# Paradigms of American Identity: and the Struggle for a More Authentic Self

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## Abstract

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Three paradigms of identity are discussed in an exploration of how national identities as well as individual identities are formed. How important is it to participate in or identify with a "culture of origin" or transcend a "culture of origin" and create your own? What does it mean to be "authentic"? An assimilation paradigm is explored in an historical context for its effects on immigrants to the U.S. and Native Americans, its impact for establishing a core national identity, and the ensuing dominant hegemony of what is required to be an "American." Multiculturalism is explored as a reaction to the flawed assimilation paradigm. Both paradigms are problematic in their expectations that individuals will fit into a mold that is untrue of them. Finally, the concept of cosmopolitanism is discussed as a viable solution to the other two limiting paradigms. Research includes perspectives from cultural theorists such as Charles Taylor, Lionel Trilling, Stuart Hall, and others that have contributed to findings in identity formation. Personal experience and a search to better understand personal identity inspired this research. Culture, worldviews, beliefs, values, historical experiences, and complexities of national and international influences are key elements of cultural discourse that will guide future studies.

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# Introduction

## Brief Overview

I grew up under the assumption that I had "lost my culture." According to members of Native American tribes and members of the dominant culture, it was assumed that I was somehow less than adequate or, missing an important piece. I questioned my identity and culture and wondered if I was truly missing something. I knew that I was a Native American from a tribe in South Dakota, but these assumptions of others left me wondering who I was and where I belonged.

As a child growing up in the foster care system, I lost touch with family members and my "culture of origin." I grew up in white family foster homes. I was placed in foster care before the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA) was enacted. The ICWA was designed to protect Indian children by ensuring the child is placed in a home that reflects unique Native American values, so the child would not "lose his or her cultural ties."

These prevailing assumptions and my resulting discomfort led to a growing desire to learn more about how one creates an identity and in which culture I should participate. I focus my research on the exploration of the importance of cultures and how individual identity is formed. I begin with a brief discussion of my research questions and relevant personal experiences. The main body of the thesis explores what cultural theorists say about how paradigms of assimilation and multiculturalism have shaped individual identities as well as a national identity. These paradigms will be put in historical context. Negative and positive aspects of both paradigms will be examined. Finally, I will explore the concept of cosmopolitanism, as a viable "ideal" in individual identity formation. In this final chapter, I include a discussion on the notion of "authenticity."

# Research Questions

How important is it to participate in or identify with a "culture of origin"? Is it possible to transcend your "culture of origin" and create your own? What are the consequences for those who distance themselves from their "culture of origin" but nevertheless do not assimilate into the dominant culture? How does one become "authentic" in the eyes of others? How does one come to a sense of "authenticity" for oneself? I embarked on this journey to research what cultural theorists had to say, both to address these questions and to better understand my personal identity.

The central theoretical questions in the literature on identity are: To what extent are individuals active agents in their own lives, or actively constructing their own identities? And to what extent is their agency constrained by social structures over which they have no control? Charles Taylor (1994) claims that human beings are unique, self-creating, and creative individuals but should not be confused with "atomistic" individuals who create their identities and pursue their ends independently of each other. In Taylor's book, *Multiculturalism*, he refers to John Stuart Mill and Ralph Waldo Emerson who recognized that people are "culture-bearing" and those cultures differ depending on their past and present identifications. [1] Taylor asserts that the uniqueness of individuals results from how we relate to each other, interact, reflect upon, modify our own cultural heritage, and others with whom we have contact. Taylor claims that our identity is created, dialogically, meaning in response to others including our conversations; individual identity is partly constituted by a collection of dialogues. A self is always a self in relation to others. The question then, is how dialogues are themselves structured into accepted

[1] Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 6.

and prevailing discourses governed by paradigms? The related question is how such paradigms shape individual and collective identity formation?

This thesis explores the intersection between agency and social structure in the development of one's identity. According to Kathleen J. Fitzgerald (2007) agency does not refer to the intentions people have in doing things, but rather to their capability of doing those things. Understanding agency in this way already suggests the power of social structures. [2] Thus, even though, as will be seen, self-creation is an "ideal" toward which I am personally striving. This "ideal" does not pretend or rely upon a concept of individual freedom to choose any identity. There is no "self" outside of culture.

In this thesis I will show how Taylor, Trilling, Hegel and other scholars believe that the individual identities people assume are acquired largely through affiliation. I will now turn to a brief discussion of personal experience and challenges in assuming an identity. This will be followed by an examination of the paradigms that are the basis for identity construction.

## Personal Experience

Placement in foster homes from the age of ten is an example of a social structure over which I had no control. My heritage was denied to me as a child due to structural constraints. My socio-historical location informs my past experiences. Foster care consisted of a series of homes where my life was structured around school, church, and activities such as Girl Scouts, church choir, 4-H, Bible schools and Bible camps. The foster families usually consisted of a mother and father figure, one or two of their own children, or sometimes no children, usually because the foster parents were elderly.

[2] Kathleen J. Fitzgerald, *Beyond White Ethnicity, Developing a Sociological Understanding of Native American Identity Reclamation.* New York: Lexington, 2007, 26.

Relationships with children, primarily of the "dominant" culture, and group membership held the most significance for me. I centered my identity on the social relationships created from the activities of the institutions in my given situation. Most of the relationships I developed through childhood were with friends who seemed oblivious to our racial differences. However, there were some who through childish pranks revealed a tendency towards racism and discrimination by their reactions in different situations. It was during these times that I wished to be "one of them"—a white person. It was through these incidences that my difference became more salient.

As I grew older, the struggle to know who I was and where I belonged became even more profound. In my adolescent years I had very strong emotions which included insecurities about not fitting in. I felt isolation and depression, which became a part of being me. When Native Americans and members of the "dominant" culture learned of my background and being raised in white foster homes, they both assumed that I had "lost my culture."

The assumption that I had "lost my culture" by both groups (Native American and the "dominant"—Caucasian—group) led me to believe that somehow I was inadequate or not quite whole. During my years of struggle in attempting to form an identity and searching for whether I belonged to a particular culture, I continued to participate in a group identified by their faith in God, the church. I found myself in a situation in which certain kinds of dialogue were prominent. Charles Taylor asserts that a feature of human life is its fundamental "dialogical" character which is needed in defining identity through the use of language. [3] The language of others helps to shape our identity but not language alone. We are expected to form our own opinions and an outlook through a considerable degree of solitary reflection. The nature of the culture or teachings of the church provided me with profound insight into who I am in my quest to discover self and truth.

[3] Taylor, C., 32.

Stanley J. Grenz (2000) claims that culture can provide insight into faith, but my experiences demonstrate that faith has provided insight into culture. According to Grenz, current discoveries about the process of human identity formation can make us aware of the multitude of dimensions entailed in the new identity of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit), which seeks to create in us through our oneness with Christ. [4]

In other words, as I struggled with these questions of identity, I found a more secure and affirming identity in being authentic, being true to myself and my own originality albeit, an "originality" shaped dialogically within my religious community. This is something that only I can articulate and discover. My quest for a more "authentic" self is dialogical. The heart of my Christian community is an embrace of a self that becomes more "revealed" and "authentic" and true contra-convention. This experience provided me with critical tools and a foundation for a security of self which in turn enabled me to achieve a critical distance from conventional expectations about who I should be.

In my research, I found excerpts from different authors in several books who wrote ideas similar to passages found in the Bible. Charles Taylor (1994) mentions moral importance as a contact with our inner nature, which is in danger of being lost because of outward conformity. Taylor claims that not only should we not mold our lives to the demands of external conformity, but we cannot find the model by which to live outside of ourselves, it is only found within. [5] Taylor's emphasis on outward conformity and a model to live by only found within, is written in Romans 12: 2, which states, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the

[4] Stanley J. Grenz, "What Does Hollywood Have to do with Wheaton? The Place of Pop Culture in Theological Reflection." *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society,* no. 2 (2000): 306.

[5] Taylor, C, 30.

renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." [6]

My faith in God has been a journey in itself, but has provided me with the best outcome for an understanding of who I am, where I belong, and what is expected of me. Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many others are storytellers who pass on spiritual knowledge. Knowledge that instills values helps me to realize my self-potential, instills a sense of well-being, helps me to feel connected, to know that I have a higher purpose, helps me to embrace compassion, forgiveness, humility, vulnerability, tolerance, and respect, to reflect ethical and spiritual values, helps to discover or rediscover the source of compassion and integrity, encourages a "mind of reflection," helps to awaken a higher consciousness that changes the way that I interact with others, incorporates individual and personal development in a time of uncertainty, and to exude character.

Appiah (2005) claims the measure of my life depends on my life's aims, as specified by me, and the shape of my life is up to me. [7]

## Problematic Paradigms and a Viable Concept

### Assimilation

In this thesis I will discuss three paradigms that lie at the center of American identity formation: 1) assimilation, 2) multiculturalism, and, 3) cosmopolitanism. I will demonstrate how each of these paradigms poses significant problems for authentic identity formation. Cosmopolitanism, I will argue provides a way out of these problems.

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[6] Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 1374.

[7] K. A. Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 32.

Chapter one examines assimilation. I will discuss core elements of assimilation as a paradigm for American identity formation, core elements for what constitutes being an American, and "voluntary" assimilation as it applies to immigrants during the 19th century. I will also consider the cultural sources and values that have historically dominated the assimilation "ideal." I will also discuss racial and ethnic prejudices that have shaped and constrained the assimilation model. Finally, I will discuss forced assimilation as it as it applies to Native Americans during the 19th century, and its limits due to racial and ethnic barriers.

"Voluntary" assimilation has been occurring over the course of U.S. history. The prevailing paradigm has served to unify the expanding population of the U.S. The concept of assimilation whether as noun or verb, outcome or process, conflates elements that are both, descriptive and prescriptive, empirical and ideological, ethnographic and ethnocentric. Ruben Rumbaut (1997) asserts that on one hand, assimilation seems simple enough as an outcome of adaption to new environments, i.e. "learning the ropes" and "fitting in," a process through which "they" become like "us." Another definition from Rumbaut describes assimilation as a process of fusion in which persons or groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other groups, and by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life. But, on the other hand, it takes on another meaning, one that is value laden with arrogant presumptions of ethnic superiority and inferiority and with bitter baggage of the past and the politics of the present. [8]

An exploration of "voluntary" assimilation will show how practices and policies are implemented to "Americanize" immigrants and how they are expected to conform to an Anglo-American mold. This section will show how this becomes problematic for immigrants who

[8] Ruben G. Rumbaut, "Paradoxes (and Orthodoxies) of Assimilation," *Sociological Perspectives,* no. 3 (1997): 485-487.

experience discrimination and racism and are pressured to make choices in terms of identity and group loyalty.

## Forced Assimilation

Forced assimilation is introduced as a means for understanding how the dominant Anglo-American culture was utilized as a weapon in the colonization and conquest of Native Americans and their lands. This section will demonstrate how assimilation policies were forced upon Native Americans and how those policies had negative as well as positive effects for them.

The term, assimilation, is tarred with the knowledge that an Anglo-conformist demand was hidden within it, like an ideological Trojan Horse, specifically when used in reference to the Native Americans. Nation-building for America began with "civilizing" the natives by targeting the Indian family through forced removal of their children and placing them in government-run boarding schools. A history of government policies to assimilate the Indian is discussed to give understanding of how Native Americans have been negatively impacted by these policies.

The chapter will conclude with a discussion of economic, social, and cultural limitations experienced by minorities and immigrants due to racial barriers. Race was socially constructed to help identify a population that Europeans and white Americans have classified as different from themselves on the basis of certain characteristics, skin color, hair, and the shape of the face. The "other" is treated with derision based on a false belief that these characteristics somehow made them inferior and were the cause of behavioral and cultural traits that the dominant group used to justify their separation, exclusion, and exploitation.

## Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a term that encompasses a more explicit political dimension. I will discuss it as a demand for recognition from hitherto devalued and marginalized groups. The term, multiculturalism, is similar to the concept of cultural pluralism. Cultural pluralism is an opposing perspective to the assimilation paradigm. It entertains the idea that numerous ethnicities can co-exist without threatening the dominant culture. The second chapter focuses on multiculturalism and includes a discussion of its inception as a movement stemming from the 1960's and the civil rights movement.

The political character of multiculturalism is premised on an understanding that historically, there have been conscious efforts made to eradicate or marginalize the cultures of racial minorities. According to Fitzgerald (2007) these efforts were applied by weakening of the Native American culture through education of the youth at boarding schools, the erasure of African American culture during slavery, and current attacks on the Latino culture exemplified by the "English Only" movement. [9]

Multiculturalism is a reaction to assimilation, certainly to its forced forms but also to the implicit coercion of so-called "voluntary" assimilation. Discussion of the multiculturalism paradigm includes its general characteristics, how it represents a political and cultural challenge to the assimilationists, and what cultural theorists say about the notion of authenticity. A brief discussion is included of how multiculturalism is specific to Native American identity politics which includes the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the assimilation paradigm and the multiculturalism paradigm can be problematic in assuming an authentic identity. A discussion of culture and identity would not be complete without a key concept, that of cosmopolitanism.

[9] Fitzgerald, 52.

## Cosmopolitanism

The concept of cosmopolitanism is the focus of the third and final chapter. There is no clear definition of what the concept of cosmopolitanism means. However, there are several contributions for theoretical presumptions. Appiah (2005) asserts the Stoic, Marcus Aurelius, referred to a "world-city" in his book, *Meditations.* Man's citizenship in this world-city referred to the universe and reflected a sense of spiritual rather than a political unity. Aurelius claims that to the philosopher, the universe is the "city of God." [10]

My discussion on cosmopolitanism will show how it may be a viable solution to the flawed and limiting paradigms of assimilation and multiculturalism in constructing an authentic identity. In this chapter, I will discuss cultural theorists who use the concept of authenticity. Taylor (1994) claims that a dialogical self, with its own way of being, and through its development, must fight against the family, organized religion, society, the school, the state, and all the forces of convention to be true to self. [11]

Through an exploration of assimilation and multiculturalism paradigms, I have been able to achieve an understanding of how cultures and identities are formed by institutions of racism and a dominant culture and society. Both paradigms are problematic in that they expect an individual to conform to their way of "being." In other words, in essence each paradigm advocates a "superior" way of living and "being."

In doing this research, I hope to show how assimilation and multiculturalism are used to create a national identity as well as an individual identity. I include a discussion of historical processes that helped to establish the core culture's norms, values, and mores which have defined

[10] Appiah, "The Ethics of Identity," 32.
[11] Taylor, 30.

the American polity. The core culture has generally presented the standards for all those who have subsequently come, or were brought, or were later incorporated into the U.S.

I hope to show how multiculturalism, as a reaction to assimilation, began as an identity forming prospect for various minority groups and a rejection of the "melting pot" as the proper path towards national integration.

Finally, I hope to show how cosmopolitanism can be a solution to the problematic assimilation and multiculturalism paradigms in the formation of individual identity and in a process of becoming "authentic." Cosmopolitanism holds that all persons stand in certain moral relations to one another, respect for one another. In my search for a better understanding of my own identity, I realize the gains in cultivating the virtues of cosmopolitanism by attaining a measure of freedom in shaping my own life and doing something useful for the common good.

## The Assimilation Paradigm

In this chapter, I present the promises and perils of assimilation experienced by immigrants and Native Americans. An historical overview provides an entry point to better understand the processes of assimilation, both voluntary and forced, for each group. I examine how the assimilation paradigm has helped to create the American national identity. I will also examine how the idea of "race" has been an essential component of that paradigm and through it the construction of "Americaness."

America has always attracted individuals from abroad to lend their intellect and labor to the process of a growing nation. Immigrants are pushed out of their homeland by political events and economic hardships and are then pulled by America's demand for labor as well as desire for a better life. Some immigrants have assimilated relatively easily into the dominant culture, while others have experienced difficulties in finding acceptance into the core group, which is established as "Anglo-Saxon." An example of this is the experience of Southern and Eastern Europeans who found their acceptance hindered due to a racialized notion of "real Americans" being from British stock.

I will also explore the process of forced assimilation to show the historical trauma suffered by the Native Americans in the 19th century. Nation building for America began with "civilizing" the natives and targeting the Indian family by forcible removal of their children, thereby breaking up the family. Research (Lori Graham, 2008) shows that despite the government's attempt at producing a complete metamorphosis of Indians, Native American culture survived. [12]

[12] Lori M. Graham, "Reparations, Self-Determination, and the Seventh Generation," *Harvard Human Rights Journal,* no. 22 (2008), 52.

The final section of this chapter is an exploration of privilege and power that has been extended to the dominant group for centuries. It examines the exclusion of the "other" due to racial differences. Further, I explore how the dominant group creates these differences to enforce the assimilation paradigm.

## Voluntary Assimilation

America's cultural transformation began with settlers who came primarily from England and established a society influenced by the English motherland. The English impregnated the "new" nation with their laws and with important elements of their political traditions and made their language the standard. [13] The "Founding Fathers" created a democratic republic, with governing institutions designed to make it durable. When a national identity first emerged, the dominant culture provided the core criteria: English speaking, white, Protestant and Anglo-Saxon.

The ideal was that American culture was to remain Anglo-Saxon. The white native-born Americans of Anglo-American parentage controlled public and private institutions and set the tone for manners and morals. By 1790, Anglo-American culture, though still evolving, had achieved dominance. [14] This dominance would soon be challenged due to the influx of an array of non-English peoples, who came to or were included in the American population as a result of: conquest, colonialism, the slave trade, territorial acquisition, and migration. The country included a mixture of many cultures including Dutch, French, Spanish, German, Scottish, and Irish. They entered an English-based culture and were expected to operate within it.

America has experienced three massive waves of migration: from the 1840's through the 1850's, from the late 1890's to World War I, and after 1965. In the first wave, immigrants helped

[13] Thomas Archdeacon, *Becoming American, An Ethnic History,* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), 24-25.
[14] Archdeacon, 25.

populate the interior of America.[15] It is estimated between 35 million to 50 million immigrants came to the United States from Europe between 1820 and 1920; many were Italians and Jews.

The first two waves of immigrants came when the United States was transitioning from an agrarian society to that of an industrial one. Immigrants provided an abundant supply of cheap labor that helped the United States to make the transition. Based on their ethnic origin usually from eastern and southern Europe, immigrants were perceived by the mostly Anglo-American population to be inferior, menacing, and unable to assimilate. As a result, they experienced discrimination, politically, socially, and economically.

According to Margot K. Mendelson (2010) an underlying use of an immigration system was to safeguard America against the influx of undesirables.[16] George W. Streich (2009) described undesirables as those with various forms of social degeneracy—feeblemindedness, insanity, crime, epilepsy, tuberculosis, alcoholism, and dependency. [17] Toward the end of the 19th century, the eugenics movement began to take hold in the popular mind. Eugenicists were convinced that heredity determined almost all of a person's capacities and genetic inferiority predisposed men and women to crime, poverty, and sickness. They argued that by encouraging reproduction of the fit and discouraging reproduction of the unfit would ease social ills. The movement's aim was to sway the government's allowance of undesirables to enter the country as immigrants. [18]

During the late19th and early 20th century, Americans aggressively promoted the idea of assimilation also called "Americanization." The U.S. motto, *E. Pluribus Unum*, whose Latin meaning, "from many, one" has influenced an assimilation paradigm. Immigrants were

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[15] Archdeacon, 174.

[16] Margot K. Mendelson, "Constructing America: Mythmaking in U.S. Immigration Courts," *Yale Law Journal*, 119 (2010): 1021.

[17] George W. Streich, "Discourse of American National Identity: Echoes and lessons from the 1910s-1920s," *Citizenship Studies*, 13 (2009): 275.

[18] Archdeacon, 161.

encouraged to become citizens by complying with three simple steps: One was to accept English as the national language; the second was to take pride in American identity and believe in America's democratic principles; and the third was to live by a Protestant ethic and be hard-working, self-reliant, and morally upright. [19] English tradition set the tone for early American principles. Lionel Trilling (1971) explains how the work ethic in England during the 19th century had great power over the English mind. Tasks cheerfully completed figured as the principle of civilization, and in one's personal life, working hard was the principle that instilled pride and sincerity. Sincerity was considered to be a defining quality of the English character. One who accepts his class status as a given and necessary condition of life, is sincere beyond question, which means he is authentic. [20]

A common language is a powerful force for the promotion of cultural unity. Faith in the American ideology of liberal principles and institutions also promotes civic unity and National pride. To further promote the English language and promote the assimilation of immigrants, the public school system began as a movement in 1785. In addition to standardizing the language, it also aimed to instill knowledge and civic virtue. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the school system curricula were designed to acculturate immigrants to common values and demands of society, teach fluency and literacy of the English language, and establish norms of conduct, expectations, and attitudes. According to Streich, assimilationists sought to close down schools and newspapers that served immigrant groups in their native language (e.g. Polish, Japanese, or German). Hyphenated identities were seen as threats because assimilationists viewed American identity as simultaneously political and cultural. [21]

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[19] Peter D. Salins, *Assimilation, American Style.* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 5-6.
[20] Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971): 111-112, 115.
[21] Streich, 273.

The phrase, "melting pot" is yet another way of showing the importance of assimilation. The metaphor was first introduced in the early 20th century by Israel Zangwill's 1908 play of the same name. The "melting" became associated with an antithetical, conformist impulse to melt the peculiarities of immigrants in order to pour the liquid into pre-existing molds created in the self-image of the Anglo-Protestants who claimed prior possession of America. [22] The metaphor was used to imply two things: each new immigrant's cultural contribution would be placed in a boiling pot to "melt" and would produce with all other ethnicities and cultures, a new national "alloy." Secondly, the base of the melting pot would be made up of natives and their cultural characteristics, blended beyond recognition, so that every piece of metal taken from the pot would have the same composition.

Assimilationism demands a common core identified by three main features: adherence to core principles and behaviors, rejection of racialized group consciousness, and rejection of cultural equity among groups. Assimilationism ranks various cultures. Upward mobility for the individual is considered beneficial but demands for equality are considered a threat. Groups are required to follow standards that they had no share in creating and may not like, even if the standards are presented as the core of freedom. [23]

## Forced Assimilation

The assimilation paradigm had a tacit essentialism, the Anglo-Protestant 'ideal' that immigrants were expected to acquire. The cultural mandate is to rid oneself of immigrant ways and become a "true American." A general assumption expected that immigrants as well as Native Americans would assimilate over time. Those individuals who do not absorb the culture

[22] David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America, Beyond Multiculturalism*, (New York: Basic Books, 1995): 92-93.
[23] Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield, eds., *Mapping Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996): 83-86.

and adopt the ways of their neighbors and fellow citizens are soon regarded as "outsiders." The stranger is different in dress, speech, manners, politics, religion, and attitudes. This challenges and threatens accepted codes and becomes an object of suspicion, or a target for hostility.

Between 1900 and 1930, over 18.6 million people immigrated to the U.S., most coming from southern and Eastern Europe. [24] Industrialists and business leaders welcomed the new workers who were needed to help aid in the nation's rush into industrial expansion. On the other hand, many political and civic leaders felt threatened that the new immigrants would degrade American language, politics, and culture. According to Mirel, in 1909, a Stanford University professor, Ellwood Cubberley, a prominent educational leader, described the new immigrants as, "largely illiterate, docile, often lacking in initiative, and almost wholly without the Anglo-Saxon conceptions of righteousness, liberty, law, order, public decency, and government." Cubberley and other members of his group of educators believed the solution to the problem was to assimilate them as quickly as possible into the American life and culture. [25]

Immigrants had to learn to speak English, learn to think of themselves as Americans rather than as members of distinct ethnic groups, proclaim that individualism was one of America's greatest character traits, be loyal to American political values, and learn patriotism through an interpretation of history that stressed America's triumphs and ignored its faults.

According to Mirel, aggressive assimilation sought to wash away all traces of the immigrant's past. Some of the most violent hate groups in U.S. history, most notably the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) promoted this change and asserted that only white Protestants should be a part of the American body politic. They argued that groups such as Blacks, Asians, Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, or Jews could never be educated or acculturated enough to be made into

[24] Jeffrey Mirel, "Civic Education and Changing Definitions of American Identity, 1900-1950," *Educational Review*, 54 (2002): 144.
[25] Mirel, 145.

"real Americans." Furthermore, Native Americans were thought of as "outsiders" to the political community, of a different order. The political question became what to do with this conquered people?

As documented by many historians, Native American populations and cultures were decimated and transformed by European diseases, forced migration, wars, genocide, and forced assimilation. The traumatic history of Native Americans leads one scholar to refer to this historical time as "the Native American holocaust in the nineteenth century," according to Lori Graham (2008).[26] Government policies of assimilation were an assault on the Native American family and its culture, almost to the point of extinction for some tribes.

In 1867, the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs advocated for the forcible removal of Indian children from their families as the only way to deal with "the Indian problem." This became the beginning of over a hundred years of policies aimed at separating the Indian child from his family. It has been said that the most logical way to erase one culture and replace it with another is through children because they are the most vulnerable to change and least able to resist it. The children were removed to Federal and church-run institutions where the children were denied their right to speak their native language, practice their religion, or practice any of their cultural ways. Parents and families were restricted in visits. The children's suffering did not stem from dislocation alone, but from other abuses including malnutrition, diseases, regimentation, routinization, military discipline, and overcrowding. [27]

For example, when the boarding school system failed to produce a complete metamorphosis of the cultural identities of the children, other forms of assimilation were contrived. One was the "outing" system where Indian students were to spend one or two years with a white family under

[26] Graham, 48.

[27] David Dejong, "Unless They Are Kept Alive": Federal Indian Schools and Student Health, 1878-1918. *American Indian Quarterly*, no. 31 (2007): 262.

the supervision of the school and learn to be self-supportive. When this failed, reports documenting the dire socioeconomic conditions existing on reservations which resulted in criticism of federal Indian policy for failing to support Indian self-sufficiency, a shift toward a "self-government" policy known as the "Reorganization Act" followed. The self-governing policy was short-lived, and was followed by a call for "termination" that would force Indians to give up their rich land base and be assimilated. Termination ideology aimed at every facet of Indian life: land, community structure, and the individual child. Congress passed laws aimed at ending or restricting the historic relationship held with certain Indian tribes and the federal government. A stepped up effort at assimilation would occur by a return to off-reservation boarding schools. This was followed by the "Relocation Program" aimed at removing the Indian from the reservation to urban areas for work. Again, the Indian endured tremendous poverty and cultural isolation in the city.

The boarding school system became an opportunity for Indian students to interact with Indian students from other tribes. These educational settings acted as "melting pots" for mixing students of many tribes and producing an alloy of tribal, regional, and supratribal identifications and added a layer of "Indian" identity. The interactions resulted in a tendency to marry outside the tribe and tribal heritage became fused together to create the emergence of pan-Indianism of today. [28] Indian boarding schools were designed to assimilate and breakup the Indian family, they also served to strengthen the "Indian" identity.

The boarding schools also served as sources of American Indian leadership and assisted in founding of the Society of American Indians and the Native American Church. Ironically, boarding schools served in the growth of pan-Indianism and activism with a spirit of resistance.

[28] Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal, Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 116.

Education was considered a source of power by the Indians and led to negotiating with the government in future land claims.

## Privilege and Power

Over the years many intellectuals have questioned the legitimacy of the dominant Anglocentric base of American culture. Some have called it nothing more than cultural imperialism. [29] Evaluating "whiteness" became another way to determine suitability for "Americaness." The earlier laws, by design, sought to exclude from citizenship and later, immigration, those races that were inherently unfit to be American. In so doing, they cemented a social structure in which "whiteness" was relatively interchangeable with social, political, and moral superiority. [30]

How successful was the assimilationist civic nationalism that sought to Americanize all European immigrants regardless of ethnicity or religion? According to Mirel, assimilationists were assured that things had gone according to plan. The children of immigrants attended public schools, mastered English, learned American ideals and values, and learned many aspects of Anglo-American Protestant culture in their history and literature classes.

J. Lynn McBrien (2005) and Charles Hirschman (1983) agree that adapting to a new culture was also affected by whether one was a voluntary immigrant or an involuntary immigrant, such as a slave. McBrien claims that voluntary immigrants view learning the language and ways of the dominant culture as paths to success, while those from an involuntary immigrant status such as

[29] Salins, 86-87.
[30] Mendelson, 1026.

colonized or enslaved people view conformity as a "symbol of disaffiliation" with their own culture. [31]

Hirschman explains how a degree of ethnic assimilation in American society is ordered by four key indicators: socioeconomic inequality, segregation in housing and schools, intermarriage and prejudice. For minorities and immigrants, schooling is seen as the primary step toward participation in American society. For Blacks, the path to success has been particularly disadvantaged because of the limited and inferior education offered in segregated schools in the South, where the majority of Blacks lived. In the later 19th and early 20th centuries, Blacks and their children who migrated to the northern cities received an equivalent of schooling as those of the first or second generation populations from South, East, and Central Europe. Hirschman contends that European ethnics made faster educational gains than Blacks because of prejudice directed toward Blacks. Prejudice proved another barrier toward occupational gains and income for Blacks. [32] Stephen A. Brighton (2008) notes how the Irish, for example, were discriminated against and Irish Catholic men were barred from the more lucrative working class occupations. Social boundaries and alienation were common experiences for Irish immigrants. [33] These anti-Irish attitudes gradually dissipated throughout the 20th century.

European ethnic populations have made considerable socioeconomic progress during the 20th century. However, a long legacy of social bigotry towards Southern and Eastern Europeans, mainly comprised of Catholics and Jews, has only slowly receded. Jews were barred from private

[31] J. Lynn McBrien, "Educational Needs and Barriers for Refugee Students in the U.S." *Review of Educational Research,* no. 75 (2005): 331.

[32] Charles Hirschman, "America's Melting Pot Reconsidered," *Annual Review of Sociology,* no. 9 (1983): 402-403.

[33] Stephen A. Brighton, "The Material Evidence of the Irish and Irish American Experience, 1850-1910." *Historical Archaeology,* no. 42 (2008): 136.

clubs and the upper echelons of private social circles. [34] In 1922, Harvard President Lowell announced a ceiling on the proportion of Jewish students at Harvard, under the guise of minimizing anti-Semitism.

Hirschman notes how segregation after 1910 declined between European immigrants and native whites, while white-black segregation increased. Segregation means less access to opportunities in society, poorer housing and neighborhoods, inferior schools, and greater distances to jobs. Brighton notes how the Irish were thought to be naturally and morally inferior and a threat to the health and security of the American way of life. These social boundaries restricted the Irish to poorer neighborhoods. According to Brighton the classification of deserving and undeserving poor was created solely upon moral and value judgments of social difference. The connotation of being undeserving, unjustly categorized people as morally corrupt individuals who willfully rejected the values system of mainstream society.

Hirschman asserts that more than any other indicator, intermarriage represents the final outcome of assimilation. The children of such unions should represent the ultimate vision of American society. Marriage has crossed ethnic, religious, and racial boundaries in recent decades.

Racism remains strong and cultural preferences that are still associated with ethnicity lead to the conclusion that other fundamental changes in attitudes are needed before "assimilation" will be achieved. Some theorists for example, offer reasons for the persistence of racism in the work place. New ethnically-different workers are seen as a threat to the established working class. Attempts are made to exclude them through expulsion, immigration bars, and strict caste barriers in employment. On a different dimension, despite prejudice and hostility, Jews and Asians in the U.S. have been able to display above-average economic success and an unusual degree of

[34] Hirschman, 404.

solidarity within their own groups. Hirschman contends that if economic success is supposed to bring assimilation then, these two groups are anomalous. Hirschman concludes that the multidimensional character of beliefs about racial and ethnic minorities, such as the influence of age and education, means that the pace of assimilation will continue to be uneven and limited.

It seems that fear and prejudice have played important roles in immigration and assimilation policies. Martha Minow (1990) explains how fear of disloyalty and non-conformity were driving forces for assimilation policies during World War I. Progressives demanded immigration restrictions, loyalty tests for immigrants, and other forms of social control for those who were different from themselves. [35]

The aim of this section has been to describe the degrees of exclusion and tolerance over time and space. I have discussed two perspectives on assimilation, those who want to assimilate and the position of the dominant group. If all of the resources are controlled by the dominant group, then explicitly or implicitly, assimilation becomes an ideal. From the perspective of the dominant group, assimilation becomes a way for them to maintain cultural and economic hegemony. Hegemony, here, means the ability to set the terms for what one assimilates to.

Historically, Americans have been the narrow and dominant group who control the institutions. Assimilation, for the dominant group has always been a two-edged sword, the fact of the "other" and what to do with the "other" and one side needing labor and the dominant group feeling overwhelmed by the growing population of the "other." Americans experienced fears of radically "different" people and of losing their status and privilege. Faced with huge numbers of ethnically and racially different groups needed for the rapidly industrializing work force, dominant groups sought to maintain hegemony through an uneven and limited model of

[35] Martha Minow, *Making All the Difference, Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Law* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990): 265.

assimilation. The more that ethnically different groups assimilated however, the more diluted became the criteria of "true" or "authentic" Americans. Anglo-Saxon hegemony became harder to sustain.

Fears of the "other" which included the Asians, Blacks, and Native Americans meant that these groups faced impenetrable barriers to assimilation. These groups were considered savages, or genetically incapable of assimilating. Indians lacked everything the Americans identified as "civilized"—Christianity, cities, letters, clothing, and swords. [36] Indians were viewed as culturally savage, brutal, and backward. Their race signified an inherent moral defect. Their distinctive physical characteristics signified intellectual incapacity, a "thing" of darkness signifying a racial hierarchy, white over darkness. Forced assimilation for the Native American became nothing less than cultural genocide and coercive placement on and off reservations.

In researching an assimilation paradigm, I wondered how it would serve to illuminate my path in shaping a personal identity. It has helped by giving me a better understanding of the Native American culture, its history, and how it should be portrayed as a living culture rather than an historical artifact. Understanding the history of forced assimilation helps me understand the importance for Native Americans of re-valuing Native identity. That revaluing has become the essential ingredient of what has come to be known as multiculturalism.

The next section addresses the movement of multiculturalism, multiculturalism as a challenge to the assimilation paradigm, challenges to multiculturalism, identity politics, and how identity politics can be problematic.

[36] Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1993),36.

# Multiculturalism

## A Challenge to the Assimilationists

The politics of multiculturalism call for recognition of groups which are marginalized, devalued, and in various ways subordinated. This desire for recognition emerges out of a social state of inequality. There is a link between recognition and identity, which gives a person an understanding of who they are and defines the characteristics of what makes them a human being in the eyes of others. Charles Taylor notes that our identities are shaped by recognition or misrecognition. For a group of people, misrecognition can be very harmful because a demeaning picture of themselves is mirrored back to them by the dominant culture. Taylor identifies this as a form of oppression because it imprisons someone in a false state of being. Internalized, such images result in low self-esteem. Standards of an individual's low value derived from the dominant group become one's own.[37] Taylor explains how this occurred with African-Americans in a white society that projected a demeaning image of them and how it negatively affected their self-image. Ridding themselves of that destructive identity is the first task for a movement seeking equality. Indigenous and colonized people must purge themselves of the demeaning image imposed by Europeans. It is not just lack of respect, but a grievous harm which can result in self-hatred. Respect is a vital human need without which an affirming sense of self is difficult to achieve. [38]

People have been struggling throughout history to perpetuate their culture in the face of a dominant culture that threatens to overwhelm it. The struggle raises questions of moral and political theory. In its early years, multiculturalism was considered to be a fundamental paradigm

[37] Taylor, C., 25.
[38] Taylor, C., 26.

shift that enabled individuals to think in terms of human potential, dignity, and the affirmation of traditionally de-valued identities. [39]

Multiculturalism demands public recognition of difference, of the distinctiveness of a member of a particular cultural group, and the importance of survival of the culture that shapes the individual's identity. Taylor explains how multiculturalism, like assimilation, is an oppressive model in that recognition requires that we treat people in a way where we pretend to be blind to their differences. It is a point of view that emphasizes the similarities in all humans but hides the particular standard of the dominant group in making universal claims. The other mode of politics, multiculturalism, is the recognition and fostering of particularity. The reproach the assimilation model makes to multiculturalism is that it violates the principle of universality and nondiscrimination; the reproach the multiculturalism model makes to the assimilation model is that it negates identity by forcing people into a mold that is untrue to them. The mold is that of the hegemonic culture and the minority or suppressed cultures are forced to take alien form. [40]

The idea of multiculturalism began to take shape as a type of grassroots movement as early as the 1970's, primarily in primary and secondary education work to acknowledge the need for racial reconstruction through a community-based attempt to address questions of personal identity and recognition of multi-cultures. It became a growing presence in the following decades in its attempt to address racial inequalities within the existing institutions. The educational institution served as an umbrella for a variety of racial equality projects, which began by seeking to dismantle white majority control of schools and its use of white values and a white perspective

[39] Suzanne L. Stone, "Comment: Cultural Pluralism, Nationalism, and Universal Rights." *Cardozo Law Review*, no.21 (2000): 1213.
[40] Taylor, 43.

of history as the sole understanding of the past. In these different ways, education is addressed as one dimension of multiculturalism. [41]

As African-American, Mexican-American, and American Indian descent, included their bi-cultural children continued to face barriers to assimilation, they began to reject the assimilation ideal and replace it with an ideal of cultural pluralism; meaning an individual can be bi-cultural and still be loyal to American ideals. Cultural pluralism acknowledged that no group lives in isolation, but each group influences and is influenced by others. Multiculturalism did not attempt a balance between diversity and unity, but sought interaction between cultures as part of everyday life. The children, for example, would move between cultures, which sometimes overlapped.

A second feature distinctive of early multiculturalism occurred in those choosing not to assimilate and retain their own racial or ethnic identity while circulating among other races and ethnicities. Theorists contend this choice of identity is imposed by assimilationism itself. The wedge between individual and one's group is driven only by the demand that you be more like the dominant culture. Multiculturalist theorists found no loss of education by an individual's choice to retain individual and group identity and interact with other races and ethnicities. They saw this as a gain and dispelled the idea of some educators that particularity breeds intellectual mediocrity.

A third feature of early multiculturalism was in their call for cultural equality, and by doing so, made their most fundamental move by tying cultural parity to empowerment and equalization in power relations. Researchers have noted that social stratification and racial oppression

[41] Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield, eds., *Mapping Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996), 94.

provided the vehicle for recognizing the need for multiculturalism in the first place. [42] Other sources of multiculturalism began with the development of new social movements such as feminism, gay rights, and others that formed as the ideology grew.

It should not go unmentioned that recognition—or a certain kind of recognition—can also be an instrument of power. One early historical example of a multicultural system of rule was the Roman Empire. It developed rules and laws to accommodate the diversity of the people under its rule. Although its distinct ethnicities were semi-autonomous under imperial rule, and could engage in their own customs and laws within their own communities, a "special law" of the nations governed intercultural exchanges. The special law differed from Rome's own civil law and was assumed to be an intercultural law known to all peoples. This example demonstrated a synthesis of universalism (Roman law) and particularism, a tolerated, or cultural pluralism. Yet it still maintained a domain of universal standards that transcends diversity. [43] Of course, this model was not based on a deep recognition of the value of other cultures, but rather on a power relationship to secure social co-existence under Roman hegemony. In other words, a degree of cultural accommodation was allowed as a means of imperial control, thus, recognition was purely instrumental and limited to the objectives of the dominant power.

Another historical example can be found in the Bible and later in Rabbinic tradition by how particularism and universalism is addressed in three levels of collective identification and obligation: ethnic-religious-national, territorial, and human. Judaism implies that each people or nation has its own customs, its own pathways for justice on earth, or to achieve salvation. There are legal and political obligations, and the most important set of obligations are owed only to one's fellow Israelite. Nationhood's major function is one of ethnicity and culture. The stranger

[42] Gordon and Newfield, 94-98.
[43] Stone, 1213.

or alien who resides in the nation need not assimilate or convert; he is entitled to retain his ancestral identity and customs. Suzanne L. Stone points out that in Leviticus 19:34 the stranger must be treated as an equal citizen subject to the same law. There are universal prohibitions, such as murder, theft, and the like, which mark the capacity for moral behavior and the bounds within which cultural diversity is acceptable. [44]

Another feature of multiculturalism is recognizing a multiplicity of legitimate cultural cores and acknowledging cultural criteria as the source of group formation, as well as promoting democratization and equity among groups. Multiculturalism introduces a new ethos: In one, many, in contrast to the motto, *e pluribus unum,* from many, one. Society is not seen as various traditions blending into one heritage, but as the co-existence of many heritages and newly invented traditions in a single nation-state. Democracy and demands for equal recognition have taken various forms over the years and now it demands equal status of cultures and genders. It asks that we give acknowledgement and status to something that is not universally shared. Taylor asserts that a politics of difference has as its basis a universal potential for forming and defining one's own identity and culture. But this potentiality must be respected equally in everyone. [45]

## American Indians and Multiculturalism

The impact of the 1960's civil rights era ushered in changes to the cultural and political landscape across the nation. Many American Indians decided it was time to cast off negative stereotypes and renew, reinvent, and reshape racial social meanings and self-definitions which also became a shift to naming Native Americans, First Peoples. The U.S. increased its spending on Federal Indian programs, which inadvertently helped to fund more activism and the formation

[44] Stone, 1214.
[45] Taylor, 42.

of groups such as, Red Power and the American Indian Movement, (AIM). Indians began their renewal of ethnic pride by settling with the government over land claims, which increased public awareness of American Indians and their grievances and history. Land claim awards enticed many Indians to reclaim their ancestries.

The increase in federal spending launched the growth of organizations in the cities as well as on the reservations. Urban Indian centers provided the base for social movements consisting of leaders and activists who were often college students, and former boarding school students. The activists' goal was to recapture a fading or suppressed Indian heritage and to reaffirm Indian identity, which eventually led to legislation in 1978 with the Indian Child Welfare Act. The ICWA was enacted due to a massive displacement of Indian children in foster care as well as non-Indian adoptive homes. The law (ICWA) states that it is policy to protect the best interests of the Indian child and promote stability and security of Indian tribes and families by establishing federal standards for children that are being placed; to be placed in homes that reflect the unique values of Indian culture.

The ICWA is a landmark piece of legislation that was passed in response to a long history of Native American children being alienated from their families and communities. Reasons for the Act include recognition that an alarmingly high percentage of Indian families are broken up by the often-unwarranted removal of their children by nontribal public and private agencies and that an alarmingly high percentage of such children are placed in non-Indian foster and adoptive homes and institutions. Prior to the passage of ICWA, between 25% and 35% of all Native American children were separated from their families and 85% were placed in non-Native homes, according to Hilary Weaver and Barry White (1999). Native American children represent 1% of the overall child population in the country, yet 2% of the foster care population are Native

American. In some states Native American children are more than 50% of the foster care population exceeding their representation in the state's general child population threefold to fourfold. [46] Native American children tended to remain in foster care longer and be moved from one foster home to another more frequently than white children. Further, Native American children raised away from their families and communities are often left with little or none of their cultural heritage. This often leads to a sense of abandonment and ethnic confusion. [47]

The ICWA was more than 10 years in the making. In 1968, in response to concerns for the loss of their children, the Association on American Indian Affairs conducted a survey of custody problems in Native American communities. In 1974, the first Congressional hearing on the matter was held. In 1976, the National Congress of American Indians supported a draft of the major provisions that later became ICWA. Senate hearings in 1977 and the House of Representatives held hearings in 1978 along with many Native American representatives to testify and submit written statements in support of ICWA. The Act became law on November 8th, 1978. [48]

Essentially, ICWA provides seven major procedural safeguards for Native American children involved in custody proceedings: 1) exclusive tribal jurisdiction over children who live on reservations except where federal law already designated jurisdiction to the state, 2) authorization for Native nations to petition for previously lost jurisdiction, 3) the power for both parents and the Native nations to intervene in state proceedings involving Native children, 4) application of higher standards of proof when Native American children are involved in state initiated custody proceedings, 5) preference for placement with Native families and communities

[46] Michael J. Lawler, et al. "Overrepresentation of Native American Children in Foster Care: An Independent Construct?" *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work,* no. 2 (2012): 96-97.

[47] Hilary N. Weaver and Barry J. White, "Protecting the Future of Indigenous Children and Nations: An Examination of the Indian Child Welfare Act." *Journal of Health and Social Policy,* no. 4 (1999): 36-37.

[48] Weaver and White, 39.

when state agencies place Native American children in substitute care, 6) informed consent must be demonstrated by Native parents in placement or adoption proceedings and they have an extended period in which to revoke consent, and lastly, 7) access to state records for Native nations and parents. [49]

The ICWA clearly indicates that cultural continuity is in the best interest of the child. The fundamental concept of the ICWA is to protect the cultural identity of the Indian child so that it will enable them to become well-adjusted adults and to preserve cultural continuity. Even though a child may not live on a reservation and is not currently involved in the culture, it does not preclude the child from having an opportunity to engage in the culture in his or her lifetime. [50]

## Seeking an Ethnic Identity

The assimilationist paradigm and multiculturalism paradigm both have flaws and can be problematic in assuming an ethnic identity or authentic identity. As claimed by Taylor and Nagel, ethnic identity is dialectic between internal identification and external ascription. It is a socially negotiated and socially constructed status which varies as its audience changes. Nagel claims that researchers have observed multi-tiered or multi-layered ethnicity patterns among Native Americans. For example, Nagel discusses various levels of identity available to Native Americans: subtribal (kin, clan, traditional), tribal (historical, reservation-based, official), supra-tribal-regional (California, Oklahoma, Alaska), or supra-tribal national (Native American, Indian, American Indian). Which identity a native individual chooses to present in social interaction depends on with whom he is interacting with. [51]

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[49] Weaver and White 40.

[50] Suzanne L. Cross, "Indian Family Exception Doctrine: Still Losing Children Despite the Indian Child Welfare Act," *Child Welfare: Journal of Policy, Practice, and Program,* no. 4 (2006): 685.

[51] Nagel, 21.

Both Nagel and Fitzgerald argue that Native Americans are reclaiming their cultural heritage due in part to cultural change which has been the result of cultural imperialism, forced on them through colonization rather than through processes of cultural diffusion and adaption.

By embracing an ethnic identity, American Indians are challenged in their struggle to learn their native heritage and their struggle often reinforces stereotypes and portrays their culture as static or stagnant. They are concerned with "tradition" and preserving a culture which becomes problematic for them because they lack the cultural capital associated with their native heritage. In other words, they are not raised in their tribes nor exposed to tribal practices. Another dilemma presents itself when they are not located within geographical proximity to native communities to be exposed to daily life and culture. Distance, lack of cultural capital, and daily immersion into mainstream society gives them a diligence to learn their ethnic identity. [52] By reclaiming a Native American heritage, these individuals are positioned to respond to social, political, and historical constructions of Nativeness and race. For instance, Native Americans are deemed to be a minority race and their attention and emphasis on physical appearance is the result of social and political constructs of whiteness and Nativeness. They are not simply replicating the dominant group's structural hierarchy with their embrace of Native Americans as a distinct "race", but are transforming the racial hierarchy through this embrace. [53]

Yet, multiculturalism's focus of group cultural identity as a morally and politically significant dynamic is not new. Historically, there have been culturally pluralistic political arrangements that have provided various degrees of recognition to the groups within them. A demand for recognition or respect of subordinate groups within a universal realm of obligation is not a new idea. Its value lies in the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual horizons of all individuals, and

[52] Fitzgerald, 226-227.
[53] Fitzgerald, 230.

enriches us by exposing us to the many different cultures, and increasing our possibilities for intellectual and spiritual growth. [54]

Stuart Hall notes that identity is not transparent or unproblematic and should not be thought of as an accomplished fact, which then becomes represented by new cultural practices, and instead should be thought of as a production, never complete, always in process, and coming from within, not outside, representation. [55]

In other words, for Hall, one way of thinking about cultural identity lies in terms of one shared culture, like a hidden, one true self among many selves, a history and ancestry shared in common. Some of the most important social movements of our time have emerged from these hidden histories. Another view of cultural identity, expressed by Hall, is to recognize the similarities as well as the significant differences and how cultural identity is "becoming" as well as "being." It is not something which already exists, it comes from somewhere, has a history. It is continually transforming; subject to history, culture, and power. [56]

Trilling develops Hall's point with his idea of individualized identity, which is a notion of authenticity, and being true to oneself. Trilling explains that we have a moral sense, knowing right from wrong, and this is anchored in our feelings. Morality, in a sense, comes from a voice within. Being in touch with these inner feelings is a crucial point in coming to terms with knowing who we really are and to be true and full human beings. Trilling lays claim to this by his explanation of alienation. We have to become completely alienated from our social existence in our innermost selves and this is not to be considered a deprivation or deficiency, but, a

[54] Taylor, 9.
[55] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Identity, Community, Culture, and Difference,* edited by J.Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990): 225.
[56] Hall, 227.

potential for growth. Authenticity of the personal being is achieved through ultimate isolation and through the power that it brings. [57]

Charles Taylor and David Hollinger assert that trajectories of multiculturalism should prioritize the purging of demeaning identities of individuals and groups, and underscore the inequalities of the historical record as well as recognize how the inequalities lend credibility to claims made by communities defined by descent. However, an increasing rate of marriages and reproduction across ethno-racial lines presents a challenge to the authority of descent defined categories. The spread of intermarriage reveals the growing extent of social integration.

## Conclusion

Multiculturalism is in many ways a great improvement upon the model of assimilation by recognizing differences. It is a valuable political argument in that equality should be awarded to other groups and cultures, for example, Jews do not have to convert to Christianity and Blacks do not have to act white. A positive recognition of difference includes a claim not only to be recognized, but deserves a political space and equality. In most respects, multiculturalism is a positive movement, but its acknowledgement of valuable cultures carries its own essentialism by an assertion that to be authentic, I, for example, because I am biologically Native American, should identify as Native American. This is a kind of essentialism, given the presumption that my true identity should conform to my culture of origin, this essentialism can be oppressive. Its implicit demand does not work for me, so I have turned to a third way, the concept of cosmopolitanism.

[57] Trilling, 170-171.

# Cosmopolitanism

## Defining Cosmopolitanism

In this section I will show how the concept of cosmopolitanism may be a viable solution to the flawed and limiting paradigms of assimilation and multiculturalism. The meaning of cosmopolitanism varies with different authors. Some theorists think it is a relatively new concept dating back only a few hundred years, while others think it has been a part of history for a much longer period. According to Kwame A. Appiah (2006), cosmopolitanism dates back to the Cynics of the third century BC, who first coined the expression cosmopolitanism, using the phrase "citizen of the cosmos." This reflected general Cynic skepticism toward custom and tradition. In the fourth century BC the Stoics elaborated on the idea and this appealed to many Christian intellectuals once Christianity was established as the religion of the Roman Empire. Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, wrote a philosophical diary, "Meditations" that attracted Christian readers for two millennia. Appiah asserts that its appeal may be in the Stoic emperor's conviction of the oneness of humanity which echoes Saint Paul's, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." [58]

Charles Jones (1999) defines the term "cosmopolitanism" as a moral perspective with several basic components. The cosmopolitan standpoint is impartial, universal, individualist, and egalitarian. The fundamental idea is that each person affected by an institutional arrangement should be given equal consideration. [59] Our moral concerns should include an impartial standpoint about the identities of others: to each individual their own freely chosen individual identity, universally deserving recognition and respect.

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[58] Kwame A. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism, Ethics in a World of Strangers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), xi-xiv.

[59] Charles Jones, *Global Justice, Defending Cosmopolitanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15-16.

Many define cosmopolitanism as multiculturalism or globalization, but Appiah claims there are two key elements of cosmopolitanism: 1) the metaphor of universal citizenship, 2) the belief that we can accept responsibility for one another while still living very different lives. Appiah claims that we need to recognize that human beings are different and we can learn from each other's differences. The idea of being different from other people is good, it emphasizes the notion of being self-created and having the option of choosing one's own plan in life, and this contributes to diversity. According to Appiah there are two strands that intertwine in the notion of cosmopolitanism: One is the idea that we have obligations to others in a society of fellow citizens including those not related in any way and the other is that we value human life. Not just any life, but particular lives. This means taking an interest in practices and beliefs that makes others significant.[60] Cosmopolitans believe that sometimes it is the differences that we bring to the table that make it rewarding to interact at all. A tenable cosmopolitan must value human life, and the value of particular human lives, the lives people have made for themselves, within the communities that lend significance to those lives.

For most of human history humans lived in small societies of a few people, they were hunters and gatherers and only experienced those whom they saw daily. Everything they ate, wore, or used for shelter was made within their communities. Even when people lived in larger societies, most still knew little about groups beyond their borders. Each group still had its own way of doing things; they became what we call cultures. [61] In modern times, multiple cultural groups have been incorporated into nation-states. Some individuals and groups tend to cling to their older cultural identities, which include resentments toward a hegemonic national society that denies them status. However, there are also those who have stepped beyond culture and are no

[60] Appiah, "The Ethics of Identity," 3-8.
[61] Leonard J. Waks, "Reason and Culture in Cosmopolitan Education," *Educational Theory*, no. 59 (2009): 590.

longer bound by any restrictive traditional norms. They are able to choose from multiple and traditional cultural resources to shape their lives. Cosmopolitanism is more wary of traditional enclosures and favors voluntary affiliations, and it promotes multiple identities, emphasizes the dynamic and changing character of many groups, and is responsive to the potential for creating new cultural combinations.

## Theorists on Cosmopolitanism

Max Weber describes cosmopolitanism as a culture not characterized by bureaucratic, technological, and goal-based rationality, but rather one in which timeless values and long-standing customs are fundamental. Weber claims that if exposure to different cultures and an appreciation for one's own is all that is meant by cosmopolitanism, then we can say that forms of cosmopolitanism have existed throughout recorded history. [62]

Anderson-Gold (2001) claims that a cosmopolitan is one who views him/herself as a citizen of the world community, based upon common human values. In addition, Anderson-Gold emphasizes this with the words of Marcus Aurelius, who he sees as a Roman cosmopolitan, "It makes no difference whether a person lives here or there, provided that, wherever he lives, he lives as a citizen of the world." [63]

Along the same lines, Moland (2011) claims that according to Hegel the modern citizen (cosmopolitan) is best served by membership in a political entity that combines institutions of the state with the culture of the nation, which allows for an individual to retain particularities. Hegel asserts that history informs our self-understanding and an individual's political identity. For Hegel, freedom implies being at home in the world, being able to make sense of one's actions

[62] Mitchell Aboulafia, *Transcendence on Self-Determination and Cosmopolitanism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 8.
[63] Sharon Anderson-Gold, *Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2001), 1.

and their effects in the world. How we view history determines how we make sense of being at home in one's actions. History can be viewed as a progress of freedom and a development of the conviction that all humans are free and self- determining beings. [64]

Appiah (2005) contends that the cultivation of one's individuality is an essential element of well-being. This refers to choosing for one's self rather than being constrained by political or social sanction. According to Appiah exercising one's autonomy is valuable and leads to self-development, a cultivation of observation, reason, and judgment. Cosmopolitanism is about intelligence and curiosity as well as engagement. We are fellow citizens of the world; we do not have to wait for institutional change to exercise our common citizenship. We can engage in dialogue with others around the world about solving problems together, about the many ways we can learn from each other, and this is how we live as fellow citizens. [65] Taylor explains that our identity is a product of a continuing conversation with a group of "significant others." People do not acquire the language for self-definition on their own. Rather, it is introduced to us through interaction with others who matter to us. Even later in life, "significant others" keep informing our identity, because they are part of our personal lived experiences and our ongoing internal dialogues.[66]

A cosmopolitan must reconcile a kind of universalism with the legitimacy and at least some forms of partiality. [67] Cosmopolitanism must have a deeper value for us, a humanity without frontiers. Appiah gives an example of learning about other's differences with his interpretation of Muslims who make the pilgrimage to Mecca each year, resources permitting, and Catholics who

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[64] Lydia L. Moland, *Hegel on Political Identity, Patriotism, Nationality, Cosmopolitanism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 97-98.

[65] Appiah, "Cosmopolitanism," xv.

[66] Alexander M. Sidorkin, "Authenticity—Dialogicality—Recognition: An Improbable Journey," *Faculty Publications,* paper 22 (1997): 1.

[67] Appiah, "The Ethics of Identity,"222.

go to Mass. One must have the belief system that gives those acts their meaning or they might think it wrong to participate in the acts. According to Appiah, those who go to Mecca or go to Mass should do so if that is what their consciences dictate. Most people can value the choices made by others as long as there is no harm in it. There are many truths and maybe the best we can do is agree to differ. We may not always agree, but we are humans with many capacities to make valuable judgments and discernments. [68]

Human beings are endowed with many capacities: to think, reflect, reason, use language, imagine, form visions, fall in love, dream dreams, and so on. Humans can experience moments of great joy as well as sadness, die for a cause as well as kill for it, this is as much a part of their humanity as their ability to reason, imagine and create beautiful works of art and literature. Having the ability to create meaning and values and lead lives based on these, humans deserve to be valued for these qualities. They are worthy of respect, regardless of differences in values. Humans should be assigned equal worth or value because we share common needs and vulnerabilities. We are all mortal, all susceptible to fear, pain and frustration. We all experience the loss of loved ones. Humans should have equal claims to the pursuit of their well-being.

We have duties to each other in general, but we also have duties or obligations to those bound by special ties. Meaning, in each society we have a particular sense of responsibility to our communities and fellow citizens. Bhikhu Parekh (2003) asserts that we have compelling reasons as moral humans to acknowledge the worth of all human beings in two fundamental ways. It is our duty not to inflict any harm on others or damage their abilities to pursue their well-being. We do not pursue our interests in ways that may bring harm upon them, or take advantage of them in any way. Further, we have a duty to alleviate their suffering and help them with what we are able

[68] Appiah, "Cosmopolitanism," 8-9.

to provide within our own resources and abilities. [69] Our moral obligations to people outside our community goes further because many of their economic and political lives are in a desperate state and it is our duty to help them create the political and economic conditions needed to lead the good life. Our duties now have a political content and relations with others in the world are politically mediated. We have duties to those of our communities as well as to outsiders.

Anderson-Gold (2001) describes Kant's view of how individuals view themselves as world citizens and the motivation driving this process can be described as self-interest rather than a duty. A "feeling for the whole" can transcend self-interest. This is a phenomenal factor that lends itself as a norm for the evolution of the species. There must be recognition of certain universal or human rights of individuals under the law of world citizenship. Every human being has the right to travel through common spaces and to be at any point in time where nature has placed him. The earth is a globe, an island in cosmic space, a physical community of interaction despite its legal barriers in the form of boundaries. Hospitality extends to the conditions for the preservation of the traveler. The stranger cannot be turned away then, if doing so would cause death; obligations of aid are universal. The law or obligation of hospitality expresses the universal human right to relief of need and to the conditions of preservation. However, this does not mean that all forms of interaction are to be tolerated. Each nation has the right to enter into an international agreement that ensures mutual respect, which is expressed in human rights laws. Cosmopolitanism is based upon the inherent dignity and equality of the human being and therefore, is often associated with universal human rights.

Given that historical experiences shape cultural expressions of self-identity, Anderson-Gold explains how it is important to allow human rights to be interpreted and implemented on a level

[69] Bhikhu Parekh, "Cosmopolitanism and Global Citizenship," *Review of International Studies*, no. 1 (2003): 6.

where it can be most effective in shaping human rights policies.[70] A cosmopolitan identity is accompanied by an ethics of duty and rights. Appiah explains that when we seek to embody our concern for strangers in human rights law and urge our governments to enforce it, we are seeking to change the world of law on every nation on the planet. Appiah, for example, asserts that international treaties define slavery to include debt bondage, which is a significant economic institution in parts of Asia.

Cosmopolitanism promotes multiple identities, emphasizes changing dynamics and the characters of groups, and is responsive to the potential for combinations of cultural groups. The term cosmopolitanism is sometimes used as a synonym for universalism on the basis that cosmopolitans look beyond a particular culture or nation to the larger sphere of humankind, which is the objective of universalists.

Cosmopolitanism also seeks recognition, acceptance, and eager exploration of diversity. It also urges individuals to absorb as much varied experience that it can, while retaining its capacity to advance its aims effectively. [71] Cosmopolitanism encourages us to look beyond our nation by understanding universal human freedom to be our goal for which each of us, in recognition of the humanity of others, is responsible. A modern world expects us to recognize others not just politically, but as human beings, as members of families and participants in causes and projects and as individuals living in a political structure in which their rights must be protected and their individuality developed; a balance of individuality and community must be maintained by taking on commitments and owning them. A political identity as well as an individual identity is essential to an ethical life.[72]

[70] Anderson-Gold, 69-70.
[71] Hollinger, 84.
[72] Moland, 177-178.

In short, cosmopolitanism has two divergent—but connected—meanings, one which points toward universalism, the other points to an embrace of diversity, the freedom to choose one's affiliations and thus, one's identity.

## A Notion of Authenticity

Taylor uses a notion of the dialogical to make the point that identity depends on recognition by others, and recognition is a vital human need. Taylor defines "authenticity" as being in touch with one's inner feelings. This is different from earlier moral views, where being in touch with some source—God, or the idea of God—was considered essential to full being. Taylor explains that we have inner natures that require expression, and in order to become ourselves, we must express ourselves. [73]

The notion of authenticity has as its basic premise the phrase in Lionel Trilling (1971), from *Hamlet*, in which Polonius states, "to thine own self be true." Trilling asserts that Polonius has had a moment of self-transcendence of grace and truth. He explains that our sentiment of being is our essence, our core, our strength, and helps to define our authenticity. Trilling asks who would not wish to be true to his own self? And, true, meaning loyal, honest, precisely aligned with self. Charles Dickens wrote in a letter at the height of his career stating that it saddened him to have missed knowing in life one friend and companion, referring to himself. Trilling believes that each of us carries within oneself, potentially and prescriptively, an "ideal." Through all life changes, we attempt to remain in harmony with the unchanging unity of this "ideal."

Authenticity, Taylor emphasizes, is not just listening to an inner voice; it is being truly and permanently open towards the possibility that I am not what I thought I was. My authentic self does not belong to me in a sense, but is always shared by others. The self is dialogical, meaning

[73] Sidorkin, 2-3.

that it depends on others to form and to exist.[74] A continuous dialogue, and certainly dialogues across the sedimented borders of identity constructed by ethnicity or other essentialized definitions of community help in defining authenticity.

Each individual can now select autonomously from multiple traditional and emergent cultural resources to shape a unique life. [75] Most people can be fascinated by cross-cultural stories and can learn useful things from them; sharing stories has both intrinsic and instrumental value. The most important interests that can lead to exchange, mutual concern, and cooperative action, moreover, are not universal. Not everyone loves music, or reads books, or has a sister, or grows flowers. But almost everyone values some things and because we can value similar things, this can lead to mutual interests. Sharing of stories is how we bond more deeply. As we share stories with particular others about things we are passionate about, we come to care about them, thus entering into each other's ethical lives. Our ethical lives include concern for particular people which shapes our moral lives of global responsibility and makes us effective world citizens.

The concept of cosmopolitanism values human variety, the choices it enables, and autonomy that variety enables. The cosmopolitan sees a world of cultural and social variety as a pre-condition for the self-creation that is at the heart of a meaningful human life. Human variety and its existence is an endless source of insight for the cosmopolitan. We are incapable of developing on our own. We need human nurture, moral and intellectual education, and practice with language if we are to develop into full persons.[76] Of the three paradigms, cosmopolitanism is most closely related to the construction of my personal identity because personal autonomy allows for the choices I have made and will make in becoming a full person.

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[74] Sidorkin, 4.
[75] Waks, 591.
[76] Appiah, "The Ethics of Identity," 268.

# Conclusion

In conducting research for this thesis, I was continually reminded of Stuart Hall's observation that cultural identity is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being." It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is continually transforming, far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past. I began this search to find a better understanding of who I am and how my past has informed who I am today.

In this exploration, I researched three paradigms from the perspectives of cultural theorists, history, and personal experience. The paradigms are components of American history, its people, and how they are subject to the continuous play of history, culture, and power. These paradigms have helped to define a national identity as well as individual identities. Research shows how an assimilation paradigm constructed as a model for immigrants and Native Americans to "assimilate" to, was defective and harmful. A multiculturalism paradigm, which emerged out of a failed assimilation model, has a lot to do with the imposition of some cultures on others, and an assumed superiority which powers this imposition. Multiculturalism demands respect for and openness to all cultures, but it also challenges all cultures to abandon those intellectual and moral values that are inconsistent with democratic "ideals" of freedom and equality. [77] Finally, I argue cosmopolitanism as a solution to the negative effects of assimilation and multiculturalism models.

An assimilation paradigm was important to the construction of American identity. Although its overall premise was to build a nation with moral values and ideals, it became problematic and limiting for the sustainability and identification of cultures. With the rapid rise of immigrants, the

[77] Taylor, 92.

prevailing ideology was to maintain an Anglo-American society that would be the foundation of America.[78]

In this thesis, I have attempted to show how assimilation posited a negative impact on immigrants and Native Americans. Many scholars have recently provided thorough reappraisals of the concept, theory, and evidence that have shaped the ideals and ideas for the notion of assimilation. Most agree that the prevalent ideology reflected a need after WWII for national unity and a postwar tendency to see American history as a narrative of consensus rather than conflict. Anglo-conformity was the prevailing "ideal" in which immigrants were to adhere to, "voluntarily." If you want to live here, get rid of old ways and become like us.

The assimilation paradigm was just as harmful for the Native Americans because the government forced assimilation practices on Native American children. The ideology was to "kill the Indian, save the man." [79] Government policies targeted Indian families through their children as they are the most logical targets of a policy designed to erase one culture and replace it with another. Assimilation policies for Native Americans have had lasting effects, but their culture has survived.

This part of history has enlarged my understanding of the negative impact an assimilation process can have on immigrants and Native Americans. It has heightened a sensitivity within me that helps to understand what others have experienced and how and why the paradigm was constructed. In response to the faulty assimilation paradigm, I explored multiculturalism as a movement and its impact on cultural groups.

The ideology of multiculturalism grew rapidly in the 1980's and early 1990's stemming from resentments towards the narrowness of the dominant culture. Multiculturalism is sometimes

[78] Rumbaut, 484.
[79] Graham, 50.

defined as the preservation of different cultures and cultural identities within a unified society. The term "multiculturalism" has appeared frequently in social and cultural debates and its meaning has become less and less clear. It acknowledges cultural diversity yet, for some it means renewed demands for assimilation, for others, a rejection of things that make "Western" culture and America great; and still for others, it is a descriptive fact of how a society interacts with its many cultures.

I have focused on cultural theorists' interpretations and critiques of the multiculturalism paradigm. Charles Taylor notes that an "authentic" self is used by multiculturalists to suggest that the "real" or "true" self is rooted in a cultural identity, suppressed and distorted by the assimilationist model. Ironically, multiculturalism adopts an essentialist response to the essentialism of the assimilationists. The trouble with an essentialist multiculturalist (a politics of identity) is that it imprisons instead of liberates. Multiculturalism rejects the "to each their separate way" solution. It does not clearly articulate its terms of unity. It gets hung up on the politics of recognition.

Nonetheless, the politics of multiculturalism asks us to recognize the unique identity of an individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else. It is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored or devalued by the dominant or majority identity employing an assimilationist paradigm. Taylor asserts that this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity. [80] It is this "authenticity" that I sought throughout my life and in writing this thesis, came to realize the notion of authenticity is something that will continually develop over the rest of my life. It calls on me to discover my own original way. This leads me to the concept of cosmopolitanism.

[80] Taylor, 38.

One of the most positive contributions of multiculturalism is its embrace of the principles of mutual respect, knowledge of other cultures, cross-cultural dialogue, valuing diversity as a good in itself, and its strong unifiers of democracy, rights, and equality. These principles are also embraced by cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism more clearly promotes values that I believe are essential for developing an "authentic" self: moral concerns for my fellow human, universal citizenship, accepting responsibility for one another, choosing my own life plan, embracing diversity, possessing a notion of self-creation, valuing human life, being free, self-determining beings, sharing common human needs, promoter of human rights, and many more. As Charles Taylor writes, "There is a certain way of being that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way…If I am not true to myself, I miss the point of my life." [81]

In my research, I investigated how three paradigms are employed and how they influence the formation of cultural identities. Personal experiences with others who assumed that I had "lost my culture" because of growing up in white foster homes and being a Native American, inspired me to research and write this thesis. In my search for individual identity, I have shown how cosmopolitanism offers a viable solution to the limiting models of assimilation and multiculturalism. Cosmopolitanism is not something that happens elsewhere. As the Stoics well knew, one is a world citizen by adapting one's local role to the needs of the cosmopolitan community. [82]

This thesis provides a point of departure for understanding the flexible nature of identity formation as well as the identity roles and expressions that permit the individual to move across cultures whether given or acquired. Culture, worldviews, beliefs, values, historical experiences

[81] Taylor, 152.
[82] Anderson-Gold, 130.

and complexities of national and international influences are key elements of my ongoing engagement with the question of identity and the quest for an authentic self.

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