Acculturation and Assimilation: A Clarification

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acculturation and assimilation: a clarification

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acculturation

process or event  A single unifying thread to be found in almost all discussions of acculturation is that it is a process as opposed to a unitary event. Thurnwald emphasizes this point when he defines acculturation as “a process of adaptation to new conditions of life” (1932:557). Similarly, Gillin and Raimy refer to acculturation as “those processes whereby the culture of a society is modified as the result of contact with the culture of one or more other societies” (1940:371), emphasizing that there are “degrees of acculturation.” Several writers such as Herskovits (1937), Siegel et al. (1953), and Spindler (1963) have emphasized that not only is acculturation a process, but that it is a “dynamic process.”

individual or group process  Contingent on the position that acculturation is a process is the question of whether it is to be conceived of as an individual process or as a group process. On the one hand, there are those scholars who implicitly treat it as a group phenomenon. For example, Linton’s definition of acculturation makes no mention of the individual: it is taken to comprehend “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (1940:501). Herskovits (1937) notes that the study of acculturation is concerned with the interaction of cultural groups. Similarly, Bogardus (1949) in discussing cultural pluralism is concerned only with culture systems and makes no reference to individual members of the culture. Even The Social Science Research Council Summer Seminar on Acculturation (Siegel et al. 1953) tacitly treats the group as a single unit when discussing acculturation processes. Some writers, such as Devereux and Loeb (1943) in their discussion of an-

The purpose of this paper is to provide a clarification of the relationship between acculturation and assimilation through the development of a conceptual framework. By means of a careful review of theoretically relevant literature prevalent characteristics related to each concept are delineated and discussed in order to identify and synthesize common, as well as contrasting, elements. A comparison of these elements or characteristics is then undertaken pursuant to proffering a clarification. In short, then, this paper seeks to compare and contrast salient characteristics of the concepts of acculturation and assimilation in order to clarify and delineate the relationship between them.
tagonistic acculturation, imply that acculturation is a group process through their treatment of the group as a single unit with no reference to the individual. Others, though they acknowledge the individual element, still are concerned with the group as the acculturating constituent (cf. Simirenko 1966).

On the other hand, individual acculturation is also acknowledged. Dohrenwend and Smith, for example, refer to the group as an important element in acculturation inasmuch as group dynamics affect the opportunity for individual acculturation. However, they explicitly emphasize that acculturation may be an exclusively individual phenomenon as well as a group phenomenon, specifying “that individual is most acculturated who deviates farthest from the norms of the strongest, that is, the most exclusive, orders of structural activity in his culture” (1962:35). Similarly, Spiro (1955) and Broom and Kitsuse (1955) acknowledge that acculturation may occur at both the group and individual levels, though they argue that the acculturation process at the individual level is affected by the acculturation process at the group level. Other writers, such as Gillin and Rainey (1940) and Eaton (1952), categorically emphasize that acculturation may occur at both the individual and the group level.

In short, it is axiomatic that acculturation may be treated as either an individual phenomenon, a group phenomenon, or both, providing care is exercised to define at which level of analysis the scholar is operating.

In considering this position it should be emphasized that the acculturation process may obtain between subcultural groups as well as between autonomous cultural groups. Thurnwald, for example, has suggested that studies of the acculturation process are applicable even for cultural enclaves within larger associations. To exemplify this position he cites “the fact that even in the fold of Catholicism in the United States there are to be found Polish, Italian, Spanish, and French, who all keep their own traditions” (1932:569). Other scholars who have suggested that the acculturation process is applicable in the case of subcultures include Herskovits (1937), Dohrenwend and Smith (1962), and Simirenko (1966), to cite but a few. Several writers have also suggested that the concept of acculturation is most applicable for studies of American ethnic groups which, subsequently, are treated as subcultures (cf. Herskovits 1958; Broom and Kitsuse 1955; Spiro 1955; Lanni 1958; Simirenko 1966).

It should be noted that this position may at first appear to be in contrast with the definition put forth by The Social Science Research Council Summer Seminar on Acculturation to the effect that “acculturation may be defined as culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems” (Siegel et al. 1953:974). However, this position is clarified by reference first to the delimiting condition “initiated” in the definition, and second, by the statement of the seminar to the effect that cultural changes induced by contacts between ethnic enclaves and their encompassing societies would be definable as acculturative, whereas those resulting from the interaction of factions, classes, occupational groups, or other specialized categories within a single society would not be so considered. Hence, socialization, urbanization, industrialization, and secularization are not acculturation processes unless they are cross-culturally introduced rather than intraculturally developed phenomena (Siegel et al. 1953:975).

—a position consistent with that established above.

direction One of the principal conditions necessary for this dynamic process to transpire is a contact situation; that is, at least two cultural groups must come into continuous first-hand contact. This thesis is consistent throughout the literature (cf. Redfield et
al. 1936:149; Herskovits 1958:11; Linton 1940:501; Gillin and Rainy 1940:371; to cite only a few). Spicer, in particular, has emphasized the role of contact in acculturation. Moreover, he argues that alternative types of contact situations lead to a wide variety in the results of contact, thereby suggesting an important variable in the acculturation process (1961:519). This point assists in differentiating acculturation from diffusion, the spread of culture traits, “which, while occurring in all instances of acculturation, is not only a phenomenon which frequently takes place without the occurrence of the type of contact between people specified (i.e., continuous, first-hand contact) . . . but also constitutes only one aspect of the process of acculturation” (Redfield et al. 1936:149).

Assuming continuous first-hand contact as a necessary prerequisite for acculturation, the question then arises as to the direction the acculturation process takes. Specifically, does this phenomenon incorporate a one-way, unidirectional process of change, or a two-way process? And, if the former, what are the determinants of the direction this process will take; if the latter, is the degree of change greater in one direction than in the other and, if so, what is the determinant, or determinants, of this change?

Several writers have argued that acculturation is a unidirectional process, as opposed to a two-way relationship. E. C. Parsons (1936), for example, distinguishes acculturation from assimilation by suggesting that acculturation is unidirectional, whereas assimilation constitutes a give-and-take relationship. Graves (1967), too, in reporting an investigation of psychological acculturation in a tri-ethnic community, treats acculturation as a unidirectional phenomenon, with change occurring on the part of ethnic minorities in the direction of a majority culture. Furthermore, many writers, while not arguing that acculturation is a unidirectional process, treat it as if it were such. In other words, in their research or theoretical discussions, especially in regard to immigrant groups, culture changes relevant to the one group, as well as factors contributory to such changes, are identified and discussed with no attention given to changes, reciprocal or otherwise, in the other group or groups. As an illustration of this point, Ianni argues that time and place should be important variables in acculturation research. He suggests that students of groups emigrating to America from Western Europe can control for this by identifying place of origin and concomitant conditions in America. Specifically, Ianni notes that “since contemporaries of the immigrant group remain under the old culture, it is possible to identify cultural changes which might have come about even in the absence of contact” (1958:43). Furthermore, he suggests four time-place situations for consideration: (1) study of the original precontact immigrant culture; (2) the conditions of contact; (3) the present-day life of the immigrant group; and (4) the present-day culture of the immigrants’ area of origin. Thereby, “changes which took place among the immigrants and did not take place among those who remained in the original culture are the result of the immigrants’ acculturative experience” (1958:44). No attention is given to the effect of the immigrant group on American culture nor is it even suggested that some traits of the immigrant group may be adopted by the American culture. On the other hand, Ianni in no way suggests or denies that a two-way acculturative process may obtain from this situation. Numerous other examples of this point are to be found in the literature. To cite but a few: Gillin and Rainy (1940), Devereux and Loeb (1943), Eaton (1952), Broom and Kitsuse (1955), Spiro (1955), Samora (1956), and Silvers (1965). However, with the exception of E. C. Parsons (1936) and Graves (1967), these writers do not argue for acculturation as a unidirectional process; they simply treat it as such, failing to acknowledge any two-way, or reciprocal, acculturative initiative on the part of the other cultural system.
Rather than a unidirectional perspective, the literature reveals consistent justification for viewing acculturation as a two-way, or reciprocal, process. The often-quoted definition of Redfield et al. illustrates this position wherein acculturation is taken to comprehend "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (1936:149, italics ours). Herskovits exhorts that "acculturation has to do with continuous contact and hence implies a more comprehensive interchange between two bodies of tradition" (1958:15, italics ours). Moreover, Foster (1960:6ff) has emphasized that acculturation is a two-way process, even though it has frequently been treated as a one-way process. Analogously, writers such as Linton (1940), Siegel et al. (1953), Bogardus (1949), and Dohrenwend and Smith (1962) implicitly treat acculturation as a two-way or reciprocal process.

To summarize, an examination of literature on acculturation would indicate that it is connotatively a bidirectional process; however, because of their research or theoretical perspectives many writers are given to treating it as a unidirectional process while not denying its reciprocal nature. It should be acknowledged, though, that this two-way process is not necessarily egalitarian. Furthermore, attention should be directed to several explanations for variance in the degrees of acculturation, both with regard to unidirectional as well as bidirectional analysis. Both of these points are developed further and illustrated in the discussion that follows.

**dominance** Congruent with the question of direction is that of dominance; that is, what effect does dominance of one cultural group over another cultural group have on the degree and direction of acculturation? Also, what implication does dominance have for acculturation at the individual level? Several writers have addressed themselves to the importance of dominance for understanding acculturation including Thurnwald (1932), Linton (1940), Bogardus (1949), Dohrenwend and Smith (1962), Graves (1967), and Foster (1960).

At the group level of analysis, dominance may be contingent on either political or normative structures. Political dominance would imply that one cultural group is in a position of power in the Weberian sense (Weber 1922:631). Dominance contingent on the normative structure suggests that one cultural group is by acquiescence placed in a position of superiority by both groups. This position is in agreement with Spiro (1955), who suggests that numerical superiority is not a necessary condition of dominance.

A paper by Dohrenwend and Smith is instructive in providing a framework for identifying the extent to which one cultural group is dominant over another. They suggest that "the relative strength of any two cultural systems in contact can be understood in terms of the conditions of admission of its various orders of structure activities which each can impose upon the other" (1962:31). They suggest two polar types: complete dominance would exist when culture A can (1) recruit members of culture B into its activities in positions of low status, (2) exclude members of culture B who wish admission to its activities in positions of high or equal status, and (3) gain admission to activities of B in positions of high status (see below for further discussion). The topical situation between whites and nonwhites in the Union of South Africa is cited as an example. At the other extreme of the continuum is parity wherein "both A and B have the ability to exclude the other from positions of high status while at the same time, lacking the ability to recruit the other at low statuses" (Dohrenwend and Smith 1962:32). Varying degrees of strength and parity fall along the continuum. In general, as exemplified by these writers, dominance is not considered a necessary prerequisite for the acculturation process to
function, Mundane as this latter point may appear, it should be emphasized because much acculturation research takes the dominant-subdominant relationship of the groups under investigation as given. Herein lies a fruitful area for future research, namely, how one cultural group comes to be considered in a position of dominance, as well as how this role is legitimated—providing, of course, that it is considered legitimate.

To further emphasize the view that dominance is not a necessary prerequisite for acculturation, though it may be an important variable in explaining acculturation rates and direction, attention is directed to Bogardus’ discussion of cultural pluralism. Bogardus suggests that there are three types of acculturation. Blind acculturation occurs when people of different cultures live near one another and culture patterns are adopted on a chance, hit-or-miss basis. Imposed acculturation implies one people’s suppression of another people’s culture and the forced imposition of its own behavior patterns and ideas. The third type, democratic acculturation, occurs when representatives of cultures view one another’s cultures with respect. In the latter type, in general, no forced acceptance of culture occurs. It is in this latter situation that Bogardus suggests that cultural pluralism prevails, defined as “the functioning of two or more culture systems at the same time within the same national unit of human society” (1949:125). The major impetus is that where cultural pluralism prevails, this “makes possible a free and full development of all constructive culture patterns and it points toward the development of a culture system superior to current systems” (1949:125). As with Dohrenwend and Smith (1962), no deterministic orientation delimiting acculturation to instances of dominant-subdominant relationships is asserted. Rather, such a position is controverted by these and other scholars.

Although it does not speak directly to the problem of dominance affecting the degree and direction of acculturation, it is of heuristic value to interject here Linton’s concept of directed culture change referring to “those situations in which one of the groups in contact interferes actively and purposely with the culture of the other” (1940:502). Similarly, Foster has developed the concept of culture conquest in his analysis of the influence of Spanish culture on the New World. Culture conquest identifies those situations in which the government (or the agent of the government) of one cultural group “has some degree of military and political control over the recipient people, and . . . this control is utilized to bring about planned changes in the way of life of this group” (1960:11). Foster notes, however, that acculturation still occurs through two types of processes: the “formal,” which applies to those situations in which individuals in authority play a positive planning role, and the “informal,” which results from individual contact between members of the two culture groups. Also, Thurnwald (1932) and Bogardus (1949)—see imposed acculturation previously cited—refer to the ability of one group to force the acculturation of another group to its culture. Furthermore, Thurnwald (1932) suggests that if conflict between cultural groups is to be avoided, one group must be considered in a superior position—especially if groups are meeting for the first time. Here, too, dominance plays an important role in determining direction and degree of acculturation.

At the individual level of analysis, the effect of dominance on degree and direction of acculturation would performe be contingent on the relationship of the cultural groups. This position is supported by the preceding discussion of Dohrenwend and Smith (1962) and Bogardus (1949). Furthermore, Gillin and Rainy have suggested that the interplay between culture and personality must be emphasized, maintaining that “neither the individual nor the cultural configuration can be meaningfully understood except by reference to the other” (1940:372).
Assuming, then, that when a dominant-subdominant relationship exists between two cultural groups, this relationship does affect the direction and degree of acculturation, the question still remains as to the direction and the degree of acculturation. With regard to forced acculturation, combined with a position of excessive dominance on the part of one cultural group, it follows that acculturation will be greater in the direction of the dominant group—at least to the extent that acculturation occurs. However, as noted below, the dominated group may successfully resist acculturation to an extensive degree. In all other cases, the literature suggests that acculturation is greater in the direction of the dominant group than in the direction of the subdominant group (cf. Young 1929; Hughes 1933; Hedin 1934; Wood 1943; Gist 1967; Press 1969; McQueen 1968; Graves 1967). This latter point, however, must be weighed in view of the research bias toward unidirectional acculturative patterns as noted previously. Regretfully, therefore, no conclusive position concerning the influence of dominance on acculturative patterns can be asserted at this time.

values and the out-group A salient concept related to understanding the acculturation process is that of values. Specifically, the question raised is whether or not the acculturation process is contingent on a change in, or acceptance of, value structures. A congruent question concerns orientation toward the out-group, that is, is the acculturation process contingent on a positive orientation by the acculturating group toward the out-group? At the group level of analysis the evidence would suggest that although acculturation may provide for a change in value orientation, and even adoption of values, this is not a necessary condition for acculturation to exist. Linton (1940), for example, in reference to enforced acculturation, suggests that although the adoption of certain cultural elements can be accelerated by enforcement, accompanying values and attitudes cannot be forced. Furthermore, he suggests that even though cultural elements may be accepted into a dominated group, they frequently are adapted to fit the culture of this group, that is, their cultural meaning may be changed. Similarly, Thurnwald has argued that in the process of adoption selected objects, ideas, or institutions "may acquire a different meaning in the new culture" (1932:566).

Substantive support for this position is to be found in the works of several writers, two of which are cited here for exemplification. Noting that acculturation of all types is "the outcome of a bilateral challenge resulting from socio-cultural contact," Devereux and Loeb (1943:146) provide a framework for the delineation and analysis of what they term antagonistic acculturation. This framework centers on two reference points: "(1) the distinction between resistance to borrowing and resistance to lending; (2) the distinction between resistance to borrowing or lending of specific cultural items as such, and resistance to, or antagonism toward, the prospective lender or borrower" (1943:134). In this regard the writers present a three-part typology to define possible outcomes when a new trait is adopted: (1) modification to fit the adopting culture; (2) undermining the social structure with rejection after a trial-period; and (3) a freefloating situation, that is, the trait fails to become an integral part of the social structure. Also worthy of note for this discussion are some suggested reasons for resistance to acculturation. Specifically, these are a desire to maintain cultural and ethnic distinctiveness and the in-group/out-group distinction. The latter includes resistance to borrowing because of a resistance to identification with the out-group and resistance to lending because lending would force the borrower into relationships with the in-group of the lender. These reasons for resistance, incidentally, are operative both within cultural groups, e.g., between subcultures or ethnic groups, as well as between distinct cultural groups.
Of specific import for this discussion is the argument by the writer that a distinction must be made between the adoption of the means associated with another culture and the ends associated with that trait or complex. It is in terms of this distinction that the concept antagonistic acculturation is conceptualized; namely, as resistance to the adoption of the goals of the out-group. Three types of antagonistic acculturation are suggested: (1) defensive isolation; (2) "the adoption of new means without a corresponding adoption of the relevant goals...the new means are adopted in order to support existing goals, sometimes for the specific purpose of resisting the compulsory adoption of the goals of the lending group" (Devereux and Loeb 1943:140); and (3) "dissociative negative acculturation, that is, the creation of new cultural items of the 'means type,' which are purposely at variance with, or the reverse of, the life-techniques of the group from which the group under study wishes to dissociate itself" (Devereux and Loeb 1943:143) for the purpose of preserving existing goals. The distinctive character of antagonistic acculturation is delineated in the abstract wherein the writers state that "while response to means and techniques may seem positive, response to goals and ends is frequently negative" (Devereux and Loeb 1943:133).

In an empirical vein Eaton's concept of controlled acculturation provides additional support for the position described above. Controlled acculturation is conceptualized as "the process by which one culture accepts a practice from another, but integrates the new practice into its own existing value system. It does not surrender its autonomy or separate identity, although the change may involve a modification of the degree of autonomy" (1952:338). Drawing upon data collected in the course of an investigation into the social structure of the Hutterites, Eaton demonstrates the ability of this group to maintain an autonomous social system, yet incorporate into the culture traits, behavior patterns, and so forth, of the surrounding culture. Furthermore, he demonstrates their ability to integrate these cultural elements into their own value system.

Each of these writers, Devereux and Loeb, deductively, and Eaton, inductively, supports the position that the acculturation process is not contingent on changes in, nor adoption of, values. On the other hand, they do not deny the possibility of adopting or acculturating values or value systems. Moreover, there is evidence that acculturation is not dependent on a positive orientation toward an out-group.

At the individual level it is again evident that the acculturation process is affected by acculturation at the group level. Subsequently, it is suggested that although acculturation may provide for a change in value orientation, and even adoption of values, this is not a necessary condition for acculturation to occur. Spiro (1955), for example, has suggested that individual acculturation may involve changes in external behavior patterns of the individual without corresponding personality changes. In this same regard, Gillin and Rainy (1940) have suggested that there are three salient manifestations of acculturation which are commonly recognized. These are (1) the material culture or traits, (2) institutional changes, and (3) changes in personality structure. Although they emphasize the importance of taking into account the influence of acculturation on personality and personality change, as well as changes in self-identity and members of the group, these writers note that such changes are in addition to the adoption of material traits and changes in institutional structures.

Albeit some scholars such as Graves (1967) would argue that acculturation must necessarily exercise a dependent relationship with a change in values, as well as a positive orientation toward the out-group, this position does not follow theoretically, empirically, or in view of an analysis of acculturation literature. The consistent reference in the literature to adoption of material traits unaccompanied by values in the out-group is
sufficient to demonstrate that a change in values is not a prerequisite for the acculturation process to be operative. Scholars such as Linton (1940) and Devereux and Loeb (1943) have argued the theoretical possibility of acculturation occurring without value change. Furthermore, Devereux and Loeb have posited that selected elements of the out-group may be adopted in order to support and maintain the in-group's social and value systems. Eaton (1952) has demonstrated empirically that an autonomous cultural group, in this case the Hutterites, may practice selective acculturation in order to protect its own values.

It should be emphasized, however, that this position does not deny the acculturation of values nor the possibility of a positive orientation toward the out-group and its values. For, if the acculturation process includes adoption of material traits, behavior patterns, norms, institutional changes, and so forth, it certainly follows that coterminous values may be acculturated as well.

A final point in this regard, then, concerns the question of acceptance by the out-group. Specifically, is acceptance by the out-group necessary for acculturation to occur within the in-group? In view of the preceding discussion it does not follow that acceptance by the out-group, nor a positive orientation by the out-group, is necessary.

In summary, several salient characteristics of acculturation may be asserted. (1) Acculturation is a process, not an end result. (2) This process may be conceived of both as a group phenomenon and as an individual phenomenon; however, acculturation at the individual level is generally influenced by conditions of acculturation at the group level. Furthermore, this process is operative between subcultures as well as between autonomous cultural groups. (3) Although acculturation is frequently treated as a unidirectional process and may be considered as such in the ideal-type sense, it definitely is a bidirectional process, that is, it is a two-way, reciprocal relationship. (4) Direct contact is a necessary prerequisite in order for acculturation to occur. (5) Dominance is a salient factor in determining direction and degree of acculturation, though the relationship of dominance to direction and degree of acculturation is unclear. On the other hand, acculturation may occur in the absence of a dominant-subdominant relationship. (6) Acculturation is not contingent on a change in values, although values may be acculturated. (7) A positive orientation toward the out-group on the part of the acculturating group or individual is not a necessary condition. (8) Acceptance or a positive orientation by the out-group toward the acculturating group is not required. (9) Acculturation is not contingent on change in reference group orientation.

assimilation

Having delineated the primary elements and characteristics of the acculturation process, attention is now focused on a similar analysis of assimilation. An underlying assumption guiding the discussion which follows is that acculturation and assimilation are separate processes. Furthermore, though they may be interrelated—a point discussed in detail later—they are not interdependent. Admittedly, this assumption may appear to the reader as tautological, but there is ample evidence in the literature—as demonstrated below—that frequently these concepts have been treated as one and the same or, at times, as stages of one another.

process or result As with acculturation, assimilation is consistently treated as a process. Gumpelwicz (1883), one of the early scholars to address himself to assimilation, considers it to be a dynamic force in society. Park and Burgess, writing on "Assimilation" in
their *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, identify it as "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups; and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (1924:735, italics ours).

Two decades earlier Simons (1901:791) emphasized that assimilation is not to be conceived of as a result, but as a process. Similarly, Hirsch (1942) has argued that assimilation is not a specific concept that can be dichotomized; rather, assimilation is a process, continuous in nature and varying in degree. Others who have supported the position that assimilation is a process include Duncan (1929:185), Woolston (1945:416), Johnson (1963:296), and Gordon (1964:71).

With regard to assimilation as process it should also be noted that, as in the case of acculturation, direct contact is required. Park and Burgess (1924:736-737), for example, stress the importance of contact in the assimilation process. Consonant support for this position is found in Simons (1901:800) and Dohrenwend and Smith (1962:35).

**values, identity, and the out-group** However, the assimilation process differs from acculturation in at least two specific respects. First, whereas acculturation does not require out-group acceptance, assimilation does require such acceptance. Second, unlike acculturation, assimilation requires a positive orientation toward the out-group. Furthermore, it requires identification with the out-group. Each of these points is developed more fully later.

The first point of differentiation, that assimilation requires acceptance by the out-group, is adequately supported in the literature. For example, Park and Burgess, in their definition of assimilation, note that it is a process "in which persons and groups acquire memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups; and by sharing in their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (1924:734, italics ours). In a subsequent apology in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Park notes that "in the United States an immigrant is considered assimilated as soon as he has acquired the language and the social ritual of the native community and can participate, without encountering prejudice, in the common life, economic and political" (1930:281). A similar position is established by Hirsch who, after a careful review of the literature on assimilation, suggests that assimilation is "the process of becoming a member of a community" (1942:39). Becoming a member of a community, then, is correlative to acceptance by that community. Of course this is not to say that interaction with that community cannot occur without acceptance by the community. Also, lack of membership in the community does not prohibit acculturation from occurring.

Empirically, support for this position is well-documented by Spiro (1955) who, after having carefully surveyed the literature related to acculturation of American ethnic groups, notes a distinctive difference between acculturation and assimilation—that assimilation is dependent on acceptance by the dominant group. Similarly, Dohrenwend and Smith in their paper "Toward a Theory of Acculturation" suggest that "in assimilation, the contact situation is marked by recruitment of members of culture A into the structured activities of culture B in positions of equal status" (1962:35). These writers, too, emphasize the distinction between acculturation, which does not require out-group acceptance, and assimilation, which does require such acceptance. Further support for this position is found in a paper by Broom and Kitsuse in which they argue that "access to participation in the dominant institutions is a precondition for the validation of
acculturation and consequently for assimilation" (1955:48). Finally, the writers emphasize that regardless of the degree of acculturation, assimilation does not occur until such time as the acculturation is accompanied by acceptance on the part of the host society.

A further point in this connection concerns the manifestation of acceptance by the out-group. More specifically, what constitutes “out-group acceptance” with respect to assimilation? Park and Burgess (1924:736-737) provide a meaningful explanation when they suggest that assimilation incorporates both secondary and primary group contact, whereas acculturation only requires contact of a secondary group nature. In other words, out-group acceptance may be considered to have been initiated when the individual or group is permitted interaction in primary social relations. Significantly, whereas assimilation is to be treated as a process, the extent to which an individual or group is permitted to participate in primary group relations then serves as a measure of out-group acceptance and, hence, the degree of assimilation.

The second point of differentiation, that assimilation, unlike acculturation, requires a positive orientation toward the out-group and, furthermore, that it requires identification with the out-group, is also supported in the literature. As early as 1901 Simons, in reviewing the scant literature on assimilation at that time, noted that assimilation requires a “psychic condition necessitating a consciousness of kind” (1901:800). Similarly, Park and Burgess (1924), in their classic discussion of assimilation, argue that a “unity of thought” is required. They also emphasize that assimilation is dependent on internal changes and not external changes alone. In this same regard, Woolston argues that assimilation is more than “simply making individuals alike in appearance or manners” (1945:416); rather, it incorporates the idea of “cooperative culture,” where individuals—in this case immigrants—come to be part of an association, as well as contributing to the correction and improvement of this association. Assimilation, then, occurs when “an individual who enters into [social] relations absorbs social meaning from them and transmits its significance to others” (Woolston 1945:424). As with Park and Burgess, Woolston also emphasizes that the assimilation process comprehends internal change, rather than external change alone.

Further support is provided by Johnson who argues that whenever the term assimilation is used, care must be exercised to distinguish between external assimilation and subjective assimilation. The term external assimilation is introduced to denote the manifest changes which lead to similarity of appearance and actions, whereas subjective assimilation “extends to the psychological life of the immigrant who seeks to identify” (1963:295). Johnson posits that external and subjective assimilation occur independent of one another, and that they may occur in varying degrees. Subsequently, the writer presents a definition of assimilation that takes into account both the external and the subjective aspects of assimilation:

assimilation is defined here as a process of change during which the immigrant seeks to identify himself in various respects with members of the host group and becomes less distinguishable from them. Both external and subjective assimilation form the components of the process. One without the other is only partial assimilation (Johnson 1963:296).

Utilizing data collected among Polish immigrants to Australia, Johnson demonstrates that external indicators, such as language and naturalization, were not significantly correlated with subjective factors of assimilation.

It has been demonstrated previously that acculturation may occur without a subsequent change in the orientation of a cultural group; that is, a positive orientation toward the out-group is not a necessary condition of acculturation. The converse of this principle may be applied to assimilation. Linton, for example, implies the necessity for a positive
orientation toward the out-group when he notes that "certain individuals in the socially inferior group may not desire to be assimilated and may emphasize the distinctive features of their own culture on that account" (Linton 1940:513, italics ours). Broom and Kitsuse provide implicit support for this view in their discussion of validation of acculturation in which they note that "they [ethnic groups in an open society] then have the alternatives of maintaining a peripheral position in the social order or venturing the risks and rewards of validating their acculturation" (1955:44). More explicitly, reinforcement for this position is found in a discussion by Eaton of controlled acculturation in which assimilation is taken as

a process of acculturation, in which an individual has changed so much as to become dissociated from the value system of his group, or in which the entire group disappears as an autonomously functioning system. Acculturation, on the other hand, is reserved for those changes in practice or beliefs which can be incorporated in the value structure of the society, without destruction of its functional autonomy (1962:339).

To recapitulate, there is sufficient support, both tacit and explicit, for the position that assimilation requires both a positive orientation toward, and an identification with, the out-group on the part of the assimilating individual or group, and that assimilation is contingent on acceptance by the out-group. Furthermore, there is also evidence that assimilation comprises a subjective, or internal, change as well as an external change. This suggests that assimilation involves changes in values. Whereas it was concluded that values may be an element of acculturation, but that change in, or acceptance of, values is not a necessary condition for acculturation to occur, it does follow from the preceding discussion that a change in value orientation is required for assimilation to occur—namely, a positive orientation toward, and identification with, the values of the out-group. This must be distinguished from the relationship of values to acculturation, such that selected traits, behavior patterns, institutions, and so forth of group B come to be valued by group A or its members without a proximate change in reference group.

In view of the preceding discussion, it may be postulated that if assimilation is to occur, there must be a change in the reference group such that group A, or a member of group A, holds a positive orientation toward group B and, congruently, values membership in that group. Furthermore, group B then becomes group A's, or a member of group A's, reference group and subsequent source of value orientations.

**individual or group process** It has been previously demonstrated in this paper that acculturation may be viewed as either an individual process or a group process, providing care is exercised to define at which level of analysis the scholar is operating. The obverse question should also be approached as to whether assimilation is to be treated as a group process, an individual process, or possibly both.

Some writers inferentially support the view that the assimilation process is strictly an individual phenomenon. Woolston, for example, suggests that assimilation occurs when "an individual who enters into [social] relations absorbs meaning from them and transmits its significance to others" (1945:424, italics ours). Similarly, Johnson (1963), Heiss (1969), and Dohrenwend and Smith (1962) restrict their discussions of assimilation to the individual level. On the other hand, scholars such as Simons (1901) and Siegel (1953) restrict their discussions of assimilation to the group level, thereby implying that it is a group process.

Park and Burgess (1924:735) combine both positions by suggesting that assimilation incorporates "groups and persons," as does Hirsch who, after systematically analyzing the relevant literature concerning assimilation, asserts that "the agents in this [assimilation]
Process are either persons or groups” (1942:36). Duncan (1929), writing in *Publications of the American Sociological Society*, provides further support for the position that assimilation involves both individuals and groups. Gordon (1964), writing on the nature of assimilation, also treats it as both an individual and a group phenomenon; however, he tends to move between the two levels indiscriminately—though this may be due in part to his emphasis on ideal types without sufficient reference to empirical data.

The references cited above would suggest, then, that the assimilation process may be treated as *either* an individual or a group phenomenon. There is more than sufficient evidence that assimilation is an individual phenomenon. Furthermore, in light of the earlier discussion concerning reference group change and out-group acceptance, assimilation is clearly an individual phenomenon. On the other hand, even though the references cited provide tacit support for assimilation as a group process, further explanation is needed on this point.

An important distinction which should be considered here is that of isolated groups as opposed to reinforced groups. For in light of the earlier discussion of reference group change and out-group acceptance, consideration of group assimilation must be in terms of a “collective conscience.” A group which assimilates must not only be accepted by the out-group; it must also identify with it. Therefore, in the case of reinforced groups, that is, groups that continually receive reinforcement from a larger parent cultural group, it is not possible to speak of group assimilation. For example, the Mexican-American subculture continually receives reinforcement by way of immigrants from Mexico. Hughes’ (1933) discussion of the French-Canadians, as well as Antonovsky’s (1956) investigation of second-generation Jewish males, provide additional examples of cultural groups or subcultural groups whose culture is continually being reinforced by contacts with representatives of the parent culture. Similar examples are to be found among other immigrant groups to America, Australia, and so forth. In such cases it is only possible, then, to speak of individual rather than group assimilation.

On the other hand, cultural group isolation does not necessarily lead to group assimilation. (By cultural group isolation is meant that the group is removed from either a supporting cultural or subcultural group.) In actuality, isolated cultural groups may develop in several ways. The group may resist assimilation as a whole. This possibility is exemplified by the Hutterites’ use of controlled acculturation (Eaton 1952) and by Devereux and Smith’s (1943) discussion of antagonistic acculturation. This is not to suggest, of course, that individual members of these groups may not assimilate into another group. Furthermore, it is possible that the attrition rate from individual assimilation may be so extensive as to effect the dissolution of the cultural group. The profligation of the Russian Molokan community in Los Angeles illustrates the latter possibility (Young 1929). Without reinforcement, except through procreation, this distinct cultural group ceased to exist as succeeding generations assimilated into the broader community. It should be noted, however, that although in the final analysis the entire membership of the Russian Molokan community assimilated, this was the result of individual attrition and not a movement by the group *in toto*.

The converse situation is that of a cultural group which collectively identifies with an out-group and desires to assimilate. The Anglo-Indians (of India) epitomize this situation (Hedin 1934; Gist 1967). However, even in this instance individual members may be accepted into the out-group much faster than the collectivity.

It should also be noted that situations prevail in which individuals are not associated with a distinct culture group, yet conceivably they may identify with and desire to assimilate into a specific culture group. This situation is illustrated by the mulattoes in
the United States (cf. Reuter 1917; Stonequist 1935), the *mestizos*, of Brazil (Slotkin 1943), and the hybrids of Hawaii (Smith 1934). It is also possible that these unassimilated individuals may form a new, distinct cultural group—particularly if assimilation is precluded—as did the Russian creoles in Alaska (Wood 1943) and, in recent years, the Eurasians of India (Gist 1967).

Finally, there are situations such as that of the Negro population in the United States wherein there exists no distinct or identifiable cultural group *per se* and, therefore, it is not possible to speak of group assimilation, although reference may be made to the *rate of assimilation* with respect to individual group members.

In summary, the assimilation process may be treated as either a group or an individual phenomenon. However, group assimilation can only be considered in the sense of a "collective conscience"; otherwise, one can only speak of an attrition rate of individual members who are assimilating. Furthermore, in the case of cultural groups which are continually reinforced—such as the Mexican-American subculture—group assimilation is not feasible. On the other hand, cultural group isolation, though imperative for group assimilation, does not necessarily dictate that group assimilation will occur. However, it is conceivable that the attrition rate will be so extensive as to lead to the dissolution of an isolated cultural group. Finally, there are situations wherein there exists no distinct or identifiable group, thereby making it impossible to speak of group assimilation, although reference may be made to the *rate of assimilation* of group members.

direction and dominance A final salient point about assimilation is its directional quality. Specifically, is assimilation to be related as a unidirectional process or as a two-way relationship? Two sources address this problem directly; both support the unidirectional position. Simons states that "there are two elements concerned in the process of assimilation—the active and the passive—the assimilating people and those being assimilated" (1901:803), suggesting that assimilation involves movement from one cultural group to another. Simons continues by stating that "consequently assimilation has a dual character—is more or less reciprocal in its action—a process of give and take to a greater or less degree" (1901:803); this reference to reciprocity supports the previously established position that assimilation requires both a change in reference group and acceptance by the out-group, but does not deny that assimilation is a unidirectional process. The second source, the report of The Social Science Research Council seminar on acculturation, is even more explicit in this regard, noting that "assimilation implies an essentially unilateral approximation of one culture in the direction of the other" (Siegel et al. 1953:988).

Much of the literature consistently implies that assimilation is a unidirectional process. The previously quoted definition of Park and Burgess (1924:735) and their subsequent discussion so implies. Gordon (1964:60-83), in his deliberation of the nature of assimilation, consistently treats it as a one-way process. Similarly Duncan (1929), in his discussion of the process of assimilation among immigrants to America, implies that it is unidirectional, as do Broom and Kitsuse (1955:48), Eaton (1952:329), Spiro (1955:1244ff.), Dohrenwend and Smith (1962:35ff.), and Woolston (1945). Furthermore, with the exception of one writer, E. C. Parsons (cited in Herskovits 1958:7-11), no support was found for the position that assimilation may be considered a two-way process. Parsons, incidentally, suggested that the major distinction between acculturation and assimilation is that the former is a one-way process while the latter is a two-way process—a position which may be summarily dismissed on the basis of evidence already cited in this paper.
The references cited so far and the discussion in this paper suggest that assimilation is a unidirectional rather than a two-way process. If assimilation requires a change in reference group, as well as acceptance by an out-group, then it is axiomatic that assimilation at the individual level is unidirectional. While an out-group can become the individual’s reference group and can accept or not accept the individual, it is not conceivable that the converse may obtain. This does not, of course, preclude the possibility that individual members of group A may assimilate into group B while at the same time individual members of group B are assimilating into group A.

The same principle applies at the group level. Providing that an isolated cultural group collectively desires assimilation into another group, designated as the “host group” by Johnson (1963), then assimilation must be unidirectional, that is, in the direction of the host group. It does not follow that the host group may reciprocate. In other words, one group assimilates and the other group accepts or rejects.

In considering direction, brief attention should also be paid to the role of dominance in the assimilation process; however, as in the case of acculturation, writers usually take the role of dominance as given; that is, that assimilation always occurs in the direction of a dominant group (cf. Simons 1901; Broom and Kitsuse 1955; Spiro 1955). Regrettably, empirical evidence concerning the role of dominance, both with respect to rate and direction (i.e., from subdominant to dominant and the converse), is lacking. Nevertheless, at the individual level it is self-evident that though dominance may be a deterrent to assimilation, it is still conceivable that members of either a subdominant or dominant group may assimilate into the other group—whether dominance is based on power or a normative structure (see above). Furthermore, at the group level there is no reason to assume that a dominant group would assimilate into a subdominant group. Other than these cursory observations the role of dominance in assimilation remains unresolved and, as with acculturation, should prove a fruitful area for future investigation.

**summary**

The salient congruities and differences in the characteristics of acculturation and assimilation are delineated in Figure 1. Based on these factors several conclusions may be drawn concerning the relationship of these two concepts. Initially it may be postulated that acculturation and assimilation are separate processes. Assimilation is not, as some have suggested or implied, a phase or end-product of acculturation (cf. Gordon 1964; Redfield et al. 1936:149; Eaton 1952:339); rather, it is a separate and distinct process. This is not to deny, of course, that assimilation is dependent on acculturation, as evidenced by the required adoption of out-group values. On the other hand, considering the two necessary conditions of reference group change and acceptance by the out-group, it can readily be demonstrated that assimilation is not dependent on some nth degree of acculturation, nor does assimilation necessarily follow after some evanescent stage of acculturation has been experienced. It is evident, for example, that there are individuals, as well as groups, who may be highly acculturated in terms of some given out-group and, furthermore, these individuals or groups may strongly identify with and seek to assimilate into the out-group. If, however, they are not accepted by the out-group, then assimilation has not begun. For example, the Eurasian community of India was highly acculturated in terms of British culture and sought to assimilate into the British community, yet was denied membership (Gist 1967). A similar situation may be found among Japanese-Americans (Broom and Kitsuse 1955), as well as many Negro-Americans. The antithesis of this situation would be low or limited acculturation, but a high degree of assimilation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCULTURATION</th>
<th>ASSIMILATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A dynamic process</td>
<td>A dynamic process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. May be treated as either an individual or a group process</td>
<td>May be treated as either an individual or a group process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Involves direct contact</td>
<td>Involves direct contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Two-way, that is, may occur in both directions</td>
<td>Unidirectional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Does not require change in values, though values may be acculturated</td>
<td>Change in values required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Reference group change not required</td>
<td>Reference group change required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Internal change not required</td>
<td>Internal change required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Out-group acceptance not required</td>
<td>Out-group acceptance required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Comparison of the salient characteristics of acculturation and assimilation.

For example, artists or scientists immigrating to America may be accepted on an equal footing in American society, yet be poorly acculturated (cf. Silvers 1965).

A third possibility is that of an individual who is accepted by the out-group, and possibly is even highly acculturated in terms of the out-group, but does not change his reference group. Siu has exemplified such a type in “the sojourner,” defined as “a stranger who spends many years of his lifetime in a foreign country without being assimilated by it” (1952:34). Examples include the foreign missionary, foreign students, diplomats, research anthropologists, and international journalists.

In summary, then, it may be concluded that: (1) acculturation and assimilation are separate, distinct processes; (2) acculturation may occur independently of assimilation; (3) acculturation is a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition for assimilation to occur; and (4) the extent to which acculturation must occur before assimilation begins is indefinite.

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