

Editorial Foreword

MINORITIES AND THE DOMINANT CULTURE. Minorities provide a useful means for taking the measure of the larger society in which they live. The qualities that define minority status often reflect those on which the majority rests, and the adaptations by which minorities survive both explore the interstices of social structure and expose the nature of social change. The three studies in this issue treat as primarily racial or religious or economic minorities whose status can be explained in other terms as well. In a model of comparison Bernard Wong contrasts the Chinese of Lima with those of New York City, uncovering the strength of American racism and much else (including the paradoxical effects of religious tolerance). Mark Tessler uses survey techniques to show the unique amalgam made of religious, traditional, and dominant cultures by Jews in Morocco and Tunisia and by Moslems in Israel. Henry Rosenfeld sees in Israeli Arabs the molding of a social class and, like Wong, shows the importance of political power in shaping the social reality with which a minority must somehow cope.

In each of these different approaches and even in some of the specific case studies used, these authors continue a discussion made lively by Sharot (16:2) on Jewish Communities, by D. Lane (17:2) on ethnic and class stratification, by C. Lane (17:2) on the Molokan sect in the U.S.S.R., by Wilkie (19:1) on colonials, marginals, and immigrants, and by Skeldon's note (19:4) on regional associations. Each of these studies links to many others in which the possibility of assimilation, the cultural role of religion, the place of the immigrant, and the social effects of economic development have been tested in some minority's plight.

THE FAMILY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT. No subject is now more fashionable than the historical study of the family, which turns out to be a social institution almost as varied (and quite as adaptable) as the state or organized religion. R. P. Neuman uses a remarkable trove of data to explore the attitudes of German workers employing birth control at a time when socialists were ambivalent, patriots appalled, and Christians opposed to practices still associated with the decadent French. Leaders of the British working classes had similarly found the question of contraception dangerously divisive (see McLaren in 18:2). Our most precise information on family patterns has come from the highly refined techniques of demographic research, which provide the basis for P. Gibbon and C. Curtin's

important revision of standard views of the Irish stem family. Like other recent work, their research suggests that patterns of stem or nuclear households are more a matter of economic and social circumstance than age-old custom. (See Hammel and Laslett in 16:1 and Plakans in 17:1.) Clearly, the family has proved remarkably adaptable despite the regular announcement of its demise from pulpits held by married as well as celibate clergy. In a provocative historical sketch Wanda Minge-Kalman looks at the family as an economic more than a demographic entity and finds it as much a unit of production in post-industrial society as in pre-industrial times, a view that extends the emphasis in Scott and Tilly (17:1). In the end perhaps no subject is more likely to bare the scholar's own cultural bedrock than study of the family, and in his review essay Alan Howard is led back to the oldest issues of anthropology: relativism and objectivity and the need for norms.