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## The New Immigration and Ethnicity in the United States

DOUGLAS S. MASSEY

AS ANYONE WHO WALKS the streets of America's largest cities knows, there has been a profound transformation of immigration to the United States. Not only are there more immigrants, but increasingly they speak languages and bear cultures that are quite different from those brought by European immigrants in the past. The rapidity of the change and the scale of the movement have led to much consternation about what the "new immigration" means for American society.

Some worry about the economic effects of immigration, although quantitative analyses generally show that immigrants do not compete with native workers and do not have strong effects on US wage rates and employment levels (Borjas and Tienda 1987; Borjas 1990; Borjas and Freeman 1992). Others worry about the social welfare burden caused by immigrants, but studies again suggest that, with the exception of some refugee groups, immigrants do not drain public resources (see Blau 1984; Simon 1984; Tienda and Jensen 1986; Borjas 1994; but Rothman and Espenshade 1992 show that local fiscal effects may be significant). Observers also express fears of linguistic fragmentation, but research indicates that immigrants generally shift into English as time passes and that their children move decisively into English if they grow up in the United States (Grenier 1984; Stevens 1985; Veltman 1988).

Despite this reassuring evidence, however, considerable disquiet remains about the new immigration and its consequences (see Espenshade and Calhoun 1993). Indeed, an immigrant backlash appears to be gathering force. English-only amendments have passed in several locales; federal immigration law has grown steadily more restrictive and punitive; and politicians, led by Governor Pete Wilson of California, have discovered the po-

litical advantages that may be gained by blaming immigrants for current social and economic problems. Given the apparent animus toward immigrants and the imperviousness of public perceptions to the influence of objective research findings, one suspects that deeper forces are at work in the American psyche.

This consternation may have less to do with ascertainable facts about immigration than with unarticulated fears that immigrants will somehow create a very different society and culture in the United States. Whatever objective research says about the prospects for individual assimilation, the ethnic and racial composition of the United States is clearly changing, and with it the sociocultural world created by prior European immigrants and their descendants. According to demographic projections, Americans of European descent will become a minority in the United States sometime during the next century (Edmonston and Passel 1991), and this projected shift has already occurred in some urban areas, notably Los Angeles and Miami. In other metropolitan areas, such as New York, Chicago, Houston, and San Diego, the transformation is well underway.

This demographic reality suggests the real nature of the anti-immigrant reaction among non-Hispanic whites: a fear of cultural change and a deep-seated worry that European Americans will be displaced from their dominant position in American life. Most social scientists have been reluctant to address this issue, or even to acknowledge it (nonacademics, however, are not so reticent—see Lamm and Imhoff 1985; Brimelow 1995). As a result, analyses by academic researchers have focused rather narrowly on facts and empirical issues: how many undocumented migrants are there, do they displace native workers, do they drive down wage rates, do they use more in services than they pay in taxes?

Answers to these questions do not get at the heart of the matter, however. What the public really wants to know (at least, I suspect, the native white public) is whether or not the new immigrants will assimilate into the Euro-American society of the United States, and how that society and its culture might change as a result of this incorporation. While social scientists have analyzed the state of the trees, the public has worried about the future of the forest, and no amount of empirical research has quieted these anxieties. In this article, I assess the prospects for the assimilation of the new immigrant groups and judge their likely effects on the society, culture, and language of the United States.

I begin by placing the new immigration in historical perspective and pointing out the distinctive features that set it apart from earlier immigrations. I then appraise the structural context for the incorporation of today's immigrants and argue that because of fundamental differences, their assimilation is unlikely to be as rapid or complete as that achieved by European immigrants in the past. I conclude by discussing how the nature of ethnicity is likely to change as a result of a new immigration that is lin-

guistically concentrated, geographically clustered, and temporally continuous into an American society that is increasingly stratified and unequal.

### The new immigration in historical perspective

The history of US immigration during the twentieth century can be divided roughly into three phases: a *classic era* of mass European immigration stretching from about 1901 to 1930; a *long hiatus* of limited movement from 1931 to 1970; and a *new regime* of large-scale, non-European immigration that began around 1970 and continues to the present. The cutpoints 1930 and 1970 are to some extent arbitrary, of course, but they correspond roughly to major shifts in US immigration policy. The 1924 National Origins Act, which imposed strict country quotas, took full effect in 1929; and the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act, which repealed those quotas, took effect in 1968 (see Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990: 26–97).

Information on the size and composition of immigrant flows during the three periods is presented in Table 1. Actual counts of immigrants by region and decade (the data from which the table was largely derived) are presented in the Data Appendix. In both tables, the figures refer to legal immigrants enumerated upon entry; they do not include undocumented migrants (see Massey and Singer 1995 for recent annual estimates), nor do they adjust for return migration, which studies have shown to be significant in both the classic era (Wyman 1993) and the new regime (Warren and Kraly 1985; Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990).

The classic years 1901–30 are actually part of a sustained 50-year period of mass immigration that began sometime around 1880. During this period some 28 million immigrants entered the United States and, except for two years at the end of World War I, the yearly total never fell below 200,000, and in most years it exceeded 400,000. The largest flows occurred in the first decades of the twentieth century. From 1901 to 1930 almost 19 million people arrived on American shores, yielding an annual average of 621,000 immigrants (see Table 1). The peak occurred in 1907 when some 1.3 million immigrants arrived. Until recently, these numbers were unequalled in American history.

The vast majority of these people came from Europe. Although the composition shifted from Northern and Western Europe to Southern and Eastern Europe as industrialization spread across the American continent (see Massey 1988; Morawska 1990), the composition throughout the first three decades of the century remained overwhelmingly European, averaging 80 percent for the entire period. As a result, the United States became less black, more white, and more firmly European in culture and outlook.

This period of mass immigration gave rise to some of the nation's enduring myths: about the struggle of immigrants to overcome poverty, about the achievement of economic mobility through individual effort, about the

**TABLE 1** Patterns of immigration to the United States in three periods of the twentieth century

	Classic era 1901-30	Long hiatus 1931-70	New regime 1971-93
<b>Whole period</b>			
Region of origin (percent)			
Europe	79.6	46.2	13.0
Americas	16.2	43.6	49.6
Asia	3.7	8.6	34.5
Other	0.5	1.6	2.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total immigration (thousands)	18,638	7,400	15,536
Annual average (thousands)	621	185	675
Peak year	1907	1968	1991
Peak immigration (thousands)	1,285	454	1,827
<b>First ten years</b>			
Region of origin (percent)			
Europe	91.6	65.9	17.8
Americas	4.1	30.3	44.1
Asia	3.7	3.2	35.3
Other	0.6	0.6	2.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total immigration (thousands)	8,795	528	4,493
Annual average (thousands)	880	53	449
<b>Last ten years</b>			
Region of origin (percent)			
Europe	60.0	33.8	10.2
Americas	36.9	51.7	54.0
Asia	2.7	12.9	32.7
Other	0.4	1.6	3.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total immigration (thousands)	4,107	3,322	9,293
Annual average (thousands)	411	332	929

SOURCE: US Immigration and Naturalization Service 1994: Table 2.

importance of group solidarity in the face of ethnic prejudice and discrimination, and about the inevitability of assimilation into the melting pot of American life. In the words of an influential social scientist at midcentury, the first decades of the century offer "The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People" (Handlin 1951). Although a reaction against the melting pot myth later arose in the second and third generations, this was largely a symbolic opposition by people who had watched their parents and grandparents suffer under "Northern European" domi-

nance, but who by the 1960s had largely penetrated arenas of power, prestige, and influence and wanted to let the world know about it (see Glazer and Moynihan 1970; Greely 1971; Novak 1971).

The classic era of mass immigration was followed by a 40-year hiatus during which immigration levels fell to very low levels and the predominance of European immigrants came to an end. From 1931 to 1970, average annual immigration fell to 185,000 and the share arriving from the Americas increased substantially, eventually equalling that from Europe. Over the entire hiatus period, 44 percent of immigrants came from the Americas, compared with 46 percent from Europe and 9 percent from Asia (the last region, according to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, includes the Middle East, which has contributed a small number of immigrants over the years, compared with such countries as China, Korea, the Philippines, and Japan). By the last decade of the hiatus, 52 percent of all immigrants were from the Americas and only 34 percent came from Europe; the peak year of immigration occurred in 1968, when 454,000 people were admitted for permanent residence.

As I have already noted, the dividing points of 1930 and 1970 are somewhat arbitrary and were chosen partly for convenience, since decennial years are easy to remember and correspond to the decennial tabulations favored by demographers. Evidence of the coming hiatus was already apparent in the last decade of the classic era, when immigration levels were a third below their 1901–30 average (411,000 rather than 621,000) and about half the average that prevailed in the first decade of the century (880,000). Moreover, by the end of the classic era, immigrants' origins were already shifting toward the Americas. Whereas 92 percent of all immigrants in the first decade of the century were European, by the 1920s the percentage had dropped to 60 percent. Although it was not recognized for many years, the era of massive European immigration was already beginning to wind down.

The termination of mass immigration around 1930 is attributable to many factors. The one that scholars most often credit is the passage of restrictive immigration legislation. In response to a public backlash against immigrants, Congress passed two new "quota laws," in 1921 and 1924, that were designed to limit the number of immigrants and shift their origins from Southern and Eastern Europe back to Northern and Western Europe (where they belonged, at least in the view of the nativist voters of the time—see Higham 1963 and Hutchinson 1981).

Although the national origins quotas, combined with earlier bans on Asian immigration enacted in 1882 and 1917, did play a role in reducing the number of immigrants, I believe their influence has been overstated. For one thing, the new quotas did not apply at all to immigrants from the Western Hemisphere, leaving the door wide open for mass entry from Latin

America, particularly Mexico. Indeed, beginning in the decade of the 1910s, employers in Northern industrial cities of the United States began to recruit extensively in Mexico, and immigration from that country mushroomed from 50,000 in the first decade of the century, to 220,000 in the second, to 460,000 in the third (see Cardoso 1980). Were it not for other factors, the change in immigration law would, at most, have shifted the national origins of immigrants more decisively toward the Americas in the 1930s, but it would not have halted immigration *per se*.

More than any change in legislation, however, the outbreak of World War I in 1914 brought a sudden and decisive halt to the flow of immigrants from Europe. During the first half of the decade, the outflow proceeded apace: 926,000 European immigrants arrived in the United States in 1910, 765,000 in 1911, and just over 1 million came in both 1913 and 1914. During the first full year of the war, however, immigration dropped to 198,000 and it fell every year thereafter to reach a low point of 31,000 in 1918. As a result, during the 1910s total immigration was halved compared with the prior decade (Ferenczi 1929).

During the 1920s, European immigration began to revive, despite the restrictive immigration quotas. Some 412,000 immigrants arrived from Germany during 1921–30, 455,000 came from Italy, 227,000 from Poland, and 102,000 from Czechoslovakia. These entries supplemented large numbers arriving from European countries that were not limited by the new quotas: 211,000 from Ireland, 340,000 from Britain, and 166,000 from Norway and Sweden combined. One country, however, is notably absent from European immigrant flows of the 1920s: Russia, or as it was now known, the Soviet Union (US Immigration and Naturalization Service 1994: 27).

Prior to World War I, immigration from Russia had been massive: 1.6 million Russian immigrants entered the United States during the first decade of the century, and 921,000 managed to get in during the subsequent decade despite the outbreak of war in 1914. The great majority of these people were Jews escaping the rampant anti-Semitism and pogroms of Czarist Russia (see Nugent 1992: 83–94); but with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the consolidation of the world's first communist state, the Russian Pale was abruptly disconnected from the capitalist West and emigration was suppressed by a new state security apparatus. As a result, immigration from Russia fell to a total of only 62,000 in the 1920s and to just 1,400 during the 1930s. The flow of Russian immigrants did not exceed 2,500 again until the 1970s (US Immigration and Naturalization Service 1994: 27–28).

Just as immigration from non-Russian Europe was gaining ground during the 1920s, another cataclysmic event virtually halted all international migration: the Great Depression. From a total of 241,000 immigrants in 1930, the flow dropped to 23,000 three years later. With mass unem-

ployment in the United States, the demand for immigrant workers evaporated and during the 1930s total immigration fell below 1 million for the first time since the 1830s. Only 528,000 immigrants entered the United States from 1931 to 1940, yielding an annual average of only 53,000.

Before the Great Depression had ended, World War II broke out to add another barrier to international movement. During the war years the flow of immigrants to the United States fell once again. From a depression-era peak of 83,000 in 1939, the number of immigrants fell to only 24,000 in 1943; and during six years of warfare, the number of immigrants averaged only 40,000 per year, lower even than during the depression years of 1930–39 (US Immigration and Naturalization Service 1994: 27–28).

With the termination of hostilities in 1945, immigration from Europe finally resumed; but by 1945 the face of Europe had changed dramatically. The Cold War had begun and the boundary line marking the area of communist dominance had shifted westward. In addition to the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe was now cut off from the capitalist economy of the West. Countries such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia, which had sent large numbers of immigrants before the depression, contributed few after 1945. Although 228,000 Polish immigrants came to the United States during the 1920s, only 10,000 entered during the 1950s.

Just as the avenues for emigration from Eastern Europe were blocked, the countries of Western Europe began to seek workers to rebuild their war-shattered economies. The wave of investment and economic growth triggered by the Marshall Plan created a strong demand for labor that, by the 1950s, began to exceed domestic supplies of most countries (Kindleberger 1967). As the postwar economy expanded and the pace of growth quickened, Germany, France, Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands not only stopped sending migrants abroad, they all became countries of immigration themselves, attracting large numbers of immigrants from Southern Europe and then, as these sources dried up, from the Balkans, Turkey, North Africa, and Asia (see Stalker 1994). The era of mass European migration to the United States was finally and decisively over.

Although immigrants were no longer available in large numbers from Europe, the postwar boom in the United States nonetheless created a strong demand for labor there. With Eastern Europe cut off and Western Europe itself a magnet for immigration, this new demand was met by Latin Americans, whose entry was unregulated under the quotas of the 1920s. The number of Mexican immigrants rose from 61,000 in the 1940s to 300,000 in the 1950s and 454,000 during the 1960s. This expansion of immigration was not limited to Mexico. During the last decade of the hiatus period, some 200,000 Cubans entered the United States, along with 100,000 Dominicans and 70,000 Colombians. A new era of non-European immigration was clearly on the rise (US Immigration and Naturalization Service 1994: 27–28).



It has become conventional to date the emergence of the new regime in US immigration from the passage of the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act, which were phased in and implemented fully in 1968. In keeping with the spirit of the times, this legislation abolished the discriminatory national-origins quotas and ended the ban on Asian entry. It put each nation in the Eastern Hemisphere on an equal footing by establishing a uniform limit of 20,000 entrants per country; it set an overall hemispheric cap of 170,000 immigrants; and it established a "preference system" of family and occupational categories to allocate visas under these limits. The amendments exempted immediate relatives of US citizens from the numerical caps, however, and nations in the Western Hemisphere were subject only to a hemispheric cap of 120,000 immigrants, not a 20,000-per-country limit.

Although this legislation contributed to the creation of the new immigration regime, it was neither the sole nor the most important cause of the increase in numbers or the shift in origins. As with the national-origins quotas, I believe scholars have generally overstated the role of the 1965 amendments in bringing about the new immigration. The Immigration and Nationality Act was in no way responsible for the drop in European immigration, for example, since this trend was clearly visible before 1965 and followed from other conditions described above.

Nor did the 1965 Act increase the level of immigration from Latin America. On the contrary, by placing the first-ever cap on immigration from the Western Hemisphere, the legislation actually made it more difficult for Latin Americans to enter the United States. Since 1965, additional amendments have further restricted entry from nations in the Western Hemisphere, placing them under the 20,000-per-country limit, abolishing the separate hemispheric caps, eliminating the right of minor children to sponsor the immigration of parents, and repealing the "Texas Proviso" that exempted employers from prosecution for hiring undocumented migrants. Rather than promoting the shift toward Latin American origins, then, the 1965 Act and its successor amendments actually inhibited the transformation. The shift in origins occurred in spite of the legislation, not because of it.

The one effect that the 1965 Act did have was to remove the ban on Asian entry and thereby unleash an unprecedented and entirely unexpected flow of immigrants from Korea, Taiwan, China, the Philippines, and other Asian countries (see Glazer 1985). At the time, the legislation was seen as a way of redressing past wrongs that had been visited upon Eastern and Southern Europeans and of mollifying the resentment of their children and grandchildren, who had risen to wield powerful political influence in the Democratic Party, which dominated the US Congress. Rather than opening the United States to immigration from, say, Italy and Poland, however, as legislators such as Peter Rodino and Dan Rostenkowski had intended, its principal effect was to initiate large-scale immigration from Asia.

As Table 1 shows, the percentage of Asians rose from under 10 percent of immigrants during the classic and hiatus eras, to around 35 percent under the new regime that began after 1970. Whereas only 35,000 Chinese, 35,000 Indians, and 34,000 Koreans were admitted as immigrants during the 1960s, by the 1980s these numbers had become 347,000, 251,000, and 334,000, respectively (US Immigration and Naturalization Service 1994: 27–28). As a result of this sharp and sudden increase in Asian immigration, the percentage of Asians in the US population began rising for the first time in more than a century.

Yet by themselves the 1965 amendments cannot explain the remarkable surge in Asian immigration. Another key factor was the loss of the Vietnam War and the subsequent collapse of the US-backed governments in Indochina. With the fall of Saigon in 1975, the United States faced new demands for entry by thousands of military officers, government officials, and US employees fearful of reprisals from the new communist authorities. As economic and political conditions in Vietnam deteriorated during the late 1970s and early 1980s, larger numbers of soldiers, minor officials, and merchants took to the seas in desperate attempts to escape.

For both political and humanitarian reasons, the United States had little choice but to accept these people outside the numerical limits established under the 1965 Act. Although only 335 Vietnamese entered the United States during the 1950s and 4,300 arrived during the 1960s, 172,000 were admitted during the 1970s and 281,000 arrived during the 1980s. In addition to the Vietnamese, the US misadventure in Indochina led to the entry of many thousands of Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong refugees, an influx that collectively totaled 300,000 by 1990. In all, about a third of Asian immigrants since 1970 can be traced to the failed intervention of the United States in Indochina (US Immigration and Naturalization Service 1994: 28).

For different reasons, therefore, immigration from Asia and Latin America has surged over the past two decades. According to official statistics, the total annual flow of immigrants averaged 675,000 during the period 1971–93, an influx that in absolute terms exceeds the 621,000 observed during the classic era from 1901 to 1930. Unlike the entrants during the earlier period, these 15.5 million new immigrants were overwhelmingly non-European: about half came from Latin America and over a third originated in Asia; 13 percent were from Europe. The peak year was 1991, when 1.8 million persons were admitted for permanent residence in the United States.

As large as the annual flow of 675,000 immigrants is, both absolutely and relative to earlier periods in US history, it nonetheless constitutes an underestimate of the true level of immigration, for it does not capture the full extent of undocumented migration to the United States, a category that became increasingly important during the 1970s and 1980s. Although

the figures summarized in Table 1 include 3.3 million former undocumented migrants who legalized their status under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), they do not include other illegal migrants who failed to qualify for the amnesty program or who entered after 1986.

Woodrow-Lafield (1993) estimates that about 3.3 million additional undocumented immigrants lived in the United States as of 1990, bringing the total number of immigrants for the period 1971–93 to around 854,000 per year. This figure still understates the true size of the inflow, however, because her estimate does not include immigrants who entered illegally and subsequently died, or those who subsequently emigrated. Full incorporation of all undocumented migrants into the figures of Table 1 would boost the relative share of Latin Americans even more, given the predominance of Mexicans in this population. Among undocumented migrants counted in the 1980 census, estimates suggest that 55 percent were Mexican (Warren and Passel 1987), and of those legalized under IRCA, 75 percent were from Mexico (US Immigration and Naturalization Service 1991).

Whatever allowance one makes for undocumented migration, it is clear that around 1970 the United States embarked on a new regime of immigration that marks a clear break with the past. The new immigration is composed of immigrants from Asia and Latin America, a large share of whom are undocumented and who are arriving in substantially larger numbers compared with earlier periods of high immigration. Although the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act played some role in creating this new regime, ultimately the effect of US immigration policy has been secondary. The dramatic change reflects more powerful forces operating in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

### The new immigration and the future of ethnicity

No matter what one's opinion of the melting pot ideology, the remarkable amalgamation of European immigrants into the society and culture of the United States is a historical fact. The disparate groups that entered the country in great numbers between 1880 and 1930—Italians, Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Lithuanians, and Russian Jews—were not only quite different from prior waves of immigrants from Northern and Western Europe, they were also quite different from one another in terms of language, literacy, culture, and economic background. After several generations of US residence, however, the differences are largely gone and the various groups have to a great extent merged together to form one large, amorphous class of mixed European ancestry.

By 1980, most people reporting ancestry in Southern or Eastern Europe were in their third or fourth generation of US residence, and as a result of extensive intermarriage in earlier generations, they were increasingly of mixed origins. Over half of those reporting Polish, Russian, Czech,

or Hungarian ancestry in the 1980 census were of mixed parentage; and the rate of intermarriage was 60 percent for women of Italian and Russian origin, 70 percent for Polish women, 83 percent for Czech women, and 88 percent for Hungarian women. For all women, the odds of intermarriage rose sharply as one moved from older to younger cohorts, and intergroup differences with respect to income, education, and occupation had all but disappeared (Lieberson and Waters 1988).

As a result of rapid growth in the population of mixed European ancestry, white Americans are gradually losing contact with their immigrant origins. Research by Alba (1990) shows that such people do not regularly cook or consume ethnic foods; they report experiencing little or no ethnic prejudice or discrimination; they are largely uninvolved and uninterested in ethnic politics; they are unlikely to be members of any ethnic social or political organization; and they tend not to live in ethnic neighborhoods.

Although most white Americans identify themselves ethnically, the labels are growing increasingly complex and the percentage who call themselves "American" or "nothing at all" is rising (Lieberson and Waters 1988; Alba 1990). In the late twentieth-century social world of European Americans, where intermarriage is pervasive, mixed ancestries are common, economic differences are trivial, and residential mixing is the norm, ethnicity has become symbolic (Gans 1979), a choice made from a range of "ethnic options" that are loosely tied to ancestry (Waters 1990).

Compared with the ascriptive ethnicity of the past, the descendants of European immigrants are moving into the "twilight of ethnicity" (Alba 1981), and rather than signaling a lack of assimilation, the use of ethnic labels proves how far assimilation has come. The amalgamation of European ethnic groups has proceeded to such an extent that expressions of ethnic identity are no longer perceived as threats to national unity. On the contrary, the use of ethnic labels has become a way of identifying oneself as American (Alba 1990).

It is natural to view the process of European assimilation as a model for the incorporation of Asians and Latin Americans into US society. Present fears of ethnic fragmentation are assuaged by noting that similar fears were expressed about the immigration of Italians, Poles, and Jews. Nativist worries are allayed by showing that today's immigrants appear to be assimilating much as in the past. According to available evidence, income and occupational status rise with time spent in the United States; patterns of fertility, language, and residence come to resemble those of natives as socioeconomic status and generations increase; and intermarriage becomes increasingly common with each succeeding generation and increment in income and education (Massey 1981; Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990).

Focusing on individual patterns of assimilation, however, ignores the structural context within which the assimilation occurs. By focusing on microlevel analyses of immigrant attainment, we forget that the remark-

able absorption of European immigrants in the past was facilitated, and to a large extent enabled, by historical conditions that no longer prevail. Compared with the great European immigrations, the new immigration differs in several crucial respects that significantly alter the prospects for assimilation and, hence, the meaning of ethnicity for the next century.

The first unique historical feature of European immigration is that it was followed by a long hiatus when few additional Europeans arrived. Although nearly 15 million European immigrants entered the United States in the three decades between 1901 and 1930, for the next 60 years the flow fell to the functional equivalent of zero. Compared with an annual average of 495,000 European immigrants from 1901 to 1930, only 85,000 arrived each year from 1931 through 1970, and most of these were not Poles, Italians, or Russian Jews, the big groups before 1930. Although overall immigration revived after 1970, the flow from Europe remained small at around 88,000 per year.

Thus, after the entry of large numbers of Europeans for some 50 years, the influx suddenly stopped and for the next 60 years—roughly three generations—it was reduced to a trickle. The cutting off of immigration from Europe eliminated the supply of raw materials for the grist mill of ethnicity in the United States, ensuring that whatever ethnic identities existed would be predominantly a consequence of events and processes operating within the United States.

Without a fresh supply of immigrants each year, the generational composition of people labeled "Italians," "Poles," and "Czechs" inexorably shifted: first, foreigners gave way to the native-born, then first-generation natives yielded to the children of natives, and more recently the children of natives have given way to the grandchildren of natives. Over time, successive generations dominated the populations of European ethnic groups and came to determine their character. With each generational transition, ethnic identities and the meaning of ethnicity itself shifted until finally most groups moved into the "twilight of ethnicity."

This pattern of assimilation was undoubtedly greatly facilitated by the long hiatus in European immigration. In essence, it gave the United States a "breathing space" within which slow-moving social and economic processes leading to assimilation could operate. The hiatus shaped and constrained the meaning of ethnicity by limiting the generational complexity underlying each group's ethnic identity: the ending of European immigration in 1930 meant that for all practical purposes, ethnic groups would never include more than three generations at any point in time.

In addition to generational change, the other engine of immigrant assimilation is social mobility, and a second historical feature of European immigration is that it was followed by a sustained economic expansion that offered unusual opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. From 1940 through 1973, incomes rose, productivity increased, unemployment fell,

income inequality diminished, poverty rates declined, rates of college attendance grew, and housing improved as the US standard of living seemed to rise effortlessly each year (Galbraith 1963; Levy 1987, 1995). First- and second-generation immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe rode this wave of prosperity to achieve full economic parity with Northern and Western Europeans by 1980.

Thus, two structural conditions—the long hiatus in immigration and the economic boom that accompanied it—are primarily responsible for the remarkable assimilation of European immigrants into the United States. Were either of these factors lacking, the story of immigrant arrival, adaptation, and ultimate absorption would have had a very different conclusion than movement into the twilight of ethnicity or the emergence of symbolic ethnicity. On the other hand, neither of these two structural conditions is likely to hold for the new immigrants from Asia and Latin America, and the patterns and outcomes of assimilation are likely to be quite different as a result.

Rather than having the opportunity of a 60-year “breathing space” within which to absorb and accommodate large cohorts of immigrants, the United States will more likely become a country of perpetual immigration. Unlike the European ethnic groups of the past, today’s Latin Americans and Asians can expect to have their numbers continuously augmented by a steady supply of fresh arrivals from abroad. Rather than being a one-time historical phenomenon, immigration has become a permanent structural feature of the postindustrial society of the United States.

Although the relative influence of the different causes is a matter of debate (Massey et al. 1993), international migration clearly stems from a complex interplay of forces operating at several levels (Massey et al. 1994). Wage differentials between poor and affluent countries provide incentives for individuals to migrate to reap higher lifetime earnings at the destination (Todaro 1976; Todaro and Maruszko 1987). Households send migrants to work in foreign labor markets as a means of self-insuring against risk and overcoming capital constraints created by market failures at home (Stark 1991). A demand for immigrants arises in postindustrial societies because market segmentation creates a class of jobs with low pay, little status, and few mobility prospects that native workers will not accept (Piore 1979); and the penetration of market forces into developing societies itself creates a mobile population disposed to international movement (Sassen 1988). The effect is amplified by rapid population growth in the developing world.

Once begun, migratory flows acquire a momentum that is resistant to management or regulation (Massey 1990a). Networks of social ties develop to link migrants in destination areas to friends and relatives in sending regions (Massey et al. 1994). Branch communities eventually form in the receiving society, giving rise to enclave economies that act as magnets for additional immigration (Portes and Bach 1985; Portes and Manning 1986;

Logan, Alba, and McNulty 1994). Large-scale emigration causes other social and economic changes within both sending and receiving societies that lead to its cumulative causation over time (Massey 1990b).

Thus, current knowledge about the forces behind international migration suggests that movement to the United States will grow, not decline. None of the conditions known to play a role in initiating international migratory flows—wage differentials, market failures, labor market segmentation, globalization of the economy—is likely to end any time soon. Moreover, the forces that perpetuate international movement—network formation, cumulative causation—help to ensure that these flows will continue into the foreseeable future.

To a great extent, these forces are beyond the immediate reach of US policy, particularly immigration policy. Despite the passage of more-restrictive immigration laws and the enactment of increasingly punitive policies, illegal migration from Mexico (and elsewhere) has continued to grow and shows no signs of diminishing (Donato, Durand, and Massey 1992; Massey and Singer 1995). Although politicians call for even stronger measures (Lamm and Imhoff 1985), the forces producing and perpetuating immigration appear to be of such a magnitude that the new regime of US immigration may continue indefinitely.

The belief that immigration flows can be controlled through legislation stems from a misreading of US history. Although the cessation of European immigration in 1930 is widely attributed to the implementation of restrictive quotas in the early 1920s, I argue that the cutoff actually occurred because of a unique sequence of cataclysmic events: World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution, the Great Depression, and World War II. A similar string of destructive and bloody events might arise to extinguish the powerful migratory flows that have become well established throughout Latin America and Asia, but for the sake of the world we should hope they do not.

In all likelihood, therefore, the United States has already become a country of perpetual immigration, one characterized by the continuous arrival of large cohorts of immigrants from particular regions. This fact will inevitably create a very different structure of ethnicity compared with that prevailing among European immigrant groups in the past. Changes in the size of populations from Latin America and Asia will be brought about not only through assimilative processes such as generational succession and intermarriage, but also through the countervailing process of net immigration. In contrast to European ethnics, the ranks of Latin American and Asian ethnics will be augmented continuously with new arrivals from abroad.

Rather than creating relatively homogenous populations spanning at most three generations, the new regime will therefore produce heterogeneous ethnic populations characterized by considerable generational complexity. Processes of social and economic assimilation acting upon earlier

arrivals and their children, when combined with the perpetual arrival of new immigrants, will lead to the fragmentation of ethnicity along the lines of class, generation, and ancestry. Rather than a slow, steady, and relatively coherent progression of ethnicity toward twilight, it will increasingly stretch from dawn to dusk.

Moreover, because the social and economic forces that produce assimilation operate slowly, while those promoting immigration work quickly, the rate at which ethnic culture is augmented by new arrivals from abroad will tend to exceed the rate at which new ethnic culture is created through generational succession, social mobility, and intermarriage in the United States. As a result, the character of ethnicity will be determined relatively more by immigrants and relatively less by later generations, shifting the balance of ethnic identity toward the language, culture, and ways of life of the sending society.

The future state of ethnicity in the United States is now seen most clearly in the Mexican American population. Upon the annexation of northern Mexico into the United States in 1848, fewer than 50,000 Mexicans became US citizens (Jaffe, Cullen, and Boswell 1980). Virtually all Mexican Americans today are descendants of immigrants who arrived in the 100 years between 1890 and the present. During this time, the United States experienced continuous immigration from Mexico except for a brief, ten-year span during the 1930s, thereby establishing a pattern that will probably characterize other streams of immigration in the future (Hoffman 1974; Cardoso 1980; Massey et al. 1987).

Owing to the long history of immigration from Mexico, Mexican Americans are distributed across a variety of generations, socioeconomic classes, legal statuses, ancestries, languages, and, ultimately, identities (Bean and Tienda 1987). Rather than the relatively coherent identity that characterized European ethnic groups, Mexican identity is rife with internal divisions, conflicts, contradictions, and tensions (Browning and de la Garza 1986; Nelson and Tienda 1985). The fragmented state of ethnicity is reflected in the fact that the US Bureau of the Census must use three separate identifiers in its Spanish Origin question—Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicano—each of which corresponds to a particular conception of Mexican identity (García 1981).

Not only will continuous immigration create a new, complex, and fragmented kind of ethnicity, but the new immigrants and their descendants are likely to encounter a very different economy from the one experienced by the European immigrants and their children. Rather than rising prosperity and occupational mobility, current economic trends point in the opposite direction. In the United States since 1973, wages have stagnated and income inequality has grown (Phillips 1990; Levy 1995); the long decline in poverty rates ended (Smith 1988); and mobility in the occupational struc-



ture has decreased (Hout 1988). Moreover, just at the point when public schools used by immigrants have fallen into neglect, the importance of education in the US stratification system has increased (Hout 1988; DiPrete and Grusky 1990; Levy 1995), particularly for Hispanics (Stolzenberg 1990).

Thus, not only will the United States lack the opportunity of an extended period within which to absorb and integrate an unprecedented number of new immigrants, but one of the basic engines of past assimilation may be missing: a robust economy that produces avenues of upward mobility for people with limited education. Continuous immigration will strengthen the relative influence of first-generation arrivals in creating ethnic culture, while the rigidification of the US stratification system will slow the rate of socioeconomic advancement among the second and third generations, making them look more like the first. Both of these structural conditions will increase the relative weight of the sending country's language and culture in defining ethnic identity.

The new immigration also differs from European immigration in other respects likely to influence the creation and maintenance of ethnicity in the United States. Although the flow of immigrants from 1971 to 1993 is actually smaller relative to the size of the US population than the flow during the classic era, it is more concentrated in terms of national origins and language. As Table 2 shows, the rate of legal immigration (3.0 per thousand population) is presently less than half that observed during the classic era (6.3 per thousand); and even making an allowance for undocumented migration (raising the total annual flow to 830,000) does not erase the differential (it increases the rate only to 3.8 per thousand population). But whereas the largest nationality of the classic era (Italians) represented only 19 percent of the total flow of immigrants, the largest group under the new regime (Mexicans) constitutes 24 percent of the flow. Moreover, whereas the language most often spoken by immigrants in the classic era (Italian) was confined to immigrants from one country, the most important language among the new immigrants (Spanish) is spoken by migrants from a dozen countries who together constitute 38 percent of all arrivals.

Thus, although European immigrants were relatively larger in number, they were scattered across more national-origin groups and languages, thereby reducing their salience for native white Americans and limiting the possibilities for linguistic segmentation in the United States. For European immigrants during the classic era, the only practical lingua franca was English; but since nearly 40 percent of the new immigrants speak the same language, Spanish becomes viable as a second language of daily life, creating the possibility of a bilingual society.

The new immigrants are not only more concentrated linguistically, they are also more clustered geographically. In 1910 the five most important immigrant-receiving states of the United States—New York, Pennsyl-

**TABLE 2** Indicators of the relative size and concentration of immigration to the United States in two periods of the twentieth century

	Classic era 1901-30	New regime 1971-93
Rate of immigration (per 1,000 population)	6.3	3.0
Rate of immigration (including undocumented migrants)	6.3	3.8
Share of largest national group (percent)	19.4	23.6
Share of largest linguistic group (percent)	19.4	38.4
Share of the five most important destination states, 1910 and 1990 (percent) <sup>a</sup>	54.0	78.2
Share of the five most important urban destinations, 1910 and 1990 (percent) <sup>b</sup>	35.6	47.9

<sup>a</sup>In 1910 the five most important destination states were New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey; in 1990 they were California, New York, Texas, Illinois, and Florida.

<sup>b</sup>In 1910 the five most important urban destinations were New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Boston; in 1990 they were Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Anaheim-Santa Ana, and Houston.

SOURCES: US Immigration and Naturalization Service 1991, 1993: Tables 2, 17, and 18; US Bureau of the Census 1913: Tables 15 and 16.

vania, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey—took in 54 percent of the total flow, whereas the five most important urban destinations (New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Boston) received 36 percent of the flow. By 1990, in contrast, the five most important immigrant-receiving states—California, New York, Texas, Illinois, and Florida—absorbed 78 percent of the flow, and the five most important urban areas (Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Anaheim-Santa Ana, and Houston) received nearly half of all entering immigrants. The metropolitan areas receiving these immigrants—notably New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles—were the most important centers of communication and mass media in the country, guaranteeing that the new immigration would be a visible presence not only in the cosmopolitan centers of the East and West coasts, but in the country at large.

The increasing concentration of Spanish-speaking immigrants in a few metropolitan areas will inevitably change the process of assimilation itself. Through the new immigration, large communities of Spanish speakers will emerge in many US urban areas, lowering the economic and social costs of not speaking English while raising the benefits of speaking Spanish. As a result, the new immigrants from Latin America are less likely to learn English than were their European counterparts at the turn of the century (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990). The emergence of immigrant enclaves—a process already well advanced in many areas—also reduces the incentives and opportunities to learn other cultural habits and behavioral attributes of Euro-American society.

## Conclusion

The new immigration to the United States from Asia and Latin America that has become increasingly prominent since 1970 has several features that distinguish it from the older European immigration of the early twentieth century. First, the new immigration is part of an ongoing flow that can be expected to be sustained indefinitely, making the United States a country of continuous immigration rather than a nation of periodic entry. Second, the new immigrants will likely enter a highly stratified society characterized by high income inequality and growing labor market segmentation that will provide fewer opportunities for upward mobility. Third, national origins and geographic destinations of the new immigrants are highly concentrated, creating large foreign-language and cultural communities in many areas of the United States.

That these distinctive conditions will prevail in the coming decades and beyond is, of course, conjectural—other scenarios are also possible. I would argue, however, that the conditions I described are the most likely outcome of existing and well-established trends. If so, the experience of European immigrants provides a poor model for the assimilation and incorporation of new immigrants from Asia and Latin America. Rather than relatively homogenous ethnic groups moving steadily toward assimilation with the American majority, the new immigration will create complex ethnic groups fragmented along the lines of generation, class, ancestry, and, ultimately, identity. Rather than ethnic populations moving toward the twilight of ethnic identity, ethnicity itself will be stretched out across the generations to reach from dawn to dusk.

The uninterrupted flow of immigrants from Latin America will also increase the prevalence and influence of the Spanish language and Latin culture in the United States. Large Spanish-speaking communities have already emerged in the gateway cities of New York, Los Angeles, Houston, and Chicago, and Latinos have become the majority in Miami, San Antonio, and in most cities along the Mexico-US border. The combination of continuous immigration and high regional and linguistic concentration will produce more such communities and will move the United States toward bilingualism and biculturalism. Assimilation will become more of a two-way street, with Euro-Americans learning Spanish and consuming Latin cultural products as well as Latins learning English and consuming Anglo-American products. Increasingly the economic benefits and prospects for mobility will accrue to those able to speak both languages and move in two cultural worlds.

Since these trends will occur in an increasingly rigid and stratified society, growing antagonisms along class and ethnic lines can be expected, both within and between groups. Given the salience of race in American

life, the acceleration of black immigration from Africa and the Caribbean, and the history of racial conflict and hostility in the United States, the relationship between native blacks and the new immigrants is likely to be particularly conflict-ridden (see Portes and Stepick 1993; Portes and Zhou 1993).

Although these trends are now most apparent with respect to Latin Americans, especially Mexicans, the potential for immigration and ethnic transformation is probably greater in Asia, where migration to the United States has just begun. The potential for Chinese immigration alone is enormous. Already the Chinese make up 7 percent of all legal immigrants, not counting the ethnic Chinese from various Southeast Asian countries, and Chinatowns have arisen and expanded in many US cities. Since theory and empirical evidence suggest that large-scale emigration is created by economic development and market penetration (Massey 1988; Hatton and Williamson 1992), China's movement toward markets and rapid economic growth may contain the seeds of an enormous migration.

Even a small rate of emigration, when applied to a country with more than a billion people, would produce a flow of immigrants that would dwarf levels of migration now observed from Mexico. Social networks linking China and the United States are now being formed and in the future will serve as the basis for mass entry. Immigration from China and other populous, rapidly developing nations in Asia has an unrecognized potential to transform America's ethnic composition and to further alter the meaning and conception of ethnicity in the United States.

**DATA APPENDIX: Immigrants to the United States from major world regions: Numbers by decade 1901-90 and for 1991-93 (thousands)**

Years	Region of origin				Total
	Europe	Americas	Asia	Other	
1901-10	8,056	362	324	53	8,795
1911-20	4,322	1,144	247	23	5,736
1921-30	2,463	1,517	112	15	4,107
1931-40	348	160	17	3	528
1941-50	621	356	37	21	1,035
1951-60	1,326	997	153	39	2,515
1961-70	1,123	1,716	428	55	3,322
1971-80	800	1,983	1,588	122	4,493
1981-90	762	3,615	2,738	223	7,338
1991-93	466	2,104	1,032	103	3,705
1901-93	20,287	13,954	6,676	657	41,574

SOURCE: US Immigration and Naturalization Service 1994: Table 2.

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