On the Concept and Theory of Social Incorporation

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The concept of social incorporation is proposed here as an alternative to the manner in which the concepts of assimilation and integration have been used in sociological literature. As commonly used (Wirth, 1945, 1966; Park, 1950; Gordon, 1964; Simpson, 1968; Francis, 1976; Yinger, 1981, 1994) the two concepts have contained an assumption of linearity, or exclusivity, that is no longer tenable, particularly in view of the results of empirical research done in the past decade or decade and a half. According to this assumption, assimilation is a process not any different from that of ethnic identity loss and vice versa, ethnic identity retention is coterminous with lack of assimilation. Assimilation, thus, is conceived as a zero-sum phenomenon; to the extent that it takes place, ethnic identity is lost and vice versa to the extent ethnic identity is retained, to that extent there is lack of assimilation.

Empirical research with second and third generations (Greely, 1974; Breton, et al., 1990), however, has shown that while assimilation is a ubiquitous phenomenon, it often is accompanied by retention or rediscovery of ethnicity, both on the individual and group levels. Many researches have directed attention to this phenomenon (Alba and Chamlin, 1983; Fugita and O'Brien, 1991; Gambino, 1975; Gans, 1979; Epstein, 1978; Yinger, 1981; Calhoun, 1994), yet the idea that the two processes are contradictory still remains and baffles even these same scholars. Yinger (1981) saw this as a paradox and described it in this manner:
The paradox can be described by an analogy: the force of ethnicity is like the earth's oil. Its production and use can, for a time go up even as the total amount goes down. Ethnicity is now a more prominent social force than it was a generation ago despite major assimilative processes that have brought groups within many societies, and even across societal lines, into closer interaction. I expect the process of assimilation to continue strongly in the years ahead; but I also expect ethnic groups to continue to be major social forces, even as they become less distinctive. Only when assimilation has gone much further than it now has, except among some urban, intellectual groups, will ethnicity begin to recede as a major societal fact. (pp. 261-262)

This can be considered to be one typical formulation of the problem of the relationship between ethnicity and assimilation. The difficulty with this formulation is that it retains the supposition that the two processes—assimilation and ethnic identity retention—are contradictory. I argue that this supposition is bound to produce an inadequate explanation of the phenomenon of assimilation and that it derives from the use of the concept of assimilation, as culminating concept, not subsumable under any concepts of a higher order of abstraction. The same problem exists also with the concepts of integration, acculturation, amalgamation and others that are often used alongside each other, as in the case of Gordon and Yinger, but lack a theoretical roof-concept that would tie them together. Yinger tried to tie these four concepts together by considering them to be types of assimilation. However his notion of assimilation is not much more than a label which dissolves itself into the four types upon any further discussion. In other words, the concept and the types are used in a tautological manner. The concept does not have any meaning without the four types. The reason it is not a theoretical roof-concept is that it applies exclusively to the groups it tries to explain i.e., cultural groups, but not to other groups in addition to them. In other words, what I call a "theoretical roof-concept" refers to a concept under which one could subsume a number of phenomena different in nature but possessing some characteristics in common. In this manner different types of phenomena can be explained by a more general theory. Thus such a concept would be applicable not only to cultural or ethnic groups but also to gender groups, regional groups, religious groups or other status groups.

I want to propose the concept of social incorporation as a theoretical roof-concept to explain what the concept of assimilation has traditionally tried to explain. As its subtype, the concept of social incorporation includes the concept of assimilation but defined in a narrower sense. In addition, however, it can include the concept of ethnic identity retention, as also other concepts, without presenting an unexplainable paradox. Before I explicate this concept, however, several issues of logic must be discussed.

All concepts fix certain features of the identified phenomenon. According to Bader (1994), concepts often become what he calls "container" concepts. The danger is that this may cause the meaning of the phenomenon identified by a concept to be fixed; it may not allow for variation in the meaning of the phenomenon, or for understanding changes of the phenomenon over time. In other words, concepts may easily become hermetic. They may restrict the meaning of the phenomenon. Yet in order to identify and understand any phenomenon, it is necessary to single out some features as characteristic of it. In the definitions of phenomena two approaches are generally familiar: either enumerating a maximum number of characteristics to describe a phenomenon, i.e., providing a connotative definition of it, or alternatively singling out a minimum number of characteristics—only those that are sufficient to identify the phenomenon, but at the same time distinguish it from other phenomena—i.e., providing a denotative definition of it.

In this connection, it should be remembered that the use of concepts in a connotative way has been advocated by the subjectivist approaches of phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, and today is highly favoured by the postmodernist theories. The basic concern behind this advocacy has been precisely the desire to avoid fixation of meaning of phenomena implied in abstract definitions. To achieve this, the subjectivists have, all along, advised replacing hermetic definitions by hermeneutic definitions.

The problem with hermeneutic and connotative definitions is that while they may point to a greater number of features and sensitize the researcher to many aspects and nuances of the phenomena under study, in the end they result in description, rather than explanation, of
the phenomena. Postmodernist theories appear to have given up on explanation for the sake of discovery and description of new and unique features of the social phenomena.

If any theory of ethnicity is to be well developed, it is necessary to have denotive definitions of concepts. The danger of hermetic closure of concepts is reduced when, within a more general theory, they are related to one another and the phenomena subsumed under them are seen as interdependent. This directs attention not only to the phenomenon in question, but also to other phenomena related to it, and thus may provide a critical perspective on the phenomenon under study.

**Dimensions of Social Incorporation**

Social incorporation can be defined as a process through which a social unit is included in a larger social unit as an integral part of it. Social units can be individuals or collectivities acting in a patterned manner.

As defined here, I consider the concept to be a "theoretical adhesive" since it can subsume under it a number of other concepts, such as assimilation, integration, identity retention, ethnic rediscovery and so on without contradiction, but at the same time it can link ethnicity with other phenomena, since it can refer not only to ethnicity but also to other social units, such as religions, regions, classes, gender. Secondly, the concept is defined as a process, not a state. Inclusion in a larger unit as an integral part may be the end-state of the process, but the phenomenon in question incorporates the activities that lead to this state without necessarily completely or ultimately achieving it.

Thirdly, this concept avoids the idea, included in the concept of assimilation when it is used as the paramount concept, that the end-result of the process is similitude. It allows for diversity to be an integral part of the whole. It describes, I would argue, minority ethnicity adapting to larger societies much more accurately than does the concept of assimilation alone. By the same token, it avoids the pitfalls of zero-sumness. The latter often is a popular preconception about ethnicity. But it is an empirically untestable assumption. To test it empirically, one would have to find a modal sample of population for whom the process of assimilation has come to a perfect stop and who are the same in all relevant respects. I do not think this is a realistic quest.

Fourth, the notion of inclusion in a larger unit as an integral part allows us to look at the whole as being in some way dependent on the parts, and at some parts as being dependent on other parts. That is, it allows us, or rather invites us, to look for the ways in which the total society depends on specific ethnic groups and the ways in which some specific ethnic groups depend on other specific ethnic groups.

Today it is platitudinous to say that the economies of such regions as North America, Western Europe and Australia depend upon immigrant labour. Results of a number of studies (Simon, 1990; Economic Council of Canada, 1991) have pointed to the economic gain accrued to the state just from the taxes that immigrants pay to the government, even in periods of economic recession. It is also obvious how the recreational life of many societies depends on institutions of diverse ethnic minority groups, such as ethnic restaurants, festivals, art, humour and the like.

Fifth, the concept of social incorporation allows for, and implicitly assumes, the idea of reciprocity. In the process of inclusion, both the minority ethnic groups and the majority group can be seen to be involved in a give-and-take. From the beginning of the studies of assimilation in North America this interaction was observed by various scholars. Louis Wirth (1945, 1966), and Milton Gordon (1964) have stated that there must be some "give" by the dominant population for assimilation to take place, and that without at least some degree of reciprocity, assimilation can never take place.

What is meant by mainstream reciprocity? The minority group may be taking over the culture of the dominant group, but the dominant group may refuse to accept anything of the minority culture. Or it may do the opposite. In many societies, there is some informal or formal reciprocity of acceptance. A number of societies have adopted policies of official bilingualism, and some, like Canada, a policy of multiculturalism. Likewise, the majority group may exclude any minority from its own formal or informal structures and may refuse to acknowledge or even allow any minority formal structures to exist, or it may do the opposite. It may accept intermarriages, it may introduce equity legislation, as have North America and a number of European countries. It may give recognition to minority organizations or institutions and use them as channels of interethic relations or the like. It appears that in the Western societies today the reality is somewhere in between, without full symmetry of reciprocity.
The idea of reciprocity as part of social incorporation has been little developed by sociologists. Some empirical data relevant to this phenomenon may have been collected by researchers, but the conclusions have not been built into a systematic theory of social incorporation. The reason for this, I would argue, is that the concept of assimilation as it has been traditionally used, does not really call for this type of data. By itself the concept does not imply the notion of reciprocity.

**Structural Incorporation**

In order to develop the theory of social incorporation, I propose that the process can be said to include three basic dimensions: structure, culture and identity. These can further be studied on two levels, individual and collective.

First, the structural dimension refers to the more or less accepted meaning of structure in sociology, except that both Gordon's and Yinger's conception of it has to be modified. Gordon, in his notion of structural assimilation, refers only to entrance into the primary group level of the mainstream society. For some reason, he completely ignores the secondary group level. He does not deal with equality in occupations, or income or with other distributions of minority and majority groups, nor does he deal with voluntary associations. Yinger modified this narrow definition of structure. Yet following Gordon, he still singles out as a separate type of assimilation the concept of amalgamation. Like Gordon, Park and Wirth, he means by this term intermarriage. But for him it is not a form of structural assimilation, but rather a biological assimilation. This, I think, is a confusion of concepts. In the context of my theory of social incorporation, I would propose the following.

The concept of structure should refer to (1) demographic and socio-economic composition of society, (2) primary-group level structures of society and (3) secondary-group level structures of society.

In a strict sense, demographic and socio-economic composition of society, in itself, is not a social structure since it is not constituted of real social relationships. As a unit, it is a set of categories produced by the sociological investigator. Still it refers to real characteristics possessed by individuals that are a significant factor in the organization, or structuration, of their social relationships. Hence, more properly, the demographic and socio-economic composition of a population is a social *understructure*, but as such it must be included in all discussions of social structure. Social incorporation on this level refers to the policies of preference and selection of specific numbers and types of outsiders admitted into the boundaries of society in relation to the society's own demographic and socio-economic composition. This includes the numbers of immigrants arriving in the country on a regular or sporadic basis, the sources of immigration, the types of ethnicities of the immigrants and the specific characteristics possessed by the immigrant groups, such as age and sex composition, educational, occupational characteristics, affluence level, etc.

Demographic and socio-economic compositions of different immigrant groups are one basic determinant of their entrance status into the structure of the mainstream society. The main issue in this regard is the criteria according to which immigrant populations with one or another type of demographic and socio-economic composition are selected in relation to the type of the demographic and socio-economic composition of the mainstream society.

An issue related to this is the relationship between the numbers of immigrants admitted into the country and the speed and ease of their incorporation into the structure, culture and identity of the host society. That is, can one say that there is a limit to the number of immigrants admitted into a society and the ability of the structure and culture of the society to incorporate them. If so, what is this limit? Another issue is the relationship between the prevalence of specific types of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of an ethnic group and the ease of nature of its social incorporation. Can we say that ethnic groups with a truncated demographic composition structures such as prevalence of younger or older persons in the group's population, speed up or slow down the group's incorporation into the society or have some other unusual consequence? Can we say that ethnic groups with high socio-economic characteristics or a high level of affluence are incorporated faster and with less difficulty than those with low levels?

Primary-group level structures include (a) marriage-family relationships and (b) friendship types of relationships. Marriage relationship may involve friendship, but this is in addition to the marriage relationships as such. The latter include spousal, parental, in-law, avuncular and other ties. Social incorporation into these types of relationships refers to ethnic intermarriage and to networks of interethnic friendships. Lack of incorporation, of course, results in exclusivity in these relationships. Different ethnic groups, majority or minority, have
different prescriptions or proscriptions regarding intermarriage and friendship relationships. The question in regard to social incorporation on this level, however, is to what extent over the span of several generations ethnic exclusivity and inclusivity produces increasingly common or permanently separate structures of primary-group relationships and what consequences do these structures have for the nature of secondary-group relationships in society in general, for inculturation of minority groups in the culture of the larger society and for their identity with the larger society.

Secondary-group level structures involve the systemic institutional organizations: economic, political, educational, etc., and the voluntary associations: cultural, professional, religious, special interest, etc. Social incorporation into these structures, on the level of individuals, means inclusion of minority ethnic persons into any of these organizations or associations on whichever status level. Note that I am not assuming that incorporation into these structures on an unequal or inequitable basis is lack of incorporation. Unequal or inequitable incorporation, albeit unjust, is still incorporation. Lack of incorporation would be if, for example, immigrants were completely excluded from any level of the occupational structure, i.e., not admitted or given any jobs at all, which in fact had happened at least at one point in the North American history. I will take up the question of differential incorporation later.

On the collective level, social incorporation into the secondary-group level structures involves coaptation of minority ethnic organizations or associations into the mainstream institutional structures. Some specific minority structures, such as initially “ethnic” associations and enterprises, may over a period of time become mainstream associations and enterprises. Examples of such voluntary associations are the Association for Sociology of Religion, a general national association, which, however, grew out of the American Catholic Sociological Association, representing to a large degree the Irish group in the United States, or the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association, a national association, developing out of the Interuniversity Committee on Canadian Slavs, representing largely several Slavic groups. Histories of a number of ethnic enterprises in North America also show a collective process of incorporation into the mainstream, for example, the history of the film industry in the United States, Bata shoes in Canada or the many ethnic restaurants that have become large chains catering to a broad clientele.

Another kind of ethnic structural coaptation is exemplified by the establishment of the so-called ethnic chairs at a number of national universities in Canada and inclusion of a number of ethnic language programs in high school standard curricula in several provinces of Canada. This type of coaptation has been stimulated by the Canadian multiculturalism policy. Its specific character consists of taking selected aspects of minority ethnic structures and building them as component substructures into the mainstream institutions.

Cultural Incorporation

I would like to turn now to the cultural dimension of social incorporation. One side of this dimension can be said to refer to what has been covered by the concept of cultural assimilation. In fact, notwithstanding Milton Gordon, I think the concept of assimilation in general has been most often used in the sense of cultural assimilation. I would suggest that as part of the broader theory of social incorporation, the concept of assimilation, if used at all, should be used only in this sense. An alternative term used by both Gordon and Yinger is “acclimation.” Another possible term is “enculturation.” The term that I think most closely designates the nature of the phenomenon is inculturation. The term enculturation is taken from anthropology, where it has referred to diffusion of cultures between two different geographically neighbouring tribes (Padilla, 1980). This I would argue is a process different from the one where a culturally distinct group of people is entering into a structure of a different society and takes over its culture. Likewise the term enculturation, though meaning almost the same as inculturation, has a shade of meaning of culture enveloping one from the outside, without the person necessarily accepting it inwardly.

Inculturation, on either individual or collective level, refers to the process of learning, accepting and internalizing some or all patterns of behaviour of another structurally larger group or society. Note the difference between this definition and the one which conceives of the process as one of becoming simply similar to another group. The latter does not specify the mechanisms through which the process takes place. This is not the place to explain the nature of these mechanisms. Here I simply want to make further distinctions in order to give a sense of the depth or levels of this phenomenon.
On the individual level, we can distinguish between inculturation of external and internal patterns of behaviour. Inculturation of external patterns refers to two levels: taking over of styles of dress, foodstuffs, holiday celebrations, rule observances, manners; and learning a new language as means of communication. Taking over of internal patterns also refers to two analytically distinct levels: tastes, likings, opinions, attitudes, biases, ideologies; and goals, norms, values. Note that each level here is organized in what I consider to be a gradation from more external to more internal, or from more superficial to more deeply meaningful patterns. The internal aspects refer to attitudes, values, etc. as learned from the broader culture, but without necessarily applying these to oneself as one who takes these values, etc. personally. That is, one may learn them as something that members of one's ethnic group, so all people in society, should follow, as it were in the abstract, but not necessarily practice them in one's own concrete, daily behavior. A positive personal response to these values, for example, feelings of personal obligation to behave in accord with them, involves an emergence of new identity which is discussed below. This feeling of obligation may be an area of overlap with the question of identity. The methodological value of these distinctions, however, lies in the empirically verifiable assumption that these levels can vary independently, i.e., one can take over, for example, manners, without necessarily taking over the attitudes or the values behind them, or one can learn the latter without necessarily being motivated to follow them in one's own daily life.

On the collective level, inculturation means taking over the style of organizational life typical of the mainstream society. This would include the use of the mainstream language as the language of organizational proceedings or, in North America, the introduction of majority-vote decision-making into organizational life if it did not exist in the traditional ethnic minority organizational culture and the like. It does not necessarily mean dissolution of ethnic boundaries in the respective organizations. Quite often these are maintained even when the mainstream organizational culture is absorbed into the entire organizational life of an ethnic association or the community. An example can be found in a number of German communities in North America that have become almost indistinguishable from the mainstream community, yet have retained a form of German identity (Helling, 1984; Wynar, 1975).

An interesting aspect of the question of social incorporation is that of the relationship between the cultural and the structural aspects of social incorporation. Milton Gordon (1964:81) argued that once structural assimilation had occurred, cultural assimilation and all other types of assimilation would follow. This was an unwarranted assumption. Yinger (1981) himself has rejected it. The point is that theoretically and empirically all combinations are possible. Inculturation can take place without a significant degree of structural incorporation, but structural incorporation, on any of its two levels, can also take place without a high degree of inculturation. Interestingly for all these years since Gordon's formulation of this problem, there has been, to my knowledge, no empirical research to test out this assumption.

The other side of the cultural incorporation is implantation of minority group cultural patterns into the mainstream culture. The minority cultures' customs, festivals, foodstuffs, art, music, words or expressions that may become part of the national culture, for example, in North America, Oktoberfest, Inuit art, Native People's elements of clothing, Afro-American jazz and such words as "hutzpah," "pasta," "perogies," etc.

Cultural incorporation seems to always work in a selective fashion, by which only some elements of minority ethnic cultures are taken up and incorporated into the mainstream culture. What the peculiar characteristics are that these selected elements share is something that deserves study. Again there has been no systematic research of this question.

Incorporation of elements of other cultures into the mainstream culture of society, however, may pose a symbolic threat to the society's dominant ethnic group. This may produce defensive reactions and interethnic conflicts over symbolic issues that may be more severe than conflicts over other issues. Yet, as North American experience has shown, this process of incorporation can take place with a minimum of conflict.

Identity and Identity Incorporation

I will turn attention now to the identity aspect of social incorporation. First of all, I do not consider acquiring a new identity to be a process of assimilation of identity as this has been traditionally understood and accepted by both Gordon and Yinger. Rather than identity incorporation
being a process of taking over somebody else's identity, it is a process of the development of one's own new identity within a new society. Identity is a social psychological phenomenon that is not shared the same way as culture or group membership. It is something that is possessed individually even though it refers to identifying with a social unit. It is something that has to be understood through subjective assessment or interpretation rather than through study of common interdependent features. Even if the symbolic content of identity is shared, for example, language, individuals really do not possess identities in common. The object of identity may be common, but each person has to develop identity for his or her self rather than take it over from others.

Identity can be defined as a manner in which persons locate themselves psychologically in relation to one or more social systems, and as the way in which they perceive others as locating them in relation to those systems (Isajiw, 1990). This refers to the process of self-inclusion, or exclusion and inclusion or exclusion by others. The social systems may be one's ethnic community, the society at large or other ethnic communities and other societies or a combination of these. It can be said that identities always have double boundaries, those from within and those from without, self-identifying and being identified by others. The dynamic of the relationship between these two boundaries and all its implications is something that has received little research and little theoretical systematization.

This subjective process of self-inclusion or exclusion carries with it elements of (1) self-conception and self-knowledge, (2) pathetic attachment, (3) feelings of responsibility and (4) trust and solidarity.

Social incorporation of one's self-conception and self-knowledge into a host society implies two kinds of perception: a conception of oneself as being a member of or being of the broader society and the perception that the broader society accepts oneself as one of ours. Symbols of representation become the main means through which such perceptions are achieved. Identification with such symbols also becomes indicative of the depth of incorporation into the broader society. Thus one may perceive oneself as say, "Canadian" by identifying with the Canadian flag as representing oneself. Or one may see oneself as "Canadian" because one has taken part in the election of members of the Canadian parliament in which the elected members of parliament are perceived as representing oneself. One may perceive oneself as being represented by the history of immigration to Canada, if Canada is perceived as a country of immigrants, or as being represented by the country's constitution if it includes a charter by which one's diverse identity is protected or given certain rights. Again one may see oneself as belonging to Canada because one's ancestors, i.e., members of the same ethnic group as immigrants or one's real kin ancestors as immigrants have been part of Canadian history. Or further one may see oneself as belonging to Canada on account of one's ethnic group having been the initial "makers" of the country, the "founding fathers" of the country or even further on account of one's real kin ancestors having been the "founders" of the country.

Not all members of minority groups can share with the members of the majority group in the same society, the same symbolic content of identity. Likewise not all generations of the same ethnic group, minority or majority, can share the same symbolic identity content. Thus the identity of some ethnic minority group members may never be incorporated into the host society to the same degree or depth as that of other minority group members or that of the majority group members. Full identity incorporation, however, also requires identity perceptions from the "outside," particularly from the members of the mainstream society. There are two aspects of this perception. The mainstream members may, or may not, perceive ethnic minority group members the same way as the latter think they perceive them. Minority members may see themselves as Canadian and may think that others also perceive them as being Canadian, but this may not be so at all. Chances are that such perceptions rarely overlap exactly.

The second aspect of the perceptions from the outside, by the members of the mainstream, of persons in the process of incorporation, relates to the extent to which the mainstream members' perceptions of themselves allow for variations. If the mainstream self is defined in very narrow terms, incorporation of other identities into the mainstream will be slow, if not impossible. If the mainstream self-conception as Canadian includes only those who are of British ancestry, then obviously any other ancestry will remain foreign to them, and no overlap of self-conceptions with those of other ancestries will be possible. For them other identities, even if subjectively defined as Canadian, will always remain alien or, at best, Canadian only in the political-bureaucratic sense of the word rather than as part of the "true" Canadian identity.
Self-conceptions of identity, however, combine with the affective or pathematic factors. These are the attachments and feelings of empathy and sympathy with other persons that go along with the perceptions of oneself. Persons incorporated into the host society can be said to be those who feel personal closeness to others in the society, to both those in the mainstream and those outside it. Personal closeness involves feelings of willingness and a desire to enter into interpersonal relations with others and feelings of freedom and acceptance in interacting with them. These feelings underlie the preferences that persons have in choosing, entering and maintaining friendships. They also engender identity with other persons.

Persons who strongly identify with others usually can “feel” themselves into the place of the others and develop sympathy towards them. This includes feelings of discomfort, pain and humiliation, if those they identify with experience discomfort, pain and humiliation, and feelings of gratification, happiness and pride, if those they identify with experience gratification, happiness and success.

In addition to identifying with an ethnic minority group, a person incorporated into the mainstream society will, in a similar manner, develop attachment, empathy and sympathy towards the mainstream society. This may be manifested by an attitude of defensiveness of the mainstream society in the face of its critics and an attitude of seeing it as, at least in some degree, “better” than other societies.

The reciprocity of this, however, is also essential for full identity incorporation in terms of this dimension. That is, full incorporation of minority identities requires that at least significant numbers of the members of the mainstream society develop feelings of attachment, empathy and sympathy with members of ethnic minority groups who are in the process of development of the mainstream identity, especially if the latter choose to retain some degree of their minority ethnic identity.

The above two dimensions of identity and identity incorporation—self-perception and pathematic attachments—relate to, as it were, passive aspects of the phenomenon. The last two dimensions—responsibility and solidarity—are action-oriented. In one sense, they are those things in one’s subjective make-up which translate identity into modes of activity. Once such activity takes place, identity acquires an external, objective character, communicable to others. By the same token, these dimensions provide the link between the self, the structural and the cultural reality of the broader society, as well as the structures and the culture of the minority community to which a person belongs. Feelings of responsibility articulate obligations towards the groups, group institutions and other structures of which one is, or becomes, a member, and they do so in accord with the accepted cultural values, goals, norms and other expectations. Social incorporation of one’s identity into the broader society involves a development of feelings of obligations to that society in relation to feelings of obligations to oneself. These may include a wide range: feelings of obligation to abide by the laws and regulations of the host society, to learn and use the language of the host society or teach it to one’s children, to send children to school, to work to support one’s family, to be on time at work or other engagements, to abide by the accepted political process, to belong to certain organizations, to observe certain holidays and courtesies, to deal with others equally, regardless of their identity, and the like.

It should be remembered that the term “feelings of obligations” is used here in the sense of subjective feelings of “rightness,” not simply pragmaticality, although the latter may also be part of it. These feelings are the subjective consequence of inculcation of the predominant values. As mentioned before, values may be learnt as abstract things and may be verbalized by persons who have learnt them without necessarily applying them to one’s own behaviour. They can be learned as applying to all, meaning to others. They become part of one’s identity only when they come to be applied to oneself in one’s own everyday life as personal commitment.

Problems arise when the value-norm complex of the broader society is learned, but it does not fully become part of personal commitment. This may be a widespread phenomenon in the process of culture and identity incorporation. It raises many questions about integration of the broader society itself. Yet this is a phenomenon which has hardly been studied theoretically or by empirical research.

Another problematic and probably widespread aspect of this phenomenon is the documented fact that many members of ethnic groups, while developing feelings of obligation to the mainstream society, still retain some such feelings toward their original ethnic group (Isaif, 1990). These two sets of obligations may complement each other, but they may also be inconsistent with each other and may produce serious psychological identity conflicts.

The reciprocal aspect of the responsibility dimension is the question of responsibility of the mainstream members towards the members of
the minority groups. Full social incorporation involves some feelings of obligations towards minorities in one's society. This especially includes the obligation of tolerance towards diverse identities as part of one's personal commitment in everyday relations with members of minorities. Problems of incorporation arise when intolerance among mainstream members is high. In such situations, incorporation may be completely precluded.

The last aspect of identity, that of trust and solidarity, may appear to be similar either to the pathematic attaches or to feelings of responsibility, but its character is basically different. Trust in others involves a subconscious reliance on a relationship of interdependence. It involves the psychological security afforded by the knowledge that one can depend on others for fulfillment of important needs and taking for granted that one can safely go about pursuing any aspect of the value-norm complex accepted by others because, "when need be," one can fall back on those others for support. One can say that it is the reciprocal of obligations, as it were, the promise of support in return for their fulfillment. Trust assumes that one belongs to and is accepted by a group. The following situations offer some examples: if persons are hungry or starving, they can assume that their family will help to feed them; if they are threatened by outsiders, they can assume that their group will help defend them; if they have any special needs, they can assume that their group, or the society, will try to fill them.

Social incorporation into a broader society implies a development of trust in the institutions and members of the broader society. This may include such things as taking for granted that the society's protective institutions, say, the police, would come to one's assistance in the case of a serious threat, taking for granted that if one follows all the accepted rules, one would have the benefit of all the institutions of society, e.g., banks will not refuse to lend money, hospitals will not refuse admittance, stores will not refuse to sell, other persons will not refuse to associate and communicate or will not deny membership, residence, employment, etc.

The reciprocal side of this form of incorporation is the trust that the members of the mainstream would have in members of minority groups, taking for granted that they will abide by the value-norm complex of the broader society in all their relationships with them, and that they, also as mainstream members, will be accorded acceptance by the minorities' members. The obvious problems are indicated by all the studies of discrimination and interethnic conflict. Probably such reciprocity is a limiting case. But the process of incorporation can still be gauged by the extent it moves towards the limiting case.

The social psychological consequence of a developed mutual trust is solidarity. The concept of solidarity has had a prominent place in the early classical sociological theory, in the works of Emile Durkheim and in some of the post-World War II theories, notably that of P. A. Sorokin, but it has had little status in current theory and current empirical research. Still it can be said to refer to a phenomenon not embraced by other concepts. Solidarity is a consequence of trust inasmuch as it is a phenomenon that can be characterized in popular terms as that of "one for all and all for one." In different periods of time, such solidarity may be manifested by individuals' willingness to go to war to "fight for one's country," by the degree of positive support of public policies, including that of taxation, by a government's protection of individual citizens abroad, by individuals' involvement in community benefit activities and the like. A higher degree of such activities involving members of minority groups and the mainstream alike would indicate a higher degree of social incorporation of minorities. The empirical question, however, remains as to the extent of social solidarity existing in the broader society at all periods of time and the extent to which, like social incorporation in general, it always remains differentiated or polarized.

**Sequence and Differentiality**

Two further issues must be considered in developing a systematic theory of social incorporation. One is the question of the *time sequence* of the different types of incorporation. In addition to its theoretical value, this question has implications for practical application. Milton Gordon (1964) assumed that cultural incorporation precedes structural incorporation. Andrew Greeley (1971, 1974) also felt that there is a time sequence to this phenomenon. Until today the question has no good answer. One reason for this is that lack of conceptual development has left the question of time sequence up in the air. Another reason is that this question cannot be answered without empirical research. Only research can specify the conditions under which there may be one sequence and those conducive to another sequence.
One can, however, postulate that there is a sequence to the process. But the sequence should not be conceived in purely linear terms. Theoretically, and on the basis of some empirical studies, we can say that the sequence is a process of going back and forth between different types of social incorporation, or going back and forth between the different aspects of it. Thus starting with early phases after immigration, we can hypothesize that the process begins with some structural incorporation on the secondary-group level, particularly incorporation into some level of the occupational structure of society. Note that I am not assuming here that incorporation means instantly becoming part of a larger whole on equal or equitable basis with everybody else. It may or may not be so, and for most minority group immigrants it is not so. Typically social incorporation is a process that takes long periods of time, usually involving several generations.

This step is followed by a degree of inculturation on the external cultural level, such as dress, foodstuffs, some manners and language. This may be followed by some primary-group level incorporations, particularly friendship. Again first friendships with persons from the mainstream may not be deep, they may revolve around some co-workers on the job or peers at school. Yet this may be sufficient to evoke a passive sense of identity with the society at large, making the person see oneself as Canadian, American, British, etc., identify with the flag and politics of the country and develop some pride in the country’s achievements. Some feelings of active identity may also begin to originate at this point, but they may not develop far until the process of incorporation on the structural level continues.

The next phase, thus, is further incorporation on the secondary-group level in terms of occupation, educational participation and the like, but notably in terms of voluntary associations, such as becoming member of school clubs, youth groups, unions, political party associations, religious associations, neighbourhood associations etc. This in turn may lead to deeper friendship association, including marriage, and to inculturation of the internal aspects of the mainstream culture—attitudes, preferences, ideological positions and an acceptance of at least some values, goals and norms of the mainstream society.

Further stages of incorporation on the individual level involve a growth of the active aspects of identity, feelings of responsibility and trust relative to the goals, norms and values accepted and a consequent feedback of this commitment and self-confidence into the passive aspects of identity and into the cultural and structural levels of incorporation. All of these, of course allow for various degrees of psychological intensity and social involvement, and one may argue that just as a very low degree of such intensity and involvement may be problematic for social incorporation, so may also be an extraordinarily high degree.

Sequencing of stages of incorporation on the collective group level is even more complicated and very little studied by sociologists. Only a partial sketch can be attempted here. It appears that a prerequisite, i.e., the first stage in collective incorporation of any ethnicity different from the mainstream, has to be the de facto or de jure policies and public philosophies of inclusion. These can be the policies, even if only implicit, of allowing immigrants into a country or policies and public philosophies regarding cultural diversity that may range from simple tolerance without public recognition to positive acceptance and public recognition given in some form by, for example, a policy of multiculturalism. The basic issue here is one of the definition of immigrants and ethnicities. That is, are they predominantly defined as being in any way “one of us” or as being “foreigners.” The former definition opens a way for some ethnic institutional and organizational coaptation.

For coaptation in the mainstream of any ethnically different cultural patterns to occur, a stage in which ethnic organizational inculturation takes place may first be necessary. At least some ethnic minority organizations have to inculturate and follow the basic patterns of the dominant culture in their collective life before the mainstream society will coapt any of their cultural patterns. This would create a condition which would enable the group to separate or select from its ethnic cultures those patterns which they like to retain as against those which they may drop. Typically one such pattern readily inculturated into the organizational life of minority groups in North America is the dominant language and the one relinquished is the ethnic minority language as the language of use—though not necessarily as the language known to some degree. The cultural pattern most readily coapted into the mainstream appears to be ethnic food (Isajiw, 1990). This kind of cultural pattern selection, however, requires at least two, and possibly three, generations.

In general, social incorporation is a process that takes place over generations. Any conceptualization of it as a state, rather than a long-range process, can have only a heuristic value, as long as it is
understood that it is a limiting hypothetical state. The theory of sequencing, however, cannot be adequately developed without further empirical research.

The second issue here is that of differential incorporation. Any conception of social incorporation as a socially fully unifying process can also be only heuristic. The empirical reality suggests that social incorporation proceeds in a differentiated manner. That is, as incorporation of ethnic and racial minority groups into the broader society takes places, it also develops differential enclaves into which members of these groups become incorporated, and although they may also move out of these enclaves, these enclaves never completely disappear.

The enclaves consist of concentrations of members of specific minority groups in different status levels of occupations, neighbourhoods, political, religious units, etc. In other words, members of different ethnic and racial groups come to be differentially incorporated into the structure of the broader society. This differentiated structure impacts on the status of ethnic groups themselves and arranges them in relation to each other into an order of ethnic stratification.

Differential incorporation has received theoretical attention already in the early works on ethnicity in terms of a variety of frameworks, colonial Asian, Caribbean, United States and Canadian (Fumvall, 1948; Wiley, 1967; Williams, 1964; Gordon, 1964; Porter, 1965; Smith, 1965, 1984; Rex, 1970). The most common form of its study, however, has been in terms of differential ethnic concentrations or segregation, particularly in occupations and neighbourhoods (Light, 1974; Wilson and Portes, 1980; Portes, 1984; Portes and Rumbaut, 1990; Reitz, 1980, 1990). These studies have mainly approached the question empirically. Their theoretical presuppositions have relied heavily on the concept of discrimination, particularly systemic or structural discrimination. The theoretical problem with the concept of structural discrimination is that while it is an important concept, useful in assessing any specific situation, similar to the concept of assimilation discussed above, it lacks a clear theoretical roof-concept under which it can be subsumed. Discrimination can be included under the concept of exclusion, but by itself this is incomplete since it ignores the fact that systemic discrimination, by being long standing, is also part of the inclusion process of the broader society on a differential status basis.

The question of differential incorporation is important in relation to the consequences that ethnic enclaves and ethnic stratification have on the broader society and on the ethnic minority groups themselves. The consequences may be economic, political, cultural, social or psychological, or all of these in varied degrees. A number of studies, both theoretical and empirical, have approached this issue of consequences (Hechter, 1977, 1978; Berry, 1991; Borjas and Freeman, 1992; Sev'er, Isajiw and Driedger, 1993). Still the issue has not been developed as part of a systematic theory of social incorporation. The theory I am proposing here must take three further questions into account. Each of these requires its own systematic treatment.

First is the question of the consequences that such incorporation has on the nature of interethic relations in society. To what extent is differential incorporation of ethnic groups a source of interethnic tensions and conflict. To what extent do ethnic and racial protest movements, riots, or channelled political action derive from the fact that different groups are incorporated in different status enclaves of the same society. The second issue is that of what consequences differential incorporation has on the social mobility patterns of different ethnic groups. Do, for example, ethnic groups whose entrance status into the secondary-group structure, particularly the occupational structure of society, which has been low, experience a slower rate of social mobility than those whose entrance status had been higher? The third issue is the evaluative aspect of differential incorporation, i.e., the question of equity. Under what conditions is differential incorporation seen as inequitable or unjust? Who are the definer of this inequity, the dominant group in society, the ethnic minority group or groups, the outside observers, such as sociologists? On the one hand, enclave concentrations may be defined as representing inequitable incorporation, on the other hand, they may also function and be seen as a resource drawn upon by members of minority groups to effect their later, more equitable incorporation (Isajiw, Sev'er and Driedger, 1993).

The question of interethnic inequity or injustice has been one of the oldest concerns of scholars; much sociological research has concerned itself with demonstrating empirically the existence of interethic, particularly inter-racial, inequity. The theoretical concerns, however, cannot be answered without taking into account and relating to one another the norms and perceptions of equity and inequity held by the majority and the minority groups in society and by making explicit the
norms of equity assumed by the theorists or the researchers themselves. Only thus can normative concepts be built into an analytical theory.

In summary I have considered three main aspects of social incorporation: structure, culture, and identity. I have analyzed in some detail the components of each of these. This analysis has led to distinctions which can serve as a principle of variation for further development of a theory of social incorporation. My critique of the concept of assimilation pointed out that it is too narrow and too one-sided to cover the phenomenon to which it purports to refer. This concept can be subsumed under the broader concept of social incorporation. Further, I have looked at social incorporation as a process taking place on both individual and collective levels and as a process involving some degree of reciprocity between the society’s mainstream and ethnic minority groups. While minority individuals and groups merge with the mainstream, selected aspects of minority structures, institutions, and identities may be retained as part of the mainstream. This reciprocity, of course, cannot be assumed to be symmetrical. Lastly, the distinction between the three aspects of social incorporation—structure, culture, and identity—raise the issue of the sequence of these aspects and that of the differential aspect of the process itself. I hope that such an approach to the concept of social incorporation will allow further development of a systematic theory of the process and be fruitful as a framework for empirical research.

References


Ethnicity and Class: A Proto-Theoretical ‘Mapping’ Exercise

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Contingency and Theory: The Failure of Grand Theories

Grand theories have not proved useful in the study of interethnic relations. Modernization clearly does not lead to the disappearance of ascriptive criteria, practices and ideologies, particularly not of ethnic or nationalist ones, as modernization theory holds. Furthermore the significance of ethnicity as a basis for social organization does not simply decrease with a high degree of social incorporation, as conventional theory suggests. The development of ethnic identity retention does not merely follow Hansen’s pattern in which the second generation removes itself from, or rebels against, its ethnic group and the third returns to it. If there is any consensus among researchers at the moment, it is probably that one must take into account the complexity and the considerable contingency of social phenomena such as ethnic identity retention and social incorporation. Familiar phrases to highlight this are structural indeterminacy, high degrees of variation, it depends, it’s all politics, path dependent sequences of change, and history is open (at least much more so than structuralist, evolutionist and Marxist theory would allow). Sociology clearly has to meet history and history needs, at least, some sociology. The question is which sociology.

Confronted with such problems, researchers in different fields have recently opted for the construction of ‘pro-theoretical’ or

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