
Book Reviews

The social systems of American ethnic groups. (Yankee City Series, Vol. III.) W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press; London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1945. Pp. xii + 318. \$4.00.

This series is a significant contribution to the social sciences as an ambitious attempt to analyze in detail the life of a modern American city with the methodological tools of the anthropologist as well as those of the sociologist. In the present volume the authors describe the processes and extent of adaptation of the various ethnic groups to the culture of the city. It is an addition both to the general description of life in Yankee City and to our knowledge of the problems of immigrant peoples adjusting to an alien culture.

The scope of the study is summarized by the authors in these terms:

- “1. To describe in detail . . . the steps and processes by which eight ethnic groups have
 - a. progressively advanced in the major status hierarchies of Yankee City and
 - b. progressively adapted the internal organization of their community systems.
2. To analyze the factors . . . attending these processes. . . .
3. To abstract wider generalizations concerning the nature of social assimilation and acculturation” (p. 32).

The advance of the ethnic groups in residence location, economic status, and social status, and changes in such institutions as the family, the church, language and the school, and “associations” are analyzed comparatively, institution by institution. These analyses are carefully done in terms of the precise historical circumstances effecting each change. Much detailed information is added to our knowledge of how culture change is initiated and the manner in which old institutions adjust in culture contact.

However, the general idea that ethnic groups experience “conflicts” and undergo “adjustments” has long been established and accepted. It is time to take the next step and study acculturation as a condition of forced and accelerated change of culture *patterns*, in which the relationships between institutions and their function in terms of human needs are thrown into relief, and thereby use the “laboratory situation” of acculturation to facilitate an understanding of the dynamics of culture. To do this the authors should have treated the cultures as units, for to study culture one must study it as a complete pattern of functionally related institutions. As a matter of fact, even individual institutions should not be studied apart from an explicitly stated cultural framework, since the significance of any one institution lies in its functional relationship to the entire pattern.

Also, treatment of our contact with ethnic groups as though it is merely a matter of their becoming American-

ized is a tacit concession to ethnocentrism. Acculturation is not a one-sided affair. Cultures in contact influence *each other*. Furthermore, an entire field of study, the influence of the subordinate groups on the dominant group and on other subordinate groups, is automatically excluded from consideration.

The authors present their “wider generalizations concerning the nature of social assimilation and acculturation” in the form of a statement that the “degree of subordination” and the “period of assimilation” of ethnic groups in America are a function of: (1) cultural divergence from the American norm, (2) racial divergence from the American norm, or (3) a combination of (1) and (2). A table is presented, based on this generalization and using language and religion as the sole criteria of cultural similarity. This table is offered as a basis for predicting the fate of ethnic groups introduced into the American milieu.

There can be no issue with the generalization that cultural and racial similarity tend to facilitate assimilation into American society; it is what one with a knowledge of the history of American ethnic groups would have concluded *a priori*. However, exception may be taken to using such a simplistic scheme as a basis of prediction. Causation in the social sciences is not a simple affair of one or two variables, but is the result of a number of variables, some of which tend to be dominant in most instances. These variables are conditioned by historical circumstances which often give dominance to variables which have previously been regarded as minor factors. A number of additional variables may be suggested which have at times played important roles in determining the fate of ethnic groups: the size of the group in relation to the assimilating groups, the prestige of the country of the group’s origin, the ability or inclination of the group to accommodate rapidly (which can be a matter quite apart from its cultural similarity), plus all the possible accidental historical circumstances which may surround the meeting of the two groups. Exceptions may be noted among the groups studied by the authors. Some of the groups did not “advance” during the early years of their residence in Yankee City largely because they wanted to earn money to take back to Europe and did not want to advance in the social system of Yankee City. On the other hand, the Jews advanced rapidly, despite the fact that by virtue of their language and religion they belonged at the bottom of the list of these ethnic groups. Their advancement was due to their superior familiarity with business life, a cultural factor not considered in the authors’ table.

Nevertheless, the field work, analysis, and writing of this study are excellent. When confronted with a concrete problem of causation, the authors do not rely on the simplism of the final chapter, but make a detailed analysis in terms of all relevant factors. Likewise, the description of institutions stresses their function in a



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broad, cultural framework, which is apparently an implicit referent for the authors, even though it is nowhere explicitly stated.

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Advances in carbohydrate chemistry. (Vol. I.) W. W. Pigman and M. L. Wolfrom (Ed.). New York: Academic Press, 1945. Pp. xii + 374. \$6.00.

This book is the first volume of a series, which is designed to present special topics in the chemistry of the carbohydrates as completely as the literature will permit at the time of the preparation of the manuscript. It is fortunate indeed that the word "recent" was not prefixed to this name, for such a prefix has no significance within a few weeks or months of the time the book appears on the market.

According to the Preface, "The increasing tempo of research and the consequent increased specialization of research workers make it desirable to provide frequent reviews of important developments in carbohydrate chemistry, not only for the carbohydrate chemist, but also for research workers in other fields and industrial chemists and teachers."

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The footnote bibliographies list 1,001 literature citations. The book is written well, edited well, and printed well. It is a must volume for any scientific library.

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ADDISON, HERBERT. *A treatise on applied hydraulics.* (3rd ed.) New York: Wiley, 1945. Pp. 623. (Illustrated.) \$6.50.

ANSON, M. L., and EDSALL, JOHN T. (Eds.) *Advances in protein chemistry.* (Vol. II.) New York: Academic Press, 1945. Pp. xiv + 443. \$6.50.

BAILEY, ALTON EDWARD. *Industrial oil and fat products.* New York: Interscience Publishers, 1945. Pp. 745. (Illustrated.) \$10.00.