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IN 1660 William Kieft, the Dutch governor of New Netherland, remarked to the French Jesuit Isaac Jogues that there were eighteen languages spoken at or near Fort Amsterdam at the tip of Manhattan Island. There still are: not necessarily the same languages, but at least as many; nor has the number ever declined in the intervening three centuries. This is an essential fact of New York: a merchant metropolis with an extraordinarily heterogeneous population. The first shipload of settlers sent out by the Dutch was made up largely of French-speaking Protestants. British, Germans, Finns, Jews, Swedes, Africans, Italians, Irish followed, beginning a stream that has never yet stopped.

The consequences of this confusion, soon to be compounded by the enormous size of the city itself, have been many. Not least has been the virtual impossibility ever of describing New York City or even the state in simple

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terms. By preference, but also in some degree by necessity, America has turned elsewhere for its images and traditions. Colonial America is preserved for us in terms of the Doric simplicity of New England, or the pastoral symmetry of the Virginia countryside. Even Philadelphia is manageable. But who can summon an image of eighteenth-century New York that will hold still in the mind? A third of the battles of the Revolution were fought on New York soil, but Bunker Hill and Yorktown come easiest to memory, as do Paul Revere and Patrick Henry.

History, or perhaps historians, keep passing New York by. During the Civil War "New York [State] provided the greatest number of soldiers, the greatest quantity of supplies, and the largest amount of money. In addition, New York's citizens paid the most taxes, bought the greatest number of war bonds, and gave the most to relief organizations."¹ Yet it is recalled as a war between Yankees and Southerners. The Union preserved, the American mind roams westward with the cowboys, returning, if at all, to the Main Streets of the Midwest. The only New York image that has permanently impressed itself on the national mind is that of Wall Street—a street on which nobody lives. Paris may be France, London may be England, but New York, we continue to reassure ourselves, is *not* America.

But, of course, it *is* America: not all of America, or even most, but surely the most important single part. As time passes, the nation comes more under the influence of the city—consider the effect of television in the past fifteen years. As time passes, the nation comes more to resemble the city: urban, heterogeneous, materialist, tough; also, perhaps, ungovernable, except that somehow it is governed, and not so badly, and with a considerable measure of democracy.

With all this, our feeling for the city is at best remote. Even New Yorkers seem to avoid too direct an involvement. The taverns of the West Side of New York boast tunes as old and as good as many gleaned in Appalachian hollows, but when the latter-day folk singers of Morrisania and Greenpoint take to the night clubs, they give forth with "Barbree Allen" and the "Ballad of the Boll Weevil." Even the sociologists, wedded to complexity and

eager for fresh subjects, have tended to shy away from the city. Chicago has been far more thoroughly studied, in part because of the accident of the existence of a great department of sociology at the University of Chicago. But it is no accident that a department of equal distinction at Columbia University during the 1940's and 1950's had almost nothing to do with New York. Big as it was, Chicago still offered a structure and scale that could be more easily comprehended.

When magazines on occasion devote issues to San Francisco or Chicago or Houston, and publish pictures of well-dressed and distinguished people in elegant settings, and tell us that these are the important people in this city, it is easy to believe them. When the same magazines get to New York and do the same, the informed reader cannot help but think they are indulging in a game. True, there *must* be important people in New York, but are they this banker, this publisher, this playwright, this society leader? The head of a huge corporation or financial complex in Chicago or Pittsburgh or Boston does play an important role in his city. He will be a central figure in a great movement to reform city government or rebuild the city center. In New York, the man who heads an institution or corporation of equal size is only one of many. The men who can sit around a table and settle things in smaller cities would here fill an auditorium. Indeed, in New York one can fill an auditorium with people of many kinds, who in other cities can sit around a room—high school principals, or educational reformers and thinkers and leaders, police captains and experts on crime and law enforcement, housing project managers and experts on housing and urban renewal, hospital directors and specialists in any field of medicine, directors of societies that help the poor and organizations that raise money from the rich, professors of sociology and owners of art galleries.

Of course there are important people in New York. But they have been men like Robert Moses, who has no equivalent in any other city in the United States, and whose major virtue was that he was well enough connected with enough of the centers of power to get something done, to get things moving. Everyone was so astonished at this fact that for a long time it hardly mattered that what

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he was getting done on a scale appropriate to the city's size was brutal and ugly, and only exacerbated its problems. The Rockefellers are also important in New York City. Perhaps only their combination of wealth and energy and political skill makes it possible for them to approximate the role that the Mellons play in Pittsburgh. But really there is no comparison. The Mellons can be a moving force in remaking the center of Pittsburgh, and in reshaping the image of that city. But all the wealth and skill of the Rockefellers, wedded to the power of Robert Moses, produce a smaller impact on New York. Robert Wagner, the mayor of New York, is an important man. He probably has never met, and never consults, men who in cities of a million or two million people would be movers of city affairs.

We must begin with this image of the city. New York is more than ten times as large as San Francisco, and twice as large as Chicago, but this does not suggest how much more complicated it is. For in the affairs of men, twice as large means four or eight times as complicated. Twice as large means that the man on top is perhaps four or eight times away from what happens on the bottom. But attempts at calculation understate the complexity. When you have 24,000 policemen in a city, it not only means that you need a few additional levels of authorities to deal with them—those over hundreds, and five hundreds, and thousands, and five thousands—but it also means (for example) that there are enough Jewish or Negro policemen to form an organization. And they too can fill a hall.

The interweaving of complexity that necessarily follows from its size with the complexity added by the origins of its population, drawn from a staggering number of countries and from every race, makes New York one of the most difficult cities in the world to understand, and helps us understand why so few books try in any serious way to understand it.

Ideally, if we are to describe one aspect of a city, in this case its ethnic groups, we should begin by spreading out as a background something about the city as a whole. We should speak about its politics, its economic life, its culture, its social life, its history. But none of these

aspects of the city can be adequately described or explained except by reference to its ethnic groups.

Consider the politics of New York. Major changes are now taking place in the city. The power of the regular Democratic party—the “machine”—to name its candidates has been broken. In 1961 Mayor Robert F. Wagner, having been denied the nomination, ran in opposition to the regular party, and won. To explain what happened, we have to say that he won with the support of lower-class Negro and Puerto Rican voters, and middle-class Jewish voters who together were enough to overcome the opposition of Italian, Irish, and white Protestant middle-class and upper-working-class voters. One could describe his victory and the political transition now underway in the city without using ethnic labels, but one could barely explain it. For in New York City ethnicity and class and religion are inevitably tied to each other. The votes of the poor and the well-to-do cannot be understood without looking into the question of who the poor and the well-to-do are, without examining their ethnic background.

Similarly, to describe the economy of New York fully, one would have to point out that it is dominated at its peak (the banks, insurance companies, utilities, big corporation offices) by white Protestants, with Irish Catholics and Jews playing somewhat smaller roles. In wholesale and retail commerce, Jews predominate. White-collar workers are largely Irish and Italian if they work for big organizations, and Jewish if they work for smaller ones. The city's working class is, on its upper levels, Irish, Italian, and Jewish; on its lower levels, Negro and Puerto Rican. Other ethnic groups are found scattered everywhere, but concentrated generally in a few economic specialties.

Despite all this, it remains something of a question just what role the ethnic groups play in the development of New York economy. New York is affected by the growth of suburbia, where it is easier to locate plants and shopping centers, and where the middle class prefers to live—and presumably this would be happening no matter what ethnic groups made up the city. New York is affected by the growth of the Far West and Southwest, for more and more productive and commercial facilities are located in those

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areas. New York is affected by the power of unions in old centers, just as Detroit and New England are, and this encourages some plants to move away. Its original growth was touched off presumably by the fact that it was the terminus of the best level route to the Midwest, both in the canal era and the railroad era, and that it has the best natural port on the Northeastern Seaboard. These factors are quite independent of the nature of its population.

But there are other elements in the relationship between the population of New York and the economic development of New York. New York is now plagued by low wages in manufacturing. In the years since the end of the Second World War, the city has declined, relative to other cities, in the wages paid in manufacturing industries. This is a very complicated matter. Yet it must be of some significance that its manufacturing wages have fallen at a time when it has had a vast influx of relatively unskilled and untrained manufacturing labor. If through some historical accident the immigrants of the period 1946–1960 had been of the same level of education and training as the refugee German and Austrian Jews of 1933–1940, might not the economic history of the city have been different? Clearly, the main lines of the economic history of New York have been fixed by great factors that are quite independent of the nature of the population. Yet obvious as this is, there are important connections between what a people are, or what they have been made by history and experience, and their economic fate, and as economists now become more and more involved in considering the development of people of widely different cultures, they may learn things that will throw more light on the economic development of New York.

New York's culture is what it is presumably because it is the cultural capital of the richest and most important nation in the world. If America's culture is important, New York's culture must be important, and this would be true even if New York were all Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. And yet, the fact that the city is one-quarter Jewish, and one-sixth Italian, and one-seventh Negro—this also plays some part in the cultural history of New York. Ethnic identity is an element in all equations.

The census of 1960 showed that 19 per cent of the population of the city were still foreign-born whites, 28 per cent were children of foreign-born whites, another 14 per cent were Negro, 8 per cent were of Puerto Rican birth or parentage. Unquestionably, a great majority of the rest (31 per cent) were the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of immigrants, and still thought of themselves, on some occasions and for some purposes, as German, Irish, Italian, Jewish, or whatnot, as well as of course Americans.

Of the foreign-stock population (immigrants and their children), 859,000 were born in Italy or were the children of Italian immigrants; 564,000 were from the U. S. S. R. (these are mostly Jews); 389,000 from Poland (these too are mostly Jews); 324,000 from Germany; 312,000 from Ireland; 220,000 from Austria; 175,000 from Great Britain; almost 100,000 from Hungary; more than 50,000 from Greece, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Canada; more than 25,000 from Yugoslavia, around 10,000 from the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, and Switzerland; more than 5,000 from Portugal and Mexico. There were more than a million Negroes, and more than 50,000 of other races, mostly Chinese and Japanese. From almost every country in the world there are enough people in the city to make up communities of thousands and tens of thousands with organizations, churches, a language, some distinctive culture (see Table 1).

Let us introduce some order into this huge buzzing confusion. The best way to do so is historically. English stock has apparently never been in a clear majority in New York City. In 1775 one-half of the white population of the state was of English origin, but this proportion was probably lower in New York City, with its Dutch and other non-English groups, and with its large Negro population.² After the Revolution and the resumption of immigration, English and Scottish immigrants as well as migrants from New England and upstate New York probably maintained the British-descent group as the largest in the city through the first half of the nineteenth century.

In the 1840's Irish and Germans, who had of course been present in the city in some numbers before this time, began to enter in much larger numbers, and soon

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became dominant. By 1855 the Irish-born made up 28 per cent of the city, the German-born 16 per cent of the city;³ with their children they certainly formed a majority of the city, and they maintained this dominance until the end of the century. In 1890 Irish-born and German-born and their children made up 52 per cent of the population of New York and Brooklyn (then separate cities).⁴

In the 1880's Jews and Italians began to come in large numbers (there were of course sizable communities of both groups in the city before this time), and this heavy immigration continued until 1924, and on a reduced scale after that.

The Negroes began to enter the city in great numbers after World War I, the Puerto Ricans after World War II.

Thus six great groups have entered the city two by two, in subsequent epochs; and to these we must add as a seventh group the "old stock," or the "white Anglo-Saxon Protestants." The two terms are of course not identical, but the overlap among those they comprise is great. The "old stock" includes those New Yorkers who descend from families that were here before the Revolution. They were largely of English, Scottish, and Welsh origin, but also included Dutch, French, and other settlers from Northwestern Europe. It has been relatively easy for later immigrants of the same ethnic and religious background—from Canada and from Europe—to assimilate to this "old stock" group if they were in occupations of high status and of at least moderate affluence.⁵

What is the relative size of these seven groups in the city today? For all except the Negroes and the Puerto Ricans, who are listed separately in the census, it is difficult to give more than a very general guess. The accepted religious breakdown of the city population, based on sample surveys and estimates by various religious groups, indicates that less than a quarter of the population is Protestant, and more than half of that is Negro.⁶ The white Protestants of course include many of German, Scandinavian, Czech, and Hungarian origins. It is thus not likely that more than about one-twentieth of the population of the city is "old stock," or "WASP." Public opinion polls

which ask for “national origin” suggest that about a tenth of the population is Irish, another tenth German. The same sources suggest that about a sixth is Italian. Jewish organizations estimate that one-quarter of the population is Jewish. The census reports that Negroes form 14 per cent of the population, Puerto Ricans 8 per cent. We have accounted for about 90 per cent of the population of the city. (In Table 2 we have arranged from the various censuses since 1900, when New York assumed its present physical extent, figures indicating the changing size of these various elements in the population of the city.) These figures, aside from being inexact (less so for Puerto Rican and Negro), also assume that everyone in the city can be neatly assigned to an ethnic category. Of course this is in large measure myth; many of the people in the city, as in the nation, have parents and grandparents of two or three or four groups.

Despite the immigration laws, old groups grow and new groups form in the city. Thus, Batista and Castro, as well as the growing size of the Spanish-speaking population, have encouraged the growth of a large Cuban community of 50,000. For despite the stringent immigration laws, the United States is still the chief country of immigration in the world, and 2,500,000 were able to enter this country as immigrants between 1950–1959. Very large numbers of these immigrants settle in New York and its region, where large communities of their compatriots make life easier and pleasanter. Buried in this vast population of the city are new groups (such as 18,000 Israelis) that in any other city would be marked and receive attention. In New York their coffee shops and bars and meeting places and political disputes and amusements and problems are of interest only to themselves. Only when an immigrant group reaches the enormous size of the Puerto Ricans does it become a subject of interest, attention, and concern.

New York cannot be read out of America because of its heterogeneity; but it is true its heterogeneity is to some extent extreme, even among the heterogeneous cities of the Northeast. The cities of the South, except for the presence of Negroes, are far more homogeneous. They are largely inhabited by white Protestants whose ancestors came from the British Isles. The cities of the Great Plain—

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from Indianapolis to Kansas City—are also somewhat less mixed. Their largest ethnic element is generally German; and Germans have also found it easiest to assimilate to the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture that is still the norm in American life. The cities of the Far West, too, are in their ethnic aspect somewhat different from the cities of the Northeast. Their populations, if we trace them back far enough, are as diverse as the populations of Northeastern cities. But these immigrants have come from the East, Midwest, and South of the United States, rather than from Europe. This second immigration to the Far West has made them more alike. If you ask people there, “Where did you come from?,” the answer is Illinois or Iowa, Oklahoma or New York. In the Northeast, the answer is more likely to be Germany or Sweden, Russia or Italy. In terms of immediate origins, the populations of Far Western cities consist of Iowans and Illinoisans and New Yorkers, rather than Germans, Jews, and Italians.

But now what does it mean for New York that most of its population is composed of people who think of themselves—at least at some times, for some purposes—as Jews, Italians, Negroes, Germans, Irishmen, Puerto Ricans? Is New York different, because of this fact, from London, Paris, Moscow, Tokyo?

Do we not, in every great city, meet people from all over the world? We do; but we should not confuse the heterogeneity of most of the great cities of the world with that of New York. The classic heterogeneity of great cities has been limited to the elite part of the population. It is the small numbers of the wealthy and exceptional who represent in those other cities the variety of the countries of the world, not, as in the United States, the masses. This for the most part is still true of the great cities of Europe, even though large numbers of Irishmen and colored people now form part of the working class of London, large numbers of Algerians part of the working class of Paris. Those with very special skills and talents have always been drawn from all over the world into its great cities. Thus, the specialized trading peoples—Phoenicians, Syrians, Greeks, Jews—have formed, for thousands of years, part of the specialized commercial and trading classes of the Mediterranean

cities. And even today, trade with foreign countries is still in large measure carried on by nationals of the countries involved, who have special knowledge of language and conditions and local laws and regulations. There is also to be found in all great cities the diplomatic corps, now enormously swollen by international agencies of all sorts. There are the people involved in cultural and artistic activities, who may be of any part of the world. These elites, commercial, political, cultural, today give such cities as London, Paris, and Tokyo an international flavor. It is these people we think of when we say that people from all over the world flock to its great cities; they do, but they are relatively few in numbers.

The heterogeneity of New York is of the masses—numbers so great that Negroes are not exotic, as they are in Paris, Puerto Ricans not glamorous representatives of Latin American culture, as they might be in London, Italians not rare representatives of a great nation, as they are in Tokyo. Here the numbers of each group are so great, so steady and heavy a presence, that it takes an effort of mind to see that all these group names describe a double aspect: those one sees around one, and those in some other country, on some other continent, with a different culture.

Admittedly, even this heterogeneity of the masses is not unique to the cities of the United States. The cities of Canada and Latin America have also drawn their populations from varied groups (though none equals New York in its variety). Even in the great cities of the past one could find sizable differences among the masses. In Athens one might presumably find countrymen from every deme, in Paris workers from every province. There was probably a tendency for them to cluster together. Even though all spoke the same language, they spoke different dialects. Even though they were all of the same religion, they may have preferred to worship among friends and relatives. Even though they all participated in some forms of a growing national culture, they must have preferred their own provincial specialties in food, folk music, and dancing.

But in New York the masses that make up the city have come not from different provinces but different countries. Their languages have been mutually unintel-

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ligible, their religion radically different, their family structures, values, ideals, cultural patterns have been as distinct as those of the Irish and the Southern Negro, of urban Jews and peasant Italians.

This is the way it was, but will it be relevant for New York City much longer? The foreign-language press declines rapidly in circulation; the old immigrant quarters now hold only some of the old-timers. The immigrant societies play little role in the city's politics. The American descendants of immigrants diverge markedly from the people of the old country. American descendants of Germans seem no more committed to the unity of Germany and the defense of Berlin than other Americans, the foreign policy of the American Irish seems to have nothing in common any more with the foreign policy of a neutral Eire, and the political outlook and culture of Americans of Italian descent seem to have little in common with what one can see in Italy. (New Italian movies exploring the limits of modern sensibility are as incomprehensible to Italian immigrants as to other immigrants.) And perhaps the Jewish commitment to Israel is best explained by the recency of the establishment of the state and the permanent danger surrounding it. American culture seems to be as attractive to the children of immigrants as the descendants of pioneers (and indeed, as attractive to Indonesians or Russians as to Americans). The powerful assimilatory influences of American society operate on all who come into it, making the children of immigrants and even immigrants themselves a very different people from those they left behind. In what sense, then, can we put immigrants, their children, their grandchildren, and even further descendants into one group and speak of, for example, "the" Irish? Must we not speak of the middle-class Irish and the working-class Irish, the big-city Irish and the small-town Irish, the recent immigrants and the second and third and fourth generation, the Democrats and the Republicans; and when we do, is there any content left to the group name?

Perhaps the meaning of ethnic labels will yet be erased in America. But it has not yet worked out this way in New York. It is true that immigrants to this country were rapidly transformed, in comparison with immigrants

to other countries, that they lost their language and altered their culture. It was reasonable to believe that a new American type would emerge, a new nationality in which it would be a matter of indifference whether a man was of Anglo-Saxon or German or Italian or Jewish origin, and in which indeed, because of the diffusion of populations through all parts of the country and all levels of the social order, and because of the consequent close contact and intermarriage, it would be impossible to make such distinctions. This may still be the most likely result in the long run. After all, in 1960 almost half of New York City's population was still foreign-born or the children of foreign-born. Yet it is also true that it is forty years since the end of mass immigration, and new processes, scarcely visible when our chief concern was with the great masses of immigrants and the problems of their "Americanization," now emerge to surprise us. The initial notion of an American melting pot did not, it seems, quite grasp what would happen in America. At least it did not grasp what would happen in the short run, and since this short run encompasses at least the length of a normal lifetime, it is not something we can ignore.

It is true that language and culture are very largely lost in the first and second generations, and this makes the dream of "cultural pluralism"—of a new Italy or Germany or Ireland in America, a League of Nations established in the New World—as unlikely as the hope of a "melting pot." But as the groups were transformed by influences in American society, stripped of their original attributes, they were recreated as something new, but still as identifiable groups. Concretely, persons think of themselves as members of that group, with that name; they are thought of by others as members of that group, with that name; and most significantly, they are linked to other members of the group by new attributes that the original immigrants would never have recognized as identifying their group, but which nevertheless serve to mark them off, by more than simply name and association, in the third generation and even beyond.

The assimilating power of American society and culture operated on immigrant groups in different ways,

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to make them, it is true, something they had not been, but still something distinct and identifiable. The impact of assimilating trends on the groups is different in part because the groups are different—Catholic peasants from Southern Italy were affected differently, in the same city and the same time, from urbanized Jewish workers and merchants from Eastern Europe. We cannot even begin to indicate how various were the characteristics of family structure, religion, economic experience and attitudes, educational experience and attitudes, political outlook that differentiated groups from such different backgrounds. Obviously, some American influences worked on them in common and with the same effects. But their differences meant they were open to different parts of American experience, interpreted it in different ways, used it for different ends. In the third generation, the descendants of the immigrants confronted each other, and knew they were both Americans, in the same dress, with the same language, using the same artifacts, troubled by the same things, but they voted differently, had different ideas about education and sex, and were still, in many essential ways, as different from one another as their grandfathers had been.

The initial attributes of the groups provided only one reason why their transformations did not make them all into the same thing. There was another reason—and that was the nature of American society itself, which could not, or did not, assimilate the immigrant groups fully or in equal degree. Or perhaps the nature of human society in general. It is only the experience of the strange and foreign that teaches us how provincial we are. A hundred thousand Negroes have been enough to change the traditional British policy of free immigration from the colonies and dominions. Japan finds it impossible to incorporate into the body of its society anyone who does not look Japanese, or even the Koreans, indistinguishable very often in appearance and language from Japanese. And we shall test the racial attitudes of the Russians only when there are more than a few Negroes passing through as curiosities; certainly the inability of Russians to get over anti-Semitism does not suggest they are any different from the rest of mankind. In any case, the word “American”

was an unambiguous reference to nationality only when it was applied to a relatively homogeneous social body consisting of immigrants from the British Isles, with relatively small numbers from nearby European countries. When the numbers of those not of British origin began to rise, the word "American" became a far more complicated thing. Legally, it meant a citizen. Socially, it lost its identifying power, and when you asked a man what he was (in the United States), "American" was not the answer you were looking for. In the United States it became a slogan, a political gesture, sometimes an evasion, but not a matter-of-course, concrete social description of a person. Just as in certain languages a word cannot stand alone but needs some particle to indicate its function, so in the United States the word "American" does not stand by itself. If it does, it bears the additional meaning of patriot, "authentic" American, critic and opponent of "foreign" ideologies.

The original Americans became "old" Americans, or "old stock," or "white Anglo-Saxon Protestants," or some other identification which indicated they were not immigrants or descendants of recent immigrants. These original Americans already had a frame in their minds, which became a frame in reality, that placed and ordered those who came after them. Those who were like them could easily join them. It was important to be white, of British origin, and Protestant. If one was all three, then even if one was an immigrant, one was really not an immigrant, or not for long.

Thus, even before it knew what an Italian or Jew or an Irishman was like, the American mind had a place for the category, high or low, depending on color, on religion, on how close the group was felt to be the Anglo-Saxon center. There were peculiarities in this placing. Why, for example, were the Germans placed higher than the Irish? There was of course an interplay to some extent between what the group actually was and where it was placed, and, since the German immigrants were less impoverished than the Irish and somewhat more competent craftsmen and farmers, this undoubtedly affected the old American's image of them. Then ideology came in to emphasize the common links between Englishmen and Ger-

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mans, who, even though they spoke different languages, were said to be really closer to each other than the old Americans were to the English-speaking, but Catholic and Celtic, Irish. If a group's first representatives were cultured and educated, those who came after might benefit, unless they were so numerous as to destroy the first image. Thus, German Jews who arrived in the 1840's and 1850's benefited from their own characteristics and their link with Germans, until they were overwhelmed by the large number of East European Jewish immigrants after 1880. A new wave of German Jewish immigrants, in the 1930's, could not, regardless of culture and education, escape the low position of being "Jewish."

The ethnic group in American society became not a survival from the age of mass immigration but a new social form. One could not predict from its first arrival what it might become or, indeed, whom it might contain. The group is not a purely biological phenomenon. The Irish of today do not consist of those who are descended from Irish immigrants. Were we to follow the history of the germ plasm alone—if we could—we should find that many in the group really came from other groups, and that many who should be in the group are in other groups. The Protestants among them, and those who do not bear distinctively Irish names, may now consider themselves, and be generally considered, as much "old American" as anyone else. The Irish-named offspring of German or Jewish or Italian mothers often find that willy-nilly they have become Irish. It is even harder for the Jewish-named offspring of mixed marriages to escape from the Jewish group; neither Jews nor non-Jews will let them rest in ambiguity.

Parts of the group are cut off, other elements join the group as allies. Under certain circumstances, strange as it may appear, it is desirable to be able to take on a group name, even of a low order, if it can be made to fit, and if it gives one certain advantages. It is better in Oakland, California, to be a Mexican than an Indian, and so some of the few Indians call themselves, at certain times, for certain occasions, "Mexicans." In the forming of ethnic groups subtle distinctions are overridden; there is an advantage to belonging to a big group, even if it

is looked down upon. West Indian Negroes achieve important political positions, as representatives of Negroes; Spaniards and Latin Americans become the representatives of Puerto Ricans; German Jews rose to Congress from districts dominated by East European Jews.

Ethnic groups then, even after distinctive language, customs, and culture are lost, as they largely were in the second generation, and even more fully in the third generation, are continually recreated by new experiences in America. The mere existence of a name itself is perhaps sufficient to form group character in new situations, for the name associates an individual, who actually can be anything, with a certain past, country, race. But as a matter of fact, someone who is Irish or Jewish or Italian generally has other traits than the mere existence of the name that associates him with other people attached to the group. A man is connected to his group by ties of family and friendship. But he is also connected by ties of *interest*. The ethnic groups in New York are also *interest groups*.

This is perhaps the single most important fact about ethnic groups in New York City. When one speaks of the Negroes and Puerto Ricans, one also means unorganized and unskilled workers, who hold poorly paying jobs in the laundries, hotels, restaurants, small factories or who are on relief. When one says Jews, one also means small shopkeepers, professionals, better-paid skilled workers in the garment industries. When one says Italians, one also means homeowners in Staten Island, the North Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens.

If state legislation threatens to make it more difficult to get relief, this is headline news in the Puerto Rican press—for the group is affected—and news of much less importance to the rest of the press. The interplay between rational economic interests and the other interests or attitudes that stem out of group history makes for an incredibly complex political and social situation. Consider the local laws against discrimination in housing. Certain groups that face discrimination want such laws—Negroes, Puerto Ricans, and Jews. Jews meet little discrimination in housing in New York but have an established ideological commitment to all antidiscrimination laws. Apartment-house owners are against

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any restriction of their freedom or anything that might affect their profits. In New York, this group is also largely Jewish, but it is inhibited in pushing strongly against such laws by its connections with the Jewish community. Private homeowners see this as a threat to their homogenous neighborhoods. These are largely German, Irish, and Italian. The ethnic background of the homeowners links them to communities with a history of anti-Negro feelings. The Irish and Italian immigrants have both at different times competed directly with Negro labor.

In the analysis then of the conflict over anti-discrimination laws, "rational" economic interests and the "irrational" or at any rate noneconomic interests and attitudes tied up with one's own group are inextricably mixed together. If the rational interests did not operate, some of the older groups would by now be much weaker than they are. The informal and formal social groupings that make up these communities are strengthened by the fact that Jews can talk about the garment business, Irish about politics and the civil service, Italians about the state of the trucking or contracting or vegetable business.

In addition to the links of interest, family and fellowfeeling bind the ethnic group. There is satisfaction in being with those who are like oneself. The ethnic group is something of an extended family or tribe. And aside from ties of feeling and interest, there are concrete ties of organization. Certain types of immigrant social organization have declined, but others have been as ingenious in remolding and recreating themselves as the group itself. The city is often spoken of as the place of anonymity, of the breakdown of some kind of preexisting social order. The ethnic group, as Oscar Handlin has pointed out, served to create a new form of order. Those who came in with some kind of disadvantage, created by a different language, a different religion, a different race, found both comfort and material support in creating various kinds of organizations. American social services grew up in large part to aid incoming immigrant groups. Many of these were limited to a single religious or ethnic group. Ethnic groups set up hospitals, old people's homes, loan funds, charitable organizations, as well as churches and cultural organizations. The

initial need for a separate set of welfare and health institutions became weaker as the group became more prosperous and as the government took over these functions, but the organizations nevertheless continued. New York organizational life today is in large measure lived within ethnic bounds. These organizations generally have religious names, for it is more acceptable that welfare and health institutions should cater to religious than to ethnic communities. But of course religious institutions are generally closely linked to a distinct ethnic group. The Jewish (religious) organizations are Jewish (ethnic), Catholic are generally Irish or Italian, now with the Puerto Ricans as important clients; the Protestant organizations are white Protestant—which means generally old American, with a smaller German wing—in leadership, with Negroes as their chief clients.

Thus many elements—history, family and feeling, interest, formal organizational life—operate to keep much of New York life channeled within the bounds of the ethnic group. Obviously, the rigidity of this channeling of social life varies from group to group. For the Puerto Ricans, a recent immigrant group with a small middle class and speaking a foreign language, the ethnic group serves as the setting for almost all social life. For Negroes too, because of discrimination and poverty, most social life is limited to the group itself. Jews and Italians are still to some extent recent immigrants, and despite the growing middle-class character of the Jewish group, social life for both is generally limited to other members of the group. But what about the Irish and the Germans?

Probably, many individuals who by descent “belong” to one of these older groups go through a good part of their lives with no special consciousness of the fact. It may be only under very special circumstances that one becomes aware of the matter at all—such as if one wants to run for public office. The political realm, indeed, is least willing to consider such matters a purely private affair. Consciousness of one’s ethnic background may be intermittent. It is only on occasion that someone may think of or be reminded of his background, and perhaps become self-conscious about the pattern formed by his family, his friends, his job, his interests. Obviously, this ethnic aspect of a man’s

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life is more important if he is part of one group than if he is part of another; if he is Negro, he can scarcely escape it, and if he is of German origin, little will remind him of it.

Conceivably the fact that one's origins can become only a memory suggests the general direction for ethnic groups in the United States—toward assimilation and absorption into a homogeneous American mass. And yet, as we suggested earlier, it is hard to see in the New York of the 1960's just how this comes about. Time alone does not dissolve the groups if they are not close to the Anglo-Saxon center. Color marks off a group, regardless of time; and perhaps most significantly, the "majority" group, to which assimilation should occur, has taken on the color of an ethnic group, too. To what does one assimilate in modern America? The "American" in abstract does not exist, though some sections of the country, such as the Far West, come closer to realizing him than does New York City. There are test cases of such assimilation in the past. The old Scotch-Irish group, an important ethnic group of the early nineteenth century, is now for the most part simply old American, "old stock." Old Dutch families have become part of the upper class of New York. But these test cases merely reveal to us how partial was the power of the old American type to assimilate—it assimilated its ethnic cousins.

There is also, in New York, a nonethnic city. There are the fields that draw talent from all over the country and all over the world. There are the areas, such as Greenwich Village, where those so collected congregate. On Broadway, in the radio and television industry, in the art world, in all the spheres of culture, mass or high, one finds the same mixture that one finds in every country. Those involved in these intense and absorbing pursuits would find the city described in these pages strange. Another area of mixture is politics. It is true that political life itself emphasizes the ethnic character of the city, with its balanced tickets and its special appeals. But this is in large part an objective part of the business, just as the Jewish plays on Broadway are part of the business. For those in the field itself, there is more contact across the ethnic lines, and the ethnic lines themselves mean less, than in other areas of the city's life.

How does one write about such groups? If one believes, as the authors of this book do, that the distinctions are important, and that they consist of more than the amusing differences of accent and taste in food and drink, then it is no simple matter to decide how to describe and analyze this aspect of American reality. For it has been common to speak about the ethnic groups in terms of either blame or praise.

It is understandable that as foreigners flooded American cities all the ills of the cities were laid on their shoulders. It is also understandable that the children of the immigrants (and they had the help of many other Americans) should have defended themselves. They had become part of America; they spoke the language, fought in the wars, paid the taxes, were as patriotic as those who could count more generations in the country—and just as they had become Americanized and good citizens, others would. There is no way of discounting the polemical impact of anything written on this question. How many and of what kind to let into this country is a permanent and important question of American public life. It is a permanent question in American life what attitudes to take on matters of public welfare, public education, housing, toward increasing numbers of new groups in American cities. These are matters that involve the chances for decent lives for many Americans, and mobilize the deep and irrational passions of many others. On such issues, most people will simply have to use arguments and facts and ideas as weapons, and will not be able to use them for enlightenment. Even scholarship is generally enlisted in the cause, on one side or another. And yet beyond personal interest and personal commitment, it is possible to view this entire fascinating spectacle of the ethnic variety of the American city and to consider what it means.

At least, this is the point of view we have tried to adopt in this book. It is inevitably filled with judgments, yet the central judgment—an over-all evaluation of the meaning of American heterogeneity—we have tried to avoid, because we would not know how to make it. One author is the son of a working-class immigrant, the other, the grandson; there is no question where their personal interest

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leads them. On the other hand, we would not know how to argue with someone who maintained that something was lost when an original American population was overwhelmed in the central cities by vast numbers of immigrants of different culture, religion, language, and race.

But the original Americans did choose this course; the nation stuck with it for a hundred years; and despite the policy of 1924, which was supposed to fix the ethnic proportions of the population then attained, these proportions change continually because the immigration policy of the United States is still the freest of any great nation. And enormous internal migrations continue to change the populations of the cities as rapidly and on as great a scale as in the era of free immigration.

A nation is formed by critical decisions, and the American decision was to permit the entire world to enter almost without restriction. The consequences of this key decision, despite the work of such major figures as Marcus Hansen and Oscar Handlin, have received surprisingly little attention. Popular writing, scholarly writing, novels, and plays, all seem to find the beginning of the process of assimilation most interesting. It is when the immigrants first arrive that everyone is aware of them. By the time the problems are less severe, or have become largely personal, local color has been dissipated in the flush of Americanization, and the writers find less to write about. Because of the paucity of the literature and the size of the subject, it has proved beyond our capacities to present our theses wholly in terms of objective and verifiable statements. It would be quite impossible to write a book such as this exclusively on the basis of concrete data which are either now available or which could, with reasonable effort, be obtained. We have nonetheless gone ahead out of the strongest possible feeling of the continuing reality and significance of the ethnic group in New York, and by extension, in American life. This is what we think we know about the subject: this is all we can say except that if we are subsequently proved wrong, we hope we shall have at least contributed to a continuing discussion.

Some of the judgments—we will not call them facts—which follow will appear to be harsh. We ask

the understanding of those who will be offended. The racial and religious distinctions of the city create more than a little ugliness and complacency. But they are also the source of a good deal of vigor, and a kind of rough justice that is not without attraction. Melbourne is said to have expressed a particular fondness for the Order of the Garter, which was awarded, as it were, on the basis of blood lines "with no damned nonsense about merit." This, precisely, is the principle of the balanced ticket and a thousand other arrangements, formal and informal, that the people of New York have contrived to bring a measure of social peace and equity to a setting that promises little of either.

The body of the book describes five major groups of the city. There is no great significance to the order in which they are arranged. We begin, as the visitor might, with what immediately strikes the eye, and proceed from there.

the Negroes

To most New Yorkers today to whom the word means anything, “Fort Greene” means the Fort Greene Houses, the largest public housing project in the city, which stands between downtown Brooklyn and the Brooklyn Navy Yard. To the eye, it is mostly Negro, though the official figures show that a fifth of the 3,500 apartments are occupied by whites, and another fifth are occupied by Puerto Ricans. It would probably surprise New Yorkers who recall stories of gang fighting in the Fort Greene area to discover that above the housing project, in a little park, stands one of the major monuments in the city. It commemorates the prison ship martyrs of the Revolution and was designed by the great architects of New York’s age of elegance, McKim, Mead & White, who also built the University Club, the Columbia University campus, the N.Y.U. Hall of Fame, the Pennsylvania Station, and the Brooklyn Museum. This monument contains a great central