

The Roles of Ethnic Theater in Immigrant Communities in the United States 1850-1930*

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In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries millions of Europeans left their homes to form immigrant communities in the United States. Much of the literature about those immigrant communities focuses upon problems such as their economic hardships, prejudices against them, and their difficulties adjusting to an unfamiliar environment. It is equally important, however, to study the strengths of these communities, their rich internal life, and the institutions that expressed and sustained that life. One of the most significant and least studied of these institutions was the foreign language, or ethnic, theater.

Springing from widely varying historical, cultural, and theatrical traditions, foreign language theater varied in style and content from one immigrant community to another and even within a single community. This paper focuses upon what these many theaters had in common, the roles they played in the lives of European immigrants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For people who were sometimes illiterate, usually poor, and often lonely, ethnic theater played three vital roles: it educated, it entertained, and it provided a focus for social and community life.

The Nature and Scope of Ethnic Theater

As large, identifiable immigrant communities made their appearance in nineteenth century America, ethnic theater also made its appearance. Professional German theater operated in New Orleans and New York before 1840 and in the towns and villages of the midwest soon after.¹ Norwegian and Swedish theater in Chicago dates back to the mid-nineteenth century.² Though large scale Polish immigration did not begin until the 1880s, by 1890 Polish theater was performing not only in urban centers such as New York, Detroit, Chicago, and Buffalo, but also in smaller communities such as Winona, Minnesota and Arcadia, New York.³

Ethnic theaters were as varied as the communities that produced them. Informal "clubs" met to discuss the theater and to read and sometimes to write plays. Amateur groups gave occasional or regular performances under a variety of sponsorships, including musical and

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literary societies, athletic groups, lodges, settlement houses, churches, labor unions, socialist societies, nationalist societies, temperance societies, women's clubs, charitable societies, youth groups, public and parochial schools, and universities. In addition, the Finns, Germans, Poles, Jews, Italians, and other European groups (as well as the Chinese and Japanese on the West Coast) supported commercial theaters with professional actors, directors, and playwrights.

Amateur or professional, ethnic theaters had many problems. Actors, directors, and playwrights quarreled among themselves. Serving poor communities, ethnic theaters were always plagued by lack of money. Often they faced opposition from their own countrymen. The Augustana Synod of the Lutheran Church condemned Swedish theater as worldly and sinful.⁴ A committee of assimilated German Jews tried to block the opening of immigrant Yiddish theater in New York in 1882 because they were afraid it would evoke antisemitism. "Go out into the country and become peddlers," the committee advised, "Find decent work and don't bring shame upon your people with this foolery you call theatre."⁵

There were other problems. During one of many "Indian Wars," Native Americans burned a German theater in New Ulm, Minnesota in 1862;⁶ more permanent damage resulted from nationwide anti-German boycotts during World War I.⁷ Ethnic theaters were harassed by the police for violating the Blue Laws; Sundays were favorite days for theater in many immigrant communities. Influenced perhaps by stereotypes of foreigners as dangerous radicals, police closed a Polish play about the assassination of Alexander II because of a rumor that a "live dynamite bomb" would be exploded.⁸

Despite these and other problems, ethnic theaters flourished, reaching a substantial portion of the immigrant community during their peak years in the early decades of the twentieth century. Countless amateur groups played for themselves or for audiences of various sizes in church basements, barns, social halls, and living rooms. Professional companies were imported from the homeland or developed from among the amateur talent within the immigrant community. These companies performed weekly, daily, sometimes twice a day in handsome, well equipped structures such as the Finnish Socialist Hall in Astoria, Oregon⁹ or the (Italian) Washington Square Theater in San Francisco¹⁰ for audiences of hundreds or even thousands. Individuals who could afford to do so traveled hundreds of miles to see special performances,¹¹ and traveling companies brought theater to communities too small or too isolated to support their own.

For many immigrants, theater was not an occasional indulgence or a frill; it was a necessity. People who worked fourteen or more hours a day, six days a week in mills, mines, or sweatshops spent their few precious hours of leisure attending ethnic theater, acting in it, or writing for it. Jewish garment workers in the Lower East Side of New York City went without meals to buy tickets to the theaters on Second Avenue, the "Yiddish Broadway."

Members of some ethnic groups brought their love of theater with them from the old country. Many Finns, for example, had seen productions of the Finnish National Theater before immigration and staffed their American theaters with professional actors and directors trained in the homeland. South Italians brought with them a sophisticated knowledge of opera and of regional folk comedy, the traditional *Commedia dell'arte*. No group were more ardent supporters of theater than East European Jews, however; but for most of them theater was a new experience. Yiddish theater made its first formal appearance in Eastern Europe in 1876, only six years before its introduction into New York City.¹²

In coming to the United States, immigrants cut themselves off from many of the institutions, traditions, and companions that had met a wide range of intellectual, emotional, and social needs in the old world. In the new world they had to develop new ways to meet these needs.¹³ Herein lay the increased importance of theater. Ethnic theater helped provide education, entertainment, and social life for immigrants whose needs in these areas could not be met by mainstream Anglo-American life.

Theater as Education

One of the major roles of ethnic theater was education. Though immigrants in general had a higher educational level than their counterparts who stayed at home, many were poorly educated, not only in English but even in their native languages. Deprived of opportunities to learn about their own culture because of poverty, isolation, or political oppression, these people were hungry for exposure to their own language, history, and literature.¹⁴ Ethnic theater provided this exposure.

Ethnic theater made history, literature, and folklore of the homeland accessible to the literate and illiterate alike and gave the American-born children at least some contact with the culture of their foreign-born parents. Yiddish theater presented dramas about Biblical and medieval heroes and about contemporary persecutions;

Swedish theater told of peasant uprisings against Danish rule and of Gustavus Adolphus and the Thirty Years War; German theater dramatized the exploits of Frederick the Great.¹⁵ Polish theaters presented so many plays on historical and national themes that a nationalistic Polish journalist praised them as "the schools of patriotism."¹⁶ Plays based upon legends and folklore as well as history were common in all ethnic theaters and were popular in professional as well as amateur productions.

Many ethnic theaters presented the classics of theatrical traditions other than their own, as well as the best of contemporary theater from all over the world in translation or in special adaptations. Shakespeare was performed in Yiddish, German, Swedish, and Italian. German theaters presented a variety of classics as well as the works of modern German dramatists such as Gerhart Hauptmann and Frank Wedekind. Italian theatergoers in San Francisco saw not only a complete range of operas, but also the works of Dumas, Goethe, Sudermann and Verne. The most cosmopolitan ethnic theater of all was the Yiddish theater of New York, which introduced its audience to Moliere, Schiller, Goethe, Tolstoy, Gorki, Sudermann, Hauptmann, Ibsen, Strindberg, Molnar, and Shaw, as well as to a variety of Yiddish playwrights such as Jacob Gordin, Leon Kobrin, and Sholom Asch.¹⁷

An important facet of the educational role of ethnic theater was its role in Americanization. Plays adopted and translated from the American stage introduced immigrants to many aspects of mainstream American culture. The Finnish theater of Astoria plunged its socialist supporters into the Anglo-Saxon version of "how the west was won" by presenting Finnish language "cowboy and Indian" productions.¹⁸ American movies became part of the regular offerings at many theaters, including the Italian "nickelodeons" of San Francisco.

Ethnic theater taught immigrants the classical vocabulary of their own language (many spoke regional dialects when they migrated), but it also introduced English in a visual context that promoted understanding. Skits or special productions were occasionally performed in English. Often English expressions slipped almost unnoticed into the later scripts, reflecting the changes in the language of immigrants who were becoming Americanized and stimulating such change among the more recent arrivals.

Finally, the educational role of ethnic theater included exposing immigrants to sophisticated dramatic examinations of the social

problems of the day. In this area, ethnic theater was far ahead of Broadway. For example, in 1896 the Irving Place German Theater presented Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, a graphic portrayal of a labor uprising in Silesia and its brutal suppression; the play was not presented to the English speaking public until 1915. Politically progressive Germans, Jews, Swedes, Finns and Hungarians formed special theater groups in which they used the works of Shaw, Ibsen, Strindberg and others, as well as original plays, to explore temperance, pacifism, the problems of the aged, the class struggle, and the status of women.

While plays incorporating political ideologies appeared in the repertory of many immigrant theaters, no group used the theater for political education more consciously, more extensively, and more effectively than the radical Finns. By the turn of the century socialism had become widespread in Finland as the symbol of resistance to foreign domination and economic oppression. In the United States, Finnish radicals led strikes in the iron and copper mines, embraced the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), socialism and communism, and organized a cooperative movement of 50,000 members.¹⁹ Theater was central to the Finnish critique of capitalist society; indeed, socialist halls in Finnish communities were built "as theaters first and as meeting places only incidentally."²⁰ Proletarian plays produced in the halls, including such titles as *Women on Strike*, *Red Army Maneuvers*, *Solidarity Helps*, *Factory Girl*, *Banished from America*, and *Difficulties of a Farm Home*, indicting the capitalist system for oppressing workers by denying them education and culture as well as bread. A catalogue of scripts issued by the Finnish Workers Federation Dramatic League in 1922 even included a political play for children, *The Price of Coal*, by Helmk Mattson, editor of an IWW journal for women.²¹ Plays written specifically to disseminate political ideology were less popular with audiences, however, than the more traditional folk plays, musicals, and classics which composed the majority of the repertory, even among the radical Finnish theaters.

The "woman question," like the class struggle, was explored in the ethnic theater. Ibsen's controversial drama, *A Doll's House*, played in German, Swedish, Finnish and Yiddish. The first Polish play in Chicago produced in 1873 was Teofilia Samolinska's *The Emancipation of Women*. Yiddish playwright Jacob Gordin wrote dramas such as *Minna* and *Without A Home* which, though not consciously feminist, were sensitive and sympathetic portrayals of the problems of immigrant women.

Theater as Entertainment

One reason for limited popularity of overtly ideological plays, socialist or feminist, was that most immigrants, like most other theater goers, were looking first and foremost for entertainment. Immigrants were more likely than other theater goers to lead lives constricted by poverty and by the ugliness of the urban slum. They came to the theater for excitement, diversion and glamour. Ethnic theater met the immigrants' need for pageantry and excitement.

"I do not go to the theater to think but to forget," wrote a Jewish immigrant who called himself 'the average theater goer.' "I seek there to forget my wife, the children, the crowded tenement, the littered wash, the bad ventilation. . . I want to see men dressed in armor or in the costumes of wealthy sheperds who wear silk chemises. . . On the women I love to see as much exposed as possible because you see I have already been married many years to my own wife. . . when I am in Thomashevsky's theater and I see on the stage a beautiful room with expensive furniture and chandeliers. . . I pretend that the well-to-do Thomashevsky has invited me to his house and is showing off his wealth to me. . . I am just a poor fellow. . . and all this costs me but half a dollar. Isn't it worth it?"²²

Various Slavic theaters featured colorful traditional costumes, horses pranced across the Yiddish stage, and Swedish companies treated their audiences to elaborate folk tableaux complete with dancing and singing and realistic representations of battles, sieges, and processions. Pageantry filled a need for the actor as well as the audience. "He who but yesterday earned his bread with a shovel today dons a royal robe and crown, if at least for a moment, to become the prompter's dugout,"²³ wrote an observer of Polish amateur theater.

On virtually every ethnic stage vaudeville revues—song, dance, short skits, farce, and various forms of comedy from the slap-stick to the sophisticated—were immensely popular. Popular too, among audiences if not among critics, were "formula plays" about everyday life in the new country or the old. In these plays stock characters—the cruel husband, the unfaithful wife, the deaf servant, the marriage broker—were put through their paces. Audiences were delighted when the rapacious landlord was outwitted by the wiley peasant, true love triumphed over all obstacles, and the hero was victorious and the scoundrel defeated, because their own lives were often marred by problems they could not solve and injustices they were powerless to correct. As one theater goer put it, "When I see how the villain is finally punished in the fourth act and the hero is rewarded, I am

touched to the heart because. . . I am a very honest man, but my neighbor is a . . . good-for-nothing."²⁴

One of the most popular subjects for comedy on virtually every ethnic stage was the newly arrived immigrant, the greenhorn, who made ridiculous mistakes and was victimized by his own countrymen as well as by the native-born American. These comedies were popular because they allowed immigrants to measure their own progress against that of the greenhorn on the stage and rejoice in how far they had come. These comedies also provided ample opportunity to satirize the immigrant community itself—the boarding house proprietor, the saloon keeper, the self-serving politician, the entire social structure, as well as to criticize the hypocrisy and corruption in mainstream American life.

Tragedy as well as comedy was an important part of ethnic entertainment. Plays filled with anger, violence, passion, revenge, suicide, and murder were well received, whether they were Shakespearian or other classic tragedies or melodramas written by contemporary local playwrights. Often these plays exposed in exaggerated but recognizable form the problems familiar to the world of the immigrant. For example, Jacob Gordin's drama, *The Jewish King Lear*, showed a pious Jewish father abused and neglected by his heartless daughters, a theme close enough to reality to bring tears to the eyes of many foreign-born parents who were less than satisfied with the behavior of their Americanized children.

Tragedy as well as comedy could be comforting to the immigrant audience. At least their spouses were not as cruel as the one portrayed on the stage, their children not as heartless, their poverty not as hopeless. Tears, like laughter, provided emotional relief for people whose lives were often filled with strong emotions. Tragedy helped immigrants to express the grief they felt at having left friends and family behind. It also helped them to handle the very real problems that confronted them in the United States.

"I go to a heart-rending drama because my boss has deducted a cent-and-a-half a dozen sleeves and my heart is heavy—and I am ashamed to cry," explained a Jewish theatergoer. "Therefore when I see. . . how Hamlet holds in his hands the skull of his friend Yorick and speaks of life and death, I suddenly recall that they have deducted a cent-and-a-half a dozen sleeves and I cry real tears."²⁵

Tragedy or comedy, ethnic theater was more than just entertainment. By allowing immigrants to view their own problems and emotions from the relatively safe vantage point behind the

footlights, it eased the pain of the transition from the old life to the new. Equally important, it provided something safe and familiar to people who were often overburdened by the need to adjust to new conditions. By bringing to America the songs, stories, and tableaux of the homeland, ethnic theater became a cherished link with the past.

Theater as a Social Center

Ethnic theater had communal or social as well as individual dimensions. It provided a social world for actors and for audiences and helped to create and sustain the immigrant communities of which it was a part. Ethnic theater provided a close knit circle within which actors, producers, and playwrights developed lasting and rewarding relationships. Many marriages took place between "theater people," whose children often made their debuts on stage as soon as they could walk and talk.

The special social world of the theater was particularly important to immigrant intellectuals, whose lack of English cut them off from the learned professions they had pursued in the homelands and who had little in common with the majority of their working class countrymen. Such people often found rewarding careers in the ethnic theater or the ethnic press or both, as the two areas were often closely connected and mutually supportive.

The ethnic theater also provided a uniquely supportive environment for women, who were shut out of many areas of activity in the ethnic and the mainstream American communities by narrow stereotypes of "woman's place." Energetic, talented, and independent women found the theater one of the few places where they could escape traditionally subordinate and domestic roles, earn money, acquire power and prestige within their communities, travel, and adopt unconventional lifestyles that in any other environment would have led to social ostracism. Women like Teofilia Samolinska, Rosa Lemberg, Sara Adler, and Antonietta Pisanelli Alessandro won fame not only as actresses but also as successful directors, playwrights, and owners and managers of theaters.

Theater played an important social role for the audiences as well as for "theater people." Just as the lodge, the saloon, or the church did, the theater provided a place where immigrants who often lived in cramped, and dismal tenements could meet one another and enjoy being together.²⁶ In the Polish, Swedish, and Finish communities theater performances were usually followed by parties with music, dancing, food, beer, and other strong drink (one reason for the

opposition of conservative religious leaders). In Italian and Yiddish theaters the entire evening took on a festive atmosphere; the theater was a place for dressing in one's best clothes, courting, gossiping, quarreling, eating, joking, and nurturing friendships.

In many communities the theater was more effective than any other single institution in bringing together people of different ages and sexes, and of widely divergent, social, intellectual, and ideological backgrounds. Here the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the educated and the uneducated, the newcomer and the long time resident, the radical and the conservative could meet together and share a common experience. The theater contributed greatly toward the building of a sense of community among ethnic populations such as the east European Jews of the Lower East Side of New York City and the Italians of the North Beach area of San Francisco.

An important community institution itself, ethnic theater also helped to support other institutions within the ethnic communities. Swedish theater groups in Chicago entertained at picnics and other outings sponsored by social and cultural associations and raised money to support employment agencies, legal aid services, and other social services for the Swedish colony. Italian theater clubs in St. Louis supported parochial schools. Polish amateur theater raised money for the building of churches and schools and for relief of Poland in times of need. Yiddish theaters routinely sublet the entire "house" for benefit performances sponsored by lodges and other organizations.

In addition to strengthening the internal lives of their local communities, ethnic theaters helped forge links between those communities and the outside world. Traveling companies helped keep local ethnic communities in touch with one another and with the mother country. Sometimes theaters of different ethnic groups launched cooperative ventures; Swedish and Norwegian theater groups gave joint performances in Chicago, and Italians and Jews shared theaters in New York. Actors from the ethnic stage made occasional appearances on the American stage; Jacob Adler, for example, gave a highly praised performance of Shylock in an otherwise all English Broadway production of *The Merchant of Venice in 1903*²⁷ More often, observers from mainstream American life came to the ethnic theater. Sometimes their impressions were unfavorable; for example, a bigoted journalist who visited a professional Italian marionette theater in Boston in 1897 thought it "too dull to be popular, even for an Italian who has little else to do."²⁸ Other observers reacted favorably, especially if they approached

ethnic theater free of negative stereotypes. Many came away with admiration for the quality of the performance and with, it may be assumed, increased understanding of the culture and community of the performers.

The Decline of Ethnic Theater

The theaters of the European immigrant communities reached their peak between 1900 and 1925. After this point they declined rapidly in number, in the frequency of performances, and, according to some critics, in the quality of those performances. Although it had attracted many of the American born as well as the foreign born, ethnic theater was primarily an immigrant theater, offering inexpensive, informal entertainment in a familiar language and a convenient location. The cessation of large scale European immigration with the Natural Origins quota laws of 1924, and the increasing affluence, Americanization, and geographic dispersion of the original audiences and their children undermined the European language ethnic theater, shrinking its audience and its influence. By the mid 1920s new forms of entertainment were available. Movies and radio were becoming increasingly popular, not only with the second generation but also with their increasingly acculturated parents. Ironically, ethnic theater contributed to its own demise. By helping immigrants to learn, to cope with the stresses of cultural change, and to feel good about their heritage and themselves, it eased their entrance into main stream American life.

Ethnic theater did not suddenly and abruptly vanish. Many actors and actresses passed from the ethnic stage into mainstream American entertainment, bringing elements of their own traditions with them. Some amateur and professional ethnic groups remained active, though on a limited scale, into mid-century and beyond. Small "art theaters," companies with an interest in artistic experimentation, in promoting social change through theater, or both, were influential in the 1930s—the Yiddish Artef theater in New York, for example, and the Swedish folk theater of Chicago. Indeed, according to Professor David Lifson, historian of the Yiddish theater, one of the main roles of Yiddish theater throughout its history in the United States was to serve as a bridge over which creative and innovative theater ideas were transmitted from the old world to the new.²⁹ Finally, in some ethnic communities new theater companies have formed in recent years, stimulated by the arrival of post-World War II immigrants and by the "new ethnicity" movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Immigrant theater is an important institution which has received surprisingly little systematic study. More research is needed on the personnel and literature of these theaters, their origins and development through time, their relationship to the theater traditions of their respective homelands and of the mainstream American theater, their relationship to other "minority" theaters (such as Puerto Rican, Mexican American, Asian American, black, and feminist theater) and their impact upon the lives of individuals and communities.

Notes

¹Elbert R. Bower. "The German Theater of Early Rural Missouri." *Missouri Historical Review*. (January 1952) 157.

²George R. MacMenn. *The Theater of the Golden Era* in California (1941), and Henrietta C.K. Naeseth, *The Swedish Theater* in Chicago 1868-1950. (Rock Island, Ill.: Agustana Historical Society, 1951).

³Matthew J. Strumski. "The Beginnings of the Polish American Theater," *Polish American Studies*. Vol. IV. (1947), 31-36; (This article is mainly a translation of an essay by Karol Estreicher, "The Polish Theater Beyond the Ocean," which appeared in *Zboda*. (June 18, 1890) 6.

⁴Naseth, *ibid.* 5-6.

⁵Lulla Rosenfeld. *Bright Star of Exile: Jacob Adler and the Yiddish Theater*. (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell Company, 1977), 217. See also Charles Cooper: "The Night Yiddish Theater Came to New York," *The Jewish Exponent*, (Philadelphia: April 3, 1976), 65.

⁶Hermann E. Rothfuss, "The Early German Theater in Minnesota." *Minnesota History*. Vol. 32 (June, 1951) 100-125.

⁷John Higham. *Stranger in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism: 1860-1925* (New York: 1963).

⁸Strumski. *Op. cit.* FT1, 34.

⁹Walter Mattila, ed. *The Theater Finns*, Vol. 7, No. 2. (July 1972).

¹⁰Laurence Estavan, ed. "San Francisco Theater Research Monographs," Vol. X, (San Francisco: Works Progress Administration, 1939). 26.

¹¹Strumski. *Op. cit.*, 32.

¹²Rosenfeld. *Op. cit.*, 39.

¹³Strumski. *Op. cit.*, 36.

¹⁴Robert Park. *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1922), 7-8.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁶Strumski. *Op. cit.*, 36.

¹⁷Hutchins Hapgood and Lincoln Stefens considered Yiddish theater "about the best in New York at that time, both in stuff and in acting." Rosenfeld. *Op. cit.* xii. For a more specific sampling of the richness of Yiddish theater, see the lists of plays and authors in Appendices A, B, and C of David Lifson. *The Yiddish Theatre in America*, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1965). 576-594.

¹⁸Mattila, *Op. cit.* 53.

¹⁹Michael G. Karni. "Yhteishyra" — or For the Common Good: Finnish Radicalism in the Western Great Lakes Region 1900-1940. Ph.D Dissertation. (University of Minnesota, 1975), 115-195.

²⁰Michael G. Karni. "Finnish American Theater 1900-1940" Unpublished paper. presented at the *Organization of American Historians* Annual Meeting, New York, April 14, 1978). 2.

²¹Mattila. *Op. cit.*, 8.

²²Mosche Nadir. "I, the Theater Goer," by permission of the *Big Stick* (March 1918), reprinted in Etta Block, ed. *One Act Plays from the Yiddish*. (New York: Block Publishing Company, 1929). vii-viii.

²³Strumski. *Op. cit.*, 32.

²⁴Nadir. *Op. cit.*, X.

²⁵*Ibid.*, ix.

²⁶For vivid descriptions of theater as a social center, see Hutchins Hapgood. *Spirit of the Ghetto: Studies of the Jewish Quarter of New*

York. (New York: Schocken, New York, 1966) 118-120. See also J.M. Scanland: "An Italian Quarter Mosaic." *Overland Monthly*. (April, 1906).

²⁷Rosenfeld. *Op. cit.*, 32.

²⁸Frederick O. Bushel. *Arena*. (April, 1897) as cited in Wayne Mocquin, ed. *A Documentary History of the Italian Americans* (New York, 1942). 53.

²⁹David Lifson — remarks made as commentator at Panel on Ethnic Theater at the *Organization of American Historians* Annual Meeting; New York: April 14, 1978.

Critique

A major point of ambiguity in the essay on ethnic theater, namely the inexact, overly-generalized application of the term ethnic, unwittingly perpetuates a wide-spread misconception about immigrant groups and unfortunately weakens valuable observations on immigrant culture. The study reinforces the tendency to perceive groups other than one's own as homogeneous and undifferentiated.¹ Quite the opposite is true. Ethnic groups are always heterogeneous and differentiated. Simplified categorization encourages simplified interpretation; neither one can accommodate the complicated nature of immigrant activity as reported in the essay. In order to understand the remarkable diversity of goals manifested in the development of ethnic theater, the diversity of membership in an ethnic group must be appreciated. It is this diversity which stimulated the cultural awakening recorded in the survey. Ironically, the advent of thorough analyses revealing the complex nature of immigrant culture may very well have been due to the reaction precipitated by similar inadequate and ambiguous labeling in early studies of ethnic minorities.

Recent scholarship has isolated three sets of variables which influence the relationships within an ethnic group and, consequently, that group's acceptance by the host society.² The first—the premigration histories of the members — includes the different geographic, educational, and economic backgrounds of the individuals, as well as their varied political, social, and cultural views. The second set refers to the immigration itself: the motivation (usually political, religious, or economic), the conditions leading to the decision to emigrate, and the intervening history. Finally, each individual within the group is affected differently by the contact