IMMIGRATION AND THE AMERICAN CENTURY*

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The full impact of immigration on American society is obscured in policy and academic analyses that focus on the short-term problems of immigrant adjustment. With a longer-term perspective, which includes the socioeconomic roles of the children of immigrants, immigration appears as one of the defining characteristics of twentieth-century America. Major waves of immigration create population diversity with new languages and cultures, but over time, while immigrants and their descendants become more "American," the character of American society and culture is transformed. In the early decades of the twentieth century, immigrants and their children were the majority of the workforce in many of the largest industrial cities; in recent decades, the arrival of immigrants and their families has slowed the demographic and economic decline of some American cities. The presence of immigrants probably creates as many jobs for native-born workers as are lost through displacement. Immigrants and their children played an important role in twentieth-century American politics and were influential in the development of American popular culture during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Intermarriage between the descendants of immigrants and old-stock Americans fosters a national identity based on civic participation rather than ancestry.

> Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that immigrants were American history. (Handlin 1973:3)

> The importance of this stream (immigration) for the economic growth of the United States is still not fully understood or completely analyzed, much of the past literature having concentrated on difficulties of adjustment and assimilation have been biased by reformers concerned with short term problems rather than long-term gains. (Kuznets 1971:21)

The twentieth century is sometimes referred to as the American Century, which is generally interpreted to mean the rise of the United States to world leadership, first through its economic ascendancy in the first half of the century and then through its political and military hegemony in the post–World War II era. If these characteristics were all that mattered, then the American Century would be a rather fleeting moment in historical perspective. There is a long history of political and economic empires, remembered most often for their excesses and eventual decline. I suggest, however, that America's symbolic position in the twentieth century is at least as important as its economic and military dominance, and this symbolic role is likely to be the dominant historical legacy.

This symbolic role has many components, but one of the most influential is that American identity is not rooted in nationhood but rather in the welcoming of strangers. Kasinitz (2004:279) has argued that over the course of the twentieth century, the Statue of Liberty replaced Revolutionary War icons as the preeminent national symbol. The founding fathers did not intend for the United States to become a nation of immigrants, but that is what happened. The Statue of Liberty was given to the American people by France to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the independence of the United States. Although

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the statue was intended to symbolize Franco-American friendship and the freedom of American society, the statue has acquired a new identity—as a beacon of welcome for people seeking new and better lives for themselves and their children (Higham 1984: chap. 3). This interpretation owes much to the poem by Emma Lazarus, which celebrates Lady Liberty as the Mother of Exiles who welcomes the huddled masses and the homeless from other lands. Although the American government and people have not always embraced immigrants, the image of the United States as a land of opportunity and refuge has become its preeminent national identity at home and abroad.

In this article, my aim is not to recount what immigrants have experienced or how they have become "American," though that is part of the story. My primary objective is to explain how American society—its institutions and culture—has changed as immigrants have become active participants as workers, political actors, and creators of culture. To paraphrase Handlin (1973:3), immigration is not simply a part of American history; rather immigration is a principal wellspring from which so much of America's dynamic character and identity have originated.

This survey of the impact of immigration on American society is a preliminary one with ideas and data drawn from various quarters. I begin with an overview of the magnitude and patterns of immigration to the United States and then review the evidence of the influence of immigration on population diversity, cities, the economy, and American politics and culture. I even argue that immigration, along with preexisting sources of population diversity, has created a more cosmopolitan and tolerant society that is much less susceptible to monolithic claims of American nationalism.

A word on terminology—I use the terms *immigrants* and *the foreign born* as synonyms, although technically and legally they are quite different. *The second generation* refers to the children of immigrants, and the balance of the population is referred to as the third and higher generations or the native born of native parentage.

HISTORICAL TREND

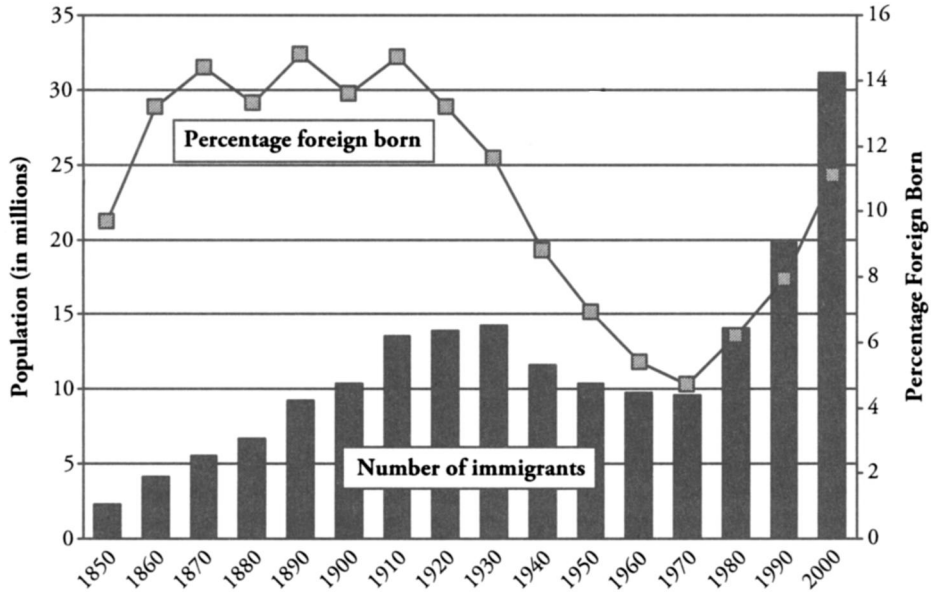
The 1880 to 1924 age of mass migration, primarily from Europe, and the post-1965 wave of immigration, primarily from Latin America and Asia, are bookends of the twentieth century, but they represent a longer history that began in the seventeenth century and that may well continue far into the future (Hirschman, Kasinitz, and DeWind 1999; Jones 1992; Min 2002; Portes and Rumbaut 1996).

Figure 1 shows the trend in immigration from 1850 to 2000. The bars show the absolute count of the foreign born enumerated in each decennial census. In absolute numbers, the size of the foreign-born population more than tripled from about 4 million in 1860 to just shy of 14 million in 1920. Following the near closing of the immigration door to southern and eastern Europe in the 1920s (it closed even earlier to peoples from Asia), the numbers of the foreign born fell steadily for the next half-century to less than 10 million persons in 1960 and 1970.

The curved line shows the foreign born as a proportion of the total U.S. population at each census. In 1860, after a decade of the largest (relative) immigration in American history, about 13% of the population was foreign born. For the next 60 years, the ratio of immigrants to the population remained around the same level—about 13% to 14%, or about 1 in 7 Americans. Then, the relative size of the foreign-born population declined precipitously, and only 1 in 20 Americans alive in 1970 was an immigrant.

With the return of immigration to the main stage of American society in the last three decades of the century, the number of foreign-born persons tripled from less than 10 million in 1970 to more than 30 million in 2000, and proportionately, the percentage foreign born increased to over 11% of the population (the most recent available estimate of the foreign born in 2004 is 34 million, which is just shy of 12% of the total U.S. population; see U.S. Census Bureau 2005).

Figure 1. Number of Foreign Born (in millions) and Percentage Foreign Born of the U.S. Population: 1850–2000

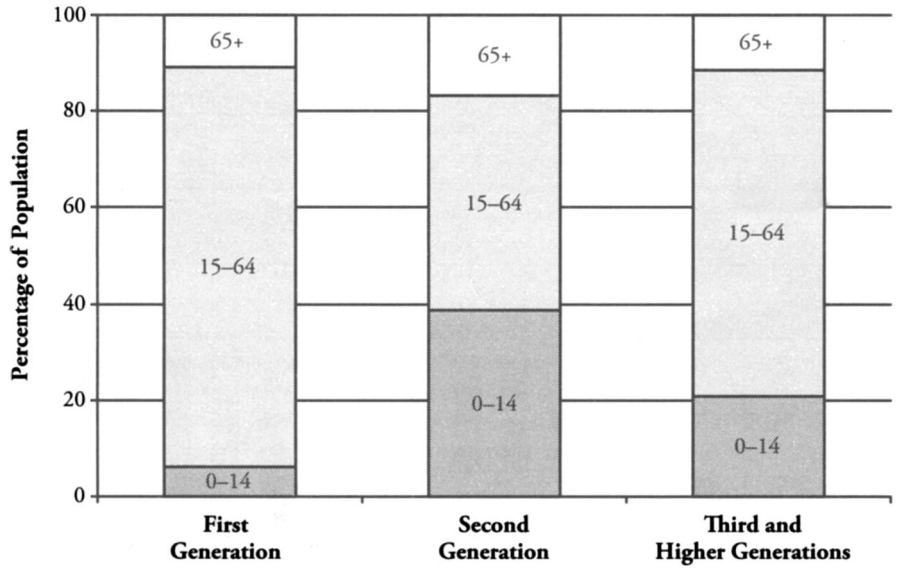


Sources: Gibson and Lennon (1999: table 1); Malone et al. (2003: table 1).

The counts of the foreign born, as large as they are, underestimate the influence of the immigrant community because the age structure and geographical location of immigrants accentuate the presence of immigrants, and more important, the second generation is not counted. At the nadir of immigration in the 1960s, immigrants were much less visible, not only because of their smaller share of the population, but also because they were much older and less likely to be "out and about" (less likely to be in the workforce, at PTA meetings with small children, and in other public venues). There is a clear relationship between the age composition of immigrants and eras of mass immigration. For example, in 1900, a little less than 14% of the national population was foreign born, but 21% of workers were foreign born (Ruggles et al. 2004). In 2000, the 11% foreign-born population translated into 14% of the labor force (King, Ruggles, and Sobek 2003). The visibility of immigrants also depends on geography. Most immigrants live in cities, while old-stock, native-born Americans are more likely to live in rural areas and small towns.

The most significant limitation of the standard demographic statistics on immigration is the exclusion of the native-born children of immigrants. The children of immigrants are reared, at least in part, in the social and cultural world of their immigrant families. The values, stories, and languages of immigrants are part of the cultural heritage of the children of immigrants. Figure 2 shows the unusual age distributions of the first and second generations, relative to the "normal" age distribution of the third and higher generations. The first generation appears to have too few children, and the second generation appears to have too many. This "anomaly" is explicable, however, with the recognition that most of the young second-generation immigrants live with the first generation as members of the

Figure 2. Age Composition of the U.S. Population, by Generation: 2004



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2005: table 5.1).

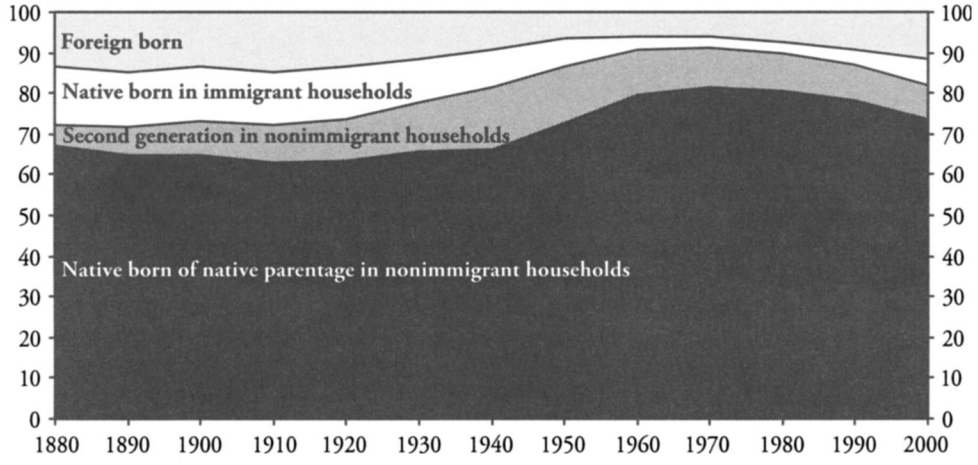
same families. Treating only the first generation as reflecting the presence of the immigrant community is misleading.

Figure 3 shows three components of a more inclusive definition of the immigrant community as percentages of the total U.S. population from 1880 to 2000. The standard definition of the immigrant population—the percentage foreign born—is shown in the top portion of Figure 3. As noted earlier, the foreign-born population declined from around 14% in the early twentieth century to less than 5% in 1970 and then bounced back to over 11% in 2000. The second component of the immigrant community—in the figure, the white area below the foreign born—includes the native born who live in households with an immigrant householder (or head of household). Most of this segment is composed of the dependent children of immigrant parents, but it also includes native-born spouses of immigrants and other relatives in immigrant households. Defining the immigrant community as inclusive of the families of foreign-born householders is probably close to the popular image.

A more expansive definition of the immigrant community includes the second generation who do not live in immigrant households—the third area from the top in Figure 3. Although some of the second generation may have no identification with their parents' birthplaces, many probably have some sense of belonging to the immigrant world, perhaps from hearing stories about life in the old country and their immigrant parents' struggles to make it in America.

In this broadest definition of the immigrant community (including all three areas at the top of Figure 3), the current share of the population with recent familial roots in the cultures and languages of other countries is closer to one-fifth or one-fourth of the national population, in contrast to the typical estimate of only slightly over 10% (counting only the foreign born). For the non-South (the North, Midwest, and West), the immigrant share of the population was closer to one-third in 2000 and was almost one half of the non-South

Figure 3. Percentage Distribution of the U.S. Population, by Immigrant Generation and Residence in an Immigrant Household



Notes: The 1890, 1930, 1980, and 1990 second-generation populations (by immigrant household) are interpolations between censuses (or the merged 1998 to 2002 CPS file). The foreign-born populations reported here include the small number of persons born abroad of U.S.-born parents and those born in U.S. territories. The NA responses to nativity in the 1940 and 1950 census files and the merged 1998–2002 CPS file are adjusted pro rata across the first, second, and third generations. "Living in a foreign-born household" indicates that a respondent lived with a foreign-born householder or foreign-born head of household. Estimates of the third generation living in foreign-born households are higher than expected in 1940 and 1950. Nearly half this population are younger than age 15 and are most likely to be children in multifamily households.

Sources: Author's tabulations from Gibson and Lennon (1999); King et al. (2003); and Ruggles et al. (2004).

population in the early decades of the twentieth century. The size of the immigrant population, the relative size in particular, creates the potential for a much more pervasive influence of immigration on American society than is generally realized.

THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION ON POPULATION DIVERSITY

Immigration has been the primary cause of the growth of the American population from a little less than 4 million in 1790 to over 270 million in 2000. Edmonston and Passell (1994:61) estimated that the current American population would be only a little more than one-third of its current size if it included only the descendents of those who arrived before 1800. Beyond population size, the most notable impact of immigration has been the broadening of the social and cultural diversity of the American population.

Colonial America was probably more diverse than the conventional portrait of the population of the 13 colonies as primarily of English origin. African Americans (both slave and free) constituted over one-fifth of the 1790 population (Gibson and Jung 2002: table 1), and there was a substantial American Indian population, many of whom were living in independent settlements and were not enumerated in censuses (Archdeacon 1983:2–4). There has even been a spirited debate among historians on the degree of diversity among the white population of Colonial America. One study, based on the method of assigning ethnic origins from assumptions about the nationality of surnames reported in the 1790 census, concluded that more than 80% of the 1790 white population was of English origin (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1909:117). A follow-up study, using a stricter interpretation

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of the U.S. Population, by Race/Ethnicity and Immigrant Generation: 1900, 1970, and 2000

Race/Ethnicity and Immigrant Generation	1900 (%)	1970 (%)	2000 (%)
White (non-Hispanic)	87.3	83.3	69.6
Third and higher generations	53.8	69.0	62.4
First and second generation	33.5	14.3	7.2
American Indian/Native American	0.3	0.3	1.0
African American	11.7	10.9	12.9
Third and higher generations	11.7	10.7	11.4
First and second generation	0.1	0.3	1.5
Latino/Hispanic/Spanish	0.5	4.6	11.5
Third and higher generations	0.2	2.1	3.1
First and second generation	0.3	2.5	8.5
Asian American and Pacific Islander	0.2	1.2	4.9
Third and higher generations	0.0	0.2	0.5
First and second generation	0.1	1.0	4.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Population (in thousands)	75,186	203,302	274,709

Sources: Author's tabulations of IPUMS census files from Ruggles et al. (2004); King et al. (2003).

of unambiguously English names, lowered the estimate of the English origin to 60% of the 1790 white population (American Council of Learned Societies 1932). More-recent scholarship has questioned the methods of these studies and concluded that there were probably much higher fractions of Celtic (Scottish and Irish), German, and other European nationalities present during the colonial era (see Akenson 1984; McDonald and McDonald 1980; and Purvis 1984).

Although variations among populations of European descent may seem relatively trivial at present, many Americans of English origin during the colonial era were concerned about too much ethnic diversity. In 1751, Benjamin Franklin complained about the "Palatine Boors" who were trying to Germanize the province of Pennsylvania and refused to learn English (Archdeacon 1983:20). These fears may have been accentuated by several major waves of immigration to the colonies in the eighteenth century, including a quarter million Scotch-Irish in the decades before the American Revolution (Fischer 1989:606–608; Jones 1992: chap. 2). The cultural diversity among the American peoples during the colonial era, however, pales when compared with the heterogeneity introduced by subsequent waves of immigration.

Table 1 provides a summary portrait of ethnic diversity, by immigrant generation, of the American population in 1900, 1970, and 2000. From our current perspective on race and ethnicity, the U.S. population appears to have been very homogenous in 1900. Altogether, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Latinos made up only about 1% of the American population in 1900. African Americans were 12% of the population in 1900, but they were regionally concentrated in the South—mostly in the rural South (Farley 1968:248).

The most visible manifestation of diversity in 1900 was the multitude of nationalities, languages, and cultures within the white population. A century ago, more than one-third of the U.S. population was composed of immigrants from Europe and their children. About half the immigrants in 1900 were considered to be "old immigrants," meaning that they

came from the traditional sending countries of Great Britain and northwestern Europe. The rest, including Italians, Slavs, Greeks, Poles, East European Jews, and many other groups from southern and eastern Europe, were labeled "new immigrants." If we consider the percentage of the majority population without recent foreign roots—the third and higher generation whites—as an index of homogeneity of the American population, then the United States was more diverse in 1900 than it was in 2000. Only 54% of the population in 1900 was native-born white of native parentage, compared with 62% in 2000.

In the early decades of the century, the "new immigrants" were often considered to be nonwhite and encountered considerable prejudice and hostility. Cities, where most immigrants settled, were derided and feared as places filled with dangerous people and radical ideas (Hawley 1972:521). These sentiments were often formulated by intellectuals, but they resonated with many white Americans who were reared in rather parochial and homogenous rural and small-town environments. Baltzell (1964:111) noted that most old-stock Americans in the late nineteenth century were appalled at the growing evils of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization. While some reformers, such as Jane Adams, went to work to alleviate the many problems of urban slums, others, such as Henry Adams, the descendent of two American presidents and a noted man of letters, expressed virulent nativism and anti-Semitism (Baltzell 1964:111). Henry Ford, who as much as anyone created the American automobile age, "looked upon big cities as cesspools of iniquity, soulless, and artificial" (Higham 1988:283). Through his general magazine, the *Dearborn Independent*, Henry Ford spread his hatred of the "international Jewish conspiracy" to a mass audience during the 1920s. Muller (1993:41) observed that, "Speeches by Ku Klux Klan members (against immigrants) were virtually indistinguishable in substance and language, if not in style, from the writings of many university professors."

People from a variety of groups and affiliations, ranging from the Ku Klux Klan to the Progressive movement, old-line New England aristocrats, and the eugenics movement, were among the strange bedfellows in the campaign to stop the immigration that was deemed undesirable by old-stock white Americans (Higham 1988; Jones 1992: chap. 9). The passage of immigration restrictions in the early 1920s ended virtually all immigration except from northwestern Europe (Bernard 1981).

In spite of the hostility against the new immigrants and the vitriolic campaign against continued immigration, the children and grandchildren of eastern and southern European immigrants experienced considerable socioeconomic mobility during the middle decades of the twentieth century (Lieberson 1980). By the 1950s and 1960s, white ethnic communities in the United States encountered only modest socioeconomic disadvantages (Duncan and Duncan 1968; Hirschman and Kraly 1988, 1990). Alba and Nee (2003:102) noted the amazing progress of Italian Americans, who were considered to be a community in distress in the 1930s but who had entered the economic mainstream by the 1970s. Although there is not a simple comprehensive explanation for the socioeconomic assimilation of white ethnics in the middle decades of the twentieth century, several plausible reasons have been advanced in the literature, including rising levels of education of the second generation, the expansion of occupational opportunities, declines in residential segregation, unionization, the nation-building experience of two world wars, and the growing presence of African American workers who filled the bottom rungs of employment in industrial cities (Alba and Nee 2003: chap. 3; Lieberson 1980).

Another major factor that erased the stark divisions between old-stock Americans and the southern and eastern European communities was intermarriage. In the early decades of the century, there was virtually no intermarriage between the new immigrants and the native born (Pagnini and Morgan 1990), but by midcentury, only a minority of the descendents of white ethnics were not of mixed parentage (Alba and Golden 1986). The one white ethnic group that remained primarily endogamous for a much longer period was Jewish Americans, but by the late 1980s, almost half of Jews were marrying persons

of different faiths (Alba and Nee 2003:92; Kosim and Lachman 1993:246–47). Although ethnic, religious, and cultural divisions persist at modest levels for whites of European origin, these are only an echo of early twentieth-century patterns of inequality, segregation, and xenophobia.

In 1970, more than 8 out of 10 Americans were non-Hispanic whites, and almost 7 out of 10 were third or higher generation non-Hispanic whites. The immigrant roots of the white population were a distant memory and were evoked only for parades on St. Patrick's Day and Columbus Day and other symbolic rituals. The study of immigrants had largely disappeared from sociology textbooks and was barely kept alive by a dwindling band of immigration historians. Diversity was a term that had not yet come into everyday discourse.

The only component of diversity on the national agenda in 1970 was the pervasive inequality between white and black America. The stark differences between the gradual processes of integration and inclusion experienced by the descendents of white immigrants and the persistence of discrimination and segregation experienced by African Americans led to a focus on the apparent immutable reality of race as opposed to a more permeable notion of ethnicity (Lieberson 1980; Massey and Denton 1994).

With the renewal of immigration from 1970 to 2000, there has been a renaissance of new forms of population diversity, including English spoken with accents by peoples from dozens of countries from around the globe (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Initially confined to California, Texas, the New York region, Chicago, and southern Florida, the new immigration wave is now reaching across the country. From 1970 to 2000, the overall share of the national population composed of American Indians, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans increased from less than 13% to over 30%.

The national share of African Americans inched up from 11% to 13%, largely owing to immigration. The relative share of Latinos and Asians grew by 7 and 4 percentage points, respectively, almost entirely because of immigration. These sharp increases have been accompanied by the expansion of new immigrants beyond their places of historical concentration. Mexican Americans have become a national minority with a presence in most cities, even in many southern rural areas that have not experienced immigration in over 200 years. Puerto Ricans and Cubans have spread beyond New York and Miami to nearby suburban areas and beyond. Asian Americans have become part of the national landscape and a visible presence on almost every college and university campus. By the century's end, national-origin groups that scarcely existed in the American imagination in 1970, such as Asian Indians and Vietnamese, had established all the trademarks of American ethnic communities, including recognizable areas of settlement, newspapers and periodicals in their home languages, and popular cuisines whose reach extends far into middle America (Min 2005).

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed two countervailing trends. The first trend was the almost complete "Americanization" of the white population as the foreign-born segment of white America largely disappeared. The second trend was a resurgence of immigration, beginning around 1970, that led to an expansion of diversity, with the establishment of Latinos and Asians as part of the American ethnic panorama. In addition to immigration, late twentieth-century diversity also has domestic roots. In 1900, the American Indian population was thought to be on the verge of disappearing, but natural increase and greater self-identification have led to a current population of 2.5 or 4.1 million in 2000, depending on whether an American Indian heritage is defined as a sole or joint racial identity (Ogunwole 2002; Snipp 2002).

Will the new immigrant populations in the twenty-first century follow the path experienced by the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe in the middle decades of the twentieth century? A number of studies have found that, overall, most contemporary immigrants and their children have made socioeconomic gains, especially in education (Alba

and Nee 2003: chap. 6; Card 2004; Hirschman 2001). Assuming continued socioeconomic mobility and moderately high levels of intermarriage, history might repeat itself, and the children of the post-1965 wave of immigrants may well be absorbed into the American mainstream. My only hesitation in making such a prediction comes from the disinvestment in inner-city public schools and other institutions that have historically fostered the social mobility of the children of immigrants.

Robert Merton (1994), perhaps the most celebrated sociologist of the twentieth century, described the rich quality of public institutions available to him as the child of working-class eastern European immigrants. Merton grew up in Philadelphia in the 1920s close to a public library and to public schools that were staffed by dedicated women concerned for his education and welfare. The nearby settlement house brought opportunities for artistic development and even chamber music performed by members of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Merton (1994:7) claimed that as a youngster in a seemingly deprived south Philadelphia slum, he was able to acquire the social, cultural, and human capital that facilitated socioeconomic mobility.

A recent ethnographic account described some of the high schools in New York City attended by first- and second-generation West Indian immigrants in the 1990s as "places of despair, fear, and resignation to low standards" (Waters 1999:257). There are, of course, many opportunities for contemporary upward mobility, but some scholars have posed the question of "second-generation decline" because of the loss of good unionized manufacturing jobs for immigrants and the lure of an inner-city street culture that discourages education aspirations among the second generation (Gans 1992; Portes and Zhou 1993).

IMMIGRANTS AND CITIES

In the early years of the twentieth century, the United States was still a country of farms and small towns. This was especially true for old-stock Americans: almost two-thirds of third and higher generation whites lived in rural areas in 1900, compared with only about one-quarter of the foreign born (Thompson and Whelpton 1933:47–48). American cities during the age of industrialization were primarily immigrant cities (Gibson and Lennon 1999: table 19). In 1900, about three-quarters of the populations of many large cities, including New York, Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, San Francisco, Buffalo, Milwaukee, and Detroit, were composed of immigrants and their children (Carpenter 1927:27).

The industrial transformation of the American economy in the early decades of the twentieth century was primarily an urban phenomenon. The United Sates grew by over 40 million people from 1890 to 1920, and fully three-quarters of this growth was in urban areas (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1975:11–12). Migration of native-born Americans from the farm to the city was an important component of urban growth, but immigrants and their children remained the majority of the urban population, especially in the industrial cites of the Northeast and Midwest, until the 1920s (Carpenter 1927:27; Eldridge and Thomas 1964:206–209).

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the majority of the farm-origin population remained on farms or in rural small-town areas as adults, though not necessarily in their exact places of origin (Taeuber 1967:25). Only a small percentage moved to large metropolitan cities. In general, the children of farmers who left farming disproportionately wound up in the lower rungs of the occupational hierarchy (Blau and Duncan 1967:28). The dominant migration stream of native-born whites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was not to the industrial heartland of the Northeast and Midwest but to the western frontier.

Table 2 shows net lifetime migration of African Americans and whites, by nativity, for each decade from 1870 to 1950. The rapidly expanding industrial economy of the North and Midwest drew disproportionately on immigrant labor and then on African American workers from the South. From 1870 to 1920, the population growth of the

Table 2. Net Lifetime Migration (in thousands) of Whites and African Americans, by Nativity: 1870–1880 to 1940–1950

	Northeast and North-central			South			West		
	Native Born			Native Born			Native Born		
Decade	White	African American	Foreign Born	White	African American	Foreign Born	White	African American	Foreign Born
1870–1880	–348	68	1,609	91	–68	89	257	—	177
1880–1890	–283	89	3,297	–271	–88	124	554	—	337
1890–1900	–344	185	2,559	–30	–185	124	374	—	205
1900–1910	–1,306	172	4,263	–69	–194	240	1,375	22	686
1910–1920	–219	523	2,227	–663	–555	232	880	32	428
1920–1930	–641	861	1,896	–704	–903	67	1,345	42	480
1930–1940	–692	425	–74	–558	–480	–53	1,250	55	5
1940–1950	–1,955	1,225	408	–866	–1,581	206	2,822	356	361
1870–1920	–2,500	1,307	13,955	–942	–1,090	809	3,440	54	1,833
1920–1950	–3,288	2,511	2,230	–2,128	–2,964	220	5,417	453	846

Source: Eldridge and Thomas (1964: tables 1.21 and 1.27).

Northeast and Midwest included almost 14 million immigrants, but there was negative net migration of 2.5 million native-born whites out of the region. Following the closing of the immigration door, more than 2.5 million African American net migrants (from the South) were added to the population of the Northeast and Midwest from 1920 to 1950, while there was a continuing exodus of native-born whites from the region (3.3 million from 1920 to 1950).

With the development of the modern industrial economy, cities offered expanded employment in factories, commerce, and offices. For persons with the right set of education, skills, and ambitions, the urban economy offered opportunities for social mobility that were impossible in any other location. But for most white Americans with limited skills and ambitions, it was not obvious that menial factory or office work in a city was a step up from living on a farm or in a small town. In addition to the familiarity of family and friends, the farm economy offered autonomy, flexibility of work, and the safety net of a minimum food basket. None of these were necessarily available for industrial workers in the city. If forced to migrate, many native-born white Americans from rural or small towns may have preferred to seek their fortune in the West than to join the ranks of the urban proletariat in industrializing cities.

The willingness of immigrants and African Americans to work in the lowest rungs of urban employment may have been largely due to the lack of better alternatives. Most immigrants had been pushed out of places of origin and had to brave considerable costs and hardship to emigrate to the United States. The fact that one-third of European immigrants from 1908 to 1923 returned to Europe is testimony of the difficulties of adjustment to life and of finding employment in industrializing America (Wyman 1993:10). In spite of the hardships, most immigrants and their children remained in American cities, and in doing so, they helped to build the foundations of the modern twentieth-century economy.

By midcentury, the heart of many great American cities, especially in the Northeast and Midwest, had begun to experience economic, social, and demographic declines. For a variety of reasons, the middle class and much of the white working class abandoned central cities and moved to the suburbs and the periphery of large metropolitan areas (Jackson

Table 3. Population and Population Change of New York City, by Nativity: 1900 to 2000

Decade	Population (in thousands)			Population Change (in thousands) During Prior Decade		
	Total	Native Born	Foreign Born	Total	Native Born	Foreign Born
1900	3,437	2,167	1,270	—	—	—
1910	4,767	2,823	1,944	1,330	655	674
1920	5,620	3,592	2,028	853	769	84
1930	6,930	4,572	2,359	1,310	980	331
1940	7,455	5,316	2,139	525	745	–220
1950	7,887	6,026	1,861	432	710	–278
1960	7,783	6,225	1,559	–104	198	–302
1970	7,895	6,458	1,437	111	233	–122
1980	7,072	5,401	1,670	–823	–1,056	233
1990	7,323	5,240	2,083	251	–162	413
2000	8,008	5,137	2,871	686	–102	788

Sources: Gibson and Lennon (1999: table 19); U.S. Census Bureau (2003: table GCT-P10).

1985). At about the same time, immigration to the United States began to pick up steam and, as in earlier times, immigrants were drawn to cities. In recent years, the foreign born are about twice as likely as the native born to live in the central cities of large metropolitan areas (Gibson and Lennon 1999: table 18; Schmidley 2001:17).

Table 3 shows the trend in the population of New York City and the change in population, by nativity, for each decade from 1900 to 2000. For the first seven decades (with the exception of the 1950s), the population of New York City grew, despite the pulls from the growing suburban ring. The last three decades of the century show two very different trends: the native-born were leaving New York, and immigrants were arriving. During the 1970s, the exodus of more than one million native born from the city could not be offset by the almost a quarter of a million additional immigrants. During the next two decades, the loss of native born continued, though more slowly. The population decline of New York was halted with the arrival of more than 400,000 immigrants in the 1980s and almost double that number in the 1990s. Fueled by a resurgence of immigration, the 2000 population of New York City rose to above its peak of several decades earlier.

New York City is an exceptional case, but the pattern of net out-migration of the native-born population is a trend shared by many other large cities in the Northeast and Midwest. In some central cities, immigration has been sufficient to keep the population from declining, and in others, it has merely been able to slow the decline. During the 1990s, the role of immigration as a counterweight to declines in the native-born population spread to many more cities in the country, including Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Columbus, Milwaukee, Memphis, Washington, DC, and Boston (Gibson and Lennon 1999: table 19; U.S. Census Bureau 2003: table 49). In most cases, the number of immigrants is in the range of a few tens of thousands (or less) and makes only a small dent in the continued pattern of population decline (or very slow growth) of many large cities. Although immigration cannot be the sole solution to the problems of central-city decline, the presence of immigrants and especially of their small businesses has brought some measure of hope and vitality to many American cities that have fallen on hard times (Foner 2001:16–18; Muller 1993: chap. 4).

IMMIGRANTS AND THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

Immigration adds more workers, and just as with the addition of any factor of production, immigration contributes to an expansion of the national economy. However, there are widespread popular beliefs, including many influential voices within public policy circles, that immigration is harmful to the economic welfare of the country and especially to native-born Americans (Borjas 1999; Bouvier 1992; Briggs 1984; Brimelow 1995). However, neither economic theory nor empirical evidence supports such negative assessments.

A report of the National Research Council (NRC) panel on the demographic and economic impacts of immigration, drawing on the theoretical and empirical research conducted by the leading specialists in labor economics and public finance, concluded that there were relatively modest effects of immigration on the American economy (Smith and Edmonston 1997, 1998). Economic theory predicts that immigration will expand labor supply and increase competition for jobs and lower wages for native-born workers who are substitutes for immigrants. But a corollary of this thesis is that immigrants expand total production (national income) and increase the incomes that accrue to native-born workers who are complements to immigrants (Smith and Edmonston 1997: chap. 4).

The indeterminate part of the theory is the division of native-born workers into those who are substitutes and those who are complements (to immigrants). The simplistic interpretation is that workers are substitutes and that capitalists are complements; these categories, however, are not necessarily people, but sources of income. Many workers have direct or indirect income from capital through their savings, ownership of property, and pension programs. Moreover, a substantial share of ordinary workers have jobs that appear to be complementary to immigrant labor, not competitive with it. This means that many native-born workers may get "pushed up" rather than being "pushed out" with the arrival of unskilled immigrant labor (Lieberson 1980: chap. 10). Regardless of the complexities of economic theory, the overwhelming body of empirical research finds little evidence of negative effects (Bean, Lowell, and Taylor 1988; Borjas 1994; Friedberg and Hunt 1995; Hamermesh 1993:119–27).

The NRC report (Smith and Edmonston 1997) summarized the empirical findings of this literature in labor economics: "The weight of the empirical evidence suggests that the impact of immigration on the wages of competing native born workers is small—possibly only reducing them by 1 or 2%" (p. 220). "The evidence also indicates that the numerically weak relationship between native wages and immigration is observed across all types of native workers, white and black, skilled and unskilled, male and female" (p. 223).

These findings have led to a revisionist hypothesis that immigration does not adversely affect low-skilled native-born workers in locations with many immigrants—say, Los Angeles or New York—but that the negative effect is observed in the national labor market, which adjusts through internal migration (Borjas 2000:5–6; Borjas, Freeman, and Katz 1996; Frey 1995). In other words, the negative impact of immigration is experienced by migrants who leave Los Angeles or New York or by those who would have migrated to Los Angeles or New York in the absence of immigration. There is no consensus in this very complex and contested area of research, but Card and his colleagues (Card 2001, 2004; Card, DiNardo, and Estes 2000) have found little evidence that low-skilled native-born workers are disproportionately leaving high-immigration areas, nor that the wage gap between native-born high school dropouts (the group that is assumed to be in competition with immigrants) and workers with higher education is widening.

What might really resolve this debate would be an experiment in which a large number of immigrants were suddenly added to a city's workforce. History provided a natural experiment along these lines when about 125,000 Cubans, mostly unskilled workers, arrived in Miami, Florida, in September 1980 during the "Mariel Boatlift." Although the workforce of Miami was instantly increased by about 7%, there were almost no measurable changes

in wages and employment of the native working class in Miami, including the African American population (Card 1990).

Immigration, as with other economic forces such as technological change and international trade, certainly leads to the displacement of native-born workers in some sectors (e.g., taxi drivers or construction workers in some cities). However, immigrants also stimulate the economy through their roles as consumers, investors, and entrepreneurs. Moreover, a good share of the "savings" gained through the lower wages of immigrant workers is passed on to native-born consumers through lower prices and to native-born workers in sectors of the economy that experience added demand. The observed net effect of immigration of about zero on the employment and wages of the native-born workers is the composite of these positive and negative effects.

The other major economic issue addressed by the 1997 NRC report was the impact of immigration on the governmental fiscal system—the balance between taxes paid and the value of government services received (Clune 1998; Garvey and Espenshade 1998; Lee and Miller 1998; Smith and Edmonston 1997: chaps. 6 and 7). The NRC researchers reported that the average native-born household in New Jersey and California (and probably in other states with many immigrants) pays more in state and local taxes as a result of the presence of immigrants (Smith and Edmonston 1997: chap. 6). These results are largely determined by the lower wages of immigrants and the demographic composition of immigrant households, which tend to be younger and have more children than the native-born population. The largest component of local and state government budgets is schooling, and immigrant households, with more children per household than native-born households, are disproportionately beneficiaries of state support for schooling.

The conclusion that native-born households are subsidizing immigrant households through the provision of public education rests on a number of debatable assumptions. First, educational costs could be considered an investment as well as an expenditure. A more-educated local workforce should lead to higher incomes and higher tax revenues in the coming years, all other things remaining equal. Second, if the costs of educating the children of immigrants are considered to be a public transfer from the native born, then the balance sheet should also count the subsidy from immigrants' countries of origin, which have reared and educated immigrants coming to the United States. Finally, the bulk of the state and local educational expenditures are the salaries of teachers, administrators, and staff who are employed in the education sector, most of whom are native born.

Regardless of the debate over the net transfer of revenues at the local and state level, an accounting of the federal fiscal system shows that immigrants (and their descendants) contribute more in taxes than they receive in benefits (Smith and Edmonston 1997: chap. 7). Just as the age structure of immigrant households makes them disproportionately the beneficiaries of public education, the relative youth of immigrants also means they are less likely to be beneficiaries of social security and Medicare (and Medicaid for the institutionalized elderly). Immigrants also help to relieve the per capita fiscal burden of native born for the national debt, national security, and public goods, which are major federal expenditures that are only loosely tied to population size. An intergenerational accounting that counts the future taxes paid by the children of immigrants concludes that immigration helps, rather than hurts, the nation's fiscal balance (Lee and Miller 1998; Smith and Edmonston 1997: chap 7).

There is a continuing debate on the impact of immigration on aggregate economic growth and the per capita income growth of native-born workers during the age of industrialization. Hatton and Williamson (1998: chap. 8) concluded that the mass migration from Europe in the two decades before World War I did not fill labor shortages, but rather lowered wages in unskilled jobs and displaced native-born workers (also see Goldin 1994). On the other hand, Carter and Sutch (1998) argued that many of Hatton and Williamson's conclusions were determined by their assumptions and model specifications.

Carter and Sutch (1998:314–44) observed that economic growth did not slow during the years of mass immigration to the United States (also see Rees 1961). They also argued that immigrants contributed to economic growth (and rising real wages of the native born) through a variety of mechanisms, including increased national savings, a faster rate of inventive activity and technological innovation, and increasing economies of scale, both in the production and in consumer markets.

In his analysis of long swings, or Kuznets cycles, Easterlin (1968) found that immigration, which contributed to population growth and family formation, stimulated economic growth through increasing demand for housing, urban development, and other amenities. This association was strongest, Easterlin observed, before the post–World War II era, when the federal government assumed more responsibility for maintaining aggregate demand. Although there are conflicting findings and debates in the literature, I do not see any unambiguous evidence for the negative effects of immigration on the American economy, past or present.

IMMIGRANTS AND POLITICS

Many immigrants tend to be fairly apolitical, are often slow to naturalize, and are more concerned with problems of day-to-day survival and their children's chances of upward mobility than with engagement in American politics (Portes and Rumbaut 1996: chap 4; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). Nonetheless, I suggest that the children and grandchildren of the immigrants who arrived during the age of migration from 1880 to 1924 played a major, if not a decisive, role in twentieth-century American politics. In particular, I suggest that their influence tipped the political balance that led to the creation of the modern welfare state in the 1930s and the elimination of official racism in the 1960s.

Major changes in governmental policy usually follow from a transformative election in which the governing party is able to break from past practices and compromises. This happened twice in twentieth-century American politics. In a short window in the mid-1930s, Roosevelt and his congressional allies passed laws that created the seeds of modern social democracy for workers and their unions, established social security for the elderly, and founded institutions, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, that were responsive to the economic needs of peoples and regions that had been left behind.

The second major period of reform was from 1964 to 1966, when Congress established Medicare, an unfinished New Deal program of economic security, and enacted a series of civil rights bills that eliminated official support and sanction for discrimination in public accommodations, employment, voting rights, and housing. And for good measure, the 1965 immigration reforms ended the infamous national origins quotas of the 1920s. Most of these reforms came after Johnson's victory in 1964 that established a huge Democratic majority in Congress. The reforms of the 1930s and 1960s helped to alleviate (though not completely solve) the deep fissures of class and race in American society that had threatened to tear it apart.

The elections of 1932 and 1964, which brought about these periods of reform, were overwhelming national mandates with support from every branch and root of the electorate. However, these national mandates followed on the heels of the 1928 and 1960 elections, which set the stage for what followed. In the 1928 and 1960 elections, the role of immigrants (and the descendents of immigrants) loomed large.

The seeds of the 1932 Roosevelt coalition were established in 1928, when Al Smith, an Irish American (on his mother's side) Catholic from New York City, attracted the immigrant urban vote to the Democratic Party. Although Herbert Hoover defeated Al Smith, more than 120 northern counties that had consistently voted Republican went for Smith and the Democrats in 1928 (Degler 1964:52). On the other side, however, Hoover took 200 southern counties that had been historically Democratic. A number of scholars have attributed the shift from the Republican dominance of the government in the 1920s

to the overwhelming New Deal coalition of the 1930s to the increasing share, turnout, and partisanship of the urban ethnic vote following several decades of mass immigration (Andersen 1979:67–69; Baltzell 1964: 230; Clubb and Allen 1969; Degler 1964; Lubell 1952:28).

Although there was a small decline in the overall share of the voting-age population composed of immigrants (defined as naturalized immigrants above age 21 and second-generation immigrants above age 21) from 1920 to 1930, there was an increase in the number of first- (naturalized) and second-generation southern, eastern, and central (SEC) European immigrants from 8 to 11 million, or from 13% to 15% of the voting-age population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1933:408, 807). This was a modest but significant shift that was magnified by the concentration of immigrants in the big cities of the Northeast and Midwest, as well as by increases in turnout and partisanship (Luconi 2001; Tuckel and Maisel 1994).

In 1960, only 9% of the voting-age population was of foreign birth, but fully 20% of the U.S. population aged 25 and older was composed of the second generation—the children of immigrants (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1965:8). And unlike their immigrant parents, some of whom may not have naturalized, all of the second generation were citizens by birth and were eligible to vote. The political leanings of the second generation can be inferred, at least in broad strokes, from research on the relationship between religion and political preferences. In the decades following the World War II era, white Protestants, and especially middle-class white Protestants outside the South, have been the base of the Republican Party, while Catholic and Jewish voters have been disproportionately Democratic (Hamilton 1972: chap. 5). The majority of early twentieth-century southern and eastern European immigrants were Catholic or Jewish (Foner 2000:11; Jones 1992:192–95)

In any election victory, there are many fathers who wish to claim paternity. To the claims that John Kennedy's election victory in 1960 was due to Lyndon Johnson's presence on the Democratic ticket or to Mayor Richard Daley's ability to turn out enough Chicago voters to deliver Illinois to the Democratic side, I would add an electorate consisting of 20% second-generation immigrants as another reason. Without Kennedy's election (and perhaps his death), the Great Society and civil rights agenda of the mid-1960s might well have been delayed for another generation or longer.

The full scope of the reforms of the 1960s may not have been fully understood or anticipated by the second-generation immigrants who voted for Kennedy and Johnson. The civil rights movement, led by the African American community, and especially by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his colleagues, put civil rights issues on the national agenda. The response of the elected leadership, both in the executive and legislative branches, was initially tepid and reserved. But following the 1964 election, there was a reform-minded president and Congress, which saw Medicare, Head Start, and ending Jim Crow as complementary elements of the national agenda. Although there remains a long way to go before the color line is erased, it is almost impossible to comprehend the revolutionary changes in post–civil rights American society relative to the apartheid character and culture of American society during the first half of the twentieth century. Immigrants and their children played an important role in this transformation with their support for Kennedy and Johnson in the 1960s, even if they did not foresee and completely welcome the outcomes.

There is a generational dynamic in the political preferences of immigrants. Immigrants and their children tend to vote "liberal" because of their identity as newcomers/outsiders and their below-average socioeconomic status. As the children and grandchildren of immigrants move up the socioeconomic ladder, there is likely to be a shift in affiliation toward the conservative end of the political spectrum. Framing the political differences as liberal versus conservative can, however, obscure the basic points. Immigrants and their children are primarily concerned with the presence of an economic safety net for those who cannot fend for themselves and for economic opportunity for those who can. These issues are not

fundamentally different from the concerns of the broader American population, but immigrants and their children have historically been more sympathetic to the message.

At present, there is renewed political concern and alarm about illegal immigration and the potential threat of terrorism from foreign shores. Indeed, there are a number of movements whose primary goal is to protect America by restricting illegal immigration and lowering the numbers of legal immigrants (Reimers 1998: chap. 2). These contemporary movements and their political supporters are, however, much less dominant and influential than those of the early twentieth century.

To be sure, there are historical parallels between the selective arrests, detentions without trail, and deportations after September 11, 2001, and the "Palmer Raids" against immigrant radicals in 1919 (Higham 1988:229–33). The vilification of clandestine migrants across the Mexican border (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002:86–89) does resemble some of the antiimmigrant politics that led to the national-origin quotas in the 1920s. The differences, however, are greater than the similarities. In the early decades of the century, anti-immigrant sentiments were often framed in terms of "scientific racism" that put Nordics at the top and Mediterraneans at the bottom (Higham 1988:271–77). These ideas were openly expressed in the mass media by reputable intellectuals and were probably believed by the overwhelming majority of the old-stock white population in the first half the twentieth century. Contemporary arguments against immigration are more likely to be framed in terms of adverse economic impact rather than the racial character of immigrants.

IMMIGRANTS AND AMERICAN CULTURE

The artistic representations of a society, as captured in Hollywood movies, Broadway plays, and music, are one measure of popular American culture. There is, of course, much more to culture than art, but the popularity of art tells us that portraits of life and human emotion captured in these expressions resonate with the public. My claim is not that Hollywood stories represent the typical lives of the American people, but simply that many Americans spend a lot of time and money on movies, plays, and other cultural accounts of American society; therefore, the content of mass entertainment (excluding purely escapist themes) reveals something about the manifest and latent values of the American population.

First- and second-generation immigrants have played a remarkable role in many of the American creative arts, including writing, directing, producing, and acting in American films and plays for most of the first half of the twentieth century (Buhle 2004; Gabler 1988; Most 2004; Phillips 1998; Winokur 1996). Table 4 offers one illustration of these patterns with the classification of leading twentieth-century Hollywood film directors by immigrant generation. This list includes the 17 Hollywood film directors who have won two or more Academy Awards (Oscars), as reported in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences database (http://www.oscars.org/awardsdatabase/index.html). The table also shows, for each director, the film (and year) for which the Academy Award was given. Although other methods could be used to define the universe of the most highly regarded film directors of the twentieth century, this particular list represents the critical acclaim of members of the film industry. Immigrant generation (and the places of birth of the first generation) was obtained from biographies of leading film directors (Wakeman 1988).

Nine of the 17 multiple recipients of Academy Awards for directing were foreign born, and another four were second-generation immigrants (David Lean was not an immigrant; he worked in Hollywood but remained a resident of England.). Only four are third- or higher-order immigrants. The presence of immigrants and their children would not be as striking in most other listings of leading contributors to the creative arts, but many of the most highly regarded composers and playwrights of Broadway were the children of immigrants, including George and Ira Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart, Jerome Kern, Harold Arlen, and Leonard Bernstein (Most 2004).

Table 4. Hollywood Directors Who Received Two or More Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Awards for Directing During the Twentieth Century, by Immigrant Generation and Place of Birth for the First Generation

Generation	Director	Place of Birth	Year	Film
First Generation				
	Frank Capra	Italy	1934	*It Happened One Night*
			1936	*Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*
			1938	*You Can't Take It With You*
	William Wyler	Germany	1942	*Mrs. Miniver*
			1946	*The Best Years of Our Lives*
			1959	*Ben-Hur*
	Lewis Milestone	Russia	1927/1928	*Two Arabian Knights*
			1929/1930	*All Quiet on the Western Front*
	Frank Lloyd	Scotland	1928/1929	*The Divine Lady*
			1932/1933	*Cavalcade*
	Elia Kazan	Constantinople	1947	*Gentleman's Agreement*
			1954	*On the Waterfront*
	Billy Wilder	Austria	1945	*The Lost Weekend*
			1960	*The Apartment*
	David Lean	England	1957	*The Bridge on the River Kwai*
			1962	*Lawrence of Arabia*
	Fred Zinnemann	Austria	1953	*From Here to Eternity*
			1966	*A Man for All Seasons*
	Milos Forman	Czechoslovakia	1975	*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*
			1984	*Amadeus*
Second Generation				
	John Ford		1935	*The Informer*
			1940	*The Grapes of Wrath*
			1941	*How Green Was My Valley*
			1952	*The Quiet Man*
	Frank Borzage		1927/1928	*7th Heaven*
			1931/1932	*Bad Girl*
	Leo McCarey		1937	*The Awful Truth*
			1944	*Going My Way*
	Joseph L. Mankiewicz		1949	*A Letter to Three Wives*
			1950	*All About Eve*
Third and Higher Generations				
	George Stevens		1951	*A Place in the Sun*
			1956	*Giant*
	Robert Wise		1961	*West Side Story* (with Jerome Robbins)
			1965	*The Sound of Music*
	Oliver Stone		1986	*Platoon*
			1989	*Born on the Fourth of July*
	Steven Spielberg		1993	*Schindler's List*
			1998	*Saving Private Ryan*

Sources: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Database (2005); Wakeman (1988).

Why were immigrants overrepresented as award-winning directors and in other creative roles in Hollywood and Broadway? Or, to put it more generally, why are talented outsiders often drawn to highly rewarding but highly risky careers? In many cases, it is because outsiders have limited opportunities to pursue mainstream career paths. Merton's (1968:185–214) theory of social structure and anomie posits that youth whose paths to conventional success are blocked often turn to deviance. Immigrants and minorities often lack the resources and connections to get ahead through conventional careers, so they find work in ethnic enclaves (small business) or in fields that are open to talent, such as crime and professional sports (Light 1977). Immigrant concentrations in small businesses, crime, or other high-risk careers are generally temporary, usually lasting only a generation or so, until the second or third generation is able to obtain an education and pursue more-conventional careers.

In his discussion of the overrepresentation of Jews in the entertainment industry in the early twentieth century, Howe (1976:557) observed that ". . . the (entertainment industry) brushed aside claims of rank and looked only for the immediate promise of talent. Just as blacks would later turn to baseball and basketball knowing that here at least their skin color counted for less than their skills, so in the early 1900s, young Jews broke into vaudeville because here too, people asked not, who are you?, but what can you do?" (also see Most 2004:7). Incidentally, in the 1930s, when many fields were closed to Jewish Americans, they were heavily overrepresented in college and professional basketball (Levine 1992).

Another question regards how creative artists with a foreign heritage were able to connect with a mass American audience and to produce films, plays, and music that Americans outside of the immigrant communities saw as quintessentially American in content and sensibility. For example, Irving Berlin, who was born as Israel Baline in Russia and immigrated to the United States as a child, wrote many of the standard American classics, such as *God Bless America*, *White Christmas*, and *Easter Parade*. The composers and lyricists who wrote much of the standard American songbook were largely second- and third-generation Jewish immigrants who were reared in ethnic enclaves but went on to write the musicals that became the staples of popular high school productions, such as *Oklahoma!*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, and *South Pacific* (Jablonski 1996; Most 2004).

In addition to sheer raw talent, perhaps there is something about being slightly outside the dominant culture that gives the edge of insight to an artist. A biographer of William Wyler (who received a record 12 Academy Award nominations for film directing) observed that Wyler was fascinated with America and things American and that as a foreigner, he saw things from the viewpoint of an interested and sympathetic outsider (quoted in Phillips 1998:87).

Another advantage of outsiders is that they are sometimes able to rise above the prejudices and closed minds of insiders. Many native-born white Americans did not initially appreciate the truly original and authentic genius of jazz music, perhaps because of its origins in the African American community. Jazz performance and the first generation of African American jazz musicians operated on the margins of the mainstream music industry for the first few decades of the twentieth century. Popular tastes began to change in the 1930s as some white band leaders, most notably Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw, began to draw inspiration from jazz and to integrate their bands. Both Shaw and Goodman were second-generation Jewish Americans who blended traditional European musical traditions with the vitality and improvisation of jazz (Firestone 1993; Shaw 1992).

In addition to high motivations to succeed and a willingness to take risks, immigrants (and their children) have two understandings of how the world works: the cultural framework of their origins and the new culture that they acquire in the host society. This "double consciousness" is described by DuBois ([1903] 1999) as part of the African American experience and is similar to Park's (1928) "marginal man" hypothesis. Marginality, or the experience of navigating across multiple cultures, can be psychologically uncomfortable and even incapacitating. However, for some, it is an asset that sparks

creativity and inspiration. Immigrants may see new possibilities for entrepreneurship, a greater awareness of cultural nuance, and greater insight into how art can capture the essence of emotions and lived experience. In a society that has relatively few cultural touchstones, immigrant artists (and others who live in multiple cultural worlds) have been free to define "Americanness" in novel ways.

CONCLUSIONS

In conventional accounts of American history and contemporary American society, immigrants are considered a part of the story, indeed a very important part of the story. The tales of how peoples from different parts of the world arrived in a new land with relatively few resources but, through dint of hard work and family sacrifice, eventually joined the American mainstream is part of the national epic. The story line is one of how immigrants become Americans. In this article, I offer an alternative interpretation of the relationship between immigration and American society. Immigrants do, of course, adapt and become more similar to other Americans over time (or at least across generations). The complementary point is that twenty-first century American society and culture are not simply products of continuity from eighteenth-century origins, but have been continually reshaped by successive waves of immigrants and their descendants.

Beyond the English language and certain eighteenth-century political ideals, the cultural legacy and influence of the American "founding population" have eroded over the years. The proportion of the American population that reported English ancestry declined from 22% in 1980 to 13% in 1990 and then to only 9% in 2000 (Brittingham and de la Cruz 2004:4; Lieberson and Waters 1988:34). Fashion, as much as genealogy, determines the subjective responses to census questions about ancestry and ethnicity. To measure the popularity of different ancestries, Waters (1990:33–36) compared the 1980 census reports of the ethnicity/ancestry of children (presumably by older family members who filled out the census form) who had mothers and fathers of different ancestries. The popularity of an English ancestry was about average but far below the preference of identification with Italian ancestry. Persons of English origin are even underrepresented in elite positions, as measured by listings in Who's Who (McDermott 2002:147). With few national myths and a founding population that no longer holds demographic, symbolic, or real power, the image of the United States as a nation of immigrants has become the primary national identity and ideology.

This was not meant to be. The United States has always had an ambivalent response to immigration. Even though immigrants played a prominent role in Colonial America and the American Revolution, the fear of foreign influences and spies led to the passage of the Alien and Sedition laws shortly after independence (Jones 1992:72–77). In the 1840s and 1850s, the "Know Nothing Party" attracted a mass following with its attacks on Catholic Irish immigrants. In 1855, the Know Nothing Party elected six governors, dominated several state legislatures, and elected a bloc of representatives to Congress (Jones 1992:134).

In spite of these flare-ups, there was generally an open immigration policy during the nineteenth century. After the land had been wrested from its original owners, the American frontier presented virtually unlimited opportunities, and most immigrants were generally thought to be pretty similar to the original founding stock of the nation. Tolerance of open immigration ended, however, with the arrival of Asian immigrants on the West Coast in the 1850s and 1860s and of southern and eastern European immigrants in subsequent decades. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first step toward a closed society. Four decades later, the door to southern and eastern European immigrants was also closed. Passing the national origins quotas in the early 1920s was a victory for the old guard of American society, which staked the claim that old-stock Americans of English Protestant origins were the founding population that defined the national character. With nativist fears to arouse the masses and pseudo-scientific eugenics to convince the

educated, the proponents of immigration restriction in the 1920s seemed to be firmly in charge (Higham 1988: chap. 10).

Their victory, however, was ephemeral. Only four decades later, the immigration door was reopened, and American cities were again buzzing with new arrivals from around the world. Immigration restriction was doomed because of the tens of millions of "new immigrants" who arrived from 1880 to 1924. These immigrants and their descendants have profoundly altered the structure and culture of American society, and after they had their turn in American politics, they overturned the national-origins quotas (Reimers 1985: chap. 3). The legacy of the 1880–1924 immigration includes a major role in the development of the modern industrial economy and the reorientation of the Democratic Party that led to the New Deal and the Great Society.

The new immigrants and their children have also made important contributions to the development of American culture and identity. The Hollywood theme "that anyone can make it in America" is a particularly Americanized version of the rags-to-riches story—one that is appealing to people, such as immigrants, who are striving for upward mobility. Many Hollywood and Broadway productions have also given us poignant accounts of outsiders who struggle to be understood and accepted. Not all the American creative arts draw on the aspirations and creative energies of immigrants, but first- and second-generation Americans have been very influential in defining and popularizing American culture.

The new immigrants who have arrived since 1965 are also changing the structure and culture of American society in new directions that cannot yet be clearly seen. One important direction, I believe, is the creation of a more cosmopolitan and tolerant society. Many new immigrants and their children have mastery of difficult-to-learn languages, and they have opened up new cultural horizons through ethnic cuisines, music, and the arts. International issues, such as the conflicts in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, the political currents in Mexico and Central America, and the spread of the Asian economic miracle, are matters of particular interest and concern to Americans who maintain familial, social, and even economic ties to the lands of their birth.

The children of immigrants inevitably lose many distinctive attributes, including language skills and personal knowledge of their countries of origin. However, the children of immigrants often broaden the base of the cosmopolitan society through the creation of multicultural families. The majority of young native-born Japanese and Chinese marry outside their communities (Alba and Nee 2003:92–93). Estimates of the intermarriage rates of other specific Asian American and Hispanic American groups range from 25% to 50% (Edmonston, Lee, and Passel 2002:239–42; Farley 1999; Qian 1997; Stevens and Tyler 2002)—patterns that are comparable to the historical experience of white ethnic groups (Alba and Golden 1986). The children of intermarried couples are likely to be an important bridge to a more tolerant society. Having both an Italian and Irish ancestry may make one somewhat less likely to accept jingoistic claims about the depravity of foreign cultures and societies. Having both an Eastern European Jewish heritage and a Korean Buddhist family may make one less likely to believe that religion is destiny or that American society should be monolithic in terms of its cultural traditions.

In sum, the presence of immigrants is a hedge against the parochial view of us versus them. Each intermarriage not only affects the identity choices of the children but also creates the potential of interethnic ties among a much larger number of persons in the extended families of the intermarried couple (Goldstein 1999). It is more difficult to hold onto ethnic stereotypes when the "other" is a nephew, niece, cousin, or grandchild.

The twentieth century was conceived in the era of nationalism and the belief that each national-origin population should have its homeland and state. However, as McNeill (1984:17) observed, "the barbarian ideal of an ethnically homogenous nation is incompatible with the normal population dynamics of civilization." The pernicious ideology of

ethnonationalism has been used to legitimate much of the conflict and misery of the past century, or as Hobsbawm (1992:134) expressed it, "The homogeneous territorial nation could now be seen as a program that could only be realized by barbarians, or at least by barbarian means."

The evolution of American society as an immigrant society, with moderately high levels of social mobility and intermarriage, has created a population of blended ancestries, united with a common civic identity. Although unintended, the American example of nationhood, open to all peoples, may be the real legacy of the American Century.

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