My purpose in this article is to review some of the definitions of ethnicity, which are currently being used in the social sciences, and to indicate a general theoretical framework for the understanding of ethnicity in the contemporary United States. It is assumed that a renaissance of ethnicity is occurring in the United States today. This is, however, not demonstratable at the present time and will be the subject of later research.2 Theoretically, I believe that ethnicity remains as one of the most available coping mechanisms available to alienated groups in our complex society. Thus ethnicity is viewed, in this paper, as a form of adaptation rather than as a social pathology.

I believe that many definitions which have been used to describe ethnicity may not be fully adequate for complex societal situations. They fail for a variety of reasons, but are primarily weak because they lack flexibility, are many times etic in origin, and generally stress the importance of the group rather than the importance of ethnicity.

Milton Gordon has defined an ethnic group as "any group which is defined or set off by race, religion, or national origin, or some combination of these categories" (1964:27). He uses the phrase
"sense of peoplehood" (1964:23-24) but seemingly prefers to accept that this "sense" can only be conferred by race, religion, or national origin.

On the other hand, Lester Singer (1962) and Raoul Narroll (1964) have lent more breadth to their definitions. Taken together the definition proposed by the above authors is composed of four interrelated criteria. 1) A shared pattern of beliefs, behavior patterns, cultural values, etc. 2) An awareness of the group's own distinctiveness which is partially reflected in a "we" feeling. 3) A group which makes up a field of communication and interaction. 4) The tendency to maintain generational continuity by marriage within the group.

Fredrik Barth, however, argues that "such a formulation prevents us from understanding the phenomenon of ethnic groups and their place in human society and culture (1969:11)." He believes that the importance of the ethnic group, to the social scientist, should be in the analysis of the process of recruitment, maintenance, and growth; not purely in the description of a static entity. Although Barth speaks of "cultural differentiae" (1969:38) his primary emphasis is upon the group rather than the ideology.

There are, however, two levels at which we can
analyze ethnic groups. One is at the group composition level and the other is at the ideological level. If we look at the group composition level, we are looking at a phenomenon which is continually in motion either retracting, expanding, or reestablishing itself. At the ideological level, however, it would seem that there is a great deal more in the way of continuity and stability. In other words, for the disenfranchised, the group may not in reality exist, but the ideology is there. It seems to be a shared ideology but not in the sense that we usually think of as shared group behavior. An example of voluntary associations in the Detroit metropolitan area may make this clear. 3

In Detroit there are five Native American organizations vying for membership. One was established in 1940 while the others are products of 1971 and 1972. The four new organizations are in many ways providing the same services but are split along political and tribal lines. Although these are five very active organizations, the vast majority of Indians in the metropolitan area give no allegiance to any of these associations. Although informal groups do form, and are significant arenas of interaction, many Indians, if not most, seem to be content to say that "being Indian is a state of mind" and is not dependent on group affiliation. One informant has mentioned to
me that "there are two kinds of people in this world; those that are Indian and those that want to be Indian." Given the context of this discussion the only possible referent that he had in mind was the Indian ideology and not a group phenomenon.

Here I suggest that the ideology is as important and perhaps more important than the construct of the group. The question that becomes important is whether the maintenance of the group is the important variable or is it rather the establishment and/or maintenance of the individual's own self-concept. I believe that the self is most important and that self-concept will hinge on the individual's perception of himself in relation to the larger society. It may be true that ethnicity for its own sake may be disfunctional but when used for solving the individual's dissonance and/or other problems it may be a highly adaptive kind of coping mechanism.

Thus, let us view ethnicity as an adaptive strategy which 1) allows the disenfranchised to reestablish and/or maintain their self-concept; 2) may be a highly effective mechanism for establishing and maintaining economic and/or social status; and 3) may be used as the basis for gaining a greater share of the expected rewards of a society.

I am nominally concerned with the external
identification of the individual as an ethnic. My primary concern is how the individual uses his "perceived ethnicity" to manipulate his relationships with himself and his exogenous world. Thus, it is only when external identification becomes a significant factor in the social relations of the individual that ethnicity becomes a "real" phenomenon. Further, in terms of this paper, I can not be concerned with those who live in what might be called a "two-ethnic" world.

It also appears to me that in a highly complex society, such as our own, we may be experiencing a real change in what an ethnic group is and why it is important. I suggest that for many ethnicity is based upon achievement whereas traditionally it was grounded in ascription. Hypothetically, is an Italian really ethnically Italian if he doesn't eat lasagna, doesn't speak Italian, doesn't associate with other Italians, etc.? Of course he isn't! But can an individual of Irish descent be ethnically Native American if he eats corn soup, dances at Pow-wows, associates with Native Americans, and is accepted by them as being Indian? I suggest that he can be!

Why this new conception of achieved ethnicity is necessary may be a very important question. I think that it does become important because we have been tied too long to the ideas of Anglo-conformity, melting pots, and even cultural pluralism. Instead
of talking about where other social scientists draw boundaries let us approach the group and watch where they draw the boundaries. I do not suggest that this has not been done, but I do suggest that for many of us it has not been a reality. Who is included, and who is not included, might well not fit our preconceptions.

The idea of achievement and the use of ethnicity as an adaptive mechanism is consistent with many variables which are visible in our society. Let us look briefly at some of them. An axiom of American society has long been the persistent demand for self-determination and, in a deeper sense, the need for self-identity. It is this same demand for self-determination and self-identity which has been instituted in the 1960's as the major goal of some minority interests in the United States. Participants in these struggles have increasingly searched for their historical roots with their eyes constantly on the future; a future designed and defined by a sense of worth, self-determination and self-identity.

With the loss of extended family networks, stress upon the nuclear family, generation gaps, urbanization, bureaucratization, and rapid change, there is a need to reestablish networks which allows one to move back in touch with his fellowman. This is probably as vital for the middle class businessman as it is for the Chicano
Different pressures may be exerted on each, but with the same result: a sense of some form of deprivation which may not simply be resolved by oneself.

Richard Flacks has indicated that because of the erosion of the family unit (particularly in the middle class) there is a great deal of confusion which has been labeled by social scientists as pathological. However, Flacks asserts that "when parents raise their children in a manner that causes them to have significant problems of adjustment, if anything, this is a healthy circumstance" (1971:23). He continues by arguing "that the basic source of socially patterned maladjustment is a culture that no longer enables a person to find coherent meaning in life" (1971:23). It is also true that those societies where institutions are not provided to aid the individual in adapting and developing his self-concept will, in the same way, produce maladjusted individuals. It is for precisely this reason that I suggest that ethnicity, which many perceive as a maladjustment, may be a readily available mechanism with which one can cope and adjust to stress. If each individual found it necessary to face the development and maintenance of a self-concept by himself, each would experience an increased level of
confusion and anxiety. However, if continuity can be provided from some source, in terms of ideology, this confusion and anxiety can be minimized.

Man's search for self-determination and a sense of identity may, I conclude, objectively be found in an ethnic experience. It is within this ideological belongingness that he can assert himself as "somebody." Daniel Adelson (1971) has suggested that in times of vast social change and crisis cultural pluralism is both a boat and an anchor. In other words, ethnicity may become that vehicle which carries one over "Jordan" and becomes an anchor to hold one there when one gets over.

Few will deny the numerous and sometimes insurmountable problems which come as the result of rapid social and technological change. However, it is one thing to know that they exist and another to understand the process of how individuals adjust to increasing stress complexity. It is suggested here that the perceived quality of accomplishment, worthwhileness, and self-determination which may result from an ethnic group experience is one of the ways by which man is able to cope with displacement. To explain, however, how man adapts one must go further.

Assuming that the adoption of ethnic identity is both a response and a means of adaptation to increasing
complexity, a cross-disciplinary approach may be most useful in explaining the process. In particular, the theories of relative deprivation so aptly used by David Aberle (1966) and Lewis Coser (1967), the theory of cognitive dissonance by social psychologist Leon Festinger (1958), the idea of the ceremonial fund as suggested by Eric Wolf (1966), and what I have chosen to call the "band wagon" effect, which is essentially a sociological phenomenon, all appear to be of value as explanatory devices.

Aberle has defined relative deprivation as "a negative discrepancy between legitimate actuality and expectation, or between legitimate expectation and anticipated actuality, or both" (1966:323). This notion of relative deprivation has been fruitfully employed to explain social movements by Aberle (1966), Coser (1967), and others. However, the concept of relative deprivation may be more useful when combined with Festinger's notion of cognitive dissonance. Festinger postulates that when an individual is induced to engage in behavior that is inconsistent with his beliefs or attitudes, he will experience the discomfort of cognitive dissonance. He continues by saying that "the reality which impinges on a person will exert pressures in the direction of bringing the appropriate cognitive elements into correspondence with reality" (1958:11).
This is not to say that relative deprivation and cognitive dissonance are the same phenomena. They may or may not be. Relative deprivation is simply a form of cognitive dissonance. It involves the relative worth of an individual or group in relation to a point in their reference field. Cognitive dissonance, on the other hand, may not involve a sense of worth. Instead the discrepancy may be between how one is behaving or believing and what one believes is expected or commanded of him to do or believe.

It is the effects and the absolution of the deprivation or dissonance, however, with which we are primarily concerned. It is here that Festinger offers consistent guidance. He hypothesizes that:

1. The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance.

2. When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which will likely increase the dissonance (1958:3).

According to Festinger there are essentially three ways of reducing this dissonance. 1) The change of a behavioral cognitive element; 2) The change of an environmental cognitive element; and 3) The addition of new cognitive elements. By then changing his environment, his behavior, or by adding new cognitive elements the individual is able to either bring about
the expected or alter his perception of the exogenous factors, until he is in consonance and, of course, no longer relatively deprived or in a state of cognitive dissonance.

During periods in which societies experience rapid growth in their social and technological fields the disinherit may find a perceived discrepancy between what they believe they are getting and what in actuality they expect to receive. This discrepancy between the observed and the expected must then be dealt with and explained in terms of factors exogenous to the individual.

In light of Festinger's theory, let us look at one example which may help to explain the adoption of ethnicity as an adaptive device.

It was related to me by two Native American informants that when they first moved to an urban area they were told by relatives that they should find Italian friends. The rational was that Italians had made it, we haven't, and if we can be mistaken for an Italian so much the better. In effect we have an example here of the reduction of dissonance by denying ethnicity, or in Festinger's terms by changing a behavioral cognitive element. However, in the case of both of these informants the dissonance was not reduced. They had moved into an inner-city
neighborhood occupied primarily by Southern whites and blacks, they were separated from Italians by many miles and ecological barriers, and they were identified, by whites, as Indians upon their arrival. However, in both cases, ethnicity continued to be denied in an effort to become socially mobile and to gain a share of the "riches" which the new urban environment had promised them. Today, however, both are members of Native American organizations which are actively ethnically oriented.

I suggest that in the above situation it is evident that the dissonance engendered by attempting to melt into the wider society, and being refused admittance; the promises that the urban environment had induced in the individual which were not fulfilled; the perception of discrimination; and perception of relative wealth in the surrounding environment was, in this case, solved in three ways. First, by avoidance of perhaps identity threatening situations; second, by a change in behavior; and third, by the addition of new cognitive elements. What actually did happen was 1) a withdrawal from social interaction which appeared to be threatening 2) a return to the pow-wow circuit, relearning of native language, and relearning of Indian craftmaking; and 3) quasi-mythmaking in the form of a belief in the independent origin of the
American Indian, stylish rhetoric, and a profound disrespect for whites and the system they represent.

One way of changing the behavioral element and confronting the environment is to re-establish or reify social relationships and/or ideology. Ethnicity may of course provide this mechanism. This is quite analogous to Wolf's concept of the ceremonial fund which serves quite the same purpose. Wolf states that "they (peasants) must also join with their fellow men in keeping order, in ensuring the rudimentary acceptance of certain rules of conduct so as to render life predictable and livable...social relations are never completely utilitarian and instrumental. Each is always surrounded with symbolic constructions which serve to explain, justify, and to regulate it (1966:7)."

Given the stress with which the individual must cope, ethnicity as an ideology or as a group phenomenon may serve the purpose of establishing relationships which have the dual function of offering individual stability and providing the basis for solidification and even economic and political power.

The asymmetrical structural relationship which exists for peasants is also present in American society for most of the lower and middle classes. This intensifies and magnifies the functional basis for the maintenance of this "ceremonial fund." By drawing on the fund of similar background, religion,
etc., the individual is socially and psychologically reinforced in such a manner as to allow for his functional adaptation, even though the afore-mentioned asymmetrical relationships exist. As Wolf points out, the amount of effort and the size of the ceremonial fund will depend on tradition and the perceived needs and abilities of the individual. In the same way, ethnicity may vary in its intensity and form.

It would certainly be rational, as well as productive for the individual who is in an uncertain social, political, or economic position to establish the kinds of social networks which would provide for him in times of emergency. This position, however, may drastically change as the individual sees himself as achieving his goals of social and/or economic mobility. The severing of ethnic ties at this stage has been well documented by Nagler (1970), as well as others, in his study of Indians in Toronto, Canada.

This brings me to the last point which I wish to consider. That is the effect of mass ethnic movements on other ethnics. Since the 1960s race relations has largely revolved around the relationships between blacks and whites. This attention has been important for two primary reasons. To many whites, and members of various other ethnic groups, the entire machinery of the several governments within the United States
revolved around "blackness." As a result many began to say "let me have some of this action." Thus the idea of ethnic became real, and in fact profitable, not only in terms of self-concept but also as a means of achieving social and economic mobility. Further, one need not look far to see other alienated groups seizing and slightly modifying the symbols that were, and continue to be, successful for Black Americans. This is what I have chosen to call the "band wagon" effect.

We have been speaking primarily of those peoples who are considered to be disadvantaged in the United States. However, it is apparent that in much of the middle class there may also be a redefinition of what an individual is in relation to his eco-system. Recently, while speaking to several upper-middle class Armenians and Italians it was pointed out to me that they perceive of a return to tradition among many of their people. As this return was being evidenced among both the religious and the non-religious and among those with weak family ties as well as strong family ties, I began to question. Their reasoning, for what they perceive as a renaissance of ethnicity among their own people, is the need for stability, the need for commonality against the impersonal work situation, and a conscious desire not to be left behind by others.
whom they see as being more ethnic than they.

This "band wagon" effect may have several important consequences. First, it provides the mechanism for the alienated to achieve a form of self-determination and a viable self-concept. Second, it provides the basis for a wider movement which may begin to integrate the several ethnic groups into the political and economic mainstream, while maintaining their culturally pluralistic traditions.

Sahlins and Service write that adaptation is "the securing and conserving control over the environment, (and) is the orienting process of the specific evolution of both life and culture" (1960:45). Essentially, this is what I have suggested ethnicity is doing in our contemporary society. I have further suggested that the result of alienation, etc. is relative deprivation and/or cognitive dissonance which must be resolved by reducing the dissonance and the deprivation. It is suggested that Wolf's concept of the ceremonial fund might very well be analogous in function to ethnicity as a mechanism which can be used to accomplish this goal. Finally, it has been suggested that the success that one group has had, because of a resurgence of ethnicity on their own part, has signalled a "band wagon" effect on other peoples who heretofore had not considered themselves to be ethnic
or had not used it as a positive mechanism with which to cope with their environment. As to why ethnicity, as the chosen mechanism, I can only suggest that it is 1) a readily available adaptation device; 2) it is independent of relative economic and political success; 3) symbols and models which have been relatively successful are available; and 4) ethnicity is a familiar model with which people can identify.
NOTES

1. This article is a revised version of a paper delivered at the symposium "Perspectives on the Effects of Complexity II: Urbanization," Central States Anthropological Society, Cleveland, Ohio: April 26-29, 1972.

2. It is a continuing source of internal intellectual debate for this author as to whether there is in actuality an emic ethnic renaissance or if instead it is only the latent discovery of the social scientist. Whichever is the case it will take additional research to clarify the point.

3. This paper is partially based upon preliminary fieldwork in an inner-city multi-ethnic community. Fieldwork will continue for an additional 30 months. Partial funding for this research has been obtained from The Ford Foundation and I thank them for their generous support.

4. I thank Ted Duncan (Wayne State University) for the initial idea which stimulated thought concerning the ceremonial fund.
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