

THE ACCOMMODATION AND INTEGRATION OF CONFLICTING CULTURES IN A NEWLY ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY

BY
RALPH H. DANHOF

The object of this discussion is to examine the nature of the integration and accommodation of conflicting cultures existing for the first time in a newly established community. In order to make such a study, the community selected had to be characterized by the following: (a) two or more distinct "ways of living" had to be carried into the community at the same time by its settlers; (b) the members of these conflicting cultures had to be numerous enough to maintain their respective modes of life and not be forced to adopt the "way of living" of another group in order to find satisfying forms of social life; and (c) the cultures carried into the community had not to possess, as far as the individuals within the new order were concerned, the means for accommodating to the existence of antithetical cultural traits within the same social organization.¹

¹ This article summarizes a study of a field study made possible by a Social Science Research Council restricted fellowship grant. Throughout this article the term "culture" is defined in the traditional anthropological sense to mean a well-defined complex of values based upon a distinct language and a relatively isolated economy. It is used rather to refer to any important cluster of related differences in the "way of living" of individuals. This use of the term, as well as the use of the term "culture," is not meant to be a criticism of the study of culture participating in what is commonly called the "Western world."

At least five conditions were in evidence in the community selected for study. First, the community was in a state of conflict with itself. Second, it was in a state of conflict with the outside world. Third, it was in a state of conflict with the government. Fourth, it was in a state of conflict with the economy. Fifth, it was in a state of conflict with the culture.

Boulder City, Nevada, created in 1909 by the United States Bureau of Reclamation in order to facilitate the construction of Boulder Dam, offered an excellent setting for such a study. Within a year after the federal government began the task of constructing the physical plant of the community, five thousand individuals had moved into the city and had begun the task of evolving a community organization. For the purpose of our analysis the population can be divided into five classes: (a) the "construction workers," (b) the "permanent settlers," (c) the Mormons, (d) migratory agricultural workers and the highly trained employees of private construction companies, and (e) temporary construction workers.

The members of these various culture groups occupied markedly distinct positions in society before entering Boulder City. In time, however, these individuals became accustomed to their niches and developed patterns of individual and group activities based on their functional

position in the community. In the case of Boulder City, the members of each of the minority cultures had become adjusted to one or two of the other ways of living carried into the community. None of the cultures, however, had become so adjusted that it had lost its own identity. The members of the minority cultures had not lost the way of living of the "Western world."

AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY

V. 49:1 [JULY 1943], PP. 14-23