The Nature of Assimilation

What happens "when peoples meet," as the phrase goes? Such meetings in the modern world are likely to take place under a variety of circumstances: colonial conquest, military occupation, redrawing of national boundaries to include diverse ethnic groups, large-scale trade and missionary activity, technical assistance to underdeveloped countries, displacement of an aboriginal population, and voluntary immigration which increases the ethnic diversity of the host country. In the American continental experience, the last two types have been the decisive ones. The displacement and attempted incorporation of the American Indian on the white conqueror's terms, and the massive immigration into this land of over 41 million people, largely from Europe but also from the other Americas and to a smaller extent from the Orient, from the days of the thinly populated and, even then, ethnically varied seaboard republic to the continent-spanning nation of the present, constitute the setting for the "meeting of peoples" in the American context.

1 A collection of articles on racial and cultural contacts bears this title. See Alain Locke and Bernhard J. Stern (eds.), When Peoples Meet, New York, Hinds, Hayden and Eldridge, revised edition, 1946.

We note here that the term is used to designate one factor or dimension in the meeting of peoples: cultural behavior. The changes may take place in the cultures of either one of the two groups or there may be a reciprocal influence whereby the cultures of both groups are modified. Nothing is said about the social relationships of the two groups, the degree or nature of "structural" intermingling, if any, the question of group self-identification, or any other possible variable in the situation.

An early and influential definition of "assimilation" by the two sociologists Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess reads as follows:

Assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life.\(^3\)

What the Social Science Research Subcommittee referred to as "acculturation" is certainly included in this definition, and the phrases "sharing their experience" and "incorporated with them in a common cultural life" seem to suggest the additional criterion of social structural relationships. This is further suggested and specified in the later remarks:

As social contact initiates interaction, assimilation is its final perfect product. The nature of the social contacts is decisive in the process. Assimilation naturally takes place most rapidly where contacts are primary, that is, where they are the most intimate and intense, as in the area of touch relationship, in the family circle and in intimate congenial groups. Secondary contacts facilitate accommodations, but do not greatly promote assimilation. The contacts here are external and too remote.\(^4\)

In a later definition of assimilation, solus, for the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Park, one of the most prolific germinal thinkers that American sociology has produced, appears to confine the referents of the term to the realm of cultural behavior (with political overtones), and, by implication, to secondary relationships. Assimilation (called here "social assimilation"), according to this definition, is the name given to the process or processes by which peoples of diverse racial origins and different cultural heritages, occupying a common territory, achieve a cultural solidarity sufficient at least to sustain a national existence.

He goes on to add:

In the United States an immigrant is ordinarily considered assimilated as soon as he has acquired the language and the social ritual of the native community and can participate, without encountering prejudice, in the common life, economic and political. The common sense view of the matter is that an immigrant is assimilated as soon as he has shown that he can "get on in the country." This implies among other things that in all the ordinary affairs of life he is able to find a place in the community on the basis of his individual merits without invidious or qualifying reference to his racial origin or to his cultural inheritance.\(^5\)

Here another variable—actually two, if a rightful distinction is made between prejudice and discrimination—is suggested. Assimilation has not taken place, it is asserted, until the immigrant is able to function in the host community without encountering prejudiced attitudes or discriminatory behavior.

Another process, "amalgamation," is distinguished by Park and Burgess. This is a biological process, the fusion of races by interbreeding and intermarriage. Assimilation, on the other hand, is limited to the fusion of cultures. [What has happened to "social structure" here?]


\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 736-7.

However, it is pointed out that there is a relationship between the two processes:

Amalgamation, while it is limited to the crossing of racial traits through intermarriage, naturally promotes assimilation or the cross-fertilization of social heritages. 6

Two essays at a "dictionary" of sociological terms were made in the early 1940's. In one, "social assimilation" is defined as the process by which persons who are unlike in their social heritages come to share the same body of sentiments, traditions, and loyalties. 7 Here the emphasis is on changes in cultural values and behavior. The use of the term "loyalties" suggests, also, a psychological variable of some sort, but in the absence of further comment, it is not possible to describe precisely the nature of the author's conception of this variable. In the other "dictionary," social assimilation is said to be the process by which different cultures, or individuals or groups representing different cultures, are merged into a homogeneous unit.

After comparison with the biological process of bodily assimilation and reference to the resulting complex of differentiated but harmonious cell units, it is stated that likewise, social assimilation does not require the complete identification of all the units, but such modifications as eliminate the characteristics of foreign origin, and enable them all to fit smoothly into the typical structure and functioning of the new cultural unit. ... [and later]

In essence, assimilation is the substitution of one nationality pattern for another. Ordinarily, the modifications must be made by the weaker or numerically inferior group. 8

This definition contains a number of ambiguities. What does "merged into a homogeneous unit" mean? Is cultural behavior only being referred to here, or are social interrelationships envisaged also? And if the latter, what kind? What is the nature of the "new cultural unit"? The later summary sentence, we note, which refers to "substitution of one nationality pattern for another," appears to center the definition on changes in cultural patterns alone.

In recent writings, a number of sociologists have simply equated "assimilation" with "acculturation," or defined it as an extreme form of acculturation. Thus Brewton Berry declares that

By assimilation we mean the process whereby groups with different cultures come to have a common culture. This means, of course, not merely such items of the culture as dress, knives and forks, language, food, sports, and automobiles, which are relatively easy to appreciate and acquire, but also those less tangible items such as values, memories, sentiments, ideas, and attitudes. Assimilation refers thus to the fusion of cultural heritages, and must be distinguished from amalgamation, which denotes the biological mixture of originally distinct racial strains. 9

Joseph Fichter defines assimilation as a social process through which two or more persons or groups accept and perform another's patterns of behavior. We commonly talk about a person, or a minority category, being assimilated into a group or a society, but here again this must not be interpreted as a "one-sided" process. It is a relation of interaction in which both parties behave reciprocally even though one may be much more affected than the other. 10

Arnold Rose defines "acculturation" as "the adoption by a person or group of the culture of another social group. Or, the process

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6 Park and Burgess, op. cit., p. 737.
7 Edward Byron Reuter, Handbook of Sociology, New York, Dryden Press, 1941, p. 84.
9 Brewton Berry, Race Relations, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1951, p. 217 (italics as in original).
ASSIMILATION IN AMERICAN LIFE

leading to this adoption.” He then goes on to characterize “assimilation” as

the adoption by a person or group of the culture of another social
group to such a complete extent that the person or group no longer
has any characteristics identifying him with his former culture and no
longer has any particular loyalties to his former culture. Or, the process
leading to this adoption.11

And John Cuber adds the variable of group rivalry and its diminu-
tion to his brief definition of “assimilation.”

Assimilation may be defined, then, as the gradual process whereby
cultural differences (and rivalries) tend to disappear.18

Arnold Green, in his discussion of assimilation, quotes the Park
and Burgess definition, and then, in commenting on it, goes on to
make a perceptive differentiation between cultural behavior and
social structural participation:

Persons and groups may “acquire the memories, sentiments, and atti-
uitudes of other persons or groups,” and at the same time be excluded
from “sharing their experience” and find themselves indefinitely de-
layed in being “incorporated with them in a common cultural life.”
Why? Because many of the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of the
receiving group are common property; the inclusive ones in Amer-
ica—such as patriotism, Christianity, respect for private property, and
veneration for legendary heroes—are vested in the total society, and
they are readily accessible to all. On the other hand, the matter of shar-
ing experience and incorporation in a common life is limited, first, by
a willingness on the part of the receiving group, and second by a de-
sire on the part of the new arrivals to foster social participation.

Although it is usually the receiving group which erects barriers to
social participation, the immigrant group, or segments of it, may like-
wise wish to do so.13

11 Arnold M. Rose, Sociology: The Study of Human Relations, New York,
12 John F. Cuber, Sociology: A Synopsis of Principles, New York, Appleton-
13 Arnold Green, Sociology: An Analysis of Life in Modern Society, New York,

This differentiation, it seems to us, is crucial, since in the careful
distinction between cultural behavior and social structure lies one
of the major keys to the understanding of what the assimilation
process has actually been like in the American experience. Such a
distinction was conceptualized by the present writer in a discussion
of the nature of the American pluralist society as the difference
between “behavioral assimilation” and “structural assimilation,”14
a distinction which we shall discuss further below.

Two recent monographs dealing with the process of immig-
native interaction have emphasized the possibility of a cultural
pluralist framework and have preferred the terms, respectively, “ab-
sorption” and “integration” of immigrants. Eisenstadt’s study of
immigrants in Palestine and the state of Israel is highly sensitive to
the function of primary groups, elites, and structural and psycho-
logical contacts between immigrants and natives of the receiving
society, and also makes good use of role analysis in considering the
process of immigrant adjustment.15 His concept of “institutional
dispersion,” that is, “the extent of the immigrants’ dispersion or
concentration within the various institutional spheres of the so-
ciety”16 pinpoints a significant dimension of the assimilation pro-
cess. The survey by Borrie and others, based on the papers and pro-

14 Milton M. Gordon, “Social Structure and Goals in Group Relations,” in
Morroe Berger, Theodore Abel, and Charles H. Page (eds.), Freedom and Con-
15 S. N. Eisenstadt, The Absorption of Immigrants, London, Routledge and
Kegan Paul, 1954. See also, his “The Place of Elites and Primary Groups in the
57, No. 3 (November 1951), pp. 332-31; “The Process of Absorption of New
Immigrants in Israel,” Human Relations, Vol. 5, No. 3 (August 1952), pp. 223-
46; “Institutionalization of Immigrant Behaviour,” Human Relations, Vol. 5,
No. 4 (November 1952), pp. 373-95; “Communication Processes Among Im-
migrants in Israel,” Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1952),
pp. 42-58; “Analysis of Patterns of Immigration and Absorption of Immigrants,”
ceedings of a Unesco conference,17 leans heavily on the idea of
“integration,” which in a paper by Bernard prepared for the con-
ference is defined and discussed as follows:

The fact of the matter is that the United States has not assimilated
the newcomer nor absorbed him. Our immigrant stock and our so-
called “native” stock have each integrated with the other. That is to
say that each element has been changed by association with the other,
without complete loss of its own cultural identity, and with a change
in the resultant cultural amalgam, or civilization if you will, that is
vital, vigorous, and an advance beyond its previous level. Without
becoming metaphysical let us say that the whole is greater than the
sum of its parts, and the parts, while affected by interaction with each
other, nevertheless remain complementary but individual.

It will be apparent that this concept of integration rests upon a be-

dief in the importance of cultural differentiation within a framework
of social unity. It recognizes the right of groups and individuals to be
different so long as the differences do not lead to domination or
disunity.18

Now that we have surveyed a sample of the accumulated usages
and meanings of the terms used to describe the processes and re-

sults of the meeting of peoples, and have noted many of the vari-

ables which, with a greater or lesser degree of clarity, have already
been distinguished, let us return to the task which we proposed to
undertake at the outset of the chapter: a rigorous analysis of the
assimilation process which would isolate and specify the major
variables or factors and suggest their characteristic relationships.
In part we shall build on the usage and nomenclature just reviewed.
Illustrations from actual situations will be drawn largely from
American life.

Let us, first of all, imagine a hypothetical situation in which a
host country, to which we shall give the fictitious name of “Syl-

vania,” is made up of a population all members of which are of the
same race, religion, and previous national extraction. Cultural be-

havior is relatively uniform except for social class divisions. Simi-

larly, the groups and institutions, i.e., the “social structure,” of
Sylvanian society are divided and differentiated only on a social
class basis. Into this country, through immigration, comes a group
of people who differ in previous national background and in reli-

gion and who thus have different cultural patterns from those of
the host society. We shall call them the Mundovians. Let us fur-
ther imagine that within the span of another generation, this popu-
lation group of Mundovian national origin (now composed largely
of the second generation, born in Sylvania) has taken on com-
pletely the cultural patterns of the Sylvanians, has thrown off any
sense of peoplehood based on Mundovian nationality, has changed
its religion to that of the Sylvanians, has eschewed the formation of
any communal organizations made up principally or exclusively of
Mundovians, has entered and been hospitably accepted into the
social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the Sylvanians at various
class levels, has intermarried freely and frequently with the
Sylvanians, encounters no prejudice or discrimination (one reason
being that they are no longer distinguishable culturally or structurally
from the rest of the Sylvanian population), and raises no value
conflict issues in Sylvanian public life. Such a situation would repre-
sent the ultimate form of assimilation—complete assimilation to the
culture and society of the host country. Note that we are making
no judgment here of either the sociological desirability, feasibility,
or moral rightness of such a goal. We are simply setting it up as
a convenient abstraction—an “ideal type”—ideal not in the value
sense of being most desirable but in the sense of representing the
various elements of the concept and their interrelationships in
“pure,” or unqualified, fashion (the methodological device of the
“ideal type” was developed and named by the German sociologist,
Max Weber).

Looking at this example, we may discern that seven major varia-

17 W. D. Borrie, The Cultural Integration of Immigrants, (together with case


18 William S. Bernard, “The Integration of Immigrants in the United States,”

Unesco (mimeo.), 1956, p. 2; also quoted in Borrie, op. cit., pp. 93-4.
bles are involved in the process discussed—in other words, seven basic subprocesses have taken place in the assimilation of the Mundovians to Sylvanian society. These may be listed in the following manner. We may say that the Mundovians have

1) changed their cultural patterns (including religious belief and observance) to those of the Sylvians;

2) taken on large-scale primary group relationships with the Sylvians, i.e., have entered fully into the societal network of groups and institutions, or societal structure, of the Sylvians;

3) have intermarried and interbred fully with the Sylvians;

4) have developed a Sylvanian, in place of a Mundovian, sense of peoplehood, or ethnicity;

5) have reached a point where they encounter no discriminatory behavior;

6) have reached a point where they encounter no prejudiced attitudes;

7) do not raise by their demands concerning the nature of Sylvanian public or civic life any issues involving value and power conflict with the original Sylvians (for example, the issue of birth control).

Each of these steps or subprocesses may be thought of as constituting a particular stage or aspect of the assimilation process. Thus we may, in shorthand fashion, consider them as types of assimilation and characterize them accordingly. We may, then, speak, for instance, of “structural assimilation” to refer to the entrance of Mundovians into primary group relationships with the Sylvians, or “identificational assimilation” to describe the taking on of a sense of Sylvanian peoplehood. For some of the particular assimilation subprocesses there are existing special terms, already reviewed. For instance, cultural or behavioral assimilation is what has already been defined as “acculturation.” The full list of assimilation subprocesses or variables with their general names, and special names, if any, is given in Table 5.

Not only is the assimilation process mainly a matter of degree, but, obviously, each of the stages or subprocesses distinguished above may take place in varying degrees.

In the example just used there has been assimilation in all respects to the society and culture which had exclusively occupied the nation up to the time of the immigrants’ arrival. In other instances there may be other subsocieties and subcultures already on the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subprocess or Condition</th>
<th>Type or Stage of Assimilation</th>
<th>Special Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change of cultural patterns to those of host society</td>
<td>Cultural or behavioral assimilation</td>
<td>Acculturation¹⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of host society, on primary group level</td>
<td>Structural assimilation</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-scale intermarriage</td>
<td>Marital assimilation</td>
<td>Amalgamation²⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of sense of peoplehood based exclusively on host society</td>
<td>Identificational assimilation</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of prejudice</td>
<td>Attitude receptionsal assimilation</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of discrimination</td>
<td>Behavior receptionsal assimilation</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of value and power conflict</td>
<td>Civic assimilation</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁹ The question of reciprocal cultural influence will be considered later.
²⁰ My use of the term here is not predicated on the diversity in race of the two population groups which are intermarrying and interbreeding. With increasing understanding of the meaning of “race” and its thoroughly relative and arbitrary nature as a scientific term, this criterion becomes progressively less important. We may speak of the “amalgamation” or intermixture of the two “gene pools” which the two populations represent, regardless of how similar or divergent these two gene pools may be.
scene when the new group arrives but one of these subsocieties and its way of life is dominant by virtue of original settlement, the pre-emption of power, or overwhelming predominance in numbers. In both cases we need a term to stand for the dominant subsociety which provides the standard to which other groups adjust or measure their relative degree of adjustment. We have tentatively used the term "host society"; however, a more neutral designation would be desirable. A. B. Hollingshead, in describing the class structure of New Haven, has used the term "core group" to refer to the Old Yankee families of colonial, largely Anglo-Saxon ancestry who have traditionally dominated the power and status system of the community, and who provide the "master cultural mould" for the class system of the other groups in the city.21 Joshua Fishman has referred to the "core society" and the "core culture" in American life, this core being "made up essentially of White Protestant, middle-class clay, to which all other particles are attracted."22 If there is anything in American life which can be described as an overall American culture which serves as a reference point for immigrants and their children, it can best be described, it seems to us, as the middle-class cultural patterns of, largely, white Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins, leaving aside for the moment the question of minor

21 See August B. Hollingshead, "Trends in Social Stratification: A Case Study," op. cit., p. 686; and August B. Hollingshead and Frederick C. Redlich, Social Class and Mental Illness, op. cit., Chapters 3 and 4. It is not entirely clear to me whether Hollingshead reserves the term "core group" for "old family" Yankees in the upper class and upper-middle class only, or for Yankees throughout the class structure.

22 Joshua A. Fishman, "Childhood Indocitration for Minority-Group Membership and the Quest for Minority-Group Bicultural in America," (mimeo); a revised version of this paper was published under the title "Childhood Indocitration for Minority-Group Membership," in "Ethnic Groups in American Life," Daedalus: The Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Spring, 1961. See also, Jurgen Ruesch, "Social Technique, Social Status, and Social Change in Illness," in Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray (eds.), Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1948, for a use of the term "core culture" to refer to lower-middle class culture in America.

reciprocal influences on this culture exercised by the cultures of later entry into the United States, and ignoring also, for this purpose, the distinction between the upper-middle class and the lower-middle class cultural worlds.

There is a point on which I particularly do not wish to be misunderstood. I am not for one moment implying that the contribution of the non-Anglo-Saxon stock to the nature of American civilization has been minimal or slight. Quite the contrary. The qualitative record of achievement in industry, business, the professions, and the arts by Americans whose ancestors came from countries and traditions which are not British, or in many cases not even closely similar to British, is an overwhelmingly favorable one, and with reference to many individuals, a thoroughly brilliant one. Taken together with the substantial quantitative impact of these non-Angle-Saxon groups on American industrial and agricultural development and on the demographic dimensions of the society, this record reveals an America in mid-twentieth century whose greatness rests on the contributions of many races, religions, and national backgrounds.23 My point, however, is that, with some exceptions, as the immigrants and their children have become Americans, their contributions, as laborers, farmers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, artists, etc., have been made by way of cultural patterns that have taken their major impress from the mould of the overwhelmingly English character of the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture or subculture in America, whose dominion dates from colonial times and whose cultural domination in the United States has never been seriously threatened. One must make a distinction between influencing the cultural patterns themselves and contributing to the progress and development of the society. It is in the latter area that the influence of the immigrants and their children in the United States has been decisive.

Accordingly, I shall follow Fishman's usage in referring to mid-

dle-class white Protestant Americans as constituting the “core society,” or in my terms, the “core subsoociety,” and the cultural patterns of this group as the “core culture” or “core subculture.” I shall use Hollingshead’s term “core group” to refer to the white Protestant element at any social class level.

Let us now, for a moment, return to our fictitious land of Sylvan and imagine an immigration of Mundovians with a decidedly different outcome. In this case the Sylvanians accept many new behavior patterns and values from the Mundovians, just as the Mundovians change many of their ways in conformance with Sylvanian customs, this interchange taking place with appropriate modifications and compromises, and in this process a new cultural system evolves which is neither exclusively Sylvanian nor Mundovian but a mixture of both. This is a cultural blend, the result of the “melting pot,” which has melted down the cultures of the two groups in the same societal container, as it were, and formed a new cultural product with standard consistency. This process has, of course, also involved thorough social mixing in primary as well as secondary groups and a large-scale process of intermarriage. The melting pot has melted the two groups into one, societally and culturally.

Whether such a process as just described is feasible or likely of occurrence is beside the point here. It, too, is an “ideal type,” an abstraction against which we can measure the realities of what actually happens. Our point is that the seven variables of the assimilation process which we have isolated can be measured against the “melting pot” goal as well as against the “adaption to the core society and culture” goal. That is, assuming the “melting pot” goal, we can then inquire how much acculturation of both groups has taken place to form such a blended culture, how much social structural mixture has taken place, and so on. We now have a model of assimilation with seven variables which can be used to analyze the assimilation process with reference to either of two variant goal-systems: 1) “adaption to the core society and culture,” and 2) the “melting pot.” Theoretically, it would be possible to apply the analysis model of variables with reference to carrying out the goal-system of “cultural pluralism” as well. However, this would be rather premature at this point since the concept of cultural pluralism is itself so meagerly understood. In a later chapter, however, we shall investigate the relationship of these seven variables to the cultural pluralism concept. We shall also leave further discussion of the “melting pot” concept till later.

Let us now apply this model of assimilation analysis in tentative fashion to selected “minority” ethnic groups on the American scene. The applied paradigm presented in Table 6 allows us to record and summarize a great deal of information compactly and comparatively. We shall deal here, for illustrative purposes, with four groups: Negroes, Jews, Catholics (excluding Negro and Spanish-speaking Catholics), and Puerto Ricans. The basic goal-referent will be “adaption to core society and culture.” The entries in the table cells may be regarded, at this point, as hypotheses. Qualifying comments will be made in the footnotes to the table. The reader may wish to refer back to page 71 for definitions of each column heading.

One of the tasks of sociological theory is not only to identify the factors or variables present in any given social process or situation, but also to hypothesize how these variables may be related to each other. Let us look at the seven assimilation variables from this point of view. We note that in Table 6, of the four ethnic groups listed, only one, the Puerto Ricans, are designated as being substantially unassimilated culturally. The Puerto Ricans are the United States'
TABLE 6. PARADIGM OF ASSIMILATION

Applied to Selected Groups in the United States—
Basic Goal Referent: Adaptation to Core Society and Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Basic Goal Referent</th>
<th>Cultural Identification</th>
<th>Structural Marital</th>
<th>Identifi-</th>
<th>Attitude Behavior</th>
<th>Civic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tional25</td>
<td>Receptio-</td>
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<td>na27</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Civic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negroes</td>
<td>Variation by class26</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>Substantially Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Substantially No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>Substantially Yes (variation by area)</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Partly28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Ricans</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25 Some reciprocal cultural influences have, of course, taken place. American language, diet, recreational patterns, art forms, and economic techniques have been modestly influenced by the cultures of non-Anglo-Saxon resident groups since the first contacts with the American Indians, and the American culture is definitely the richer for these influences. However, the reciprocal influences have not been great. See George R. Stewart, American Ways of Life, New York, Doubleday and Co., 1954, and our discussion in the following chapter. Furthermore, the minority ethnic groups have not given up all their pre-immigration cultural patterns. Particularly, they have preserved their non-Protestant religions. I have thus used the phrase “substantially Yes” to indicate this degree of adaptation.

26 Although few, if any, African cultural survivals are to be found among American Negroes, lower-class Negro life with its derivations from slavery, post-Civil War discrimination, both rural and urban poverty, and enforced isolation from the middle-class white world, is still at a considerable distance from the American cultural norm. Middle and upper-class Negroes, on the other hand, are acculturated to American core culture.

27 As I pointed out earlier, ethnic identification in a modern complex society may contain several “layers.” My point is not that Negroes, Jews, and Catholics in the United States do not think of themselves as Americans. They do. It is that they also have an “inner layer” sense of peoplehood which is Negro, Jewish, or Catholic, as the case may be, and not “white Protestant” or “white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant,” which is the corresponding inner layer of ethnic identity of the core society.

28 Value and power conflict of Catholics with a large portion of the rest of the American population over such issues as birth control, divorce, therapeutic abortion, and church-state relationships constitute the reason for the entry of “Partly” here.
ASSIMILATION IN AMERICAN LIFE

point. While this process is only partially completed in the immigrant generation itself, with the second and succeeding generations, exposed to the American public school system and speaking English as their native tongue, the impact of the American acculturation process has been overwhelming; the rest becomes a matter of social class mobility and the kind of acculturation that such mobility demands. On the other hand, the success of the acculturation process has by no means guaranteed entry of each minority into the primary groups and institutions—that is, the subsociety—of the white Protestant group. With the exception of white Protestant immigrant stock from Northern and Western Europe—I am thinking here particularly of the Scandinavians, Dutch, and Germans—by and large such structural mixture on the primary level has not taken place. Nor has such acculturation success eliminated prejudice and discrimination or in many cases led to large-scale intermarriage with the core society.

The only qualifications of my generalizations about the rapidity and success of the acculturation process that the American experience suggests are these: 1) If a minority group is spatially isolated and segregated (whether voluntarily or not) in a rural area, as is the case with the American Indians still on reservations, even the acculturation process will be very slow; and 2) Unusually marked discrimination, such as that which has been faced by the American Negro, if it succeeds in keeping vast numbers of the minority group deprived of educational and occupational opportunities and thus predestined to remain in a lower-class setting, may indefinitely retard the acculturation process for the group. Even in the case of the American Negro, however, from the long view or perspective of American history, this effect of discrimination will be seen to have been a delaying action only; the quantitatively significant emergence of the middle-class Negro is already well on its way.

Before we leave specific examination of the acculturation variable and its relationships, it would be well to distinguish between two types of cultural patterns and traits which may characterize any ethnic group. Some, like its religious beliefs and practices, its ethical values, its musical tastes, folk recreational patterns, literature, historical language, and sense of a common past, are essential and vital ingredients of the group's cultural heritage, and derive exactly from that heritage. We shall refer to these as intrinsic cultural traits or patterns. Others, such as dress, manner, patterns of emotional expression, and minor oddities in pronouncing and inflecting English, tend to be products of the historical vicissitudes of a group's adjustment to its local environment, including the present one (and also reflect social class experiences and values), and are in a real sense, external to the core of the group's ethnic cultural heritage. These may conveniently be referred to as extrinsic cultural traits or patterns. To illustrate, the Catholicism or Judaism of the immigrant from Southern or Eastern Europe represent a difference in intrinsic culture from the American core society and its Protestant religious affiliation. However, the greater volatility of emotional expression of the Southern and Eastern European peasant or villager in comparison with the characteristically greater reserve of the upper-middle class American of the core society constitutes a difference in extrinsic culture. To take another example, the variant speech pattern, or argot, of the lower-class Negro of recent southern background, which is so widespread both in the South and in northern cities, is a product of external circumstances and is not something vital to Negro culture. It is thus an extrinsic cultural trait. Were this argot, which constitutes such a powerful handicap to social mobility and adjustment to the core culture, to disappear, nothing significant for Negro self-regard as a group or the Negro's sense of ethnic history and identity would be violated. While this distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic culture is a tentative

one, and cannot be uniformly applied to all cultural traits, it is still
a useful one and may help cast further light on the acculturation
process, particularly in its relationship to prejudice and discrimi-
nation.

As we examine the array of assimilation variables again, several
other relationships suggest themselves. One is the indissoluble con-
nection, in the time order indicated, between structural assimila-
tion and marital assimilation. That is, entrance of the minority
group into the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core
society at the primary group level inevitably will lead to a substan-
tial amount of intermarriage. If children of different ethnic back-
grounds belong to the same play-group, later the same adolescent
cliques, and at college the same fraternities and sororities; if the
parents belong to the same country club and invite each other to
their homes for dinner; it is completely unrealistic not to expect
these children, now grown, to love and to marry each other,
blithely oblivious to previous ethnic extraction. Communal leaders
of religious and nationality groups that desire to maintain their
ethnic identity are aware of this connection, which is one reason for
the proliferation of youth groups, adult clubs, and communal in-
stitutions which tend to confine their members in their primary
relationships safely within the ethnic fold.

If marital assimilation, an inevitable by-product of structural
assimilation, takes place fully, the minority group loses its ethnic
identity in the larger host or core society, and identificational as-
similation takes place. Prejudice and discrimination are no longer
a problem, since eventually the descendants of the original minority
group become indistinguishable, and since primary group relation-
ships tend to build up an “in-group” feeling which encloses all
the members of the group. If assimilation has been complete in all
intrinsic as well as extrinsic cultural traits, then no value conflicts
on civic issues are likely to arise between the now dispersed de-
cendants of the ethnic minority and members of the core society.
Thus the remaining types of assimilation have all taken place like

a row of tenpins bowled over in rapid succession by a well placed
strike. We may state the emergent generalization, then, as follows:
Once structural assimilation has occurred, either simultaneously
with or subsequent to acculturation, all of the other types of assimi-
lization will naturally follow. It need hardly be pointed out that
while acculturation, as we have emphasized above, does not neces-
sarily lead to structural assimilation, structural assimilation inevi-
tably produces acculturation. Structural assimilation, then, rather
than acculturation, is seen to be the keystone of the arch of assimil-
ation. The price of such assimilation, however, is the disappear-
ance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation
of its distinctive values.

There are a number of other crucial hypotheses and questions
which can be phrased by the manipulation of these variables. One
of the most important, of course, is whether “attitude receptional”
and “behavior receptional” assimilation—that is, elimination of
prejudice and discrimination—may take place when acculturation,
but not structural assimilation, occurs. This can be shown to be
one of the key questions in the application of our analytical model
to “cultural pluralism,” and thus we shall leave its discussion to a
later chapter. Another interesting question is whether prejudice and
discrimination are more closely related to differences between the
core group and the ethnic minority in intrinsic culture traits or
extrinsic culture traits. I would hypothesize that, at least in our
time, differences in extrinsic culture are more crucial in the develop-
ment of prejudice than those of an intrinsic nature. Differences
in religious belief, per se, are not the occasion for bitter acrimony
in twentieth-century America, particularly when these differences
occur in middle-class Americans of native birth whose external ap-

31 Cf. R. M. MacIver's statement: “But we do not find sufficient reason to re-
gard religion by itself as of crucial importance in provoking the tensions and
ravages manifested in the everyday relationships of American society.” The
More Perfect Union, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1948, p. 12 (italics as in
original).
appearance, speech patterns, and manner are notably uniform. On the other hand, the gap in extrinsic cultural traits between the zoot-suited side-burned slum juvenile and the conservatively clothed and behaving middle-class American distinctly gives the signal for mutual suspicion and hostility. This is not to say that differences in intrinsic values among ethnic groups in America, particularly as these differences spill over into demands on the shaping of American public life, may not result in power conflict. But one must make a distinction between irrational ethnic prejudice, in what might be called the old-fashioned sense, and the conflict of groups in the civic arena over issues based on opposing value-premises, sincerely held in each case.

We shall forgo additional manipulation of the variables in the analytical model at this point since the preceding discussion should have clarified its potential use. We now have an analytical scheme—a set of conceptual categories—which allows us to appreciate the true complexity of the assimilation process, to note the varying directions it may take, and to discern the probable relationships of some of its parts. This set of analytical tools should serve us well as we consider the theories of assimilation and minority group life which have arisen historically in America.

Theories of Assimilation: Part I

Introduction and Anglo-Conformity

Although the relatively brief span of American history to date has been in the main a period whose story must be told within the setting of colonization and immigration, and although the 41 million immigrants who have come to America since the founding of the nation constitute the largest population transfer of its kind in the history of the world, remarkably little explicit attention has been given by the American people to devising or discussing the theoretical models which either would formulate the preferred goals of adjustment to which this influx of diverse peoples might be expected to look for guidance, or would describe the processes of adjustment as they empirically have taken place. Furthermore, such discussion of this topic as may be found on the record is frequently embedded in a gilded frame of rhetoric not calculated to facilitate clarity or precise analytical distinctions. In some cases one must even make one's own guess as to whether the discussant is talking about "ideal goals" or historical processes which have already occurred, or both. Some inferences may be made, of course, from the concrete actions taken by the native American population with regard to immigrants and immigration. Articulation of the problem becomes more salient with the increasingly relevant and perplexing events of the twentieth century, but even so, the amount of theoretical attention focused on the problem of the assimilation of peoples of diverse social origins and cultures within the larger American society has been strikingly incommensurate with its magnitude and importance. Consequently, any description and classification of such theoretical attention to assimilation on the American scene throughout its history must come to terms with the paucity of material and, in some cases, ambiguities of meaning and incompleteness of analysis which the record reveals.

Over the course of the American experience, "philosophies," or goal-systems of assimilation, have grouped themselves around three main axes. These three central ideological tendencies may be referred to as "Anglo-conformity" (the phrase is the Coles's3), "the melting pot," and "cultural pluralism."2 In preliminary fashion, we may say that the "Anglo-conformity" theory demanded the complete renunciation of the immigrant's ancestral culture in favor of the behavior and values of the Anglo-Saxon core group; the "melting pot" idea envisaged a biological merger of the Anglo-Saxon peoples with other immigrant groups and a blending of their respective cultures into a new indigenous American type; and "cultural pluralism" postulated the preservation of the communal life and significant portions of the culture of the later immigrant groups within the context of American citizenship and political and economic integration into American society. Various individual changes were rung on these three central themes by particular

proponents of assimilation goals, as we shall see, but the central tendencies remain.

“Cultural pluralism” as an articulated goal-system of assimilation is a relative late-comer on the American scene, being predominantly a development of the experiences and reflections of the twentieth century. Whatever the unconscious or unexpressed cultural goals of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrant groups may have been, and regardless of the factual existence of some degree of cultural pluralism in the colonial and nineteenth century experiences, these eras of American life are characterized by implicit or explicit adherence to theories which postulate either the Anglicization of the non-English portions of the population, or the forging of a new American cultural type out of the diverse heritages of Europe.

The white American population at the time of the Revolution was largely English and Protestant in origin, but had already absorbed substantial groups of Germans and Scotch-Irish and smaller contingents of Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Swedes, Swiss, South Irish, Poles, and a handful of immigrants from other European nations. Catholics were represented in modest numbers, particularly in the middle colonies, and a small number of Jews were residents of the incipient nation. With the exception of the Quakers and a few missionaries, the colonists had generally treated the Indians and their cultures with contempt and hostility, driving them from the coastal plains and making the western frontier a bloody battleground. (This had not prevented the transplanted Europeans, however, from taking over from the redman the cultivation of agricultural staples such as corn and tobacco, survival techniques for living in the wilderness, and some of his place names.) Although the Negro at this time made up nearly one-fifth of the total population, his predominantly slave status, together with racial and cultural prejudice, barred him from serious consideration as an assimilable element of the society. And while many of the groups of European national origin started out as determined ethnic enclaves (German-

town, Pennsylvania, was at first truly a German town, and the seventeenth-century Welsh immigrants had to be dissuaded by William Penn from setting up their own self-governing “barony” in Pennsylvania), eventually, most historians believe, considerable ethnic intermixture within the white population took place. “People of different blood [sic]—” write two eminent American historians about the colonial period, “English, Irish, German, Huguenot, Dutch, Swedish—mingled and intermarried with little thought of any difference.”3 In such a society, its people predominantly English, its white immigrants of other ethnic origins either English-speaking or having come largely from countries of Northern and Western Europe whose cultural divergences from the English were not great, and its dominant white population excluding by fiat the claims and considerations of welfare of the non-Caucasian minorities, the problem of assimilation understandably did not loom unduly large or complex.

The unfolding events of the next century and a half, with increasing momentum, shattered the complacency which rested upon the relative simplicity of colonial and immediate post-Revolutionary conditions. Large-scale immigration to America of the famine-fleeing Irish, the Germans, and the Scandinavians (along with additional Englishmen and other peoples of northern and western Europe) in the middle portion of the nineteenth century (the so-called “old immigration”), the emancipation of the Negro slaves and the problems created by post-Civil War Reconstruction, the placement of the conquered Indian with his broken culture on government Reservations, the arrival of the Oriental, attracted by the discovery of gold and other opportunities in the West, and finally, beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and continuing to the early 1920’s, the swelling to proportions hitherto unknown or unimagined of the tide of immigration from the peas-

entries and "pales" of Southern and Eastern Europe (the so-called "new immigration"), fleeing the persecutions and industrial dislocations of the day—all these events constitute the background against which we may consider the rise of the theories of assimilation which have been mentioned above. We shall examine them serially.

ANGLO-CONFORMITY

"Anglo-conformity" is really a broad "umbrella" term which may be used to cover a variety of viewpoints about assimilation and immigration. All have as a central assumption the desirability of maintaining English institutions (as modified by the American Revolution), the English language, and English-oriented cultural patterns as dominant and standard in American life. However, bound up with this assumption are related attitudes which may range, on the one hand, from discredited notions about race and "Nordic" and "Aryan" racial superiority together with the Nativist political programs and exclusionist immigration policies which such notions entail, through an intermediate position of favoring immigration from Northern and Western Europe on amorphous, unreflective grounds ("They are more like us"), to, at the other end of the spectrum, a lack of opposition or animus toward any im-


migration source as long as these immigrants and their descendants duly adopt the standard Anglo-Saxon cultural patterns.

It is quite likely that "Anglo-conformity" in its more moderate forms has been, however explicit its formulation, the most prevalent ideology of assimilation in America throughout the nation's history. During colonial times, suspicion of those who were "foreigners" either through religion or national background, or both, was not uncommon. Concern was especially manifested in Pennsylvania, which had received the greatest quantity and variety of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, and, on the eve of the Revolution, was about one-third German in population. Benjamin Franklin, writes Maurice Davie, "had misgivings about the Germans because of their clansiness, their little knowledge of English, the German press, and the increasing need of interpreters. Speaking of the latter he said, 'I suppose in a few years they will also be necessary in the Assembly, to tell one-half of our legislators what the other half say.' Yet he was not for refusing them admission entirely; he urged better distribution and more mixture with the English."

The founding fathers of the American nation were by no means men of unthinking prejudices. The disestablishment of religion and the separation of church and state so that no religious group—New England Congregationalists, Virginia Anglicans, or even all Protestants combined—could call upon the government for special favors or support, and so that man's religious conscience would be free, were cardinal points of the new national policy which they fostered. (George Washington had written the Jewish congregation of Newport during his first term as President, "The Government of
the United States . . . gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." And their political differences with ancestral England had just been decided on the battlefield. But there is no reason to suppose that they looked upon the fledgling country as an impartial melting pot for the merging of the various cultures of Europe, or as a new "nation of nations," or as anything but a society in which, with important political modifications, Anglo-Saxon speech and institutional forms would be standard. Indeed, their newly won victory for democracy and republicanism made them especially anxious that these still precarious fruits of revolution should not be threatened by a large influx of European peoples whose life experiences had accustomed them to bear the repressive bonds of despotic monarchy. Thus, although they explicitly conceived of the new United States of America as a haven for those unfortunates of Europe who were persecuted and oppressed and needed succor, both Washington and Jefferson had characteristic reservations about the effects of too free a policy. Washington had written to John Adams in 1794, "My opinion, with respect to immigration, is that except of useful mechanics and some particular descriptions of men or professions, there is no need of encouragement, while the policy or advantage of its taking place in a body (I mean the settling of them in a body) may be much questioned; for, by so doing, they retain the language, habits and principles (good or bad) which they bring with them." And Thomas Jefferson, whose views on race and attitudes toward slavery were notably liberal and advanced for his time, had doubts concerning the effects of mass immigration on American institutions and, though conceding that immigrants "if they come of themselves . . . are entitled to all the rights of citizenship," could write in the early 1780's as follows: "But are there no inconveniences to be thrown into the scale against the advantage expected from a multiplication of numbers by the importation of foreigners? It is for the happiness of those united in society to harmonize as much as possible in matters which they must of necessity transact together. Civil government being the sole object of forming societies, its administration must be conducted by common consent. Every species of government has its specific principles. Ours perhaps are more peculiar than those of any other in the universe. It is a composition of the freest principles of the English constitution, with others derived from natural right and natural reason. To these nothing can be more opposed than the maxims of absolute monarchies. Yet from such we are to expect the greatest number of emigrants. They will bring with them the principles of the governments they leave, imbied in their early youth; or, if able to throw them off, it will be in exchange for an unbounded licentiousness, passing, as is usual, from one extreme to another. It would be a miracle were they to stop precisely at the point of temperate liberty. These principles, with their language, they will transmit to their children. In proportion to their numbers, they will share with us the legislation. They will infuse into it their spirit, warp and bias its directions, and render it a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass." The attitudes of Americans toward foreign immigration in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century may correctly be described as ambiguous. On the one hand, immigrants were much desired to swell the population and importance of states and territories, to man the farms of expanding prairie settlement, to work the mines, build the railroads and canals, and take their place in expanding industry. This was a period in which no federal legislation of any consequence prevented the entry of aliens, and such state legislation as existed attempted to bar only on an individual

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basis those who were likely to become a burden on the community, such as convicts and paupers. On the other hand, the arrival in an overwhelmingly Protestant society of large numbers of poverty-stricken Irish Catholics who settled in groups in the slums of eastern cities activated dormant fears of “Popery” and Rome. The substantial influx of Germans who made their way to the cities and farms of the Midwest, and whose different language, separate communal life, and freer ideas on temperance and sabbath observance brought them into conflict with the Anglo-Saxon bearers of the Puritan and Evangelical traditions, constituted another source of anxiety. Fear of foreign “radicals” and suspicion of economic demands of the occasionally aroused workingmen added fuel to the nativist fires. To make matters worse, a number of European states and localities, particularly England and some of the German principalities, in fact conceived of the United States as a convenient place to dump a portion of their convicts and paupers and acted accordingly, the state laws to the contrary being largely ineffective. Add to all this the inhuman conditions of sanitation and sustenance on the passage over, and the consequent death and disease in the emigrant party, and the fears of many Americans may be understood, regardless of how they may be evaluated. Thus, even the immigration from England did not escape censure. Although many English immigrants of the period were skilled mechanics and farmers, the not infrequent boatloads of “undesirables” from the almshouses and prisons of the chief ancestral country aroused considerable concern. “Now, sir, is it just?” passionately protested Senator John Davis of Massachusetts to his colleagues on the Senate floor in 1836, “Is it morally right for Great Britain to attempt to throw upon us this oppressive burden of sustaining her poor? Shall she be permitted to legislate them out of the kingdom, and to impose on us a tax for their support, without an effort on our part to counter-vail such a policy? Would it not be wronging our own virtuous poor to divide their bread with those who have no just or natural claims upon us? And above all, sir, shall we fold our arms and see this moral pestilence sent among us to poison the public mind and do irremediable mischief?” And the editorialist of Niles’ Weekly Register bitingly commented in 1830 on the arrival of a ship at Norfolk with a group of elderly English paupers: “John Bull has squeezed the orange, but insolently casts the skins in our faces. . . .”

The fruits of these fears in their extreme form were the Native American movement of the 1830’s and 1840’s and the “American” or “Know-Nothing” Party of the 1850’s with their anti-Catholic campaigns and their demands for restrictive naturalization and immigration laws and for keeping the foreign-born out of political office. While these movements scored local political successes and their turbulences rent the national social fabric in such a manner that the patches are not yet entirely invisible, they had no success in influencing national legislative policy toward immigration and immigrants. And their fulminations inevitably provoked the expected reactions from thoughtful observers. Several years before he was to assume the Presidency, Abraham Lincoln wrote to his old friend, Joshua Speed: “Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation, we began by declaring that ‘all men are created equal.’ We now practically read it ‘all men are created equal, except negroes.’ When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read ‘all men are created equal, except negroes, and foreigners and Catholics.’ When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty—


to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy [sic]."

The flood of newcomers to the westward-expanding nation grew larger, reaching over one and two-thirds millions in the decade 1841-50, and over two and one-half millions in the decade prior to the Civil War. Throughout the entire period, quite apart from the excesses of the Know-Nothings, the predominant conception of what the ideal immigrant adjustment should be was probably that which is summed up in a comment from a letter written in 1818 by John Quincy Adams, then Secretary of State, in answer to the inquiries of Baron von Fürstenwaerther: "They [immigrants to America] come to a life of independence, but to a life of labor—and, if they cannot accommodate themselves to the character, moral, political and physical, of this country with all its compensating balances of good and evil, the Atlantic is always open to them to return to the land of their nativity and their fathers. To one thing they must make up their minds, or they will be disappointed in every expectation of happiness as Americans. They must cast off the European skin, never to resume it. They must look forward to their posterity rather than backward to their ancestors; they must be sure that whatever their own feelings may be, those of their children will cling to the prejudices of this country." This conception of the nature of the young nation as already set in a predominantly English mould is well summed up in the remarks of a writer of one of the first general treatises on immigration, published in 1848:

The people of the United States, considered as a whole, are composed of immigrants and their descendants from almost every country. The principal portion of them, however, derived their origin from the British nation, comprehending by this term the English, the Scotch and the Irish. The English language is almost wholly used; the English manners, modified to be sure, predominate, and the spirit of English liberty and enterprise animates the energies of the whole people. English laws and institutions, adapted to the circumstances of the country, have been adopted here. . . .

The New England states, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and the Carolinas were principally settled by the English; New York and New Jersey by the Dutch; Mississippi and Louisiana by the French; Florida by the Spaniards. The new states have been settled mainly by emigrants from the older states, with large numbers from foreign countries—Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, &c. We have not the means at hand of determining the exact number that have been derived from these various sources. The tendency of things is to mould the whole into one people, whose leading characteristics are English, formed on American soil.

Ethnic antagonisms tended to be submerged by the tidal wave of Civil War which swept over the divided nation, and, following the war, the era of wholesale industrial expansion began, which, together with the continued process of westward settlement, created a need for immigrants which guaranteed them a generally favorable reception. The national sources of the migrants from overseas were still predominantly the lands of Northern and Western Europe, with the Scandinavian countries assuming a more important role in this period as Swedes and Norwegians moved to take their place on the farm lands of the western prairie; also the French-Canadians began to spill down over the land border into the mill towns of New England. However, a mushrooming capital-
ism eventually produced its own irritants of nativism, as sporadic bursts of labor unrest rearoused fears of foreign radicalism. And anti-Catholic feeling was not dead—only dormant.

In 1876 the United States Supreme Court declared state restrictions on immigration an infringement of the exclusive right of Congress to regulate foreign commerce, and six years later the first effective federal legislation dealing with immigration materialized. It was a selective law which excluded, in its own terminology, lunatics, idiots, convicts (except those convicted of political offenses), and persons likely to become a public charge. In the same year, growing nativist pressures from the Pacific Coast led to the barring of further immigration of Chinese laborers.

In fact, events of the 1880's inaugurated an era in American nativism, which, while containing a number of ebbs and swells of passion, was not to end until the quota laws of the 1920's were passed.\(^7\) In the earlier decade, the dislocations of growing class cleavage and a new wave of industrial strikes culminated in the explosive Haymarket Riot, which solidified general fear of the foreign-born radical. Native-born workers pressed successfully for a law excluding the bringing of contract laborers from abroad. Municipal reformers began substantially to connect the problems of political corruption, poverty, and crime in an urban setting with the presence of the immigrant. Protestant fears of papal influence revived, fed by the unmistakable signs of Catholic institutional growth, particularly the parochial school system, and by Catholic political prominence in some of the cities of the Northeast. Significantly, also, in 1882 nearly 800,000 migrants from other lands entered the United States, the largest number by far up to that time and a figure not to be reached again, or surpassed, until 1903. Even more importantly, the decade of the 1880's brought with it a portentous (though at the time little-recognized) change in the

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\(^7\) See Higham, op. cit. This section owes a substantial debt to Higham's book, subtitled "Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925."
number of years before. Their obvious corollary was exclusion of the allegedly inferior breeds, but if the newer type of immigrant could not be excluded, at least all that could be done must be done to instill Anglo-Saxon virtues in these benighted creatures. Thus, one educator of the period, writing in 1909, could state routinely in one of his professional works: “These southern and eastern Europeans are of a very different type from the north Europeans who preceded them. Illiterate, docile, lacking in self-reliance and initiative, and not possessing the Anglo-Teutonic conceptions of law, order, and government, their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock, and to corrupt our civic life. The great bulk of these people have settled in the cities of the North Atlantic and North Central states, and the problems of proper housing and living, moral and sanitary conditions, honest and decent government, and proper education have everywhere been made more difficult by their presence. Everywhere these people tend to settle in groups or settlements, and to set up here their national manners, customs, and observances. Our task is to break up these groups or settlements, to assimilate and amalgamate these people as a part of our American race, and to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government, and to awaken in them a reverence for our democratic institutions and for those things in our national life which we as a people hold to be of abiding worth.”

Anglo-conformity received its fullest expression in the so-called Americanization movement, which gripped the nation like a fever during World War I. While “Americanization” in its various stages had more than one emphasis, essentially it was a consciously articulated movement to strip the immigrant of his native culture and attachments and make him over into an American along Anglo-Saxon lines—all this to be accomplished with great rapidity. To use an image of a later day, it was an attempt at “pressure-cooking assimilation.” As far back as the 1890’s the settlement houses had begun a gentler process of dealing with the adjustment of the hordes of impoverished newcomers from Southern and Eastern Europe, and some of them had shown an appreciation of the immigrant’s own cultural heritage and its potential contribution to American life. Other private groups, notably the “lineage” patriotic societies, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Society of Colonial Dames, and the Sons of the American Revolution, began to draw up and disseminate, in the decade or so before the war, educational programs designed to teach the foreign-born to understand American political institutions, to become naturalized, and to embrace patriotic sentiments. Another group concerned with “proper” education and indoctrination of the immigrant population during this period was the business and industrial community, aroused by continued labor unrest and the strike-fomenting and class war preachments of the Industrial Workers of the World; their concern took form in 1908 with the organization of the North American Civic League for Immigrants and its program of immigrant aid and adjustment. Also, some of the cities with large immigrant populations had initiated evening school classes designed to teach English to the foreign-born, and a few state and federal agencies had begun to concern themselves with the problem of the immigrant.

The repercussions of World War I, beginning with “preparedness” and culminating in America’s entry in 1917, transformed the pressures on the immigrant to “Americanize” into an enormous force. Suspicion of the intent of the large German-American group produced in the minds of many citizens of the time the menace of the “hyphenated American,” and hatred and persecution of Ger-
man cultural manifestations in this country were epidemic. This suspicion bubbled over into a general concern for assuring the loyalty of all those who had come from other lands. The cry of the hour was “100% Americanism,” and now federal agencies in the form of the Bureau of Education, the Bureau of Naturalization, and the Committee on Public Information, state governments, additional municipalities, and a veritable host of private organizations joined the effort to persuade the immigrant to learn English, take out naturalization papers, buy war bonds, forget his former origins, and give himself over to the full flush of patriotic hysteria. In the words of John Higham, “By threat and rhetoric 100 per cent Americanizers opened a frontal assault on foreign influence in American life. They set about to stampede immigrants into citizenship, into adoption of the English language, and into an unquestioning reverence for existing American institutions. They bade them abandon entirely their Old World loyalties, customs, and memories. They used high-pressure, steam-roller tactics. They cajoled and they commanded.”

It is evident that several interwoven strands made up the cloth of the Americanization program. The concern for political loyalty and external manifestations of patriotism dominated the emotional tone of the later stages, but running through the whole were more prosaic instrumental programs of instruction in the use of the English language, elementary American history, the nature of American government, and so on. Both the patriotic appeals and the instrumental materials, however, were embedded in a framework of either explicit denigration or implicit disregard of the immigrant’s own native culture and the groups and institutions which, with his fellows, he had created on American soil. Thus the Superintendent of the New York Public Schools could state in 1918: “Broadly speaking, we mean ... [by Americanization] an appreciation of the institutions of this country, absolute forgetfulness of all obligations or connections with other countries because of descent or birth.”

Samuel Rea, president of the Pennsylania Railroad, expressed similar sentiments when he wrote in a leaflet published during this period by the National Americanization Committee that “they [the foreign-born] must be induced to give up the languages, customs, and methods of life which they have brought with them across the ocean, and adopt instead the language, habits, and customs of this country, and the general standards and ways of American living.” And in 1915 the President of the United States had informed an assemblage of naturalized citizens in Philadelphia that ethnic group identity was not compatible with being a “thorough American.” “America does not consist of groups,” Woodrow Wilson had stated. “A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular national group in America has not yet become an American.”

The winds of the Americanization crusade continued to blow strong after the Armistice, and even intensified, as a result of the breath of the Big Red Scare. However, by 1921 the crusade was over, and though homelier elements of it survived through the 1920’s in routine programs of instruction for the foreign-born in English and civics, and in the augmentation of the adult education movement, the excesses of the preceding program of immigrant indoctrination evaporated. In its place, however, there arose a demand for restriction of the influx of new immigrants which had resumed after the hiatus of the war years. This new wave of restrictionist sentiment was based in considerable part on the racist as-

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21 Quoted in Berkson, op. cit., p. 59. Original source given as “The Evening Post, August 9, 1918.”
Assumption of the inherent inferiority and lack of assimilability of the immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe ("Americanization" had at least implied that the assimilation of these groups was feasible), and its goal was not only to effect a decrease in the total number of immigrants to the United States, but to set up a formula which would favor the entry of immigrants from Northern and Western Europe and keep the number of the unfavored groups to a minimum. The literacy requirement, instituted by an apprehensive Congress in 1917 over President Wilson's veto, had failed to achieve this purpose. The goals of the restrictionists were thoroughly accomplished in a series of acts beginning in 1921 and culminating in the national origins formula which went into effect in 1929, restricting immigration from Europe and Africa to a total of slightly over 150,000 per year and allotting quotas to the various countries on the basis of an estimate of their respective contributions to the national origins of the white American population of 1920. Most Asians were banned entirely.

The great depression of the 1930's and the cataclysm of World War II in the following decade produced no significant change in American immigration policy, and the national origins formula was reaffirmed, with minor modifications (token quotas were assigned to the countries of Asia) in the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. Both racial assumptions and Anglo-conformity may be said to be built-in implicit features of this policy. The currents of prejudice signaled by the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920's, and the anti-Semitic flurries of the 1930's, stimulated by economic hard times and events in Nazi Germany, proved that nativism was not extinguished in the America of this portion of the twentieth century, and the wholesale internment of Japanese and Japanese-Americans during World War II revealed that in times of acute stress racist premises could again direct the hand of official action. In the current prosperous period, however, although problems of group adjustment remain endemic, noisy nativism of the traditional variety is not conspicuous. In its place have come resistance to the long-forming bid of the Negro minority for equal treatment and civic integration, and the problems growing out of the migration to the United States of peoples from other parts of North America—the Spanish-speaking peoples of Mexico and Puerto Rico. The effect of the national origins formula on admission of migrants from outside the Western Hemisphere, however, assures that the day of large-scale immigrant colonies of white Europeans is over. The number of foreign-born Europeans in the United States continually shrinks as the ranks of the older generation are thinned by mortality and are replaced in only token amounts, and the problems of assimilation and group adjustment for these elements of the population must increasingly be placed in the context of the attitudes and aspirations of the second and third generations—native-born Americans. It is in the context of all the events described above that the doctrine of Anglo-conformity—probably still the dominant implicit theory of assimilation in America, though not unchallenged—must be evaluated. To such a preliminary evaluation let us now turn.

It is necessary, first of all, to emphasize that a belief in Anglo-conformity as the desirable goal of assimilation in America cannot automatically be equated with racism. While, as our historical survey has revealed, the two ideologies have intersected and reinforced each other at particular points in the American experience, such has not always been the case, and conceptually we may note that each can exist independently of the other. In actual fact, it would appear that all racists, in so far as they have conceded the right of any of their disfavored groups to be present in America, and notwithstanding their pessimism as to the success of the assimilation venture, have been Anglo-conformists; but the converse is not true—all upholders of Anglo-conformity have not been racists. The non-racist Anglo-conformists presumably are either convinced of the cultural superiority of Anglo-Saxon institutions as developed in the
United States, or believe simply that, regardless of superiority or inferiority, since English culture has constituted the dominant framework for the development of American institutions, newcomers should expect to adjust accordingly.

None of the spokesmen for Anglo-conformity, to my knowledge, has presented a careful delineation in sociological depth of what the process actually involves. If we examine their statements and pleas, however, in relation to the system of assimilation variables outlined in the previous chapter, we note that their most concerted explicit focus is on behavioral assimilation, or acculturation. That is, all of them demand with greater or lesser importunity, that the newcomers to America give up the cultural forms of their native lands and take on the behavior and attitudes of the dominant Anglo-Saxon mould of their adopted country. Less frequently explicit, but usually implicit, is the disapproval, except for non-white groups, of ethnic "colonies" and communal life. Although the Anglo-conformists are pleasantly vague as to the details of any alternative, the favored course would appear to be that the immigrants and their descendants eschew the development of their own institutions and organizations, and any sense of distinct ethnic identity, and enter the "general" American structure of institutional life. Presumably this would lead to extensive intermarriage. Put in our own terms, this amounts to a demand for structural assimilation, identificational assimilation, and marital assimilation. It is also expected that since the newcomers will have adopted "American" values and goals, they will have no "alien" demands on the body politic, and thus civic assimilation will have taken place. Prejudice and discrimination, the two remaining variables, are rarely brought to the level of articulation in these formulations, but the implicit assumption is that if the immigrant will conform in all the above respects, unfavorable attitudes and behavior toward him will disappear.

Leaving out for the time being considerations based on value premises, what can be said of the Anglo-conformity goal from the point of view of both the American historical experience thus far and the type of sociological analysis which we have suggested? Basically, our thesis is this: From the long-range point of view, the goal of Anglo-conformity has been substantially, although not completely, achieved with regard to acculturation. It has, in the main, not been achieved or only partly been achieved with regard to the other assimilation variables. This statement requires, of course, considerable explication and qualification.

Let us consider, first, the impact of the assimilation process on the immigrants themselves—those, at least, that came in sizable numbers after the original English settlements. All such groups, with the probable exception of the British in the nineteenth century, have initially flocked together in "colonies," urban or rural, and have developed a form of communal life oriented, in varying details, around their own burial and insurance societies, churches of their native faith with services conducted in their native language, organizations devoted to the defense of the group domestically and the memories or aspirations of the native land, recreational patterns involving native customs and tongue, and a network of personal friendships with their ethnic compatriots. And why not? To have expected otherwise was absurd. The process of leaving one's native land to take up permanent residence in an alien society with an alien culture is difficult enough in the most propitious of circumstances. When we consider that the American immigration experience in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries implicated, for the most part, peasants whose previous horizons rarely stretched beyond their native village, meagerly educated workmen and tradesmen, and refugees from medieval ghettos, and that all of these immigrants were received by a society at best
largely indifferent, at worst hostile to them, and concerned only with their instrumental economic skills in the context of a raw and untempered expanding capitalism, then we must recognize how fortunate it was that the immigrant groups were separately large enough to provide the warmth, familiar ways, and sense of acceptance that prevented the saga of "uprooting" from becoming a dislocating horror.

The self-contained communal life of the immigrant colonies served, then, as a kind of decompression chamber in which the newcomers could, at their own pace, make a reasonable adjustment to the new forces of a society vastly different from that which they had known in the Old World. The semi-hysterical attempt at pressure-cooking assimilation which was the Americanization crusade of World War I, while it contained worth-while instrumental elements, was fundamentally misguided in its demand for a rapid personal transformation and a draconic and abrupt detachment from the cultural patterns and memories of the homeland. Instead of building on the positive values of the immigrant's heritage, emphasizing the common denominator of understandings and aspirations which his native background shared with the American and assuring him of the elementary right of self-respect, it flayed his alienness with thinly veiled contempt, ignored his stabilizing ties to the groups which made him a person in the sociological sense, and widened the gap between himself and his children. 25

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the Americanization movement in its formal aspects, as is generally conceded, had small success. The newcomers, in widely different ways and in varying degrees gradually made suitable progress in acculturation to the American patterns and integration into the civic (as distinguished from the area of primary group relationships) life of the society, but not in the forced march tempo demanded by "Americaniza-


As E. G. Hartmann, the historian of the movement, writes, "... The number of immigrants who become Americanized along the formal lines advocated by the Americanization groups must have been small, indeed, when compared with the great bulk of their fellows who never saw the inside of an American schoolroom or settlement house. The great majority of the latter became Americanized in time through the gradual process of assimilating American customs, attitudes, speech, and ideals from their native American neighbors and from their American-born children." 26 In this entire process, with respect to both concerted effort and laissez faire, it is worth emphasizing that the heartache, bewilderment, and tension of assimilation for the immigrant and his family could have been considerably decreased if American public opinion had been inclined and wise enough to build onto the newcomer's heritage rather than treating it with disdain.

This brings us to the children of the uprooted. Here is where the acculturation process has been overwhelmingly triumphant. While the lineaments of this triumph and the evidence for it will be reserved for consideration in a later chapter, we may note here that in whatever contest ensued between the behavior models of the parents' culture and those of the general American society, the latter pressed upon the new generation's sensibilities by the public school system and the mass media of communication, there was no question as to which would be the winner. In fact, the problem was that the forces were so unevenly balanced that the greater risk consisted in possible alienation from family ties and in status and role reversals of the generations which could easily subvert normal relationships of parent and child. It is true that the images of American behavior often came through curiously refracted and distorted by the social class background of the immediate environs, and sometimes the immigrant's offspring rejected the restrictions of the parental culture only to fail to take on the social restraints

26 Hartmann, op. cit., p. 271.
inherent in the patterns of the broader society, a situation conducive to delinquency. But, by and large, the massive forces of the acculturation process transformed the seed of Ireland, Germany, Italy, the Russian Pale, and other areas into aspiring Americans, who were at home in the English language whatever the class accents and minor ancestral inflections that tinged their version, and, with varying perspectives, eager to climb the ladder of social class which they knew had rungs marked “made in the U.S.A.”

There were exceptions to this generalization, to be sure. When minorities were grouped in rural enclaves widely separated in distance from native American neighbors, or when, occasionally, parochial school systems emphasized the parental language rather than English, the acculturation process was delayed. But usually delayed only—not checked. Perhaps it waited upon a move to the city with its broader horizons after childhood—or until the third generation grew up. But its ultimate victory was inevitable.

As for the Negro, the Indian, and the Latin-American minorities, additional factors entered the situation and have modified the outcome. The rural Negro of the South, under both slavery and post-Reconstruction exploitation and discrimination, developed a set of subcultural patterns considerably remote from those of the core society of middle-class whites. As he moved in the twentieth century to the cities of the North and South, the acculturation process was retarded because of the massive size and strength of the prejudice and consequent discrimination directed toward him. The Negro is developing a middle class indistinguishable in basic behavior patterns from middle-class whites, at what is undoubtedly an accelerating rate since World War II, but there is still some distance to go before his class distribution and appropriate modifications in the lower-class subculture will signalize complete acculturation to the American scene. For somewhat similar reasons, augmented by the language difference, the Spanish-speaking people of Mexican origin in the Southwest appear to be developing a middle class out of the second generation rather slowly, an unmistakable sign of a retardation in the acculturation process. The Puerto Ricans of New York and a few other northern cities have been here such a short time that it has not been possible to observe acculturation over two full generations, although there are signs that the development of a strong middle-class contingent will not be as rapid as in the case of the European (and the Oriental), probably because of the depth of the prejudice against them as well as indigenous cultural factors. The American Indians who still remain on the reservations, relatively isolated as they are in rural enclaves, still retaining a fierce pride in their ancestral cultures and group identity, and occupying a special legal status which reinforces their group separatism, have taken only a partial step towards acculturation to the patterns and values of the core society.

Was acculturation entirely a one-way process? Was the core culture entirely unaffected by the presence of the immigrants and the colored minorities? In suggesting the answer to this question, I must once again point to the distinction between the impact of the members of minority groups as individuals making their various contributions to agriculture, industry, the arts, and science in the context of the Anglo-Saxon version (as modified by peculiarly American factors) of the combination of Hebraic, Christian, and Classical influences which constitutes Western civilization, and the specific impact on the American culture of the minority cultures themselves. The impact of individuals has been so considerable that it is impossible to conceive of what American society or American life would have been like without it. The impact of minority group culture has been of modest dimensions, I would argue, in most areas, and significantly extensive in only one—the area of institutional religion. From a nation overwhelmingly and characteristically Protestant in the late eighteenth century, America has become a

national entity of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews—where membership in, or identificational allegiance to, one or the other of these three great faiths is the norm, and where the legitimacy of the institutional presence and ramifications of this presence of the three denominations is routinely honored in American public opinion. In the course of taking root in American soil, Catholicism and Judaism have themselves undergone changes in form and expression in response to the forces and challenges of the American experience. For the rest, there have been minor modifications in cuisine, recreational patterns, place names, speech, residential architecture, sources of artistic inspiration, and perhaps a few other areas—all of which add flavor and piquancy to the totality of the American culture configuration but have scarcely obscured its essential English outlines and content.

Over the generations, then, the triumph of acculturation in America has been, if not complete, at least numerically and functionally overwhelming. It is with regard to the other assimilation variables that the assimilation process has refused to take the path which the Anglo-conformists, at least by implication, laid out for it. The key variable which unlocks the mystery of this deviation, both revealing it and suggesting its causes, is, as usual, the cluster of phenomena associated with participation in cliques, organizations, and institutions which we have called structural assimilation. Again, it is necessary to point out that the evidence for the statements to be made below, and their illustration, await later presentation. Here we shall merely delineate in brief the broad picture. It is a picture to which we have already referred in Chapter 2—an American society in which each racial and religious (and to a lesser extent, national origins) group has its own network of cliques, clubs, organizations, and institutions which tend to confine the primary group contacts of its members within the ethnic enclave, while interethnic contacts take place in considerable part only at the secondary group level of employment and the political and civic processes. Each ethnic group contains the usual class divisions, and the behavior patterns of members of the same class are very similar regardless of their race, religion, or national origin. But they do not go their similar ways together; separated by the invisible but powerful barriers of ancestral identification and belief, they carry out their intimate life in the separate compartments of ethnicity which make up the vertical dimensions of the American social structure. The only substantial exception to this picture of ethnic separation is the compartment marked “intellectuals and artists”—a social world we shall deal with later.

If structural assimilation in substantial fashion has not taken place in America, we must ask why. The answer lies in the attitudes of both the majority and the minority groups and in the way in which these attitudes have interacted. A folk saying of the current day is that “It takes two to tango.” To utilize the analogy, there is no good reason to believe that white Protestant America ever extended a firm and cordial invitation to its minorities to dance. Furthermore, the attitudes of the minority group members themselves on the matter have been divided and ambiguous. Let us, again, examine the situation serially for the various types of minorities.

With regard to the immigrant, in his characteristic numbers and socio-economic background, structural assimilation was out of the question. He did not want it, and he had a positive need for the comfort of his own communal institutions. The native American, moreover, whatever the implications of his public pronouncements, had no intention of opening up his primary group life to entrance by these hordes of alien newcomers. The situation was a functionally complementary standoff.

The second generation found a much more complex situation. Many of them believed they heard the siren call of welcome to the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of white Protestant America.
After all, it was simply a matter of learning American ways, was it not, and had they not grown up as Americans and were they not culturally different from their parents, the greenhorns? Or perhaps an especially eager one reasoned, like the Jewish protagonist of Myron Kaufmann's novel, *Remember Me To God*, bucking for membership in the prestigious club system of Harvard undergraduate social life: If only I can go the last few steps in Ivy League manners and behavior, they will surely recognize that I am one of them and take me in. But, Brooks Brothers suit notwithstanding, the doors of the fraternity house, the city men's club, and the country club were slammed in the face of the immigrant's offspring. That invitation wasn't really there in the first place; or, to the extent it was there, it was, in Joshua Fishman's telling phrase, a "'look me over but don't touch me' invitation to the American minority group child." And so the rebuffed one returned to the homelier but dependable comfort of the communal institutions of his ancestral group. There he found his fellows of the same generation who had never stirred from the home fires at all. Some of these had been too timid to stray; others were ethnic ideologists positively committed to the group's survival; still others had never really believed in the authenticity of the siren call or were simply too passive.

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29 Cf. Joshua Fishman's statement: "The assumptions posit a compelling American core culture toward which the minority group child grows up with ambivalent feelings. He is attracted to it, surrenders willingly to it, desires full participating membership in it—as does 'every red-blooded American' child. Were it not for a lack of total congruence between his aspiration and the permissiveness of the core-in-action (not the core-in-theory), there would be no ambivalence and perhaps no retentionism either. Nevertheless, the minority group child is ever ready to 'swallow his pride' and to try once more. Like the ever hopeful suitor, he constantly rationalizes: 'Perhaps she will like me in new shoes, perhaps she will like me in a new hat.' The child's views of his own shoes and hat are, in comparison, devaluational." (Joshua A. Fishman, "Childhood Indoctrination for Minority-Group Membership and The Quest for Minority-Group Biculturism in America," cit. supra.

30 Ibid.
intellectuals and although “black nationalist” and “black racist” fringe groups have recently made an appearance at the other end of the communal spectrum. As for their religion, they are either Protestant or Catholic (overwhelmingly the former). Thus there are here no “logical” ideological reasons for separate communality; dual social structures are created solely by the dynamics of prejudice and discrimination rather than being reinforced by ideological commitments of the minority itself.

Structural assimilation, then, turned out to be the rock on which the ship of Anglo-conformity foundered. And if structural assimilation, to large degree, did not take place, then in similar measure amalgamation and identificational assimilation could not. It is a commonplace of empirical observation that prejudice and discrimination still remain on the American scene, though probably in slowly decreasing amounts, and the fact that value conflict arising out of varying religious adherences still occurs on public issues indicates that civic assimilation has not been complete. All this, while Anglo-conformity, with the exceptions and qualifications noted above, has substantially triumphed in the behavioral area. To understand, then, that acculturation without massive structural intermingling at primary group levels has been the dominant motif in the American experience of creating and developing a nation out of diverse peoples is to comprehend the most essential sociological fact of that experience.

5
Theories of Assimilation: Part II
The Melting Pot

While Anglo-conformity, in various guises, has probably been the most prevalent ideology of assimilation in the American historical experience, a competing viewpoint with more generous and idealistic overtones has had its adherents and exponents from the eighteenth century onward. Conditions in the virgin continent were modifying the institutions which the English colonists brought with them from the mother country. Immigrants from non-English homelands, such as Germany, Sweden, and France, were similarly exposed to this fresh environment. Was it not possible, then, to think of the evolving American society not simply as a slightly modified England but rather as a totally new blend, culturally and biologically, in which the stocks and folkways of Europe were, figuratively speaking, indiscriminately mixed in the political pot of the emerging nation and melted together by the fires of American influence and interaction into a distinctly new type?

Such, at any rate, was the conception of the new society which motivated that quietly romantic eighteenth century French-born writer and agriculturalist, J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur, who had settled in New York and, after many years of American residence
and accumulated familiarity with the existing scene, issued in 1782 his various reflections and observations in a small volume entitled Letters from an American Farmer. “What . . . ,” asks Crévecoeur, “is the American, this new man?” And he answers: “He is either an European, or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.” 1 And in an earlier passage he had characterized the people of his adopted homeland as “a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes.” “From this promiscuous breed,” he declared, “that race now called Americans have [sic] arisen.” 2

Some observers have interpreted the open-door immigration policy of the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century as reflecting an underlying native faith in the effectiveness of the American melting pot, in the belief, to quote Oscar Handlin, “that all could be absorbed and that all could contribute to an emerging national character.” 3 No doubt many who observed the nativist agitation of the times with dismay felt as did Ralph Waldo Emerson that such conformity-demanding and immigrant-hating forces represented a perversion of the best American ideals. In 1845, Emerson wrote in his Journal:

I hate the narrowness of the Native American Party. It is the dog in the manger. It is precisely opposite to all the dictates of love and magnanimity; and therefore, of course, opposite to true wisdom . . . . Man is the most composite of all creatures . . . . Well, as in the old burning of the Temple at Corinth, by the melting and intermixture of silver and gold and other metals a new compound more precious than any, called Corinthian brass, was formed; so in this continent,—asylum of all nations,—the energy of Irish, Germans, Swedes, Poles, and Cosacks, and all the European tribes,—of the Africans, and of the Polynesians,—will construct a new race, a new religion, a new state, a new literature, which will be as vigorous as the new Europe which came out of the smelting-pot of the Dark Ages, or that which earlier emerged from the Pelasgic and Etruscan barbarism. La Nature aime les croisements. 4

Eventually, the melting pot hypothesis found its way into the rarefied air of historical scholarship and interpretation. While many American historians of the late nineteenth century, some of them fresh from graduate study at German universities, tended to adopt the view that American institutions derived in essence from Anglo-Saxon, and ultimately Teutonic, sources, others were not so sure. 5 One of these was Frederick Jackson Turner, a young historian from Wisconsin, who had taken his graduate training at Johns Hopkins. Turner presented a paper to the American Historical Association, meeting in Chicago in 1893. Called “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” this paper proved to be one of the most influential essays in the history of American scholarship. Its point of view, supported by Turner’s subsequent writings and his teaching, pervaded the field of American historical interpretation for at

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2 Ibid., p. 51.

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least a generation. Turner's thesis was, essentially, that the dominant influence in the shaping of American institutions and American democracy was not this nation's European heritage in any of its forms, or the forces emanating from the eastern seaboard cities, but rather the experiences created by a moving and variegated western frontier. Among the many effects attributed to the frontier environment and the challenges it presented was that it acted as a solvent for the national heritages and separatist tendencies of the many nationality groups which had joined the trek westward, including the Germans and Scotch-Irish of the eighteenth century and the Scandinavians and Germans of the nineteenth. "The frontier," asserted Turner, "promoted the formation of a composite nationality for the American people. . . . In the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality nor characteristics. The process has gone on from the early days to our own." And later, in an essay on the role of the Mississippi Valley, he refers to "the tide of foreign immigration which has risen so steadily that it has made a composite American people whose amalgamation is destined to produce a new national stock."

It was the special nature of midwestern democracy, according to Turner, to encourage mixing, not only biologically but culturally. "It is not merely that the section was growing rapidly and was made up of various stocks with many different cultures, sectional and European," he declared; "what is more significant is that these elements did not remain as separate strata underneath an established ruling order, as was the case particularly in New England. All were accepted and intermingling components of a forming society, plastic and absorptive." "Thus," he concluded, "the Middle West was teaching the lesson of national cross-fertilization instead of national enmities, the possibility of a newer and richer civilization, not by preserving unmodified or isolated the old component elements, but by breaking down the line-fences, by merging the individual life in the common product—a new product, which held the promise of world brotherhood."

While Turner presented little or no empirical proof of his claim that the western frontier acted as a solvent for national heritages and stocks, or that it did so any more than did the eastern cities, the "frontier melting pot" thesis remained an important part of his larger influential theory of the role of the frontier in shaping the characteristic outlines of American society and character.

Thus far, the proponents of the melting pot idea had dealt largely with diversity produced by sizable immigration only from the countries of Northern and Western Europe—the so-called "old immigration," consisting of peoples with cultures and physical appearance not greatly different from those of the Anglo-Saxon stock. Emerson, it is true, had impartially included Africans, Polynesians, and Cosacks in his vision of elements of the mixture, but it was only in the last two decades of the nineteenth century that the rise of a large-scale influx of peoples from the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe—the so-called "new immigration"—imperiously posed the question of whether these uprooted newcomers who were crowding into the large cities of the nation and the industrial sector of the economy could also be successfully "melted." Would the "urban melting pot" work as well as the "frontier melting pot" of an essentially rural society was alleged to have done? Turner, it is interesting to note, was rather cool toward these later immigrants who settled in the urban slums (as the Irish had before them) to fill the

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6 Since the 1930's the Turner frontier thesis has been subject to increasing criticism. For a collection of papers presenting both supporting and countering the Turner position, see George Rogers Taylor (ed.), The Turner Thesis Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History, Boston, D. C. Heath and Co., 1949 (Amherst College, Problems in American Civilization Series).
8 Ibid., p. 190.
9 Ibid., pp. 350-51.
demands of an expanding industrialization, and he failed to include them in his vision of the American melting process.\footnote{See Saveth, op. cit., Chapter V, “Frontier and Urban Melting Pots.”}

It remained for an English Jewish writer with strong social convictions, moved by his observation of the role of the United States as a haven for the poor and oppressed of Europe, to give utterance to the broader view of the American melting pot in a way which attracted public attention. In 1908, Israel Zangwill’s drama, \textit{The Melting Pot}, was produced in this country and became a popular success. It is a play dominated by the vision of its protagonist, a young Russian Jewish immigrant to America, a composer whose goal is the completion of a vast “American” symphony which will express his deeply felt conception of his adopted country as a divinely inspired crucible in which all the ethnic divisions of mankind will divest themselves of their ancient animosities and differences and become fused into one group signifying the brotherhood of man. In the process he falls in love with a beautiful and cultured Gentile girl. The play ends with the completion and performance of the symphony and, after numerous vicissitudes and traditional family opposition from both sides, the approaching marriage of David Quixano and his beloved. During the course of these developments, David, in the rhetoric of the time, delivers himself of such sentiments as these:

\begin{quote}
America is God’s crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming! Here you stand, good folk, think I, when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won’t be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God you’ve come to—these are the fires of God. A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians—into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American.
\end{quote}

And later,

\begin{quote}
Yes, East and West, and North and South, the palm and the pine, the pole and the equator, the crescent and the cross—how the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God. Ah, Vera, what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem where all nations and races come to worship and look back, compared with the glory of America, where all races and nations come to labour and look forward.\footnote{Israel Zangwill, \textit{The Melting Pot}, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1909, pp. 37, 199.}
\end{quote}
sentatives of many old-world races are being fused together into a new type," maintained at the same time that "the crucible in which all the new types are melted into one was shaped from 1776 to 1789, and our nationality was definitely fixed in all its essentials by the men of Washington's day." And a similar view, according to a careful study of the matter, was shared by Wilson. In the minds of both Roosevelt and Wilson, writes Edward Saveth, "unlike the frontier melting pot, which occurred earlier and was accepted as part of the process of nation making, the later mingling of peoples was looked upon more as an assimilative process whereby the peoples from southern and eastern Europe were indoctrinated in canons of Americanism established by earlier arrivals."  

The melting pot idea was soon to be challenged by a new philosophy of group adjustment (to be discussed later), and was always competing with the more pervasive adherence to Anglo-conformity. However, it continued to draw a portion of such attention and discussion as was consciously directed to this aspect of the American scene in the first half of the twentieth century. In the middle 1940's a sociologist, Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy, who had carried out an investigation of intermarriage trends in New Haven, Connecticut, described a revised conception of the melting process as it had taken place in that city and suggested a basic modification of the theory. In New Haven, Mrs. Kennedy reported, after a study of intermarriage from 1870 to 1940, the rate of in-marriage, or endogamy, among the various national origins groups was high over the whole period, although it had dropped from 91.20 per cent in 1870 to 65.80 per cent in 1930 to 63.64 per cent in 1940. But while there was a decreasing emphasis on national origins lines in choosing a mate, there was still a considerable tendency to marry within one's own religious group. In 1940, 79.72 per cent of the British-Americans, Germans, and Scandinavians intermarried among themselves—that is, within a Protestant "pool"; 83.71 per cent of the Irish, Italians, and Poles intermarried among themselves—a Catholic "pool;" and 94.32 per cent of the Jews married other Jews. (The question of intermarriage between Jews of Central European origins and Jews of Eastern European origins was not studied.) Where Catholic-Protestant marriages took place—and it should be noted that in 1940 both the Irish and the Italians, when they did marry outside their own national group, preferred British-Americans to any other single national origins group—the majority of such marriages were sanctioned by Catholic nuptials, thus prescribing that the children would be brought up as Catholics. In other words, intermarriage was taking place across nationality background lines, but there was a strong tendency for it to stay confined within the basic influential field of one or the other of the three major religious groups: Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Thus, declared Mrs. Kennedy, the picture in New Haven resembled a "triple melting pot" based on religious divisions, rather than a "single melting pot."  

Her study indicated, she stated, that "while strict endogamy is loosening, religious endogamy is persisting and the future cleavages will be along religious lines rather than along nationality lines as in the past. If this is the case, then the traditional 'single-melting-pot' idea must be abandoned, and a new conception, which we term the 'triple-melting-pot' theory of American assimilation, will take its place as the true expression of what is happening to the various nationality groups in the United States."  


15 Saveth, op. cit., p. 148.
thesis was later taken up by the theologian, Will Herberg, and formed an important sociological frame of reference for his analysis of religious trends in American society, published as Protestant—Catholic—Jew.18

Having now examined the rise and development of the melting pot idea, let us examine it with the aid of our analytical scheme, and against the background of the realities of American group life. We shall deal first with the “single melting pot” version, since this version is not only historically and logically prior but is the form in which this idea has captured the imagination of a number of articulate interpreters of American society for over a century and a half.

Partisans of the idea of America as one huge melting pot, like adherents of Anglo-conformity, have provided no systematic delineation of their views. Indeed, the concept is one which singularly lends itself to expression in vague rhetoric which, however noble its aims, gives minimal clues as to the exact implications of the term for the manifold spheres of societal organization and behavior. Nevertheless, certain logical inferences can be made, and one feature appears to be envisaged in all the statements of the idea: a complete mixture of the various stocks through intermarriage—in other words, marital assimilation, or amalgamation.

With regard to cultural behavior, the most characteristic implication is that the cultures of the various groups will mix and form a blend somewhat different from the cultures of any one of the groups separately. However, a neglected aspect of this model of cultural intermixture is whether all groups will make an equally influential contribution to the boiling pot, or whether there is to be a proportionate influence depending upon the size, power, and strategic location of the various groups. If, to illustrate hypothetically and simply, there are 100,000 Sylvanians occupying their own country, and 2000 Mundovians enter as immigrants, under the melting pot model of cultural interpenetration will the resulting blend—assuming some rough measurement were possible—consist of equal parts of Sylvania and Mundovian culture, or will the Sylvania cultural contribution be fifty times as important and pervasive as the Mundovian contribution? The answer to this question obviously has significant consequences for the contributing societies, in relation to the questions of both objective cultural survival and group psychology.

Indeed, at one extreme of interpretation—a loose and illogical one, to be sure—the melting pot concept may envisage the culture of the immigrants as “melting” completely into the culture of the host society without leaving any cultural trace at all. It would appear that some exponents of the idea came close to feeling that this was the proper role for Southern and Eastern European immigrants to play in the American melting process. In this form, of course, the melting pot concept embraces a view of acculturation which is hardly distinguishable in nature from that of Anglo-conformity, except that the conformity is to be exacted toward a cultural blend to which the cultures of immigrant groups from Northern and Western Europe have been conceded an earlier contribution.

With regard to the remaining assimilation variables, the analysis may proceed as follows: If large-scale intermarriage is to have taken place, then obviously the immigrants must have entered the cliques, clubs, other primary groups, and institutions of the host society and, in addition, placed their own impress upon these social structures to some extent. Thus the process of structural assimilation must somehow reflect a blending effect, also. Identificational assimilation takes place in the form of all groups merging their previous sense of peoplehood into a new and larger ethnic identity which, in some fashion, honors its multiple origins at the same time that it constitutes an entity distinct from them all. Prejudice and discrimination must be absent since there are not even any identifiable separate groups to be their target, and “civic assimilation” will have taken place since disparate cultural values are assumed to have

merged and power conflict between groups would be neither necessary nor possible. This, then, is the “ideal-typical” model of the melting pot process. With this analysis and the previous discussion in mind, let us take a quick look at the American experience to see how well the model applies. A fuller discussion of some of the issues is reserved for later chapters.

While no exact figures on the subject are attainable, it is safe to say that a substantial proportion of the descendants of the non-English immigrants of colonial times and the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century (with the exception of the Irish Catholics and the German Jews) have by now been absorbed into the general white “sociological Protestant” sector of American life. That is to say, they do not live in communal subsocieties which are lineal descendants of those which their immigrant ancestors created, and so far as they understand it, are simply “Americans” who may be vaguely conscious of an immigrant forebear here and there from a non-English source but for whom this has little current meaning. This would include many descendants of the Scotch-Irish, German Protestants, Swedes, and Norwegians, among other groups from Northern and Western Europe, as well as, in all probability, a few with colonial Jewish ancestry whose early American progenitors converted to Christianity (not to mention occasional individuals who have a mulatto ancestor who, at some time, “passed” into the white group). This does not mean that communal societies with appropriate institutions representing most of these ancestral groups do not still exist, but that, in relation to the total number of ethnic descendants, they become increasingly thinly manned as

19 Estimates of the number of very light Negroes who “pass” permanently into the white group range from 2000 to 30,000 annually, although the practice is obviously so shrouded in secrecy that even these limits may not include the true figure. See Maurice R. Davie, Negroes in American Society, New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1940, pp. 401-7; also, Gunnar Myrdal, with the assistance of Richard Steiner and Arnold Rose, An American Dilemma, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1944, pp. 129-30, 683-8.
merely melted but were largely transmuted, and so did not affect
the original material as strikingly as might be expected.” 20 Will
Herberg echoes this view. “The enthusiasts of the ‘melting pot’
...” he writes, “were wrong ... in regard to the cultural aspect
of the assimilative process. They looked forward to a genuine blending
of cultures, to which every ethnic strain would make its own
contribution and out of which would emerge a new cultural syn-
thesis, no more English than German or Italian and yet in some
sense transcending and embracing them all. In certain respects this
has indeed become the case: our American cuisine includes antipasto and spaghetti, frankfurters and pumpernickel, filet mignon
and French fried potatoes, borsch, sour cream, and gefillete fish,
on a perfect equality with fried chicken, ham and eggs, and pork
and beans. But it would be a mistake to infer from this that the
American’s image of himself—and that means the ethnic group
member’s image of himself as he becomes American—is a compos-
ite or synthesis of the ethnic elements that have gone into the mak-
ing of the American. It is nothing of the kind: the American’s
image of himself is still the Anglo-American ideal it was at the be-
ginning of our independent existence. The ‘national type’ as ideal
has always been, and remains, pretty well fixed. It is the Mayflower,
John Smith, Davy Crockett, George Washington, and Abraham
Lincoln that define the American’s self-image, and this is true
whether the American in question is a descendant of the
Pilgrims or the grandson of an immigrant from southeastern Europe. ... Our cultural assimilation has taken place not in a ‘melting pot,’ but
rather in a [citing Stewart] ‘transmuting pot’ in which all ingredients
have been transformed and assimilated to an idealized ‘Anglo-
Saxon’ model.”21

Both structurally and culturally, then, the “single melting pot”
vision of America has been something of an illusion—a generous
and idealistic one, in one sense, since it held out the promise of a
kind of psychological equality under the banner of an impartial
symbol of America larger than the symbols of any of the constituent
groups—but one which exhibited a considerable degree of
sociological naiveté. Given the prior arrival time of the English colo-
nists, the numerical dominance of the English stock, and the cul-
tural dominance of Anglo-Saxon institutions, the invitation ex-
tended to non-English immigrants to “melt” could only result, if
thoroughly accepted, in the latter’s loss of group identity, the trans-
formation of their cultural survivals into Anglo-Saxon patterns, and
the development of their descendants in the image of the Anglo-
Saxon American.

Culturally, this process of absorbing Anglo-Saxon patterns has
moved massively and inexorably, with greater or lesser speed,
among all ethnic groups. Structurally, however, the outcome has,
so far, been somewhat different, depending on whether we are con-
sidering white Protestant descendants of the “Old” immigration,
white Catholics and Jews of both periods of immigration, or the
racial and quasi-racial minorities. Here, then, is where the “triple
melting pot” hypothesis of Kennedy and others becomes applicable.
While Protestant descendants of Germans and Scandinavians can,
if they wish, merge structurally into the general white Protestant
subsociety with relative ease, Jews, Irish Catholics, Italian Catho-
lics, and Polish Catholics cannot do so without either formal reli-
gious conversion or a kind of sociological “passing”—neither proc-
ess being likely to attract overwhelmingly large numbers. Negroes,
Orientals, Mexican-Americans, and some Puerto Ricans are pre-
vented by racial discrimination from participating meaningfully in
either the white Protestant or the white Catholic communities.
Nationality background differences within the white population,
however, appear to be more amenable to dissolving influences, for

20 George R. Stewart, American Ways of Life, New York, Doubleday and Co.,
1954, p. 23. Stewart’s views emphasize the similarity between the culture of the
early English settlers and those of other groups from Northern and Western
Europe.
reasons which we shall consider later. The passing of the "nationality" communities may be slower than Kennedy and Herberg intimate and the rate of Catholic-Protestant intermarriage has been shown to be substantially higher in the country as a whole than in New Haven. However, a vastly important and largely neglected sociological point about mixed marriages, racial, religious, or national, apart from the rate, is in what social structures the intermarried couples and their children incorporate themselves. If Catholic-Protestant intermarried couples live more or less completely within either the Catholic social community or the Protestant social community, the sociological fact of the existence of the particular religious community and its separation from other religious communities remains.

The result of these processes, structurally speaking, is that American society has come to be composed of a number of "pots," or subsocieties, three of which are the religious containers marked Protestant, Catholic, and Jew, which are in the process of melting down the white nationality background communities contained within them; others are racial groups which are not allowed to melt structurally; and still others are substantial remnants of the nationality background communities manned by those members who are either of the first generation, or who, while native born, choose to remain within the ethnic enclosure. All of these consti-

See our discussion in Chapter 7.