

# This Week's Citation Classic

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Glazer N & Moynihan D P. *Beyond the melting pot: the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970 (1963). 363 p.

The book studies the role of ethnicity in the politics, economy, and culture of New York City, by way of profiles of the five largest groups. It argues that the ethnic group in New York, and the United States, is not a survival, but a new creation, each shaped by a distinctive history, culture, and American experience, which gives each group a distinctive role in the life of the city. [The *Science Citation Index*<sup>®</sup> (*SCI*<sup>®</sup>) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*<sup>™</sup> (*SSCI*<sup>™</sup>) indicate that this book has been cited over 380 times since 1969.]

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"I had, since the mid-1940s, been studying and writing about American ethnicity, an interest spurred by my work as an editor of *Commentary* magazine. I had already written a book about American Jews,<sup>1</sup> and another book on the American Communist Party,<sup>2</sup> which interpreted it more as an expression of ethnic rather than of class interests. The genesis of *Beyond the Melting Pot* was an idea of James Wechsler, editor of the *New York Post*, and Irwin Ross, for a series in the newspaper on the ethnic groups of the city. Daniel Bell suggested me as the person to write it. I expanded the idea into a book, which was modestly supported by the New York Post Foundation. Martin Meyerson, then director of the Joint Center for Urban Studies of Harvard and MIT, was also interested in my work on ethnicity, and the support was funneled through the Center.

"My approach to American ethnic groups was influenced by RE. Park,<sup>3</sup> who traced the

changes affecting ethnic groups objectively and sympathetically, avoiding the competing ideologies of Americanization and cultural maintenance; and by the social anthropologists who emphasized the wholeness of a culture, and the significance of family and child-rearing patterns for a people. I thought it essential that the analysis of each group should be grounded in its history and its economic role. What emerged from these orientations as somewhat original was the idea that the ethnic group was not only a survival from the age of mass immigration, but something of a new creation, and thus we could expect not rapid assimilation but an extended persistence, even as each group underwent change.

"My original intention was to have each ethnic group studied by a scholar from that group, who combined the empathy and understanding one might expect on the basis of origin and intimate experience, an objective perspective, and a willingness to participate in the project. The combination, in 1959, was hard to find. The only collaborator was Daniel P. Moynihan, a young political scientist suggested by Irving Kristol. Moynihan wrote the section on the Irish and brought to the book unexcelled knowledge of the political role of ethnicity in New York City.

"The book's impact, I believe, was based on the fact that it took ethnicity seriously at a time when most thinking people considered it a survival from the age of mass immigration and of decreasing importance. It turned out we—in America and the rest of the world—were due for a revival of ethnic interests, loyalties, and attachments in the later 1960s and 1970s, accompanied by considerable social research on ethnicity. A good deal of that research takes off from—or against—some point or hypothesis in *Beyond the Melting Pot*."

1. **Glazer N.** *American Judaism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972 (1957). 210 p.
2. ...., *The social basis of American communism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961. 244 p.
3. **Park R E.** *The immigrant press and its control*. New York: Harper, 1922. 487 p.