How exceptional is New York? Migration and multiculturalism in the empire city

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Abstract

This article builds on the 'city as context' framework in analysing the way the unique features of particular cities help in understanding the effects of immigration and resulting cultural diversity. The focus is on New York City and on how recent immigration has transformed the social construction of race and ethnicity and the nature of intergroup relations there. New York's remarkable ethnic and racial diversity, its immigrant history, and institutions have combined to make it a receiving city, in many ways, like no other in the United States. Multiculturalism, it is argued, has evolved there in what might be called a particular New York way.

'There is no multiculturalism *tout court,*' the editors of a volume on multicultural questions observe, 'there are only specific, context-dependent multicultural problematiques' (Joppke and Lukes 1999, p. 16). To date, scholars have typically explored the context-dependent nature of multiculturalism by taking the nation-state as the unit of analysis – a strategy some would argue reflects 'methodological nationalism' in the social sciences, in which the nation-state is viewed as the "natural" unit of analysis (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). Indeed, several definitions of multiculturalism – and there are many – refer to policies, ideals, or realities within a nation-state's borders. There have been comparisons of nations which have adopted official multicultural policies, such as Canada, and those which have not, like the United States (e.g. Reitz and Breton 1994; Bloemraad 2003). Another common comparison involves contrasting the meanings, manifestations, and effects of multiculturalism in the United States

and Western European countries (see, for example, Glazer 1999 and Joppke and Lukes 1999).

This article looks at a different context for understanding multiculturalism, the city, with a particular focus on contemporary New York City as it has been dramatically changed by the massive inflow of immigrants in the past few decades. It builds on the 'city as context' framework elaborated in anthropology, which points to the unique features of particular cities in understanding the effects of immigration and resulting cultural diversity.

In a special issue of *Urban Anthropology* published several decades ago, Jack Rollwagen criticized immigration studies that implicitly assume that the life of an immigrant group will be exactly the same regardless of the city in which the group lives – what he called 'the city as constant argument' (Rollwagen 1975). He argued, instead, for an approach that is sensitive to the contrasts among immigrant groups from the same cultural background in different American cities, pointing to the size of the immigrant group and available opportunities in particular cities. In further developing this approach, Caroline Brettell (2003) has suggested other features to be considered in exploring cities as contexts for immigrant incorporation, including the city's history as a receiving area for immigrants, the extent to which it is dominated by a single immigrant population, and the character of race and ethnic relations. My own work has highlighted specific aspects of New York as an immigrant city (Foner 2001, 2005) and added a temporal dimension by comparing the immigrant experience in early- and late-twentieth century New York (Foner 2000, 2001, 2005, 2006). Sociologists of immigration have also been attentive to the importance of urban context, perhaps most notably Roger Waldinger (2001a), who analyses how US urban regions differ in the way geographical and historical particularities have shaped immigrant flows – their skill composition, the diversity of the groups, and timing of arrival – and the effects of particular social, political, and economic institutions and structures on the options available to arrivals from abroad (also see, for example, Portes and Stepick 1992 and Stepick *et al.* 2003 on immigrant Miami and Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996 on immigrant Los Angeles).

As recent immigration has transformed the social construction of race and ethnicity and the nature of intergroup relations in the United States, the issue here is how, and in what ways, New York is distinctive in the American context. New York's remarkable ethnic and racial diversity, its immigration history, and its institutions have combined to make it a receiving city, in many ways, like no other in the United States. Multiculturalism – and by this I simply mean the coexistence of plural cultures or cultural diversity – has evolved there in what one might call a particular New York way.[1]

Much of what follows stresses the particularities of the New York context, yet I do not support an extreme regional or urban relativism that sees only ways that each city or region is unique. National developments, for example, have led to certain changes in conceptions of race that New York shares with other parts of the United States. There is also another dynamic. As a major cultural capital of America, what happens in New York has the potential to affect the shape of change elsewhere in the nation. This may be a good thing. It could be argued that as America's quintessential immigrant city, with a long history of ethnic succession and immigrant inclusion, New York, in many ways, offers an optimistic scenario about the future of intergroup relations for the nation.

What makes New York unique?

A host of features make New York special as an immigrant city. New York City served as the historic port of entry for southern and eastern European immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries so that by 1920, Jewish and Italian immigrants and their children made up over two-fifths of the population. In the newest wave of immigration, since the late 1960s, the city has continued to attract a significant share of the nation's new arrivals (see Foner 2000, 2001). Since 1900, about 10 per cent or more of the nation's foreign-born population has lived in New York City. For much of the twentieth century, a fifth or more of New York City's residents were foreign-born; the figure reached 41 per cent in 1910 and by 2000 it was nearly as high at 36 per cent (see Table 1). Adding to the ethnoracial mix, the

Table 1. *Foreign-Born Population of New York City, 1900–2000*

Year Percentage	Total population (in Thousands)	Foreign-Born population (in Thousands)	Percentage of Foreign-Born in New York City	Percentage of U.S. Foreign-Born in New York City
1900	3,437.2	1,270.1	37.0	12.2
1910	4,766.9	1,944.4	40.8	14.3
1920	5,620.0	2,028.2	36.1	14.5
1930	6,930.4	2,358.7	34.0	16.5
1940	7,455.0	2,138.7	28.7	18.3
1950	7,892.0	1,860.9	23.6	17.8
1960	7,783.3	1,558.7	20.0	16.0
1970	7,894.9	1,437.1	18.2	14.9
1980	7,071.6	1,670.2	23.6	11.9
1990	7,322.6	2,082.9	28.4	10.5
2000	8,008.3	2,871.0	35.9	9.2

Source: Foner 2000: 5; Singer 2004

city experienced a massive inflow of African Americans from the South between World War I and the 1960s as well as a huge migration of Puerto Ricans after World War II.

The result of these inflows is that the vast majority of New Yorkers have a close immigrant connection. If they are not immigrants themselves, they have a parent, grandparent, or great-grandparent who is. Many of the nearly one million Jewish New Yorkers have grandparents or great-grandparents who arrived at the turn of the twentieth century from eastern Europe; hundreds of thousands have roots in Italy and Ireland; many black New Yorkers are descended from immigrants who arrived a hundred years ago from what was then the British Caribbean; and while island-born Puerto Rican New Yorkers, who are US citizens by birth, are not considered immigrants, they and their children and grandchildren are a significant presence in the city (see Foner 2005).

The post-1965 immigration has replenished older groups and created new ethnic mixes. At the time of the 2000 Census, more than a quarter of the city's 2 million non-Hispanic blacks were foreign-born, most of them West Indians. A substantial proportion of the newest arrivals hail from Europe. In 2000, the former Soviet Union ranked fourth among the top sending countries to New York City, Poland was fifteenth, and altogether, about one out of four of the city's non-Hispanic whites was foreign born (Mollenkopf, Olson, and Ross 2001; Beveridge 2002). Put another way, only about half of New York City's non-Hispanic whites were native-born people with two native-born parents. New York City's white population is dominated by first-, second-, and third-generation Catholics (Irish and Italian) and Jews, and white Protestants are practically invisible, if still economically and socially powerful (Mollenkopf 1999, p. 419).[2]

A striking feature of New York City's immigrant population, which stands at nearly three million, is its extraordinary diversity. No one or two, or even three or four, nations dominate. Between 1990 and 1996 alone, as many as twenty countries sent more than 5,000 immigrants to the city (Kraly and Miyares 2001). In 2000, the top three groups – Dominicans, Chinese, and Jamaicans – were just under 30 per cent of all the foreign-born. No other foreign country accounted for more than five per cent, and there were substantial numbers of many West Indian, Latin American, Asian, and European nationalities. There is, moreover, a huge native minority population of African Americans and Puerto Ricans; in the late 1990s, blacks and Hispanics of native stock (native-born to native parents) made up about a quarter of the city's population.

The remarkable diversity of New York's immigrants is matched by the heterogeneity of their skills. New York's mixture of nationalities has ensured a mix of class and occupational origins, with high-skilled

and low-skilled immigrants roughly equal in number in the New York urban region (Waldinger and Lee 2001, pp. 50, 52, 63).

Then there is the long list of 'place-specific conditions' that mark off New York City as an immigrant destination, including many of relevance to the analysis here.[3] By US standards, New York City's government provides a wide range of social, health, and educational services, including the City University of New York [CUNY], which is the largest urban public university system in the nation. In the autumn of 2005, it had more than 190,000 undergraduate students enrolled; 40 per cent of CUNY's first time freshmen were born outside the US mainland. Partly a legacy from earlier immigrant waves, the city is home to many non-governmental institutions, like settlement houses and Catholic schools, that have helped recent arrivals; it is a strong union town, with many labour unions (as well as colleges and political groups) in the post-civil rights years providing leadership positions for African Americans and Puerto Ricans who, it is argued, are 'trying to manage ethnic succession' involving new immigrant groups 'while still seeing themselves as fundamentally outsiders to the larger power structures' (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2004a, p. 15).

New York City's political culture bears the stamp of earlier European immigration and is used to accommodating newcomers from abroad. Ethnic politics are the lifeblood of New York City politics; no group 'finds challenge unexpected or outrageous' (Glazer and Moynihan 1970, p. xxx) and ethnic politics has long been practised as a shorthand method of coalition-building (Marwell 2004, p. 243). In the 1930s, Fiorello LaGuardia – who some consider the city's greatest mayor – sprinkled his speeches with Italian and Yiddish, and in the postwar years, aspiring leaders visited the three 'I's – Israel, Italy, and Ireland – the touchstones of so many Jewish and Catholic voters (Wakin 2003). By 2003, after two years in office, Mayor Michael Bloomberg had already visited the Dominican Republic three times; in May 2005, he rolled out the first of his television campaign spots in Spanish.

Politics in the city 'presents newcomers with a segmented political system, organized for mobilization along ethnic group lines, and a political culture that sanctions, indeed encourages, newcomers to engage in ethnic politics' (Waldinger 1996b, p. 1084). A large number of political prizes are up for grabs, many within reach of the newest groups. The New York City Council has fifty-one members; the city sends sixty-five representatives to New York's State Assembly and twenty-five to the State Senate; and fifty-nine community boards in the city have up to fifty members each (Waldinger 1996b; Mollenkopf 1999). Despite the importance of party support in sustaining native white or minority incumbents in immigrant districts, Logan and Mollenkopf (2003) argue that New York City's primaries have proved

to be an effective path for immigrant political mobility when one group becomes predominant in a district, as happened in the 1990s among West Indians and Dominicans, and, more recently, the Chinese in city council elections.

Given New York's remarkable diversity, and long history of welcoming and absorbing immigrants, it is not surprising that the city's official commitment to cultural pluralism and cultural diversity stands out. Officials and social service agencies actively promote events to foster ethnic pride and glorify the city's multi-ethnic character and multi-ethnic history. Practically every group has its own festival or parade, the largest being the West Indian American Day parade on Brooklyn's Eastern Parkway, which attracts between one and two million people every Labor Day – and is now a mandatory campaign stop for politicians seeking citywide office. Even something as mundane as parking rules reflect a public recognition of ethnic diversity; alternate side parking regulations were suspended on thirty-four legal and religious holidays in 2005, including the Asian Lunar New Year, Purim and Passover, the Feast of the Assumption, the Muslim holiday of Id-al-Adha, and the Hindu celebration of Diwali.

In a city which prides itself on its immigrant history, New Yorkers – both old and new – feel comfortable with ethnic succession. Kasinitz and his colleagues put it well when they note that if 'Italians are yesterday's newcomers and today's establishment, then maybe Colombians are the new Italians and, potentially, tomorrow's establishment. New Yorkers ... are happy to tell themselves this story. It may not be completely true, but the fact that they tell it, and believe it, is significant and may help them make it come true' (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf and Waters 2004b, p. 399).

The construction of race and ethnicity

How have the special features of New York City and its immigrant population affected the way race and ethnicity are constructed?[4] And is this different, and in what ways, from what has happened in other major US immigrant destinations?

Inevitably, perceptions of race and ethnicity in New York have been shaped by national trends and developments in the country as a whole. Throughout the United States, blacks are the 'quintessentially racialized Americans', with their special position of disadvantage rooted in two hundred years of African slavery and a hundred years of state-sponsored discrimination (Glazer 1999; Foner and Fredrickson 2004). The growing number, and significance, of Hispanics and Asians in the past few decades in New York, as elsewhere in the nation, have led to a move away from thinking about race as a matter of black and

white ('the black-white binary') and to the common usage of the terms 'Hispanic' or 'Latino' and 'Asian.' Furthermore, New Yorkers' views of ethnoracial differences have been influenced by, among other things, national political debates, the use of ethnoracial categories by the US census and federal and local government agencies, and television and other national media.

Yet the construction of race and ethnicity in New York City has taken its own direction in some ways, and this is largely a result of basic demographics, both past and present. Consider the way that 'whiteness' is constructed. On the one hand, virtually everywhere in the United States 'white' is shorthand for, and generally synonymous with, 'non-Hispanic white.' In the urban capitals of immigrant America, moreover, Euro-Americans – read 'white' to most Americans – are increasingly absent from the lower and even middle ranks, so that, as Waldinger (2001b, p. 328) points out, class and ethnicity tend to overlap in ways that cumulate advantages for Euro-Americans, who set the standard to which others aspire.

On the other hand, 'whiteness' has particular associations depending on the region. There are even different terms to describe it. In Texas and southern California 'Anglo' is commonly used to describe a white person who is not of Hispanic origin whereas in New York it is rarely heard. The use of 'Anglo' derives from the long-term Mexican presence in the US-Mexico border region, a region that was once part of Mexico and now has an enormous Mexican-origin population. 'Anglo' has not caught on in New York (or other northeastern and midwestern cities), where, given the history of immigration, ethnic differences among the non-Hispanic white population still have a strong resonance and 'Anglo' conjures up images of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants or WASPS, a category that excludes white ethnics.

In New York City, in addition, the immigrant strains in the white population have been kept alive by the ongoing influx of European newcomers from areas that were important sending countries in the past, Poland and Russia in particular. In 2000, non-Hispanic whites represented 35 per cent of the city's population, about a quarter of them foreign-born (see Table 2). The large proportion of immigrants in the non-Hispanic white population distinguishes New York from most other major American immigrant cities. In contemporary New York, the term 'immigrant' encompasses a substantial number of whites from Europe.

'Blackness' also has a different meaning in New York than in many major immigrant cities because of the large West Indian community and growing number of Africans. New York is not alone in this regard. In 2000, when more than a quarter of New York City's non-Hispanic black population was Afro-Caribbean and 3 per cent was African-born, more than a third of the non-Hispanic blacks in the Miami and

Table 2. *Population of New York City by Race and Hispanic Origin, 1970–2000* (Percentages)

	1970	1980	1990	2000
Non-Hispanic White	62.5	52.4	43.4	35.0
Non-Hispanic Black	19.4	24.0	25.6	24.4
Hispanic	16.2	19.9	23.7	27.0
Asian	1.2	3.4	6.8	9.8

Source: Lobo and Salvo 2004: 128–129

Fort Lauderdale metropolitan areas were Afro-Caribbean; over a third of the Boston metropolitan area's non-Hispanic blacks and ten per cent of Washington DC's were Afro-Caribbean and African (Logan and Deane 2003; Logan and Mollenkopf 2003). However, in the main gateway cities in California, Texas, and the Midwest with substantial African American populations, there are few foreign-born blacks: black there unambiguously means African American. This is not so in New York and other urban centres which have experienced a large influx of black immigrants and where notions of blackness are changing as a result.

Admittedly, given the history of racism in America, and the legacy of the one-drop rule, whites in New York City, as in South Florida, Washington, DC and Boston, often lump blacks together and are insensitive to ethnic differences among them. But there is evidence for a growing awareness of such distinctions. In Vickerman's (2001) phrase, monolithic conceptions of blackness are being 'tweaked' rather than dispelled. According to Vickerman, the increasing number of black immigrants in cities like New York (along with the expansion of the African American middle class and a rising number of mixed race individuals) is challenging notions of a monolithic blackness there and pushing negative stereotypes of blacks to change. He contends that there is a growing scope for immigrants to lay claim to a West Indian or African identity instead of undergoing submersion into a larger black identity, and even the possibility that the conceptions of race that black immigrants bring with them from their countries of origin will have an influence.

A further complication in New York is that many Hispanics in the city identify as black when asked their race by the census, which is unusual in the US urban context. (Of the New York metropolitan area's Hispanics, 9 per cent identified as black on the 2000 Census, compared to 1 per cent in the Los Angeles-Long Beach metropolitan area, 2 per cent in Chicago, 3 per cent in Miami, and 1 per cent in Houston, Logan 2003). This no doubt has to do with the large numbers of Dominicans and Puerto Ricans in New York, many of whom are dark-skinned and have some African heritage.

Another distinguishing feature of New York's Hispanic population is its heterogeneity. New York is home to a growing number of Hispanics – 27 per cent of the city's population in 2000 – yet there is no one dominant Latino nationality as in southern Californian and Texas cities where Mexicans predominate and Miami, where Cubans outnumber other Latino groups.[5]

The combination of nationalities, generations, and class backgrounds of Latinos in particular cities influences how they see themselves, and are seen by others, including the way the panethnic category 'Latino' or 'Hispanic' is constructed. Even the preference for 'Latino' or 'Hispanic' varies by region, with one survey suggesting that Texans and people in the South tend to favour 'Hispanic' while Californians and people in the Northeast prefer 'Latino' (Rodriguez 2003).

In Texas, as Neil Foley (2004, p. 341) notes, the word 'Mexican' historically denoted a race as well as a nationality from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century: 'a fifth-generation Mexican American was still a "Mexican" rather than an American in the eyes of most Anglos.' Anglos, he writes, do not call Mexican Americans 'Mexicans' anymore; they have become 'Hispanic . . . a post-1960s, post-civil rights term that unites Mexican Americans to other groups who trace their heritage to Spanish-speaking countries.' Still, the overwhelming dominance of people of Mexican origin among Hispanics in cities like Houston and Los Angeles means that Hispanic or Latino usually means 'Mexican' or 'Mexican American,' which is not the case in New York.

People from the Hispanic Caribbean may have a very different understanding of the Hispanic or Latino label than those from Mexico and Central America – which has important implications in New York City where, in 2000, two out of three Latinos were of Caribbean origin. Caribbean Latinos, Itzigsohn (2004, p. 208) argues, construct their racial identity vis-à-vis blackness: 'First-generation Dominicans, for example, reject being associated with blackness because in the Dominican Republic blackness is associated with Haiti and Dominicans construct their national identity in opposition to Haitians. Mexican Americans, on the other hand, particularly those who adopt a Chicano and Chicana identity, build their racial identity around notions of "mestizaje" and Native American origin.' An added complexity is the large number of Puerto Rican New Yorkers, around 830,000 in 2000. In the mid-twentieth century, New Yorkers thought of minorities in the city as 'black' and 'Puerto Rican.' Now, Hispanic is often used in public discourse to refer to all Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Latin American groups, although the continued plurality of Puerto Ricans in the city's Hispanic population still gives Puerto Ricans a central role. Another dynamic is involved in the

self-identity process. Given the stigma attached to Puerto Ricans in New York, people with origins in other Caribbean or Latin American countries generally want to avoid being identified as Puerto Rican (see Grosfoguel 2003). Something similar has been reported for Chicago, where there is a substantial – but, by New York City standards, much smaller – Puerto Rican population and a huge Mexican community. (In 2000, Chicago's 113,000 Puerto Ricans constituted 15 per cent of the city's Latino population compared to over 530,000 Mexicans who accounted for 70 per cent.) As in New York, Chicago Mexicans often stigmatize Puerto Ricans as lazy and lacking a good work ethic; for their part, many Puerto Ricans construct Mexicans as 'illegal' and unsophisticated newcomers from the Third World (DeGenova and Ramos-Zayas 2003).

The dominance of Cubans in Miami is a different story. Not only are Cubans the main Hispanic group in terms of numbers, but persons born in Cuba or of Cuban descent are Miami's largest ethnic group. Miami's Cubans are politically dominant, economically powerful, and largely set the cultural tone for the city (Grenier and Perez 2003, pp. 47–48). The dominance of Cubans, many of whom are phenotypically white or light-skinned, no doubt helps to explain why 86 per cent of the Hispanics in the Miami metropolitan area identified themselves as white on the 2000 Census – compared to 45 per cent in Los Angeles, 42 per cent in New York, 50 per cent in Chicago, and 54 per cent in Houston (Logan 2003).[6] Having acquired unprecedented economic and political power that they do not share with other Hispanic groups reinforces a focus among Cubans on national identity, a tendency to repudiate the stigmatizing tag 'Hispanic', and a resistance to making linkages to other less successful Hispanic newcomers, although the recent growth of new Hispanic populations in Miami (Nicaraguans, Colombians, and others) may lead Cubans to reach out, at least in some situations, to these other groups (Itzigsohn 2004, p. 212).

Miami stands out not just for the Cuban presence, but for the Asian absence. In 2000, only 1.4 per cent of Miami-Dade County's residents were Asian, a far smaller proportion than in any other major US immigrant gateway city. Clearly, New York's four-part ethnoracial hierarchy – white/black/Hispanic/Asian – is not relevant in Miami. Even in many gateway cities with large numbers of Asian immigrants, the category 'Asian' is constructed differently than in New York, depending on which Asian groups are present and predominate.

New York City's Asian newcomers are a mix of nationalities. The Chinese – the only Asian population of note in the city prior to 1965 – are still the dominant Asian group, a little over two-fifths of the city's Asians in 2000. But they have been joined in the past few decades by a significant number of South Asians, Koreans, and Filipinos. What

New York lacks in any number, however, are Southeast Asians, who are much more numerous in California, including Los Angeles.[7] Given the extremely low levels of education and high poverty rates among foreign-born Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong, these groups do not fit the 'model minority' stereotype of Asians which flourishes in cities like New York. Where these Southeast Asian groups are a significant presence, for example, in Fresno, Long Beach, and Stockton, California and St. Paul, Minnesota, a less positive image of 'Asians' may well emerge. There is another difference between New York's and California's Asians that may affect how they are perceived and how they see themselves (including whether they develop a panethnic Asian identity). Several cities in the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay regions have an Asian majority or near-Asian majority, with many well-to-do Asian residents. By 2000, there were five cities in the Los Angeles and San Francisco regions with an Asian majority; another nine were more than 40 per cent Asian. Not a single city in the New York region came close to having an Asian majority (Zhou and Kim 2003, pp. 129–33).

New York, in short, cannot stand for the nation as a whole. Regional and urban differences in immigrant flows, and in the ethnoracial make-up of the native-born population, have led, not surprisingly, to variation in the way that racial and ethnic categories are constructed and perceived. At the same time, as I noted at the outset, no city (or urban region) is an island, and various forces lead to commonalities in the way race and ethnicity are constructed across the United States. Indeed, the views that develop in New York may have an undue influence, and diffuse across the United States, precisely because the city is such an important media centre in the country – hub of the advertising and publishing industries, headquarters of major television broadcasting companies, and location for the production of dozens of magazines (see Gans 1999, p. 379). Los Angeles, of course, is also a media capital. Because both New York and Los Angeles are the major immigrant centres in the nation, the production of popular culture is taking place in cities where notions of race and ethnicity have been deeply affected – though often in different ways – by the recent and massive immigrant influx.

Intergroup relations

The incredible ethnic and racial diversity in New York City and its history of immigration have affected on-the-ground relations, and created a mixture and mingling of ethnoracial groups. In the 1990s, when he was in office, former Mayor David Dinkins often referred to the city as a gorgeous mosaic. More recently, sociologists studying second-generation New Yorkers have argued that New York may serve

as a 'positive model of creative multiculturalism and inclusion' for the rest of the country (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2004a, p. 17).

The city is not, of course, a racial paradise. People of colour continue to experience prejudice and discrimination, and tension and conflict between racial and ethnic groups are far from eliminated. Residential segregation between whites and blacks persists at extraordinarily high levels; black and Latino immigrants often engage in distancing strategies to set themselves apart from African Americans and Puerto Ricans; native minorities often resent what they see as numerical, residential, economic, or political encroachment by immigrants; and there is a general tendency, out of preference but also on account of prejudice, for members of racial and ethnic groups to stick to their own kind in day-to-day interactions (see Foner 2000, 2005). In the 1990s, the city witnessed several black boycotts of Korean-owned stores as well as two significant riots: one, in Brooklyn's Crown Heights in 1991, involving African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, began after a car driven by Hasidic Jews jumped the curb and killed a young black (Guyanese) boy; the other, in the Dominican neighbourhood of Washington Heights in 1992, was sparked by the fatal police shooting of a suspected Dominican drug dealer (see Halle and Rafter 2003).

The fact is, however, that, by and large, peaceful coexistence between members of different racial and ethnic groups is the rule in New York, as in other gateway cities. Nor is it just a case of tolerance and accommodation; genuine cooperation and coalition building also often occur. Among other things, friendships develop in schools, colleges, playgrounds, and workplaces, and political alliances are formed on certain issues and electoral campaigns. A growing number of multi-hued neighbourhoods have emerged in New York and elsewhere, providing the basis for the creation of ties, particularly among Asians, whites, and Latinos (see Sanjek 1998). Significant numbers of American-born Hispanics and Asians have non-Hispanic white spouses or partners, and though still relatively rare, black-white intermarriages are rising in frequency (Foner and Fredrickson 2004).

These are national trends and dynamics. Of relevance here is whether the forces for accommodation are stronger in New York than in other immigrant gateway cities because of its history, its institutions, and what one journalist calls its polyglot cosmopolitanism (Tilove 2004).

New York and Los Angeles

When it comes to comparisons of New York City and Los Angeles, the answer is a cautious 'yes'. New York and Los Angeles are the premier immigrant gateways in the contemporary United States, together

home to about one in five of the nation's foreign-born.[8] A general assumption, in the scholarly as well as popular literature, is that New York City is a more immigrant-friendly place than Los Angeles, where the reception of immigrants has been much cooler, indeed often hostile. In the mid-1990s, Angelenos provided the votes needed to pass Proposition 187, which, had it been implemented, would have made undocumented immigrants ineligible for government-funded social and health services. (Most of the provisions were later invalidated by California court decisions.) In the same period, pro-immigrant New York City mayors supported an executive order barring city employees from disclosing a person's immigration status to federal authorities. When, in 2003, Mayor Bloomberg revised this policy in order to bring New York City in line with federal regulations, he backtracked after a few months in response to intense public pressure.

A number of reasons have been advanced to explain the warmer welcome extended to newcomers in New York City (Waldinger 1996b; Mollenkopf 1999; Keogan 2002; Sabah and Bozorgmehr 2003). New York has always been an immigrant mecca, and the non-Hispanic native white population is closer to its immigrant roots. Large-scale immigration from abroad, by contrast, is new in Los Angeles, which, until recently, was a heavily Anglo city filled with transplanted white Midwesterners, many from rural areas and small towns. Los Angeles's native whites are less likely than Jewish-, Italian-, and Irish-American New Yorkers to identify with their immigrant ancestors, who tended to settle in America longer ago and in the midwestern or eastern homes the Angelenos left behind. That Europeans continue to constitute a significant proportion of first-generation immigrant New Yorkers has also, as Keogan (2002) puts it, 'facilitated the reproduction of an inclusive immigrant identity.' In 2000, first- and second-generation immigrants accounted for less than a third of Los Angeles County's non-Hispanic whites compared to about half in New York City (Mollenkopf, Olson, and Ross 2001).

The speed of the recent immigrant build-up plays a role. As against the more gradual increase in New York City in the past few decades, Los Angeles has experienced a growth spurt. The foreign-born population of Los Angeles County went from 9.5 per cent in 1960 to 36 per cent in 2000; in New York City, the increase was more modest, from 20 per cent in 1960 to 36 per cent in 2000. Moreover, the overwhelming dominance of Mexicans and Central Americans in Los Angeles – about three-fifths of the region's foreign-born – has tilted the immigrant profile there towards those with low skills, who are more likely than the better-educated and highly-skilled to be perceived as putting extra pressure on social services. In New York, the proportion of high-skilled and low-skilled immigrants is fairly evenly balanced, and the region's least skilled newcomers tend to arrive with

higher levels of education than the Mexicans who predominate in Los Angeles (Waldinger and Lee 2001, pp. 62–63).

The large Mexican and Central American presence in Los Angeles has also led to a relatively high proportion of undocumented compared to New York City. Opposition to immigrants and high levels of immigration is generally greater when newcomers are seen as being largely undocumented. It has also been argued that New York City's political institutions and culture, with a strongly partisan political system and a long history of balancing ethnic interests and managing ethnic competition, have been more effective in recognizing and incorporating claims from immigrants (Mollenkopf 1999; Logan and Mollenkopf 2003). In New York, ethnic competition is a fact of life. As Mollenkopf (1999, p. 419) observes, far from finding intergroup competition threatening, the city's white population, largely made up of first-, second-, and third-generation Catholics and Jews, 'are masters of the art.'

Changes, however, are in the air in Los Angeles, as the 2005 election of Antonio Villaraigosa, son of a Mexican immigrant, as Los Angeles mayor indicates. The pressure of demographics and, perhaps more important, the increasing political clout of Latinos have lessened anti-immigrant sentiment in Los Angeles in the past few years. Indeed, as immigration continues and as more native-born Angelenos leave the region, a growing number of Los Angeles area residents are immigrants or descendants of recent immigrants. One sociologist speculates that Los Angeles may even emerge as 'an engine of pro-immigrant sentiment comparable to, and even in some respects outdoing, New York City' (Halle 2003). Villaraigosa's victory has been hailed as a sign of the integration of Latinos into the mainstream of Los Angeles political life and Villaraigosa praised as a gifted coalition builder – a 'pol for a polygot city' – who 'carried every quadrant of this famously fractious city' (Meyerson 2005).

Also bear in mind the reaction to immigrants in many suburban and outer-rim areas of New York City, where formerly all- or nearly all-white communities have received large numbers of non-white, often Latino, immigrants in the last decade. Not only (as in Los Angeles) is the immigrant influx a radical change, but, in the case of predominantly native white suburbs, residents have often moved there precisely to flee the problems and ethnoracial diversity of the inner city. Tensions are frequently rife between established residents and newcomers, particularly when the new arrivals are low-skilled, poorly-educated, often undocumented Latinos who have entered the community in search of low-level work. In the New York area, conflicts have arisen over day-labourer sites in towns in Westchester County and on Long Island. Two hate crimes on Long Island in Farmingville, a community about fifty miles from New York City,

attracted national attention; in 2000, two Mexican day labourers were beaten nearly to death by two men from nearby towns, and three years later, four Farmingville teenagers burned down the house of a Mexican family, who barely escaped (Gootman 2003; Smith 2003). While these two crimes are extreme, they are indicative of a deep anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiment and reaction that have not occurred, or at least been sharply curtailed and contained, in New York City.

Hispanics and African Americans

New York City has adjusted more easily to the influx of new arrivals in yet another way. In many cities around the country, relations between Latino immigrants (and their children) and native blacks have become deeply strained, some would say even potentially explosive. Nationally, Hispanics now surpass blacks as the largest minority, and in a number of cities Hispanics have numerically overtaken African Americans and begun to challenge their newly-won accession to positions of power and control. Whether this demographic shift leads to open conflict depends on a host of factors, including the existence of interethnic political institutions and the actions of particular political leaders. There is, however, no denying the existence of competition between the groups for political influence, jobs, housing, and educational resources – competition which is often exacerbated by negative stereotypes and factors such as language divisions.

In cities in Texas and elsewhere in the Southwest where Hispanics have recently outnumbered African Americans, the two groups are in direct competition for representation on school boards and city councils and in other local arenas of power (see Foley 2004). South Central Los Angeles is another area where black-to-brown residential succession has been taking place in many neighbourhoods. In the lower-income city of Compton, in the southern end of South Central Los Angeles, African Americans finally achieved power after a long struggle, only to see their position contested by a growing Latino population that is almost exclusively of Mexican origin. (Blacks went from 71 per cent of Compton's population in 1970 to 40 per cent in 2000, while the Hispanic share went from 13 to 57 per cent.) Some black leaders have rejected the legitimacy of Latinos' calls for affirmative action, arguing that it was created to redress the wrongs of slavery, not to benefit immigrants, and that Latinos are latecomers who did not engage in civil rights struggles. For their part, Latinos complain of lack of access to municipal jobs and leadership positions in local government as well as African American school officials' and teachers' biases against Latinos and insensitivity to Latino students' special language needs (Johnson, Farrell, and Guinn 1999; Camarillo

2004; see also McLain and Tauber 2001; Morawska 2001; Mindiola, Niemann, and Rodriguez 2002).

There is a different twist to African-American-Latino strains in Miami, where a large and established black minority find themselves living in a city dominated demographically, politically, and economically by Latinos. Tensions between Miami's African Americans and Cubans, it is said, 'are seething constantly and fuming periodically' – with the two communities divided by space, class, political party, ideology and language. African Americans regard Cubans as their 'new masters' who, among other things, give preferential governmental treatment to Hispanics and are indifferent to African American concerns (Grenier and Castro 2001, pp. 150, 155). Blacks, as one observer puts it, have felt engulfed 'in a Latino maelstrom. Not only did Latinos end up controlling most of Miami's major political, economic, and educational institutions, but their leaders appeared to have little regard for the history of suffering that Blacks had been subjected to or appreciation for their pioneering role in the civil rights movement' (Vaca 2004, p. 110).

New York City is not without tensions between African Americans and Hispanics, but several factors have reduced their salience and seriousness. Partly owing to large-scale black as well as Hispanic immigration, Hispanics and blacks in New York City are almost equal in number – a demographic balance that has held for the past thirty-five years (see Table 2). In Los Angeles, Houston, Miami and other cities, Hispanics far outnumber blacks, and this is a radical change that has taken place over the past few decades. (Between 1970 and 2000, for example, the proportion of Hispanics in metropolitan Miami more than doubled, from 24 to 57 per cent, while blacks only slightly increased their share, from 15 to 19 per cent. The city of Los Angeles was 17 per cent black and 18 per cent Hispanic in 1970; by 2000, blacks had declined to 11 per cent while Hispanics were up to 47 per cent. One-fifth of Houston's residents were black and only five per cent Hispanic in 1960; by 2000, the proportion of blacks had grown only a little, to 25 per cent, but the Hispanic share had mushroomed to 37 per cent.)

Moreover, in New York City, unlike the Southwest and California where the Hispanic population is overwhelmingly Mexican, or Miami, where it is overwhelmingly Cuban, no one Hispanic group dominates – and there are large numbers from several nationalities. As a result, the different groups are sometimes at odds with each other rather than in conflict with native blacks. Robert Smith (2001) suggests a potential division in New York City's Latino community between those from the Caribbean (Puerto Ricans and Dominicans) and those from Meso-america and Andean countries (Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and others) based on cultural and racial differences as well as Dominicans' and Puerto Ricans' earlier access to elected office and

political clout. Furthermore, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans are often competitors, not allies, in political contests and Latino immigrants of all stripes often seek to distinguish themselves from Puerto Ricans (Pessar and Graham 2001; Smith 2001). Also, as will be recalled, an unusually high proportion of Hispanic New Yorkers identify themselves as blacks; 'black Hispanics' may be especially likely to develop amicable ties and alliances with native and Caribbean blacks, and in some cases to intermarry.

Intermixing and the second generation

Finally, there is the question of 'creative multiculturalism' in New York City and the interactions between the second generation, native minorities, and native whites. As the children of immigrants come of age, new cultural patterns, often referred to as cultural hybrids, are emerging as they grow up, go to school, work beside, and sometimes intermarry with the long-established native-born. This is true throughout the United States. Yet because of New York City's extraordinary ethnic heterogeneity, the creation of cultural hybrids involves a remarkable number of groups – Asians, Latin Americans, Caribbeans, and Africans from many countries as well as native-born African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and non-Hispanic whites, the latter mostly Jewish-, Italian-, and Irish-American. Moreover, because established minority and second-generation immigrant young people in New York dominate their age cohort, they have a great deal of contact with each other in their neighbourhoods and a variety of city institutions (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2002, p. 1027).

In the boroughs of New York City, young people in the first and second generation mix and mingle with each other as well as native minorities (less often with native whites) in a range of contexts (see Malkin 2004; Trillo 2004; Warikoo 2004). It is in these interactions in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, workplaces, and colleges that new popular cultural forms are born – and that members of the second generation come to see themselves as 'New Yorkers', rather than American. Discussing the second-generation young adults in their study, Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters (2002, p. 1034) write that a 'New York identity embraced the dynamic cultural activities familiar to them, but not necessarily the larger white society. 'New Yorkers', for our respondents, could come from immigrant groups, native minority groups, or be Italians, Irish, Jews, or the like.'

Anyone (like myself) who has taught at the City University of New York – where, in 2005, the undergraduate student body was 30 per cent black, 28 per cent white, 26 per cent Hispanic, and 15 per cent Asian – can see this identity-creation process in action. Students from places all over the world interact in class, become more comfortable

with those from different national backgrounds, and come to take for granted the incredible ethnic mix in their classes, on the subway, in stores, and on the streets as a basic part of life in the city. Although many second-generation youth live in ethnic enclaves where one or two groups dominate, many also grow up in places like Jackson Heights, with its incredible ethnic stew, including Indians, Pakistanis, Mexicans, Dominicans, Chinese, Irish, and Pakistanis or 'a Puerto Rican, Mexican, Chinese, Arabic neighbourhood like Sunset Park (where the aging population of "real Americans" are Norwegians)' (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2002, p. 1034). They may feel the sting of disadvantage and discrimination, but they 'move in a world where being from "somewhere else" is the norm' (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf and Waters 2004b, p. 397). Ethnic diversity is the expectation in New York. Indeed, this can sometimes be confusing to the newest arrivals. Soviet teenagers whom Annelise Orleck (1987, p. 295) studied were confounded when they entered high school in Brooklyn, wanting to know where the Americans were: 'It is. . . . hard to know what we are supposed to be becoming. Everybody here is from someplace else.'

In describing the vibrant inner-city youth culture emerging in New York, Kasinitz (2000, p. 41) speaks of a 'melting pot of urban youths, all "of color" but from a variety of cultures' and young people creating new forms of music (for example, Filipino and Indian hip-hop) that fuse Asian and African-American forms and of fluid exchanges between African Americans and Jamaicans and other West Indians: 'The New York youth sporting dreadlocks . . . is as likely to be African American as Jamaican, and the street slang of central Brooklyn youth owes as much to Kingston and Port of Spain as to the American South. . . . African-American young people dance to Jamaican dance hall music and imitate Jamaican patois, even as West Indian youngsters learn African American street slang. Puerto Ricans can meringue and Dominicans can play salsa and rap in two languages.'

Does this mean that there is no interethnic/racial conflict among second-generation youth from different countries or among second-generation youth and native minorities and whites? Of course not.[9] Does it mean that the children of immigrants, in many contexts, do not 'hang out' with peers from their own ethnic and racial group? Again, the answer is no. Nor does it mean that members of some groups – in particular those of African ancestry – do not experience subtle (and often not so subtle) barriers to inclusion into new kinds of ethnoracial mixes.

A few years ago, I taught a freshman seminar at CUNY that included students from Colombia, the Philippines, Pakistan, India, Russia, the republic of Georgia, Uzbekistan, as well as an African American, Puerto Rican, and native white. It was clear that friendships had developed among students from different groups, although an

Indian student complained that when Russians gathered in the student lounge they spoke Russian with each other, thereby excluding the others, and the lone African American student appeared to have developed few ties to the other students in the class. There is a danger of reading too much into this one example, yet observations in my own and others' classes suggest that the kind of mixing among students of Asian, Latino, and European background that I have described in the seminar is nothing out of the ordinary in the context of CUNY. It is a normal feature of college life, which will, I suspect, continue for many students as they carve out careers in New York City workplaces after graduation.[10] If students of African ancestry appear to be less integrated into informal social groups with those from other backgrounds, they, too, are developing multi-ethnic ties that include age peers of African American, Afro-Caribbean, and African background. In some cases, these ties include Latinos, Asians, and non-Hispanic whites as well. A fascinating example comes from recent research in New York City high schools that indicates that some academically successful Mexican young people identify and hang out with their black counterparts as a way of becoming incorporated into the black middle-class culture of mobility and facilitating their own upward path (Smith 2004).

Thus while New York is obviously not a perfect model of inclusion for the rest of the country, it does offer many optimistic signs – and the emergence of what has been called a 'new kind of multiculturalism ... of hybrids and fluid exchanges across group boundaries' (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf and Waters 2004a, p. 16).

Conclusion

New York is clearly exceptional in many ways as an American immigrant city. The composition, and extraordinary diversity, of immigrant streams to New York City have created a racial and ethnic order that is unlike the Latinization of Los Angeles, Miami, or Houston. Nor is it just the immigrant flows that make a difference as they affect the basic demographic contours of the city. The particular shape of New York City's political structure and culture – and the very history of immigration there – have implications for the dynamics of ethnoracial identities and relations.

At the same time, as I have also noted, New York is not a world – or, I should say, city – apart, and its ethnoracial structure is deeply affected by national laws, policies, and institutions. Notions of 'blackness', for example, have been shaped by the legacy of slavery and segregation in the nation as a whole; the category Hispanic is a classification developed by the U.S. Census Bureau; and views of Asians have been influenced by US political relations with (and

economic developments in) Asian countries. The fact is, too, that the national media and public discourse by national-level political leaders have had a role in the construction of race and ethnicity in New York. With regard to the media, however, another dynamic comes into play. New York has been, and may well continue to be, a trendsetter for the rest of the country. To the extent that much of the media in the country is based in New York City, the ethnoracial hierarchies, categories, and attitudes that hold sway there may have an impact elsewhere. Indeed, Gans (1999, p. 379) even suggests that because New York and Los Angeles are the country's 'prime creators of popular culture', their 'distinctive racial and ethnic characteristics will probably be diffused in subtle ways throughout the country as a whole'.

The analysis in this article is a beginning attempt to understand how constructions of race and ethnicity and intergroup relations develop in particular urban centres in the United States in the context of large-scale immigration, applying a 'city as context' approach to the examination of migration and multiculturalism. My own eye has been on New York, yet future studies of immigration, race and ethnicity will no doubt seek to place other cities on centre stage in the quest to appreciate what makes them unique as well as what they share with other American cities (for an account of multicultural Miami and the hybrid cultural mixes that have developed there see Stepick *et al.* 2003). Such endeavours will of necessity entail branching out beyond established immigrant destinations to explore emerging urban gateways that have only recently begun to receive large numbers of immigrants (e.g. Gozdziak and Martin 2005). Given that immigration has been occurring in an era of metropolitan decentralization and suburbanization, they will also involve going beyond a focus on central cities like New York to consider wider metropolitan areas and the combination of central cities, inner and outer suburbs, and suburban cities within these areas (Waldinger 2001a; Singer 2004). One thing is clear: whether the spotlight is on central cities or suburbs of metropolitan regions, the particular features of specific urban, or suburban, contexts cannot be ignored or taken for granted – and need to be an integral part of studies by anthropologists and other scholars who seek to comprehend the complex dynamics of migration and multiculturalism in an American society that continues to be dramatically transformed by the recent and ongoing massive immigration.

Notes

1.   I deliberately use this broad definition of multiculturalism which, as Alba and Nee (2003, p. 141) observe, is at one end of the spectrum of definitions of the term and 'refers to an undeniable empirical fact'. At the other end, as they note, 'the term suggests a grand ambition, to raise minority cultures to parity with the majority (or ones)' (see Vertovec 1998

for a discussion of the various meanings that multiculturalism can have for different social and political actors). In my use of the term multiculturalism, I do not oppose it to assimilation: assimilation is not a zero-sum game that requires the disappearance of ethnicity or ethnic markers – the more ethnic you are, the less you are a member of the dominant culture (Alba and Nee 2003, p.11, Kasinitz 2004, p. 293). Ethnic diversity, to put it another way, can go along with involvement in a common culture and commitment to shared national core values and allegiances.

2.   In 2000, 49 per cent of New York City's non-Hispanic white population was foreign-born or US-born with at least one foreign-born parent; this was true for 42 per cent of the city's non-Hispanic blacks (Mollenkopf, Olsen, and Ross 2001, p. 32).

3.   On the structure of economic opportunities, wages, and housing see Foner 2000, 2001, 2005; Waldinger 1996a; Ellis 2001.

4.   Race is a highly problematic, and highly charged concept, partly because it takes on meanings in popular discourse that differ from academic understandings and partly because of a concern that using the term can legitimize the very inequalities it describes. I follow George Fredrickson in using race to refer to the 'belief that socially significant differences between human groups or communities that differ in visible physical characteristics or putative ancestry are innate and unchangeable' (Foner and Fredrickson 2004, p. 2). 'Ethnicity' is often distinguished from race by defining ethnicity as based on ancestry and descent as opposed to biology or genes, but such distinctions are not as easy or unambiguous as scholars sometimes maintain. Fredrickson (2002, pp. 154–155) argues that race can be described as what happens when ethnicity is deemed essential or indelible and made hierarchical.

5.   In 2000, in Los Angeles and Houston, for example, around two-thirds or more of the Hispanic population was of Mexican origin; in New York City, 38 per cent was of Puerto Rican ancestry, 27 per cent Dominican, 9 per cent Mexican, 16 per cent South American, and 7 per cent Central American (Logan and Mollenkopf 2003).

6.   Almost half of all Latinos in the nation chose 'white' as their race on the 2000 Census.

7.   As a refugee population, Southeast Asians have been spread out around the country and stand out in a number of states that have small immigrant populations. In 2000, Vietnamese were the largest immigrant group in Louisiana, and Laotians the second largest in Minnesota and Wisconsin. A third of the nation's foreign-born Cambodians, 41 per cent of the nation's foreign-born Vietnamese, and 32 per cent of the nation's foreign-born Laotians lived in California (Camarota and McArdle 2003).

8.   This is based on 2000 figures for New York City and Los Angeles County. If only the city of Los Angeles is considered, then it is one in seven. If the larger New York and Los Angeles metropolitan areas are the units, they were home to one out of three US immigrants (see Singer 2004).

9.   The respondents in the New York second generation study conducted by Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters (2004a, p. 10) reported that the greatest hostility occurs between groups that are relatively close to each other in residential space and the labour market – English-speaking West Indians reporting conflicts with Haitians and African Americans, for example, and South Americans colliding with Puerto Ricans and Dominicans.

10.   Data from the Immigrant Second Generation in Metropolitan New York Survey suggest that large numbers of second-generation adults are employed in multicultural worksites (reported in Malkin 2004).

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