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Conundrum of an Immigrant: Assimilation versus Cultural Preservation

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Abstract. As immigration continues to describe the reality of virtually all industrialized countries, the discourse about its phenomenology and permutations of character as well as policy responses in open, industrialized and market-driven societies related to immigration continue to be among the most heavily researched issues as they drive social and demographic change in significant ways. The fundamental polarity remains between the traditional model of assimilation as compared to the cultural preservation under various models of multiculturalism – aside, of course, from hybrid forms and structuralist approaches. This article examines broad issues of cultural identity, bilingualism, the benefits of membership in a minority group, the changing and increasingly relevant role of religion (primarily of Islam), education and intermarriage, and the significant deviations from the legacy culture minority groups sometimes develop in the process of acculturation without making a full transition to majority culture. At a time when economic benefits of assimilation appear to be increasingly less controlling in struggles for cultural identity and immigrant rights, a number of paradoxes becomes visible only by taking a historical view over the last twenty years at both the American and European experiences to understand socio-political backlashes from majority voters as well as the immigrant responses thereto.

Keywords: *Assimilation, cultural preservation, multiculturalism, immigrants, bilingualism, hybrid traditions*

Since the late 19th century, many western societies debate and study integration patterns of immigrants under the aspects of cultural diversity and identity. As the stream of immigrants to societies perceived as more prosperous or offering more opportunities or simply shelter from persecution or hardship anything but abates and much rather continues to increases, these host societies face challenges from ethnic and cultural heterogeneity that results in frictions and high cost of integration that are virtually never borne by employers clamoring for ever cheaper labor. As a result, the discourse about the cost and benefits of cultural diversity is intense[1] and has become a major driving force of political

[1] Albertp Alesina and Eliana LaFerrara. "Ethnic Diversity and Economic Performance." National Bureau for Economic Research Working Paper 10313 (Washington, D.C, 2004).

contests in virtually all industrialized countries, but particularly so in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, but also in some of the better developed countries in Africa and South America.[2] The social sciences have developed three principal theoretical and conceptual approaches to cultural integration: assimilation, multiculturalism, and structuralism. Predictably, synthetic perspectives formed more recently that are known as segmented assimilation. Because the Americas, and especially the North American half of the continent has been populated systematically by international immigration since 1492, the context of immigration into the United States and Canada is of particular significance to observations testing such theoretical concepts in the representation of minority interests within the majority culture[3] while the European experience is somewhat different and, at least in the postcolonial era, less reflective of global immigration.

The contemporary population of major American urban centers like the metropolitan New York area embraces its multicultural and ethnic inclusiveness more than it ever had during the last forty to sixty years. Under these circumstances, it might seem that assimilation and cultural preservation are perfectly compatible as they both taken together create the cultural richness that characterizes life in a vibrant metropolis. Italian restaurants, the St. Patrick's Day Parade, Cinco de Mayo, Chinese New Year's celebrations, Indian Ratha Yathra became as much a part of American urban life as Halloween decorations and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade.[4] And yet, a closer reading of studies that surveyed successive generations of immigrants shows the reality of an ongoing conflict between their desire for cultural preservation and a tendency to conform to host country culture. All these personal and group identity struggles reveal inherent mutual exclusivity between assimilation and cultural preservation within immigrant groups. "Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning."[5]

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[2] Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut. *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (2nd ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
[3] Lani Guinier, *The Tyranny of the Majority: Fundamental Fairness in Representative Democracy* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 157 *et seq*.
[4] Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).
[5] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Descriptions: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.

1. Melting pot culture

At the core of the "melting pot" analogy is the power of the host society and culture to serve as a standard and role model through an inter-generational process of social, cultural and economic integration that leads members of diverse ethnic groups to adopt a common culture resulting in identical or highly similar access to opportunities on all levels of life. Throughout a significant part of the last century, the efficiency of assimilation of immigrants into the host culture was considered the best measurement of their success. Similitude is achieved by incremental relinquishment of previously practiced culturally (i.e., not individually) motivated behavioral patterns and the adoption of the standards and practices of the host culture by way of conscious or subconscious imitation or response to standards and demands, for example as a condition to employment or educational and professional success through the process of acculturation.[6]

Cultural identity is formed by simple binary choice: either to identify with the dominant culture or with one's legacy minority culture. Stronger identification with the majority culture implies weaker identification with the legacy minority culture. And that makes sense because, at least in the majority's view of the hosts, its educational and economic superiority in overall terms is the reason for the presence of the great majority of immigrants who are not political refugees or arrived solely on grounds of family reunification.[7] These views have over time been criticized as overly simplistic and it has been said that they fail to capture the multitude of possible patterns of acculturation of minorities. Cross-cultural psychology suggests a more complex model of identity formation.[8] The degree of identification with the culture of the majority is treated as separate and independent from the degree of identification with the minority culture. Individuals

[6] Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (2nd ed., Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1970).

[7] Amelie Constant, Liliya Gataullina, and Klaus F. Zimmermann. "Ethnosizing Immigrants." *IZA Discussion Paper No. 2040. (*Bonn: University of Bonn, 2006).

[8] John W. Berry, "Social and cultural change." In H.C. Triandis & R. Brislin (eds.), *Handbook* of *Cross-Cultural Psychology,* Vol. 5**.** *Social* 211-279. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1980; *Id.* "Multicultural Policy in Canada: A Social Psychological Analysis." *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science* 16 (1984):353-370; *Id.* (1997), "Immigration, Acculturation and Adaptation." *Applied Psychology International Review* 46 no.1 (1997): 5-68.

may sense a strong affinity for the majority and at the same time for a minority culture.[9]

At first sight, cultural preservation in conjunction with assimilation is not only possible but indeed advantageous to an individual able to draw strengths from two divergent cultures.[10] As sociologist Min Zhou explains in "Growing up American": "The pluralist perspective offers an alternative way of viewing the host society, treating members of ethnic minority groups as a part of the American population rather than as foreigners or outsiders and presenting ethnic or immigrant cultures as integral segments of American society."[11] The ability to navigate two different ethnic backgrounds with integrity creates a unique cultural niche for a person enabled to serve as an intermediary between two worlds. An option to mix and match qualities drawn from both backgrounds to create the most successful combination of the two within the framework of the dominant culture seems to be a tangible advantage of all bicultural individuals. Since language fluency is one of the most prominent measures of acculturation, but also of ethnicity, scholars have dedicated much attention to bilingual immigrant youth and its academic performance as yet another quantifiable objective measure of effective assimilation. A series of studies on immigrant children in the U.S. published by Min Zhou quotes sources like Maria Eugenia Matute-Bianchi who claims that "fully bilingual young Mexican-Americans tended to perform better in school than those who lacked proficient bilingual skills."[12] Another research by Zhou & Bankston on Vietnamese in a poor neighborhood of New Orleans confirms that biculturalism often proves to be a genuine asset: "being both Vietnamese and American frequently caused children to achieve superior levels of performance."[13] Similarly, a study of immigrant children living in New York City's Chinatown "found

[9] Jean S. Phinney, "Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review of Research." *Psychological Bulletin* 108 (1990):499-514; Jean S. Phinney, Gabriel Horenczyk, Karmela Liebkind and Paul Vedder, "Ethnic Identity, Immigration, and Well-being: An International Perspective." *Journal of Social Issues* 57 (2001):493–510.

[10] Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 530 (1993):74-96.

[11] Min Zhou, "Growing Up American: The Challenge Confronting Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants." *Annual Revue of Sociology* 23 (1997):63–95, at 73.

[12] Zhou, "Growing Up American," 88.

[13] Zhou, "Growing Up American," 86; Zhou, Min and Carl Leon Bankston. *Growing Up American: How Vietnamese Children Adapt to Life in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999).

that bilingual students had higher student retention rates, more graduates, and higher self-esteem."[14] These findings just confirm a popular perception: that cultural diversity is an asset that can be maintained even in the presence of full assimilation. Higher cognitive skills, better school performance and increased motivation all seem to flow from the distinct trait of being able to negotiate two different cultural spheres and combine their distinct and separate qualities, but also their similarities into one uniform, bilingual, successful reality.

2. Bilingualism

However, a closer look at this encouraging picture quickly shows its inherent imperfections. First of all, government statistics and reports do not necessarily confirm these perceived academic advantages of bilingualism. A review of studies on the subject by the U.S. Department of Education in 1981 "concluded that bilingually educated students scored below average in both English skills and general academic achievement." In fact, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 used 'reluctant bilingualism' as its official policy, marginalizing ethnic languages, as Zhou phrases it, as "the source of hindrance rather than an asset."[15] The doctrine of 'forcible assimilation' even "insists that English language skills compete with non-English skills,"[16] often causing inevitable confusion and conflicts in children exposed to both languages in equal measure. Consequently, there came into existence an 'English Only' movement that advocates strict monolingualism in schools. According to this theory, bilingualism "can inhibit social adaptation in a predominantly English-speaking society, creating a 'new apartheid.'"[17] In view of these irreconcilably opposed educational doctrines, biculturalism expressed as bilingualism is not only incompatible with assimilation, but it even poses a direct threat to the process of assimilation of recent immigrants. The classical assimilationist viewpoint treats "distinctive ethnic traits such as old cultural ways, native languages, or ethnic enclaves" as "sources of disadvantages."[18] It is not clear if this assessment can indeed be justified.

[14] Zhou, "Growing Up American," 89.
[15] *Id*., at 88.
[16] *Id*., at 87.
[17] *Id*., at 87.
[18] Child cited in Min Zhou, "Segmented Assimilation: Issues, Controversies, and Recent Research on the New Second Generation". *International Migration Review* 31(4) (Winter 1997): 975-1008 at 977.

The inherent conflict between assimilation and cultural preservation is more clearly pronounced in groups at risk of facing downward assimilation, thus replacing the set of materially advantageous values of old country ancestors with a fatalistic apathy of downtrodden local minority groups. In the case of Haitian immigrants settling in inner-city ghettos, the parents' values of hard work and education expected to lead their children to success in the U.S. are confronted with the biases African-Americans children face in school.[19] As a consequence, the perceived victimization of their entire racial group draws young Haitians into a community of local peers who ostracize good academic performance as 'acting white' and as betraying the truly shared values of the group. "A common message is the devaluation of education as a vehicle for the advancement of all black youths, a message that directly contradicts the immigrant parents' expectations."[20] In such circumstances, assimilation does not mean acceptance of the mainstream values of the dominant host society, but rather an embrace of the values of a marginalized minority group that may itself not be deemed fully integrated. Similarly, Matute-Bianchi studied immigrant Mexicans who often integrate not into mainstream American society but into the marginalized groups of Chicanos and Cholos, in the process replacing their national pride and academic work ethics with 'oppositional culture' that identifies "school administration with oppressive authority," perceives their entry into the middle class as "almost impossible," and strongly discourages learning to a point where "high achievers are seen as sell-outs to oppressive authority."[21] Thus, groups of Mexican descent "were faced with what they viewed as a forced-choice dilemma between doing well in school or being a Chicano."[22]

3. Minority superiority

In the example of the Vietnamese youth discussed earlier, deliberate cultural isolation, rather than willful assimilation, seems to lie at the root of the academic successes of the surveyed group. Immersed in an ethnic enclave where interactions with non-Vietnamese are severely limited and the observance of

[19] Zhou, "Growing Up American," 81.
[20] *Id*., at 81.
[21] *Id*., at 70.
[22] Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou. "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 530 (1993):74-96, at 89.

traditional values as well as of behavioral standards is enforced not only by the family but also by their community at large, young Vietnamese in New Orleans found themselves immune to pressures from their underprivileged American peers and excelled at schools where Americanization did, in fact, mean underperformance. "In the case of the Vietnamese, being part of a Vietnamese network appears to offer a better route to upward mobility than being Americanized into the underprivileged local environment, or for that matter into the native-born mainstream youth subcultures."[23] Children from various Chinatowns across the country experience a similar phenomenon. "[Ogbu] attributed their academic success to the integration of these students into the family and the community which placed high values on education and held positive attitudes towards public schools."[24] A study of Californian Punjabi Sikhs unveiled an even more drastic example of resistance to assimilation as their secret of success. In this rural 'redneck country,' Punjabi students were physically abused by their American peers for their 'otherness' - and yet, "despite these attacks and some evidence of discrimination by school staff, Punjabi students performed better academically than majority Anglo students."[25] Besides higher graduation rates, their election of more advanced math and science classes, and a superior grade point average, Punjabi students "expressed aspirations for careers in science and engineering" as well as in business.[26] The isolationist pressure of the local Indian community is justifiably credited for the academic successes of its children, especially in connection with its strong encouragement for education. "Through this strategy of selective assimilation, Punjabi Sikhs appeared to be winning the race against the inevitable acculturation of their children to American-style aspirations."[27] When recent immigrants arrive in their new host country, the level of education and the amount of ethnic group-specific versus general human capital[28] they possess is an important predictor of the acculturation strategies they will adopt.[29] Higher educated migrants tend to intermarry more

[23] Zhou,"Segmented Assimilation," 996.
[24] Zhou, "Growing Up American," 77.
[25] *Id*., at 90.
[26] *Id*., at 90.
[27] *Id*., at 89.
[28] Slobodan Djajić, "Assimilation of Immigrants: Implications for Human Capital Accumulation of the Second Generation." *Journal of Population Economics* 16 (2003):831–845.
[29] George A. Akerlof and Rachel E. Kranton. "Economics of Identity." Quarterly Journal of Economics 115 no. 3 (2000):715–53; Akerlof George A. and Rachel E. Kranton. "Identity

readily with natives.[30] Education affects intermarriage by three mechanisms through which education affects intermarriage: the cultural adaptability effect, the enclave effect and the assortative matching effect.[31] The effect of cultural adaptability is based on the conclusion that educated people are better able to adapt to new customs and cultures. Therefore those immigrants that already arrive with higher human capital possess better adaptive skills and are more likely to marry natives. The enclave effect reflects the fact that educated immigrants will more likely move out of their ethnic enclaves because they can avail themselves of better economic opportunities outside their group. They are, therefore, less likely to meet potential spouses of their own group and so, less likely to marry them. Finally, gains from marriage are larger when the spouses' education levels are similar. Furtado calls this the "assortative matching effect." Because the search process for partners entails substantial cost (as, of course, does education),[32] educated immigrants are more willing to substitute the benefits of ethnic homogamy for assortativeness on the education dimension, *i.e.*, maximizing similarities in that regard.[33] Based on 1970 U.S. Census data, assortative matching is more important than cultural adaptability in explaining marital choices of second-generation immigrants, although the empirical evidence tends to support both the cultural adaptability and assortative matching hypothesis.[34]

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and Schooling: Some lessons for the Economics of Education." Journal of Economic Literature 40 no. 4 (2002):1167-1201.

30 Stanley Lieberson and Mary C. Waters. From Many Strands: Ethnic and Racial Groups in Contemporary America (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1988); Robert Schoen and John Wooldredge. "Marriage Choices in North Carolina and Virginia, 1969-1971 and 1979-1981." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51 (1989):465-481; Gary D. Sandefur and Trudy McKinnell. "American Indian Intermarriage." Social Science Researce 347 (1986):347–48; Xin Meng and Robert G. Gregory, "Intermarriage and the Economic Assimilation of Immigrants." Journal of Labor Economics 23 (2005):135-175; Daniel T. Lichter and Zhenchao Qian, "Measuring Marital Assimilation: Intermarriage Among Natives and Immigrants." Social Science Research 30 (2001):289-312; and Barry R. Chiswick and Christina A. Houseworth. "Ethnic Intermarriage among Immigrants: Human Capital and Assortative Mating." IZA Discussion Paper No. 3740 (Bonn: University of Bonn, 2008).

31 Delia Furtado, "Human Capital and Interethnic Marriage Decisions." IZA Discussion Paper Series No. 1989 (Bonn: University of Bonn, 2006).

32 Michael Olneck, "Terms of Inclusion: Has Multiculturalism Redefined Equality in American Education?" American Journal of Education 101 (1993):234-260.

33 Matthijs Kalmijn, "Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends." Annual Review of Sociology 24 (1998):395-421; Alba, Richard D. and Reid M. Golden, "Patterns of Ethnic Intermarriage in the United States." Social Forces 65 (1986):202-223.

34 Delia Furtado and Nikolaos Theodoropoulos, "I'll marry You and You get me a Job: Marital Assimilation and Immigrants Employment Rates." *International Journal of Manpower* 30 no. 1/2 (2009): 116-126.

4. Assimilation as inevitability

That notwithstanding, the assimilation perspective predicts that assimilation is an inevitable development. According to this view, "this process consists of gradually deserting old cultural and behavioral patterns in favor of new ones" in order to gain equal access to opportunities within society.[35] Indeed, research shows that seemingly integrated – or separated - immigrant groups are rarely able to preserve their original culture without adapting it to an array of influences of the host country. In the case of immigrant subgroups dominated by East-Asian philosophy and religion, such as the Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese and Japanese communities, the surrounding American society provokes public displays only of those traits that are inherently similar and thus acceptable to the dominant WASP mentality. As Min Zhou explains, they "often selectively unpack from their cultural baggage those traits suitable to the new environment, such as two parent families, a strong work ethics, delayed gratification, and thrift. Also, they either bury at the bottom of their trunks or keep strictly to themselves other things considered not so fit, such as non-confrontation, passivity, submissiveness, and excessive obligations with the family."[36] In this way, the host country environment encounters only a mitigated demo version of various Asian cultures, a version that is more palatable and therefore easier to accept. Some communities, however, seem unable to control the internal and external aspects of their culture in this fashion, and the identity of the entire ethnic group in time becomes affected by the expectations and influences of the host country.[37] One example of an only seemingly traditional society is the community of Garifuna (Black Caribes) immigrants described by Nancie Gonzalez in "Garifuna Settlement in New York: A New Frontier."[38] The customary lifestyle of the Garifuna community included migratory work of multi-lingual young men, with women taking care of their typically rural households. Immigration to the United States not only increased the numbers of women actively pursuing gainful employment, and as a result achieving greater independence, but it also changed important social patterns within Garifuna society. For example, "several informants commented that they were 'forced'

[35] Zhou,"Segmented Assimilation," 976.
[36] *Id*., at 994.
[37] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures.* New York: Basic Books, 1977.
[38] Nancie L. Gonzalez, "Garifuna Settlement in New York: A New Frontier." *International Migration Review* Special Issue: International Migration in Latin America. 13 no. 2 (1979): 255-26.

to marry by the Immigration Service."[39] The strict immigration laws of the United States encouraged if not demanded a formalization of the traditionally loose relationships within Garifuna society that were closer to cohabitation and common law marriage than to the predominant American family model and as a result changed the definition of family for the entire ethnic group, while the work demands and economic constraints of city life altered its traditional hospitality towards the extended family. As Min Zhou confirms, "if a group displays characteristics that are not compatible to the ideas of the mainstream, or seem similar to characteristics identified with or projected onto native-born minorities, such as matriarchal families, these traits will be … seen as 'deficient' cultural characteristics and thus stigmatized."[40] Another example of adaptive cultural patterns is Cheikh Anta Babou's study of "Brotherhood Solidarity, Education and Migration: The Role of the *Dhiras* among the Murid Muslim Community of New York". Upon their arrival in New York, the otherwise traditional Murid Muslims of the Peanut Basin of Senegal changed their usual craft-based professions to more economically viable trades and informal financial services for the immigrant African community. More importantly, however, Murid family life was profoundly affected by their relocation. Not only did they find their traditional polygamy to be illegal in the United States, but their women, suddenly free to seek and engage in gainful employment and to enjoy exposure to the realities of a more liberal society, started to demand more rights from their husbands. These trends resulted in an increase of family disputes and a divorce rate previously unheard of in Senegalese society, with fewer than 50% of marriages lasting longer than four years.[41] Sometimes it is almost impossible to preserve the culture of the country of origin in the host country whose culture is often diametrically opposed to important values of the former.

5. Hybrid traditions

But one does not really need to look beyond European ethnic communities to notice that 'tradition' does not ordinarily withstand the factual pressures of assimilation. In particular, the one European ethnic group perceived as the most pronounced one in the U.S., the Italians, went as far as to virtually reinvent their

[39] *Id*., at 260.
[40] Zhou,"Segmented Assimilation," 994.
[41] Cheikh Anta Babou, "Brotherhood Solidarity, Education and Migration: The Role of the *Dhiras* among the Murid Muslim Community of New York." *African Affairs* 101 (2002):151-170, at 163.

own culture in the process. An extensive study of Italian-American customs conducted by Simone Cinotto in "Lenoard Covello, the Covello Papers, and the History of Eating Habits among Italian Immigrants in New York"[42] concluded: "[w]hile transforming festive food into the everyday, Diner argues, Italian Americans invented from scratch an ethnic pattern of sociability and conviviality based on the consumption of Italian food, which was pivotal in the definition of their ethnic identity."[43] Dishes that were festive or unknown in the old country became downright staples of Italian-American cuisine that itself came to form a large part of Italian-American identity; family values were distorted towards strict control of the younger generation for the preservation of tradition's sake; family gatherings, modeled after American Thanksgiving celebrations, became a favored way of expressing membership in the ethnic group. "That identity was largely 'invented' by mixing high and popular culture, readings of Dante with folkloristic performances and dances from different Italian regions."[44] Even their new body image had to reflect the Italian-American cult of abundance: "immigrants believed that slenderness in nubile young women denoted their frailty and feebleness, thus dwindling their marriage prospects."[45] Gender roles changed as well: "Because of their domestic skills, women supervised the emerging ethnic domesticity. The dominant identifications of family reputation and of the respectability of its women merged with new gendered meanings."[46] In particular, a girl's suitability for marriage was determined by her preference for Italian food and her demonstrated ability to prepare it. These changing social patterns do not have much in common with actual cultural preservation. Rather, they reflect the increasing influence of assimilation and integration.

6. Dual or alternating identities

Contrary to the propositions of advocates of ethnic plurality, confrontations between old and new cultures are more likely to produce irresolvable conflicts than a peaceful coexistence of both models does. This aspect

[42] Simone Cinotto, "Leonard Covello, the Covello Papers, and the History of Eating Habits among Italian Immigrants in New York." *The Journal of American History* 91no. 2 (2004): 497-521.
[43] *Id.*, at 499.
[44] *Id.*, at 507.
[45] *Id.*, at 515.
[46] *Id.*, at 518.

of the immigrant experience is especially prominent in classic generational conflicts within ethnic groups. Research documents known as the "Cavello Papers" that documented the lives of New York Italians in an East Harlem neighborhood in the 1920s may serve as a colorful example of it. The adult generation clearly displayed separated identities: it tried to preserve original Italian notions of tradition and to impart the same to their children while shielding them from the perceived dangers of cultural Americanization ("the importing of so-called American values and behavior was a typical cause of conflict in the family."[47] Their school-bound offspring, on the other hand, suffered a definite lack of acceptance by their American teachers and peers ("The conflict between the notions learned in school and the principles with which the children were socialized within the family is presented as the main cause of high levels of truancy, school dropouts, and maladjustment among second-generation adolescents."[48] Children of East Harlem immigrants developed what could be interpreted as an alternating integrated identity, with their Italian facet carefully hidden from the American environment and the American facet kept secret from their Italian relatives ("This split was attained by creating a veil of secrecy that preserved a certain amount of autonomy in each of the two worlds"[49] – hence an identity conflict arose. Similar experiences of Latvian youth in the Midwest described in "Close Encounters with the Midwest: Forming Identity in a Bicultural Context" by Alison Smith *et al.* appear to confirm that pattern: children who were expected to uphold traditional Latvian values while in the U.S. felt conflicted about contrary expectations of their respective American and Latvian societies, and even years later they confessed to hiding their American activities from the Latvian community, while decreasing the impact of their Latvian culture among American peers.[50] Some of these necessarily conflicted young people grew up to reject the continued pressures to conform to the culture of their parents, and as a consequence they became fully assimilated because "immigrant groups that are particularly strict about maintaining cultural traditions may ultimately push away some if their members."[51] Thus, vigorous efforts to preserve a culture alien to the place and country people inhabit may ultimately have an effect opposite to the one intended.

[47] *Id*., at 514.
[48] *Id.*, at 505.
[49] *Id*., at 503.
[50] Alison G. Smith, Abigail J. Stewart, David G. Winter, "Close Encounters with the Midwest: Forming Identity in a Bicultural Context." *Political Psychology* 25 no. 4 (2004):611-641.
[51] *Id.*, at 634.

Of particular importance is the link between preferences for redistribution in any form.[52] As diversity can affect the sense of national community, this goes directly to the social consensus for redistribution, especially when the poor (the beneficiaries of redistributive programs) are predominantly minorities and, conversely, minorities are predominantly poor.[53] In this case, economic redistribution may become linked with cultural redistribution by majority voters, further correlating socio-economic and cultural differences.[54] Political support for universal social programs can erode as cultural minorities prefer private or communal provision of public services that better fit their cultural preferences. Minorities' focus on group specific public goods can divide coalitions advocating welfare.[55] Therefore support for affirmative action, group rights, or increased autonomy for the expression of cultural differences can dangerously weaken minority links with members of the majority community and undermine their ongoing support for effective welfare policies.[56] Furthermore, divisions among different minority groups can further impede processes designed to form coalitions.[57]

7. Religion as Identity

As assimilation progresses, ethnicity and language diminish as unifying and solidifying markers of identity.[58] As multiculturalism increasingly becomes the

52 Alberto Alesina and Nicola Fuchs-Schündeln., "Good Bye Lenin (or Not?): The Effect of Communism on People's Preferences" American Economic Review 97 no. 4 (2007):1507-28.
53 Erzo F.P. Luttmer and Monica Singhal, "Culture, Context, and the Taste for Redistribution" Working Paper John F. Kennedy School of Government - Harvard University (Boston, Mass. August 2008).
54 Yann Algan, Alberto Bisin and Thierry Verdier (eds.), Cultural Integration of Immigrants in Europe (Studies of Policy Reform) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
55 Moses Shayo, "A Model of Social Identity with an Application to Political Economy: Nation, Class and Redistribution". American Political Science Review 103 no. 2 (2009):147-174.
56 Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka, "Do Multiculturalism Policies Erode the Welfare State?" Paper presented at the Conference on New Challenges for Welfare State Research, RC 19 of the International Sociological Association, Toronto, Ontario, August 21-24, 2003.
57 Algan, Bisin and Verdier (eds.), Cultural Integration of Immigrants in Europe.
58 Harold R. Isaacs, "Basic Group Identity: The Idols of the Tribe" in Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (eds.) Ethnicity: Theory and Experience (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) 29-53; Laura Zimmermann, Klaus F. Zimmermann and Amelie

prevailing form of integration in Europe and preservation of the language of immigrants becomes the object of bilateral agreements between home and host countries, claims to bilingual education are becoming accepted as par for the course, particularly in Germany[59] but also in the Netherlands,[60] Austria, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Islam, the religion of the large majority of post-colonial immigrants, moves to the center of their reassertion of identity in lieu of other factors such as ethnic traditions, language or dietary habits. The hope of people intent on preserving minority identity accepts the fact of assimilation with regard to language, education and all other elements of culture[61] – save religion that is being stylized as a source of ethnic pride, a communitarian sentiment derived from its practice.[62] In accordance with a world-wide trend reviving fundamentalist Islam, its outward symbols of modest feminine dress and headscarves challenge the balance of power between the secular state and *shari'a*.[63] Scholarship on Islam and Muslims presents a remarkable Atlantic divide that is particularly significant in the area of integration studies. While a continually developing body of research and literature on Muslims in the West has emerged in Europe after WWII, but especially during the last thirty years, it must be acknowledged that it was not until the

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Constant. "Ethnic Self-Identification of First-Generation Immigrants." International Migration Review 41, no. 3 (2007):769-781.

59 Riva Kastoryano, Negotiating Identities. States and Immigrants in France and Germany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Riva Kastroyano, "Cultural Preservation and Empowerment of Immigrant Community." Presentation at the ICSW Expert Meeting on Cultural preservation and Empowerment of immigrant communities - a contributor or obstacle to successful integration? International Council on Social Welfare, April 30 - May 2, 2007, Jerusalem.

60 Steven Erlanger, "Amid Rise of Multiculturalism, Dutch Confront Their Questions of identity." New York Times, August 13, 2011.
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/14/world/europe/14dutch.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

61 Danny Cohen-Zada, "Preserving Religious Identity through Education: Economic Analysis and Evidence from the US." Journal of Urban Economics 60 no.3 (2006):372-398.

62 Amelie Constant, Liliya Gataullina and Klaus F. Zimmermann, "Clash of Cultures: Muslims and Christians in the Ethnosizing Process." IZA Discussion Paper No. 2350 (Bonn: University of Bonn, 2006); Bisin, Alberto and Thierry Verdier, "Beyond the Melting Pot: Cultural Transmission, Marriage and the Evolution of Ethnic and Religious traits." Quarterly Journal of Economics 115 (2000):955-88.

63 Riva Kastoryano, "Transnational Participation and Citizenship. Migrants in the European Union" in Mabel M. Berzin and Martin Schain (eds.), Europe Without Borders. Remapping Territory, Citizenship and Identity in a Transnational Age (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Riva Kastoryano, "French Secularism and Islam. France's Headscarf Affair" in Tariq Modood, Anna Triandafyllidou and Ricard Zapata Barrero (eds). Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship. A European Approach) (London: Routledge, 2006), 57-70.

watershed event of September 11, 2001 that the area has met with a comparable level of interest in the United States. European research has centered largely on integration of recent waves of immigrants, with an emphasis on the social sciences, particularly anthropology, political science and sociology whereas only a small number of American Islamicists and anthropologists pursued an interest.[64] It seems significant that, in North America, Islam has developed a particular following among minority groups (a fact historically known from the days of Black Muslim activism during the Civil Rights era), but also especially among women, notably Latina immigrants. Muslims and Hispanics frequently live side by side in urban neighborhoods across the country, particularly in the states of California, Texas, Florida, New York and Illinois that collectively account for 72.5% of the entire foreign-born Hispanic population in the United States, according to data from the Migration Policy Institute.[65] Reasons for this trend are sought in the higher status afforded women in Islam, their modest dress, their valuation by other than outwardly apparent criteria, altogether a response to a need for protection and respect. Although not raised in an Islamic culture, and without the faith being part of their upbringing, Latina and other immigrant women flock to Islam as a result of contacts and exposure made in immigrant communities, a curious form of cross-cultural influence occasioned but not intended by their immigration to the United States. Islam's relationship with modernity is often complex, nuanced, and above all variable. This is particularly evident in the conflicting positions taken by different movements in Islam, some of which, like the jihadists, reject modernity as a Western import whereas others actively embrace and endorse modernity precisely for its Western character.[66]

8. Conclusions

Traditional values are continuously redefined and updated in response to a changing environment, even within the country where they originated; the same must be even truer in a country where those values and customs are inherently

[64] Jocelyn Cesari, "Islam in the West: From Immigration to Global Islam." Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review 8 (2009) 148-175, at 149.
[65] Wendy Diaz, "Latina Immigrants: The New Ambassadors of Islam." *New American Media / The Muslim Link*, January 18, 2013. http://newamericamedia.org/2013/01/latina-immigrants-the-new-ambassadors-of-islam.php
[66] See Fajsal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity.* London: Hurst 2005.

foreign and hence create tensions with the expectations of the local population. The answer of immigrant groups is either to resolve this conflict by an eventual assimilation and seamless blending into the surrounding culture, or by attempting to preserve a marginal ethnic identity through a mix of old and new values and by making efforts to project old values and traditions in a fashion more palatable to the hosts.[67] This is often achieved by creating a not necessarily authentic exotic flair in order to attract the curiosity of, and to increase the appeal to, the surrounding ethnic group. In this way, values and customs both experience accelerated permutation and, under the guise of upholding traditional values, they come to represent a new and almost freely 'innovated' culture – like the one of the Italian-American community. Therefore, no genuine and pure cultural preservation remains possible whenever a group faces assimilation. What appears to be an expression of determined cultural preservation is, in fact, merely another expression of assimilation actually occurring.

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[67] Luigi Guiso, Paola Sapienza, and Luigi Zingales, "Does Culture Affect Economic Outcomes?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20 no. 2 (2006):23-48.

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