

# Population Growth, Migration, and Urbanization, 1860–1920

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During the period of mass immigration that began in the mid-1840s and ended in the mid-1920s, the population of the United States increased from about 17 million to more than 105 million (Table 13.1). This sixfold increase was unparalleled elsewhere in the Western industrializing world; the populations of the United Kingdom and Germany, for example, grew at about half that rate. Even before the onset of mass immigration, extremely high rates of natural growth had doubled the population of the new nation in less than 25 years, but toward the end of the 19th century natural growth rates declined as the excess of births over deaths diminished. During the 1870s death rates were as high as 22 per thousand and birthrates exceeded 40 per thousand. By the decade of World War 1, death rates had declined to about 15 per thousand, but birthrates had dropped more dramatically to just over 25 per thousand. Net migration rates fluctuated from decade to decade, reaching a maximum of 10 percent between 1880 and 1885 and, after declining to less than 3 percent during the depression of the mid-nineties, increased once again to a level of 7 percent between 1905 and 1910. The proportion of the white population born abroad increased from about 13 percent in 1850 to almost 20 percent in 1890 and then declined to 17 percent by 1920, but the proportion of people of foreign birth and parentage together reached its maximum level of 45 percent in 1920 (Table 13.1). Overall, immigration probably doubled the rate of growth among those of European ancestry, but in the absence of a substantial immigrant contribution the relative proportion of blacks in the total population dropped from more than 15 percent in 1850 to less than 10 percent in 1920.

This unparalleled rate of growth among the white population was accompanied, as in many parts of Europe, by a rapid rate of urbanization. Unlike Europe, the diverse resources of an

**Table 13.1 U.S. Population Composition and Growth, 1840–1920 (in percentages)**

	Population (in millions)	Urban	Black	Foreign parentage	Foreign born
1840	17.1	10.8	16.8	n.d.	n.d.
1850	23.2	15.3	15.7	n.d.	12.9
1860	31.4	19.8	14.1	n.d.	17.9
1870	39.8	25.7	13.5	19.0	19.6
1880	50.2	28.2	13.1	22.5	17.8
1890	62.9	35.1	11.9	25.0	19.9
1900	76.0	39.7	11.6	27.6	18.1
1910	92.0	45.7	10.7	27.8	18.0
1920	105.7	51.2	9.9	28.0	16.9

n.d. = no data.

undeveloped frontier stimulated high levels of interregional migration to non-urban settings as well. Between 1790 and 1850, the urban proportion of the total population more than tripled to reach 15 percent and increased by a similar margin in the succeeding six decades, so that by 1910 more than 45 percent of the population lived in urban settlements (Table 13.1). Toward the turn of the 19th century, the cityward movement of people far exceeded migration to a greatly diminished frontier. By 1920, the population of the United States surpassed 100 million, and for the first time a narrow majority was urban. The impact of foreign immigration on both the size and the ethnic composition of the American population had for long aroused anxieties among the native-born and, in 1924, entry restrictions, which had been applied to Orientals as early as the 1880s, were extended to include all foreigners. Thereafter, a precipitous drop in foreign arrivals compounded the longer-term effects of a declining rate of natural growth and brought a period of unprecedented population growth to an end.

### THE ORIGINS AND DESTINATIONS OF MIGRANTS

Restrictive legislation was in part provoked by changes in the volume, sources, and destinations of immigrants after about 1880. Approximately 33 million foreigners entered the United States in the century prior to comprehensive immigration restriction, but only one-third of this total had actually arrived by 1880. During the succeeding forty years, an average of about 6 million people arrived in each decade, with more than 8 million newcomers entering the United States in the first decade of the 20th century (Table 13.2). After 1880, the source areas of immigrants expanded from northwestern Europe to include southern and eastern sections of the continent. Prior to that date, about 85 percent of all immigrants came from the British Isles, British America (Canada), the German states, Switzerland, Scandinavia, and the Low Countries, but during the decade of World War I these areas accounted for barely 20 percent of the total arrivals. Immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires as well as from Mediterranean Europe provided more than one-half of the new arrivals in the last decade of the 19th century and overwhelmingly dominated the immigrant stream from Europe in the two subsequent decades (Fig. 13.1). Immigration from Latin America and the Orient also increased markedly after 1880. Al-

though their contribution to the total flow remained less than 10 percent, both groups had a profound impact on the populations of western states.

Debates on the desirability of immigration increasingly focused on the tendency of the more recent arrivals to congregate in the slums of large cities of the Northeast and Middle West. On the basis of both Old World sources and American destinations, a distinction was made between "old immigrants" who had arrived before about 1880 and "new immigrants" who had landed after that date. The distinction, however, did become the source of prejudicial evaluations of the new immigrants and the basis of the ethnic quotas that were established by the immigration restriction legislation of the 1920s. In contrast, the contributions and experiences of the old immigrants were reevaluated in a more positive light. Northwest Europeans were viewed as part of the broader culture from which American values were derived. Their rapid assimilation into American society was further facilitated by their participation in the frontier movement and their more balanced distribution between urban and rural settings. With the striking exception of the Irish, most old immigrant groups did indeed contribute to the settlement of the midwestern frontier in larger proportions than most new immigrants. Parts of the rural Middle West were, however, a mosaic of ethnic communi-

Table 13.2 Decennial Immigration to the United States, 1820-1919

	1820 to 1829	1830 to 1839	1840 to 1849	1850 to 1859	1860 to 1869	1870 to 1879	1880 to 1889	1890 to 1899	1900 to 1909	1910 to 1919
Total in millions	0.1	0.5	1.4	2.7	2.1	2.7	5.2	3.7	8.2	6.3
Percent of total from:										
Ireland	40.2	31.7	46.0	36.9	24.4	15.4	12.8	11.0	4.2	2.6
Germany <sup>a</sup>	4.5	23.2	27.0	34.8	35.2	27.4	27.5	15.7	4.0	2.7
United Kingdom	19.5	13.8	15.3	13.5	14.9	21.1	15.5	8.9	5.7	5.8
Scandinavia	0.2	0.4	0.9	0.9	5.5	7.6	12.7	10.5	5.9	3.8
Canada <sup>b</sup>	1.8	2.2	2.4	2.2	4.9	11.8	9.4	0.1	1.5	11.2
Russia <sup>a</sup>	—	—	—	—	0.2	1.3	3.5	12.2	18.3	17.4
Austria-Hungary <sup>a</sup>	—	—	—	—	0.2	2.2	6.0	14.5	24.4	18.2
Italy	—	—	—	—	0.5	1.7	5.1	16.3	23.5	19.4

<sup>a</sup>Continental European boundaries prior to the 1919 settlement.

<sup>b</sup>British America to 1867; Canada includes Newfoundland; Canadian immigration was not recorded between 1886 and 1893.

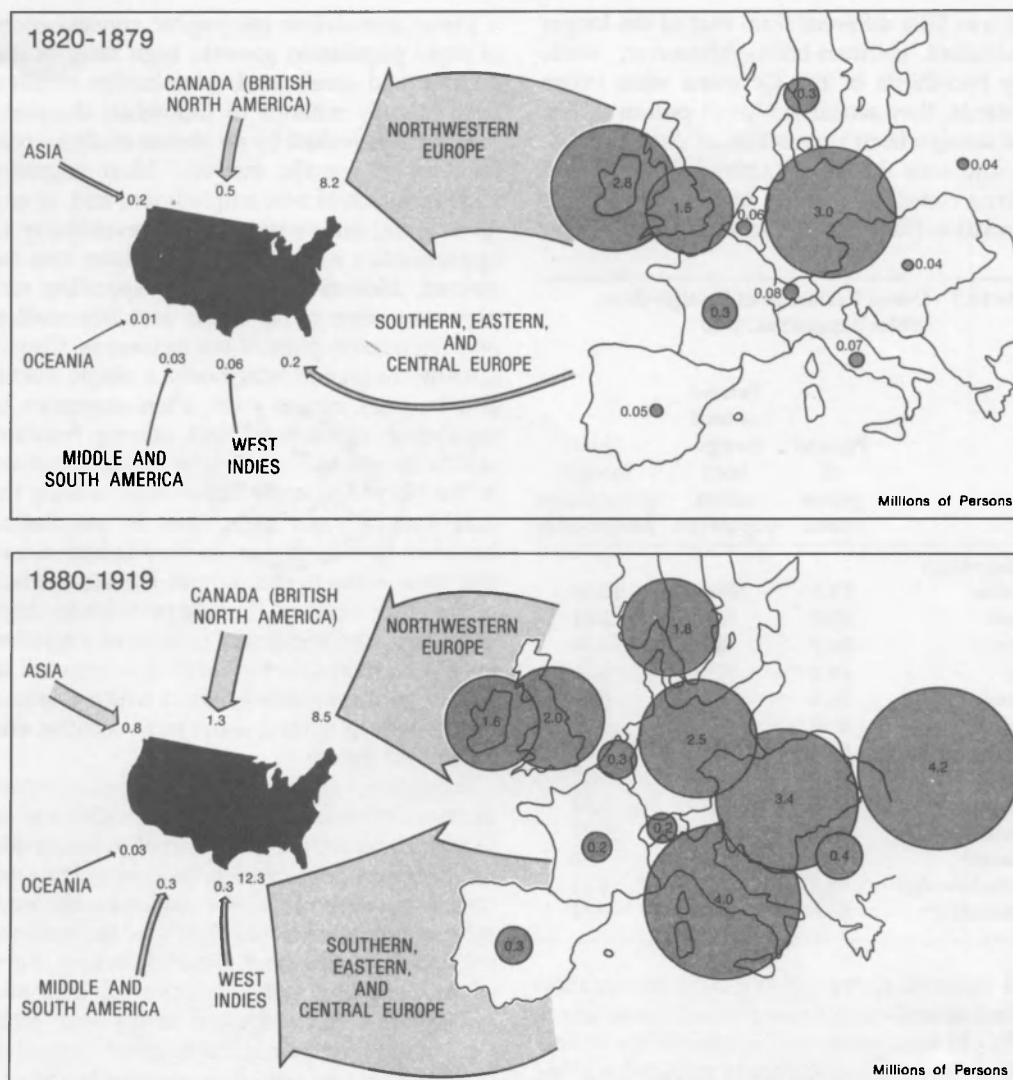


Figure 13.1 Source Areas of Immigrants to the United States, 1820–1919

ties, and for most groups assimilation was not necessarily rapid. Moreover, the declining intensity of frontier settlement recorded regional shifts in economic growth and opportunities to which native as well as foreign-born migrants responded. Indeed, the most striking feature of both old and new immigrants was their avoidance of the South throughout the entire period of mass immigration. A commercial agricultural system largely based upon the intensive use of black labor and a decidedly slow rate of industrialization offered few attractions to foreign immigrants.

Immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were more highly urbanized than the earlier arrivals from northwestern Europe, yet in 1920 the long established Irish remained the second most urbanized group (Table 13.3). Almost 87 percent of the Irish-born lived in cities and this proportion was exceeded only by the Russian immigrants. More than 80 percent of all Poles, Hungarians, and Italians lived in cities, but fewer than 70 percent of several other new immigrant groups were classed as urban. Among the recently arrived Yugoslavs and Czechs, for example, the degree of urbaniza-

tion was little different from that of the longer established German-born. Moreover, while only two-thirds of the Germans were urban residents, they accounted for 11 percent of the total foreign-born population of American cities, and only the newly arrived Russians and Italians contributed more to the total foreign population (Table 13.3). Certainly, some ethnic

**Table 13.3 Urban Residence of Foreign-Born White Population, 1920**

	Percent of group urban	Percent of total foreign-born urban population	Total foreign populations (in millions)
Foreign-born white	75.5	100.0	10.36
Russia	88.6	12.0	1.24
Ireland	86.9	8.7	0.90
Italy	84.4	13.1	1.36
Poland	84.4	9.3	0.96
Hungary	80.0	3.1	0.32
United Kingdom	75.0	8.4	0.86
Austria	75.0	4.2	0.43
Canada	74.5	8.1	0.84
Yugoslavia	69.3	1.1	0.12
Germany	67.5	11.0	1.14
Czechoslovakia	66.3	2.3	0.24
Scandinavia	54.6	6.5	0.34

and national groups of the new immigration settled almost exclusively in cities, but as late as 1920, old immigrants still accounted for almost half of the foreign-born urban population. This distinction of the "old" and the "new" clearly neglected the effects of length of residence in the new country on both the distribution and assimilation of immigrants and also obscured major differences in the experiences of individual groups within each category. Changes in the proportion of immigrants with urban destinations was probably no greater than among native Americans who migrated before and after 1880. Some of these native-born urban migrants were, of course, the children of immigrants who had settled on the land earlier in the century. Others were southern-born blacks who established patterns of migration that were to expand dramatically once foreign immigration was restricted.

These cumulative geographic consequences of rapid population growth, high rates of migration, and accelerated urbanization resulted from literally millions of individual decisions that were provoked by an almost endless combination of specific motives. Most migrants were in search of new employment and, at any given time, information on the availability of opportunities in specific destinations was restricted. Moreover, centers of expanding employment were rarely fixed, and information was often incomplete, if not erroneous. Consequently, migration was rarely a single event, and frequent moves were often responses to expanding agricultural and mining frontiers and to the growth of manufacturing industries in the Northeast and Middle West. During the past twenty years high rates of population turnover have been documented in both urban and rural settings throughout the second half of the 19th century. The large volume, high frequency, and sequential pattern of migration usually occurred in the form of a network or "chain" of destinations within which relatives and friends provided short-term security and reliable information.

Frequent migration and population turnover did not obliterate the cumulative locational effects of the selective migration of different ethnic, religious, and racial groups from their ancestral or adopted source regions. Although most immigrants shared their new destinations with other groups, and although in time many of their ancestral traits disappeared, their ethnic identities in the United States were often associated with their initial regional concentrations rather than with their cultural hearths in the Old World. Long before mass immigration, English immigrants to the New England and Chesapeake colonies, when they spread westward, were identified as "Yankee" and "southern" rather than as English-American. Similarly, French colonists to Quebec and Acadia retained their original labels long after their subsequent moves to Louisiana and New England, respectively. The Mormons, defined by their religious beliefs, were originally organized in upstate New York but today are most closely identified with their adopted state of Utah. Other groups have retained their immigrant label, but their ethnic identity is now closely associated with their original concentrations within the United States. People of

Norwegian ancestry, for example, are strongly associated with sections of Wisconsin and those of Swedish descent with parts of Minnesota.

These uneven patterns of distribution in part record national and regional differences in the impact of industrial capitalism, which set well-defined limits to the routes and destinations of most migrants. The disruptive effects of industrialization on rural crafts, domestic manufacturing, and farming virtually forced emigration from many parts of Europe. During the 1840s, crop failures savagely compounded this agrarian distress, and these critical conditions in the Old World rather than any complete awareness of opportunities in the New World probably initiated mass emigration. Once established, however, the immigrant flow also responded to upswings and downswings in the American business cycle and to regional shifts in economic growth within the United States.

#### THE INITIAL IMPACT OF MASS IMMIGRATION: 1860

The regional destinations of those foreigners who had arrived in the first surge of mass immigration were clearly established by 1860. Of more than 4 million foreign-born people, 37 percent were concentrated in the Mid-Atlantic region and an identical proportion in the Middle West, while another 11 percent were to be found in New England (Fig. 13.2). Fewer than 10 percent of the foreign-born had settled in the South, and the majority of these people were concentrated in Baltimore, New Orleans, Louisville, and other ports and river towns which encircled that dominantly rural region. Prior to the start of mass immigration, native-born Americans had moved westward in substantial numbers, and each coastal concentration of colonial Americans had expanded in a somewhat latitudinal fashion. Most migrants from the Southeast (Georgia and South Carolina) moved into the lower Mississippi valley, while those from the Mid-Atlantic region pushed west along the Ohio valley into the middle Mississippi valley. Those from the Upper South (Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina) migrated to both sections of the Mississippi valley, while the majority of New Englanders moved into the Great Lakes region by way of the Mohawk

Gap, through which the Erie Canal was dug. The westward extension of this northern trajectory of frontier settlement lagged far behind those farther south, for New Englanders had initially found land available in upstate New York and Upper Canada (Ontario). By the time New Englanders began to settle the westerly sections of the Great Lakes region, they were joined by large numbers of immigrants primarily, but not exclusively, from the German states and Scandinavia. The pioneer populations of Wisconsin and Minnesota included extremely high proportions of foreigners. The Irish contribution to this proportion was, however, decidedly modest. Consequently, the regional distributions of the Irish and continental Europeans exhibited some striking contrasts as early as 1860.

These regional tendencies are revealed by a crude index of deviation that indicates the degree to which a given group is under- or over-represented in relation to regional distribution of the population as a whole (Table 13.4). The index has been computed for regional clusters of states on the basis of similarities in their ethnic compositions (Fig. 13.2). The Irish were heavily overrepresented in the Northeast, and although immigrants from the German states were also well represented in the Mid-Atlantic region, there were relatively few of them in New England. In the Middle West, the Germans were as highly overrepresented as were the Irish in New England. Of all immigrant groups, the English were the most evenly distributed among these regions, and only in Missouri, Iowa, and the Kansas Territory were they slightly underrepresented. The Scots closely paralleled the settlement patterns of the English, but the Welsh were strongly overrepresented only in the Mid-Atlantic region. Of the other smaller groups, those from British America (Canada), including many whose parents were born in the British Isles, were strikingly prominent in New England and some sections of the Middle West, while immigrants from Scandinavia, Holland, and Switzerland were almost exclusively concentrated in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

Although substantial proportions of most immigrant groups had participated in the settlement of the Middle West, the Irish were a striking exception. To be sure, Irish laborers were involved in the construction of canals,

**Table 13.4 Regional Representation of Selected Foreign-Born Groups, 1860 (index of deviation)**

	Ireland	Germany	England	Scotland	Br. America
New England	1.9	0.2	1.0	1.2	2.8
Mid-Atlantic	2.0	1.4	1.7	1.6	1.0
E. Midwest	0.7	1.6	1.3	1.2	1.4
N. Midwest	1.3	3.6	2.6	1.9	2.7
S. Midwest	0.7	1.6	0.8	0.8	0.8
Total in thousands	1,611	1,301	432	109	250

Note: Index of deviation = percent group / percent total population in each region.  
See Figure 13.2 for regional boundaries

railroads, and cities in the West, but very few settled on the land. Famine conditions yielded a high proportion of impoverished and sickly migrants who lacked the skills and resources to move beyond the ports of arrival. Indeed, in the absence of specialized cheap passenger services, Irish immigrants became the westbound ballast of Atlantic sailing ships, compensating in revenue for the difference in bulk between eastbound cargoes of raw materials and return loads of manufactured goods. The New Brunswick lumber trade, in particular, provided cheap passages to the Maritime Provinces, from where many Irish immigrants moved on to New England. Eventually, the greater frequency of ships between Liverpool and New York directed the Irish emigrant traffic to these ports.

The majority of German immigrants also landed in New York, but initially the routes of commodity commerce had influenced their destinations too. Many German-speaking people from Alsace-Lorraine and adjacent sections of the Rhine valley traveled to the United States on cotton freighters returning from Le Havre to New Orleans. They moved on to the Middle West by way of the Mississippi. Immigrants from northwestern Germany utilized the tobacco ships that plied the route from Bremen to Baltimore, from where the majority moved inland by way of the Ohio valley. Others found their way to New York after short voyages across the North Sea to the ports of the east coast of England and then overland to Liverpool. Once the emigrant traffic became a specialized and scheduled service and the pressures for immediate emigration subsided, the vast majority of all foreigners arrived at New York and, with the rapid development of

steamship services after the Civil War, this dominance became even more pronounced. Deteriorating and at times catastrophic conditions in the Old World strongly directed the initial courses of emigration but, increasingly, economic growth in the United States became decisive in the regional allocation of immigrants.

#### REGIONAL DESTINATIONS: 1860–1890

Following the resumption of mass immigration with the end of the Civil War, the majority of immigrants continued to come from northwestern Europe, and most arrived during two major surges that peaked in the early 1870s and again in the mid-1880s. The completion of a transcontinental railroad system and the rapid advance of trunklines into the western states had facilitated the westward expansion of settlement and development. Railroad construction had also been rewarded by huge government grants of land adjacent to their routes and, consequently, the railroads had a vested interest in the rapid alienation of their holdings. To speed up settlement, they sent agents to Europe to publicize the potential of their holdings and provided special discounted fares from rural Europe to the American West. Several midwestern states created immigration agencies that also facilitated the diffusion of information on conditions and opportunities on the American frontier but, ultimately, it was the personal networks of knowledge compiled from emigrants' correspondence that provided the most persuasive influences on the decision to migrate.

Under these circumstances, the proportion

of immigrants who moved directly inland from the ports of arrival increased markedly. In 1860, approximately equal proportions of immigrants were housed in the Mid-Atlantic region and in the Middle West, but by 1890 about 45 percent of all foreign-born residents lived in the latter region and just under 30 percent in the former (Fig. 13.2). While many immigrants continued to settle in Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois, the largest gains were made in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Dakotas. Here, immigrants were often a majority of the new settlers, but farther south in Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska, the substantial native-born migration exceeded that of foreigners. Nevertheless, Scandinavian, Dutch, Swiss, and German immigrants were all well represented in varying degrees throughout the Middle West. With the exception of the Germans in the Mid-Atlantic region and the Swedes in New England, these groups were not prominent in the Northeast (Table 13.5). Although they were often identified as new immigrants, almost 120,000 Bohemians (Czechs) were recorded in the U.S. Census of 1890, and their regional distribution was little different from that of other groups from

continental northwestern Europe. In particular, there were striking concentrations of Czechs in and around Omaha, Nebraska. The Swiss and Scandinavians were also overrepresented in the Pacific Northwest and the northern sections of the Rockies. Throughout this vast expanse of new settlement, newly arrived immigrants often reestablished and even elaborated their ancestral patterns of life in the form of church centered or congregational societies. Although they quickly adapted to the agricultural practices and market orientation of American life, many rural groups have retained a distinct ethnic identity to this day. Among many striking examples of these persisting ethnic groups are the Dutch in and around Kalamazoo, Michigan, and the Swiss of New Glaurus, Wisconsin.

California had also attracted some of the immigrant groups who had settled the Middle West and the Northwest, but here the British, Irish, Italians, and Portuguese were also well represented. The distinctive ethnic tone of California and adjacent sections of the Southwest was, however, set by the prominence of the Chinese and Mexicans. Mining and railroad

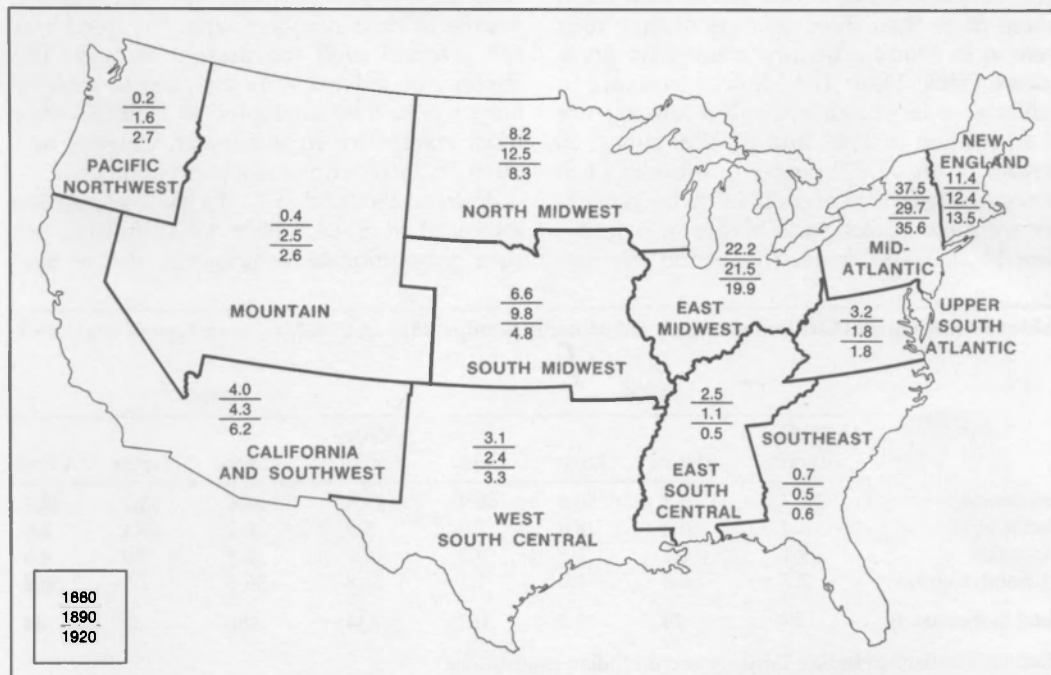


Figure 13.2 Regional Distribution of Foreign-Born Immigrants: 1860, 1890, and 1920 (by %)

**Table 13.5 Regional Representation of Northwest Europeans, 1890 (index of deviation)**

	Ire.	Ger.	Eng.	Scot.	Wales	Can.	Nor.	Swe.	Den.	Swit.	Hol.	Boh. <sup>a</sup>
New England	3.0	0.3	2.0	2.2	0.5	5.2	0.1	1.0	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1
Mid-Atlantic	2.2	1.5	1.7	1.6	2.3	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.7	1.0	0.5
E. Midwest	0.7	1.5	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.3	0.6	1.3	0.8	1.3	2.6	1.8
N. Midwest	0.7	2.6	0.9	1.2	1.1	2.0	11.8	5.0	4.8	2.0	2.1	3.8
S. Midwest	0.5	1.2	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.9	1.5	2.3	1.5	1.2	2.5
Mountain	1.0	1.0	3.7	3.3	4.5	1.7	1.2	3.1	6.8	2.6	0.5	0.2
Pacific N.W.	0.7	1.0	1.7	2.4	2.0	2.4	3.4	2.9	3.1	3.3	0.6	0.3
Total in thousands	1,872	2,785	908	242	100	981	323	478	133	104	82	118

<sup>a</sup>Bohemia.

Note: Index of deviation = percent group/percent total population in each region. See Figure 13.2 for regional boundaries.

construction made extensive use of Chinese labor but, by the mid-1880s, the increasing volume of immigration from East Asia had provoked not only hostility but also exclusionary legislation. In 1890, more than 106,000 Chinese immigrants lived in the United States and more than three-quarters of them were concentrated in the cities and larger towns of northern California and the Pacific Northwest. Although there were only 2,200 newcomers from Japan, they were also concentrated on the west coast, where more than three-quarters of their total were to be found primarily in intensive horticulture (Table 13.6). The Mexican presence in California was, of course, partly a consequence of annexation in 1848, and by 1890 almost 30 percent of the 77,800 people of Mexican birth were recorded there, and almost all the remainder were living along the border in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. This period also saw

the final stages of the relocation of American Indians on western reservations. In 1890, fewer than 60,000 Indians were recorded in the Census. About one-quarter of them were concentrated in various parts of the northern Middle West, another third lived in California, and the majority of the remainder were dispersed throughout the Southwest and mountain regions (Table 13.6). Throughout the 19th century, these enforced migrations of Native Americans were accompanied by the continued decline in their numbers, and this trend was not reversed until the present century. The majority of Indians were assigned to reservations where they attempted to maintain their tribal institutions in unfamiliar, isolated, and often distinctly unpromising environments.

Between 1860 and 1890, the black population increased from 4.4 million to 7.5 million, but their proportionate contribution to the total

**Table 13.6 Regional Distribution of Selected Minority Groups, 1890 and 1920 (as percentage of total U.S.)**

	1890				1920			
	Native America	Mexico	Japan	China	Native America	Mexico	Japan	China
Southwest	36.7	29.8	56.4	68.9	28.6	34.6	65.5	48.9
Pacific N.W.	8.4	0.2	18.9	11.9	5.5	0.2	19.4	8.9
Mountain	9.1	1.1	1.5	9.3	10.0	2.9	9.0	4.9
W. South Central	2.7	66.8	1.0	1.1	24.8	56.6	2.5	56.6
Total in thousands	59 <sup>a</sup>	78	2	107	244	486	82	44

<sup>a</sup>Excludes Indians in Indian Territory and on Indian reservations.

See Figure 13.2 for regional boundaries.



population declined from 14.1 to 11.9 percent. Although immigrants continued to avoid the South, blacks were as highly concentrated there in 1890 as they had been in 1860, in spite of the emancipation of slaves in 1863. While the proportion of whites living in the Old South, east of the Mississippi, declined from 22 to 18 percent, that of blacks dropped from 78 to 72 percent (Fig. 13.3). These losses were compensated for by gains in southern states west of the Mississippi and, consequently, more than 90 percent of blacks still resided in the South in 1890. Like the population of the South as a whole, blacks were overwhelmingly rural, but those who lived outside the South were concentrated in Philadelphia, Washington, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Kansas City, and other cities that bordered on the South.

Before 1890, the vast movement of people to the Middle West often deflected attention from the substantial impact of immigration on the industrialization and urbanization of the Northeast. Immigrants from England, Scotland, and Wales joined the native-born in the skilled sectors of the expanding mining, metal working, and textile industries, and in 1890

they were much more strikingly overrepresented in the Northeast than in the Middle West (Table 13.5). The regional distributions of the English and the Scots were quite similar, but the Welsh remained concentrated in the Mid-Atlantic region and were poorly represented in New England. The Irish remained relatively underrepresented in the Middle West and, despite the emergence of a secondary center in California, were more highly concentrated in the Northeast than in 1860 (Table 13.5). The Irish had begun to obtain employment in the semiskilled sectors of several manufacturing industries, but the majority worked as day laborers or domestic servants, or were employed in the workshops of the so-called "sweated" trades. In New England, they shared their regional predominance with the Canadians who had originally come from the English-speaking sections of the Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland, but after the Civil War the French-speaking Quebecois also moved there in large numbers. The latter often competed with the Irish for jobs in the textile industry, but English-speaking Canadians were able to enter those skilled trades within

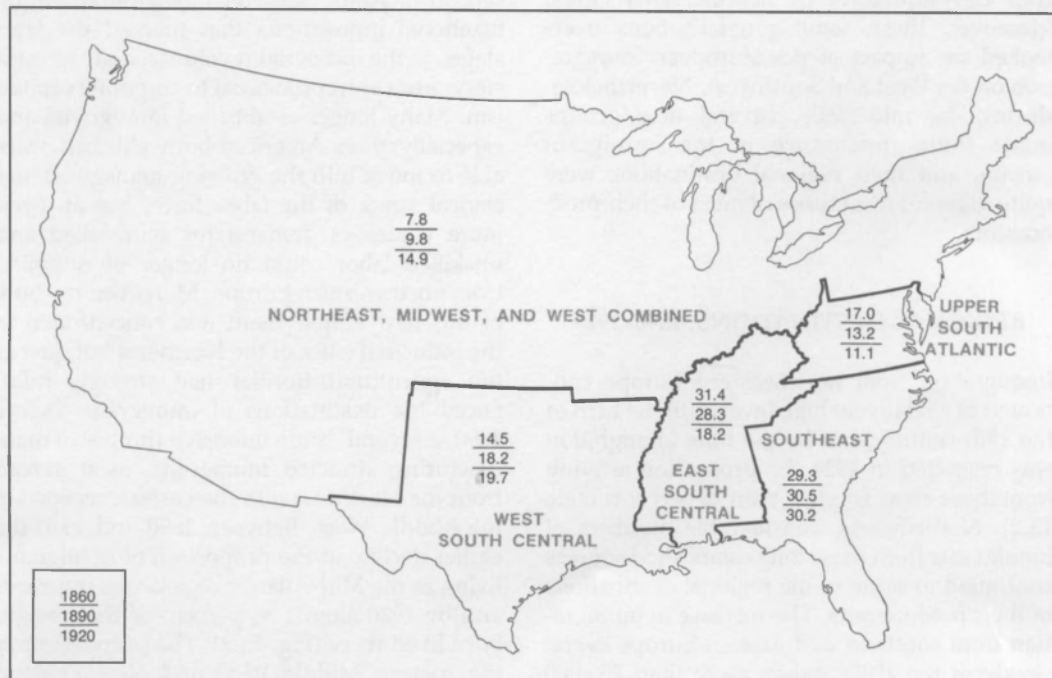


Figure 13.3 Regional Distribution of the Black Population: 1860, 1890, and 1920 (by %)

which advancement to petty proprietorship was still possible. In the Mid-Atlantic region, where the Canadians were not prominent, these small-scale skilled trades were often dominated by German immigrants.

Overall patterns of migration and settlement established before the Civil War, during the first surge of mass immigration, were maintained during those of the early 1870s and mid-1880s. To a much greater degree than in subsequent decades, these immigrants moved directly to the farms and small towns of the agricultural interior. Farther south and especially in the Southwest, native-born migrants were dominant. Substantial numbers of immigrants from the British Isles and to a lesser degree from Germany were concentrated in the industrial centers of the Northeast. On the west coast, where immigrants were also well represented, newcomers from non-European sources had already established a distinctive tone to that region's ethnic pluralism, and in California the Chinese were the largest foreign-born group. Generalizations about the old immigrants exaggerated the assimilative effects of their settlement on the frontier and, in any event, many of them also responded to industrial developments in northeastern cities. Moreover, these same generalizations overlooked the impact of non-European immigration on the West and Southwest. Nevertheless, during the mid-1880s, several new groups made their appearance in the immigrant stream, and their regional destinations were quite different from those of most of their predecessors.

#### REGIONAL DESTINATIONS: 1890-1920

Immigration from northwestern Europe continued at a relatively high level until the turn of the 19th century, but by the time immigration was restricted in 1924 the proportion arriving from these areas was less than 20 percent (Table 13.2). Nevertheless, considerable numbers of immigrants from these long established sources continued to settle in the regional destinations of their predecessors. The increase in immigration from southern and eastern Europe began slowly in the 1880s, when more than 750,000 people came from these more remote sources and accounted for about 15 percent of the total.

By the first decade of the present century this proportion had increased dramatically to well over two-thirds of total immigration. Foreign arrivals declined slightly in the subsequent decade because of the disruptive effects of World War I. Changes within Europe strongly influenced these shifts in the source areas of immigrants. Diminishing rates of population growth, combined with economic development, had greatly reduced the incentives for emigration from many parts of northwestern Europe. In contrast, the disruptive impact of industrialization on rural societies, which had afflicted northwestern Europe earlier in the century, had finally diffused to many once remote areas of southern and eastern Europe. Quite apart from these economic considerations, political persecution in the form of pogroms greatly accelerated the emigration of Jews from the Russian Empire, while the removal of restraints on movement within the Austro-Hungarian Empire also facilitated emigration from Central Europe.

The changing labor needs of the American economy were also extremely critical in this reorientation of immigrant source areas. The United States was one of the pioneers of the second phase of those technological and organizational innovations that marked the later stages of the industrial revolution and the transition from entrepreneurial to corporate capitalism. Many longer-established immigrants and especially their American-born children were able to move into the growing managerial and clerical strata of the labor force, but an even more voracious demand for semiskilled and unskilled labor could no longer be supplied from northwestern Europe. Moreover, the bulk of this new employment was concentrated in the industrial cities of the Northeast but, just as the agricultural frontier had strongly influenced the destinations of immigrants before 1890, a second, more intensive frontier of manufacturing attracted immigrants as it spread from the Northeast into the eastern sections of the Middle West. Between 1890 and 1920 the earlier decline in the proportion of immigrants living in the Mid-Atlantic region was reversed, and by 1920 almost 36 percent of the foreign-born lived there (Fig. 13.2). The proportions in the eastern Middle West and New England remained relatively stable, and by 1920 well over two-thirds of the total foreign-born lived

in the three regions that formed the expanded industrial core of the American economy often described as the American Manufacturing Belt.

These changes in the regional distributions of the foreign-born clearly indicate the predominant destinations of recently arrived immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Unfortunately, the census tabulations of the diverse immigrants coming from the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires were rarely consistent and often included several distinct ethnic groups under the same category. As early as 1890 the concentration of southern and eastern European immigrants in the Mid-Atlantic region was especially pronounced and, in addition, the strong representation of Italians in New England and of Poles in the eastern Middle West was also apparent (Table 13.7). Thirty years later, these initial patterns had been maintained but East Europeans and Greeks were now strongly overrepresented in the eastern Middle West. The Italians alone of the new immigrants were weakly represented in the eastern Middle West, while in New England they now shared their prominence with the Russian-born, who were primarily of Jewish background (Table 13.7). Despite their greatly reduced proportionate contribution to the total immigrant stream, northwestern Europeans also concentrated in the industrial core region and, with the exception of the Irish, continued to be well represented in the Middle West and the Far West. The regional distributions of these old immigrants showed few overall changes between 1890 and 1920 (Tables 13.5 and 13.8).

The large cities of the industrial core region were also the primary destinations of black

migrants from the South. During the 1870s and 1880s, the net loss of black migrants from the South amounted to about 130,000 but, during the 1890s, when emigration from Europe dropped from the extremely high levels of the previous decade, the South incurred an even greater loss of more than 250,000 blacks. After a slight decline in net migration from the South between 1900 and 1910, the northward flow increased dramatically during World War I, when emigration from Europe was virtually impossible. During this decade the South experienced a net loss of more than 450,000 black migrants, most of whom moved to the cities of the Northeast and the Middle West. With the restriction of foreign immigration in 1924, the migration of blacks became the largest single source of new unskilled labor; in many respects they defined the beginning of a third major era of migration. By 1920 these new patterns of migration were well established, and the decline in the black population of the Old South that had begun before 1890 increased markedly thereafter. By 1920 this region housed just over two-thirds of the total black population, but 10 percent now lived in the Northeast and eastern Middle West (Fig. 13.3). Immigration from both Canada and Mexico also increased substantially after 1890 and especially during World War I. Their long-established regional patterns remained unchanged. More than 70 percent of the French Canadians in the United States were concentrated in New England (Table 13.8), and more than 90 percent of those of Mexican birth were spread along the border states of the Southwest (Table 13.6). In California both the Mexican- and Japanese-born populations had increased, but the Chinese had declined after

Table 13.7 Regional Representation of "New" Immigrants, 1890 and 1920 (index of deviation)

	1890						1920					
	Italy	Rus.	Aus.	Hun.	Greece	Pol.	Italy	Rus.	Aus.	Hun.	Greece	Pol.
New England	1.2	0.9	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.5	2.1	1.7	0.9	0.5	2.9	n.d.
Mid-Atlantic	2.8	2.2	2.4	3.5	1.4	1.4	2.8	2.3	2.1	2.4	1.1	n.d.
East Midwest	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.9	0.6	1.1	1.5	1.8	1.3	n.d.
Total in thousands	183	183	123	62	2	147	1,610	3,871	3,130	1,111	176	n.d.

Note: Index of deviation = percent group/percent total population by regions.  
See Figure 13.2 for regional boundaries.

**Table 13.8 Regional Representation of Northwest Europeans, 1920 (index of deviation)**

	Ire.	Ger.	Eng.	Scot.	Wales	Can.	Nor.	Swe.	Den.	Swit.	Hol.	Fr. Can.
New England	3.2	0.3	2.0	2.2	0.4	7.7	0.2	1.4	0.5	0.3	0.2	10.4
Mid-Atlantic	2.0	1.2	1.4	1.4	2.0	0.7	0.2	0.6	0.4	0.9	0.9	0.3
East Midwest	0.8	1.6	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.4	0.5	1.3	0.8	1.3	2.3	0.6
North Midwest	0.6	2.7	0.6	0.6	0.8	1.2	10.0	4.5	4.1	1.8	2.4	1.1
South Midwest	0.6	1.4	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.4	0.9	1.3	2.5	1.2	1.6	0.1
Mountain	0.8	0.6	2.0	1.9	2.8	1.4	1.8	2.7	5.7	2.7	1.3	0.4
Pacific N.W.	0.7	0.9	1.8	2.3	2.0	2.6	4.0	3.1	3.0	2.9	1.4	0.6
Southwest	1.1	0.9	1.8	1.8	1.4	1.9	0.6	1.2	2.1	2.8	0.7	0.1
Total in thousands	1,037	1,686	814	255	67	1,138	364	626	189	119	132	308

*Note:* Index of deviation = percent group/percent total population in each region. See Figure 13.2 for regional boundaries.

legislation excluded newcomers. Unlike the Japanese and Mexicans who were closely associated with different aspects of intensive horticulture, the vast majority of the Chinese lived in distinctive ethnic quarters or "Chinatowns" in many of the large metropolitan cities.

#### THE PREDOMINANCE OF URBAN DESTINATIONS

Throughout the period of mass immigration, cities were the original destinations of most immigrants, and many of the children of those who initially settled in small towns or rural areas eventually moved to larger communities. Between 1890 and 1920, however, almost all the newcomers from southern and eastern Europe moved directly to the cities of the expanding industrial core region. Like the Irish and Germans before them, the proportionate representations of each of the major ethnic groups of the new immigration varied considerably from city to city within the Northeast and Middle West. The percentages of Irish and Germans in the foreign-born populations of American cities declined, but in 1910 they still tended to predominate in different groups of cities (Fig. 13.4). The cities of New England continued to house large proportions of Irish-born and relatively few Germans, but these proportions were reversed in the port cities of the Great Lakes (Milwaukee, Buffalo, Detroit, Toledo, Chicago, and Cleveland) and in Cincinnati, St. Louis, and St.

Paul. In the more than fifty cities with populations greater than 100,000 in 1910, only three—New York City, Jersey City, and San Francisco—had higher than average proportions of both German- and Irish-born, but many cities of the Mid-Atlantic region housed close to the average proportions of both groups (for example, Rochester, Newark, Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Paterson, Albany, and Philadelphia). In contrast, most southern and western cities housed less than average proportions of both groups.

Slavic and Hungarian immigrants from the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires found their way to major centers of heavy industry in the valleys of Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio and the ports of the Great Lakes. Consequently, the port cities of the Great Lakes, which had for long housed substantial German-born populations, became major centers of eastern European settlement. Other German-dominant cities which did not become centers of heavy industry, such as Cincinnati and St. Louis, housed relatively small proportions of the new immigrants. Few Slavs moved to the Irish-dominated cities of New England, but they did work alongside the Irish in the heavy industrial cities of the Mid-Atlantic region where the Irish and Germans were more evenly represented. Precise measurements of the proportionate representation of different Slavic ethnic groups in various cities are not always possible from the census record. Although immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire included some German-speaking peo-

ple, the majority were Slavs and Hungarians who were well represented in Pittsburgh and several of the cities of the Great Lakes (Cleveland, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Detroit) but, with the notable exception of Bridgeport, Connecticut, they were sparsely represented in the cities of New England (Fig. 13.5).

In contrast, immigrants from Russia and Italy were only weakly represented in cities with high proportions of people from the Austro-Hungarian and German empires. They were, however, particularly prominent in the larger cities of New England and the Mid-Atlantic coast and especially those with highly diversified and consumer-oriented industries (Boston, Providence, New Haven, New York City, Paterson, Newark, and Philadelphia). Most immigrants from the Russian Empire were of Jewish background who found employment in the rapidly growing clothing industry that had long been associated with the use of "sweated" immigrant labor in small workshops or homes. They were also conspicuous in the rapidly expanding retail sector of not only the large cities of the Northeast, but also of the most major metropolitan centers of the Middle West and the Far West. Southern Italians were especially prominent in cities once dominated by Irish immigrants and, although Italians replaced the Irish in the ubiquitous activities of day laboring, they were also well represented in retailing and other small proprietary activities. In general, new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were highly represented in fewer of the most populous cities than were those of the old but, with the exception of the South, the ethnic profiles of most large cities included some representation of most nationalities. Moreover, within most large American cities, immigrant settlements followed patterns that were broadly similar from city to city.

#### THE IMMIGRANT WITHIN THE CITY

For long it was assumed that most immigrants initially clustered in the slums of the inner city and then gradually dispersed into suburbs. The term *ghetto* is often applied to these inner-city concentrations of immigrants, and this American usage has its origins in the settlement of large numbers of East European Jews in Ameri-

can cities during the last two decades of the 19th century. The term rapidly lost its exclusive association with Jewish settlement and was widely used to refer to the residential quarters of other newly arrived European immigrants and eventually to the inner-city concentrations of blacks and Hispanics. Like the term *slum*, the *ghetto* referred to those parts of the city where congested and unhealthy living quarters and isolation from the remainder of urban society combined to create pathological social conditions. In the *ghetto*, exotic migrants unfamiliar with American culture exacerbated the problems of the *slum*.

These negative impressions of the *ghetto* were part of the more general sense of apprehension at the change in the composition of foreign immigration discussed earlier. These distinctions between the old and the new immigration were perhaps somewhat exaggerated, for immigrants had been closely associated with the slums of large northeastern cities long before the *ghetto* became a focus of concern. The residential quarters of Irish and German immigrants who settled in American cities during the middle decades of the 19th century were not described as *ghettos*, but contemporary observers complained of unsanitary living arrangements, social problems, and the immigrant threat to American institutions. Nevertheless, to a greater degree than earlier immigrants from northwestern Europe, the more recent arrivals from southern and eastern Europe were assumed to be less well prepared for residence and employment in the American city and for participation in American society and politics. Deprived of contact with the host society, they would encounter a slower and more painful process of assimilation.

By 1900, the *ghetto* had become a symbol of the failure of the American dream not only in regard to material advancement, but also because it was associated with pathological social conditions and the "corruption" of American democracy. It was an image that provided justification for efforts to improve the environment of the immigrant and also for campaigns to exclude further immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Following the implementation of immigration restriction, this negative image of the *ghetto* and its residents was retained to describe the social and living conditions of Hispanic and black migrants from Mex-

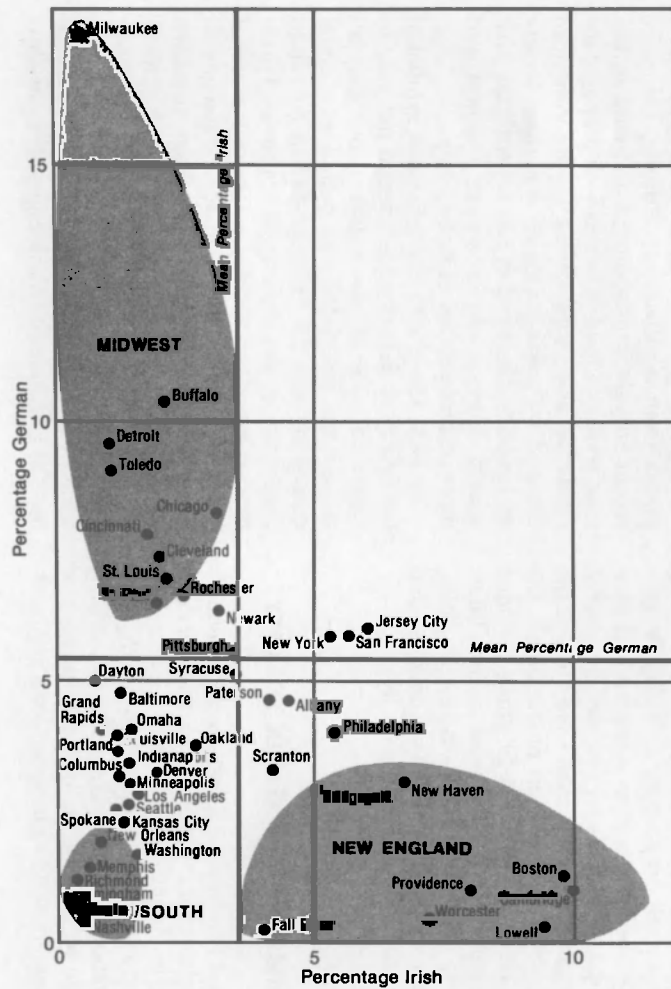


Figure 13.4 Proportions of "Old" Immigrants in American Cities, 1910 (mean percentage lines indicate percentage of identified ethnic group's population in all cities of 100,000 + population)

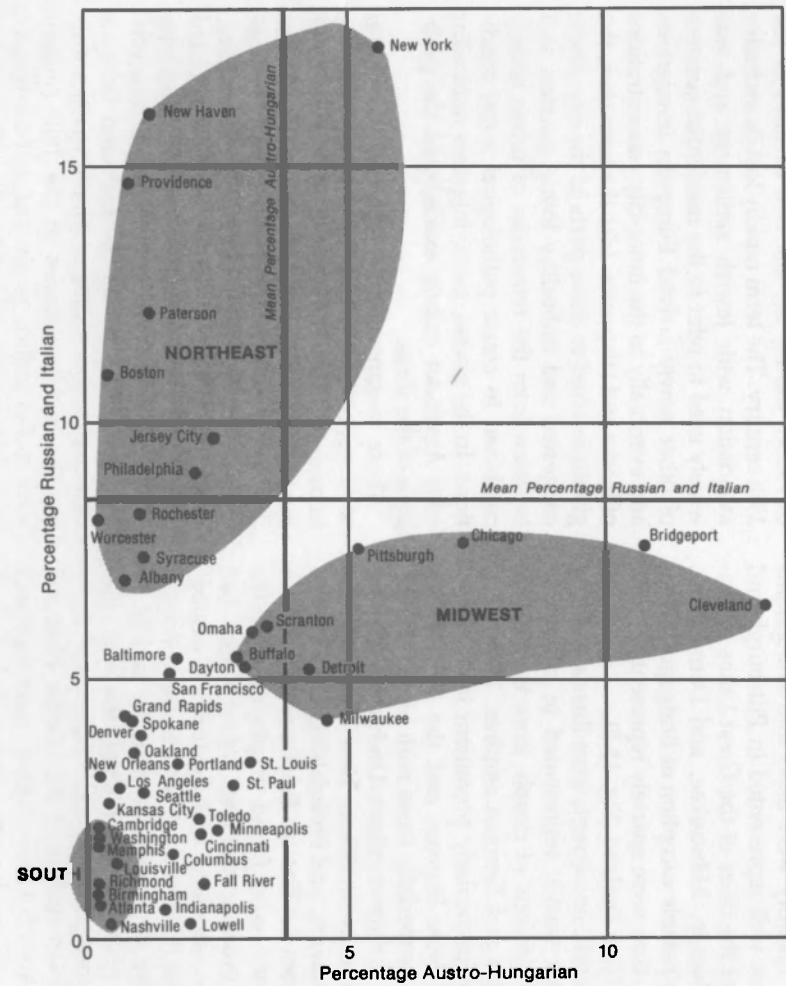


Figure 13.5 Proportions of "New" Immigrants in American Cities, 1910 (mean percentage lines indicate percentage of identified ethnic group's population in all cities of 100,000 + population)

ico, Puerto Rico, and the American South, who replaced Europeans in the inner sections of American cities. Indeed, these new ghettos became more extensive and more enduring than any of the earlier concentrations of European immigrants. In the extent of their segregation, in the persistence of their poverty, and in the degree of their social disorganization, the black experience in the American city now symbolizes the most extreme manifestation of ghetto conditions. The term *ghetto*, like the term *slum*, projects a negative image of the migrant experience of the American city, but this image is in many respects both simplified and incomplete.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE GHETTO

Clearly, the overcrowded and often unsanitary conditions within the ghetto are not a matter of debate. Overcrowded rooms, congested lots, and inadequate utilities contributed to high mortality, the neglect of domestic cleanliness, and the breakdown of family life. These apparent consequences of the adverse environment of the ghetto did, however, differ greatly both between and among immigrant groups. While age-standardized death rates were substantially higher in the inner-city slums than in the growing suburbs, the rates within the congested immigrant quarters were extremely varied. For long, mortality and especially infant mortality among blacks had greatly exceeded that of other minority groups, and during the 19th century Irish death rates were much higher than those of other immigrants from northwestern Europe. Of the diverse immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, the death rates of Russian Jews were generally much lower than those among Italians in adjacent dwellings and also somewhat lower than those of longer established immigrant groups who lived in substantially less crowded conditions. The precise magnitudes of any environmental effects on black and Irish mortality rates were compounded by the degree and longevity of their impoverishment both before and after migration, while low rates among Jewish immigrants were influenced by their prior adaptations to congested and living conditions in the Old World.

The moral life of those who survived in the harsh environment of the ghetto was also pre-

sumed to be in constant danger. Congested quarters with overcrowded rooms threatened the moral fabric of family life, and these environmental pressures were further aggravated by the tendency of migrants to be young, single, or married men without families. They were prepared to work in undesirable jobs and to endure appalling living conditions so that they might save funds sufficient to advance their prospects in their homeland. Moreover, the frequency with which immigrants took lodgers into their already crowded homes was viewed as a serious threat to domestic morality and family stability. Many lodgers however, were relatives or friends, and standards of family privacy were not necessarily any different from those that had long prevailed in the Old World. Many temporary migrants became immigrants and made arrangements for their families to join them. While the prevalence of single-parent households or high proportions of young unmarried men among the early arrivals from southern and eastern Europe was often viewed as an indicator of family disintegration, relatives located in several locations often provided support and resources whenever migration was frequent and sexually selective. These households consisted of dispersed and itinerant individuals and, despite the social costs of separation, families did not necessarily disintegrate, but rather adapted to the consequences of frequent migration.

Originally, these temporary migrants from southern and central Europe were distinguished from northwest Europeans who came to the United States as families with every intention of permanent settlement. In many respects, the Irish migration to the United States was initially an extension of seasonal movements within the British Isles, which could no longer accommodate the impact of famine. Throughout the 19th century, the uneven effects of industrialization on artisans, small farmers, and agricultural laborers had made temporary out-migration an increasingly essential part of rural life in many once remote sections of Europe. This process began as a spasmodic seasonal event over short distances and eventually developed into an intercontinental labor market involving lengthy sojourns in the New World. The rapid growth of labor migration toward the turn of the 19th century was associated with the shift in the source areas

of European emigration, but many Irish, like many southern Europeans, viewed migration to the United States as a temporary measure. Only after it became clear that return from a somewhat hostile environment was impossible, did the Irish reluctantly interpret their departure from Ireland as an involuntary eviction.

The Irish quarters of the major northeastern seaports and some of the manufacturing towns of New England aroused great concern even when the vast majority of urban residents lived in cramped and poorly serviced accommodations. Impoverished at the time of their arrival and confined to the most menial occupations in the United States, the Irish were described as intemperate, criminal, disorderly, and immoral. It has been assumed that the Irish were condemned to the slums of their adopted cities for a life term, but it is now clear that they were extremely mobile and moved frequently within the United States in search of employment. Although the movements of the Irish to northeastern cities were more sexually balanced than those of southern Europeans, most females sought employment in resident domestic service and most males were itinerant laborers. These sexually divergent employment patterns often created single-parent households and a critical dependence upon networks of friends and relatives. The initial experience of the Irish in the New World was somewhat exceptional among northwest Europeans, but just as the new immigration included some family emigrants, the old included some labor migrants.

By the turn of the 19th century these anxieties about the Irish had diminished and, consequently, the social problems of the ghetto were associated with southern and eastern Europeans. Similarly, in the more recent past, the prejudicial judgments about southern and eastern Europeans have been obscured as the social problems of blacks and Hispanics have been magnified. Some authorities stress profound differences between the experiences of European immigrants and the more recent migrants to the inner city but, in the organization of their movements around the resources of relatives and friends, blacks and Hispanics have established adaptations to deprivation that have many precedents. Certainly, current concerns about the damaging effects of the sexual divi-

sion of labor on the family patterns of black migrants resemble early and often insensitive native reactions to Irish immigration. High levels of recorded criminal behavior have also supported negative or defamatory interpretations of the ghetto. And, too, the corrupt administration of public services, institutionalized crime, and the prevalence of adolescent gangs offended dominant legal and moral precepts, but they also revealed a highly organized and elaborately regulated pattern of life.

Even those quarters where the environment of the ghetto exacted its mortal toll and which began as colonies of labor migrants eventually established social networks based not only on family and friends, but also on ethnic institutions. Some of these institutions were transplantations of long-established ancestral organizations that were rapidly adapted to meet new demands in an unfamiliar setting. The organizational activities of both secular and religious institutions were not viewed as an appropriate antidote because they tended to delay or obstruct assimilation. These "separatist" developments simply compounded the fears of those who viewed assimilation as conformity to an American Protestant world, but for many immigrants the ghetto served as a "decompression chamber" within which familiar faces and associations mediated the newcomers' encounter with the American city.

The organization of parochial schools, fraternal lodges, and political associations revealed a level of institutional development that was inconsistent with many negative evaluations of the social life of immigrant quarters. The term "urban village" has been coined to describe quarters where economically deprived remnants of these distinctive ethnic subcommunities persisted over several generations. Initially, these positive reports about the social organization of ethnic groups were regarded as exceptions worthy of comment, but as scarcely numerous enough to call into question the negative image of the ghetto. Social disorganization and pathological behavior are no longer regarded as unavoidable outcomes of migration to and prolonged residence in the inner city slums and, increasingly, ghettos have been described in a fashion that is more sensitive to the adaptations of their residents to their deprivation and discomfort.



## THE SPATIAL SETTING OF THE GHETTO

Just as negative interpretations of the ghetto assumed that the social isolation of segregated quarters compounded the damaging effects of the environment, some revisionist viewpoints have related the social networks and institutional fabric of the ghetto to high levels of residential concentration. In short, both interpretations share a similar view of the spatial setting of the ghetto. From the negative perspective, residential dispersal would substitute the elevating influences of American society for the contagious moral degradation of the ghetto, but from the opposing viewpoint, this process would undermine ethnic communities. These assumptions about the degree to which immigrants were segregated in ethnically homogeneous inner city quarters have also been qualified. During the period when the term ghetto was first applied to immigrant quarters, the majority of newcomers did live in congested quarters bordering on the central business district or specialized industrial areas. The threatened expansion of business activities into adjacent residential areas had resulted in their abandonment by upwardly mobile families, but the rate of abandonment was quite varied. Accordingly, most immigrant groups settled in several relatively small districts that they shared with at least one other group, while the intervening areas were often dominated by quite different nationalities. Industrial areas were often located on the edge of large cities, or they formed the nucleus of new urban settlements; and under these circumstances, more homogeneous ethnic quarters were often established in new, hastily built housing.

At times, the rate of immigration greatly exceeded the supply of available housing and, despite extremely high levels of overcrowding, some immigrants were forced to seek housing in many parts of the city. This problem was especially severe during the middle decades of the 19th century when the first major wave of mass immigration greatly exceeded the available housing in both the northeastern seaports and the newly established cities of the Middle West. Some Irish and German immigrants did concentrate in congested housing near the waterfront and warehouses, but the rate at which established Americans vacated these neighbor-

hoods was much too slow to provide accommodation for newcomers who quickly accounted for a third or more of urban populations. Existing dwellings were hastily converted into multifamily tenements, and their grounds were filled with cheap new structures, but these developments could not meet the rapidly growing demand. Many immigrants were forced to settle in shantytowns on the edge of the city, like migrants to the cities of the less-developed world today. Others clustered on poorly drained, filled land vacated by those who were able to afford more desirable sites.

In mid-19th century cities the small-scale and scattered locations of much urban employment also diminished the degree of immigrant concentration. Many immigrants were involved in the direct service of wealthy families or small proprietors and lived where they worked, in the homes or shops of their employers. German immigrants to mid-19th century cities were on the whole better represented in the petty proprietary artisanal occupations. They moved to newly settled parts of the Middle West and were especially prominent in the ports of the Great Lakes and the river towns of the Ohio valley. Here, in the absence of a large preexisting housing stock, they formed somewhat more extensive ethnic settlements than in the Northeast. In Milwaukee, for example, the Germans were usually more strongly concentrated than were the Irish, but were also scattered in several clusters rather than in one district. Substantial numbers of those in the service and food trades were to be found mixed in with their Irish and native-born clientele. Only toward the end of the 19th century, when employment was more abundantly available in the adjacent sections of the central business district, did centrally located immigrant quarters house the majority of newcomers who were increasingly drawn from southern and eastern Europe.

Although the expansion of the central business district blighted and diminished the supply of inner-city housing, it was also a major source of employment for new immigrants. Because the growth of the central business district was often spasmodic and different land uses expanded at varying rates, long-lived immigrant settlements were maintained on stable margins. Indeed, some groups were able to

settle near to those sections of the business district that provided the bulk of their employment. In most northeastern and midwestern cities, the most striking examples of this relationship were the close proximity of Russian Jews to the clothing workshops and of Italians to the fresh food markets. Immigrant employment was often insecure and seasonal, and usually entailed long and awkward working hours for which neither the schedules nor the routes of the emerging city streetcar systems were appropriate. Despite the housing problem, residence close to the abundant and diverse employment opportunities of the central business district offered advantages unavailable in more desirable residential areas.

The effects of this selective expansion of the central business district and the cumulative consequences of two major waves of immigration were especially striking in Boston (Fig. 13.6). During the middle decades of the 19th century, the Irish had settled in many sections of the city, including the northern and southern margins of the central business district. The

expansion of commercial facilities rapidly displaced the Irish from the southern edge of the business district, but the northward expansion of business was extremely modest and the Irish settlement there persisted to the end of the 19th century. By 1905, the Irish were abandoning the North End and other sections of the inner city of Boston to newly arrived Russian Jews and southern Italians. Italians were rapidly becoming the predominant group in the North End and in East Boston, and Russian Jews had concentrated in the West End and to a lesser degree in the South End (Fig. 13.6). Nevertheless, both the North and West Ends continued to house not only residual Irish populations but also modest proportions of other immigrant groups, while in the South End no one ethnic group predominated.

Moreover, immigrant settlement in the inner city did not form a complete zone around the central business district, because in Beacon Hill and Back Bay an affluent population of native parentage still prevailed. In these districts, immigrants were highly dispersed since they pro-

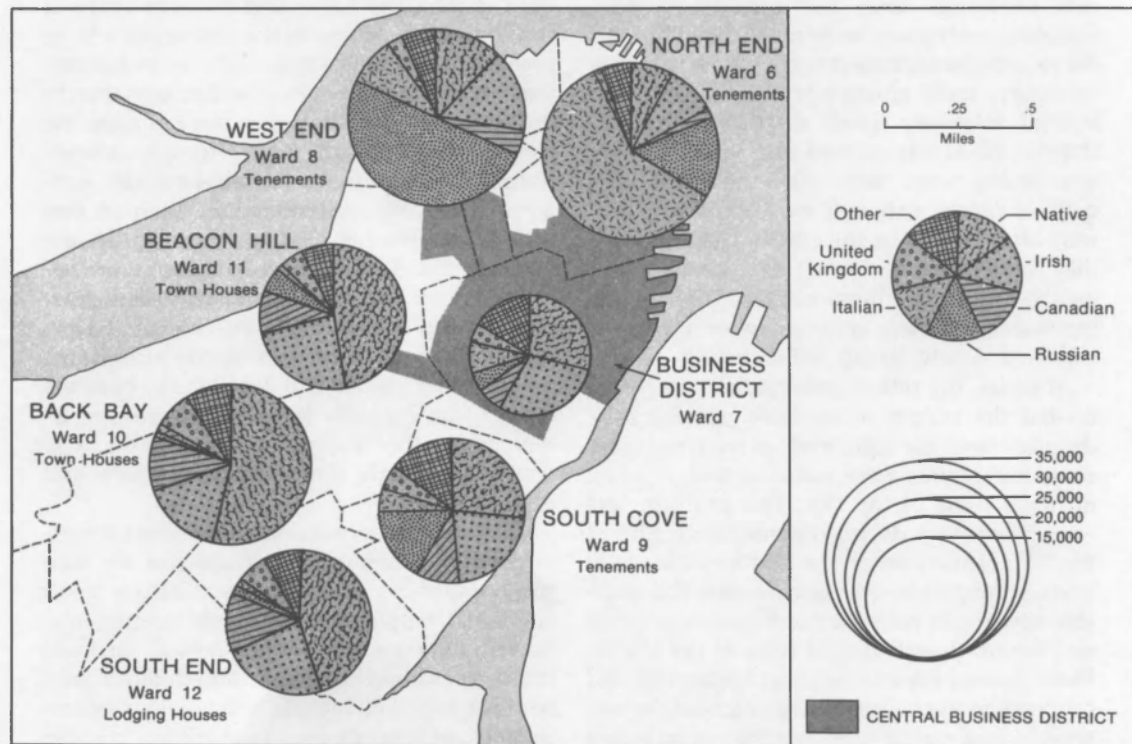


Figure 13.6 Immigrants in the Inner City: Boston, 1905

vided resident domestic service and local services. This mosaic of ethnic residence was not exclusively confined to the inner city. There were also concentrations of newcomers as well as longer-established immigrants in Roxbury, which at that time was considered to be an inner suburb. The leading ethnic institutions and amenities were usually associated with the largest and often earliest concentrations of particular groups and, while these quarters were usually identified as the ghetto, they housed only a minority of each group. These fragmented and complex residential patterns resulted from the uneven availability of cheap housing near appropriate sources of employment at the time of initial settlement.

Although the movement of Puerto Ricans to New York and other northeastern cities did not reach large proportions until after World War II, the settlement of Mexicans in the cities of southern California and the Southwest increased substantially in the 1920s, as did that of southern-born blacks in northeastern and midwestern cities. Mexicans encountered relatively small concentrations of European ethnic groups but, like Orientals, tended to be segregated in small but extremely homogeneous districts. Blacks were initially unable to compete with European immigrants for quarters near to the central business districts of northeastern and midwestern cities; prior to World War I, they had settled in the back alleys and rear lots of substantial dwellings, as they had for generations in southern cities. This somewhat dispersed and decidedly limited supply of housing proved to be inadequate for the increased flow of migrants during World War I. Confronted with a densely occupied inner city and an increasingly racist housing market, blacks were forced to settle in those sections of the inner suburbs where speculative overbuilding had created a supply of vacant middle-income housing suitable for subdivision. New York's Harlem, Boston's Roxbury, and Chicago's South Side all indicate the degree to which the initial foci of black ghettos was established beyond the outer fringer of the inner city settlements of European immigrants.

After World War I, further increases in the cityward movement of southern blacks transformed these small nuclei into ghettos that became more extensive and more enduring than any of the earlier concentrations of Euro-

pean immigrants. Similarly, with the expansion of migration from Mexico, extensive and exclusive Hispanic settlements described as "barrios" developed in cities of the Southwest and southern California. These developments created an extent and level of residential segregation unprecedented among European immigrants, and distinctions among European ethnic groups appeared to be of minor consequence when compared with those between black, Hispanic, and white. These new distinctions were further emphasized by the suburban dispersal of the descendants of European immigrants and their presumed assimilation into an homogenous, but white, American society. In contrast, the most recent minorities of the inner city have encountered many obstructions in their efforts to follow the suburban course of their predecessors. While it is clear that the ghettos formed after 1920 have proved to be more extensive and persistent than earlier concentrations, the presumed relationships between suburbanization, social mobility, and assimilation of the former residents of the inner city have been questioned.

#### SUBURBANIZATION AND ASSIMILATION

Although the social problems of the slum and the ghetto were often simplified or exaggerated, efforts to alleviate the environmental disabilities of the inner city were facilitated by suburbanization. Despite the modest impact of public intervention on living conditions in the inner city, suburbs by the late 19th century appeared to provide a partial solution to the housing problem for a progressively larger proportion of the urban population. From this perspective, the ghetto could be viewed as the temporary residential quarters of newly arrived immigrants, from which they or their immediate descendants would eventually disperse into the growing suburbs. Since suburban populations were presumed to be defined by social and economic status and stage in the lifecycle rather than by ethnic heritage, social and residential mobility were associated with final assimilation into American society. Certainly, revised interpretations of the social world of the ghetto were more consistent with assumptions about the material advancement and suburbanization of immigrants and their descendants

than with one that stressed the pathological social consequences of the ghetto environment.

While levels of residential segregation among most of the descendants of European immigrants were lower than those of their migrant ancestors, these changes do not necessarily record a simple trajectory from inner-city ghetto to integrated suburb. Modest proportions of some groups have retained some sections of their original ethnic quarters, and the dispersed larger community continues to patronize the long-established ethnic institutions and amenities there. Suburban movements did not always take the form of dispersal from an inner city concentration, but occurred in the form of a contiguous wedgelike expansion in one or two well-defined directions. Eventually the inner margins of this wedge were abandoned, and among highly mobile groups a completely suburban residential pattern was established. Under these circumstances, new suburban foci of ethnic institutions were developed, and today they are frequently as closely associated with the ethnic heritage of their clientele as were their original inner-city quarters. Although the original ethnic communities of the inner city were based upon an overlapping mosaic of neighborhoods, the ethnic associations and networks that serve the needs of suburban residents are not necessarily dependent upon high levels of residential concentration. Ethnicity may thus have a diminishing influence upon suburban residential differentiation, but some ethnic identities and associations have persisted despite suburbanization.

If diminished levels of residential segregation have been viewed as measures of suburban dispersal and, by inference, of assimilation, in many cities both the rates and the dimensions of these changes have been quite modest. In contrast, suburbanization did involve dramatic improvements in the quality of the living environment and in access to avenues of occupational mobility. From this perspective the experiences of immigrants and especially their descendants have been envisaged as a set of "escalators" on which the rate of advancement varied from group to group. In general, it was assumed that the course of upward advancement followed an almost natural or inevitable order, in which long-established groups were expected to hold the most remunerative and

desirable occupations, and newly arrived migrants the least secure and lowest paid jobs. In short, with each successive wave of immigration, the ethnic division of labor was altered as newcomers entered the lowest strata of the labor force and the descendants of earlier immigrants moved on to more rewarding positions. While many, perhaps the majority, of newcomers initially worked in unpleasant and poorly rewarded jobs, they assumed they would return to their homeland with their accumulated savings or that they or their children would eventually gain access to more remunerative employment. In each phase of immigration there were also some newcomers who were able to avoid the lower floors, while others were condemned to prolonged residence on the ground floor long after the arrival of more recent immigrants.

In many respects, a preoccupation with the environmental deficiencies and social isolation of the ghetto and the slum has obscured the degree to which the fluidity or rigidity of the ethnic division of labor has influenced the material predicament and residential patterns of the most-deprived minority groups. The damaging effects of inner city life have varied considerably among its diverse residents, and both the environmental and spatial attributes of ghettos have been reinterpreted in a fashion that is more sensitive to the positive adaptations of their residents. Nevertheless, these adaptations are strained beyond their limits whenever access to avenues of economic advancement are blocked by deliberate exclusion or depressed economic conditions. Today, levels of residential segregation among blacks and some Hispanics are far higher and more persistent than they were among the migrant generation of European groups and, despite their material advancement and suburbanization, the decline in the levels of residential segregation among the descendants of European migrants has been relatively modest. The inner city today is more isolated from not only the remainder of urban society but also from the increasingly decentralized urban employment opportunities than it was during the era of European immigration. The boundary between the inner city and suburb has for long been the graphic expression of apparently temporary blockages in the process of social mobility. Dur-

ing the 1890s these obstructions presented a more permanent look and aroused anxieties about the impact of the "new" immigration, and today similar concerns about impoverished minorities have provoked questions about the desirability of immigration.

#### OVERVIEW: REGIONS AND CITIES IN A PLURAL SOCIETY

Despite the proverbial geographical mobility of Americans and the loss of many overt ethnic traits among the children of immigrants, the regional destinations of the immigrant generation have proved to be quite persistent. Certainly, many of the descendants of northwest European immigrants have joined those with a longer American ancestry in the movement to the Pacific coast. By far the most conspicuous change in the distribution of ethnic groups has been the movement of blacks to the cities of the Northeast and Middle West. Overall, however, the regional representations of different ethnic groups have resulted from an incremental process of migration of varying volume and composition. Regional destinations were often established on the basis of new opportunities, or

occasionally they were the unavoidable outcome of pressures to emigrate. Networks of information and family ties often reinforced these initial patterns of settlement. The cities of each major region also displayed variable ethnic profiles, but for each major phase of immigration certain general observations about ethnic residential patterns may be made. The term "ghetto" was developed to describe the common disabilities of immigrant quarters. This negative view, however, has been substantially modified, as have interpretations of the suburban movement as a process of rapid assimilation. Emigration certainly altered the ancestral cultures of most American immigrants profoundly, but these changes were already underway before their departure. Moreover, while these alterations were often in the direction of a single, well-defined national culture, some aspects of ethnic identity were voluntarily redefined or preserved through discrimination. This persistent if changing pluralism of American society is directly derived not only from the complex composition of several major phases of migration, but also from the varied geographic consequences of each migration flow.

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