Our 'Cense' of Self: the 2006 Census saw 1.6 million 'Canadian' Canadians Return to British and French origins

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Since 1871, a question has been included in the census on ethnic origin (although until 1951 it was referred to as racial origin). During the first half of the 20th century, although most census respondents saw themselves as either British or French, as early as 1951 some 72,000 persons declared that their ethnic origin was Canadian. In 1986 just over 69,000 persons made such a declaration. Over the 1951-1986 there was a substantial diversification of the population and there was no increase in the reporting of one's ethnicity as Canadian.

With an increasingly diverse immigration pattern, the number of possible ethnic attachments multiplied and the Canadian born population of neither British nor French descent rose. Following the failure of Meech Lake and more specifically prior to the 1991 census a campaign was organized by a group of citizens with the help of the Toronto Sun which called upon the population to write in "Canadian" in the census question on ethnic origins. The idea was guided by the mistaken belief that ethnic differences were at the root of the national unity crisis and by consequence the census question on ethnicity became the object of a political campaign to affirm one's 'Canadianess'. The campaign's architects believed that ethnic attachments ran counter to the primacy of being Canadian, that is to say they undercut one's national identity. In 1991 the campaign's success appeared limited with over 700 000 Canadians-mainly in Ontario heeding the call or 3% of the population reporting only Canadian and 1% reported Canadian in combination with one or more other origins. Nonetheless the results did not initially appear to bear fruit as the combined number of responses made it the sixth most popular answer in the country and this it would be placed in that spot amongst the list of examples of responses to the 1996 question on ethnic origins. In 1996 four blank spaces were provided for respondents who could choose from 24 examples in which 'Canadian' was in the sixth spot. ("Canadian" was included as an example on the English questionnaire and "Canadien" as an example on the French questionnaire in both censuses).

In the 1996 Census some 5.3 million persons (a near majority of them in Quebec) reported their only ethnic origin as 'Canadian' and another 3.5 million persons reported both 'Canadian' and other origin-some 31% of the population. Headlines in major newspapers praised this result as a victory for Canadian identity. Professor Rhoda Howard-Hassman of McMaster University contended that the 1996 census result

reinforced the sense of Canadian identity by thickening of our sense of 'Canadianess'. However to argue that the census level of Canadian response strengthened national identity or thickened citizenship required that one overlook which "Canadians" responded in that way.

Virtually all persons who reported "Canadian" in 1996 had English or French as a mother tongue, were born in Canada and had both parents born inside Canada. This suggests that many of these respondents were people whose families have been in this country for several generations. In effect the "new Canadians" were persons that previously reported either British or French origins. Moreover in 1996 some 55% of people with both parents born in Canada reported Canadian (alone or in combination with other origins). By contrast, only 4% of people with both parents born outside Canada reported Canadian. Thus the Canadian response did not appeal widely to either immigrants or their children. Most important however was the fact that neatly half of those persons reporting Canadian origin in 1996 were in Quebec this represented a majority of the mother tongue francophone population. It is at best doubtful that some six months after a divisive referendum on Quebec sovereignty that a majority of francophone Quebecers would want to affirm their sense of belonging to Canada by reporting that their ethnicity was "Canadien".

In the 2001 Census, 11.7 million people, or 39% of the total population, reported Canadian as their ethnic origin, either alone or in combination with other origins. Some 4.9 million Quebecers out of 7.1 million individuals reported Canadian or "Canadien" thus accounting for nearly seven in ten persons (nearly eighty percent of francophones in Quebec). Again it is highly unlikely that such persons were making a strong statement about their attachment to Canada contrary to the notion advanced by Howard-Hassman five years earlier. A special survey done by Statistics Canada in the year 2002 (the Ethnic Diversity Survey-EDS) aimed in part at understanding what Canadians meant when they respond 'Canadian' to the question on ethnic origin revealed that 43% of francophones that identify as such reported a strong sense of belonging to Canada some 25 points less than anglophones who reported 'Canadian' ethnicity and 20 points lower than allophones who reported similar origin in the EDS. Indeed allophones reported significant higher rates of belonging to Canada despite considerably lower rates of reporting their ethnicity as 'Canadian'.

As Statistics Canada properly cautioned, "the reporting of ethnicity, and subsequent interpretation of the results, has become increasingly complex due to a number of factors, and poses challenges for historical data comparisons. The concept of ethnicity is fluid and is probably one of the more complex concepts measured in the census. Respondents' understanding or views about their ethnicity, awareness of their family background, number of generations in Canada, the length of time since immigration, and the social context at the time of the census can all affect the reporting of ethnicity from one census to another. Increasing intermarriage or unions among various groups has led to an increase in the reporting of multiple ancestries, which has added to the complexity of the ethnic data."

Yet some analysts chose not to heed their warning and instead opted to draw conclusions based on the ethnicity data on the strength of Canadian identity. Indeed recent federal government interest in the concept of social integration has in part

focused on the relationship between attachment and belonging to Canada and the degree to which one chooses to self-define as ethnically Canadian.

As indicated in the box below there were slight changes to the presentation of the question on ethnic origin between 1996 and 2006. In light of the heavy 'Canadian' response in 1996 a preamble was added to the 2001 question which was seemingly designed to lift the confusion between ethnicity and citizenship that was widely believed to be prompting the large numbers of Canadian self-identifiers. In retrospect however the strategy seemed to backfire if indeed the idea was to make people believe that the 'Canadian' response was about ethnicity only. In 2006, the preamble was lifted and a phrase was added to the question which prompted to individuals to think in terms of an ancestor as someone that "…is usually more distant than a grandparent". This important nuance in the question likely contributed to the important decline in those reporting 'Canadian' ethnic origins.

Census Questions on Ethnic Origins, 1996-2006:

1996

To which ethnic or cultural group (s) did this person's ancestors belong:

2001

"While most persons in Canada view themselves as Canadians information on their ancestral origins has been collected since the 2001 census to capture the changing composition of Canada's diverse population. Therefore the question refers to the **origin of the person's ancestors** (put in bold).

To which ethnic or cultural group (s) did this person's ancestors belong:

2006

The census has collected information on the ancestral origin of the population for over 100 years to capture the composition of Canada's diverse population

To which ethnic or cultural group (s) did this person's ancestors belong:

An ancestor is usually more distant than a grandparent

Some rethinking is required around the degree to which people's level of attachment to Canada can be linked to ethnically self-defining as Canadian something that the results of the 2006 census on ethnic origins further call into question. After the mercurial rise of the Canadian response to the question on ethnic origin and ancestry between 1991 and 2001, the 2006 census of Canada witnessed a decrease in the number of persons reporting that their ethnicity was Canadians that is to say the "Canadian Canadians" As observed below the number of Canadian responses decreased by nearly 15% with the bigger increase being in single declarations of Canadian ethnicity.

Table 1

Numbers of 'Canadian' responses to question on ethnic origin by total, single and multiple responses, 1996 -2006

Ethnicity Canadian	Total - Single and multiple ethnic origin responses	Single ethnic origin responses	Multiple ethnic origin responses
1996	8,806,275	5,326,995	3,479,285
2001	11,682,680	6 748 135	4 934,550
2006	10 066 290	5 748 720	4 317 570

When analyzing the Canadian responses on the basis of generational status one observes that the number of immigrants reporting such ethnicity declined by nearly 40% between 2001 and 2006, amongst the children of immigrants-the second generation-the decline was nearly 30% while the decline was ten percent in the third generation or more. By consequence the third generation or more which in 2001 constituted 88% of all such respondents saw its share rise to 91%. Less than 2% of all immigrants included Canadians as part of their response the question of ethnicity, compared to 15% of the second generation and 47% of those who are third generation or more.

Table 2

Canada 2001 and 2006 Total – Canadian response Single and multiple ethnic origin 15 years of age and over	Total - Generation status	1st generation	2nd generation	3rd generation or more
2006	7 960 855	111 040	613 440	7 236 370
2001	9 071 320	181 165	839 020	8 051 135

The decreases occurred across each generation between 2001 and 2006 both with respect to single and multiple responses of 'Canadian' ethnicity.

Table 3

Ethnicity Canadian 15 years and over by generation status		Total - Single and multiple ethnic origin responses	Single ethnic origin responses	Multiple ethnic origin responses
Total population	2001	9 071 325	5 270 100	3 801 225
	2006	7 960 855	4 654 355	3 306 495
1st generation	2001	181 165	56 175	124 985
	2006	111 040	30 670	80 370
2nd generation	2001	839 020	263 585	575 440
	2006	613 440	141 440	472 005
3rd generation and over	2001	8 051 135	4 950 335	3 100 805
	2006	7 236 370	4 482 245	2 754 125

As observed below across the provinces there were consistent in the number of Canadian responses with the largest in the province of Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Ontario.

Table 4

Canada and Provinces 2001 and 2006	Ethnicity Canadian Total - Single and multiple ethnic origin responses		% decrease
Ethnic origin Canadian	2001	2006	
Canada	11 682 680	10 066 290	15%
Newfoundland and Labrador	271 345	241 470	11%
Prince Edward Island	60 000	52 350	13%
Nova Scotia	425 880	368 940	14%
New Brunswick	415 810	380 915	8.5%
Quebec	4 897 475	4 474 120	8.5%
Ontario	3 350 275	2 768 865	19%
Manitoba	252 330	206 355	9%
Saskatchewan	240 535	172 365	28%
Alberta	813 485	667 405	17.5%
British Columbia	939 460	720 200	25%

On the basis of age those who respond Canadian are more likely to do so in singular terms as they grow older with the youngest cohort to report Canadian as part of a multiple rather than a single declaration.

Table 5

Canada 2006			
Canadian ethnic responses by age cohort	Total - Single and multiple ethnic origin responses	Single ethnic origin responses	Multiple ethnic origin responses
Total - Age groups	10 066 290	5 748 720	4 317 570
0-14 years	994 970	478 625	516 345
15-24 years	1 694 550	970 060	724 485
25-44 years	3 518 660	2 025 745	1 492 915
45-64 years	2 688 495	1 559 410	1 129 090
65 years and over	1 169 615	714 885	454 730

And while it is more common for immigrants to report single rather than multiple origins on the occasions (that grew fewer between 2001 and 2006) where they added Canadian to a response it was much more likely to be part of a multiple response unless the individuals were at an advanced age and hence they may associate choosing this option with being in Canada over an extended period of time.

Table 6

Ethnic origin Canadian 1st Generation-(immigrants) 2006	Total - Single and multiple ethnic origin responses	Single ethnic origin responses	Multiple ethnic origin responses
Total - Age groups	111040	30670	80 370
15 to 24 years	16895	4155	12 735
25 to 34 years	17270	4620	12 650
35 to 44 years	25830	7 180	18 650
45 to 54 years	20530	5875	14 655
55 to 64 years	16020	2 910	13 110
65 to 74 years	5775	1 725	4 050
75 years and over	8715	4 200	4 510

Statistics Canada points out that: "the emergence of the reporting of a national ethnic ancestry was not unique in Canada. Countries such as Australia and United States, which have long immigration histories such as Canada's, have also experienced increasing numbers reporting a national ethnicity. According to the 2006 Australian Census, 37.1%, or 7.4 million, of its population reported Australian as their ethnic ancestry, up from 35.6% in 2001. According to the American Community Survey in 2006, there were 20.4 million people who reported American as their only ethnic ancestry, representing 6.8% of the US population." But it is worth noting that of the three countries it is Canada that has the largest number of dual or multiple responses of individuals-thus it appears to be the more mixed or hyphenated country.

Canadians: Majority of us will be hyphens by 2021

In 1986, approximately 19.1 million Canadians reported single origin or ancestry and 7.0 million made multiple declarations, in 1991 some 19.3 million made single declarations and 7.8 million people reported multiple backgrounds. In 1996 some 18.3 million reported single ethnic origin and 10.2 multiple origins in 1996, in 2001 the number of persons reporting single ethnic origin remained at 18.3 while the figure for multiple origins rose to 11.3 (an increase of 10%) and in 2006 the number of single responses remained at 18.3 while the number of multiple responses jumped to 12.9 million (an increase of 15% increase). At this rhythm, by 2021, should the question on ethnicity remain unchanged, the majority of Canadians will likely be "hyphenated" that is to say they will be reporting more than one ethnic background.

Table 7

Single and Multiple Declarations of Ethnicity

Canada	Total - Single and multiple ethnic origin responses	Single ethnic origin responses	Multiple ethnic origin responses
Total - Generation status	25 664 220	15 533 950	10 130 275
1st generation	6 124 565	5 049 755	1 074 805
2nd generation	4 006 420	2 174 770	1 831 645
3rd generation or more	15 533 245	8 309 425	7 223 820

As observed below the two provinces with the highest number of persons declaring single backgrounds are Quebec and Newfoundland. These provinces have high levels of third generation respondents that contribute to the significant percentage of single declarations. However the first generation-i.e. immigrants-also predominantly declare single backgrounds and this explains the relatively high percentage of such declarations in Toronto and Vancouver.

Table 8

15 years of age and over 2006	Total - Single and multiple ethnic origin responses	Single ethnic origin responses	Multiple ethnic origin responses	% single origin
Canada	25664220	15533950	10130275	60.5
Newfoundland and Labrador	422385	299575	122810	71.6
Prince Edward Island	110205	53355	56855	48.4
Nova Scotia	756595	382205	374390	50.5
Halifax	309265	148390	160875	47.8
New Brunswick	601425	334535	266890	55.5
Quebec	6184490	4669070	1515425	75.5
Montréal	2967715	2191645	776070	73.8
Ontario	9819420	5806235	4013185	59.1
Ottawa - Gatineau	914610	502125	412480	54.9
Gatineau	229080	149955	79125	65.0
Ottawa	685525	352170	333355	51.3
Toronto	4122820	2879770	1243050	69.8
Manitoba	908450	466515	441935	51.3
Winnipeg	562635	282605	280030	50.1
Saskatchewan	766235	355170	411065	46.3
Regina	157605	67725	89890	43.1
Saskatoon	187690	81320	106370	43.4
Alberta	2625140	1283640	1341505	48.8
Calgary	871405	441465	429940	50.6
Edmonton	837715	418130	419580	49.9
British Columbia	3394910	1836910	1557995	53.9
Vancouver	1752390	1090660	661725	62.2
Victoria	278590	121785	156805	43.5

The 2006 figures reveal that age is a consideration in multiple reporting. The older the respondent the less likely they are to give a multiple response thus reflecting differences in the degree of mixing across the age cohorts.

Table 9

Geography: Canada	Total - Single and multiple ethnic origin responses	Single ethnic origin responses	Multiple ethnic origin responses	Percentage of single origin responses
Total - Age groups	25 664 220	15 533 950	10 130 275	60.5
15 to 24 years	4 207 810	2 212 895	1 994 915	52.6
25 to 34 years	3 987 070	2 275 895	1 711 180	57.0
35 to 44 years	4 794 095	2 902 985	1 891 110	60.5
45 to 54 years	4 951 410	3 000 940	1 950 470	61.2
55 to 64 years	3 649 525	2 274 300	1 375 225	61.9
65 to 74 years	2 255 640	1 556 070	699 570	69.0
75 years and over	1 818 660	1 310 855	507 800	72.7

Where did the Canadians go? British Isles Origin Responses Surpass Canadian between 2001 and 2006

According to Statistics Canada "the extent of reporting multiple ancestral backgrounds varied among groups. Some groups that have longer histories in Canada also had a high proportion of their population reporting multiple ancestries. For example, a majority of individuals who reported Irish origin (88.7%) said that they had other ancestral origins. An estimated 88.0% of individuals reported Scottish origin and some other origins. The proportion was 78.9% among those who reported German origin and 75.0% among individuals of Ukrainian origin. In contrast, only 10.0% of Somali origin and 6.0% of Korean origin reported multiple origins."

But between 2001 and 2006 the 1.6 million "ethnic" or "Canadian Canadians" returned to their British or French roots in terms of the census self-identification. The 2006 census saw an increase of 1.1 million persons of British origin and some 300 000 persons of French origin

Table 10

Total – Combined Single and multiple ethnic origin responses			
Geography: Canada	2006	2001	
Total - Ethnic origin	31 241 030	29 639 035	+1 601 995
Canadian	10 066 290	11 682 680	-1 616 390
French origins	5 000 350	4 710 580	+289 770
French	4 941 210	4 668 410	+272 800
British Isles origins	11 098 610	9 971 615	+1 126 095
English	6 570 015	5 978 875	+591 140
Irish	4 354 155	3 822 660	+531 495
Scottish	4 719 850	4 157 210	+562 640
Welsh	440 960	350 365	+90 595
Other British	403 915	150 585	+253 330
German	3 179 425	2 742 765	+436 660
Aboriginal origins	1 678 235	1 319 890	+358 345

Italian	1 445 330	1 270 370	+174 960

Table 11
Few of the ethnic 'Canadians' turned to British origins between 2001 and 2006 shifted into the single origin categories something done more so by those who shifted to French.

Single ethnic origin responses			
Geography: Canada	2006	2001	Change
Total - Ethnic origin	18 319 580	18 307 545	+12 035
Canadian	5 748 720	6 748 135	-999 415
European origins	3 726 655	3 747 165	-20 510
British Isles origins	2 548 330	2 670 360	-22 030
English	1 367 125	1 479 525	-112 400
French origins	1 256 905	1 082 700	+184 205
French	1 230 540	1 060 760	+169 780
Italian	741 045	726 275	+14 770
German	670 640	705 600	-34 960
Aboriginal origins	630 425	565 040	+65 385
Scottish	568 515	607 235	-38 720
Irish	491 030	496 865	-5 835

As revealed below the ethnic 'Canadians' that shifted to British origins between 2001 and 2006 moved largely into the multiple declarations where the latter categories (i.e. English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh) enjoyed its biggest gains.

Table 12
Geography: Canada	Multiple ethnic origin responses		
	2006	2001	Change
Total - Ethnic origin	12 921 445	11 331 490	+1589 955
British Isles origins	8 550 275	7 301 255	+1 249 020
English	5 202 890	4 499 355	+703 535
Canadian	4 317 570	4 934 545	-616 075
Scottish	4 151 340	3 549 975	+601 365
Irish	3 863 125	3 325 795	+537 330
French origins	3 743 440	3 627 880	+115 560
French	3 710 675	3 607 655	+103 020
German	2 508 785	2 037 170	+471 615
Aboriginal origins	1 047 815	754 850	+292 965
Italian	704 285	544 090	+160 195
Welsh	413 850	321 920	+91 930

Conclusion: The Ethnic Within

The shift in the results in the 2006 census question on ethnic origins raises several questions notably as to the continued relevance of the question the respective impact of campaigns aimed at directing the population to a particular response and how modifications in the questions on the part of Statistics influence responses. Answering the last question it seems evident that the change to the 2006 question with the focus on the grandparent's ancestry and the lifting of the preamble reminding us that we are all Canadians ended up reducing the number of ethnic Canadians relative to the 2001 census and brought them back to the level attained in 1996. The reductions were felt across the generations and probably made the data more reliable in the measurement of immigrant and second generation respondents who seem less inclined to mix citizenship and ancestry. We make this observation without questioning the legitimacy of reporting 'Canadian' in the third generation or more. Finally was the campaign in the 1991 census designed to get more people to shed their origins and call themselves ethnically 'Canadian' succeed in attaining its objective. The answer is likely 'Yes' and 'No'. In effect it put 'Canadian' on the map in terms of its category as ethnic background. But it did so largely in conjunction with other backgrounds and hence contributed to a record level of Canadian 'hyphenation" possibly putting us on the road to be the most officially hyphenated immigrant receiving country on the planet. Surely those who dream of a country where we are all Canadian and shed our purportedly divisive origins will not be the happiest amongst all the hyphens.

Early ethnic theoreticians almost universally accepted the idea of the melting pot, a belief that all differences among American immigrant groups would eventually dissolve, allowing for a merger into a homogeneous new creature called the "American" (Gordon 1964; Kazal 1995). Over the past thirty-five years, however, many scholars have turned to other models of ethnic relations, and now various forms of cultural pluralism tend to dominate academic discussions. The new views repudiate the assimilationist views of melting-potists and instead assert that ethnic groups have continued to hold on to distinctive parts of their culture while also belonging to a larger cultural entity. America, they say, is a stew pot, not a melting pot. In Beyond the Melting Pot, one of the earliest pluralist statements, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan argued that the old model had "outlived its usefulness, and also its credibility. The point about the melting pot ... is that it did not happen" (1970, xcvii).

Indeed, by the 1970s it was clear that ethnic groups were not disappearing from the scene as predicted by assimilationists. In many cases, in fact, interest in ethnic heritage, even among white Americans, was actually rising to its highest level in decades. Sometimes this interest had political motivations (Glazer and Moynihan 1970). In many other cases, however, the interest took a more personal form, an interest in family and local ethnic history called the "Roots Phenomenon" after the hugely successful book and 1977 television miniseries. But although everyone now seems to agree on the existence of some sort of revitalization or reawakened interest in ethnicity not predicted by assimilationist models, there is little agreement, three decades later, as to the significance or "authenticity" of this ethnic revivalism.

One of the earliest discussions of the causes of ethnic revival was sparked--appropriately enough for this study--by a Swedish American, Marcus Hansen, in 1937. Hansen proposed a generalized "principle of third-generation interest," which is most famously encapsulated in his statement that "what the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember" (1990, 195). In other words, whereas the second generation of immigrants is primarily concerned with blending into American society, the third generation, already established, feels a sense of loss at the passing of Old World ethnic practices and attempts to revive them.

This theory remains a central subject of many discussions of modern ethnicity (see, for example, the essays in Kvisto and Blanck 1990).

Many scholars, however, have reacted to renewed interest in the "ethnic revival" with skepticism, arguing that it is nothing more than the dying gasps of ethnic groups that are being swallowed up by mass culture. Howard Stein and Robert Hill denigrated it as mere "dime-store ethnicity" (1977, 22). Herbert Gans, probably the most influential scholar in this school of thought, stated flatly that "there has been no ethnic revival." The current interest in roots and Old World culture, argued Gans, is no more than "symbolic ethnicity," characterized by fuzzy-headed nostalgia and ignorance of the complexities of the real past (1979, 1, 17; see also Gans 1994). Some scholars, such as Stephen Steinberg (1989), have been even more skeptical and critical of ethnic revival than was Gans, dismissing merely "symbolic" ethnicity as irrelevant to understanding modern society.

Studies that debate the proper positioning of modern ethnicity along a continuum from assimilation to pluralism all assume both a static "traditional," or Old World, culture and a static American culture. The inevitable outcome of such a position is the view that change and tradition are antithetical. Because the social and cultural context of cultural practices has changed, they argue, revival of such practices amounts to little more than fakery and self-delusion (see, for example, Steinberg 1989, 63).

Few scholars have attempted to understand this new form of ethnicity on its own terms, instead of in contrast--invariably unfavorable--to older forms of ethnicity. Mary Waters (1990) and Richard Alba (1985, 1990) are major exceptions, scholars who, in their own ways, ascribed more meaning to "symbolic" ethnicity than Gans allowed and attempted to provide a more nuanced alternative to the assimilation-pluralism dichotomy. Modern American ethnicity, for Waters and for Alba, is different from earlier forms of ethnicity, because associations with it involve a large degree of choice. For most white Americans, ethnicity no longer stems from the all-encompassing cultural and social environment of places like Little Italy in 1910 or isolated Swedish colonies on the Great Plains in the nineteenth century. Modern white ethnicity in the United States has become a matter of voluntary, conscious, and deliberate association. (4) This does not, however, render it any less "real" or significant in people's lives.

To understand this significance, we must view "tradition" and "culture" not as static, "natural," and unchanging but as ever-evolving ideas, constantly invented and reinvented by both dominant and minority culture groups through changing historical contexts. Glazer and Moynihan, in their early pluralist work, acknowledged the shape-shifting nature of ethnicity (1970). Fredrik Barth was also an early proponent of the notion that ethnic groups consist of ever-changing boundaries and definitions (1969). In fact, Barth argued, the particulars of language, food, and ritual are irrelevant. It is the act of boundary creation itself, not the specific traditions contained within those boundaries, that defines ethnicity and gives...

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Ethnic Identity

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The construct, ethnic identity, can best be understood through an examination of its etymological origins. The term *ethnic* has Latin and Greek origins – *ethnicus* and *ethnikas* both meaning nation. It can and has been used historically to refer to people as heathens. *Ethos*, in Greek, means custom, disposition or trait. *Ethnikas* and *ethos* taken together therefore can mean a band of people (nation) living together who share and acknowledge common customs. The second part of the construct, *identity*, has Latin origins and is derived from the word *identitas*; the word is formed from *idem* meaning *same*. Thus, the term is used to express the notion of sameness, likeness, and oneness. More precisely, identity means "the sameness of a person or thing at all times in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else" (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 620). Combining the definitions and interpretations of identity and ethnicity it can be concluded that they mean, or at minimum imply, the sameness of a band or nation of people who share common customs, traditions, historical experiences, and in some instances geographical residence. At one level of interpretation the combined definition is sufficient to capture the manner in which the identity is generally conceptualized and used to understand ethnocultural influences on its formation and development. At another level identity is almost synonymous with ethnicity prompting some sociologists like Herbert Gans (2003) to suggest that identity is no longer a useful term. Additionally, because of it increasing popularity identity is rapidly becoming a cliché and therefore more and more difficult to understand (Gleason, 1996).

Definitions of ethnic identity vary according to the underlying theory embraced by researchers' and scholars' intent on resolving its conceptual meanings. The fact that there is no widely agreed upon definition of ethnic identity is indicative of the confusion surrounding the topic. Typically, ethnic identity is an affiliative construct, where an individual is viewed by themselves and by others as belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group. An individual can choose to associate with a group especially if other choices are available (i.e., the person is of mixed ethnic or racial heritage). Affiliation can be influenced by racial, natal, symbolic, and cultural factors (Cheung, 1993). Racial factors involve the use of physiognomic and physical characteristics, natal factors refer to "homeland" (ancestral home) or origins of individuals, their parents and kin, and symbolic factors include those factors that typify or exemplify an ethnic group (e.g., holidays, foods, clothing, artifacts, etc.). Symbolic ethnic identity usually implies that individuals choose their identity, however to some extent the cultural elements of the ethnic or racial group have a modest influence on their behavior (Kivisto & Nefzger, 1993).

Yuet Cheung (1993) defines ethnic identification as "the psychological attachment to an ethnic group or heritage" (p. 1216) and thus centers the construct in the domain of self-perception. The Netherlands sociologist, Sawiti Saharso (1989), extends the definition to include social processes that involve one's choice of friends, selection of a future partner, perception of their life-chances, and the reactions of others in one's

social environment. Both definitions involve boundaries where one makes a distinction between "self" and "other." Saharso's definition extends the "others" boundary to include an attribution component. An individual may strongly identify psychologically with an ethnic group, however, the strength and authenticity of the identity is contingent on the acceptance and acknowledgment of "ingroup" and "outgroup" members. Saharso's definition is consistent with the writings of the sociologist, Fredrik Barth (1969), who argued that ethnic identity was a means to create boundaries that enabled a group to distance themselves from one another. Barth was quite forceful about his position as he strongly maintained that ethnic boundaries define a group and not the "cultural stuff that encloses it" (Sollars, 1996, p. xxii).

The psychologist, Jean Phinney (1990), notes that there are "widely discrepant definitions and measures of ethnic identity, which makes generalizations and comparisons across studies difficult and ambiguous" (p.500). Currently, the most widely used definition of the construct in psychology is the one developed by Phinney (1990, 2000, 2003). She maintains, that, "ethnic identity is a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity, or sense of self as a member of an ethnic group" (2003, p. 63). From her perspective one claims an identity within the context of a subgroup that claims a common ancestry and shares at least a similar culture, race, religion, language, kinship, or place of origin. She goes on to add that, "Ethnic identity is not a fixed categorization, but rather is a fluid and dynamic understanding of self and ethnic background. Ethnic identity is constructed and modified as individuals become aware of their ethnicity, with in the large (sociocultural) setting" (2003, p. 63).

Phinney (1990, 2000) views subjective identity as a starting point that eventually leads to the development of a social identity based on ethnic group membership. The cross-cultural psychologist Peter Weinreich (1986) not only views self-identity as a starting point, he believes that identity formation and development refers to different identity states where different social contexts will influence the identity state and one's actions. He asserts that "one's identity as situated in a specific social context is defined as that part of the totality of one's self-construal in which how one construes oneself in the situated present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future." Moreover, Weinreich maintains that ethnic self-identity is not a static process but one that changes and varies according to particular social contexts. Individuals, for example, may avoid situations where their identity is challenged, threatened, humiliated, and castigated; and seek out and sustain whenever possible settings that favor the identity state. Self-expression, maintenance of ethnic identity, and situated identities offer promise for understanding the complexities and dynamics of ethnic orientations through Weinreich's theory of Identity Structure Analysis (Weinreich & Saunderson, 2003).

Several conceptual approaches to ethnic identity emphasize an individual level of analysis where notions of identity formation and development are linked to one's self-concept. Much of the work in this area relies on the social psychologist Henri Tajfel's (1982) theory of social identity. Tajfel basically maintains that one's social identity strongly influences self-perception and consequently should be the central locus of

evaluation. The strength and weakness of the self is largely determined from our status with our reference groups and how we assess outgroup members. When ethnicity and race form the nexus of an ingroup, then self-identity will be correspondingly influenced. One's distinctive ethnic characteristics, however, can be restrictive as one may reject external judgments and opinions of their own ethnic group and in turn establish their own criterion to challenge and refute those of the dominant outgroup. Other responses are possible: individuals might withdraw or choose to dissociate with the referent thereby creating added psychological complications for themselves. Tajfel's social identity theory has generated considerable influence on ethnic identity research; some prefer to carry out the work under the ethnic self-identification rubric.

Ethnic identity is usually contextual and situational because it derives from social negotiations where one declares an ethnic identity and then demonstrates acceptable and acknowledged ethnic group markers to others. One's ethnic declaration often is open to the scrutiny of others who may validate or invalidate the declaration. Ethnic declarations embody an ethnic consciousness that is closely aligned with the cultural elements of the ethnic group with which they affiliate. The ultimate form of one's ethnic consciousness is the genuine association of one's personal identification with a communal one. Thus it is logical to assume that a concordance would exist between personal identity and an outsider's sense of identity where the importance is placed on one's own categories and intention of self-identification. To promote the union between self and other, individuals often will use ethnological speech patterns and gestures to promote the authenticity of their claim. If outward physical appearances do not mesh with the standard physical criteria or there is the sense that others doubt the identity claim ethnic actors will tend to exaggerate and give emphasis to mannerisms and speech idiosyncrasies known to be particular and specific to the reference group. This ritual or stylistic emphasis frequently occurs, too, when ethnic group members meet or gather in geographic areas that differ from their homelands or communities of common origin. The distinctive ritual is a prime example of situational ethnicity and situated ethnic identity.

At an individual or societal level one may rely on labels to describe their ethnic affiliation and subsequently their identity. Labels assist in classifying and naming people. Thus, ethnic labeling has a sociopolitical value and function, especially for census and demographic studies. At a superficial level, where generalizations about distinct cultural orientations are not used, ethnic labels serve a useful function. However, use of a label is a small part of the identity process, as one is likely to expand the labeling to include other identifiers such as natal background, acculturation status, ego-involvement, and attitudes toward own and other groups; behavioral preferences such as language usage, friendship affiliations, music and food preferences, and participation in cultural and religious activities may be included (Trimble, 2000).

People with mixed ethnic backgrounds present interesting ethnic identity cases as they have at least two ethnic groups from which to claim and negotiate an ethnic declaration. Based on extensive interviews with people of mixed-ethnic background the clinical psychologist Maria P. P. Root (1994) identified four basic reasons why a multi-ethnic person would choose to identify with a particular group regardless of how others may

view them. Root maintains that: 1.) One enhances their sense of security by understanding a distinct part of their ethnic heritage; 2.) Parental influences stimulated by the encouragement of grandparents promote identity, thereby granting permission to the offspring to make a choice; 3.) Racism and prejudice associated with certain groups lead to sharing experiences with family, thereby assisting the individual to develop psychological skills and defenses to protect oneself (the shared experiences helps to build self-confidence and creates the sense that one can cope with the negative elements often associated with the group); and 4.) "Gender alignment between parents and children may exert influence on ethnic and racial socialization particularly when they have good relationships and are mutually held in esteem" (p. 15).

The first oblique reference to ethnic identity can be found in the anthropological and sociological literature of the early 20th century, in reference to the field study of non-western cultures. The terms, ethnic groups and ethnicity, were first used in anthropology to refer to a people presumed to affiliate with the same cultural group and who shared the same custom, language and traditions. Over the years the construct seems to have emerged through the combination of ethnic and identity and their meanings, as a reasonably thorough literature search was unable to uncover a coining author or an often-cited definition.

Reference to the notion of ethnic identity can be trace back to the early 19th century. In 1808, Hugh Murray (1808), in referring to the influence of mental images on self-recognition, asserted a notably modern view on the construct when he stated, "But I think it evident that the characteristic qualities…are wholly unconnected with those external by races which are distinguished. Mind is more flexible substance and yields more readily to the influence of altered circumstances" (pp. 33-34). Writing about individual and national differences between 1830 and 1835 the naturalist, Alexander Von Humboldt, maintained that, "Language is the outer appearance of the mentalities of peoples; their language is their mentality and their mentality their language. One can hardly overemphasize their identity. People who share a common language develop a similar subjectivity, a *weltanschauung* (world view)" (Von Humboldt, 1830-1835/1985), p. 12). In both citations, language and one's mental images formed the basis of the scholars' observations about the importance of identity from a nationalistic perspective.

When first used, ethnic identity was synonymous with race or racial identity and ethnicity in general. It is likely that ethnicity was first used by the French nationalist and scientist, Georges Vacher de la Pouge, in 1896 to describe the "natural and counterfeit" cultural, psychological and social characteristics of a population, and in order to distinguish the latter from the concept of race which he defined as a series of physical characteristics (Vacher de la Pouge, 1896). Herbert J. Gans (1996) suggests that the sociologist David Riesman gave ethnicity a new and salient meaning in the 20th century. Werner Sollars (1996), on the other hand, attributes the earliest use of the term to Einar Haugen and Joshua Fishman who were likely influenced by the sociologist W. Lloyd Warner (see p. xxxvii) all of whom were writing about the concept in the 1940's and 1950s. Race and ethnicity were often used interchangeably in reference to both the physical and cultural characteristics of an individual as a member of his or her ethnic or racial group and the

circumstances that influenced its importance. On this point in 1916, the philosopher Horace Kallen wrote that, "When the quarrel (whether they identified with the English or Britons in America) came they remembered how they had left the mother country in search of religious liberty for themselves; how they left Holland, where they had found this liberty, for fear of losing their ethnic and cultural identity and what hardships they had borne for the sake of conserving both the liberty and the identity" (Kallen, 1996, p. 69). In 1922, the sociologist, Max Weber, wrote about ethnic groups in a novel way, including within the definition a subjective element that previously had been absent. Weber also differentiated between racial and ethnic identity by proposing that a blood relationship was necessary for racial identification but not for ethnic identification. He defined ethnic groups as, "…those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for group formation; furthermore it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists." Although he wrote about the significance of ethnicity in general, Weber never acknowledged the need for an individual's active participation in their ethnic identity formation, nor did he explore the construct much beyond a definitional conceptualization.

The concept of ethnic identity began to reemerge in the social and behavioral sciences literature of the 1960's and 1970's. Ethnicity, for example, is more salient today than in prior decades. "Ethnicity," maintains Daniel Bell, "is a means (now) for disadvantaged groups to claim a set of rights and privileges which the existing power structures have denied them" (1975, p. 174). And for the past few decades America's ethnic minority groups have been actively asserting their civil rights and demanding privileges heretofore denied them.

Several factors have been cited as leading to this renewed interest in ethnicity, arguably the most significant being the civil rights struggle of African Americans in the United States. The beginning of this movement can be characterized as an attempt on the part of African Americans leaders and the African Americans culture in general, to take charge of their ethnic and racial identity and to subsequently redefine their ethnicity at both a societal and cultural level. Consequently, the social movement led to increased discourse on the topics of race and ethnicity in addition to an upsurge in societal awareness regarding these topics (Bourguignon, 1979; Phinney, 1990).

More and more it appears that North Americans are realizing that their biological ancestors wittingly and unwittingly influence their lives. To gain some understanding and perhaps to add structure and meaning, many are searching their attics for long lost records describing their social histories. And from the discoveries one constructs a "symbolic identity." "If you wish to understand persons - their development and their relations with significant others," maintains Anselm Strauss (1959), "you must be prepared to view them as embedded in historical context" (p. 164). In the course of constructing and maintaining the identity, common historical symbols are identified, shared, and passed along to future generations. The symbols also can serve as a public affirmation of one's ethnic claim - clothing, decals, adornments, flags, food, language,

and celebrations.

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"ETHNICITY" AS A "KEY WORD": NOTES TOWARD A DEFINITION

The term "ethnicity" has become crucial in anthropological, sociological, and literary approaches to American culture. Functioning as what Raymond Williams calls a

"key word" in contemporary American culture, the noun "ethnicity" has an interesting context, having emerged but recently in the course of a significant debate. Understanding the context may help us to understand the function of "ethnicity."[1]

The noun is derived from the older adjective and noun, "ethnic," which goes back to the Greek words for "nation" and "heathen," used in the Greek Bible translation for the Hebrew "goyim," non-Israelites, gentiles. From the fourteenth through the nineteenth centuries "ethnic" was used pejoratively, in the sense of pagan, non-Christian. Only in the mid-nineteenth century did the more familiar meaning of "ethnic" as "peculiar to a race or nation" emerge. But the language retains overtones of "ethnic" as "heathen," now secularized to "other," non-standard," somehow "un-American." This connotation persists from Jacob Riis' muckraking yet often stereotyped account of How the Other Half Lives (1890) to Kathleen Wright's handbook of American minorities, The Other Americans (1911). Implicit in the older antithesis of "ethnic" and "Christian" and in the newer opposition of "ethnic" and "American' was the assumption that ethnics could be, perhaps had to be converted, "de-ethnicized," in order to be saved, or in order to become fully American. In such a context everything that now might be called "ethnicity" appeared merely as an obstacle in a transforming process, which was to convert Native Americans and {2} immigrants, African slaves, and, perhaps, even English Puritans, into "real" Americans.

The noun "ethnicity" was first used, according to the 1972 supplememt to the Oxford English Dictionary, in 1953, in the context of a debate about McCarthyism, loyalty, and intellectual freedom. In response to an article by the poet Archibald MacLeish, who had drawn a bleak picture of the limitations imposed on intellectual freedom in McCarthyist America, David Riesman made "Some Observations on Intellectual Freedom," in the course of which he guardedly affirmed the continued existence of liberty in America. The Harvard sociologist resorts three times to a discussion of ethnic group life and tensions, and, in the third instance, apparently without being aware of his innovation, introduced the term "ethnicity."[2]

Riesman's American Scholar essay first calls attention to ethnic victims in America's past, a past he feels MacLeish had idealized. "If. . . a rough toleration has at times been maintained within our country, . . . fears and hatreds have found outlets against Indians, Mexicans, Spaniards and Japanese. . ." (12) Far from sharing MacLeish's apocalyptic views, however, Riesman sees "our ethnic diversity, our regional and religious pluralism" (14) as a safeguard against the possibilities of fascism in the United States. What was bad in America's past as ethnic hatred and what is good in America's present as anti-totalitarian diversity becomes, in Riesman's third and most significant reference, a source of strength and tension which outweighs concerns for power struggles and antagonisms between "the people" and "bosses."

There is a tendency for the older `class struggles,' rooted in clear hierarchical antagonisms, to be replaced by a new sort of warfare: the groups who, by reason of rural or small-town location, ethnicity, or other parochialism, feel threatened by the better educated upper-middle-class people (though often less wealthy and politically powerful) who follow or create the modern movements in science, art, literature, and opinion generally. (25) {3} "Ethnicity" thus emerges in the context of a shift from a concern for power relations to an interest in the contradiction between modernized, de-ethnicized intellectuals and artists and parochial, regional, ethnic sentiments. While responding to

MacLeish's outcry that radical dissent and a leftist perspective were endangered in McCarthyist America, Riesman argued, in fact, that the very basis of what appeared as "witch hunts" to "obscurantist" intellectuals was not to be found in power relationships, but in a struggle between intellectual urbanity and artistic modernity on the one hand and parochial ethnicity and small-town identity on the other. The term "ethnicity" offered a framework for an interpretation of America as a country beyond class struggles. This origin of "ethnicity" helps to explain the continuous polemic against "ethnic studies" that they were invented with an "ideological intention" : "If you cut the cake ethnically, classes become less apparent."[3]

In the two decades since Riesman's coinage, the term "ethnicity" has become a household word. Andrew M. Greeley discussed the difficulties of the term in <u>Ethnicity in the United States: A Preliminary Reconnaissance</u> (1974):

`Ethnicity' in the wider sense refers to any differentiation based on nationality, race, religion, or language. Part of the problem in thinking clearly about ethnicity in the American context is that some groups that Americans think of as `ethnic' are constituted by religion (Jews), some by nationality (Poles), some by religion and nationality (Irish Catholics), some by race (blacks). . . some by language. . . and some by region. (291)

The definitions are increasingly larger and more positive; ethnic consciousness has been transformed from an obstacle into a prerequisite for a truly American identity. MIichael Novak, who popularizes and proselytizes the new ethnicity in his <u>Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics</u> (1971), asks <u>all</u> Americans {4} to find an ethnic answer to the persistent identity question, "who am I?" The traditional answer, "I am an American" (or, I am in the process of becoming American) no longer suffices; we remain "nothing" until we become aware of our own specific ethnic identity. According to Novak, one soon discovers that one <u>does</u> have roots in a real or an imaginary ethnic group, to which one belongs "in part involuntarily, in part by choice. Given a grandparent or two, one chooses to shape one's consciousness by one history rather than another." (56) In fact, there is no more history, there are only histories to choose from. By adopting a specific ethnic group history, an American nothing becomes an ethnic somebody; and the affirmative "I am somebody, too" is supposed to apply to everybody. Every American is a potential ethnic. According to Greeley, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants are an ethnic group like any other; and according to Novak, Americans with mixed or untraceable origins may establish a "voluntary" or "imaginary" ethnicity of their own. In fact, this is their only chance to avoid remaining "nothings": in an interesting inversion Americanness has become heathenish and ethnicity sacred.

When we go back to Riesman's opposition between ethnics and intellectuals, we may be surprised to find that even that contradiction has given way to the omnivorous term ethnicity. Greeley suggested, not altogether facetiously, we regard "intellectuals as an Ethnic Group."[4] More, intellectuals and artists seem to be surpassing non-intellectual ethnics in ethnic consciousness, which has given rise to a literature of ethnocentric exhortation by once de-ethnicized and now re-ethnicized writers. The new ethnicity is such an intellectual and artistic phenomenon that Herbert Gans has argued that the proponents of the ethnic revival have ignored the statistically more relevant continuing drive toward assimilation in most American ethnic groups. For Gans, the ethnic revival is

perhaps merely a fashion that may pass like the notion of a religious revival in the 1950's. Most {5} likely, Novak's "unmeltable ethnics" are primarily nostalgic academics and intellectuals who are wrong, Gans says, "when they claim to represent others than themselves."[5] It remains surprising, though, that at least parts of the group Riesman posited as antagonistic to "ethnicity" have become, often quite vociferous, spokesmen for an ethnic consciousness. If intellectuals once were seen as unequivocal missionaries of universalism, they now propagate a new parochialism. How does the inversion of the value scale of "ethnicity" and Americanness affect contemporary writers? For one thing, the new evaluation of "non-American" traits has led to a wide-spread interest in "ethnic" writing and thus created a demand for "authentic" literature about other than mainstream backgrounds. This boom in publishing is not limited to Black, Jewish, and immigrant writers, but extends to Puerto Rican, Chicano, and Native American authors. The new literary opportunities have occasionally been seen as a danger to the "authenticity" of ethnic literature: as the market and the desirability of ethnic writing increases, writers will emerge who use ethnicity merely as a device. For example, the lavishly illustrated, beautifully designed book by Hyemeyohsts Storm, Seven Arrows (Harper & Row, 1972), was seen as the direct expression of "hundreds of years of Indian life," as a true rendition of "the Cheyenne way. . . and Indian conception of the universe and the meaning of life," or as a "beautiful, moving testament to the spiritual culture and wisdom of the Plains people."[6] These evaluations were based on an erroneous assumption of folk authenticity, and the reviewer in the American Anthropologist, a student of Cheyenne religious symbolism, was disappointed by Storm: "Several books would be required to correct the compounded inaccuracies of Storm's version of Cheyenne tradition."[7] The criticism expressed here and in the Indian Historian, however, is limited by a view of Seven Arrows as folklore, not as literature. Measured against the yardstick of folk authenticity, Seven Arrows may be characterized as "fakelore" (Richard Dorson's term). As a writer of fiction, after all, a form of lying, Hyemeyohsts Storm is in the main tradition {6} of American minority and ethnic writers, who have taken folk materials as a point of departure, as the basis of invention, as a vehicle in an act of communication which is essentially trans-ethnic. Charles Chesnutt "invented" his own Black folklore in his prose fiction of the l890's just as Storm may be inventing his in the 1970's. Chesnutt, however, had to wage his literary struggle at a time when ethnicity was still more of a liability than it is for writers in the age of Momaday and Storm. I suspect that there will be a flourishing of "new" ethnic literature, which will perhaps be less and less authentic in the anthropological sense as literary America becomes more and more ethnic.

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1. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 1780-1950 (New York: Harper & Row, 1958, pp. xi-xviii.
2. Archibald MacLeish, "Loyalty and Freedom," American Scholar, 22, n. 4 (Aut, 1953), pp. 393-98. David Riesman, "Some Observations on Intellectual Freedom," American Scholar, 23, n. 1 (Wint, 1953-54), pp. 9-25, esp. pp. 12, 14, 15.
3. Andrew Hacker, "Cutting Classes," New York Review of Books, March 4, 1976, p. 17.

4. New York Times Magazine, July 12, 1970, p. 22
5. "Preface," Neil C. Sandberg, Ethnic Identity and Assimilation (New York: Praeger, 1974), p. xiii.
6. Library Journal, July, 1972, p. 2436; Wall Street Journal, January 16, 1973, p. 18.
7. John H. Moore, American Anthropologist, 75 (1973), p. 1041. Cf. also Rupert Costo, "Seven Arrows Desecrates Cheyenne," The Indian Historian, 5, p. 2.

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Language and Ethnicity

Series: Key Topics in Sociolinguistics

Carmen Fought

Fought Carmen

Part 1 General issues in ethnicity and language

1 What is ethnicity?

Race is not rocket science. It's harder than rocket science. (Christopher Edley, Jr., Foreword to *America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences, vol. 1*, 2001)

As a professor, I've noticed a recent trend of resistance among my students to forms that ask them to specify their ethnicity by checking a box. They see it variously as racist, irrelevant, inaccurate, or nobody's business but their own. Several students have told me that they respond to such forms by marking "other_____" and writing in next to it simply "human being." I respect their choice to do this and I applaud their small protest against the way that such forms oversimplify the question of ethnicity in our diverse and complex world. However, I also know as a social scientist that most "human beings" do *not* see themselves as members of a great undifferentiated whole. Whatever our political leanings, however open and accepting of others our character might be, we nonetheless tend to cling to the distinctions among us. Most teenagers in Western societies, for instance, would die of embarrassment if somebody thought that they dressed like, acted like, or talked like their parents. They go to great lengths to avoid this possibility,

including developing new **slang** terms and discarding them like used tissues, in an attempt to stay one step ahead of the game. In our heterosexually oriented modern communities, men do not usually like to be mistaken for women and vice versa. Even drag queens, a group that would seem to contradict this idea, enact an identity that relies on the audience's knowing that they are, in fact, biologically male (Barrett 1999). And in any country where multiple ethnic groups are represented, from Australia to Zimbabwe, ethnicity (however we define this term, and it won't be easy) will be a salient factor that social scientists must take into account.

The study of ethnicity (which, you'll notice, I still have not defined) is a field unto itself. Although it has formed a crucial part of the development of sociolinguistic theory, most linguists, with a few notable exceptions, have spent relatively little time on the definition of ethnic categories in the abstract. But the sand has run out. I cannot in good conscience write a book on the topic of "language and ethnicity," and bring to it expertise only in language, hoping the other half will sort itself out. So I will draw here on the substantial literature that has been produced exploring the central relevant questions: What is ethnicity? How is it related to race? What is an ethnic group? Everyone who knew that I was writing this book has said, "You have to give a definition of ethnicity." Yes, I tell them, thanks so much for the advice. But when volumes have been devoted to exploring this single question, I can hardly get by with hammering out a two-line blurb at the beginning and then just moving on. So I will try in this chapter to give a feeling for the discussion that has taken place in the history of research on race and ethnicity, among scholars much more qualified than I am to address this topic, even though it is impossible to cover the discussion comprehensively in this short space. And, despite the well-meaning advice of friends and colleagues, I leave open the possibility that I may not be able (or willing), in the end, to pin down one single definition of ethnicity for the purposes of this book.

1.1 AREAS OF AGREEMENT ABOUT ETHNICITY

Many (if not most) native speakers of English hear the term "ethnicity" and recognize it as a word they know. But actually delimiting the exact meaning of this word, as is so often true with **semantics**, turns out to be a complex endeavor. Scholars in the fields of anthropology, sociology, ethnic studies, and even linguistics, have approached this problem in a number of ways, which will be discussed further below. There are, however, a few areas of preliminary agreement about ethnicity across the approaches and disciplines, particularly among the most recent writings on this topic, and I will begin by giving an overview of those commonalities.

First, scholars across the disciplines (and I include the linguists here as well) agree that ethnicity is a ***socially constructed*** *category*, not based on any objectively measurable criteria. For a while the term "ethnicity" was used as if it were the socially defined counterpart to the biologically defined "**race**." The problem, of course, is that years of

scientific research have failed to yield any reliable biological rubric for grouping human beings into racial categories. As Zelinsky reports:

After decades of effort during which many classificatory schemes were proposed, then rejected, physical anthropologists have finally admitted defeat. It has proved impossible to arrive at a set of quantifiable morphological and physiological features whereby we can unequivocally compartmentalize all human beings into a small array of discrete races.   (2001:8)

Omi and Winant use the term "racial formation" for the social construction of race, more specifically for "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (1994:55). I will return to the relationship of ethnicity and race in a moment, but the main point here is that both of these categories must be treated as socially constructed, and this reality must be incorporated into any definition we might use.

   On the other hand, the fact that "ethnicity" and "race" may be socially constructed *does not mean they are purely hypothetical concepts* that have no basis in reality. A number of studies acknowledge the presence of a line of thinking of this type in the earlier research, and Bobo, for example, notes that even up to the present some scholars have "argued vigorously for discontinuing the use of the term 'race' " (2001:267). However, a majority of recent works insists that these concepts are both real and crucial, and it is perilous to dismiss them as mere constructs. Zelinsky notes, "In terms of practical consequences, race as something collectively perceived, as a social construct, far outweighs its dubious validity as a biological hypothesis" (2001:9). In a similar vein, Smelser et al. say:

The concepts of race and ethnicity are social realities because they are deeply rooted in the consciousness of individuals and groups, and because they are firmly fixed in our society's institutional life.   (2001:3)

Regardless of the social relativity of their definitions, or of whether we believe that race and ethnicity should or should not have the prominent role in society that they have, we cannot dismiss them as having no basis in reality. The ideologies associated with them create their own social reality.

   Another point of general agreement is that ethnicity *cannot be studied or understood outside the context of other social variables*, such as gender or social class. Urciuoli (1996:25ff.), for example, discusses in detail the conflation of class and race, and how, in the dominant ideologies, this can lead to an automatic association of certain ethnic groups with "the underclass." As will be discussed in Chapter 2, the speakers in the Puerto-Rican American community that Urciuoli studied often equated becoming more middle class with becoming more white. With respect to gender, Bucholtz notes that "any performance of ethnicity is always simultaneously a performance of gender" (1995:364); Omi and Winant express a very similar idea, saying, "In many respects, race is gendered and gender is racialized" (1994:68). As noted earlier, the construction of identity by individuals is a complex and multifaceted process in which ethnicity may be only one note, possibly not even the dominant note, at a particular moment. I have touched on these ideas only briefly here, but I will return to and develop them repeatedly throughout the discussion.

In addition, most works on race and ethnicity acknowledge the important roles of *both self-identification and the perceptions and attitudes of others* in the construction of ethnic identity. As Smelser et al. note, the categories of race and ethnicity are to some degree imposed by others and to some degree self-selected (2001:3). In modern societies that value self-determination and respect the right of each individual to define himself or herself, it is easy to fall back on the utopian idea that a person's race or ethnicity is whatever he or she says it is. But while this can be true on one level, on another level one cannot be completely free of the views and attitudes of others in the society. There are numerous references in the literature to the explicit need of community members to be able to categorize others ethnically (and in other ways). Omi and Winant see this as particularly true of race:

One of the first things we notice about people when we meet them (along with their sex) is their race . . . This fact is made painfully obvious when we encounter someone whom we cannot conveniently racially categorize – someone who is, for example, racially "mixed."   (1994:59)

A Puerto-Rican American woman in Urciuoli's study commented, "[T]he people at work try to categorize me, keep trying to get out of me what I am *really*. Really Spanish? Really black? Really East Indian?" (1996:144). **Phenotype**may play a particularly crucial role in the community's categorizations. Anulkah Thomas (personal communication) reports the experience of a Panamanian girl of African descent who was told by a teacher to check "black" on the census form because "that's what people see when they look at you." The need of others to categorize an individual's race and ethnicity forms a part of the context in which that individual constructs his or her identity.

I myself have been the subject of **ascription** to an ethnicity I would not normally claim. My father was a generic white American with no association to a particular European ancestry. My mother is from Madrid, Spain. On census forms, I would normally check "white" as my race. Still, the legal definition of Hispanic by the US Office of Management and Budget is: "All persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race" (Smelser et al. 2001:   ). By this definition, I qualify as at least half-Hispanic. Phenotypically, some people have told me that I look to them like I could be "a Latina," a perception which is probably enhanced by my being a native speaker of Spanish and my being named "Carmen." My students usually know that I am fluent in Spanish, and that I have conducted research on Chicano English. As a result of these factors, I believe, an undergraduate who thanked me and another professor (who was from Mexico) in her senior thesis referred to us as "two strong Latinas." Among other things, I think this points to the important role of language in ethnic identity ascription. The fact that I felt a small thrill of pleasure at this involuntary moment of "**passing**" also says something about what it means to be a member of the dominant ethnic group, a topic to which I will return in Chapter 6.

A good **ethnographic study** of the role of the community in defining ethnic membership is Wieder and Pratt's (1990) research on the Osage tribe. All communities (and **communities of practice**) will have norms for evaluating who is and is not a member, sanctions for behaviors the group considers unacceptable, and so forth. Probably

because of the historical implications of membership in certain tribes, there is much overt discussion in some Native-American communities of who is or is not "a real Indian."[1] The answer to this question about ethnic identity can have repercussions in many practical areas, such as determining who is registered as a member of a particular tribe, who is entitled to government services or health care, or who can vote in tribal elections. Side by side with these is a completely different set of concerns, related to the historical oppression of Native Americans, including issues about who has "sold out" versus maintaining pride in their culture.

Wieder and Pratt (1990) found that a number of factors outsiders (particularly European Americans) might consider to be important in defining group membership are quite useless and may even disqualify the individual in question from true status as a "real Indian." Instead, they treat being a "real Indian" as a process, rather than a static category. What is of most interest here is the constant reference to others (and the recognition of others) in how Wieder and Pratt set up the framework for the construction of ethnicity in this community. Osage community members "discuss the obvious Indianness, or lack of it, of a candidate Indian. 'Is he [or she] really an Indian?' is a question that they ask, and they know it can be asked about them" (1990:47). In addition, many if not most of the "actions" they identify as relevant for this particular community involve language, language use, or **speech events**in some way.

A similar situation is described for African Americans in some communities by Fordham and Ogbu (1986). They note that "being of African descent does not automatically make one a black person" and that one can be denied membership in the larger African-American group (which they term a "fictive kinship system") because of actions that signal a lack of loyalty or some other lack of adherence to the norms considered appropriate to group membership (1986:184). Although the relative roles of "other" versus "self" in defining one's identity, particularly one's ethnic identity, may vary a great deal from one community to another, the groups discussed here illustrate the strength and multiplexity that the "other" component can have.

1.2 POSSIBLE DEFINITIONS OF ETHNICITY

Almost all the large-scale works on the topics of race and ethnicity begin by trying to define one or both of these elusive terms, and many also start by taking apart the definitions posited by earlier generations of researchers. Scholars from the various relevant disciplines, including sociolinguistics, seem to have taken three basic approaches to this problem: 1) trying to define *ethnicity* in isolation; 2) trying to define *ethnic group* instead, then defining *ethnicity* as a corollary term; and 3) trying to define *ethnicity* in relation to *race*. Each of these has advantages and disadvantages. Below is a small sampling of the types of definitions of *ethnicity* or *ethnic groups* that can be found in the literature:

Ethnicity, then, is a set of descent-based cultural identifiers used to assign persons to groupings that expand and contract in inverse relation to the scale of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the membership.

(Cohen 1978:387)

[Ethnic groups are] human groups that entertain a subject belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration . . . it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.   (Weber, cited in Smelser et al. 2001:3)

[An ethnic group:]

1.   is largely biologically self-perpetuating
2.   shares fundamental cultural values . . .
3.   makes up a field of communication and interaction
4.   has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. (Barth 1969)

The ethnic group is a modern social construct, one undergoing constant change, an imagined community too large for intimate contact among its members, persons who are perceived by themselves and/or others to share a unique set of cultural and historical commonalities . . . It comes into being by reasons of its relationships with other social entities, usually by experiencing some degree of friction with other groups that adjoin it in physical or social space(Zelinsky 2001:44; italics removed)

We see among these definitions certain similarities, which I will return to in a moment, and also some contradictions. Barth, for example, views the ethnic group as "interacting," while Zelinsky seems to suggest that if the members of the community actually have a lot of intimate contact, they are disqualified from being an ethnic group. Although Zelinsky's definition (along with the accompanying discussion) nicely sums up the main features found in many of the others, this particular element of it seems questionable to me (what about groups that are dying out, for example?). The summary of the definitional problem that I most admire is found in Omi and Winant (1994), the second edition of a well-respected, much-cited work on the sociology of race. The authors give a detailed and insightful analysis of how these concepts function, but, rather than attempting to define them they say, simply, "The definition of the terms 'ethnic group' and 'ethnicity' is muddy" (1994:14).

1.3 POSSIBLE DEFINITIONS OF RACE

The definition of race is complicated in many of the same ways as that of ethnicity. As noted above, we must acknowledge race itself as a constructed category, but that still leaves us with the problem of defining it. In some cases scholars make no explicit attempt to separate race from ethnicity, as in this definition from W. E. B. DuBois:

What, then, is race? It is a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life.   ([1897] 2000:110)

Omi and Winant (1994), as noted above, give no explicit definition of ethnicity, although they clearly have the understanding that it is different from race, as shown by the fact that they discuss these concepts in separate sections. Their definition of race is "a concept

which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (1994:55).

In other cases, race and ethnicity are deliberately separated by some criterion, the most frequent one being elements related to physical appearance:

"[R]ace" is a social category based on the identification of (1) a physical marker transmitted through reproduction and (2) individual, group and cultural attributes associated with that marker. Defined as such, race is, then, a form of ethnicity, but distinguished from other forms of ethnicity by the identification of distinguishing *physical* characteristics, which, among other things, make it more difficult for members of the group to change their identity.   (Smelser et al. 2001:3; italics in original)

Interestingly, Smelser et al. do not actually provide a separate definition of ethnicity that can be referenced as part of the explanation above. Here is another definition linking these two terms:

Common usage tends to associate "race" with biologically based differences between human groups, differences typically observable in skin color, hair texture, eye shape, and other physical attributes. "Ethnicity" tends to be associated with culture, pertaining to such factors as language, religion, and nationality.   (Bobo 2001:267)

Bobo adds that, "[a]lthough perceived racial distinctions often result in sharper and more persistent barriers than ethnic distinctions, this is not invariably the case, and both share elements of presumed common descent or ascriptive inheritance" (2001:267).

There are a large number of scholarly works that focus on how race is constructed (including, among many others, Davis 1991, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992, Omi and Winant 1994, Gandy 1998). In particular, it is enlightening to look at how different sociopolitical contexts affect this process in different countries around the world. A number of scholars have argued convincingly that the dominant ideology of race in the United States, for instance, centers around a black–white dichotomy, in which other groups (like Asian Americans) and variations within groups are pushed to the side. People of mixed black–white ancestry are classified as black under the "one-drop rule" (see Davis [1991] for a full discussion). Even as late as 1986, the US Supreme Court refused to overturn a ruling against a woman who sought to have her race reclassified as white, legally; the woman, Susie Phipps, had one African-American ancestor six generations back (Davis 1991: 9–11). In this view, skin-tone differences between African Americans or European Americans are downplayed in racializing discourses (even though these may have practical repercussions of their own). This ideology can lead to some paradoxical situations, such as the idea suggested by Ignatiev that in the USA "a white woman can give birth to a black child, but a black woman can never give birth to a white child" (1995:1).

n the history of ideas those which have the longest life are often not carefully articulated concepts but only images or metaphors. When they were pungently new, they were ideas

that seized the imagination of the people. Years later the dead metaphors are still carried about in their cultural baggage.

Most tenacious in its hold upon the American mass mind has been the dead (because it is no longer visualized) metaphor of the Melting Pot. The "melting-pot" was first given currency in 1908 by Israel Zangwill's thus-named drama.

Henry Pratt Fairchild, professor of sociology at New The Melting Pot Mistake

By Henry Pratt Fairchild

New York Arno Press, 1977

226 pages, $23.95

ISBN-0-405-09949-5

Beyond the Melting Pot

The Negroes, Puerto Ricans,

Jews, Italians and Irish

of New York City (2nd edition)

By Nathan Glazer

and Daniel Patrick Moyniham

Cambridge, MA M.I.T. Press, 1970York University, in his book The Melting-Pot Mistake, published in 1926, noted that the "melting pot" was a symbol for which there was a need. It expressed a faith and a hope, according to which, in Fairchild's words, "America is a Melting-Pot. Into it are being poured representatives of all the world's peoples. Within its magic confines there is being formed something that is not only uniform and homogeneous but also finer than any of the separate ingredients. The nations of the world are being forged into a new and choicer nation, the United States" (p.10).

Although Zangwill himself later repudiated his early work by becoming a Zionist, the symbol of the Melting Pot was still alive in the popular mind when Fairchild wrote. Fairchild presented it as a fact, however, that "We know now that the Melting-Pot did not melt, but we are not entirely sure why," and expressed doubt that "so com-plicated a phenomenon as assimilation can be adequately represented by any symbol at all" (p.12).

Fairchild, writing only two years after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, was still aware of the need to convince a segment, perhaps a majority, of his readership of the need for immigration restriction. A later reader, however, can profitably read Fairchild

not for what he writes about the explicit failure of the Melting Pot, but by observing certain implicit assumptions which inform his work from its beginning. Fore-most among these is the assumption that there is no break in the continuity of stages of development from primitive man to races, and from races to nationalities. All stages of development emerge from nature, in a continuing and continuous evolution.

Even while Fairchild wrote, this assumption of continuity was under attack by the school of Franz Boas, a cultural anthropologist. The success of the Boasians in establishing a new implicit assumption in the social sciences an assumption (not to be questioned) that there is a radical break between man in nature and man in culture has been fully chronicled by Carl Degler in his In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Today's reader, raised to honor the Boasian assumption, may find Fairchild to be perplexing and perhaps disturbing reading.

Fairchild considers in a lengthy chapter "The Factor of Race," beginning with a portrayal of primitive man, whose physical features "resembled much more closely those of a gorilla or chim-panzee than a modern civilized man" (p.15). Today, this primor-dial origin is rarely cited in social science as significant to an understanding of the origin of society. It is assumed that society begins with primitive culture, and that primitive culture represents a definitive break from nature. It has been left to the sociobiologists, representatives of the physical science of biology, to re-examine social origins from an evolutionary standpoint.

While Fairchild notes that man is unique in spreading over the surface of the whole earth "without losing his specific unity," he believes that varieties, or races, although they are some-thing less than species, are none-theless important: "The primary basis of group unity is therefore racial" (p.21). Fairchild recog-nizes "yellow, brown, black, red, and white races," (p.22) roughly one for each continent. Within the white race, he recognizes Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterra-nean races (pp.43, 64, 94-102, 109-110). A significant section of his book (pp.94-106) is an at-tempt to assess the relative con-tributions of these three races to the American population.

Fairchild urges caution in making judgments about racial differences: "Just what the truly racial features of intellect, disposition, temperament, and emotion may be is still almost terra incognita." Nonetheless, whatever may be the results of research into this unknown terri-tory, "there seems to be little room for doubt that these psy-chical contrasts play a much more important part in imped-ing harmonious action between groups than the external or nar-rowly physical aspects" (p.32). This means that "the period of race contact," resulting from "the pressure of population," is one of "race conflict" (p.35).

Fairchild, however, is far from being the kind of racial determinist that Count de Gobineau, for example, is often caricatured as having been (Essay on the Inequality of Human Races, Paris: 1853). Fairchild notes that "Race is inherited, nationality is acquired" (p.42) and concludes that "as man has moved upward along his distinctly

human path-way the influence of race upon his activities has steadily decreased in relative importance while that of nationality has correspondingly increased" (p.51).

The racial factor is not, however, annulled by that of nationality. On the contrary, the unity of nationality is threatened by racial disunity: "The essence of national coherence is a suffi-cient degree of recognized like-ness and community of interest in the great activities of group life to inspire a yearning for   togetherness.' a manifestation of the   we-feeling' as contrasted with the   you-feeling.'" The latter becomes excessively strong where racial differences are most stark: "William Graham Sumner used to tell his students at Yale that the United States had no claim to the name of nation be-cause of the presence of so large a negro population, the implication being that between the white and colored races there exist such lively recognitions of dissimilarity that they can never establish the degree of common feeling necessary to true national-ity" (pp.53-54).

Fairchild does not refer to "racism," a term not in use when he wrote, but does define "race prejudice" - "The trouble with the customary application of the term   race prejudice' is that a very large part of what it is made to refer to is neither racial nor prejudice. Taking the latter fault first, a prejudice in the strict sense is a pre-judgment, that is, a judgment made in advance of the evidence. Now the state of mind usually alluded to is not a judgment, but a feeling, and it does not arise in advance of the evidence. The evidence consists of the traits of a person recog-nized to be of another race. The feeling is a feeling of revulsion or withdrawal that arises sponta-neously under these conditions. It may vary in intensity and per-haps in quality according to the circumstances, that is, according to the sort of association, contact, or relationship that is in-volved in the meeting" (p.68-69).

Nation versus

Nationality

Fairchild stresses "a clear distinction between the concepts of   nationality' and   nation'" (p.52). He uses the latter term in a sense which is rather uncom-mon today: "A true nation arises when such a group as has been described realizes its aspiration, that is, when a nationality achieves the political control of the geographical area upon which it dwells" (p.53). As exam-ples of nationalities which have failed to accomplish this, Fairchild cites the "submerged nationalities" of Eastern Europe.

Nationalities can perish if they are submerged for a long period of time and lack essential unifying ingredients: "When a nationality, for whatsoever reason, has only a few well-established common traits, it is essential that these should be of a fundamental character, includ-ing at least two or three out of the following list: language, religion, political ideas, basic moral code, family institution, class feel-ings" (pp.55-56). A common language and religion kept the Greek nationality alive during centuries of Turkish domination.

Fairchild recognizes an evo-lutionary factor in the survival of nationalities which socio-biolo-gists, fifty years later, defined as "inclusive fitness": "Sympathy toward the in-group and antipa-thy toward the out-group may be regarded as universal human traits" (p.59). "In the competi-tion of life between groups, altruism, patriotism, and social efficiency have survival value, and since these factors have been essential to the development of civilization the motive which underlies them, group sympathy, may be considered as having had a distinct usefulness" (p.61).

Applying these criteria to early America, Fairchild sees a nationality emergent in the colo-nies long before the war for in-dependence: "Quite early the colonists recognized the dangers inherent in too great numbers of foreigners, and in some cases attempted to limit their admis-sion by various means" (p.87). Even after other nationality groups began to enter the U.S. in significant numbers, they were generally of predominantly Nor-dic race. Hence, "the immigra-tion problem in the United States was not a racial problem previous to the year 1882" (p.105).

An influx of Alpine and Mediterranean elements came after 1882. "Beginning about 1882, the immigration problem in the United States has become increasingly a racial problem in two distinct ways, first by altering profoundly the Nordic predomi-nance in the American popula-tion, and second by introducing various new elements which, while of uncertain volume, are so radically different from any of the old ingredients that even small quantities are deeply signifi-cant" (p.112). The latter include "the Hebrews" (p.111).

The Immigration Act of 1924 used nationality as the clos-est practical approximation to race. It was discriminatory, but "it was recognized that quotas based on foreign-born residents exclusively were illogical and themselves discriminatory against the old stock. It was real-ized that the native population had at least as good a right as foreigners to be considered in determining the composition of the immigration of the future" (pp.132-133).

The Question

of Assimilation

At the midpoint of his book, Fairchild considers what assimila-tion has been in process, how it has been effected, and how it relates to the melting pot ideal. The latter represents a total assimilation since "A melting pot is not an end in itself. The purpose of a melting pot is to get the heterogenous substances into a form of unity and fluidity. But the great questions remain: What kind of a substance are you going to have when the fusion is complete? And what are you going to do with it?" (p.120).

Most evidently, the melting pot fails where languages and religions are involved. Two or more languages or religions never "melt" into one new language or one new religion (pp.144-145). "The process by which a nationality preserves its unity while admitting representa-tives of outside nationalities is properly termed   assimilation'" (p.136). But

"the attempt to mix nationalities must result not in a new type of composite nation-ality but in the destruction of all nationality. No one of the com-ponents can survive the process if it is carried too far. This is the outstanding fallacy of the melting pot. It applies a figure that is appropriate only in the racial sense to a problem that is preponderantly national. It repre-sents unification in terms of a process which, for the greater part of the task of unification, will not work. If the truth were otherwise in this matter the history of the Balkans would have been very different from what it has been. The inhabitants of this unfortunate area are broken up into incompatible groups not by racial differentiations - most of which they would be quite unable to detect but by languages, religions, customs, social habits, and traditional group loyalties" (pp.150-151).

In the final analysis, assimilation contradicts the melt-ing pot ideal because, in assimila-tion, "The traits of foreign nationality which the immigrant brings with him are not to be mixed or interwoven. They are to be abandoned" (p.154). The melting pot, on the contrary, absorbs all characteristics, preserving them in a formless mass which represents a melting down of most or all of the characteristics of nationality.

"Americanization"

Fairchild gives considerable attention to a critique of a concept seldom invoked today: Amer-icanization.1 Criticizing the Americanization efforts of his own day, he sees in them the error of equating information with national allegiance. Americanization sees assimilation as only an educational process, a voluntary process, "much like the act of conversion in an old-fashioned revival" (p.169-170).

Other flaws of the early Amer-icanization movement in-cluded an assumption that the fact of immigration indicates a desire to assimilate: "Unfortunately, the truth is that the feature of the American nationality which operates as the chief drawing card in the great majority of cases among the recent immigrants is the opportunity to make money" (p.175). This ob-servation is even more relevant after seventy years. Indeed, it is now almost incontestable.

Fairchild answers, as follows, the objection, still current at the end of the twentieth century, that an American nationality cannot be defined because only the Amer-ican Indians are true Americans: "To say that the Indi-ans are the only true Americans means that what constitutes an American is ancient residence upon a certain territory, which was not even called American until after the white men discovered it. According to this clever saying America is a piece of land, and nothing more" (pp.199-200).

America, however, is "not merely an aggregation of people" (p.200), but "something more than a governmental organization" (p.201). It is "a nationality, and fortunately also a nation. America is a spiritual reality. It is a body of ideas and ideals, traditions, beliefs, customs, habits, institutions, standards, loyalties, a whole complex of cultural and moral values" (p.201).

Again, Fairchild stresses that race, while antecedent to nationality, is not superseded by it: "-There can be no doubt that the founders of America expected it and intended it to be a white man's The calmness with which they closed their eyes to the…country, presence of the Negroes in this white man's country did not alter their intentions any more than it provided an escape from the difficulties involved. There can also be no doubt that if America is to remain a stable nation it must continue to be a white man's country for an indef-inite period to come. We have enough grounds of disunion and disruption without adding the irremediable one of deep racial antagonisms. An exclusion policy toward all non-white groups is wholly defensible in theory and practice, however questionable may have been the immediate means by which this policy has been put into effect at successive periods in our history" (p.240).

Toward the end of his book, Fairchild takes note of factors which have now grown in weight at the end of the twentieth cen-tury. He concludes that "The discussion thus far has rested on the assumption But there is a…that the impor-tance of national unity is axiom-atic. notable body of public thought, all the more influential because it pa-rades under the guise of liberal-ism, that questions the validity of this axiom" (p.247). Nonetheless, Fairchild gives no evidence of any awareness that the assumption of national unity would come under increasingly effective attack. He also refers to "Walker's law" that "the ultimate outcome of unrestricted immigration is a progressive deteriora-tion of the standard until no difference of economic level exists between our population and that of the most degraded communities abroad" (p.252). This, read now, seems to be a premonition of the two-fold impact of unrestricted immigration and free trade upon the living standards of the great mass of Americans who are non-supervisory employ-ees.

Finally, in the last para-graph of his book, Fairchild suggests that had the Immigration Act of 1924 not been enacted, the melt-ing pot might have worked all too well to destroy national unity because "what was being melted in the great Melting Pot, losing all form and symmetry, all beauty and character, all nobility and usefulness, was the American nationality itself" (p.261). The melting pot was a mistake, not a failure. Had it succeeded, it would have de--stroyed the Amer-ican nationality.

Failure of the Melting Pot

Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, in the preface to their 1963 book Beyond the Melt-ing Pot, confirm that the melting pot has failed: "The point about the melting pot, as we say later, is that it did not happen. At least not in New York and mutatis mutandis, in those parts of America which resemble New York." The unmeltable ingredients, as gath-ered in New York City, are "the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish" cited in the subtitle to Beyond the Melting Pot, which is a sociological survey of each separate group. Nowhere in this survey, however, do the au-thors suggest that the outcome of the melting process, had it happened, would have been a mistake. The cardinal assump-tion of Glazer and Moynihan about the melting pot, then, is something quite other than that of Fairchild.

Similarly, Glazer and Moynihan begin with another assumption directly contrary to that of Fairchild. They are Boasians, making no reference to physical anthropology and but little reference to cultural an-thropology. If race is found to be significant, as in the case of the Negroes, this is due to historical (i.e., cultural) happenstance (or, more appropriately, misfortune). The evolutionary paradigm (species/ races/ nationalities/ nations) which Fairchild brings to all points of his study is in-voked not even implicitly by Glazer and Moynihan.

Glazer and Moynihan are also, unlike Fairchild, agnostic about the definition of an American nationality. They conclude only that "Religion and race de-fine the next stage in the evolution of the American peoples. But the American nationality is still forming: its processes are mysterious, and the final form, if there is ever to be a final form, is as yet unknown" (p.315). Evidently, they see no incongruence between the existence of Ameri-can peoples, as opposed to an American people, and an Ameri-can nationality. Fairchild, of course, sees the two as mutually exclusive.

The authors find that "the word American' was an unam-biguous reference to nationality only when it was applied to a relatively homogeneous social body consisting of immigrants from the British Isles, with relatively small numbers from nearby European countries" (p.15). With later immigration, it came to mean in legal terms a citizen, but socially it had lost its identify-ing power. "In the United States it became a slogan, a political gesture, sometimes an evasion, but not a matter-of-course, con-crete social description of a per-son. Just as in certain languages a word cannot stand alone but needs some particle to indicate its function, so in the United States the word American' does not stand by itself. If it does, it bears the additional meaning of patriot, authentic' American, critic and opponent of foreign' ideologies" (p.15).

The authors see the Ameri-can peoples molded into as many different social-political forms: "The ethnic group in American society became not a survival from the age of mass immigra-tion but a new social form" (p.16). "Ethnic groups then, even after distinctive language, customs, and culture are lost, as they largely were in the second generation, and even more fully in the third generation, are con-tinually recreated by new experiences in America" (p.17).

On the basis of their study of ethnic groups in New York City, the authors conclude that ethnic groups have become "in-terest groups" (p.17). These groups resist assimilation in the sense in which Fairchild uses the term: "Conceivably the fact that one's origins can become only a memory suggests the general direction for ethnic groups in the United States - toward assimilation and absorption into a homogeneous American mass. And yet, it is hard to see in the New York of the 1960s just how this comes about. Time alone does not dissolve the groups if they are not close to the Anglo-Saxon center. Color marks off a group, regardless of time; and perhaps most significantly, the majority' group, to which assimi-lation should occur, has taken on the color of an ethnic group, too. To what does one assimilate in modern America?" (p.20).

"Although Glazer and Moynihan wrote almost a third of a century ago, the problems they address often seem to be unchanged."

For Glazer and Moynihan, again unlike Fairchild, this ques-tion must remain a rhetorical one. They remain agnostic about the most central of questions. In their words, "this book is inevitably filled with judgments, yet the central judgment an overall evaluation of the meaning of American heterogeneity we have tried to avoid, because we would not know how to make it" (p.21).

In default, therefore, Glazer and Moynihan measure the assimilation of their five subject groups by applying to them the yardstick of socio-economic sta-tus. Their leading and implicit assumption is that any group's failure to attain median socio-economic status must be explained. Any such short-fall is evidence of a societal failure, a failure of assimilation. This as-sumption is, of course, the basis for affirmative action and other racial preferences, pro-grams implemented only a few years after the authors wrote. Glazer, therefore, in writing of "the Negroes," is slightly in advance of his time when he concludes that "the strictly legal approach to [racial] discrimination will have to be supplemented with new approaches" (p.41).

It now seems a wonder that the authors register concern that "In 1960 in the New York metropolitan area a quarter of Negro families were headed by women" (p.50). Today, when two-thirds of all African-Ameri-can births are to unwed mothers, it seems to be a wild daydream to hope that one could ever again be able to report such a statistic.

Although Glazer and Moynihan wrote more than a third of a century ago, the problems they address often seem to be unchanged. Thus, Glazer devotes considerable attention to Negro-Jewish tensions (pp.71-77), which have certainly not subsided. Of the inhabitants of Harlem, Glazer notes that "They lack only the ultimate power of expropriation, but if they did, Jewish and other white business might fare as badly in Harlem as the American investments in Mexican oil, or in Cuba" (p.74).

Another familiar problem is the slowing down of assimilation among Hispanics. The authors note that the ease with which Puerto Ricans can migrate from their island to New York and vice versa is a deterrent to assimila-tion and a new factor in ethnic history (p.100). In response, "The city government on its part encourages city employees to learn Spanish, and issues many announcements to the general public in both languages. Con-ceivably this will change, but Spanish already has a much stronger official position in New York than either Italian or Yid-dish ever had. This is one influ-ence of the closeness of the is-land, physically, politically, and culturally" (p.101).

In the case of two groups, there are remarkable differences between their circumstances in 1963 and in 1996. Glazer writes about the first of these, the Jews, as he writes about all other groups save the Irish, who are the subjects of Moynihan's con-tribution.

Glazer observes that "Inter-marriage, an important sign of integration, remains low among Jews. The 1957 sample census showed that about 3   per cent of married Jews

were married to non-Jews, and the proportion is possibly even lower in New York" (p.160). Glazer cites a study in New Haven showing no increase in intermarriage since 1930, "although in this period the Jews of New Haven became much more acculturated and pros-perous. This pattern sharply distinguishes the Jews of the United States from those of other countries in which Jews have achieved wealth and so-cial position, such as Holland, Germany, Austria, and Hun-gary in the twenties. There the intermarriage rates were phenomenally high" (p.160).

Much has changed in this regard since Glazer wrote. Now, rates of exogamy among American Jews are close to 50 percent. This high rate of physical assimilation brings the American Jewish experi-ence more into parallel with that of central Europe. High rates of exogamy would seem to guarantee the total assimila-tion of a group, but in the case of the Jews their rejection as a group by their central Euro-pean hosts fol----lowed the pe-riod, the 1920s, when seem-ingly they had won complete acceptance. In this respect, the Jewish experience calls into question the entire con-cept of what assimilation means.

Moynihan concludes that "The relative failure of the Irish to rise socially seems on the surface to be part of a gen-eral Catholic failure" (p.258). Moynihan's understanding of "a general Catholic failure," found corroboration as late as 1972 in Michael Novak's The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics. In 1974, however, it was abruptly overturned when Andrew Greeley, a Jesuit sociologist, published, in his Ethnicity in the United States: A Preliminary Recon-naissance, his findings that Irish Catholics and other white Catho-lic groups earned average incomes higher than those of most white Protestant nationality groups.

White Protestants are men-tioned but rarely in Beyond the Melting Pot, and are the subject of one wildly inaccurate proph-ecy: "The white Protestants are a distinct ethnic group in New York, one that has probably passed its low point and will now begin to grow in numbers and probably also in influence" (p. 314). Doubtless, this, at least in part, reflected the belief that mediating figures similar to John Lindsay would emerge in the city's political future. Such was not to be.

Glazer and Moynihan's con-clusion attempts to define why the melting pot failed. Their reason remains ill-de---fined, how-ever conjectural: "We may argue whether it was   na-ture' that re-turned to frustrate continually the imminent creation of a sin-gle American nationality. The fact is that in every generation, throughout the history of the American republic, the merging of the varying streams of popula-tion differentiated from one another by origin, religion, out-look, has seemed to lie just ahead - a generation, perhaps, in the future. This …continual deferral of the final smelting of the different ingredients sug-gests that we must search for some…into a seamless national web systematic and general causes for this American pattern of some cen-tral tendency in the national ethos which…subnationalities; structures people, whether those coming in afresh or the descendants of those who have been here for generations, into groups of different status and character" (pp.290-291)

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"…ethnicity and nationality are rather important factors…"

Whatever this "central ten-dency in the national ethos" may be, the authors do not further define it. The simplest answer, of course, was one that was repug-nant to the creed of the New Fron-tier; i.e., that ethnicity and nationality are rather more pow-erful as factors than liberal think-ers had supposed them to be. This was the warning which Fairchild attempted to communi-cate. It is the conclusion, admit-tedly supported by a third of a century of hindsight, of William Pfaff in his The Wrath of Nations: Civilization and the Furies of Na-tionalism (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

Any attempt at the end of the century to revive the melting pot metaphor must be a feeble one. Under another name, "Trans-Amer-ica," - which is an adaptation of Randolph Bourne's 1916 vision of "Trans-national America" - Michael Lind seems to be making such an attempt. Lind's The Next Amer-ican Nation (New York: The Free Press, 1995)2 bravely affects to look to the future, but it offers little more than yet another re-furbishing of the melting pot ideal. Other authors, still fond of metaphor, have written of "the American salad bowl" or "the Amer-ican mosaic." Lawrence Fuchs, a political scientist, wrote of The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1990).

Lind's seems to be a faith, despite all, in the civic culture. That culture, in turn, is reduc-ible to nothing more than a be-lief in continuing socio-economic advancement for all, just something to keep everyone busy and out of trouble, some-thing like Gatsby's "the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us." Everyone must be kept running, never allowed to linger, to think, perhaps to wonder where, if any-where, it all might be headed. Disbelief, even lingering, might lead to a dispersal of the multi-cultural herd into contending packs. In a multicultural society, the civic culture can only func-tion if it is minimal in the com-mitment which it implies, a promise of bare civility rather than a loyalty to civilization.

Meanwhile, the meltdown of American nationality, of which Fairchild warned, proceeds apace. o

1See an article on Americanization by Otis Graham, Jr. and Elizabeth Koed in The Social Contract, Vol.IV, No.2, p.98.

2The Next American Nation was reviewed by William Chip in The Social Contract, Vol.VI, No.2, Winter 1995-96, p.148. There is an additional review by David Payne in this issue, p.231.

[Editor's note: Also on this topic: As-similation in American Life by Milton Gordon, New York: Oxford Press, 1964.]