Introduction

I n the winter of 1877, a group of mourners gathered in a dimly lit funeral parlor on Pearl Street in lower Manhattan to pay their last respects to Ah Fung (sometimes referred to as Ah Lung), a Chinese man who had been brutally murdered in his Lower East Side apartment. He had died of "ghastly wounds" at Bellevue Hospital after living for eighty hours with his brain exposed.[1] Both Irish and Chinese people attended the funeral, including Mrs. Ah Fung, a woman of Irish ancestry. The *New York World* described the mixed gathering as "something unprecedented . . . [that gave] a good idea of the cosmopolitan character of the city"[2] Given the well-publicized history of anti-Chinese hostility among the Irish working class, it is not surprising that the editors viewed the Ah Fung funeral as an anomaly.[3]

The details of Ah Fung's life are murky. The *World* described him as a laundry worker, while the *New York Times* reported that he had eked out a living making cigars and cigarettes with a Chinese man, Tung Ha, also known as "Peter Johnson," and his white wife, Theresa.[4] The three lived at 17 Forsyth Street, located in an ethnically mixed neighborhood across from the future site of the Manhattan Bridge. For unknown reasons, the household had not included Ah Fung's wife; the two apparently had been living apart for several months before the attack.[5]

Like other working-class immigrant communities, the Chinese called on their local mutual aid societies to help cover the funeral costs.[6]

Members of the Ene E. Jong, a Chinese burial society, raised $200 for the funeral and burial expenses. But the dead man's friends and relatives had to look outside the Chinese community for an undertaker, for it would not be until the 1930s that the Chinese could hire a licensed Chinese funeral director. They hired William H. Kennedy, who placed Ah Fung's coffin in his carriage house "amidst numerous hacks, coffins of several sorts, and a dreary looking hearse." The forty-five-year-old Irish immigrant was a former carpenter and stable and livery keeper known for having "buried all the Chinese that [had] died in the down-town settlement for a number of years past." Readers of the *World* caught a glimpse of Chinese customs from Kennedy, who provided a lengthy description of Chinese funeral and burial rituals, information he had acquired after many years of serving the local Chinese community.[7] He also provided details of the Ah Fung funeral, noting that Mrs. Ah Fung, whom he described as "bright and intelligent," was apparently unmoved by her husband's violent death. In the undertaker's view, the young woman was "not in the least crushed by affliction, for having left a tidy sum to his widow, she [was] not left in poverty by the demise of her husband."[8] Kennedy's perception that Mrs. Ah Fung was not aggrieved but satisfied at her newly acquired financial state reinscribed popular racial stereotypes of the time—that she could never have entered the marriage out of love, but only for economic gain.

The newspaper reports of Ah Fung's murder and the funeral that followed were no different from other tales of interracial love, sex, and violence that had become standard fodder in an increasingly sensationalist press by the late nineteenth century. But once we sift through the lurid details of the crime and the "colorful" descriptions Kennedy provides, a layer of interracial/interethnic social and economic relations that operated beneath the radar of popular depictions of urban life begins to surface. Ah Fung's community in 1877 consisted of both Chinese and non-Chinese people who in various ways provided friendship, kinship ties, social services, and financial as well as emotional support.

Ah Fung's situation was not unusual. Interrracial/interethnic relations were a common feature of daily life among working-class New Yorkers even as the ethnic composition of working-class neighborhoods in lower Manhattan changed over time. Nearly fifty years after Ah Fung's funeral, a few blocks north of Forsyth Street, Johanna Hurley sat with Ching

Yeng and her four-year-old daughter, Lung Som Moy, as Ching's husband, Lung Lin, lay dying. Hurley, a widowed German immigrant, lived in the same apartment building and had summoned the ambulance. The building on Division Street, where Hurley's and Ching's families resided, housed an ethnically mixed population of old and new immigrants, the latter being mostly Russian and Polish Jews who worked in the city's garment factories, ran small shops, or peddled wares in the densely populated neighborhoods of lower Manhattan.[9] Moy's father worked as a store manager several blocks over on Pell Street in the area popularly known as "Chinatown."

Shortly after her husband died, Ching made plans to return to China. But she hoped that one day her daughter would return to the United States, her country of birth. Thus, in accordance with the Chinese exclusion laws, she applied for a return certificate for Lung Som Moy before leaving the country. The friendship between Hurley and Ching Yeng continued over time and space, as the two women kept in touch for several years after Ching and her daughter moved to China.

In 1935, thirteen years after Moy had left the United States, she applied for readmission. Chinese friends of her family who still lived in New York City called on Hurley, now living on Chrystie Street, to testify on the young woman's behalf. Despite ill health, she accompanied two Chinese men to Ellis Island. Hurley stated that she had been friendly with a number of Chinese people in her old neighborhood, who had even given her a Chinese name, "Wah Moo." For instance, she recalled the Lum family who lived on Mott Street and had visited Moy's family frequently. So many years later, she still remembered the names of some of the Lum children: "The oldest girl is May—there's George—there's one I used to call 'cowboy.'" The Chinese immigration inspectors evidently found Hurley's testimony convincing, for they admitted Moy into the country as a U.S. citizen. Then, like so many working-class people, Hurley, Moy, and the Lums disappeared from the public record.[10]

I begin with the stories of Ah Fung and Johanna Hurley not because they exemplify every aspect of interracial/interethnic social relationships, but precisely because they are fragments of a larger, more complicated story of urban life. Their stories serve as temporal bookends within which we can piece together the social connections that helped working-

class people cope with life and death, create families, and sustain livelihoods. Both stories involve Chinese people but take place on the edges of "Chinatown." They illustrate how working-class immigrant people often crossed paths at the interstices of designated community boundaries, signifying sets of social and economic relations that often defied popular notions of neighborhood borders.

The purpose of this project is to explore the social and economic conditions under which people participated in the simultaneous development of co-ethnic and interracial/interethnic relations in their daily lives. My main argument is that between the end of Reconstruction and the 1930s, national and local efforts to reify racial boundaries through Jim Crow segregation, immigration exclusion laws, and urban reform movements often facilitated interracial/interethnic social and economic relations. An examination of lived experiences and everyday practices—sexual relationships, marriage, the formation of families and friendships, work, play, and political activities—can provide meaning, motion, and specificity to the analytic categories of race, class, gender, and nation. Studying the conditions under which people crossed the lines of difference as they negotiated systems of power at the national, state, and local levels also allows historians to chart both changes and continuities in conceptions of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality and, in the process, revisit ethnic and racial "isolation" as both a lived experience and a concept.

Social and economic networks across ethnic lines evolved out of necessity as much as personal desire and ranged from loving intimate relationships to outright hostility. They also varied according to circumstances and residential patterns. In New York City, the ethnic composition of neighborhoods, blocks, apartment buildings, and households varied greatly. Between the time of Ah Fung's murder and the 1920s, much had changed in the neighborhoods of lower Manhattan. Many of the Irish inhabitants of southern Manhattan had dispersed throughout the city in search of cheap housing and better employment. This region by 1900 now housed the "new" immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Large clusters of European Jews settled in the southeastern part of lower Manhattan on Orchard, Allen, Cherry, and Ludlow streets.[11] First- and second-generation Italian immigrant families came to dominate Elizabeth and Mulberry streets and part of Mott Street. But much

of lower Manhattan was still ethnically diverse. According to the 1900 federal census, residents of Mott Street, the so-called "heart" of Chinatown, listed their countries of origin as Algeria, Africa, Canada, China, Cuba, England, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, and Russia. Italian immigrants made up the largest group, followed by Chinese and Russians.[12] Other streets, such as Bayard, the Bowery, and Park Row, also housed a mix of ethnic groups and household configurations.

Despite the reality of ethnically mixed neighborhoods, the popular images of urban ethnic communities as isolated from one another and from the rest of the "modern" world have persisted in the popular imagination since the nineteenth century. Groups that had immigrated to the United States from Asia and from Southern and Eastern Europe bore the brunt of mostly negative images perpetuated by lawmakers, journalists, reformers, the clergy, scholars, and popular writers. As a result, ethnic neighborhood designations such as "Chinatown," "Little Italy," and the "Lower East Side" remain in the public imaginary as unchangeable.

Such images underscore the presumed strength of ethnic isolation as a social and psychological process of community and identity formation that overrode ethnically mixed residential demographic patterns. During the early 1950s, the author and critic Lloyd R. Morris described the Lower East Side, for example, as a "fusion of nationalities" that was "less obvious than their persistently maintained identity, their continuing separateness."[13] In a humorous reference to European Jewish cuisine, Edwin Burrows and Mike Wallace, in their 1999 Pulitzer Prize-winning history of New York City, likened Jewish immigrants from Hungary and Russia to "herrings in a barrel," suggesting that these groups not only were crowded into streets and tenements but also were unmovable.[14] A tourist guide to New York City's "Chinatown" adhered to similar images: "It's almost as though the entire community has been plucked from the Far East and laid to rest in Manhattan, its inhabitants unaware of the transition."[15] Such images have outweighed the competing idea of the "melting pot," that immigrants discarded all vestiges of their original culture to become "a new, composite American." Both interpretations contradicted the uneven processes of acculturation and the persistence of racism and xenophobia at the local and national levels.[16]

Federal and state policies and local segregationist practices explicitly intended to isolate those groups deemed "undesirable" and "unassimi-

lable" or even a danger to U.S. society and culture. Such measures took the form of antimiscegenation laws, the Indian Removal Acts, immigration restriction and citizenship laws, and discrimination in housing, education, and employment.[17]

The new immigrant groups who entered the United States during the late nineteenth century were perceived as different kinds of "problems" and, hence, experienced discrimination in particular ways. Exclusion laws barred the immigration of Chinese laborers and women suspected of entering the United States for "immoral purposes" (i.e., prostitution) and deemed all Chinese immigrants ineligible for naturalization and citizenship. Even some who opposed exclusion rejected the notion that Chinese immigrants even wanted to integrate themselves into American culture. U.S. Supreme Court Justice David Josiah Brewer ridiculed efforts to exclude the Chinese, arguing in 1904 that "no Chinaman comes to this country or goes to any other with the intention of casting his lot with it. . . . So far from meaning to be naturalized, he intends to remain alien."[18]

Other ethnic groups also came under scrutiny. Questions over whether Jewish and Italian immigrants could successfully assimilate emerged in both religious and secular realms. In New York City, Catholic parish priests, most of whom were of Irish ancestry, consistently expressed frustration at what many of them viewed as the backwardness of Italian co-religionists. For Lillian W. Betts, a social worker and urban reformer, the Italians in New York were clearly not a part of the city's larger identity: "A year's residence in an Italian tenement in New York taught me first of all the isolation of a foreign quarter; how completely cut off one may be from everything that makes New York, New York." According to the attorney and writer Madison Grant, Jews threatened to degrade the Anglo-Saxon population. In his *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), Grant asserted that "the result of the mixture of two races, in the long run, gives us a race reverting to the more ancient, generalized and lower type. The cross between a white man and a negro is a negro; the cross between a white man and a Hindu is a Hindu; and the cross between any of the three European races and a Jew is a Jew."[19] During World War I, ethnic stereotypes bore the additional associations with political unrest—Italians with anarchism and Jews with bolshevism.

Academic scholarship forwarded the concept of ethnic isolation

between the 1920s and the 1950s as a central framework for analyzing race and ethnic relations in the United States. The sociologist Robert E. Park maintained that Asians in particular were isolated from American society and slower to assimilate than other groups, a phenomenon he called the "Oriental Problem." In an effort to find out why, he initiated his "Survey of Race Relations" in the 1920s as a means of gathering data on whites' attitudes toward Asian American people. Park's student Louis Wirth, a German Jewish immigrant, and Wirth's student Paul Siu, a Chinese immigrant, continued the study of social isolation by analyzing the immigrant experiences of their own ethnic groups. Wirth's book, *The Ghetto* (1928), examined the adjustment strategies among European Jews to U.S. cities. Like his mentor, Wirth argued that the experience of ghettoization as a form of physical and cultural isolation applied to other ethnic/racial groups.[20]

Siu's study, aptly titled *The Chinese Laundryman: A Study of Social Isolation* (1953), departed significantly from both Park and Wirth. Siu lived among Chinese laundry workers in Chicago as a participant observer during the 1930s. As the historian John Kuo Wei Tchen has pointed out, the significance of Siu's study lies in its portrayal of the Chinese immigrant experience as unique. Siu countered Park's and Wirth's contention that the "ghetto" experience was uniformly applicable to all ethnic groups. The strength of anti-Chinese prejudice, as exemplified in the exclusion movement and the immigration restriction laws that specifically targeted Chinese immigration, set the Chinese apart from other immigrant groups. According to Siu, Chinese immigrants were not "marginal men" who straddled two cultural worlds, as Park had posited, but were continual strangers in a hostile country, "sojourners" who clung to their ways of life in a new land rather than actively seeking to assimilate. In the process, they developed "immigrant economies" or occupational niches that did not compete with those of whites. The latter concept in particular is a place to further explore the degree to which such occupations functioned separately from one another.[21] For Wirth and Siu, life imitated art. Both men experienced institutional isolation within and outside academia. Although widely popular among Jewish readers, Wirth's book was virtually ignored in academic circles. Siu found a similar lack of interest and recognition for his scholarship on the Chinese.

The Civil Rights Movement facilitated a resurgence of scholarship

in urban, immigration, and ethnic studies on ethnic identity politics and community formation by the 1970s and 1980s.[22] Ethnic isolation remains a central mode of understanding race and ethnic community formation in U.S. society in scholarly and popular works. In Asian American history, for example, the Chinese have been portrayed as "exotics," ardent nationalists positioned as outsiders of the body politic, or as contagions whose very presence threatened the health of the nation.[23]

The continued engagement with the concept of isolation is an important phenomenon not only for Asian American history but also for urban history in general. The debates allow historians to probe further into the various ways isolation functioned in the lives of marginalized groups. Thus, my intention is not to argue that immigrants either were or were not isolated in U.S. society or that some groups were more isolated than others. Rather, I argue that "isolation" or "segregation" and their presumed antonym, "integration," were rarely totalizing or uniform experiences and that the degree of "isolation" or "integration" was contingent on particular social and economic conditions. The stories of a diverse ethnic population raise the inevitable questions, such as isolation from what and from whom? How do we define "isolation"? Did all ethnic groups experience isolation in the same ways? The 1989 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists several definitions of "isolation," the primary of which refers to "the fact or condition of being isolated or standing alone; separation from other things or persons; solitariness." One of the primary definitions of "integration" stems from antiracist social movements, "the bringing into equal membership of a common society those groups or persons previously discriminated against on racial or cultural grounds."[24]

Southern Manhattan during the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century offers a good locale to examine the degree to which isolation and integration functioned, for it is in this geographic space where narratives of ethnic isolation have emerged the most strongly in American urban history. Comparative studies of ethnic/racial groups, as well as studies of interracial sex and marriage, have facilitated the process of thinking beyond the experiences of any one particular group and encouraging an examination of the differential effects of systems of oppression and the historical specificity of relations between ethnic/racial groups and the state.[25] As Susan Glenn has pointed out,

immigrants from different ethnic groups may have developed friendly relations in the workplace, but they often kept a "comfortable social distance" from each other.[26]

Interactions across ethnic and racial lines have been an integral part of the history of New York City since the settlement by the Dutch in Manhattan during the seventeenth century. Between the nineteenth century and the twentieth century, the city's rapid growth as a major seaport and industrial center increased such possibilities. New immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and smaller numbers of East Asians increased the city's population. Joining them were rural, working-class, and college-educated men and women within the United States in search of employment, leisure, and education.[27]

Cultural shifts accompanied these large-scale demographic changes. Middle- and working-class white women enjoyed increased physical mobility, regularly traversing the city streets to and from shops, missions, jobs, amusement parks, and "exotic" offerings in shops and restaurants. While many educated middle-class women moved into working-class and poor neighborhoods to participate in the settlement house and missionary movements, immigrant working-class "ghetto girls" crafted identities and social practices that more accurately reflected their lives as wage-earning, immigrant women. They dressed in less expensive versions of the latest fashions, wore makeup, and socialized in public spaces with young working-class men.[28]

The potential for mixing across lines of difference, however, raised concerns about sexual behavior both within and outside the heterosexual norm, especially in densely populated urban areas. Writers expressed anxieties over the transgression of racial and ethnic boundaries at the same time that they reinforced normative white heterosexuality. In New York City, as in San Francisco and Chicago, homosexual men came under periodic surveillance by reformers, municipal leaders, the police, and the clergy, who were determined to shore up heterosexual, middle-class, Protestant normativity among the poor, immigrants, and those deemed sexually deviant.[29]

By the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, concerns about interracial sex and marriage found expression in short stories, plays, and songs that capitalized on popular anxieties. William Norr's *Stories of Chinatown*, published in 1892, and Anne Nichols's play *Abie's*

Irish Rose, which opened on Broadway thirty years later, exemplify works that revealed popular understandings of race and ethnic differences as much as they sought to entertain.[30] Both writers situated their stories in New York City, a contested site of race, ethnic, and sexual politics, as expressed in the tension between the so-called old and new immigrants and between "whites" and "non-whites."

Norr, a former sports writer, turned to writing "true-to-life" fiction that perpetuated popular representations of working-class lower Manhattan as a center of both ethnic isolation and interracial mixing. Like many local newspapermen, Norr socialized with urban working-class people at bars and opium houses in the "Chinatown" neighborhood. He gained notoriety especially for his "discovery" of the "Mayor of Chinatown," the infamous former pugilist and self-promoter "Chuck" Connors.[31] Popular stereotypes and his own experiences formed the basis of his stories, which highlighted the supposed dangers of interracial love between young working-class white women and Chinese immigrant men who "kept" their women by plying them with alcohol and opium. The message was clear: Such liaisons could never succeed, for all of the tales in Norr's collection ended in tragedy, with the death of white women who took up with the "repulsive Chinese."[32] The weakness of the women lured to Chinatown also affected Irish men, who sought to rescue "their" women. In the stories, a number of which feature Connors, working-class Irish men ultimately lost out to the lure of the exotic, as these liaisons fragmented and destroyed the possibility of intraethnic Irish relationships.

Nichols took a comedic approach to interracial/interethnic tensions. *Abie's Irish Rose* was set in the Bronx, well north of lower Manhattan, where a large concentration of European Jews still resided when the play opened at the Fulton Theater in New York. The play ran until 1923 and then appeared as a Hollywood film in 1928. The story focused on the marriage between a young Jewish man and a woman of Irish ancestry. Although billed as a comedy, the main characters' struggle to hide their marriage from their parents exemplified the generational conflict within immigrant communities over assimilation and the potential loss of religious and cultural practices as a result of intermarriage. In a case of life imitating art, one of the play's lead male actors was Bernard Gorcey, an immigrant of Swiss and Russian ancestry who had married an Irish

Catholic woman. Other plays and films about Jewish–Irish romances followed during the 1920s, including "Kosher Kitty Kelly" and "The Cohens and the Kellys." As these plays suggest, ethnic differences signaled the uneven process of "whitening" among groups of European ancestry and the degree to which cultural differences resulted in social distances between groups.

Humorous songs, such as "Moysha Machree" (1906) and "If It Wasn't for the Irish and the Jews (1912)," highlighted different aspects of assimilation, as well as Jewish–Irish relations. Each group at different historical moments had achieved relative upward social, economic, and political mobility, despite the continued existence of anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism. What the songs do not reveal, however, is that the Irish and European Jews still occupied distinct positions on the black–white continuum in American society precisely because of the new immigration. Unlike the Irish by this time, Jews and other newly arrived immigrant groups remained on the margins of whiteness.[33]

The comic portrayals of parental hysteria over Jewish–Irish romances disguised the tensions that persisted throughout the 1920s as the rise of white supremacy groups and racial violence throughout the nation attested, especially when it involved crossing the color line. Public furor over the murder of a nineteen-year-old white missionary, Elsie Sigel, in the summer of 1909 illustrated the ways in which the investigation of a homicide quickly gave way to municipal action that focused on interracial sex and marriage, especially between white women and non-white men. At the height of the Sigel case that summer, members of the New York City police determined to rid "Chinatown" of white women who did not possess marriage certificates in an effort to curtail contact with Chinese men. It did not matter that Sigel's body was found on Eighth Avenue, well outside of southern Manhattan. The association of the Chinese in New York and of all new immigrant groups to this region persisted, regardless of demographic realities.[34]

The Sigel case underscores the power of memory, popular representations, and the development of co-ethnic communities. Together, they have contributed to the dominant view of these communities as distinct and separate from each other and the rest of society. The "Chinatown" case serves as one example. The association between European Jews and the Lower East Side is another. The turn-of-the-century writers Abra-

ham Cahan, political activist, journalist, novelist, and editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, and Israel Zangwill, were instrumental in making the connection between the Lower East Side and American Jewish history.[35] Michael Gold's autobiographical novel *Jews without Money* (1935) captured much of the romanticized, sometimes satirical memories of Lower East Side life, as well as its tensions: "The East Side never forgot Europe. We children heard endless tales of the pogroms." Memories also included a wariness of other ethnic groups in America. Gold's mother figure expresses these anxieties: "My mother was opposed to the Italians, Irish, Germans, and every other variety of Christian with whom we were surrounded." There was also the "memory" of the Chinese, as represented by a Chinese laundryman who engaged in sex with a young neighborhood Jewish woman, whom they nicknamed "Sweetheart of the Yellow Cholera."[36]

Local understandings of "difference" to a large extent contributed to a social distancing between groups. For Rose Cohen, a young Russian immigrant woman, "difference" turned on expressions of gender identity. For Cohen, being a "civilized" woman in America meant adopting the working-class codes of "new womanhood," a fashionable "ghetto girl." In her memoir, she recalled thinking that her fellow Italian workers were not civilized because they were willing to work for low pay and forego accessories like hats, gloves, and umbrellas. For many young immigrant women like Cohen, demanding higher pay and purchasing accessories with their own wages was part of an assimilating process that the writer Anzia Yezierska described as becoming "a person," an independent, assertive, and, hence, "American" woman who embraced early-twentieth-century consumerism. In Cohen's view, an *Italian* characteristic was to refrain from acculturation to American consumerism. Whether Cohen ever would have used the term "race" as a way to understand and describe the distance between herself and her Italian co-workers is unclear; nonetheless, she perceived differences between Jewish and Italian women in terms that were relevant to her life as a young working-class immigrant woman.

Overt hostilities were also not uncommon. According to Cohen, the harassment of Jewish pushcart peddlers by local Irish youths happened frequently. The disruption of the funeral of a prominent rabbi provides another example. In the summer of 1902, a large group of non-Jewish

factory workers attacked the passing funeral cortege of Jacob Joseph, the chief rabbi of the U.S. Jewish Congregation and head of the Congregation Beth Hamedrash Hagodai on Norfolk Street. The assailants threw objects out of the upper factory windows at the passing mourners, whose numbers reached several hundred. A riot ensued when the mourners fought back. The story made the front page of the *New York Times*, which pointed out that conflicts such as this were not uncommon in the heavily Jewish neighborhood where the incident occurred.[37] John Eng recalled being harassed by Irish and Italian boys when he was a youth in the 1930s: "I had a lot of trouble. . . . The problem was the Irish and Italian kids. You know, 'Hey, Chinky, go back to Chinatown!' You think Mulberry Street was Chinatown back then? It was all Italian. I fought back. I had to."[38]

Amid such tensions, however, ethnic groups could also influence and benefit from each other, as in the case of the Irish and Italians in Greenwich Village. Their physical proximity to one another and a shared religious faith helped bridge differences and facilitate the process of assimilation. Conflict and avoidance between the two groups had been the norm since Italians began immigrating into the area in the late nineteenth century. But by the 1920s, the Irish, now "white" and hence "American," served as models for Italians as they strove for assimilation and acculturation into white American society. The "Irish ways" of Americanization operated through the structure and culture of machine politics and ethnic institutions, such as the local Catholic churches.[39] As individuals and as members of larger social networks, the people in this book were both products of and agents in a changing urban environment in which they carved out social, economic, and physical spaces by choice *and* as a result of racism and poverty.

As I discuss in greater depth in Chapter 3, the reclassification of the Irish and other European groups as Caucasian or white by the early twentieth century signaled a number of shifts in systems of inclusion and exclusion that affected the ethnic composition of urban occupations between the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Such changes created a system of dependency that brought people of different races and ethnicities into contact with one another out of necessity. With the growth of New York City as an industrial and mercantile center, many occupations also expanded to serve the needs of businesses and

the public, such as hauling and livery. Irish men were already numerous in many of these occupations, to the exclusion of other groups, who then came to rely on their services. A stratified and segmented urban occupational labor force, then, created a social and economic context that brought people of different races together out of mutual necessity.

Although one could explore interracial/interethnic social relations in any number of geographic locations, I want to revisit this region of New York City precisely because it has long been considered, in popular and academic texts, a cluster of ethnic enclaves isolated from the rest of the modern city. My goal is to sift through the memories and assumptions about urban communities, to unearth the history of complex social relations across and within ethnic and racial groups and, in so doing, make sense of the sometimes fragmented stories behind those such as Ah Fung, Mrs. Ah Fung, their friends, William Kennedy, Johanna Hurley, and Lung Som Moy. The larger forces of transnational migration flows, settlement patterns among immigrants and U.S.-born transplants to the city, and the development of a segmented and stratified occupational labor structure and new perspectives on gender relations—the "new masculinity" and the new woman—provided the social, economic, and political context within which to view daily relations among a diverse population who lived and labored in lower Manhattan.

How do we comprehend the different contexts within which interracial and interethnic interactions occurred? Kevin Mumford's conceptual model of *interzones* is particularly valuable because it locates specific spacial environments within which urban working-class people worked and socialized. Mumford conceptualizes black–white sex districts as sets of concentric circles, with the most stigmatized vice, interracial sex, occupying the center.[40] Such a model helps readers visualize the structure of urban vice districts simultaneously as marginalized social spaces and as sites for the possibility of resistance and transgression of sexual and racial norms. However, the model of concentricity alone cannot encompass a broader range of social relations. I propose intersecting and overlapping spheres as another way to visualize urban interracial/interethnic relations that includes, but is not limited to, sexual interactions. What we are left with is a vision of an extraordinarily complex system of social relations that defies any one particular model and that takes into account the simultaneity of different types of social relations. Such

relations are shaped by particular conditions in the workplace, home, streets, and so forth. People's interactions across lines of difference in a variety of social, political, and economic contexts suggests that intersecting, overlapping, and concentric spheres of contact could co-exist at any given moment. At the core of such interactions was power: the power of the state to regulate the social, political, and economic status of people at the local level, based on presumptive notions of race, class, gender, and sexuality, as well as the power of individuals to carve out opportunities out of oppressive systems.

To conceptualize long-term and short-term interactions across lines of ethnic and racial difference as intersecting and overlapping applies the social-science paradigm of intersectionality, which posits that forms of oppression act in conjunction and are mutually constitutive. The legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw developed the concept of intersectionality to more fully comprehend systems of oppression and identity formation. In urban studies, such an approach allows us to see the city as a set of geographic and social sites in which inhabitants could develop relations simultaneously across and within lines of race, ethnicity, class, and gender as part of a complex process of urban community formation.[41]

Where, exactly, can we locate these interactions? The urban built environment provides historians with clues. Interior and exterior spaces then, as now, were at a premium and often functioned as sites of multiple, overlapping activities. Shops, tenement and apartment dwellings, schools, saloons, missions and settlement houses, the streets, wharves, alleyways, and beneath the bridges provided physical and cultural space where particular kinds of social and economic relationships took place between urban working-class women, men, and children and between the middle classes and the poor, working-class, and immigrant populations. The crowded, noisy tenements concerned social reformers but evoked mixed responses from the residents. Some complained to social reformers about drunken, dirty, noisy neighbors, while others enjoyed the cacophony of voices and the tunes played out by local musicians in the streets and apartments.[42]

In these locations, people crossed paths with one another in particular contexts and under conditions produced by a combination of factors, including the racialized and gendered urban paid labor force, Progressive-era social reform movements, and the emergence of new forms of

urban masculinity and femininity. In some circumstances, however, these same factors could also work to drive a wedge between groups. For example, as Chapter 5 demonstrates, much as the workers at Christodora House, a settlement on Avenue B and 9th Street, wanted to create a "common ground" on which men and women of different ethnicities and class positions could base their interactions, gender, class, and ethnic divisions nevertheless manifested themselves in settlement house activities. Interactions between middle-class Protestant social workers and working-class immigrants underscored exactly how *uncommon* that ground actually was when one looked carefully at the power structure that guided the settlement.

This book takes the reader to different geographic locations of southern Manhattan to examine the ways in which race, ethnicity, class, and gender shaped daily interactions. This area was not a homogeneous region; nor was it simply a set of isolated ethnic clusters, as suggested by the "ethnic enclave" model. Within these neighborhoods, people regularly transgressed social categories as much as they assisted in hardening the lines between them. Moreover, these neighborhoods functioned as nodes of social, economic, and political connection to other areas of the city, especially with the growth of the boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. Thus, one can conceptualize New York City as a system of interconnected boroughs, based on kinship and community ties, paid labor, and social relationships, at the same time that the people in each neighborhood within a borough maintained a distinctive identity.

In part, this book grew out of my own competing memories of the area. Conventional images have never resonated with my memories and experiences. I grew up in northern New Jersey, but my familial roots lie in Manhattan's "Chinatown." The maternal side of my family began in New York City, when my great-grandmother left Portland, Oregon, where she had immigrated as a child, and moved to New York to marry an older Chinese merchant. My memories of ordinary life focus not on the supposed isolation of this community nor on the lurid or the criminal. Rather, my strongest recollections focus on other aspects of daily life: the interactions between neighbors in my great-aunt Kate's apartment building on Mott Street, where Naughton's funeral home and stables were once located; the elderly Italian couple who lived down the hall and assisted her in her old age; a biracial uncle who grew up on

Doyers Street in the 1920s and 1930s and had both white and Chinese playmates; a great-aunt who came of age in the 1920s and performed in the theater and married a Chinese man but also maintained intimate relationships with white women. Guests at family banquets during the 1970s always included Chinese and non-Chinese family and friends.

Interracial marriages have been a common occurrence on both sides of my family. My paternal grandfather, George Yee, was born in San Francisco, the son of a Tong hit man. In the early 1930s, the entire family, including George's Chinese wife and two sons, fled first to Pittsburgh, where my grandmother, a young woman in her twenties, died of unknown causes. After finally settling in Boston's working-class Chinatown neighborhood, George Yee remarried. His second wife, Marie Ouellette, was a white woman of French Canadian ancestry from Salem, Massachusetts. George's parents, my father's grandparents, so disapproved of the marriage that they raised my father and uncle themselves, while my grandfather raised a bi-racial family on the outskirts of Boston's Chinatown. In New York City's Chinatown, my mother's cousin married a man whose mother was third-generation Irish and whose father was a Chinese restaurant manager. When Wong Jung Que and Margaret Hart married around 1920, unions between women of Irish ancestry and Chinese men, while not typical, also were not uncommon.

My family's experiences as working-class urbanites, while unique in some ways, were at the same time familiar in the complex history of urban family and community formation in New York City. The chapters that follow explore the various dimensions of race and ethnic relations, beginning in the late nineteenth century and ending in the early 1930s. This study is organized thematically. Each chapter explores the ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, and class, not simply as categories of identity but as systems of power relations, opened up or limited opportunities. Within these categories, factors such as family backgrounds and friendship networks also played integral roles in people's lives and their modes of interactions. This study does not purport to cover all possible venues for cross-cultural relations. There are, for example, further possibilities for examining the social implications of cross-ethnic and cross-racial alliances in factories and sites of labor organizing.[43]

The book begins in the semi-private realm of urban residential households. Chapter 1 explores the ways in which immigration patterns

and policies shaped the demographics of working-class households, a small percentage of which were interethnic/interracial. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the ways in which an urban paid labor force, which was stratified along the lines of gender, race, and ethnicity, brought working-class people into contact with one another. Chapter 2 focuses on commercial relations that took place in retail establishments, restaurants, and laundries. Chapter 3 demonstrates how caring for people in urban communities, which involved physicians, nurses, midwives, undertakers, and certain urban trades, mainly related to the building industry, were vital to maintaining the health of urban people and the physical infrastructures that sustained residences and workplaces. As these chapters demonstrate, immigration, occupational patterns, public policies, and local practices resulted in systems of inclusion and exclusion, creating an economic and social necessity that often brought different groups of people into one another's lives.

The discussion then moves outside of the domain of small business enterprises and family economies to working-class people's interactions with anti-vice activists, settlement house workers, and missionaries in their neighborhoods. While people across race, gender, and ethnicity worked to sustain life and build a healthy economic and social infrastructure, the presence of increased numbers of poor and working-class people raised concerns among Progressive reformers about poverty, crime, and the ability of the new immigrants to acculturate into American society. Residential dwellings, shops, restaurants, saloons, and the streets, places that fostered economic and social networks, together with settlement houses, also served as physical sites of social reform and surveillance.

Chapters 4 and 5 analyze the ways in which urban reform institutions and organizations served as a locus for interactions across lines of race, ethnicity, gender, and class. Most scholars have focused primarily on the settlement and anti-vice movements from the vantage points of middle-class reformers, due in large part to the availability of sources such as organizational records, correspondence, and speeches. Non-elite people were not completely absent, however, from these documents. The city-wide private anti-vice organization the Committee of Fifteen, for example, received numerous memos and letters from men and women inquiring about employment or volunteer opportunities as agents or

clerical staff or reporting instances of prostitution and gambling in their neighborhoods. The committee, in fact, did hire men from the neighborhood as agents posing as "johns." Chapter 4 focuses specifically on the anti-vice movement in New York City, led by organizations such as the Committee of Fifteen and the Committee of Fourteen. Within a relatively short period, reformers shifted their organizing tactics to incorporate new social-science methods and practices in an effort to gather information within brothels, pool halls, hotels, saloons, and gambling parlors. It was the reliance on social science that intensified and systematized interactions and encounters between undercover agents and prostitutes and other purveyors of illicit activities.

The composition of anti-vice committees and the methods they used to gather information from local businessmen and residents changed dramatically between 1900 and 1905. By the time the Committee of Fourteen organized in 1905, social-science methodology, which experimented with surveys and interviews and employed "objective" analysis and the systematic gathering of "facts," had taken hold. Moreover, educated women, the new women of the Progressive era, were important players in the quest for tenement house, hotel, and saloon reform; improvements in industrial labor conditions; and the prosecution of procurers, "white slave" traffickers, and corrupt police—all factors that, the committee's experts argued, supported prostitution, rape, and child abduction.

Such interactions were framed partly by the movement to control the masses, as well as the desire by social reformers themselves to mix with immigrants and the working classes in what by then were considered the less desirable, yet alluring, areas of the city. Saloons, houses of prostitution, opium dens, and gambling joints were simultaneously sites of conflict and conviviality across lines of gender, class, ethnicity, and race. The national shift in gender roles played itself out in the neighborhoods as male and female social reformers attempted to eliminate urban vices. Chapter 5 extends the discussion on reform by focusing on the ways in which the politics of religion in settlement houses and Christian missions shaped race, gender, and ethnic relations.

This book includes a diverse population of racial and ethnic groups but highlights first and subsequent generations of Irish, Chinese, Jews, and Italians. These groups figure prominently in the chapters that follow

for two main reasons. First, their experiences illuminate the ways that systems of power affected groups that at some point in their history as urban immigrants had hovered within the black–white paradigm that for so long has defined race relations in U.S. history. The comparative experiences of these groups also illustrate the process of "whitening"—how Asians, as exemplified by the Chinese experience in the United States, never shed the possibility of representing a "yellow peril," while European groups by the 1930s had been deemed "white ethnics." Even in the "great metropolis" of cosmopolitan New York City, the collective experiences of the Chinese and their representations in the popular imagination have been pivotal in the juxtaposition of white and non-white in U.S. society. One of the most haunting aspects of the history of southern Manhattan is that by the late nineteenth century the black population had begun its migration to other parts of the city, particularly Harlem and the borough of Brooklyn. Yet the black–white model was firmly in place as a national ideological anchor that shaped economic opportunities for many residents.

Ultimately, this is a story of the lives of non-elite people—men, women, and children of diverse ethnic, racial, and class backgrounds who negotiated the cosmopolitanism of southern Manhattan as much through their interactions with people of different cultural backgrounds as through their participation in the creation and sustenance of distinct urban ethnic communities. The challenge for historians is to determine the extent to which such interactions were meaningful at any level. The distinction between "relationship" and "interaction" is often difficult to assess. The following chapters aim to reveal something about the conditions of people's lives that not only made cross-cultural relationships possible but also at times prevented them from developing, as well as the motives of individuals for initiating and sustaining social and economic relations across lines of gender, race, ethnicity, and class.

Historians have written extensively about the artificiality of racial definitions and classifications. By the 1920s, the classification of whiteness as a race included all European immigrants, but at the same time, the distinction between "white" and "non-white" had solidified. Although anti-Catholic sentiment would also pervade American society

into the early 1960s, Irish and German Catholics (as well as Protestants) could claim a white identity that was not yet available to European Jews. Anti-Semitism was a constant reminder of the "not quite whiteness" of Jews until after World War II, even though, like the Irish and, later, the Italians, European Jews had been designated "white" in the census since the 1880s.[44]

The language and politics of difference have undergone significant changes over the past two centuries, encoded in the categories "nationality," "race," "ethnicity," "gender," "culture," and "class." Such terms can denote group identities as well as official designations for enumeration and the development of public policy. Popular, legal and social-science definitions of race and ethnicity have been fluid and often inconsistent. In 1911, the Immigration Commission, headed by William P. Dillingham, departed from the practice of classifying people according to country of origin, opting instead to categorize people according to race.[45] The commission defined race broadly rather than adopting the accepted notion that five distinct races existed—Caucasian, Mongolian, African, Malay, and Indian—which, its report argued, confined itself to only physical characteristics and color. According to the report, widening the definition of race to include what social scientists of the time would have referred to as "culture" was, the commission believed, more statistically accurate and practical in its effort to identify diverse groups coming from particular countries of origin. Thus, the commission retained the desire to classify, coming up with forty categories that it believed more accurately represented the identity of immigrant groups.[46]

The terminology of race remained inconsistent in "objective" government documents, as well as in the courts. The social construction of race as an official classification shaped the ways in which government documents, such as the census, have categorized immigrants and their descendants into specific "racial" groups and reported their country of origin, or nationality. Even though federal census reports added more detail in terms of the numbers of categories, race remained an ambiguous category. Once classified as simply "colored" along with African Americans, the Chinese, for example, were classified as "Ch" for Chinese by 1890, but their children could be classified as either "Chinese" or "white," especially if they had been born of marriages between Chinese and women of European ancestry. People of African descent were categorized alterna-

tively as "colored," "Negro," "Black," or "mulatto." Such inconsistencies reflected the continued confusion among census takers about what race "really" was. At the root of the race problem were shifting meanings of whiteness.

Between the late nineteenth century and the 1930s, popular understandings of "race" had undergone important changes. As the nation moved steadily toward the narrow "one-drop" rule that signified "blackness," the meaning of "whiteness" expanded to include the Irish and, later, all Europeans of Caucasian ancestry. By 1920, concerns about how to define "white" and, hence, "non-white" made its way into the U.S. Census guidelines. For the first time, the introduction to the census articulated the notion of racial purity as a way to resolve the problem of classifying mixed-race people and provided guidelines for census takers (who, as it turned out, used their own discretion when classifying people anyway). While previous census reports had simply declared "whiteness" to mean people of European ancestry, in the 1920 guidelines, the government added the terms "purity" and "blood" to further specify the meanings of "white," "non-white," and mixed-white: "The term 'white' as used in the census reports refers to persons understood to be pure-blooded whites. A person of mixed blood is classified according to the nonwhite racial strain or, if the nonwhite blood itself is mixed, according to his racial status as adjudged by the community in which he resides."[47]

Although racial classification was one of several components of the census enumeration process, its inclusion was a consequence of a larger national discourse about maintaining white racial purity and the dangers of interracial marriage, which fulfilled the promise of the myth of the melting pot and assimilation but also fed fears about the future of the nation. For eugenicists, race mixing between whites and non-whites threatened to pollute white purity.

Whiteness as an expression of racialism has had a powerful impact on the everyday lives of people. Those who historically have been categorized by immigration law and the popular imagination as "non-white" have been denied access to citizenship rights, full employment opportunities, and education. Cohen's commentary underscores Matthew Jacobson's point that "one can be both white *and* racially distinct from other whites."[48] Both Italians and Jews at the time Cohen was a young woman

were "not quite white" Europeans, yet they were officially categorized as "white" in government documents such as the census.

Official classifications and census takers' observations, however, did not always coincide with how people identified themselves. During the early decades of the new immigration, people tended to identify themselves according to the village or region from which they had emigrated. For example, many of those who had migrated from Italy often referred to themselves as "Sicilian" and "Calabrian" and created communities of people from these areas, particularly around Elizabeth, Mulberry, and Mott streets. Immigrants from Germany often identified themselves according to principalities such as Hesse-Cassal.[49] Moreover, the categories as listed by the "Report of the U.S. Immigration Commission" did not always mean non-white. For example, by 1911, the Irish had indeed "become" white, although they were listed as a distinct race.

It is tempting to use the term "ethnicity" to encompass a range of characteristics, ranging from the biological and phenotypical to language and religion. In the twenty-first century, race and ethnicity have come to mean different things. Race, as Jacobson illustrates, is a fabrication, creating artificial markers of difference to sort out groups. Since the 1920s, "ethnicity" has become synonymous with "culture," also a fluid category of identity that includes such attributes as language, religious practices, and social customs. During the period under consideration, however, "race" held much more purchase than the concept of "ethnicity," despite the fact that some encyclopedias and dictionaries used both terms in their definition of "race." Take, for example, the *Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia with a New Atlas of the World* in 1913, which defined "race" as "an Ethnical stock; a great division of mankind having in common certain distinguishing physical peculiarities, and thus a comprehensive class appearing to be derived from a distinct primitive source: as, the Caucasian *race;* the Mongolian *race;* the Negro *race*."[50]

But in many ways, "race" remains an ambiguous and contradictory way to define difference. As Peggy Pascoe has shown, the indeterminacy of race has emerged in local and federal courts as judges, lawyers, and juries have struggled to define it within the intimate venue of marriage.[51] For this study, I use the term "race" as it was commonly used during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the report by Dillingham's Immigration Commission notwithstanding—a fluid yet

identifiable distinction among people of European, Asian, and African ancestry. I use "ethnicity" as a way to distinguish among groups that came under common racial categories, especially in regard to European immigrants who, for a relatively short time, stood on the cusp of whiteness and eventually came under the state rubric "Caucasian."[52]

Madison Grant and his patrician contemporaries who opposed the new immigration lived a world apart from the new immigrants and races about which they wrote; little did Grant realize that the immigration-restriction policies that he had so ardently supported actually facilitated many different kinds of interactions between the very racial groups he and others sought to separate. This is the story about how institutionalized power operated in people's everyday lives: Grant took power for granted; Ah Fung, his wife, and their Irish and Chinese friends never could. It is the obvious and stark contrast between Grant's ideas about race and the daily lives of urban working-class people that ultimately frames this book.

An analysis of interracial/interethnic families, households, and friendship networks necessitates a discussion of the meaning(s) of "family" and "community" in an urban setting. I use "family" in the broadest sense to include those who are related by blood and marriage, as well as others who maintain close personal ties over time within residential spaces and workplaces. In this sense, "community" and "family" potentially overlap. Broad interpretations of "family" and "community" are useful because they allow for the possibility of understanding urban social relations as fluid and changing rather than as rooted in traditional conceptions of kinship.

Finally, I place quotation marks around popular neighborhood designations to signal the semi-accuracy of these labels. "Ethnic" clustering was a reality of urban settlement patterns in U.S. cities. At the same time, however, as this study shows, such clustering was as much psychological as it was physical. "Little Italy," "Chinatown," and the European Jewish "Lower East Side" housed large clusters of Italians, Chinese, and Jews. But, as Donna Gabaccia has pointed out, "Italians" emigrated from villages within distinct regions with which people identified, such as Calabria and Sicily. Eastern European Jews hailed from Russia, Poland, Rumania, and Lithuania, bringing with them distinct cultural practices. Although most Chinese immigrants had come from rural communities

in Guandong Province of southern China, they identified with specific villages. Moreover, many came to the United States via the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, and Canada, often bringing with them fragments of cultural practices and languages from these "stop-over" places.

Moreover, within "ethnic" neighborhoods in New York City, a fair amount of ethnic diversity existed. As the following chapters demonstrate, "Chinatown," "Little Italy," and the "Lower East Side" housed individuals and families from a range of European ethnic backgrounds, as well as whites who claimed to be native New Yorkers over several generations and whites and a small population of blacks who had migrated from other parts of the United States.

The logical places to begin the search for interracial/interethnic households are the state and federal manuscript census reports, but one must be mindful of the limitations of these documents. Beyond locating and enumerating households and the people within them during a given census period, they reveal nothing about the social dynamics and levels of intimacy between people in families and households. But it is through this albeit imperfect method of counting people and households that the manuscript census provides a glimpse into the organization and structure of households and family and, beginning in the late nineteenth century, a detailed picture of the ethnic composition of a geographic area, from the macro- to the micro-levels—that is, by state, county, enumeration district, street, and building. They permit us to look into people's households and know their names (or approximates thereof), what their occupations might have been, their ages, whether or not they attended school, and approximately when they had immigrated. At the macro-level, census documents also allow historians to analyze the national discourses on race, gender, and ethnicity, which include the invisibility of married women's lineages. That designers of the census also understood the changes in configurations of household units during the industrial period is clear in the changing definitions of "family" for enumeration. For example, by the early twentieth century, to accommodate the reality that many urban working-class families lived in one flat, the census redefined "family" as a unit that shared a "common roof and table" with other families in the household. Census enumerators assumed that each family would rotate usage of a dining table with other families in the household.[53]

These documents, however, hide as much as they reveal. What seems to be clear from census lists might actually muddy our understanding of how families and households functioned on a daily basis. For example, the patriarchal and heteronormative assumptions of both family and household structures prevailed; household members were named in relation to the head of household, usually male. Although the head of the household might indeed have been the primary breadwinner in a family or household, this was not always the case, as shown by working-class people's reliance on the wages of children, boarders, and other relatives who might have resided in the same apartment dwelling. Second, and particularly vexing to genealogists and historians, was the erasure of married women's birth surnames, another reflection of patriarchal social norms. But as that erasure suggests, absences or silences can also reveal certain assumptions about cultural norms. Moreover, heterosexuality historically has been both an invisible and dominant feature of census reports. Thus, all of the households listed in manuscript censuses belie the social reality of gay and lesbian identities and communities, which flourished throughout New York City during the period under consideration.

Third, the census assumes "family" as constructed on the basis of blood ties, thus hiding the ways in which many groups, including African Americans, Chinese, and American Indians, in the United States also have included non-blood kinship ties as part of familial bonds. The fragmentation of blood kin as a result of slavery and the phenomenon of Chinese "paper" sons and daughters have rendered the concept of family a more flexible and fluid configuration of people who live together.

Reconstructing interracial/interethnic social relations in daily life is like chasing ghosts. Not only were most people in this book not famous; in many ways, they lived in the shadows of history, from the thousands of unnamed people who were crammed into photographs of street life to the long lists of households recorded by census takers. I have attempted to integrate as many types of printed primary documents available on social and economic life in New York City in general, and in southern Manhattan in particular. All of these sources embed their own inherent biases and limitations. Although rare, the voices of working-class people who lived and worked in the area emerge, albeit mediated, through interviews and letters. Although none of these sources together or alone

can give us the full picture of personal and group dynamics, they provide a glimpse into the joys and struggles of people living in an ethnically diverse region of Manhattan. From their own positions within the structure of urban society, working-class people, reformers, police, and tourists enacted in their own ways and on their own terms the constructions of race, class, and gender that prevailed during their lifetimes. The task of *An Immigrant Neighborhood* ultimately is to illuminate how they negotiated their understandings of "difference" (and similarities) in everyday life. The extent to which the story of interethnic/interracial relations in southern Manhattan applies to other cities, or even to other parts of New York City, remains an open and intriguing question.