

fundamentalists are themselves having fewer children than in the past, Mormons, Orthodox Jews, and Islamic and Christian fundamentalists and evangelicals have, on average, far larger families than others.

Fertility crashes have happened before, for instance, in Greece in the second century BC. But when “cultural and economic conditions discourage parenthood, not even a dictator—and many have tried—can force people to go forth and multiply,” Longman writes. Still, as the Greeks and Romans shirked their child-producing duties, Europe did not sink into a vegetative state. As the Roman empire slowly collapsed, the population didn’t die out, it just changed. Some sociologists believe that nearly all of the spread of Christianity in late antiquity was the result of the higher birthrates and lower death rates of Christians. Out of their fecundity, medieval Europe was born.

SOCIETY

East Egg Moves West

THE SOURCE: “The Right Side of the Tracks: Affluent Neighborhoods in the Metropolitan United States” by Barrett A. Lee and Matthew Marlay, in *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 88 (3), 2007.

SOCIAL SCIENTISTS HAVE chronicled nearly every possible aspect of poor and middle-class neighborhoods over the last century. Finally, sociologists are beginning to probe one of the remaining under-researched territories of America: the enclaves of the rich.



Metropolitan Washington, flush with the lucrative industries that service the federal government, contains 74 rich neighborhoods, more than anywhere else in the country. Most are in the suburbs.

The comfortable class is hardly confined to the hedge-fund manager haunts of New York and the stately formality of Boston, where previous students have usually looked, write Barrett A. Lee and Matthew Marlay, sociologists at Pennsylvania State University. The well-off have moved to the suburbs. And to the West. In the most recent census figures, 30 percent of affluent neighborhoods—the top two percent of census tracts (each populated by about 4,000 people), with median family incomes of about

\$110,000 and over—are located in the West, 27 percent in the South, 26 percent in the Northeast, and only 18 percent in the Midwest. Nearly eight of 10 rich neighborhoods aren’t in central cities at all.

The flush communities are populated by families with children, for the most part, and about 88 percent of their residents are white. Roughly two percent are African American and about the same percentage are of Hispanic descent. Asian Americans, however, are overrepresented. On Main Street in a hypothetical

Richville, eight of 100 residents would be of Asian descent, compared with five of 100 in Average-town. About 13 percent of the households would be headed by somebody born in another country, compared with 14 percent for all communities. Nearly 70 percent of adults would have college degrees, compared with 26 percent overall.

Not too many full-time coupon clippers would live in these rarified reaches. Men in these census tracts would be more likely to be working than their counterparts in areas lower on the income ladder; women less likely. But most affluent households—70 percent—do report “unearned” income from interest, dividends, and rents, the authors write. Lee and Marlay were unable to squeeze out precise information on overall wealth—the oceanfront vacation home or the odd private jet—from the data available. But they did find that long before the current housing downturn, the top two percent of houses cost nearly \$400,000, compared with just over \$100,000 in the average sample census tract. The richest neighborhoods are not likely to be gated communities. Such developments are more often home to people some notches down the wealth ladder and worried about crime.

With a grand total of 74 wealthy census tracts, the Washington metropolitan area tops the list in terms of quantity. Metropolitan New York City is second with 54. Nationwide, there are 764 wealthy neighborhoods as defined by Lee and Marlay’s criteria. Interested though most of us are in how

the other half lives, the authors note that the evidence produced by their statistical analysis is “rather predictable.” But the “modest surprises” offered by the authors’ research are somewhat comforting: Even the rich in America tend to hold down jobs, and a substantial number of them are first-generation immigrants.

SOCIETY

New York, Immigration 101

THE SOURCE: “How Exceptional Is New York? Migration and Multiculturalism in the Empire City” by Nancy Foner, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Nov. 2007.

TO UNDERSTAND HOW NEW YORK differs from other cities in the way it deals with immigration, look no further than street parking. New York matter-of-factly bows to its infinite variety of ethnic groups by suspending alternate-side parking restrictions on no fewer than 34 legal and religious holidays, including the Hindu celebration of Diwali, the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, the Catholic feast of the Assumption, the Jewish holiday of Purim, and the Asian Lunar New Year.

A “particular New York way” of absorbing vast numbers of new

New Yorkers pride themselves on a tradition of successfully absorbing immigrants, even if the story is not always quite true.

immigrants has taken root in the city, writes Nancy Foner, a sociologist at Hunter College, in part because New Yorkers have had so much practice in accommodation.

For much of the 20th century, one in five New York residents was foreign born. That figure reached 41 percent in the 1910 census, a level it’s again approaching, at 36 percent in the last census. Those New Yorkers who weren’t born in a foreign country themselves are likely to have a relative who was, Foner writes.

As a magnet for immigrants, New York may be fortunate that its three million newcomers are not dominated by one group that can gang up on the others. The top three groups—Dominicans, Chinese, and Jamaicans—made up less than 30 percent of all foreign-born people in the five boroughs in 2000. Many immigrants still come from Europe. The countries of the former Soviet Union are the fourth-largest source. Even among blacks—a group often counted as if it were a monolith—there is tremendous diversity. More than a quarter of the city’s two million non-Hispanic black residents were born abroad.

New York also has historical advantages, Foner writes. Migration into the boroughs has been steady and diverse for more than a century, unlike some cities that have been surprised by a large recent influx after generations of little change. New York’s low-skilled immigrants have been balanced by an equal number of highly skilled newcomers. The city’s 51 city council seats, 65 state assembly positions, 25 state senate slots, and 59 community boards—with up to 50 members