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2

ASSIMILATION AND PLURALISM

From Immigrants to White Ethnics

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Wikipedia

timeline

1826
German Jews begin entering the U.S. By 1850, the Jewish population had risen from 6,000 to 50,000. Ten years later the population is 150,000.

1845–1852
Irish potato famine leads to mass immigration to the U.S.

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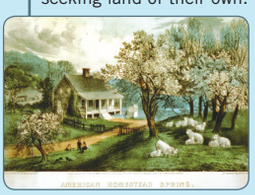
1848
Serfdom ends in parts of Europe, freeing many peasants to move to the U.S.

1854
The Know-Nothings, a nativist political party seeking to restrict immigration, win significant victories in Congress, a sign of popular dissatisfaction with growing immigration from Catholic Ireland.

LOC

1862
The Homestead Act provides free plots of western land to settlers, spurring an influx of immigrants from Europe seeking land of their own.



LOC

1881–1885
1 million Germans immigrate to the U.S.

1820 1830 1840 1850 1860 1870 1880

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We have room for but one flag, the American flag . . . We have room for but one language and that is the English language . . . and we have room for but one loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people.

—Theodore Roosevelt,
26th president of the United States, 1907

If we lose our language [Ojibwa] . . . , I think, something more will be lost. . . . We will lose something personal. . . . We will lose our sense of ourselves and our culture. . . . We will lose beauty—the beauty of the particular, the beauty of the past and the intricacies of a language tailored for our space in the world. That Native American cultures are imperiled is important and not just to Indians. . . . When we lose cultures, we lose American plurality—the productive and lovely discomfort that true difference brings.

—David Treuer (2012, pp. 304–305)

Welcome to America. Now, speak English.

—Bumper sticker, 2013

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- **2.1** Explain and analyze the concepts of assimilation and pluralism, including the "traditional" model of assimilation.
- **2.2** List and explain other group relationships.
- **2.3** Describe the timing, causes, and volume of the migration from Europe, and explain how those immigrants became "white ethnics."
- **2.4** Explain the patterns of assimilation and the major variations in those patterns.
- **2.5** Describe the status of the descendants of European immigrants today, including the "twilight of white ethnicity."
- **2.6** Explain how the traditional model of assimilation does or does not apply to contemporary immigrants.

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1890
The demographic trends in immigration shift as immigration from southern and eastern Europe substantially increases, while the relative proportion of immigration from northern and western Europe begins to decrease.

1917
The U.S. enters World War I with anti-German sentiment rising at home.

1948
The Displaced Persons Act opens American doors to more than 200,000 Europeans who could not return to their homes after World War II.

1980–2000
Economic turmoil in the Soviet Union leads to a massive exodus of Russian and Ukrainian Jews. More than 200,000 eventually settle in the U.S.

1895 1910 1925 1940 1955 1970 1985 2000

1881–1920
2 million Eastern European Jews immigrate to the U.S.

LOC

1911
The Dillingham Commission publishes a report warning that the "new" immigration from southern and eastern Europe threatens to subvert American society.

1911–1920
2 million Italians immigrate to the U.S.

LOC

1924
The Johnson–Reed Act limits annual European immigration to 2% of the number of people from that country living in the U.S. in 1890. The act greatly reduces immigration from southern and eastern European nationalities that had only small populations in the U.S. in 1890.

1965
The Hart-Celler Act produces major changes in patterns of immigration to the U.S., eventually reducing the percentage of immigrants from Europe.

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More than 300 different languages are spoken in the United States today, including more than 150 different American Indian languages. Most are spoken by relatively few people, but the sheer number of languages suggests the dimensions of contemporary American diversity.

Does this multiplicity of languages and cultures bring confusion and inefficiency? Does it enrich everyday life and spark creativity? Does it really matter if a language disappears and we lose the "lovely discomfort" of difference?

These are some of the questions Americans (and the citizens of many other nations) must ask as we confront the issues of inclusion and diversity. Should we encourage groups to retain their unique cultural heritage, including their language, or should we stress unity and conformity? How have these issues been addressed in the past? How should we approach them in the future? •

This chapter continues to look at the ways ethnic and racial groups in the United States relate to one another. Two concepts, assimilation and pluralism, are at the core of the discussion. Each includes a variety of possible group relations and pathways along which group relations might develop.

Assimilation is a process in which formerly distinct and separate groups come to share a common culture and merge together socially. As a society undergoes assimilation, differences among groups decrease. **Pluralism**, on the other hand, exists when groups maintain their individual identities. In a pluralistic society, groups remain separate, and their cultural and social differences persist over time.

In some ways, assimilation and pluralism are contrary processes, but they are not mutually exclusive. They may occur together in a variety of combinations within a particular society or group. Some groups in a society may be assimilating as others are maintaining (or even increasing) their differences. As we shall see in Part III, virtually every minority group in the United States has, at any given time, some members who are assimilating and others who are preserving or reviving traditional cultures. Some Native Americans, for example, are pluralistic. They live on or near reservations, are strongly connected to their heritage, and speak their native language. Other Native Americans are very much assimilated into the dominant society: They live in urban areas, speak English only, and know relatively little about their traditional cultures. Both assimilation and pluralism are important forces in the everyday lives of Native Americans and most other minority-group members.

Assimilation is a process in which separate groups come to share a common culture and merge together socially.

In **pluralism**, groups maintain separate identities, cultures, and organizational structures.

American sociologists have been very concerned with these processes, especially assimilation. This concern was stimulated by the massive migration from Europe to the United States that occurred between the 1820s and the 1920s. More than 31 million people crossed the Atlantic during this time, and a great deal of energy has been devoted to documenting, describing, and understanding the experiences of these immigrants and their descendants. These efforts have resulted in the development of a rich and complex literature that we will refer to as the "traditional" perspective on how newcomers are incorporated in U.S. society.

This chapter begins with a consideration of the "traditional" perspective on both assimilation and pluralism, and a brief examination of several other possible group relationships. The traditional perspective will then be applied to European immigrants and their descendants, and we will develop a model of American assimilation based on these experiences. This model will be used in our analysis of other minority groups throughout the text and especially in Part III.

Since the 1960s, the United States has been experiencing a second mass immigration, and a particularly important issue now is whether the theories, concepts, and models based on the first mass immigration to the United States (from the 1820s to the 1920s) apply to this wave. The newest arrivals differ in many ways from those who came earlier, and ideas and theories based on the earlier experiences will not necessarily apply to the present. We will briefly note some of the issues in this chapter and explore them in more detail in the case study chapters in Part III.

Finally, at the end of this chapter, we will briefly consider the implications of these first two chapters for the exploration of intergroup relations. By the end of this chapter, you will be familiar with many of the concepts that will guide us throughout this text as we examine the variety of possible dominant–minority group situations and the directions our society (and the groups within it) can take.

ASSIMILATION

We begin with assimilation because the emphasis in U.S. group relations has historically been on this goal rather than on pluralism. This section presents some of the most important sociological theories and concepts that have been used to describe and analyze the assimilation of the 19th-century immigrants from Europe.

TYPES OF ASSIMILATION

Assimilation is a general term for a process that can follow a number of different pathways. One form of assimilation is

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The melting pot has been a popular and powerful image for Americans.

expressed in the metaphor of the **melting pot**, a process in which different groups come together and contribute in roughly equal amounts to create a common culture and a new, unique society. People often think of the American experience of assimilation in these terms. This view stresses the ways diverse peoples helped construct U.S. society and made contributions to American culture. The melting-pot metaphor sees assimilation as benign and egalitarian, a process that emphasizes sharing and inclusion.

Although it is a powerful image in our society, the melting pot is not an accurate description of how assimilation actually proceeded for American minority groups (Abrahamson, 1980, pp. 152–154). Some groups—especially the racial minority groups—have been largely excluded from the "melting" process. Furthermore, the melting-pot brew has had a distinctly Anglocentric flavor: "For better or worse, the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition was for two centuries—and in crucial respects still is—the dominant influence on American culture and society" (Schlesinger, 1992, p. 28).

Contrary to the melting-pot image, assimilation in the United States generally has been a coercive and largely one-sided process better described by the terms **Americanization** or **Anglo-conformity**. Rather than an equal sharing of elements and a gradual blending of diverse peoples, assimilation in the United States was designed to maintain the predominance of the English language and the British-type institutional patterns created during the early years of American society.

The stress on Anglo-conformity is clearly reflected in the quote from President Roosevelt that opens this chapter. Many Americans today agree with Roosevelt: 77% of respondents in a recent survey—the overwhelming majority—agreed that "the United States should require immigrants to be proficient in English as a condition of remaining in the U.S." Interestingly, about 60% of Hispanic Americans (vs. 80% of non-Hispanic whites and 76% of blacks) also agreed with this statement (Carroll, 2007). We should note that the apparent agreement between whites and Hispanics on the need for immigrants to learn English may flow from very different orientations and motivations. For some whites, the response may mix prejudice and contempt with support for Americanization, while the Hispanic responses may be based on direct experience with the difficulties of negotiating the monolingual institutions of American society.

Under Anglo-conformity, immigrant and minority groups are expected to adapt to Anglo-American culture as a precondition to acceptance and access to better jobs, education, and other opportunities. Assimilation has meant that minority groups have had to give up their traditions and adopt Anglo-American culture. To be sure, many groups and individuals were (and continue to be) eager to undergo Anglo-conformity, even if it meant losing much or all of their heritage. For other groups, Americanization creates conflict, anxiety, demoralization, and resentment. We assess these varied reactions in our examination of America's minority groups in Part III.

THE "TRADITIONAL" PERSPECTIVE ON ASSIMILATION: THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

American sociologists have developed a rich body of theories and concepts based on the assimilation experiences of the immigrants who came from Europe during the 1820s to the 1920s, and we shall refer to this body of work as the traditional perspective on assimilation. As you will see, the scholars working in this tradition have made invaluable contributions, and their thinking is impressively complex and comprehensive. This does not mean, of course, that they have exhausted the

The **melting pot** is a type of assimilation in which all groups contribute in roughly equal amounts to a new culture and society.

Americanization (or **Anglo-conformity**) is a type of assimilation in which groups are pressured to conform to Anglo-American culture.

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possibilities or answered (or asked) all the questions. Theorists working in the pluralist tradition and contemporary scholars studying the experiences of more recent immigrants have questioned many aspects of traditional assimilation theory and have made a number of important contributions of their own.

Robert Park. Many theories of assimilation are grounded in the work of Robert Park. He was one of a group of scholars who had a major hand in establishing sociology as a discipline in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. Park felt that intergroup relations go through a predictable set of phases that he called a **race relations cycle**. When groups first come into contact (through immigration, conquest, etc.), relations are conflictual and competitive. Eventually, however, the process, or cycle, moves toward assimilation, or the "interpenetration and fusion" of groups (Park & Burgess, 1924, p. 735).

Park argued further that assimilation is inevitable in a democratic and industrial society. In a political system based on democracy, fairness, and impartial justice, all groups will eventually secure equal treatment under the law. In an industrial economy, people tend to be judged on rational grounds—that is, on the basis of their abilities and talents—and not by ethnicity or race. Park believed that as American society continued to modernize, urbanize, and industrialize, ethnic and racial groups would gradually lose their importance. The boundaries between groups would eventually dissolve, and a more "rational" and unified society would emerge (see also Geschwender, 1978, pp. 19–32; Hirschman, 1983).

Social scientists have examined, analyzed, and criticized Park's conclusions for years. One frequently voiced criticism is that he did not specify a time frame for the completion of assimilation, and therefore his idea that assimilation is "inevitable" cannot be tested. Until the exact point in time when assimilation is deemed complete, we will not know whether the theory is wrong or whether we just have not waited long enough.

An additional criticism of Park's theory is that he does not describe the nature of the assimilation process in much detail. How would assimilation proceed? How would everyday life change? Which aspects of the group would change first?

Milton Gordon. To clarify some of the issues Park left unresolved, we turn to the works of sociologist Milton Gordon, who made a major contribution to theories of assimilation in his book *Assimilation in American Life* (1964). Gordon broke down the overall process of assimilation into seven subprocesses; we will focus on the first three. Before considering these phases of assimilation, however, we need to consider some new concepts and terms.

Gordon makes a distinction between the cultural and the structural components of society. **Culture** encompasses all aspects of the way of life associated with a group of people. It includes language, religious beliefs, customs and rules of etiquette, and the values and ideas people use to organize their lives and interpret their existence. The **social structure**, or structural components of a society, includes networks of social relationships, groups, organizations, stratification systems, communities, and families. The social structure organizes the work of the society and connects individuals to one another and to the larger society.

It is common in sociology to separate the social structure into primary and secondary sectors. The **primary sector** includes interpersonal relationships that are intimate and personal, such as families and groups of friends. Groups in the primary sector are small. The **secondary sector** consists of groups and organizations that are more public, task oriented, and impersonal. Organizations in the secondary sector are often very large and include businesses, factories, schools and colleges, and bureaucracies.

Now we can examine Gordon's earliest stages of assimilation, which are summarized in Table 2.1.

1. **Acculturation** or **cultural assimilation.** Members of the minority group learn the culture of the dominant group. For groups that immigrate to the United States, acculturation to the dominant Anglo-American culture may include (as necessary) learning the English language, changing eating habits, adopting new value systems and new gender roles, and altering the spelling of the family surname.
2. **Integration** or **structural assimilation.** The minority group enters the social structure of the larger society. Integration typically begins in the secondary sector and gradually moves into the primary sector. That is, before

The **race relations cycle** is the concept that there will be a predictable cycle of group relations, from conflict to eventual assimilation.

Culture includes all aspects of the way of life of a group of people, including beliefs, values, technology, and many other components.

Social structure is the networks of relationships, groups, organizations, and institutions that organize work and connect individuals to one another.

The **primary sector** of a social structure consists of close, intimate relations.

The **secondary sector** of a social structure consists of impersonal, goal-oriented relations.

Acculturation or **cultural assimilation** is the process by which one group learns the culture of another.

Integration or **structural assimilation** is the process by which a group enters the social structure of the larger society.

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TABLE 2.1 Gordon's Stages of Assimilation

STAGE	PROCESS
1. Acculturation	The group learns the culture of the dominant group, including language and values.
2. Integration (structural assimilation)	
a. At the secondary level	Members of the group enter the public institutions and organizations of the dominant society.
b. At the primary level	Members of the group enter the cliques, clubs, and friendship groups of the dominant society.
3. Intermarriage (marital assimilation)	Members of the group marry with members of the dominant society on a large scale.

SOURCE: Adapted from Gordon (1964, p. 71).

people can form friendships with members of other groups (integration into the primary sector), they must first become acquaintances. The initial contact between groups often occurs in public institutions such as schools and workplaces (integration into the secondary sector). The greater their integration into the secondary sector, the more nearly equal the minority group will be to the dominant group in income, education, and occupational prestige. Once a group has entered the institutions and public sectors of the larger society, according to Gordon, integration into the primary sector and the other stages of assimilation will follow inevitably (although not necessarily quickly). Measures of integration into the primary sector include the extent to which people have acquaintances, close friends, or neighbors from other groups.

3. **Intermarriage or marital assimilation.** When integration into the primary sector becomes substantial, the basis for Gordon's third stage of assimilation is established. People are most likely to select spouses from among their primary relations, and thus, in Gordon's view, primary structural integration typically precedes intermarriage.

Gordon argued that acculturation was a prerequisite for integration. Given the stress on Anglo-conformity, a member of an immigrant or minority group would not be able to compete for jobs or other opportunities in the secondary sector of the social structure until he or she had learned the dominant group's culture. Gordon recognized, however, that successful acculturation does not automatically ensure that a group will begin the integration phase. The dominant group may still exclude the minority group from its institutions and limit the opportunities available to them. Gordon argued that "acculturation without integration" (or Americanization without equality) is a common situation in the United States for many minority groups, especially the racial minority groups.

In Gordon's theory, movement from acculturation to integration is the crucial step in the assimilation process. Once that step is taken, all the other subprocesses will occur inevitably, although movement through the stages can be very slow. Gordon's idea that assimilation runs a certain course in a certain order echoes Park's conclusion regarding the inevitability of the process.

More than 50 years after Gordon published his analysis of assimilation, some of his conclusions have been called into question. For example, the individual subprocesses of assimilation that Gordon saw as linked in a certain order are often found to occur independently of one another (Yinger, 1985, p. 154). A group may integrate before acculturating or combine the subprocesses in other ways. Also, many researchers no longer think of the process of assimilation as necessarily linear or one-way (Greeley, 1974). Groups (or segments thereof) may "reverse direction" and become less assimilated over time, revive their traditional cultures, relearn their old language, or revitalize ethnic organizations or associations.

Nonetheless, Gordon's overall model continues to guide our understanding of the process of assimilation, to the point that a large part of the research agenda for contemporary studies of immigrants involves assessment of the extent to which their experiences can be described in Gordon's terms (Alba & Nee, 1997). In fact, Gordon's model will provide a major organizational framework for the case study chapters presented in Part III of this text.

Human Capital Theory. Why did some European immigrant groups acculturate and integrate more rapidly than others? Although not a theory of assimilation per se, **human capital theory** offers one possible answer to this question. This theory argues that status attainment, or the level of success achieved by an individual in society, is a direct result of educational levels, personal values and skills, and other individual characteristics and abilities. Education is seen as an investment in human capital, not unlike the investment a business might make in machinery or new technology. The greater the investment in a person's human capital, the higher the probability of success. Blau and Duncan (1967), in their pioneering

Intermarriage or **marital assimilation** is marriage between members of different groups.

Human capital theory is the view that upward mobility is a direct result of effort, personal values and skills, and investment in education.

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statement of status attainment theory, found that even the relative advantage conferred by having a high-status father is largely mediated through education. In other words, high levels of affluence and occupational prestige are not so much a result of being born into a privileged status as they are the result of the superior education that affluence makes possible.

Why did some immigrant groups achieve upward mobility more rapidly than others? Human capital theory answers questions such as these in terms of the resources and cultural characteristics of the members of the groups, especially their levels of education and familiarity with English. Success is seen as a direct result of individual effort and the wise investment of personal resources. People or groups who fail have not tried hard enough, have not made the right kinds of educational investments, or have values or habits that limit their ability to compete.

More than most sociological theories, human capital theory is quite consistent with traditional American culture and values. Both tend to see success as an individual phenomenon—a reward for hard work, sustained effort, and good character. Both tend to assume that success is equally available to all and that the larger society is open and neutral in its distribution of rewards and opportunity. Both tend to see assimilation as a highly desirable, benign process that blends diverse peoples and cultures into a strong, unified whole. Thus, people or groups that resist Americanization or question its benefits are seen as threatening or illegitimate.

On one level, human capital theory is an important theory of success and upward mobility, and we will on occasion use the theory to analyze the experiences of minority and immigrant groups. On another level, the theory is so resonant with American "commonsensical" views of success and failure that we may tend to use it uncritically.

A final judgment on the validity of the theory will be more appropriately made at the end of the text, but you should be aware of the theory's major limitations from the beginning. First of all, as an explanation of minority-group experience, human capital theory is not so much "wrong" as it is incomplete. In other words, it does not take account of all the factors that affect mobility and assimilation. Second, as we shall see, the assumption that U.S. society is equally open and fair to all groups is simply wrong. We will point out other strengths and limitations of this perspective as we move through the text.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What are the limitations of the melting-pot view of assimilation?
2. Why does Gordon place acculturation as the first step in the process of assimilation? Could one of the other stages occur first? Why or why not?
3. What does human capital theory leave out? In what ways is it consistent with American values?

PLURALISM

Sociological discussions of pluralism often begin with a consideration of the work of Horace Kallen. In articles published in *The Nation* magazine in 1915, Kallen argued that people should not have to surrender their culture and traditions to become full participants in American society. He rejected the Anglo-conformist, assimilationist model and contended that the existence of separate ethnic groups, even with separate cultures, religions, and languages, was consistent with democracy and other core American values. In Gordon's terms, Kallen believed that integration and equality were possible without extensive acculturation and that American society could be a federation of diverse groups, a mosaic of harmonious and interdependent cultures and peoples (Kallen, 1915a, 1915b; see also Abrahamson, 1980; Gleason, 1980).

Assimilation has been such a powerful theme in U.S. history that in the decades following the publication of Kallen's analysis, support for pluralism remained somewhat marginalized. In more recent decades, however, interest in pluralism and ethnic diversity has increased, in part because the assimilation predicted by Park (and implicit in the conventional wisdom of many Americans) has not fully materialized. Perhaps we simply have not waited long enough, but as the 21st century unfolds, distinctions among the racial minority groups in our society show few signs of disappearing, and, in fact, some members of these groups are questioning the desirability of assimilation. Also, more surprising perhaps, white ethnicity maintains a stubborn persistence, although it continues to change in form and decrease in strength.

An additional reason for the growing interest in pluralism, no doubt, is the everyday reality of the increasing diversity of U.S. society, as reflected in Figure 1.1. Controversies over issues such as "English-only" policies, bilingual education, and welfare rights for immigrants are common and often bitter. Many Americans feel that diversity or pluralism has exceeded acceptable limits and that the unity of the nation is at risk (e.g., visit www.us-english.org/, the home page of a group that advocates for English-only legislation).

Finally, interest in pluralism and ethnicity in general has been stimulated by developments around the globe. Several nation-states have disintegrated into smaller units based on language, culture, race, and ethnicity. Recent events in the Middle East, China, Eastern Europe, the former USSR, Canada, and Africa, just to mention a few, have provided dramatic and often tragic evidence of how ethnic identities and enmities can persist across decades or even centuries of submergence and suppression in larger national units.

In contemporary debates, discussions of diversity and pluralism are often couched in the language of **multiculturalism**, a general term for a variety of programs and ideas

Multiculturalism is a general term for pluralistic views that stress inclusion, mutual respect, and a celebration of group diversity.

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that stress mutual respect for all groups and for the multiple heritages that have shaped the United States. Some aspects of multiculturalism are controversial and have evoked strong opposition. In many ways, however, these debates merely echo a recurring argument about the character of American society, a debate that will be revisited throughout this text.

TYPES OF PLURALISM

We can distinguish various types of pluralism by using some of the concepts introduced in the discussion of assimilation. **Cultural pluralism** exists when groups have not acculturated and each maintains its own identity. The groups might speak different languages, practice different religions, and have different value systems. The groups are part of the same society and might even live in adjacent areas, but in some ways, they live in different worlds. Many Native Americans are culturally pluralistic, maintaining their traditional languages and cultures and living on isolated reservations. The Amish, a religious community sometimes called the Pennsylvania Dutch, are also a culturally pluralistic group. They are committed to a way of life organized around farming, and they maintain a culture and an institutional life that is separate from the dominant culture (see Hostetler, 1980; Kephart & Zellner, 1994; Kraybill & Bowman, 2001).

Following Gordon's subprocesses, a second type of pluralism exists when a group has acculturated but not integrated. That is, the group has adopted the Anglo-American culture but does not have full and equal access to the institutions of the larger society. In this situation, called **structural pluralism**, cultural differences are minimal, but the groups occupy different locations in the social structure. The groups may speak with the same accent, eat the same food, pursue the same goals, and subscribe to the same values, but they may also maintain separate organizational systems, including different churches, clubs, schools, and neighborhoods.

Under structural pluralism, groups practice a common culture but do so in different places and with minimal interaction across group boundaries. An example of structural pluralism can be found on any Sunday morning in the Christian churches of the United States, where local parishes are often identified with specific ethnic groups or races. What happens in the various churches—the rituals, expressions of faith, statements of core values and beliefs—is similar and expresses a common, shared culture. Structurally, however, this common culture is expressed in separate buildings and by separate congregations.

A third type of pluralism reverses the order of Gordon's first two phases: integration without acculturation. This situation is exemplified by a group that has had some material success (measured by wealth or income, for example) but has not become Americanized (learned English, adopted American values and norms, etc.). Some immigrant groups have found niches in American society in which they can survive and occasionally prosper economically without acculturating very much.

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Mulberry Street, New York City, around 1900, a bustling marketplace for Italian immigrants.

Two different situations can be used to illustrate this pattern. An **enclave minority group** establishes its own neighborhood and relies on a set of interconnected businesses, each of which is usually small in scope, for its economic survival. Some of these businesses serve the group, whereas others serve the larger society. The Cuban American community in South Florida and Chinatowns in many larger American cities are examples of ethnic enclaves.

A similar pattern of adjustment, the **middleman minority group**, also relies on small shops and retail firms, but the businesses are more dispersed throughout a large area rather than concentrated in a specific locale. Some Chinese American communities fit this second pattern, as do Korean American greengroceries and Indian American–owned motels (Portes & Manning, 1986). These types of minority groups are discussed further in Part III.

The economic success of enclave and middleman minorities is partly due to the strong ties of cooperation and mutual aid within their groups. The ties are based, in turn, on cultural bonds that would weaken if acculturation took

Under **cultural pluralism**, groups have not acculturated or integrated and each maintains a distinct identity.

Under **structural pluralism**, a group has acculturated but not integrated.

An **enclave minority group** establishes its own neighborhood and relies on a set of interconnected businesses for economic survival.

A **middleman minority group** relies on interconnected businesses, dispersed throughout a community, for economic survival.

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place. In contrast with Gordon's idea that acculturation is a prerequisite to integration, whatever success these groups enjoy is due in part to the fact that they have not Americanized. Kim Park, whom we met in the first chapter, is willing to work in his uncle's grocery store for room and board and the opportunity to learn the business. His willingness to forgo a salary and subordinate his individual needs to the needs of the group reflects the strength of his relationship to family and kin. At various times and places, Jewish, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Cuban Americans have been enclave or middleman minorities (see Bonacich & Modell, 1980; Kitano & Daniels, 2001).

The situation of enclave and middleman minorities—integration without acculturation—can be considered either a type of pluralism (emphasizing the absence of acculturation) or a type of assimilation (emphasizing a high level of economic equality). Keep in mind that assimilation and pluralism are not opposites but can occur in a variety of combinations. It is best to think of acculturation, integration, and the other stages of assimilation (or pluralism) as independent processes.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Is the United States becoming more pluralistic? What are some of the costs and some of the benefits of increasing pluralism?
2. What are the differences between middleman and enclave minority groups? Do these groups challenge the idea that assimilation moves step-by-step in a certain order?

OTHER GROUP RELATIONSHIPS

This book concentrates on assimilation and pluralism, but there are, of course, other possible group relationships and goals. Two commonly noted goals for minority groups are separatism and revolution (Wirth, 1945). The goal of **separatism** is for the group to sever all ties (political, cultural, and geographic) with the larger society. Thus, separatism goes well beyond pluralism. Native Americans have expressed both separatist and pluralist goals, and separatism has also been pursued by some African American organizations, such as the Black Muslims. In the contemporary world, there are separatist movements among groups in French Canada, Scotland, Chechnya, Cyprus, southern Mexico, Hawaii, and scores of other places.

A minority group promoting **revolution** seeks to switch places with the dominant group and become the ruling elite or create a new social order, perhaps in alliance with members of the dominant group. Although revolutionary activity can be found among some American minority groups (e.g., the Black Panthers), this goal has been relatively rare for minority groups in the United States. Revolutionary minority groups are more commonly found in situations such as those in colonial Africa, in which one nation conquered and controlled another racially or culturally different nation.

The dominant group may also pursue goals other than assimilation and pluralism, including forced migration or expulsion, extermination or genocide, and continued subjugation of the minority group. Chinese immigrants were the victims of a policy of expulsion, beginning in the 1880s, when the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) closed the door on further immigration and concerted efforts were made to encourage those in the country to leave (see Chapter 9). Native Americans have also been the victims of expulsion. In 1830, all tribes living east of the Mississippi River were forced to migrate to a new territory in the West (see Chapter 4). The most infamous example of genocide is the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, during which six million Jews were murdered, but there are, tragically, many other examples (see Figure 2.1). The dominant group pursues "continued subjugation" when, as with slavery in the antebellum South, it attempts to maintain a powerless and exploited position for the minority group. A dominant group may simultaneously pursue different policies with different minority groups and may, of course, change policies over time.

Separatism is a minority group goal. A separatist group wishes to sever all ties with the dominant group.

Revolution is a minority-group goal. A revolutionary group wishes to change places with the dominant group and establish a new social order.

FROM IMMIGRANTS TO WHITE ETHNICS

In this section, we will explore the experiences of the minority groups that stimulated the development of the traditional perspective. A massive immigration from Europe began in the 1820s, and over the next century, millions of people made the journey from the Old World to the New. They came from every corner of the continent: Ireland, Greece, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Ukraine, Russia, and scores of other nations and provinces. They came as young men and women seeking jobs, as families fleeing religious persecution, as political radicals evading the police, as farmers seeking land and a fresh start, and as paupers barely able to scrape together the cost of their passage. They came as immigrants, became minority groups upon their arrival, experienced discrimination and prejudice in all its forms, went through all the varieties and stages of assimilation and pluralism, and eventually merged

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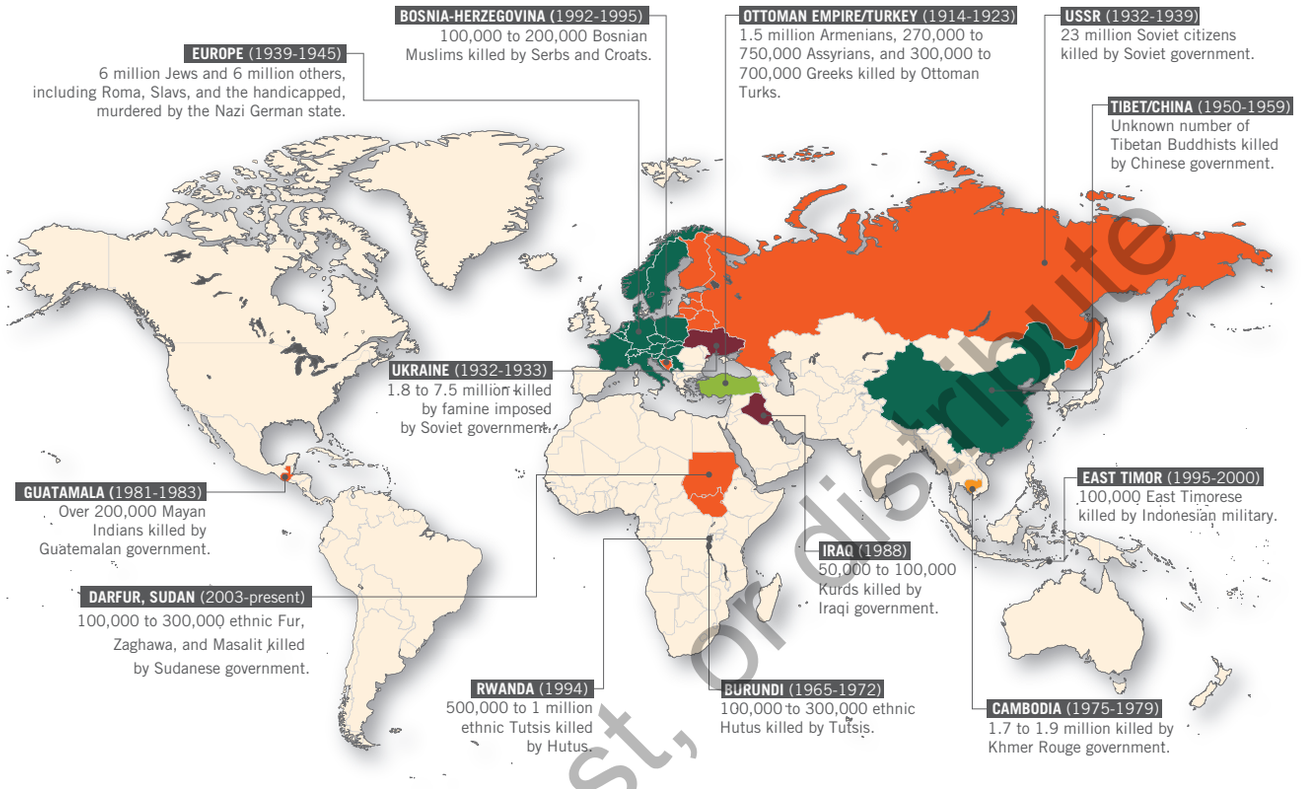
FIGURE 2.1 Select Genocides Around the World, 1914 to Present



into the society that had once rejected them so viciously. Figure 2.2 shows the major European sending nations.

These immigrants were a diverse group, and their experiences in the United States varied along a number of crucial sociological dimensions. Some groups (Italians and other southern Europeans) were seen as racially inferior, while others (Irish Catholics and Jews from eastern Europe) were rejected and marginalized because of their religion. The immigration experience—from start to finish—was shaped by gender and was decidedly different for men and women.

Social class was also a major differentiating factor: Many of these immigrants brought few resources and very low human capital. They entered U.S. society at the bottom and often remained on the lowest occupational and economic rungs for generations. Other groups brought skills or financial resources that led them to a more favorable position and faster rates of upward mobility. All these factors—race, class, and gender—affected the experience in the United States and led to very different outcomes in terms of social location, mobility paths, and ultimate acceptance.

This first mass wave of immigrants shaped the United States in countless ways. When the immigration started in the 1820s, the United States was not yet 50 years old, an agricultural nation clustered along the East Coast. The nation was just coming into contact with Mexicans in the Southwest, immigration from China had not yet begun, slavery was flourishing in the South, and conflict with American Indians was intense and brutal. When the immigration ended in the 1920s, the population of the United States had increased from fewer than 10 million to more than 100 million, and the society had industrialized, become a world power, and stretched from coast to coast, with colonies in the Pacific and the Caribbean.

It was no coincidence that European immigration, American industrialization, and the rise to global prominence occurred simultaneously. These changes were intimately interlinked, the mutual causes and effects of one another. Industrialization fueled the growth of U.S. military and political power, and the industrial machinery of the nation depended heavily on the flow of labor from Europe. By World War I, for example, 25% of the nation's total labor force was foreign-born, and more than half the workforce in New York, Detroit, and Chicago consisted of immigrant men. Immigrants were the majority of the workers in many important sectors of the economy, including coal mining, steel manufacturing, the garment industry, and meatpacking (Martin & Midgley, 1999, p. 15; Steinberg, 1981, p. 36).

In the sections that follow, we explore the experiences of these groups, beginning with the forces that caused them to leave Europe and come to the United States and ending with an assessment of their present status in American society.

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FIGURE 2.2 European Immigration to the United States, 1820–1920

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND IMMIGRATION

What forces stimulated this mass movement of people? Like any complex phenomenon, immigration from Europe had a multitude of causes, but underlying the process was a massive and fundamental shift in subsistence technology: the **industrial revolution**. We mentioned the importance of subsistence technology in Chapter 1. Dominant–minority relations are intimately related to the system a society uses to satisfy its basic needs, and they change as that system changes. The immigrants were pushed out of Europe as industrial technology wrecked the traditional agricultural way of life, and they were drawn to the United States by the jobs created by the spread of the very same technology. We will consider the impact of this fundamental transformation of social structure and culture in some detail.

The **industrial revolution** is the shift in subsistence technology from labor-intensive agriculture to capital-intensive manufacturing.

Labor-intensive production is a form of work in which most of the effort is provided by people working by hand.

Capital-intensive technology replaces hand labor with machine labor. Large amounts of capital are required to develop, purchase, and maintain the machines.

Industrialization began in England in the mid-1700s, spread to other parts of northern and western Europe and then, in the 1800s, to eastern and southern Europe. As it rolled across the continent, the industrial revolution replaced people and animal power with machines and new forms of energy (steam, coal, and eventually oil), causing an exponential increase in the productive capacity of society. (See pages 42–43 for a detailed timeline.)

At the dawn of the industrial revolution, most Europeans lived in small, rural villages and survived by traditional farming practices that had changed very little over the centuries. The work of production was **labor-intensive** or done by hand or with the aid of draft animals. Productivity was low, and the tasks of food production and survival required the efforts of virtually the entire family, working ceaselessly throughout the year.

Industrialization destroyed this traditional way of life as it introduced new technology, machines, and sources of energy to the tasks of production. The new technology was **capital-intensive** or dependent on machine power, and it

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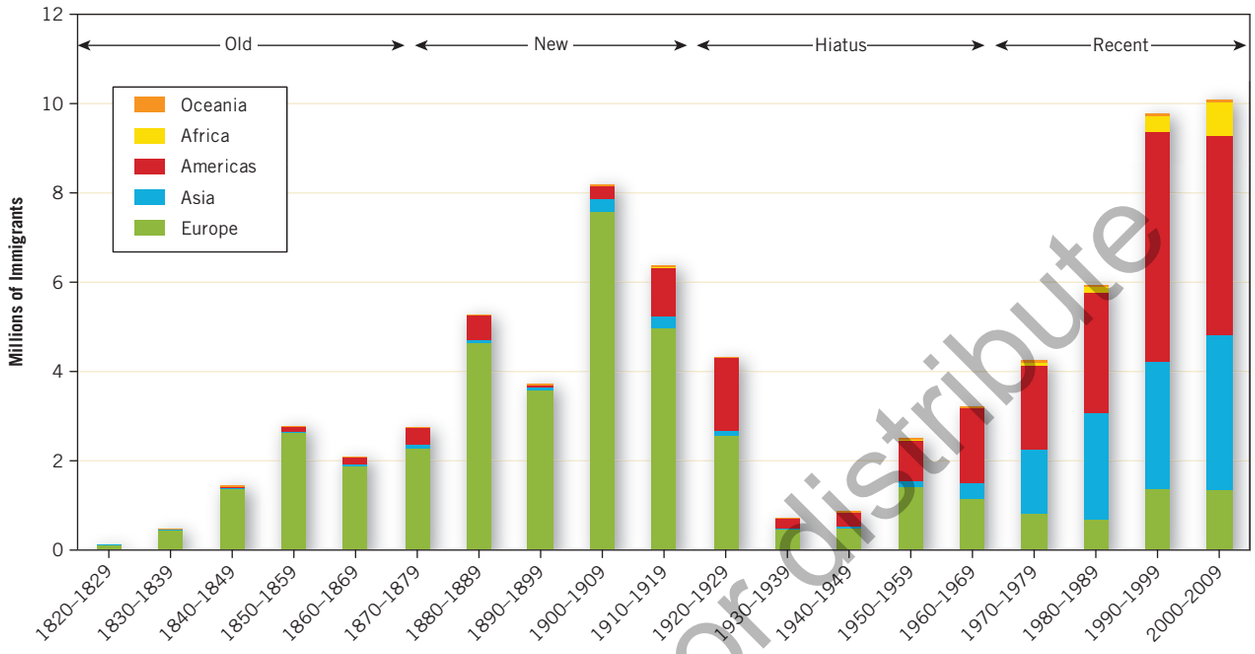
FIGURE 2.3 Legal Migration to the United States by Region of Origin, 1820–2009



SOURCE: Data from Table 2, Persons Obtaining Legal Permanent Resident Status by Region and Selected Country of Last Residence: Fiscal Years 1820 to 2012. *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2012 Legal Permanent Residents.* U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

reduced the need for human labor in rural areas as it modernized agriculture. Also, farmland was consolidated into larger and larger tracts for the sake of efficiency, further decreasing the need for human laborers. At the same time, even as survival in the rapidly changing rural economy became more difficult, the rural population began to grow.

In response, peasants began to leave their home villages and move toward urban areas. Factories were being built in or near the cities, opening up opportunities for employment. The urban population tended to increase faster than the job supply, however, and many migrants had to move on. Many of these former peasants responded to opportunities available in the New World, especially in the United States, where the abundance of farmland on the frontier kept people moving out of the cities and away from the East Coast, thereby sustaining a fairly constant demand for labor in the very areas that were easiest for Europeans to reach. As industrialization took hold on both continents, the population movement to European cities and then to North America eventually grew to become one of the largest in human history.

The timing of migration from Europe followed the timing of industrialization. The first waves of immigrants, often called the **Old Immigration**, came from northern and western Europe starting in the 1820s. A second wave, the **New Immigration**, began arriving from southern and eastern Europe in the 1880s. Figure 2.3 shows both waves and the rates of legal immigration up to 2009. Note that the "new" immigration was much more voluminous than the "old" and that the number of immigrants declined drastically after the 1920s. We will explore the reasons for this decline later in this chapter and discuss in detail the more recent (post-1965) increase in immigration—overwhelmingly from the Americas (mostly Mexico) and Asia—in Chapters 8 through 10.

EUROPEAN ORIGINS AND CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

The immigrants from Europe varied from one another in innumerable ways. They followed a variety of pathways into the United States, and their experiences were shaped by their cultural and class characteristics, their countries of origin, and the timing of their arrival. Some groups encountered much more resistance than others, and different groups played different roles in the industrialization and urbanization of America. To discuss these diverse patterns systematically, we distinguish three subgroups of European immigrants: Protestants from northern and western Europe, the largely Catholic immigrant laborers from Ireland and from southern and eastern Europe,

The **Old Immigration** was from northern and western Europe to the United States from the 1820s to the 1880s.

The **New Immigration** was from southern and eastern Europe to the United States from the 1880s to the 1920s.

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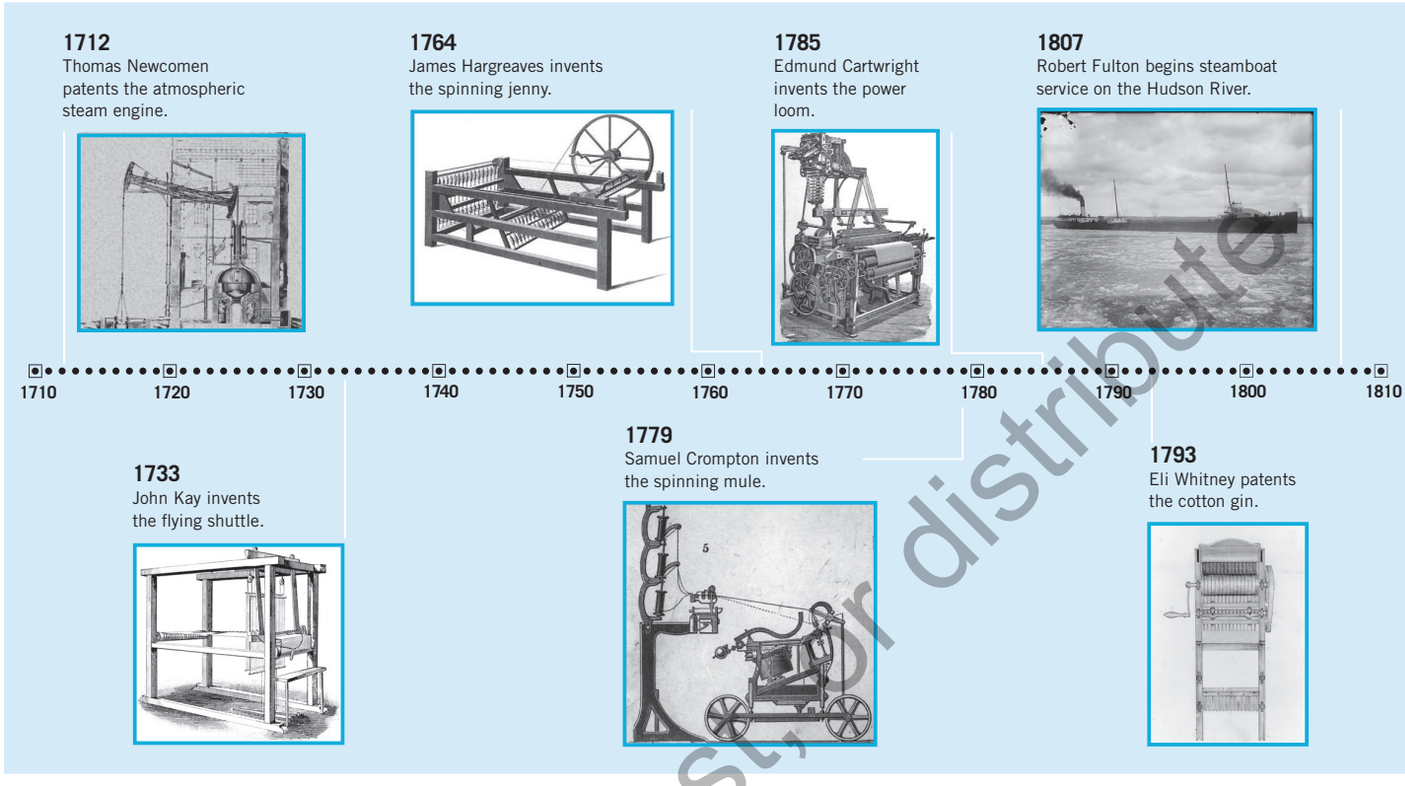
FIGURE 2.4 Timeline of the Industrial Revolution, 1712–1903



SOURCE: Adapted from Industrial Revolution: Timeline, Facts, and Resources, Research by B. Sobey, TheFreeResource.com.

and Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe. We look at these subgroups in roughly the order of their arrival. In later sections, we will consider other sociological variables (i.e., social class, gender) that further differentiated these groups.

NORTHERN AND WESTERN PROTESTANT EUROPEANS

Northern and western European immigrants included English, Germans, Norwegians, Swedes, Welsh, French, Dutch, and Danes. These groups were similar to the dominant group in their racial and religious characteristics and also shared many cultural values with the host society, including the Protestant Ethic—which stressed hard work, success, and individualism—and support for the principles of democratic government. These similarities eased their acceptance into a society that was highly intolerant of religious and racial differences until well into the 20th century, and these immigrant groups generally experienced a lower degree of ethnocentric rejection and racist disparagement than did the Irish and immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.

Northern and western European immigrants came from nations that were just as developed as the United States; thus, they tended to be more skilled and educated than other immigrant groups, and they often brought money and other resources with which to secure a comfortable place for themselves in their new society. Many settled in the sparsely populated Midwest and in other frontier areas, where they farmed the fertile land that had become available after the conquest and removal of American Indians and Mexican Americans (see Chapter 4). By dispersing throughout the midsection of the country, they lowered their visibility and their degree of competition with dominant-group members. Two brief case studies, first Norwegians and then Germans, outline the experiences of these groups.

Immigrants From Norway. Norway had a small population base, and immigration from this Scandinavian nation was never sizable in absolute numbers. However, "America Fever" struck here as it did elsewhere in Europe, and on a per capita basis, Norway sent more immigrants to the United States before 1890 than any other European nation except Ireland (Chan, 1990, p. 41).

The first Norwegian immigrants were moderately prosperous farmers searching for cheap land. They found abundant acreage in upper-Midwest states, such as Minnesota and Wisconsin, and then found that the local labor supply was too small to effectively cultivate the available land. Many turned to their homeland for assistance and used their relatives and friends to create networks and recruit a labor force. Thus, chains of communication and migration were established linking Norway to

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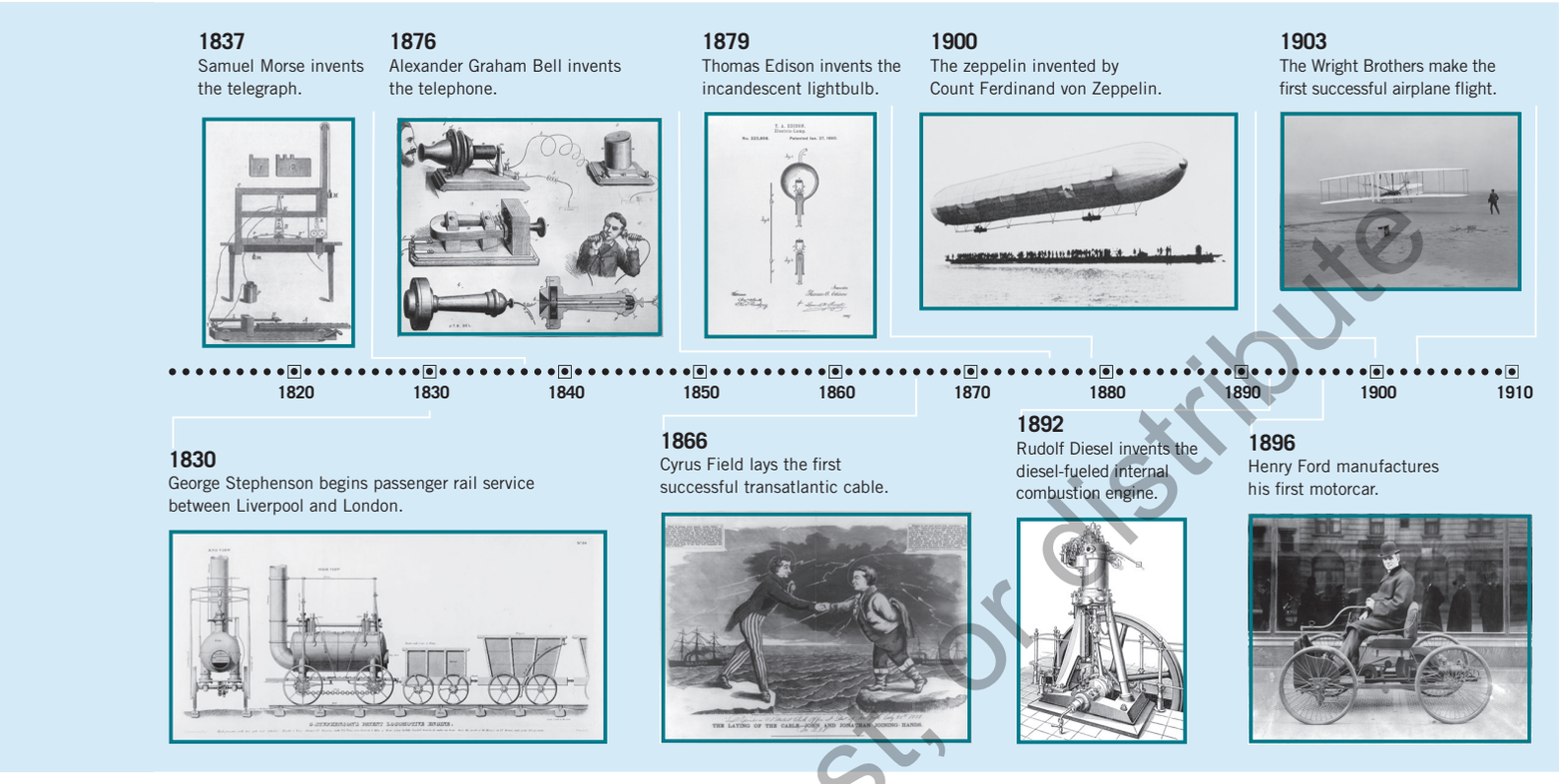

the Northern Plains, supplying immigrants to these areas for decades (Chan, 1990, p. 41). Today, a strong Scandinavian heritage is still evident in the farms, towns, and cities of the upper Midwest.

Immigrants From Germany. The stream of immigration from Germany was much larger than that from Norway, and German Americans left their mark on the economy, the political structure, and the cultural life of their new land. In the last half of the 19th century, at least 25% of the immigrants each year were German (Conzen, 1980, p. 406), and today more Americans (about 15%) trace their ancestries to Germany than to any other country (Brittingham & de la Cruz, 2004).

The German immigrants who arrived earlier in the 1800s moved into the newly opened farmland and the rapidly growing cities of the Midwest, as had many Scandinavians. By 1850, large German communities could be found in Milwaukee, St. Louis, and other Midwestern cities (Conzen, 1980, p. 413). Some German immigrants followed the transatlantic route of the cotton trade between Europe and the southern United States and entered through the port of New Orleans, moving from there to the Midwest and Southwest. German immigrants arriving later in the century were more likely to settle in urban areas, in part because fertile land was less available. Many of the city-bound German immigrants were skilled workers and artisans, and others found work as laborers in the rapidly expanding industrial sector. The double penetration of German immigrants into the rural economy and the higher sectors of the urban economy is reflected by the fact that by 1870, most employed German Americans were involved in skilled labor (37%) or farming (25%; Conzen, 1980, p. 413).

German immigrants took relatively high occupational positions in the U.S. labor force, and their sons and daughters were able to translate that relative affluence into economic mobility. By the dawn of the 20th century, large numbers of second-generation German Americans were finding their way into white-collar and professional careers. Within a few generations, German Americans had achieved parity with national norms in education, income, and occupational prestige.

Assimilation Patterns. By and large, assimilation for Norwegian, German, and other Protestant immigrants from northern and western Europe was consistent with the traditional model discussed earlier in this chapter. Although members of these groups felt the sting of rejection, prejudice, and discrimination, their movement from acculturation to integration and equality was relatively smooth, especially when compared with the experiences of racial minority groups. Their relative success and high degree of assimilation are suggested in Table 2.3, presented later in this chapter.

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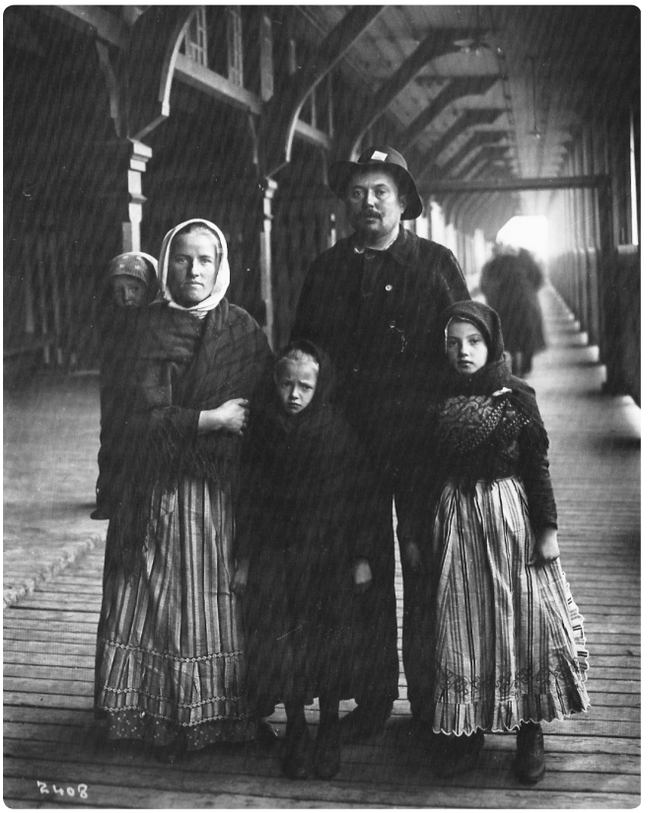


William James Topley/Library and Archives Canada/PA-010254

Newly arrived immigrants from Germany.

IMMIGRANT LABORERS FROM IRELAND AND SOUTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPE

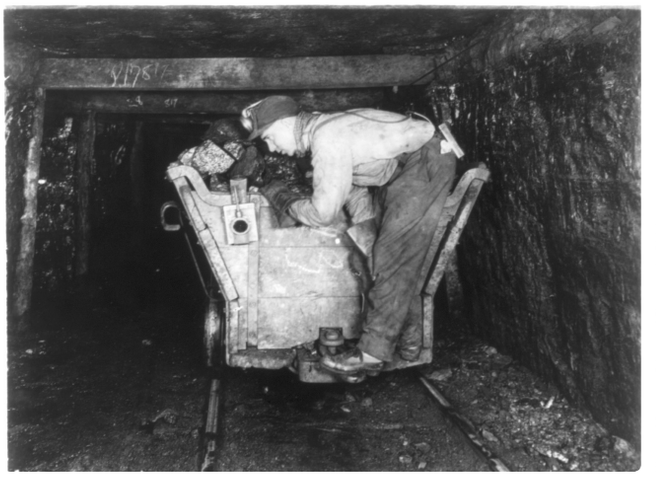
The relative ease of assimilation for northern and western Europeans contrasts sharply with the experiences of non-Protestant, less educated, and less skilled immigrants. These "immigrant laborers" came in two waves. The Irish were part of the Old Immigration that began in the 1820s, but the bulk of this group—Italians, Poles, Russians, Hungarians, Greeks, Serbs, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Bulgarians, and scores of other southern and eastern European groups—made up the New Immigration that began in the 1880s.

Peasant Origins. Most of the immigrants in these nationality groups (like many recent immigrants to the United States) were peasants or unskilled laborers, with few resources other than their willingness to work. They came from rural, village-oriented cultures in which family and kin took precedence over individual needs or desires. Family life for them tended to be autocratic and male dominated, and children were expected to subordinate their personal desires and work for the good of the family as a whole. Arranged marriages were common. This cultural background was less consistent with the industrializing, capitalistic, individualistic, Protestant, Anglo-American culture of the United States and was a major reason that these immigrant laborers experienced a higher level of rejection and discrimination than did the immigrants from northern and western Europe.

The immigrant laborers were much less likely to enter the rural economy than were the northern and western European immigrants. Much of the better frontier land had already been claimed by the time most new immigrant groups began to arrive, and a large number of them had been permanently soured on farming by the oppressive and exploitative agrarian economies from which they were trying to escape.

Regional and Occupational Patterns. They settled in the cities of the industrializing Northeast and found work in plants, mills, mines, and factories. They supplied the armies of laborers needed to power the industrial revolution in the United States, although their view of this process was generally from the bottom looking up. They arrived during the decades in which the American industrial and urban infrastructure was being constructed. They built roads, canals, and railroads, as well as the buildings that housed the machinery of industrialization. For example, the first tunnels of the New York City subway system were dug, largely by hand, by laborers from Italy. Other immigrants found work in the coal fields of Pennsylvania and West Virginia and the steel mills of Pittsburgh, and they flocked by the millions to the factories of the Northeast.

Like other low-skill immigrant groups, these newcomers took jobs in which strength and stamina were more important than literacy or skilled craftsmanship. In fact, the minimum level of skills required for employment actually declined as industrialization proceeded through its early phases. To keep wages low and take advantage of what seemed like an inexhaustible supply of cheap labor, industrialists and factory owners developed technologies and machines that required few skills and little knowledge of English to operate. As mechanization proceeded, unskilled workers replaced skilled workers in the workforce. Not infrequently, women and children replaced men because they could be hired for lower wages (Steinberg, 1981, p. 35).



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Many immigrants found work in coal mines.

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Assimilation Patterns. Eventually, as the generations passed, the prejudice, systematic discrimination, and other barriers to upward mobility for the immigrant laborer groups weakened, and their descendants began to rise out of the working class. Although the first and second generations of these groups were largely limited to jobs at the unskilled or semiskilled level, the third and later generations rose in the American social class system. As Table 2.3 shows (later in this chapter), the descendants of the immigrant laborers achieved parity with national norms by the latter half of the 20th century.

EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWISH IMMIGRANTS AND THE ETHNIC ENCLAVE

Jewish immigrants from Russia and other parts of eastern Europe followed a third pathway into U.S. society. This group was a part of the New Immigration and began arriving in the 1880s. Unlike the immigrant laborer groups, who were generally economic refugees and included many young, single males, eastern European Jews were fleeing religious persecution and arrived as family units intending to settle permanently and become citizens. They settled in the urban areas of the Northeast and Midwest. New York City was the most common destination, and the Lower East Side became the best-known Jewish American neighborhood. By 1920, about 60% of all Jewish Americans lived in the urban areas between Boston and Philadelphia, with almost 50% living in New York City alone. Another 30% lived in the urban areas of the Midwest, particularly Chicago (Goren, 1980, p. 581).

Urban Origins. In Russia and other parts of eastern Europe, Jews had been barred from agrarian occupations and had come to rely on the urban economy for their livelihoods. When they immigrated to the United States, they brought these urban skills and job experiences with them. For example, almost two thirds of the immigrant Jewish men had been tailors and other skilled laborers in eastern Europe (Goren, 1980, p. 581). In the rapidly industrializing U.S. economy of the early 20th century, they were able to use these skills to find work.

Other Jewish immigrants joined the urban working class and took manual labor and unskilled jobs in the industrial sector (Morawska, 1990, p. 202). The garment industry in particular became the lifeblood of the Jewish community and provided jobs to about one third of all eastern European Jews residing in the major cities (Goren, 1980, p. 582). Women as well as men were involved in the garment industry. Jewish women, like the women of more recent immigrant laborer groups, found ways to combine their jobs and their domestic responsibilities. As young girls, they worked in factories and sweatshops, and after marriage, they did the same work at home, sewing precut garments together or doing other piecework such as wrapping cigars or making artificial flowers, often assisted by their children (Amott & Matthaei, 1991, p. 115).

An Enclave Economy. Unlike most European immigrant groups, Jewish Americans became heavily involved in commerce and often found ways to start their own businesses and become self-employed. Drawing on their experience in the old country, many started businesses and small independent enterprises, and developed an enclave economy. The Jewish neighborhoods were densely populated and provided a ready market for services of all kinds. Some Jewish immigrants became street peddlers or started bakeries, butcher and candy shops, or any number of other retail enterprises.

Capitalizing on their residential concentration and close proximity, Jewish immigrants created dense networks of commercial, financial, and social cooperation. The Jewish American enclave survived because of the cohesiveness of the group; the willingness of wives, children, and other relatives to work for little or no monetary compensation; and the commercial savvy of the early immigrants. Also, a large pool of cheap labor and sources of credit and other financial services were available within the community.

The Jewish American enclave grew and provided a livelihood for many of the children and grandchildren of the immigrants (Portes & Manning, 1986, pp. 51–52). As has been the case with other enclave groups that we will discuss in future chapters, including Chinese Americans and Cuban Americans, economic advancement preceded extensive acculturation, and Jewish Americans made significant strides toward economic equality before they became fluent in English or were otherwise Americanized.

Americanized Generations. One obvious way an enclave immigrant group can improve its position is to develop an educated and acculturated second generation. The Americanized, English-speaking children of the immigrants used their greater familiarity with the dominant society and their language facility to help preserve and expand the family enterprise. Furthermore, as the second generation appeared, the American public school system was expanding, and education through the college level was free or inexpensive in New York City and other cities (Steinberg, 1981, pp. 128–138). There was also a strong push for the second and third generations to enter professions, and as Jewish Americans excelled in school, resistance to and discrimination against them increased. By the 1920s, many elite colleges and universities, such as Dartmouth, had established quotas that limited the number of Jewish students they would admit (Dinnerstein, 1977, p. 228). These quotas were not abolished until after World War II.

Assimilation Patterns. The enclave economy and the Jewish neighborhoods established by the immigrants proved to be an effective base from which to integrate into American society. The descendants of the eastern European Jewish immigrants moved out of the ethnic neighborhoods years ago, and their positions in the economy—their pushcarts, stores, and jobs in the garment industry—have been taken over by more

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Hester Street, New York City, was the center of the Jewish immigrant enclave a century ago.

recent immigrants. When they left the enclave economy, many second- and third-generation eastern European Jews did not enter the mainstream occupational structure at the bottom, as the immigrant laborer groups tended to do. They used the resources generated by the entrepreneurship of the early generations to gain access to prestigious and advantaged social class positions (Portes & Manning, 1986, p. 53). Studies show that Jewish Americans today, as a group, surpass national averages in income, levels of education, and occupational prestige (Sklare, 1971, pp. 60–69; see also Cohen, 1985; Massarik & Chenkin, 1973). The relatively higher status of Russian Americans shown in Table 2.3 (later in this chapter) is due in part to the fact that many Jewish Americans are of Russian descent.

CHAINS OF IMMIGRATION

All immigrant groups tend to follow "chains" established and maintained by the members of their groups. Some versions of the traditional assimilation perspective (especially human capital theory) treat immigration and status attainment as purely individual (psychological) matters. To the contrary, scholars have demonstrated that immigration to the United States was in large measure a group (sociological) phenomenon. Immigrant chains stretched across the oceans and were held together by the ties of kinship, language, religion, culture, and a sense of common peoplehood (Bodnar, 1985; Tilly, 1990). The networks supplied information, money for passage, family news, and job offers.

Here is how chain immigration worked (and continues to work today): Someone from a village in, say, Poland would make it to the United States. The successful immigrant would send word to the home village, perhaps by hiring a letter writer. Along with news and stories of his adventures, he would send his address. Within months, another immigrant from the village, perhaps a brother or other relative, would show up at the address of the original immigrant. After his months of experience in the new society, the original immigrant could lend assistance, provide a place to sleep, help with job hunting, and orient the newcomer to the area.

Before long, others would arrive from the village in need of the same sort of introduction to the mysteries of America. The compatriots would tend to settle close to one another, in the same building or on the same block. Soon, entire neighborhoods were filled with people from a certain village, province, or region. In these ethnic enclaves, the old language was spoken and the old ways observed. Businesses were started, churches or synagogues founded, families begun, and mutual aid societies and other organizations formed. There was safety in numbers and comfort and security in a familiar, if transplanted, set of traditions and customs.

Immigrants often responded to U.S. society by attempting to re-create as much of their old world as possible. Partly to avoid the harsher forms of rejection and discrimination and

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Chinatowns were the centers of social and economic life for Chinese immigrants.

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NARRATIVE PORTRAIT

Entering the Promised Land

New York Times

Mary Antin, author of *The Promised Land.*

Mary Antin was born a Russian Jew, grew up in a Jewish ghetto, and immigrated to the United States in 1894. Her family settled in the slums of Boston, where she was quickly identified as an outstanding student. Even though she spoke no English at her arrival, she was able to attend an elite high school and also went to Columbia University and Barnard College. In 1912, she published her memoir, The Promised Land, *which describes her childhood in Russia and her family's largely successful assimilation into American society. The book was immensely popular, perhaps because it presents her assimilation in positive terms. This passage describes her arrival in Boston and her first view of American society. Note how she consciously begins to absorb American culture, piece by piece.*

FIRST GLIMPSES OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

Mary Antin

Our initiation into American ways began with the first step on the new soil. My father found occasion to instruct or correct us even on the way . . . to [our new home] . . . in a rickety cab. He told us not to lean out of the windows, not to point, and explained the word "greenhorn." . . .

The first meal was an object lesson of much variety. My father produced several kinds of food, ready to eat, without any cooking, from little tin cans that had printing all over them. He attempted to introduce us to a queer, slippery kind of fruit, which he called "banana," but had to give it up for the time being. . . .

[In] the evening . . . I was delighted with the illumination of the streets. So many lamps, and they burned until morning, my father said, and so people did not need to carry lanterns. . . . The streets were as bright as a synagogue on a holy day. . . .

Education was free. That subject my father had written about repeatedly, as comprising his chief hope for us children, the essence of American opportunity, the treasure that no thief could touch. . . . On our second day . . . a little girl from across the alley came and offered to conduct us to school. My father was out, but we five between us had a few words of English by this time. We knew the word school. We understood. This child, who had never seen us till yesterday, who could not pronounce our names, . . . was able to offer us the freedom of the schools of Boston! . . . The doors stood open for every one of us. The smallest child could show us the way. . . .

We had to visit the stores and be dressed from head to foot in American clothing; we had to learn the mysteries of the iron stove, the washboard, and the speaking-tube; we had to learn to trade with the fruit peddler through the window, and not to be afraid of the policeman; and, above all, we had to learn English. . . .

With our despised immigrant clothing we shed also our impossible Hebrew names. A committee of our friends . . . concocted American names for us all. Those of our real names that had no pleasing American equivalents they ruthlessly discarded. . . . My mother . . . was punished with the undignified nickname of Annie. Fetchke, Joseph, and Deborah issued as Frieda, Joseph, and Dora, respectively. As for poor me, I was simply cheated. The name they gave me was hardly new. My Hebrew name being Maryashe . . . , my friends said that it would hold good in English as *Mary*; which was very disappointing, as I longed to possess a strange-sounding American name like the others.

SOURCE: *The Promised Land* by Mary Antin (1912). Copyright, 1911 and 1912, by the Atlantic Monthly Company. Copyright, 1912, by Houghton Mifflin Company.

Questions to Consider

1. What is the single most significant act of acculturation in this passage? Why?
2. Can you identify any instances of integration?
3. What elements of chain immigration can you detect? What important roles do social networks play in Mary's adjustment to the United States?

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partly to band together for solidarity and mutual support, immigrants created their own miniature social worlds within the bustling metropolises of the industrializing Northeast and West Coast. These Little Italys, Little Warsaws, Little Irelands, Greektowns, Chinatowns, and Little Tokyos were safe havens that insulated the immigrants from the larger society and allowed them to establish bonds with one another, organize a group life, pursue their own group interests, and have some control over the pace of their adjustment to American culture. For some groups and in some areas, the ethnic subcommunity was a short-lived phenomenon. For others (the Jewish enclave discussed earlier, for example), the neighborhood became the dominant structure of their lives, and the networks continued to function long after their arrival in the United States.

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THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST IMMIGRATION: PREJUDICE, RACISM, AND DISCRIMINATION

Today, it may be hard to conceive of the bitterness and intensity of the prejudice that greeted the Irish, Italians, Poles, Jews, and other new immigrant groups. Even as they were becoming an indispensable segment of the American workforce, they were castigated, ridiculed, attacked, and disparaged. The Irish were the first immigrant laborers to arrive and thus the first to feel this intense prejudice and discrimination. Campaigns against immigrants were waged, Irish neighborhoods were attacked by mobs, and Roman Catholic churches and convents were burned. Some employers blatantly refused to hire the Irish, often advertising their ethnic preferences with signs that read "No Irish Need Apply." Until later arriving groups pushed them up, the Irish were mired at the bottom of the job market. Indeed, at one time they were referred to as the "niggers of Boston" (Blessing, 1980; Potter, 1973; Shannon, 1964).

Other groups felt the same sting of rejection as they arrived. Italian immigrants were particularly likely to be the victims of violent attacks, one of the most vicious of which took place in New Orleans in 1891. The city's police chief was assassinated, and rumors of Italian involvement in the murder were rampant. Hundreds of Italians were arrested, and nine were brought to trial. All were acquitted. Anti-Italian sentiment was running so high, however, that a mob lynched 11 Italians, while police and city officials did nothing (Higham, 1963).

Anti-Catholicism. Much of the prejudice against the Irish and the new immigrants was expressed as anti-Catholicism. Prior to the mid-19th century, Anglo-American society had been almost exclusively Protestant. Catholicism, with its celibate clergy, Latin masses, and cloistered nuns, seemed alien, exotic, and threatening. The growth of Catholicism, especially because it was associated with non-Anglo immigrants, raised fears that the Protestant religions would lose status. There were even rumors that the pope was planning to move the Vatican to America and organize a takeover of the U.S. government.

Although Catholics were often stereotyped as single groups, they also varied along a number of dimensions. For example, the Catholic faith as practiced in Ireland differed significantly from that practiced in Italy, Poland, and other countries. Catholic immigrant groups often established their own parishes, with priests who could speak the old language. These cultural and national differences often separated Catholic groups, despite their common faith (Herberg, 1960).

Anti-Semitism is prejudice or ideological racism directed specifically toward Jews.

Anti-Semitism. Jews from Russia and eastern Europe faced intense prejudice and racism (or **anti-Semitism**) as they began arriving in large numbers in the 1880s. Biased sentiments and negative stereotypes of Jews have been a part of Western tradition for centuries and, in fact, have been stronger and more vicious in Europe than in the United States. For nearly two millennia, European Jews have been chastised and persecuted as the "killers of Christ" and stereotyped as materialistic moneylenders and crafty businessmen.

The stereotype that links Jews and moneylending has its origins in the fact that in premodern Europe, Catholics were forbidden by the church to engage in usury (charging interest for loans). Jews were under no such restriction, and they filled the gap thus created in the economy. The ultimate episode in the long history of European anti-Semitism was, of course, the Nazi Holocaust, in which six million Jews died. European anti-Semitism did not end with the demise of the Nazi regime, however, and it remains a prominent concern throughout Europe and Russia (see Chapter 13).

Before the mass immigration of eastern European Jews began in the late 1800s, anti-Semitism in the United States was relatively mild, perhaps because the group was so small. As the immigration continued, anti-Jewish prejudice increased in intensity and viciousness, fostering the view of Jews as cunning but dishonest merchants. In the late 19th century, Jews began to be banned from social clubs and the boardrooms of businesses and other organizations. Summer resorts began posting notices: "We prefer not to entertain Hebrews" (Goren, 1980, p. 585).

By the 1920s and 1930s, anti-Semitism had become quite prominent among American prejudices and was being preached by the Ku Klux Klan and other extreme racist groups. Also, because many of the political radicals and labor leaders of the time were Jewish immigrants, anti-Semitism became fused with a fear of Communism and other anticapitalist doctrines. Some prominent Americans espoused anti-Semitic views, among them Henry Ford, the founder of Ford Motor Company; Charles Lindbergh, the aviator who was the first to fly solo across the Atlantic; and Father Charles Coughlin, a Catholic priest based in Detroit who hosted a popular radio show (Selzer, 1972).

Anti-Semitism reached a peak before World War II and tapered off in the decades following the war, but as we shall see in Chapter 3, it remains a part of U.S. society (Anti-Defamation League, 2000). Anti-Semitism also has a prominent place in the ideologies of a variety of extremist groups that have emerged in recent years, including "skinheads" and various contemporary incarnations of the Ku Klux Klan. Some of this targeting of Jews seems to increase during economic recession and may be related to the stereotypical view of Jewish Americans as extremely prosperous and materialistic.

A Successful Exclusion. The prejudice and racism directed against the immigrants also found expression in organized,

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widespread efforts to stop the flow of immigration. A variety of anti-immigrant organizations appeared almost as soon as the mass European immigration started in the 1820s. The strength of these campaigns waxed and waned, largely in harmony with the strength of the economy and the size of the job supply. Anti-immigrant sentiment intensified, and the strength of its organized expressions increased during hard times and depressions, and tended to soften when the economy improved.

The campaign ultimately triumphed with the passage of the National Origins Act in 1924, which established a quota system limiting the number of immigrants that would be accepted each year from each sending nation, a system that was openly racist. For example, the size of the quota for European nations was based on the proportional representation of each nationality in the United States as of 1890. This year was chosen because it predated the bulk of the New Immigration and gave the most generous quotas to northern and western European nations.

The quota system allocated nearly 70% of the available immigration slots to the nations of northern and western Europe, despite the fact that immigration from those areas had largely ended by the 1920s. Immigration from Western Hemisphere nations was not directly affected by this legislation, but immigration from Asian nations was banned altogether. At this time, almost all parts of Africa were still the colonial possessions of various European nations and received no separate quotas. In other words, the quota for immigrants from Africa was zero.

The National Origins Act drastically reduced the overall number of immigrants that would be admitted each year. The effectiveness of the numerical restrictions is clearly apparent in Figure 2.4. By the time the Great Depression took hold of the American economy in the 1930s, immigration had dropped to the lowest level in a century. The National Origins Act remained in effect until 1965.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What forces motivated people to leave Europe and come to North America? How did these motives change from time to time and from place to place?
2. What motivated the forces of resistance and discrimination in the United States? How did the "exclusionists" finally triumph? What roles did class play in these processes?

PATTERNS OF ASSIMILATION

In this section, we will explore some of the common patterns in the process of assimilation followed by European immigrants and their descendants. These patterns have been well established by research conducted in the traditional perspective and are consistent with the model of assimilation developed by Gordon. They include assimilation by generation, ethnic succession, and structural mobility. We discuss each separately in this section.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GENERATIONS

People today—social scientists, politicians, and ordinary citizens—often fail to recognize the time and effort it takes for a group to become completely Americanized. For most European immigrant groups, the process took generations, and it was the grandchildren or the great-grandchildren (or even great-great-grandchildren) of the immigrants who finally completed acculturation and integration. Mass immigration from Europe ended in the 1920s, but the assimilation of some European ethnic groups was not completed until late in the 20th century.

Here is a rough summary of how assimilation proceeded for these European immigrants: The first generation, the actual immigrants, settled in ethnic neighborhoods, such as Little Italy in New York City, and made only limited movement toward acculturation and integration. They focused their energies on the network of family and social relationships encompassed within their own groups. Of course, many of them—most often the men—had to leave their neighborhoods for work and other reasons, and these excursions required some familiarity with the larger society. Some English had to be learned, and taking a job outside the neighborhood is, almost by definition, a form of integration. Nonetheless, the first generation lived and died largely within the context of the "old country," which had been re-created within the new.

The second generation, or the children of the immigrants, found themselves in a position of psychological or social marginality: They were partly ethnic and partly American but full members of neither group. They were born in America but in households and neighborhoods that were ethnic, not American. They learned the old language first and were socialized in the old ways. As they entered childhood, however, they entered the public schools, where they were socialized into the Anglo-American culture.

Very often, the world the second generation learned about at school conflicted with the one they inhabited at home. For example, the old-country family values often expected children to subordinate their self-interests to the interests of their elders and the family as a whole. Marriages were arranged by parents, or at least heavily influenced by and subject to their approval. Needless to say, these expectations conflicted sharply with American ideas about individualism and romantic love. Differences of this sort often caused painful conflict between the ethnic first generation and their Americanized children.

As the second generation progressed toward adulthood, they tended to move out of the old neighborhoods. Their geographic mobility was often motivated by social mobility.

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TABLE 2.2 Some Comparisons Between Italians and WASPs

		GENERATION		
	WASPs*	First	Second	Third and Fourth
1. Percentage with some college	42.4%	19%	19.4%	41.7%
2. Average years of education	12.6	9	11.1	13.4
3. Percentage white collar	34.7%	20%	22.5%	28.8%
4. Percentage blue collar	37.9%	65%	53.9%	39.0%
5. Average occupational prestige	42.5	34.3	36.8	42.5
6. Percentage of "unmixed" Italian males marrying non-Italian females	N/A	21.9%	51.4%	67.3%

SOURCE: Adapted from Alba (1985), Tables 5-3, 5-4, and 6-2. Data are originally from the NORC General Social Surveys, 1975–1980, and the Current Population Survey, 1979. Copyright © 1985 Richard D. Alba.

*White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) were not separated by generation, and some of the differences between groups may be the result of factors such as age. That is, older WASPs may have levels of education more comparable to first-generation Italian Americans than do WASPs as a whole.

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They were much more acculturated than their parents, spoke English fluently, and enjoyed a wider range of occupational choices and opportunities. Discriminatory policies in education, housing, and the job market sometimes limited them, but they were upwardly mobile, and in their pursuit of jobs and careers, they left behind the ethnic subcommunity and many of their parents' customs.

The members of the third generation, or the grandchildren of the immigrants, were typically born and raised in non-ethnic settings. English was their first (and often their only) language, and their values and perceptions were thoroughly American. Although family and kinship ties with grandparents and the old neighborhood often remained strong, ethnicity for this generation was a relatively minor part of their daily realities and self-images. Visits on weekends and holidays, and family rituals revolving around the cycles of birth, marriage, and death—these activities might have connected the third generation to the world of their ancestors, but in terms of their everyday lives, they were American, not ethnic.

The pattern of assimilation by generation progressed as follows:

- The first generation began the process and was at least slightly acculturated and integrated.
- The second generation was very acculturated and highly integrated (at least into the secondary sectors of the society).
- The third generation finished the acculturation process and enjoyed high levels of integration at both the secondary and the primary levels.

Table 2.2 illustrates these patterns in terms of the structural assimilation of Italian Americans. The educational and occupational characteristics of this group converge with those of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) as the generations change. For example, the percentage of Italian Americans with some college shows a gap of more than 20 points between the first and second generations and WASPs. Italians of the third and fourth generations, though, are virtually identical to WASPs on this measure of integration in the secondary sector. The other differences between Italians and WASPs shrink in a similar fashion from generation to generation.

The first five measures of educational and occupational attainment in Table 2.2 illustrate the generational pattern of integration (structural assimilation). The sixth measures marital assimilation, or intermarriage. It displays the percentage of males of "unmixed," or 100%, Italian heritage who married females outside the Italian community. Note once more the tendency for integration, now at the primary level, to increase across the generations. The huge majority of first-generation males married within their group (only 21.9% married non-Italians). By the third generation, 67.3% of the males were marrying non-Italians.

Of course, this model of step-by-step, linear assimilation by generation fits some groups better than others. For example, immigrants from northern and western Europe (except for the Irish) were generally more similar, racially and culturally, to the dominant group and tended to be more educated and skilled. They experienced relatively easier acceptance and tended to complete the assimilation process in three generations or less.

In contrast, immigrants from Ireland and from southern and eastern Europe were mostly uneducated, unskilled peasants who were more likely to join the huge army of industrial labor that manned the factories, mines, and mills. These groups were more likely to remain at the bottom of the

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American class structure for generations and to have risen to middle-class prosperity only in the recent past. As mentioned earlier, eastern European Jews formed an enclave and followed a distinctly different pathway of assimilation, using the enclave as a springboard to launch the second and third generations into the larger society (although their movements were circumscribed by widespread anti-Semitic sentiments and policies).

It is important to keep this generational pattern in mind when examining immigration to the United States today. It is common for contemporary newcomers (especially Hispanics) to be criticized for their "slow" pace of assimilation, but their "progress" takes on a new aspect when viewed in the light of the generational time frame for assimilation followed by European immigrants. Especially with modern forms of transportation, immigration can be very fast. Assimilation, on the other hand, is by nature slow.

ETHNIC SUCCESSION

A second factor that shaped the assimilation experience is captured in the concept of **ethnic succession**, or the myriad ways European ethnic groups unintentionally affected one another's positions in the social class structure of the larger society. The overall pattern was that each European immigrant group tended to be pushed to higher social class levels and more favorable economic situations by the groups that arrived after them. As more experienced groups became upwardly mobile and began to move out of the neighborhoods that served as their "ports of entry," they were often replaced by a new group of immigrants who would begin the process all over again. Some neighborhoods in the cities of the Northeast served as the ethnic neighborhood—the first safe haven in the new society—for a variety of successive groups. Some neighborhoods continue to fill this role today.

This process can be understood in terms of the second stage of Gordon's model: integration at the secondary level (see Table 2.1), or entry into the public institutions and organizations of the larger society. Three pathways of integration tended to be most important for European immigrants: politics, labor unions, and the church. We will cover each in turn, illustrating with the Irish, the first immigrant laborers to arrive in large numbers, but the general patterns apply to all white ethnic groups.

Politics. The Irish tended to follow the northern and western Europeans in the job market and social class structure and were, in turn, followed by the wave of new immigrants. In many urban areas of the Northeast, they moved into the neighborhoods and took jobs left behind by German laborers. After a period of acculturation and adjustment, the Irish began to create their own connections with the mainstream society and improve their economic and social positions. They were replaced in their neighborhoods and at the bottom of the occupational structure by Italians, Poles, and other immigrant groups arriving after them.

As the years passed and the Irish gained more experience, they began to forge more links to the larger society, and, in particular, they allied themselves with the Democratic Party and helped construct the political machines that came to dominate many city governments in the 19th and 20th centuries. Machine politicians were often corrupt and even criminal, regularly subverting the election process, bribing city and state officials, using city budgets to fill the pockets of the political bosses and their cronies, and passing out public jobs as payoffs for favors and faithful service.

Although not exactly models of good government, the political machines performed a number of valuable social services for their constituents and loyal followers. Machine politicians, such as Boss Tweed of Tammany Hall in New York City, could find jobs, provide food and clothing for the destitute, aid victims of fires and other calamities, and intervene in the criminal and civil courts.

Much of the power of the urban political machines derived from their control of the city payroll. The leaders of the machines used municipal jobs and the city budget as part of a "spoils" system (as in "to the winner go the spoils"), and as rewards for their supporters and allies. The faithful Irish party worker might be rewarded for service to the machine with a job in the police department (thus the stereotypical Irish cop) or some other agency. Private businessmen might be rewarded with lucrative contracts to supply services or perform other city business.

The political machines served as engines of economic opportunity and linked Irish Americans to a central and important institution of the dominant society. Using the resources controlled by local government as a power base, the Irish (and other immigrant groups after them) began to integrate themselves into the larger society and carve out a place in the mainstream structures of American society, as illustrated in the following Narrative Portrait.

Labor Unions. The labor movement provided a second link among the Irish, other European immigrant groups, and the larger society. Although virtually all white ethnic groups had a hand in the creation and eventual success of the movement, many of the founders and early leaders were Irish. For example, Terence Powderly, an Irish Catholic, founded one of the first U.S. labor unions, and in the early years of the 20th century, about one third of union leaders were Irish and more than 50 national unions had Irish presidents (Bodnar, 1985, p. 111; Brody, 1980, p. 615).

Ethnic succession is the process by which white ethnic groups affected one another's positions in the social class structure.

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NARRATIVE PORTRAIT

Ethnicity, Prejudice, and the Irish Political Machine

David Gray grew up a Welsh Protestant in Scranton, Pennsylvania, during the 1930s and 1940s. At that time, this coal-mining town was split along ethnic lines, and Gray (1991) recounts his socialization into the realities of in-groups and out-groups. He also describes how Scranton's Irish Catholic community responded to the Great Depression and how they used the local political machine to protect their own, generating resentment and prejudice among the Welsh.

Gray eventually earned a PhD in sociology, and became a college professor and an accomplished and respected sociologist. Among his many admiring students was one of the authors of this textbook, who grew up in Scranton's Irish Catholic community a generation after Gray.

SHADOW OF THE PAST

David Gray

I did not ask to be born Welsh Protestant in Scranton, Pennsylvania. No more than [my friend] Eddie Gilroy . . . asked to be born Irish Catholic. But there we both were in the heart of the anthracite coal region . . . during the years of the Great Depression. . . . We were friends, good friends. [After school], he played second base and I played shortstop. . . . We thought we were a good double-play combination and, beyond the baseball field, we respected and liked each other as well.

But, there was something wrong with Eddie Gilroy. At age ten I didn't know exactly what it was. He didn't make many errors and we often shared whatever pennies we had . . . at the corner candy store. Still, there was something wrong with him—vague, general, apart from real experience, but true all the same.

His fundamental defect came into sharper focus at the age of twelve. Sunday movies had just arrived in Scranton. . . . I wanted to go with Eddie . . . [but] I couldn't.

"Why?"

"Because Protestants don't go to the movies on Sunday"—nor play cards, football or baseball. . . .

"How come Eddie and Johnny can go?"

"They're Catholic."

No one quite used the word "immoral" but . . . the implication was clear: if Catholics did such bad things on Sunday, they surely did a lot of bad things on other days as well.

No matter, then, that Gilroy might sacrifice for even a Protestant runner to go to second, . . . or share his candy. . . . His Catholicism . . . permeated his being, . . . muting his individual qualities. . . .

. . . Little Welsh Protestant boys and girls learned that Catholics were somehow the enemy. . . .

But, quite unfortunately from their vantage point, the Welsh of Scranton were not the only ones in town. While they had come to the coal regions in large numbers, others, in even larger numbers, had come also. Irish, Italian, Polish, German. . . . With [some] exception[s] . . . , most were Catholic. . . .

In this communal setting . . . the Great Depression arrived with particular force. [The region suffered from massive unemployment.] The coal industry . . . was gone. . . . The public sector . . . became the primary possibility for . . . jobs.

And the Irish . . . controlled political power. . . . [They] did their best to take care of their . . . own. . . .

In Scranton's public life, the intimate relationship of religion, politics, and economics was clear. . . . From the Mayor's office to trash collectors, . . . the public payroll included the names of O'Neill, Hennigan, Lydon, Kennedy, Walsh, Gerrity, and O'Hoolihan. . . . Welsh Protestants came to know . . . that Lewis, Griffiths and Williams need not apply.

. . . Among the Welsh, the general feeling of resentment on more than one occasion was punctuated with: "Those goddam Irish Catholics."

. . . Jobs, homes, and lives were at stake, and religious affiliation was relevant to them all. Irish Catholic political power was a fact from which Welsh Protestant resentment followed. Prejudice there certainly was—deeply felt, poignantly articulated, . . . and, unfortunately, communicated to the young.

SOURCE: Gray (1991, pp. 34–38).

Questions to Consider

1. According to this passage, do the Welsh and Irish seem equally acculturated? Are they equally integrated?
2. What boundaries separate the Welsh and the Irish? How are their differences maintained? In what ways are they integrating with each other?

As the labor movement grew in strength and gradually acquired legitimacy, the leaders of the movement also gained status, power, and other resources, while the rank-and-file membership gained job security, increased wages, and better fringe benefits. The labor movement provided another channel through which resources, power, status, and jobs flowed to the white ethnic groups.

Because of the way jobs were organized in industrializing America, union work typically required communication and cooperation across ethnic lines. The American workforce at the turn of the 20th century was multiethnic and multilingual, and union leaders had to coordinate and mobilize the efforts of many different language and cultural groups to represent the interests of the workers as a social class. Thus, labor union leaders became important intermediaries between the larger society and European immigrant groups.

Women were also heavily involved in the labor movement. Immigrant women were among the most exploited segments of the labor force, and they were involved in some of the most significant events in American labor history. For example, one of the first victories of the union movement occurred in New York City in 1909. The Uprising of the 20,000 was a massive strike of mostly Jewish and Italian women (many in their teens) against the garment industry. The strike lasted four months, despite attacks by thugs hired by the bosses and abuses by the police and the courts. The strikers eventually won recognition of the

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union from many employers, a reversal of a wage decrease, and a reduction in the 56- to 59-hour week they were expected to work (Goren, 1980, p. 584).

One of the great tragedies in the history of labor relations in the United States also involved European immigrant women. In 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, a garment-industry shop located on the 10th floor of a building in New York City. The fire spread rapidly, and the few escape routes were quickly cut off. About 140 young immigrant girls died, and many chose to leap to their deaths rather than be consumed by the flames. The disaster outraged the public, and the funerals of the victims were attended by more than a quarter of a million people. The incident fueled a drive for reform and improvement of work conditions and safety regulations (Amott & Matthaei, 1991, pp. 114–116; see also Schoener, 1967).

European immigrant women also filled leadership roles in the labor movement and served as presidents and in other offices, although usually in female-dominated unions. One of the most colorful union activists was Mother Jones, an Irish immigrant who worked tirelessly to organize miners:

> *Until she was nearly one hundred years old, Mother Jones was where the danger was greatest—crossing militia lines, spending weeks in damp prisons, incurring the wrath of governors, presidents, and coal operators—she helped to organize the United Mine Workers with the only tools she felt she needed: "convictions and a voice." (Forner, 1980, p. 281)*

Women workers often faced opposition from men as well as from employers. The major unions were not only racially discriminatory but also hostile to organizing women. For example, women laundry workers in San Francisco at the start of the 20th century were required to live in dormitories and work from 6 a.m. until midnight. When they applied to the international laundry workers union for a charter, they were blocked by the male members. They eventually went on strike and won the right to an eight-hour workday in 1912 (Amott & Matthaei, 1991, p. 117).

Religion. A third avenue of mobility for the Irish and other white ethnic groups was provided by religious institutions. The Irish were the first large group of Catholic immigrants and were thus in a favorable position to eventually dominate the church's administrative structure. The Catholic priesthood became largely Irish, and as they were promoted through the hierarchy, these priests became bishops and cardinals. The Catholic faith was practiced in different ways in different nations. As other Catholic immigrant groups began to arrive, conflict within the Irish-dominated church increased. Both Italian and Polish Catholic immigrants demanded their own parishes in which they could speak their own languages and celebrate their own customs and festivals. Dissatisfaction was so intense that some Polish Catholics broke with Rome and formed a separate Polish National Catholic Church (Lopata, 1976, p. 49).

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Women striking for a 40-hour work week.

The other Catholic immigrant groups eventually began to supply priests and other religious functionaries and to occupy leadership positions within the church. Although the church continued to be disproportionately influenced by the Irish, other white ethnic groups also used the Catholic Church as part of their power base for gaining acceptance and integration into the larger society.

Other Pathways. Besides party politics, the union movement, and religion, European immigrant groups forged other not-so-legitimate pathways of upward mobility. One alternative to legitimate success was offered by crime, a pathway that has been used by every ethnic group to some extent. Crime became particularly lucrative and attractive when Prohibition, the attempt to eliminate all alcohol use in the United States, went into effect in the 1920s. The criminalization of liquor failed to lower the demand, and Prohibition created a golden economic opportunity for those willing to take the risks involved in manufacturing and supplying alcohol to the American public.

Italian Americans headed many of the criminal organizations that took advantage of Prohibition. Criminal leaders and organizations with roots in Sicily, a region with a long history of secret antiestablishment societies, were especially important (Alba, 1985, pp. 62–64). The connection among organized crime, Prohibition, and Italian Americans is well-known, but it is not so widely recognized that ethnic succession operated in organized crime as it did in the legitimate opportunity structures. The Irish and Germans had been involved in organized crime for decades before the 1920s, and the Italians competed with these established gangsters and with Jewish crime syndicates for control of bootlegging and other criminal enterprises. The pattern of ethnic succession continued after the repeal of Prohibition, and members of groups newer to urban areas,

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including African Americans, Jamaicans, and Hispanic Americans, have recently challenged the Italian-dominated criminal "families."

Ethnic succession can also be observed in the institution of sports. Since the beginning of the 20th century, sports have offered a pathway to success and affluence that has attracted countless millions of young men. Success in many sports requires little in the way of formal credentials, education, or English fluency, and sports have been particularly appealing to the young men in minority groups that have few resources or opportunities.

For example, at the turn of the century, the Irish dominated the sport of boxing, but boxers from the Italian American community and other new immigrant groups eventually replaced them. Each successive wave of boxers reflected the concentration of a particular ethnic group at the bottom of the class structure. The succession of minority groups continues to this day, with boxing now dominated by African American and Latino fighters (Rader, 1983, pp. 87–106). A similar progression, or "layering," of ethnic and racial groups can be observed in other sports and in the entertainment industry.

The institutions of American society, both legitimate and illegal, reflect the relative positions of minority groups at a particular moment in time. Just a few generations ago, European immigrant groups dominated both crime and sports because they were blocked from legitimate opportunities. Now, the colonized racial minority groups still excluded from the mainstream job market and mired in the urban underclass are supplying disproportionate numbers of young people to these alternative opportunity structures.

CONTINUING INDUSTRIALIZATION AND STRUCTURAL MOBILITY

We have already mentioned that dominant–minority relations tend to change along with changes in subsistence technology, and we can find an example of this relationship in the history of the European immigrant groups across the 20th century. Industrialization is a continuous process, and as it proceeded, the nature of work in America evolved and changed and created opportunities for upward mobility for the white ethnic groups. One important form of upward mobility throughout the 20th century, called **structural mobility**, resulted more from changes in the structure of the economy and the labor market than from any individual effort or desire to "get ahead."

Structural mobility refers to rising occupational and social class standing that is a result of changes in the structure of the economy and labor market, as opposed to individual efforts.

Structural mobility is the result of the continuing mechanization and automation of the workplace. As machines replaced people in the workforce, the supply of manual, blue-collar jobs that had provided employment for so many first- and second-generation European immigrant laborers dwindled. At the same time, the supply of white-collar jobs increased, but access to the better jobs depended heavily on educational credentials. For white ethnic groups, a high school education became much more available in the 1930s, and college and university programs began to expand rapidly in the late 1940s, spurred in large part by the educational benefits made available to World War II veterans. Each generation of white ethnics, especially those born after 1925, was significantly more educated than the previous generation, and many were able to translate their increased human capital into upward mobility in the mainstream job market (Morawska, 1990, pp. 212–213).

The descendants of European immigrants became upwardly mobile not only because of their individual ambitions and efforts but also because of the changing location of jobs and the progressively greater opportunities for education available to them. Of course, the pace and timing of this upward movement was highly variable from group to group and from place to place. Ethnic succession continued to operate, and the descendants of the most recent immigrants from Europe (Italians and Poles, for example) tended to be the last to benefit from the general upgrading in education and the job market.

Still, structural mobility is one of the keys to the eventual successful integration of all white ethnic groups that is displayed in Table 2.3 (later in this chapter). During these same years, the racial minority groups, particularly African Americans, were excluded from the dominant group's educational system and from the opportunity to compete for better jobs.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why is generation important for understanding assimilation?
2. What were the major institutional pathways through which European immigrants adapted to U.S. society? Can you cite evidence from your home community of similar patterns for immigrant groups today?

VARIATIONS IN ASSIMILATION

In the previous section, we discussed patterns that were common to European immigrants and their descendants. Now we address some of the sources of variation and diversity in assimilation, a complex process that is never exactly the same for any two groups. Sociologists have paid particular attention to the way degree of similarity, religion, social class, and gender

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shaped the overall assimilation of the descendants of the mass European immigration. They have also investigated the way immigrants' reasons for coming to this country have affected the experiences of different groups.

DEGREE OF SIMILARITY

Since the dominant group consisted largely of Protestants with ethnic origins in northern and western Europe and especially England, it is not surprising to learn that the degree of resistance, prejudice, and discrimination encountered by the different European immigrant groups varied in part by the degree to which they differed from these dominant groups. The most significant differences related to religion, language, cultural values, and, for some groups, physical characteristics (which were often seen as "racial"). Thus, Protestant immigrants from northern and western Europe experienced less resistance than the English-speaking Catholic Irish, who in turn were accepted more readily than the new immigrants, who were both non–English speaking and overwhelmingly non-Protestant.

The preferences of the dominant group correspond roughly to the arrival times of the immigrants. The most similar groups immigrated earliest, and the least similar tended to be the last to arrive. Because of this coincidence, resistance to any one group of immigrants tended to fade as new groups arrived. For example, anti-German prejudice and discrimination never became particularly vicious or widespread (except during the heat of the World Wars) because the Irish began arriving in large numbers at about the same time. Concerns about the German immigrants were swamped by the fear that the Catholic Irish could never be assimilated. Then, as the 19th century drew to a close, immigrants from southern and eastern Europe—even more different from the dominant group—began to arrive and made concerns about the Irish seem trivial.

In addition, the New Immigration was far more voluminous than the Old Immigration (see Figure 2.4). Southern and eastern Europeans arrived in record numbers in the early 20th century, and the sheer volume of the immigration raised fears that American cities and institutions would be swamped by hordes of what were seen as racially inferior, unassimilable immigrants (a fear with strong echoes in the present).

Thus, a preference hierarchy was formed in American culture that privileged northern and western Europeans over southern and eastern Europeans, and Protestants over Catholics and Jews. These rankings reflect the ease with which the groups have been assimilated and have made their way into the larger society. This hierarchy of ethnic preference is still a part of American prejudice, as we shall see in Chapter 3, although it is much more muted today than in the heyday of immigration.

RELIGION

A major differentiating factor in the experiences of the European immigrant groups, recognized by Gordon and other students of American assimilation, was religion. Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish immigrants lived in different neighborhoods, occupied different niches in the workforce, formed separate networks of affiliation and groups, and chose their marriage partners from different pools of people.

One important study that documented the importance of religion for European immigrants and their descendants (and also reinforced the importance of generations) was conducted by sociologist Ruby Jo Kennedy (1944). She studied intermarriage patterns in New Haven, Connecticut, over a 70-year period ending in the 1940s and found that the immigrant generation chose marriage partners from a pool whose boundaries were marked by ethnicity and religion. For example, Irish Catholics married other Irish Catholics, Italian Catholics married Italian Catholics, Irish Protestants married Irish Protestants, and so forth across all the ethnic and religious divisions she studied.

The pool of marriage partners for the children and grandchildren of the immigrants continued to be bounded by religion but not so much by ethnicity. Thus, later generations of Irish Catholics continued to marry other Catholics but were less likely to marry other Irish. As assimilation proceeded, ethnic group boundaries faded (or "melted"), but religious boundaries did not. Kennedy described this phenomenon as a **triple melting pot**: a pattern of structural assimilation within each of the three religious denominations (Kennedy, 1944, 1952).

Will Herberg (1960), another important student of American assimilation, also explored the connection between religion and ethnicity. Writing in the 1950s, he noted that the pressures of acculturation did not affect all aspects of ethnicity equally. European immigrants and their descendants were strongly encouraged to learn English, but they were not so pressured to change their religious beliefs. Very often, their religious faith was the strongest connection between later generations and their immigrant ancestors. The American tradition of religious tolerance allowed the descendants of the European immigrants to preserve this tie to their roots without being seen as "un-American." As a result, the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths eventually came to occupy roughly equal degrees of legitimacy in American society.

Thus, for the descendants of the European immigrants, religion became a vehicle through which their ethnicity could be expressed. For many members of this group, religion and ethnicity were fused, and ethnic traditions and identities came to have a religious expression. For example, Mary Farrell, the Irish American schoolteacher introduced in Chapter 1, still attends Mass regularly in spite of the Catholic Church's position on homosexuality and gay marriage. She feels connected

The **triple melting pot** is the idea that structural assimilation for white ethnic groups took place within the context of the three major American religions.

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to the church, in part, because her family has always been Catholic and, by observing the rituals of the church in the present, she is honoring her connections to the past. It is not just that she is Irish Catholic American but that—for her and millions of others—being Catholic is part of being Irish in America.

SOCIAL CLASS

Social class is a central feature of social structure, and it is not surprising that it affected the European immigrant groups in a number of ways. First, social class combined with religion to shape the social world of the descendants of the European immigrants. In fact, Gordon (1964) concluded that U.S. society in the 1960s actually incorporated not three but four melting pots (one for each of the major ethnic/religious groups and one for black Americans), each of which were internally subdivided by social class. In his view, the most significant structural unit within American society was the **ethclass**, defined by the intersection of the religious, ethnic, and social class boundaries (e.g., working-class Catholic, upper-class Protestant, etc.). Thus, people were not "simply American" but tended to identify with, associate with, and choose their spouses from within their ethclasses.

Second, social class affected structural integration. The huge majority of the post-1880s European immigrants were working class, and because they "entered U.S. society at the bottom of the economic ladder, and . . . stayed close to that level for the next half century, ethnic history has been essentially working class history" (Morawska, 1990, p. 215; see also Bodnar, 1985). For generations, many groups of eastern and southern European immigrants did not acculturate to middle-class American culture but to an urban working-class, blue-collar set of lifestyles and values. Even today, ethnicity for many groups remains interconnected with social class factors, and a familiar stereotype of white ethnicity is the hard-hat construction worker.

GENDER

Anyone who wants to learn about the experience of immigration will find a huge body of literature incorporating every imaginable discipline and genre. The great bulk of this material, however, concerns the immigrant experience in general or focuses specifically on male immigrants. The experiences of female immigrants have been much less recorded and hence far less accessible. Many immigrant women came from cultures with strong patriarchal traditions, and they had much less access to leadership roles, education, and prestigious, high-paying occupations. As is the case with women of virtually all minority groups, the voices of immigrant women have been muted. The research that has been done, however, documents that immigrant women played multiple roles both during immigration and during the assimilation process. As would be expected in patriarchal societies, the roles of wife and mother were central, but immigrant women were involved in myriad other activities as well.

In general, male immigrants tended to precede women, and it was common for the males to send for the women only after they had secured lodging, jobs, and a certain level of stability. However, women immigrants' experiences were quite varied, often depending on the economic situation and cultural traditions of their home societies. In some cases, women were not only prominent among the "first wave" of immigrants but also began the process of acculturation and integration. During the 19th century, for example, a high percentage of Irish immigrants were young, single women. They came to America seeking jobs and often wound up employed in domestic work, a role that permitted them to live "respectably" in a family setting. In 1850, about 75% of all employed Irish immigrant women in New York City worked as servants, and the rest were employed in textile mills and factories. As late as 1920, 81% of employed Irish-born women in the United States worked as domestics. Factory work was the second most prevalent form of employment (Blessing, 1980; see also Steinberg, 1981).

Because the economic situation of immigrant families was typically precarious, it was common for women to be involved

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Woman worker at a textile mill.

Ethclass is the group formed by the intersection of social class and ethnic or racial group.

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in wage labor. The type and location of the work varied from group to group. Whereas Irish women were concentrated in domestic work and factories and mills, this was rare for Italian women. Italian culture had strong norms of patriarchy, and "one of the culture's strongest prohibitions was directed against contact between women and male strangers" (Alba, 1985, p. 53). Thus, acceptable work situations for Italian women were likely to involve tasks that could be done at home: doing laundry, taking in boarders, and doing piecework for the garment industry. Italian women who worked outside the home were likely to find themselves in single-sex settings among other immigrant women. Thus, women immigrants from Italy tended to be far less acculturated and integrated than those from Ireland.

Eastern European Jewish women represent still another pattern of assimilation. They were refugees from religious persecution, and most came with their husbands and children in intact family units. According to Steinberg (1981), "few were independent breadwinners, and when they did work, they usually found employment in the . . . garment industry. Often they worked in small shops with other family members" (p. 161).

Generally, immigrant women, like working-class women in general, were expected to work until they married, after which time it was expected that their husbands would support them and their children. In many cases, however, immigrant men could not earn enough to support their families, and their wives and children were required by necessity to contribute to the family budget. Immigrant wives sometimes continued to work outside the home, or they found other ways to make money. They took in boarders, did laundry or sewing, tended gardens, and were involved in myriad other activities that permitted them to contribute to the family budget and still stay home and attend to family and child-rearing responsibilities.

A 1911 report on southern and eastern European households found that about half kept lodgers and that the income from this activity amounted to about 25% of the husbands' wages. Children also contributed to the family income by taking after-school and summertime jobs (Morawska, 1990, pp. 211–212). Compared with the men, immigrant women were more closely connected to home and family, less likely to learn to read or speak English or otherwise acculturate, and significantly more influential in preserving the heritage of their groups.

When they sought employment outside the home, they found opportunities in the industrial sector and in clerical and sales work, occupations that were quickly stereotyped as "women's work." Women were seen as working only to supplement the family treasury, and this assumption was used to justify a lower wage scale. Evans (1980) reports that in the late 1800s, "whether in factories, offices, or private homes . . . women's wages were about half of those of men" (p. 135).

Finally, in addition to the myriad other roles they played, women also tended to function as the primary keepers of cultural traditions from the old country. Husbands were often more involved in the larger society and had greater familiarity with Anglo culture and the English language. Women, even when they were employed, tended to be more oriented to home, children, family, and the neighborhood, and more likely to maintain the traditional diet and dress, speak to their children in the old language, and observe the time-honored holidays and religious practices. Thus, in addition to their economic roles, the women of the immigrant groups performed crucial cultural and socialization functions and tended to be more culturally conservative and more resistant to Anglo values and practices than were the men. These gender role patterns are common in immigrant groups today, not only in the United States but also in western Europe.

SOJOURNERS

Some versions of the traditional perspective and the "taken-for-granted" views of many Americans assume that assimilation is desirable and therefore desired. However, immigrant groups from Europe were highly variable in their interest in Americanization, a factor that greatly shaped their experiences.

Some groups were very committed to Americanization. Eastern European Jews, for example, came to America because of religious persecution and planned to make America their home from the beginning. They left their homeland in fear for their lives and had no plans and no possibility of returning. They intended to stay, for they had nowhere else to go. (The nation of Israel was not founded until 1948.) These immigrants committed themselves to learning English, becoming citizens, and familiarizing themselves with their new society as quickly as possible.

Other immigrants had no intention of becoming American citizens and therefore had little interest in Americanization. These **sojourners**, or "birds of passage," were oriented to the old country and intended to return once they had accumulated enough capital to be successful in their home villages or provinces. Because immigration records are not very detailed, it is difficult to assess the exact numbers of immigrants who returned to the old country (see Wyman, 1993). We do know, for example, that a large percentage of Italian immigrants were sojourners. Although 3.8 million Italians landed in the United States between 1899 and 1924, it is estimated that around 2.1 million departed during the same interval (Nelli, 1980, p. 547).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What are some of the most important variations in the ways European immigrants adjusted to U.S. society?
2. What was the "triple melting pot," and how did it function?

Sojourners are immigrants who intend to return to their country of origin.

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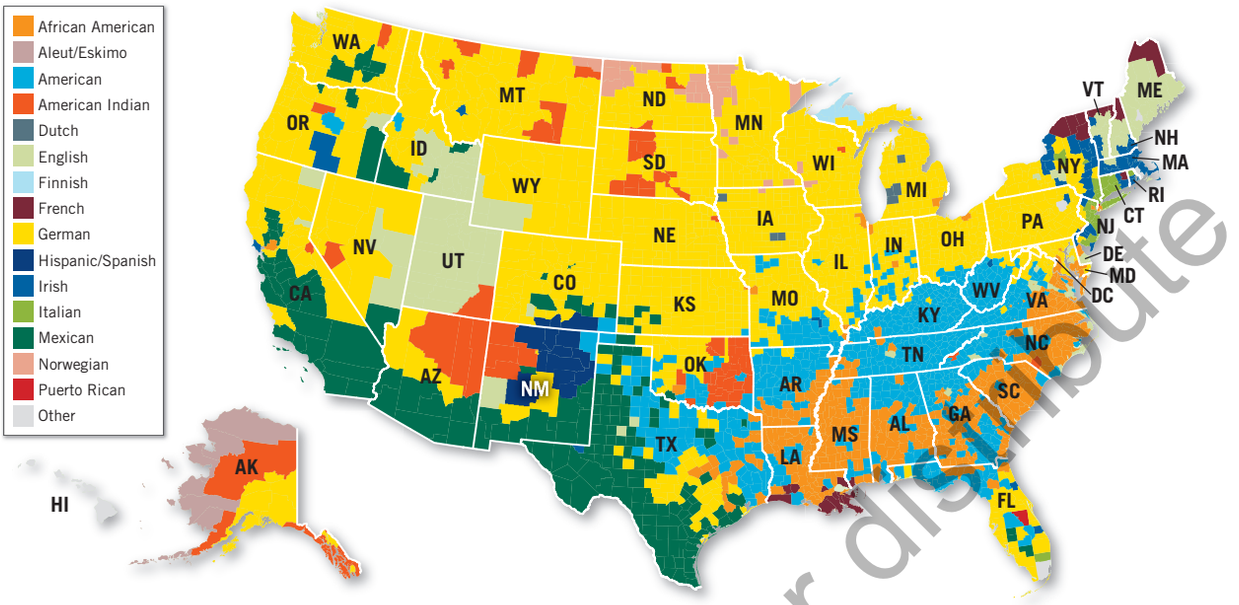
FIGURE 2.5 Ancestry With Largest Population in Each County, 2000



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2004a).

3. What important gender role differences existed in European immigrant groups? Would you guess that men or women would be more likely to be sojourners? Why?

THE DESCENDANTS OF THE IMMIGRANTS TODAY

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Figure 2.5 shows the geographical distribution of 15 racial and ethnic groups across the United States. The map displays the single largest group in each county. There is a lot of detail in the map, but for our purposes, we will focus on some of the groups mentioned in this chapter, including Norwegian, German, Irish, and Italian Americans (the Jewish population is too small to appear on this map).

First of all, the single largest ancestry group in the United States is German American, and this is reflected in Figure 2.5 by the predominance of yellow from Pennsylvania to California. Note also how the map reflects the original settlement areas for this group, especially in the Midwest. Likewise, Norwegian Americans (pink) are numerically dominant in some sections of the upper Midwest (e.g., northwestern Minnesota and northern North Dakota), along with Finnish Americans, another Scandinavian group. Irish Americans (blue) and Italian Americans (light green) are also concentrated in their original areas of settlement, with the Irish in Massachusetts and the Italians more concentrated around New York City.

Thus, almost a century after the end of mass immigration from Europe, many of the descendants of the immigrants have not wandered far from their ancestral locales. Of course, the map shows that the same point could be made for other groups, including blacks (concentrated in the "black belt" across the states of the old Confederacy), Mexican Americans (concentrated along the southern border from Texas to California), and Native Americans, whose concentration in the upper Midwest, eastern Oklahoma, and the Southwest reflects the locations of the reservations into which they were forced after the end of the Indian wars.

Given all that has changed in American society over the past century—industrialization, population growth, urbanization, and massive mobility—the stable location of white ethnics (and other ethnic and racial groups) seems remarkable. Why aren't people distributed more randomly across the nation's landscape?

The stability is somewhat easier to explain for some groups. African Americans, Mexican Americans, and American Indians have been limited in their geographic as well as social mobility by institutionalized discrimination, racism, and limited resources. We will examine the power of these constraints in detail in later chapters.

For white ethnics, on the other hand, the power of exclusion and rejection waned as the generations passed and the descendants of the immigrants assimilated and integrated.

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APPLYING CONCEPTS

Imagine you are interviewing the grandchildren (third generation) and great-grandchildren (fourth generation) of immigrants from Europe about their families' assimilation experiences. Some of the questions you might ask are listed below. Identify the stage of Gordon's model of assimilation that each question is testing.

A. What language did you speak at home when you were growing up?
B. What was your total household income last year?
C. (If married) Does your spouse share your religious faith?
D. (If married) Does your spouse share your ethnic background?
E. Did your parents have the same ethnic background? How about your grandparents?
F. Did you vote in the most recent presidential election?
G. What percentage of your friends share your ethnic background?
H. What percentage of your friends share your religious faith?
I. What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
J. Has your family name been changed or "Americanized"?

STAGE	ITEMS
Acculturation	
Integration (secondary level)	
Integration (primary level)	
Marital assimilation	

TURN THE PAGE TO FIND OUR ANSWERS.

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Their current locations are perhaps more a reflection of the idea (introduced in Chapter 1) that the United States is a nation of groups as well as individuals. Our group memberships, especially family and kin, exert a powerful influence on our decisions about where to live and work and, despite the transience and mobility of modern American life, can keep people connected to their relatives, the old neighborhood, their ethnic roots, and the sites of their ancestors' struggles.

INTEGRATION AND EQUALITY

Perhaps the most important point, for our purposes, about white ethnic groups (the descendants of the European immigrants) is that they are today on the verge of being completely assimilated. Even the groups that were the most despised and rejected in earlier years are acculturated, integrated, and thoroughly intermarried.

To illustrate this point, consider Table 2.3, which shows the degree to which a variety of white ethnic groups had been integrated as far back as 1990, more than a generation ago. The table displays data for 9 of the more than 60 white ethnic groups that people mentioned when asked to define their ancestries. The groups include the two largest white ethnic groups (German and Irish Americans) and seven more chosen to represent a range of geographic regions of origin and times of immigration (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

The table shows that by 1990, all nine of the groups selected were at or above national norms ("all persons") for all measures of equality. There is some variation among the groups, of course, but Table 2.3 shows that all exceeded the national averages for both high school and college education and had dramatically lower poverty rates, usually less than half the national average. All nine groups exceed the national average for median household income, some—Russians, for example, many of whom are Jewish—by a considerable margin.

In other areas, the evidence for assimilation and equality is also persuasive. For example, the distinct ethnic neighborhoods that these groups created in American cities (Little Italy, Greektown, Little Warsaw, etc.) have faded away or been taken over by other groups, and the rate of intermarriage between

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answers to APPLYING CONCEPTS

STAGE	ITEMS
Acculturation	A, J
Integration (secondary level)	B, F, I
Integration (primary level)	G, H
Marital assimilation	C, D, E

members of different white ethnic groups is quite high. For example, based on data from the 1990 census, about 56% of all married whites have spouses whose ethnic backgrounds do not match their own (Alba, 1995, pp. 13–14).

THE EVOLUTION OF WHITE ETHNICITY

Absorption into the American mainstream was neither linear nor continuous for the descendants of European immigrants. Over the generations, white ethnic identity sporadically reasserted itself in many ways, two of which are especially notable. First, there was a tendency for later generations to be more interested in their ancestry and ethnicity than were earlier generations. Marcus Hansen (1952) captured this phenomenon in his **principle of third-generation interest**: "What the second generation tries to forget, the third generation tries to remember" (p. 495). Hansen observed that the children of immigrants tended to minimize or deemphasize ("forget") their ethnicity to avoid the prejudice and intolerance of the larger society and to compete on more favorable terms for jobs and other opportunities. As they became adults and started families of their own, the second generation tended to raise their children in non-ethnic settings, with English as their first and only language.

By the time the third generation reached adulthood, especially the "new" immigrant groups that arrived last, the larger society had become more tolerant of white ethnicity and diversity, and having little to risk, the third generation tried to reconnect with their grandparents and roots. These descendants wanted to remember their ethnic heritage and understand it as part of their personal identities, their sense of who they were and where they belonged in the larger society. Thus, interest in the "old ways" and the degree of identification with the ancestral group was often stronger in the more Americanized third generation than in the more ethnic second. Ironically, of course, the grandchildren of the immigrants could not recover much of the richness and detail of their heritage because their parents had spent their lives trying to forget it. Nonetheless, the desire of the third generation to reconnect with their ancestry and recover their ethnicity shows that assimilation is not a simple, one-dimensional, or linear process. This practice of ethnic recovery in later generations is illustrated in the biography of Mary Farrell, the Irish Catholic introduced in Chapter 1, who attends Mass in part because she feels that the rituals connect her with her ancestors.

In addition to this generational pattern, the strength of white ethnic identity also responded to the changing context of American society and the activities of other groups. For example, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a notable increase in the visibility of and interest in white ethnic heritage, an upsurge often referred to as the ethnic revival. The revival manifested itself in a variety of ways. Some people became more interested in their families' genealogical roots, and others increased their participation in ethnic festivals, traditions, and organizations. The "white ethnic vote" became a factor in local, state, and national politics, and appearances at the churches, meeting halls, and neighborhoods associated with white ethnic groups became almost mandatory for candidates for office. Demonstrations and festivals celebrating white ethnic heritages were organized, and buttons and bumper stickers proclaiming the ancestry of everyone from Irish to Italians were widely displayed. The revival was also endorsed by politicians, editorialists, and intellectuals (e.g., see Novak, 1973), reinforcing the movement and giving it additional legitimacy.

The ethnic revival may have been partly fueled, à la Hansen's principle, by the desire to reconnect with ancestral roots, even though most groups were well beyond their third generations by the 1960s. More likely, the revival was a reaction to the increase in pluralistic sentiment in the society in general and the pluralistic, even separatist assertions of other groups. In the 1960s and 1970s, virtually every minority

The **principle of third-generation interest** is the idea that the grandchildren of immigrants will stress their ethnicity much more than will the second generation.

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TABLE 2.3 Median Household Income, Percent of Families Living in Poverty, and Educational Attainment for Selected White Ethnic Groups, 1990

	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	% OF FAMILIES LIVING IN POVERTY	% HIGH SCHOOL OR MORE	% BA OR MORE
ALL PERSONS	**$30,056**	**10%**	**75.2%**	**20.3%**
Russian	$45,778	3.6%	90.8%	49%
Italian	$36,060	4.9%	77.3%	21%
Polish	$34,763	4.3%	78.5%	23.1%
Ukrainian	$34,474	4%	77.5%	28.3%
Swedish	$33,881	4.5%	87.3%	27.4%
German	$32,730	5.5%	82.7%	22%
Slovak	$32,352	3.8%	78.2%	21.6%
Norwegian	$32,207	5.1%	85.9%	26%
Irish	$31,845	6.5%	79.6%	21.2%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2008).

group generated a protest movement (Black Power, Red Power, Chicanismo, etc.) and proclaimed a recommitment to its own heritage and to the authenticity of its own culture and experience. The visibility of these movements for cultural pluralism among racial minority groups helped make it more acceptable for European Americans to express their own ethnicity and heritage.

Besides the general tenor of the times, the resurgence of white ethnicity had some political and economic dimensions that bring us back to issues of inequality and competition for resources. In the 1960s, a white-ethnic urban working class made up largely of Irish and southern and eastern European groups still remained in the neighborhoods of the industrial Northeast and Midwest, and still continued to breathe life into the old networks and traditions (see Glazer & Moynihan, 1970; Greeley, 1974). At the same time that cultural pluralism was coming to be seen as more legitimate, this ethnic working class was feeling increasingly threatened by minority groups of color. In the industrial cities, it was not unusual for white ethnic neighborhoods to adjoin black and Hispanic neighborhoods, putting these groups in direct competition for housing, jobs, and other resources.

Many members of the white ethnic working class saw racial minority groups as inferior and perceived the advances being made by these groups as unfair, unjust, and threatening. They also reacted to what they saw as special treatment and attention being accorded on the basis of race, such as school busing and affirmative action. They had problems of their own (the declining number of good, unionized jobs; inadequate schooling; and deteriorating city services) and felt that their problems were being given lower priority and less legitimacy because they were white. The revived sense of ethnicity in the urban working-class neighborhoods was in large part a way of resisting racial reform and expressing resentment for the racial minority groups. Thus, among its many other causes and forms, the revival of white ethnicity that began in the 1960s was fueled by competition for resources and opportunities. As we will see throughout this text, such competition commonly leads to increased prejudice and a heightened sense of cohesion among group members.

THE TWILIGHT OF WHITE ETHNICITY?[1]

As the conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s faded and white ethnic groups continued to leave the old neighborhoods and rise in the class structure, the strength of white ethnic identity resumed its slow demise. Today, several more generations removed from the tumultuous 1960s, white ethnic identity has become increasingly nebulous and largely voluntary. It is often described as **symbolic ethnicity** or as an aspect of self-identity that symbolizes one's roots in the "old country" but is otherwise minor. The descendants of the European immigrants feel vaguely connected to their ancestors, but this part of their identities does not affect their lifestyles, circles of friends and neighbors, job prospects, eating habits, or other everyday routines (Gans, 1979; Lieberson &

Symbolic ethnicity is superficial, voluntary, and changeable.

[1]This phrase comes from Alba (1990).

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Waters, 1988). For the descendants of the European immigrants today, ethnicity is an increasingly minor part of their identities that is expressed only occasionally or sporadically. For example, they might join in ethnic or religious festivals (e.g., St. Patrick's Day for Irish Americans, Columbus Day for Italian Americans), but these activities are seasonal or otherwise peripheral to their lives and self-images. The descendants of the European immigrants have choices, in stark contrast to their ancestors, members of racial minority groups, and recent immigrants: They can stress their ethnicity, ignore it completely, or maintain any degree of ethnic identity they choose. Many people have ancestors in more than one ethnic group and may change their sense of affiliation over time, sometimes emphasizing one group's traditions and sometimes another's (Waters, 1990).

In fact, white ethnic identity has become so ephemeral that it may be on the verge of disappearing altogether. For example, based on a series of in-depth interviews with white Americans from various regions of the nation, Gallagher (2001) found a sense of ethnicity so weak that it did not even rise to the level of "symbolic." His respondents were the products of ancestral lines so thoroughly intermixed and intermarried that any trace of a unique heritage from a particular group was completely lost. They had virtually no knowledge of the experiences of their immigrant ancestors or of the life and cultures of the ethnic communities they had inhabited, and for many, their ethnic ancestries were no more meaningful to them than their states of birth. Their lack of interest in and information about their ethnic heritage was so complete that it led Gallagher to propose an addendum to Hansen's principle: "What the grandson wished to remember, the great-granddaughter has never been told."

At the same time as more specific white ethnic identities are disappearing, they are also evolving into new shapes and forms. In the view of many analysts, a new identity is developing that merges the various "hyphenated" ethnic identities (German American, Polish American, etc.) into a single, generalized "European American" identity based on race and a common history of immigration and assimilation. This new identity reinforces the racial lines of separation that run through contemporary society, but it does more than simply mark group boundaries. Embedded in this emerging identity is an understanding, often deeply flawed, of how the white immigrant groups succeeded and assimilated in the past, and a view, often deeply ideological, of how the racial minority groups should behave in the present. These understandings are encapsulated in "immigrant tales": legends that stress heroic individual effort and grim determination as key ingredients leading to success in the old days. These tales feature impoverished, victimized immigrant ancestors who survived and made a place for themselves and their children by working hard, saving their money, and otherwise exemplifying the virtues of the Protestant Ethic and American individualism. They stress the idea that past generations became successful despite the brutal hostility of the dominant group and with no government intervention, and they equate the historical difficulties faced by immigrants from Europe with those suffered by racial minority groups (slavery, segregation, attempted genocide, etc.). They strongly imply—and sometimes blatantly assert—that the latter groups could succeed in America by simply following the example set by the former (Alba, 1990; Gallagher, 2001).

These accounts mix versions of human capital theory and traditional views of assimilation with prejudice and racism. Without denying or trivializing the resolve and fortitude of European immigrants, equating their experiences and levels of disadvantage with those of African Americans, American Indians, and Mexican Americans is widely off the mark, as we shall see in the remainder of this text. These views support an attitude of disdain and lack of sympathy for the multiple dilemmas faced today by the racial minority groups and many contemporary immigrants. They permit a more subtle expression of prejudice and racism and allow whites to use these highly distorted views of their immigrant ancestors as a rhetorical device to express a host of race-based grievances without appearing racist (Gallagher, 2001).

Alba (1990) concludes as follows:

> *The thrust of the [emerging] European American identity is to defend the individualistic view of the American system, because it portrays the system as open to those who are willing to work hard and pull themselves out of poverty and discrimination. Recent research suggests that it is precisely this individualism that prevents many whites from sympathizing with the need for African Americans and other minorities to receive affirmative action in order to overcome institutional barriers to their advancement. (p. 317)*

What can we conclude? The generations-long journey from immigrant to white ethnic to European American seems to be drawing to a close. The separate ethnic identities are merging into a larger sense of "whiteness" that unites descendants of the immigrants with the dominant group and provides a rhetorical device for expressing disdain for other groups, especially African Americans.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. In what concrete ways are the descendants of the European immigrants successful?
2. What is Hansen's principle, and why is it significant? What is Gallagher's addendum to this principle, and why is it important?
3. Does white ethnic identity have a future? Why or why not?

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NARRATIVE PORTRAIT

Assimilation, Then and Now

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A block in Hell's Kitchen where Mario Puzo grew up.

Mario Puzo and Luis Rodriguez are both sons of immigrants, but they grew up in two very different Americas. Puzo, best known as the author of The Godfather, *grew up in the Italian American community, and his memoir of life in New York City in the 1930s illustrates some of the patterns that are at the heart of Gordon's theory of assimilation. Writing in the 1970s, Puzo remembers his boyhood and his certainty that he would escape the poverty that surrounded him. Note also his view of (and gratitude for) an America that gave people (or at least white people) the opportunity to rise above the circumstances of their birth.*

Rodriguez paints a rather different picture of U.S. society. He grew up in the Los Angeles area in the 1950s and 1960s and was a veteran of gang warfare by the time he reached high school. His memoir, Always Running: La Vida Loca *(1993), describes how his high school prepared Mexican American students for life.*

CHOOSING A DREAM: ITALIANS IN HELL'S KITCHEN

Mario Puzo

In the summertime, I was one of the great Tenth Avenue athletes, but in the wintertime I became a sissy. I read books. At a very early age I discovered libraries. . . . My mother always looked at all this reading with a fishy Latin eye. She saw no profit in it, but since all her children were great readers, she was a good enough general to know she could not fight so pervasive an insubordination. And there may have been some envy. If she had been able to, she would have been the greatest reader of all.

My direct ancestors for a thousand years have most probably been illiterate. Italy, the golden land, . . . so majestic in its language and cultural treasures . . . , has never cared for its poor people. My father and mother were both illiterates. Both grew up on rocky, hilly farms in the countryside adjoining Naples. . . . My mother was told that the family could not afford the traditional family gift of linens when she married, and it was this that decided her to emigrate to America. . . . My mother never heard of Michelangelo; the great deeds of the Caesars had not reached her ears. She never heard the great music of her native land. She could not sign her name.

And so it was hard for my mother to believe that her son could become an artist. After all, her one dream in coming to America had been to earn her daily bread, a wild dream in itself. And looking back, she was dead right. Her son an artist? To this day she shakes her head. I shake mine with her. . . .

What has happened here has never happened in any other country in any other time. The poor, who have been poor for centuries . . . whose children had inherited their poverty, their illiteracy, their hopelessness, achieved some economic dignity and freedom. You didn't get it for nothing, you had to pay a price in tears, in suffering, but why not? And some even became artists.

SOURCE: Puzo, Mario (1993). "Choosing a Dream: Italians in Hell's Kitchen." In W. Brown & A. Ling (Eds.), *Visions of America,* pp. 56–57. New York: Persea. Reprinted by permission of Donadio & Olson, Inc. Copyright © 1993 Mario Puzo.

ALWAYS RUNNING: LA VIDA LOCA

Luis Rodriguez

Mark Keppel High School was a Depression-era structure with a brick and art deco facade and small, army-type bungalows in the back. Friction filled its hallways. The Anglo and Asian upper-class students from Monterey Park and Alhambra attended the school. They were tracked into the "A" classes; they were in the school clubs; they were the varsity team members and lettermen. They were the pep squad and cheerleaders.

But the school also took in the people from the Hills and surrounding community who somehow made it past junior high. They were mostly Mexican, in the "C" track (what were called the "stupid" classes). Only a few of these students participated in school government, in sports, or in the various clubs.

The school had two principal languages. Two skin tones and two cultures. It revolved around class differences. The white and Asian kids . . . were from professional, two-car households with watered lawns and trimmed trees. The laboring class, the sons and daughters of service workers, janitors, and factory hands lived in and around the Hills. . . . The school separated these two groups by levels of education: The professional-class kids were provided with college-preparatory classes; the blue-collar students were pushed into "industrial arts." . . .

If you came from the Hills, you were labeled from the start. I'd walk into the counselor's office and looks of disdain greeted me—one meant for a criminal, alien, to be feared. Already a thug. It was harder to defy this expectation than just accept it and fall into the trappings. It was a jacket I could try to take off, but they kept putting it back on. The first hint of trouble and the preconceptions proved true. So why not be an outlaw? Why not make it our own?

SOURCE: Rodriguez (1993, pp. 83–84).

Questions to Consider

1. What are the key sociological differences between the experiences of Puzo and Rodriguez?
2. How does the concept of segmented assimilation apply to these two different lives? What sectors of American society are Puzo and Rodriguez being prepared for? Is there any basis for Rodriguez's despair as opposed to Puzo's optimism?

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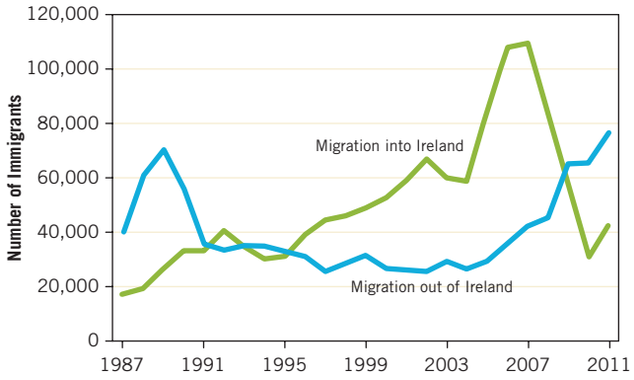
COMPARATIVE FOCUS

Immigration and Ireland

FIGURE 2.6 Migration Into and Out of Ireland, 1987–2011



Just as the United States has been a major receiver of immigrants for the past 200 years, Ireland has been a major supplier. Mass immigration from Ireland began with the potato famines of the 1840s and continued through the end of the 20th century, motivated by continuing hard times, political unrest, and unemployment. This mass out-migration—along with the famines—cut the 1840 Irish population of 7 million in half, and the population today is still only about 4.5 million.

History rarely runs in straight lines, however. In the 1990s and into the 21st century, Ireland suddenly became a consumer of immigrants. As displayed in Figure 2.6, the number of newcomers entering Ireland soared between 1987 and 2006, and the number of people leaving decreased. Starting in about 2007, however, the trend reversed: The number of newcomers plummeted, and the historic pattern of out-migration reappeared.

What explains these patterns? Answers are not hard to find. The influx of immigrants starting in the late 1980s was largely a response to rapid economic growth. The Irish economy—the so-called "Celtic Tiger"—had entered a boom phase, spurred by investments from multinational corporations and the benefits of joining the European Economic Union. Irish nationals who had left seeking work abroad returned home in large numbers, and people from Europe and other parts of the globe also began to arrive. In addition, Ireland began to receive refugees and people seeking asylum from Africa, the Middle East, and other trouble spots.

The changes that started in 2007 have an equally obvious cause. The global economy faltered badly in that year, and the Irish economy followed suit: Banks failed, companies went bankrupt, the housing market collapsed, and jobs disappeared. The Irish returned to their historic role as a supplier of immigrants to other economies around the world.

Although the era of in-migration lasted only a few decades, it may have created some permanent changes in Irish society. For example, the number of Irish of African and Asian descent has increased by a factor of 8 since 1996 (although both groups are less than 2% of the total population). Over the centuries, many different groups (e.g., Vikings, Spanish, and Anglo-Normans) have become part of Ireland, but, for the first time in their history, the Irish are dealing with issues of racial diversity.

Questions to Consider

1. What similarities can you see between immigration to Ireland and immigration to the United States?
2. Do you suppose that immigrants to Ireland will be assimilated in the same way as immigrants to the United States? If you could travel to Ireland, what questions would you ask about the assimilation process?

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CONTEMPORARY IMMIGRANTS: DOES THE TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVE APPLY?

Does the traditional perspective—based as it is on the experiences of European immigrants and their descendants—apply to more recent immigrants? This is a key issue facing social scientists, government policymakers, and the general public today. Will contemporary immigrants duplicate the experiences of earlier groups? Will they acculturate before they integrate? Will religion, social class, and race be important forces in their lives? Will they take three generations to assimilate? More than three? Fewer? What will their patterns of intermarriage look like? Will they achieve socioeconomic parity with the dominant group? When? How?

Sociologists (as well as the general public and policymakers) are split in their answers to these questions. Some social scientists believe that the "traditional" perspective on assimilation does not apply and that the experiences of contemporary immigrant groups will differ greatly from those of European immigrants. They believe that assimilation today is fragmented or **segmented** and will have a number of different outcomes. Although some contemporary immigrant

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groups may integrate into the middle-class mainstream, others will find themselves permanently mired in the impoverished, alienated, and marginalized segments of racial minority groups. Still others may form close-knit enclaves based on their traditional cultures and become successful in the United States by resisting the forces of acculturation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 45).

In stark contrast, other theorists believe that the traditional perspective on assimilation is still relevant and that contemporary immigrant groups will follow the established pathways of mobility and assimilation. Of course, the process will be variable from group to group and from place to place, but even the groups that are today the most impoverished and marginalized will, in time, move into mainstream society.

How will the debate be resolved? We cannot say at the moment, but we can point out that this debate is reminiscent of the critique of Park's theory of assimilation. In both cases, the argument is partly about time: Even the most impoverished and segmented groups may find their way into the economic mainstream eventually, at some unspecified time in the future. There are also other levels of meaning in the debate, however, related to one's perception of the nature of modern U.S. society. Is U.S. society today growing more tolerant of diversity, more open and equal? If so, this would seem to favor the traditionalist perspective. If not, this trend would clearly favor those who argue for the segmented-assimilation hypothesis. Although we will not resolve this argument in this text, we will use the debate between the traditional and segmented views on assimilation as a useful framework as we consider the experiences of these groups (see Chapters 8, 9, and 10).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What is segmented assimilation, and why is this an important concept? How would social class and gender relate to the debate over whether contemporary assimilation is segmented?

IMPLICATIONS FOR EXAMINING DOMINANT–MINORITY RELATIONS

Chapters 1 and 2 have introduced many of the terms, concepts, and themes that form the core of the rest of this text. Although the connections between the concepts are not simple, some key points can be made to summarize these chapters and anticipate the material to come.

First, minority-group status has much more to do with power and the distribution of resources than with simple numbers or the percentage of the population in any particular category. We saw this notion expressed in Chapter 1 in the definition of *minority group* and in our exploration of inequality. The themes of inequality and differentials in status were also covered in our discussion of prejudice, racism, and discrimination. To understand minority relations, we must examine some very basic realities of human society: inequalities in wealth, prestige, and the distribution of power. To discuss changes in minority-group status, we must be prepared to discuss changes in the way society does business, makes decisions, and distributes income, jobs, health care, and opportunities.

A second area that we will focus on in the rest of the book is the question of how our society should develop. Assimilation and pluralism, with all their variations, define two broad directions. Each has been extensively examined and discussed by social scientists, by leaders and decision makers in American society, and by ordinary people from all groups and walks of life. The analysis and evaluation of these two broad directions is a thread running throughout this book.

Segmented assimilation has multiple outcomes. Some groups may eventually enter the middle class, but others may be permanently excluded, marginalized, and impoverished.

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SUMMARY

This summary is organized around the Learning Objectives listed at the beginning of this chapter.

2.1 Explain and analyze the concepts of assimilation and pluralism, including the "traditional" model of assimilation.

Assimilation and pluralism are two broad pathways of development for intergroup relations. Assimilation is a process by which groups grow more similar, and in the United States, it has generally meant Americanization or Anglo-conformity. In the traditional model, assimilation includes a number of stages: acculturation, integration at the secondary and primary levels, and intermarriage.

Under pluralism, group differences are maintained through time. In cultural (or "full") pluralism, groups differ both culturally and structurally. Under structural pluralism, groups share essentially the same culture but occupy different locations in the social structure.

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2.2 List and explain other group relationships.

Group relations other than assimilation and pluralism include separatism, revolution, forced migration and expulsion, genocide, and continued subjugation.

2.3 Describe the timing, causes, and volume of the migration from Europe, and explain how those immigrants became "white ethnics."

The period of mass European immigration stretched from the 1820s to the 1920s and included both "Old" (from northern and western Europe) and "New" (from southern and eastern Europe) phases. More than 30 million people made the journey from Europe to the United States during this time. People moved for many reasons, including the pursuit of religious and political freedom, but the underlying motive force was industrialization and urbanization. Immigrants from Europe were minority groups at first but, over a series of generations, assimilated, became upwardly mobile and integrated, and Americanized. Their experiences varied by gender, "race," and class, but, generally, most groups followed the "traditional" model of assimilation (which was based on these groups).

2.4 Explain the patterns of assimilation and the major variations in those patterns.

Assimilation for European immigrant groups generally followed a three-generation pattern, with the grandchildren of the original immigrants completing the process. Ethnic succession occurred when newly arrived groups of immigrants pushed older groups up in the occupational structure. The three major pathways of integration were politics, labor unions, and religion, but others included organized crime and sports. Structural mobility occurred as the American industrial economy matured and changed. Continuing mechanization and automation changed the nature of work, creating more opportunities in the middle-class, white-collar areas. The descendants of the immigrants were generally able to take advantage of expanding opportunities for education and move higher in the class structure than their parents and grandparents did. The experience of assimilation varied by the physical appearance of the group, its religion, social class, gender, and extent of sojourning.

2.5 Describe the status of the descendants of European immigrants today, including the "twilight of white ethnicity."

These groups are, on average, at or above national norms for affluence and success. White ethnicity seems to be fading and may be in its twilight, although it remains a significant force for some people.

2.6 Explain how the traditional model of assimilation does or does not apply to contemporary immigrants.

Research is ongoing, but, at least for some immigrant groups, assimilation today may be segmented and may have outcomes other than equality with and acceptance into the middle class. We will consider these possibilities in depth in Part III.

KEY TERMS

acculturation or cultural assimilation 34
Americanization (or Anglo-conformity) 33
anti-Semitism 48
assimilation 32
capital-intensive 40
cultural pluralism 37
culture 34
enclave minority group 37
ethclass 56
ethnic succession 51
human capital theory 35
industrial revolution 40
integration or structural assimilation 34
intermarriage or marital assimilation 35
labor-intensive 40
melting pot 33
middleman minority group 37
multiculturalism 36
New Immigration 41
Old Immigration 41
pluralism 32
primary sector 34
principle of third-generation interest 60
race relations cycle 34
revolution 38
secondary sector 34
segmented assimilation 65
separatism 38
social structure 34
sojourners 57
structural mobility 54
structural pluralism 37
symbolic ethnicity 61
triple melting pot 55

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Gordon's model of assimilation. Identify and explain each stage and how the stages are linked together. Explain Table 2.2 in terms of Gordon's model.
2. "Human capital theory is not so much wrong as it is incomplete." Explain this statement. What does the theory leave out? What are the strengths of the theory? What questionable assumptions does it make?
3. What are the major dimensions along which the experience of assimilation varies? Explain how and why the experience of assimilation can vary.

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4. Define pluralism, and explain the ways it differs from assimilation. Why has interest in pluralism increased? Explain the difference between and cite examples of structural and cultural pluralism. Describe enclave minority groups in terms of pluralism and in terms of Gordon's model of assimilation. How have contemporary theorists added to the concept of pluralism?
5. Define and explain segmented assimilation, and explain how it differs from Gordon's model. What evidence is there that assimilation for recent immigrants is not segmented? What is the significance of this debate for the future of U.S. society? For other minority groups (e.g., African Americans)? For the immigrants themselves?

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Current Debates: English Only?

Should English be made the official language of the United States? Should immigrants be required to be fluent in English? Would "English-only" policies exclude and marginalize immigrants?

On our website you will find an overview of the topic, the clashing points of view, and some questions to consider as you analyze the material.

Public Sociology Assignments

Public Sociology Assignments provide opportunities for students to address directly and personally some of the issues raised in this text.

The first two public sociology assignments on our website will lead students to confront diversity in their community. In the first assignment, you will investigate your hometown to see if you can document increases in racial and ethnic diversity consistent with Figure 1.1. In the second assignment, you will study graffiti: Does it express stereotypes and prejudice? What does it reflect about local group hierarchies?

Contributed by Linda M. Waldron

Internet Research Project

For the Internet Research Project for this chapter, you will use information from the U.S. Census to assess the relative assimilation of several groups, including some white ethnic groups. Your investigation will be guided by a series of questions, and your instructor may ask you to discuss the issues in small groups.

For Further Reading

Please see our website for an annotated list of important works related to this chapter.

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