

Araştırma Makalesi

Exploring Immigration Experiences in the USA: Evaluating Traditional Assimilation Theories with a Latinx Focus¹

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Abstract

Classical assimilation theories avoided further exploration of the assimilation processes and operations of ethnic organizations. Thus, the current study adopts the format of an extended narrative review article, analyzing classical theoretical perspectives on assimilation. This paper sheds light on the complex interplay of factors influencing the process while critically evaluating the utility of classical assimilation theories in contemporary immigration settings. The present study embarks on a comprehensive exploration of immigrant experiences across different Latinx generations in the United States, with a focus on the role of ethnic enclaves. The results reveal the following: a) there have been multifaceted barriers that need to be evaluated related to immigrant integration, including language proficiency, disparities in educational attainment, income inequality, occupational segregation, socioeconomic status disparities, and residential choices; b) these can stem from experiences of discrimination and exclusion. Hence, concerns related to ill-treatment across immigrant generations might differ. In summary, this paper examines the limitations of traditional assimilation theories in explaining contemporary immigrant experiences and outcomes in the U.S.

Keywords: Assimilation, immigrant, ethnic, exclusion, residential segregation, integration

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Research Article

Amerika'daki Göç Deneyimlerini İnceleme: Geleneksel Asimilasyon Teorik Çerçevelerinin Latinx Odaklı Değerlendirmesi

Öz

Klasik asimilasyon teorileri, etnik örgütlerin asimilasyon süreçleri ve işleyişinin daha derinlemesine incelenmesinden kaçınmaktadır. Bu sebeple, mevcut çalışma, uzun bir anlatı inceleme makalesi formatını benimser ve asimilasyon konusundaki klasik teorik bakış açılarını analiz eder. Bu makale, süreci etkileyen faktörlerin karmaşık etkileşimine ışık tutarken, klasik asimilasyon teorilerinin günümüz göç ayarlarında ne kadar kullanışlı olduğunu eleştirel bir şekilde değerlendirir. Bu çalışma, özellikle etnik mahallelerin rolüne odaklanarak, ABD'deki farklı Latinx nesilleri arasındaki göçmen deneyimlerini kapsamlı bir şekilde keşfe çıkar. Sonuçlar şunları ortaya koymaktadır: a) göçmen entegrasyonu ile ilgili değerlendirilmesi gereken çok yönlü engeller bulunmaktadır, bunlar dil yeterliliği, eğitim düzeyindeki eşitsizlikler, gelir eşitsizliği, meslek ayrımcılığı, sosyoekonomik durum eşitsizlikleri ve ikamet tercihleri gibi; b) bunlar, ayrımcılık ve dışlanma deneyimlerinden de kaynaklanabilir. Bu nedenle, göçmen nesilleri arasındaki muameleyle ilgili endişeler farklılık gösterebilir. Özetle, bu makale ABD'deki çağdaş göçmen deneyimlerini ve sonuçlarını açıklamada geleneksel asimilasyon teorilerinin sınırlarını incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Asimilasyon, göçmen, etnik, dışlama, yerleşim yeri ayrımcılığı, entegrasyon

Introduction

The exploration of immigrant integration is a multifaceted and dynamic field, drawing upon various theoretical frameworks that help us better understand the processes and outcomes of immigrants' journeys in new societies. One critical aspect that significantly impacts these experiences is the concentration of immigrants in specific residential areas. The character and dynamics of these areas can either serve as catalysts for assimilation or contribute to the perpetuation of segregation, leading to a complex interplay of social, cultural, and economic factors. Throughout history, the role of immigration, race, and ethnicity has been instrumental in shaping our understanding of segregation and demographic shifts. By examining neighborhoods as small-scale versions of society, we gain valuable insights into the intricate web of population dynamics, acculturation, and cultural adaptation.

Numerous theoretical frameworks contribute to the body of research on immigrant integration. The concentration of immigrants in specific residential areas significantly affects the experiences of immigrant families, and the way these areas are characterized can either promote integration or contribute to segregation (Hall, 2013, p.1895). Historical perspectives have shown the significance of immigration, race, and ethnicity in our understanding of segregation and demographic changes (Phillips, 2007, p.1139). Neighborhoods, in this context, serve as valuable vantage points for examining population dynamics. In this paper, I undertake a critical examination of various arguments derived from classical assimilation theory, commonly put forth to distinguish between the earlier mass immigration of Europeans and contemporary immigration trends. My assessment reveals that these arguments lack conclusive evidence. Acknowledging this gap in the current body of literature, the paper narrows its focus to a specific ethnic group.

The concept of assimilation theory, particularly the correlation between residential concentration and cultural assimilation of ethnic groups in the United States, has been a subject of significant scholarly discourse. This article aims to delve into the nuanced relationship between residential concentration and immigrant experiences across generations, exploring the implications of assimilation theory within this context. Drawing upon the foundational work of Massey *et al.* (1985, p.96), this review critically evaluates the theoretical perspective positing that a higher residential concentration of an ethnic group signifies weaker cultural assimilation. Emphasizing a generational lens, this study seeks to uncover the complexities and variations in immigrant experiences and integration within the framework of residential concentration.

This narrative review is dedicated to exploring the interplay between ethnic enclaves and the different facets of integration across various generational cohorts, with a specific emphasis on the generational aspects

within Latinx immigrant families. Additionally, this study expands its examination to consider the theoretical implications of residential ethnic concentration on successive generations of Latinx immigrants, drawing insights from previous research on immigrant integration. In light of these theoretical perspectives, it is important to consider the critique of integration within racially and economically diverse environments and its connection to ethnicity. Ethnicity profoundly influences residential choices, making it a critical factor in immigrant integration (Conzen, 1979, p.608). Different types of ethnic attachment may yield varying effects. When a particular ethnic group constitutes a significant portion of a neighborhood's population, it forms a residential concentration (Qadeer & Kumar, 2006, p.11). Previous studies indicate that when minority populations acquire traits conducive to assimilation, they tend to choose residences outside of ethnic enclaves.

The problem addressed by this study is as follows: "Amongst immigrant populations, what are the perceived advantages and disadvantages associated with residing in predominantly white neighborhoods, and to what extent do assimilative factors influence the residential choices of Latinx immigrant descendants, particularly during their transition from the second to the third generation?" This paper aims to bridge the gap in our understanding of how assimilation factors affect residential choices by emphasizing the need for a longitudinal and cross-generational perspective. It also highlights the underexplored aspect of newer immigrant cohorts in comparison to their predecessors. By analyzing outcomes across different immigrant generations within the context of residential ethnic concentration, this study aims to contribute to a broader understanding and application of assimilation theory, with a specific emphasis on generational differences.

The Evolving Framework of Assimilation Theory

The primary sociological framework that has significantly influenced our comprehension of immigrant group mobility is classical assimilation theory, which originated from the Chicago School in the 1920s and has been further elaborated by scholars like Milton Gordon, Richard Alba, Milton Yinger and Victor Nee (Alba & Nee, 1997, p. 839; Alba & Nee, 2003, p.11). For instance, Gordon's 1964 publication outlines five core processes of assimilation. These encompass cultural assimilation (also termed acculturation), which involves adopting the language, values, attire, music, and traditions of the dominant society. Structural assimilation pertains to integration into the socioeconomic strata, social circles, and associated establishments of the host society. Marital assimilation involves the intermixing of diverse groups through marriage, while identificational assimilation concentrates on fostering a shared sense of identity with the host society. Lastly, attitudinal reception involves the elimination of legal, political, and cultural barriers, resulting in behavioral changes and civic integration, thereby addressing power conflicts.

In Gordon's framework, structural assimilation is described as "the establishment of primary interpersonal relationships, integration into social networks and institutions, and integration into the broader social fabric of the dominant society" (1964, p.68). Gordon suggests that the initial response of a minority group to the majority population typically involves cultural assimilation, which can occur independently of other assimilation types and can persist across multiple generations. Cultural assimilation serves as a precursor to structural assimilation and paves the way for the subsequent occurrence of all other forms of assimilation. Both Gordon and scholars such as Shibutani and Kwan (2005, p.249) regard assimilation as a gradual process, highlighting the significant role of communication channels in aiding integration into society at large. Numerous studies have either directly or indirectly drawn upon Gordon's theory or have empirically investigated the interconnections among various facets of assimilation, frequently underscoring quantitative results. Alba and Nee (1997, p.850) contend that the traditional assimilation model fails to consider the mutual influences between group dynamics and individual accomplishments.

One of the long-standing hypotheses about ethnic groups in industrial societies is that ethnic attachments hinder mobility. The conventional argument is that individuals who maintain their ethnic culture, identity, behaviors, social networks, and institutional affiliations face personal costs in terms of missed opportunities for good jobs and higher earnings (Reitz & Sklar, 1997, p. 251). Ethnic attachments are seen as limiting the utilization of human resources. Yinger introduced a significant perspective on cultural assimilation, challenging the notion that it involves relinquishing elements of one's culture and replacing them with those of another (1981, p.250). In contrast to previous hypotheses, Yinger proposes that cultural assimilation essentially involves adding values, norms, and styles, enriching the cultural repertoire of those involved. He further suggests that under conditions of high mobility, as strongly interdependent groups come into extensive contact, acculturation is likely to be additive, not merely substitutive. Similarly, while she focuses on the internal struggles shaping Latinx identities and interactions, Anzaldúa emphasizes the notion of blending and coexistence rather than displacement or exclusion, where individuals can enrich their experiences without forsaking their heritage (2014, p.273). In other words, individuals do not need to give up their familiar foods, music, or language but can add elements from other cultural traditions. Thus, it has been observed that, in the United States, increased societal pressures for assimilation and conformity to the Anglo culture have heightened the costs associated with ethnic attachments (Reitz & Sklar, 1997, p.252). This situation may lead minority group members to perceive that maintaining their ethnic identity is worth the cost, or the majority group members may encourage such feelings, anticipating that these costs to minorities will translate into benefits for themselves, thus giving rise to cultural pluralism. The rise of cultural pluralism in modern times may have diminished or potentially eradicated the economic drawbacks associated with ethnic affiliations (Reitz & Sklar, 1997, p.259).

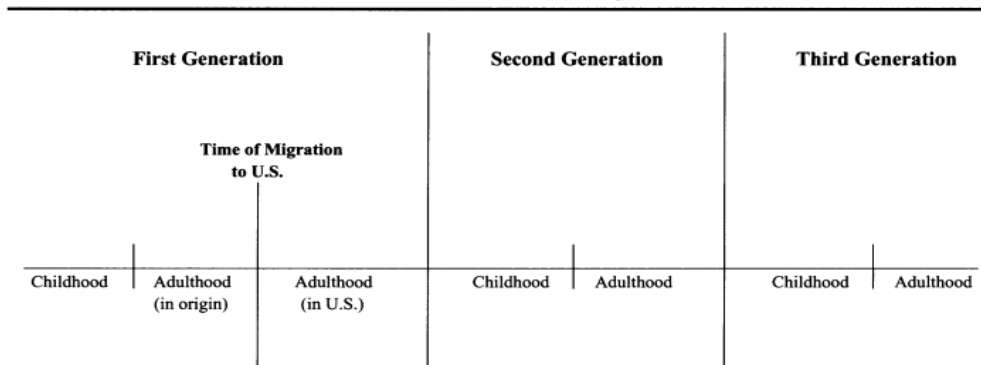
Alba and Nee clarify Gordon's classical assimilation theory by highlighting the crucial function of specific institutions, particularly those bolstered by civil rights legislation, in accomplishing assimilation (1997, p.249). They referenced the instance of Jewish organizations which, in the mid-1940s, persuaded the council to threaten the tax-exempt status of colleges or universities engaging in discriminatory practices based on race or religion (Brown & Bean, 2006, p.33). Furthermore, they found that Gordon's theory appeared somewhat ambiguous when applied at the individual level. According to their perspective, Gordon's hypothesis appears to be more suitable for group-level analysis, with different dimensions of assimilation not necessarily applying at the individual level (Alba & Nee, 1997). This distinction is important to emphasize as it impacts the conceptualization of assimilation, maintaining the independence between individual and group levels.

Previous scholars perceive assimilation as a gradual process that gradually diminishes distinct cultural characteristics (Gans, 2007, p. 154; Alba & Nee, 2003, p. 212) . Building upon Gordon's viewpoint, they argue that upon achieving structural assimilation (which necessitates prior cultural assimilation), individuals of European descent can maintain their ethnic identity without it impeding their involvement in the primary and secondary institutions of the dominant society. While classical assimilation theory is commonly regarded as most applicable in contexts where the mainstream culture is clearly defined, criticisms have been levelled against Alba and Nee for defining assimilation so broadly that it loses precision, especially in situations involving racial and economic diversity (Brown & Bean, 2006, p. 34). Nevertheless, despite the assumption that post-1965 immigration wave immigrants may assimilate less than those who arrived in the early 20th century, there is mounting evidence that new immigrants, especially their offspring, are making significant progress (Alba & Nee, 2003, p. 125).

The Changing Nature of Immigrant Integration between Generations

As previously noted, the exploration of assimilation in the United States spans more than two hundred years and focuses on the experiences of three distinct waves of immigrants who arrived during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The initial two waves encompass roughly four million first-generation immigrants and their descendants, as recorded in the 1880 and 1910 censuses (Abramitzky *et al.*, 2021, p. 591). The 1880 group mainly comprises immigrants from Northern and Western European countries such as Ireland and the United Kingdom. Conversely, the 1910 group includes a larger proportion of immigrants from Southern and Eastern European regions who initially encountered greater challenges in the American labor market (Abramitzky *et al.*, 2014, p. 502). Subsequently, the progress of these immigrants' offspring is monitored, utilizing their names, birth years, and birthplaces to compare their adult achievements with those of children born to native-born White Americans (Abramitzky *et al.*, 2014, p. 503). The third wave under scrutiny encompasses individuals born around 1980 who are the offspring of immigrants.

FIGURE 1
Generational Time Line for an Adult Immigrant and Descendants



Source: “Assessing the Socioeconomic Mobility and Integration of U.S. Immigrants and Their Descendants” by Brian Duncan and Stephen J. Trejo. *ANNALS, AAPSS*, 657, January 2015.

Note: In this study, the term “first generation” refers to the adult immigrant, the term “second generation” refers to the U.S.-born child, and the term “third generation” refers to the U.S.-born grandchild.

While Latinx immigration has a long history spanning multiple generations, and contemporary Latinx immigrants exhibit diversity in terms of migration status and modes of entry into the United States, scholars have traditionally framed the Latinx group’s experiences in one of two ways. They have either portrayed them as similar to European immigrants, distinguishing them from the experiences of Black Americans, or as akin to the experiences of Black Americans (Bean & Brown, 2006, p.39).

In contrast to earlier waves of immigrants, individuals in this modern cohort arrived in the U.S during a period characterized by substantial immigration policy restrictions, primarily originating from economically disadvantaged and ethnically varied nations in Latin America and Asia. Duncan and Trejo conducted an examination of this cohort using publicly available administrative data from the Opportunity Insights project (2015, p.111). Their research tackles some of the intricacies associated with studying the socioeconomic incorporation of immigrants and their U.S.-born offspring. Their findings indicate that, on average, second-generation members from most contemporary immigrant groups outperform the typical American in terms of educational achievement. However, there are significant exceptions among various Hispanic groups, including Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Central Americans. Consequently, their research underscores the importance of considering the long-term economic prospects for immigrant families in the United States, particularly Hispanic American families.

Research Methodology for This Study

This study adopts a descriptive review approach in the field of planning due to its reduced rigor and resource demands. As pointed out by Noordzij *et al.* narrative reviews can be influenced by the reviewer's personal experiences, preconceived beliefs, and subjectivity (2011, p.321). I highlighted key terms for easy discovery in databases. I have used related keywords to find relevant articles. To locate studies on similar topics, I have used the exact terms used in indexing. It took several tries with different keywords to find the right paper for the review questions. Consequently, data extraction in this review follows an informal approach, presenting evidence in a narrative format without structured analysis. However, this study identifies shortcomings in existing literature, requiring a more selective and intentional approach to serve as a comprehensive evaluation of the entire field.

Literature Search and Evaluation

Literature Identification:

The selection of search keywords stemmed from the research question so that I could analyze the research question to identify its underlying concept domains. The literature search was initiated using a set of keywords, including "assimilation," "segregation," "immigration," "discrimination," "Latinx," "enclave," and "ethnic." The initial relevance assessment for each manuscript was based on its title. If the title indicated relevance to assimilation and immigration between different birth cohorts, the complete reference was retrieved, including the author, publication year, title, and abstract, for a more comprehensive assessment. This search was conducted across three widely recognized databases: Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and EBSCOhost, which are frequently employed by researchers from diverse fields. This effort yielded a total of 734 citations (367 from EBSCOhost, 111 from ScienceDirect, and 256 from Google Scholar). After screening for studies of significance, 475 duplicates were removed. The remaining citations were examined for their potential relevance, leading to the exclusion of 156 records (abstract and title) as they were believed to be irrelevant. 103 full-text articles were examined for eligibility, and 26 articles were chosen for inclusion in the synthesis section of the review.

Inclusion/ Exclusion Criteria:

This study considered studies offering guidance on assimilative factors that influence the residential choices of Latinx immigrant descendants, including literature reviews focusing on specific immigration-related topics, such as assimilation. The selection process encompassed studies from various disciplines, including social psychology, economics, sociology, and psychology. This study utilized a two-step process: initially, employing a broad screening of articles for potential inclusion by reviewing their abstracts and then performing a more detailed quality evaluation through a full-text review. I assessed search results using stringent criteria derived from the population, comparison, and outcomes to determine whether they are suitable for inclusion. I acquired

the complete text of each article and conducted a comprehensive examination of each one to ascertain whether it met the inclusion criteria and aligned with the objectives of our study. One should note that, in this study, quality evaluation may not be a pivotal factor because the primary focus is on comprehensively identifying a wide range of studies rather than assessing their quality.

Excluded from consideration were studies constrained by various factors, such as the geographical scope, the levels of analysis, and measurement approaches. Thus, any articles that met the following exclusion criteria were not considered: (a) case studies, (b) systematic and narrative review papers, (c) analyses not centered on assimilation, (d) articles not written in English, and (e) articles exclusively not dealing with residential choices. Studies were omitted from consideration if they failed to meet any of the methodological standards, although it was not mandatory to apply all the criteria during the screening process.

I collected data from each article and organized it within an Excel spreadsheet. The data was customized based on (a) its unique identification number, (b) year of publication, (c) author and their country, (d) titles of articles, (e) research methodology, (f) results encompassing both risks and protective factors, and (g) the conclusions derived from the research. After screening for studies of importance and applying the criteria mentioned earlier, the selection was refined to 26 articles. These studies were chosen for inclusion in the following section of the review.

Empirical Research on Immigrant Integration

Facing Barriers and Residential Mobility

Education, Income, and Socioeconomic Status

The conventional perspective suggests that European immigrants initially took on lower-paid jobs compared to native-born individuals upon their arrival in the United States. However, this disparity in job positions was temporary, as, over time, European immigrants integrated with the native population. Previous research on assimilation has indicated a progressive link between various aspects of assimilation, including socioeconomic, social, cultural, segmented, and spatial assimilation. However, the direction of these causal relationships has often been underexplored in empirical studies, mainly due to limitations associated with cross-sectional data. For instance, South and his colleagues addressed this issue by amalgamating data from three distinct sources: The Latino National Political Survey, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, and census data at the tract level (2005, p.582). Their longitudinal data analysis provided evidence that higher income, English language proficiency, and integration into Anglo social settings promote the geographic mobility of Latinx immigrants into Anglo neighborhoods. Additionally, U.S. citizenship and the number of years spent in the United States positively correlated with the tendency to move into predominantly Anglo neighborhoods, while contact with

co-ethnic groups was inversely associated with such mobility. South and his colleagues' analysis, which followed 700 Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban immigrants from 1990 to 1995, lent support to hypotheses derived from the classical model of minority assimilation.

Current observers voice worries regarding the high occurrence of concentrated poverty in immigrant communities and the limited educational achievements among immigrant youths. A significant number of these youths discontinued schooling early to enter industries such as textiles and manufacturing (Qadeer & Kumar, 2006, p.8). It is crucial to recognize that the extent of assimilation can differ among various immigrant groups. Education holds a central position in the assimilation process of descendants of immigrants and in molding the social and economic fabric of the host society.

Variations in language, income, and occupation were not the dominant factors significantly influencing integration and the residential decisions of immigrant communities. Brown and Bean noted that while there is a sense of cultural familiarity, it does not necessarily lead to increased assimilation (2006, p.29). They drew attention to the persistent presence of discrimination and institutional hurdles, particularly in employment and other opportunities, which serve as barriers to complete integration. The authors pointed out that immigrants may not immediately recognize these obstacles because they often assess their economic prospects in the host country relative to those in their countries of origin. This viewpoint represents a notable shift from prior assumptions regarding assimilation. Brown and Bean (2006, p.39) also proposed that immigrants may come to recognize, by the second or third generations, that achieving complete integration is a more arduous and time-consuming process than originally thought.

Nowadays, especially the documented immigrant population does not have a lower socioeconomic status as presumed. Additionally, highly educated immigrants, regardless of gender, are more inclined to marry native-born Americans compared to their less-educated counterparts (Bean & Stevens, 2003). Consequently, a high socioeconomic status enhances immigrants' cultural integration into the host society and diminishes the perception of discrimination among second-generation offspring (Stepick & Stepick, 2010). Addressing these concerns, Abramitzky *et al.* examined actual rather than predicted income data from the 1940 census (2021, p.591). By combining a sample of fathers with their linked sample of sons, they observed the actual income of both generations, totaling 62,000 pairs, of which 7,800 were immigrants. However, it is important to note that their analysis spanned the period from 1910 to 1940, potentially limiting its relevance to contemporary mobility trends among immigrants and their descendants. Nevertheless, for their set of father-son pairs, they found a consistent advantage in immigrant mobility when utilizing either actual income or income scores.

Social Status and Education

As previously discussed, structural assimilation, or as Gordon's assertion, the integration of a minority group into the primary social circles of the core society fosters enhanced social interactions, potentially leading to intimate relationships and, ultimately marital assimilation. This issue holds significance as marital assimilation serves as a key indicator of the educational challenges faced by various immigrant generations. The findings presented by Stanley Lieberson and Mary Waters (1993) indicate a gradual rise in intermarriage rates as individuals progress through different educational levels. From the classical assimilation standpoint, intermarriage may weaken group identity while also potentially reducing prejudice and discrimination by diminishing the ethnic or religious distinctions of ancestors and averting value conflicts on civic matters.

Discrimination and Fear of Ill-treatment

Alternative viewpoints regard the Latinx immigrant population more as part of a disadvantaged racial/ethnic minority group whose path toward attaining economic equality with other immigrant groups is consistently impeded by racial and ethnic discrimination (Portes & Zhou, 2015, p.229). Ethnic discrimination tends to escalate when residing in public housing, diminishing the probability of Latinx immigrants relocating from their initial neighborhoods. Nevertheless, residing in metropolitan areas with significant Latinx populations often results in relocation to census tracts that are less predominantly Anglo (South *et al.*, 2005, p.587).

According to recent findings from the Pew Research Center (2018), experiences of discrimination are associated with being of Hispanic ethnicity. These encounters with discrimination are less frequent among later generations of adults with Hispanic heritage. This complexity challenges certain implicit assumptions in assimilation theory. As the second and third generations seamlessly integrate and may not have discernible accents, they become less identifiable to those who might seek to discriminate against them.

Ethnic Enclaves and Integration: Can Ethnic Enclaves Be Potential Ghettos?

To start with, one should mention that ghettos are largely the product of exclusion and externally imposed segregation of a minority. There is no direct evidence from audit studies and indirect evidence from location attainment analyses towards particular neighborhoods by public policy or social processes. The concentration of one group in an area is caused by either potential homeowners' trust or dependence on their family and friends for the availability of accommodation (Qadeer & Kumar, 2006, p.7).

One of the arguments for the changing nature of ethnic enclaves can be coming from the migration policy changes. Because these policies hold immigrants' clustering, one can say that some level of clustering may be essential

for immigrants; however, they have little choice but come close to others from their homelands for support and introductions. On the other hand, new immigration policies changed some employment qualifications. In order to migrate, they need to fulfil some skill requirements. It is important to recognize that the circumstances for undocumented immigrants are different from those of documented immigrants.

From a socioeconomic perspective within the assimilation framework, ethnic enclaves have the potential to develop into areas marked by poverty and deprivation, which could resemble ghettos. However, it is important to note that this outcome is not universal and applies to all types of enclaves. The distribution of family income and employment opportunities may vary based on ethnicity and residential location.

According to assimilation theory, the percentage of an ethnic group living in concentrated neighborhoods serves as an indicator of the group's level of cultural assimilation within the United States (Massey et al., 1985, p.103). It has been proposed that the higher the concentration of a group in residential enclaves, the weaker their presumed assimilation. From a cultural assimilation standpoint, residing in ethnic enclaves may serve to protect racial and ethnic minority populations from assimilation and facilitate intra-group relations within these neighborhoods (Qadeer & Kumar, 2006, p. 11). It is worth noting that this same pattern is predicted by discrimination and place stratification theory.

To sum up, it is important to think about the implicit assumptions of assimilation theory because those may not apply to all group experiences. However, coming out of the Chicago school, the first immigrant populations mostly settled in big cities; they were mostly rural peasants from Europe. The classical theory was applied to a particular immigrant: unskilled, with lower education, and often from a rural background, who was arriving in an urban economy in the United States. They had a series of potential disadvantages. They could work in only unskilled jobs rather than high-skilled jobs. Thus, Europe was changing; the immigrants came to the United States sometimes with large families and could not afford big housing opportunities. Thus, enclaves emerged, a combination of people coming from the same villages, the same mutual support, and so forth. That was the baseline assumption of the Chicago school. On the other hand, as previously discussed, the children of these immigrants learned English, knew how to live in an urban setting, became accustomed to living in urban life, and can have higher education by going to school in the U.S. Eventually, they make money, and they have a chance to live outside of the enclave. The important question will be:

Will the descendants of Latinx immigrants stay in the ethnic enclaves?

The aspirations of descendants for upward mobility in areas such as housing and employment tend to steer them away from ethnic enclaves. By the third generation, this choice may become the norm rather than an exception. These intergenerational variations significantly influence the significance of one's ethnic background. Data from the Pew Research Center in 2016 revealed that America is becoming more ethnically diverse, and this trend is expected to continue in the coming years, primarily driven by immigration, especially from Latin America and Asia.

Brown and Bean highlighted that within assimilation theory, individuals of Latin origin are predominantly viewed as a recently arrived immigrant group whose assimilation process will eventually resemble that of earlier immigrant groups (2006, pp.3-4). According to this viewpoint, natural integration processes necessitate a substantial amount of time, likely spanning three or four generations. Brown and Bean proposed that symbolic ethnicity might arise among those who are already economically well-integrated (2006, p.15). Offspring of immigrants from the highest socioeconomic strata tend to rely less on co-ethnic networks and expressions of racial/ethnic solidarity for pragmatic reasons, as these aspects become more focused on meeting expressive and individualistic needs. For them, racial and ethnic identification becomes a matter of choice. In opposition to the assimilationist perspective, William Yancey and his associates highlighted robust linkages between structural affinities, kinship, and ethnic networks (1976, p. 398). They emphasize the considerable role of residential clustering as a decisive factor in fostering various forms of socioeconomic cohesion, collectively working to uphold ethnic solidarity and identity.

Exploring new destinations provides valuable insights into the integration of contemporary immigrants. Flippen and Farrell-Bryan offer a historical perspective on the emergence of these new destinations, highlighting the increased diversity in the origins of immigrants today compared to the past (2021, p.483). They contribute to the literature on residential concentration by placing emphasis on new destinations. The impact of the Great Recession is notable, with higher out-migration patterns observed from new destinations compared to traditional ones, consequently reducing internal migration. The authors delve into the specific mechanisms through which the local reception context shapes immigrant incorporation. Various dimensions, such as labor, housing, and educational structures, take center stage in the analysis, particularly for co-ethnic communities. The results in this field are markedly inconsistent and influenced by factors such as the categorization method distinguishing between new and established destinations, the spatial units used for analysis, and whether segregation indices were derived from the entire immigrant population, overarching ethnic labels, or specific national backgrounds. Although some research has shown consistently lower levels of segregation in newly emerging destinations for both Latinxs and Asians (i.e., Asian Americans, Indian Americans, China, and Filipinos), there are cases where

Latinxs in these new areas experienced notable increases in segregation between 1980 and 2000. One should note that, considering the modern immigration wave from Asia since 1965, the diverse arrival times and methods of Asian immigrants to the United States contribute to the varying likelihood of being U.S. born among different Asian origin groups (Pew Research Center, 2021). One critique is that much empirical attention has been directed towards specific ethnic groups of immigrants rather than focusing on their new residential neighborhoods. There is a relative lack of understanding regarding the varied challenges and residential aspirations of diverse immigrant groups within the context of different neighborhoods.

Discussion

This article aims to be one of the initial academic endeavors to explore classical assimilation theories and research regarding immigrant integration. This review adds value to the existing body of knowledge by making a first attempt to gather and condense relevant conceptual and empirical studies on the vital topics of assimilation, integration, acculturation, and residential segregation. In the course of this research discussion, an exploration of evidence pertaining to the socioeconomic and residential assimilation of recent immigrant groups is undertaken. While the findings present a mixed picture, the discerned evidence aligns with the perspective that assimilation is indeed occurring, although not uniformly across all groups. The present review uncovers several significant implications that can directly or indirectly influence future research on immigrants.

Acculturation is a multifaceted and dynamic process that involves individuals or groups adapting to a new cultural environment. Not all individuals or groups experience acculturation in the same way. Factors such as their background, motivations for immigration, and the receptiveness of the host culture can greatly influence their acculturation trajectory. For instance, refugees forced to flee their home countries may experience a quite different acculturation process compared to voluntary immigrants seeking better economic opportunities. While it is tempting to assume that more time spent in a new culture inevitably leads to greater acculturation, the reality is much more intricate. First-generation immigrants may struggle with language barriers and cultural adjustment initially but may eventually integrate or assimilate to a greater extent over time. However, their children, the second generation, may have a different experience as they are often more influenced by the host culture due to their upbringing and education. While Gordon's (1964) classical assimilation theory suggests a linear progression of acculturation with time, the reality is far more nuanced.

Yinger (1981) suggests that despite shifts in identity and high rates of intermarriage in certain contexts, as well as widespread acculturation and integration across most situations, certain subcultural group boundaries will remain distinct. Some individuals will continue to prioritize their ethnic identity when assessing their own sense

of self. In the contemporary era, it is not a matter of assimilation versus ethnicity but rather one of assimilation and ethnicity, as proposed by Yinger in 1981. Consistent with this viewpoint, data from the Pew Research Center (PRC) in 2018 indicates that the proportion of individuals primarily identifying as “American” rises from 7% among immigrants to 56% among those in the third generation or higher. This trend mirrors the pattern observed in the usage of terms associated with the country of origin. Specifically, for third-generation or higher Latinx generations who were born in the U.S. to U.S.-born parents, the data reveals a strong attachment to their U.S. national identity. Yinger’s perspective of concurrently considering assimilation processes and ethnicity seems to be supported by these findings.

Gordon’s (1964) work proposed a sequence of stages that individuals go through after acquiring a new culture. The initial stage, which he considered crucial, is structural assimilation, followed by widespread intermarriage, identification with the host society, and the resolution of prejudice, discrimination, and value conflicts. It is important to acknowledge that this sequence may evolve across generations. In the preceding chapters, I have explored the compatibility of structural assimilation with other forms of assimilation. Nevertheless, I contend that for a comprehensive understanding of the assimilation process, we need a more distinct and intricate definition of structural assimilation. Taking another look at Alba and Nee’s (1997) argument, the crucial point is distinguishing between connections within primary groups—whether social or familial—and the assimilation in residential areas, educational accomplishments, and economic prosperity. Much like a butterfly effect, relationships within primary groups naturally lead to profound interactions among individuals, leading them to share fundamental values and behaviors.

Limitations and Future Implications

The initial limitation of this review is limited objectivity and quality control. Single-author review articles are prone to bias since they hinge exclusively on one individual’s viewpoint, judgments, and knowledge. This review describes summarizing literature without strict systematic methods; hence it might lack the internal quality control mechanism. Moreover, it may miss alternative perspectives and interpretations of the literature.

Because the nature of this study is more theoretical than empirical, it is lacking standardization. Therefore, I cannot support or reject the classical or new assimilation hypotheses in terms of immigrant descendants, mainly third and/or fourth generations. Empirical research often focuses on spatial patterns of assimilation because where you live is important for a stratificational outcome, and it can also be easily measured. The other markers of cultural assimilation are hard to examine and measure. However, the results can provide a better understanding of immigrant experiences.

This review has an additional limitation related to the growing Asian immigrant population compared to immigrants from Eastern Europe and Africa. Following the Americas, Asia stands as the second-largest birth region for immigrants in the United States (PRC, 2021). Since 2013, India and China have emerged as the primary countries of origin, surpassing Mexico. Therefore, according to the latest trends estimated by researchers at Pew Research Center (2021), Asian Americans are anticipated to become the nation's largest immigrant group by the middle of the century. Single-race, non-Hispanic Asians are projected to surpass Hispanics and become the largest immigrant group in the country by 2055 (PRC, 2021). Analyzing the Asian and Latinx populations in a single study and comparing their results would provide a better understanding of the differences in cultural assimilation. To achieve this, examining census data is essential. However, census data has faced criticism because it is believed to provide extensive industrial and geographic coverage; however, it only includes details about occupation and not individual salaries or earnings. On the other hand, it is easier to measure spatial assimilation than cultural assimilation. As Alba and Victor Nee proposed, Gordon's approach of inherent interweaving among different stages of assimilation coexists. Nevertheless, one of the critiques and limitations of the theory is that Gordon's framework cannot be readily applied to co-ethnic communities. Recent research by Filippen and Brian (2021) delves into current discussions on spatial assimilation, the impact of co-ethnic communities on immigrant integration, and how the growth in immigrant populations may fuel perceptions of threat, nativism, and reactive ethnicity. This area of inquiry presents an additional avenue for exploration.

Another constraint in thoroughly examining assimilation relates to the case of Mexican immigrants in the United States. This emphasizes the difficulty of strictly applying an assimilation or ethnic-disadvantage perspective to newcomers. Observers frequently find themselves uncertain about how to characterize the experiences of this group and, consequently, gauge the extent of its incorporation (Brown & Bean, 2006).

It should be emphasized that there is not a singular factor determining whether Latinx descendants choose to remain in ethnic enclaves. According to data from the Pew Research Center in 2016, approximately 65% of Latinx immigrants predominantly identify themselves by the name of their country of origin, marking the highest percentage across generations. This figure decreases to 36% for second-generation Latinx individuals and further drops to 26% for those in the third generation or beyond. Additionally, the Pew Research Center's survey data indicates that among self-identified Latinx individuals, those who are foreign-born or in the second generation are more likely to express that the majority of their neighbors share their heritage. However, looking at the broader perspective, only 30% of third-generation or higher self-identified Latinx individuals reside in predominantly Latinx neighborhoods, according to the same survey.

People's background options come from their choices on the basis of affordability and neighborhood conditions, which they know through their contacts and close ones. The opinion of ethnic enclaves turning into ghettos can actually contribute to assimilation and residential segregation research. Examining small towns, unlike large urban centers, may give assimilation research an additional improvement. Future researchers can use merged data from different sources, such as surveys and census tracts, to examine the structures and factors of Latinx spatial assimilation. By exploring an alternative approach to spatial assimilation research, future studies can investigate how the socioeconomic, social, and cultural aspects of assimilation influence the capacity of Latinx immigrants to secure housing in Anglo neighborhoods rather than ethnic enclaves. Finally, even if it would be a difficult study, future exploration can be made by observing or collecting data from refugees and/or undocumented migrant populations to evaluate the classical assimilation theory. Their process of integration could be potentially different.

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