

## Acculturation in a Transcultural World

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## Acculturation in a Transcultural World

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## Abstract

From a nationalist perspective, each nation possesses a distinct culture which is said to be homogeneous and separate from the cultures of all other nations. Accordingly, acculturation of migrants and their descendants occurs when they gradually move away from the country of origin's culture and assimilate to the culture of the country of immigration. This perspective, however, is empirically inaccurate: With regard to languages, religions, and ethical values, there are not only differences between nations, but also differences within them and cross-country cultural commonalities. Thus, as Wolfgang Welsch argues, we live in a trans-cultural world, and acculturation is problematized in two ways: Migrants do not need to be culturally different from the people in the country of immigration, and that country does not need to possess a common, homogeneous national culture. Yet both problems can be overcome if the idea of distinct national cultures is replaced by the concept of national, cultural mainstreams which, following Alba and Nee and the ethnic boundary making approach, are socially constructed and characterized by intersubjective associations between nations and cultural elements. Such mainstreams do not need to be separate and homogeneous and are thus compatible with transculturality. Acculturation can then be reconceptualized as one of three possible pathways of integration into the cultural mainstream of the country of immigration.<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

“You don't understand how it works in this country. If you want to get anywhere, you have to be as mainstream as possible. If not, you will be left by the roadside.” (Adichie 2009a: 172) With these words, Chinaza Agatha Okafor's husband explains why he has changed his Nigerian, Igbo name Ofodile Emeka Udenwa into Dave Bell, and why he wants her to change her name into Agatha Bell now that she lives with him in the United States (id. 172f). A fierce believer in assimilation, Ofodile/Dave furthermore requests that Chinaza speaks American English even when she talks to him at home, and wants her to cook nothing but American food (id. 178f). One day, Chinaza meets Nia, an Afro-American woman who lives in one of the other apartments of the house. While the two women make friends, Chinaza learns that Nia had not been called by that name during her childhood. As Nia tells her, it “is a Swahili name. I changed my name when I was eighteen. I spent three years in Tanzania. It was fucking amazing.” (id. 180)

Chinaza, Ofodile/Dave, and Nia are fictional characters from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's short story *The Arrangers of Marriage*, but they and the ways in which two of them have changed their names symbolize a real paradox which is of great importance in the context of migration and integration. On the one hand, those who adhere to an ideology which Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut call “forceful assimilationism” demand that immigrants behave like Ofodile/Dave and let go of their foreign languages, customs, habits, beliefs, loyalties etc. as quickly as possible. Forceful assimilationists see foreign cultural influences as something which needs to be excluded from the country so as to preserve the national culture. (Portes/Rumbaut 2001: 272 – 275)

On the other hand, the cultures which forceful assimilationists want to protect by *excluding* foreign cultural elements are themselves often the result of the *inclusion* of foreign elements. To give just one example, tea was unknown in England in the lifetime of William Shakespeare, and to the present day, the tea which Englishmen drink is imported from faraway countries like China, India, and Kenya. One might argue that this is of little relevance to people who perceive the tea time as quintessentially English. But on many other occasions, people act like Nia and include cultural elements of whose foreign origin they are well aware into their everyday culture, be it books by foreign authors, foreign-language music by foreign bands, films starring foreign actors and set in foreign countries, cars produced by foreign companies, fashion by foreign brands, or foreign food served in restaurants characterized by the focus on a particular foreign country's cuisine.

What all this points at is a mismatch between the assimilationist conception of culture and acculturation and the cultural realities of a world shaped by intensified cultural globalization (Welsch 2010: 43ff), the emergence of evermore “transnational social spaces” marked by interactions, ties, communications and exchange processes across state borders (Faist 2004), and, as a result, omnipresent cultural, transnational “imitation, borrowing, appropriation, extraction, mutual learning and representation” (Wang/Yeh 2005: 177).

Assimilationists see cultural integration as a long journey from one distinct national culture to another one. In the most simple, paradigmatic case, it is assumed that over the course of some generations, people with migration background (MB)<sup>2</sup> gradually abandon the culture of the country of origin and assimilate, or acculturate, to the culture of the country of immigration (Gordon 1981: 69ff). From such a perspective, the meaning of the term “integration” is more than close to the word’s etymological meaning: the reconstruction of a whole – a national, cultural whole whose cohesion is threatened by migration (Rauer 2013: 52).

Yet do such wholes actually exist? Are countries as culturally homogeneous, as “pure”, and, in spite of cultural globalization, as distinct from one another as the ascription of one culture to each nation suggests? In chapter II, I empirically examine the accuracy of a model of separate, homogeneous national cultures and come to the conclusion that it needs to be rejected in favor of Wolfgang Welsch’s model of transculturality. According to Welsch (2010), cultural reality presents itself not as a pile of separate, internally homogeneous wholes, each of which belongs to one nation, but as a network which connects various, often distant places to each other – without producing a single, global culture (because this network is made up of a huge number of diverse threads of different colors). Under these conditions, the traditional model of separate, homogeneous national cultures on which the conventional concept of acculturation is based represents, in Ulrich Beck’s (2000: 16) vivid words, nationalist “zombie categories [...] which float around in our heads and adjust our perspective to realities which more and more vanish.”

The main argument of this paper is that even though we live in a transcultural world in which the model of national cultures is empirically inaccurate, one can make sense of acculturation. To develop this argument, which I will do in chapter III, I discuss Milton Gordon’s concept of

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<sup>2</sup> While somewhat bulky, “people with MB” is the only established term which covers actual migrants as well as their children (and possibly grandchildren) who were born in the country of immigration, irrespective of their citizenship. Therefore, it should be used instead of “(im)migrants” or “foreigners” unless one specifically refers to people who have migrated or are citizens of a foreign country.

the core culture and Richard Alba and Victor Nee's concept of the mainstream. The latter, which is linked to the ethnic boundary making approach, adds a constructivist perspective to the discussion which makes it possible to conceptualize a national cultural mainstream in a way which is compatible with the empirical cultural realities of a transcultural world. Under these conditions, acculturation or cultural assimilation – terms which I use as synonyms, following Gordon (1981: 71) – can be reconceptualized as one of three possible pathways of cultural integration in a transcultural world. Chapter IV concludes.

## 2. Our Transcultural World

### 1.1 A Nationalist Perspective on Culture

In 1813, about 60 years before the foundation of the modern German nation state, Ernst Moritz Arndt wrote the song *Des Deutschen Vaterland*. In this song, Arndt poses the question how the territory of the future German state shall be demarcated, and answers that question in the sixth stanza: “Where'er resounds the German tongue, where'er its hymns to God are sung.' Be this the land, brave German, this thy fatherland!” (Baskerville 1855: 151). Germany, thus, should include all German-speaking regions of Europe and exclude all parts of the continent in which other languages are spoken. Lingually at least, it would therefore be a state with a homogeneous culture that differed from all other states' cultures.

Arndt's vision of Germany was never realized. The Prussian-led foundation of the German Empire in 1871 corresponded to the lesser German solution without the German-speaking parts of Austria-Hungary, and also without the German-speaking parts of Switzerland and Liechtenstein. The latter, unlike Austria, remained outside of Germany even during the national socialists' reign. Yet beyond being merely an unfulfilled dream, Arndt's song also is expressive of the dreamer's worldview and the social, discursive environment by which it was it shaped and to which, in turn, it contributed.

Written in the early 19th century, less than 25 years after the French Revolution had shaken the old, aristocratic European order to its foundations and amidst the wars spurred by Napoleon's attempts to alter the political landscape in Europe, Arndt's song gives utterance to the then emerging nationalist discourse and exemplifies the world order it envisages. As Benedict Anderson (2006: 6f) argues in his seminal work *Imagined Communities*, nationalism serves to construct nations by making people see themselves, as well as others, as mem-

bers of a particular, sovereign national community – Germans, Americans, Italians, Chinese, South Africans etc. pp.

Moreover, further elements of the world are subjected to the same “totalizing classificatory grid which [can] be applied with endless flexibility to [...] peoples, regions, religions, languages, products, monuments, and so forth. The effect of the grid [is] always to be able to say of anything that it [...] belong[s] here, not there” (id. 188). As the nationalist grid aims at allocating everyone and everything to *one* national *community*, the nationalist perspective on culture revolves around the axiom that any culture belongs to an entire nation and to no other, as manifest in Arndt's vision that the German language should be the language of all of Germany and of Germany alone. Thus, in nationalist writings like those of the 19th century German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, national cultures are depicted as *internally homogeneous* and *separate from each other* (Welsch 2010: 40 – 42).

While the national discourse was developed two centuries ago, it is still relevant today. From a Foucauldian perspective, one can argue that discourses produce subjects which are “results of something evidently antecedent” (Graefe 2010: 294), and the ease with which contemporary subjects view themselves as members of a nation demonstrates this. Yet it is not just the self-view, but also the world-view of subjects that is shaped by discourses like nationalism (Parr 2008: 234). As the following passage from Portes and Rumbaut's book *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation* exemplifies sociologists of migration and their view of culture and language often are no exemption from this rule:

“Language [...] defines the limits of communities and nations and leads to bounded national identities and ethnic solidarities. Through use of the same language, individuals learn to identify each other as members of the same bounded cultural community. [...] Immigrants arriving in a foreign land face a significant dilemma [...]: On the one hand, the languages that they bring are closely linked to their sense of self-worth and national pride. On the other hand, these languages clash with the imperatives of a new environment that dictate abandonment of their cultural baggage and learning a new means of communication. [...] Precisely because a common language lies at the the core of national identity, host societies oppose the rise of refractory groups that persist in the use of foreign tongues.”

There are two differences between Arndt's vision of Germany and this passage by Portes and Rumbaut: The former describes an envisaged future of one particular nation. Portes and Rumbaut instead refer to the present. Moreover, the quoted passage includes no references to particular nations or particular groups of immigrants, and no words like “often”, “usually”, or “many”. In Karl Popper's (2005: 37 – 42) terminology, all sentences in the quoted passage are universal statements, statements which are – supposedly – true in each and every case. Judging from these sentences as well as from similar statements by other sociologists who generally assume that *all* immigrants do not speak the *common* language of the country of



immigration when they arrive, it appears that we live in a world in which visions of cultural nations, and thus of separate, homogeneous national cultures, à la Arndt and Herder have ultimately become true – not only in Germany, but in each and every country.

Indeed, it is undeniable that these statements are true in many cases. Mexicans or Chinese who migrate to the U.S., Turks or Poles who migrate to Germany are just four out of countless examples for people who migrate to a monolingual country whose language is not theirs. However, as Popper noted, universal statements are not proven by cases which correspond to these statements, whereas the existence of a single case which contradicts them is sufficient to falsify them (Popper 2005: 47f.). To use a well-known example: The sighting of many white swans does not prove that all swans are white, whereas the sighting of one black swan proves that not all swans are white (Diekmann 2009: 174). And already, a black swan has been mentioned: Austrians, some Swiss and Liechtensteiners who migrate to Germany arrive not as people who do not speak German, but as German native speakers. How accurate, then, is the model of national cultures in general? How many other black swans are there?

## 2.1 Transculturality: Cultural Differences, but no different National Cultures

### 2.1.1 *The Concept of Transculturality by Wolfgang Welsch*

Since the model of national cultures emphasizes internal cultural homogeneity within a nation and the separateness of different national cultures, black swans which may falsify it can be either cultural differences within one nation or cross-country cultural commonalities. A perspective on cultural reality which predicts that one will find both types of evidence against the model of national cultures has been presented by Wolfgang Welsch. Welsch (2010: 42) explicitly rejects the vision of cultures as separate, internally homogeneous wholes, for two principal reasons:

- (1) Cultural diffusion between different parts of the world results in cultural commonalities across countries because an increasing number of cultural elements exist in their country of origin as well as in other countries (Welsch 2010: 43 – 45).
- (2) Social differentiation in countries is associated with cultural differences between people from the same country so that countries become internally heterogeneous (Welsch 1999: 195).

Coevally, Welsch (id. 203f.) emphasizes that transculturality differs not only from the model of national cultures, but also from the thesis that globalization results in the emergence of a common, global culture. Thus, transculturality does not imply that there are no cultural differ-

ences between nations, or that these differences are not of importance. However, unlike in the model of national cultures, these cultural differences between nations are not interpreted as expressions of underlying differences between separate, homogeneous national cultures. Such an interpretation would be incompatible with the cross-country cultural commonalities and the cultural differences within nations which are highlighted by the concept of transculturality.

As Melanie Hühn et al. (2010: 20f.) note, the validity and contentual significance of transculturality depend on the underlying conceptualization of culture. Unfortunately, the wide prevalence of the term “culture” stands in stark contrast to the lack of conceptual clarity. The term is notorious for the existence of numerous different definitions, and many definitions are vague and/or more or less all-encompassing (Moebius/Quadflieg 2011: 11f.). The sociology of migration and integration, where culture and related terms like acculturation are of crucial importance, has not been spared this malaise (Nauck 2008: 119). Nor has Welsch's (2010: 39) definition of culture as “all those practices by means of which human beings produce a life which is typical for human beings. This [...] includes everyday life routines, competences, convictions, etiquette, social regulations, worldviews and so forth.” The intensional definition in the first sentence is unclear unless we know precisely what “a life which is typical for human beings” is,<sup>3</sup> and the extensional definition suffers from the opaque “and so forth”.

From now on, I operate with an extensional definition of culture which contains languages, religions, and ethical values.<sup>4</sup> These three dimensions of culture are repeatedly cited as dimensions by which people from one group differ from people of other groups, e.g. in the previously quoted passage by Portes and Rumbaut, Samuel Huntington's (2003: 40 – 48) controversial book *The Clash of Civilizations*, or the culturally relativist criticism of universal human rights.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, all dimensions are relevant in the context of migration and integra-

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<sup>3</sup> For example, one can argue that the lives of contemporary Americans or Europeans are markedly atypical for human beings. Numerous elements of their lives, including things which are usually taken for granted like constant supply with electricity, potable tap water at home, and steady access to more than enough food in supermarkets, were virtually inconceivable for most of human history, and still are unattainable for the hundreds of millions of human beings who live in poverty.

<sup>4</sup> There are, of course, further dimensions of culture, e.g. the everyday culture to which I referred in the introduction. The definition of culture as language, religion, and values is not intended to be a comprehensive definition, but one which is precise, suitable for the purpose of testing the hypothesis that national cultures are separate and homogeneous by means of a limited number of variables, and relevant in the context of migration and integration.

<sup>5</sup> One may argue that nonetheless, one should not refer to religion and ethical values to test the model of national cultures, for while religion and values are often said to set groups apart, these groups are often identified as civilizations, not as nations. This is true inasmuch as, unlike in the case of languages, it is hardly ever explicitly stated that there is one religion or one set of values per nation. Nevertheless, that thesis is the logically necessary con-

tion. Exemplary cases include the discussion of migrant bilingualism, the linkage between language proficiency and the educational achievement of pupils with MB, fears of a supposed Islamization of Europe, and related worries about ethical conflicts about gender equality or the rights of homosexuals.

### 2.1.2 *The Evidence for Transculturality: Languages*

It is evident that there are lingual differences between countries. This, however, is in line with the model of national cultures and with transculturality. The important questions are whether there are lingual commonalities across countries and whether there are lingual differences within countries. The existence of lingual commonalities across countries due to world languages is common knowledge. As a result of colonialism, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese are spoken in various countries on different continents. Hence, most Latin American countries are Spanish-speaking, while Brazil shares a language with Portugal and the African countries Angola and Mozambique, and a Canadian, a New Zealander, an Indian, a Ugandan, and an Irishman can have a meaningful conversation in which all of them speak an official language from their country. In addition, there are international languages like German or Swahili, which is spoken in several East African countries.

The existence of multilingual countries is lesser known than the existence of world languages. How many multilingual countries there are of course depends on the operationalization. In the present paper, I have chosen the following operationalization: Firstly, any country in which there is no absolute majority of native speakers of the same language qualifies as a multilingual country. This alone, however, is still insufficient, because based on such an operationalization, bilingual countries would be classified as monolingual, which is inadvisable because  $2 \neq 1$ . To avoid this, I make use of the criterion of the two-thirds majority which, in parliaments, commonly signals that a majority is not just absolute, but so strong that the minority carries no weight. Hence, any country in which there is no two-thirds majority of native speakers of the same language is multilingual. Whether there is one large or two or more

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clusion if one accepts the rather common premises (a) “Every culture has its own religion and values (among other things)” and (b) “There is one distinct, homogeneous culture per nation.” If one accepts premises (a) and (b), one has to claim that (c) “There is one religion and one set of values per nation.” To avoid conclusion (c) (which, as I will show, is empirically inaccurate and therefore needs to be avoided), one needs to reject at least one of the premises from which it follows – either by arguing that there are no such national cultures (rejection of (b)), or by arguing that national cultures exist, but are defined by other cultural dimensions than religion and ethical values (rejection of (a)). A sound rejection of (a) requires that one names other, relevant cultural dimensions X, Y, ... which define separate, homogeneous national cultures because there is one x, y, ... per nation. I am not aware of any suitable candidate here. If I am not mistaken about this, to avoid (c) it is necessary to reject premise (b): the existence of separate, homogeneous national cultures.

smaller minority languages does not matter. The following table shows the 45 countries which are multilingual based on this operationalization.<sup>6</sup>

	1 <sup>st</sup> language	2 <sup>nd</sup> language	3 <sup>rd</sup> language
<b>Africa*</b>			
<i>Benin</i>	Fon (40%)	Yoruba (13%)	
<i>Chad</i>	Sara (28%)		
<i>Congo (Rep.)</i>	Kikongo (48%)		
<i>Djibouti</i>	Somali (60%)	Afar (35%)	
<i>Eritrea</i>	Tigrinya (55%)	Tigre (30%)	Kunama (2%)
<i>Ethiopia</i>	Oromo (34%)	Amharic (29%)	Somali (6%)
<i>Gambia</i>	Mandinka (42%)	Fula (22%)	Wolof (12%)
<i>Ghana</i>	Asante (16%)	Ewe (14%)	Fante (12%)
<i>Guinea</i>	Peul (35%)	Malinke (32%)	Soussou (20%)
<i>Liberia</i>	English (20%)		
<i>Malawi</i>	Chichewa (33%)	Chilomwe (18%)	Chiyao (14%)
<i>Mali</i>	Bambara (47%)	Peul (9%)	Dogon (7%)
<i>Mozambique</i>	Emakhuwa (25%)	Portuguese (11%)	Xichangana (10%)
<i>Namibia</i>	Oshiwambo (49%)	Nama/Damara (11%)	Afrikaans (10%)
<i>Niger</i>	Hausa (55%)	Djerma (21%)	
<i>Nigeria</i>	Hausa (21 – 29%)	Yoruba (21%)	Igbo (18%)

<sup>6</sup> The data on which this and the following table on multireligious countries are based stem from the web site of the CIA World Factbook, which contains regularly updated country profiles with demographic and other information on all countries in the world (Central Intelligence Agency 2016). Especially, but not only in African countries, there sometimes is no information about the share of people who speak a certain language, whilst the share of people who belong to a homonymous ethnic group is stated. In such cases, the latter used as a proxy for the former (e.g.: the share of ethnic Yorubas as a proxy for the share of Yoruba native speakers in Nigeria).

Furthermore, with regard to languages, but mostly to religions, the World Factbook sometimes states the shares of people who speak an unspecified / unknown language or adhere to an unspecified / unknown religion. These shares were treated as missing data, and the remaining shares were recalculated. For example, if according to the World Factbook 50% of a country's population is Christians, 40% are Muslims, and 10% adhere to an unspecified / unknown religion, the table in this paper will state that 56% (50/90) of the population are Christian and 44% (40/90) are Muslim. As the example shows, this procedure increases the shares of each lingual and religious group, and thus the likelihood that a big group will constitute a two-thirds majority. It therefore works in favour of the model of national cultures by potentially reducing the number of multilingual/multireligious countries.

<i>Senegal</i>	Wolof (39%)	Pulaar (27%)	Mandinka (4%)
<i>Sierra Leone</i>	Temne (35%)	Mende (31%)	Krio (10%)
<i>South Africa</i>	IsiZulu (23%)	IsiXhosa (16%)	Afrikaans (14%)
<i>South Sudan</i>	Dinka (36%)	Nuer (16%)	
<i>Uganda</i>	Luganda (17%)		
<i>Zambia</i>	Bembe (34%)	Nyanja (15%)	Tonga (11%)
<b>Asia</b>			
<i>Afghanistan</i>	Afghan Persian (50%)	Pashto (35%)	
<i>Bhutan</i>	Sharchhopka (28%)	Dzongkha (24%)	Lhotshamkha (22%)
<i>Brunei</i>	Malay (66%)	Chinese (10%)	
<i>India</i>	Hindi (41%)	Bengali (8%)	Telugu (7%)
<i>Indonesia</i>	Javanese (40%)		
<i>Laos</i>	Lao (55%)		
<i>Malaysia</i>	Bahasa Malaysia (50%)	Chinese (23%)	
<i>Nepal</i>	Nepali (45%)	Maithali (12%)	Bhojpuri (6%)
<i>Pakistan</i>	Punjabi (48%)	Sindhi (12%)	Saraiki (10%)
<i>Philippines</i>	Tagalog (28%)	Cebuano (13%)	Ilocano (9%)
<i>Singapore</i>	Mandarin (36%)	English (30%)	Malay (12%)
<i>United Arab Emirates</i>	Arabic (19 – 42%)		
<b>Australia and Oceania</b>			
<i>Fiji</i>	Fijian (57%)		
<b>Europe</b>			
<i>Belgium</i>	Dutch (60%)	French (40%)	German (<1%)
<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	Bosnian (49%)	Serbian (33%)	Croatian (15%)
<i>Latvia</i>	Latvian (62%)	Russian (37%)	
<i>Monaco</i>	French (47%)	Monegasque (16%)	Italian (16%)
<i>Montenegro</i>	Serbian (45%)	Montenegrin (39%)	Bosnian (6%)
<i>Switzerland</i>	German (64%)	French (23%)	Italian (8%)
<b>North &amp; Central America</b>			
<i>Belize*</i>	English (63%)	Spanish (57%)	Creole (45%)

<i>Canada</i>	English (59%)	French (22%)	Punjabi (1%)
<i>Guatemala</i>	Spanish (≤59%)	Qiche (9%)	Cakchiquel (8%)
<b>South America</b>			
<i>Bolivia</i>	Spanish (61%)	Quechua (21%)	Aymara (15%)

**Table 1:** Multilingual countries and most widespread native languages

\* Shares sum up to more than 100% because of individuals with more than one native language.

### II.2.3 The Evidence for Transculturality: Religions

Just as there are world languages which are spoken in many countries across the world, there also are world religions to which people from a vast number of nations adhere. The two largest religions are Christianity and Islam. Christianity is the most wide-spread religion in many European, North, Central, and South American countries, in most of sub-Saharan Africa and in Pacific countries like Australia and New Zealand. Islamic countries can be found throughout Northern Africa, from Senegal in the West to Somalia in the East, throughout the Middle East, and in South-East Asia, where there is Indonesia, the most populous Islamic country of all.

The following table shows the world's multireligious countries, based on a similar operationalization like that of multilingual countries. The table includes 33 multireligious countries which, like the multilingual countries,<sup>7</sup> are spread across all continents. As 10 of these countries are also among the 45 multilingual countries, the total number of countries which are multilingual and/or multireligious sums up to 68 – a rough third of all countries in the world.<sup>8</sup>

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> religion</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> religion</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> religion</b>
<b>Africa</b>			
<i>Angola</i>	Christianity (53%)	Indig. religions* (47%)	
<i>Benin</i>	Christianity (43%)	Islam (25%)	Vodoun (17%)

<sup>7</sup> Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Ethiopia, Fiji, Malaysia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Singapore.

<sup>8</sup> The actual number of multilingual and/or multireligious countries may be even higher: Some countries are absent from the tables not because they are monolingual and monoreligious, but because there are no data on the share of people who speak a certain native language or adhere to a certain religion. For example, Germany which, according to Gert Pickel (2011: 341), is the religiously most divided country in Europe because of its separation into a mainly Christian and a mainly atheist part is absent because the data contain no clear information on the share of atheists in the country

<i>Burkina Faso</i>	Islam (62%)	Christianity (30%)	Indig. religions* (7%)
<i>Cameroon</i>	Indig. religions* (40%)	Christianity (40%)	Islam (20%)
<i>Central African Rep.</i>	Christianity (50%)	Indig. religions* (35%)	Islam (15%)
<i>Chad</i>	Islam (54%)	Christianity (35%)	Indig. religions* (7%)
<i>Cote d'Ivoire</i>	Christianity (46%)	Islam (40%)	
<i>Ethiopia</i>	Christianity (63%)	Islam (34%)	Indig. religions* (3%)
<i>Guinea-Bissau</i>	Islam (54%)	Christianity (26%)	Indig. religions* (18%)
<i>Madagascar</i>	Indig. religions* (52%)	Christianity (41%)	Islam (7%)
<i>Mauritius</i>	Hinduism (49%)	Christianity (33%)	Islam (17%)
<i>Mozambique</i>	Christianity (56%)	None (19%)	Islam (18%)
<i>Nigeria</i>	Islam (50%)	Christianity (40%)	Indig. religions* (10%)
<i>Sierra Leone</i>	Islam (60%)	Indig. religions* (30%)	Christianity (10%)
<i>Tanzania</i>	Islam (>35%)	Indig. religions* (35%)	Christianity (30%)
<i>Togo</i>	Indig. religions* (51%)	Christianity (29%)	Islam (20%)
<b>Asia</b>			
<i>China</i>	None (52%)	Folk religion (22%)	Buddhist (18%)
<i>Lebanon</i>	Islam (54%)	Christianity (41%)	Druze (6%)
<i>Malaysia</i>	Islam (62%)	Buddhism (20%)	Christianity (9%)
<i>Mongolia</i>	Buddhism (53%)	None (39%)	Islam (3%)
<i>Singapore</i>	Buddhism (34%)	Christianity (18%)	None (16%)
<i>South Korea</i>	None (43%)	Christianity (32%)	Buddhism (24%)
<b>Australia and Oceania</b>			
<i>Fiji</i>	Christianity (65%)	Hinduism (28%)	Islam (6%)
<i>New Zealand</i>	Christianity (51%)	None (44%)	Hindu (2%)
<b>Europe</b>			
<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	Christianity (46%)	Islam (40%)	
<i>Estonia</i>	None (65%)	Christianity (34%)	
<i>France</i>	Christianity (63 – 66%)	None (23 – 28%)	Islam (7 – 9%)
<i>Macedonia</i>	Christianity (65%)	Islam (33%)	
<i>Netherlands</i>	Christianity (47%)	None (42%)	Islam (5%)

<i>United Kingdom</i>	Christianity (64%)	None (28%)	Islam (5%)
<b>North &amp; Central America</b>			
<i>Trinidad and Tobago</i>	Christianity (62%)	Hinduism (20%)	Islam (6%)
<b>South America</b>			
<i>Guyana</i>	Christianity (57%)	Hinduism (29%)	Islam (7%)
<i>Suriname</i>	Christianity (48%)	Hinduism (27%)	Islam (20%)

**Table 2:** Multireligious countries and most widespread religions

\* The data do not allow for a differentiation between different indigenous religions. Since the pooling of indigenous religions increases the likelihood that there is a two-thirds majority of people who adhere to indigenous religions, the effect of this limitation is to reduce the number of multireligious countries. For example, a country in which 70% of the population adhere to indigenous religions is classified as monoreligious, whereas it would be classified as multireligious if it were known that these 70% consist of 50% who adhere to religion A and 20% who adhere to religion B.

\*\* Shares add up to more than 100% because of Japanese who adhere to Shintoism as well as to Buddhism.

### 2.2.3 The Evidence for Transculturality: Ethical Values

With regard to ethical values, it is not possible to present as clear, quantitative evidence as with regard to language and religion. Whereas people can simply state their native language and their religion in questionnaires, the measurement of ethical values requires more complicated methods such as Likert scales with multiple items (Diekmann 2009: 240 – 247), and there can be notable differences between people's statements and their actual behaviour (id. 572 – 575).<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, there is enough evidence to show that the notion that people from the same nation support the same ethical values because they have been socialized in the same cul-

<sup>9</sup> The latter of course applies to religion as well, though in varying degrees. The phenomenon of people who belong to one religion, yet hardly ever practice it and possibly do not believe in its most basic tenets is far more common among, for example, European than African Christians. "Apart from a few exceptions (Senegal), Africa can be described as *the* 'religious continent'. Here, peak values in subjective religiosity and ecclesial incorporation are the rule, not the exception" (Pickel 2011: 387). Of course, it would be interesting to see how the results of the empirical test would turn out if one referred to such indicators. Predictable consequences are a decline in religious commonalities across countries and an increase in religious heterogeneity in those countries where subjective religiosity and church participation substantially vary among members of the same religion. But at the global level, such a test simply cannot be done because at present, there are not enough valid empirical data about subjective religiosity and church participation, especially with regard to Asia and Africa (Pickel 2011: 389). Hence, for the time being, data on the formal religious affiliation are the only empirical material one can use to investigate the global distribution of religions as it has been done for table 2



ture whereas people from other cultures support other values is overly simplistic. Again, this does not imply that there cannot be ethical conflicts between people from different nations, and the existence of such conflicts is compatible with transculturality because transculturality argues against different national cultures, not against cultural differences. Similarly to the cases of languages and religions, the existence of ethical conflicts within nations and of ethical values which are supported by people from various nations is decisive.

Attentive followers of political debates in democratic countries will find it easy to name internally contested ethical issues. At the time of writing, migration, integration and asylum policies are subject of a fierce debate in European countries. In the debates about abortion and euthanasia, there are marked differences between the liberal and restrictive positions which may be held by different citizens of the same country. In a country like the U.S., where much legislative power lies with the individual federal states, such differences can be reflected by opposite legal provisions, as in the case of the death penalty, which is currently legal in 32 states and illegal in 18 (Amnesty International 2015: 512). And the debate about torture following the 9/11 attacks and, in Germany, the fatal kidnapping of eleven year-old Jakob von Metzler has demonstrated that even the universal validity of human rights can become a subject of disagreement within Western countries.<sup>10</sup>

Coevally, the by now considerable number of Nobel peace laureates from non-Western countries is indicative of the support which allegedly Western values like human rights and democracy can receive from non-Westerners. This list (Nobel Media AB 2015) includes:

- Aung San Suu Kyi (Myanmar) who fights for democracy in a country ruled by military dictators;
- Nelson Mandela (South Africa) who became world-renowned as the leader of the ANC's struggle against apartheid;
- Shirin Ebadi (Iran) who espouses women's rights and democracy;
- Liu Xiaobo (China) whose struggle for human rights questions the thesis that the Chinese reject these values because of their collectivist culture;

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<sup>10</sup> Von Metzler was kidnapped and killed by a young man who was caught by the police while the boy was still believed to be alive. In a futile attempt to save von Metzler's life, the police illegally threatened to torture the kidnapper in order to make him talk. This spurred a debate about the legitimacy of torture in emergency situations similar to the ticking time bomb scenario.

- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee (Liberia) and Tawakkul Karman (Yemen) who were honoured for their commitment for women's rights;
- Wangari Maathai (Kenya) who supported gender equality as much as environmentalism;
- Kailash Satyarti (India) who fights child labour;
- Malala Yousafzai (Pakistan) who demonstrates her Islamic faith by wearing a scarf and has become a prominent opponent of the Taliban through her commitment for the education of girls;
- The National Dialogue Quartet (Tunisia) who advocate for the country's peaceful democratization following the revolution during the Arab Spring.

The full weight of this list becomes apparent only when we consider that the honoured individuals had achieved far less without their collaborators, like the various other ANC members in Mandela's case or Aung San Suu Kyi's fellow party members from the National League for Democracy. As Bertolt Brecht (2003: 62f.) reminds us in his *Questions from a Worker Who Reads*, the “great men” of history had accomplished none of their deeds without the aid by numerous, long forgotten common people. Along these lines, the famous Nobel peace laureates only constitute the internationally visible top of a larger ice berg.

The result of all the evidence combined is unambiguous. Evidence for transculturality and against the model of national cultures has been found on each and every continent. It has been found with regard to language, with regard to religion, and with regard to ethical values. And always, both types of evidence have been found – evidence for cross-country cultural commonalities and evidence for cultural differences within countries. Our world is not a world of separate, homogeneous national cultures. The world in which people migrate and integrate is a transcultural world, and thus, this is the world to which sociologists should refer when they deal with migration, integration, and acculturation. Yet what does acculturation mean when separate, homogeneous national cultures do not exist?

### 3 Acculturation without National Cultures?

#### 3.1 How Transculturality challenges the Concept of Acculturation

##### 3.1.1. *Acculturation from a Nationalist Viewpoint*

The nationalist perspective on cultural reality goes along with a simple, straightforward conceptualization of acculturation: At the time of arrival, immigrants are still fully shaped by the culture of their country of origin, and thus culturally different from the country of immigration:

“They are *in* [the country of immigration], but not yet *of it*” (Haller et al. 2011: 733). According to the model which Herbert J. Gans (1992: 174f.) has labelled straight-line assimilation, acculturation then proceeds linearly across migrant generations, i.e. first generation migrants acculturate inasmuch as they can (given that, for example, it is relatively hard to learn a new language as an adult), their children acculturate more extensively, but are also influenced by their parents' culture, and by the third or maybe the fourth generation, acculturation to the national culture of the country of immigration is completed.

A paradigmatic exemplary case for this type of acculturation can be found in one of the classical works on assimilation theory, Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life*. Despite the book's title and its focus on the United States, Gordon's (1981: 3f.) aim is to develop a theory of assimilation that can also be applied to other countries. Thus, to conceptualize acculturation, he refers to the fictitious case of migration from Mundovia to Sylvania and describes how Mundovian immigrants in Sylvania and their descendants gradually give up Sylvanian culture and adopt the culture of Mundovia (Gordon 1981: 68 – 70). Accordingly, Gordon (id. 71) defines acculturation as the “[c]hange of cultural patterns to those of [the] host society”.

Criticism of this view of acculturation often challenges the notion that it proceeds linearly, with each migrant generation moving closer to the full assimilation to the culture of the country of immigration: Acculturation may rather follow a bumpy line with regressions and no guarantee that full acculturation will be the final result (Gans 1992: 175), or it may be selective, so that it occurs with regard to some dimensions of culture, but not with regard to others (Portes/Rumbaut 2001: 52 – 54). The recognition of transculturality poses another challenge which is not concerned with the progression of the process of acculturation, but with its supposed defining characteristics. Firstly, acculturation may not be a change of cultural patterns to those of *the host society* in the country of immigration: If there is no homogeneous national culture in the country of immigration, no such culture can be adopted by people with MB. Secondly, there may not be a *change* of cultural patterns to those of the host society, for such a change requires that initially, immigrants come from a culturally different country. The cross-country cultural commonalities presented in the previous demonstrate that this does not need to be the case.

To illustrate both of these abstract arguments, one can refer to the case of Germans who migrate to Switzerland (a not uncommon occurrence): On the one hand, Germans who migrate to Geneva in Francophone Switzerland and subsequently learn French, their children who grow up as bilinguals and their grandchildren who are French native speakers and know very little German or none seem to follow the pathway of straight-line acculturation – yet the language which gradually replaces German is not the national, common language of Switzer-

land. On the other hand, Germans who migrate to Zurich in German-speaking Switzerland never undergo such a process of lingual change, they are fully “acculturated” from the start. At most, they adopt a new dialect of their native language – something which can also happen in cases of internal migration (e.g. from Bavaria to Saxony, two German regions known for their prominent dialects) and bears little if any resemblance to the process of learning an entirely new language.

Since transculturality applies not only to language, but to all three dimensions of culture as defined in this paper, so does the challenge for the concept of acculturation which it poses: Because cultural reality does not conform to the predictions of the model of national cultures, a conceptualization of acculturation which builds upon this model is often ill-suited to grasp the actual processes of cultural change, adaptation, and preservation that shape the lives of many people who migrate, or whose ancestors have migrated, in our transcultural world. To account for the experiences and everyday realities of people who migrate between culturally similar countries or to culturally heterogeneous countries and for those of their descendants, acculturation needs to be conceptualized in such a way that it is not bound to the false hypotheses of the model of national cultures.

### *3.1.2 A first Step beyond Nationalism: Gordon's Core Culture*

While, as discussed, Gordon did not abstain from conceptualizing acculturation on the basis of a nationalist perspective on culture, he also exceeded the limitations of that perspective. Long before Welsch's development of the concept of transculturality, Gordon (1981: 19 – 59) portrayed America as an internally heterogeneous country whose population was divided into different ethnic groups like whites and Afro-Americans and different classes. On top of that, the country was multireligious – while the first settlers had been mostly Protestant, later waves of immigration had resulted in the presence of sizeable numbers of Catholics and Jews (id. 173 – 220). Realizing how this situation challenged notions of acculturation that assume that the country of immigration is ethnically and culturally homogeneous, Gordon (id. 71f.) argued that assimilation by people with MB does not mean assimilation to the entire population. Rather, he argued that there is a “core group”, a dominant part of the population in the country of immigration, and reconceptualized acculturation as the assimilation to that group's culture: the “core culture”. In America, Gordon (id. 72) identified the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant middle-class Americans as the core group. In general, he argued that the core group can be distinguished from other parts of the population on the basis of its numerical size, its power, or its historical role as the first group who lived in the country (ibid.).

While Gordon's concept of the core group and the core culture goes far beyond the limitations of the model of national cultures by incorporating the possibility of internal cultural heterogeneity in the country of immigration, it still has some weaknesses. Firstly, it is not necessary that one and the same group is the largest and the most powerful and the oldest group in a country. Gordon ignores the question how the core group can be identified under those circumstances. Secondly, in our transcultural world, some countries are so heterogeneous that the differentiation between the core group and other groups is insufficient to cope with the cultural differences within countries, e.g. because the core group is not present in some parts of the country, or because it is only a little larger than another group. For example, most Canadians are Anglophone, but in Quebec, people speak French. If the core group is identified on the basis of its size, and if one accepts Gordon's thesis that acculturation is tantamount to the adaptation of the core group's culture, people with MB in Canada are acculturated if they speak English – including those who have migrated to Francophone Quebec. And Christians who migrate to Lebanon would need to convert to Islam, the majority's religion, in order to acculturate, even though 41% of Lebanese are Christian as well.<sup>11</sup>

Ultimately, while Gordon was aware of the problem of internal cultural heterogeneity in the country of immigration, he did not deal with the problem of cross-country cultural commonalities and its implications for acculturation. The three ideal-typical pathways of integration which he presented – Anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism – differ profoundly from each other, yet it is always assumed that initially, people with MB are culturally different from the native population or its core group.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the discussion so far has shown that the recognition of transculturality challenges not only the model of national cultures, but also the nationalist conceptualization of acculturation which is based on that model, and that these problems cannot be resolved by reconceptualizing acculturation as the adaptation of a core culture. To do so, one needs to turn to the more recent theory of mainstream assimilation by Richard Alba and Victor Nee. As I will argue, Alba and Nee not just renamed Gordon's core group and core culture, but conceptualized the mainstream in such a way that the problems from which Gordon's concepts suffer can be overcome.

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<sup>11</sup> See table 2.

<sup>12</sup> The pathway of Anglo-conformity is identical with the nationalist conceptualization of assimilation, the pathway of the melting pot means that the initially different cultures of people with and without MB merge into a new, common culture, and the pathway of cultural pluralism depicts a multiculturalist perspective on integration in which each group keeps its distinct culture (Gordon 1981: 84 – 159).

### 3.2 Mainstream Acculturation in a Transcultural World

#### 3.2.1 *How National Cultures, Cultural Mainstreams, and Core Cultures differ from each other*

Prima facie, the differences between a core culture and cultural mainstreams may appear to be merely semantic. It seems to make little, if any difference whether one speaks of the core group with a core culture, as Gordon does, or of the mainstream, as Alba and Nee do. Both terms suggest that a given group and its culture are, in one way or another, more important for a country than others. On closer inspection, however, there are important differences between the core group / culture as defined by Gordon and the mainstream as defined by Alba and Nee. These differences arise from the fact that Alba and Nee's conceptualization of the mainstream – unlike Gordon's conceptualization of the core group / culture, and unlike transculturality – builds upon a constructivist perspective on culture, namely the boundary making approach (Alba/Nee 2005: 59 – 66).

Like transculturality, the boundary making approach has been developed in rejection of the Herderian paradigm of different ethnic groups or nations which possess different, homogeneous cultures (Wimmer 2009: 246 – 249). However, at least prima facie, they also contradict each other. From a transcultural perspective, one can argue, as I have done in the previous chapter, that there are no national cultures because the distribution of cultural elements which allegedly define them does not correspond to the thesis that there is one culture per nation. Based on a boundary-making perspective, by contrast, one can argue that there are national cultures which are not defined by the empirical distribution of languages, religions, values (etc.), but by intersubjective perceptions and identifications. For, as Andreas Wimmer (id. 254) argues, “actors mark ethnic boundaries with cultural diacritica they perceive as relevant, such as language or skin color, or the like. These markers are not equivalent to the sum of ‘objective’ cultural differences that an outside observer may find.” Since Wimmer (id. 254 – 258) uses the boundary making approach to analyze when and how people with MB can become part of national groups, it is legitimate to apply this argument to cultural boundaries not just between ethnic, but also between national groups.

As it is apparently self-evident that national cultures, like anything else, either exist or do not exist, it appears that one needs to opt either for transculturality and its focus on empirical distributions or for the boundary making approach and its focus on intersubjective associations. This, however, would be a choice between Scylla and Charybdis, for both distributions and associations are relevant. On the one hand, the accuracy of hypotheses like the universal statement that immigrants do not speak the common language of the country of immigration depends solely on the empirical distribution of cultural elements. On the other hand, we

know from the Thomas theorem that intersubjective beliefs, such as the widely accepted thesis that every nation has its own culture, are socially relevant even when they are contradicted by empirical evidence (Thomas/Thomas 1928: 572). Thus, any perspective on culture which entails an exclusive focus on either empirical distributions or intersubjective associations and beliefs blinds out something important. A comprehensive understanding of the cultural world in which we live can only be achieved by focusing on both. Yet how can this be done without incurring the self-contradictory thesis that national cultures do not exist (as shown by the distribution of languages, religions, and values) and exist (as shown by people's belief in and identification with them)?

The case of precedence which shows the way out of that dilemma is racism. Unlike a century ago, there is now broad scientific consensus that *biological races* do not exist because there are many biological differences among people whose skin is of the same color and many biological commonalities between people with different skin colors (Garner 2010: 1f.) – an argument which strikingly resembles the transcultural argument against national cultures. Coevally, the existence and social relevance of *socially constructed races* is undeniable in light of the holocaust, American slavery, or apartheid in South Africa. Rather than asking “Are there races?” it is therefore necessary to ask “Are there biological races?” and “Are there socially constructed races?”. And while it would be logically inconsistent to claim that races exist and do not exist, it is easily possible to claim that biological races are non-existent while there are socially constructed races.

Based on these reflections, I propose to deal with the question “Do national cultures exist?” in exactly the same way, i.e. to split it into two questions. The first question is: “Do empirical national cultures which are defined by their separateness and homogeneity exist?” This is the question to which I have given a negative answer in chapter II. A second, entirely different question is: “Do socially constructed national cultures which are intersubjectively ‘define[d] as real’ (Thomas/Thomas 1928: 572) exist?” The answer to this question is evidently affirmative. Again, because these two questions are logically distinct, a positive or negative answer to one question does not affect the answer to the other one.

With the distinction between non-existent empirical national cultures and existent socially constructed national cultures being made, it is possible to formulate a definition of the cultural mainstream that is in line with Alba and Nee's reflections on the American mainstream, yet abstract enough to be applicable to other countries, including those which are notably different from the U.S. Like Gordon, Alba and Nee (2005: 25) start from the observation that America is culturally heterogeneous – however, not because different ethnic groups in the country possess different, yet homogeneous cultures, but because “American culture was

and is mixed, an amalgam of diverse influences”. Also, like Gordon, they recognize the existence of different religious orientations within the United States.

Yet while Gordon envisaged an exclusively Protestant core group, Alba and Nee (id. 282 – 284) argue that during the 20th century, Catholics and Jews also entered the religious, and thus cultural, mainstream. This happened when the general public regarded them as American religions, rather than as religions of particular groups of people with MB. Thus, of all the cultural elements which empirically exist within a country, the cultural mainstream includes those which also form part of the socially constructed national culture. It is, in other words, *the totality of all cultural elements which exist in a country and are commonly seen as parts of the national culture*. The main difference between the cultural mainstream, thus defined, and Gordon's core culture is that the cultural mainstream can be heterogeneous, to the extent that Alba (2008: 40) suggests speaking of different mainstreams within a country. Moreover, while Gordon's core culture is per definitionem restricted to a single core group, the cultural mainstream can contain people from various groups.

At the same time, it does not need to include each and every group and, like the core group, may exclude even some parts of the native population. For example, the Afro-American youth from urban “ghettos” who feature prominently in segmented assimilation theory are not part of the American mainstream because of the counter-cultural values and lifestyles that prevail among them (Portes/Rumbaut 2001: 59 – 62). To avoid the connotation of conscious resistance or hostility which the prefix “counter” conveys, I propose to generally label non-mainstream cultural elements subcultural. Counter-cultures, then, are subcultures whose adherents actually are consciously resistant or hostile to the cultural mainstream.

### 3.2.2 *The Compatibility of Cultural Mainstreams and Transculturality*

Cultural mainstreams can exist both in a world of separate, homogeneous national cultures and in a transcultural world. They exist when- and wherever some or all of the cultural elements within a country are commonly regarded as parts of the national culture. However, in a world which corresponds to the model of national cultures, it would be superfluous to speak of cultural mainstreams. For if there was one common language, religion, and set of ethical values per country, one might reasonably expect that citizens in any country see the language, religion, and values which they share with each other and with nobody else as their national culture. Thus, if empirical national cultures existed, these cultures and the cultural mainstreams would be identical, and one could simply conceptualize acculturation in accordance with the model of national cultures.



Therefore, the fact that we live in a transcultural world without empirical national cultures is *the conditio sine qua non* not for the existence of national, cultural mainstreams, but for the concept's relevance for acculturation theory. The recognition of transculturality raises questions: What is acculturation, if not the “[c]hange of cultural patterns to those of [the] host society” as which it was defined by Gordon (1981: 71)? What do assimilationists mean when they want people with MB to assimilate to the national culture of the country of immigration? What do multiculturalists mean when they speak out in favor of tolerance for people with MB who deviate from this national culture? In a world of national cultures, the meaning of such statements is self-evident; in a transcultural world, one might be tempted to wonder if they mean anything. By means of the concept of cultural mainstreams, one can clarify their meaning anew.

Fortunately, the concept of the cultural mainstream is not just relevant in a transcultural world, but also compatible to its empirical realities. According to the previously developed definition, in a country in which  $x$  languages,  $y$  religions and  $z$  sets of ethical values exist, 1, 2, ...  $x$  languages, 1, 2, ...  $y$  religions, and 1, 2, ...  $z$  sets of ethical values are part of the cultural mainstream. As seen before, this definition of the cultural mainstream does not entail that it needs to be homogeneous, and it allows for the possibility that the same language, religion, or values are part of the cultural mainstreams in several countries. This ensures the compatibility of the mainstream and transculturality.

While Alba and Nee (2005) focus on the American mainstream, the United States are just one, albeit large and powerful, country of about 200 and one cannot simply assume that conditions in this country are also present in other countries. Therefore, it is important to analyse whether or not Alba and Nee's conception of the mainstream also works in other countries. I think it does, as can be shown by applying it to Canada and Lebanon, where Gordon's concept failed. In the case of Canada, Alba's proposal to differentiate between different mainstreams is crucial. One can argue that the lingually heterogeneous Canadian mainstream comprises the mainstream of Anglophone Canada and the Quebecois mainstream, and apply the appropriate part of the Canadian mainstream to the integration of people with MB in Canada based on the region where they settle. In Lebanon, by contrast, there is no division between a Muslim and a Christian part of the country. In this case, the mainstream in the entire country is multireligious – provided that Lebanese regard Christianity and Islam as parts of Lebanese culture –, and anyone who is either a Muslim or a Christian adheres to a mainstream religion.

### 3.2.3 *Pathways of Integration into the Cultural Mainstream*

Now that it has been clarified what the cultural mainstream is, how it differs from national cultures and core cultures, and why the concept is relevant in as well as compatible with a transcultural world, one can finally answer the question how acculturation in a transcultural world can be conceptualized, and how people with MB can enter the cultural mainstream in the country of immigration.

Based on the previously developed definition of the cultural mainstream, according to which it contains all the cultural elements which exist in a country and are regarded as parts of the national culture, there are two possible ways in which initial differences between the culture of people with MB and the cultural mainstream in the country of immigration can be resolved: On the one hand, people with MB can adopt existent cultural elements which already form part of the cultural mainstream by learning a new language, converting to another religion, or changing their ethical values. On the other hand, the intersubjective associations between cultural elements and nations by which the socially constructed national culture is constituted may change so as to encompass cultural elements of people with MB that have hitherto been regarded as foreign, as in the previously mentioned case of Jews and Catholics in the U.S. In the terminology of the boundary making approach, people with MB may either cross the cultural mainstream's boundaries, or these boundaries may be shifted so as to include people with MB which they have previously excluded (Wimmer 2009: 256 – 258).

The case of Muslims in Germany may serve to illustrate this abstract juxtaposition by means of a concrete example. Currently, there are about 4 million Muslims in Germany, including about 2 million German citizens (Haug et al. 2009: 57 – 79). Yet Islam is not part of the German cultural mainstream, as can be induced from surveys which show that negative, xenophobic attitudes toward Islam predominate (Pollack 2014: 19 – 24) or from observations of German Muslims who are told that they are no “real Germans” because of their religion (Kaddor 2015: 64 – 68). To integrate or be integrated into the German cultural mainstream, Muslims may either adopt a mainstream religious orientation, such as Christianity or atheism, or the notion that “Islam belongs to Germany”, which was famously propagated in 2010 by the then German Federal President Christian Wulff (2010: 6), may become common sense among the German population. How realistic and desirable either of these options is, is a question for other papers and for political debates; here, they merely serve to exemplify principal possibilities of integration into the cultural mainstream.

Alba and Nee argue that for such reasons, assimilation to the mainstream is no unilateral process of adaptation by people with MB, at least not necessarily, but can and often does involve change on behalf of migrants and their descendants as well as on behalf of the native

population in the country of immigration (Alba 2008: 41f.). In my assessment, this usage of the term “assimilation” is too broad and obscures the crucial differences between the two pathways of integration into the cultural mainstream which I have just sketched. While it is true that both pathways yield the same result – people who have been outside of the cultural mainstream become part of it – processes which result in the same consequences can still be notably different from each other, as shown by the important differences between natural procreation and in vitro fertilization. The differences between the two pathways of integration into the cultural mainstream are equally fundamental.

Thus, for the sake of a clear and precise terminology, I propose to speak of *acculturation* or *cultural assimilation* when people with MB change their culture and adapt to the cultural mainstream of the country of immigration, whereas the process of changing and widening the socially constructed boundaries of the mainstream may be labeled *cultural inclusion*. Through this terminological differentiation, it will certainly become easier to avoid misunderstandings like Hartmut Esser's (2008: 105) claim that Alba and Nee's theory sees “no real alternative to ‘assimilation’ as the adaptation to certain reference standards in the different receiving societies.” The pathway of inclusion is a real alternative, namely the adaptation of the reference standards to changing socio-cultural realities.

But in a transcultural world, assimilation and inclusion are not enough to conceive of integration into the cultural mainstream. For cases like migration between Germany and German-speaking Switzerland or between the numerous Spanish-speaking, predominantly Christian countries in Latin America, a third ideal-typical pathway of mainstream integration is needed, which may be labeled *smooth integration*. How can smooth integration be defined? It is the process of mainstream integration which occurs when migrants simply enter the mainstream upon arrival because they fit into the existent mainstream in the country of immigration from the start. In such cases, neither adaptation by migrants to the mainstream (acculturation/assimilation) nor a shift of the mainstream's boundaries (inclusion) take place. If such a possibility is mentioned at all in sociological, theoretical texts about integration, it is seen as limited to internal migration in a country or even house-moving in a city (Esser 1980: 227). But the cross-country cultural commonalities of a transcultural world ensure that it can also apply to cases of international migration.

## 4 Conclusion

When Chimamanda Adichie, the Nigerian author of the story about Ofodile/Dave, Chinaza, and Nia from the introduction, migrated to the U.S. for the first time, she made a memorable

experience which she would recall several years later in a speech titled *The Danger of a Single Story*:

“My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she could listen to what she called my ‘tribal music’, and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey. [...] She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove. [...] My roommate had a single story of Africa. A story of catastrophe. In this single story there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her, in any way” (Adichie 2009b: 4:12 – 5:20)

Adichie (2009b: 5:55 – 6:34) is aware that her roommate did not act the way she did because of personal ignorance, but because there is something wrong about the ways in which we are used to think about the world. While the roommate's attitudes mainly reflect the common belief that the West and Africa are polar cultural opposites (Speitkamp 2009: 9f.), her confusion about a recently immigrated woman who is a native speaker of her own mother tongue is also in line with the widely accepted model of national cultures and reaffirmed by sociologists who, following this model, generally assume that immigrants do not speak the single, common language of the country of immigration.

As I have shown in chapter II, such assumptions assort well with the discourse of nationalism and its classificatory grid that tends to allot everyone and everything to one nation, but not with the actual distribution of cultural elements within and across countries. Even though one of the essential qualities of discourses, according to Foucault, is that they are soaked with power and thus tend to produce the realities which they seemingly just describe (Parr 2008: 234), the nationalist discourse has not resulted in a world in which every country has its own, homogeneous culture which is different from those of all other countries. Rather, we live in a transcultural world in which countries can be either culturally homogeneous or culturally heterogeneous, and in which cultural differences between some countries are contrasted by cultural commonalities across others.

However, the discussion in chapter III has led to the conclusion that it would be improper to focus only on these empirical facts and to conclude that there are no national cultures, period. While the productive power of nationalism has not resulted in the existence of empirical national cultures, it has resulted in the existence of socially constructed national cultures because people tend to associate certain cultural elements, but not others with their nation. Thus, following Alba and Nee, the cultural mainstream can be conceptualized as the total quantity of cultural elements which exist in a country and are commonly regarded as parts of the national culture. Such mainstreams differ both from empirical national cultures and from core cultures as conceptualized by Gordon. As they do not need to be internally homogene-

ous or different from the cultural mainstreams of other nations, they can exist in a transcultural world.

Alba and Nee's (2005) principal aim is to demonstrate that their conceptualization of the mainstream makes it possible to make sense of assimilation in the United States – despite the impacts of the so-called new immigration that have led other researchers, in particular those who adhere to the theory of segmented assimilation, to claim that assimilation will be of relatively little importance in contemporary and future America. Whether segmented assimilation theory or Alba and Nee's new assimilation theory are empirically accurate is a question which is to be answered in other papers – and already, there are many papers aimed at resolving that task. The aim of the present paper, instead, has been to argue that by means of Alba and Nee's conceptualization of mainstream assimilation, one can resolve a quite different problem: To clarify anew the meaning of acculturation after the recognition that empirical national cultures do not exist.

The French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (2006: xxiv) once described the post-modern mindset as one which is characterized by scepticism towards great narratives about “great voyages [with] great goal[s]”. Since we as sociologists of migration and integration should not allow ourselves to be in the situation of Adichie's erstwhile roommate and to be confused when faced with cases of migration which do not correspond to the old-established model of separate, homogeneous national cultures, a good dose of post-modern thought is certainly warranted. Rather than viewing acculturation as the great, generation-spanning voyage from one homogeneous national culture to another one, it ought to be conceptualized as one of three notably different pathways of integration into the cultural mainstream, and it ought to be recognized that this and other processes of integration take place in a transcultural world that is far more complex, diverse, and colorful than nationalism suggests. The transcultural world in which people migrate, integrate and acculturate is no world for allegedly universal great narratives, no world for single stories.

Through this paper, I hope to have contributed to the sociological debate about the integration and acculturation of people with MB in a twofold manner: by showing that the model of national cultures, which often, at least implicitly underlies sociologists' theorizing about these processes, is empirically inaccurate with regard to languages, religions, and values; and by showing that the recognition of transculturality does not make the concept of acculturation obsolete, for it can be reconceptualized as one of three different pathways of integration into national cultural mainstreams. The accuracy and importance of these contributions are now open to scientific debate – the only method, as Popper (1969: 106 – 112) argued, to gradually approach truth and objectivity.

Beyond that, I see two limitations to the present paper which can only be overcome through further work. Firstly, while the rejection of the model of national cultures in favor of transculturality is empirically based, the arguments about the mainstream and acculturation are entirely conceptual. Having recognized that there are cases of migration which do not fit into the model of national cultures either because the country of immigration is culturally heterogeneous or because the countries of origin and of immigration are culturally similar, it appears worthwhile to study such cases and to investigate how these framework conditions actually affect people with MB and their integration.

Secondly, the present paper has looked at culture and acculturation from an exclusively descriptive point of view (apart from the possibility of some unwitting effects of personal value orientations on the perception of reality). What may appear laudable from a perspective that emphasizes strict freedom from value judgment is, in my assessment, more of a shortcoming. In times of the refugee crisis in Europe – and of many more refugee movements in other parts of the world that receive less coverage by Western media –, in times of severe socio-political problems arising from Islamist terrorism and failed integration as well as from Islamophobic, xenophobic, and racist discrimination, it is not too bold to predict that migration, cultural integration, and questions of cultural identity will be of great importance not only for sociologists, but for the future of many countries worldwide and many people who live there – natives, migrants, and their descendants alike. If, under these conditions, sociology retreats to the ivory tower and refrains from participating in political debates about these topics, if it chooses to leave urgent normative questions unanswered, its societal relevance may rightly be questioned.

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