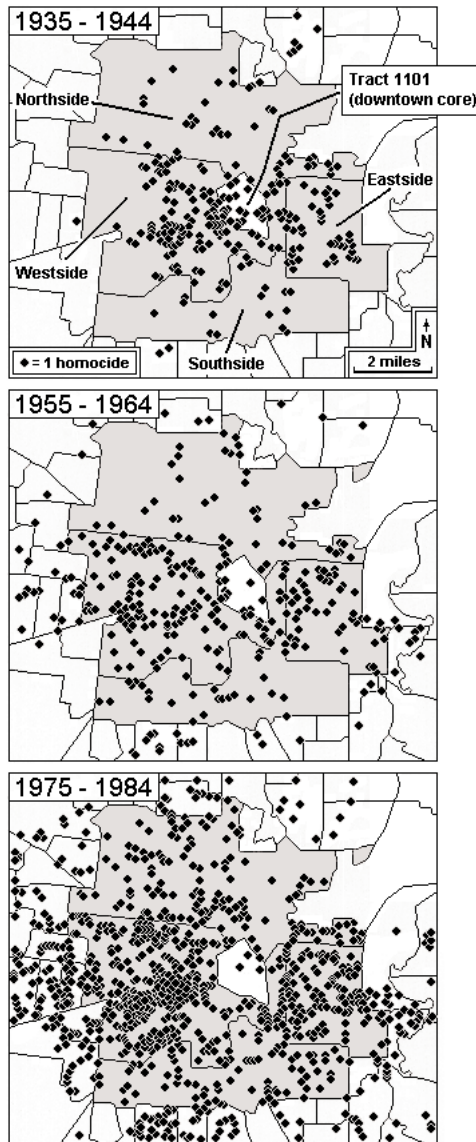
Figure 5 Distribution of homicides by inner city regions over time, San
Antonio, Texas (Adapted from: Bradshaw et al 1998, pp. 863-878)

motion of consumption by the target tourist market. The need to
provide an environment that promoted a sense of security among
visitors led to the sealing off of street access to the more remote
stretches of the Paseo del Rio distant from the consumer core, fur-
ther isolating that core. The growing accommodation of the main-
stream mass market is also reflected in the presence of security offi-
cers. Despite private commercial enterprise on the Paseo del Rio,
city police, with their dissonant connotations of urban cultural ero-
sion, do not provide the security for the area. Rather, security is
placed in the hands of park rangers, whose profile is more consis-
tent with the desired recreational atmosphere.

Further initiatives that separate the downtown from inner city
ethnic communities continue. For example, with approximately 100
routes in the greater San Antonio area, VIA public transportation
overwhelmingly services the lower-income and non-Anglo popula-
tion of the city and utilizes the downtown core near the Paseo del
Rio as its hub. Further emphasizing the creation of a distinct place
segregated from the remainder of the downtown population, the
public transportation system has proposed the removal of this cen-
tral hub located on Commerce Street, replacing it with regional
focal hubs out of the immediate downtown core. The separation of
the downtown core in form and function is reinforced by the estab-
lishment of a separate transportation system designed to convey
tourists within the urban enclave and the King William area while
providing no access to perimeter populations. Yet, the service adver-
tises that the tourist will be taken "on a journey of more than 250
years of fascinating history, introducing [them] to San Antonio
today" (Lone Star Trolley Company, Inc., 1991:2).

By the end of the 1930s, municipal authorities were proclaim-
ing that San Antonio was the cultural heart of the Latino Southwest
and "the largest Latin-American city outside of Latin America"
(City of San Antonio, 1939:3-11). The continued perceived success
of this strategy was recently echoed by the Washington, DC-based
Urban Land Institute, which concluded that San Antonio's "many
historic and authentic attractions such as the Alamo, the River Walk,
the Market Square area, La Villita and the Spanish missions, offer
exciting visitor destinations and experiences that cannot be duplicat-
ed" (1995:12). The movement towards dependence on a Latino-fla-
vored tourist industry has handicapped the Latino population by

preventing higher-paying heavy industry jobs from establishing themselves in San Antonio due to a "militant fear of organized labor and their concern that such 'smokestack' production would damage tourism" (Booth and Johnson, 1983:20). Genuine infrastructural development and its higher-paying jobs have taken place in the predominantly Anglo suburban fringe of the city where disposable income and skilled labor resulting from the overall economic growth of the city predominantly reside. Commodified multiculturalism depends upon these and other racialized social structures of privilege.

The Significance of Regressive Multiculturalism

In the 20th century, San Antonio undertook a mission to develop a multicultural Latino-flavored environment for the mainstream consumer market by preserving both selected aspects of the established environment and the local social fabric. In 1995, the Urban Land Institute reported that consumers "delight in San Antonio's downtown area, with its retail operations, businesses, entertainment offerings, cultural/historical attractions and restaurants all within walking distance of one another and linked by the most exotic pedestrian environment in the Southwest—the River Walk…" (1995:8-18). A Latino-flavored environment oriented to the individual *had* been created—but it was an intimate urban environment of commodified multiculturalism for the individual tourist, created at the expense of a downtown, predominantly minority population. The power of the mainstream market had shaped the core of San Antonio and squarely interposed its conception of multiculturalism. Market culture had harmonized multiculturalism and racial hierarchy within a singular social process: consumption.

The prevalence of formal and informal discrimination that constrained the movements of racial minorities in the early and mid-20th century consumer culture (Jim Crow) made the environmental contexts of minority subjugation highly relevant to the formation of nonwhite identity among whites. In the mature consumer culture of the present day, the fusion of identity and commodities has rendered identity a fluid concept that is extricated from the minority population and their environmental contexts. As seen in San Antonio, this

detached identity is the principal expression of multiculturalism and reaches the mainstream primarily at consumer outlets.

As reflected in Figure 6, commodified multiculturalism is a direct expression of consumer culture social relations in which commodified aesthetics have penetrated general socialization to the extent that a minority's identity is just another aesthetic fused to a commodity, to be offered in the marketplace like any other. And, just like the consumer who wishes to purchase a tamale or Kung Pao chicken to enjoy its exotic flavor, the direct presence or knowledge

Figure 6. Fusing Hispanic cultural aesthetics to a conventional mass-market commodity on the Paseo del Rio (Source: Miller Brewing Co. 1994)

of the cultural community and the cultural politics that produced it are unnecessary to the experience.

Downtown San Antonio is thus a mass consumer outlet. It is also a mass consumer outlet with a theme–not unlike a theme park, where visiting consumers elect to spend their money on a selection of themes on display and available for purchase. Thus, it is not surprising that in 1961 the city hired the designers of Disneyland and Six Flags over Texas to study the Paseo del Rio as a potential attraction (*San Antonio Express*, 6/1/61). Nor is it surprising that the city has attracted more traditional theme parks, such as Sea World and Fiesta Texas, to broaden the cultural menu of commodified experiences from which the mainstream market may select. The conversion of the downtown from a place of socialization mediated by individuals into a place of socialization mediated by commodities is expressed by one tourist, who states, "I used to come to the Riverwalk to walk…now I come to shop" (River Walk Survey, 1996:19). Thus, the consuming market indulges the popular multicultural ethic by assembling ethnically-flavored commodities from a selection of cultural experiences available for purchase.

Despite claims to the contrary, the free market sponsorship of multiculturalism still articulates a racial hierarchy. By objectifying Latino culture and situating an artificial Latino-flavored space as the centre of tourist activity, the target market has implicitly been figured as sovereign and Anglo. It is important to note that the city's tourist industry is hardly a monolith of Anglo control; Latinos are represented, although not proportionately, at all levels of management. Latino participation in tourist administration does not determine the character of the industry, however. The dominant factor is the ethnic perceptions thought by local business to be embedded in the general culture. Hence, they have consistently marketed products and services in a fashion that is heavily disposed to Anglo perspectives and characteristics. Consumers operating within this structure practically and symbolically command the service of both Latinos and consumer products. As Hale (1998:8, 168) states,

> …this market, in turn, helped organize the one commonality that all white consumers shared regardless of their class, regional, religious, or gender position: their racial privilege. Whiteness became the homogenizing ground of the American mass market. [It was converted into] a mass cultural rather than a localised, socially embodied, particularised self, an absolute division that dissolved any range of racially mixed subjectivities, a natural and embodied but not strictly biological or legal category, a way to mediate the fragmentation of modernity and still enjoy its freedom.

Commodified socialization resolves the ambiguity of a society that simultaneously practices multiculturalism and racial hierarchy by accommodating the prevailing geographic *separation* of races while culturally *including* commodified aesthetics of racial minorities. This was somewhat dramatically reflected in San Antonio when, in a Latino-dominated city with a Latino-marketing theme, and on the city's premiere Latino-flavored attraction, the Paseo Del Rio, a tourist said that "Too many Mexican boys hang around down there" (Texas Water Resources Institute, 1972:92). Clearly, more research into the personal perception of multiculturalism by consumers is

Table 2: Comparison of Anglo/Latino (a) per capita income and (b) families below the poverty line (FBPL), San Antonio, 1970-2000

(a)

	Per Capita Income		
	Anglo	Latino	% of Anglo
1970	$5,318*	$4,528*	85%
1980	$6,628	$3,798	57%
1990	$17,115	$7,032	41%
2000	$19,832	$12,140	61%

*Median Family Income

(b)

	Families Below Poverty Line		
	Anglo	Latino	% of Anglo
1970	16.1%	35.0%	217%
1980	14.8%	24.3%	164%
1990	7.2%	27.4%	381%
2000	11.2%	19.8%	177%

Base Data: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1960-2000

required, but it is apparent that, by integrating commodities and commodified experiences openly fused with minority attributes into mainstream life, a structural mechanism has been revealed whereby the mainstream can genuinely perceive itself as multicultural while neglecting direct multiculturalism that *bodily* integrates the minority individual. As indicated in Table 2, this is materially evident when noting that upon the surge of post-Civil Rights multiculturalism in San Antonio, the economic status of Latinos represented 85 percent of that of Anglos (1970). After thirty years of free market multicultural initiatives Latino per capita income represented 61 percent of that of Anglos[10] (US Bureau of the Census 1970, 2000). Clearly, the economic status of Latinos with respect to Anglos in San Antonio is affected by additional factors such as job loss due to

cheaper foreign wage rates, immigrations, etc.; however, given the centrality of the tourist industry in the city's economy, it's difficult to imagine that tourism would be entirely eclipsed by these subordinate factors of the city's economic performance. In addition, the greater exposure and vulnerability of the city's Latino population to these additional factors is yet another reflection of Latino underprivilege that persists despite the multiculturalist development scheme of the city.

The pursuit of multiculturalism in San Antonio based on mass-market consumerism is emblematic of a larger pattern of cross-cultural socialization that needs investigation. San Antonio's dependence on marketing Latino aesthetics is a particularly intensive example of a landscape of commodified multiculturalism. Much less intensive, but more ubiquitous, are the many retail outlets (shopping malls and department stores) offering an array of superficially coded 'racial' commodities where commodities are fused with racial otherness (e.g., music, sports clothes, Indian-associated artifacts, and so on), outlets that are far from the minority communities which ostensibly generated these articles.[11] Due to their abundance and accessibility to mainstream America, these suburban outlets (malls) are far more significant sites of regressive multiculturalism than large-scale, theme-oriented commercial sites. By sheer number of establishments and the frequency of the public's visitation to them, these neighborhood outlets are the principal sites where mainstream America vicariously integrates multiculturalism (through commodities) into their personal lives. But the spatial concentration of minority underprivilege by necessity demands geographically-concentrated multicultural initiatives to address it. San Antonio is unsurpassed as a mature, large-scale, geographically-concentrated multicultural program, making it a harbinger for the regressive multiculturalism destined to arise in thirteen other locations also designated by the US Department of Commerce.[12]

The implications of commodified multiculturalism are substantial for racial minorities still marginalized in the post-Civil Rights era. The powerful righteousness of antidiscrimination that propelled the Civil Rights movement and eventually achieved legitimacy in the mainstream Anglo culture has been co-opted and diluted by the commodified multiculturalism exemplified by San Antonio. Having adopted minority Civil Rights *and* multiculturalism (howev-

er commodified), further enlisting the support of the mainstream, predominantly Anglo population in the struggle against enduring minority underprivilege is less likely if the mainstream perceives itself to have definitively broken with the bigoted past. For minorities, despite legal equality and high-profile participation in the marketplace of representations, contemporary multiculturalism results in continued *bodily* socio-economic marginalization, but full citizenship in the *democracy of commodities*.

Notes

1. However imperfectly, the dominant axis around disparities in the socio-economic status of differing cultural groups in North America has been race. Thus, in the North American psyche, multiculturalism is closely associated with multiracialism–or the free and equitable association of differing racial groups within society.
2. Urban renewal is defined as the upgrading of part of an urban area. The term has traditionally been applied to inner cities. While urban renewal has traditionally been done by or under the stimulation of a public authority, what is meant by commercial urban renewal is the upgrading of an urban area largely by private commercial interests. Thus, the accommodation and welfare of local lower-income populations, their housing or community institutions, is rarely a component of commercial urban renewal.
3. This campaign was extensive. For example, the Conservation Society converted the alley beside the *Solo Serve* store to an access passageway between the *Paseo del Rio* and Main Plaza. The endangered strip of land was referred to by Conservation Society members as the "cow path" since it had once been the watering route to the river from Main Plaza between the old Veramendi Palace and the old county court house. The Conservation Society voted that it be named '*Paseo de Veramendi*' (San Antonio Conservation Society, April 4, 1940:2; May 9:2;May 30).
4. The Catholic Church refused to restore or lease the missions. The Archbishop stated that "the church has no funds for preservation or restoration, but only for saving souls" (Taylor, 1937). Once the Conservation Society had shouldered the burden of restoration, the Catholic Church, with a partly restored mission San Jose on its hands, reversed its position of funding historic preservation. The Church decided that "every soul with a living faith" would "be glad to see this

monument to religion restored to some at least of its past glory and dedicated anew to its original sacred purpose, the praise of God and the salvation of souls" ("The Restored San Jose Mission Church Re-Dedicated", 1937). Shortly thereafter the Church sued the Conservation Society and Bexar County to determine who owned what around San Jose (*San Antonio Express News*, 11/9/37:6).

5. San Antonio's tourist calendar showcases numerous cultures, but the staple themes are Latino. Along with the aforementioned sites, some events are *Los Pastores*, *Semana de las Misiones*, *Las Posadas*, *Fiesta de las Luminarias*, International Mariachi Festival, Tejano Conjunto Music Festival, *Cinco de Mayo*, *Diez de Septiembre*, *Fiesta Noche del Rio*, and *Ballet Folklorico de San Antonio*. But the premiere annual event is the ten day festival extravaganza in April called *Fiesta San Antonio* where unabashed public revelry and conspicuous alcohol consumption are organized into a long series of events vaguely associated with sub-themes which nominally have Latino connotations. Five of Texas's top fifteen tourist attractions are located in San Antonio with four out of those five attractions having distinct Hispanic themes associated with them. The resulting array of officially sponsored leisure activities utilizing `Hispanicism' as a cultural resource to elicit visitation and consumption is that San Antonio is Texas's premiere tourist destination. In what Arreola (1987) calls "the Mexican American cultural capital" the result is industry agglomeration. Leisure enterprises such as two major theme parks, a destination hotel resort complex, golf courses, and a race track, make collective use of these cultural promotions.

6. The new overall urban renewal area of 147 acres, most of which was for the Fair, would cause dozens of streets to be altered or disappear and force some 1600 people to move away. Immediately adjacent to the fairgrounds, *La Villita* was expanded to fill out a whole block – irrespective of historicity. La Villita Street became the long-sought pedestrian mall, curbs were eliminated, and it was expanded to fill the city block. One of the old historic structures was razed to become a parking lot. Nevertheless, the San Antonio Conservation Society supported the designation of *La Villita* as the city's second historic district in 1969. O'Neill Ford, HemisFair coordinating architect, came up with the idea of extending the San Antonio River channel into the fairgrounds in an area originally used as agricultural fields for the Mission San Antonio de Valero (the Alamo). The river extension was then used as a connection to the Rivercenter shopping mall (Fisher, 1996:298-299).

7. For more on this occurrence, see Mike Greenberg, "Mixed-use best for

developing Victoria Courts", *San Antonio Express-News* 20 January 1999, 1B. John Gutierrez-Mier, "Ghost Town's Tenants: A handful still lives at Victoria Courts", *San Antonio Express-News* 30 August 1999, 7A, and Lety Laurel, "Victoria Courts coming down amid tears, memories", *San Antonio Express-News* 15 July 2000, 1A, 8A.

8. Hispanic\non-Hispanic classification is based on surname. Property ownership is defined as being either the direct property owner or the Hispanic\non-Hispanic predominance of the board of directors ranging back to a maximum depth of control to the third-layer holding company.

9. The extravagant promotional blitz in the 1950s and 1960s associated with San Antonio's premiere attraction–the Alamo–is a well-documented phenomenon. King (1976) and Lofaro (1985:144) state that the media/advertising campaign of the mid-1950s was the first one specifically directed at youths, termed "consumer trainees," upon realizing their economic potential as the first column of the baby boom generation.

10. All general income figures reflect the same disparity, but the preferred indicator is per capita income. Unfortunately, extracting the per capita income indicator from the 1970 census for San Antonio by the sophisticated 'White' and Hispanic origin classifications proved to be an exceptionally ambitious task–much more so than median family income. But for simple reference, the per capita income for Latinos in the 2000 census for San Antonio was 61 percent of Whites not of Hispanic origin.

11. For more on this subject matter see de Oliver 1997. Take particular note of the concept of "therapeutic primitivism" which describes the social context for "racial" commodities.

12. The thirteen additional cities/locations are; Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Harlem, New York; Kansas City-St. Louis, Missouri; Los Angeles, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; San Antonio, Texas; San Diego, California; San Francisco, California; Santa Fe-Albuquerque, New Mexico; Southwestern South Dakota; Tulsa-Pawhuska, Oklahoma; Washington, D.C.-Fredericksburg, Virginia; Williamsburg-Jamestown-Hampton-Norfolk, Virginia (Doggett 1993:8-9).

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