

**From Anglo-Conformity and the Melting Pot to Cultural Pluralism, Dynamic
Pluralism, and the Multicultural Society:**

The Position of the African-American Population in These Concepts

Term Paper
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Race, Citizenship, and National Identity

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the salient and unique features of American history is its heterogeneity. Racial, ethnic, and national groups bringing with them different cultures, different collective memories, different experiences, and different expectations peopled this continent and created this nation. There can be no thorough understanding of the development of the United States as a nation without an understanding of how these groups interacted with and reacted to one another. (Gordon, p. 266)

About 268 million people live in the United States of America today.¹ They consist of 220 million (82.8%) whites, 33.5 million (12.6%) African-Americans, 9.7 million (3.7%) Asian-Americans, 2.3 million (0.9%) Native Americans, and 28.3 million (10.6%) Latino-Americans.² The American society contains a highly diverse population; the American people speaks a great variety of languages, has different traditions, creeds, adheres to many variant norms and values, experiences differences in education and lifestyles. Hardly any other country possesses a wider range of ethnic and racial groups and cultures as the United States. The American society and the American culture have many different faces which must all be taken together to form the unique picture of the United States.

How do the different ethnic and racial groups live together? Have they preserved their own national identities or have they become “Americanized”? Has the African-American population been able to preserve its customs and traditions? Which features of their culture have they contributed to the American society and have they been welcome to do that?

“Anglo-conformity”, “Melting Pot”, “Cultural Pluralism”, “Dynamic Pluralism”, and “Multiculturalism” are conceptual models that aim to give explanations for the way in which the U.S. has absorbed immigrants from different countries and has combined them and their descendants with surviving Indians and descendants of African slaves to form the American nation. They have served as explanations of what has happened – descriptive models – and what should happen – goal models.

¹ Cf. Brockhaus, volume 23. Numbers are from 1996.

² The number of Latinos is divided up into the other four categories of race and ethnicity since the entry “Hispanic” exists in the census only as a subcategory.

In the following, the term paper will discuss these concepts and compare their positive and negative aspects. Of particular interest will be the question of how much the Black population in the United States has been integrated in these theoretical reflections and in what way their situation differs from that of immigrants. In order to be able to take a closer look at those subjects, the concepts will be explained. Before that, an outline of the history of Blacks in America will be given to provide grounds for the topic.

II. THE SITUATION OF BLACKS IN AMERICA

The Black people who live in the United States today, are for the most part descendants of the slaves who were taken away from Africa and brought mainly to the southern states 150 to 300 years ago.

In order to guarantee the quick economic development, the North American colonies were forced to rely on additional human labor. They met this demand by slavery which assured white dominance over Blacks. In the southern states, the slaves either worked under poor conditions on huge plantations, or were as domestic servants permanently available to their masters and mistresses. In the northern states, they did hard work in stinking factories. More and more a social structure developed where Blacks stood on the bottom rung of the ladder. The white population had created an ideology that the Black race was inferior, and thus the whites were able to justify the institution of slavery.

The Blacks who were torn from various tribes with different languages in their homelands, could not communicate with each other and therefore had to rely on the language of their masters. As slaves were part of different culture groups, it was impossible to speak of a common African culture that could have been preserved and possibly developed further. But a new Black culture formed in America that still contained elements of African origin, but was also strongly influenced by the culture of whites. Especially domestic servants came into close contact with the social life of whites. Hence, they practiced the religions of their owners, copied their clothes and behavior patterns. The lifestyles of African-Americans became more and more similar to the lifestyles of whites, while Black traditions, norms, values, and behavior patterns were gradually ab-

sorbed into the dominant culture of the white population. As a result of this assimilation, Blacks lost the distinctive peculiarities of their African life. African-Americans were not able to preserve their original cultures, only certain styles of music or the way of seeing things.

The bad living conditions of Blacks hardly changed with the cessation of the slave trade around 1800 or the abolition of slavery in 1863. The white population, especially in the south, always found new ways of discrimination against Blacks. The so-called Jim Crow laws institutionalized an elaborate system of segregation reaching into almost every area of Southern life and articulated, for example, in separate seats for Blacks and whites in railroad cars, waiting rooms, restaurants; the denial of access to parks, beaches, even hospitals; the refusal of the right to vote. But also the living conditions of the many African-Americans who migrated to northern cities hardly improved. Blacks were exploited in factories, received only low wages and often lived in the slums of the cities.

Discrimination in every sphere of life became the main trouble of African-Americans. Secret organizations like the Ku Klux Klan terrorized Blacks and their allies and fought with lynch-law, raping, and beatings against equal rights of Blacks. But according to Alkalimat, white oppression and social control resulted in the new common national sentiment of Blacks who mainly lived in the south from 1870 to 1930:

This is the period in which Black people were molded into a definite nationality, a people sharing social, cultural, economic, and political experiences, as well as suffering under a brutal system of social control and repression. (Alkalimat, p. 81)

The civil rights movement in the 1960s led to legal and political gains.³ They were the main reason why in the 1980s and 1990s those Blacks who were in a position to take advantage of them, faced increased opportunities for advancement. Economic disparities between Black and white professionals did not vanish, but they diminished substantially. The number of Blacks attending college became substantially larger. However, the rise of a Black middle class served to accentuate the increasingly desperate misery of other African-Americans. These poor Blacks felt the impact of the declining industri-

³ Cf. the paragraph on multiculturalism in this term paper (pp. 16-19).

al economy and dwindling government services with special force. In the early 1990s, more than one-third of all Black families lived in poverty.⁴

III. THE DIFFERENT CONCEPTS

Anglo-Conformity

In the literature about the diversity of the American society it is not agreed upon how exactly to distinguish the concepts of Anglo-conformity and melting pot from one another. Some authors, like Freese and Wersch⁵, include Anglo-conformity in the theory of the melting pot, while others (e.g. Burchell and Homberger, Gordon⁶) regard them as two distinct concepts of assimilation. The term paper will take Gordon's classification as a guidepost because it makes the position of Blacks in these concepts plainer.

In the 19th century, the U.S. experienced a great influx of new immigrants. One idea of bringing them together was the so-called "Anglo-conformity". Anglo-conformity implies that every newcomer must acculturate to the old immigrants in the United States already calling themselves "Americans". The Americans, to the most part white immigrants from the English-speaking parts of Europe, found it necessary that the newcomers settle down quickly and get used to their society. They regarded the West-European, particularly the Anglo-Saxon, culture and the English language as compulsory for every other ethnic group planning to live in America. This meant that the English language and English-oriented norms and values not only governed the thinking of the leading section of the population but were seen as dominant and standard in American life. Peter Freese speaks of this notion as "Americanization"⁷: Only those are allowed to come who are willing to take on the prevailing traditions, which means that b and c must acculturate to a.⁸ The result of this philosophy was that every minority group, i.e. every non-Anglo-Saxon group, was in constant threat of attacks and had to subordinate

⁴ Cf. Brinkley, p. 903.

⁵ Cf. Freese, p. 24 and Wersch, p. 461.

⁶ Cf. Burchell and Homberger, pp. 157-165 and Gordon, pp. 268-277.

⁷ This term became particularly popular during World War I and the time after.

⁸ Cf. Freese, p. 24.

itself. To put it differently, the concept included other immigrant groups only insofar as they were capable of adapting themselves to the prevailing Anglo-Saxon standards.

Proponents of this ideology stressed the benefits of the independent political institutions that were created in the American Revolution and demanded that immigrants from monarchist or despotic governed states of the Old World give up their culture in favor of American traditions and habits. The thorough Americanization of the immigrants was to lead to the formation of a homogeneous nation-state. Although the United States was conceived as a haven for people persecuted and oppressed in Europe, it was feared that a free immigration policy would result in each immigrant group retaining its language, habits and principles which it brought along.

Yet, the mostly southern European immigrants were not free to choose whether they wanted to stick to Anglo-Saxon principles or not – Anglo-Saxon principles were simply imposed on them. The opinion of many established Americans was “If they don’t like it here, they can go back where they came from.”⁹ So, president John Q. Adams demanded in one of his speeches that if the immigrants were not able to accommodate themselves to the American (i.e. the Anglo-Saxon) character, they should go back to the lands of their nativity. If they intended to stay, they were to shed their European past and identity and look forward to their lives in America as Americans (i.e. immigrants living in accordance with Anglo-Saxon conventions).¹⁰ The dominance of northern and western Europeans was also justified by ideologies claiming that the English, Germans, and others from the “old immigration” constituted a superior race of tall, blonde, blue-eyed “Nordics” whereas the peoples of eastern and southern Europe were “inferior breeds” whose presence in America threatened, either by intermixture or supplementation, the traditional American stock or culture.¹¹

Apparently, it was a great advantage at that time to be a WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant), and a disadvantage to be a Catholic or a Jew, to be from Italy or Poland. The new immigrant groups had to practice a good deal of self-help and community

⁹ Gordon, p. 272.

¹⁰ Cf. Gordon, p. 272.

¹¹ In 1916 “The Passing of the Great Race” by Madison Grant was published. It is about a new pseudo-science, suggesting the biological superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race and warning about intermixture with “lower” races.

development on their own for the sake of their protection. Being different from the established Americans in so many obvious ways, they found it hard to get themselves accepted. But, if these new immigrants already faced that many problems in the U.S., what can be said about the African-American people whose situation was even more different from that of the old immigrants (other native continent and past, different skin color)?

Anglo-conformity is a concept that only speaks of immigrants. It never mentions the role of Blacks. But even though it is not explicitly expressed whether or not African-Americans are included in this concept it is still clear that they are not welcome to this kind of American society. First, only European immigrants are taken into account. Neither are Blacks from the continent of Europe, nor can they be counted as immigrants who came voluntarily, in search for a better future. Second, unlike European immigrants, Blacks never had the choice to go back to their homelands. President Adams demanded that immigrants return to their homes when not able and willing to get rid of their traditions. Blacks gave up most of their African identities – they were forced to under white suppression – and therefore, quickly adapted to the lifestyles of the white American population. Because of this adjustment process, however, they had lost their bonds to Africa almost completely with the consequence that they did not have the option to go back to their homes even after the abolition of slavery. Also, since the parents often were from different tribes, their children and later descendants could no longer determine their tribal membership. A third, and probably the most obvious reason to exclude Blacks from the Americanization is the ideology that represents southern and eastern Europeans as inferior to northern and western Europeans. African-Americans, having even darker complexion, hair and eye colors than southern and eastern Europeans would certainly be regarded as even more benighted creatures. Thus, Anglo-conformity is a concept that discriminates against all non-Anglo-Saxon European immigrants but even more against the African-American population already living in the country.

Another variety of assimilation is the idealistic appeal to Americans to merge and become a new race and a new nation, different from any other in the world – the ideology of the melting pot.

Melting Pot

... America is God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming! ... Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians – into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American. (Zangwill, p. 33)

“The Melting Pot”, a play written by Israel Zangwill in 1908, describes the protagonist's euphoria for America as the land of the bright future. David Quixano, who is a young Russian-Jewish immigrant and composer, is obsessed with the idea that all immigrants who come to America will melt their cultures, traditions, and views into a single American identity, “perhaps the coming superman”.¹² He not merely sees the only hope for humankind in the New World because there, people can free themselves of the troubles and miseries of their homelands, but also because they can cease their ancient animosities and differences and become fused into a new, possibly superior nationality signifying the brotherhood of man through the combination of features that the immigrant groups brought along from variegated sources:

The pride and the prejudice, the dreams and the sacrifices, the traditions and the superstitions, the fasts and the feasts, things noble and things sordid – they must all into the Crucible. (Zangwill, p. 96)

For David, the crucible provides a wonderful solution to overcoming his terrible memories. (His whole family was slaughtered by the Czar regime because of their Jewish religion.) He is convinced that everybody can look forward to America as a place where neither Jews, nor other immigrants will be despised any more because every person living in the United States will be as much American as any other. In the end, David completes the composition of his vast symphony called “America”. With this music, he hopes to melt the souls of the immigrants. The symphony orchestra is a symbol for his vision of America: All the different instruments stand for the various immigrant groups and the wonderful symphony is the product of their contributions once they are united in the orchestra.

The process of American amalgamation is not assimilation or simple surrender to the dominant type, as is popularly supposed, but an all-round give-and-take by which the final type may be enriched or impoverished. (Zangwill, p. 203)

¹² Zangwill, p. 34.

Hence, the Zangwillian version of the melting pot stands for different peoples that come together and form the new American identity out of their distinctive peculiarities. Zangwill perceives the transformation of immigrants into Americans as positive both for the country and for the immigrants themselves. In his definition, melting pot clearly does not mean assimilation to Anglo-Saxon principles. When the play opened, the U.S. was in the middle of absorbing the largest influx of immigrants in its history – Irish and Germans, followed by Italians and East Europeans, Catholics and Jews – some 18 million new citizens between 1890 and 1920.¹³ “The Melting Pot” thus provided a model for America which was desperately needed in this period.

According to the theory of the melting pot, ideas and cultures of disparate nations are blended and welded into a new type of man. A metaphor for the melting pot expresses the assimilation in the following way: If you throw gold and silver coins into a crucible, you will receive a new alloy, but will not be able any more to identify what was originally gold and what was silver. It is the same with the immigrants: They should form the American population and their origins – Italian, English, or German – become unidentifiable. The amalgamation would lead to the creation of something new, better and superior because each group would give the best of itself to the crucible. Peter Freese has an equation for this position that he calls the “unconditional assimilation”: Everybody can come and participate in the American crucible where $a+b+c$ will lead to the development of d .¹⁴

The comparison of the United States with a melting pot was created by the French-born writer and agriculturist J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur in the late 18th century. According to this original melting pot concept, the United States was a country which provided people of different backgrounds and who aspired political and religious freedom as well as economic independence with the opportunity to become “Americans”, i.e. citizens with equal rights in a new nation. Connected to this was the expectancy that each group would contribute the positive traditions of their homelands to an independent American culture.

¹³ Cf. Booth, <http://washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/meltingpot/melt0222.htm>.

¹⁴ Cf. Freese, p. 24.

In contrast to the concept of Anglo-conformity, the melting pot philosophy does not think of the evolving American society as “a slightly modified England but rather as a totally new blend, culturally and biologically, in which the stocks and folkways of Europe, figuratively speaking, were indiscriminately mixed...”¹⁵ All European immigrant groups, whether they are from the northern, southern, eastern, or western parts of the continent, were equal, no group dominating and no group discriminated against. Features of every group could be absorbed and all could contribute to an emerging national character.

You simply melt right in,
It doesn't matter what your skin.
It doesn't matter where you're
from,
Or your religion, you jump right in
To the great American melting pot.
The great American melting pot.
Ooh, what a stew, red, white, and
blue.

Lovely Lady Liberty
With her book of recipes
And the finest one she's got
Is the great American melting pot
The great American melting pot.

When Lynn Ahrens naively suggests in her song “The Great American Melting Pot” that America, the “Lovely Lady Liberty”, welcomes everybody with open arms to the “great American melting pot” regardless of his or her race and ethnicity, these verses must sound very ironic especially to African-Americans. It does not matter if we take the melting pot definitions by Crèvecoeur, Zangwill, or most of the definitions by other people, it was the African-Americans and Indians that were never included.¹⁶ Most of the time it is spoken about the “... melting pot for the merging of various cultures of Europe...”¹⁷, but hardly ever of the cultures from Asia, Latin America, or South Ameri-

¹⁵ Gordon, p. 273.

¹⁶ Although Gordon argues that Blacks were included in Zangwill’s “Melting pot”, they were only mentioned once in passing (p. 184), while in all the other instances, Zangwill only speaks of the merging of European immigrants.

¹⁷ Gordon, p. 270.

ca.¹⁸ Of course, when the concept of the homogenizing model of the melting pot became popular, immigration from these parts of the world was rare. But what is the reason why Blacks, at the beginning, were not included into the reflection and later on also only by some authors and only to a very small degree?

Most of the immigrants came to America to earn more money and thus to attain a better standard of living, or as in David's case in Zangwill's drama, to flee persecution and oppression in their home country. Many were prepared or even strove to give up their mother tongue, some of their customs and clothing and thus, to get rid of their past, and to take on the way of speaking, attitudes, and other characteristics of the Americans (i.e. the immigrants that had arrived some decades before them). In contrast to the immigrants, African-Americans did not come of their own free will. They had not intended to leave their homes, let alone to give up their languages and cultural assets. But under the suppression of whites they were forced to surrender their original identity and did not have the place to realize their traditions, habits, and goals. Unlike the immigrants, Blacks could not contribute the best of their culture to the melting pot of the American society.

In the epilogue to his drama, Zangwill suggests that the only ethnic group in America that has no homeland is the Jews. But what is the homeland of the Blacks? There are several places where their ancestors came from, but since they were brought together to work on the plantations, Blacks today have no single African country that they can call their home. Therefore, it seems all the more important that Blacks are included in the melting pot. Furthermore, Zangwill says that Blacks will be integrated in the melting pot idea in the future. It seems though that he rather means that they will be assimilated to "immigrant America". He defends Blacks by saying that most things said about them are merely prejudices or rumors but still, he does not feel able "to deny that the prognathous face is an ugly and undesirable type of countenance or that it connotes a lower average of intellect and ethics, or that white and black are as yet too far apart for profitable fusion."¹⁹ He makes clear that he despises the outward appearance of African-Americans and that he does not welcome them very much to the crucible. But if he

¹⁸ An exception is Emerson's voice in Gordon, p. 274. He includes "Africans and Polynesians" in the melting pot idea.

¹⁹ Zangwill, p. 206.

wants to stick with his notion of the melting pot that he expressed in the play, Zangwill must let Blacks participate although he also suggests that they better build up their own state in Liberia or crowd together in the south of the United States.²⁰

Other reasons explaining why Blacks were not included in the conceptual model of the melting pot are similar to the ones already mentioned with respect to Anglo-conformity. African-Americans not only came from a continent other than Europe and their cultures varied much from European norms and values. But their exclusion was especially based on their phenotype and the motives that brought them to America, both of which were clearly different to the ones of the European immigrants. Because of the differences in outward appearance to the white race and because of their past, African-Americans were still heavily discriminated against even after the abolition of slavery.

Although the Negro at that time made up nearly one-fifth of the total population, his predominantly slave status, together with racial and cultural prejudice, barred him from serious consideration as an assimilable element of the society.
(Gordon, p. 269)

Blacks were regarded a unmeltable group, as not being assimilable to society, just as less as they were seen and treated as having equal rights as established Americans and newly arriving immigrants. It was mostly the latter that profited from the subordination of Blacks. For instance, from the middle of the 19th century on, free trained Black workers in the factories were replaced by white immigrants, especially from Ireland (themselves a group with a very low status in the U.S.). Whites tried everything to keep the position of Blacks as low as possible. Discrimination in the job and in most other spheres of life provided a burden that Blacks had to face additionally in contrast to most other minority groups.

Unlike the immigrants, African-Americans first had to establish their own identity. “Black is beautiful” articulated a common Black cultural basis, the creation of a joint culture, which was expressed, for example, in the typical Black music style – the jazz. Since they were only in the making of defining themselves as a unified section of the population, many Blacks stuck together in neighborhoods to facilitate the formation of

²⁰ Cf. Zangwill, p. 207.

an African-American culture and to protect themselves with the help of the community against racial attacks from the outside.

The chief argument for assimilation, both in the form of Anglo-conformity and the melting pot, is that the United States would be a stronger, more unified society if differences among its citizens were minimized. While this idea has a good intention, it did not work well at all. The melting pot philosophy actually planned that each ethnic or racial group gives the same amounts of its identity to the emerging American society. But in reality, there were some groups – mainly the WASPs - dominating others and therefore contributing more of their culture to the “American flavor” than minority groups. Furthermore, some nationalities like the Irish or the Germans, more quickly adapted to the prevailing American situation than other groups like the Chinese or Italians who were very attached to their cultural characteristics and not willing to give them up. Because of their low status and because they were despised by a large part of the population, many scholars did not even consider Blacks as having contributions worthy for America.

It cannot be denied that melting pot and Anglo-conformity led to the creation of an American society, but subordinated groups had to do without their culture because it was drowned by a dominant one. There was no homogeneous contribution of cultural features. The situation of African-Americans was particularly problematic because they did not have equal rights at that time but were faced with discrimination.

Cultural Pluralism

Many non-English immigrants who came to America created ethnic enclaves and looked forward to the preservation of at least some of their native cultural patterns. Their friends, relatives, and other countrymen who arrived later on were magnetically drawn into the safe haven of these enclaves which had their own social clubs, restaurants, burial and insurance societies, churches, and groceries, all serving their special needs. Here, the settlers sought to rebuild a society in which they could communicate in the familiar tongue and maintain familiar institutions. Moreover, the ethnic colonies were places of mutual aid and protection against the uncertainties of a strange and frequently hostile environment.

Thus cultural pluralism was a fact in American society before it became a theory – a theory with explicit relevance for the nation as a whole, and articulated and discussed in the English-speaking circles of American intellectual life. (Gordon, pp. 277 and 278)

In the last two decades of the 19th century, the influx of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe had begun. Most of them would remain in the urban areas of the country as the frontier was closed, and the expanding industrial economy demanded a lot of workers. Occasionally, a few educators or publicists protested the demands of the “Americanizers,” arguing that the immigrants had ancient and honorable cultures, and that these cultures had much to offer. In their views, America was to serve as an example of the harmonious cooperation of various heritages to a world inflamed by nationalism and war.²¹

But it was Horace Kallen that formulated the classic pluralist position which he named “cultural pluralism” and which posed an alternative to the assimilation concepts. In his idea, the different ethnic groups could maintain their cultural identities and liberalism, internationalism, and tolerance prevail. Peter Freese describes Kallen’s idea as: $a+b+c$ remains $a+b+c$.²² Kallen, an American Jew, was himself derivative of an ethnic background which was subject to the contemporary pressures for dissolution implicit in Anglo-conformity and the melting pot. In his two articles under the title of “Democracy versus the Melting-Pot” (1915), he vigorously rejected the usefulness of these theories as models of what was actually transpiring in American life or as ideals for the future. Rather he was impressed by the way in which the various ethnic groups in America were coincident with particular areas and regions, and with the tendency for each group to preserve its own language, religion, communal institutions, and ancestral culture. Besides, immigrants participated in the overall economic and political life of the nation, and have learned the English language and used it in general communication. The development of the United States of America, therefore, could be regarded as a development toward a cooperation of cultural diversities, or as a “commonwealth of national cultures”:

²¹ Cf. Gordon, p. 279.

²² Cf. Freese, p. 24.

Its form is that of the Federal republic; its substance a democracy of nationalities, cooperating voluntarily and autonomously in the enterprise of self-realization through the perfection of men according to their kind. The common language of the commonwealth, the language of its great political tradition, is English, but each nationality expresses its emotional and voluntary life in its own language, in its own inevitable aesthetic and intellectual forms. The common life of the commonwealth is politico-economic, and serves as the foundation and background for the realization of the distinctive individuality of each nation that composes it. Thus 'American civilization,' may come to mean the perfection of the cooperative harmonies of 'European civilization,' the waste, the squalor, and the distress of Europe being eliminated – a multiplicity in a unity, an orchestration of mankind. (Kallen, p. 92)

Kallen's view was posited on the belief that cultural groups were distinct, that individuals achieved their greatest sense of freedom and satisfaction to the extent that they were members of a cultural group, and that public policy should encourage national groups to flourish. In essence, the United States of America would be a better nation if it became a nation of nations.

In our time, the early Kallen concept of cultural pluralism is represented by the metaphor of a mosaic, a collection of separate stones linked together in a common project; the stones, however, are each distinct and relatively unchanging. (Ravitch, p. 139)

Another metaphor for the pluralist society except "orchestration of mankind" or mosaic, is the salad bowl: Just like the ingredients of a salad which have their own distinct flavor, but also contribute to the overall taste of the salad, the different ethnic groups with their versatile experiences and knowledge play a part in the development of the American society which is then shaped by cultural abundance. The distinct identities of the ethnic groups are preserved. It does not matter, which metaphor is taken, the important thing is that the connection of single parts leads to something new while leaving them distinguishable. The idea of supplementary and blending processes replaces the idea of the melting. According to cultural pluralism, it is important that children and grandchildren of immigrants but also of slaves are taught to be proud of their cultural heritage and the role it played in building the American nation. This would help non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants and Blacks to overcome their feeling of rootlessness as well as the sense of ethnic or racial inferiority that WASPs had sought to create. By clinging together and living in accordance with ancestral principles, the different groups would

be able to improve their self-esteem and become aware that they have also contributed to the American society valuable cultural traditions, values, lifestyles. Each culture had something to bring to the new pluralistic culture being created.

Thus, since Kallen articulated and promoted cultural pluralism, the United States has been departing from the time in which only the Anglo-Saxon set of values was accepted as the truthful way of living. Instead, it has entered a period in which values that represent other cultures will have to be accepted as values that are not “worse” than the WASP values, but different. The ethnocentric mind about the American society has altered into an polycentric one.

In recent years, the civic culture has also reassured us that it is praiseworthy to enjoy our ethnic diversity. We do not have to straighten our hair, change our names, shorten our noses, or discard our distinctive garb. (Ravitch, p. 143)

For the Black population, the pluralistic society as proposed by Kallen appears as an important progress to the concepts of assimilation. Subordination of a group as well as discrimination are banned in theory. It sounds as if it really would not matter any more where you come from, what your history is, what you look like. But Kallen’s “orchestration of mankind” more closely, it turns out that he, like the authors of the melting pot theories, only speaks of “the cooperative harmonies of ‘European civilization’”. Again, where is the reference to African-Americans and other groups that are not of European origin?

Multiculturalism

After World War II, the position of cultural pluralism became stronger, not least because of experiences overseas of the American soldiers, the growing interest in cultural achievements outside the mainstream culture, and new insights by the research on immigration. Marcus Lee Hansen conveyed the spirit of the time in what became known as Hansen’s law: “What the son of the immigrant is trying to forget, the grandson seeks to remember.” Now, America is to stand for cultural diversity with the etiquette of multi-ethnicity.

Particularly in the late 1960s, ethnicity became a hot issue in American life and politics. Cries for ethnic studies programs on college campuses, the proclamation of ethnic heritage days in cities, the formation of new ethnic organization, and political assertion that the melting pot would not and should not work were all manifestations of this new interest in ethnicity. The descendants of the new immigrants and the slaves had lost much, probably most, of the culture of their ancestors but still had some common bonds of religion, customs, political interest, and family and group life that held them together. In the 1960s, there was a resurgence of ethnicity. Neither the African-Americans, nor most other ethnic minorities felt part of WASP America, and now was the time to demand both recognition and celebration of their own backgrounds.²³ Since a peaceful change in cooperation with whites could not be attained, an increasing number of African-Americans were turning to a new approach to the racial issue: the philosophy of “Black power”. Black power suggested a shift away from the goal of assimilation and toward increased awareness of racial distinctiveness. The most enduring impact of this ideology was to instill racial pride in African-Americans who had been taught by their nation’s dominant culture to think of themselves as somehow inferior to whites. The political dimension of Black power was found in the civil rights movement. Traditional Black organizations that had emphasized cooperation with sympathetic whites – groups such as the NAACP and the Urban League – now faced competition from more radical groups. By the mid-1960, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and other groups were calling for more radical and occasionally even violent action against the racism of white society and were openly rejecting the approaches of older, more established Black leaders. Revolutionary organizations as the Black Panthers even appealed to Blacks to work for complete racial separation. Some other ethnic groups took the Black civil rights and Black nationalist movements as models for their own quest for group identity and emulated Black pressure-group tactics.

Older, European immigrant groups liked to believe that they had advanced in American society by adopting the values and accepting the rules of the world to which they had moved and advancing within it on its own terms. African-Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and others all challenged this assimilationist idea and advocated

²³ Cf. Dinnerstein and Reimers, pp. 150-156.

instead a culturally pluralist society, in which racial and ethnic groups would preserve not only a sense of their own heritage but also their own social and cultural norms.

To a large degree, they were successful. The recognition of the special character of particular groups became embedded in federal law through a wide range of affirmative action programs²⁴, which extended to Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, and others. Eventually, this impulse led to an even more assertive cultural movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s that became known as "multiculturalism", which especially challenged the "Eurocentric" basis of American education and culture and demanded that non-European civilizations be accorded equal attention. Universities and other educational institutions were reformed to embrace African-American, Asian-American, Latino-American, and other European ethnic authors, celebrations and perspectives; ethnic studies proliferated.

Although multiculturalism still means different things to different people, at its core is the effort to legitimize the cultural pluralism of the rapidly diversifying American population. That means acknowledging that "American culture," which had long been defined primarily by white males of European descent, also included other traditions: female, African-American, Indian, Hispanic, and Asian. Thus, multiculturalism is a:

Policy and philosophy promoting a vision of knowledge and experience that does not privilege any single group; usually directed against a Eurocentrism that defined history and values in reference to a Northern European experience in America. (McDonogh, Wong, p. 488)

The multicultural society aims at the reduction of the existing discrimination, rejects forced adaptation of different cultural conceptions and behavior patterns to one hegemonic culture and fosters the realization of the general notion of social and cultural pluralism as well as the recognition of the equality of all people and the keeping of human rights.

²⁴ Affirmative Action is a term from 1964 covering the whole complex of reforms seeking to establish equal chances of employment for ethnic and racial minorities and women.

“The quasi citizenship that characterized the black estate for so many generations will not work in the multicultural that is here and coming.”²⁵ C. Eric Lincoln denotes with “quasi citizenship” the status of the African-American population after the abolition of slavery: Under the law they were Americans, but especially in the south they were not treated as having the same rights as the rest of the Americans. Lincoln is convinced that this kind of status cannot be transferred to immigrants and will consequently not work in a multicultural society. Taken this, multiculturalism is a better concept for Blacks. Every citizen has equal rights in the multicultural society – immigrants, but also Blacks. They can exchange their status of quasi citizenship of the past with a “real” American citizenship.

Still, there are problems with multiculturalism. As the preservation of their cultural heritage is encouraged, people settle down where they find their social networks best established, i.e. in the region or quarter of the city where fellows of the same nationality can be found. What can happen now is that the different groups cut themselves off from the others. In many big American cities ethnic quarters like Chinatown or Little Italy have developed which are dominated by people of a particular nationality and which do not allow an approach to other cultures. Moreover, city boundaries often divide residential areas according to the skin color of the residents - lines of Black and white that are never crossed. Rivalry and jealousy can lead to racism, xenophobia, and violence.

The multicultural society is open to new immigrants. But this leads to a further drawback for the Black population. Many of these immigrants now compete with Blacks and often achieve higher social, economic, and racial status. For the poor African-Americans, as research indicates, immigration, particularly of Latinos with limited education, has led to increased joblessness, and frustration.²⁶

The rediscovery of the second heritage has contributed in our days to the controversy about multiculturalism. According to Freese²⁷, two main parties exist. The “revolutionary” bloc stresses the differences among the American people, fights against the

²⁵ Cf. Lincoln, p. 139.

²⁶ Cf. Booth.

²⁷ Cf. Freese, pp. 28 and 29.

mainstream culture and against English as the common language in the U.S. It promises the paradise of a “multicultural mosaic” of different races, religions, languages, and cultures existing next to each other having equal rights and without the determination of value. The “conservative” bloc, in contrast, despite the ethnic and religious differences stresses the common factors of the people. It promotes English as the obligatory language of the American nation. It holds the view that the society would only be able to survive if its members spoke a common language and recognize a core set of common values and behavior patterns. This bloc promotes what is called by some authors “dynamic pluralism.”

Dynamic Pluralism

More often than not, the neighborhoods where Americans live, the politicians and propositions they vote for, the cultures they immerse themselves in, the friends and spouses they have, the churches and schools they attend, and the way they view themselves are defined by ethnicity. The question is whether, in the midst of such change, there is also enough glue to hold Americans together. (Booth)

Characteristic of the multicultural society are separation and fragmentation. There are television sitcoms and movies that are considered Black or white, Latino or Asian. At some Western universities there are separate student organizations for Blacks, Latino-Americans and Asian-Americans. Rather than helping each other, the single groups often try to get as much resources as possible without sharing with other groups. Scholars worry about the loss of community and shared sense of reality among Americans.

But over the decades, the concept of cultural pluralism and its successor, the multiculturalism, have evolved into a tendency toward assimilation, not differentiation. The ways that groups interact and influence each other, Diane Ravitch calls “dynamic pluralism”:

... in contrast to a melting pot, it might be called a stir-fry or a lightly cooked stew, each ingredient seeping into the other while retaining its own flavor. Dynamic pluralism describes the ways that cultures blend and change each other. (Ravitch, p. 140)

This concept describes a society with different ethnic and racial groups which on the one hand, have kept their own cultural identity and on the other, overlap with other cultures. Dynamic pluralism is probably the concept best to describe the general situa-

tion in the United States. Like multiculturalism, it covers every ethnic and racial group in America. Blacks are incorporated as well as whites, Asians, Latinos, and Native Americans. But multiculturalism is static insofar as it does not allow overlapping of cultures. It demands that each group sticks to its cultural patterns. Dynamic pluralism is more progressive and open since it gives everybody the freedom to choose for himself or herself what he or she wants to be and wants to do. You can be a Jew, be married to an Indian woman, love eating pizza and hamburgers, and listening to rap music. Everything is possible, maybe because dynamic pluralism seems to be the American reality rather than a model for the American reality. Dynamic pluralism also is the concept that is most beneficial for the African-American population. There is no pressure to assimilate or to surrender culture and identity, no “quasi-citizenship” or isolation in ghettos.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Millions of European immigrants assimilated to the prevailing conditions of life in America for generations. Still, the theory of the melting pot did not work out because ethnic and racial groups had different influences on forging the American society. Anglo-conformity became the guiding principle for many years because the established Americans had no intention of opening up their primary group life to entrance by the hordes of the alien newcomers. The non-WASP immigrants, on the other hand, needed the comfort of the communal institutions that they found in the “ethnic enclaves. But domination of the larger groups over minorities and lack of willingness of many groups to surrender their identities in favor of a common one, eventually resulted in the failure of the melting pot.

Blacks did not fit in the assimilation theories. Their starting position, their convictions, and cultural patterns were fundamentally different from the situation of the immigrants. Dark complexion and preceding slavery exposed African-Americans to discrimination. Many whites were of the opinion that African-Americans were not a group deserving inclusion in the melting pot.

Cultural pluralism can be regarded as the counter-concept to assimilation. It celebrates the cultural and social diversity of the nation. Multiculturalism developed mainly out of civil rights struggles of minority groups and is a symbol for the shift from a so-

ciety ruled and shaped by European immigrants to one that is equally open to Asian-Americans, Latinos, Indians, and Blacks. In theory, the multicultural society gives Blacks the chance to enjoy the same rights as the larger society. However, the society fractures into many separate, disconnected communities with no shared sense of commonality or purpose. Separation fosters rivalry, and fights over resources among the various ethnic and racial groups. African-Americans who have not succeed in climbing up the social ladder, are frustrated about immigrants better off than themselves and their situation often deteriorates.

There seems to be no instant recipe for a successful model since the fascinating vision of the melting pot has proved an equally unsolvable myth as the new promise of the multicultural mosaic. Maybe, dynamic pluralism serves best the needs of an immigrant country since it was not a created model but developed from the observation of the recent trend of overlapping cultures in the United States. It is best described as a middle ground, a mixture of multiculturalism and notions of assimilation, at least to a shared civic culture and a common language. Thus, dynamic pluralism promotes interaction with other groups granting everybody the same opportunities.

Over the centuries and decades, the notion has caught on that America is not just another place of Western civilization but a place that is unique because in only a few other countries can be found so many different cultures from all over the world criss-crossing. Currently, there are ethnic and racial groups in the American society whose descent seems to completely blurred, while one would not know that others live in America and not in their original home country. Although dynamic pluralism seems to be most widespread in America, Diane Ravitch argues, that all concepts have their validity and can be found in everyday life in the U.S. They do not exclude each other, rather they coexist.

An American citizen today can at one and the same time be assimilated in some facets of his or her life (for example, at work or at college); can be a member of a vigorous ethnic culture; and can be a participant in dynamic pluralism who happily enjoys the products of other cultural groups. Americans do not choose among these ways of living; most move easily from one mode to another or live simultaneously in several. (Ravitch, p. 140)

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