

Cleveland Amory tells a story about prominent English American families in Massachusetts. A Chicago banking firm wrote a Boston investment company for a letter of recommendation for a young Bostonian. Eloquently praising the young man's virtues, the company's letter pointed out that his mother was a member of the Lowell family, his father a member of the Cabot family, and his other relatives were members of other prominent New England families. The bank wrote back, thanking the company but noting that this was not the type of letter of recommendation they had in mind: "We were not contemplating using Mr. _____ for breeding purposes."¹ Apocryphal or not, this story illustrates the elite status of certain Boston families and suggests their prominence in New England's history.

The story indicates too the importance of inbreeding, descent, and interlocking family ties over the generations. Ethnicity involves cultural or nationality characteristics that are distinguished by the group itself or by important out-groups, but lines of descent are major channels for passing along these ethnic characteristics to later generations.

English Americans—that is, *Americans of English ancestry*—are the third largest white ethnic group in the United States, after German and Irish Americans. Approximately 27.7 million Americans are estimated to have substantial English ancestry according to a 2008 census report.² The term *English Americans* itself may sound a bit strange. Other terms are often used. Most common are the somewhat inaccurate terms *Anglo-Saxon* and *white Anglo-Saxon Protestant*. **Anglo-Saxon** originally referred to Germanic tribes, the Angles and the Saxons, who came to the area now called England in the fifth and sixth centuries C.E. It was later applied to the inhabitants of England and to those English who came to North America. **Anglo-Protestant Americans** is a more accurate term for those often referred to as Anglo-Saxons or as **white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans**. Although in-depth analyses of this ethnic group are rare, numerous authors have commented on its central importance: "Our American culture, our speech, our laws are basically Anglo-Saxon in origin."³

Milton Gordon's view of the shaping effect this first large group of European immigrants had on the dominant culture was noted in a previous chapter: "If there is anything in American life which can be described as an overall American culture which serves as a reference point for immigrants and their children, it can best be described . . . as the

middle-class cultural patterns of, largely, white Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins."⁴ This comment suggests the importance of this dominant culture in the adaptation process faced by later immigrant groups.

As we noted previously, the term *Anglo-Saxon* derives from the names for Germanic tribes, the Angles and the Saxons, that came to the area now called England in the fifth and sixth centuries C.E.⁵ However, in writing about the United States, some authors have used the term *Anglo-Saxon* and related terms in a loose way to include British groups other than the English, such as the Scots and the Welsh. Other northern European groups that have substantially adapted to the Anglo core culture—particularly Scandinavian and German Protestants—are sometimes included by scholars in the terms *Anglo-Saxon* and *Anglo-Protestant*. In any event, when the terms *Anglo-Saxon*, *Anglo-Protestant*, and *British American* are used by scholars, English Americans and the still-dominant culture they generated are usually at the heart of the discussion.

Early on, Americans of northern European descent expressed a sense of their superiority and prominence in the new nation. In the late 1780s, John Jay, the first chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, wrote in *The Federalist*, "Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs."⁶ This highly ethnocentric perspective—inaccurate at the time—has been a central problem for groups not from northern Europe ever since.

The English Migrations

Some Basic Data

Although the English were not the first Europeans to come to North America (the Spanish came earlier, for example), they were the first Europeans to colonize it in large numbers. By the early eighteenth century there were approximately 350,000 English and Welsh colonists in North America. At the time of the American Revolution, this number was approaching 2 million.⁷

Migration to the North American colonies was heavily English until the early 1700s. Then the

English migration generally receded to modest levels, until well into the nineteenth century.⁸ Nearly 3 million English again migrated to the U.S. between 1820 and 1950, most heavily between 1880 and 1900. The English migration to the colonies, and later to the United States in the nineteenth century, was one of the largest population flows in this period. The English were the first sizable European group in what was to become the United States and continued to be an important segment of the European migration until World War I.⁹

The First Colonial Settlements

The English colonists' seventeenth-century migration, together with their pattern of settlement, was distinctive. This movement can be viewed as *colonization migration*, a concept explored in Chapter 2. Unlike other types of migration, colonization migration involves the subordination of indigenous societies. As we show in Chapter 6, the first victims of English and other European colonialism on this continent were indigenous societies. English colonists participated actively in killing Native Americans or otherwise driving them off their lands.¹⁰

Why did the English Crown become interested in establishing North American colonies? English advocates in the colonial period put forth various explanations. The need for trading posts and for new sources of raw materials, as well as for new markets for English goods, was cited as a rationale by advocates of North American colonization.¹¹ Yet other colonial advocates emphasized Protestant missionary objectives, the search for a passage to Asia, the need to stop Spanish or French expansion, and the need for a place for England's surplus population. As one researcher puts it, "What England primarily looked for in colonies was neither expansion of territory *per se* nor overseas aggregations of Englishmen, but goods and markets."¹²

The English colonization was a case of migrant superordination (see Chapter 2) with dire consequences for preexisting Native American societies. Geographical expansion proceeded rapidly. At first, some Native American groups were treated in a friendly fashion, if mainly because the colonists depended on Native American food and advice. As colonists gained numerical superiority over indigenous populations, they forced the latter back into frontier areas or slaughtered them outright.¹³ Few



English colonists aboard The Mayflower sign the Mayflower Compact.

European colonists seemed concerned over the genocidal consequences of their aggressive colonialism.

The English established large settlements in North America, often using royal companies of various kinds. Recall from the introduction to Part I that some were early manifestations of European capitalism. The first joint-stock companies were formed by merchants under the auspices of James I of England in the 1600s. Employees of the Southern Company settled Jamestown, a colony where the primary goal was economic. Initially planning to develop the colony with poor laborers from Europe, the leaders soon perceived a labor shortage and secured enslaved Africans from a Dutch-flagged ship in 1619, laying the foundation for slavery in North America. The northern colony of Plymouth was settled in 1620 under the auspices of another royal company. Many New England colonists—later called “Pilgrims”—were Puritans who had broken with the Anglican church.¹⁴ Both settlements nearly expired in their early years because of disease and starvation. The Plymouth colony managed to survive only with the aid of Indian communities.¹⁵

According to historian David Fischer, several distinctive English-speaking groups were among the first to immigrate. First came Puritans from England’s eastern counties, who entered the Massachusetts area primarily between 1629 and 1640. They brought to New England “nucleated settlements, congregational churches, town meetings, and a tradition of ordered liberty.”¹⁶ A second group of immigrants came to the Virginia area between 1642 and 1675. This group consisted of a small number of Royalists from southern England and numerous indentured servants. Their culture was characterized by “extreme hierarchies of rank, strong oligarchies, Anglican churches, a highly developed sense of honor, and an idea of hegemonic liberty.”¹⁷ A third group—Quakers from the North Midlands of England and Wales, who came to the Delaware Valley between 1675 and 1725—established a “pluralistic system of reciprocal liberty” based on spiritual and social equality, austerity, and an intense work ethic.¹⁸

A fourth group of immigrants came to the Appalachian backcountry from the borderlands (for example, Scotland) of northern Great Britain and Ireland between 1718 and 1775. This group represented various ethnic ancestries (English, Scottish, and “Scotch-Irish”) and had extreme socioeconomic inequalities, but its members

TABLE 3.1

Surnames	White Population (%)
English	60.1
Scottish, “Scotch-Irish”	14.0
German	8.6
Irish (Free State)	3.6
Dutch	3.1
French, Swedish	3.0
Other	7.6
Total	100.0

shared the ideal of natural liberty.¹⁹ Each of these four groups had a somewhat distinctive type of culture—distinctive speech patterns, architecture, family and child-rearing customs, dress and food ways, religious orientations, and conceptions of liberty and the organization of public life. Over time, their cultural patterns interacted and fused together to create the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture of the colonies and, later, the United States.

The American Historical Association has developed rough estimates of the “national stocks” of the white population in 1790 based on surname analysis (see Table 3.1).²⁰ These estimates give the English the primary position among whites, with other British groups accounting for significant proportions then. In addition, African Americans, then mostly enslaved, made up about *one-fifth* of the total population in 1790.²¹

Q Why did the English become interested in establishing North American colonies?

Later Migration

A modest number of British and other European immigrants entered the United States between the Revolution and 1820, but the century following 1820 saw the greatest Atlantic migration in history. English immigrants moved in large numbers from manufacturing and mining industries in England to comparable positions in U.S. industry; their skills helped spur dramatic industrialization.²² When English American workers were eventually displaced by

machines or later immigrant groups, they or their children often moved up into managerial, professional, and technical positions. With their help, and substantial investments by English capitalists, U.S. industrial productivity soon surpassed that of Great Britain.²³

The ease with which English immigrants moved into industrial workplaces suggests the swiftness of their incorporation at the level of U.S. secondary organizations. Their skills and backgrounds kept most from the poverty that other immigrants faced. Larger numbers moved into clerical and professional jobs than was the case with many later white immigrant groups. Acculturation was relatively easy. They were more readily hired where the ability to speak English was important. They avoided most anti-immigrant agitation. Indeed, new English immigrants often shared the ethnocentric or racist views held by previous English colonists, including the stereotyping of Jews, the hostility toward black Americans, and the dislike of southern Europeans. Structural assimilation in the *primary-relations sphere*, to use the concept of Milton Gordon, was usually rapid for them. English immigrants never faced enforced residential segregation, and marriage with other English Americans was commonplace.²⁴

Relatively small numbers of English immigrants have come to the U.S. since 1910. In the 1930s, more people returned to England than came in as immigrants. The modest English migration since 1910, coupled with dramatic increases in immigration from other areas, has had a significant demographic effect. Since 1910, British Americans as a group have declined significantly as a proportion of the total population.²⁵

Other Protestant Immigrants

The terms *Anglo-Saxon* and *Anglo-Protestant* have sometimes been used by researchers to include not only the English but also the Scots, the Welsh, and even the Scandinavians and the Germans. The Welsh entered the colonies in relatively small numbers, beginning in the early 1600s. Many found employment in industrial jobs or farming. The first generations retained their customs, language, and distinctive communities, but most were soon substantially assimilated to the white Anglo-Protestant mainstream.²⁶

In terms of political and economic power, the Scots were the closest to the dominant English group

from the 1700s onward, although they too were subject to Anglo-conformity pressures. By the late eighteenth century there were perhaps 250,000 Scots in the United States, a number supplemented over the next century by three-fourths of a million migrants. In the colonial period, some were prosperous merchants, clerks, soldiers, and middle-income farmers, although the majority were probably servants, laborers, and poor farmers. Scots experienced hostility from some English Americans in the early period. Adaptation to the English core culture gradually accompanied inclusion in the economic system; by the early 1800s, many if not most had achieved parity with their English American neighbors. They, too, were becoming an important segment of the white Anglo-Protestant mainstream.

German immigrants made up the largest non-British group during the eighteenth century. Germans constituted nearly one-tenth of the colonists, and in the century after 1820, several million more came to the United States. Some were Catholics and Jews, but the largest proportion was Protestant. Many became farmers, merchants, and, later, industrial workers. Over several generations, much, but by no means all, of the German culture was reshaped or displaced by the well-established Anglo-American patterns. Cultural assimilation, together with substantial mobility in the economic and political spheres, came in a few generations for German Protestants. For years, however, some distinctiveness persisted in the form of certain German customs, festivals, and residential concentrations. Jewish Germans (see Chapter 5), who immigrated in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, remained somewhat distinctive, in part because of the often vicious anti-Semitism directed against them and later Jewish immigrants by many other Americans.

Scandinavian immigrants, such as Swedes and Norwegians, did not enter in large numbers until the 1870s and 1880s. In all, perhaps 2 million came. Many immigrants entered as farmers and laborers, but the second and third generations moved into skilled blue-collar and white-collar positions. Here, too, substantial adaptation to the British American core culture came in just a few generations. Still, some distinctiveness in family customs and residential location, especially in midwestern areas, persists today.

These white Protestant groups from northern Europe adapted relatively rapidly in the cultural, economic, and political spheres, although this

process was not always peaceful. In the period of early contact, some northern European groups suffered physical attacks and extreme cultural conformity pressures from English Americans. However, within a generation English Americans were intermarrying with Scottish, Welsh, and "Scotch-Irish" Americans, and sometimes with Scandinavians and Germans. By the early twentieth century, the designations *white Anglo-Saxon Protestant* and *white Anglo-Protestant* increasingly came to blur the distinction between the English and the later northern European immigrant groups.

The Invention of the "White Race"

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the emergence of the "white race" as a deliberately constructed social group for the first time in North American or, for that matter, world history. From the beginning, English colonists and their descendants saw themselves as quite different from the indigenous Americans and black Americans, whom they initially stereotyped as "uncivilized" and "savages." English Americans saw themselves as "republicans" of great virtue; they were concerned with protecting the new nation and reserving it, as some stated in the 1790s, for the "worthy part of mankind."²⁷ By the late 1700s, the growing importance of southern plantations for the economy as a whole (northern entrepreneurs and bankers were often linked to the southern economy) increased demand for Indian lands and enslaved African American workers. At the same time, slavery was being abolished, sometimes rather slowly, in most northern states.

As a result, a white Anglo-Protestant elite circulated the idea of an advantaged "white race" and of inferior Indian and African "races." Famous U.S. founders, men of English or Welsh descent, played a central role in making this racial framing of society central to the thinking of most white Americans. These included three presidents: Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Washington. Jefferson, the main writer of the Declaration of Independence, wrote extensively in the first major book by a U.S. intellectual that African Americans were greatly inferior to white Americans with regard to skin color, physical form, reason, familial love, forethought, and even the ability to feel pain and grief.²⁸ In an 1814 letter to a neighbor, Edward Coles, the aging Jefferson explained why he still thought that black Americans

should not be freed; black Americans are "brought from their infancy without necessity for thought or forecast, are by their habits rendered as incapable as children of taking care of themselves, and are extinguished promptly wherever industry is necessary for raising young."²⁹ Jefferson reiterated explicitly racist notions in his earlier writings as to the lack of forethought among black Americans and his view of their childlike dependency. In this letter to Coles, Jefferson described freed blacks thus: "In the mean time they are pests in society by their idleness, and the depredations to which this leads them." Many slaveholders like Jefferson, Madison, and Washington viewed those enslaved as a childlike and thus inferior "race."

These views were not confined to powerful whites. White elites of the founding era and later decades sought to provide some racial privileges for propertyless European immigrants and their children, and thus to prevent the latter from bonding with other Americans of color. As sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois suggested, white workers often accepted a lesser economic position and lower wages in return for the "public and psychological wage" that went with being members of a "white race." In return for acceptance of their subordinate class position, white workers, including new immigrant workers, were allowed by the white elite to be part of a racial hierarchy in which all whites enforced deference from black Americans and other Americans of color.³⁰

Historical research shows that many nineteenth-century European immigrants, who did *not* define themselves initially as "white" but rather as Irish, German, or Italian, gradually came to construct themselves as "white" as they moved up economically and politically in society. The development of a racist frame and its white-supremacist ideology was accelerated during Andrew Jackson's presidency (1829–1837). (Jackson himself was infamous as a slaveholder and for involvement in destroying Native American societies.) By the late nineteenth century or early twentieth century, not only the later English immigrants but also immigrants from Scotland, Scandinavia, Ireland, and Germany had come to accept a place in the "white race." Their racial privileges included the right to substantial personal liberty, to travel and immigrate, and (only for men initially) to vote. Similarly, the white elite's response to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century farmer protests and union organization among white immigrants included efforts to convince these

farmers and workers to embrace racial solidarity within the socially invented "white race."³¹

Q What structural and cultural factors led to the social construction of the "white race"?

Nativist Reactions to Later European Immigrants

In the 1700s and 1800s, some native-born white Americans, themselves descendants of earlier immigrants, expressed their hostility toward new European immigrants. **Nativism**, an anti-immigrant ideology that advocates the protection of the native-born inhabitants of a country from immigrants who are seen as threatening or dangerous, goes far back in North American history, but the term appears to have been first used in the 1840s. Nativists were nationalists who saw themselves as the *only* true Americans.³²

Before the American Revolution, nativists focused on the religious and moral undesirability of new immigrants. Certain religious groups (especially Catholics), "paupers," and convicts were discouraged by English Americans from entering the colonies. Antiforeign sentiment was directed primarily at non-English immigrant groups, of whom French Huguenot refugees were one example. At least one Huguenot community was violently attacked by nativists. "In the early years Englishmen treated the increasingly numerous immigrants from other European countries . . . with much condescension and frequently with exploitative brutality." In Virginia and Maryland, discriminatory duties were placed on non-English servants coming into colonies. Catholics among the Irish were "doubly damned as foreign and Papist."³³

Established colonists felt ambivalence about immigrants. On the one hand, immigrants provided needed labor for employers, ship captains profited from immigration, and new immigrants were encouraged to settle in frontier areas to increase colonial security. On the other hand, immigrants were sometimes seen as a threat, and English American mobs occasionally tried to prevent their landing.³⁴

More Fear of Immigrants

Antiforeign sentiment took legal form in the late 1700s after the Federalist Party became concerned

about political radicalism among new immigrants and about non-English immigrants' growing support for Jeffersonian Republicans. The 1798 Alien Act empowered the English American president (John Adams) to deport immigrants considered a threat. The period of residence required to be eligible for citizenship was raised from two to five years in 1795 and to fourteen years in 1798. Attempts were made to set an exorbitant fee for naturalization. These strategies were designed to limit the political power of non-English immigrants. Numerous attempts were made to reduce the influence of immigrants by vigorously pressuring them to assimilate to English-dominated institutions.³⁵

A nativistic concern about non-English immigrants who did not know the English language and customs led Benjamin Franklin to establish a school in Pennsylvania in the 1740s.³⁶ Even the liberty-loving Franklin held strong ethnic prejudices about German immigrants and feared they would "shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of us Anglifying them."³⁷

Anti-Catholic sentiment fueled much nativist agitation. Irish and German immigrants entering during the 1840s and 1850s were targeted by bursts of nativist agitation; a variety of secret societies, sometimes termed the "Know-Nothing" movement, fought immigration and Catholicism. (When questioned, members of these societies are reported to have said, "I don't know nothing.") During the 1850s, ethnocentric Know-Nothings were elected to state legislatures, Congress, and state executive offices. They periodically precipitated violent attacks against both new immigrants and native-born Roman Catholics.³⁸

Nativism was coupled with racist ideologies in the nineteenth century; other northern Europeans joined English Americans in this perspective. U.S. socioeconomic development was celebrated as the perfect example of what could be accomplished by the "Anglo-Saxon race." This racialized Anglo-Saxonism was picked up by white expansionists who lusted after Mexican lands in California and Texas. European Americans legitimated their vigorous military thrust into those areas by a perceived mandate to colonize "inferior races" there. One European American expansionist commented that "the Mexican race now see in the fate of the aborigines of the North, their own inevitable destiny. They must amalgamate or be lost in the superior vigor of

the Anglo-Saxon race, or they must utterly perish."³⁹ This Anglo-Saxonism was to play an important role in racist thought for decades. It provided the rationalization for U.S. imperialist military and business expansion overseas, in places such as the Philippines, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

After the Civil War, some U.S. intellectuals came under the influence of **social Darwinism**, a perspective that extended Charles Darwin's evolutionary thinking into the societal realm and thus argued for a culture that embraces the "survival of the fittest." This perspective developed in England and the United States and contained notions of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority linked to a theory of the social "survival of the fittest." One advocate, John Fiske, celebrated the superiority of English civilization and claimed it was the destiny of the English people to populate *all the world's* empty spaces.⁴⁰ Even more influential were popular U.S. writers such as Josiah Strong, a Congregationalist minister whose book, *Our Country* (1885), sold thousands of copies. Strong was a vigorous advocate of Anglo-Saxon superiority, which he and others combined with the view that native-born Catholics and non-British immigrants were highly undesirable. The English peoples were multiplying, he argued, and the U.S. was destined to be the seat of an "Anglo-Saxon race" whose numbers would approach (by the 1980s, he inaccurately predicted) a billion strong.⁴¹

Nativism and Racism Since 1890

Increased immigration from southern and eastern Europe and Asia around the turn of the twentieth century focused anti-immigration sentiment on these groups. Henry Cabot Lodge, an English American aristocrat from New England and a powerful political figure, was determined to defend the United States against immigrant "threats" in the 1890s and early 1900s. English Americans formed the Immigration League to halt southern and eastern European immigration. The League worked diligently for a literacy test, which passed Congress, and associated itself with the eugenics movement started by a prominent English Darwinist. Early U.S. eugenicists feared that allowing so-called "unfit" southern and eastern European (especially Catholic and Jewish) immigrants to enter would destroy the "superior race" of north Europeans. In their view,

the unfit should be sterilized, excluded, or even eliminated.⁴²

Perhaps the most prominent American to contribute to racial nativism was Madison Grant, an American of English extraction who fused various racist ideas in his influential book, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916). Worried about newer groups from southern and eastern Europe, Grant claimed that interbreeding with inferior European "races" would lead to mongrelization. Northern Europeans—the "Nordic race"—were the superior "race."⁴³ By the 1920s, this racist perspective (sometimes called "scientific racism") helped fuel pressures for immigration legislation that discriminated against non-British white groups. National-origin quotas were set to restrict the then-substantial immigration from southern and eastern Europe.

The 1920s and 1930s saw an outpouring of racial nativism. Nativist organizations such as the revived Ku Klux Klan, an old U.S. terrorist group, provided a social outlet for those who wished to subordinate African, Catholic, and Jewish Americans and preserve the "Anglo-Saxon race." Opposition to foreign immigration resurfaced again during and after World War II, when various members of Congress and (northern) European American organizations opposed legislation that would permit large numbers of political refugees, such as European Jews and Catholics, to migrate to the United States.

In more recent decades anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic nativism has continued to take the form of ethnic or racial stereotyping and harassment of Americans not of northern European ancestry. For example, Democratic Party presidential and vice-presidential candidates have sometimes been targeted because of their Catholic or southern European ancestry. In the 1984 national election, attacks were leveled at the Italian immigrant ancestry of Democratic vice-presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro. Among other things, some Republicans (often of northern European ancestry) alleged that she and her Italian American husband had connections to organized crime. Since the 1990s, a number of Americans of Italian ancestry who are involved in politics, such as former Governor Mario Cuomo of New York, have suffered similar "Mafia" stereotyping.⁴⁴

Another recent form of nativism can be seen in the various anti-immigration organizations that have flourished in the past two decades. Like their predecessors in the early twentieth century, these



At a demonstration in Denver, right-wing skinheads give the Nazi salute.

organizations have opposed and stereotyped recent immigrants, particularly those coming from Asia and Latin America since the late 1960s. Immigrants' languages and cultures have been the focus of nativist opposition. White-supremacy groups have held rallies, published racist literature, and established websites that attack non-European immigrant groups (sometimes viciously called, together with black Americans, the "mud people") as a threat to "American jobs" and to the Anglo-Protestant culture. Contemporary nativist groups include not only significant representations of northern European Americans but also, ironically, many whites with southern and eastern European ancestries—those whose parents or grandparents were targets of earlier nativist organizations.

The Dominant Culture and Major U.S. Institutions

Most analysts of the U.S. racial and ethnic scene have assumed that the dominant culture and institutions of the United States are substantially Anglo-Protestant in character. During the first century and a half of colonial settlement, an English heritage integrated most East Coast colonies. As historian

Sheldon Hanft has put it: "Since all but two of the original colonies were founded by Englishmen, were administered by English officials, were protected by England's army and navy, and were led by English-trained clergy, lawyers, and educators, they adapted English models in their laws, constitutions, educational system, social structure, and cultural pursuits." He adds that many wealthier colonists sent their sons to English universities, and "English styles in literature, poetry, music, architecture, industry, and clothing were the models to emulate until the twentieth century."⁴⁵

The dominant U.S. political, legal, and economic institutions have generally been based on English models, but they have not been identical to those in England. For example, the early dominance of the Anglican church in several colonies soon gave way to significant religious diversity, and the availability of (Indian) land for (white) immigrants—the basis of much North American wealth—often fostered more democratic institutions here than in Europe at the time.⁴⁶

Language

Although contemporary nativists have tried to bring it about, the United States as yet has no official

language. Nonetheless, the *de facto* dominance of the English language signals the huge impact of early English colonists and their descendants. When the English came, perhaps a thousand indigenous languages were spoken. Today, only a few hundred are still spoken, and the number of Native Americans speaking indigenous languages is far smaller than those speaking the languages of the European conquerors.

The principal U.S. language over the past two centuries has not been a thorough blend of Native American and early immigrant languages, but an English language that has incorporated words from European and North American sources. Some scholars have argued that "our customary way of life is most like the English, and our language is but one of the several English dialects." Historically, assimilation pressures on non-English-speaking immigrants have first taken the form of language pressure. As early as the 1740s, native-born Americans of British background attacked new immigrants (such as Germans) for their alleged threats to the persistence of the English language and Anglo-American culture. From then to the present, the dominance of the English language has been a major concern of nativists.⁴⁷

Today, as in the past, millions of Americans live in homes in which a language other than English is often spoken. In recent decades this group of non-English speakers has been attacked as un-American by organized nativists, who worry that many newcomers, especially Latin American and Asian immigrants, will not accept English as their primary language. They are especially concerned that Spanish, spoken by only about 12 percent of Americans at home, is challenging the dominance of English. (Yet, census surveys indicate that the majority of these home Spanish speakers speak English as well.) One result of lobbying by nativist organizations has been introduction of legislation to make English the official U.S. language. In 1986, California passed a ballot proposition that declared English to be the official language of this most populous state. Numerous other states have passed nativist legislation. Since 1981, an English Language Amendment to the U.S. Constitution has periodically been introduced in Congress, but has not yet been passed.⁴⁸

In the 1990s, a group called National English Campaign announced that its goals were to (1) replace ethnic group identification and "hyphenated ethnicity" with an "American identity" based on individual

citizenship and (2) establish English as the official language of government, schools, and elections. More recently in the twenty-first century, numerous similar groups like U.S. English, Inc., have worked aggressively to get states and the federal government to make English the official language. Some thirty U.S. states now have some type of official English laws. Such efforts also suggest fear of a pluralism of U.S. racial and ethnic groups and cultures and an emphasis on an English-oriented U.S. identity.⁴⁹

Contemporary organizations with nativist undertones, such as the California English Campaign and the National English Campaign, have fought bilingual programs across the country. In the late 1990s California passed a ballot initiative to limit instruction of immigrant children to only one year in their native language before they moved into classes taught in English.⁵⁰ The English-only groups argue that they are not trying to discriminate but wish immigrants to quickly become part of the mainstream by adopting English as their primary language. However, some like U.S. English, Inc., have also been part of a project of a conservative nonprofit organization supporting major immigration restrictions.⁵¹

Civil rights leaders have pointed out the discriminatory nature of actions advocated by pro-English groups, in particular the prohibition of Spanish usage by government agencies, elimination of bilingual programs, and elimination of bilingual ballots in states with numerous Latino voters. A number of research studies have shown that children who are "denied the right to view the world through their language and culture are made to feel inferior" and sometimes react in such negative ways as dropping out of school or engaging in drug use—outcomes that cost not only themselves but the greater society dearly.⁵²

Nativist campaigns that promote use of the English language underscore the traditional dominance of that language—and the uneasiness that, ironically, some descendants of *earlier immigrants* still feel in the presence of languages and cultures brought by relative newcomers to this "nation of immigrants."⁵³ As one legal scholar notes, their "first myth is that our national unity somehow depends solely on the English language, ergo we must protect the language through constitutional amendment or legislation. A corollary is that the only language of true American identity is the English language."⁵⁴

What is ironic about the aggressive English-only movements is that most of the immigrants being attacked not only recognize that English is the language of much political, social, and economic discourse, but also strive hard to learn it. In recent years tens of thousands of immigrants have been turned away or placed on waiting lists for adult English classes in several cities. Significantly, according to the Pew Hispanic Center's recent report, nearly 90 percent of Latino immigrants speak English well. The percentage is even higher for later generations.⁵⁵ Thus, English-only nativism is wrongheaded on the facts and mainly serves to further segregate English-only supporters from the rest of the world. In addition, lack of knowledge of languages other than English cripples many Americans who conduct business abroad or deal politically with people in other countries across the globe. A person who knows more than one language well, as many do in Europe, typically has greater knowledge and is therefore more intelligent in this regard than a person who knows but one.

Religion and Basic Values

English religious influence on this country has been great since colonial days. The various English (and British) denominations represented a variety of beliefs. Anglicans in Virginia were characterized by a hierarchy of priests and liturgical worship. This group favored a state church supported by compulsory church taxes. Presbyterian churches in the Appalachian backcountry favored a national church governed by strong ministers. Congregationalists in New England favored moderate separation of church and state and more democratic church governance. Baptists (Rhode Island) and Quakers (New Jersey and Pennsylvania) advocated strict separation between church and state. The communally organized Baptists favored a fellowship-centered form of worship. The spirit-centered worship of Quakers followed from a belief in an Inner Light that dwells in all people.⁵⁶ These latter groups established the principle of separation of church and state at the heart of the U.S. political system.

For the first 200 years, English religious denominations, or variations thereof, dominated the North American scene. The Anglican church received early government support but lost its privileged position during the American Revolution. Anglican and

Congregational churches were in the majority at that time, although Baptist and Presbyterian churches and Quaker groups were becoming numerous. In the century after 1776, English dominance of the country's religious institutions decreased as Catholic, Jewish, and other religious groups grew with new immigration.⁵⁷

The Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim faiths, as well as non-British Protestantism, have been greatly shaped by the "American way of life," a phrase the scholar Will Herberg applied to the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture.⁵⁸ One important study of Judaism has shown the substantial impact of Protestant institutions on eastern European Judaism. Immigrant synagogues made major changes over time in response to the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture. For example, Jewish religious schools adapted to Protestant American scheduling and Sunday school formats. Reform Jews adopted English as the language of worship and introduced Friday night services.⁵⁹ Yet, the Anglo-Protestant culture's effects on the non-Protestant religions of later immigrants have been uneven and incomplete. Although new immigrants have been expected to adapt in many areas, some religious heritages from the home countries have been preserved. Contemporary U.S. religious patterns can be accurately described as a type of cultural pluralism.

Certain Anglo-Protestant values have had significant effects on non-Anglo immigrants. The importance of the ascetic (austere and self-denying) Protestantism that early English immigrants brought to the colonies should not be underestimated. "American condemnation of British sexual and political impurities focused on the King. Idleness, wealth, and power had corrupted him."⁶⁰ Puritanism helped to establish the **Protestant work ethic**—the idea of hard work as a duty of every individual, originally of an individual who seeks to please God—at the center of the U.S. value system. This work ethic was linked by many to the persistent pursuit of personal profit. The expanding U.S. capitalistic system in the 1700s and the 1800s was pervaded by the "pursuit of profit, and forever renewed profit, by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise."⁶¹

The influence of English religious traditions on music and the arts in the first centuries is also evidence of the extensive effects of the English on early American culture. The first book published in New

England was the *Bay Psalm Book* (1640), which drew heavily on English music. "Yankee Doodle" was probably an English tune whose original lyrics satirized colonial soldiers. Only when the Revolution began did American soldiers take it over from the British. Before, during, and after the Revolution, English melodies were the basis of most popular songs.⁶² Even the new national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner," took its melody from an English drinking song!

Interestingly, over the next two centuries English influence on popular music receded dramatically before the pervasive influence of African American music (jazz and rock and roll, for example), "Scotch-Irish" country music, and the Mexican American music of the Southwest. Today, popular music is one major area of U.S. culture from which the direct English influence has substantially disappeared.

Education

English and other British Americans took advantage of what few educational opportunities were available in the colonial period; more affluent parents sent their children to private schools established before 1800. With the public school movement, which began in earnest in the first decades of the nineteenth century, British American dominance of public schools became a fact of life. British Americans saw public schools as a means of socializing non-British immigrants into Anglo-Protestant values. In the nineteenth century, most school systems were established and fostered by British American industrialists and educators who shaped curricula and supervised schools. Although some—for example, John Dewey—believed education should bring mobility opportunities for poor immigrants, many elite educators emphasized social-control aspects of schools. The Americanization pressures on immigrant children were intense. Whether children were Irish, Jewish, or Italian, Anglicization was designed to ferret out non-Anglo-Protestant ways and assimilate the children to Anglo-Protestant manners, work habits, and values.⁶³

Public schools' social-control function and the Anglo-American influence on their operation remain evident today. More recent immigrants, such as Asians and Latinos, have faced Anglo-conformity pressures similar to those experienced by earlier Irish and Italian immigrants. Indeed, the public schools are still a major battleground for those

concerned with making English the official language of the United States.

Political and Legal Institutions

The political and legal institutions that affect all Americans have been shaped fundamentally, and are still being shaped greatly, by the English heritage in at least two ways: the laws and traditions more or less inherited from the English, and their concrete application today by English immigrants' descendants. Given the early majority of English immigrants in colonial society, English legal institutions became dominant. The Mayflower Compact (1620), a political framework that theoretically provided for equality under law, was part of this English political tradition. New England, with its Puritan institutions, often provided the model for later political and legal developments.⁶⁴

The North American colonies developed distinctive political institutions—in some significant ways those characteristic of seventeenth-century England. The basic political ideas in England and the soon-to-be United States included unity of government and society, subordination of government to law, a balance of power between the legislature and the executive, and heavy reliance on local governments.⁶⁵ U.S. political and legal institutions, growing out of the U.S. Constitution, have generally reflected these ideas ever since. Nonetheless, some contrasts can be seen. Governmental authority and power were being centralized in England in the late 1700s, but in the new United States of 1789, governmental power was separated into three branches—executive, judicial, and legislative. The position of the U.S. president is unusual: The United States, unlike most modern political systems, does not distinguish between head of the government and chief of state. Indeed, numerous recent presidents have demonstrated how powerful the U.S. executive branch is relative to the Congress, whereas in most European countries parliaments are more powerful versus heads of governments. The United States is a relatively new society, but it is an "old" political state.

Representative government in the colonies and, later, in the United States is another example of English influence. Using Parliament as its model, the British Crown established representative colonial assemblies almost from the start.⁶⁶ Gradually, these assemblies grew in power vis-à-vis the London

government. Indeed, Crown infringements on them helped to generate the Revolution.

The U.S. legal framework reflects great English influence. Before the Revolution, English common law was asserted to be "the measure of rights of Americans."⁶⁷ Tension between the new nation and England generated U.S. objections to the continuation of English-based laws. Some Americans wanted a new U.S. legal code, but for the most part, U.S. officials and lawyers only "sought to reshape or add to the existing stock of authoritative legal materials."⁶⁸ Although there was variation in how English statutes were brought into the U.S. legal system, their implementation was thoroughgoing: "The use of English statutes was provided for at an early stage in twenty-six of the twenty-eight jurisdictions organized between 1776 and 1836."⁶⁹ Although the U.S. legal system has been patched many times, the basic cloth today is still English common law.⁷⁰

Officeholding

In addition to their fundamental impact on the establishment and structure of U.S. political institutions, English Americans have had a major impact on their operation. The first U.S. president, George Washington, was of English ancestry, as were many presidents who followed him. Americans with significant English ancestry have filled a disproportionate number of major offices at various political levels throughout U.S. history.

The colonial assemblies were "almost exclusively English in makeup."⁷¹ The Declaration of Independence was signed by fifty-six European American men, thirty-eight of whom were English by background or birth; nine were Scottish or "Scotch-Irish," three Irish, five Welsh, and one Swedish.⁷² A majority of the fifty-five members of the U.S. Constitutional Convention were also English; the Constitution was framed around their concerns not only for (partially) democratic institutions reminiscent of English institutions but also for the protection of their property and wealth. Most people of property and wealth in the new nation—merchants, slaveholders, financiers, shippers, wealthy farmers, and their allies—supported the new U.S. Constitution, substantially out of economic self-interest. Note too that enslaved Americans, indentured servants, poor farmers, laborers, and women had no say in the making of the U.S. Constitution.⁷³

Studies of U.S. presidents, Supreme Court justices, and members of Congress have revealed a distinctive pattern persisting to the present. Of the U.S. presidents from George Washington to Barack Obama, about two-thirds had significant English ancestry and *all* but one of the others had other major northern European backgrounds.⁷⁴ No southern Europeans, Jewish Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, or Middle Eastern Americans have ever been president. Just one American of color—President Barack Obama elected in 2008—has served, and his maternal ancestry is partially English. (His father was African.) A study of the origins of Supreme Court justices from 1789 to 1957 found that more than half were of English or Welsh extraction. Northern Europeans of Protestant backgrounds generally dominated the country's highest court from the 1790s to the early 1990s—that is, until the appointment of several black (Clarence Thomas), Jewish (Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer), Italian (Samuel Alito), and Puerto Rican (Sonia Sotomayor) justices since the early 1990s.⁷⁵ Moreover, an analysis of 162 prominent political leaders (including presidents, representatives, senators, and Supreme Court justices) of the critical historical period between 1901 and 1910 found that more than half were of English or Welsh origin. These data show just how powerful elite members of the English or British American groups have been over most of the history of this country, even as their group's percentage of the population has long been less than 10 percent.⁷⁶

Even when new immigrant groups periodically managed to break into U.S. politics in major ways, as in the case of Irish and Italian Americans in larger cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they often remained subservient to Anglo-Protestant leaders who continued to hold the highest political offices. Newer immigrants and their children finally gained significant electoral and political power in the first decades of the twentieth century in major cities like Chicago, but not as top elected officials at the national level. For example, as of 2010, only one Catholic American had *ever* been president: Irish American John F. Kennedy (1961–1963). His brief presidency marked only a temporary shift from a substantially north European Protestant political establishment at the very top, for Kennedy was followed by more white men of northern European Protestant stock as presidents, until the 2008 election of President Barack Obama.⁷⁷

Although the disproportionate influence of northern European Americans at the very top of national politics and corporate decision making persists today, significant challenges to this dominance can be seen. For example, in the 2000s, the cabinets of presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama have included a number of Americans whose ancestral backgrounds are not northern European. These cabinets have included numerous officials of Asian, Latino, and African American backgrounds, signaling the growing racial and ethnic diversity in national politics.

What about the English American impact on local governments? A study of New Haven, Connecticut, up to 1960 illustrates English political dominance in New England. For many decades an Anglo American patrician elite there "completely dominated the political system. They were of one common stock and one religion, cohesive in their uniformly conservative outlook on all matters, substantially unchallenged in their authority, successful in pushing through their own policies, and in full control of such critical institutions as the established religion, the educational system (including not only all the schools but Yale as well), and even business enterprise."⁷⁸ A study of the mayors of Cleveland, Ohio, in the period between 1836 and 1901 found that most were part of the Anglo-Protestant elite with strong ties to New England. Although midwestern, their political framework was substantially guided by what was termed the "New England creed," one proposition of which was "The good society is white and Protestant."⁷⁹

In more recent decades Americans of British ancestry have had to compete with non-British immigrants and their descendants for power in local and state politics, and today the racial and ethnic mix in local and state political institutions varies considerably across the country. Irish, Italian, and, most recently, African, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Asian Americans have risen to political power in some large cities of the Midwest, East, South, and West. Still, English and other British Americans continue to exercise disproportionate political influence in many areas, especially in suburban politics, although they and their ethnicity still receive relatively little media attention.

Economic Institutions

Recall from previous sections that the English heritage is substantially reflected in U.S. economic

institutions—in the norms and values that shape these capitalistic institutions and in the disproportionate dominance of individuals with English American backgrounds. Just as the U.S. legal system incorporated portions of the English legal system, the forms of capitalism that dominated much of northern Europe during colonial times also shaped the colonies' emerging economic system. The British Crown wished to increase raw materials and markets available to the home country. To this end, the first English colonies were often capitalistic, especially those established by state-chartered trading companies or English investors.

Mercantile capitalism, which still existed in the colonies at the time of the Revolution, was a state-directed capitalism linked to English nationalism. The American Revolution was in part a clash between English commercial interests and English American commercial interests, a clash that unified the colonies and brought a political break between two similar economic systems.⁸⁰

Industrial capitalism developed in the United States after 1830, again with intimate connections to the English system. Much investment and many technologies used for U.S. industrial development came from England; increased numbers of English capitalists and skilled workers provided much of the know-how for U.S. economic development. After the Revolution, as before, Britain and the United States formed a single north Atlantic economy.⁸¹

Direct Participation in the Economy

English and other British Americans have regularly influenced the operation of the U.S. economy through direct control of critical business and political positions. In the beginning, they established most of the colonies and controlled much land and wealth. Control of the colonies lay substantially in the hands of English and other British American landowners and merchants.⁸² In the late prerevolutionary period, farmers with their own farms small and medium-sized did come to have more influence.⁸³ In addition, English Americans with significant land and wealth often needed labor. Thus, the North American colonies imported labor from Europe and Africa. By the 1730s, a substantial Irish migration had begun, and a large proportion of these immigrants were indentured servants. A brutal African slave trade eventually supplanted this trade in indentured servants.⁸⁴

As we move into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we find few studies on the English or British American dominance of the economy. A study of the wealth of men in 1860 concluded only that the wealth of "native-born males," doubtless mostly British Americans, was about twice that of "foreign-born males."⁸⁵ U.S. industrialization in the nineteenth century was often fueled by English and Dutch capital. U.S. business elites had long been dominated by Americans of British or other northern European descent. In the nineteenth century, the most famous of these were industrialists and financiers, many of whom have been regarded as exploitative "robber barons." They included John D. Rockefeller, Leland Stanford, and J. P. Morgan, men of great wealth and power. Their heritages were typically English, with a few other northern European heritages mixed in. Many of their associates or family members became U.S. senators, representatives, and governors.⁸⁶

A study of top executives and entrepreneurs in the late-nineteenth-century iron and steel industry found that few came from recent immigrant families; most were native born and had fathers with capitalist or professional backgrounds. Thus, most did *not* fit the image of a poor immigrant "making good," as did the steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, who came to the U.S. as a poor boy. More than half were of English or Welsh ancestry; most of the rest were Scottish or Irish.⁸⁷ A survey of 200 major executives at the largest companies from 1901 to 1910 found that 53 percent were of English or Welsh origin, 7 percent were Scottish, 14 percent were Irish, and 8 percent were Canadian or British (unspecified).⁸⁸

A few studies have also made clear the extent of British American dominance in local economies. For instance, in the 1930s, Burlington, Vermont, was dominated by "Old Americans"—those who had been in the U.S. for four generations, probably heavily English and English Canadian. They controlled banking and manufacturing, and also constituted a disproportionate number of professionals and political officials.⁸⁹ Only a few studies of the economically influential that examine ethnicity have been done since the 1930s. The 1940s "proper Philadelphians" about whom sociologist E. Digby Baltzell has written typically had English or British backgrounds. This is suggested by the dominance of Episcopalians and Presbyterians in the Philadelphia *Social Register* for the year 1940.⁹⁰ In an analysis of

the 1950s and 1960s, Baltzell also underscored the continuing dominance of British Americans at the national level in these important decades.⁹¹

Q What factors ensure the centrality of the Eurocentric culture and institutions?

Contemporary Elites

Thomas Dye's important 1970s study of major U.S. decision makers identified only 4000 people in top positions in corporations, government, and other sectors: "Great power in America is concentrated in a tiny handful of men. A few thousand individuals out of 200 million Americans decide about war and peace, wages and prices, consumption and investment, employment and production, law and justice, taxes and benefits, education and learning, health and welfare, advertising and communication, life and leisure."⁹² Certainly, decisions of importance are reached at the middle and lower levels of society, but the few thousand in top positions make many of the most critical decisions—those affecting the lives of many millions in all racial-ethnic groups. Dye's research revealed that the social origins of the top 4000 were not representative of the population as a whole. Most were affluent, white, Anglo-Protestant men. There were very few African Americans and virtually no Mexican Americans, Native Americans, or Asian Americans. These elites were "at least 90 percent Anglo-Protestant," and Dye noted that "there were very few recognizable Irish, Italian, or Jewish names" in the group.⁹³

In the last decade or two, popular U.S. magazines have proclaimed that those in the media, politics, and the universities who most influence American life are now a much more representative group. Elites "today represent a real break with their predecessors."⁹⁴ However, this view is inaccurate. One must be careful to distinguish social and economic realities from rags-to-riches myths. Today, the upper reaches of U.S. economic and other major institutions have broadened to include not only British Americans but also those with other northern European ancestry, particularly German, Irish, and Scandinavian Americans, and a handful of Catholic and Jewish Americans are now in the elite bastions of economic power. Yet, in the twenty-first century, Catholic and Jewish Americans are still *not* proportionately represented

TABLE 3.2 People with English Ancestry: Selected Population Characteristics (2008)

	People with English Ancestry	Total U.S. Population
Number	27,516,394	304,059,728
Median age (years)	46.9	36.9
High school degree or greater (25 years and over)	93.2%	85%
College degree or greater (25 years and over)	37.4%	27.7%
Foreign born	1.8%	12.5%
Female	52.2%	50.7%
Median family income	\$75,954	\$63,366
Percent individuals below poverty line	6.8%	13.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "2008 American Community Survey." All figures are estimates based on a national survey and have modest margins of error.

at the top of the corporate pyramid. And few non-Europeans can be found at the very top. Indeed, recent research on Fortune 500 companies shows that fewer than 4 percent of these corporations have people of color as their CEOs.⁹⁵

English Americans as a Group: Economic and Other Demographic Data

Demographic analysts using the American Community Survey (Census Bureau) data estimate that 27.7 million Americans now claim English as their ancestry, about 7.8 percent of the population in 2009. According to Table 3.2, a very small percentage of those indicating substantial English ancestry were born abroad. The proportions of women and men in this English ancestry population are similar to those of the total population, but the English ancestry population is substantially older than the population as a whole.⁹⁶

In the 2008 census survey data (see Table 3.2) we also see that the educational attainment of these Americans as a group was higher than that of the total population, for the category of high school diploma or greater (93.2 percent versus 85 percent) and the category of at least a college degree (37.4 percent versus 27.7 percent). The occupational distribution data (not in Table 3.2) also indicate that those of English ancestry are much more likely to hold managerial, professional, and other white-collar jobs than the total population of workers.

Taken as a group, these English American families were economically better off than those in the total population—with a substantially higher median family income of \$75,954, as shown in Table 3.2. The poverty rate for individuals of English ancestry was also a little more than half that of all Americans.

English Americans Today

Although they constitute the group whose culture and institutions have usually been the standard against which other groups' degree of assimilation is measured, English Americans are rarely researched. A recent analysis by the first author using a major Internet search engine—and using many phrases with "English American" or "Anglo-Saxon American" in them—revealed *no* major research articles or books dealing centrally with this group today. On billions of websites there is no indication of a major recent research study of contemporary English Americans and their everyday lives. This extensive neglect of such a powerful group suggests just how much the English Americans have blended into the sociocultural background of U.S. society.

Some 27.7 million Americans today claim significant or total English ancestry. Those of English descent appear to have some tendency to marry others with similar backgrounds. One older analysis found that just over half the women with English

ancestry had mates who were at least of partial English ancestry.⁹⁷

Residential dispersal has been characteristic of English Americans and other northern European Americans. One study of the New York region found that, by the 1980s, respondents with English ancestry had dispersed throughout the region. Their ancestors had immigrated to the area in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and later descendants had much time to move around. In this study, 95 percent of those with English or Dutch ancestry reported mixed ethnic backgrounds; many had ancestors from several countries. Moreover, some 40 to 50 percent of those with British backgrounds said that their ethnic identity had *no importance* to them. Sociologist Richard Alba cautions that this latter response may mean that many have come to see their English or British American identity as synonymous with a "truly American" identity. They may have so completely integrated their English or British identity with their definition of what is American that they see no need to identify assertively with their country of origin. In contrast, more recent immigrant groups (for example, southern Europeans) were much more likely to identify strongly with their national heritage.⁹⁸

As we noted, very little contemporary research looks at the daily lives of English Americans today. However, one brief research commentary by Joan Marsh Schlesinger has addressed English Americans' mourning practices and the values associated with such practices. She suggests that English Americans tend to approach difficult family situations like funerals with a pragmatic and stoic attitude, one that plays down emotionality and accents planned process. They tend to prefer institutionalized care for loved ones who are near death, rather than the home care often preferred by other groups, and personal and family grief tends to be kept private. In Schlesinger's view, English Americans today, not unlike many other Americans, accent a private and often less emotional or intellectualized approach to dealing with difficult life and death issues.⁹⁹

Although English Americans can be viewed for many purposes as one ethnic group, regional variations in broader elements of English American culture are evident, both in the past and in the present. For example, the concepts of liberty brought by the major groups of English immigrants in the 1600s and 1700s evolved in different ways in the colonies.

In New England, the English Puritans' concept of ordered freedom, codified in written laws, "became an instrument of savage persecution." Ordered freedom involved the liberty to impose individual restraints on Puritans themselves without interference by outsiders, to grant exemptions from these restraints to particular individuals, and to practice the "true" religion and persecute dissenters. In Virginia, the idea of hegemonic freedom—the belief that liberty was the birthright of the free-born English and gave those with high status the right to rule people of lower ranks—"permitted and even required the growth of race slavery for its support." In the Delaware Valley, the English Quakers' belief in reciprocal freedom, which recognized each individual's right to dissent, caused them to withdraw from the world. In contrast, the Appalachian "backcountry" belief in natural freedom, which favored minimal government and the supremacy of private interests, sometimes dissolved into cultural anarchy.¹⁰⁰ The backcountry group included not only English immigrants but also immigrants from Scotland and Ireland. Thus, all those of English or other British descent emphasized the importance of individual freedom as they saw it. All these interpretations can still be found today as different regional variations on the theme of freedom.

Historian David Fischer has analyzed the relationship between regional diversity *today* in the United States and the distinctive colonial cultures of these four broad groups of English and British immigrants. Regional differences in homicide rates provide an interesting example. Homicide rates today are low in the areas of New England in which the early Puritans established a tradition of order and nonviolence, and high in the southern areas that were first settled by immigrants from Great Britain's northern borderlands of Scotland and Ireland, whose culture was somewhat violence prone before emigration. Other social indicators examined by Fischer include education, attitudes toward gender equality, and patterns of local government and public life. Those areas with high rates of high school and college graduation today are generally the ones whose colonial culture valued education highly. Those states that failed to ratify the Woman's Suffrage Amendment (1918–1921) and the Equal Rights Amendment (1972–1978) were those in whose colonial culture women had a comparatively low status. Many New England communities today continue

the colonial practice of democratic governance by town meetings, and current regional differences in the levels of taxation and public spending are broadly similar to what they were in the colonial period. Significantly, "each of the four cultural regions of British America . . . [has] kept its own customs of enculturation for many generations."¹⁰¹

One distinctive region is the South, which was settled substantially by English and other immigrants from Britain's borderlands. The largest white ethnic group in the South today is still Americans of English descent. Sociologist Lewis Killian noted that another important part of the southern white population has descended from early Irish immigrants, those often called the "Scotch-Irish" Protestants (see Chapter 4). There are also large proportions of French, Spanish, or German descent in the South. Killian has argued that English and other British Americans have become mostly submerged in a larger, ethnically diverse white population that has emphasized whiteness above all else: "For a southerner, the salient fact was and is whether he was white or black; all else was secondary."¹⁰²

The theoretical frameworks of assimilation analysts often take the English (or British) Americans and their culture and institutions as the starting point for the analysis of individual and group assimilation in the United States. Gordon's important seven-stage framework (Chapter 2) generally assumes Anglo-conformity as the general trend of adaptation by subsequent immigrant groups in the North American colonies and, later, in the United States.

Looking at the history of English Americans, however, power-conflict theorists would emphasize the ways in which the English colonization process initiated and maintained racial and ethnic stratification in the United States. The initial violent subordination or extermination of Native Americans by English colonists is a clear example of *migrant superordination*, which takes place when a migrating group imposes its will on an indigenous group. The entry of later groups of immigrants and their relegation to a subordinate position in the North American stratification system by that time fully dominated by English Americans, as was the case for enslaved Africans, is an example of *indigenous superordination*. Such concepts acknowledge the social hierarchy, with its unequal power and resources, that has developed and persisted over the long course of U.S. racial and ethnic history.

Q What are the major consequences of maintaining a Eurocentric culture and institutions?

Summary

This chapter examines one of the most neglected of U.S. ethnic groups: English Americans. The degree to which they now blend into the background of U.S. culture and society makes it difficult to assess the power, location, and achievements of these early immigrants and their many millions of descendants. Americans of English ancestry still make up a substantial proportion of the U.S. population, and they still tend to share certain values and customs and, in numerous areas, to marry others of northern European ancestry.

The English established major colonies in the area that became the eastern United States. *Dominance* is the appropriate term for English influence on North American religious, economic, and political institutions. The colonization migration of the English created a dominant culture and hierarchical social structure to which subsequent immigrant groups were required to adapt. The study of European group assimilation in North America begins with the English. For centuries, English migrants and millions of descendants have been disproportionately represented in key social, economic, and political positions in society.

Between the mid-1800s and today, English Americans have been joined in their dominant position by certain other European American groups. The result is a more diverse Anglo-Protestant group, but one that still holds disproportionately great power.

The tremendous impact of Anglo-Protestant Americans on North American culture and social institutions does not mean that substantial segments have not remained working class or poor. In addition, there have long been significant regional and denominational differences within the English and British American groups.

Since World War II, the English and British Protestant dominance has been challenged by Catholic and Jewish Americans with European ancestry as well as by non-European groups. Some analysts argue Anglo-Protestant influence is waning. Schrag, for instance, argued some time back that "Anglo-Saxon Protestants" were on the road to cultural decline and

offered as evidence the increasing non-Anglo-Saxon dominance of music, literature, and art. However, even Schrag presented a different conclusion for the economic sphere: The Anglo-Protestant "elite still controls its own corporate offices, its board rooms, its banks and foundations."¹⁰³ Analyses declaring the elimination of Americans of English and British ancestry as a powerful force in many U.S. institutions are, as the preceding data suggest, still premature.

Key Terms

English Americans	66	nativism	71
Anglo-Saxon	66	social Darwinism	72
Anglo-Protestant Americans	66	Protestant work ethic	75
white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans	66		