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A competing hypothesis is that period effects, that is, major events, were the prime determinant of change. Yet such a stance cannot explain why many value changes observed in the United States were also observed in Western Europe, where several key period effects differed (Delli Carpini 1986: 135; Inglehart 1990: 96). In a similar vein, the inadequacy of period explanations is intimated by the larger value changes witnessed among youth since period effects tend to appear as uniform impacts across age categories in the form of aggregate shifts (Jennings and Niemi 1981: 388).

An alternative hypothesis for explaining value change is that high levels of physical and economic security in the developed world after 1945 led to a greater “postmaterialist” value orientation among post-World War II age cohorts (Inglehart 1990: 177). Ron Inglehart claims to have found a significant positive increase in postmaterialism in Western Europe and the United States from survey data (Inglehart 1990: 96). Although this relationship appears to be robust, the same question must be put to Inglehart as was put to Lipset and Ladd, namely, which postmaterialist values are significant and why? Interestingly, Inglehart’s postmaterialism measure includes questions about liberty and equality, which arguably explain much of what passes for “postmaterialism”⁸ (Inglehart 1990: 74–75, 252, 262).

The importance of liberalism and egalitarianism as historical-cultural factors, independent of wealth-driven postmaterialism, may also account for Inglehart’s finding that “in non-Western societies, cultural change shows patterns that are very different from those it displays throughout the industrialized West” (Inglehart 1990: 7). Indeed, one can hardly describe wealthy societies like Nauru or Kuwait as bastions of postmaterialism. Finally, Inglehart’s explanation for the decline of religious and nationalist idealism in the West—that economic security eliminates the need for cultural security—is highly questionable (Inglehart 1990: 185). In fact, it might be more accurate to say that idealisms of one sort (religious/ethnonational) have been replaced by idealisms of another sort (liberal, egalitarian), which have become institutionalized through cultural action.

The Development of a Modernist Cultural Elite

The principal carriers of the new cosmopolitan values are the well-educated strata, a category that has expanded greatly since the end of World War II. To see this trend in better detail, I will draw upon a two-

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dimensional model first advanced by Daniel Bell (slightly modified here) to explain value divisions in American society (see Figure 8.6).

In Bell's scheme, education is the prime determinant of cultural values. Notice that while well-educated public and private sector employees differ in their "left-right" economic stance, both embrace the modernist ideas of the "New Left" where cultural questions are concerned. This would help explain why the private-sector journalists examined were to the right of the professoriate on economic questions. Empirically, Inglehart found a similar relationship to obtain with his data: postmaterialist respondents tended to divide along an economic dimension but shared a relatively positive score on a "New Politics" dimension that captured sociocultural values (Inglehart 1990: 274–277).

Educational status also plays a role *within* the American elite leadership. In a more recent study of American elites, Robert Lerner, Alther Nagai, and Stanley Rothman wrote that in terms of ideological orientation, "The elite occupational groups align closely with Daniel Bell's 'pre-versus post-Modernism' cultural divide (1976)." Accordingly, labor leaders scored closer to military and (fundamentalist) religious leaders than media elites

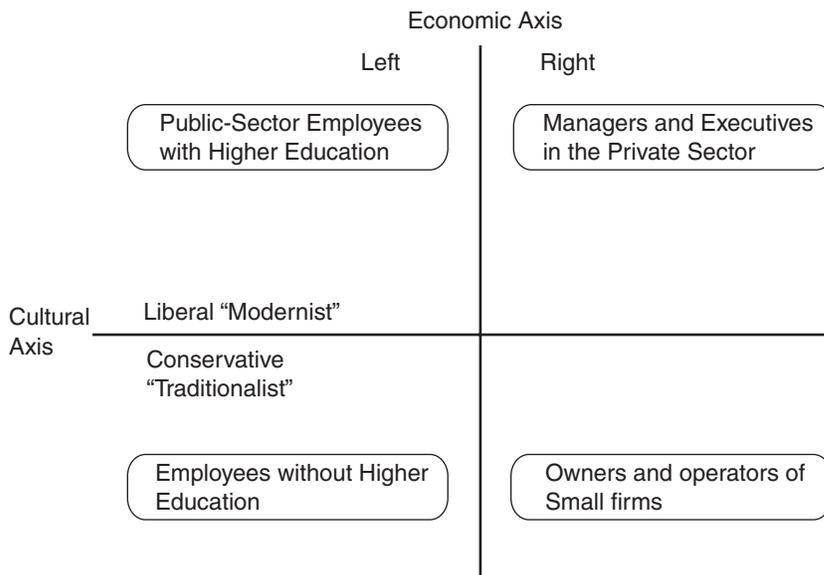


Figure 8.6. The American value structure. (Bell 1980: 161; Betts 1988: 150.)

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in their cultural conservatism, while media elites placed to the right of labor leaders on economic issues (Lerner et al. 1996: 51). When viewed from the point of view of this thesis, “traditional” members of the majority group, whether on the left or right, would tend to endorse dominant ethnicity whereas “modernists” would oppose it.

Looking at American data, McClosky and Zaller have empirically confirmed the four-way diagram shown in Figure 8.6. The more sophisticated (i.e., educated) the respondent, the more likely he or she is to embrace the democratic values of liberty and equality. Their findings have subsequently informed the literature on democratic elite theory (Vengroff and Morton 2000: 360; McClosky and Zaller 1984: 258, 260–261). Exploring the same themes, Byron Shafer and William Claggett used a national sample of nearly 8,000 which divided the U.S. population into four equal-value sectors and examined the educational composition of each sector. Their results are shown in Figure 8.7.⁹ (Liberalism and egalitarianism are mutually exclusive economic positions but are culturally complementary.)

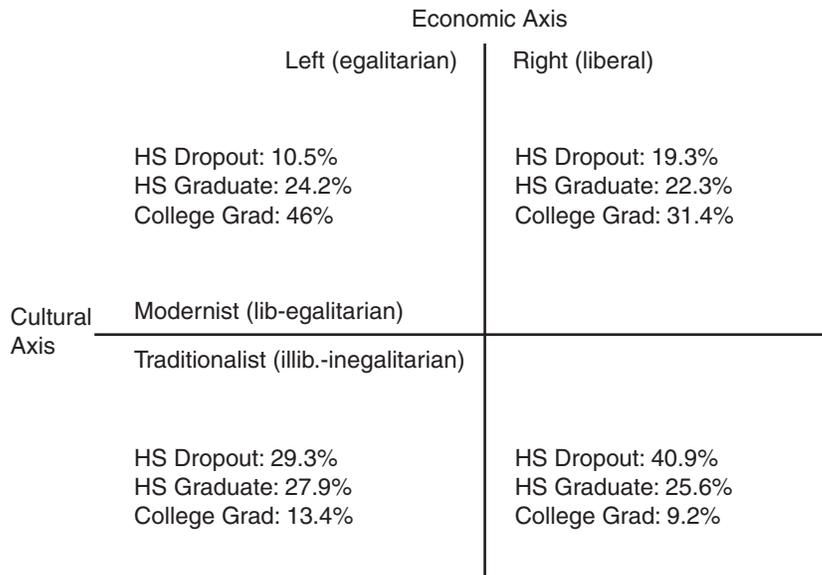


Figure 8.7. Educational composition of American value sectors. (Shafer and Claggett 1993: 76–77.)

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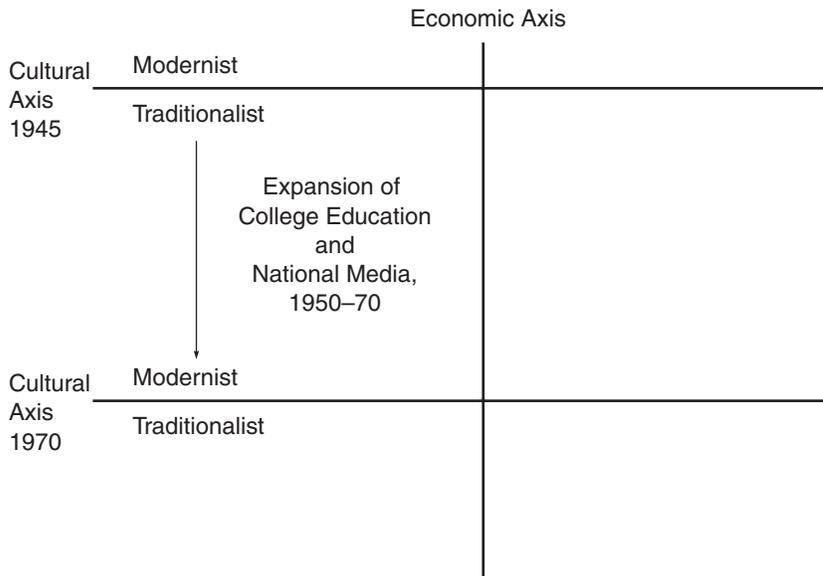


Figure 8.8. The impact of education expansion on the American value structure, 1950-1970.

This data shows that modernists are far better educated than traditionalists. We are now in a position to show how the value structure of American society changed to cause the decline of dominant ethnicity. Looking at Figure 8.8, we can see how increasing education (correlated with expressive individualism) prompted cultural modernization, increasing hostility toward dominant ethnicity.

Expressive Revolution: The Second Phase of Modernist Aesthetic Institutionalization

This chapter has offered evidence of significant ethical change in the second half of the twentieth century, but a similar story could be told on the aesthetic front. In effect, the rise of the new universalist ethic in post-World War II America was matched by an accompanying development in the aesthetic sphere: liberty and equality, abstract philosophical principles, came to be figuratively translated into symbol. As noted, the hedonistic and techno-futurist facets of modernism were the first to be taken

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up by the American mass culture of the 1920s and 1930s. Cosmopolitanism was another dimension of modernism that attained acceptance by 1940, albeit among a limited strata of educated, urban elites.

Nevertheless, the more threatening symbols of the Young Intellectuals, such as drug use, unconventional dress, and sexual promiscuity, did not emerge as mass phenomena during modernism's "smart" expansion phase. In the 1960s, however, these forces burst upon the scene, carried by a wave of alternative youth cultures that reinforced the modernist gains of the 1920s. Talcott Parsons coined this new cultural ferment the "expressive revolution" (B. Martin 1981: 2, 15–16; Parsons 1975). In truth, the new 1960s ethos represented the flowering of the efforts of the Beatnik movement of the late 1940s and 1950s.

One theme of this second wave of expressive turmoil was a renewal of the early Villagers' quest to find countercultural influences from subordinate groups like blacks, ethnics, the underclass, and deviant youth. Following in the footsteps of their pre-World War I Village forebears, hedonistic modernists like the Beats drew black blues and soul, youthful rock'n'roll, underclass attire, substance abuse, and sexual practices into their cultural repertoire (Delli Carpini 1986: 17, 24–27; Hebdige 1979: 27–28).

The new modernism's attempt to differentiate itself from the white Protestant cultural center lent added strength to the cosmopolitan interpretation of American identity. This spirit is exemplified in Norman Mailer's *White Negro* (1957), a romantic celebration of the uninhibited lifestyle of the black "hipster" that recalled Carl Van Vechten's romantic *Nigger Heaven* of the 1920s. The hipster, according to Mailer, knew that one had to "exist without roots, to set out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of self. . . . One is Hip or one is Square" (Curry and Goodheart 1991: 197; McClay 1994: 270–271).

The Beat phenomenon proved to be merely the opening salvo in the commercialization of left-wing modernism, a trend that embarked on a meteoric ascent with the "hippie" movement of the 1960s. The hippies, directly linked to the Beats through Allen Ginsberg, proclaimed an anarchist cosmopolitanism reminiscent of Fourier, prophesizing a "love generation" and an "epoch of liberation, love, peace, compassion, and [the] *unity of mankind*" (Kaiser 1988: 204; Jamison and Eyerman 1994: 160, emphasis added). What is important here is that modernism's lowbrow phase, despite its populist accent, continued the adversarial narrative of anti-WASP cosmopolitanism.

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The Institutionalization of Left-Modernist Counterculture

Earlier, activities of the Young Intellectuals were shown to have heralded the “smart” consumerism of the 1920s. The bohemian ferment of the Beats, Pop Artists, and Hippies produced a similar result, validating Daniel Bell’s observation that the modernist sensibility of the “New Left” avant-garde, which was taken to its apogee in the 1960s, became institutionalized in American society. Accordingly, the motifs of the 1960s counterculture became ingrained in the tissue of American mass culture. As Bell so masterfully writes: “the life-style once practiced by a small *cenacle* . . . is now copied by many . . . [and] this change of scale gave the culture of the 1960’s its special surge, coupled with the fact that a bohemian life-style once limited to a tiny elite is now acted out on the giant screen of the mass media” (Bell 1976: 54).

The change of scale mentioned by Bell and confirmed by others (e.g., Siegal 1986; Featherstone 1991; or Campbell 1987) showed up in various ways. In a study of gentrification in New York’s SoHo district, for example, Sharon Zukin found that the number of artists working in New York jumped from a few thousand in the 1960s to about 100,000 at the start of the 1970s, leading to the collaboration of corporate and artistic actors in such projects as the gentrification of SoHo (Featherstone 1991: 46; Zukin 1982a, 1982b). Meanwhile, the hippie movement mushroomed during 1967 into a nationwide phenomenon that encompassed millions (Anderson 1995: 171–176, 241–245). These observations have been confirmed by survey data, which illustrate that behavior associated with the counterculture, ~~namely~~ premarital sex and the use of narcotics, increased dramatically in the late 1960s and early 1970s. (Caplow et al. 1994: 443, 450). Significantly, a U.S. high school survey of lifestyle and politics in 1967 showed that the ethical (“left”) and aesthetic (“counterculture”) components were highly correlated (Ennis 1992: 305–306).

Two other significant developments in the massification of left-modernism were the explosive growth in blue jean sales and the expansion and transformation of the rock music industry in the 1960s. Rock’s share of the music market jumped from 20 to 50 percent during this decade, spawning phenomena like the rock festival (Ewen 1982: 114, 243–245; Ennis 1992: 345). Over 300 rock festivals were held in the 1960s, culminating in the Woodstock Festival, attended by more than a million young people in 1969. This event was viewed as a defining moment for *both* the counterculture and the wider American “baby boom” generation,

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heralding left-wing modernism’s arrival at the cultural center. (Anderson 1995: 174, 277–278; Kaiser 1988: 26; Ennis 1992: 350).

The New Master Frames

By the end of the 1960s, the modernist avant-garde breached the remaining defenses of traditionalism in the American bourgeoisie, and the ensuing fashion mechanism quickly drew the new styles into the mainstream, remaking the nation’s mass culture. The resultant cultural trends therefore yield a similar pattern to that observed for the American value structure. This is the familiar division in economics between left and right, as well as the cultural division between modernists and traditionalists (see Figure 8.9).

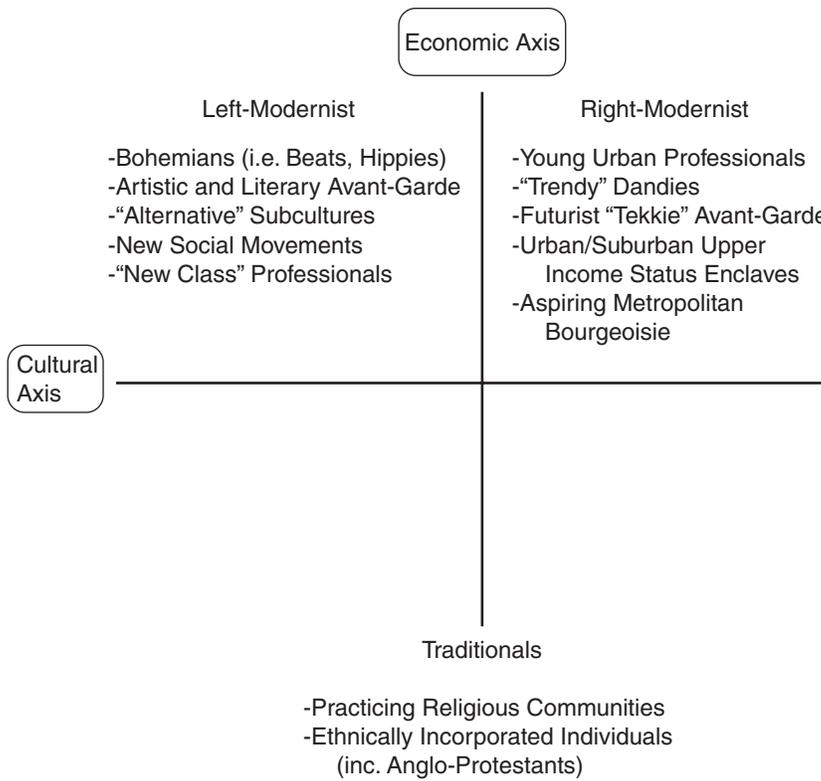


Figure 8.9. The American cultural structure.

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The “right-modern” (i.e., modernist bourgeois or “BoBo”) category is probably the most numerous and includes the mass of generally unself-conscious, future-oriented consumers who possess fragmented identities based on work, leisure, and status, but lack a strong sense of corporatism. These are the contemporary heirs of the “smart” modernists of the 1920s, albeit with significant accretions from the 1960s wave of expressive modernism. “Yuppies,” “trendy” dandies, “tekkie” futurists, golf buffs, and sailing enthusiasts might be considered prime exemplars of this cultural segment (McCracken 1988: 121; Vidich and Bensman 1995: 264–270). Indeed, a recent study claims that fully 14 percent of those born between 1946 and 1964 can be counted as “yuppies,” a figure rising to 50 percent if one includes “psychographic yuppies” (Bush and Burnett 1986: 27). The “traditionalist” group is smaller in number than the right-moderns and includes all of those for whom ethnic or religious meaning systems are of primary salience. The “traditionalist” identity itself carries little weight, as opposed to its constituent ethnic and religious subgroups.¹⁰ Finally, the “left-modern” group exists as the smallest numerical entity.

Each of these three categories may be perceived as master frames,¹¹ which either exist as self-conscious “imagined communities” or, if not, encompass subgroups that do so. The nature of American society’s master frames varies in many ways. Some are fragmented and disunited (right-moderns), others are moderately cohesive (left-moderns), while some are very cohesive (traditionalist subgroups). Some are antagonistic toward dominant ethnicity (ethnic minority traditionalists, left-moderns), while others are favorable (dominant ethnic and religious traditionalists). Overall, however, the cultural institutionalization of modernism expanded the “modern” categories, whether of the left or right, at the expense of the traditional. Therefore, the large-scale institutionalization of modernist culture in American society, which accompanied the value changes of 1950–1970, hastened the decline of dominant ethnic identity (see Figure 8.10).

The discussion in this chapter provides a link between the pre-World War II expansion of cosmopolitan Americanism, encompassing the intellectual elite, and the diffusion of these ideas among a wider stratum after 1945. Between the early 1930s and 1950s, universalist ideas of liberty and equality spread from the intellectual elite to the better-educated sections of the political and economic elite: the mass media, executive, judiciary, and top bureaucrats.

Even so, the institutionalization of liberal and egalitarian hegemony in

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the cultural sphere was only achieved between 1950 and 1970 owing to a structural change in American society. The G.I. Bill and the rise of an affluent postindustrial society increased the demand for higher education. University education and national television coverage expanded. This placed a larger segment of American society in contact with intellectually hegemonic cosmopolite ideals. The consequent “liberalized” strata, culturally modern in orientation, expanded with the growth of the higher education system, leading to large-scale value change. This tide swept dominant ethnic conceptions of the nation to the margins of American society, allowing the modernist avant-garde status group to occupy the cultural center.

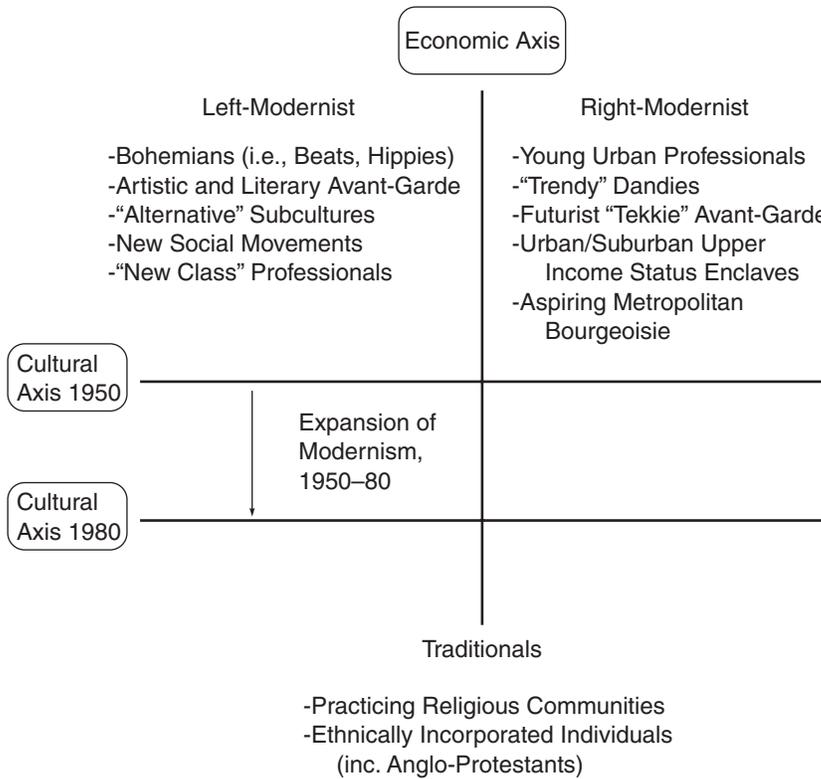


Figure 8.10. The impact of education expansion on the American cultural structure, 1950–1980.

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The Role of Expressive Individualism in WASP Decline

The Growth of Expressive Individualism

“Expressive individualism,” writes Robert Bellah, “holds that each person has a unique core of feeling and intuition that should unfold or be expressed if individuality is to be realized” (Bellah 1996: 333–334). This form of individualism, which sprang from the expressivist romanticism of the nineteenth century, had long influenced American thinkers from the Transcendentalists to the New York Intellectuals (Taylor 1989: 374–390; Blake 1990: 6). The activities of the Young Intellectuals in Greenwich Village form part of this Anglo-American tradition. However, only after World War II, especially in the post-1960s period, did an expressive-individualist sensibility spread to larger segments of the population.

A number of indicators seem to back up the contention that expressive individualism gained ground during the 1960s. For one thing, between the late 1960s and early 1980s a marked liberalization occurred in attitudes toward illegal drug use, premarital sex, and all forms of erotic expression (Caplow et al. 1994: 432–436). The lyrics of the modern rock song celebrated these changes and also stressed the ecstasy of liberated, future-oriented individualism.¹⁰ Moreover, the period from the 1950s to the 1980s witnessed a general shift toward more independent living, especially among youth: besides a marked decline in kinship networks, there occurred an increase in nonfamily living and a dramatic rise in the proportion of one-person households, which rose from 11 percent in 1950 to 24 percent in 1987 (Caplow et al. 1994: 46–50). Alex Shoumatoff described this new phenomenon as it appeared in New York:

The greatest concentration of single people in the world, the world capital of rampant individualism, is New York City. In 1980 . . . thirty-four percent of the city’s entire population fifteen years old or older, had never married, and 349,373 of the 706,015 households in Manhattan had only one person in them. Manhattan actually had even more “singles” than that, because many of those counted had roommates who were also single but who didn’t appear on the census rolls; and some “never-marrieds,” as well as some of the divorced and the widowed who had not remarried, were living with their parents or with other kin. (Shoumatoff 1985: 190)

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Emile Durkheim was one of the first social scientists to develop a theory of the effects of individualism by studying differentials in suicide rates. In this sense, the American data are instructive. Suicide rates have increased substantially since the 1950s, particularly among the young, males, and whites (Caplow et al. 1994: 511, 517; Putnam 2000: 261). A related phenomenon, of similar importance, is the growth of the psychotherapy industry (Bellah 1996: 121). A recent study demonstrates the point: 40 percent of Americans were found to belong to “support groups” of some kind, with 5 percent belonging to groups specifically concerned with self-help (Putnam 1995a: 71–72).

The self-help movement is much more than merely a psychological response to a changed technoeconomic environment. In many ways, it affirms the tenets of expressive individualism incubated by the Young Intellectuals of Greenwich Village. Hence the expressively oriented Human Potential movement of the sixties 1960s gave self-help a strong boost, while the spate of new books that emerged by the end of that decade carried overtly individualistic titles like *You!* or *Looking Out for Number One* (Curry and Goodheart 1991: 199–200; Ennis 1992: 363).

These books stressed the importance of self-expression and the contingency of cultural communities: “You are moving away. Away from institutional claims and other people’s agenda. . . . If I could give everyone a gift for the send-off on this journey, it would be a gift of portable roots. . . . For each of us there is the opportunity to emerge reborn, authentically unique” (Taylor 1992a: 14; Giddens 1991: 70–72). The essential point to take from this discussion is that the discourse of expressive individualism spread from its avant-garde sources during the 1960s to encompass a larger segment of society. As we shall see, this had important repercussions for American ethnicity.

Ethnicity and the Ideology of Expressive Individualism

For expressive individualists, ethnicity compels individuals to conform to collective modes of representation, thereby obscuring individual authenticity and inhibiting consumer choice. Carriers of expressive-individualistic ideas will thereby experience ethnicity, dominant or otherwise, as “confining” and regressive, a force to be transcended in the name of postethnic identities based on shared choices. For example, Jews and Anglo-Saxons in the interwar New York intellectual community were united by their shared rejection of ethnic ties in favor of a postethnic

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“avant-garde” identity (Bell 1980: 131–132; Bender 1987: 325; Novak 1971: 37).

Milton Gordon surmises that this transethnic perspective is especially characteristic of intellectuals, whose shared interests—and, I would argue, shared individualist ideology—bring them together. Charles Anderson corroborates Gordon’s claims, adding that “the evidence now available suggests that academic intellectuals . . . do exhibit extremely weak ties to the religious community; instead they tend to participate in and identify with groups consisting of persons from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Academics with Protestant and Jewish origins tend to be weaker in religious community than those with Catholic backgrounds” (Gordon 1964: 224; Anderson 1970: 137–138).

Although some expressive-individualist intellectuals have assailed ethnicity, expressivists have reasons to support “exotic” forms of it. Recall that modernism, the aesthetic correlate of individualism, places a premium on diversity of experience. As a consequence, the loss of ethnic diversity might be viewed as a narrowing of the possibilities for experience, and hence the richness of choices available for the individual to realize his or herself. To circumvent this dilemma, the expressivist response has been to embrace the ethnicity of the “other,” while rejecting it for the self. In aggregate, this individualism results in a transcendent attitude toward the “bland” WASP background culture but endorses a conservationist posture toward what are perceived to be more interesting “foreground” ethnic cultures.

This explains the stance of the quintessential American expressivist, Randolph Bourne, who urged his Anglo-Saxon peers to become cosmopolitans of “international mind,” while excoriating Jews who gave up their traditional faith (Bourne [1916] 1964: 113–114, 118). The expressivist tradition, therefore, has given birth to two different strains of individualism. The first, which I categorize as universalist individualism, urges the transcendence of ethnic ties in the name of an abstract individuality—a position associated with Israel Zangwill and the early Liberal Progressives. In contrast, the second tradition, here termed cosmopolitan individualism, champions ethnicity as a means of increasing the diversity of experience available to the expressive self (Buruma 2001: 23–27).

In truth, modernism happily blends the two modes. As evidence, consider the easy coexistence of (universalist) abstract art and (cosmopolitan) ethnocultural *pastiche* under the rubric of modern art. Arnold Toynbee sees the two forces, which he describes in turn as “futurism” and “cultural

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promiscuity,” as being historically concurrent (Toynbee 1962, 5: 384). Similarly, for Daniel Bell, the cosmopolitan “mingling of strange gods”¹¹ and the abstract expression of cubist painters and functionalist architects can both be subsumed under the mantle of the modernist aesthetic.

Universalist Individualism: The Melting Pot Modernists

Recently, the authors of several high-profile works have expressed the universalist perspective, championing expressive liberty as a solvent of parochial ethnic bonds and attacking what they view as the confining, backward nature of American multiculturalism. Foremost among these authors is David Hollinger, who articulates his stance in his recent work, *Postethnic America* (1995). Another apostle of this creed is Werner Sollors, whose *Beyond Ethnicity* (1986) approvingly quotes postethnic thinkers from Israel Zangwill at the turn of the century to “cosmopolitan” consensus figures like David Riesman and Talcott Parsons in the 1950s and 1960s.¹² In addition to warning about the parochialism inherent in ethnicity, Sollors lauds ethnic mixture, and ~~in a rare multiculturalist departure~~ remarks that ethnic blending allows those of multiple ancestry numerous “possibilities for playfulness” in creating their authentic selves (Sollors 1986: 252).

Several recent polemics against multiculturalism of liberal nationalist origin also draw on the expressive argument. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., for example, in *The Disuniting of America* (1993), maintained that “[Europe] is the unique source of those liberating ideas of individual liberty . . . human rights and cultural freedom that are our most precious legacy.” Not surprisingly, Schlesinger also registered his approval of interethnic/interracial marriage, ethnic decline, and the melting pot concept in general (Schlesinger [1991] 1993: 127, 133).

Cosmopolitan Individualism: The Multicultural Modernists

The recent surge of support for universalist individualism does not mean that it has won the day. Indeed, a strong argument can be made that multiculturalism is the official ideology of the American nation, manifested in school and university curricula, social science and humanities discourse, and the political and legal systems (Glazer 1997: 33, 147; Lind 1995: 98). However, here one must be careful. Many of the provisions of *institutional* multiculturalism grew out of the egalitarian desire to use

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the tools of state to raise the socioeconomic standing of black Americans, women, and other underprivileged groups (Glazer 1997: 121; D. King 1998b: 303–304). As a result, many multiculturalist arguments merely advocate the inclusion of minority perspectives and minority content into the mainstream culture and back ethnic strategies for procuring greater political and economic power for subaltern groups (Glazer 1997: 20; Kymlicka 1995; Taylor 1992b; R. Smith 1993, 1997).

This “loose-bounded”¹³ multiculturalism, characteristic of individual-centered cosmopolitans, is analogous to what Stanley Fish calls “boutique multiculturalism” and must be differentiated from the “strong” multiculturalism contained within “tight-bounded” ethnic strategies (Fish 1998: 69, 73). Those who advocate illiberal methods of ethnic boundary-maintenance (like proscriptions against intermarriage or interethnic contact) can be found only among a small cadre of avowedly ethnocentric intellectuals, not among the cosmopolitan-individualist mainstream whose influence is critical to multiculturalism’s success (Glazer 1995: 137–138; Gerstle 2001: 349). Ultimately, then, most multiculturalist arguments about power and inclusion resemble those of the pluralists (Horace Kallen excluded) in the early part of this century. Jane Addams, John Dewey, Randolph Bourne, Sinclair Lewis, Everett Clinchy, and the crafters of the World Council of Churches’ statements on race relations can all be fitted into this paradigm.

Moreover, the reigning normative posture among *progressive* American intellectuals from the 1920s onward was arguably pluralist, despite the commonly held belief in the assimilationist sympathies of pre-1960s social thinkers.¹⁴ Post-1920s progressives tended to applaud ethnocultural diversity while denouncing dominant-group attempts at homogenization. Yet, they simultaneously approved of the cosmopolitan attitudes and interethnic contact that pose such a great danger to the survival of ethnic groups in America. “The traditions of pluralism and assimilation blurred into a rosy haze,” remarks John Higham, “in which differences were praised in principle but never looked at very closely” (Higham [1975] 1984: 220–221; Gleason 1992: 56–60, 161–162; Lissak 1989: 172, 174–176).

It is also significant that progressive opinion, from the turn of the twentieth century onward, *did not exclude black Americans from its vision*. Nathan Glazer is correct in his assessment that blacks did not figure centrally in the thinking of early pluralists and melting pot cosmopolitans. He is also correct to assert that the *mass* of the American native-white population,

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including many of its elites, welcomed white immigrants aboard the vessel of sociological nationhood before blacks (Glazer 1998). However, where black communities were present, progressive thinkers like the Liberal-Progressive reformers, ecumenical Protestants, and Modernist radicals consistently attempted to include them.

The Ethical Culture Society, for example, tried to entice blacks to participate in Settlement activities, beginning in the late nineteenth century (Radest 1969: 123). Jane Addams was also interested in black inclusion. Hence she noted with satisfaction that W. E. B. DuBois's lectures had been well received by an Italian-immigrant audience at Hull House and hoped that the Mediterranean immigrants could lead Americans to be more tolerant of blacks (Addams 1910: 255–256). Later, Addams tried to persuade members of the Mexican and black communities in Chicago to join her Settlement but was bitterly disappointed by the prejudiced reaction of white immigrant groups toward this initiative—a reaction that she attributed to the Americanization process (Addams 1930: 282–284).

Blacks were similarly earmarked to join the new “melting pot.” Accordingly, Israel Zangwill argued in 1914 that black Americans, who had contributed their music and dance to both white Americans and the world were destined to amalgamate with the rest of the American population (Sollors 1986: 72). Finally, let us not forget the involvement of New York Settlement figures such as William English Walling (NAACP founding member, 1909) or Seth Low (trustee of Tuskegee Institute since 1907) with the black community, nor the groundbreaking activities of the FCC's Committee on Race Relations (1921). We would also do well to remember that the Anglo-Saxon radicals of the Village Renaissance introduced white America to the richness of black jazz and dance and celebrated the openness of black American society as an antidote to Puritanism. Thus in myriad ways, pre-World War I radicals and Liberal Progressives sought to welcome both immigrant white and native-born black into the fabric of a new cosmopolitan America.

The key shift was predicated on the repudiation of America's Anglo-Protestant ethnic heritage in the name of liberal-egalitarian radicalism. The self-esteem and richness of *all* non-Anglo-Saxon cultures, whether black or immigrant white, was celebrated as soon as the new non-WASP vision of America was promulgated in the first decade of the twentieth century. One might therefore argue that the crucial turn came in the 1890s with the pluralist Americanism of Felix Adler and William James. Sixties multiculturalism merely institutionalized and re-labeled their ideas.

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As regards the radical-progressive vision, there was little or no lag period in which immigrants were admitted into the American symbolic pantheon while racial minorities were excluded. Once the pluralists had erected the Anglo-Protestant as “Other,” all minorities were swept up into the “Oppressed/Culturally Rich” category. Similarly, today several writers have pointed out that multiculturalism’s unity is largely sustained by reference to a “moral center” consisting of the WASP (or white) Other (Greeley 1971: 124; Bonnett 1997: 177–178; Ceaser 1998: 142–146).

To repeat: the connections between the Liberal-Progressive brand of cosmopolitan pluralism and today’s individual-centered “boutique multiculturalism” are extremely robust. Indeed, it would be difficult to discern much difference between the two ideologies, despite the passing of three quarters of a century. Today, many American opinion-makers *are* multiculturalists. Yet, like their interwar predecessors, their desire for diversity does not spring from the tight-bounded ethnic determinism of a Johann Gottfried von Herder or Horace Kallen—they would be horrified by Kallen’s idea that “men cannot change their grandfathers” or by Herder’s belief in the immutable, organic division of humanity (Kallen 1924: 122; Schmidt 1993: 155; Breuilly 1994: 104–107). Instead, a diversity of both ethnic *and* transethnic groups, each with fluid boundaries, is championed. This makes sense as both an egalitarian and a modernist strategy: it abets the modernist quest for authenticity and experience, and it complements the egalitarian drive to weaken dominant groups while supporting less powerful ones.

Consequently, multiculturalism, for the American intellectual mainstream, is a liberal-egalitarian strategy that might be better labeled diversitarianism or “soft multiculturalism” (Gerstle 2001: 349). In the last instance, it repudiates all ~~hard~~ ethnic boundary-maintaining mechanisms while stressing the brotherhood of man, the richness of intermarriage, and the possibilities for personal growth inherent in hybridity, liminality, and marginality. The conjoint celebration of hybridity and multiculturalism is especially evident among those of radical, “cosmopolitan-multiculturalist” bent like Lisa Jones, Michele Wallace, and Greg Tate (Willis 1995: 212). Paradoxically, multiculturalist ideology thus constitutes a powerful force for *inclusion* and ethnic interaction, which tends to result in the *erosion* of ethnic boundaries (Glazer 1997: 20).

Walter Wallace is therefore correct when he refers to multiculturalism as a “halfway house” or transition point toward ethnic dissolution (Wallace 1997: 153). Its practitioners, beginning with Jane Addams, probably

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wished to retain ethnic diversity. Yet their support for the cosmopolitan imperatives of developing “international minds” and encouraging intermarriage, as well as their efforts to raise the socioeconomic standing of ethnic minorities, had the opposite effect. Thus, in the end, assimilation to a modernist, multiply-constituted *pastiche* logically proceeds from “soft” multiculturalism—largely as unintended consequence.

In the face of these developments, soft multiculturalism can offer little resistance. Moreover, cosmopolitan individualists themselves, with their *bricolage* of diverse identity choices, are not personally threatened by ethnic decline. Therefore, should intermarriage endanger the ethnic diversity of the United States, American multiculturalists would never criticize the former practice. Just as the pluralists of yesteryear expressed their admiration for multiethnic offspring like Al Smith or Fiorello LaGuardia, soft multiculturalists will swiftly praise the growth of the mixed-race population. In summary, it should be evident that expressive-individualist ideology, in both its universalist (“melting pot”) and cosmopolitan (“multiculturalism”) variants, tends to weaken ethnic bonds.

Expressive Individualism and the Decline of Ethnic Association

Thomas Hylland Eriksen, citing a typology first proposed by Don Handelman, identifies four degrees of ethnic incorporation: category, network, association, and community. According to this schema, ethnic incorporation strengthens as ethnic group members move beyond mere self-categorization and begin to network and form associations along ethnic lines (Eriksen 1993: 43–44). One of the principal effects of expressive individualism is to reverse the ethnic incorporation process and direct individuals toward privatized or transethnic social activity.

In the American case, ethnic association was an important form of activity for all groups. Among Anglo-Protestants, the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution and other hereditary societies directly served this function. More important, however, were fraternal societies like the Odd Fellows and Masons, and service clubs like the Rotary and the Lions. Kenneth Underwood’s study of Holyoke, Massachusetts, in the 1940s, for instance, found that the Rotary Club, though officially nonsectarian, counted only 15 Catholics among its 142 members—this in a community that was 80 percent Catholic (Underwood 1957: 236). Charles Anderson, writing in the late 1960s, remarked that while the main fraternal societies “usually have no formal Protestant ties . . . [they]

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traditionally have been white Protestant strongholds” (Anderson 1970: 118–19).

Catholics and Jews, meanwhile, originally associated within their respective ethnic societies. The high point of ethnic association, however, was reached in 1914. From that point on, “All the institutions of ethnic culture weakened. Lodges declined, ethnic ceremonies and theaters faded, saloons closed, and in their churches and newspapers a younger generation of priests and editors began to encourage a greater use of English.” After World War II, ethnic neighborhoods became increasingly working class as more mobile white ethnics moved to the suburbs. Though integrated institutionally by Americanized Catholic churches, Democratic Party branches, and AFL-CIO locals, ethnic neighborhoods began to crumble substantially from the 1960s as working-class whites departed the city centers in a second wave of suburbanization (Higham 1999: 52–55).

In Protestant communities, changes were similarly in the offing. Robert Putnam has dramatically catalogued the decline in American connectedness, or “social capital” since the 1960s (Putnam 2000). In membership terms, Protestant-influenced fraternal societies have fared especially poorly: the Masons, to take a prominent case, have lost 39 percent of their membership since 1959, and heavy declines were also recorded for the Lions, Elks, Shriners, and Jaycees in the 1970s and 1980s (Putnam 1995a: 70; 1995b).

Symbolic Ethnicity

The erosion of ethnic organization in the United States indicates that, in addition to the aning of Anglo-Protestant communalism, ethnic organization  *per se* is in decline in the United States. What researchers have begun to discover is that the nature of white ethnicity in the United States has, to borrow Handelman’s phraseology, shifted from group to category. Members of ethnic categories know themselves by their symbolic boundary markers, but they lack structural organization.

In the United States, the process of ethnic de-incorporation has proceeded beyond the “ethnic category” formulation, for, as Eriksen remarks, members of ethnic categories are at least taught about their ancestral origins and group narrative, and continue to base some of their interactions with others upon ethnic premises (Eriksen 1993: 42; Handelman 1977). However, it appears that for white Americans, the myth-symbol complex and group narrative that are standard fare for ethnic categories now serve

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only as repositories from which a subset of symbols may be drawn. Moreover, these select symbols may be synthesized with American symbols and complemented by new creations in order to minimize friction between ethnic tradition and modern American lifestyles.

Herbert Gans has labeled this form of social behavior “symbolic ethnicity.” In his estimation, “Symbolic ethnicity can be expressed in a myriad of ways, but above all it is characterized by . . . a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behaviour.” For example, Jews in the United States may choose not to attend services at the local synagogue except on occasion, they may no longer participate in Jewish occupational networks, their children may marry outside the group, and they may choose not to observe kosher customs (Gans 1979: 9; Zenner 1985: 123–124). These processes demonstrate that white Americans who are conscious of their ethnic origin manifest a lower degree of ethnic activity today than previously. This decrease in ethnic incorporation often leads to transethnic social action, which typically results in interethnic marriage, a key step on the road to what David Hollinger calls postethnicity.

Interethnic Marriage

The high rate of interethnic marriage in the United States is a relatively recent phenomenon. For example, a landmark study in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1940 demonstrated that intermarriage rates were remarkably low for many ethnic groups at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1900, New Haven’s Jews, Italians, and Poles were completely endogamous groups, and even the Irish (80 percent) and Germans (60 percent) tended to marry within the group (Herberg 1955: 45–46; R. Kennedy 1944: 332–333). According to Herman Lantz, parish records in “Coal Town,” West Virginia, indicated a very low rate of interethnic marriage in the 1950s, and he discovered that many native-born Anglo-Protestants were strongly against the practice. One working-class Anglo-Protestant woman, when asked about intermarriage, replied: “The feeling was strong against intermarriage among the Americans. I think they [Anglo-Protestants] just preferred our own breed of people.”

Other respondents in Coal Town stressed that the Catholicism of the European immigrants was the biggest barrier (Lantz 1958: 57–58). Similarly, in the Muncie, Indiana, of the mid-1920s and 30s, the Lynds found that religion was a key factor: Catholics and Protestants tended to shun

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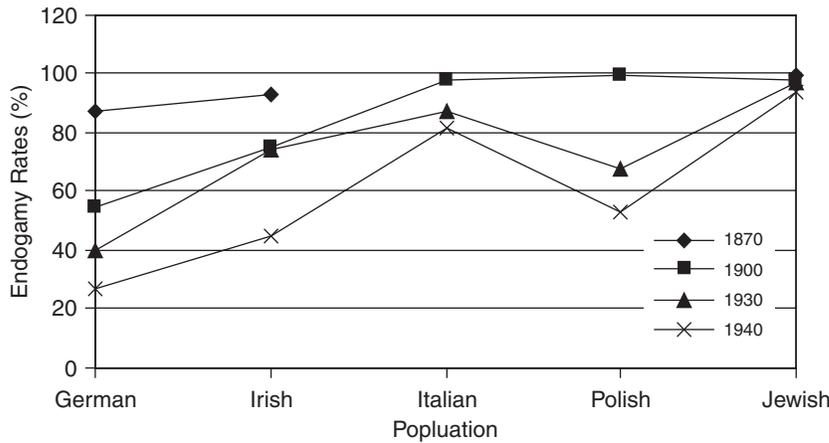


Figure 9.10. Endogamy rates, New Haven, CT, 1870-1940. (Kennedy 1944: 335.)

intermarriage with each other (Lynd and Lynd 1937: 114). In fact, nationwide, the religious census of 1957 showed 91 percent of Protestants to be endogamously married (Anderson 1970: 132-134).

Despite strong proscriptions against interethnic marriage, it began to occur after 1900, although the religious boundaries between Catholicism and Protestantism remained largely intact (Herberg 1955: 30). Thus in New Haven in 1900, older groups like the Germans and Irish started to lose their high rates of endogamy, and 40 years later, even Southern and Eastern European groups began to follow suit (Figure 9.10).

The melting pattern evident in New Haven by World War II proved a harbinger of things to come. Large differences in the proportion of mixed-ancestry individuals between younger and older age cohorts indicates that interethnic marriage was becoming increasingly prevalent by mid-century.

Interethnic Marriage in the Contemporary United States

“We’re all Italian around here, aren’t we, Mrs. O’Brien?” This humorous anecdote was related by an Italian-American social scientist being led on a tour of an “all-Italian” section of Philadelphia, a city whose largest ethnic group in 1980 was the “multiple-ancestry” category. Philadelphia is not unique in this regard (Yancey et al. 1985: 46). Among whites in 1980,

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there was no major group in which a majority of marriages took place within the ethnic (Lieberson and Waters 1988: 173). The result is an increasingly mixed population.

For example, among those of Italian origin in 1980, 43 percent were of multiple ancestry. More significant is the diachronic perspective: just 5.9 percent of those over 65 years of age are of mixed ancestry as against 81.5 percent of those under five years of age (see Figure 9.11). For Richard Alba, "Italian Americans are on the verge of the twilight of ethnicity," poised to join a larger Euro-American group and maintaining only a weakened, symbolic identification with Italian ethnicity (Alba 1985a: 152).

For Northern/Western European groups, those of mixed ancestry comprise an even larger majority of the total. Figure 9.12 illustrates the trend, showing that "older" groups like the English, Germans, or Irish have a greater proportion of mixed-ancestry individuals than newer arrivals like the Italians or Greeks.¹⁵ Among the Irish, for instance, only 25.7 percent were of single ethnicity in 1980, and, among older groups like the English, the numbers are not only low but are considered to be underestimated due to the unreliability of responses. On this note, Stanley Lieberson writes: "Little more than half of the respondents giving English, Scottish and Welsh in 1971 reported a similar response a year later. Thus inconsistency varies in a systematic way: the older stock white populations

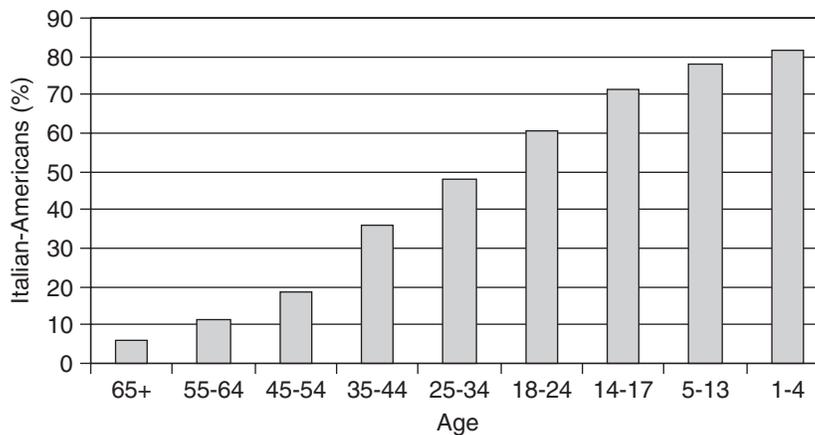


Figure 9.11. Percentage of Italian-Americans of mixed ancestry, by age group, 1980. (Battistella 1989.)

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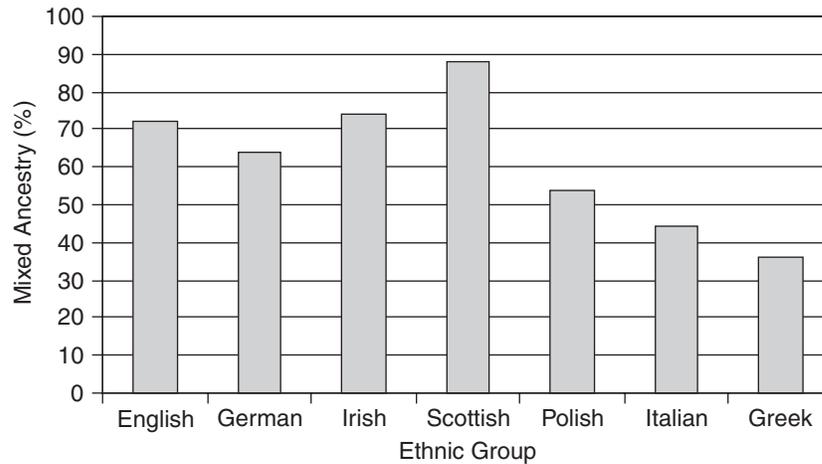


Figure 9.12. Percentage of mixed ancestry, by ethnic group, 1980. (Lieberson and Waters 1988: 45.)

from Northwestern Europe, containing substantial components with many generations of residence in the United States, have much lower levels of consistency than either blacks or whites from relatively more recent sources of immigration such as Italians or Poles” (Lieberson 1985: 175).

Interracial Marriage

Recent figures showing a marked increase in marriage across ethnic lines can be extended to patterns of interracial marriage. Postwar data shows that the proportion of interracial marriages began to increase slowly after World War II, partly as a consequence of a 1967 Supreme Court decision striking down antimiscegenation legislation in 16 states. Nationwide, in 1960, just 0.12 percent of married couples were interracially married¹⁶ (Kitchen 1993: 101; Furlong 1972: 113; Burma 1972: 132). By 1995, this had changed: the census recorded that 2.5 percent of marriages crossed a racial boundary (see Figure 9.13). This national rate conceals great differences by racial group. Over half of Native Americans and Japanese Americans married outside their group while African Americans remained highly endogamous. Hispanic–white intermarriage is significant

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but lower than that between whites and Asians (Lieberson and Waters 1988: 228–232; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1990; Kitchen 1993: 124; Spickard 1989).

This intermarriage is having predictable consequences for the nation's ethnic composition. The year 2000 census, in an unprecedented and controversial move, allowed respondents to tick more than one racial background. The results show that, like golf star Tiger Woods, fully 2.4 percent of Americans are now of multiracial origin, a figure several times higher in diverse states like California. Demographer Barry Edmonston projects that this figure will reach 21 percent of the population nationwide by 2050, with higher rates projected for younger cohorts and for those in high-immigration states (U.S. Census 2001a; Stanfield 1997).

The growth of Hispanic and Asian populations in the United States has undoubtedly helped to spur the increase in transracial nuptials noted above. However, the change in dominant group attitudes toward interracial marriage between 1950 and 1980, which we reviewed in Chapter 8, also appears to be a significant factor (Spickard 1989). A recent test of this thesis, linking intermarriage data from the 1990 census with attitudinal data from the 1990 General Social Survey, showed that “overall . . . localities with more positive [white] attitudes towards minorities” recorded higher interracial marriage rates (Heron 1997: 11).

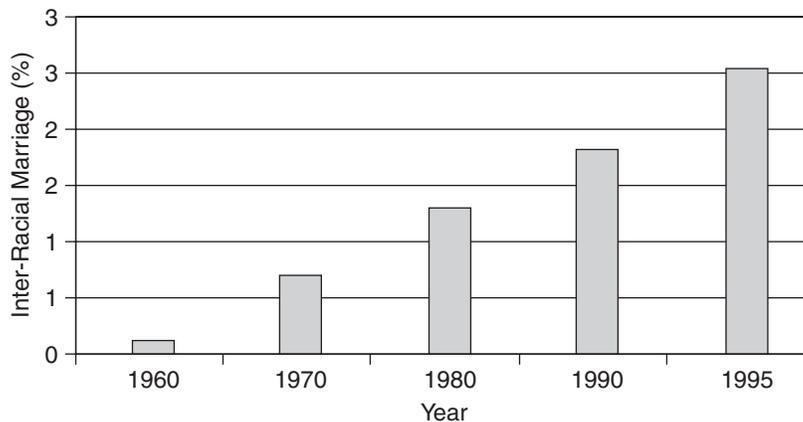


Figure 9.13. Interracial marriage in the United States, 1960–1995. (Furlong 1972: 113; U.S. Census 1996, no. 62.)

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Exoticism and Ethnic Choice

Rising rates of interracial and interethnic marriage and the increasing incidence of inconsistent or mixed-ancestry responses to the census provide us with evidence that ethnicity's influence over primary group interaction, especially among the native-born, is in decline. The principal reason for this recent blurring of ethnic boundaries is the institutionalization of an ethos that calls upon individuals to transcend communal commitments in pursuit of a chosen self.

Another way in which expressive individualism affects ethnicity concerns its companion, the modernist aesthetic, which values the new and different. Interestingly, in line with the ethos of modernism, white Americans have tended to identify themselves with ethnic groups whose culture differs the most from the "bland American" norm (Crispino 1980: 102; Van Esterik 1982: 217; Waters 1992: 89). Peter Schrag was one of the first to pinpoint this new phenomenon: "the option of becoming a WASP is no longer as attractive as remaining a hyphenated Pole or Italian," remarked Schrag in 1973. "A lot of third-generation Americans, moreover, are trying to reclaim the religious and ethnic affiliations which their fathers tried to disown a generation ago . . . even for those who live in the spirit of the melting pot, the WASP option remains thinkable only in the obsolescent terms of another age" (Schrag 1973: 154). ~~Indeed,~~ Schrag's observations are confirmed by the statistical decline in the esteem accorded British ancestry between 1926 and 1977¹⁷ (Waters 1990: 83).

The trend toward diminished Anglo-Protestant conformity continues to the present day—so much so that Italian appears to be the most popular ethnic "option" exercised by multiple-ancestry individuals. For example, among those of Italian-Scottish mixture who simplified their ancestry response on the 1980 U.S. census, Italian was chosen 3 to 1 over Scottish. English remains more popular, but even here, Italian predominates 3 to 2 (Waters 1990: 32–5). Novelty and experiential richness, factors related to expressive individualism, were major reasons cited by respondents for favoring Italian as an ancestry choice (Waters 1990: 142–143). Perhaps further research in this area might examine whether the rate of anglicization of non-British surnames has declined in the past 50 years in response to the same forces.

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Voluntary Ethnicity

The aforementioned trends point to a decline in Anglo-Protestant conformity. Even so, symbolic ethnicity may represent a less radical form of ethnic decline than voluntary ethnicity. Voluntary, or optional, ethnicity describes a situation in which individuals of mixed ancestry choose to play different ethnic roles in different social situations (Pieterse 1997: 380–381). “Passing” and ethnic entrepreneurialism are two forms of this activity. All of this suggests that the level of ethnic commitment¹⁸ for mixed ancestry individuals is less complete than for single-ancestry individuals. In other words, ethnically inspired social activity will occur over a narrower spectrum of activities in the individual’s lifeworld (White and Burke 1987: 314–315).

Postethnicity

The blending of ancestries through interethnic marriage, coupled with the transformation of ethnicity into a symbolic element of personal lifestyle, has led not only to symbolic and voluntary ethnicity, but also to the growth of *postethnic* feeling (Hollinger 1995: 39–47). Used here, the term *postethnic* refers to the phenomenon of individuals whose ethnic background is unknown, or at the very least, is of little or no importance as a determinant of their social action. One indication of this is the 10.7 percent of Americans surveyed in the General Social Surveys of 1972–1980 who could not name any ancestries at all, the nearly 3 percent who merely replied “American,” or the one-third inconsistency rate obtained in a follow-up questionnaire undertaken a year after the 1972 survey (Lieberman 1985: 172–174). A similar degree of fluidity and inconsistency has recently been reported in ethnographic research conducted in suburban California (Waters 1990: 48).

Recent research also backs up Gans’s contention that ethnic sentiment wanes as succeeding generations draw on an increasingly thin repertoire of ethnic myths and symbols from a proliferating number of traditions (Gans 1994: 579–580). Richard Alba’s research in the Capital Region of upstate New York, for instance, found that the importance of ethnic identity to an individual declines with the number of ancestries possessed and with the number of generations lived in the United States. “Complexity probably does not serve well the purpose of instilling an ethnic identity that is more than superficial,” states Alba. “In the long run, intermarriage

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does diminish ethnic identity.” (Alba 1990: 68, 205–206, emphasis added). The end result of such a process, as this theory would predict, is culturally modernistic: an individual chooses symbols from a cosmopolitan array of both ethnic and lifestyle options to create his or her authentic self. Theoretically speaking, a nation of symbolic ethnic “samplers” represents the consummation of the twin traditions of universalist and cosmopolitan individualism, in which ethnicity has been completely transcended by the project of the self.

American Religion: A Comparative Case

Ethnicity and religion are functionally related because both provide historical narratives, myth-symbol complexes, and collective identities to their membership. Indeed, religion is often a symbol of ethnicity, and ethnicity often underpins religious denominationalism (Niebuhr [1929] 1987: 106–108; Roof and McKinney 1987: 117; P. Smith 1991: 34). Therefore, America’s religious profile would be expected to manifest many of the same features as its ethnic profile. Not surprisingly, this is precisely the case.

Take the fact that, by 1980, less than half (43 percent) of American adults responding to a Gallup survey replied that they had always been members of the same denomination. Generally speaking, Protestants switch more than Catholics or Jews, and Protestant denominations typically lose 40 percent of their membership through this process (Roof and McKinney 1987: 165). Individual liberty has penetrated American religion in other ways: for instance, those claiming membership in a church or synagogue fell from 76 percent to 65 percent between 1947 and 1988.

Meanwhile, those with no religious affiliation grew from 3 percent, in the turn-of-the-century cohort, to 13 percent of the 1958–1965 cohort (Roof and McKinney 1987: 236). In addition, 76 percent of church members in 1978 endorsed the following principle: “an individual should arrive at his or her own religious beliefs independent of any churches or synagogues” (Roof and McKinney 1987: 56). Robert Bellah describes this phenomenon as “Sheilaism,” named after a respondent who adheres to no particular religious creed, but instead posits the existence of her own private, agnostic faith (Bellah [1985] 1996: 221). Some also consider religious television to be an indication of religious privatism, though this is a matter of dispute among sociologists of religion¹⁹ (Wuthnow 1989: 116–136).

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As these trends might suggest, interreligious marriage is commonplace in contemporary America. Considered a pillar of American social reality until the 1970s, religious endogamy has faded considerably since then, washing away the tripartite walls of Herberg's "triple melting pot" thesis.²⁰ In 1950, Ruby Kennedy found that Protestant in-marriage was 70 percent in New Haven, though Protestants formed just 20 percent of the population. (Kennedy 1952) Even in 1967, Charles Anderson's research showed that 77 percent of Protestants (who made up 35 percent of the population) in "Catholic City" married their co-religionists, while 63 percent of Catholics in "Protestant City" married endogamously (Anderson 1970: 134). Recent census research suggests that religion is a more important factor than ethnicity in determining the choice of a mate, but this data also demonstrates that roughly half of young Jews and Catholics marry outside their faith. Since 88 percent of Catholics and 94 percent of Jews married within their faith in 1957, the new data effectively demonstrates that major changes have occurred in the last 40 years (Alba 1990: 14–15; Lieberman and Waters 1988: 234–235; Greeley 1972: 169).

By the 1960s, religious switching, religious intermarriage, and declining religiosity were complemented by the growing disjunction between ethnicity and religion, an event symbolized by the merging of once-distinct ethnic denominations (Roof and McKinney 1987: 126). Another religious pattern that approximates developments in the field of ethnicity is symbolic religiosity. This phenomenon manifests itself in the disaggregation of the symbolic core of religious *mythomoteurs*. Not content to choose between denominations, individuals now want to choose among the symbols and rituals of a particular religion(s) to construct more authentic self-identities. Seen in this way, religious symbols become merely an addition to the "Diderot unity" of individual lifestyle choices²¹ (McCracken 1988: 119, 123–124).

Such activity also seeks to avoid the more onerous obligations imposed by a complete set of religious practices by detaching religious symbols from their context and adapting them to more privatized settings (Gans 1994: 585). In summary, American religion manifests the same privatizing tendencies that are found in American ethnicity: growing religious intermarriage, symbolic religiosity, and postreligiosity.

In previous chapters, I mapped the trajectory of egalitarianism and expressive individualism in the United States and saw how these forces came

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to be institutionalized, greatly affecting the attitudes of white Anglo-Protestants toward other ethnics. In this section, egalitarianism and expressive individualism are shown to have effects that patently go beyond opinion, cutting to the core of the *structures* of American ethnicity. First, WASP structural dominance has markedly declined under the pressure of egalitarian forces. Second, ethnic boundaries have loosened as a result of expressive individualism.

In combination, these post-1945 developments give the lie to conventional assumptions that the United States has evolved along an Anglo-conformist—melting pot—multiculturalist trajectory. Instead, largely the reverse is evident: a shift, beginning after World War II, from a *dominant-ethnic* pattern—consisting of a “vertical mosaic” of tightly bounded ethnic groups dominated by Anglo-Protestants—to a *liberal-egalitarian* pattern in which ethnic hierarchies are largely flattened²² and ethnic boundaries considerably relaxed. Large-scale immigration since 1970 and increased minority assertiveness may convey an impression of multicultural vitality, but beneath this veneer lies a modernity whose acids are more corrosive of ethnicity than ever before. Of course, the biggest losers of all have been WASPs, whose decline, on all fronts, may be considered almost terminal. A white, English-speaking, “Anglo” category remains, but, as we will discover in the next chapter, this identity retains its salience and boundedness primarily among a minority of marginalized whites.²³

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