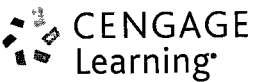


RACE AND ETHNIC RELATIONS

American and Global Perspectives

TENTH EDITION

Martin N. Marger



Australia • Brazil • Japan • Korea • Mexico • Singapore • Spain • United Kingdom • United States

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American and Global
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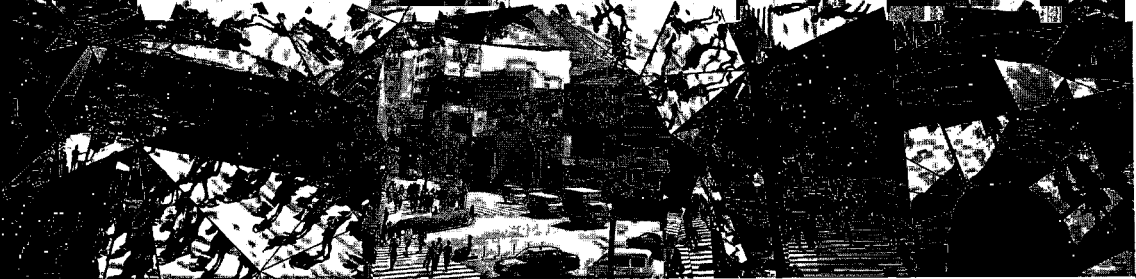
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IMMIGRATION AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE AMERICAN ETHNIC HIERARCHY

CHAPTER

5

In the range of its ethnic diversity, the United States is unmatched in the contemporary world. It is a society whose population derives from virtually every region of the world, encompassing people of every imaginable culture, displaying equally varied physical characteristics. Ethnic diversity, however, is not a new American phenomenon. Although its heterogeneity has expanded in recent decades, from the outset of European settlement in the 1600s a continuous flow of newcomers added fresh ingredients to the American potpourri. It is not an exaggeration to describe the United States as the world's greatest experiment in social relations. No society before it and few since have attempted to blend such a varied and steadily changing mix of human elements.

That America is a nation of immigrants is now a well-worn cliché. The historian Oscar Handlin professed that when he began to write a history of immigrant groups in the United States, he discovered that the immigrants *were* American history. With the exception of American Indians and some Mexican Americans, all ethnic groups in the United States trace their origins to other societies. Even those exceptional groups, of course, were at one time migrants to North America. But how the various groups entered American society, the ways they adapted and were responded to, and their initial placement in and subsequent movement along the ethnic hierarchy all differed enormously.

In this chapter, we trace the formation of the United States as a multiethnic society and the development of its ethnic hierarchy. As explained in Chapter 2, groups may make initial contact in several ways, including conquest, annexation, and voluntary and involuntary immigration. That initial form of contact is critical in determining each group's subsequent rate and manner of absorption into the mainstream society. In the case of American Indians, conquest was the nature of contact, and for a few Hispanics, it was annexation. These cases are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 8. It has been through immigration, however—both voluntary and involuntary—that most groups entered American society and subsequently took their place in the ethnic hierarchy.

We begin with a brief discussion of the dynamics of immigration and some of the themes that sociologists and demographers have put forth in explaining this human phenomenon. We then trace the several major periods of large-scale immigration to the United States, focusing on how, in the process, the society's ethnic configuration has changed. Finally, we describe the contemporary ethnic hierarchy and how the changing makeup of the population is leading to new intergroup relations and trends.

THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC FACTORS OF IMMIGRATION

As far back as historians and archaeologists are able to trace, humans have been on the move. From prehistoric times forward, human migrations have been impelled by various factors: changing physical conditions, changing economic conditions, political turmoil, trade and commerce, exploration, and war.

THE ONSET OF LARGE-SCALE IMMIGRATION

During the past three centuries, long-distance migration has occurred on a far greater scale and has been more systematic and purposeful than in previous periods of human history. Starting in the late fifteenth century, Spain and Portugal, followed by England, France, and Holland in the early 1600s, established global colonial empires, sending people from the homeland to various parts of Asia, Africa, North and South America, and Australasia. By modern standards, however, these migrations were small scale, involving government administrators, merchants, and soldiers who occupied and secured the colonies. Settlers also arrived, but they were almost always outnumbered by indigenous peoples. At approximately the same time, an intercontinental migration began from Africa, though of an involuntary nature. Over the next three hundred years, around ten million Africans would be transported to North and South America and the Caribbean and another six million elsewhere through the slave trade (Lovejoy, 1996; Manning, 1992).

The nineteenth century marked the onset of international migration as we know it today. Population transfers involving large numbers now began to occur, especially from Europe to the Americas. In the one hundred years after 1820, thirty-three million Europeans would emigrate overseas (Thistlewaite, 1991). Four countries—the United States, Canada, Brazil, and Argentina—became the target destinations of the vast majority of these migrants. Among these four, however, the United States was by far the principal recipient society, absorbing about three-fifths of all European immigration.

THE STRUCTURAL FORCES OF MODERN IMMIGRATION

What stimulated this massive movement, and why did it begin in the nineteenth rather than in previous centuries? Three interrelated factors were pivotal: population growth, industrialization, and technological advances.

POPULATION GROWTH The emergence of modern technology in the nineteenth century brought about a sharp decline in the mortality rate of European nations. This

process is commonly referred to as the **demographic transition**. *Societies, according to this theory, pass through several demographic stages.* In the first, birthrates and death rates are both high, keeping population growth at a relatively stable level. Agrarian societies or those with a very low level of industrial development are characterized by this demographic pattern. In the second stage, birthrates remain at a high level, but with advancing industrialization new technologies give rise to better hygienic conditions, which in turn lead to declining death rates. This sets in motion a spiraling population. Most European societies in the nineteenth century were experiencing this phase of the demographic transition. The European population more than doubled between 1800 and 1900, producing great social strains. Similar conditions are occurring today in many developing societies. The third stage occurs when societies reach a high degree of industrialization and urbanization, forcing birthrates to decline; combined with low death rates, a stable rate of population growth is thereby achieved. Advanced industrial societies—North America, Western Europe, and Japan—reached this stage several decades ago and have entered a fourth stage in which low death rates combined with precipitously low birthrates make immigration the primary means of assuring a replacement population (McFalls, 2003).

INDUSTRIALIZATION As industrialization expanded in Western Europe in the nineteenth century, the agricultural sector declined, setting off both internal and international migrations. As people were driven off the land, first in Germany and England and later in other countries, they naturally migrated to the cities, where jobs in burgeoning industries were to be found. The overseas migrations of the nineteenth century were thus preceded by internal rural-urban migrations. Later, people in other parts of the continent migrated to those countries of Europe where industrialization was most fully developed, Britain, Germany, and France. The rapidity and revolutionary nature of the changes brought about by the new industrial system outpaced the ability of these countries to accommodate expanding populations, thus encouraging migration abroad. Moreover, the metropolitan societies of Europe supported emigration as a means of coping with social problems at home as well as expanding their interests abroad (Cohen, 1991).

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS Augmenting the demographic stimulants of migration were the transforming technological innovations that now facilitated the relatively rapid and efficient movement of people. With the development of steamships and railroads, people were no longer confined to limited geographic space. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, transportation modes continued to become faster and more efficient, creating for most people virtually unlimited movement. "Steamships," writes historian William Van Vugt, "made the world smaller so that emigration was no longer as great a step as it had been" (1999:13). Although immigration had been a constant phenomenon throughout all of human development, its scope now reached epic proportions.

INDIVIDUAL DYNAMICS OF IMMIGRATION

What has been described to this point are the structural, or macrolevel, dynamics of immigration. The decision of people to migrate, however, is not simply the product

of such impersonal, external forces. Not all people in a society in the midst of a population explosion or a wrenching economic transformation choose to migrate. We must also consider, then, the dynamics of immigration at the individual or microlevel of analysis. What motivates people to abandon their homeland and move to another society, often with little or no foreknowledge of what awaits them in their new home? For individuals and families there can hardly be a more profound and challenging experience than to leave their established surroundings and seek out a new life in an unfamiliar environment. Writers, historians, sociologists, and journalists have been intrigued by the immigration phenomenon for decades. This has particularly been apparent in the United States, where immigrants have been not only a staple focus of social science but a recurrent theme of novelists and folklorists.

Various forces motivate individuals and families to migrate. Political or religious oppression often encourages people to contemplate leaving. A sense of adventure or the desire for something new, particularly among young adults, may motivate them to migrate. But more than anything, it is the promise of economic betterment that functions as the lure for most immigrants. This is no less the case today than it was in the nineteenth century at the outset of large-scale immigration to America.

PUSH-PULL FACTORS Classical theories of immigration stress the rational decisions of immigrants themselves in shaping migration patterns. The overriding assumption in this model is that immigration is a deliberate choice made by people once they have weighed the economic and social costs and benefits of moving. Following along these lines, those from poorer and relatively closed societies can be expected to move to richer, more open societies that promise greater economic and social opportunities.

Immigration, in this view, is largely a function of what are commonly described as **push-pull factors**. *Push factors are those economic, social, and political conditions in the origin society that exert a stimulus for people to leave.* Economic hardship and lack of future employment opportunities are the most common incentives for migration, but political oppression, religious suppression, and poor quality of life might also serve as stimulants. The forces of change emerging in European societies in the nineteenth century (for example, technological innovations driving farmers off the land and pressures on the society to accommodate a rapidly expanding population) stimulated out-migration. *Pull factors are those conditions that exert an attraction to a target society.* Jobs, an expanding economy that promises future opportunities, the availability of land, political and religious freedom, or a higher quality of life might serve as lures to potential immigrants. The United States, Canada, Brazil, and Argentina provided this pull for Europeans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These countries needed settlers to develop and cultivate their vast empty lands. Later, as industrialization took hold, they required huge workforces that could build an industrial infrastructure and provide a labor force for their factories and mines.

This perspective on immigration is based essentially on neoclassical economic principles. Labor markets operate much as markets for commodities and are shaped by basic supply ("push") and demand ("pull") dynamics. Thus, where there is a need for labor or where wages are high, people will move to fill those positions. Similarly, where unemployment is high and wages low, immigration will decline. Potential migrants, it is assumed, engage in cost-benefit calculations, weighing their

circumstances at home against the expected future payoff of migrating. When staying becomes less beneficial than moving, individuals and their families will be inclined to consider migration.

Numerous intervening variables are factored into the migration decision (Lee, 1966). Migration entails acquiring sufficient resources to make the move; families or individuals may want to migrate but lack the financial means to do so. Or, consider information. People may think of migrating, but unless and until they acquire knowledge of a promising receiving society they will go nowhere. This in large measure explains why the abjectly poor, for whom migration would seem a perfectly rational choice, rarely migrate: they lack the necessary financial and informational resources. Psychic costs and benefits may also be considered. Migrating to a new society almost always involves some degree of trauma, giving up familiarity with the home society and adapting to a new one. Not all have the wherewithal to endure such a heavy psychological burden or choose to put their families through the change.

SOCIAL NETWORKS Although the rational decisions of immigrants themselves may explain much about immigration dynamics, some theorists have pointed out the shortcomings of the neoclassical approach. Immigration decisions, they suggest, are seldom the result of rational calculation alone. Moreover, the market model cannot explain why immigrants choose to go to one society rather than another. In addition, immigration may continue to occur even as traditional push and pull factors diminish. In this view, social and communication networks linking sending and receiving societies are key factors that influence migration decisions. And, these factors serve to perpetuate a migration stream after it has begun.

Once a number of immigrants establish themselves in a new location, they become a link with those left behind. Workers contact relatives and friends in their home villages and towns and inform them of work opportunities in the new location. Today, as we will see later, immigrants learn of employment opportunities and of other attractions of receiving societies not only through contact with migrants who have preceded them but also through advanced means of communication like television and the Internet. Obviously these did not exist in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, making it necessary for immigrants already in America to inform their friends and kin of the work opportunities and for employers to actively recruit workers and encourage them to come.

These social networks create what has been called a **migration chain**, wherein *people tend to immigrate to locations that have already been settled by other family members, friends, or coethnics*. This typified the European immigration streams to America of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most of the workers in a plant or factory, for example, might have been from one country, but even more specifically from one region or town, having been recruited by employers or by coworkers. These migration streams were strengthened as well by the creation of ethnic institutions—churches, businesses, boardinghouses—that served the needs of expanding ethnic communities.

Demographer Douglas Massey has explained that once these migrant networks are in place, there need be no economic incentive for the flow of migration to continue. Migration becomes self-sustaining in a process he refers to as “cumulative

causation”: “Every new migrant reduces the costs and risks of subsequent migration for a set of friends and relatives, and some of these people are thereby induced to migrate, thus further expanding the set of people with ties abroad and, in turn, reducing costs for a new set of people, some of whom are now more likely to decide to migrate, and so on” (1999:45).

COMBINING MACRO- AND MICRO-PERSPECTIVES Theories of immigration are numerous and many emphasize global economic and political structures, the role of government, and transnational dynamics as critical variables in explaining contemporary international migration (Massey et al., 1993; Portes and Rumbaut, 2006). The push-pull and network models described previously focus on the decisions and motivations of individuals and families rather than on immigration as a collective phenomenon. These seem particularly applicable to the waves of voluntary immigrants from Europe to America of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But immigration, like all forms of human behavior, comprises individual actions that occur within and are shaped by social structures.

What Castles and Miller (2009) refer to as the “migration systems approach” has become a more popular way for social scientists of various disciplines to analyze immigration trends, using such a combined perspective. The basic idea is that immigration is the result of both macro- and microlevel structures. Macro-structures—government policies, the global economy, and international political conditions—provide an institutional setting within which individuals and families make decisions about migration. The immigration process, therefore, is always a composite of the dynamics occurring at each level.

SETTLEMENT AND ADAPTATION

The journey of immigrants is, in the end, only a brief span in the total immigration process. Once having entered the new society, immigrants face the complications of adjustment. Immediate challenges—finding suitable housing and earning a living—are daunting by themselves. In addition, however, immigrants must confront longer-term social and cultural obstacles: learning the language of the new society, educating themselves and their children, and becoming accustomed to new norms and values.

THE CONTEXT OF RECEPTION How immigrants adapt and how well they succeed in a new society is only partially a function of the personal efforts, choices, and skills that they bring to the labor market. The political and social environment they are met with may be receptive or it may be hostile. What government policies are in place to deal with immigrants? What is the attitude toward immigrants among native-born residents? What support systems provided by family, friends, and co-ethnics do immigrants find, and is there a thriving ethnic community to meet their unique cultural needs? A combination of these factors—what Portes and Rumbaut (2006) call the “context of reception”—will determine how and at what speed immigrants move in the direction of either assimilation or pluralism in their adaptive patterns and will affect, in the long term, their ultimate level of success.

SOCIETAL EFFECTS It is important to consider that the impact of immigration falls not only on the newcomers. In fact, mass immigrations have a major impact on all of the receiving society's institutions—business and commerce, work, politics, religion, and education. Also affected are the society's language, cuisine, arts, fashion, and virtually all other aspects of culture.

Migration streams to the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had profound economic and social effects, continually adding new elements to the society's original base and, in the process, transforming its character and culture. As we will see later, this transformative process is perhaps even more evident today as the most recent immigrant wave makes its societal mark.

EARLY IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ANGLO DOMINANCE

POPULATION COMPONENTS

Despite the human mix that characterized the United States almost from its very founding, before the 1830s the breadth of ethnic diversity was not yet great. When the first European settlers arrived, they encountered an indigenous population that, as we will see in Chapter 6, was both culturally diverse and geographically dispersed. By the third decade of the nineteenth century, the indigenous peoples had been reduced to subordination and no longer posed a serious threat to European dominance.

The only other significant non-European group that was part of the American ethnic picture was composed of black slaves who had been brought from Africa beginning in the late seventeenth century. When blacks first entered the society, the slave system was not yet institutionalized. Most blacks were indentured servants, contracted to serve their masters for a certain period of time, usually several years (Franklin, 1980). This was not essentially different from the status of many white indentured servants who had come from England, Scotland, and Ireland. By the late 1600s, however, black slavery was established in several colonies, and the slave trade was firmly in place. Slavery in the American colonies at first grew slowly but increased rapidly during the eighteenth century. On the eve of the American Revolution, slaves accounted for more than 20 percent of the colonial population (Dinnerstein et al., 2003). Following independence, however, that percentage would begin to decline as Europeans began to enter the society in larger numbers.

Because of their cultural— but especially their physical—distinctness from the European settlers, blacks and American Indians (as well as Mexicans in the Southwest) were, from the first, relegated to the bottom of the emerging ethnic hierarchy; their position would not basically change afterward.

Although their numbers were small, immigrants were not unwelcome. In fact, following the establishment of the American state, a general tolerance for European immigrants was quite evident, and their national origins and even religion were not of great concern. George Washington, speaking to newly arrived Irish immigrants in 1783, expressed this attitude clearly in proclaiming that “[t]he bosom of America is open to receive not only the opulent and respectable stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all nations and religions” (quoted in Muller, 1993:19).

It was the English-origin, or Anglo, group—whose defining ethnic features were its northwestern European and Protestant origins—that became the host, or dominant, group. Other, smaller, groups were mainly northwestern Europeans—Scots, Welsh, Scotch-Irish, Dutch, Scandinavians, and German Protestants—all culturally and racially close to this core group and, as a result, relatively quickly absorbed into it. Thus the core group represented a blend of rather similar cultural and racial elements, with the English unmistakably its majority component.

This core group subsequently set the cultural tone of the society and established its major economic, political, and social institutions. All following groups would be required to adapt to an Anglo-Protestant social and cultural framework. It became the standard, notes the historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., “to which other immigrant nationalities were expected to conform, the matrix into which they would be assimilated” (1998:34). Glazer and Moynihan vividly describe the establishment of a dominant ethnic group in American society with the power to select those who came after it:

The original Americans became “old” Americans or “old stock,” or “white Anglo Saxon Protestants,” or some other identification which indicated they were not immigrants or descendants of recent immigrants. These original Americans already had a frame in their minds, which became a frame in reality, that placed and ordered those who came after them. It was important to be white, of British origin, and Protestant. If one was all three, then even if one was an immigrant, one was really not an immigrant, or not for long. (1970:15)¹

CREATION OF THE DOMINANT ETHNIC CULTURE

Although the Anglo core group has been diluted by successive immigrant waves over many generations and its cultural imprint likewise colored by other groups, its cultural dominance has remained unwavering throughout American history. “The white Anglo-Saxon Protestant,” notes sociologist Lewis Killian, “remains the typical American, the model to which other Americans are expected and encouraged to conform” (1975:16). The societal power of the Anglo core group also remains evident, as indicated by its continued overrepresentation among political and economic elites. It is true nonetheless that its power has been diminished in the past few decades by the increasing penetration of non-Anglo groups into these positions (Alba and Moore, 1982; Davidson et al., 1995).

The makeup of the dominant group itself has changed somewhat as other white Protestant groups have melded with it. Today the dominant ethnic group in American society may be said to broadly comprise white Protestants, because those Protestants from other northwestern European societies—namely, the Scandinavian nations, Germany, and the Netherlands—have blended almost imperceptibly with those of British origins. White Protestants, then, have varied national roots, but their common Protestantism and racial character have neutralized any meaningful national differences among them. References to the WASP, Anglo, or Anglo-American group, then, should be understood to mean “white Protestants of various national

¹ From Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970). Copyright © 1970 by MIT Press. Reprinted by permission.

origins." These terms are used interchangeably to denote the dominant American ethnic group and its core culture.

DOMINANT CULTURAL VALUES AND COMPETING IDEOLOGIES Ideologies and public policies concerning American ethnic relations have historically reflected the cultural preferences and the economic and political interests of the WASP, or Anglo, core group in several ways.

To begin with, the preeminence of Anglo cultural values has consistently underlain public policies in education, language, law, welfare, and religion. The ascendancy of the English language, the English legal system, and, with few exceptions, the Christian faith, was never seriously challenged. From the beginning, the expectation held sway that entering groups—immigrant, conquered, or enslaved—would conform to this core culture.

At certain times—especially in the early years of the twentieth century when ethnic diversity seemed to reach a high point—the idea of the melting pot called into question the inevitability as well as the desirability of Anglo cultural dominance. *The idea was that the cultural differences among the many immigrant groups, so conspicuous at that time, would disappear through a gradual blending process.* Different ethnic cultures, it was felt, would eventually fuse into a single "American" culture as a kind of hybrid creation. Although the notion of a melting pot remained symbolically popular for many decades, it never found manifestation in public policy or gained widespread allegiance. In any case, the idea was incomplete because the place of non-Europeans in this ideal social brew was never fully dealt with. The melting pot was belied as well by the fact that the boundaries among the European groups did not disappear, nor were their cultures ever entirely diluted by WASP norms and values.

Another competing ethnic ideology that gained adherents at times is **cultural pluralism**. As explained in Chapter 4, *the objective of cultural pluralism, rather than a fusion of diverse ethnic groups, is the preservation of each.* In the past, cultural pluralism in the United States never found more than token acceptance at the level of public policy. In recent times, however, schools, universities, and government agencies have acknowledged the pluralistic nature of American society and have made efforts to affirm multiculturalism as the society's dominant ethnic ideology (Glazer, 1997).

The prevalent ethnic ideology, expressed most forcefully in government policies for most of U.S. history, is assimilation into the dominant group, or what Gordon (1964) has called Anglo-conformity. Groups are expected to shed their ethnic uniqueness as quickly and as completely as possible and take on the ways of the core culture. This expectation always guided the prevailing social thought and policy regarding new ethnic groups; it continues to do so even today despite the pluralistic, or multicultural, rhetoric of recent years.

Some have argued that today there is, in reality, no core culture per se. That is, given the rapidly increasing ethnic heterogeneity of American society in recent decades, it has become increasingly difficult to identify a universally acknowledged core culture (Brubaker, 2001). Indeed, as E. Digby Baltzell, a longtime student of the WASP upper class, observed, "[T]he process of cultural pluralism has gone so far that larger and larger segments of the Anglo-Saxon-Protestant majority now see

themselves as resentful outsiders" (1991:222). Here it should be remembered that when ethnic groups meet, there is always an exchange, to some degree, between them. There is little debate about the expansion of American cultural diversity and with it, the waning of the traditional dominant culture. But it is equally apparent that an Anglo core cultural base consisting of a few major elements—language, religion, political norms and values—remains in place.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INEQUALITY The pressures on ethnic groups throughout American history to assimilate culturally have not been complemented by corresponding pressures to assimilate structurally, that is, to enter into full and equal relations with the dominant group in all institutional areas. Although Anglo-conformity has generally been expected of ethnic groups in their behavior and appearance, a pluralistic outcome has more often than not typified the dominant group's expectations of interethnic relations. The more culturally or physically distinct a group, the more its members have been encouraged to remain "among their own" in the intimate areas of social life—marriage, residence, social clubs, and the like (Table 5.1).

Most important, the efforts of minority ethnic groups to attain economic and political equality have traditionally met with resistance, often of an official nature. Through immigration quotas and exclusionary measures, Indian-removal acts, slave laws, institutionalized segregation, antilabor regulations, voting restrictions, and an array of other measures, dominant group interests were protected. Of course, these policies all generated great controversy and conflict, and minority challenges often met with success. But concessions wrested from the dominant group have always been slow, costly, and incremental.

TABLE 5.1 | DEGREE OF ASSIMILATION OF AMERICAN ETHNIC GROUPS

Ethnic Population	Cultural Assimilation	Secondary Structural Assimilation ^a	Primary Structural Assimilation ^b
Anglo-Protestants (core group)	High	High	High
Northwestern Europeans	High	High	High
Irish Catholics	High	High	Moderate
Southern and Eastern European Catholics	High	Moderate	Moderate
Jews	High	High	Moderate
Asians	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Latinos	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
American Indians	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Blacks	High	Moderate	Low

^aAs indicated by entrance into economic, political, and other social institutions at various levels.

^bAs indicated by entrance into primary relations with the dominant group in areas such as residence, club memberships, and intermarriage.

In sum, for most of American history, public policies and publicly proclaimed ideologies have generally corresponded to the dual aims of, on the one hand, cultural assimilation (specifically Anglo-conformity) and, on the other hand, structural pluralism (the latter in a form assuring Anglo dominance). These objectives have reflected the American system of ethnic stratification. Those groups least visibly different from the Anglo core group have been received with less hostility and have been presented with an opportunity structure more open and less limited than have those distinctly nonwhite or non-Protestant.

EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION: THE FIRST AND SECOND WAVES

In the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, the relative homogeneity that characterized the United States in its formative years began to change with the onset of large-scale European immigration. The variety of groups that would subsequently enter was nothing short of astonishing and would fundamentally reshape the society from that point forward. Indeed, the start of mass immigration to America marked the beginning of the creation of a multiethnic society whose heterogeneity was unprecedented. In the one hundred years to follow, more than thirty million immigrants would come to the United States, making it, as the historian Maldwyn Jones called it, "the classic country of immigration" (1992:2).

After the colonial period and before the modern era of immigration starting in the late 1960s, the United States experienced two major waves of European immigration. Both contributed great portions of the white population, but the principal groups composing each were markedly different in their national origins and their sociological characteristics. As a result, immigrant groups were not all received by the dominant (or core) group in the same way, and their ensuing absorption into the society also varied.

THE "OLD IMMIGRATION": THE FIRST GREAT WAVE

With immigration before 1820 at a relatively low level, we can think of *the six decades between 1820 and 1880 as the first great wave*, or as historians often refer to it, the *Old Immigration*. This period marks the beginning of large-scale immigration to America, bringing millions who would begin to populate every region of the country. Equally important is that for the first time non-Anglo groups of significant size began to enter the society, although immigration from Britain continued unabated.

As noted earlier, immigration during these years was driven primarily by a combination of labor needs in the expanding American economy and the dislocations occurring in Europe due to the breakdown of the agrarian order and the rise of industrialism. In addition to the declining agricultural sector and emergent industrialization, the Napoleonic Wars created much political and economic instability in Europe, providing an additional catalyst for immigration. The United States held out promise of a new beginning for those who were displaced from their land, who were unable to find a place in the newly emergent economic and social orders, or who were fleeing political revolt. These strong push conditions were accompanied

by a growing demand for labor, both agricultural and industrial, in the New World. The demand for workers was made more pressing by the abolition of the African slave trade. Without new settlers, the vast resources of the United States could not be exploited, and as a result, efforts to recruit immigrants were made by state and territorial governments and many emergent industries.

SCOPE AND DIVERSITY Between 1840 and 1860, more than four million people entered the United States—equal to about 30 percent of the entire free population of the nation in 1840 (Levine, 1992). In proportion to the total population, it was the greatest influx of newcomers in American history. By 1860 the population of most of America's largest cities was nearly half foreign-born. Much of this immigration was driven by the establishment of regular steamship voyages between Europe and America. What had been a dangerous and costly voyage of weeks by sailing ship became a relatively uneventful crossing of days by steamer. Moreover, this new form of transatlantic travel provided mental comfort to immigrants who were no longer faced with what had seemed an irreversible decision. Now immigrants knew they could more easily return if America failed to meet their expectations or if they could not adapt to life removed from the old country.

The immigrants' origins were varied; they included not only those from Britain and other northwest European societies but also, in the West, Chinese; in New England, French Canadians; and in the Southwest, Mexicans. The two most sizable groups arriving during this era, however, were the Germans and the Irish. After the Civil War, most immigrants continued to come from Germany, Ireland, and Britain, but a substantial number came from Scandinavia as well. Altogether, more than two million Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes came to the United States after 1860 (Dinnerstein et al., 2003).

This initial period of large-scale immigration marked the entrance not only of non-British people in large numbers but also, for the first time, significant numbers of non-Protestants. Most of the Irish were Catholics, as were about half the Germans. As a result, nativist—specifically anti-Catholic—actions and rhetoric became widespread. Catholics were seen by many as a seditious element and Catholicism as basically incompatible with American ways (Higham, 1963). By midcentury, however, anti-Catholic nativism had begun to wane as national attention turned to the issue of slavery. Moreover, as the American industrial economy surged, immigration generally was welcomed by industrialists and others of the business community who saw immigrants as a source of cheap labor and a growing consumer market.

Despite early prejudice and discrimination toward the Catholics among them, particularly the Irish, these northwestern European groups were, by comparison with groups that would follow them, advantaged in two ways: they were close enough culturally to the Anglo core group to assimilate within a relatively short historical time, and they were physically indistinct from the Europeans who had preceded them to America, thereby avoiding long-lasting imputations of racial identity. Thus their integration into the mainstream society was not severely constrained, and the resistance of the dominant group to them was, in historical perspective, relatively mild. Here we briefly describe the path followed by the Germans; in Chapter 10 we look more closely at the Irish.

THE GERMANS Germans had settled in America as early as the seventeenth century; they were, in fact, the largest non-British group during the colonial period. But German immigration developed on a massive scale beginning in the 1830s, with the largest numbers coming in two great waves. In just seven years, from 1850 to 1857, almost one million Germans arrived, and between 1865 and 1885, two million more. By the late nineteenth century, Germans were the second-largest ethnic group in the society, exceeded only by the British. Whereas most of the Irish remained in eastern cities, particularly New York and Boston, German immigrants dispersed westward throughout the Northern tier of states from New York to the Mississippi River. Many settled in several large midwestern cities, including Cincinnati, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Detroit, and Chicago. There they established ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods—so-called *Kleindeutschlands*, or Little Germanys—that would grow with the continued arrival of new immigrants (Dinnerstein et al., 2003; Rippley, 1984).

The class origins of the Germans were more varied than those of the Irish, who were mostly poor and unskilled. Most Germans were tradesmen, industrial workers, small shopkeepers, farmers, and professionals; only a small percentage were unskilled laborers (Keil, 1991). With the growth of manufacturing, German craft workers became the core of the burgeoning U.S. industrial working class (Levine, 1992). Many of the craftsmen and merchants took up residence in small towns, while farmers, attracted by rich lands, settled in large numbers in the midwestern states of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Ohio. In religion, too, the Germans were a diverse immigrant population. Roughly half were Protestant and half Catholic, but there was a small German-Jewish element as well.

In addition to economic circumstances, some German emigrants were driven by political crisis. One small but very influential segment of the German immigration of this period was a group known as “Forty-Eighters.” Forced out of Germany because of their participation in an unsuccessful revolution in 1848, they took political refuge in the United States. They subsequently exerted an inordinate influence not only on German American affairs but also on national issues. They were vehemently anti-slavery, as well as anticlerical, and they sowed the seeds of the American labor movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century (Levine, 1992).

THE “NEW IMMIGRATION”: THE SECOND GREAT WAVE

Although substantial German and Irish immigration had presented the first real challenge to WASP dominance, the polyglot nature of American society took shape most forcefully as a result of what has been called the *New Immigration*. *During a period extending roughly from the early 1880s until the outbreak of World War I, almost twenty-five million European immigrants came to the United States.* This influx represents the archetypal American immigration, and it is this period that we most often think of when we visualize traditional immigrant life. It is from this second great wave of immigration that most of today’s non-Protestant Euro-Americans, or “white ethnics,” are descended.

SCOPE AND DIVERSITY These new immigrants not only represented the numerical peak of European immigration to the United States but also radically changed the ethnic

character of the society. To begin with, most were from southern and eastern European societies, whose cultures were alien to those of Britain and northwestern Europe. Most important, they were non-Protestant—primarily Catholic and secondarily Jewish. Although most of the earlier Irish were Catholic, in other respects they were not so culturally distant from the Anglo-Americans. Likewise, the Germans may have spoken a different language, but over half were Protestant, and they were not looked on by the dominant Anglo group as cultural inferiors. Finally, the new immigrants were mainly people whose class origins were lower than those of previous groups, except perhaps the Irish. They were chiefly peasants from the poorer states of Europe—southern Italy, Russia, Poland, Greece, and the many parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The shift in immigrant origins was brought about by a number of factors. First, the growth of industry in Britain and Germany furnished more labor opportunities for their populations. Hence, the pressures to migrate were reduced. German immigration to the United States, for example, dropped from 1.5 million in the 1880s to 0.5 million in the 1890s (Dinnerstein and Reimers, 1999). In addition, economic problems that had been experienced earlier in northern European countries now spread to southern and eastern Europe, creating food shortages and high unemployment and thus an incentive for people to leave.

Pull factors also changed. With the closing of the western frontier, land was no longer the chief lure of immigrants to the United States. The expanding American industrial economy, however, now exerted an even stronger pull. Factories, mines, and mills demanded ever greater numbers of workers, and unskilled immigrants supplied the major part of this need.

An important feature of the New Immigration was that many who went to America expected to return to their origin societies. Consequently, a major portion of the immigration comprised men unaccompanied by their families. Their objective was to earn enough money to enable them to return to their native towns or villages and purchase land or establish themselves in an enterprise. Many did just that. Although records are nonexistent and only rough estimates can be made, perhaps one-third of all immigrants during this period remigrated back to their homelands or to other societies (Thistlethwaite, 1991).

The largest of the new immigrant groups were Italians, mostly from the south of Italy, and eastern European Jews, mostly from Poland and Russia. Both tended to concentrate in cities of the Northeast, especially New York. Another major component of the New Immigration was Slavic groups, including Russians, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Slovenes, Croatians, Serbs, Bulgarians, and especially Poles. Together, these groups made up about four million of the new immigrants. Other central European groups, including Hungarians, Czechs, and Armenians, also were part of the immigration of this era.

Other societies in addition to the United States attracted large numbers of European immigrants during this great age of international migration. These included Australia, Brazil, Canada, and Argentina. In the latter two countries, in fact, immigration rendered an even more profound demographic effect, proportionately, than in the United States (Baily, 1999; Thistlethwaite, 1991). However, in absolute numbers and ethnic variety, American immigration was far greater.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS The settlement patterns of the immigrants of this period differed in some respects from the Old Immigration. Whereas many immigrants of the earlier great wave were attracted by the opportunity to own land and therefore settled in rural areas, the new immigrants were mainly industrial workers who settled in cities and towns that supported those industries. As a result, rather than dispersing geographically, the new immigrants tended to concentrate in urban areas, particularly of the Northeast and Midwest. It was here that industrial expansion was occurring and the most alluring work opportunities were being offered. The growth of these industrial centers was rapid and profound. From 1900 to 1920, Milwaukee's population, for example, increased by more than 60 percent, Cleveland's by more than 120 percent, and Detroit's by almost 250 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 1920). Although it was aided by a steady rural-urban movement of farmers and lumbermen, the primary elements of this population increase were the foreign-born. As seen in Table 5.2, the foreign-born composed more than 30 percent of the population of seven of the fourteen largest cities in 1900.

Once they entered the United States, the different immigrant groups migrated to various cities and regions, determined in large measure by the groups' occupational proclivities. Particular groups seemed to be channeled to specific industries. The Polish immigration illustrates this tendency. Census labor reports show that the overwhelming majority of Polish immigrants were classified as laborers or workers

TABLE 5.2 FOREIGN-BORN IN THE FOURTEEN LARGEST U.S. CITIES, 1900

City	Total Population	Total Foreign-Born	Percent Foreign-Born
New York	3,437,202	1,270,080	37.0
Chicago	1,698,575	587,112	34.6
Philadelphia	1,293,697	295,340	22.8
St. Louis	575,238	111,356	19.4
Boston	560,892	197,129	35.2
Baltimore	508,957	68,600	13.5
Cleveland	381,768	124,631	32.7
Buffalo	352,387	104,252	29.6
San Francisco	342,782	116,885	34.1
Cincinnati	325,902	57,961	17.8
Pittsburgh	321,616	84,878	26.4
New Orleans	287,104	30,325	10.6
Detroit	285,704	96,503	33.8
Milwaukee	285,315	88,991	31.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1900).

in manufacturing; few were found in agriculture or the professions, in clerical or sales positions, or in building trades (Hutchinson, 1956). In a sense, the Polish immigrant to the United States was a migrant laborer, not so much an immigrant as a "temporary worker," intent on returning home. Historian Caroline Golab (1977) explains that prior to their emigration, Poles already had much experience in the industrial sphere because they had been migrating to various European societies during the late nineteenth century. "It was rare," she writes, "to find a Polish immigrant who had not migrated to some other part of Europe or within his own country before coming to America" (1977:74). Hence, Poles were familiar with town and city life and with machines and factories. Quite logically, then, upon arriving in the United States they migrated to the same industries that had used them in Europe, such as heavy metals and mining. This accounts for the readiness of Poles to settle in cities of the Great Lakes, such as Chicago, Buffalo, Detroit, and Milwaukee, as well as in the anthracite region of western Pennsylvania, where these industries were most prevalent at the turn of the century and in the several decades that followed. As we will see in Chapters 10 and 11, similar factors operated for immigrant Italians and Jews in accounting for their occupational inclinations.

The new immigrants in the cities tended to settle in depressed areas, inhabiting run-down tenements that had been vacated by earlier ethnic groups such as the Irish. The concentration of immigrants in these areas was partially the result of simple economic necessity; such housing was available and affordable. The creation of ethnic enclaves in large cities, however, was also the product of the natural attraction of immigrants to areas inhabited by those who had preceded them to America and came from the same towns and regions. New immigrants sought the security and support of coethnics and thus gravitated to common areas. "Life in the Italian quarter," writes Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, "provided a coherence and familiarity which drew immigrants irresistibly toward it" (1982:118). It was much the same for other groups. As the skeleton of the ethnic community was shaped, others were attracted, creating in turn the need for larger and more complex ethnic institutions.

More than ethnic needs, however, residential clustering and the building of ethnic communities resulted mostly from the attraction of work opportunities in specific locations. In their classic study of Polish immigrants, Thomas and Znaniecki (1918) explained that in large cities the desire to live near work was a stronger consideration than the desire to live near one's fellow ethnics. Thus institutions catering to immigrants—churches, groceries, banks—followed the residential concentration created by employment opportunities. Moreover, one should not exaggerate the ethnic homogeneity of these urban areas, as movies and novels have so often portrayed them. Although there certainly were neighborhood concentrations of immigrants and their children from particular countries, these pockets were never as ethnically pure as has been commonly assumed, nor did they endure much beyond the first two immigrant generations (Hershberg et al., 1979).

RESURGENT NATIVISM AND THE END OF THE SECOND WAVE The sharp cultural and class differences of the new immigrants provoked a strongly antagonistic reaction from the dominant group. Americans questioned how the immigrants would ultimately fit into the society and, abetted by popular notions of social Darwinism, widely assumed their cultural inferiority (Jacobson, 1998).

Prompted by the continued influx, nativist feelings and racist theories reached an apex by the early 1920s, resulting in restrictive quotas enacted by Congress that severely limited large-scale European immigration. The quotas were deliberately designed to favor the sending countries of northwestern Europe and to curtail immigration from southern and eastern European countries. Previously, with no quotas and few stipulations other than health requirements, an open door, in effect, had existed for Europeans. The restrictive legislation represented a symbolic closing of the door. Even prior to the passage of this legislation, immigration from Europe had been reduced by the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Although immigration resumed at high levels for several years after the war, the quotas that were established in 1924 changed the makeup of newcomers back to mainly northwestern Europeans. Moreover, immigration to the United States of all groups dropped precipitously from 700,000 in 1924 to fewer than 300,000 the following year. Not until the early 1970s would the number again approach the level of immigration reached prior to the mid-1920s.

In addition to restrictive quotas, immigration was discouraged by the Great Depression of the 1930s. Unemployment reached record levels, and the United States was therefore no longer seen as an attractive destination. Fewer immigrants arrived during the 1930s than during any decade of the previous hundred years. In fact, more people left the United States during this time than entered as immigrants. As the world again plunged into war in the late 1930s, a further obstacle to immigration was imposed. The historical flow of American immigration can be seen in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.2 shows the major ancestry groups that currently make up the Euro-American population, which derives primarily from the two main periods, old and new, of European immigration.²

THE NEWEST IMMIGRATION: THE THIRD GREAT WAVE

The decade of the 1960s witnessed events that would fundamentally alter the U.S. ethnic order. One, as we will see in Chapter 7, was the black civil rights movement. But something else occurred in the 1960s that, arguably, would prove to have an equally significant impact on American ethnic relations: the revision of immigration laws encapsulated in the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965. This new legislation erased the restrictive country-of-origin quota system that had virtually prohibited certain groups from immigrating to the United States. It also created a system of criteria for admission; priority was now given to those with family ties to U.S. citizens or permanent residents and to those with needed occupational skills.

Several driving forces precipitated this truly radical change in immigration laws. First, the civil rights movement itself provided an initial impetus. As an adjunct to the mounting pressure for an end to discriminatory measures against African Americans, public sentiment now seemed prepared to do the same with immigrants, bringing the reality of immigration laws into line with the rhetoric of equal opportunity. Also contributing to the acceptability of change were the sentiments and efforts of the new presidential administration that entered Washington in 1961. John F. Kennedy,

² The diversity of the European component of the American ethnic configuration is actually greater than shown in Figure 5.2 because only the largest ancestry groups are included.

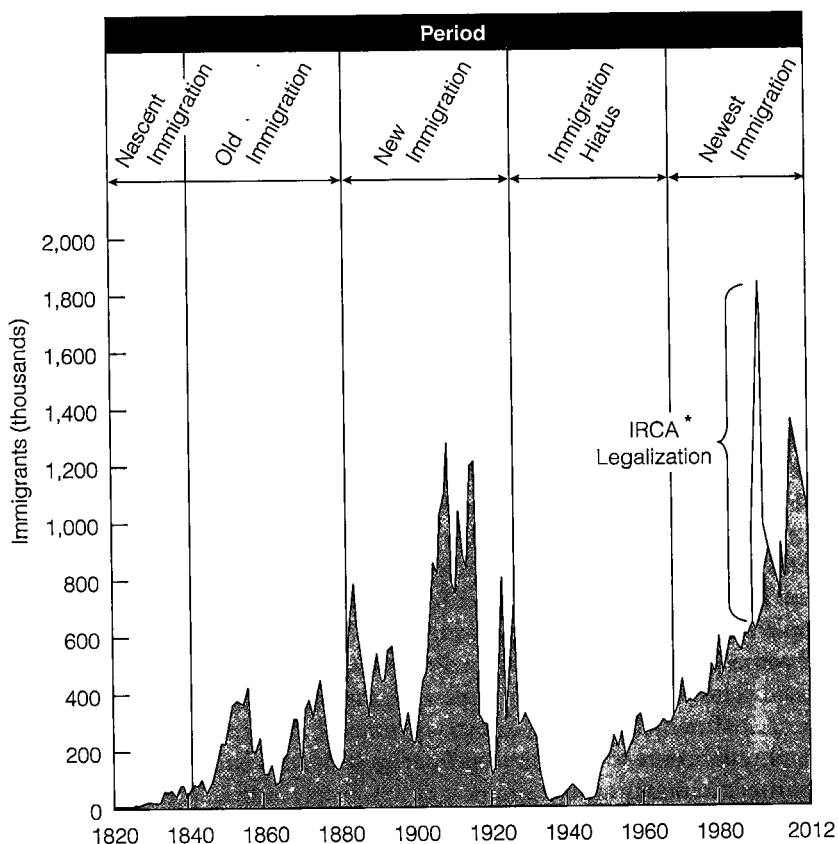


FIGURE 5.1 U.S. IMMIGRATION CURRENTS, 1820–2012

*IRCA refers to the amnesty provision of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, under which many unauthorized foreign residents were transferred to legal immigration status.

Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1996); U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2012).

in his 1960 campaign for the presidency, had explicitly pledged to work toward the removal of discriminatory immigration regulations. As with much of the civil rights legislation of the mid-1960s, the revision of immigration laws was enacted in large measure as a tribute to Kennedy after his assassination in 1963.

In 1965, when the revision was passed, few predicted the enormous numbers that would enter the United States as a result, nor could they foresee the profound impact this legislation would subsequently have on the ethnic makeup of the society. The ensuing massive and immensely diverse immigration led to an unprecedented level of heterogeneity of the U.S. population. The two previous periods of substantial immigration, occurring in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, had been primarily European in origin. Though resisted by nativist forces, these immigration periods did not essentially threaten the basic cultural and racial makeup of the society. The connotation of *immigrant* in the United States was “of European descent.” The

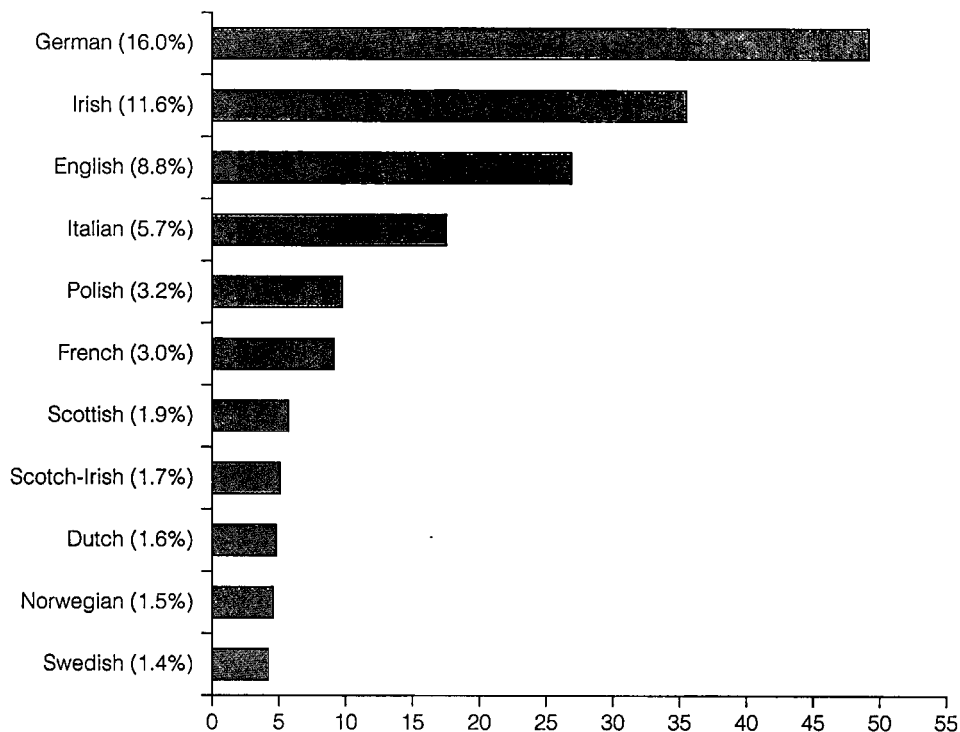


FIGURE 5.2 | LARGEST EURO-AMERICAN ANCESTRIES, IN MILLIONS

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2012d).

modern period of immigration, however, marked the onset of a movement that ensured that the society's ethnic configuration, and thus its culture, would not be in the future what it had been for most of its history.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEWEST IMMIGRATION

SCOPE Between 1960 and 2012, thirty-seven million people either entered the United States as legal immigrants or were granted permanent residence. More than nine million came during the 1990s, and another thirteen million between 2000 and 2012 (Figure 5.1). Today, immigration to the United States averages around one million per year, a number larger than the total immigration to all other developed countries combined.

These figures, of course, do not take into account those who enter unofficially. No one can be certain of their numbers, but government estimates are in the range of eleven million undocumented immigrants currently residing in the United States. Three-quarters are from Latin America, 60 percent from Mexico alone (Hoefer et al., 2012). The number of undocumented immigrants grew rapidly during the 1990s and early 2000s but has leveled off in recent years, mostly as a result of reduced economic opportunities. We will return to the issue of illegal immigration in Chapter 13.

The foreign-born population of the United States has today reached an all-time high. Even during the peak immigration years of the early twentieth century, immigrants numbered only about half of what they do today. However, when looked at in proportionate, not absolute, terms, immigrants today do not have as great a demographic impact as they did in the early 1900s. At that time, immigrants constituted about 15 percent of the total population, compared to around 13 percent today. Even including unauthorized immigrants would not increase that figure significantly. Nonetheless, it is very obvious that immigration in all forms continues to play a large role in U.S. population growth and will play an even greater role in the future (Durand et al., 2006; Passel and Cohn, 2008; Pew Hispanic Center, 2013; Westoff, 2007).

ETHNIC MAKEUP Numbers alone do not tell the whole story of the current period of American immigration. Perhaps more important, the character of immigration has been radically changed from that of past eras. Whereas the vast majority of immigrants throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were from European societies, today most are from Latin America and Asia. Figure 5.3 shows how immigration patterns were completely transformed starting in the 1960s.

The ramifications of that change have had a ripple effect throughout virtually all economic, political, and social institutions.

Figure 5.4 shows the leading countries of origin of immigrants to the United States. Clearly countries of Latin America and Asia predominate. But the sheer diversity of non-European immigrants is quite astonishing. Among the Asians, for example, are Filipinos, Koreans, Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong. From the Middle East have come Palestinians, Iraqis, Iranians, Lebanese, Syrians, Egyptians, and Israelis. Those from Africa include Somalis, Ethiopians, Ghanaians, and Nigerians. And from Latin America, the national origins of the immigrants cover the entire Central and South American regions, in addition to the Caribbean.

MOTIVATING FORCES What has prompted this newest large-scale immigration to the United States? Obviously the changes in immigration law in 1965 provided the favorable legal conditions and thus the necessary vehicle. But essentially the same push-pull factors that motivated past immigrants to America have been functioning for the newest wave. Although many have come as political refugees (mostly from Southeast Asia, Cuba, and Central America), most immigrants have responded to the population and economic pressures of their societies of origin. Most, in other words, seek economic betterment and improved social conditions. Other factors, of course, may play a role in motivating immigration, including political forces, cultural preferences, and physical security. But most commonly, job opportunities will be the primary incentive (Gozdzik and Martin, 2005; Hirschman and Massey, 2008; Saad, 1995).

Immigration to the United States, as well as to other industrialized societies of North America, Europe, and Australia, accelerated in the past five decades, mostly because of the widening gap between rich and poor nations. The economies of the latter, many of them newly independent states, were generally incapable of supporting rapidly growing populations, thereby creating a migration push. Most of the world's population growth has occurred since the end of World War II, and the

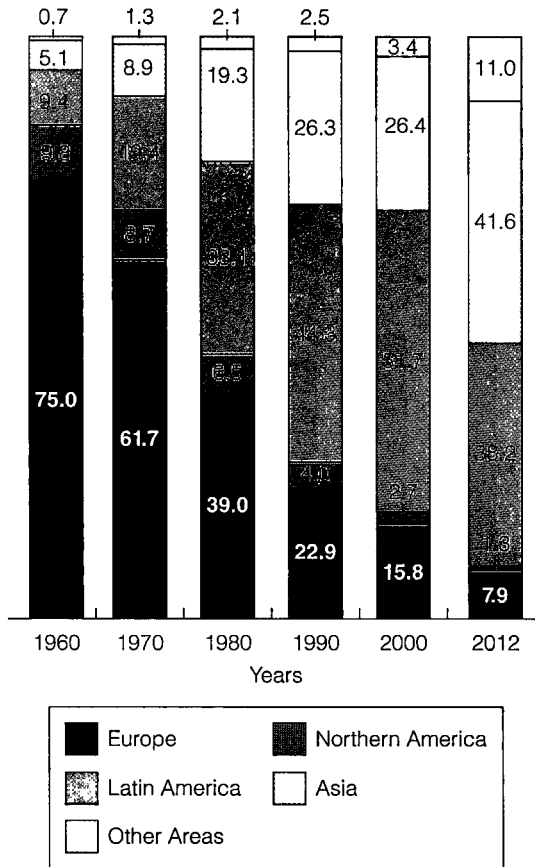


FIGURE 5.3 | REGIONS OF ORIGIN OF U.S. IMMIGRANTS, 1960–2012 (PERCENT)

*Africa and Oceania.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2012).

overwhelming majority of that growth has taken place in the less developed countries. Moreover, the gains in economic development made by many of these countries during the 1960s and 1970s slowed or reversed in the 1980s due to economic recession, growing debt, and internal political conflicts. Those conditions induced further pressures to migrate to the wealthier countries, like the United States, whose advanced economies promised better employment opportunities and a superior quality of life.

If poverty and overpopulation, as in the past, have provided the major push factors for the contemporary flow of immigration to the United States and other industrialized countries, pull factors are also similar to those that stimulated past immigration waves: the changing structure of the U.S. economy, especially the expansion of low-wage jobs, but also high-status technical jobs.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS Although the Newest Immigration has affected virtually all U.S. regions and states, it has had the most radical demographic effect on a few states,

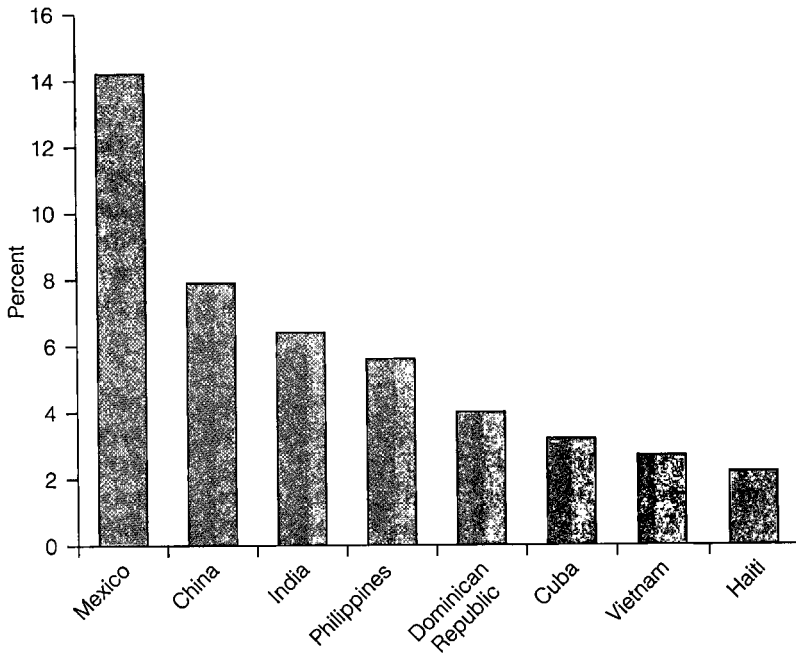


FIGURE 5.4 | LEADING COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF U.S. IMMIGRANTS, 2012

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2012).

namely California, New York, Illinois, Texas, and Florida. So great has the change been in California and Texas that they have been transformed into states where non-Hispanic whites are no longer the numerical majority. Similarly, though immigrant groups have dispersed widely, specific groups remain concentrated in particular regions. Asians, for example, have settled mostly in California; Latinos in the Southwest and Florida; and almost all new groups have large communities in New York City. Table 5.3 shows the states with the largest immigrant populations.

Like so many American immigrants of past generations, many today come with few expectations of remaining permanently in the United States. A great number do leave, and many (particularly from Mexico) engage in a continual back-and-forth movement. But also like their predecessors, many who at first see their immigration as temporary become firmly ensconced in their new society. The result has been, as in earlier eras of immigration, the flourishing of ethnic enclaves in cities that have attracted large numbers of new immigrants. Some, namely New York and Chicago, remain meccas for new immigrants, much as they were in the past. But others—Sunbelt cities like Los Angeles, Miami, and Houston—are now focal points of the Newest Immigration (Iceland, 2009).

Although most of the newest immigrants have settled in large urban areas, virtually no U.S. city or town has been unaffected. Many immigrants have leapfrogged over the central cities and settled in suburban communities, a pattern not common in

TABLE 5.3 STATES WITH LARGEST IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS

State	Number of Immigrants (Millions)	Immigrants as Percent of Total Population
California	10.1	27.0
New York	4.3	22.2
Texas	4.1	16.4
Florida	3.7	19.4
New Jersey	1.8	21.5
Illinois	1.8	14.0
Massachusetts	1.0	14.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2012d).

the past (Singer, 2010). As an example, consider Bridgewater, New Jersey, an affluent township forty miles from New York City. Seemingly immune to ethnic changes occurring in the city and its surrounding communities, Bridgewater had been a solidly white, middle-class enclave. Its Asian population had been almost invisible in 1980, but twenty years later Bridgewater was 10 percent Asian, and its schools were teaching students speaking forty-one native languages (Chen, 1999). Numerous small towns not in metropolitan areas are even more unexpected destinations for new immigrants. In Maine, for example, Lewiston's population of thirty-six thousand was augmented in 2001 by more than two thousand Somali immigrants (Belluck, 2002). Garden City, Kansas, would hardly be imagined as an immigrant destination, but, drawn by jobs in its meatpacking plants, immigrants—most from Mexico—changed the town's ethnic composition from 80 percent non-Hispanic white in 1980 to less than 50 percent by 2000 (Stull and Broadway, 2008). Immigrant communities such as these have become commonplace in all parts of the country.

CLASS RANGE Another evident feature of the Newest Immigration is its class range. Unlike past great waves of immigration, in which most newcomers were either poor or of modest means, the latest influx is made up of individuals and families who span the entire class spectrum, from low-level, unskilled workers to highly educated professionals. Those from Latin America tend to have less education and fewer skills, whereas those from Asia generally have more education and higher occupational skills (Mather, 2007). The result of this socioeconomic variety has been equally diverse patterns of settlement and adaptation among immigrants.

GENDER During previous large-scale immigration periods, male immigrants outnumbered females among most groups. The Newest Immigration is more gender balanced. In fact, the majority of immigrants from some countries (the Philippines, Korea, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic, for example) are women (Rumbaut,

1996). Immigrant women have disproportionately filled jobs in the low-wage service sector—such as hotel and restaurant workers—and in certain labor-intensive industries. In San Francisco, for example, the garment industry is the largest manufacturing sector, employing more than twenty-five thousand workers; 90 percent are women, most of them Asian immigrants (Louie, 2000).

CONTEMPORARY IMMIGRATION AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

As vast and diverse as immigration to the United States has been during the past four decades, it has hardly been a uniquely American phenomenon. Indeed, looking at the world's developed nations reveals that almost all have been affected in a similar way. The numbers may be smaller than in the United States, but the relative impact has been no less deeply felt and, in some cases, has produced even greater social strain. In addition to the traditional immigrant-receiving societies of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, many western European nations now have large immigrant populations and, as result, have emerged as multiethnic societies. For countries such as Britain, France, and Germany, this has represented a profound transformation and a wrenching societal experience, the consequences of which are still unfolding. Even relatively homogeneous societies like Italy, Spain, Sweden, and Japan have begun to evince greater ethnic diversity due to immigration. And, in all of these societies, the changing ethnic composition has brought forth heated public debate, just as in the United States: Are immigrants becoming too numerous? Is the society's cultural integrity threatened? Are immigrants taking jobs from native workers? We will revisit these issues as they have affected the United States in Chapter 13 and western European nations in Chapter 17.

To recognize that we are in an age of immigration should not cause us to forget that immigration, as noted at the outset of this chapter, has been ongoing since the very emergence of human societies. Nonetheless, it would hardly be exaggerating to declare that today we are in a period in which the dimensions of immigration are greater, and its consequences loom larger, than in any previous era in human history. And there appears no likelihood that the tide of international migration will recede in the foreseeable future. As long as there is a global stratification system, well-off nations with strong economies will attract people from nations with weak economies and severe population pressures. It seems apparent, then, that the issues and social consequences of large-scale immigration and increasing global diversity will be with us for many decades.

THE AMERICAN ETHNIC CONFIGURATION

It is now obvious that the newest immigration has thrust the United States into a period in which ethnic heterogeneity is historically unprecedented. Never before has America been more diverse, and that diversity will in all likelihood continue to expand. The traditional ethnic dominance of Euro-Americans, therefore, is no longer a given. As shown in Figure 5.5, if current demographic trends continue, Euro-Americans will make up less than half the American population by the middle of this century. This eventuality is assured in light of recent census data indicating that deaths now exceed births among non-Hispanic white Americans.

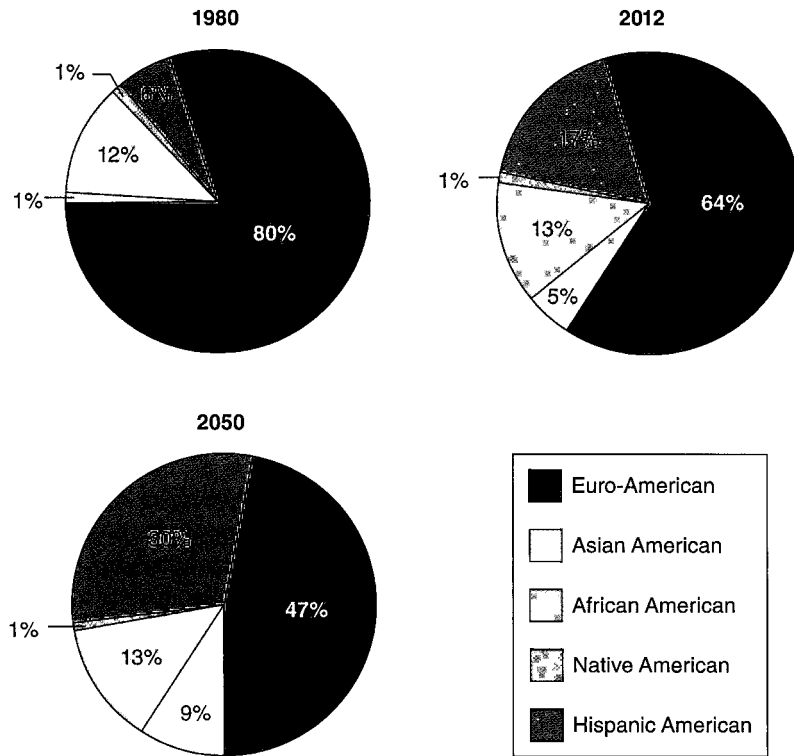


FIGURE 5.5 | ETHNIC MAKEUP OF THE UNITED STATES: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Source: Passel and Cohn (2008c); U.S. Census Bureau (2000, 2012d).

“OFFICIAL” RACIAL AND ETHNIC CLASSIFICATIONS

The demographic projections in Figure 5.5 must be studied with some caution. To begin with, these are merely estimates demographers have constructed on the basis of current and, presumably, future demographic trends. But demographers have no way of predicting what kind of fertility and mortality rates might be unleashed by economic and social forces. Few were able to foresee the post-World War II baby boom, for example. Nor can they be sure of future immigration rates since these are determined mostly by federal legislation, making them a key political issue subject to all kinds of political influences.

CHANGING RACIAL AND ETHNIC CATEGORIES Another, perhaps more significant, factor makes those projections less compelling than they initially seem. Even if demographers were capable of making accurate predictions, their estimates do not take into consideration that the categories currently used to classify the population by race and ethnicity are likely to change in the future.

In 1977, the U.S. federal government, as a means of monitoring and enforcing civil rights legislation and affirmative action programs, adopted a set of ethnic categories by which people could be classified and counted (Wright, 1994). These were

subsequently adopted by virtually all government agencies, including the U.S. Census Bureau, as well as by educational institutions, corporations, and the mass media. Five racial-ethnic categories were put in place, and they have been changed only in minor ways since then: white, black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native. These have become familiar categories, appearing on various educational and employment applications, census forms, and surveys. Unfortunately, rather than clarifying the conceptual morass of race and ethnicity in American society, these categories have further confounded the issue and contributed to even greater confusion.

For example, consider that Hispanic—an ethnic designation—is a separate category, alongside “racial” categories—black, white, Asian, American Indian. Or consider that extremely broad ranges of cultures and physical types are lumped together into each of these categories. For example, to speak of “blacks” in the United States in the aggregate is to assume a homogeneity that does not exist. Overlooked is the ethnic variety among U.S. blacks. Although blacks whose ancestry is traceable to American slavery predominate, today Haitians, Jamaicans, other Caribbeans, many Latinos, and even a growing population of African immigrants are also part of the American “black” population. Culturally these groups have little in common; they may even evince physical differences. Likewise, the term *white* has no significance beyond a reference to white ethnic groups in the aggregate. To speak of Polish Americans, Jewish Americans, and Irish Americans as part of a common group is to falsely meld groups whose cultural traditions are quite distinct.

What the current U.S. classification system represents, then, is an extremely crude and bewildering attempt to count the population by ethnicity. It also demonstrates the arbitrariness of racial or ethnic classification. Race and ethnicity, it should be remembered, are social constructs; they are not biologically fixed divisions of the human population or of the population of any particular society. The ways that societies choose to subdivide and classify their populations can and do change. In the United States, racial and ethnic classifications have been subject to repeated modifications, redefinitions, and replacements (Lee and Bean, 2010). Moreover, it should be remembered that census questions ask people to identify *themselves* in terms of race and ethnicity. Given the complexities of trying to determine anyone’s actual racial and ethnic history, census data must be seen as measures of *identity*, not *ancestry* (Perez and Hirschman, 2009).

FADING ETHNIC BOUNDARIES An even more important caveat to be considered in looking at these projections is that—as we will see in the next few chapters—much intermarriage is occurring across racial and ethnic lines, the effect of which is to further blur these already fuzzy and politically influenced categories. Consider golfer Tiger Woods as an example. Woods has been touted as a great black athlete. But is he “black”? His father was African American, his mother is Asian American, and his ancestry also includes Euro-American and Native American. As Woods himself explains, “Growing up, I came up with this name: I’m a ‘Cablinasian,’” a blend of Caucasian, black, Indian, and Asian (Fletcher, 1997). President Obama, of course, is another obvious case, his mother a white woman from Kansas, his father a black man from Kenya.

As the population becomes more diverse, cases such as that of Tiger Woods and President Obama are becoming commonplace. Indeed, they may be exemplars of

America's ethnic future. Continued racial and ethnic mixing are reshaping racial and ethnic boundaries and identities and will continue to do so in the coming decades. The result is that the familiar racial-ethnic categories—white, black, Hispanic, Asian—no longer make much sense (if they ever did) in classifying people and simply no longer work in accurately describing American society.

Although the current classification system may be far less than satisfactory, we remain thoroughly reliant on racial and ethnic data gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau, as well as by other public and private agencies and organizations that employ the official racial-ethnic scheme. Until sociologists and other social scientists can collaborate with policy makers to construct a more rational and meaningful way of conceptualizing ethnic boundaries, we are constrained to use the categories currently in place.

"MIXED RACE" PEOPLE The failure of the commonly used racial-ethnic classification scheme to accurately reflect the increasingly mixed blend of the U.S. population has led in recent years to calls for the creation of a "mixed race" category. Presumably this would account for those individuals who fall through the cracks of the current system, that is, those whose parentage reflects more than one racial-ethnic category. The 2000 U.S. Census stopped short of creating such a category, though it did, for the first time, give people the choice of identifying themselves with more than one racial category—an option chosen by 2.4 percent of the population (Lee, 2001). A similar option was provided in the 2010 Census and was chosen by 2.9 percent of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012f).

The creation of a mixed-race category would more comfortably fit a growing segment of the population, but it would do nothing to make the racial-ethnic classification scheme any less arbitrary; it would only create another category that carries no more real meaning than any of the others. Moreover, creating a mixed-race category, as explained in Chapter 1, raises the implication that there are "pure" races to begin with. As one researcher has put it, "[I]nsofar as there is no biological foundation for the three or four acknowledged races, neither is there a biological foundation for mixed-race groups" (Zack, 2001:52).

In reality, of course, there has been a mixed-race population in American society from the very beginning. In earlier times, when the essential racial division was black/white, the so-called **one-drop rule** arbitrarily crystallized this racial dichotomy. In effect, one had to be either black or white; there were no in-between categories.³ *Blacks were defined as those having black ancestors—that is, "one drop of black blood."* But the percentage of black ancestry (what fraction constituted one drop?) varied from state to state. In some it was one-fourth; in others, one-eighth, one-sixteenth, or even one-thirty-second (Davis, 2001). At the turn of the last century, the one-drop rule was essentially the law of the land; even today it affects racial classification (Hollinger, 2005). Most of the U.S. black population, in fact, has some white ancestry, and a small portion of the white population has some black ancestry (Blackburn, 2000; Smedley, 2007).

³ In fact, the U.S. Census during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did provide an "intermediate" racial category, "mulatto," which was eliminated by 1930 when the one-drop rule defined as black "anyone with any black ancestry" (Davis, 2001; Lee and Bean, 2010).

CONTINUED ETHNIC DIVERSITY One unmistakable fact does emerge from the confusion accompanying attempts to classify and quantify the American population by race and ethnicity: the United States continues to evolve into an ever-more heterogeneous society. In the twenty-first century, America's ethnic character will be more culturally and physically diverse than it was in the twentieth century. And despite the efforts of some to preserve groups' social boundaries, the trend toward a fading of those racial and ethnic lines seems irreversible.

Despite the virtually unparalleled heterogeneity of the United States today, it is interesting—if bemusing—to consider how misinformed most Americans are about the ethnic makeup of their society. Most cannot describe the actual size of various ethnic groups with anything even approaching accuracy. This has been demonstrated by national surveys over the past decade, in which Americans grossly exaggerate the size of racial and ethnic minorities. The typical American estimates the size of African American, Hispanic American, and Asian American populations to be more than twice as large as they actually are (Carroll, 2001). This seriously distorted picture of the American ethnic configuration is bound to influence people's attitudes and actions regarding ethnic-related issues such as immigration, affirmative action, and multiculturalism.

THE AMERICAN ETHNIC HIERARCHY TODAY

The analysis of America's ethnic groups that follows in the next seven chapters suggests that the American ethnic hierarchy today can be viewed as divided into three comprehensive tiers:

1. The top tier comprises white Protestants of various national origins, for whom ethnicity has no real significance except to distinguish them from the remainder of the ethnic hierarchy.
2. The intermediate tier comprises white ethnics of various national origins (mostly Catholic and Jewish) and many Asians, for whom ethnicity continues to play a role in the distribution of the society's rewards and continues to influence social life—but in both instances, decreasingly so. In fact, for some white ethnic groups in this tier, ethnicity has lost almost all social relevance, as they blend into the top tier.
3. The bottom tier comprises racial-ethnic groups—blacks, Latinos, American Indians, and some Asians—for whom ethnicity today has significant consequences and for whom it continues to shape many of the basic aspects of social and economic life.

This ethnic hierarchy has remained relatively stable for the past century and a half. Although the distance between many of the groups has been reduced, their rank order has, with few exceptions, not been basically altered.

Arranging ethnic groups in such a rank order, of course, masks the more specific class and cultural differences among them, as well as the internal differences within each. But in a very general sense, each of the country's ethnic groups can be placed in one of these tiers, based on a combination of the factors we will look at in upcoming chapters: the collective place of the group in the society's economic and political hierarchies; the extent to which prejudice and discrimination remain significant for the

group; and the extent to which group members have entered into full social participation with members of the dominant group.⁴

Perhaps the most important aspect of this three-part American ethnic hierarchy is that the gap between the bottom tier of groups and the other two is much greater than the gap between the top and intermediate tiers. Thus, except for Asians and some Hispanics, the American ethnic system today seems to be increasingly dichotomized—white and nonwhite. The overriding issues of American ethnic relations, therefore, remain focused on the economic, political, and social disparities between whites and nonwhites and the policies intended to reduce them. The crux of the matter is relatively simple: will the gap between whites and nonwhites continue in its present form, will it be reduced substantially, or will it perhaps widen? The issues of American race and ethnic relations are largely subsumed by this pivotal question.

SUMMARY

- Following its conquest of the indigenous peoples and enslavement of blacks, the Anglo core group established its social and political dominance in America and exercised the power of selection over those who came afterward.
- American ideologies and public policies regarding ethnic groups and issues have consistently reflected Anglo cultural preferences and Anglo economic and political interests. Based on those thoughts and actions, an ethnic hierarchy has been shaped, and the rank order of groups has not essentially changed.
- The ethnic diversity of the American population blossomed forcefully during the approximately one hundred years between the 1820s and 1920s. Two massive waves of European immigration took place. The *Old Immigration*, during the first fifty years of that period, brought mainly groups from northern and western Europe, the largest among them the Irish and Germans. During the second fifty years, the *New Immigration* consisted primarily of groups from southern and eastern Europe. The cultural distinctiveness of the latter provoked a nativist movement that ultimately resulted in the passage of restrictive immigration laws, ending, in effect, further large-scale European immigration.
- The contemporary period of immigration, referred to as the *Newest Immigration*, was launched by the passage of immigration reforms in 1965, which ended country-of-origin restrictions. Whereas previous periods of heavy immigration had consisted mostly of European groups, the Newest Immigration is made up in largest part of groups from Asia and Latin America.
- The scope of the Newest Immigration has exceeded even that of the early 1900s, previously the heaviest period of immigration to the United States. As a result, an ethnic reconfiguration of the U.S. population is occurring. Asian and Latin American groups are growing, and Euro-American groups are declining in size.
- The American ethnic hierarchy today is made up essentially of three comprehensive tiers: white Protestants of various national origins at the top; white

⁴ Using a combination of these factors means that some will offset others. For example, although Jews and Asians rank higher in their aggregate economic class position than northwestern Europeans, they still do not fully interact at the primary level with those groups, and the extent of prejudice and discrimination directed against them is much greater. Hence, when all these factors are considered, Jews and Asians are part of the intermediate tier of groups rather than the top.

ethnics of various national origins, along with most Asian Americans, in the middle; and Hispanic Americans, African Americans, and American Indians at the bottom.

CRITICAL THINKING

1. In the early formation of the American nation, English influences predominated in shaping basic institutions, like language, law, politics, and economy. Why were American Indians or other ethnic groups unable to exert similar influence?
2. Examine the ethnic makeup of the top leadership of America's major political, economic, educational, and cultural institutions. Based on your findings, are Anglo-Americans still the dominant ethnic group? In what ways has their political, economic, and cultural power been diluted?
3. Does "Anglo-conformity," discussed in this chapter, still characterize the expected path of assimilation for new immigrants to America? Is the "melting pot" model more applicable to U.S. society today than in past eras?
4. Do an analysis of your city or town in terms of its ethnic makeup. Has it changed during the past several decades and, if so, in what ways? Which ethnic groups are present today that were absent in past times? What factors contributed to those groups' migration to your community?

PERSONAL/PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. As explained in this chapter, the United States is in the midst of a demographic transformation in terms of race and ethnicity. How will the changing U.S. racial/ethnic landscape affect you?
2. Consider the process of voluntary immigration, as described in this chapter, and try to put yourself in the place of immigrants. What might motivate you to consider leaving familiar surroundings and move to another city or state or even another country, not knowing what might await you once you arrived there?