



Immigration, Assimilation, and the Cultural Construction of American National Identity (Routledge Research in Race and Ethnicity)

By Shannon Latkin Anderson

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Over the course of the 20th century, there have been three primary narratives of American national identity: the melting pot, Anglo-Protestantism, and cultural pluralism/multi-culturalism. This book offers a social and historical perspective on what shaped each of these imaginings, when each came to the fore, and which appear especially relevant early in the 21st century. These issues are addressed by looking at the United States and elite notions of the meaning of America across the 20th century, centering on the work of Horace Kallen, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and Samuel P. Huntington. Four structural areas are examined in each period: the economy, involvement in foreign affairs, social movements, and immigration. What emerges is a narrative arc whereby immigration plays a clear and crucial role in shaping cultural stories of national identity as written by elite scholars. These stories are represented in writings throughout all three periods, and in such work we see the intellectual development and specification of the dominant narratives, along with challenges to each. Important conclusions include a keen reminder that identities are often formed along borders both external and internal, that structure and culture operate dialectically, and that national identity is hardly a monolithic, static formation.

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About the Author

Shannon Latkin Anderson is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Roanoke College.

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