
Race and Ethnicity in the United States:

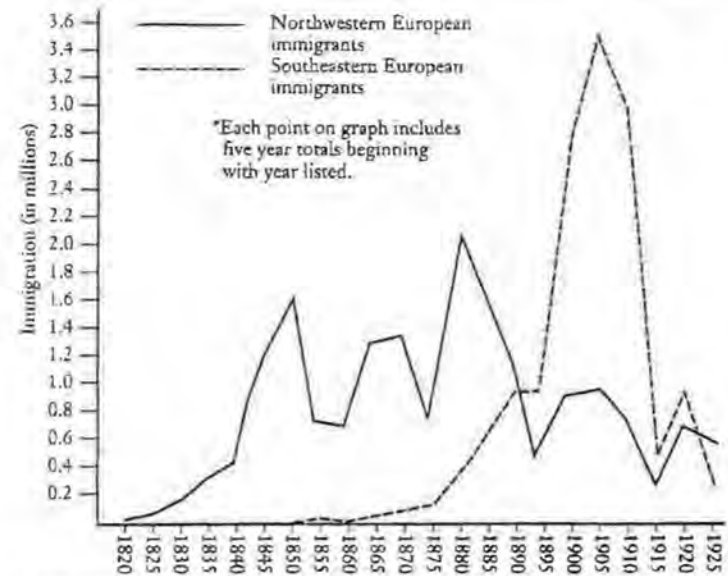
Our Differences and Our Roots

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FIGURE 6.1 EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES, 1820–1930

U.S. Bureau of the Census, *International Migration and Naturalization* (Washington, DC, 1970)

New Immigrants from Europe

The United States received much of its modern character from European immigrants who arrived between 1880 and 1914. Their numbers alone—26 million new Americans—would leave a permanent mark. Although immigrants continued to come from Germany (both Protestant and Catholic), Scandinavia, and the British Isles, southeastern Europe was the source of most (Figure 6.1). People from eastern Germany, Poland, Russia, Italy, Greece, Hungary—all the Slavic countries—arrived in New York harbor looking for opportunity, fleeing oppression, or both. Space constraints prohibit doing even minimal justice to this mass of humanity. Rather than trying to tell too many stories, we focus on two groups—Italians and eastern European Jews—to provide a flavor of the diversity of these new immigrants and the time in history they arrived. These two groups were selected for the size of their immigration plus their cultural differences from mainstream America in 1880.

The Italians

The first Italians to enter the United States were men, either single or traveling without their wives and children. Typically, they were of working age, unskilled (44 percent), and illiterate (Brown, 1989; Cohen M, 1992). The primary goal for most was to earn money in the new country and return home with it as they had in the past (Cohen M, 1992). Now that the Atlantic crossing was quicker, safer, and cheaper with the coming of the steamship, it was possible for these men to go back and forth several times before finally bringing their families over. In many cases, wives and children would remain in Italy for decades before being permanently reunited with their husbands and fathers. By 1900, the Italian community in the United States was still only 25 percent women (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996).

As with most European immigrants from the mid-1800s on, most Italians became urbanites in the United States. By the 1880s, almost all European immigrants were being routed through the immigration processing center on Ellis Island in the New York harbor. After admission, New York City was their first experience of America. One

could find work there and move into a growing Italian ethnic community where life seemed less foreign. Still, it did not take Italian immigrants long to learn of opportunities elsewhere. Even though the main ethnic community remained in New York City for years, Italians appeared all over the United States in the early twentieth century with sizable communities throughout the eastern seaboard, in New Orleans (200,000 by 1920) and even rural Louisiana, in Texas, and the West (particularly in California) (Baiamonte, 1989; Balhoni, 1991a; Cotts and London, 1994; De Marco, 1981; Garroni, 1991).

As the Italian ethnic community ("Little Italy") grew in New York City and men were joined by their families, economic survival became a family affair. Men continued in the jobs traditionally open to them as unskilled labor in construction, on railroads, and in factories. Many found work through Italian labor contractors (*padroni*) who would supply groups of immigrant workers to American employers (Henderson, 1976). Because they were limited to the lowest paying jobs, it was necessary for the rest of the family to work as well. Sons tended to work at jobs similar to their fathers and only in rare circumstances were they allowed to attend the public school system. Wives and daughters also worked, but different rules applied and different jobs were available.

Some of these different rules concerned marriage. Almost a cultural universal at the turn of the twentieth century, it was considered inappropriate for married women to work *publicly*. This meant that wage labor or domestic service was out of the question for married Italian women. They could, however, help out in a family business if



A group of Italian "spat" lodgers huddle in a Bayard street tenement.

there was one (considered part of their assigned nurturing family role), take in boarders (if they had the room), or take home handwork to do in the secrecy of their kitchens. This handwork often consisted of sewing or piecework, but more often, Italian women contributed to New York's booming business in artificial flowers. Married women and their daughters often spent evenings painstakingly putting together these ornaments to grace finer homes (Cohen M, 1992).

As for unmarried daughters, New York City offered many opportunities but none very appealing. Daughters were expected to work—if anyone in the family attended school, it would be sons—and they could work anywhere because they were unmarried. In 1905, 46 percent of all Italian women over the age of 16 were wage earners, twice the percentage for all American single women (Cohen M, 1992). Young Italian girls made up large portions of the labor pool in clothing, candy, and box factories. In fact, 78 percent of wage-earning Italian women in New York City worked in factories, more than any other ethnic group in that city (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996). After a day's work, they would pick up the makings of artificial flowers to take home. Unlike their brothers, they were expected to turn over all of their earnings to the family (although many found ways around this). Marriage had to be postponed as long as the family needed this income (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996).

Movement up the economic ladder was slow for Italian immigrants, whose high rates of illiteracy coupled with lack of opportunity to utilize American education kept skills low. In addition, what being unskilled did not prevent, discrimination did. In 1918, for example, when the American economy was short of labor, some job advertisements specified that they would accept "Italian or Colored," showing not only how desperate the employers were but the general ranking of the two ethnic groups on the employment ladder (Henderson, 1976). In 1917, Italians had the highest rate of child mortality of any group in New York City (perhaps related to the fluff and chemicals from the homework women did) (Cohen M, 1992). It is not altogether surprising that some Italian Americans turned to crime, but the stereotypes far outstrip the reality (Gambino, 1991). Recall that this phenomenon occurred with the Chinese. One of the ironies about stereotypical Italian criminal activity is that it really did not begin to occur until most Italian Americans started to assimilate to American culture.

New Jewish Immigrants

In 1880, of the 250,000 Jews who lived in the United States, the vast majority were German Jews. By 1924, approximately 4 million Jews lived in the United States, and almost all had ties to eastern Europe (Daniels, 1991). What had been a relatively small, largely assimilated, and geographically dispersed minority became a large, culturally distinct minority concentrated in New York City and other large eastern cities.

Eastern European Jewish cultural differences not only distinguished them from mainstream American life but also from German Jewish culture in the United States. Eastern European Jews brought traditional Judaism, not to be confused with Reform Judaism favored by most German Jews. Some of them also brought Hassidic Judaism—a new, somewhat mystical, and very strict offshoot of Judaism—that produced cloistered urban neighborhoods in New York and New Jersey. They brought the Yiddish

language—a Jewish dialect based on German—which was heard on the streets of New York's Lower East Side and in its theaters, and read in its newspapers in the early twentieth century. They brought the socialist politics of Europe, which were later reflected in labor union activity. They also brought a belief in the foundation of an all-Jewish state in their traditional homeland of Palestine. Eastern European Jews were a diverse lot and their arrival was responsible for major changes in the way American society operated.

Coming to America: From Eastern Europe to the Lower East Side Eastern European Jews flooded into the Lower East Side of New York City in the late 1800s and early 1900s, with approximately less than 30 percent venturing outside of New York (Daniels, 1991). By 1910, close to a million Jews were in New York City, and half of them lived in the 1.5 square miles of the Lower East Side (Daniels, 1991; Henderson, 1976). At the turn of the century, the population density in that area was 700 people per acre (Howe, 1976). Unlike Italian immigrants, these Jews were much more likely to immigrate as families. If parts of families had to remain behind for economic reasons, it was usually not for as long as with Italian immigrants. By 1900, the sex ratio in the Jewish community was even (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996).

Married women in the Jewish community faced the same limitations we have seen in other ethnic communities of the period. By 1911, only 1 percent worked outside the home (Weinberg, 1988). Many took in boarders and some did homework (although neither as frequently nor for as long as Italian housewives). By 1911, 56 percent of Jewish homes had at least one boarder (Weinberg, 1988). The best solution for most of these women, however, was some kind of home business. In this manner, business, cooking, and childcare could be combined efficiently. Of perhaps equal importance for the women involved, they were not cut off from the community, as the following description from Russian Jewish immigrant daughter Mary Antin illustrates:

[B]ehind the store was the kitchen, where in the intervals of slack trade, she did her cooking and washing. Arlington Street customers were used to waiting while the storekeeper salted the soup or rescued a loaf from the oven (quoted in Friedman-Kasaba, 1996:129).

Once again, as long as a married woman remained at "home," work was acceptable. Fathers, sons, and daughters were more likely to be employed outside the home. Few children among early immigrants attended school out of economic necessity. The Jewish tradition of literacy and education did play a role, however, in that 54 percent of Jewish immigrants arriving between 1899 and 1910 were literate compared with 26 percent of Italian immigrants (Cohen M, 1992). (The rates for Jewish men were even higher because only they were entitled to a religious education in Russia.) When Jewish immigrant families could spare a child for education, they favored sons over daughters and younger children over older children (Cohen N, 1992; Friedman-Kasaba, 1996). The logic behind the second preference was that older children could earn more, while younger children would be quicker to learn English. Because the preferences varied from family to family, sometimes younger daughters were treated to American learning. By comparison with Italian families, twice as many Jewish sons

finished high school in the first generation and three times as many in the second generation; Jewish girls were twice as likely to reach that level as their Italian counterparts (Cohen M, 1992).

Part of the Jewish success with education was due to the skills and traditions they brought with them, but much can be explained by their relative economic success. Children could be spared from the labor force. Although fathers and unmarried children worked in many of the same clothing factories as Italian children, Jewish men tended to have higher level (and better paid) positions, while Jewish women earned 25 percent more than Italian women (Cohen M, 1992). Much of this was no doubt due to their employers: virtually all of the factories were owned by German Jews. With the exception of many young Italian immigrant girls stationed at rows of sewing machines, the clothing business became Jewish from top to bottom. By 1914, Jews made up 70 percent of the entire New York City clothing business (Henderson, 1976). In 1900, 53 percent of Jewish men, 77 percent of Jewish women, and 59 percent of Jewish children were in the "needle trades" (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996). If we include all Jewish immigrants of the time, regardless of job or location, they averaged 14 to 20 percent more in salary than any other immigrant group. Perhaps more impressive, they reached the income of native-born Americans after less than five years in the economy (Chiswick, 1992).

Although this story is beginning to look like a pleasant respite from all the terrible immigrant tales encountered thus far, the Jewish picture is neither entirely rosy nor is it without contradictions. For example, although Jews had the lowest rates of child mortality in New York City (Italians had the highest), they also had one of the higher rates of abortions (Cohen M, 1992; Lindenthal, 1981; Weinberg, 1988). Jewish women wanted to keep their family size down for predominantly economic reasons. They preferred (and were first in line for) Margaret Sanger's birth control clinics and her pamphlet, "What Every Married Woman Should Know," published in Yiddish for those avid readers (Weinberg, 1988). Meanwhile, first-generation Jewish families suffered from high rates of abandonment by their husbands and/or fathers. The *Jewish Daily Forward*—a Yiddish language New York City newspaper—used to run a "Gallery of Missing Husbands" in which photographs of shirking males were published (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996). Part of the family breakups were caused by poverty, but some were related to the emotional problems of reuniting families separated for several years by the serial immigration process so common at the time (Weinberg, 1988).

From Sweatshops to Universities: Overcoming Anti-Semitism The German Jewish-owned clothing factories in New York City were commonly called sweatshops, at least by the workers. Most factories contained several floors, each covered with rows of as many sewing machines as would fit. The machine operators were almost all teenage girls, most eastern European Jews or Italians. Their job was to produce ready-to-wear clothing. As hard as the work was, it was generally better employment than the available alternatives for immigrant girls. For Jewish girls, it had the added bonus of being a family affair: many of them had fathers working in the same business (Glenn, 1990).

Low wages, poor working conditions, and a tradition of labor activism imported from Europe made this largely Jewish workforce volatile (Brandes, 1976; Glanz,

1976). In 1909 and 1910, 30,000 garment workers went on strike for 13 weeks. Of these strikers, 21,000 were Jewish women and girls. They were joined by 2,000 young Italian women and some 6,000 men, mostly Jewish (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996; Henderson, 1976). Although many young Italian women worked in the clothing trade, they were generally poorer and less involved in the strike than Jewish women. This strike succeeded in achieving higher wages for garment workers and served to found the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Although this effort was successful for the workers, union activity in the early twentieth century was a potentially dangerous undertaking. The government generally was highly supportive of manufacturers who wished to prevent unions. One garment worker union leader in Seattle—Rebecca August—found herself arrested and held in immigration jail for two months, charged with entering the country for immoral purposes. “Immoral purposes” meant you were connected with prostitution (Weinberg, 1988).

As newly arrived eastern European Jews attempted to better their workplace and further their education, both they and German Jews saw anti-Semitism rise in the United States. Perhaps ironically, wealthier Jews (mostly German Jews initially) faced a greater variety of discrimination than did poorer Jews, including continued discrimination in obtaining bank loans. In the early twentieth century, they faced exclusion from the better hotels and resorts as such practices became common. In one case, Nathan Straus—a co-owner of Macy’s—was refused a room at a New Jersey hotel; he



Out of economic necessity, many children of immigrant families worked rather than attending school, such as this Jewish boy at work in New York's garment district.

later returned to build another hotel right next to the offending one, except his was built twice as large (Cohen, 1984). Other Jewish entrepreneurs continued this approach well into the twentieth century, creating vacation resorts that catered almost exclusively to Jews.

Discrimination also appeared in private schools, clubs, professional organizations, and housing. Real estate in upscale neighborhoods was commonly limited by restrictive covenants, much like their modern versions (e.g., restrictions regarding house design) except they included lists of racial and ethnic groups who could not buy the property even if the current owner wished to sell to them. Such restrictions were legal until declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948. As for schools and professional organizations, only wealthier Jews were likely to encounter such problems; it would take a generation before eastern European Jews sought higher education and professional careers for themselves. On the east coast, they found themselves largely limited to state institutions of higher learning when the ivy-covered doors did not open.

Jews became included in a growing anti-immigration sentiment that stemmed from the massive overall turn-of-the-century immigration. Although these attitudes did not reach their peak until after World War I, the beginnings were already present. In 1907, Congress created the Dillingham Commission to study the question of immigration to the United States. Three years of study produced a forty-two volume report, published in 1910 and 1911. The Commission concluded that (1) humans come from a wide variety of races, which genetically determined inferiority and superiority; (2) recent immigrants to the United States (including all Jews) were all of the inferior type; and (3) the government should strongly consider restricting immigration (Carter et al., 1996; Cohen, 1984). Congress took all of this advice in 1924.

The Anti-Immigrant Twenties

One might assume that the political changes that began in the African American community during the 1920s would have riveted European American attention in that direction. Strangely enough, African Americans were really not seen as all that much of a threat during that decade; the threat would not be perceived until the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s. During the 1920s, Protestant America was much more focused on Asians, Catholics, and Jews, all of whom were current and potential future immigrants. An interesting collection of historical, economic, and scientific circumstances seemed to work almost in unison to maximize and rationalize their fears and prejudices. The result was the virtual end of legal American immigration for many years.

Anti-Immigrant Attitudes

Recall first that anti-immigrant feeling was alive and well before the outbreak of World War I. Restrictions on Asian immigration already had a thirty-year tradition. In addition, the flood of most Catholic and Jewish immigrants from Europe reached its highest level in the years just before the war. Congress had already launched a large scale study of immigrants in America, reflecting that concern. World War I is probably best viewed as a time of economic prosperity coupled with distracted attention. Both are clearly understandable, but the war's end removed the distraction and, within a few years, the prosperity. We have already seen how the recession of the early 1920s stimulated race riots in the United States; that same recession helped spur anti-immigrant attitudes.

Conveniently, the Ku Klux Klan had just been revived by William J. Simmons, who organized the new Klan in Atlanta on October 16, 1915. The original Klan formed in reaction to Reconstruction; the new Klan really did not have an agenda, but the original organization had recently been glamorized by the recent Hollywood film *Birth of a Nation*. Enough members were attracted to encourage Simmons, who had organized several fraternal organizations for a profit (among other things, he sold insurance to new members). By 1920, Simmons was joined in leading the Klan by two publicity agents. The Klan moved North to where anti-immigrant attitudes were



The schoolchildren's morning ritual of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance was originally an attempt to reinforce new immigrants' loyalty to the United States.

already brewing, and membership grew rapidly. Adapting to the scenery, the 1920s Klan practically ignored African Americans and Jews, spewing most of its hate on Catholics. Simmons later sold his interest in the organization for \$90,000, and the Klan went on to be a major political force in 1923, primarily in Indiana and Ohio. By 1925, it was largely disbanded, but in the meantime, it successfully supported many political candidates who favored immigration restriction (Higham, 1981; Smith, 1978).

A book by Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, was published in 1916. Grant postulated that Europeans belonged to three different races: moving more or less from the northwest to the southeast, one would find Nordics, Alpines, and Mediterraneans (Grant, 1921). As with the Klan, 1916 was not a prime year for these ideas, but a new edition of the book in 1921 was the right idea at the right time. Here clearly was evidence that southeastern European immigrants were lowering the racial stock of the United States. A few years before, the field of psychology produced its first intelligence (I.Q.) test, which was supposed to measure intelligence rather than knowledge. Amazingly, northwestern Europeans (the very people who made up the test) obtained the highest scores on this new test (Higham, 1981).

Immigration Restriction: The National Origins Act

With all of these beliefs, fears, and prejudices thriving in the 1920s, it is small wonder that Congress acted as it did. Having considered various kinds of immigration control over the years, the first major offering was the Immigration Act of 1921, which imposed a literacy test on immigrants (designed to keep out unskilled labor) along with a quota for every country. The law created an elaborate mathematical formula, which allowed every country a number of yearly immigrants equal to 3 percent of that nation's population as counted by the 1910 census.

In 1924, Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Act (commonly called the National Origins Act), which would govern immigration to the United States until the mid-1960s. Modeled on the 1921 act, the National Origins Act changed the percentage from three to two and the census year from 1910 to 1890. These changes, especially the latter, served to undercut almost all further immigration from southeastern Europe. The law also tightened further Asian immigration. The result was that northwestern European countries were allotted 85 percent of the total 150,000 immigrants to be allowed in during any given year (Carter et al., 1996; Higham, 1981).

~~Native Americans: New Citizens and Old Struggles~~

~~Native Americans entered the twentieth century with very little going well for them. The fighting was over, but the peace was almost as hard. They lived on reservations as dependents of the federal government, unlike any ethnic group in the history of the United States. They also related to that government as groups (or tribes) rather than as individuals, again unlike any other ethnic group. And finally, they were not citizens of the United States.~~

~~Native American Cultures and Reservations~~

~~As we saw earlier, the earliest Native American reservations were augmented by boarding schools for children. These schools were originally run by religious organizations who had the conversion and assimilation of the children as their goal. As a general rule, the schools succeeded in damaging Native American cultures and were unsuccessful in Americanizing the children (Boseker, 1994; Rader, 1991). These schools were later placed under the control of the federal government's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which ran them from the 1880s until the 1930s (Hendrick, 1976; Liska, 1994). The BIA maintained both day schools and boarding schools, but both were geared toward the Americanization of the students. Starting in the 1930s, many states began incorporating Native Americans within the public school system. However, direct Native American control over the education of their children would have to wait until the 1970s.~~

~~The BIA was responsible for running reservation life until the 1930s, after which it played a strong role in conjunction with tribal governments. Ultimate authority was often blurred. The "dependent nation" status of Native American~~



~~BIA activities in that reservations were often viewed as a people who resided there. This unique relation with many questions unanswered or unclear. The history involving Native American sovereignty (or its lack)~~

~~Native Americans v. the Federal Government.~~

~~The unique legal relation between Native Americans and the Cherokee court cases of the 1830s, questions unanswered. The Indian Removal Act of "dependent nations" should be relocated at will by thought best; thus, reservations were born. How arise over the coming years.~~

~~Going back a little into the late nineteenth century, the decision of ex parte Crow Dog (1883), which questioned the right to deal with reservation crimes in Congress responded in 1885 with the Major Crimes Act, which removed crimes such as murder from Native American jurisdiction. Years later by an extremely important attempt to~~

goal of this law was to divide reservation land into individually owned parcels (allotments). The new owners of this private property could then do anything with their new possession, such as leasing or selling it to European Americans (Stuart, 1977). They also could hold their land and become independent ranchers or farmers; some historians have argued that a middle class of Native Americans (with cultural traditions intact) and new Indian leadership might have developed from this law (Barsh, 1987). To most observers, however, the main intent of the law appeared to be opening up reservation land to European American speculators and ending the Native American tribal relationship with the federal government; the Curtis Act of 1898 continued in this tradition (Holm, 1979). After all, how far could Native Americans take this freedom, since they were still not U.S. citizens in 1887?

The citizenship issue was sticky after passage of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, just as it was for Asians on the West Coast. The intent of the amendment was to make citizens of former slaves, but the wording seemed to include quite a few other people. In the court case of *Elk v. Wilkins* (1884), the Supreme Court found that Native Americans were not granted citizenship under the amendment. Native Americans were likened to the children of foreign ambassadors who, although born here, would not be citizens (Stidham and Carp, 1995). It took Congress until 1924 to pass the Indian Citizenship Act, which finally granted citizenship status to all Native Americans and settled the issue. It gave Native Americans state, federal, and tribal rights, making them unique among American citizens.

The Dawes Act of 1887 lasted until 1934 when it was overturned by an equally important act of Congress—the Wheeler-Howard Act (Indian Reorganization Act) of 1934. Passed as part of Roosevelt's New Deal legislation, the goal of the Indian Reorganization Act was to turn the clock back to pre-Dawes by reaffirming tribal integrity and sovereignty. Land ownership once again became communal, and tribes would have the right to create business corporations if they so chose. Equally important, the federal government supported the building of democratic political institutions within tribes (Strong and Van Winkle, 1993; Stuart, 1977). This maintenance of tribal integrity was important down the road when tribes learned to take the federal government to court seeking the restoration of land granted to them in past treaties but subsequently taken away.

A final episode in this period of history began just before World War II. Because Native Americans were now citizens, they were subject to the draft under Selective Service. Many Native Americans objected to draft registration on the grounds that it violated tribal sovereignty. The courts sided with the Selective Service. The issue may well have been pointless, however. With the attack on Pearl Harbor, many Native Americans responded with patriotism. Some tribes even independently declared war on Japan and Germany. By the war's end, 44,500 Native Americans (10 percent of the Native American population) had served in the armed forces (Franco, 1990).

Immigration from Mexico

No racial or ethnic groups in the United States show the connection between minority status and the economy as clearly as slaves, who were brought here for the sole

purpose of making money. However, if another ethnic group comes close to showing this stark relation, it would have to be Mexican immigrants, who came to the United States to make money. When they were welcome in the United States, their welcome was purely economic—inexpensive labor was needed. Today, Mexican Americans are part of the American fabric. Between 1900 and 1990, 2.5 million Mexicans legally crossed the border, complete with documents. Undocumented Mexicans are by definition uncounted, but they came in similar numbers. All these immigrants would become a large and influential minority group—economics is now only part of their story, but in the early twentieth century, everything connected with Mexican immigration grew from economic motives.

Immigration and Economics: The Push and Pull Factors of Cheap Labor

The story of Mexican immigration does not begin until a little before 1900, and even then it started slowly. Border officials counted around 50,000 crossings in the first decade of the century, those immigrants presumably joining the 103,393 Mexican citizens in the United States counted by the 1900 census. By 1910, the census counted 219,802 Mexican citizens plus another 107,866 American-born children who were automatically U.S. citizens (Cardoso, 1980).

At the same time in the United States, the economy was gearing up for World War I. We have already seen the impact of that economic upturn on African American laborers in the South. The western United States also was facing a labor shortage, exacerbated by the many restrictions on Asian immigration. The mining and railroad companies and farmers of the Southwest were as happy to employ Mexican immigrants as those Mexicans were happy to be employed. Between 1914 and 1920, it is estimated that over 1 million Mexicans crossed the border to work in the United States; the Mexican government estimates that number at 2 million (Cardoso, 1980; Meier and Ribera, 1993).

Up until 1920, most Mexican immigrants sought work in Texas. The need for their labor continued into the 1920s with increased demand from California agriculture. If you are wondering how these immigrants got beyond the first immigration restriction act of 1921 (which required literacy), Congress conveniently passed an exemption law that applied only to Mexican laborers, permitting the flow of immigrants to continue. Still, immigrants tended to be individuals away from families. A study done during the 1920s showed that Mexican workers in the United States sent a total of \$58 million to Mexico in postal money orders alone (Cardoso, 1980). At that point in time, it was clear that almost all Mexicans in the United States saw their stay as a sojourn, lasting only long enough to earn needed funds. Many crossed the border numerous times, coming and going as they needed work.

The 1920s also produced various employment control techniques with regard to Mexicans that clearly benefited American employers. As with African American workers in the South, Mexicans made good strikebreakers when shipped around the country. The 1923 strike at the Bethlehem Steel plant in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania received Mexican workers from Texas. In that same year, a strike at the National Tube Company (part of U.S. Steel) in Lorain, Ohio acquired 1500 Mexican workers from Texas.

Many of the workers in both situations did not know they were being shipped in as strikebreakers (Meier and Ribera, 1993). When Mexicans were not needed either in the fields or as strikebreakers, Americans used the technique of repatriation.

Repatriation is a euphemism for mass deportation. Just as Mexican workers could be shipped around the country in groups, they could also be shipped to Mexico in the same manner (Guerin-Gonzales and Story, 1995). This occurred on a small scale during short recessions of the 1920s, but the depression of the 1930s initiated large scale repatriation. The 1930 census counted 639,000 Mexican citizens living in the United States; by 1940, that figure was down to 377,000. The Mexican government estimates 458,000 Mexican citizens returned to Mexico between 1929 and 1937 (Meier and Ribera, 1993). It is impossible to determine just how many of the returnees left voluntarily. Although jobs were difficult to find during the depression, signs also began to appear with messages such as "Only White Labor Employed" and "No Niggers, Mexicans, or Dogs." Still probably close to 170,000 were repatriated. Los Angeles county supported the use of this system as follows: 6,000 unemployed Mexicans would cost the county \$425,000 in welfare but only \$77,000 in transportation costs back to Mexico (Cardoso, 1980). The fact that some American citizens were undoubtedly among the repatriated was not a European American concern.

The Mexican American: A New Ethnic Group

In spite of these comings and goings, a stable population of Mexican Americans did begin to develop. Some families did immigrate together and some families were created in the United States. In 1928, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was formed in Texas, with the goal of protecting the rights of Mexican Americans. As a means to achieving this, it recommended assimilation to Mexican Americans, with a particular emphasis on learning English. These are clearly the goals of people who expect to stay.

Chinese Americans

Chinese Americans became more Americanized in the first half of the twentieth century, stemming in part from concurrent political changes in China. The formation of the new Republic of China included encouragement to Chinese all around the world to modernize. Chinese Americans could now cut off their queues and adopt Western hairstyles. Others eliminated ancestor worship, many second-generation Chinese explored the Christian religions of their adopted country. A Chinese boy scout troop was formed in San Francisco in 1914 followed by a Chinese YMCA in 1916. The newly formed Chinese American Citizens Alliance was an educationally oriented organization that encouraged greater Chinese assimilation to the United States (Tsai, 1986).

In spite of modernization, however, most Chinese still lived in Chinatowns in a narrower range of occupations over time. As mines and railroads either closed or looked elsewhere for labor, more and more Chinese moved into laundry or restaurant

work. When the depression of the 1930s occurred, Chinatowns were especially hard hit because of the interlocking nature of the business interests.

Probably the most significant change in America's Chinatowns was the slow growth of the female population. Even with the difficulties of immigration, women comprised 25 percent of the Chinese population in the United States by 1940, up from 6.5 percent in 1910 (Tsai, 1986). As with Chinese men, these women also came to embrace more Western ideas. In addition to other factors that influenced men, they also had the role model of Madame Chiang Kai-shek—the very well-known wife of China's leader. Her visit to the United States in 1943 during World War II made a major impression on the Chinese American community (Chan, 1991).

World War II also produced an extremely important change in the status of Chinese Americans that would come to affect both their lives and future immigration. Although the Chinese were still aliens ineligible for citizenship according to the 1870 law, the alliance between China and the United States in opposition to Japan made this status embarrassing to the United States. On December 17, 1943, President Roosevelt signed an act, commonly called the Magnuson Bill, which allowed naturalization to Chinese nationals and eliminated the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Followed by the War Bride Act of 1945, many doors, which had previously been ajar at best, opened for Chinese immigrant women.

The Arrival of the Japanese

Emigration from Japan became legal in 1885. Their first destination would be the sugar fields of Hawaii—30,000 Japanese made that journey from 1885 to 1894, coming as contract laborers much like the Chinese. Another 127,000 would come from 1894 to 1907 (Ichioka, 1980). Most of these early immigrants were young rural men from agricultural backgrounds whose education level tended to be lower than the average Japanese (Ichioka, 1980; Spickard, 1996). The average term of a labor contract was three years, during which time the laborer was essentially the property of the planter (Ichioka, 1983).

Japanese women, most of whom came after 1900, later joined the men in the sugar cane fields (Tamura, 1995). Young, single Japanese women had traditionally been part of the labor force in Japan, particularly in industrial labor where they comprised 68 percent of the workforce; thus, labor overseas for single women was not as radical as it might seem (Von Hassell, 1993), and they soon became 20 percent of the emigrants (Spickard, 1996). Many of these women continued to work in the cane fields. Others, especially those who wound up on the mainland, became prostitutes in the male-dominated society of Japanese immigrants. As is true for most illegal activities, we do not know as much about this as we would like. Some of these women used prostitution as a temporary occupation before moving into better circumstances; others appear to have been forced into the work against their wills (Spickard, 1996; Warren, 1989).

Beginning in 1890, significant Japanese immigration to the United States began, with the majority entering through the ports of Seattle and San Francisco. In the last

decade of the nineteenth century, 25,942 Japanese would be admitted to the United States; in the first decade of the twentieth century, another 129,797 would be admitted (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1993). Their numbers were not huge, but they concentrated almost entirely in the three Pacific Coast states where anti-Asian sentiment was already strong.

The first jobs open to the early Japanese immigrants were in farming and on the railroads, many being available because of the recent shutdown of Chinese immigration. In the early 1900s, Japanese labor moved into other forms of wage labor including sawmills and salmon canneries (Azuma, 1994). Many opened small businesses such as restaurants, barbershops, watch making shops, and laundries (Bonacich and Modell, 1980; Yamato, 1994). More important, they began moving from farm labor to farm operation, either through purchase or leasing. They tended to specialize in labor-intensive produce such as berries or vegetables, many of which were later sold at farmer's public markets directly to the public. In the 1914 Seattle public market, for example, Japanese farmers rented 300 of the 400 stalls (Daniels, 1988). The trend here is clear—get out of wage labor and into running your own business. Not only was wage labor poorly paid in general, but also the Japanese immigrants took an extra cut because of racism. While Italian American railroad workers made between \$1.45 and \$1.65 an hour in 1910, Japanese workers earned between \$1.20 and \$1.40. Japanese carpenters in the sawmills made between \$1.65 and \$2.00 a day, while their European

American coworkers earned between \$2.75 and \$3.50 (Azuma, 1994). Yet even though these new Japanese entrepreneurs were not in direct competition with European American businessmen (who did not, for example, grow strawberries), their success only increased the prejudice and discrimination they faced.

Anti-Japanese Attitudes

All in all, European Americans on the West Coast did not see much worth in their Japanese neighbors. Much of the hatred came from organized labor, which viewed any new cheap labor as a threat. As one labor organizer commented in 1900:

Chinatown with its reeking filth and dirt, its gambling dens and obscene slave pens, its coolie labor . . . is a menace to the community; but the sniveling Japanese, who swarms along the streets and cringingly offers his paltry services for a suit of clothes and a front seat in our public schools, is a far greater danger to the laboring portion of society than all the opium-soaked pigtailed who have ever blotted the fair name of this beautiful city (quoted in Yamato, 1994:35).

The school reference above concerned the practice of some older Japanese who wished to learn English at the public schools. They were often placed in classes with younger children. Politician Grover Johnson observed:

I am responsible to the mothers and fathers of Sacramento County who have their little daughters sitting side by side in the school rooms with matured Japs, with their base minds, their lascivious thoughts, multiplied by their race and strengthened by their mode of life . . . I have seen Japanese twenty-five years old sitting in the seats next to the pure maids of California . . . I shudder to think of such a condition (quoted in Spickard, 1996:29).

You might notice a similarity with the earlier justifications for lynching African Americans, using the defense of women to feed prejudice.

If the previous two expressions of hatred do not seem cut from the same cloth, they are not. Most anti-Japanese feeling did not stem from a clear economic motivation (McClatchy, 1978). As we have seen, labor competition from the Japanese became less of an issue, especially as the Japanese moved from wage labor into business and owning property. These businesses, for the most part, thrived in independent economic niches, much like the German Jews with their clothing factories.

The Early Growth of the Japanese American Community

By 1920, California was becoming the most popular home for the Japanese American community. In 1900, only 40 percent of all Japanese Americans lived in that state, but by 1920, almost 70 percent did (Daniels, 1988). Although the largest urban concentration was the Japanese community in Los Angeles ("Little Tokyo"), Japanese Americans resisted the urbanizing trends of the twentieth century, continuing to focus their



Japanese "picture brides" awaiting in San Francisco, sent for by Japanese men working in the United States.

efforts on farm ownership (Yamato, 1994). In spite of the various West Coast laws prohibiting such acquisitions (nine states had done so by 1925), the percentage of the Japanese American labor force as farm owners increased from 18 percent to 39 percent in the few short years between 1913 and 1924 (Spickard, 1996; Suzuki, 1995). By 1940, 6,000 of the 125,000 total West Coast Japanese Americans would be farm owners, controlling a total of 250,000 acres worth \$72.6 million (Daniels, 1986, 1991).

The real work of assimilation occurred within the Japanese American family. Families with Issei (first-generation) parents were characterized by strong leadership. Fathers were the ultimate authorities, but mothers maintained considerable informal authority. Mothers' attitudes were particularly important because women were responsible for early childhood socialization. In a typical immigrant family, children were treated quite leniently for the first several years of life but were then expected to follow quite strict guidelines. In short, these children (the Nisei) were expected to retain the Japanese tradition of hard work in the face of adversity but to apply that attitude to becoming as American as possible as quickly as possible. Some mothers intentionally withheld aspects of Japanese culture from their children so as to speed up this process (Von Hassell, 1993). As one Nisei woman described it, "It's a wonder we weren't all schizos. Our parents were always telling us to be 'good Japanese.' Then they'd turn right around and tell us to be 'good Americans'" (quoted in Spickard, 1996:80-81).

The first rule for a Nisei child was to excel in the public school system. For the most part, they attended integrated schools where they competed directly with European American children. Nisei children excelled in the classroom and on the playing



With the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor, West Coast Japanese Americans were forcibly evacuated from their homes and crowded camps in the interior of the country.

field. They achieved grades well above the norm for California students and attended for more years. In 1940, 58 percent of Nisei men over the age of 25 held high school diplomas compared with 46 percent for comparable European American men (Spickard, 1996). This gap only increased with time. But Issei parents did not totally neglect Japanese education for their children. Japanese language schools were organized for Nisei to attend after their day at the public school. In addition, some Nisei were selected to attend school in Japan for a few years, rounding out their educational experience. Almost half of the West Coast Nisei took advantage of this opportunity (Spickard, 1996). Generally, parents encouraged boys more than girls in the educational arena. In spite of this, Nisei girls learned to identify with their female teachers and achieved well on their own (Tamura, 1995).

Just When Things Were Looking Up: Pearl Harbor and the Relocation Camps

The Japanese attack on the United States Naval Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, seems to have caught civilian Americans as unprepared as the Navy. By 1941, the Japanese American community on the West Coast had become quite Americanized in both culture and attitudes, but the people were both unknown to and feared by their European American neighbors. Rumors spread rapidly about an impending Japanese invasion of the West Coast in which Japanese Americans would aid the invaders. Public opinion moved quickly to strongly support the removal of all Japanese Americans from coastal areas. Ironically, more Japanese Americans were then living on the Hawaiian Islands than on the West Coast, but no such rumors spread there; the Japanese American community in Hawaii was much more integrated with other ethnic groups and, as a result, was not feared.

President Franklin Roosevelt responded quickly to this pressure from the West, signing Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942. With the stroke of one man's pen—this was *not* a law passed by Congress—all Americans of Japanese ancestry were thereby ordered removed to inland prison camps (Daniels, 1975). This order resulted ultimately in the rounding up of 120,313 people, two-thirds of whom were American citizens, and their being incarcerated without due process of law. The United States Supreme Court soon declared this flagrantly unconstitutional order to indeed be constitutional. West Coast Issei and Nisei were given notice in early 1942 that they were to prepare to be evacuated, bringing with them only what they could carry (Daniels, 1988; Nakanishi, 1993).

In most cases having only a matter of days, Japanese Americans faced many economic and logistic problems. What could be done with farms or businesses? Lucky individuals found European Americans willing to look after things. Mary Tsukamoto describes her family's good fortune in having a European American neighbor not only willing to keep up their farm but also to pay taxes on it for them while they were absent (Tsukamoto and Pinkerton, 1988). Less fortunate individuals attempted to lease homes or businesses; many returned to find them poorly treated or looted. Personal possessions were often sold in yard sales at which European Americans rejoiced in finding such good bargains (Box 6.2). In short, relocation placed an incredible economic hardship on the Japanese American community (Spickard, 1996).

**BOX 6.2: JAPANESE AMERICAN
RELOCATION YARD SALES**

This extract from Paul Spickard's work (1996:104) gives us some idea of the anger and frustration many Japanese Americans must have experienced at the injustice of their forced incarceration during World War II.

The secondhand dealers had been prowling around for weeks, like wolves, offering humiliating prices for goods and furniture they knew many of us would have to sell sooner or later. Mama had . . . one fine old set of china, blue and white porcelain, almost translucent. . . .

One of the dealers offered her fifteen dollars for it. She said it was a full setting for twelve and worth at least two hundred. He said fifteen was his top price. Mama started to quiver. . . . She didn't say another word. She just glared at this man, all the rage and frustration channeled at him through her eyes.

He watched her for a moment and said he was sure he couldn't pay more than seventeen fifty for that china. She reached into the red velvet case, took out a dinner plate and hurled it at the floor right in front of his feet.

The man leaped back shouting, "Hey! Hey, don't do that! Those are valuable dishes!"

Mama took out another dinner plate and hurled it at the floor. Then another and another, never moving, never opening her mouth, just quivering and glaring at the retreating dealer, with tears streaming down her cheeks. He finally turned and scurled out the door, heading for the next house. When he was gone she stood there smashing cups and bowls and platters until the whole set lay in scattered blue and white fragments across the wooden floor.

Meanwhile, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) was created to form and run the relocation camps. As the camps filled, the United States government began to consider the possibility of an all-Japanese American unit in the army. Because the United States military was still racially segregated in World War II, this unit would consist of only Japanese American troops led by European American officers. On February 1, 1943, Secretary of War Stimson announced the formation of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The Selective Service System originally had classified the Nisei as 4-C (the same status as enemy aliens), but their classification was changed to 1-A, making them available for the draft. Hawaiian Japanese Americans comprised the majority of this new unit, but Nisei in the camps willing to sign loyalty oaths also were eligible. They were trained and sent to Europe to fight while their families remained in the relocation camps.

The 442nd would ultimately see 18,000 Nisei men in its service, most of them volunteers. By the end of the war, they had received 9,486 casualties and been awarded 18,143 individual decorations, including one Congressional Medal of Honor (29 total were awarded during World War II), 47 Distinguished Service Crosses, 350 Silver Stars, and 3,600 purple hearts. They became the most decorated unit in American military history (Daniels, 1988; Menton, 1994). One of those soldiers, Daniel Inouye of Hawaii (who later became a United States senator), first returned to the United States via ship to the port of San Francisco. He had lost an arm in Italy. Wearing his uniform with its one empty sleeve and covered with medals, he was unable to find a barber willing to cut his hair.

While the 442nd was fighting in Europe, the WRA was slowly trying to empty the camps. Japanese Americans who could find work (again, away from the coast) were allowed to leave. After World War II, most returned to the West Coast and attempted to pick up where they had left off. They once again became quite successful. Efforts to obtain some form of apology from the federal government began. In 1976, President Gerald Ford rescinded Executive Order 9066. On August 10, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which provided for a payment of \$20,000 to each surviving Japanese American who had spent time behind barbed wire. When the checks were finally mailed in October of 1990, 60,000 such people were still alive (Nakanishi, 1993; Spickard, 1996).

7

New Immigrants and Old Minorities: The Contemporary Playing Field

The beginning of the twentieth century is often thought of as the *great age* of immigration in the United States. By 1910, 14.7 percent of the entire U.S. population was foreign-born—the highest it had been since colonial days (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997b). The National Origins Act of 1924 put an effective stop to this influx, placing immigration quotas on every country. This law would remain in force for forty years, dropping the percentage of foreign-born in the United States by two-thirds between 1910 and 1970.

This chapter focuses on the newest Americans—those immigrants who arrived because of immigration law changes in the 1960s. The doors to America opened halfway, beginning a second great age of immigration. Unlike the wave from a century ago, which flowed largely from Europe, this new wave originated in Latin America and Asia (see Alba, 1999). The United States would once again face large numbers of people searching for ways to adapt while altering the ethnic landscape of the population. Not surprisingly, these changes also brought about the same anti-immigrant attitudes so prevalent in the early years of the twentieth century (Henry, 1999). Our current story of immigration is still in the process of unfolding.

The 1965 Immigration Act

In spite of what appears to be a forty-year period of the status quo, immigration law did undergo some interesting changes via minor alterations between 1924 and 1965. Some alterations occurred largely for political reasons—granting rights of citizenship to Chinese immigrants during World War II, for example—but other changes were more significant overall. Immigration has always been linked with labor force demands. Immigration law changes in the 1940s and 1950s clearly showed that a closed-door policy did not allow fine tuning of the labor force during times of shortage.

The *bracero* program began quietly in 1942, receiving little notice because the United States had just entered a war that was then going badly. While the armed forces were in the rebuilding process, industrial production was going full swing and labor was needed. This labor shortage brought rural minorities and women into the labor force, but still more labor was needed, particularly in agriculture. The *bracero* program was designed to bring Mexican citizens into the United States on a temporary basis to work in agriculture. The program would remain operative until 1964.

A more global policy change in immigration law occurred with the passage of the Nationality Act of 1952 (the McCarran-Walter Act). This law left the quota system from 1924 intact but with three additions that would appear a decade later in much stronger form. First, the Nationality Act linked immigration preference with skills that were “urgently needed” in the United States. Immigrants with skills already in place could leapfrog over other applicants from their country. Second, it formalized preferences for immigrant relatives of U.S. citizens. Third, racial groups previously singled out as “ineligible for citizenship” were permitted to become naturalized citizens.

Basic Changes in the Law

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was the most significant immigration law since 1924; no immigration law passed since has come close to its importance. The cornerstones of the 1965 law were family reunification and an end to the racially and ethnically biased quota system. The law took shape with the addition of subsequent legislation, creating the following immigration preference system:

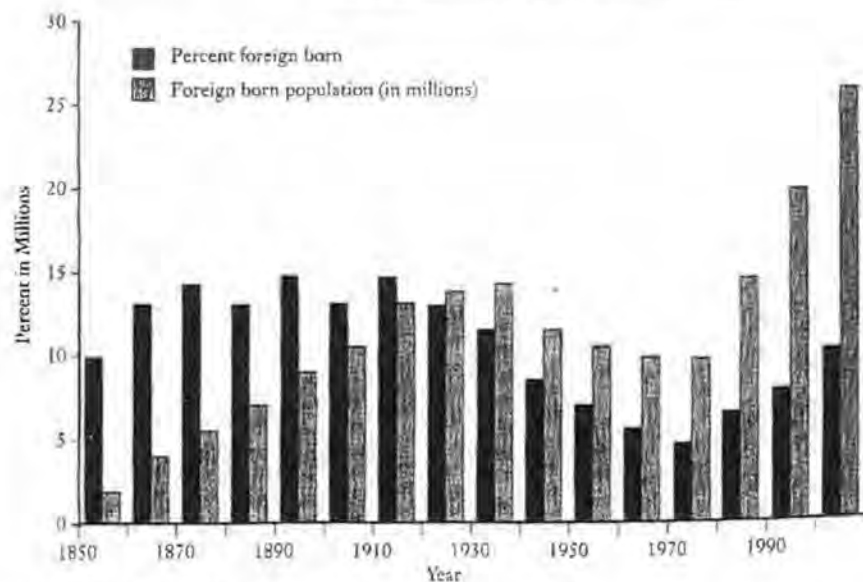
1. Restricted immigration would be limited to 270,000 individuals annually with no more than 20,000 individuals entering from any one country. Of that total, 80 percent would be limited to close relatives of citizens or residents of the United States, and 20 percent would be allocated on the basis of needed skills possessed by aspiring immigrants.
2. Unrestricted immigration would be granted to individuals in the following categories: (a) spouses, parents, and minor children of adult U.S. citizens and (b) refugees and asylees.

Interestingly, most governmental officials at the time had little idea of the impact this law would have on the United States, either in the overall size of immigration or its diversity. When Attorney General Robert Kennedy was asked how this law would

affect Asian immigration, he replied, “it would be approximately 5,000. Mr. Chairman, after which immigration from that source would virtually disappear; 5,000 immigrants could come in the first year, but we do not expect that there would be any great influx after that” (quoted in Borjas, 1990:32). Kennedy was not alone. Most governmental officials believed that demand for immigration to the United States was relatively low.

The demand, however, was huge, particularly from Asians and Latin Americans. In addition, Congress did not seem to have a firm grasp on the nature of family structure—the more relatives that entered the United States, the more still other relatives became eligible. In most years, more immigrants entered under this unrestricted status than under restricted status. (Over time, the occupational preferences category decreased and was filled with increasing numbers of family relations in an effort to minimize total immigration numbers.) Congress thought it was half opening a door to a few newcomers. In fact, it was opening that door almost completely to a crowd of avid immigrants. Figure 7.1 shows the change in the percentage of foreign-born in the United States throughout the twentieth century. It also shows us the absolute change in the numbers of foreign-born in the United States. The impact of the 1965 law cannot be clearer.

FIGURE 7.1 FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION AND PERCENT OF U.S. POPULATION, 1850–1997.



U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999c.

Refugees and Asylees

Refugees and asylees comprise a fairly large proportion of unrestricted immigration. The United States has long admitted refugees and permitted asylum but only for certain kinds of refugees. Before 1980, refugees and asylees gained their status as immigrants only if they were fleeing a Communist country or a Communist-dominated area. Immigration policy was essentially an extension of foreign policy. The federal government often denied this status to individuals from non-Communist countries on the grounds that they sought to immigrate for economic reasons and were using fear of political oppression in the home country as an excuse. Because most countries with high levels of governmental oppression also offer fewer economic opportunities than the United States, prospective immigrants found such charges hard to refute.

The Refugee Act of 1980 redefined a refugee as an individual living outside his or her country of nationality because of fear of persecution on their return as a result of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The new law also attempted to place a cap on the total number of immigrants to be admitted under this status. This cap changes regularly, however, in response to changing world conditions. To date, most immigrants to the United States under this status have emigrated from Cuba and Vietnam. Unlike other immigrants, refugees and asylees receive federal governmental assistance, from finding housing and employment to receiving Medicaid. Between 1981 and 1987, approximately \$600 million per year was spent on aid to refugees, amounting to about \$7,000 per immigrant (Borjas, 1990).

The New Foreign-Born

Table 7.1 provides an overall view of the sources of recent immigration to the United States. One country alone—Mexico—is the birth country of over one fourth of all foreign-born. Other Spanish speaking countries from Latin America add another 24 percent. From across the Pacific, the many countries of Asia make up over 26 percent of all foreign-born. The Philippines regularly sends the most immigrants, but as Table 7.1 shows, Asian immigration is relatively spread out. The number from Europe may seem surprisingly large, but the impact on the United States has been more in numbers than in cultural diversity. Immigration was quite high between 1950 and 1970 from both the United Kingdom and Germany. Beyond that, there has been a steady stream of immigrants from virtually all European countries. The relatively smaller numbers from each country serve to lessen the imported cultural diversity. The greatest impact for the United States, both in numbers and in diversity, has come from Latinos and Asians.

These new immigrants settle in very definite geographic patterns. Some settle in certain areas based on earlier immigration to that area by their ethnic group. Such areas are typically urban but increasing numbers of new immigrants are settling in suburban areas (Alba et al., 1999). Others seek locations that are generally expanding economically and provide more opportunities. This combination has made California the most popular destination for both Latino and Asian immigrants. Fully 8 million foreign-born live in that state, making up 25 percent of its population. New York

TABLE 7.1

REGIONS AND TOP THIRTEEN COUNTRIES OF BIRTH OF THE FOREIGN BORN, 1997

Country of Birth	Number (in thousands)	Percent
All Countries	25,800	100.0
Latin America	13,235	51.3
Mexico	7,017	27.2
Cuba	913	3.5
Dominican Republic	632	2.4
El Salvador	607	2.4
Asia	6,914	26.8
Philippines	1,132	4.4
China	1,107	4.3
Vietnam	770	3.0
India	748	2.9
Korea	591	2.3
Europe	4,360	16.9
Soviet Union	734	2.9
United Kingdom	606	2.3
Germany	578	2.2
North America	568	2.2
Canada	542	2.1
Other	748	2.9

U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999c

contains 3.6 million foreign-born—19.6 percent of its population. Between them, California and New York contain almost half of the foreign-born in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999c). Beyond these two states, Hawaii is over 18 percent foreign-born, followed by Florida (16.4 percent) and New Jersey (15.4 percent). The impact of the new immigration is clearly focused in a few select regions of the United States.