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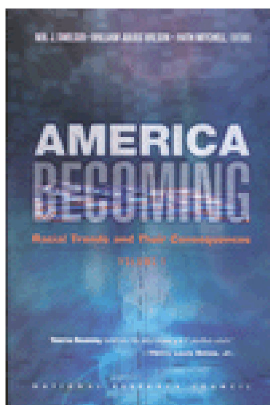

**America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences, Volume 1**

Neil J. Smelser, William Julius Wilson, and Faith Mitchell, Editors; National Research Council

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# 7

# Contemporary Immigration and the Dynamics of Race and Ethnicity

*Min Zhou*

This article examines three interrelated questions: (1) To what extent does contemporary immigration differ from immigration at the turn of the century, and how may these differences affect our approach to the issues of, and concerns about, immigration? (2) How have settlement patterns of new immigrants transformed America's urban centers and the nature of racial and ethnic relations in these centers? (3) What opportunities and challenges have new immigrants and their offspring faced as they converge in America's largest urban centers, and will they be able to advance socioeconomically if they follow the path taken by earlier European immigrants?

## IMMIGRATION THEN AND NOW

### General Trends

Contemporary immigration refers to the period of large-scale, non-European immigration to the United States from the time immigration began to accelerate in the late 1960s through the mid-1990s, following a long hiatus of restricted immigration (Massey, 1995). Between 1971 and 1995, the United States admitted approximately 17.1 million immigrants, including 1.6 million formerly unauthorized aliens and 1.1 million Special Agricultural Workers[1] (SAW) who were granted permanent-resident sta-

[1]The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 (Public Law 99-603; Act of 11/6/86), was passed to control and deter illegal immigration to the United States. Its major



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tus under the provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (hereafter IRCA). The scale of contemporary immigration almost matched that during the first quarter of the century (17.2 million admissions between 1901 and 1925), when immigration to the United States was at its peak. Although similar in number, the annual admission trends in these two peak periods looked quite different, as shown in Figure 7-1. From 1901 to 1925, annual admission numbers fluctuated, with several noticeable ebbs and flows. In contrast, from 1971 to 1995, the inflow was fairly steady. Annual admission numbers were less than 500,000 from 1971 to 1978, then gradually increased from 1978 to 1988. Then in 1989, annual admission numbers suddenly surged above the 1 million mark in a spurt that lasted until 1992. Afterward, the admission flow subsided, but fell to a level higher than the pre-1989 mark; and it has since remained steady and substantially large.

The upsurge in the late 1980s impressed the media and the public, who mistook it for an increase in the overall size of the flow. In fact, the 1989-1992 increase (reflected in the triangular peak in Figure 7-1) was almost entirely the result of legalization, permitted by IRCA, of formerly undocumented immigrants. In theory, all the IRCA legalizees should have been residing in the country for a considerable period of time prior to 1989, though a substantial portion of those whose status was legalized by the SAW program turned out to be relatively recent arrivals. Nonetheless, the more accurate description of trends in legal admission separates the legalizees from other legal immigrants, as shown in Figure 7-1. Clearly, had it not been for IRCA, immigration trends would have been stable, though heading in a gradual, upward direction.

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provisions stipulate legalization of undocumented aliens, legalization of certain agricultural workers, sanctions for employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers, and increased enforcement at U.S. borders. Special Agricultural Workers (SAW) are aliens who performed labor in perishable agricultural commodities for a specified period of time and were admitted for temporary, and then permanent, residence under a provision of IRCA. Up to 350,000 aliens who worked at least 90 days in each of the three years preceding May 1, 1986, were eligible for Group I temporary resident status. Eligible aliens who qualified under this requirement but applied after the 350,000 limit was met, and aliens who performed labor in perishable agricultural commodities for at least 90 days during the year ending May 1, 1986, were eligible for Group II temporary resident status. Adjustment to permanent resident status is essentially automatic for both groups; however, aliens in Group I were eligible on December 1, 1989, and those in Group II were eligible one year later on December 1, 1990.

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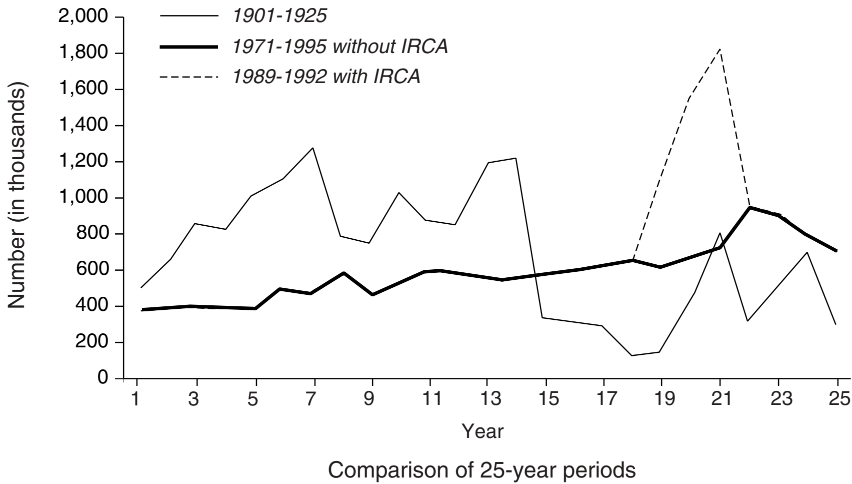


FIGURE 7-1 Immigration to the United States: 1901 to 1925 versus 1971 to 1995.
SOURCE: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1997).

## Contemporary Immigration in Historical Perspective

From a historical standpoint, the trend of contemporary immigration differs from the earlier trend in five significant ways. First, despite the absolute numbers, the rate of contemporary immigration relative to the total U.S. population is much lower than that of the earlier period, simply because the U.S. population more than tripled during the course of the twentieth century (Smith and Edmonston, 1997). The average rate from 1986 to 1995 was 3.9 immigrants per 1,000 U.S. residents, as opposed to 11.1 from 1905 to 1914 (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997:17). The comparatively low rate of contemporary immigration implies a more modest overall impact on the U.S. population today than in the past, though such an impact is disproportionately localized in areas of high immigration.

Second, the rate of contemporary emigration is also considerably lower today than in the past. It was estimated that for every 100 immigrants who arrived from 1901 through the early twenties, 36 returned to their homelands. Between 1971 and 1990, in contrast, less than 25 returned. This trend suggests a more steady rate of growth today than in the past, and indicates that contemporary immigrants are more likely than their earlier counterparts to stay in the United States permanently (Warren and Kraly, 1985; U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997).

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Third, unlike immigration then, today's immigration is accompanied by a much larger number of undocumented immigrants. Before the Nationality Act of 1924 established the national-origins quota system, immigration to the United States was relatively open, with legal restrictions only on immigrants from Asia—a small fraction of total U.S. immigration. Thus, the number of undocumented immigrants before 1924 was not at issue. Today, various immigration laws are in place to regulate front-door entrants; but historical patterns of labor's reliance on Mexican migration, especially in agriculture, as well as migration networks, have facilitated undocumented immigration through back-door channels (Massey, 1995).

Net trends in undocumented immigration have fluctuated since the 1980s. On the one hand, IRCA "dried up" a large portion of the undocumented population because former illegals were no longer illegal. Moreover, the employer-sanctions provisions of IRCA exercised an initial deterrent effect on illegal flows of laborers across the Mexican border. Fairly quickly, however, conditions returned to the status quo ante, as undocumented workers and their employers learned to circumvent new restrictions; and the inertial effect of long-established migrant networks facilitated the inflows. Consequently, the number of undocumented immigrants grew to 5 million as of October 1996, up from an estimated 3.9 million in October 1992, indicating an average annual growth of 275,000 during the 1994 to 1996 period. About 60 percent of undocumented immigrants enter across land borders. Undocumented immigrants from Mexico alone account for 54 percent of the total, eight times the number from El Salvador, the second largest source. California's share is 40 percent of all undocumented immigrants (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997:185). Because of the high visibility of so many immigrants of Mexican origin, and because of the geographic concentration, undocumented immigration has become a highly publicized and contested policy issue in California.

Fourth, compared to immigration then, today's inflows are made up of a higher proportion of refugees and those seeking asylum.[2] From 1946 to 1995—i.e., in the 50 years after World War II ended—more than 3 million refugees and people seeking asylum were granted lawful permanent-resident status through various legislation. Unlike post-WWII refugees, more than 90 percent of whom were from war-torn countries in

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[2]Refugees and people seeking asylum can be anyone with a well-founded fear of prosecution on the basis of race, religion, membership in a social group, political opinion, or national origin. Refugees are those seeking protection from outside the United States; those seeking asylum are seeking protection once already in the United States.

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Europe, contemporary refugees reflect more numerous and diverse national origins, with most coming from the Caribbean, Central America, Southeast Asia, and the former Soviet Union. From 1961 to 1995, the number of refugees admitted annually averaged 68,150, compared to 47,000 over the 15-year span immediately after the War (1946 to 1961). The admission of refugees today implies a much larger base for later immigration through family reunification.

Last but not least, the all-time high presence of nonimmigrants arriving in the United States temporarily each year also bears a broad implication for potential immigration, both legal and illegal. According the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), of 22.6 million nonimmigrant visas issued in 1995, 17.6 million (78 percent) were for tourists who came for short visits, business or pleasure; the rest were for long-term nonimmigrants, including 395,000 foreign students along with their spouses and children, 243,000 temporary workers or trainees along with their immediate relatives, and a smaller number of traders and investors. These groups contain a significant pool of potential immigrants. The majority of those who initially entered as students can freely seek employment in the United States after the completion of their studies, which in turn increases the probability of later moving to permanent-resident status. Among those who entered as tourists, the great majority will depart on time; however, a relatively small proportion, but a quantitatively large number, of those who might qualify for family-sponsored immigration, may overstay their visas and wait here to have their status adjusted. In 1995, almost one-half of the legal immigrants admitted were originally nonimmigrants who had their visas adjusted here in the United States. About 40 percent of the total undocumented immigrant population were "nonimmigrant overstays" (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997).

In sum, lower rates of emigration, higher numbers of undocumented immigrants and refugees or people seeking asylum, and the larger pool of potentially permanent immigrants among nonimmigrants suggests the complexity of contemporary immigration. Another significant implication for immigration to America is that it is a more challenging task than ever to accurately measure the scale and impact of immigration and to manage or control the inflows.

## HETEROGENEITY OF CONTEMPORARY IMMIGRANTS

Compared with the turn-of-the-century immigrants, contemporary immigrants are markedly heterogeneous in national origins, types of admission, spatial distribution, and socioeconomic characteristics. The newcomers come predominantly from non-European countries. Since the

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1980s, 88 percent of the immigrants admitted to the United States come from the Americas (excluding Canada) and Asia, and only 10 percent from Europe, compared to more than 90 percent at the earlier peak. In particular, the percentage of immigrants from the Americas, as a proportion of total legal immigrant admissions, has risen substantially from its 1950 base of 25 percent, moving to 39 percent in the 1960s, and jumping up to 50 percent since the 1980s. Similarly, the percentage of immigrants from Asia, as a proportion of the total admissions, grew from a tiny 5 percent in the 1950s, to 11 percent in the 1960s, to 33 percent in the 1970s, and has stayed at 35 percent since 1980, except for 1991 when the Asian share dropped to 18 percent because of the sudden increase in the legalizees under IRCA, most of whom were Mexicans or Central Americans (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997).[3] The top five sending countries from 1981 through 1995 were Mexico, the Philippines, China/Taiwan, the Dominican Republic, and India, compared to Italy, Austria/Hungary, the Soviet Union, Canada, and the United Kingdom during the first two decades of the century. Mexico alone accounted for more than one-fifth of the total legal admissions since the 1980s. In fact, Mexico was on the INS list of the top five countries of last residence from 1921 through 1960, and was number one after 1960 (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997:14).

The size and composition of immigration has a lasting effect on the size and composition of the general U.S. population. During the past 30 years, immigration accounted for more than one-third of total U.S. population growth. Asian- and Hispanic-origin populations grew particularly fast, in both absolute and relative sizes. Some groups—Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Dominicans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Asian Indians, Koreans, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians—grew at spectacular rates, mainly as a result of immigration. It is estimated that, at the current rates of net immigration, intermarriage, and ethnic affiliation, the size of the Asian population will increase from 9 to 34 million by 2050 (growing from 3 to 8 percent of the population) and the Hispanic population will rise from 27 million in 1995 (about 9 percent of the population) to 95 million (or 25 percent of the population) in 2050 (Smith and Edmonston, 1997).

Spatially, the turn-of-the-century immigrants were highly concentrated along the Northeastern seaboard and in the Midwest. For them, the top five most preferred state destinations were New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey; and the most preferred immigrant urban destinations were New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Boston (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr, 1996). In contrast, today's

[3]Not including immigrants from Iran, Israel, and Turkey.

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newcomers are highly concentrated not simply in states or urban areas traditionally attracting most immigrants but also in states or urban areas in the West, Southwest, and Southeast. Since 1971, the top five states of immigrant intended residence have been California, New York, Florida, Texas, and New Jersey, accounting for almost two out of every three newly admitted immigrants. California has been the leading state of immigrant destination since 1976. In 1995, the five leading urban areas of high immigrant concentration were New York, Los Angeles-Long Beach, Chicago, Miami-Hialeah, and Orange County, California (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997).

The new immigrants also differ from the turn-of-the-century inflows in their diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The image of the poor, uneducated, and unskilled "huddled masses," used to depict the turn-of-the-century European immigrants, does not apply to today's newcomers. The 1990 Census attests to the vast differences in demographic characteristics, levels of education, occupation, and income by national origins (Table 7-1). The sex ratio was nearly balanced, with a slightly higher proportion of females coming from the former Soviet Union, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, the Philippines, and Korea. Most of the immigrants were of prime age, between 27 and 35, except for the Chinese, who were slightly older, and the Russians, who were comparably much older. For all other groups listed in Table 7-1, except the Russians, the majority of the immigrants arrived after 1980.

These new immigrants also varied drastically in socioeconomic status. For example, more than 60 percent of foreign-born persons (age 25 years or older) from India reported having attained college degrees, three times the percentage for average Americans; but less than 5 percent of those from El Salvador and Mexico so reported. Among employed foreign-born workers (age 16 years or older), more than 45 percent of the Indians held managerial or professional occupations, more than twice the percentage of average American workers; but less than 7 percent of the Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Mexicans held comparable jobs. Moreover, for immigrants from India a median household annual income of $48,000 was reported, compared to a $30,000 average for American households; those from the Dominican Republic and the Soviet Union reported median annual household incomes of less than $20,000. Percentages varied for those reporting poverty-level annual incomes (less than $16,500 per year), ranging from a low of 5 percent of Asian Indians and Filipinos to a high of 33 percent of Dominicans, compared to about 10 percent of American families.

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## SOURCES AND PERPETUATION OF CONTEMPORARY IMMIGRATION

### Immigration Legislation

Contemporary immigration is often referred to as "post-1965" immigration. The use of the term is not arbitrary, because immigration from the Americas and Asia surged after the passage of the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Hart-Cellar Act). However, it is debatable whether the Hart-Cellar Act was the principal cause of the major shift in today's immigration. The Hart-Cellar Act, which took effect in 1968, had a humanitarian goal of reunifying families and an economic goal of bringing in needed labor. It abolished the national-quotas system that restricted immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, lifted the ban on immigration from Asia, and established the seven preference categories. The act set an annual numerical cap of 290,000 (spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens were exempt from numerical limitations), allocating 170,000 to the Eastern Hemisphere, with a 20,000-per-country limit, and 120,000 to the Western Hemisphere, with no per-country limit.

The abolition of national quotas was intended to spur immigration from countries in Eastern and Southern Europe and, to a lesser extent, from Asian countries. In fact, the 1965 Act and its subsequent amendments set the first-ever cap on immigration from the Western Hemisphere, restricting immigration from the Americas, especially Mexico, which had been under way since the 1920s (Massey, 1995). Figure 7-2 shows that immigration from the Americas (not including Canada), as a percentage of total inflow, was notably large (16 percent) in the 1920s; decreased to 10 percent in the 1930s, mainly because of the Great Depression; then grew substantially in the 1940s (18 percent) and 1950s (25 percent). Immigration from Asia, by contrast, was relatively insignificant prior to 1970 (less than 6 percent) but surged rapidly after the enactment of the Hart-Cellar legislation. In the decades after passage, there has been a continuous surge in immigration, and the new arrivals have been disproportionately from the Americas and Asia—a development facilitated, but not caused, by the 1965 shift in immigration policies. Rather the national-origins composition reflects broader changes in the United States and around the world.

### Globalization

The globalization of the U.S. economy since the 1960s has forged extensive economic, cultural, and ideological ties among the United States

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TABLE 7-1 Socioeconomic Characteristics of Immigrants from Selected Countries, 1990

| | Soviet Union | Mexico | El Salvador | Guatemala | Dominican Republic |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female, % | 54.8 | 44.9 | 48.4 | 48.7 | 54.6 |
| Median age, yrs. | 50 | 29.3 | 27.9 | 28.7 | 32.5 |
| Immigrated after 1980, % | 39.4 | 50.0 | 75.3 | 68.2 | 53.2 |
| Poor English,[a] % | 51.9 | 70.7 | 72.4 | 70.7 | 68.7 |
| College degrees,[b] % | 26.5 | 3.5 | 4.7 | 5.8 | 7.4 |
| Professional Occupations,[c] % | 30.9 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 7.0 | 10.9 |
| Household income, $ | 19,125 | 21,926 | 23,533 | 24,362 | 19,996 |
| Poverty % | 18.5 | 27.4 | 22.5 | 21.5 | 33.4 |
| Total (1,000s) | 334 | 4,298 | 465 | 226 | 348 |

[a]Age 5 and older.
[b]Age 25 and older.
[c]Age 16 and older

SOURCE: U.S. Census of Population (1990).

and many developing countries in Latin America and Asia. Direct U.S.-capital investments in developing countries have transformed those countries' economic and occupational structures. Foreign investment disproportionately targets production for export, taking advantage of raw material and cheap labor in developing countries. Such development results in tremendous internal rural-urban migration, predominantly of low-skilled and female laborers coming from the rural economy to urban industrial centers, which in turn causes underemployment and displacement of the urban work force. Robust but unstable employment in the growing export manufacturing sector, combined with unemployment and underemployment in national economies, has created an enormous pool of potential emigrants (Sassen, 1989).

On the other hand, economic development following the American model has stimulated consumerism and consumption and raised expecta-

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| Haiti | Jamaica | China | Philippines | India | Korea | Vietnam | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 50.2 | 55.1 | 49.6 | 56.6 | 45.1 | 57.0 | 47.5 | 51.1 |
| 34.8 | 34.5 | 44.6 | 38.4 | 36.9 | 33.8 | 29.2 | 35.3 |
| 58.7 | 46.2 | 54.5 | 49.1 | 55.8 | 56.2 | 62.9 | 43.8 |
| 55.2 | 1.7 | 72.2 | 32.0 | 27.2 | 61.9 | 66.2 | 46.9 |
| 11.8 | 15.0 | 30.9 | 45.6 | 63.0 | 34.4 | 15.9 | 20.5 |
| 13.8 | 21.2 | 29.0 | 28.3 | 48.1 | 25.5 | 16.9 | 22.2 |
| 25,454 | 30,599 | 30,597 | 45,419 | 48,320 | 30,147 | 30,039 | 28,314 |
| 20.9 | 10.4 | 12.5 | 4.6 | 5.1 | 15.1 | 23.8 | 14.9 |
| 225 | 334 | 530 | 913 | 450 | 568 | 543 | 19,767 |

tions regarding the standard of living. The widening gap between consumption expectations and the available standards of living within the structural constraints of the developing economies, combined with easy access to information and migration networks, has in turn created tremendous pressure for emigration (Portes, 1979; Portes and Rumbaut, 1996). Thus, U.S. foreign-capital investments in developing countries have resulted in the paradox of rapid economic growth and high emigration from these countries to the United States.

On the U.S. side, unprecedented growth in capital-intensive, high-tech industries and services has created a severe shortage of skilled workers. American businesses and policy makers believe that importing skilled labor is the quickest solution, as opposed to training American workers. Since the 1980s, about one-third of the engineers and medical personnel in the U.S. labor market have come from abroad. The needs of business,

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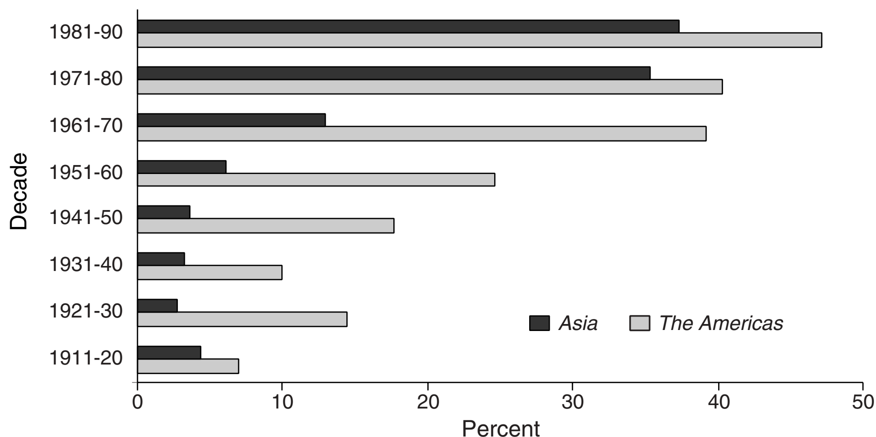


FIGURE 7-2 Immigration from the Americas (not including Canada) and Asia, as a proportion of the total immigration to the United States, 1911 to 1990. SOURCE: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1997).

however, are not sufficient explanation of the trends in high-skill migration; a disproportionate percentage, almost 60 percent, of the total skilled immigration in 1995 originated from selected countries in Asia. It is the global integration of higher education in many of the sending countries and advanced training in the United States, interacting with the opportunity structure in the homelands, that have set in motion the high-skill immigration.

The infusion of the educational systems with globalization in many developing countries—notably India, Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan—has given rise to a sizeable professional class. Many members of this emerging middle class are frustrated by uneven economic development and rigid opportunity structures in their homelands that devalue their human capital worth; in addition, many feel powerless to make changes because of repressive political systems. They therefore aggressively seek emigration as the most preferred alternative, and the change in U.S. immigration policy facilitated their move (Liu and Cheng, 1994). The emergence of the United States as the leading place for training international students has also been instrumental in supplying the U.S. economy with needed skilled labor (Ong et al., 1992). Many foreign students found permanent employment in the United States after completing their studies or practical training. For example, in fiscal year 1995, close to 40 percent of the immigrants from mainland China were admitted under employment-based preferences. Almost all of them had received higher education or training in the United States.

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## Global Refugee Movement

The world refugee phenomenon is another macrostructural factor facilitating human movement, and is also beyond the control of U.S. immigration policy. The word "refugee" denotes someone in flight from persecution or war. The United States has received a substantial number of refugees throughout its history; however, the system of refuge and asylum is a product of the post-WWII period. Therefore, immigrants admitted as refugees or asylees are, by definition, distinguished from earlier major migration waves.

Since WWII, the United States has accepted tens of thousands of refugees. Table 7-2 lists the top 10 countries from which refugees or people seeking asylum were admitted to the United States from 1946 to 1995. During the first 15 years immediately after WWII, 705,718 refugees were granted permanent-resident status. Among them, 95 percent came from war-torn countries in Europe. Later waves of refugees, however, were more diverse, with less than 25 percent coming from Europe. Many refugees were pushed out of their homelands as a result of revolutions, civil wars, or U.S. political, military, and economic involvements in originating countries. For example, the Cuban Revolution and U.S. anti-Commu-

TABLE 7-2 Top 10 Countries of National Origin for Refugees and Asylees Granted Permanent Resident Status, 1946 to 1995

| 1946-1960 | | | 1961-1995 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Country of Birth | Number | % of Total | Country of Birth | Number | % of Total |
| Poland | 159,852 | 22.7 | Vietnam | 560,888 | 23.5 |
| Germany | 99,493 | 14.1 | Cuba | 532,394 | 22.3 |
| Hungary | 61,826 | 8.8 | Soviet Union | 209,953 | 8.8 |
| Italy | 61,299 | 8.7 | Laos | 179,047 | 7.5 |
| Yugoslavia | 54,571 | 7.7 | Cambodia | 123,436 | 5.2 |
| Soviet Union | 44,131 | 6.2 | Iran | 54,501 | 2.3 |
| Latvia | 38,205 | 5.4 | Romania | 49,213 | 2.1 |
| Greece | 28,692 | 4.1 | Poland | 44,278 | 1.9 |
| Lithuania | 27,263 | 3.9 | Thailand | 41,260 | 1.7 |
| Romania | 16,237 | 2.3 | Yugoslavia | 35,247 | 1.4 |
| Top 10 countries | 591,569 | 83.8 | Top 10 countries | 1,830,217 | 76.7 |
| European countries | 668,129 | 94.7 | European countries | 543,443 | 22.8 |
| All countries | 705,718 | 100.0 | All countries | 2,385,267 | 100.0 |

SOURCE: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1997: Table 32).

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nist foreign policy led to the admission of more than 500,000 Cubans since the late 1950s. U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia brought 700,000 refugees from Vietnam since the end of the Vietnam War, along with 135,000 Cambodians and 210,000 Laotians (almost one-half were Hmongs), and some 200,000 ethnic Chinese from Southeast Asia. Refugees from the former Soviet Union, mostly Jews, formed the third largest post-WWII refugee group to the United States. About 103,615 Russian refugees were granted permanent-resident status between 1971 and 1990. The collapse of the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s contributed a surge of refugees, 45,000 annually, between 1991 and 1995 (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997).

Though a large refugee population emerged in Europe in the aftermath of WWII, the United States simultaneously shut its doors to the very groups most affected by displacement. Not only were rights of refuge and asylum a product of the immediate postwar period; they were heavily influenced by the politics of the time, in particular, the anti-Communist orientation of U.S. foreign policy. Hence, there has often been divergence between the sociological and bureaucratic or official criteria for refugee or eligibility status, which has in turn produced great conflict. The admission of Cubans, Southeast Asians, Russians, and Nicaraguans as refugees, and the simultaneous exclusion of Haitians, Guatemalans, and Salvadorans, are perfect examples. The civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala, with increased U.S. intervention and military assistance in the early 1980s, led to the influx of almost half a million refugees and people seeking asylum into the United States. At the same time that Nicaraguans fleeing Sandinista "totalitarianism" were welcomed, Salvadorans and Guatemalans fleeing political violence and extreme economic hardship were treated unfavorably. They were permitted into the United States only temporarily; many of them applied for political asylum but became undocumented in the late 1980s when their applications were denied (Lopez et al., 1996). The fate of 34,000 Haitian detainees at the Guantanamo base in the early 1990s was similar to that of Salvadorans and Guatemalans (Stepick, 1992). Many Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Haitians who arrived in the United States and applied for political asylum have not been granted permanent-resident status, and thus have been forced into a legal limbo.

A variety of factors limit the ability of the United States to exercise control over refugee inflows: (1) the extension and consolidation of the worldwide human-rights regime; (2) the increase in conflicts at the subnational level in the wake of the break-up of the Soviet Union, which has produced growing refugee populations throughout the world; and (3) globalization, which facilitates the inflow of potential asylum seekers under other auspices (e.g., the special legislation granting permanent resi-

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dency to thousands of Chinese students and their families as a result of the 1989 Tienanmen incident).

## Migration Networks

Once set in motion, international migration is perpetuated by extensive and institutionalized migration networks (Massey et al., 1987). Networks are formed by family, kinship, and friendship ties. They facilitate and perpetuate international migration because they lower the costs and risks of movement and increase the expected net returns on such movement (Massey et al., 1993). More than two-thirds of the legal immigrants admitted to the United States since the 1970s are family-sponsored immigrants. Even among employer-sponsored migrants, the role of networking is crucial. Family, kin, and friendship networks also tend to expand exponentially, serving as a conduit to additional and thus potentially self-perpetuating migration. For example, a recent poll showed that about one-half of the Dominican Republic population (7.5 million) reported having relatives in the United States, and two-thirds of them would move to the United States if they could (cited in Rumbaut, 1999). In Mexico, about one-half of all adult Mexicans have some kind of relationship with someone living in the United States, and more than one-third have been in the United States at some point in their lives (Massey and Espinosa, 1997). Similarly, at least one-third of Cuba's population (11 million) has relatives in the United States and Puerto Rico, despite nearly four decades of hostile relations (cited in Rumbaut, 1999). These microstructural ties and potentially vast social networks have become a powerful force perpetuating migration. Networks are also established by legitimate institutions that assist migrants and potential migrants, by underground organizations that emerge to reap profits from a lucrative black market, and by humanitarian organizations established to aid both legal and undocumented immigrants (Massey et al., 1993).

U.S. immigration policy has been instrumental in sustaining and expanding family migration networks. The Hart-Cellar Act and its subsequent amendments give preference to family reunification, providing immediate relatives of U.S. citizens with unlimited visa numbers; the majority of the remaining visa allocations go to other relatives, subject to the numerical cap. In 1995, 64 percent of the total 720,461 admissions were family-sponsored immigrants (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997). U.S. policies have also been crucial in establishing employment networks for unskilled-labor migration and, to a lesser extent, for skilled-labor migration. For example, the Bracero Program, aimed at easing the labor shortage of U.S. agriculture in the Southwest, set a key link in the chain of agricultural labor from Mexico. With the end of the pro-

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gram in 1964, labor migration from Mexico became institutionalized, as a result of both a black market that reorganized the flow of undocumented immigration and a humanitarian-organization presence that arose simultaneously to protect the rights of undocumented immigrants (Massey and Liang, 1989; Massey and Espinosa, 1997). The enactment of IRCA, intended to curb illegal immigration through a carrot (amnesty) and stick (employer sanction) approach, not only suddenly increased the volume of immigration but also induced more seasonal migrant workers to stay in the United States permanently, while raising a false sense of hope encouraging undocumented immigrants to stay.

Overall, contemporary immigration has been influenced and perpetuated by the interplay of a complex set of macro- and microstructural forces. Understanding its dynamics requires a reconceptualized framework that takes into account the effects of globalization, uneven political and economic developments between developing and developed countries, the role of the United States in world affairs, as well as the social processes of international migration.

## THE SPATIAL IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION ON THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

Contemporary immigrants are overwhelmingly urban bound. About 94 percent of Asian and close to 90 percent of Hispanic immigrants live in urban areas, compared to slightly more than 70 percent of the U.S.-born population. New immigrants, like their fellow Americans, are spatially distributed not only by social class and race, but also by social networks and family or kinship ties. As discussed previously, today's immigrants are highly concentrated in just a few states; and, within these states, they are highly concentrated in just a few metropolitan areas. Next, describe patterns of spatial concentration in five of the largest metropolitan regions—New York, Los Angeles, Miami, San Francisco, and Chicago.[4] As the different national-origin groups converge in particular urban centers, these urban centers are in turn impacted by the arrival of newcomers.

## OLD AND NEW "ELLIS ISLANDS"

Ellis Island in New York, where the Statue of Liberty stands, is the historic gateway for millions of European immigrants, who made New York City their new home in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

[4]These are Census Bureau designated PMSAs (Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas) rather than cities proper.

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centuries. Since the 1970s, immigration has transformed old "Ellis Islands" and given rise to new ones. New York remains the most popular immigrant receiving center; however, Los Angeles has surpassed it as the largest immigrant metropolis in absolute and relative terms. In absolute numbers, Los Angeles is home to 600,000 more foreign-born persons than New York, as of 1990. Approximately 33 percent of Los Angeles' residents are immigrants, compared to 27 percent in New York, a decrease for New York from 40 percent at the turn of the century (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr, 1996). Miami and San Francisco, which are much smaller metropolises, have become more densely populated by new immigrants than any other U.S. metropolitan areas; 34 percent and 27 percent of their populations, respectively, are foreign born. In contrast, Chicago, the second largest immigrant metropolis in 1910, dropped a few places down the list by 1990, with immigrants comprising 13 percent of the total population.

Moreover, new immigrant centers bring together a much larger share of the country's immigrant population than old ones. In 1910, immigrants were 15 percent of the total U.S. population. About a quarter lived in the top five largest metropolises—New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Boston (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr, 1996). In 1990, immigrants constituted less than 9 percent of the total population; however, a much higher proportion (37 percent) were concentrated in the five largest metropolitan areas—Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Miami, and Chicago. Also, the majority of urban immigrants lived in the central city.

## WHO GOES WHERE?

Different urban centers attract immigrants from different countries. Table 7-3 lists statistics for the top 10 national origins of immigrant groups in five metropolitan areas. New York, which received primarily European immigrants at the turn of the century, has now become the center for Caribbean immigrants. Dominicans, Haitians, and Jamaicans comprise almost one-fifth of New York's immigrant population, yet none of these groups outnumbered other groups by an overwhelming margin; and none ranked in the national top-10 list (see Table 7-3). In all, two-thirds of Dominican immigrants, 36 percent of Haitian immigrants, and 39 percent of Jamaican immigrants in the United States lived in New York.

In Los Angeles, Mexican immigrants are the largest immigrant group, comprising 40 percent of the area's immigrant population, 5.5 times more than the second largest group on the metropolis' top-10 list and on the national top-10 list. Also noticeable are immigrants from El Salvador and Guatemala, making up 11 percent of the area's immigrant population. Although these two Central American groups are not on the national top-

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TABLE 7-3 Top 10 Immigrant Groups by Selected PMSAs, Listed by National Origin, 1990 (1,000s)

| Rank | United States | *n* | New York | *n* | Los Angeles | *n* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Mexico | 4,298 | Dominican Republic | 232 | Mexico | 1,167 |
| 2 | Philippines | 913 | China[a] | 166 | El Salvador | 213 |
| 3 | China[a] | 774 | Jamaica | 129 | Philippines | 161 |
| 4 | Canada | 745 | Italy | 122 | China[a] | 136 |
| 5 | Cuba | 737 | Soviet Union | 84 | Korea | 114 |
| 6 | Germany | 712 | Haiti | 80 | Guatemala | 108 |
| 7 | United Kingdom | 640 | Guyana | 77 | Vietnam | 76 |
| 8 | Italy | 580 | Colombia | 71 | Iran | 67 |
| 9 | Korea | 568 | Poland | 66 | Soviet Union | 51 |
| 10 | Vietnam | 543 | Ecuador | 64 | Japan | 40 |
| Totals | | | | | | |
| Top 10 | | 10,510 | | 1,092 | | 2,102 |
| All immigrants | | 19,767 | | 2,286 | | 2,895 |

[a]Includes Hong Kong and Taiwan.

SOURCE: U.S. Census of Population (1990).

10 list, they are disproportionately concentrated in Los Angeles, which is home to 48 percent of Guatemalan immigrants and 46 percent of Salvadoran immigrants in the United States. Compared to the immigrant population in New York, Los Angeles' appears to be less diverse ethnically, though it may have as many national-origins groups as one can count. It is also less diverse in class status because of the strong correlation between national origins and skill levels of the newcomers.

The dominance of Cubans in Miami is a different story. Though Miami is a much smaller metropolitan area, it not only has the highest proportion of immigrants of all, it is also a metropolis with the largest presence of Cubans. More than one-half of Miami's immigrant population is of Cuban origin—a percentage 6.5 times larger than that of Miami's

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| Miami | *n* | San Francisco | *n* | Chicago | *n* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cuba | 429 | China[a] | 95 | Mexico | 238 |
| Nicaragua | 67 | Philippines | 60 | Poland | 76 |
| Haiti | 45 | Mexico | 48 | Philippines | 43 |
| Colombia | 43 | El Salvador | 26 | India | 34 |
| Jamaica | 31 | Vietnam | 17 | Italy | 28 |
| Dominican Republic | 16 | Nicaragua | 14 | Germany | 28 |
| Honduras | 16 | United Kingdom | 11 | Korea | 25 |
| Peru | 15 | Germany | 11 | China[a] | 24 |
| Mexico | 10 | Soviet Union | 9 | Greece | 18 |
| Spain | 10 | Canada | 9 | Yugoslavia | 18 |
| | 682 | | 300 | | 532 |
| | 875 | | 441 | | 797 |

second largest immigrant group, Nicaraguans. Unlike Mexicans in Los Angeles, Cubans in Miami are not simply the largest foreign-born group in size, they are also socioeconomically diverse with a significantly large middle class and strong influence in the area's political and economic matters.

Like Miami, San Francisco is also a much smaller metropolitan area. Though no single national-origin group is dominant, the Asian presence is impressive, making up more than 40 percent of the immigrant population. In contrast, Chicago is a much larger metropolis but its foreign-born population is relatively small (13 percent). Interestingly, Mexican immigrants form the largest foreign-born group, three times larger than Polish

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immigrants, the second group on Chicago's top-10 list. However, their visibility is blurred by the area's relatively large native born population.

## DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATION IN URBAN PORTS-OF-ENTRY

The diversity of contemporary immigrants, and their geographic concentrations, have a profound effect on both old and new "Ellis Islands" with significant bearing on the changing dynamics of racial and ethnic relations. Just 30 years ago, America's urban landscape, including the areas with high immigrant density, was predominantly White and culturally homogeneous. The racial hierarchy was dictated by a Black-White dichotomy, with a White dominance. Although various immigrant groups coexisted in the urban social structure, these immigrants were expected to eventually become assimilated—i.e., become "White." Immigrant enclaves or ghettos did exist, mostly in the central city, but they did not constitute a permanent problem because they were considered transitional stops or springboards and were expected to eventually disappear in time. Indeed, within the span of only two to three generations, and a long hiatus of low immigration, the once "inferior races"—Jews and Italians—have become indistinguishably "White" (Alba and Nee, 1997). Meanwhile, the majority of second- and third-generation Americans of Asian and Hispanic origin also quietly dispersed into White middle class without much public notice because they represented only a tiny fraction of the population.

In the past three decades, however, the continuously high immigration has rapidly transformed the racial composition in American cities, making it less "White," but no more "Black"—i.e., more "brown" and/or "yellow" than ever before. Figure 7-3 illustrates the racial composition of five selected metropolises by generation using the 1994-to-1997 data from the U.S. Current Population Survey (CPS). The top graph illustrates the racial composition of the foreign-born population, which reflects the patterns of contemporary immigrant settlement noted. It is not surprising that Los Angeles and Miami have become remarkable Hispanic centers. The middle graph shows the racial composition of the children of immigrants. Only Los Angeles contains a Hispanic-dominant second generation, with the same shift in Miami, slowed down by its large concentration of White second-generation retirees, making Miami's second-generation population an ethnically diverse group. New York and Chicago contain a predominantly White second-generation population, a reflection of the impact of these areas' earlier immigration histories. San Francisco, the singularly Asian-dominant region, stands out as different,

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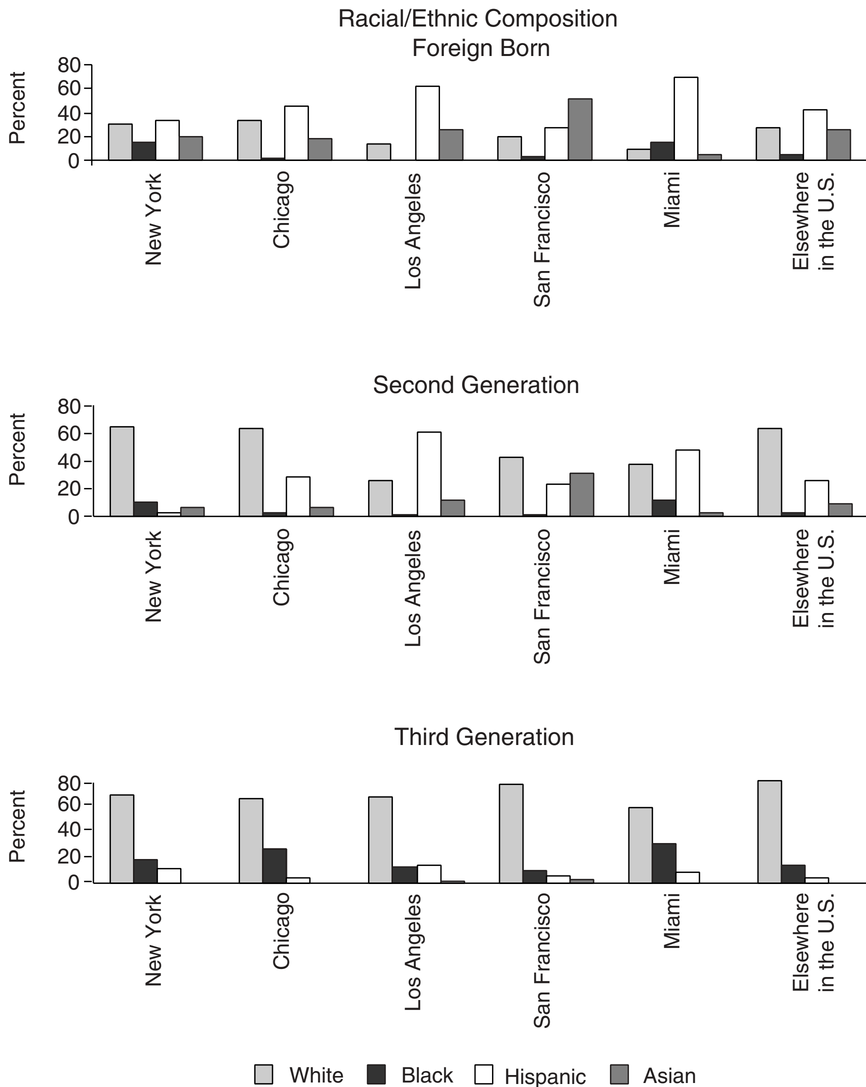


FIGURE 7-3 Distribution of major ethnic groups by generational status in major metropolitan areas with large immigrant populations. SOURCE: Current Population Survey (1994 to 1997). Foreign born refers to first generation; second generation refers to U.S.-born persons with at least one foreign-born parent; and third generation refers to U.S.-born persons with U.S.-born parents.

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boasting the greatest variety in the ethnic composition of its second generation, as well as the most pronounced Asian tilt.

As for the third-plus generation illustrated by the lower graph, this turns out to be the one characteristic around which there is the least regional variation. Whites comprise 60 percent of the third-plus generation population in every region, and the White-Black dichotomy is quite striking, while other ethnic groups are barely visible across regions. Noteworthy is the absence of third-generation Asians in San Francisco. Because of various Asian exclusion acts that barred immigration from Asia from the 1880s through much of the twentieth century, only the Japanese-ancestry group (and Chinese to a lesser extent) has a noticeable third generation. Nonetheless, third-generation non-Mexican Hispanics (mostly Puerto Ricans who have citizenship rights by birth) in New York and Mexicans (who are mostly descendants of U.S.-born Mexicans rather than Mexican immigrants) in Los Angeles are visibly represented.

## THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

A more critical aspect of these demographic changes is the effect the arrival of non-European immigrants has on racial and ethnic relations in the various new "Ellis Islands." Since the 1970s, a massive influx of non-White immigrants into America's largest urban centers, and a concurrent out-migration of non-Hispanic Whites from these areas, has made ethnicity more salient, posing new challenges to all Americans—White, Black, and U.S.-born of Asian or Hispanic ancestry—and to the newcomers themselves who are striving to become accepted as Americans.

### A Crisis of Identity for Descendants of European Immigrants

Non-Hispanic Whites are, primarily, descendents of earlier European immigrants. Decreasing numbers notwithstanding, U.S.-born Whites have continued to hold dominant political and economic power, even in cities where they are a numerical minority; and the shift of the Black-White paradigm does not change this dominance. How then have the descendants of European immigrants been affected by new immigration? Perhaps the most significant impact has involved notions of an "American" identity and "American" ways. Although America's White middle class can afford to avoid the urban poor, by retreating into suburban communities, it is confronted with the "invasion" of "unacculturated," but nonetheless well-to-do, newcomers who have not set foot in an inner-city immigrant neighborhood—i.e., did not gradually work their way out through acculturation, as European parents or grandparents did. The new mode of incorporation into the middle class—moving immediately

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to the suburbs—has disrupted the customary ways. Those who tend to judge new immigrants by standards established in the "good old days," fear that newcomers will overtake America and Americans will be un-Americanized by them.

In affluent suburban communities with a large and sudden influx of middle-class newcomers, such fears are more pronounced. For example, in Monterey Park, California, Whites used to be able to drop their hyphens as unqualified Americans, distinct from ethnic or racial minority groups. But in the wake of the large influx of affluent Asian immigrants, they find themselves on the defensive, without an ethnic culture of resistance and empowerment to express their fears and anxiety (Horton, 1995).

The residential concentration of poor, low-skilled immigrants has also created a threat, but not so much to poor Whites who remain in urban ghettos as to suburban Whites. The hotly contested issues of multiculturalism, bilingualism, and immigration reform in the political arena reflect some of these deeply rooted fears. These fears, however, manifest themselves differently in different metropolitan settings. For example, in Los Angeles, the Spanish language is stigmatized and is being banned from instruction in schools; whereas in Miami, the same language is considered an important marketable skill, and bilingualism is celebrated as the American way. In many ways, non-Hispanic Whites, especially those in areas of immigrant concentration, are pressured to negotiate out of a new dilemma of becoming a minority with a majority mentality in a multiethnic society (Horton, 1995).

## The Shrunken Territory of Blacks

Blacks, also a predominantly U.S.-born group, have been culturally, socially, and economically affected by the influx of "colored" immigrants. In the wake of the contemporary surge of immigrants, U.S.-born Blacks have experienced increasing differentiation in socioeconomic characteristics at the individual level and bifurcation between the middle class and the poor (Oliver and Shapiro, 1995; Grant et al., 1996). These patterns of differentiation and bifurcation are primarily caused by the drastic economic restructuring of America's urban labor markets simultaneously with rapid growth in immigration. Uneducated and poor Blacks have been trapped in the inner city, where ladders of social mobility have disappeared and where entry to low-skilled jobs is barred by employer discrimination and immigrant employment networks (Waldinger, 1996; Wilson, 1996). Middle-class Blacks have experienced unprecedented social mobility; yet, many have continued to face racial discrimination, especially in the housing market, which constrains their residential mobility (Massey and Denton, 1987; Clark, 1996).

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The arrival of large numbers of non-White immigrants has significantly changed the racial composition of the urban population, rendering the Black-White paradigm outdated. However, the change has not moved Blacks up the racial hierarchy. Instead, Blacks' racial caste status has been further pushed down by the unfortunate incorporation of the new colored immigrants into the "moral problem in the hearts and minds of Americans" (Myrdal, 1944). For example, the widely publicized Black-Korean conflicts in America's inner cities and the 1994 Los Angeles urban unrest were not caused so much by economic competition as by the realignment of racial relations, manifested in tensions over "turf," which has constrained Blacks in virtually every aspect of their lives (Morrison and Lowry, 1994; Min, 1996). In their struggle for racial equality, many U.S.-born Blacks are confronted with a daunting dilemma—how to deal with being a U.S.-born minority competing with foreign-born minorities whose members have come from different backgrounds, many with a majority mentality, and heading in different directions.

U.S.-born Blacks also face fierce economic competition from new immigrants. Although a direct-replacement effect is inconclusive, the large and readily available pool of immigrants may have contributed, at least indirectly, to exacerbating the economic situation of urban Blacks. The oversupply of labor allows employers to lower wages for qualified workers and to discriminate against U.S.-born Blacks. In addition, immigrant-employee networks, developed initially to help coethnic members find jobs, erect entry barriers against Blacks who are outside these networks (Scott, 1996). What is more threatening is that Blacks, especially the educated class, suddenly find their hard-won occupational niche suddenly shared by immigrant minorities (Waldinger, 1996).

## "Foreigners" in Their Own Land—Americans of Asian and Hispanic Ancestry

U.S.-born children and grandchildren of Asian and Hispanic ancestry have also felt the intense cultural and social impact of contemporary immigration, especially those already "assimilated." Suddenly they are confronted with the renewed image of themselves as "foreigners." Their American identity is now questioned because they look like these newcomers who do not fit the old characterization of "American" as "an European or the descendant of an European" (De Crevecoeur, 1782[1904]) or an "immaculate, well-dressed, accent-free Anglo" (Zangwill, 1914). Such characterizations, widely and often unconsciously held, make it harder for many Americans who do not fit those characterizations to feel fully American, even those who are actually native-born—i.e., American Indians or Mexican Americans, whose ancestors settled on this land long before it came to be called "America."

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Stereotypical images of "American" create both psychological and practical problems for U.S.-born Americans who phenotypically resemble the new arrivals. Harassment of a Mexican American accused of being an undocumented immigrant, or comments about a third-generation Japanese American's "good English" are frequently reported. These ethnic Americans suffer persistent disadvantages merely because they look "foreign" (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1988, 1992).

Although infuriated by the unfair treatment as foreigners, U.S.-born Asians and Hispanics are also caught in a dilemma of inclusion versus exclusion in their struggle for racial equality. U.S.-born Asians and Hispanics and their foreign-born counterparts often hold contradictory values and standards about labor rights, individualism, civil liberty, and, ultimately, the ideology of assimilation. These differences, intertwined with the acculturation gap between immigrant and U.S.-born generations, have impeded ethnic coalition-building, ideological consensus, and collective action. For example, the picketing of restaurants in New York's Chinatown in 1994 and Los Angeles's Koreatown in 1998, an effort mostly by second-generation Asian Americans fighting for immigrant rights, was perceived by the ethnic community as a group of "Whitened" kids trying to "destroy their parents' businesses" and the ethnic community. Ironically, the parent generation consciously struggles to push children to become "White" by moving their families to White neighborhoods, sending their children to White schools, and discouraging their children from playing basketball and mimicking hip-hop culture. For Afro-Caribbean immigrants, the parents even push their children to adopt strategies, such as invoking their accents or other references to French or British colonial culture, to differentiate themselves from U.S.-born Blacks and avoid the stigma of "Blackness" (Waters, 1994, 1996; Portes and Stepick, 1993). But becoming "White" is politically incorrect, and thus unacceptable for the U.S.-born generation.

## New Immigrants at the Crossroads

The social, cultural, and economic impacts of contemporary immigration are perhaps most profound on the newcomers themselves. Unlike earlier labor migrants of Asian or Hispanic origin, who were mostly sojourners with every intention of eventually returning to their homelands, the new immigrants tend to regard America as their permanent home and make concerted efforts to assimilate socioeconomically. However, new immigrants, middle class and working class alike, are almost always regarded as "foreigners," sometimes even rejected by U.S.-born coethnics as "FOB" (fresh-off-the-boat—a derogatory term referring to newcomers from third-world countries). Many encounter a skeptical and hostile public that keeps questioning their willingness to assimilate and casting

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doubts on their ability to assimilate. Meanwhile, they face the unrealistically high expectation that they should assimilate quickly. It took the early European immigrants two to three generations to integrate into the middle class, and their transition was facilitated by economic expansion, industrialization, and a long hiatus of restricted immigration (Alba, 1985; Alba and Nee, 1997; Perlmann and Waldinger, 1997). Today the second generation of contemporary immigrants is just coming of age, and predictions about their future assimilation are only estimates.

## Economic Incorporation

Aside from assimilation, immigrants must deal with the issue of economic survival. New immigrants have arrived in cities where economic restructuring and globalization have created bifurcated labor markets. There are numerous labor-intensive, low-paying jobs that do not require much education or skill, and do not provide a living wage, on the one end; and a growing sector of knowledge-intensive, good-paying jobs that require extensive educational credentials and proficiency with the English language, on the other. This bifurcated labor market renders many immigrants underemployed with substandard wages or occupational overqualification (Zhou, 1997a).

Table 7-4 shows patterns of labor-force participation and underemployment rates for working-age (25 to 64 years old) immigrants by ethnicity and gender, compared to U.S.-born non-Hispanic Whites. Except for Southeast Asians, male immigrants had high rates of labor-force participation (more than 90 percent). Southeast Asian workers were more than twice as likely as other workers to be economically inactive; the higher rate of nonparticipation in the labor force among Southeast Asian refugees was the result of their lack of education, English proficiency, job skills, measurable economic resources, and access to employment networks through preexisting ethnic communities (Rumbaut, 1995; Zhou and Bankston, 1998).[5] However, Mexican workers who were most handicapped of all immigrant groups by the lack of skills and English proficiency had the highest labor-force participation rate (95.7 percent). This, however, was because most Mexican immigrant workers arrived through extensive employment and migrant networks (Massey, 1996). Of those in the labor force, all male immigrants, except Europeans, were more likely

[5]The African immigrant group also includes a significant component of refugees from Ethiopia who had a high labor-force participation rate. Unlike Southeast Asian refugees, African refugees, as well as refugees from Europe, tend to have attained higher educational levels, more fluent English proficiency, and better access to community-based employment networks.

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than U.S.-born White workers to be underemployed, with more than 50 percent of the immigrants (more than 60 percent of the Asians) experiencing underemployment.

Among underemployed males, Mexicans and other Asians showed the lowest proportions in the sub-unemployment category; other Asians showed the lowest rate of unemployment. Partial employment seemed to be the modal category among underemployed males of all groups; percentages ranged from 38.4 percent among other Asians to about 48 percent among West Indians and Hispanics other than Mexicans, whose rate was 55.6 percent. For the low-wage employment and overqualified categories, there were significant intergroup differences. Among underemployed male workers, Mexicans were almost twice as likely as other groups to be in the low-wage category and least likely to be in the overqualified category. By contrast, Africans, Asians, and Europeans were more likely to be educationally overqualified for the jobs they held. Clearly, disadvantages in labor-market status do not necessarily affect immigrant groups in the same manner.

Patterns of labor-force participation among female workers also showed significant intergroup differences. Only 10 percent of West Indian working-age (25 to 64 years old) women stayed out of the labor force, but more than 33 percent of Mexican and Southeast Asian women did. Among those in the labor force, the majority were underemployed, regardless of race/ethnicity; however, West Indian women had a much lower rate of underemployment than all other groups. Relative to their male counterparts, all female workers were generally less likely to participate in the labor force; when they did, they were more disproportionately underemployed.

Among underemployed women, the intergroup patterns were quite similar to those among underemployed men. Sub-unemployed women appeared to be more severely affected than their male counterparts, even after accounting for education or age. However, sub-unemployed males may be assumed to be discouraged workers who have detached themselves from the labor market involuntarily; sub-unemployed females, on the other hand, may be in that category voluntarily, having withdrawn from the labor force because of marriage or childbearing. Partial employment among men may be viewed as an imposed disadvantage; partial employment among women may be voluntary or a strategy for supplementing a husband's low-wage employment.

### Prospects of Economic Mobility

Whether all forms of underemployment yield comparable economic disadvantages is a matter of debate. Unemployment is an absolute disad-

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TABLE 7-4 Labor Force Participation and Underemployment Among Immigrant Workers Ages 25 to 64 by Ethnicity and Gender, 1990

| Characteristics | African | West Indian | Mexican |
|---|---|---|---|
| All Males (*n*) | 3,484 | 8,341 | 72,485 |
| Not in the labor force (%) | 6.7 | 5.1 | 4.3 |
| In the labor force (%) | 93.3 | 94.9 | 95.7 |
| Underemployed (%) | 57.5 | 49.5 | 57.3 |
| All Underemployed | | | |
| Sub-unemployment (%) | 9.0 | 11.1 | 8.8 |
| Unemployment (%) | 8.5 | 18.0 | 14.9 |
| Partial employment (%) | 44.1 | 48.6 | 55.6 |
| Low-wage employment (%) | 5.7 | 8.2 | 17.2 |
| Overqualified employment (%) | 32.6 | 14.2 | 3.5 |
| All Females (*n*) | 1,893 | 9,890 | 60,229 |
| Not in the labor force (%) | 17.6 | 10.1 | 35.2 |
| In the labor force (%) | 82.4 | 89.9 | 64.8 |
| Underemployed (%) | 73.9 | 55.9 | 83.7 |
| All Underemployed | | | |
| Sub-unemployment (%) | 16.9 | 15.2 | 21.9 |
| Unemployment (%) | 12.6 | 13.4 | 15.9 |
| Partial employment (%) | 51.0 | 54.1 | 47.2 |
| Low-wage employment (%) | 5.7 | 10.4 | 13.8 |
| Overqualified employment (%) | 13.9 | 7.0 | 1.2 |

[a]Undersampled (1/10 of the 5% PUMS).

SOURCE: U.S. Census of Population and Housing (1990), PUMS (5%).

vantage. Partial employment, or low-wage employment, is usually inadequate for sustaining a decent living, much less for moving up the socioeconomic ladder. These two types of underemployment affect Mexican immigrants disproportionately. Although Mexican immigrants have relatively easy access to the U.S. labor market, their employment stability is heavily affected by the uncertain demands of the highly competitive, volatile industries in which they work, such as the agricultural and apparel industries. These conditions, in turn, constrain Mexican immigrants' ability to achieve economic success commensurate with their high rate of labor-force participation.

Immigrants who arrive with strong human capital—a good education or highly marketable skills—may be able to overcome labor-market disadvantages. Those who arrive with weak human capital are likely to be employed at low wages in dead-end jobs; coupled with this disadvan-

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| Other Hispanic | Southeast Asian | Other Asian | European | U.S.-Born Non-Hispanic[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 65,070 | 10,411 | 51,897 | 61,833 | 78,704 |
| 7.9 | 16.2 | 5.6 | 5.0 | 6.2 |
| 92.1 | 83.8 | 94.4 | 95.0 | 93.8 |
| 52.8 | 56.8 | 60.4 | 47.3 | 43.8 |
| | | | | |
| 12.0 | 11.4 | 8.3 | 12.0 | 13.8 |
| 14.4 | 12.4 | 5.9 | 8.3 | 10.2 |
| 48.8 | 46.1 | 38.4 | 39.4 | 39.5 |
| 11.5 | 8.4 | 8.5 | 6.6 | 9.6 |
| 13.4 | 21.7 | 38.9 | 33.7 | 27.0 |
| | | | | |
| 72,516 | 10,797 | 62,896 | 78,661 | 82,141 |
| 28.5 | 34.9 | 23.9 | 25.0 | 20.8 |
| 71.5 | 65.1 | 76.1 | 75.0 | 79.2 |
| 74.4 | 72.3 | 72.1 | 70.8 | 67.6 |
| | | | | |
| 18.5 | 17.5 | 17.1 | 22.2 | 20.8 |
| 13.6 | 12.1 | 6.9 | 6.2 | 6.0 |
| 49.9 | 50.8 | 48.3 | 56.3 | 58.0 |
| 12.7 | 11.6 | 9.6 | 7.1 | 8.3 |
| 5.2 | 7.9 | 18.0 | 8.2 | 6.9 |

tage, they usually have few economic resources and cannot afford the time or cost for the kind of reeducation and retraining that could possibly advance them in the labor market. Those who initially hold entry-level, low-wage jobs are not necessarily trapped at the bottom of the labor market, however. As immigrants gain labor-market experience, many are able to advance within and across industries to better-paying positions and even to self-employment (Portes and Zhou, 1992, 1996; Zhou, 1992). Thus, the long-term scenarios of underemployment being either an alternative means to upward social mobility or a dead-end job trapping immigrants at the starting point, or pushing them further toward the bottom, are not mutually exclusive. Whether one can successfully move out of underemployment depends not simply on individual human capital or incentive, however; the effects of human capital may be circumvented by factors beyond the control of individuals.

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### "Will Money Whiten?"

While the new immigrants are transforming America, their options are, in turn, being constrained by the changing dynamics of race and ethnicity. Once in the United States, non-Whites are racialized into a highly stratified system that imposes a minority status, with all its accrued disadvantages. Descendents of European immigrants became White as they shed their imposed "racial" minority status and "melted" into the middle-class mainstream. If becoming "White" means convergence toward the middle class, some highly skilled immigrants achieved that shortly after arriving in the United States. Those from the working class face more obstacles in climbing the social ladder, but they too are expected to eventually make it, if not in this generation, then surely in succeeding generations. In reality, the likelihood that "money will Whiten" seems likely for some immigrant groups, but not for others.

Mexican immigrants and their offspring, for example, have to bear the double burden of "race." They come, primarily, from the lower segment of Mexican society, which is stratified on the basis of color and class, and their incorporation into the host society further reinforces and stigmatizes the disadvantaged status they carried with them from Mexico. Moreover, their initial low socioeconomic status impedes economic mobility, which further reinforces their placement in the preexisting highly stratified and racialized hierarchy. Though not nearly as despised or disliked as Blacks, Mexicans suffer from a stigma that adversely affects the schooling of their U.S.-born children, which, in turn, may produce some downward movement into the "underclass" (Lopez and Stanton-Salazar, forthcoming). Most Asian immigrants, by contrast, do not have to bear the double burden of home-country stratification and host-country ascribed racism, because the U.S. contemporary norm tends to treat Asians as the "model minority." Whether money will "Whiten" this "other colored" group, however, is still too early to conclude.

## THE NEW SECOND GENERATION

The settlement patterns and modes of incorporation of new immigrants affect not only them, but their children as well. Because of the recency of contemporary immigration, a new generation of immigrant children and children of immigrant parentage is just coming of age. This new second generation is not only disproportionately young but also ethnically diverse. Recent national survey data show that almost 40 percent of the second generation are under 18 years of age, in contrast to 28 percent of the U.S. population. In the second generation, 35 percent are of Latin American ancestry and 7 percent of Asian ancestry, compared with

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14 percent and 3 percent, respectively, in the total U.S. population (Current Population Survey, 1994-1997). If it were distributed randomly across America's urban landscape, the new second generation would not be of great interest since it is relatively small in absolute numbers. As in the past, however, the second generation is highly concentrated in just a handful of metropolitan regions. For example, California alone accounted for some 45 percent of the nation's immigrant student population. More than 1 out of 10 school-aged children in the state were foreign born, and over one-third of the state's school-aged children spoke a language other than English at home (Cornelius, 1995). In major immigrant-receiving cities, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, and Miami, more than one-third of the students in the entire school system speak a language other than English at home (Zhou, 1997b).

As I have discussed earlier, the structural changes associated with massive immigration during the past three decades, along with the shifts in the economy, local cultures, and neighborhoods, create diverse receiving contexts quite different from the ones taken for granted by classical assimilation theorists. Differing from their immigrant parents, immigrant children lack meaningful connections to their "old" world. They are thus unlikely to consider a foreign country as a place they will return to. Instead, they are prone to evaluate themselves or to be evaluated by others by the standards of their new country (Gans, 1992; Portes, 1995; Portes and Zhou, 1993).

Nonetheless, the encounter in any metropolitan context is likely to invoke one of the following scenarios: the child either succeeds in school and moves ahead, or falls behind (or remains the same as), the modest, often low, status of the parents' generation. The latter scenario is labeled by Herbert Gans (1992) as "second-generation decline." Thus, a more pressing issue is whether or not the new second generation will be able to incorporate into middle-class America, following the path taken by the "old" second generation arriving at the turn of the century, and to advance beyond their parents' generation. Next, I provide a brief demographic profile of the new second generation and highlight some prominent issues about second-generation adaptation and the ways in which the nature and consequences of immigration affect the prospect of immigrant children.

### The Age Structure of the Second Generation

Figure 7-4 presents the second generation's distinctive age profile. Unlike the foreign born (in broken lines), whose population tends to peak in the early adult years, the age distribution among the children of the immigrants takes a distinctive U-shaped curve, with the largest second-

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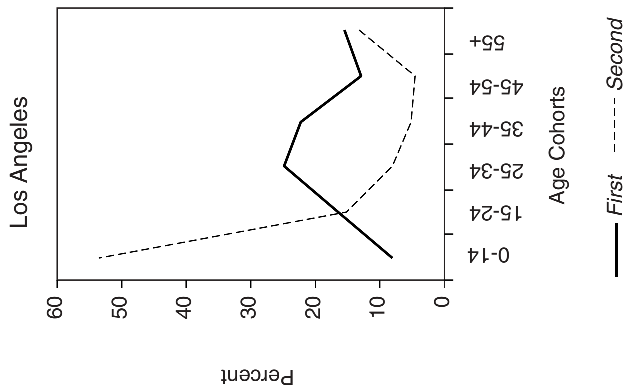


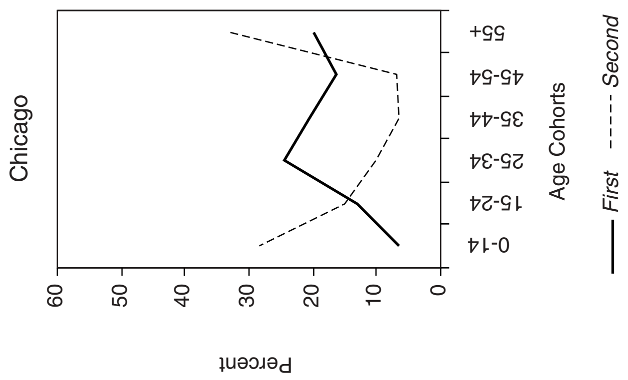


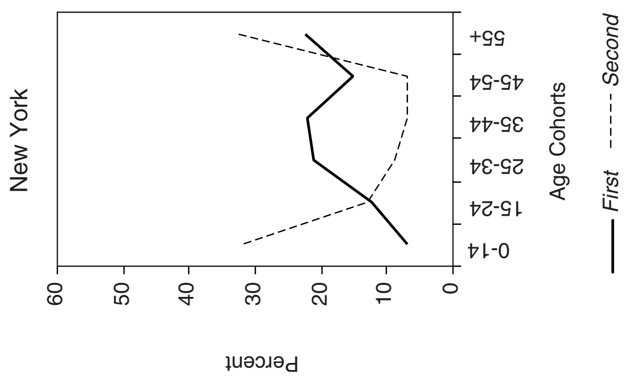


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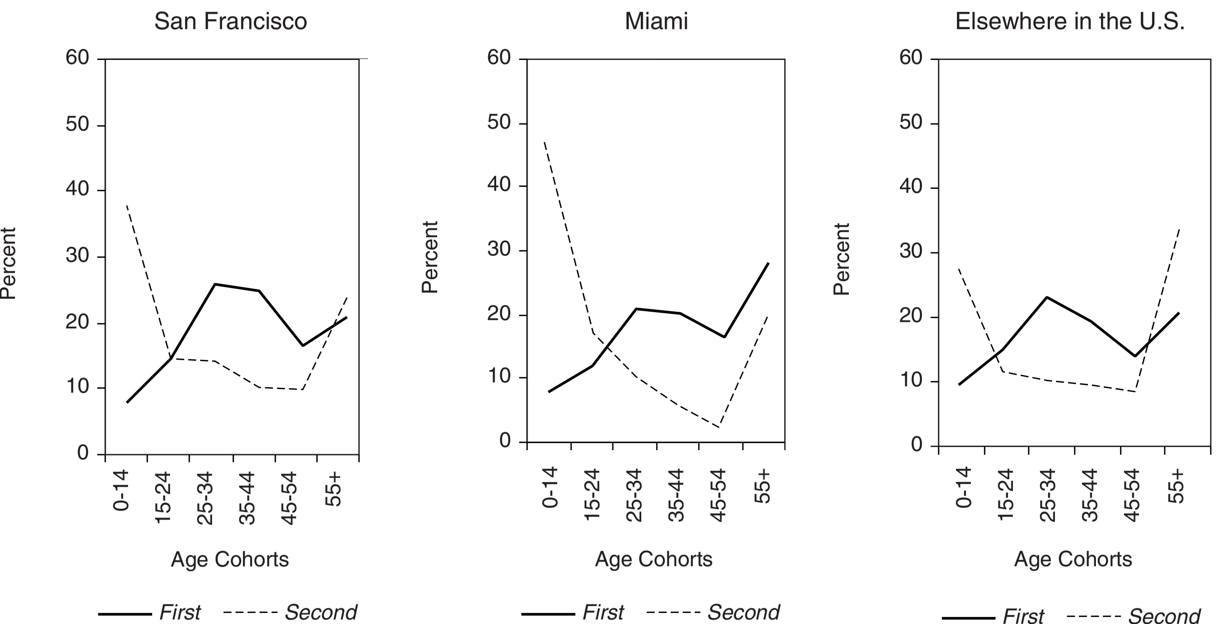


FIGURE 7-4 Distribution of age cohorts in major metropolitan areas with large immigrant populations. First generation (foreign born) versus second generation (U.S. born with at least one foreign-born parent). SOURCE: Current Population Survey (1994 to 1997).

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generation contingents either under 15 or over 55, and relatively small cohorts resting in between. The U-curve not only implies a high level of variation among the second generation, but it also indicates that the relative weight of this population differs greatly across the age cohort. Most importantly, the second-generation presence is of relative importance among the youngest and oldest groups. Among prime-age adults, however, immigrant offspring are still a relatively inconspicuous minority.

The U-curve, though always observable, nonetheless assumes a different form in each of the immigration regions. Los Angeles looks especially distinct, with a disproportionately large population of second-generation children, and a disproportionately low population of second-generation elders, making for a very peculiar looking "U." Miami again resembles Los Angeles, differing only in the relative weight of elderly immigrant offspring, most of whom are undoubtedly migrants from the colder climates of the Northeast and the Midwest. Though the fissure point obviously varies from place to place, splitting the second-generation population into those born before and after 1960 highlights the ethnic contrast between the old and the new second generation. Immigrant offspring born before 1960 are predominately White in all five regions, and almost exclusively so in New York, Los Angeles, and even Miami. By contrast, those born after 1960 are a far more varied lot, with Whites topping out at 40 percent in New York and Chicago, and not quite reaching the 20 percent mark in Los Angeles.

The age and ethnic structures of various immigrant regions are linked, and consequentially so. Whereas the shift from old to new second generation can be seen in the youngest cohort in every place, nowhere has the majority of the new second generation yet come of age. But within age cohorts, the shift from old to new is considerably more advanced in some places than in others. In Chicago, only the youngest cohort has seen the White second-generation group change from a quantitative majority to a quantitative minority; in New York the same transition has already transpired among adolescents and the youngest of adults, but not among any other cohorts. By contrast, the ethnic origins of younger, but prime-aged, second-generation adults have already tipped in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Miami.

### Second-Generation Progress or Decline?

The demographic patterns discussed above suggest that the new second generation is still in the making, but is expected to come of age rapidly in the next decade or so. This new second generation is highly concentrated in regions of first-generation settlement, yet extraordinarily

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diverse in national origins. The central question of concern is whether this second generation will decline or eventually converge toward the mean. Analyses of CPS data yield several important findings about the second generation in America's major immigrant receiving centers—New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Miami (Zhou, 1999). First, there is a consistent trend of significant second-generation progress beyond that of the first generation, across regions and ethnic groups. Members of the second generation generally fare as well as, and in many cases better than, members of the third generation. The second generation also tends to do better in immigrant centers than elsewhere in the United States. Once important demographic and socioeconomic factors are controlled, the second generation's progress beyond the third generation's becomes even more pronounced.

Second, foreign birth does not exert as severe a penalty as generally expected; compared to the status of the third generation, the second generation's initial disadvantages become insignificant, once measurable demographic and socioeconomic factors are controlled for. This finding indicates that first-generation disadvantages are strongly associated with ethnicity, spatial concentration of ethnic groups, and major socioeconomic factors, and that controlling for these factors reduces the negative impact of foreign birth.

Third, the effects of ethnicity are consistent with prior research, in that they consistently favor Asian-origin groups and penalize other minority groups. And in the third generation, there is a clear convergence of Asian Americans toward the socioeconomic status of non-Hispanic Whites and a persistent gap between Mexican and other Hispanic groups and non-Hispanic Whites, which resembles the Black-White gap.

Fourth, immigrant centers that are distinct from other major urban areas are also distinct from each other. These urban centers offer opportunities as well as disadvantages for immigrants and their offspring. The broader inter-regional variations bear on ethnicity. Specifically, Asians fare better in Chicago than their coethnics elsewhere; but Blacks, Mexicans, and other Hispanics suffer most in the same region. Miami is clearly favorable for the adaptation of non-Mexican Hispanics (most of whom are Cuban), but Los Angeles does not seem to provide similar advantages for Mexicans.

Although my analyses do not directly test the hypothesis of "second-generation decline," the findings clearly show that the second generation is advancing in big strides. More troubling are the significant intergroup differences in the rate of progress and the trend toward third-generation decline, both of which reflect the enduring influence of the U.S. system of ethnic stratification.

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## Determinants of Social Mobility for Immigrant Children

The intergenerational mobility of immigrants has been empirically measured by the extent to which immigrant groups achieve parity with the society's dominant group in education, occupation, income and wealth, and political power—as Gordon puts it, "secondary structural assimilation" (Gordon, 1964). The experiences of the children and grandchildren of the European immigrants who arrived in the early twentieth century appear to confirm assimilationist predictions. Between 1920 and 1950, when America experienced a long hiatus of restricted immigration, the earlier waves of immigrants were absorbed. They experienced significant upward mobility across generations, as measured by length of stay, mastery of the English language, acquisition of human capital, and increasing exposure to American cultures (Alba, 1985; Chiswick, 1977; Greeley, 1976; Sandberg, 1974; Wytrwal, 1961).

The question is open as to whether new immigrants and their offspring will follow the path of their European predecessors. In terms of the direction of intergenerational mobility, the distinctions between the earlier European immigrants and the contemporary newcomers may not be as sharp as they appear. With regard to the rate of structural assimilation, the classical assimilationist paradigm shows its constraints. The historiography of the turn-of-the-century European immigrants and studies of new immigrants reveal divergent rather than convergent outcomes across national-origin groups (Landale and Oropesa, 1995; Model, 1991; Perlmann, 1988; Tienda and Lii, 1987; Zhou and Kamo, 1994). These studies suggest that the direction and the rate of social mobility are two distinct dimensions of the adaptational outcomes and that what determines the direction may not necessarily determine the rate.

### Class

Socioeconomic status shapes the immediate social conditions for adaptation, because it determines the type of neighborhood in which children live, the quality of the schools they attend, and the group of peers with whom they associate. Immigrant children from middle-class backgrounds benefit from financially secure families, good schools, safe neighborhoods, and supportive formal and informal organizations, which ensure better life chances for them. Children of poorly educated and unskilled parents, by contrast, generally grow up in neighborhoods subject to poverty, poor schools, violence, drugs, and a generally disruptive social environment.

Clearly, outcomes of adaptation vary according to whether immigrants settle in affluent middle-class suburbs or in impoverished inner-

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city ghettos. Although the emergence of a middle-class population is a distinctive aspect of contemporary immigration, a disproportionately large number of immigrant children converge in underprivileged and linguistically distinctive neighborhoods. There, the immigrants and their children come into direct daily contact with the poor rather than with the middle class; they are also apt to encounter members of native minorities and other immigrants rather than members of the dominant majority. At school, many immigrant children find themselves in classrooms with other immigrant children speaking a language other than English, or with native minority children who either have problems keeping up with schoolwork or consciously resist academic achievement. These adversarial circumstances have been found to be detrimental to second-generation adaptation (Ogbu, 1974; Perlmann and Waldinger, 1997; Portes, 1995; Portes and Zhou, 1993).

**Race/Ethnicity**

The effect of race/ethnicity is intertwined with class. As immigrant children are absorbed into different segments of American society, becoming American may not always be an advantage. When immigrants enter middle-class communities directly, or after a short transition, they may find it advantageous to acculturate and assimilate. If the social environment surrounding immigrant children is rich in resources, and if its goals are consistent with those of the immigrant family, then ethnic resources may be relatively less important, but they may still count. For example, many middle-class immigrant parents move into affluent White neighborhoods, send their children to schools attended primarily by White students from similarly or more affluent socioeconomic backgrounds, and still insist on enrolling their children in weekend or after-school ethnic schools, or involving them in ethnic, religious, or cultural activities. The children then benefit both from privileged socioeconomic contacts with the dominant group in mainstream America and from the group-specific expectations of and opportunities for intellectual development.

Different outcomes are possible where the social environment is not so rich. Many immigrant children have moved to central cities with few socioeconomic resources and live in inner-city ghettos among the most disadvantaged segments of the native minority and immigrant populations. The problem of poverty concentration has been exacerbated by the disappearance of industrial jobs in these urban areas, reducing the demand for low- and semi-skilled labor and trapping the working poor in underemployment and unemployment (Wilson, 1987). The flight of the middle class has worsened the situation, removing opportunities for im-

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migrants to integrate into mainstream society and causing severe social isolation—similar to that commonly faced by U.S.-born minorities in the most impoverished stratum of society.

### Contextual Factors

Changes in social and economic conditions in the host society create structural constraints for second-generation mobility. Economic restructuring has eliminated most of the well-paying, blue-collar jobs in manufacturing that enabled less-skilled European immigrants to climb the social ladder. With the hourglass economy taking shape, as Gans (1992: 173-174) predicts,

> [S]ome members of the second generation, especially those whose parents did not themselves escape poverty, could in adulthood finish in persistent poverty because they will either not be asked, or be reluctant to work at immigrant wages and hours as their parents did but will lack the job opportunities, skills, and connections to do better.

Moreover, American popular culture, with its emphasis on materialism, consumption, and individualism, and its anti-intellectual streak, powerfully influences all children. The effects of exposure to popular culture, however, vary also by class and race. Many inner-city children who feel oppressed and excluded from the American mainstream are also frustrated by the hypocrisy of a culture that highly values freedom and materialism and offers only a dwindling economic future. Many respond to their social isolation and their constrained opportunities with resentment toward middle-class America, rebelling against all forms of authority and rejecting the goals of achievement and upward mobility. Because students in schools shape one another's attitudes and expectations, such an oppositional culture negatively affects educational outcomes. School achievement seems unlikely to lead to upward mobility, and high achievers are seen as sell-outs to oppressive authority.

Although there is a strong anti-intellectual streak in American youth culture at all socioeconomic levels, the rejection of academic pursuits is especially intense among members of minority groups, who are more likely than members of the majority to identify school administrations with oppressive authority, to perceive their entry into the middle class as almost impossible, and to be in schools where learning is strongly discouraged by peers. Lowered chances for mobility create frustration and pessimism for all American youth, but these emotions are most strongly felt by those at the bottom of the economic hierarchy. When those at the bottom are also members of historically oppressed minority groups, frustration is mixed with the need to maintain self-esteem, so that rejection of

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middle-class mores and opposition to authority become important strategies for psychological survival. In underprivileged neighborhoods, in particular, immigrant children meet U.S.-born peers with little hope for the future and are thus likely to be pressured by their peers to resist assimilation into the middle class, as expected by their parents. These trends pose a challenge to all parents, but the challenge is especially daunting for immigrant parents with limited educational backgrounds, frequently limited English skills, and few resources (Zhou, 1997b).

Thus, when immigrant children enter American society at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy, acculturation and assimilation are likely to be tinged with distinct disadvantages, viewed as maladjustment by both mainstream society and the ethnic community. Immigrant children from less fortunate socioeconomic backgrounds have a much harder time succeeding in school than do middle-class children, and a significant number of the children of poor, especially dark-skinned, immigrants can be trapped in permanent poverty in an era of stagnant economic growth, and in the process of rapid Americanization. The prospects facing children of the less fortunate may be high rates of unemployment, crime, alcoholism, drug use, and other pathologies associated with poverty and the frustration of diminishing expectations. In this case, young immigrants or children of immigrants may benefit from cultivating social ties within ethnic communities to develop forms of behavior likely to break the cycle of disadvantage. The extent to which young people are integrated into this immigrant community also becomes a major determinant of school adaptation, especially when the social environment otherwise places children at risk (Zhou and Bankston, 1998).

## CONCLUSION

The significant differences between contemporary immigration and turn-of-the-century European immigration necessitate a reconceptualization of the phenomenon and the development of alternative theories of immigration and immigrant adaptation. Contemporary immigration in the United States has resulted from the interplay of macro- and microstructural factors operating cross-nationally, rather than unilaterally. The new immigration has transformed America's major immigrant-receiving centers through a dialectical process, creating opportunities and constraints for immigrant incorporation as well as for a realignment of racial and ethnic relations. For new immigrants and their children, the path to integration into American society may be rugged and segmented because of the diverse socioeconomic backgrounds of new immigrants. Many new immigrants continue to follow the traditional route, starting from the bottom rungs of the socioeconomic ladder and gradually working their

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way up. A visible proportion of the immigrants, however, have managed to bypass that bottom step, incorporating directly into mainstream professional occupations and dispersing into suburban middle-class communities. Still, a significant number may be permanently "trapped" at the bottom, either unable to find work or working at "dead-end" jobs with little hope for social mobility.

Increasing diversity has posed challenges for all Americans—U.S. born and immigrant—as they are pressured to negotiate the culture of diversity and redefine themselves in the new racial/ethnic stratification system. The old framework of assimilation has become outmoded. In multiethnic urban centers today, all U.S.-born racial/ethnic groups are facing the challenge of adjustment to the new reality. There are growing tensions arising from an urgent need to negotiate the culture of diversity and redefine oneself in the new racial/ethnic stratification system.

Furthermore, the future of the new second generation is intrinsically linked to the diversity of immigration and to the current system of social stratification into which today's immigrant children are assimilating. The American public still seems to assume that all immigrant children should move up and melt into the middle class. As there are poor Whites who have never attained middle class, it should not be a surprise that some immigrant children may not make it either. Certainly, we cannot expect all immigrant children to excel equally in a society as unequal as ours. As Gans (1992) argues, it is time to question the American faith in the inevitability of immigrant success. Children of middle-class immigrants have a better chance for success; their poorer counterparts, especially the darker-skinned ones, may not fare equally well. Consequently, assimilation as a widespread outcome for contemporary immigrant groups is possible for some but questionable for others. It is too early to reach a definite conclusion about assimilation, with scenarios of second-generation decline still a matter of speculation; it seems clear, however, that assimilation no longer means that everybody eventually succeeds.

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