

the war in 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended these tensions, the United States (Daw, 2009). Mexican citizens residing there were granted U.S. citizenship and the right to maintain their lands and cultures, but those in their lands whose these provisions were not cottoned.

Immigration 101

From the time Europeans first settled on the American continent until the most voluntary immigration was from Europe. All migrating groups experienced difficulties arising from leaving their homes, traveling to a new land, and adjusting to a new life. Some northern and western European immigrants, such as people from England and France, were immediately welcomed to the United States, whereas others, such as immigrants from Ireland and Italy, were not. In part this was due to economics. Native-born workers feared that Irish and Italian immigrants would work for less money and thus take away their jobs. These newer immigrants tended to be Catholic, whereas most prior immigrants from Europe were Protestant, and anti-Catholic prejudice and discrimination were widespread.

Some northern and western European immigrants were also initially considered inferior by people already settled here. Most of them assimilated (not absorbed into the existing culture) within a few generations. Once one generation settled into their new lives, newer immigrants from the same area were able to move into established ethnic enclaves; they felt more comfortable than because others spoke their native languages and followed the same customs. Immigrants from Asia, southern and eastern Europe, and the Pacific Islands often experienced racism and exclusion based on ethnic, religious, and class biases. In the early 1900s, laws restricted immigration from certain nations and denied citizenship to some immigrant groups. Immigration quotas, for example, were based on the percentage of each group that already lived in the United States, so that the ethnic composition of the United States would not be altered by immigration.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-236) was an attempt to replace the quota system that had dominated immigration patterns that meant led to increased immigration from Latin America, Asia, and eastern and southern Europe. By 1977, about three-quarters of the people migrating to the United States were from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Immigration continues to increase, and it is anticipated that one out of three Americans will either be an immigrant or the child of an immigrant by 2065 (Cohn, 2015).

Refugee Status

Americans also prize their country's reputation as a haven for persecuted people. Some of the earliest colonists immigrated so that they could practice their religion freely. Many different groups have made the United States their destination in order to escape religious persecution and political conflicts. However, it was not until the 1950s that refugees, particularly those fleeing communist countries, were given special treatment.

By law, refugees are people who are fleeing persecution from countries that the U.S. government considers to be oppressing certain groups of people. For example, as a consequence of U.S. military intervention in Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries, large numbers of immigrants were categorized as refugees after 1975. Their migration to the United States was the result of a refugee status. Passage of the Refugee Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-232), which gave legal status to people fleeing dangerous conditions, such as armed conflict or natural disasters, provided more social services for the resettlement of refugees. As discussed in Chapter 4, whether the United States should continue to admit refugees, particularly those from some predominantly Muslim countries, has been raised by the Trump administration. This part of U.S. history continues to be written.

Undocumented or Unauthorized Immigrants

Recent debate has also centered on the topic of people residing in the United States without proper authorization. The terms often used to refer to these estimated 11 million people are *illegal immigrants* or *illegal aliens* (Kronstadt, 2017). Language is powerful, as discussed in Chapter 1. Those who work with undocumented people find the term *alien* to be offensive, as if the lack of documentation makes a person less than human (think about the use of the term *alien*, typically used to describe a creature from another planet). Therefore, the use of the terms *undocumented* or *unauthorized* are preferable from a social work perspective that discourages labels that are pejorative or carry negative imagery. Living in the United States without legal documentation is a civil infraction and, as such, is not legally considered a criminal act, but a constitutional violation. The vast majority of undocumented people came to the United States for economic reasons. Immigrants tend to be poor with statistics of origin in Latin America. These characteristics have brought race, class, and ethnicity issues into the immigration debate, and the ramifications of increased immigration have become important issues for social workers.

Implications for Social Work Practice

As discussed in Chapter 1, part of social workers' professional mandate is to respect and appreciate diversity within and among those served. In the Council on Social Work Education's 2015 *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards*, a primary purpose of social work education is to engage diversity and difference in practice and understand the dimensions of diversity—age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation (p. 7). In order to accomplish that goal, social workers must develop practice skills that are responsive to the diversity of their clients.

Influence of History Historic events provide an important context for understanding current concerns of nondominant groups. The colonization of Indigenous Peoples has resulted in a continued struggle to enforce their rights as sovereign nations (as assured by treaties) to maintain or regain their cultures,