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EDITED BY

Herbert J. Gans

Nathan Glazer

Joseph R. Gusfield

Christopher Jencks



UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

AMERICANS[☆] David Riesman[☆]

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SYMBOLIC ETHNICITY: THE FUTURE OF ETHNIC GROUPS AND CULTURES IN AMERICA

HERBERT J. GANS

INTRODUCTION

One of the more notable recent changes in America has been the renewed interest in ethnicity, which some observers of the American scene have described as an ethnic revival. This paper argues that there has been no revival, and that acculturation and assimilation continue to take place. Among third- and fourth-generation "ethnics" (the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Europeans who came to America during the "new immigration"), a new kind of ethnic involvement may be occurring, which emphasizes concern with identity, with the feeling of being Jewish or Italian, etc. Since ethnic identity needs are neither intense nor frequent in this generation, however, ethnics do not need either ethnic cultures or organizations; instead, they resort to the use of ethnic symbols. As a result, ethnicity may be turning into symbolic ethnicity, an ethnicity of last resort, which could, nevertheless, persist for generations.

Identity cannot exist apart from a group, and symbols are themselves a part of culture, but ethnic identity and symbolic ethnicity require very different ethnic organizations and cultures than existed among earlier generations. Moreover, the symbols third-generation ethnics use to express their identity are more visible than the ethnic cultures and organizations of the first- and second-generation ethnics. What appears to be an ethnic revival may therefore be only a more visible form of long-standing phenomena, or of a new stage of accul-

turation and assimilation. Symbolic ethnicity may also have wider ramifications, however, for David Riesman has suggested that "being American has some of the same episodic qualities as being ethnic."¹ In effect, both kinds of being are also new ways of striving for individualism.

ACCULTURATION AND ASSIMILATION²

The dominant sociological approach to ethnicity has long taken the form of what Neil Sandberg aptly calls "straight-line theory," in which acculturation and assimilation are viewed as secular trends that culminate in the eventual absorption of the ethnic group into the larger culture and generation population.³ Straight-line theory in turn is based on melting pot theory, which implies the disappearance of the ethnic groups into a single host society. Even so, it does not accept the values of the melting pot theorists, since its conceptualizers could have used terms like cultural and social liberation from immigrant ways of life, but did not.

In recent years, straight-line theory has been questioned on many grounds. For one thing, many observers have properly noted that even if America might have been a melting pot early in the twentieth century, the massive immigration from Europe and elsewhere has since then influenced the dominant groups, summarily labeled "WASP," and has also decimated their cultural, if not their political and financial, power, so that today America is a mosaic, as Andrew Greeley has put it, of subgroups and subcultures.⁴ Still, this criticism does not necessarily deny the validity of straight-line theory, since ethnics can also be absorbed into a pluralistic set of subcultures and subgroups, differentiated by age, income, education, occupation, religion, region, and the like.

A second criticism of straight-line theory has centered on its treatment of all ethnic groups as essentially similar, and its failure, specifically, to distinguish between religious groups, like the Jews, and nationality groups, like the Italians, Poles, etc. Jews, for example, are a "peoplehood" with a religious and cultural tradition of thousands of years, but without an "old country" to which they owe allegiance or nostalgia, while Italians, Poles, and other participants in the "new immigration" came from parts of Europe that in some cases did not

even become nations until after the immigrants had arrived in America.

That there are differences between the Jews and the other "new" immigrants cannot be questioned, but at the same time, the empirical evidence also suggests that acculturation and assimilation affected them quite similarly. (Indeed, one major difference may have been that Jews were already urbanized and thus entered the American social structure at a somewhat higher level than the other new immigrants, who were mostly landless laborers and poor peasants.) Nonetheless, straight-line theory can be faulted for virtually ignoring the fact that immigrants arrived here with two kinds of ethnic cultures, sacred and secular; that they were Jews from Eastern—and Western—Europe, and Catholics from Italy, Poland, and elsewhere. (Sacred cultures are, however, themselves affected by national and regional considerations; for example, Italian Catholicism differed in some respects from German or Polish, as did Eastern European Judaism from Western.)

While acculturation and assimilation have affected both sacred and secular cultures, they have affected the latter more than the former, for acculturation has particularly eroded the secular cultures that Jews and Catholics brought from Europe. Their religions have also changed in America, and religious observance has decreased, more so among Jews than among Catholics, although Catholic observance has begun to fall off greatly in recent years. Consequently, the similar American experience of Catholic and Jewish ethnics suggests that the comparative analysis of straight-line theory is justified, as long as the analysis compares both sacred and secular cultures.

Two further critiques virtually reject straight-line theory altogether. In an insightful recent paper, William Yancey and his colleagues have argued that contemporary ethnicity bears little relation to the ancestral European heritage, but exists because it is functional for meeting present "exigencies of survival," particularly for working-class Americans.⁵ Their argument does not invalidate straight-line theory but corrects it by suggesting that acculturation and assimilation, current ethnic organizations and cultures, as well as new forms of ethnicity, must be understood as responses to current needs rather than departures from past traditions.

The other critique takes the opposite position; it points to the persistence of the European heritage, argues that the extent of acculturation and assimilation have been overestimated, and questions the

rapid decline and eventual extinction of ethnicity posited by some straight-line theorists. These critics call attention to studies indicating that ethnic cultures and organizations are still functioning, that exogamous marriage remains a practice of numerical minorities, that ethnic differences in various behavior patterns and attitudes can be identified, that ethnic groups continue to act as political interest groups, and that ethnic pride remains strong.⁶

The social phenomena that these defenders of ethnicity identify exist; the only question is how they are to be interpreted. Straight-line theory postulates a process, and cross-sectional studies do not pre-empt the possibility of a continuing trend. Also, like Yancey and his co-authors, some of the critics are looking primarily at poorer ethnics, who have been less touched by acculturation and assimilation than middle-class ethnics, and who have in some cases used ethnicity and ethnic organization as a psychological and political defense against the injustices that they suffer in an unequal society.⁷ In fact, much of the contemporary behavior described as "ethnic" strikes me as working-class behavior, which differs only slightly among various ethnic groups, and then largely because of variations in the structure of opportunities open to people in America, and in the peasant traditions their ancestors brought over from the old country, which were themselves responses to European opportunity structures. In other words, ethnicity is largely a working-class style.⁸

Much the same observation applies to ethnic political activity. Urban political life, particularly among working-class people, has always been structured by and through ethnicity, and while ethnic political activity may have increased in the last decade, it has taken place around working-class issues rather than ethnic ones. During the 1960s, urban working-class Catholic ethnics began to politicize themselves in response to black militancy, the expansion of black ghettos, and government integration policies that they perceived as publicly legitimated black invasions of ethnic neighborhoods, but which threatened them as working-class homeowners who could not afford to move to the suburbs. Similarly, working- and lower-middle-class Catholic ethnics banded together in the suburbs to fight against higher public school taxes, since they could not afford to pay them while they also had to pay for parochial schools. Even so, these political activities have been *pan-ethnic*, rather than ethnic, since they often involved coalitions of ethnic groups that once considered each other enemies but were now united by common economic and other interests. The ex-

tent to which these pan-ethnic coalitions reflect class rather than ethnic interests is illustrated by the 1968 election campaign of New York City's Mario Proccaccino against John Lindsay. Although an Italian, he ran as a "candidate of the little people" against what he called the "limousine liberals."

The fact that pan-ethnic coalitions have developed most readily in conflicts over racial issues also suggests that in politics, ethnicity can sometimes serve as a convenient mask for antiblack endeavors, or for political activities that have negative consequences for blacks. While attitude polls indicate that ethnics are often more tolerant racially than other Americans, working-class urban ethnics are also more likely to be threatened, as homeowners and jobholders, by black demands, and may favor specific antiblack policies, not because they are "racists," but because their own class interests force them to oppose black demands.

In addition, part of what appears as an increase in ethnic political activity is actually an increase in the visibility of ethnic politics. When the pan-ethnic coalitions began to copy the political methods of the civil rights and antiwar movements, their protests became newsworthy and were disseminated all over the country by the mass media. At about the same time, the economic and geographic mobility of Catholic ethnic groups enabled non-Irish Catholic politicians to win important state and national electoral posts for the first time, and their victories were defined as ethnic triumphs, even though they did not rely on ethnic constituents alone and were not elected on the basis of ethnic issues.

The final, equally direct, criticism of straight-line theory has questioned the continued relevance of the theory, either because of the phenomenon of third-generation return, or because of the emergence of ethnic revivals. Thus, Marcus Hansen argued that acculturation and assimilation were temporary processes, because the third generation could afford to remember an ancestral culture that the traumatic Americanization process forced the immigrant and second generations to forget.⁹ Hansen's hypothesis can be questioned on several grounds, however. His data, the founding of Swedish and other historical associations in the Midwest, provided slender evidence of a widespread third-generation return, particularly among nonacademic ethnics; in addition, his theory was static, for Hansen never indicated what would happen in the fourth generation, or what processes were involved in the return that would enable it to survive into the future.¹⁰

The notion of an ethnic revival has so far been propounded mostly by journalists and essayists, who have supplied impressionistic accounts or case studies of the emergence of new ethnic organizations and the revitalization of old ones.¹¹ Since the third- and fourth-generation ethnics who are presumably participating in this revival are scattered all over suburbia, there has so far been little systematic research among this population, so that the validity of the revival notion has not yet been properly tested.

The evidence I have seen does not convince me that a revival is taking place. Instead, recent changes can be explained in two ways, neither of which conflicts with straight-line theory: (1) today's ethnics have become more visible as a result of upward mobility; and (2) they are adopting the new form of ethnic behavior and affiliation I call "symbolic ethnicity."

THE VISIBILITY OF ETHNICITY

The recent upward social, and centrifugal geographic, mobility of ethnics, particularly Catholics, has finally enabled them to enter the middle and upper-middle classes, where they have been noticed by the national mass media, which monitor primarily these strata. In the process they have also become more noticeable to other Americans. The newly visible may not participate more in ethnic groups and cultures than before, but their new visibility makes it appear as if ethnicity had been revived.

I noted earlier the arrival of non-Irish Catholic politicians on the national scene. An equally visible phenomenon has been the entry of Catholic ethnic intellectuals into the academy and its flourishing print culture. To be sure, the scholars are publishing more energetically than their predecessors, who had to rely on small and poverty-stricken ethnic publishing houses, but they are essentially doing what ethnic scholars have always done, only more visibly. Perhaps their energy has also been spurred in part by the need, as academics, to publish so that they do not perish, as well as by their desire to counteract the anti-ethnic prejudices and the entrenched vestiges of the melting pot ideal that still prevail in the more prestigious universities. In some cases, they are also fighting a political battle, because their writings often defend conservative political positions against what they perceive—I think wrongly—as the powerful liberal or radical academic majority.

Paradoxically, a good deal of their writing has been nostalgic, celebrating the immigrant culture and its *Gemeinschaft* at the same time that young Catholic ethnics are going to college partly in order to escape the restrictive pressures of that *Gemeinschaft*. (Incidentally, an interesting study could be made of the extent to which writers from different ethnic groups, of both fiction and nonfiction, are pursuing nostalgic, contemporary, or future-oriented approaches to ethnicity, comparing different ethnic groups, by time of arrival and position in the society today, on this basis.)

What has happened in the academy has also happened in literature and show business. For example, although popular comedy has long been a predominantly Eastern European Jewish occupation, the first generations of Jewish comic stars had to suppress their ethnicity and even had to change their names, much as did the first generation of academic stars in the prestigious universities. Unlike Jack Benny, Eddie Cantor, George Burns, George Jessel, and others, the comics of today do not need to hide their origins, and beginning perhaps with Lenny Bruce and Sam Levenson, comics like Buddy Hackett, Robert Klein, Don Rickles, and Joan Rivers have used explicitly Jewish material in entertaining the predominantly non-Jewish mass media audience.¹²

Undoubtedly, some of these academics, writers, and entertainers have undergone a kind of third-generation return in this process. Some have re-embraced their ethnicity solely to spur their careers, but others have experienced a personal conversion. Even so, an empirical study would probably show that in most cases their ethnic attitudes have not changed; either they have acted more publicly and thus visibly than they did in the past, or in responding to a hospitable cultural climate, they have openly followed ethnic impulses that they had previously suppressed.

A similar analysis may explain the resurgence of traditionalism among some Jews and Protestants. In both instances largely middle-class young people are perceived as having become newly orthodox (or fundamentalist), and in some cases this is undoubtedly true. Religious conversions may have increased in the last decade, partly because of the ideological and other turbulence of the 1960s, but also because the postwar affluence spawned a cohort of parents who were so upwardly mobile that they were too busy to pay attention to their children. These children developed a strong need for substitute parental guidance, which later manifested itself by their joining the theo-

cratic *Gemeinschafts* that can be found among virtually all of the recent neotraditional movements. Converts are, however, also the most visible, since they tend to be leaders and are thus most often monitored by the mass media. At the same time, they have been joined by less visible young people who were already orthodox, but perhaps quiescently so, either because orthodoxy was in disrepute among their peers while they were growing up, or because they were uncomfortable in orthodox groups dominated by old people.¹³ Only empirical research can indicate the proportions of third-generation returnees and already orthodox people in these groups, but in any case, it seems wrong on the part of enthusiastic observers of a religious revival to group the neotraditionalists with earlier traditional groups, such as the Chassidim, the non-Chassidic Orthodox Jews living in such enclaves as New York City's Boro Park, and rural groups like the Amish.¹⁴ These groups have survived by insulating themselves from the larger society, rarely take in converts, and thus have also insulated themselves from the neotraditionalists.

ETHNICITY IN THE THIRD GENERATION

The second explanation for the changes that have been taking place among third-generation ethnics will take up most of the rest of this paper; it deals with what is happening among the less visible population, the large mass of predominantly middle-class third- and fourth-generation ethnics, who have not been studied enough either by journalists or by social scientists.¹⁵

In the absence of systematic research, it is difficult even to discern what has actually been happening, but several observers have described the same ethnic behavior in different words. Michael Novak has coined the phrase "voluntary ethnicity"; Samuel Eisenstadt has talked about "Jewish diversity"; Allan Silver about "individualism as a valid mode of Jewishness"; and Geoffrey Bock about "public Jewishness."¹⁶ What these observers agree on is that today's young ethnics are finding new ways of being ethnics, which I shall later label "symbolic ethnicity."

I start my analysis with the assumption, taken from straight-line theory, that acculturation and assimilation are continuing among the third and fourth generations.¹⁷ If these concepts were quantified, one

might find that upwardly mobile working-class groups are moving out of ethnic cultures and groups faster than other ethnics as they try to enter the middle class, whereas those already in the middle class are now acculturating and assimilating at a slower rate, partly because they have already moved out of ethnic cultures and groups to a considerable extent, but also because they are finding that middle-class life is sufficiently pluralistic and their ethnicity sufficiently cost-free that they do not have to give it up deliberately.

In any case, for the third generation, the secular ethnic cultures that the immigrants brought with them are now only an ancestral memory, or an exotic tradition to be savored once in a while in a museum or at an ethnic festival. The same is true of the "Americanization cultures," the immigrant experience and adjustment in America, which William Kornblum suggests may have been more important in the lives of the first two generations than the ethnic cultures themselves. The old ethnic cultures serve no useful function for third-generation ethnics who lack direct and indirect ties to the old country, and neither need nor have much knowledge about it. Similarly, the Americanization cultures have little meaning for people who grew up without the familial conflict over European and American ways that beset their fathers and mothers: the second generation that fought with and was often ashamed of immigrant parents.

Assimilation is still continuing, for it has always progressed more slowly than acculturation. If one distinguishes between primary and secondary assimilation, that is, movement out of ethnic primary and secondary groups, the third generation is now beginning to move into nonethnic primary groups.¹⁸ Although researchers are still debating just how much intermarriage is taking place, it is rising in the third generation for both Catholic ethnic groups and Jews, and friendship choices appear to follow the same pattern.¹⁹

The departure out of secondary groups has already proceeded much further. Most third-generation ethnics have little reason, or occasion, to depend on, or even interact with, other ethnics in important secondary-group activities. Ethnic occupational specialization, segregation, and self-segregation are fast disappearing, with some notable exceptions in the large cities. Since the third generation probably works, like other Americans, largely for corporate employers, past occupational ties between ethnics are no longer relevant. Insofar as they live largely in the suburbs, third-generation ethnics get together with their fellow homeowners for political and civic activities, and are

not likely to encounter ethnic political organizations, balanced tickets, or even politicians who pursue ethnic constituencies.

Except in suburbs where old discrimination and segregation patterns still survive, social life takes place without ethnic clustering, and Catholics are not likely to find ethnic subgroups in the Church. Third-generation Jews, on the other hand, particularly those who live in older upper-middle-class suburbs where segregation continues, if politely, probably still continue to restrict much of their social life to other Jews, although they have long ago forgotten the secular divisions between German (and other Western) and Eastern European Jews, and among the latter, between "Litwaks" and "Galizianer." The religious distinction between German Reform Judaism and Eastern European Conservatism has also virtually disappeared, for the second generation that moved to the suburbs after World War II already chose its denomination on the basis of status rather than national origin.²⁰ In fact, the Kennedy-Herberg prediction that eventually American religious life would take the form of a triple melting pot has not come to pass, if only because people, especially in the suburbs, use denominations within the major religions for status differentiation.

Nevertheless, while ethnic ties continue to wane for the third generation, people of this generation continue to perceive themselves as ethnics, whether they define ethnicity in sacred or secular terms. Jews continue to remain Jews because the sacred and secular elements of their culture are strongly intertwined, but the Catholic ethnics also retain their secular or national identity, even though it is separate from their religion.

My hypothesis is that in this generation, people are less and less interested in their ethnic cultures and organizations—both sacred and secular—and are instead more concerned with maintaining their ethnic identity, with the feeling of being Jewish or Italian or Polish, and with finding ways of feeling and expressing that identity in suitable ways. By identity, I mean here simply the sociopsychological elements that accompany role behavior, and the ethnic role is today less of an ascriptive than a voluntary role that people assume alongside other roles. To be sure, ethnics are still identified as such by others, particularly on the basis of name, but the behavioral expectations that once went with identification by others have declined sharply, so that ethnics have some choice about when and how to play ethnic roles. Moreover, as ethnic cultures and organizations decline further, fewer ethnic roles are prescribed, thus increasing the degree to which people have freedom of role definition.

Ethnic identity can be expressed in either action or feeling, or combinations of these, and the kinds of situations in which it is expressed are nearly limitless. Third-generation ethnics can join an ethnic organization or take part in formal or informal organizations composed largely of fellow ethnics, but they can also find their identity by "affiliating" with an abstract collectivity that does not exist as an interacting group. That collectivity, moreover, can be mythic or real, contemporary or historical. On the one hand, Jews can express their identity as synagogue members, or as participants in a consciousness-raising group consisting mostly of Jewish women. On the other hand, they can also identify with the Jewish people as a long-suffering collectivity that has been credited with inventing monotheism. If they are not religious, they can identify with Jewish liberal or socialist political cultures, or with a population that has produced many prominent intellectuals and artists in the last hundred years. Similar choices are open to Catholic ethnics. In the third generation, Italians can identify through membership in Italian groups, or by strong feelings for various themes in Italian or Neapolitan or Sicilian culture, and much the same possibilities exist for Catholics whose ancestors came over from other countries.

Needless to say, ethnic identity is not a new or a third-generation phenomenon, for ethnics have always had an ethnic identity, but in the past it was largely taken for granted, since it was anchored to groups and roles, and was rarely a matter of choice. When people lived in an ethnic neighborhood, worked with fellow ethnics, and voted for ethnic politicians, there was little need to be concerned with identity except during conflict with other ethnic groups. Furthermore, the everyday roles people played were often defined for them by others as ethnic. Being a drygoods merchant was often a Jewish role; restaurant owners were assumed to be Greek, and bartenders, Irish.

The third generation has grown up without assigned roles or groups that anchor ethnicity, so that identity can no longer be taken for granted. People can of course give up their identity, but if they continue to feel it, they must make it more explicit than it was in the past, and must even look for ways of expressing it. This has two important consequences for ethnic behavior. First, given the degree to which the third generation has acculturated and assimilated, most people look for easy and intermittent ways of expressing their identity, for ways that do not conflict with other ways of life. As a result, they refrain from ethnic behavior that requires an arduous or time-consuming commitment, either to a culture that must be practiced con-

stantly, or to organizations that demand active membership. Second, because people's concern is with identity, rather than with cultural practices or group relationships, they are free to look for ways of expressing that identity which suits them best, thus opening up the possibility of voluntary, diverse, or individualistic ethnicity. Any mode of expressing ethnic identity is valid as long it enhances the feeling of being ethnic, and any cultural pattern or organization that nourishes that feeling is therefore relevant, providing only that enough people make the same choices when identity expression is a group enterprise.

In other words, as the functions of ethnic cultures and groups diminish and identity becomes the primary way of being ethnic, ethnicity takes on an expressive rather than instrumental function in people's lives, becoming more of a leisure-time activity and losing its relevance, say, to earning a living or regulating family life. Expressive behavior can take many forms, but it often involves the use of symbols—and symbols as signs rather than as myths.²¹ Ethnic symbols are frequently individual cultural practices that are taken from the older ethnic culture; they are “abstracted” from that culture and pulled out of its original moorings, so to speak, to become stand-ins for it. And if a label is useful to describe the third generation's pursuit of identity, I propose the term “symbolic ethnicity.”

SYMBOLIC ETHNICITY

Symbolic ethnicity can be expressed in a myriad of ways, but above all, I suspect, it is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated into everyday behavior. The feelings can be directed at a generalized tradition, or at specific ones: a desire for the cohesive extended immigrant family, or the obedience of children to parental authority, or the unambiguous orthodoxy of immigrant religion, or the old-fashioned despotic benevolence of the machine politician. People may even sincerely desire to “return” to these imagined pasts, which are conveniently cleansed of the complexities that accompanied them in the real past, but while they may soon realize that they cannot go back, they may not surrender the wish. Or else they displace that wish on churches, schools, and the mass media, asking them to recre-

ate a tradition, or rather, to create a symbolic tradition, even while their familial, occupational, religious, and political lives are pragmatic responses to the imperatives of their roles and positions in local and national hierarchical social structures.

All of the cultural patterns that are transformed into symbols are themselves guided by a common pragmatic imperative: they must be visible and clear in meaning to large numbers of third-generation ethnics, and they must be easily expressed and felt, without requiring undue interference in other aspects of life. For example, Jews have abstracted *rites de passage* and individual holidays out of the traditional religion and given them greater importance, such as the *bar mitzvah* and *bas mitzvah* (the parallel ceremony for thirteen-year-old girls that was actually invented in America). Similarly, Chanukah, a minor holiday in the religious calendar, has become a major one in popular practice, partly since it lends itself to impressing Jewish identity on the children. *Rites de passage* and holidays are ceremonial, and thus symbolic to begin with; equally importantly, they do not take much time, do not upset the everyday routine, and also become an occasion for reassembling on a regular basis family members who are rarely seen. Catholic ethnics pay special attention to the feast days of saints affiliated with their ethnic group, or attend ethnic festivals that take place in the area of first settlement or in ethnic churches.

Consumer goods, notably foods, are another ready source for ethnic symbols, and in the last decades the food industry has developed a large variety of easily cooked ethnic foods, as well as other edibles that need no cooking—for example, chocolate matzohs that are sold as gifts at Passover. The response to symbolic ethnicity may even be spreading into the mass media, for films and television programs with ethnic characters are on the increase. The characters are not very ethnic in their behavior, and may only have ethnic names—for example, Lieutenant Colombo, Fonzi, or Rhoda Goldstein—but in that respect they are not very different from the ethnic audiences who watch them.

Symbolic ethnicity also takes political forms, through identification or involvement with national politicians and international issues that are sufficiently remote to become symbols. As politicians from non-Irish ethnic backgrounds achieve high national or state office, they become identity symbols for members of their group, supplying feelings of pride over their success. For example, Michael Dukakis, ex-governor of Massachusetts, and John Brademas, congressman from

Indiana, may currently serve this function for Greeks, being the first members of the ethnic group to be elected to high office—other than Spiro Agnew, who, however, changed both his name and his religion before entering politics. That such politicians do not represent ethnic constituencies, and thus do not become involved in ethnic political disputes, only enhances their symbolic function, unlike local ethnic politicians, who are still elected for instrumental bread-and-butter reasons and thus become embroiled in conflicts that detract from their being symbols of ethnic pride. Thus, there was little pride in New York's Jewish community when Abe Beame was elected the first Jewish mayor of the city in 1973; in fact, some New York Jews opposed his election on the ground that any new difficulties facing the city during his administration would be blamed on the Jews. As it happened, the city's financial crisis turned disastrous while Beame was in office, and although he was widely criticized for his role in it, he was not attacked as a Jew, and was in fact succeeded by another Jewish mayor, Ed Koch.

Symbolic ethnicity can be practiced as well through politically and geographically even more distant phenomena, such as nationalist movements in the old country. Jews are not interested in their old countries, except to struggle against the maltreatment of Jews in Eastern Europe, but they have sent large amounts of money to Israel, and political pressure to Washington, since the establishment of the state. While their major concern has undoubtedly been to stave off Israel's destruction, they might also have felt that their own identity would be affected by such a disaster. Even if the survival of Israel is guaranteed in the future, however, it is possible that as allegiances toward organized local Jewish communities in America weaken, Israel becomes a substitute community to satisfy identity needs. Similar mechanisms may be at work among other ethnic groups who have recently taken an interest in their ancestral countries—for example, the Welsh and the Armenians—and among those groups whose old countries are involved in internal conflict—for example, the Irish, and Greeks and Turks since the Cyprus war of 1973.

Old countries are particularly useful as identity symbols because they are far away and cannot make arduous demands on American ethnics; even sending large amounts of money is ultimately an easy way to help, unless the donors are making major economic sacrifices. Moreover, American ethnics can identify with their perception of the old country or homeland, transforming it into a symbol, which leaves

out those domestic or foreign problems that could become sources of conflict for Americans. For example, most American Jews who support Israel pay little attention to its purely domestic policies; they are concerned with its preservation as a state and a Jewish homeland, and see the country mainly as a Zionist symbol.

The symbolic functions of old countries are facilitated further when interest in them is historical, when ethnics develop an interest in their old countries as they were during or before the time of the ancestral departure. Marcus Hansen's notion of third-generation return was actually based on the emergence of interest in Swedish history, which suggests that the third-generation return may itself be only another variety of symbolic ethnicity. The third generation can obviously attend to the past with less emotional risk than first- and second-generation people, who are still trying to escape it, but even so, an interest in ethnic history is a return only chronologically.

Conversely, a new symbol may be appearing among Jews: the Holocaust, which has become a historic example of ethnic-group destruction that can now serve as a warning sign for possible future threats. The interest of American Jews in the Holocaust has increased considerably since the end of World War II; when I studied the Jews of Park Forest in 1949–1950, it was almost never mentioned, and its memory played no part whatsoever in the creation of a Jewish community there. The lack of attention to the Holocaust at that time may, as Nathan Glazer suggests, reflect the fact that American Jews were busy with creating new Jewish communities in the suburbs.²² It is also possible that people ignored the Holocaust then because the literature detailing its horrors had not yet been written, although since many second-generation American Jews had relatives who died in the Nazi camps, it seems more likely that people repressed thinking about it until it had become a more historical, and therefore a less immediately traumatic, event. As a result, the Holocaust may now be serving as a new symbol for the threat of group destruction, a symbol required, on the one hand, by the fact that rising intermarriage rates and the continued decline of interest and participation in Jewish religion are producing real fears about the disappearance of American Jewry altogether; and on the other hand, by the concurrent fact that American anti-Semitism is no longer the serious threat to group survival that it was for first- and second-generation Jews. Somewhat the same process appears to be taking place among some young Armenians who are now reviving the history of the Turkish massacre of Armenians some sixty

years later, at a time when acculturation and assimilation are beginning to make inroads into the Armenian community in America. Still, good empirical data about the extent of the concern both with the Holocaust and the Turkish massacre are lacking, and neither may be as widespread among third-generation Jews and Armenians as among their professional and voluntary organizational leaders. Conversely, the 1978 NBC miniseries "The Holocaust" may be both an effect of rising interest in the tragedy and a cause of further interest, even if NBC commissioned the series in the hope of duplicating the earlier success of "Roots."

Most of the symbols used by third-generation ethnics are, however, more prosaic. Jews who take vacations in Israel and Catholic ethnics who go back to their ancestral countries may make these visits in part to satisfy identity needs. Some agnostic Jewish college students appear to have transformed Yom Kippur into a symbol of their Jewishness and stay away from classes even though they do not go to synagogue. It is even possible that the recent public emergence of Polish and other ethnic jokes serves some symbolic functions. Sandberg found that his Polish respondents were not particularly upset by Polish jokes, and perhaps third-generation Poles tell them to each other as negative symbols, which indicate to them what Polishness is not, and concurrently enable them to express their distaste for the butts of these jokes: Poles of an earlier generation or lower socioeconomic status.²³

I suggested previously that ethnicity per se had become more visible, but many of the symbols used by the third generation are also visible to the rest of America, not only because the middle-class people who use them are more visible than their poorer ancestors; but because the national media are more adept at communicating symbols than the ethnic cultures and organizations of earlier generations. The visibility of symbolic ethnicity provides further support for the existence of an ethnic revival, but what appears to be a revival is probably the emergence of a new form of acculturation and assimilation that is taking place under the gaze of the rest of society.

Incidentally, even though the mass media play a major role in enhancing the visibility of ethnicity and communicating ethnic symbols, they do not play this role because they are themselves ethnic institutions. True, the mass media, like other entertainment industries, continue to be dominated by Jews (although less so than in the past), but for reasons connected with anti-Semitism, or the fear of it, they have generally leaned over backwards to keep Jewish characters and Jewish

fare out of their offerings, at least until recently. Even now, a quantitative analysis of major ethnic characters in comedy, drama, and other entertainment genres would surely show that Catholic ethnics outnumber Jewish ones. Perhaps the Jews who write or produce so much of the media fare are especially sensitive to ethnic themes and symbols; my own hypothesis, however, is that they are, in this case as in others, simply responding to new cultural tendencies, if only because they must continually innovate. In fact, the arrival of ethnic characters followed the emergence and heightened visibility of ethnic politics in the late 1960s, and the men and women who write the entertainment fare probably took inspiration from news stories they saw on television or read in the papers.

I have suggested that symbolic ethnicity must be relatively effortless, but while this is probably true for the majority of third-generation ethnics, it is possible that more intense identity needs may produce a more intense form of symbolic ethnicity. Thus, Paul Ritterband has suggested that some aspects of the contemporary neotraditional movement among Jews may be in part symbolic, in that the movement is more concerned with strengthening feelings of Jewish identity and a sense of historic continuity than with perpetuating an Orthodox culture. Drawing on the distinction between *Halachah* (law) and *Aggadah* (myth), he suggests that such leading figures of the movement as Martin Buber and Abraham Heschel developed what he calls a new mythic culture, which manifests little relationship with an allegiance to the existing law-centered Orthodox Judaism. Consequently, it would be useful to study the members of this movement to discover to what extent they are pursuing new ways of being good Jews, and to what extent they want to perpetuate the laws and other dictates of Orthodoxy.

I noted earlier that identity cannot exist apart from a group and that symbols are themselves part of a culture, and in that sense, symbolic ethnicity can be viewed as an indicator of the persistence of ethnic groups and cultures. Symbolic ethnicity, however, does not require functioning groups or networks; feelings of identity can be developed by allegiances to symbolic groups that never meet, or to collectivities that meet only occasionally and exist as groups only for the handful of officers that keep them going. By the same token, symbolic ethnicity does not need a practiced culture, even if the symbols are borrowed from it. To be sure, symbolic culture is as much culture as practiced culture, but the latter persists only to supply symbols to the former.

Indeed, practiced culture may need to persist, for some, because people do not borrow their symbols from extinct cultures that survive only in museums. And insofar as the borrowed materials come from the practiced culture of the immigrant generation, they make it appear as if an ethnic revival were taking place.

Then, too, it should be noted that even symbolic ethnicity may be relevant for only some of the descendants of the immigrants. As intermarriage continues, the number of people with parents from the same secular ethnic group will continue to decline, and by the time the fourth generation of the old immigration reaches adulthood, such people may be a minority. Most Catholic ethnics will be hybrid, and will have difficulty developing an ethnic identity. For example, how would the son of an Italian mother and Irish father who has married a woman of Polish-German ancestry determine his ethnicity, and what would he and his wife tell their children? Even if they were willing, would they be able to decide on their, and their children's, ethnicity; and in that case, how would they rank or synthesize their diverse backgrounds? These questions are empirical, and urgently need to be studied, but I would suggest that there are only three possibilities. Either the parents choose the single ethnic identity they find most satisfying, or they encourage the children to become what I earlier called pan-ethnics, or they cope with diversity by ignoring it, and raise their children as non-ethnics.

THE EMERGENCE OF SYMBOLIC ETHNICITY

The preceding observations have suggested that symbolic ethnicity is a new phenomenon that comes into being in the third generation, but it is probably of earlier vintage and may have already begun to emerge among the immigrants themselves. After all, many of the participants in the new immigration were oppressed economically, politically, and culturally in their old countries, and could not have had much affection even for the villages and regions they were leaving. Consequently, it is entirely possible that they began to jettison the old culture and to stay away from ethnic organizations other than churches and unions the moment they came to America, saving only their primary groups, their ties to relatives still left in Europe, and their identity. In small-town America, where immigrants were a nu-

merically unimportant minority, the pressure for immediate acculturation and assimilation was much greater than in the cities, but even in the latter, the seeds for symbolic ethnicity may have been sown earlier than previously thought.

Conversely, despite all the pressures toward Americanization and the prejudice and discrimination experienced by the immigrants, they were never faced with conditions that required or encouraged them to give up their ethnicity entirely. Of course, some of the earliest Jewish arrivals to America had become Quakers and Episcopalians before the end of the nineteenth century, but the economic conditions that persuaded the Jamaican Chinese in Kingston to become Creole, and the social isolation that forced Italians in Sydney, Australia, to abolish the traditional familial male-female role segregation shortly after arriving, have never been part of the American experience.²⁴

Some conditions for the emergence of symbolic ethnicity were present from the beginning, for American ethnics have always been characterized by freedom of ethnic expression, which stimulated both the ethnic diversity and the right to find one's own way of being ethnic that are crucial to symbolic ethnicity. Although sacred and secular ethnic organizations that insisted that only one mode of being ethnic was legitimate have always existed in America, they have not been able to enforce their norms, in part because they have always had to compete with other ethnic organizations. Even in ethnic neighborhoods where conformity was expected and social control was pervasive, people had some freedom of choice about ethnic cultural practices. For example, the second-generation Boston Italians I studied had to conform to many family and peer-group norms, but they were free to ignore ethnic secondary groups, and to drop or alter Italian cultural practices according to their own preference.

Ethnic diversity within the group was probably encouraged by the absence of a state religion and national and local heads of ethnic communities. For example, American Jewry never had a chief rabbi, or even chief Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform rabbis, and the European practice of local Jewish communities electing or appointing local laymen as presidents was not carried across the ocean.²⁵ Catholic ethnics had to obey the cardinal or bishop heading their diocese, of course, but in those communities where the diocese insisted on an Irish church, the other ethnic groups, notably the Italians, kept their distance from the church, and only in the parochial schools was there any attempt to root out secular ethnic patterns. The absence of

strong unifying institutions thus created the opportunity for diversity and freedom from the beginning, and undoubtedly facilitated the departure from ethnic cultures and organizations.

Among the Jews, symbolic ethnicity may have been fostered early by self-selection among Jewish emigrants. As Liebman points out, the massive Eastern European immigration to America did not include the rabbis and scholars who practiced what he calls an elite religion in the old countries; as a result, the immigrants established what he calls a folk religion in America instead, with indigenous rabbis who were elected or appointed by individual congregations and were more permissive in allowing, or too weak to prevent, deviations from religious orthodoxy, even of the milder folk variety.²⁶ Indeed, the development of a folk religion may have encouraged religious and secular diversity among Jews from the very beginning.

Still, perhaps the most important factor in the development of symbolic ethnicity was probably the awareness, which I think many second-generation people had already reached, that neither the practice of ethnic culture nor participation in ethnic organizations was essential to being and feeling ethnic. For Jews, living in a Jewish neighborhood or working with Jews every day was enough to maintain Jewish identity. When younger second-generation Jews moved to suburbia in large numbers after World War II, many wound up in communities in which they were a small numerical minority, but they quickly established an informal Jewish community of neighborly relations, and then built synagogues and community centers to formalize and supplement the informal community. At the time, many observers interpreted the feverish building as a religious revival, but for most Jews the synagogue was a symbol that could serve as a means of expressing identity without requiring more than occasional participation in its activities.²⁷ Thus, my observations among the second-generation Jews of Park Forest and other suburbs led me to think, as far back as the mid-1950s, that among Jews, at least, the shift to symbolic ethnicity was already under way.²⁸

Suburban Jews also built synagogues and centers to help them implant a Jewish identity among their children, and to hold back primary assimilation, particularly intermarriage. Jewish parents sent their teenagers into Jewish organizations so that they would date other Jews, and then to colleges where they would be most likely to find Jewish spouses. Rising intermarriage rates suggest, however, that their efforts were not always successful, but also that their fears of the con-

sequences of intermarriage were exaggerated. By now, many Jewish parents realize that intermarriage need not inevitably lead to surrender of Jewish identity. Non-Jewish spouses of third-generation Jews sometimes convert to Judaism, more frequently adopt some trappings of Jewish culture and pay homage to Jewish symbols, and even raise their children as Jews, thus suggesting that even with third-generation intermarriage, the next generation will still consider itself to be Jewish.²⁹

Actually, if being Jewish need only mean feeling Jewish and attending to Jewish symbols, the transmission of Jewish identity to the next generation is fairly easily achieved, even by non-Jewish parents. Although little is known about socialization for Jewish identity, it may require only a minimum of parental action, no cultural or organizational affiliation, and perhaps not even a Jewish education for the children. Some evidence suggests that at about age five, children begin to ask themselves, their peers, and their parents what they are, and being told that they are Jewish may be sufficient to plant the seeds of Jewish identity.³⁰

Needless to say, a person's ethnic identity is not firmly established at five and can weaken or disappear in later years. Even when this does not happen, adolescents and adults often develop doubts about their ethnic identity, and particularly about their ability to pass it on to their children.³¹ I have the impression that ambivalence about one's identity is weaker among third-generation Jews than it was among their parents, if only because ethnic identity is now not burdensome or beset with major social and economic costs. Still, unless strong incentives or pressures develop to encourage Jews to give up their identity, it seems likely that they will retain it in the fourth generation, especially since the demands of symbolic ethnicity are light enough not to cause conflict with other, more highly valued, identities and activities.

Some of these observations apply equally well to third-generation Catholic ethnics, especially those who live in the suburbs. They still attend church more frequently than Jews attend synagogue, generally marry Catholics, and are unlikely to give up their Catholic identity. They do not, however, feel a strong need to perpetuate their secular ethnicity, so that, for example, Italian parents do not press their adolescent children to date other Italians. Even so, it is possible that identity may also be transmitted to children by others besides parents; for example, grandparents and peers. In any case, Sandberg has shown

that fourth-generation Poles still retain their Polish identity, and Crispino has found the same among Italians.³²

As intermarriage increases, however, it will be important to discover which ethnic identity, if any, is transmitted to children by intermarried Catholic ethnics; whether mothers and fathers play different roles in identity transmission; and how grandparents and close friends act in this connection. Similar questions could be asked of hybrid ethnics, although it seems unlikely that they could even decide which of their many ancestries they should pass on to their children.

THE FUTURE OF ETHNICITY

The emergence of symbolic ethnicity naturally raises the question of its persistence into the fifth and sixth generations. Although the Catholic and Jewish religions are certain to endure, it appears that as religion becomes less important to people, they, too, will be eroded by acculturation and assimilation. Even now synagogues see most of their worshippers no more than once or twice a year, and presumably the same trend will appear, perhaps more slowly, among Catholics and Protestants as well.

Whether the secular forms of ethnicity can survive beyond the fourth generation is somewhat less certain. One possibility is that symbolic ethnicity will itself decline as acculturation and assimilation continue, and then disappear as erstwhile ethnics forget their secular ethnic identity to blend into one or another subcultural melting pot. The other possibility is that symbolic ethnicity is a steady-state phenomenon that can persist into the fifth and sixth generations.

Obviously this question can only be guessed at, but my hypothesis is that symbolic ethnicity may persist. The continued existence of Germans, Scandinavians, and Irish after five or more generations in America suggests that in the larger cities and suburbs, at least, they have remained ethnic because they have long practiced symbolic ethnicity.³³ Consequently, there is good reason to believe that the same process will also take place among ethnics of the new immigration.

Ethnic behavior, attitudes, and even identity are, however, determined not only by what goes on among the ethnics, but also by developments in the larger society, and especially by how that society will treat ethnics in the future: what costs it will levy and what benefits it will award to them as ethnics. At present, the costs of being and feeling ethnic are slight. The changes that the immigrants and their

descendants wrought in America now make it unnecessary for ethnic to surrender their ethnicity to gain upward mobility, and today ethnics are admitted virtually everywhere, provided they meet economic and status requirements, except at the very highest levels of the economic, political, and cultural hierarchies. Moreover, since World War II, the ethnics have been able to shoulder blacks and other racial minorities with the deviant and scapegoat functions they performed in an earlier America, so that ethnic prejudice and "institutional ethnism" are no longer significant, except, again, at the very top of the societal hierarchies.

To be sure, some ethnic scapegoating persists at other levels of these hierarchies; American Catholics are still blamed for the policies of the Vatican, Italo-Americans are criticized for the Mafia, and urban ethnics generally have been portrayed as racists by a sometime coalition of white and black Protestant, Jewish, and other upper-middle class cosmopolitans. But none of these phenomena, however repugnant, strike me as serious enough to persuade anyone to hide his or her ethnicity. White working-class men, and perhaps others, still use ethnic stereotypes to trade insults, but this practice serves functions other than the maintenance of prejudice or inequality.

At the same time, the larger society also seems to offer some benefits for being ethnic. Americans increasingly perceive themselves as undergoing cultural homogenization, and whether or not this perception is justified, they are constantly looking for new ways to establish their differences from each other. Meanwhile, the social, cultural, and political turbulence of the last decade and the concurrent delegitimation of many American institutions have also cast doubt on some of the other ways by which people identify themselves and differentiate themselves from each other. Ethnicity, now that it is respectable and no longer a major cause of conflict, seems therefore to be ideally suited to serve as a distinguishing characteristic. Moreover, in a mobile society, people who often find themselves living in communities of strangers tend to look for commonalities that make strangers into neighbors, and shared ethnicity may provide mobile people with at least an initial excuse to get together. Finally, as long as the European immigration into America continues, people will still be perceived, classified, and ranked at least in part by ethnic origin. Consequently, external forces exist to complement internal identity needs, and unless there is a drastic change in the allocation of costs and benefits with respect to ethnicity, it seems likely that the larger society will also encourage the persistence of symbolic ethnicity.

Needless to say, it is always possible that future economic and political conditions in American society will create a demand for new scapegoats, and if ethnics are forced into this role, so that ethnicity once more levies costs, present tendencies will be interrupted. Under such conditions, some ethnics will try to assimilate faster and pass out of all ethnic roles, while others will revitalize the ethnic group socially and culturally, if only for self-protection. Still, the chance that Catholic ethnics will be scapegoated more than today seems very slight. A serious economic crisis could, however, result in a resurgence of anti-Semitism, in part because of the affluence of many American Jews, in part because of their visibly influential role in some occupations, notably mass communications.

If present societal trends continue, however, symbolic ethnicity should become the dominant way of being ethnic by the time the fourth generation of the new immigration matures into adulthood, and this in turn will have consequences for the structure of American ethnic groups. For one thing, as secondary and primary assimilation continue, and ethnic networks weaken and unravel, it may be more accurate to speak of ethnic aggregates rather than groups. More importantly, since symbolic ethnicity does not depend on ethnic cultures and organizations, their future decline and disappearance must be expected, particularly those cultural patterns that interfere with other aspects of life and those organizations that require active membership.

Few such patterns and organizations are left in any case, and leaders of the remaining organizations have long been complaining bitterly over what they perceive as the cultural and organizational apathy of ethnics. They also criticize the resort to symbolic ethnicity, identifying it as an effortless way of being ethnic that further threatens their own persistence. Even so, attacking people as apathetic or lazy and calling on them to revive the practices and loyalties of the past have never been effective for engendering support, and reflect instead the desperation of organizations that cannot offer new incentives that would enable them to recruit members.

Some cultural patterns and organizations will survive. Patterns that lend themselves to transformation into symbols and easy practice, such as annual holidays, should persist. So will organizations that create and distribute symbols, or "ethnic goods" such as foodstuffs or written materials, but need few or no members and can function with small staffs and low overhead. In all likelihood, most ethnic organizations will eventually realize that in order to survive, they must deal

mainly in symbols, using them to generate enough support to fund other activities as well.

Symbols do not arise in a vacuum, however, but are grounded in larger cultures. Moreover, insofar as ethnicity involves the notion of a heritage and an actual or imagined gloried past, contemporary symbols depend on older cultures. What kinds of symbols future generations of ethnics will want can hardly be predicted now, but undoubtedly some will want nostalgia, while others will use ethnicity as a substitute or indicator for other goals or purposes. Even now, ethnicity has served as an intentional or unintentional cover for racism, conservative political and economic ideologies, and the defense of familial and local structures and values against national forces and tendencies that drive American society further from *Gemeinschaft* and closer to a nationally homogeneous *Gesellschaft*.³⁴

The demand for current ethnic symbols may require the maintenance of at least some old cultural practices, possibly as hobbies, and through the work of ethnic scholars who keep old practices alive by studying them. It is even possible that the organizations that attempt to maintain the old cultures will support themselves in part by supplying ethnic nostalgia, and some ethnics may aid such organizations if only to assuage their guilt at having given up ancestral practices.

Still, the history of religion and nationalism, as well as events of recent years, should remind us that the social process sometimes moves in dialectical ways, and that acculturative and assimilative actions by a majority occasionally generate revivalistic reactions by a minority. As a result, even ethnic aggregates in which the vast majority maintains its identity in symbolic ways will probably always bring forth small pockets of neotraditionalism—of rebel converts to sacred and secular ways of the past. They may not influence the behavior of the majority, but they are almost always highly visible, and will thus continue to play a role in the ethnicity of the future.

SYMBOLIC ETHNICITY AND STRAIGHT-LINE THEORY

The third and fourth generations' concern with ethnic identity and its expression through symbols seems to me to fit straight-line theory, for symbolic ethnicity cannot be considered as evidence either of a third-generation return or of a revival. Instead, it constitutes only another point in the secular trend that is drawn, implicitly, in straight-

line theory, although it could also be a point at which the declining secular trend begins to level off and perhaps to straighten out.

In reality, of course, the straight line has never been quite straight, for even if it accurately graphs the dominant ethnic experience, it ignores the ethnic groups who still continue to make small bumps and waves in the line. Among these are various urban and rural ethnic enclaves, notably among the poor; the new European immigrants who help to keep these enclaves from disappearing; the groups that successfully segregate themselves from the rest of American society in deliberately enclosed enclaves; and the rebel converts to sacred and secular ways of the past who will presumably continue to appear.

Finally, even if I am right to predict that symbolic ethnicity can persist into the fifth and sixth generations, I would be foolish to suggest that it is a permanent phenomenon. Although all Americans, save the Indians, came here as immigrants and are thus in one sense ethnics, people who arrived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and before the mid-nineteenth-century old immigration, are, except in some rural enclaves, no longer ethnics even if they know where their emigrant ancestors came from. Admittedly, in recent years some upper-class WASPs have begun to consider themselves to be ethnics, but they have done so as a reaction to their loss of cultural power, and the feeling of being a minority that has accompanied this loss, and they have not identified themselves by their European origins.

The history of groups whose ancestors arrived here seven or more generations ago suggests that, eventually, the ethnics of the new immigration will be like them; they may retain American forms of the religions that their ancestors brought to America, but their secular cultures will be only a dim memory, and their identity will bear only the minutest trace, if that, of their national origins. Ultimately, then, the secular trend of straight-line theory will hit very close to zero, and the basic postulates of the theory will turn out to have been accurate—unless, of course, by then America, and the ways it makes Americans, have altered drastically in some now unpredictable manner.

NOTES

This paper was stimulated by S. H. Eisenstadt's talk at Columbia University in November 1975 on "Unity and Diversity in Contemporary Jewish Society." I am grateful to many people for helpful comments on an earlier draft of the

paper, notably Harold Abramson, Richard Alba, James Crispino, Nathan Glazer, Milton Gordon, Andrew Greeley, William Kornblum, Peter Marris, Michael Novak, David Riesman, Paul Ritterband, Allan Silver, and John Slawson.

1. Personal communication. Incidentally, David Riesman is now credited with having invented the term "ethnicity" as it is currently used. (Hereafter, I shall omit personal communication notes, but most of the individuals mentioned in the text supplied ideas or data through personal communication.)

2. For the sake of brevity, I employ these terms rather than Gordon's more detailed concepts. Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), chap. 3.

3. Neil C. Sandberg, *Ethnic Identity and Assimilation: The Polish-American Community* (New York: Praeger, 1974). The primary empirical application of straight-line theory is probably still W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole, *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

4. See, for example, Andrew Greeley, *Ethnicity in the United States* (New York: Wiley, 1974), chap. 1.

5. W. Yancey, E. Ericksen, and R. Juliani, "Emergent Ethnicity: A Review and Reformulation," *American Sociological Review* 41 (1976): 391-403; words quoted at p. 400.

6. The major works include Greeley, *Ethnicity in the United States*; Harold J. Abramson, *Ethnic Diversity in Catholic America* (New York: Wiley, 1973); and Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970).

7. Class differences in the degree of acculturation and assimilation were first noted by Warner and Srole, *Social Systems*; for some recent data among Poles, see Sandberg, *Ethnic Identity*.

8. Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers* (New York: Free Press, 1962), chap. 11. See also Dennis Wrong, "How Important is Social Class," in Irving Howe, ed., *The World of the Blue Collar Worker* (New York: Quadrangle, 1972), pp. 297-309; William Kornblum, *Blue Collar Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); and Stephen Steinberg, *The Academic Melting Pot* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1977).

9. Marcus L. Hansen, *The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant* (Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Historical Society, 1938); and "The Third Generation in America," *Commentary* 14 (1952): 492-500.

10. See also Harold J. Abramson, "The Religioethnic Factor and American Experience: Another Look at the Three-Generations Hypothesis," *Ethnicity* 2 (1975): 163-77.

11. One of the most influential works has been Michael Novak, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* (New York: Macmillan, 1971).

12. See Phil Berger, *The Last Laugh* (New York: Morrow, 1975).

13. Similarly, studies of the radical movements of the 1960s have shown that they included many people who themselves grew up in radical families.

14. See, for example, Egon Mayer, "Modern Jewish Orthodoxy in Post-Modern America: A Case Study of the Jewish Community in Boro Park" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1974).

15. Perhaps the first, and now not sufficiently remembered, study of third-generation Jews was Judith Kramer and Seymour Leventman, *The Children of the Gilded Ghetto* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

16. Geoffrey Bock, "The Jewish Schooling of American Jews" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1976).

17. I also make the assumption that generation is an important determinant of ethnic behavior, but I am aware that it is less important than I sometimes imply; that there are large differences in the experience of a generation within and between ethnic groups; and that the immigrants' age of arrival in the United States affected both their acculturation and that of their descendants.

18. The notion of primary assimilation extends Gordon's concept of marital assimilation to include movement out of the extended family, friendship circles,

and other peer groups. In describing marital assimilation, Gordon did, however, mention the primary group as well. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*, p. 80.

19. The major debate at present is between Abramson and Alba, the former viewing the amount of intermarriage among Catholic ethnics as low; and the latter, as high. See Abramson, *Ethnic Diversity in Catholic America*; and Richard Alba, "Social Assimilation of American Catholic National-Origin Groups," *American Sociological Review* 41 (1976): 1030-46.

20. See, for example, Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier* (New York: Basic Books, 1967); Herbert J. Gans, "The Origin and Growth of a Jewish Community in the Suburbs: A Study of the Jews of Park Forest," in Marshall Sklare, ed., *The Jews: Social Pattern of an American Group* (New York: Free Press, 1958), pp. 205-48; and Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners* (New York: Pantheon, 1967), pp. 73-80. These findings may not apply to communities with significant numbers of German Jews with Reform leanings. There are few Orthodox Jews in the suburbs, except in those surrounding New York City.

21. My use of the word "symbol" here follows Lloyd Warner's concept of symbolic behavior. See W. Lloyd Warner, *American Life: Dream and Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), chap. 1.

22. See Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism*, 2d. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 114-15.

23. Sandberg, *Ethnic Identity*, Table 5-20. Understandably enough, working-class Poles felt more offended by these jokes. Table 5-19.

24. On the Jamaica Chinese, see Orlando Patterson, *Ethnic Chauvinism* (New York: Stein and Day, 1977), chap. 5; on the Sydney Italians, see Rina Huber, *From Pasta to Pavlova* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977), part 3.

25. For a study of one unsuccessful attempt to establish a community presidency, see Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

26. Charles S. Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973), chap. 3. Liebman notes that the few elite rabbis who did come to America quickly sensed they were in alien territory and returned to Eastern Europe. The survivors of the Holocaust who came to America after World War II were too few and too late to do more than influence the remaining Jewish Orthodox organizations.

27. Gans, "The Origin of a Jewish Community in the Suburbs."

28. See Herbert J. Gans, "American Jewry: Present and Future," *Commentary* 21 (1956): 422-30, which includes a discussion of "symbolic Judaism."

29. Fred S. Sherrow, "Patterns of Religious Intermarriage among American College Graduates" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1971).

30. See, for example, Mary E. Goodman, *Race Awareness in Young Children* (Cambridge: Addison-Wesley, 1952).

31. Sklare and Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier*, p. 331.

32. Sandberg, *Ethnic Identity*; and James Crispino, *The Assimilation of Ethnic Groups: The Italian Case* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1979).

33. Unfortunately, too little attention has been devoted by sociologists to ethnicity among descendants of the old immigration.

34. The Ethnic Millions Political Action Committee (EMPAC), founded by Michael Novak, described itself as a "national civil rights committee, dedicated to a politics of family and neighborhood, to equality and fairness, to a new America." Conversely, Patterson sees ethnicity as a major obstacle to the achievement of a universalist, and socialist, humanism. Patterson, *Ethnic Chauvinism*.

10

A NEW MARITAL FORM: THE MARRIAGE OF UNCERTAIN DURATION

ROBERT S. WEISS

The most striking characteristic of American family life today is the very great frequency with which it is disrupted by divorce. The number of divorces is now very nearly half the number of marriages: in the twelve months preceding November 1977, about 2,200,000 marriages took place and about 1,100,000 divorces.¹ Earlier estimates that between 35 and 40 percent of new marriages would eventually end in divorce now appear to be too conservative.² It should be kept in mind, too, that these figures deal only with formal divorce and so understate the degree of serious familial disruption. If we consider not just divorce but any voluntary separation in which partners move to different households without intent of future rejoining, it appears that well over half the marriages now being formed will experience a significant break.³

The rate of divorce in the United States has been increasing in a rather uneven fashion for as long as we have records. But after a post-war peak in 1945, it was temporarily stable through the decade of the fifties. In 1960 it resumed its increase, at first slowly, then quite rapidly. In 1975 the rate of increase suddenly slowed, and since 1976 the divorce rate has again been stable. Despite its present stability, the divorce rate now appears high enough to justify the assertion that we have developed a new marital form, a marriage that is about as likely to end in divorce as not: a marriage of uncertain duration.

Accompanying the higher rate of divorce is a greater ease in obtaining one. Twenty-five years ago, divorce was extremely difficult to ob-