

Hartmut Esser

# Assimilation, Ethnic Stratification, or Selective Acculturation?. Recent Theories of the Integration of Immigrants and the Model of Intergenerational Integration

(doi: 10.2383/32055)

Sociologica (ISSN 1971-8853)  
Fascicolo 1, gennaio-aprile 2010

**Ente di afferenza:**

()

Copyright © by Società editrice il Mulino, Bologna. Tutti i diritti sono riservati.  
Per altre informazioni si veda <https://www.rivisteweb.it>

## Licenza d'uso

Questo articolo è reso disponibile con licenza CC BY NC ND. Per altre informazioni si veda <https://www.rivisteweb.it/>

# Assimilation, Ethnic Stratification, or Selective Acculturation?

## Recent Theories of the Integration of Immigrants and the Model of Intergenerational Integration

by Hartmut Esser

doi: 10.2383/32055

Within the field of social sciences it is quite difficult to run a debate on theories. The main problem is that there is hardly any consensus on what a “theory” actually means, on what makes up a theory’s capacity and on what has to happen if there are obvious exceptions and competing theoretical developments responding to these exceptions. Theories on the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities constitute a particularly vivid and significant example of such a theoretical debate. One can roughly describe the theoretical development as follows: For a long time and in spite of all criticism on many details, the hypothesis of the eventual “assimilation” of immigrants with a different ethnic background was considered to summarize appropriately the empirical processes in classical immigration countries such as the USA, Canada or Australia. The concept of this classical assimilation theory (CAT) had indeed been controversial from the very beginning and even in its most explicit versions, for example those formulated by Park, Gordon, Price or Eisenstadt, one can also find every now and then cautionary notes. However, in the course of the so-called “new immigration” after 1965 at the latest, there had been heavy debates on its supportability, in particular within the USA. It was claimed that one could no longer speak of an uninterrupted trend of assimilation over the course of generations. Furthermore, one could observe manifold and even stable patterns of ethnic pluralisation and innumerable “discontents” with the mere assimilation into the host society instead of a traceless disappearance of ethnic categories. These observations were summarized in the so-called “theory of segmented assimilation,” which had

been most notably developed by Alejandro Portes, Rubén Rumbaut and Min Zhou. The pivotal hypothesis is that there is no longer only one outcome of immigration processes, but three: first, assimilation comprising the upward mobility to the middle classes of the host society (just as was proposed by the old concept), second, the also permanent displacement to marginal areas (“downward assimilation”), and, third, the likewise permanent establishment of independent ethnic communities resulting from the utilization of ethnic resources for upward mobility, but without giving up one’s ethnic identity (“selective acculturation”). Richard Alba and Victor Nee proposed an alternative to this concept, which they denote as “new assimilation theory” (NAT). Their core argument is that – in spite of all deviations that can be observed in more recent developments – assimilation remains the expected main trend over the course of generations. Moreover, they state that the two other outcomes assumed by the theory of segmented assimilation still play only a minor role in the face of given social circumstances and empirically provable development, although they are surely empirically and conceptually relevant for at least certain groups and special circumstances.

Without doubt, all three theories have made important contributions to the sociological systematization of the numerous possible and empirically observable processes as well as to the outcomes of immigrants’ (intergenerational) integration. This already applies to the CAT with its idea of assimilation as a “general law,” but particularly to the TSA with its more differentiated perspective on alternative processes and outcomes. In addition, the NAT has rightly pointed to the fact that it may still be too early to assess which one of the processes and of the outcomes will persist in the long run. The problem that all three theories have in common is that they mainly consist of generalisations of certain empirical trends. They at best include outlines and typologies describing which more general conditions and generating mechanisms are at work and what actually makes up the situational logic of the processes. The following contribution addresses this problem with the methodological aim to reconstruct each of the three theories and their postulated outcomes (assimilation, ethnic stratification, selective acculturation) as a special case of a comprehensive and explicitly explicative model, i.e., of the model of intergenerational integration. The distinctive feature of this model is that it specifies different “generating mechanisms” for in principle all of these (and other) possible processes and outcomes and integrates them into one functional connection. In section 1, we will first have a closer look at the three theories, the three structural outcomes suggested by them, and the underlying methodological problem. Subsequently, we will present the model of intergenerational integration in its basic form in section 2, and in section 3 substantiate in more detail some of the relationships assumed by it. In section 4, we will then reconstruct the structural outcomes that are proposed by the three theories

(assimilation, ethnic stratification, and selective acculturation) within the framework of this model. The contribution will close in section 5 with a few short comments on the relations between the three theories and the model of intergenerational integration.

## 1. Three Theories, Three Outcomes, and One Problem

In his summary of the so-called race-relations-cycle, Robert E. Park provided the most explicit formulation of the classical assimilation theory (CAT):

“The impression that emerges from this review of international and race relations is that the forces which have brought about the existing interpenetration of peoples are so vast and irresistible that the resulting changes assume the character of a cosmic process (...) In the relations of races there is a cycle of events, which tends everywhere to repeat itself (...) The race relations cycle (...) is apparently progressive and irreversible. Customs regulations, immigration restrictions and racial barriers may slacken the tempo of the movement; may perhaps halt it altogether for a time; but cannot change its direction; cannot at any rate, reverse it.” [Park 1950, 149 ff.; emphasis added]

This “cosmic process” refers to the typical process of contact, conflict, accommodation (as an emotionally cold mutual adjustment to the new situation) and the eventual traceless absorption into the host society via the “assimilation” of ethnic groups into the host society’s core segments over the course of generations. It is nothing but the generalisation of numerous observations and their exaggerated representation as a general “law.” This approach stands within the tradition of Durkheim’s idea of sociological laws *sui generis*. However, all attempts to explain other trends by means of such laws have so far been completely in vain. Early criticism already referred to the innumerable implicit assumptions (that have by no means always been met) and exceptions to the concept, a fact that clearly limits its usability as an adequate conceptualization of the processes:<sup>1</sup> The concept was directed to a host society that had been assumed to be homogenous or to one certain segment of it that had been defined as the core culture, like, for example, the White AngloSaxon Protestant culture in the USA. In this respect the concept was – more or less unintentionally – socio- and ethnocentric. The concept gained its seemingly universal validity through several social and economic background conditions that had been taken for granted. These include, for example, immigrations from European countries which lack any

<sup>1</sup> See the summaries on the development and basic propositions of the CAT in Alba and Nee [1999, 136 ff.]; Alba and Nee [2003, 1 ff., 18 ff.]; Zhou [1999, 196ff].

major social distances between newcomers and natives, or good opportunities for economic upward mobility from lower classes to middle and upper classes that had been available until recently. With the emergence of the “new immigration” at the latest, these conditions were no longer thoroughly effective: Immigrants from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean have to face greater social distances or even racist attitudes, and also economic conditions for an assimilative upward mobility to the middle classes have clearly become worse since then. In short: The CAT might have been valid in times of the “old immigration,” but it cannot be applied to the conditions that have arisen in the meantime.

One of the major arguments against the CAT had always involved the criticism that assimilation has by no means been the only empirical outcome of the development of interethnic relations across generations. This criticism has then been intensified and extended in the course of the meanwhile global waves of international and transnational migration. This applies to, for example, transnational networks evolving in this process. They represent new and independently stable social systems, which transcend obsolete boundaries of nation states. As a result, the related idea of assimilation into a stable “container” defined by nation states seems to be irrevocably dismissed as well. The theory of segmented assimilation (TSA), which has particularly been developed with regard to the second generation of the “new immigration,” specifies (in addition) three structural constellations that are stable across time and generations [Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; cfr. a brief and programmatic contribution: Bean and Stevens 2003, 96 ff.; Zhou 1999, 196; cfr. also the short introductory notes above]: “growing acculturation and parallel integration into the white middle-class,” “permanent poverty and assimilation into the under-class” and “rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community’s values and tight solidarity” [Zhou 1999, 196]. The background is formed again by numerous observations in the course of the so-called “new immigration,” questioning whether the implicit assumptions that rendered the CAT the impression of universal applicability are still valid (or have ever been valid at all).

The “new assimilation theory” was developed in response to the TSA and its proposition that conditions have changed completely with the rise of the “new immigration” and that, therefore, an entirely new theoretical foundation was now necessary [cfr. Alba and Nee 1999; Alba and Nee 2003; Alba 2008]. The NAT proceeds from recognizing explicitly the weaknesses, gaps, one-sidedness and false propositions of the classical assimilation theory, as well as from its actual ethnocentric bias. It first of all withdraws from the proposition of an invariable cultural “mainstream,” which is determined by only one segment of the host societies and which provides the basis for assimilation. To be sure, such a mainstream could still be found in every

society simply because a couple of central institutional and cultural core segments do indeed exist in every society in spite of all postmodern fluidity. This mainstream, however, is subject to continuous change, although this change takes place more slowly than individual events of individual reactions. What is particularly noteworthy here is that in principle all groups and cultural influences are “interactively” involved in the constitution of this mainstream. The NAT then also considers explicitly those three alternative stable outcomes of the development of interethnic relations which have already been proposed by the TSA: assimilation, ethnic stratification and selective acculturation. Following again the TSA, the NAT also assumes that certain (social, economic, political) conditions (“modes of incorporation”) determine which of the three outcomes will finally occur. The NAT, however, ultimately sticks to the empirical core proposition of the classical assimilation theory: Just as in the case of the old immigration, the basic mechanisms and structural conditions in the host societies will finally, in the long run, give rise to cultural assimilation, upward mobility and adaptation of housing behaviour and social contacts. Moreover, and again in a longterm perspective involving several generations, ethnic identifications and identities will grow weaker and eventually become mere symbolic and individually cultivated relicts without any further relevance.

The TSA and the NAT agree largely in their criticism of the weaknesses of the CAT and also in their acknowledgement of other alternatives of intergenerational developments, particularly with regard to the three possible outcomes assimilation, ethnic stratification and selective acculturation.

The NAT and the TSA differ in terms of several conceptual and theoretical assumptions and preliminary decisions. As already mentioned, the main difference, however, consists in their evaluation of certain empirical facts: A closer look at the histories of immigration, above all European immigration, revealed that the “new” conditions were in fact not that “new.” Moreover, evidence arising from (ancillary) conditions of the current situation suggested that assimilation is also the main outcome for the new generations of the new immigration. All three theories have in common, however, that they lack an explicit modelling of underlying mechanisms allowing for the explanation of all three outcomes on the basis of preferably one comprehensive theoretical context. We will now introduce the model of intergenerational integration as a solution to this problem.

## 2. The Model of Intergenerational Integration

The model of (intergenerational) integration was originally developed to reconstruct the special conditions of the classical assimilation theory that are not always or even “inevitably” given, and, in particular, to explain the sequence of the four phases of the race-relations-cycle introduced by Robert E. Park [cfr. Esser 2004; Esser 2006; Esser 1985 for an early version]. It consists, in principle, of three components: the specification of the basic options immigrants have and the corresponding selection rules; the connection between options and empirical conditions via a few basic functions; and the definition of the explanandum – i.e., various structural outcomes of the process of intergenerational integration – as an aggregated result of (among other things) individual choices between certain alternatives.

### 2.1. *The Options*

At the heart of the model are the options for those immigrants who are currently present within a receiving context. Options include activities which are related to the receiving country (receiving context option, in short: rc-option) and those which are related to the ethnic context (ethnic context option, in short: ec-option). Examples are changing or maintaining habits, relationships, or orientations. In order to explain when and why a certain activity occurs, we need a general rule for the selection between options that can be applied to, in principle, all empirical constellations. The model uses the rule of the expected utility theory as such a general selection rule. For each of the possible options a so-called EU weight is computed. The EU weight is the sum of both the negative and positive returns that can be achieved with the selection of a particular option, weighted with the corresponding expectation that the return actually occur with the selected option. Individuals would then select the option with the highest expected value [cfr. Esser 2004, 1135 ff.; Esser 2006, 39 ff. on details of the expected utility theory and also with reference to the model].

In terms of the integration of immigrants one can consider the problem of the decision for either the rc-option or the ec-option as a special case of an investment. When immigrants enter the receiving country, they are already more or less equipped with different sorts of capital (cultural, economic and social capital), but not all of this capital can be used or is efficient enough to achieve the most important aims in life there. The reason for that lies in the fact that the capital that is necessary to manage everyday life is tied to certain contexts. In this respect, the capital is more or less specific to achieving important goals [cfr. amongst others Friedberg 2000; Kalter and Granato 2002; Nee and Sanders 2001]. A possible solution to this problem is the

investment in capital with a high usability in (or even beyond) the receiving country. This would coincide with the selection of an rc-option, including, for instance, efforts toward second language acquisition, educational aspirations in the receiving country or attempts to establish interethnic relationships. The problem that arises here as well as for any other investment is that while the payoff is uncertain, the costs of investment will definitely occur. The alternative option, i.e., the ec-option, consists in maintaining the status quo of a given capital equipment. This option may be attractive as well: Although the payoff might possibly be (clearly) lower than that of a successful rc-investment, it will almost definitely be achieved and, in addition, no (investment) costs will arise.

If we denote the expected returns to the ethnic status quo as  $U(ec)$ , those of a successful rc-investment as  $U(rc)$ , the probability that the investment will be successful as  $p(rc)$ , and the investment costs as  $C(rc)$ , the following equations will result for the EU-weights of both options:

$$(1) \text{EU}(ec) = U(ec).$$

$$(2) \text{EU}(rc) = p(rc)U(rc) + (1 - p(rc))U(ec) - C(rc).$$

From these equations and from the assumption that

$$\text{EU}(rc) > \text{EU}(ec),$$

follows as the condition for the transition from the ec-option to the rc-option:

$$(3) p(rc)(U(rc) - U(ec)) - C(rc) > 0.$$

One can interpret the term

$$U(rc) - U(ec)$$

as the motivation for choosing rc-options. The estimated probability of the investment success  $p(rc)$  refers to the (objective) opportunities available to the immigrants within the receiving country. If they face no or only very few opportunities, as in the case of legal or other exclusions, they will hardly select or be able to select an rc-option, even if motivation is high. Motivation, in turn, depends on two evaluations: on the one hand, on the attractiveness of the returns to the rc-option  $U(rc)$  and the attractiveness of the given ethnic status quo  $U(ec)$ , on the other. This also reveals why the choice in favour of an rc-option can also become unattractive

with increasing returns to the status quo. Hence, with respect to the selection of the rc-option, immigrants may have to face obstacles or incentives emerging from two sides: externally, on the part of the receiving society via low/high rc-opportunities, low/high rc-returns, and high/low rc-costs; and internally, via increasing/decreasing ec-returns, which lower or raise the motivation for choosing the rc-option.

In short: What will finally happen is subject to the relations between the empirical conditions within the receiving as well as the ethnic context and the resources and capital the immigrants bring along from their country of origin and how they can use them in the new context.

## 2.2. *Basic Functions*

The problem in explaining the choice between several options is how to connect the theoretical and abstract EU-weights with the various empirical and actual conditions. The model of intergenerational integration describes these connections using only a few and preferably basic functions. We assume two pivotal empirical (ancillary) conditions for the variation in the EU-weights: the group size of the immigrant population on the one hand, and ethnic boundary making on the other.

### a) Group size

The assumption that group size plays a central role in determining the EU-weights is based on Blau's opportunity theory of interethnic relations [cfr. Blau 1994, 28ff.; Blau and Schwartz 1984]. This theory proposes that the chances for intra- and interethnic relations (of any kind) are distributed according to the objective structure of relative group sizes: Members of a smaller group already have structurally higher chances (and even the "pressure") for interethnic contacts or investments than do members of a larger group. In contrast, chances for and returns to intraethnic contacts and investments increase in larger groups. From this typical consequences for the selection of the rc-option as against the ec-option arise. Two simple functions, then, initially specify the correlations (cfr. Figure 1). Function 1 describes in general the correlation between group size and EU-weight (in two variants 1a and 1b; see below for more detail) in terms of the investment related to the receiving country: The larger the group of immigrants, the smaller becomes the EU-weight of the rc-option for the mere reason that the probability of meeting native actors decreases structurally. This, in turn, has a negative effect on language acquisition or on the establishment of interethnic relations, for example. Function 2 depicts, again in general (and in two variants 2a and 2b), the correlation between group size and the propensity to

choose the ec-option: The EU-weight for the ec-option becomes higher as group size increases – again for analogous reasons of an increasing structural probability to meet someone with the same ethnic background.

To be sure, structural effects of group size do neither necessarily occur nor have they to be particularly strong. This is the case, for example, when members of a larger group are distributed over spacious regions or when ethnic groups are otherwise “individualized.” Functions 1a and 2a, therefore, describe those (extreme) cases, in which the options’ EU-weights are largely independent of group size. Stronger correlations between group size and EU-weights for both options are represented in functions 1b and 2b (see below for more details).

In addition, EU-weights can, of course, vary and change independently of the strength of their correlation with the group size. Decreasing chances for or returns to a successful rc-investment, as well as increasing costs would generally lead to a decrease in the EU-weights for the rc-option. This applies analogously to the chances for and returns to the ec-option and is perfectly in line with the common approach to explain typical patterns of social integration by means of certain “variables,” like education, age at the time of immigration and (de-)segregated housing, which are all used for explaining second language acquisition as compared to first language retention [cfr. Esser 2008]. One could illustrate this in the model by a shift in the constants of the basic functions. For the sake of clarity, however, we refrained from including this illustration in Figure 1 (but cfr. functions 1a and 1a’ in Figure 6 below).

### *b) Ethnic boundary making*

The reason why ethnic boundary making is included in the explanation of intergenerational integration is that it can change the EU-weights for the two options in a systematic and lasting manner. This partly happens in a particularly “unconditional” way, for instance in terms of aversions or preferences based on ideologies, and especially in terms of discriminations. Ethnic boundary making can thus evolve into insurmountable obstacles to selecting one or the other option. The NAT is, therefore, absolutely right in pointing to the pivotal importance of ethnic boundary making.

Ethnic boundary making can emerge for immigrants from both sides: externally, as the closure of the receiving country, and, internally, as the ethnicisation of the ethnic context. Closures can, in turn, be the result of two different processes. The first one involves decreasing chances for successful rc-investments due to structurally restricted opportunities for the access to the receiving country through, for example, spatial segregations or concentration on economic areas and activities which are characterized by decreasing productivity and increasing competition. The second

process consists in the reinforcement of mentally anchored social distances against immigrants, for example, in the form of ethnic prejudice or discriminations.<sup>2</sup> Ethnicisations can also be based on structural and/or mental grounds. EU-weights for the ec-option increase structurally with available ethnic organizations, for example, in the form of an ethnic economy, the institutional completeness of ethnic communities and expanding ethnic networks. They increase mentally with the emergence or reinforcement of ethnic identities, which can be understood, among other things, as a subjective (additional) bonus for choosing the ec-options (cfr. also paragraph 3 below).

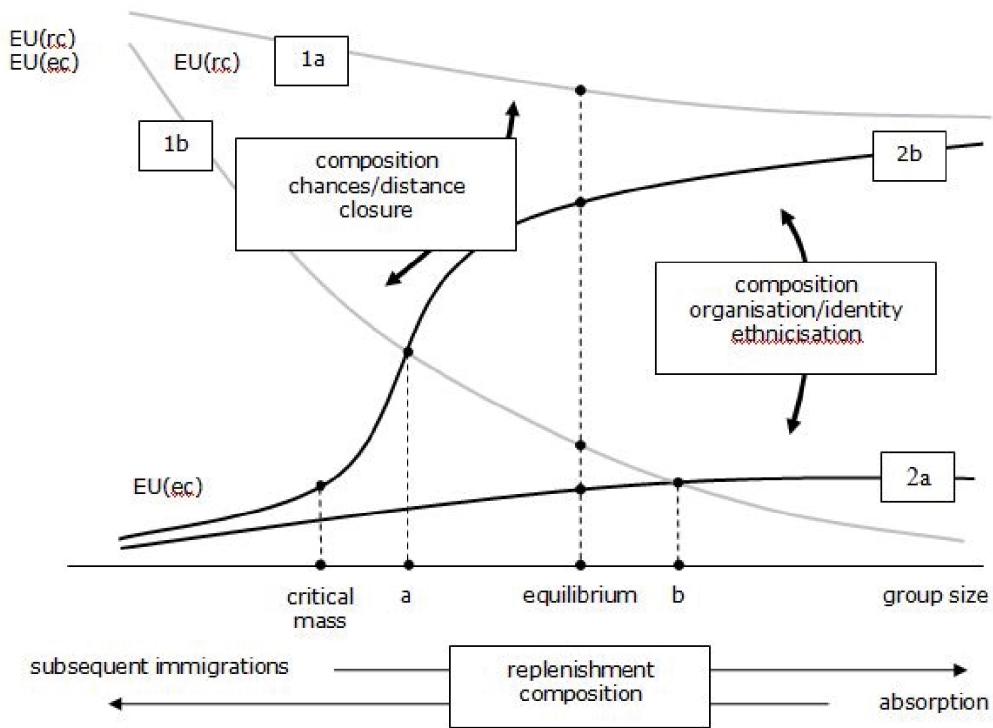


FIG. 1. The model of intergenerational integration.

<sup>2</sup> Different from everyday usage, closures and ethnicisations or ethnic boundary making do not only relate to mental aspects like stereotypes or identities, but also to aspects of the ethnic-specific distribution of *structural* chances and returns for both options, above all for the ec-options through ethnic segregations and ethnic organizations. “Ethnic” refers to the empirical fact that such structural distributions can indeed occur independently of any mental processes. Examples are spatial segregations that are based on income differences but not on discriminations or ethnic preferences, or economic niches and “cultural division of labor” that are based on rather accidental characteristics of the migration history or the economic situation. Another example is the development of ethnic opportunities through an ethnic economy resulting from solely economically motivated activities of (“ethnic”) entrepreneurs. Mutual reinforcements of structural and mental aspects as well as of closures and ethnicisations are, of course, possible (cfr. also paragraph 3 below).

Ethnic boundary making causes – in general – a decrease in the EU-weights for rc-options and an increase in the EU-weights for ec-options., but particularly a strengthening of the effect of group size on the EU-weights for both options. It is the increase in the salience of ethnic categorizations and of the ingroup-outgroup differentiation that further increases or diminishes according to increasing/decreasing group size. This is illustrated in Figure 1 by the shift of functions 1 and 2 to 1a and 2b. Function 1b describes the effects of closures and function 2b those of ethnicisations (cfr. paragraph 3 below on the special shape of function 2b with the threshold of a “critical mass” with regard to the group size).

c) Replenishment and composition

The two central variables of the model – group size and ethnic boundary making – result in turn from two other processes: changes in demographic and social processes that determine the group size on the one hand, and changes in the composition of the characteristics of the immigrant population on the other.

Two different processes account for the variations in group size: the process of absorption of, above all, following generations (defined as diminishing ethnic (between-group) differences as compared to the native population in the course of assimilation; cfr. also below) reduces group size as an “ethnic” context of action, and subsequent migrations of new immigrants lead to an increase in group size (cfr. the two arrows below the horizontal axis in Figure 1). The current group size is thus described by means of the net effect between absorption and subsequent migrations, the so-called replenishment (cfr. the vertical line in Figure 1 that indicates a possible equilibrium in this process). Changes in the composition of the characteristics of the immigrant population result from differences in the characteristics of new immigrants, of those who are actually present and of those who drop out of the population through the process of absorption. Systematic shifts in the composition do not always occur. However, there are by all means constellations – for example, in the case of chain migrations – where one can expect systematic changes, for instance, in terms of age, family situation, social ties or cultural imprint. Such changes in composition can, in turn, influence the emergence of ethnic boundary making (cfr. paragraph 3 below).

The model of intergenerational integration thus combines the processes of the social integration of immigrants with migration processes in a dual manner: It includes both changes in group size via the process of replenishment and changes in ethnic boundary making via changes in the composition of the characteristics of the immigrant population.

### 2.3. Structural Outcomes

The model of intergenerational integration aims at explaining certain structural outcomes of the integration of immigrants as societal facts. The structural outcomes refer to typical distributions of individual characteristics between the different ethnic groups, although individual within-group variances are by all means possible. Most simply, between-group differences disappear completely or continue to exist. These structural outcomes are referred to as “assimilation” versus “segmentation.” The three structural outcomes which we examine here are special variants of these two outcomes (cfr. paragraph 4 for more details). Such distributions are considered to be the result of certain patterns of individual actions: If individual immigrants choose options that are related to the receiving country, the groups will assimilate also without any intention of the actors. This won’t happen, however, if immigrants chose options that are related predominantly to the ethnic group. In this way, one can easily connect the structural outcomes with the EU-weights of the respective options and the corresponding individual actions: The structural outcome of assimilation would occur if the EU-weight of the rc-option exceeded that for the ec-option ( $\text{EU}(\text{rc}) > \text{EU}(\text{ec})$ ), whereas segmentation would result if the relation was the other way round ( $\text{EU}(\text{rc}) < \text{EU}(\text{ec})$ ). According to the model, the actual outcome finally depends on group size and ethnic boundary making, which in turn result from replenishment (i.e., the ratio between new immigrations and absorption) and the thus possibly changing composition of immigrant groups – just as it is described in the basic functions.

## 3. Migration, Composition, and Ethnic Boundary Making

Functions 1 and 2 describe the basic correlation between group size and EU-weights of the respective options, and variants 1a and 1b illustrate different strengths and shapes of this correlation resulting from different degrees of ethnic boundary making. In the model of intergenerational integration ethnic boundary making is, in turn, connected with the migration process itself, namely via the replenishment in the course of new immigrations and the thus possibly changing composition of the immigrant population, which in turn leads to closures and/or ethnicisations. Systematic changes in the composition that cause ethnic boundary making are particularly to be expected in the course of chain migrations where immigrants with different motives, skills and capital equipment little by little follow pioneer immigrants. Pioneer immigrants typically constitute a rather young, well-educated, mobile, flexible and “individualized” population, whereas immigrants who follow them establish a

rather old, less well-educated, relatively immobile and inflexible group which is more strongly embedded in family or other social networks and culturally more ethnically oriented [cfr. amongst others Borjas 1987]. Not only do these correlations describe the functions' shapes (hypothetically), but they can explain them, namely as a result of more or less long sequences of beginning and developing immigration flows, the changing composition of the immigrant population, and the thus possibly evolving ethnic boundary making. So, in addition to currently present immigrants, also other actors are involved in these processes: prospective immigrants who have decided for the time being to stay in their home country (with the options to follow or not to follow the pioneer immigrants), the natives (with the options of closure or not) and (ethnic) entrepreneurs (with the options to establish an ethnic organization or not).

### 3.1. *Closure*

Figure 2a describes the causal processes of an increasing closure and, hence, of the explanation of the transition from function 1a to function 1b.

The starting point is the onset of a migration process (due to a certain attractiveness of a receiving country) and the assumption that this process initially involves pioneer immigrants ( $S1 \rightarrow S2$ ). Depending on the constellation of characteristics of the willingness to immigrate on the part of prospective immigrants, this ongoing migration process can make actors who so far have stayed in their home country now decide to immigrate as well in face of the changed circumstances (for instance, due to a visible success of the pioneers and family separation). This may even culminate in complete cascades of contagion processes resulting in a relocation of nearly all inhabitants of a village or a region into one receiving context. Correspondingly, the composition of the immigrant population is changing now as compared to the one made up by pioneer immigrants, because more and more older, less well-educated, less flexible and less mobile people arrive, who, moreover, are more likely to be embedded in social networks and culturally more ethnically oriented ( $S2 \rightarrow S3$ ). These are all characteristics, however, which play an important role for the EU-weights of the rc-option and thus change the immigrants' chances for this option. Moreover, they have an impact on the native population's proneness to social distances towards whole groups of people with a striking different ethnic background, as these now affect everyday life within the receiving society and the competition to a clearly greater extent than did the few individualized and flexible pioneer immigrants ( $S3 \rightarrow S4$ ).

The overall result is that EU-weights of the rc-option decrease and that the negative correlation with group size becomes stronger. This is summarized in and

described by means of the different shape of function 1a as compared to that of function 1b.

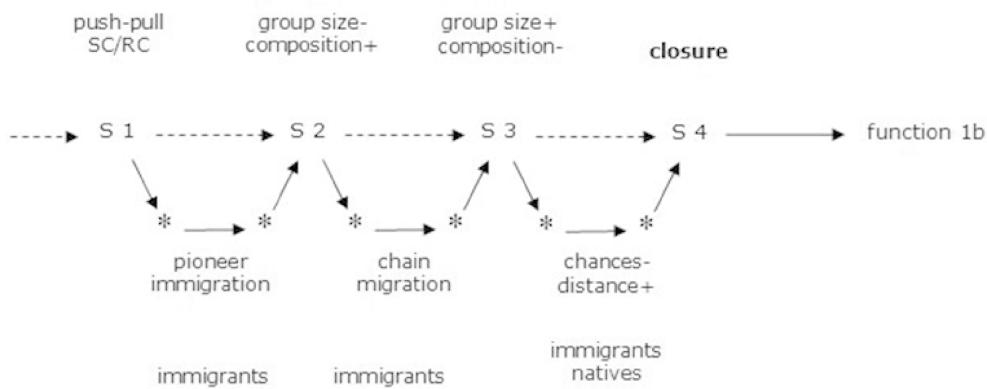


FIG. 2a. Migration, composition and closure.

To be sure, the process outlined in Figure 2a is a theoretical one and empirically not always given like that. It therefore doesn't represent a general "law": Not always do chain migrations emerge, nor does the composition of the immigrant population have to change in the manner assumed. We simply want to demonstrate how to explain again, in principle, the changes in function 1 from 1a to 1b and with that why first contacts in the course of starting (pioneer) immigrations are frequently unproblematic and friendly, but soon and inevitably turn into social problems, conflicts and social distances (cfr. also paragraph 4 and the reconstruction of the race-relations-cycle). In addition, we want to point to the innumerable assumptions that would be necessary in order to formulate such a "law" if one wanted to go beyond the mere description of ever new individual cases.

### 3.2. *Ethnicisation*

Figure 2b describes analogous processes in terms of ethnicisation, and thus, for the explanation of the transition from function 2a to function 2b.

Again, the outlined process of starting chain migrations and the changing composition of the immigrant population towards a more ethnically embedded and oriented group ( $S1 \rightarrow S2 \rightarrow S3$ ) forms the background. It has two important consequences. Firstly, the demand for ethnic services and resources (of all kinds: cultural, structural, social, emotional) grows and it becomes increasingly interesting for prospective (ethnic) entrepreneurs – in addition to the respective effects of an increasing

group size and the associated growth of ethnic markets in general – to meet this demand with a corresponding offer and to invest in an ethnic organization (enterprises, associations, networks, cultural and religious facilities). Secondly, the proportion of those immigrants who are more ethnically oriented and more embedded in ethnic networks, and thus of those with a strong ethnic identity ( $S_3 \rightarrow S_4$ ), rises with the changing composition of the population of (chain) immigrants. Together, these two consequences account for ethnicisation.

We now additionally assume that once a certain group size is reached, the ethnic organization and ethnic identities are mutually reinforced in a cumulative positive feedback process (cfr. the point on function 2b of Figure 1 indicating the “critical mass” for the outset of this reinforcement process). Selective chain migrations and other forms of transnational exchange that are stimulated by the increased group size contribute to this reinforcement process, too. These other forms of transnational exchange comprise migration marriages, transnational enterprises and political activities – up to and including the “institutional completeness” of ethnic communities and transnational networks enabling immigrants to conduct their everyday activities in a completely intra-ethnic environment (even across any borders). The cumulative process of an increasing ethnicisation resulting from the interplay between ethnic organization and identity formation is depicted in Figure 2b by a feedback arrow for situation  $S_4$ . However, it is assumed that the increase in ethnicisation declines again with a continuing increase in group size: The “institutional completeness” of ethnic communities and transnational networks is limited, and ethnic embeddings and orientations are subject to strong relationships which cannot be extended in larger populations, if only because of structural reasons.

In Figure 1, these processes are represented by the sigmoid form of the curve of function 2b. Changes in ethnicisation again can be induced externally and by the net effect between new immigrations and absorption, i.e., by the replenishment process.

These processes are also by no means inevitable and depend on numerous other special conditions like the one that prospective (ethnic) entrepreneurs have to combine high skills with entrepreneurial initiative and sufficient ethnic social capital in order to be successful and, thus, to provide (often unintentionally) the necessary structural basis for the process of ethnicisation to start.

Further feedback processes are conceivable, like, in particular, the progressively proceeding ethnic boundary making resulting from the mutual reinforcement of closure and ethnicisation up to a complete ethnic division of a society: A closure – for whatever reason it sets in – increases the demand for ethnic resources, because rc-options are unavailable. This increased demand for ethnic resources then enhances the emergence of ethnic organizations and the reactive emphasis on ethnic identities,

leading, in turn, to the activation of social distances. The progressively proceeding dissolution of ethnic boundary making, the so-called boundary blurring, can be described analogously: Improved chances for rc-options – for example, in the course of generations – decrease the demand for ethnic organizations and make ethnic orientations less plausible, which, in turn, reduces social distances – up to the complete disappearance of the salience of ethnic categories.

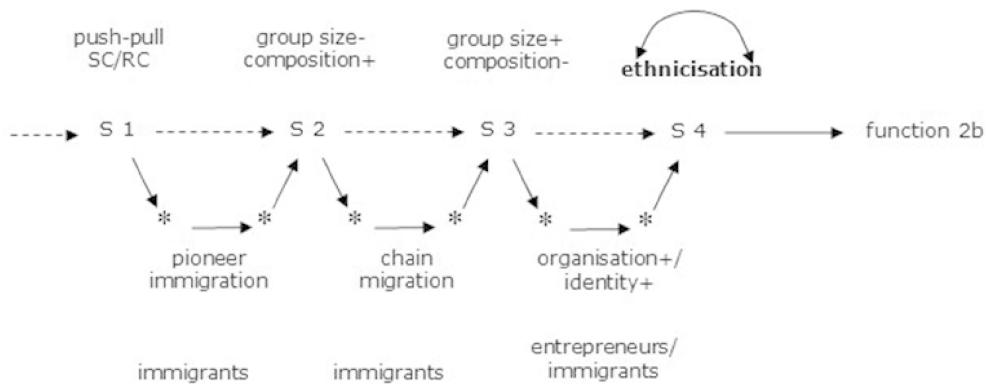


FIG. 2b. Migration, composition and ethnicisation.

#### 4. Assimilation, Ethnic Stratification, and Selective Acculturation in the Model of Intergenerational Integration

The model of intergenerational integration neither claims that a particular structural outcome must occur, nor that anything is possible or equally likely. The actual outcome depends on partly highly specific constellations. We will now reconstruct the three theories at issue here and their postulated outcomes – assimilation, ethnic stratification and selective acculturation – as special cases of certain constellations of the relations summarized in the functions of the model of intergenerational integration.

##### 4.1. Assimilation

We begin with the reconstruction of the classical assimilation theory in its most precise version, the so-called race-relations-cycle according to Park (cfr. Figure 3).

The first phase of the race-relations-cycle – contact – involves isolated pioneer immigrations and a friendly and interested reception: There are not yet any closures and/or ethnicisations (functions 1a and 2a) and group size is still small. The EU-weights of both options inevitably require an orientation towards the demands

of the receiving country and if nothing changed, one could already now expect the outcome of an overall assimilation (just as in the case of most national migrations of individual persons).

We now assume that subsequent immigrations continue, reinforce themselves and also include persons with different motives and resources, particularly in the course of immigration of family members, relatives and whole networks. As a result, the composition of the immigrant population changes (in the direction assumed for such chain migrations in paragraph 3), and closures and/or ethnicisations evolve – up to and including cumulative processes of an ethnic division (transition from functions 1a and 2a to functions 1b and 2b). These processes characterize the second phase, the phase of conflict.

Assimilation can still occur, but not uninterruptedly and as a matter of course, and accompanied by increasing opportunity costs. The presence of a greater number of immigrants and the meanwhile established ethnic facilities encourage more subsequent immigrations, so that group size can further increase and the completion of ethnic communities can proceed. The structurally increasing self-sufficiency of ethnic communities due to the increase in group size and ethnicity allows immigrants to enter and maintain their relationships and to make their investments exclusively within these communities. As a consequence, interethnic cleavages that have evolved so far lose their (everyday) significance. This is the phase of accommodation: Everybody gets along and accepts each other without having any special emotion and lives in peaceful coexistence.

Of course, it would be very unlikely now that “assimilation” would occur unless group size was to decrease again due to the absence of subsequent immigrations and general demographic processes and hence undermine the basis of ethnicisations as well as of closures. Here, the classical assimilation theory makes a far-reaching, more or less implicit and anything but self-evident or even “universally” valid assumption with regard to assimilation as the “inevitable” fourth phase of the race-relations-cycle: Following generations don’t have to face any closures, because they disappear more or less completely (transition from function 1b back to 1a, symbolized by a broken line). On the one hand, they have structurally higher opportunities for acculturative access, which results in an increase in EU-weights for rc-options in terms of, for example, second language acquisition or educational attainment in the receiving country. On the other hand, the adaptation to and the normalization of the situation involved in the accommodation process reduce social distances on part of the native population. This already allows the choice of rc-options, in spite of the fact that overall EU-weights for ec-options remain high (function 2b) due to, for instance, developing ethnic infrastructures and a possible further increase in group size through

ongoing subsequent immigrations. Finally, the absorption process sets in, too, in the course of the assimilation of following generations: Depending on its relative strength as compared to new immigrations and depending on the composition, group size and (thus) the demand for ethnic services decrease again. As a consequence, ethnic organizations lose their structural basis and, subsequently, ethnic orientations also become less plausible (transition from function 2b to function 2a; also symbolized by a broken line). The EU-weight for the rc-option is now clearly higher than the one for the ec-option (just as is the case with pioneer immigrants), and ethnic habits and emotions are at best maintained as kinds of sentimental relicts of an otherwise individualized lifestyle.

Unlike the classical assimilation theory assumed, this process is not mandatory, but, as one can easily see, depends on numerous specific conditions. The critical – and often rightly criticized – hypothesis is the one of the inevitable disappearance of ethnic boundary making for following generations. Therefore, the NAT is right in pointing to the “boundary blurring” as a central core of “assimilation.” The classical assimilation theory gained its high plausibility with regard to the “old” immigration by the fact that these specific conditions were (and still are) anything but rarely met empirically in the process of intergenerational integration – even beyond any objection that could be raised against the assumption of an irreversible and inevitable “law.”

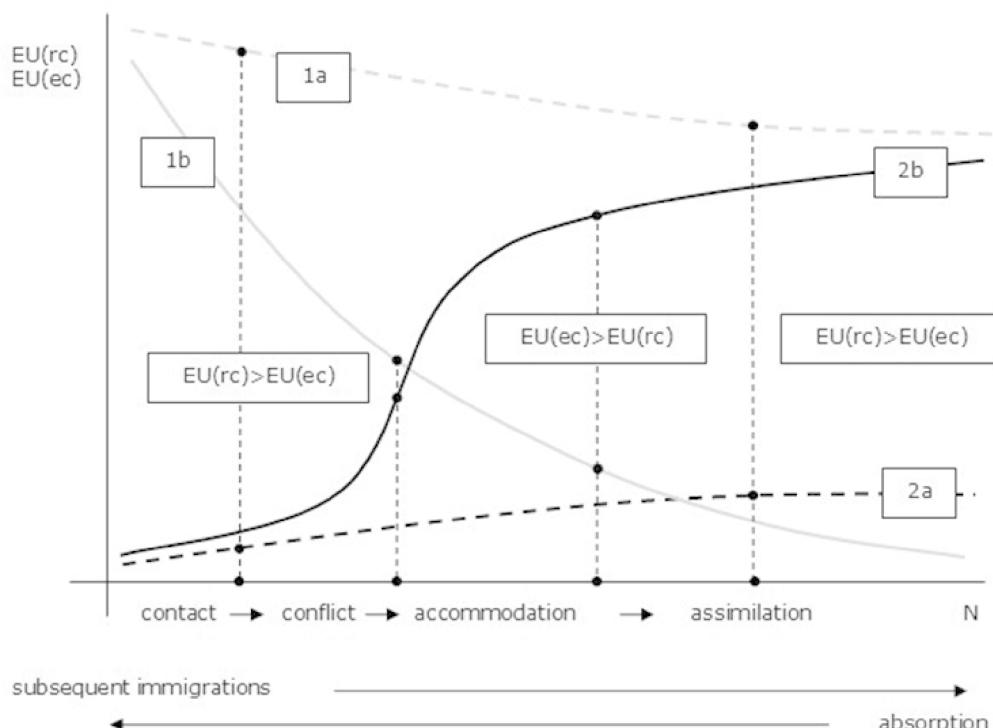


FIG. 3. Assimilation (race-relations-cycle according to Park).

#### 4.2. *Ethnic Stratification*

The classical assimilation theory regards as the normal case the disappearance of ethnic inequalities of any kind. Ethnic stratifications refer to the case that systematic differences between ethnic groups continue to exist – even in the course of generations – in terms of evaluated resources, particularly regarding chances on the labour market (unemployment, income, occupational position, upward mobility, in general). This means that no “structural assimilation” will result for them. One can include this outcome straightforward in the model of intergenerational integration by assuming that those constellations will not arise for following generations that made EU-weights for rc-options (relevant to upward mobility) exceed those for the ec-options. Above all, this is due to the fact that closures do not disappear for following generations, thus making a transition from function 1b to function 1a impossible: Unlike the classical assimilation theory assumes, chances for education and on the labour market do not improve for them, nor do social distances and possible discrimination decrease, either. The non-appearance of structural assimilation is thus nothing but the almost trivial consequence of the non-appearance of implicitly assumed ancillary conditions for the following generations. And this is just how the NAT replies to the TSA with regard to the danger of evolving ethnic stratifications for the “new second generation”: Their (ancillary) conditions aren’t that bad.

The outlined correlations, in principle, suffice to explain the emergence of ethnic stratifications. However, things aren’t always that easy, especially if one can observe ethnic stratifications in spite of objectively increased chances and/or decreased social distances, i.e., if shifts from function 1b to function 1a actually occur in terms of the following generations [cfr., for example, Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 266 ff. on the descendants of early and quickly successful Cuban immigrants]. Let us examine the correlation between two apparently unrelated mechanisms: the development of the respective ethnic community up to “institutional completeness [according to Breton 1964], and the resulting “ethnic mobility trap” [according to Wiley 1970] with the consequence that ethnic stratifications will emerge even if ethnic closures disappear.

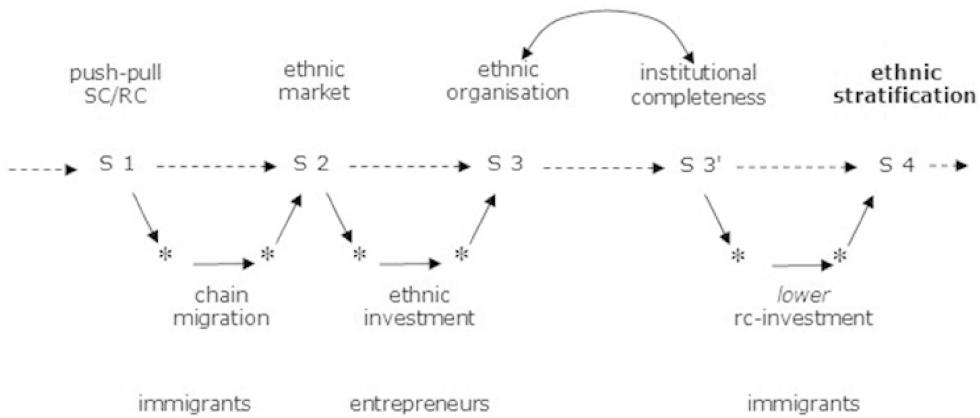


FIG. 4. Institutional completeness and ethnic mobility trap.

The institutional completeness results from the stepwise development of an ethnic community containing all relevant (functional) facilities, including an ethnic economy and the corresponding internal labour market and status system. Background are again the correlations described above between chain migrations, the resulting demand for ethnic products and other services, and the establishment of a sufficiently large ethnic market for these products and services ( $S1 \rightarrow S2$ ), which, in turn, makes it profitable for (ethnic) entrepreneurs to invest accordingly. It is then assumed that the resulting emergence of first ethnic organizations ( $S2 \rightarrow S3$ ) reinforces the process of chain migration (possibly paralleled by closures on part of the receiving society). This, in turn, causes a further increase in the demand for ethnic services, supporting the continuous organizational development of the ethnic community – up to “institutional completeness” ( $(S3 \rightarrow S3')$ ; cfr. the indicated feedback arrow). The development of the ethnic community makes ec-options more attractive, which may even result in the EU-weight for the ec-option exceeding the one of the possibly already high EU-weight for the rc-option. In short: ec-options may be more attractive than rc-options in spite of high rc-chances and low social distances (cfr. functions 1b and 2b' in Figure 5).

The “ethnic mobility trap” is then defined as follows: If ec-options are less efficient for upward mobility into higher classes of the receiving societies than are corresponding rc-investments, the developing ethnicisation will result in lower mobility efforts, even if structural chances are high and social distances are absent – a correlation that occurs empirically quite often (although not always; cfr. below on selective acculturation). This yields (in most cases, unintentionally) the structural outcome of an ethnic stratification – just as further existing closures do.

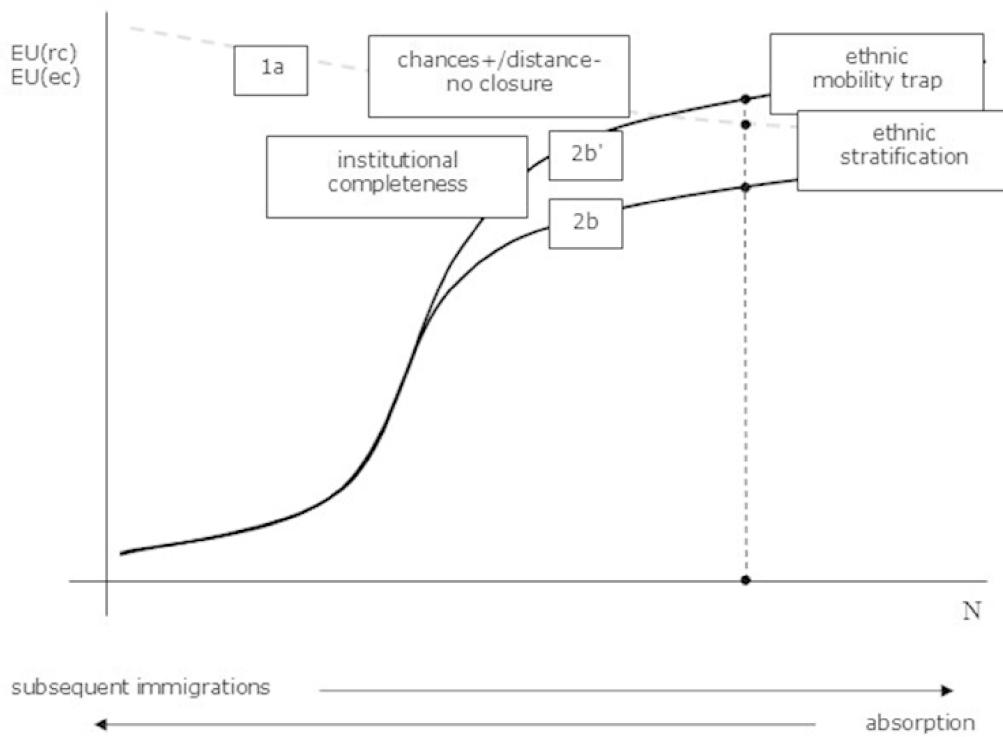


FIG. 5. Institutional completeness, mobility trap and ethnic stratification.

Whether such a system remains stable depends on the empirical developments. Of particular importance here is, on the one hand, that the institutional development of the ethnic community has to continue. On the other hand, ethnic options have to remain attractive as compared to possibly increasing rc-opportunities as a result of, for example, changing net effects of new immigrations and absorption and the related composition of the immigrant population. Ethnic enclaves and “parallel societies” disappear in the majority of cases in the course of generations, merely because the number of new immigrations decreases, while absorption increases and finally prevails. Occasionally, ethnic enclaves function as intermediate stations for new immigrants. This may give rise to the – wrong – impression that a stable ethnic underclass, or even a marginalized “parallel society,” existed, while in fact following generations show a high degree of absorption and upward mobility.

#### 4.3. Selective Acculturation

Applying the model of intergenerational integration, we have assumed so far that the rc-option is by all means the more efficient alternative for the structural integration into the receiving society – above all via educational and labour market suc-

cess. In fact, in many cases this makes perfect sense: The usability of ethnic resources depends mostly on a specific ethnic context, without which they will become inefficient (cfr. already paragraph 2 above). Limiting social contacts to ethnic networks or speaking only one's mother tongue results indeed in disadvantages in terms of the upward mobility into central spheres of the receiving country. The core of the thesis of selective acculturation (as part of the TSA) consists in the differentiation of this assumption: There are also "inappropriate" segments within the receiving society which can serve as points of reference for immigrants in terms of educational and labour market success. For example, certain inner-city subcultures are characterized by orientations and "values" that are directed against educational success and upward mobility, and it is the "assimilation" of immigrants to these inner-city subcultures which results in ethnic stratification and permanent marginalisation. Ethnic resources, embeddings and orientations, however, can be effective means of avoiding this kind of assimilation. Moreover, they can even be especially conducive to upward mobility.

In order to reconstruct these observations and hypotheses with the model of intergenerational integration, we consider the EU-weights not only according to their ethnic classification (rc versus ec in functions 1 and 2 as hitherto), but independently from that according to their efficiency for the acquisition of generalisable qualifications, too. Because such generalisable qualifications can be used within the rc-context (and, in addition, in other receiving countries or on globalised markets in general) their efficiency for upward mobility is independent of specific contexts. Such qualifications include, above all, technical and administrative knowledge. In this way we resolve the equations of rc-option with efficiency for upward mobility and ec-option with mobility obstacles which is often presumed unquestionably by the assimilation theory.

The EU-weights for options which are more efficient for upward mobility are indicated by solid lines and those for the less efficient ones are indicated by dotted lines in Figure 6. Function 1a, which depicts assimilation to a "proper" segment of the receiving society (as usual), as well as functions 2a, 2b, and 2b' are efficient in this sense. The latter describe ethnic options that are efficient due to, for example, a culturally anchored high evaluation of education and achievement in general and to ethnic social capital that provides the necessary social control for ensuring adherence to these values. If all depended merely on these constellations and processes, immigrants would choose an option efficient for upward mobility at any rate: Both ethnic and non-ethnic options are efficient for upward mobility. This alone would make clear how structural assimilation can arise from selecting an ec-option while at the same time being embedded in ethnic networks and maintaining ethnic orientations – and this is exactly what selective acculturation means.

Things change with contacts to an “inappropriate” rc-segment (described by function 1a’): It is comparatively easy (and attractive) to establish such contacts. As a result, EU-weights for the corresponding inefficient activities are higher than those for the efficient activities related to the “proper” rc-segment (function 1a), which are, however, difficult to access. Yet, options within the “inappropriate” rc-segment are more easily accessible (and perhaps more attractive) than the ethnic options 2a and 2b, which are, in turn, more efficient for upward mobility. Only a further ethnicisation involving the corresponding reinforcement of values for upward mobility can give rise to a change in the ratio of the EU-weights: The EU-weights of function 2b’, which consider values for upward mobility, exceed (once a certain group size is reached) the EU-weights of function 1a describing the “inappropriate” rc-options. This is exactly how ethnic social capital protects from “inappropriate” contacts. The constellation is quite similar to the one underlying the ethnic mobility trap described above. In the case of highly developed ethnic communities, ec-options display higher EU-weights than rc-options, although these are quite easily to access and attractive, too. The result of this constellation, however, is completely different: protection from temptations for inappropriate activities combined with the motivation for and control of activities which are important in terms of educational and occupational success. Let us refer to this effect as the ethnic mobility drive.

Differentiating between efficiency for upward mobility and ethnic orientations in terms of the options resolves another implicit assumption of the classical assimilation theory in that upward mobility and a strong ethnic embedding and orientation can now occur simultaneously. The prerequisite is, however, that the specific contents of the ethnic-cultural values in question give rise to increasing EU-weights for those options, which are more efficient for both upward mobility and investment in generalisable capital. In short: What is important here is not ethnicisation “per se.” Rather, activities that are related to ethnic options in fact have to be efficient for upward mobility, particularly because ethnic resources support the very values which promote educational success, achievement and upward mobility in general. This is the reason why the ethnic mobility drive and “selective acculturation” by no means occur in any ethnicised ethnic group. Moreover, in those groups where they can be observed empirically (like currently in some Asian groups in the USA), they are characterised as regards content by exactly the same motivations for achievement, success and education which the (old) assimilation theory ascribed only to the middle and upper classes of the receiving societies [cfr. empirical results in Kroneberg 2008]. It revealed that this ascription had been wrong.

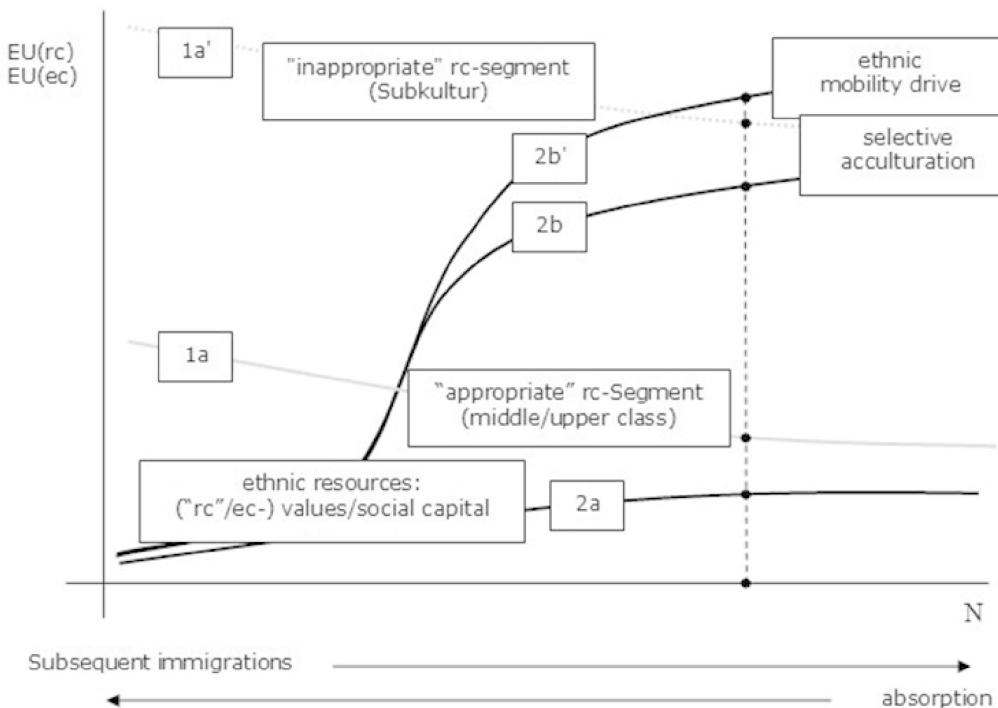


FIG. 6. Selective acculturation.

## 5. Theories of Integration: One for All?

The model of intergenerational integration tries to consider the mechanisms and correlations involved in the processes of immigrants' social integration as parsimoniously as possible and in such a way that different structural outcomes can be generally explained as consequences of special empirical constellations and processes. We started from and ended in a methodological criticism of the three most important "theories" addressing this problem – the classical assimilation theory, the "theory of segmented assimilation" and the "new assimilation theory." None of these three theories is an explanatory theory. They constitute nothing but empirical generalisations. Occasionally, they include descriptions of (ancillary) conditions and outlines of particular causal effects, but they refrain from bringing them together systematically and from relating them explicitly to more general mechanisms. The model of intergenerational integration attempts to remedy these deficiencies – at the price of a considerable effort, numerous (partly even heroically) simplifying assumptions and the unpleasant insight that the basic functions of the model do not yet supply the proper explanation. The basic functions, in turn, are themselves based on more or less incomplete generalisations of innumerable, historically and socially determined

and often even “unique” (micro) processes with only one genuinely general foundation, namely the principles of situation-oriented action of human actors.

The question which then arises is: Aren’t the contributions of the three theories – above all the (comparatively) dense descriptions of the empirical processes and their generalisation to a few typical but rather unconnected (well-known and “new”) processes and outcomes – already sufficient from a scientific point of view? Let us first note that although the authors of the TSA mostly refer to their theory as a “middle range theory,” they intend and claim to provide one single explanation for all three outcomes. The NAT picks up this point in its criticism of the TSA. The TSA deserved credit for pointing explicitly to the fact that there are many possibilities and constellations of conditions resulting in deviations from or delays in the outcome of assimilation in the course of generations which was taken for granted until then. However, the TSA was wrong in overemphasising these possibilities and conditions and underemphasising the outcome of assimilation that still occurs in the course of generations – and there could be no talk of an overall explanation. All this suggested that the TSA doesn’t represent the one comprehensive theory considering also the new conditions as it claims to do. It was therefore necessary to further provide a separate “theory of mainstream assimilation,” namely one that overcame the one-sidedness and weaknesses of the classical assimilation theory and also considered outcomes other than assimilation. Moreover, this theory should specify mechanisms that are more plausible and empirical conditions for long-term developments that are more reliable than those suggested by the TSA, so that it could be complemented in terms of the two other possible outcomes (ethnic stratification and selective acculturation). In summary, on the part of the NAT a kind of theoretical division of labour is suggested: The TSA addresses the outcomes “ethnic stratification” and “selective acculturation” – as far as the corresponding conditions do indeed occur. The NAT, in contrast, deals with the outcome “assimilation.” It differs from the CAT and the TSA in terms of important basic assumptions, such as the idea that boundary blurring is the core or even a part of the definition of “assimilation.” This is, however, not a solution to the problem but rather the problem itself: a comprehensive theory which is able to explain when the one or the other outcome is to be expected (and thus when the one or the other special “theory” is “applicable”) is still lacking. Moreover, the idea of “complementary” theories fails to consider the perhaps most important achievement of theoretical systematisations: explaining as many explananda as possible while using as few assumptions and correlations as possible. The TSA does not suggest such a division of labour but claims to already provide such a theoretical integration. Although the TSA’s descriptions, outlines and typologies of path-dependent processes are without doubt extremely

important, the theory itself is not (yet) explicit and systematic enough in order to justify this claim.

The model of intergenerational integration doesn't add much to this. Its assumptions, generalisations, simplifications and differentiations are based nearly completely on the outlines and empirical evidence provided by both the older and the more recent theories of the integration of immigrants. If these numerous outlines and evidence hadn't been available, we wouldn't have been able to develop this model at all. The additional achievements of this model consist in the systematisation of the sub-processes that are included in the single theories in a mostly rather unconnected way and their relation to more general (causal) mechanisms. In doing so it becomes clear why empirical conditions that are partly indeed entirely "new" may also result in "new" empirical outcomes – although the underlying theoretical mechanisms and processes remain the same.

*The author wishes to thank, in particular, Frank Kalter and Clemens Kroneberg for important comments on this contribution.*

## References

- Alba, R.
- 2004 *Language Assimilation Today: Bilingualism Persists More than in the Past, but English Still Dominates*. CCIS Working Paper No. 111, San Diego, Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research, University at Albany.
- 2008 "Why We Still Need a Theory of Mainstream Assimilation." Pp. 37-56 in *Migration und Integration. Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, edited by F. Kalter. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Alba, R., and Nee, V.
- 1999 "Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration." Pp. 137-160 in *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience*, edited by C. Hirschman, P. Kasinitz and J. DeWind. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- 2003 *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bean, F.D., and Stevens, G.
- 2003 *America's Newcomers and the Dynamics of Diversity*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Blau, P.M.
- 1994 *Structural Contexts of Opportunities*. Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press.
- Blau, P.M., and Schwartz, J.E.
- 1984 *Crosscutting Social Circles. Testing a Macrostructural Theory of Intergroup Relations*. Orlando: Academic Press.

- Borjas, G.J.
- 1987 "Self-Selection and the Earnings of Immigrants." *The American Economic Review* 77: 531-553.
- Breton, R.
- 1964 "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants." *American Journal of Sociology* 70: 193-205.
- Esser, H.
- 1980 *Aspekte der Wanderungssoziologie. Assimilation und Integration von Wanderern, ethnischen Gruppen und Minderheiten. Eine handlungstheoretische Analyse.* Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- 1985 "Soziale Differenzierung als ungeplante Folge absichtsvollen Handelns: Der Fall der ethnischen Segmentation." *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 14: 435-449.
- 2004 "Does the 'New' Immigration Require a 'New' Theory of Intergenerational Integration?" *International Migration Review* 38: 1126-1159.
- 2006 *Sprache und Integration. Die sozialen Bedingungen und Folgen des Spracherwerbs von Migranten.* Frankfurt/M. and New York: Campus.
- 2008 "Spracherwerb und Einreisealter: Die schwierigen Bedingungen der Bilingualität." Pp. 202-229 in *Migration und Integration. Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, edited by F. Kalter. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Friedberg, R.M.
- 2000 "You Can't Take It With You? Immigrant Assimilation and the Portability of Human Capital." *Journal of Labor Economics* 18: 221-251.
- Kalter, F., and Granato, N.
- 2002 "Demographic Change, Educational Expansion, and Structural Assimilation of Immigrants: The Case of Germany." *European Sociological Review* 18: 199-216.
- Kroneberg, C.
- 2008 *Ethnic Communities and School Performance Among the New Second Generation. Testing the Theory of Segmented Assimilation.* Unpublished manuscript, Mannheim.
- Nee, V., and Sanders, J.
- 2001 "Understanding the Diversity of Immigrant Incorporation: A Forms-of-Capital Model." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24: 386-411.
- Park, R.E.
- 1950 "The Nature of Race Relations." Pp. 81-116 in R. E. Park, *Race and Culture*. Glencoe, Ill: Free Press.
- Portes, A., and Rumbaut, R.G.
- 2001 *Legacies. The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 2006 *Immigrant America. A Portrait*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Portes, A., and Zhou, M.
- 1993 "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 530: 74-96.

Esser, *Assimilation, Ethnic Stratification, or Selective Acculturation?*

Wiley, N.F.

1970 "The Ethnic Mobility Trap and Stratification Theory." Pp. 397-408 in *The Study of Society. An Integrated Anthology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, edited by P.I. Rose. New York and Toronto: Random House.

Zhou, M.

1999 "Segmented Assimilation: Issues, Controversies, and Recent Research on the New Second Generation." Pp. 196-212 in *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience*, edited by C. Hirschman, P. Kasinitz and J. DeWind. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

## **Assimilation, Ethnic Stratification, or Selective Acculturation?**

### **Recent Theories of the Integration of Immigrants and the Model of Intergenerational Integration**

---

**Abstract:** In response to several special characteristics of the so-called “new immigration” and to the well-known weaknesses of classical assimilation theory, several theoretical suggestions have recently been made and discussed, including, in particular, the “Theory of Segmented Assimilation” and the “New Assimilation Theory.” In addition to the (classical) structural outcome of assimilation, these theories assume two other possible outcomes: ethnic stratification as the enduring social descent of following generations and selective acculturation as the social advancement by using and retaining ethnic resources and identities. This contribution reconstructs these theoretical developments and the presumed structural outcomes as special cases of a comprehensive model, i.e., the model of intergenerational integration, and systematizes sub-processes and single mechanisms outlined by the various theories. Another important result is the identification of conditions and background processes that do not necessarily occur empirically, but that underlie the different theories and structural outcomes as well as the proposed model of intergenerational integration.

---

*Keywords:* *assimilation, ethnic stratification, selective acculturation, “new immigration”, intergenerational integration.*

---

**Hartmut Esser** ist professor (em.) for Sociology and Philisophy of Science at the University of Mannheim. His main fields of interest are general methodology of the (explanative) social Sciences, the theory of action, migrations and integration, social inequality, and the sociology of family. Among his publications: *Sociology. General Foundations* and six volumes on *Sociology. Special Foundations*.