

The Theory of Segmented Assimilation



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Overview

- What is Assimilation v. Integration, Incorporation
 - Normative v. Descriptive v. Explanatory
- Critiques of Segmented Assimilation
 - It's Not True! Melting Pot Endures
 - It's More Complicated Than That!
 - It's True, But the Explanation Is Wrong
- What Is the Explanation of Segmented Assimilation?



Constructing Definitions

- Everything is vague to a degree you do not realize,
- Until you have tried to make it precise.
- Bertrand Russell

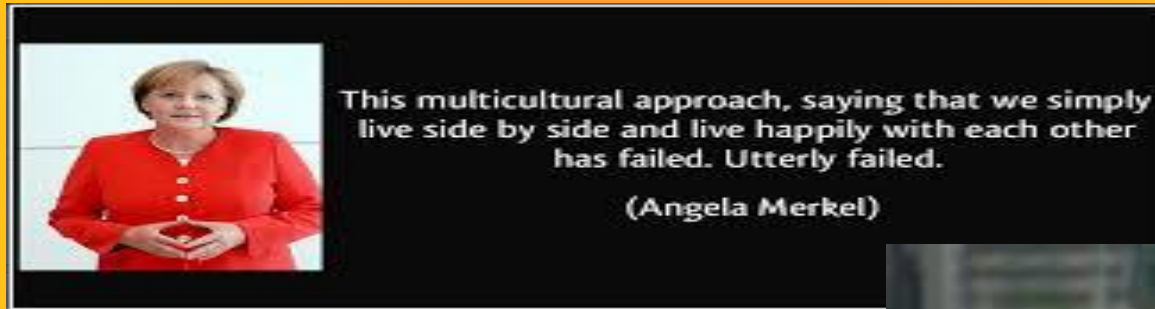


Defining Assimilation

- Normative v. Descriptive Critical Distinction
 - Popular Discourse is Normative or Ideological



Political Discourse



- Emphasizes problems, implies that those who are problematic are the norm, representative of the whole
- Scapegoats
- Alleged failures of multiculturalism, integration policies
- Cultural Essentialism—religion—
 akin to racism (not biological)
- Assimilation or banishment



Academic Perspective Assimilation & Integration, Incorporation as Empirical

– Integration descriptive,
empirical

- Incorporation

– American Academic
Discourse: Assimilation
is Descriptive

- Park & Burgess 1920s
- Gordon 1960s
- Alba and Nee turn of 21st C



Variations on a Theme

- Salad bowl, pizza
- Become Similar to versus
- Becoming a part of , intercultural



Similar or Different, What Do You Mean?

- Culture
 - Language, Values
 - Berry's Primary Focus
- Social Relations
 - Residential, Work, Friends, Marriage
 - Segregation or Integration
- Educational Attainment
- Occupation & Income



Segmented Assimilation

Portes & Colleagues

- Simple Idea that Contained Complexity and Generated Controversy
- **Remember this is Descriptive, not Normative**
- Simple Version:
 - Not all 2nd Generation immigrants are the same



Segmented
Assimilation
Elaborated



Berry's
reference
primarily to
culture

Separation
Marginalization

Assimilation

Selective
Acculturation
Integration



Two Critiques of Segmented Assimilation

- It's Not True!
 - Although obstacles, “everyone” eventually assimilates into mainstream
 - Alba and Nee
 - Waldinger and Perlmann
 - It's more complicated than that: Vertovec's Superdiversity and too much variation to capture
- Is the Glass Half-Empty or Half-Full; Does the description capture some meaningful variation?



What Does the Data Say?

- Not all immigrants are alike
 - In spite of populist backlash declaiming “Immigrants” are _____
- Variation by National Origin (parental education, class), Country of Residence (Nordic generally better), Neighborhood
- Individual Variation, too
 - **Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please (1852)**

Miami

2nd Generation Educational Attainment

| highest degree or year of school completed | Cuban Private | Cuban Public | Nicaraguan | Colombian | Haitian | West Indian--Jamaican |
|--|---------------|--------------|------------|-----------|---------|-----------------------|
| Drop Out H.S; | | 4.9% | 4.9% | 2.6% | 3.1% | 5.0% |
| Graduate H.S. | 8.1% | 16.8% | 20.8% | 13.9% | 11.3% | 12.6% |
| 1 or 2 years post-H.S. vocational | 9.6% | 22.7% | 18.6% | 27.2% | 24.7% | 20.1% |
| Finish 2-year-College or vocational | 10.4% | 11.4% | 12.8% | 11.9% | 14.4% | 8.2% |
| 3 + years of University | 23.7% | 18.5% | 19.9% | 16.6% | 24.7% | 19.5% |
| Graduate University | 34.8% | 17.4% | 15.9% | 19.9% | 16.5% | 22.0% |
| Begin Graduate | 9.6% | 5.3% | 4.4% | 6.6% | 4.1% | 9.4% |
| Master's | 3.7% | 1.8% | 1.3% | .7% | | 1.3% |

IMMIGRANTS

Berry's
reference to
only culture
and social
relations

Separation
Marginalization

Segmented Assimilation

Assimilation

15-20%

UPWARD
Compared
to parents

Integration

WORKING
CLASSES

70-75%

DOWNWARD,
LOWER
CLASS

10%

Segmented Assimilation The Complex Version A Cultural Adaptation

- Emphasized cultural identity and upward mobility
- Immigrant Model
- Selective Acculturation: emphasis on education and parental respectability





Second Critique



- It's true, but the explanation is wrong
 - Segmented Assimilation reminiscent of Oscar Lewis's Culture of Poverty
 - Also, recalls Ogbu's early work contrasting voluntary migrants and "involuntary" migrants
- Style v. substance
 - Opposition of "all" adolescents

Explanation for Segmented Assimilation

- Structure (as opposed to Culture)
- Parental SES
 - Cuban Private Schools in Miami



Sweden v. Germany v. US

Co-Ethnic Community

- Enclave, Co-Ethnic Solidarity
 - Cross-Class Solidarity
 - Sharing Cultural & Social Capital



Assimilation/Integration as Description

- Descriptive Assimilation, Integration largely taking place

15-20%

- Some Upward

UPWARD

- Some Downward

10%

DOWN
WARD

- Most in the Middle

70-75%

WORKING CLASSES
(generally better than parents)

Revised, Limited Formulation of Segmented Assimilation

- Not Culture
- Context of Reception—welcome v. rejection
- The Upwardly Mobile: Immigrant Success Story
 - Legal Status, Access to Quality Education
 - High parental SES
 - Co-ethnic community that shares resources
- Downward Mobility
 - No Legal Status, Unequal Education
 - 3% Chinese, 20% Black Immigrants in Miami
- Little attention to the vast middle
 - Better than Immigrant Parents, but at or below Natives

Explanation of Assimilation/Integration

- Revised Segmented Assimilation
 - Inner City Minority Youth Culture **not** determinative
- Parental SES, often reflected in National Origin Differences
- Context of Reception: National, plus School and Neighborhood Climates

**WHAT DO
YOU
THINK?**