

C H A P T E R T W O

The United States as a Melting Pot: Myth and Reality

The ethnic dynamics of the advanced industrial nations have been transformed during the past half-century, the result being that they are more diverse or multicultural than they were in the past, creating a situation in which cultural differences, particularistic identities, and nationalist aspirations have become more, rather than less, pronounced over time. Some of these changes are the consequence of the global diaspora of peoples from economically less-developed nations, while others are a consequence of historically embedded differences within these nations.

This chapter is the first of four chapters devoted to six case studies. Here we explore the dynamics of ethnic relations in the United States, the largest of the historic settler nations that – because it successfully cast off its colonial status in the American Revolution – has appropriately been called the “first new nation” (Lipset 1963). The first part of the chapter provides a historical overview in order to place into context contemporary developments. In so doing, it seeks to make sense of the major social forces that shape ethnicity and ethnic relations, and reciprocally the ways ethnic groups shaped their own lives and sense of what it meant to be a member of American society. The second part of the chapter turns to the present. First, it locates contemporary ethnicity in relation to the economic transformations that have arisen in what Richard Sennett (1998) has referred to as the “new capitalism.” Secondly, it looks at the role played by the evolution of the nation’s liberal democratic political system. Finally, it examines the cultural dimensions of these developments, both in terms of the impact of national cultures on the particularistic cultures of various ethnic groups and the reciprocal impact of these particularistic cultures on the larger national culture itself.

The United States: A Nation of Immigrants

Historian Oscar Handlin (1973) once claimed that he set out to write the history of American immigration and discovered it was the history of America. While this was an overstatement insofar as indigenous peoples – American Indians and Mexicans in the southwest – were not immigrants and Africans, though migrants, were not voluntary immigrants, nonetheless there is considerable truth to his claim. Indeed, the vast majority of the 281,000,000 residents of the nation either migrated themselves or, more often, are the offspring of earlier immigrants. They originated from a vast array of countries, with the largest numbers originating from various locales in Europe, Latin America, and Asia.

Each of the successive waves of immigration that has shaped American history has had its own distinctive ethnic character. Thus, immigrants from western Europe characterized the first major wave – from about 1820 up to the Civil War. The second wave, extending from around 1880 until the imposition of immigration restrictions in 1924, was not only considerably larger than the first, but its composition differed insofar as large numbers originated from eastern and southern Europe. The third wave, which commenced after the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, differed yet again as the main contributing nations to this surge of immigration were Latin American and Asian.

Immigrants were key to the evolving understanding of what it meant to be an American. National identity was forged within the reality that as a settler nation with an ever-changing ethnic composition, an overarching American identity had to be in some way reconciled with a multitude of particular ethnic identities. Historian John Higham (1999: 40) has described the situation in comparative terms in the following way:

The truly distinctive feature of immigration to the United States is its extraordinary and continuing diversification from the early eighteenth century to the present. Other immigrant-receiving countries have tended to draw from a few favored ethnic backgrounds. . . . In contrast, the United States has continually attracted new groups and has thereby avoided a fixed division between an immigrant people and an older native population. As the country became more accessible to less familiar immigrant types, by fits and starts it made room for them.

Higham goes on to identify a number of factors that served to mitigate potential conflicts between and among ethnic groups. These include the fact that because the nation was rich in resources and land, it offered opportunities to newcomers and in the process blunted ethnic competition. The vast frontier of the nineteenth century contributed to this situation, and served

as an impetus to geographic mobility that prevented particular ethnic groups from associating corporate ethnic life with particular social spaces. This meant that the United States would not be burdened with the intractable ethnic conflicts that are rooted in competing territorial claims. While these factors are important, for our purposes the third factor he discusses – political access – is critical. Higham (1999: 41) observes that:

The United States presented itself to the world as a universal nation, a home for all peoples. . . . This American self-image was enormously magnetic. It implied that nationality was not exclusive, that citizenship would be widely available, and that class and ethnic boundaries would be soft and permeable. The invitation to newcomers (at first to white males only) to participate in political life on equal terms with other citizens gave outsiders some leverage in using the power of suffrage and the protection of courts. It encouraged white ethnic groups to organize, to make their weight felt, and so to use a system of liberty under law.

As Higham notes, the inclusiveness of the new republic has its limits. In connecting these ideals to reality, as we shall see in the following sections, newcomers were not always welcome and were forced to confront considerable ethnocentric animus. Moreover, for those not considered to be white, the reality of their experience was the antithesis of the universal nation ideal. A dialectical tension existed between the ideal of inclusion and actual demands for exclusion. Nowhere was this better seen than in the way democracy was initially conceived. Bernard Bailyn (1967: 60) has pointed out that though a “contagion of liberty” swept the new republic, at the same time fears were expressed about the presumed dangers that would result if political power were granted to “weak or ignorant” people. Thus, although the nation was conceived as a democracy, who was and who was not eligible for citizenship became a crucial concern. Citizenship, and how it was granted or denied, became a major means of incorporating some groups into not only the American political system, but also into social life in general, while at the same time excluding others. In most of the nation’s history of incorporation and exclusion, race served as the most powerful determinant shaping policies regarding citizenship.

Thus, for the millions of European immigrants who entered the US during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the “invention of the white race” and their progressive inclusion within the parameters of this racial designation proved crucial to their ability to become full-fledged Americans (Allen 1994; see also Roediger 1991). This is seen vividly in the case of the Irish. They were the first among the voluntary immigrants to confront intense nativist hostility, giving rise to such anti-Irish organizations as the Know-Nothings (Higham 1970). Viewed as a social problem, they were accused of being inclined to alcoholism and criminal activity. Their burgeoning numbers in

major cities combined with their inclination to be involved in political activities fueled anxiety about their potential impact on American democracy. In this regard, critics contended that their Catholicism was inherently authoritarian and thus antithetical to democracy. Moreover, the Irish were often depicted in the popular imagination in racial terms. Cartoonist Thomas Nash, for example, portrayed them as racially similar to Africans, and it was not uncommon for them to be referred to as “white niggers.” This term reflects their racially ambiguous status in the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, part of the strategy designed by the Irish to promote their inclusion and to combat prejudice directed against them was to become unambiguously white. In so doing, the Irish sought to distance themselves from outsider groups by embracing the white supremacist oppression and exclusion of American Indians and African Americans. They acquiesced to the claim that the dominant culture was to be construed in terms of a core that was white, Anglo-Saxon in origin, and Protestant in religion, or in other words WASP.

WASP hegemony, European immigrants, and the melting pot

Throughout the nineteenth century and past the middle of the twentieth, the melting-pot metaphor was the most influential and enduring characterization of ethnic relations in the US. Yet, as Philip Gleason (1964) has pointed out, this symbol of fusion has also led to considerable confusion. During the formative decades of the new republic, French immigrant J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur (1904 [1782]: 39) wrote about the American experience as involving newcomers from various nations being “melded into a new race of men.” Though such ideas gained common currency in the nineteenth century, it was not until the Jewish playwright Israel Zangwill’s play, *The Melting Pot*, was staged in 1908 that the metaphor received its most explicit and popular articulation. Here again one encounters the idea that the American, though the composite product of individuals from various national origins, is someone qualitatively distinct from those particular origins. Thus, the American is the product of the fusion of diverse peoples with distinctive cultural perspectives. The confusion Gleason refers to involves three points. First, it is not clear whether the melting pot is intended as a description of what is an inevitable process of incorporation or as a prescription of what ought to be achieved in promoting a unified national identity. Second, it is not clear whether the idea refers only to cultural fusion or to biological fusion (that is, intermarriage) as well. Finally, it is not entirely clear whether the immigrant alone is transformed by the melting pot, or whether their presence also transforms the host society.

What was clear was that the melting pot served to justify the Americanization campaigns particularly characteristic of the early decades of the twen-

tieth century. These campaigns were intended to eradicate all vestiges of the new arrivals' cultural heritages, while simultaneously instilling in them what were considered to be appropriate American attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Nowhere was this position more vividly evident than in the activities of industrialist Henry Ford's "Sociology Department," which ran training schools in his automobile plants for immigrant workers. The purpose of the schools was to teach the English language and to study in preparation for citizenship. Workers enrolled in the program took pledges that they would only speak English, and they proclaimed themselves intent on becoming "100 percent" American – rather than remaining a hyphenated American. In practical terms, this perspective required a willingness and ability on the part of immigrants to accept and to emulate the hegemonic WASP culture.

An ongoing issue confronting the political representatives of the dominant culture was to determine whether in fact particular groups had the requisite capacity and desire to become American in the WASP sense of the term. In other words, they had to determine which groups were capable of fusing or blending into the fabric of American society and which were "unmeltable." The two primary criteria employed in making these determinations were race and religion. The result was that the subsequent social history of immigrants of European origin diverged considerably from that of all others. But this is not to suggest that Europeans should be seen as a homogeneous whole. Indeed, within the composite European population, various groups experienced considerable levels of prejudice and discrimination during their early years in the US, while others managed rather quickly to gain acceptance (Jaret 1999).

While religion was a crucial variable, with the arrival of waves of Catholics and Jews between 1880 and 1924 being seen by nativists as a serious threat to the "righteous empire" created by Protestants, the saliency of race was also a key factor. As noted above about the Irish, southern and eastern Europeans also tended to be described in racial terms: the Nordic peoples of western Europe were contrasted to a variety of presumed racial inferiors, including Mediterraneans, Slavs, and Jews. Racist thought was used by those urging immigrant restriction legislation. Their fears were articulated by Madison Grant in his diatribe, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916: 92), when he wrote that as a consequence of the arrival of these newcomers, "Our jails, insane asylums, and almshouses are filled with this human flotsam and the whole tone of American life, social moral, and political, has been lowered and vulgarized by them."

The divide between acceptable and unacceptable Europeans emerged as the consequence of the particular character of national identity that took form during the period between the American Revolution and the Civil War. During the nineteenth century, the new nation set out with an expansionist mission to control much of the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific,

finding in the doctrine of Manifest Destiny an ideological justification for a policy of conquest. The United States was resource rich but population poor, while economic development required both resources and an expanding population. This was the case during the earlier agrarian era, but population growth became even more crucial as the nation began to industrialize in the nineteenth century. Thus, in order to attract an adequate labor supply, the nation established liberal immigration policies and continued the practices begun during the colonial era of investing heavily in the Atlantic slave trade.

Despite its general openness to newcomers, during this early phase of nation-building, the voluntary immigrants came overwhelmingly from western Europe, with the British constituting the dominant group. Over a million immigrants had already arrived by the time of the first census in 1790, with fully 89 percent of this population originating from England and Scotland. At slightly under 6 percent, the Germans were the second largest group. Among the other groups represented during the early years of the republic were the Irish, Dutch, French, and Scandinavians. The sheer size of the British population, combined with the legacy of colonial rule, stamped the British heritage on the political, cultural, and social fabric of the emerging nation. The economic domination of the British coalesced with political domination. British laws, institutions, and political sensibilities were transplanted to America. To provide but one example of what this meant, British hegemony was such that the language question never managed to rise to the level of genuine political debate during the nineteenth century, and as a result no law was passed that mandated English as the official language of the nation. It was simply assumed to be (Kivisto 1995: 117–24).

Between 1790 and 1820, the level of immigration was relatively modest, with an estimated 250,000 people arriving from western Europe during these three decades. The number picked up dramatically thereafter, with sizeable immigrant streams coming from not only Britain, but also Germany and Ireland. Though there were considerable differences among the British, as a whole they not surprisingly adapted quickly to the new environment, blending into the host society so rapidly that they became, as Charlotte Erickson (1972) has characterized them, “invisible immigrants.” These new arrivals settled in the urban centers of the northeast and became the key component in the move into the frontier, first in the middle west and later onward to the Pacific coast.

The Germans, too, played a major role in the settlement of the middle west. With sufficient social and individual capital to be economically successful, the German population – diverse in terms of religious affiliation and political persuasion – established a vibrant ethnic community while exhibiting a willingness to develop social relationships outside of the confines of German America. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Germans were well

positioned in the hierarchy of ethnic groups in America. In this regard, their experience parallels that of most other western European groups. The Irish were the exception. As noted above, this was in no small part due to the fact that they were Catholic in a chiefly Protestant nation (Jones 1960: 147–57). Moreover, the idea that they were racially distinct from the British further served to place them in a disadvantageous location in the ethnic hierarchy.

All of this changed dramatically after 1880, during which time the industrialization of the economy intensified and the demand for unskilled laborers in the manufacturing sector grew. Although immigrants continued to arrive from western Europe, their numbers were not sufficient to meet demand. The slack was taken up by immigrants from other parts of Europe. Indeed, between 1890 and 1930, the number of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe exceeded those from western Europe. The largest groups to arrive during this major immigration were Italians, Jews (from various countries in Europe, but particularly from Poland and Russia), and Poles. However, immigrants came from a wide range of countries, including Albanians, Byelorussians, Bulgarians, Croatians, Czechs, Estonians, Finns, Greeks, Hungarians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Portuguese, Romanians, Russians, Serbians, Slovaks, Slovenes, Spaniards, and Ukrainians. Taken as a whole, as table 2 indicates, the foreign born reached a level of 14.8 percent of the total population during this period.

These “strangers in the land” (Higham 1970) were culturally, religiously, and linguistically diverse, but what was most significant to native-born Americans were their differences *vis-à-vis* those who had arrived prior to the Civil War. These were the people Madison Grant accused of constituting a cultural threat and a social problem. They confronted in varying degrees prejudice, discrimination, and social marginalization. In many instances, efforts to gain an economic foothold that allowed for upward

Table 2 US foreign-born population, 1890–2000

Year	Number (in millions)	Percent
2000	28.4	10.4
1990	19.8	7.9
1970	9.6	4.7
1950	10.3	6.9
1930	14.2	11.6
1910	13.5	14.7
1890	9.2	14.8

Source: US Census Bureau 2001.

social mobility proved to be difficult. In response to their presence, an increasingly powerful movement to limit or altogether ban further mass immigration took root. It managed to influence immigration legislation from the 1890s forward, during which time a series of measures were taken to make admission to the US more difficult and to raise the barrier for those seeking to become citizens. These efforts to limit immigration culminated in an initial quota law in 1921 and a more stringent one passed in 1924, known as the National Origins Act. Although immigration was not altogether prohibited, the result was that with the passage of this law, the migratory movement from Europe on a grand scale came to a halt. Economic and political factors served to reinforce this situation, as the Depression of the 1930s followed by the Second World War proved to be disincentives to would-be immigrants.

Southern and eastern Europeans occupied an interstitial and ambiguous place in American society. Nowhere was this better reflected than in the social distance studies noted in chapter 1 that were conducted by Emory Bogardus (1933). In these studies of comparative levels of social acceptance of various groups, whereas western Europeans were the most readily accepted and non-Europeans (including blacks, Asians, Turks, and others) were the least readily accepted, these groups found themselves somewhere in the middle. Not surprisingly, the ethnic communities that they created expended considerable time and energy attempting to convince the larger society – and perhaps themselves – that they were in fact fully capable of being assimilated into American society (Øverland 2000). Part of these campaigns entailed efforts to convince the host society that they were indeed white. Over time, as the members of these groups adjusted to their new homeland and became acclimated to it, immigrants and their offspring relied less and less on their ethnic communities to sustain them. Rather, they began to look to the institutions of the larger society and began to involve themselves in their activities. This occurred more quickly for some groups and at a slower pace for others, depending in no small part on the variations in the levels of prejudice and discrimination that confronted particular groups. What all of these groups shared in common was easy access to full citizenship rights, which served as a major vehicle for becoming American on terms where they had a voice in defining precisely what that meant.

Coercive pluralism and the politics of exclusion

Until the second half of the twentieth century, the situation was quite different for all non-Europeans, whether they were indigenous peoples who were the victims of colonial conquest, those involuntary migrants imported into the nation as slaves, or immigrants from other shores. These groups con-

fronted situations that reflect what Lawrence Fuchs (1990: 80–6) has described as various forms of “coercive pluralism.”

Predatory pluralism

For the approximately 150 to 200 tribes that became known collectively as Indians, the form was one that Fuchs characterized as “predatory.” By this he meant that these original occupants of the land were defined as outsiders that, insofar as they stood in the way of European settlement, were to be pushed aside. The consequences of contact with Europeans proved devastating for the American Indian population, which declined precipitously from the arrival of Europeans, when reliable estimates put the population at between 2,000,000 and 5,000,000, to slightly more than 250,000 by 1890 (Thornton 1987). This dramatic decline was the combined result of military campaigns, famine, and the spread of various communicable diseases introduced by Europeans for which the indigenous peoples had far less resistance.

Conflict over territorial claims intensified with the passage of time as the demand for land on the part of European settlers grew. Farmers, land speculators, and entrepreneurs increasingly sought to acquire land occupied by various tribes, and were largely successful in these efforts, the nineteenth century being a period of systematic and wide-scale displacement. Not surprisingly, it was also a period during which open conflict and warfare escalated, with the most violent pitting the US government against two formidable tribal confederations: the Iroquois in the northeast and the Creek in the southeast. The defeat of Indians made possible the process of forced relocations of numerous tribes in the eastern part of the nation to less desirable and unfamiliar lands to the west.

The federal government recognized a legal basis for American Indian claims to land ownership, and as a result entered into treaties that represented the legal basis for acquiring tribal lands. In so doing, the government’s relationship to Indian tribes bore a resemblance to its relationship to foreign powers, though it refused to recognize tribes as independent nations. These treaties were unequal exchanges in which Indians confronted enormous pressure to sign, and both the government and white settlers frequently violated their terms. The status of American Indians was uncertain insofar as they were neither citizens nor aliens. From about the middle of the nineteenth century until the 1930s, the establishment of the reservation system shaped Indian relations with the US government (Cornell 1988: 12). Reservations were total institutions constructed as a means of achieving political containment and control, ensuring the physical and social separation of the indigenous population from the nation-state’s societal core. In this system, tribes entered into a dependency relationship with agents of the federal government.

Some policy-makers sought to end the ambiguous status of American Indians by urging a cessation of governmental relations with tribal organizations. The idea underlying this perspective was that Indians ought to be viewed as individuals like members of other groups, and not in corporate terms. The Indian Allotment Act of 1887 (also known as the Dawes Act) was an attempt to put an end to collectively held land, replacing it instead with land owned by individual Indian property owners. This was seen as a necessary prerequisite for the granting of citizenship rights (Cornell 1988: 56–8). It was not until 1924 that all American Indians became citizens. Subsequently, the federal government has zigzagged between liberal and conservative policies. Thus, the liberalism of the New Deal era led to the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act (1934), which sought to enhance the role of tribal organizations in political and economic matters. In contrast, the conservative Eisenhower administration's "termination" approach was designed to sever governmental ties with tribes and to abolish the reservation system. Termination failed and thus the unique relationship of American Indians to the federal government remains.

Caste pluralism

In contrast to Native Americans, Fuchs (1990: 87–109) describes the system that African Americans confronted as "caste pluralism." Forcibly brought into the country in the Atlantic slave trade, they occupied a particularly oppressive location in the national economy. In an otherwise class-based economy, which permitted individual mobility, Africans in America were relegated to a subordinate position based on race-specific ascriptive criteria. This meant that not only would they not be able to experience individual or intergenerational integration into the larger society, but also all facets of their everyday lives were severely circumscribed. Slavery was only one form of caste pluralism. Although caste pluralism defined the period up to the Civil War, the elimination of slavery did not signal the end of caste pluralism.

Slavery has been succinctly defined by Orlando Patterson (1982: 334) as "human parasitism." The reason that slavery took root throughout the New World was economic. Race prejudice served as an ideological justification for slavery, but did not produce it. In short, the planter class in the southern states concluded that it was economically advantageous to use slave labor rather than indentured servants or wage laborers. Though slavery was practiced in the northern states as well, it was most closely associated with the southern plantation system. Like the reservation, the plantation system is also an instance of a total institution (Genovese 1969). The peculiarity of the plantation was that it operated internally as a total institution while being part of an international economic system, insofar as the Industrial Revolution in England would not have been possible with-

out the availability of cotton provided by southern plantations (Hobsbawm 1969).

Ralph Ellison in his unfinished novel, *Juneteenth*, has poignantly described the impact of slavery on Africans caught up in its web. He does so in a passage where a revivalist preacher chants variations on the following theme of the deprivations endured by African Americans: "Eyeless, tongueless, drumless, danceless, songless, hornless, soundless, sightless, wrongless, rightless, motherless, fatherless, brotherless, sisterless, powerless" (Ellison 1999: 124). This lack of power did not mean that slaves accepted slavery. On the contrary, the prevalence of slave revolts, runaways, and the considerable evidence of less dangerous forms of resistance indicate that slaves on the whole refused to grant legitimacy to this "peculiar institution" (Stampp 1956; Blassingame 1972). However, in the end slaves were sufficiently powerless to be capable of freeing themselves. Instead, slavery ended as a result of conflicts among whites, pitting pro- and anti-slavery forces. As the nineteenth century progressed, the abolitionist movement's challenge to the slavocracy intensified. Throughout the northern states, slavery was progressively abolished. In 1807, federal law prohibited the further importation of slaves, though the illicit trade would continue until the eve of the Civil War. In the end, slavery was abolished, not simply by a moral campaign that challenged its legitimacy, but by a complex of social, political, and economic factors.

In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, there were grounds for optimism on the part of recently freed blacks. The legal abolition of slavery ratified as the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution was followed shortly thereafter by additional constitutional measures that held forth the promise of bringing African Americans into the mainstream. The Fourteenth Amendment granted the rights of citizenship, and black suffrage was granted in the Fifteenth Amendment. These three post-Civil War Amendments formed the legal basis for a redefinition of the place of Africans in the United States. In the brief postwar period of reconstruction, blacks sought to take advantage of these changes by asserting their newfound independence in both the political and economic arenas.

However, in a combination of legal and extralegal moves, whites managed to reinstitute a new structure of white supremacy. Legal initiatives transpired at the state and local levels, as new laws were passed with two major goals in mind. The first was to prevent blacks from voting through such means as poll taxes and literacy tests, and from otherwise becoming citizens in anything but a formal sense. In other words, it led to the political disenfranchisement of African Americans. The second was to mandate racial segregation in all facets of public life, a segregation that was underpinned by the assumption that it meant racial subordination (Foner 1988). Thus, the segregation of blacks and whites in such public facilities as schools, parks, and public transportation characterized this new racial formation.

The net result was the establishment of a new era of white domination and racial segregation that became known as Jim Crow (Woodward 1974). The linchpin that accorded the legitimacy of the federal government to Jim Crow was the 1896 Supreme Court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which established the basis for the “separate but equal doctrine” that was to define race relations past the first half of the twentieth century. This legal basis for racial segregation and subordination was backed up by the perpetual threat of violence and terror, seen most vividly in the activities of groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and in the pervasiveness of lynching. This system shaped race relations for the better part of a century. Leon Litwack (1998: 149) described the era of Jim Crow from the perspective of blacks: “No matter how hard they labored, no matter how they conducted themselves, no matter how fervently they prayed, the chances of making it were less than encouraging; the basic rules and controls were in place.”

Sojourner pluralism

The third type of coercive pluralism Fuchs (1990: 110–27) defined was “sojourner pluralism,” which characterized the situation of two particular groups in the antebellum period – Mexicans and the Chinese – and later was applicable to other Latino and Asian groups. As the term suggests, these groups were perceived as temporary residents of the country, labor migrants who would for a limited period of time take advantage of economic opportunities. The clear expectation was that they would eventually return to their respective homelands.

Because they were labor migrants, European-origin ethnics often viewed these groups as competitive threats in the labor market, and thus they were early victims of working-class racism (Roediger 1991). This was a crucial issue, as in an immigrant-receiving country with a need for labor there was a countervailing need to reconcile it with the fears of nativists opposed to the presence of the racial Other. The case of the Chinese is particularly illustrative in this regard insofar as the first attempt to prohibit specific groups from immigrating was directed solely at them.

The major pull factor that brought the Chinese to the US was the quest for gold. These were indeed sojourners, or “birds of passage,” hoping to get rich on “Gold Mountain” in order to return home where they would live well. Over 90 percent of the immigrants were males, leading over time to the characterization of the Chinese in America as a “bachelor society.” In this context, an ethnic community emerged from the mid-nineteenth century, dominated by business elites within the community that managed to create organizations that served to enhance their position. The institutional structure of the community included three transplanted types of organizations: clan associations, speech or territorial associations,

and criminal bands known as secret societies. While the first two types were involved in various forms of mutual aid, employment, and commerce, the activities of the secret societies centered around gambling, drugs, and prostitution. The dependence of immigrants on Chinese elites within the community and the isolation of Chinatowns from the larger society that was a consequence of the intense racism of the host society meant that Chinese enclaves operated, in Ronald Takaki's (1989: 230) term, as "ethnic islands."

Though relatively small in numbers, Chinese immigrants had been targeted by a virulent nativist campaign from the time they first arrived around the middle of the nineteenth century. As noted above, organized labor played a particularly significant role in a push for the economic exclusion of the Chinese and in a quest to prevent new immigrants from entering the country. However, anti-Chinese animus was widespread throughout American society and was often exploited by politicians (Lyman 1974; Gyory 1998). Efforts aimed at economic exclusion included a variety of laws that specifically targeted the Chinese, including California's "Foreign Miners Tax," to which only the Chinese were subject, and San Francisco's "Laundry Ordinance," which imposed taxes on laundries that did not use horses, which in practice meant Chinese laundries (Hsu 2000: 59). The Chinese were banned from work in some industries, such as commercial fishing. They were also the victims of mob violence in numerous locales. They were expelled from some communities, including Seattle and Tacoma. They fell victim to hangings and burnings in Los Angeles in 1871, and murderous attacks in the gold mines along the Idaho-Oregon border in 1885 and the coal mines of Rock Springs, Wyoming, in 1887 (Lyman 1974: 60-1; Hsu 2000: 59).

Paralleling these efforts aimed at economic exclusion were those aimed at immigration restriction. Though anti-immigration agitation was initially centered in California, it became a national cause. After efforts to ban further immigration at the state level became impractical and legally suspect, a national Chinese exclusion act was passed in 1882. It prohibited the further entry of Chinese immigrants for ten years. Certain exceptions were made, such as those for students and merchants. The Geary Act passed ten years later imposed even harsher burdens on the Chinese, a situation that would remain in effect until the national legislation of 1924 that effectively halted mass migration across the board. Actually, migration did not entirely cease, for not only were some legal immigrants permitted entry, but moreover illegals also found their way into the country (Hsu 2000: 71-87).

Immigration restriction was linked to another form of political restriction, which entailed denying citizenship rights to the Chinese in America. Stanford M. Lyman (1997: 167) points to the impact this denial had on the status of the Chinese:

What proved most effective for marginalizing the Chinese in America were statutes and judicial rulings that excluded them from participation in the body politic. It is true, of course, that, as Jonathan D. Spence has recently observed, "The restrictive immigration laws levied against the Chinese – and at no other foreign nationals at the time – form a melancholy theme in late-nineteenth century American history." Even more tragic, however, was their formal exclusion from the benefits, rights, and opportunities of US civil society that, at least in the casuistry of law and the rhetoric of public policy, were then accorded to all other newcomer Americans, and, in theory but not practice, to the recently emancipated African Americans.

The Chinese were not accorded the rights of citizenship until 1943, this change occurring during the Second World War, when the Chinese Kuomintang nationalists became allies of the US against Japan (Lyman 1997: 184). Although the Chinese case is unique in many respects, their situation paralleled that of other peoples of color who, being considered neither white nor of African ancestry, confronted a legal system intent on preventing them from being deemed eligible for citizenship. Thus, a wide array of groups faced similar barriers to civic inclusion, including the Japanese, Burmese, Koreans, Hawaiians, Armenians, Syrians, Arabs, East Indians, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, American Indians, and mixed-bloods (Lyman 1997: 128–59).

While hostility to non-Europeans in general was intense, a growing anti-immigration movement did not limit its campaign solely to these particular immigrant groups. Rather, claiming that the nation was experiencing *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), as the title of Madison Grant's book put it, it sought to make the United States a haven for western and northern Europeans. It pressed Congress for restrictive legislation, and the Congress obliged in a series of legislative changes that ultimately put an end to wide-scale immigration. In 1891, 1903, 1907, and 1917 more stringent limitations were imposed on the nation's open door policy (Higham 1970). The 1906 Basic Naturalization Act mandated knowledge of English as a prerequisite for becoming a citizen. As noted earlier, in 1921 an initial quota law was passed, setting limits to the number of immigrants from particular countries. This was followed by the National Origins Act of 1924, which limited the number of immigrants from outside the Western Hemisphere to 153,700 per year. Nations were allotted quotas based on the percentages of their populations making up the US population in 1920. The net result was to ensure that 82 percent of new arrivals would be from western and northern Europe. As figure 1 illustrates, the consequence of this act, which took effect in 1929, was that for the next four decades mass immigration ceased and the existing ethnic hierarchy was reinforced.

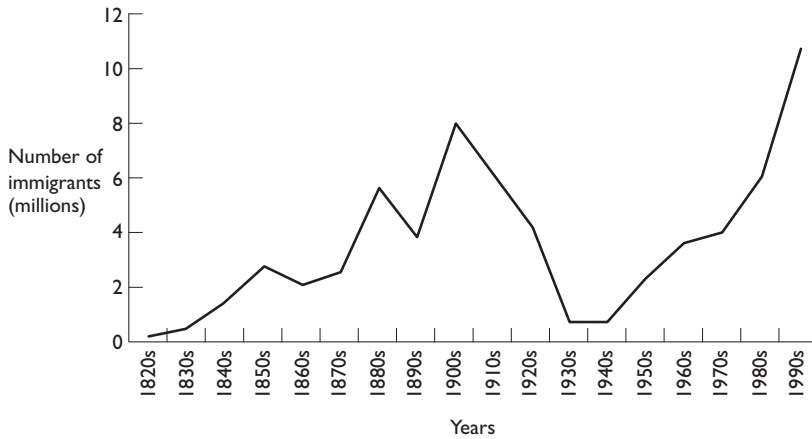


Figure 1 US immigration levels by decade
 Source: US Census Bureau 2001.

The Emergence of a New Racial Formation

It is within this general historical context that a new racial formation emerged in the 1960s (Omi & Winant 1994). Three central elements of this racial formation can be identified: (1) the progressive assimilation of European ethnics that became more and more evident from the Second World War on; (2) the success of the black civil rights movement in bringing an end to the Jim Crow era and establishing laws to combat discrimination; and (3) the resumption of mass immigration that occurred after the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (also known as the Hart–Cellar Act), which, because it had eliminated the racist character of the 1924 Act, had resulted in a dramatic increase in the size of the Latino and Asian populations during the last three decades of the twentieth century.

The assimilation of European ethnics

Turning to the first of these elements, for the vast majority of European-origin Americans, the immigration hiatus between the 1920s and 1960s severed the homeland ties of the third- and fourth-generation ethnic offspring of immigrants, which meant that they became increasingly unfamiliar with their homeland cultures, a key to the fact that they were progressively Americanized. Levels of prejudice and discrimination declined, as a redrawing of

the racial boundaries resulted in the expansion of groups who were considered to be white. In this new dispensation, the racial category white became a synonym for European-origin. After mid-century one could still hear group-specific ethnic slurs (e.g., kike, guinea, hunkie), but such usage was on the decline.

These developments took place during the two prosperous decades following the Second World War. During this time the class structure was transformed as a consequence of the growth of large bureaucratic corporations and the parallel growth of government bureaucracies due to the expansion of the welfare state and the military during the Cold War. The net result was the dramatic growth of the "white collar" worker, the new middle class that C. Wright Mills (1951) pointed to as the primary vehicle for upward mobility for European-origin ethnics. The result was a reconfiguration of the connection between class and ethnicity. Prior to this period, the newer immigrant groups from southern and eastern Europe represented the backbone of the unskilled working class. Now their children were able to rise into the ranks of the middle class, aided by such programs as the GI Bill. The result was a growing gulf between those ethnics who went to college, entered the middle class, and moved out of ethnic neighborhoods in cities to new suburban housing developments, and those who did not pursue higher educations and tended to remain both in the blue-collar workforce and in the city. What this implied was that for blue-collar workers ethnic and class identities were mutually reinforcing, while for their white-collar counterparts the connection showed considerable evidence of unraveling.

Moreover, contrary to the claims for an ethnic revival among European-origin ethnics, the salience of ethnic identities for these groups actually declined. Even a spokesperson for the cultural transmission thesis such as Andrew Greeley could offer only a highly qualified analysis of the continuing significance of ethnicity. He argued that by the 1970s ethnicity did matter, but only "to some extent some dimensions of the ethnic culture do indeed survive and enable us to predict some aspects of the behavior of the children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren of immigrants" (Greeley 1974: 319). What some commentators saw as an ethnic revival was in fact to a large extent a backlash against what were perceived to be gains made by blacks and other people of color in the immediate aftermath of the civil rights movement. This backlash was associated with a questioning of the American dream arising because of a belief that racial minorities were the beneficiaries of government-sponsored programs at the expense of white working-class ethnics. What was at stake for these working-class ethnics was, not a returning to their roots, but finding common cause with other European ethnics against the perceived threat posed by non-European ethnics (Rieder 1985).

The differences among European ethnics eroded in part because the religious factor proved over time to be less and less divisive. When John Kennedy

ran for President, anti-Catholic voices expressed a fear that the Vatican would run the White House, but his election could be seen as a tangible indication of the extent to which this kind of thinking no longer reflected the opinions of the Protestant majority. This is a revealing example of the thesis advanced by Will Herberg in *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (1955), where he pointed to the ascendance of a new ecumenical sensibility in which these three Judeo-Christian groups would be seen as discrete bodies located under the umbrella of American civil religion. This pointed to both cultural and civic assimilation, wherein groups were united as citizens while simultaneously allowing for separate corporate identities – and thus did not necessarily imply structural assimilation.

However, by mid-century, a major structural transformation was underway that would redefine ethnic identity for European-origin groups. A precipitous decline in the number and influence of distinctively ethnic institutions occurred, accompanied by an exodus from ethnic neighborhoods, often to the ethnically heterogeneous suburbs. Mother-tongue language loyalty exhibited rapid declines, along with the erosion of many cultural values and traditions. It is not surprising that the pace of change varied across groups as well as within groups. Among the particularly relevant factors influencing the impact of assimilation were group size, degree of residential concentration, the length of time in the US, religion, homeland concerns, and the level of educational attainment and economic upward mobility.

Added to these factors was the impact of intermarriage. In the 1940s, sociologist Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy (1944) argued that she could detect the existence of a “triple melting pot” wherein European ethnics were marrying outside of ethnic group boundaries at an increased rate, but within the religious boundaries of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. Whether or not she accurately captured that historical moment, in the ensuing decades the boundaries between specific European groups has clearly eroded as rates of intermarriage have soared. And during this time it is clear that religious boundaries increasingly did not serve as a replacement for ethnic boundaries. By the last quarter of the twentieth century, one could fairly speak about pervasive marital assimilation among European groups.

These changes could be seen for all European-origin groups (obviously excluding such religio-ethnic sectarian outliers as the Amish, Hutterites, and Hasidic Jews). The rate of change varied among groups, but it is clear that the group that remained the least maritally assimilated for the longest time was Jews. This is not surprising, given the fact that, as John Higham (1970) has argued, Jews have historically confronted far higher levels of hostility than other European groups. Moreover, the Jewish community had a particular interest in preserving a distinctive corporate identity, lest their religious heritage be absorbed into the Christian mainstream.

After mid-century, a significant majority of American Jews sought to promote civic and cultural assimilation, and to challenge anti-Semitism while simultaneously warding off structural and marital assimilation. This proved to be a delicate balancing act, and as early as the 1950s, Herbert Gans (1956) wrote about a phenomenon he called “symbolic Judaism.” What he was pointing to was the extent to which middle-class Jews were abandoning distinctly Jewish cultural practices, values, and behaviors in an effort to fit into the mainstream. They wanted, he suggested, to feel Jewish, on at least some occasions, without being prepared to act Jewish in the normal routines of their lives.

The good news was that by the last quarter of the century, the levels of anti-Semitism had fallen dramatically, and Jews were being afforded expanded opportunities in all facets of American social life. However, one of the unintended consequences of the new tolerance and inclusiveness was the rise in intermarriage. While the rate of Jewish intermarriage in 1950 was less than 4 percent, by 1990, 32 percent had married non-Jews. Moreover, for marriages taking place after 1985, the figure had risen to 52 percent (Kosmin et al. 1991: 13–14). In other words, despite the lingering persistence of anti-Semitism, by the end of the twentieth century Jews were clearly following the intermarriage trends of other European Americans. Thus, despite the presence of ultra-Orthodox Jews and the arrival of newcomers from the former Soviet Union, Israel, and elsewhere in the Middle East and north Africa, the situation of the vast majority of Jews increasingly parallels that of other European ethnics.

In the face of the pervasive gradual decline of the salience of ethnicity for all European-origin groups, there is also considerable evidence for ethnic persistence. However, that persistence has taken a new form. One influential way of viewing that form is Gans’ (1979) theory of symbolic ethnicity that I discussed in chapter 1 (which is in effect an extrapolation from his earlier, more particular concept of symbolic Judaism). Rather than relying on community or culture, the third generation and beyond uses symbols, primarily out of a sense of nostalgia for the traditions of the immigrant generation. According to Gans (1979: 203–4):

most people look for easy and intermittent ways of expressing their identity, for ways that do not conflict with other ways of life. As a result, they refrain from ethnic behavior that requires an arduous or time-consuming commitment, either to a culture that must be practiced constantly or to organizations that demand active membership. Second, because people’s concern is with identity, rather than with cultural practices or group relationships, they are free to look for ways of expressing that identity which suit them best, thus opening up the possibility of voluntary, diverse, or individualistic ethnicity.

This individualistic ethnicity opens up a variety of, to use Mary Waters’ (1990) term, “ethnic options.” According to Waters, ethnicity remains mean-

ingful insofar as it is related to the desire for a sense of community. However, ethnicity has a decidedly voluntaristic cast as people selectively determine which features of the ethnic tradition to valorize, while ignoring or abandoning others. Furthermore, Waters (1990: 112–13; 134) points to the existence of considerable cultural syncretism among European-origin groups as well as a remarkable convergence regarding what are defined as being the most important traditional values of their respective ethnic group. Regardless of group, ethnics all agreed that *their* group placed a premium on family, education, hard work, religiosity, and patriotism. As the presumed commonalities have become more significant than the differences, the idea of a shared pan-ethnic identity among European Americans has emerged.

This development has been aided by widespread intermarriage. The complex pattern of intermarriage among European-origin ethnics has produced a population with multiple ancestries, and in the process has led to a reduction in the salience of ethnic identities based on particular nations of origin. Instead, as Richard Alba (1990: 293) contends, “The transformation of ethnicity among whites does not portend the elimination of ethnicity but instead the formation of a new ethnic group: one based on ancestry from anywhere on the European continent.” This situation ought to be construed as a form of assimilation, but not the melting-pot version. While I agree with Alba, something significant is missing in the way he frames the transformation, which is by referencing the white race as a nonproblematic given. In fact, the assimilation of these ethnics has necessitated a redrawing of the racial boundaries so that groups once considered nonwhite have become white. The boundaries of inclusion have changed. In everyday language, it is far less likely that people self-identify as European American and far more likely that they refer to themselves as white. Michael Omi (2001: 253) has made this point when he writes that, “In the ‘twilight of ethnicity,’ White racial identity may increase in salience.”

This transformation speaks to the fact that the flip side of changing the boundaries of inclusion is a reformulation of the boundaries of exclusion (Lipsitz 1998; Allen 1994; Roediger 1991). In viewing Europeans taken as a whole as “we,” non-Europeans are thereby viewed as “they.” In this regard, the nostalgia that fuels symbolic ethnicity looks less benign, for the celebration of one’s heritage can serve as the basis for criticizing or denigrating other ethnic groups. For example, to argue that their culture places a premium on family ties is to implicitly criticize groups such as African Americans because of the prevalence of single-parent households in that group. Similarly, the conviction that hard work is an important value among European ethnics can be used as a way of blaming those groups who suffer from persistently high levels of unemployment for their economic problems. Waters (1990: 147) suggests that “symbolic ethnicity persists because of its ‘fit’ with racist beliefs.” Thus, in the ethnoracial pentagon (Hollinger 1995) that

has emerged during the post-civil rights era, non-Europeans in the new ethnic dispensation continue to be relegated to various locations of subordination and exclusion based on differing perceptions of these groups by the hegemonic group (Winant 1994, 1999).

The new African American dilemma

Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, a monumental study sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation and published in 1944, was primarily devoted to chronicling the political, economic, and cultural forces that had shaped the black experience in the US. In addition, it advanced a thesis that – though appreciating the complexity of American race relations – offered a remarkably simple prognosis concerning the future. The dilemma noted in the title of the book had to do with the conflict between the national ideals of freedom and equality for all and the reality of a legacy of black oppression and exclusion. Myrdal was convinced that in the end the dilemma would be resolved by the realization of these key American values. He was an advocate of assimilation who based his assessment of the future on the assumption that the nation had a unified cultural system with commonly shared core values. The race problem was located in the white mind, which, as long as it maintained prejudicial views that were translated into discrimination, would ensure that the dilemma would persist. Thus, the solution to the race problem would occur when whites rooted out their own racism and treated blacks in accordance with the demands of the key cultural values associated with freedom and equality. Quite remarkable was Myrdal's lack of emphasis on ethnic competition and the potential role to be played by a social movement of the oppressed, the latter being a curious lacuna insofar as the book appeared just as the modern civil rights movement got underway.

The civil rights movement blossomed during the 1950s, at a time of heightened Cold War tensions and during a period of unprecedented economic prosperity. The former was significant because in the propaganda battles waged by the US and the Soviet Union, instances of virulent racist violence, such as the brutal murder of Emmett Till, played into the hands of the nation's enemies. The latter was important because at a time when there was a growing demand for workers and unemployment levels were very low, competition for jobs declined, leading to a reduction in interracial conflict.

In this climate, the modern civil rights movement developed. It built itself in part on long-established organizations such as the NAACP and the Urban League, but also on newer organizations such as the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). These newer organizations shared a strategic focus on nonviolent protest – including a will-

ingness to engage in civil disobedience – while the older organizations were more inclined to seek redress for injustice and inequality through the courts and the legislative process (Morris 1984). Thus, it was the Legal Defense Fund of the NAACP that fought a long battle in the courts to end school segregation. The newer organizations, meanwhile, were responsible for taking democracy into the streets.

The early period of the movement focused on challenges to the southern Jim Crow system. Thus, in 1953 a boycott of the municipal bus system in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, challenged the “back of the bus” requirement. Two years later a similar effort in Montgomery, Alabama, catapulted Rosa Parks into the national spotlight and served to launch the career of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The movement combined protest tactics with court challenges. In various cities similar nonviolent actions were undertaken, including the sit-ins at the segregated lunch counter at Greensboro, North Carolina’s, Woolworth store, and the CORE-sponsored Freedom Rides intended to affect a federal ban on segregated interstate buses. Related to these challenges to segregation were efforts aimed at political empowerment. These included voter registration drives in several southern states, capped by the 1964 Freedom Summer, the massive voter registration project in Mississippi. The number of movement initiatives grew slowly during the early 1950s and increased substantially thereafter. A dramatic escalation of activities occurred in the first half of the 1960s, culminating in a massive March on Washington in 1963. This phase of the movement effectively ended by the later part of the decade (McAdam 1982; Morris 1984).

Throughout this period, white responses varied considerably. On the one hand, black protest met with stiff resistance. Political elites in the south sought to preserve the Jim Crow system. Two particularly relevant challenges were those of Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus, who attempted to stop the integration of Little Rock’s Central High School, and Alabama’s Governor George Wallace, who similarly sought to prevent blacks from being admitted to the University of Alabama. Citizens Councils were founded in many communities to provide a base for white resistance, while terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan experienced a revival. When the movement directed its energies to combating the *de facto* segregation in nonsouthern states, it met with intense resistance to integration (Gerstle 1995). On the other hand, many whites began to react negatively to incidents of violence against unarmed, nonviolent protesters. The unleashing of police dogs on demonstrators, the indiscriminate beatings, and similar acts of violence reached the attention of audiences via the mass media, and in particular television, which broadcast these events to a national audience. As the leadership of the civil rights movement well understood, it was essential that they make their case for dramatic change to this “conscience constituency.”

The tumultuous events of the 1950s and 1960s produced a watershed in

the history of blacks in the United States. The collective mobilization of the modern civil rights movement resulted in the demise of Jim Crow and the dawn of a new epoch in race relations. The judicial and legislative impacts were far reaching. The landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* revisited the "separate but equal" doctrine of the 1886 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision by introducing social-scientific evidence that revealed that segregation and racial inequality went hand in hand. Thus, the court ruling paved the way for promoting the integration of public schools. In the following decade, the US Congress passed three pieces of legislation that sought to remedy a three-century legacy of discrimination: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which forbade discrimination in employment and education; the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which ensured blacks the right to political participation in the south; and the Housing Act of 1968, which prohibited racial discrimination in renting or selling housing. At the same time, President Lyndon Johnson declared a "War on Poverty," that though explicitly articulated in class-specific terms, had a disproportionate impact on blacks, who were over-represented in the ranks of the poor.

At the zenith of the civil rights movement, a more militant period emerged that suggested a legitimization crisis and a sense that more radical changes were needed to overcome the racial oppression of blacks. It took the form of Black Power, which was ideologically influenced by the Black Nationalism of Marcus Garvey and in some quarters by socialism. Black nationalists sought to achieve power and economic development without the promotion of racial integration. Part of the reason for this antipathy towards integration was the suspicion that whites may proclaim a desire to integrate, but had no real intention of actually doing so. This suspicion about the good faith of whites could be seen among the members of the Nation of Islam, who argued for racial purity and self-determination, but like Garvey tended to espouse a version of Black Capitalism.

On the other hand, influenced by Third World liberation struggles, the Black Panthers also advanced the idea of self-determination, but were also advocates of socialist internationalism. In so doing, they sought to link Black Nationalism to class struggle (Bush 1999). It should be noted that similar manifestations of militancy occurred among Native Americans in the Red Power Movement and among Mexicans in Chicano politics in general and the Brown Berets in particular. The Panthers became the victims of intense political repression and by the early 1970s the organization was moribund. While most of the disenfranchised in the black community did not join these or other militant organizations, their anger at the perceived slowness of racial progress was expressed by a wave of urban riots that swept the nation, commencing with the Harlem/Bedford-Stuyvesant riot of 1964 and the Watts riot of 1965 and extending into the early 1970s, resulting in hundreds of deaths, thousands of injured, and millions of dollars in property damage.

Joseph T. Rhea (1996) has argued that what has become known as “identity politics” has its roots in the civil rights movement, but ought to be seen as in some respects distinct from it. This is an example of Taylor’s (1992) politics of recognition. Rhea has described this manifestation of identity politics as the “Racial Pride Movement.” For blacks, Rhea contrasts two divergent efforts to wrestle with the legacy of the past and present aspirations. On the one hand, there is the anti-assimilationist identity politics of the Black Power movement in the 1960s and Afrocentrist thought since the 1980s. On the other hand, there is the inclusionist goal evident in the movement to establish a national holiday in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Both instances were manifestations of efforts within the African American community to challenge the lingering badges of inferiority that a long legacy of racist thought had perpetuated in the minds of not only the dominant white race, but within the oppressed black race as well.

To what extent did the civil rights movement achieve its goals, and where did it fail? How different were American race relations in the aftermath of the movement compared to the preceding period? Though answers to these questions produce a wide range of responses from scholars in the field, on the basis of many measures, one would have to conclude that genuine improvements have occurred, while at the same time it is clear that glaring and persistent problems and inequalities remain. Turning first to the matter of prejudice – or what Gordon would refer to as “attitude receptional assimilation” – improvement is evident. The post-civil rights era has been characterized by a significant decline in older forms of racist thought. A substantial majority of white Americans endorse racial equality and integration in principle (Jaynes & Williams 1989; Sniderman & Carmines 1997). However cautiously one needs to view public opinion surveys, using these as indicators of white attitudes towards blacks leads to the conclusion that the nation has undergone substantial gains over the past half century. At the same time, there is a more troubling side to contemporary white attitudes. Lawrence Bobo (2001: 294) summarizes the situation in the following way:

If one compared the racial attitudes prevalent in the 1940s with those commonly observed today, it is easy to be optimistic. A nation once comfortable as a deliberately segregationist and racially discriminatory society has not only abandoned that view, but now overtly, positively endorses the goals of racial integration and equal treatment. There is no sign whatsoever of retreat from this ideal, despite events that many thought would call it into question. The magnitude, steadiness, and breadth of this change should be lost on no one. The death of Jim Crow racism has left us in an uncomfortable place, however: a state of *laissez-faire* racism. We have high ideals, but cannot agree on the depth of the remaining problem – we are open to integration, but in very limited terms and only in specific areas.

Bobo's analysis, in other words, argues that although the second half of the twentieth century witnessed a decline in racial prejudice and a general endorsement of the principle of fair play, this did not necessarily translate into policies designed to redress the legacy of segregation. This is particularly evident in the two most controversial policies to emerge out of the civil rights era: school busing to achieve integration and affirmative action. Busing was a policy for facilitating the desegregation of public schools, a plan of action that arose as a response to the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that school systems must move to desegregate "with all deliberate speed." In the period between 1964 and 1973, the percentage of blacks in the south attending schools with whites rose from 2 percent to 46 percent. While the initial phase of desegregation focused on the *de jure* segregation in the Jim Crow south, it also came to include a concern for the *de facto* segregation characteristic elsewhere in the nation.

Intense white opposition to school integration arose and led to the phenomenon known as "white flight." This took two forms, and was felt most intensely in urban public schools: (1) moving from urban to suburban school districts; and (2) enrolling students in parochial schools, or especially in the south, in newly created "Christian academies." Although the relationship between white flight and busing is complicated, by the 1980s many urban school systems were made up of only a minority of white students. For example, the white student population was only 4 percent in Washington DC, 8 percent in Atlanta, and 12 percent in Detroit. Even within schools a form of "re-segregation within desegregated schools" often occurred as special academic programs effectively created what amounted to two schools within one, and each was racially quite distinct (Jaynes & Williams 1989: 76–83).

While busing became less controversial over time, affirmative action has continued throughout its career to generate intense controversy. Affirmative action is not concerned with racial integration *per se*, but rather with improving the socioeconomic status of blacks (and other minority groups). The rationale behind affirmative action plans is that merely terminating discriminatory laws and policies is not enough to realize genuine racial equality. This is due to the fact that over time such historical practices have enhanced the socioeconomic location of whites at the expense of blacks. The legal basis for affirmative action derives from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned employment discrimination and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to investigate complaints and to refer violators to the Department of Justice. The Act did not mandate preferential treatment for minorities, but instead merely said that employers who discriminate must stop or face prosecution.

As John David Skrentny (1996) has pointed out, among the "ironies of affirmative action" is the fact that the policies to emerge within a decade were not the intentions of those responsible for the passage of the Act. In

fact, the original purpose of the legislation appears to be to combat persistent patterns of ongoing discrimination. When the focus turned to the matter of the under-representation of blacks and other minorities in various occupations, a shift from what Carol Swain (2001: 321) has termed “soft” programs to stronger, preferential-treatment plans commenced. Among the key actors to promote this shift were both the liberal Lyndon Johnson and the conservative Richard Nixon. The idea of measuring success by the implementation of quotas appealed to government bureaucrats and also was embraced by corporate leaders. Affirmative action expanded to include a wide array of programs, including employment area concerns, such as those related to private-sector hiring and government contracting, but also involving the educational arena, where programs were implemented dealing with admission policies and scholarship and grant allocations.

Affirmative action became something of a lightning rod for conflict. Not only did conservatives oppose it, but so did many liberals, leading Stephen Steinberg (2000) to contend that the “capitulation” of liberals on this issue is an indication of the degree to which a racial backlash has sought to undo the advances brought about by the civil rights movement. The major complaint of opponents reflected the importance attached to individualism in American culture. It contended that preferential programs amounted to a form of “reverse discrimination” (Glazer 1975). It was on this basis that a number of court challenges to affirmative action were initiated. The most highly publicized early case was *Allan Bakke v. Regents of the University of California* (1978), wherein the plaintiff complained that he had been unfairly denied admission to medical school because 16 of the 100 slots were targeted for “disadvantaged persons,” which in practice meant racial minorities. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that the set-asides were unacceptable and demanded that Bakke be admitted. While he was, the Court also made clear that affirmative action in principle was not unconstitutional.

However, in recent years, with a considerably more conservative Supreme Court, recent judicial rulings have called the constitutional issue into question. This is seen perhaps most vividly in another university admission case, that of *Hopwood v. Texas* (1995). In this case, the white female litigant claimed that she had been denied admission to the University of Texas Law School as a result of the existence of the institution’s affirmative action program, which relied on numerical goals in its quest to increase the numbers for underrepresented groups. The Court struck down the program as unconstitutional, concluding that, “The law school may not use race as a factor in deciding which applicants to admit” (quoted in Skrentny 2000: 282). In addition to such rulings, affirmative action came under assault in other ways, most vividly in California, where the electorate passed Proposition 209, which prohibited state-sponsored affirmative action programs.

The specific arguments over affirmative action must be located within a

general assessment of the socioeconomic and educational situation of African Americans. In drawing conclusions, it is important to note that while at some level generalizations about the black community as a whole are valid, it is also crucial to realize that the community is increasingly divided between those who appear to be making it and those who are not. This distinction forms the basis of William Julius Wilson's (1978) "declining significance of race thesis." He argues that the current race relations regime is different from its two predecessors – the antebellum era when a caste system prevailed, and the Jim Crow era where class acquired significance for blacks that it did not have earlier, but nonetheless where race continued to play a more powerful role in shaping life chances. Today, he contends, class is coming to play a more consequential role than race in shaping the life chances of African Americans. Wilson (1978: 151) depicts a split within the black community along class lines, describing this bifurcation in the following way:

On the one hand, poorly trained and educationally limited blacks of the inner city, including that growing number of black teenagers and young adults, see their job prospects increasingly restricted to the low-wage sector, their unemployment rates soaring to record levels, their labor-force participation rates declining, their move out of poverty slowing, and their welfare roles increasing. On the other hand, talented and educated blacks are experiencing unprecedented job opportunities in the growing government and corporate sectors, opportunities that are at least comparable to those of whites with equivalent qualifications.

Blacks have witnessed a significant expansion in educational and employment opportunities and the black middle class has grown considerably in recent decades. As recently as 1960, the black middle class constituted only 13.4 percent of the black population, compared to 44.1 percent for whites. By 1981, the figure for blacks had risen to 37.8 percent, while that for whites had risen to 54.3 percent (Landry 1987: 68, 291). Not only had it grown, but the contemporary black middle class is no longer confined to the black ghetto. Levels of home ownership and suburban living among this segment of the black population have risen. Due to opportunities afforded this class sector of the black community, according to Reynolds Farley (1999: 123), "the 1980s were the first years in which there were unambiguous decreases in black-white residential segregation." Blacks have entered the political arena, and are now one of the key constituencies in the Democratic Party. In terms of racial pride, blacks in professional sports and the entertainment industry have assumed roles of genuine prominence. One need only think of the impact of Michael Jordan and Bill Cosby to get some sense of the changes that have occurred in the collective conscience. These and similar changes have led some neoconservative thinkers to proclaim that we have reached the "end of racism" (D'Souza 1995).

However, such a conclusion overlooks a great deal. In the first place, white resistance to black improvement has been far more persistent throughout the post-civil rights period than this view appreciates (Feagin & Vera 1995). Moreover, while the black middle class has grown, it has not achieved parity with the white middle class and serious gaps in income remain. Perhaps more significantly, as Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro (1995) have pointed out, if one looks at wealth and not income, the disparities between the black and white middle classes is stark. Blacks, they discovered, own only 15 cents for every dollar of wealth possessed by whites.

Moreover, despite the changes in levels of prejudice noted above, discrimination remains a serious problem. While this may have a greater negative impact on poor blacks, even middle-class blacks continue to be victimized by subtle and not-so-subtle forms of discrimination in everyday life, including avoidance, poor service, verbal epithets, harassment, and threats (Feagin 1991). For example, research by the Urban Institute has discovered that housing and employment discrimination is far more common than the public at large thinks is the case (Fix & Struyk 1993). While the black middle class has moved from central cities to the suburbs at an expanded rate, this has not necessarily meant that they have moved from segregated to integrated neighborhoods. Indeed, the collar suburbs of many large cities today have become black communities as whites have headed to outer ring suburbs. The case of the Chicago suburb of Matteson, Illinois, is illustrative. In 1980 the community was 84 percent white. Fifteen years later, it was only 47 percent white (Terry 1996: A6). This white flight is not a response to avoiding poverty and its attendant problems, as has been argued to explain earlier white flight from cities. Blacks arriving in Matteson were members of the middle class. Thus, the movement of whites out of the community is a reflection of Bobo's (2001: 294) claim that there are severe limits to the willingness of whites to integrate. In short, the gains of the black middle class are decidedly mixed. The black middle class is pointed to as the success story of the post-civil rights era for good reason. Yet, it is also clear that they not only confront newer forms of institutional discrimination, but are not immune from the older forms as well.

For the other sector of the black community, those whom William Julius Wilson (1987) has referred to as the "truly disadvantaged," the world not only continues to be segregated, but in some cases there is evidence of even greater levels of segregation than in the past, leading some researchers to refer to this as "hypersegregation" (Massey & Denton 1993). Inner-city blacks in such neighborhoods attend segregated schools, worship in segregated churches, shop in segregated stores, and so forth. The exodus of the black middle class from inner cities for new neighborhoods has left behind only the poorest of the poor in communities increasingly disconnected to the larger urban economy and bereft of the institutional social supports that once helped

ghetto dwellers to survive in a hostile world. These are communities hard hit by deindustrialization, where residents are forced to cope with the consequences of what happens to neighborhoods "when work disappears" (Wilson 1996). In other words, for this segment of the African American community, life is more rather than less difficult than in the past.

Social problems – including the explosion of drug use, high crime levels, endemic violence, the pervasiveness of gangs, the problems associated with teen pregnancy, and low academic achievement – have taken a huge toll (Anderson 1990). To appreciate the depth of the problems one need only realize that the leading cause of death among young black males is murder, usually at the hands of another young black male. Add to this the fact that blacks have been particularly hard hit by the AIDs epidemic. As a consequence of all of these problems, a segment of poor blacks engulfed in a pervasive anomie has concluded that it continues to be victimized by the "scar of race" and will never realize the American Dream (Sniderman & Piazza 1993). Cornel West (1993: 15–31) has concluded that the most appropriate term for describing the worldview of this sector of black America is "nihilism."

The lives of blacks at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder have been complicated by deindustrialization and by the arrival of new immigrants since the 1960s. The decline in the number of manufacturing jobs has prevented many blacks from the kind of upward mobility available to unskilled workers in the past. New immigrants have posed a new challenge insofar as they compete with blacks for unskilled jobs (Bean & Bell-Rose 1999: 24), and as their numbers grow, also become a new political constituency that can dilute the impact of blacks.

In the aftermath of the conservative administrations of Ronald Reagan and his successor George Bush, levels of class-based social inequality became considerably more pronounced. The neoliberalism of the Clinton years did little to remedy this trend. For the haves, the past two decades have been very good, while for the have-nots life has grown more difficult. Moreover, the number of people in the ranks of the have-nots has grown as levels of poverty have increased, particularly in the inner cities of major metropolitan areas. What this suggests is that class and race converge insofar as the majority of the residents of the nation's inner cities are racial minorities – largely black or Latino.

Wilson (1999: 64) attributes many of the economic problems confronting lower income blacks to transformations brought about by the new global economy. He continues to argue for the prominence of class-related factors in contributing to this situation, and in seeking solutions to it. Thus, he makes a case for the creation of a multiracial coalition of workers and for progressive legislative initiatives such as full-employment legislation and other universal entitlement programs rather than race-specific ones. In so doing, he is urging policies akin to those of the social democracies of western Europe.

However, at the same time, he argues that insofar as racial discrimination and segregation continue to contribute to the problems confronting blacks, there is a need for a renewal of commitment to race-specific affirmative action – or as he renames it, “affirmative opportunity.” While sympathetic to the argument on behalf of a class-specific version of affirmative action, he argues that because race cannot be reduced to class, color-blind policies cannot in and of themselves solve the problems, and therefore race-based policies are also necessary (Wilson 1999: 95–116).

American Indians in the aftermath of the Red Power movement

Part of Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society expansion of the welfare state entailed an effort to revive aspects of the New Deal’s Indian Reorganization Act. In addition, it sought to address the endemic poverty and attendant social problems that characterized reservation life. The significance of these efforts was that Indians were given more power than they had previously had in controlling their communities. Antipoverty, educational, and cultural programs were funded through the Office of Economic Opportunity, and thus often circumvented the much-criticized Bureau of Indian Affairs and many traditional tribal leaders perceived to be pawns of the BIA. The result was the outbreak of considerable internal conflict, linked to the birth of the Red Power movement (Nagel 1996). Unsatisfied with what they viewed as the paternalism of the federal government, militants demanded greater efforts aimed at self-determination. The Red Power movement began at the local level with such confrontational tactics as “fish-ins” and hunting out of season. Defying state laws was intended to highlight the fact that the states had violated treaty rights, which guaranteed American Indians special fishing and hunting privileges.

The movement was catapulted into the national spotlight with three dramatic episodes in political theater: the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz in San Francisco Bay; the 1972 Trail of Broken Treaties March that culminated in the occupation of the BIA headquarters in Washington DC; and the 1973 takeover of Wounded Knee, the site of an 1890 massacre of 150 unarmed Sioux Indians. This movement played a singularly important role in encouraging ethnic renewal. It aimed to resist the melting pot and to stimulate instead a renewed vitality of American Indian culture and society (Cornell 1988: 187–201; Nagel 1996). Although the militancy of the era waned over time, considerable conflict persists. Recent examples include the ongoing court battles over hunting and fishing rights and land-related treaty disputes. One of the consequences of the assertiveness of American Indians is an anti-Indian backlash on the part of whites.

Today life on reservations continues to be colored by deeply rooted pov-

erty. Housing is considerably worse than that of most Americans, while unemployment and underemployment rates are exceedingly high (Snipp 1989: 96–126, 259). Linked to poverty are a variety of health and social problems. American Indians may be the least healthy ethnic group in the US. Their infant mortality rate is higher than the national average, and their life expectancy is 10 years shorter than that of most Americans. The community suffers from both extremely high suicide and homicide rates. Alcoholism is a serious problem, with the alcohol-related death rate registering at five times that of all other racial groups. Linked to this problem is fetal alcohol syndrome, which takes a major toll within the Indian community.

During the Reagan years, James Watt, the Secretary of the Department of Interior (in which the BIA is located) and extreme right-wing politician, contended that reservations were socialist and speculated about reviving the idea of termination. While this did not happen, nonetheless during the past two decades little serious effort has been undertaken by the federal government to improve the quality of life for American Indians while also helping in efforts aimed at cultural preservation. Meanwhile, the efforts of reservation leaders have met with only limited success. At present, economic development plans tend to revolve around establishing gambling casinos on reservation land (permissible because they are not bound by state laws regarding gambling) or using such lands for the disposal of hazardous wastes. Not surprisingly, both of these endeavors are controversial within the community and have contributed to significant internal conflict.

Given the economic and social problems on reservations, increasing numbers of people have left them for cities. Though the movement began in the 1950s, it has increased during the past two decades. Sizeable enclaves exist in such cities as Los Angeles, Chicago, Denver, San Francisco, Phoenix, and Minneapolis–St. Paul. Urban Indians are far more likely to intermarry – and indeed they have a high intermarriage rate. Moreover, though urban poverty exists, so do opportunities for economic improvement. Cities have been crucibles for both an emerging pan-Indian identity and for assimilation. For urban Indians, ethnic identity becomes more a matter of choice than is the case for counterparts on reservations. As a result, it appears that the future of the more upwardly mobile urban American Indians will likely be quite different from that of reservation dwellers.

The new immigrants

Between 1924 and 1965, immigration did not cease, but it ebbed considerably. Between 1931 and 1960, the total number of immigrants (which includes refugees during the Second World War and Displaced Persons in the war's immediate aftermath) was approximately 4,000,000. In other words,

the total during this three-decade period was less than half the 8,800,000 immigrants that arrived in the single decade between 1901 and 1910. As figure 1 indicates, it also stands in stark contrast to the levels reached in each of the decades from 1970 to century's end.

The resumption of mass immigration after 1965 was made possible by changes in US immigration laws. In the 1954 Immigration and Naturalization Act (McCarran-Walter Act), although the national-origins system was preserved, Asians and other groups excluded entirely by the 1924 Act were allowed to enter in small numbers. However, it was only with an amendment to the Immigration and Naturalization Act in 1965 ending the national-origins system that the way was paved for the current wave of immigration, which has been dominated by groups from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean. Each decade since its passage has witnessed a rise in immigration levels. The figure for legal immigration between 1971 and 1980 was 4,500,000. That figure rose in the next decade to 7,300,000. By 1997, the figure was 6,900,000 (US Census Bureau 1999: 10). According to Roger Waldinger and Jennifer Lee (2001: 32), "the intake during the century's last decade exceeded that in the first decade by 500,000."

The demographic impact of this new wave of immigration can be seen by considering the following facts. In terms of the sheer number of newcomers, the United States is at present the leading immigrant-receiving nation in the world. As a percentage of the total population, the foreign-born comprise 9.3 percent of the total population, a level the country has not seen since the early decades of twentieth century. However, this figure is lower than those registered at the dawn of the twentieth century because the overall population of the nation in the year 2000 was three times larger than it was a century earlier. Historically, European-origin whites made up a very large percentage of the overall population. In 1950, for example, the figure was 87 percent. While it is too early to speak, as some forecasters have, about the dawn of the "majority minority," it is certainly the case that racial minorities will constitute a larger part of the overall mix than at any other time.

In addition to the different points of origin of today's immigrants compared to those from the previous period of mass immigration, there are a number of other features that make this wave distinctive. In the first place, it is characterized by far lower levels of return migration. There are also far more undocumented or illegal immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and nonimmigrants who might become immigrants (such as tourists, foreign students, and temporary workers) than in the past (Zhou 2001: 204). Because the 1965 immigration law encouraged professionals to migrate, the number of middle-class or potentially middle-class immigrants is larger today compared to earlier periods (Kivisto 1993: 94). Finally, the origins of the new immigrants have had implications for the American religious landscape. On the one hand, given the fact that Latino groups are heavily Roman Catholic,

their presence has resulted in the growth of that religious community. On the other hand, due to the presence of Asians and Middle Easterners, three major world religions, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, are now making their presence felt (Warner & Wittner 1998).

The browning of the US

As figure 2 indicates, Latinos are by far the largest of the new immigrant pan-ethnic groups. Constituting 12.5 percent of the population today, depending on how one factors mixed-race people into the picture, the 2000 Census reports that the Latino population is either slightly larger or slightly smaller than the African American. What is clear is that they will soon replace African Americans as the largest racial minority if they have not already done so. Already in a number of cities, including some of the nation's largest, such as Los Angeles, Houston, and Phoenix, Latinos outnumber blacks. Mexicans are the largest of the Latino groups – with over 3,500,000 arriving between 1981 and 2000 – followed by Puerto Ricans and Cubans. Puerto Ricans, it should be noted, are not strictly speaking immigrants given the territorial status of the island. Since the political conflict between the US and Cuban governments makes the free flow of immigrants impossible, the Cuban population is not growing like other Latino groups. In addition to these groups, smaller numbers have arrived from various points in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Given the fact that Mexicans have a long history in the US, the Mexican American is by far the largest Latino group, and it is also by far the largest component of the new immigrants. Indeed, 66 percent of Latinos currently in the US are Mexican, compared to only 9 percent for Puerto Ricans, the second largest group (US Census Bureau 2001: 1).

The three largest Latino groups share many things in common besides a language, but they also exhibit important differences (Bean & Tienda 1987). The Mexican community is not only the largest, but because of its long history in the US, contains an extremely diverse population. It includes people who were in regions of what later became the United States long before the arrival of Anglos to the area, and also includes illegal immigrants who crossed the border today in search of work. Due to the permeability of the border, Mexicans frequently head for *El Norte* when political or economic conditions become difficult. They fled to the US in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution in 1910. Between 1942 and 1964 they were encouraged to work in US agricultural fields as contract laborers prohibited from seeking citizenship under the terms of the “bracero program.” Finally, since 1965 they have immigrated in increasingly large numbers (Gutierrez 1995).

A well-established ethnic community has existed for many decades and out of it have arisen political demands for an end to discrimination and a

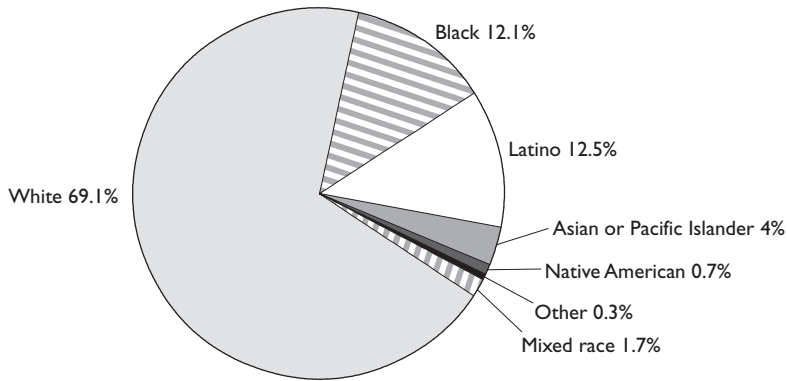


Figure 2 Ethnic groups in the US, 2000

Source: US Census Bureau 2001.

greater voice in social and political life. The Chicano politics of the 1960s promoted ethnic pride and entailed an assertive demand for improvements in economic and educational opportunities and greater political power in regions where Mexicans were highly concentrated (Gutierrez 1995; Rhea 1996). Mexicans were, for example, the most important ethnic group involved in the multi-ethnic coalition that made up the United Farm Workers movement. Given the prominent role they have played historically as agricultural workers, their role in this unionization campaign is not surprising. The militancy of the period ended by the mid-1970s, with mixed results in achieving their goals.

The poverty rate among Mexican Americans has risen since the mid-1980s. Today the group has a higher poverty rate than African Americans, and a higher than average unemployment rate (Blank 2001: 32). Economist George Borjas (2000: 15–49), a critic of current immigration policies, contends that this is the case in no small part because of the fact that there has been a decline in the human capital of more recent immigrants (with educational attainment levels being of particular importance for his argument). While not all scholars of the new wave of immigrants concur with this claim or concur with his position on immigration control, it is the case that the sheer number of recently arrived unskilled and comparatively poorly educated Mexicans who have not yet had time to gain a real foothold in the US economy can help account for this recent rise in poverty. Connected to this, Mexicans Americans have a high school dropout rate. Moreover, as with other disadvantaged groups, barrio residents confront a range of social problems, including the particularly destructive impact of gangs and drugs (Moore & Pinderhughes 1993).

On the other hand, the Mexican American middle class has grown – chiefly composed of third-generation ethnics and beyond. Thus, in a trend that parallels that of African Americans, this community too is increasingly bifurcated between a middle class moving into the mainstream and their poorer counterparts left behind in inner-city barrios. The middle class is likely to reside in suburbs and thus is spatially separated from the poor (Alba et al. 1999: 451). They are more likely to find careers in white-collar professions and to own their own businesses. In contrast, more recent arrivals are typically located in the bottom tier of the dual labor market, working in the garment industry, in service industries such as hotels and restaurants, and as agricultural laborers. In the Midwest, they constitute a key component of the workforce in the meat-packing industry, and as that industry has increasingly located operations in rural communities, their presence has transformed heretofore ethnically homogeneous communities in the agricultural heartland (Stull et al. 1992).

Given their geographic concentration in southwestern border states, Mexicans have become increasingly important politically. Both major parties have courted their vote (in the 2000 Presidential elections, both George W. Bush and Al Gore addressed Latino audiences in Spanish), although at the moment their allegiance remains firmly located in the Democratic Party. Efforts to mobilize Mexican American voters have produced notable successes at the ballot box as several thousand Mexican ethnics have been elected to various federal, state, and local offices. At the same time, they remain under-represented given their size in the overall population.

Turning to Puerto Ricans and Cubans offers a study in contrasts. Neither group has as long a history in the US as Mexicans have had. Although Puerto Ricans have been citizens of the US since 1917, large-scale movement from the island to the mainland did not begin until after the Second World War. Perhaps more than any other group, Puerto Ricans exhibit considerable “circular migration,” moving back and forth depending on where better economic opportunities present themselves at any particular moment (Fitzpatrick 1987). In the Cuban case, the exodus only really commenced with the installation of the revolutionary government of Fidel Castro in 1959 and with the decisions that led to it becoming a client state of the Soviet Union. Cubans entered the US in several distinct waves, in part of a cat-and-mouse game of international relations between the two nations: the “Golden Exiles” in the early 1960s, the “Freedom Flight” immigrants who arrived between 1965 and 1973, and the “Marielitos” in 1980 (Pedraza 1992). These represented distinctive immigrant waves characterized by considerably different levels of capital – financial, human, and social. Thus, the first wave consisted of the better off in Cuba who were hostile to communism, and thus were hailed as welcome refugees. In stark contrast, the Marielitos consisted of social undesirables, including convicts, that the Cuban regime

was glad to rid itself of, and which posed serious problems and resistance to their presence in the US.

Puerto Ricans are the poorest of the Latino groups, experiencing high levels of unemployment, underemployment, and welfare dependency. In New York City, many have found work in low-paying blue-collar jobs, especially in the service sector. Given their limited resources and relative lack of economic success, their ethnic community is more fragile and less institutionally complete than either the Mexican or Cuban (Fitzpatrick 1987). In contrast, the Cubans are the most economically successful Latino group, due largely to the fact that the earliest people to emigrate from Cuba came from the upper and middle classes and brought both financial resources and educational credentials that gave them a distinct advantage.

Cubans in Miami have created an ethnic enclave economy that has provided opportunities for entrepreneurial success. At the same, it has benefited Cuban workers, especially those with limited English-language abilities. The community has been quite cohesive and has been able to exert considerable political clout, especially in south Florida, where Cubans have aligned themselves – unlike other Latino groups – with the Republican Party. This was evident in the soap-opera drama that developed around Elián González. The older generation remains rooted in the ethnic community, still fighting an ideological war with the Castro regime. Younger Cuban Americans, by contrast, are moving out of the community at a growing rate. Among the American-born generations, English is generally the language of choice, they are less likely than the older generation to claim to have encountered discrimination, and they have a comparatively high level of educational attainment (Portes & Schauffler 1996; Rumbaut 1996).

While Latino groups share much in common, this brief overview also points to significant differences among groups, and thus to the difficulties involved in efforts to get particular nationality groups to begin to perceive themselves in more pan-ethnic terms. However, they do share one thing in common that makes them unique compared to earlier immigrants and to other contemporary immigrants: their overall size as a percentage of the immigrant population and their close proximity to their homelands. These two factors contribute to a situation that facilitates the development of transnational social spaces and the emergence of a regional cultural cosmos steeped in Latino culture.

Asians: strangers from a different shore

The Asian presence in the US has also grown dramatically during the past three decades. Collectively, Asian Americans are sometimes referred to as a “model minority” (Takaki 1989) because they have higher per capita incomes and educational attainment levels and lower levels of poverty than

other ethnic groups. Indeed, in many ways they appear at least on the surface to be doing better than whites. At the same time, they confront a variety of exclusionary policies and practices that prevent their full incorporation into the mainstream (Tuan 1998).

The largest Asian immigrant groups include Filipinos, Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and groups from the Indian subcontinent. Of these groups, only the Chinese had a significant presence before 1965 (along with the Japanese, who have in recent decades not been major contributors to the new immigration). Due to the combination of an earlier presence and substantial migration since 1970, the Chinese American community has grown dramatically. Not only have the old historic Chinatowns in major centers such as New York City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles experienced dramatic growth, but in addition new middle-class enclaves have arisen in places such as Monterey Park, California, which Timothy Fong (1994) has referred to as "the first suburban Chinatown." Thus, at present the Chinese constitute a diverse group, including on the one hand middle-class Chinese whose ancestors have been in the US for several generations, and on the other hand recent arrivals who do not speak English and who therefore are highly dependent on the powerful business interests that control Chinatowns. Thus, their circumstances bear a resemblance to those of Mexican Americans. Poorer new arrivals live in crowded Chinatowns, work long hours for low wages (often in Chinese-owned establishments), and confront a range of economic and social problems that make adjustment difficult. On the other hand, much of the middle class has chosen to live in the suburbs, where they no longer live in isolation from the larger society (Fong 1994).

In contrast to the Chinese, both the Filipino and Korean populations are overwhelmingly the result of the post-1965 immigration. Although people from a wide spectrum of Philippine society have emigrated to the US, a significant number are college-educated professionals, with a particularly large number having been trained in the health professions, including doctors, nurses, and pharmacists. As a result, despite the fact that it is typical to experience a sustained period of occupational precariousness as they adjust to the new society, many appear to be gaining an economic foothold. Women play a prominent role here insofar as most nurses are women, and it is estimated that over 50,000 Filipina nurses work in the US, representing over half of the total foreign-trained nurses (Fong 2000: 25). In part because Filipinos are divided along regional and dialect lines, and due to internal conflicts over homeland politics, a powerful and coherent ethnic community has not evolved. This has accentuated the gulf between the first and second generations. The American-born generation that is currently coming of age tends to be quite acculturated and exhibits far less interest in the politics and culture of the homeland than is the case with their parents (Tizon 1999).

Korean immigrants differ from the vast majority of the Korean population in two respects. First, they are overwhelmingly Christian in a nation where the vast majority of people are Buddhist. Second, a substantial number are educated white-collar professionals. These cultural and economic factors contribute in part to the fact that despite the relatively short time they have been in the US, Koreans are, comparatively speaking, doing quite well. They have an especially high level of self-employment. Many own small family-run businesses, such as grocery stores, fruit stands, flower shops, repair shops, liquor stores, and clothing stores. Though a partial explanation for this entrepreneurial activity, scholars are divided over the extent to which recent arrivals have managed to get into business by relying on *Kye*, which are revolving credit associations within the Korean community (Min 1996: 102; Light & Gold 2000: 114, 255). Many Korean businesses are located in inner-city black neighborhoods, and as a consequence considerable tension has developed between blacks and Koreans. In the 1992 Los Angeles riot, Korean stores were targeted by rioters, resulting in the destruction of more than 1,000 Korean-owned businesses at a price tag of over \$300,000,000 (Min 1996; Abelmann & Lie 1995). Korean Americans place a premium on education as a means for their children to become economically successful. Thus, it is quite clear that they do not wish that their offspring continue in family-owned businesses, but instead want them to enter the world of the professional classes.

Collectively, although Asian Americans are a distinct numerical minority, their presence has become more consequential in recent decades, especially on the west coast and in major urban settlements elsewhere such as New York City and Chicago. Thus, the Korean shopkeepers noted above, Chinese workers in the garment industry, and many Asian students in colleges and universities are perceived by some members of other groups as a competitive threat. On the other hand, Asian Americans have been held up as a model of success. Without downplaying their genuine achievements, two points are in order. First, as Deborah Woo (1999) has made clear, it is important to disaggregate data on Asians, since some groups do far better than others, and some within particular groups do far better than others within the same group. As an example of the former, one need only point to the Vietnamese (and other southeast Asians) to find groups that lag behind the others economically and suffer from relatively high levels of poverty. Regarding the former, the Chinese community is divided between those making it and those left in impoverished circumstances in Chinatowns, which are beset with a variety of social problems, including those associated with gangs and drugs. Second, the term "model minority" is often used to make invidious comparisons between the Asian success story and the failures and presumed personal shortcomings of blacks, Latinos, and American Indians. The message amounts to a form of blaming the victim, suggesting that if

only these groups could emulate the work ethic and family values of the model minority, they too would be successful (Takaki 1989: 474–84).

Immigrant futures

What are the implications of the presence of the new immigrants taken as a whole for America? Reciprocally, what kinds of futures can the new arrivals expect for themselves and their children? Will the heirs of the new immigrants follow paths of inclusion that parallel the paths of earlier waves of immigrants? These are difficult questions to answer for two reasons. In the first place, the sheer diversity of the new immigrant groups makes generalizations difficult. Cultural differences, class differences, variations in the possession of cultural and social capital, the presence or lack of a preexisting ethnic community, and so forth make for marked differences among the newcomers. Second, since the second generation is only now coming of age, social scientists must be circumspect in drawing comparisons between the immigrants of today and those of yesterday (Portes & Zhou 1993; Perlman & Waldinger 1999; Portes & Rumbaut 2001). Third, there is a need to consider the shifting character of the nation's racialized ethnicity.

The economy is considerably different today from the past. While immigrants in the early twentieth century entered a capitalist economy characterized by a burgeoning manufacturing sector, today's advanced capitalist economy has substantially restricted the role of manufacturing. Instead, the two areas where major job creation has occurred are in the service sector and in the technology sector. The demand for unskilled labor is high in both sectors, while the latter also exhibits a high demand for skilled labor. Thus, present economic conditions provide opportunities at both the lowest and the higher tiers of the economy. Low-paying jobs are available to the majority of immigrants, especially if American workers do not want them, while for a more elite sector of immigrants, who arrive with high levels of human capital, rapid entrée into the middle class is possible.

The impact of recent immigrant is uneven. Around three-quarters of all new immigrants have settled in six states: California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey. The distinctiveness of California should not be underestimated, as it has become home to over a third of all new immigrants (Tienda 1999: 132). It's not surprising that in this state the battle over whether or not to keep the doors open is most intense. Thus, political controversies over Proposition 187, bilingual education, and affirmative action in the state's public universities reflect the divisiveness resulting from current levels of immigration. It is also here that the new racial faultlines are most evident. The 1992 Los Angeles race riot has been described as the nation's "first multiethnic riot." As with the Watts riot in

1965, blacks were pitted against whites; however, unlike that earlier riot, Latinos and Asians were also involved (Sears 1994). Of particular importance was the conflict between blacks and Koreans, the latter often finding their businesses being targeted for attack (Abelmann & Lie 1995; Min 1996).

Drawing larger conclusions about the future of the salience of ethnicity and the nature of interethnic relations must be done circumspectly. However, what does appear to be the case is that the new immigrants have recast the nation's racialized ethnic landscape. Whereas in the past, the racial divide was defined in terms of whites and nonwhites, Peter Rose (1997) has suggested that in the future the racial faultline might be between blacks and nonblacks. One reason for this is that while the nation as a whole benefits from the presence of the new immigrants, blacks do not (Bean & Bell-Rose 1999; Borjas 2000). In fact, especially for unskilled workers, the competition for jobs has intensified and blacks have been the net losers while the immigrants are the net winners. Although Latinos have at the moment replaced blacks as the nation's poorest group, this is in no small part due to the fact that there are so many young new arrivals just getting a foothold in the economy. What this means in terms of a recasting of racial identities is uncertain. Will Asians – the so-called “model minority” – become white the way the Irish, southern Europeans, and eastern Europeans did? What about Latinos, who in terms of indices of economic and educational success are closer to blacks than whites or Asians? What are the chances that they will become white? If both pan-ethnic groups do become white, what does this mean for the two groups with the longest legacies of exclusion, blacks and American Indians?

Are the new immigrants following the trajectories of inclusion of earlier immigrants? Are they assimilating? In terms of such indices as home ownership, citizenship, learning English, intermarriage, and acculturation of values, it appears that the experience of today's immigrants and their children is in many respects comparable to that of earlier generations of immigrants (*Economist* 2000a: 13). Nonetheless, there are also salient differences reflecting a new historical moment. Richard Alba (1998: 18–24) has suggested that post-1965 immigrants may be exhibiting a new path to inclusion distinct from the older notion of assimilation. One such difference can be seen in what Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1993) refer to as “segmented assimilation.” As I noted in chapter 1, in this scenario some immigrants become acculturated into mainstream values and behaviors, while others become acculturated into the adversarial culture of impoverished groups. This bifurcation results from what they describe as an “hourglass economy” in which those entering its bottom tiers find themselves confronting a bottleneck preventing upward mobility. Thus, the future is one of considerable complexity and uncertainty.

Toward a Transnational America?

What has been the impact of the new racial formation – the new racial pentagon – on what it means to be an American and on the continued efficacy of the melting-pot image? For one thing, the melting pot as an ideal has been rejected by many, and in its place has arisen the vision of the US as a multicultural nation. This vision, harking back to Horace Kallen's (1924) earlier cultural pluralist vision, valorizes the preservation of ethnic group identities. However, despite the fear of some critics of multiculturalism that it will lead to the "disuniting of America" (Schlesinger 1992), there is abundant evidence to suggest that assimilation is occurring. Nathan Glazer (1997: 119) describes assimilation today in the following way: "The word may be dead, the concept may be disreputable, but the reality continues to flourish." At the same time, however, he proclaims, "we are all multiculturalists now."

It is clear that many European-origin ethnics, despite the abundant evidence of assimilation, nonetheless are intent on preserving vestiges of their ethnic identities long into the future. For them, assimilation is not perceived to entail the deracination of ethnic identity, but instead allows for the possibility that one can be fully American while maintaining a distinctive ethnic identity. Similarly, many new immigrants reject the old melting-pot ideal of the 100-percent American. But more than that, they also reject the idea of the hyphenated American. Instead, they are opting to be "ampersand Americans" (*Economist* 2000: 13). In other words, they are embracing transnational identities in which they seek to become an American while also preserving the homeland identity: American and Mexican, American and Chinese, and so forth. Some are interested in the possibility of obtaining dual citizenships. Many more remain actively involved in their homelands, often by maintaining the ties of kinship and friendship, but also by remaining involved politically, economically, and culturally in the larger homeland society (Levitt 2001). For Mexicans and other Latinos, transnationalism is aided by geographic proximity that makes frequent trips home feasible. For other groups, those within the groups with sufficient social and human capital are able to become global villagers by taking advantage of communication technologies and the relative ease of travel in order to forge transnational identities (Portes 1996). Whether in the long run – when the third and beyond generations come of age – this will prove to be a permanent and distinctive feature of the new immigration, or a transition along the road to an incorporation much like that encountered by earlier waves of immigrants, remains an open question.

Voluntary ethnics and their offspring have choices about, as Glazer (1997: 120) puts it, "how they will define their place in American society." This, he goes on to observe, makes the case of African Americans (and, I would also

add, American Indians) unique. These two groups, simply, have less latitude in terms of choice-making as the politics of exclusion continues to impact their lives to a greater extent than it does for other groups. To the extent that they live lives separate from the larger society – be it in a hypersegregated ghetto or on an isolated reservation – they inhabit a multicultural world whether they want to or not.

In this general context, what might be emerging is what Randolph Bourne (1977), writing at around the same time as Horace Kallen, called “transnational America.” By this he meant an America open to the influence of distinctive ethnic identities. Whereas Kallen’s pluralism and some versions of multiculturalism tend to treat ethnic identities and the core national culture as fixed and distinct, Bourne had a more dynamic view in mind, one that expected that ethnic groups would change as a result of their encounter with the larger American society. It also assumed, however, that American society would be transformed in positive ways by this encounter insofar as the core culture was subject to a constant process of reinvention. In a society that is today more open to diversity than it was during Bourne’s lifetime, it might well be that a transnational America is in the making. However, it is certain that such a development will meet resistance and the outcome cannot be predicted.

As the next chapter – which turns to two other major settler nations, Canada and Australia – will show, this is not a phenomenon unique to the US. Indeed, these two nations have also become multicultural in recent decades and have begun to rethink what it means to be, respectively, Canadian and Australian. However, quite unlike the US, the national governments in both countries have played active roles in defining and advancing the cause of inclusion and multiculturalism.