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**American History Minor Field Statement
Immigration to the United States – 1790 to Present
Teaching Field Statement**

In the introduction to his Pulitzer prize-winning book *The Uprooted: the Epic Story of the Great Migration that Made the American People*, Harvard historian Oscar Handlin famously wrote, “once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America... [but] I discovered that the immigrants **were** American history.”¹ Handlin was one of the pioneers of an immigrant-centered historiography of America which, in the last fifteen years, has begun to explore questions about the significance of immigration on the American nation: How has the ethnic, national and racial makeup of the United States developed over time? What has been the effect of the particular national, ethnic and racial makeup of the United States on its history and on the different nationalities, and on the various racial and ethnic groups within the nation? What is the meaning of American citizenship, given the ethnic, racial and national diversity of the United States? Their responses to these questions offer new perspectives and insights on the history of the nation and suggest the overarching questions, themes, and texts that would inform an undergraduate course in immigration history.

Through the mid-1960s, historians writing about immigration to the United States chronicled the passage of Germans, Irish, Italians and other European nationalities, who constituted the overwhelming majority of immigrants from the late eighteenth century through the early 1930s; they also popularized the somewhat misleading image of the United States as a “melting pot,” a place where different groups heated in the crucible of nation’s culture combined to become “American.” Historians discussed and analyzed the quest of these immigrants for cultural, economic and linguistic “assimilation” and debated the degree to which the different groups achieved their goals. A few historians also examined the very different immigration experiences of much smaller groups of non-European immigrants—Hispanic, Chinese and Japanese—and pointed out the negative reception they received in this country. Nonetheless, they found, generally speaking, that these latter groups were able to survive and prosper in an environment that did not honor their different voices.

Immigration to the United States after World War II, however, contrasted sharply from that before the war, as Hispanics from Mexico, Central and South America, and Asians from a dozen different nations came to dominate in the same proportions that European once had. Historians recounting the “new immigration” discussed the changed character of post-WWII immigration and its origins in the transformation of domestic politics and culture in the nation and reevaluated old immigration issues from new perspectives. Recently, historians have attempted to understand through “whiteness studies” new attitudes among immigrant groups about their assimilation into the dominant “white” culture. And a few prominent historians have discussed the possibility that new immigration trends will result in “the disuniting of America” under the pressure of large numbers of immigrants and their desire for a “multicultural” society.

Roger Daniels, in his book *Debating American Immigration 1882-Present*, observes that those who write about immigration often use “hydraulic” metaphors to dramatize the subject – “immigration is a ‘flood’ or an ‘inundation,’ ... immigrants are described as coming in ‘waves,’ ‘torrents,’ and ‘streams.’”² Daniels argues that rather than dramatizing the issue with vivid metaphor, the first task for those seeking to understand immigration should be to grapple with the numbers involved, claiming that “if you don’t get your numbers right you just don’t know what you are taking about.”³

United States Census Bureau figures indicate that since 1820, some 67 million people have immigrated to the United States, almost 39 million from Europe, 9 million from Asia, 18 million from the Americas and almost 800,000 from Africa. Over that period, the percentage of foreign born in the United States population has varied from a high of about 15 percent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, to a low of around 10 percent currently. The numbers of immigrants has varied greatly in different periods due to both internal and external factors. In the decade 1841-1850, approximately 1.7 million immigrants were admitted to the United States, between 1901 and 1910, almost 8.8 million persons entered the country, in the period between the Great Depression and the end of World War II, approximately 700,000 entered, and most recently (1991-2000) slightly more than 9 million persons immigrated. Another set of statistics indicates it that there have been dramatic changes in the sources of immigrants over the last century. In 1900, 85 percent of immigrants to the United States came from Europe, slightly more than 1 percent each from Asia and Latin America, and the balance mostly from Canada. In the year 2000, 22 percent

of immigrants to the United States were of European origin 42 percent from Latin America, 25 percent from Asia, and 10 percent from other countries.

Historians organize and analyze the history of immigration to the United States in several ways. Hundreds of books treat a single nationality or ethnic group, for example Irish or Germans, Hispanics (for example *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, by George J Sánchez), Vietnamese, Asians (for example, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture*, by Gary Y. Okihiro) or Jews. Thomas Sowell, in *Ethnic America: A History* [1981], and Robert Takaki, in *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* [1993] argue that by examining each group separately, they can analyze the particular conditions of each group's immigration experience in the United States more effectively than is possible with other approaches. Others prefer to treat the subject chronologically, either presenting immigration history from the beginning, as in *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, by Roger Daniels, or a history of one period, for example Matthew Frey Jacobson's *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917*. These treatments allow authors to compare and contrast the experiences of different immigrant groups.

In *The Next American Nation* [1995] Michael Lind argues that there have been three revolutions in American history, each of which created a different republic by “putting the basic building blocks of the nation state – race, culture and citizenship together in a different way.” For Lind, the first revolution was the War of Independence, which, in his view, created an Anglo-American republic which lasted from 1789 to 1861. During this period, “the national community was identified with the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Germanic element of the population... the civic religion [was] Protestant Christianity and the political creed, federal republicanism.” In this first republic, there were doubts, he finds, about whether certain types of persons, for example Irish Catholics, Jews or blacks – could be “real Americans.” The Civil War and Reconstruction created a second republic – “Euro-America” – which redefined what it was to be an American. This republic was more inclusive than the first as it accommodated the diverse European immigration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He finds that this “post-Civil War nationalism” created a new political creed which he calls “decentralized federal democracy.”

Lind's third republic – “Multicultural America” – was “born in the turmoil of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s through the 1970s.” In this republic, white supremacy

was abolished, and an attempt was made to “purge law and politics of racial classifications and to enlarge the middle class to include the disadvantaged.” The ideology of this Third Republic is that there is no single, coherent national community, rather five communities – white, black, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Native American. Lind believes that a Fourth Republic will be constructed on a ideology he calls liberal nationalism, which should, he argues establish a fairer economic and social environment for all United States citizens. Part of that plan is a restrictive immigration environment. While acknowledging that there are other ways to divide American history, Lind argues that the characteristics he focuses on, characteristics that “change[d]... the rules governing race and citizenship,...[are] the most important.”⁴

In *The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity and the Civic Culture* [1990], Lawrence Fuchs offers another perspective on the historic patterns of ethnicity in the United States. He suggests that in the colonial period there were three views on immigrants and their potential membership in the American nation: the “Pennsylvania idea” which held that “all white European settlers were welcome into the colony on terms of equal rights,” the “Massachusetts idea,” which sought only immigrants who were “religiously pure” and the “Virginia idea” which “with its increasing reliance on a plantation economy, wanted workers as cheaply as it could get them, without necessarily welcoming them to membership in the community.”⁵ Fuchs then explores the principles on which Americans based their changing attitudes to successive waves of immigration to the United States, and to the process by which the position of African-Americans and Hispanics in the polity and economy developed.

Daniels divides immigration history into five periods, based on a combination of official policy and the rate of immigration. In his formulation, the history of modern immigration has the following organization:

1882-1924 - high immigration and growing restriction

1924-1943 - low and decreasing immigration and severe restriction

1943-1965 - low but increasing immigration and decreasing restriction

1965-1980 - high and increasing immigration and relatively low restriction

1980-present - high and increasing immigration and increasing but essentially ineffective restriction

Several authors, including Peter Kolchin in *Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America* [Journal of American History, Vol. 89, Issue 1, June, 2002] and Matthew Frye Jacobson in *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* [1998], have explored immigration in the context of the changing meaning of “whiteness,” essentially the process by which the United States has become the modern multiracial/multiethnic society that Lind describes. Kolchin describes the historiographic focus of whiteness studies as an attempt to understand “...how diverse groups in the United States came to identify, and be identified by others, as white – and what that has meant for the social order.”

Jacobson postulates three epochs of immigration. In the first epoch, between 1790 and 1840, the Immigration Act of 1790 defined American citizens as those persons “free and white,” with that whiteness implicitly being that of an Englishman. In the second epoch, between 1840 and 1920, many immigrated to the United States from Northern and Southern Europe, Mexico, and lesser numbers from China and Japan. Each group came for different reasons and had different experiences in “becoming American.” Initially, some groups in the United States encouraged Chinese immigration for the cheap labor those immigrants provided, but when economic conditions became depressed, Chinese immigration became a contentious issue and several states and the Federal government took legal and other measures to deny all Asians citizenship, and in many cases the ability to own real property. William Howard Taft expressed his view of the possibility of Chinese and Japanese becoming American citizens and members of American society in his Presidential inaugural address:

The admission of Asiatic immigrants who cannot be amalgamated with our population has been made the subject either of prohibitory clauses in our treaties and statutes or of strict administrative regulation secured by diplomatic negotiation. I sincerely hope that we may continue to minimize the evils likely to arise from such immigration without unnecessary friction and by mutual concessions between self-respecting governments.⁶

According to Jacobson, each new wave of immigrants became the catalyst for a redefinition of whiteness. European immigration served to fracture the monolithic whiteness established in the first era and put in its place a hierarchy of whiteness, and he and other historians describe how at different times and in different situations a particular group, e.g. Irish or Mexicans, might be considered “white,” particularly in relation to nonwhite groups

such as blacks and Native Americans, and at other times the same group might be denied that designation.

Hispanic Immigration

British colonial authorities, and later the authorities and citizens of the United States, initially came into contact with Hispanic peoples of the Western Hemisphere in Florida and the Caribbean. However, close and continuous contact involving significant immigration between Hispanic countries and the United States began only as the area under United States sovereignty expanded to the west and came in contact with the borders of the Spanish colony of Mexico. Several authors, among them Susan Limerick in *The Legacy of Conquest – The Unbroken Past of the American West*, Roger Daniels in *Coming to America* and Richard White in *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*², describe with different emphases and perspectives, these contacts. They note, for example, that initial immigration between the two countries was from the United States to Mexico. White describes how the Mexican government encouraged immigrants from the United States to settle in northern Mexico (the areas which later became Texas, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Arizona and California) with guarantees of land, security and exemption from some taxes. He also notes that the law establishing those incentives “indicat[ed] a lingering doubt about the loyalty of immigrants, [as it] prohibited foreign settlement along international borders and the seacoast...”⁷ Researchers estimate that by 1830, twenty thousand Anglos had settled in Texas, outnumbering the Mexican native population there. Limerick makes this early, and thereafter continuous, engagement between the United States and Mexico one of the major themes of her book, refuting the idea that the expansion of the United States westward was essentially into an empty land, and that there was essential no human history of the American West and Southwest worth telling prior to the arrival of United States citizens there.

By the 1830s, the growing Anglo population in the Southwest was challenging Mexican authority, and in 1836 the Anglo settlers there declared Texas a sovereign republic. Late in 1845, the United States admitted Texas to the Union as the twenty-eighth state, precipitating a long-threatened Mexican-American War. In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), the victorious United States gained half of the territory of Mexico and offered citizenship to all Mexicans who chose to remain in their homes in what had been Mexican territory but was now part of the United States. From that date, immigration – legal and

illegal – of Mexicans to the United States has been a significant and often contentious issue in both countries.

The United States Census Bureau began compiling data on Mexican immigration to the United States as early as 1820; by 1848, its estimate was that there were probably 10,000 Mexicans in California. From that year, large numbers of Mexicans began to immigrate to United States with the start of the California Gold Rush; by 1900, estimates suggest that there were slightly more than 100,000 Mexicans living in the United States; in the next thirty years, that number reached 1.5 million persons. In *Becoming Mexican American* (1993), George J. Sánchez describes the “push-pull” nature of Mexican immigration since the beginning of the twentieth century. In that period, the most important “push” factor was been the political and economic instability within Mexico, including the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Mexicans who wished to immigrate to the United States found that the American West and Southwest offered them supportive cultural institutions – Spanish was spoken widely, the Catholic Church was well established, they often had friends and relations already there, and they could make use of a good rail network, built by the Mexican government to furnish access to the United States market to make the trip. Further, Mexicans immigrants did not need, or intend, to make an irreversible decision, they could easily return to Mexico – indeed all writers on Mexican immigration emphasize that very few Mexican immigrants came to the United States with the intention of living there indefinitely. From the very beginning of Mexican immigration to the present, many Mexican “immigrants” have seen themselves more as sojourners rather than permanent residents. This type of immigration situation has been, in effect, a “safety valve” for both countries. For example Mexicans who move to the United States due to political or economic problems in their native land have the option, due to the short distances involved, to return to Mexico if economic conditions in the United States deteriorate. The situation is not particularly ideal, but it is quite different for immigrants who come great distances to the United States and do not have the support system available to Mexican immigrants.

After 1900, agricultural interests, particularly in California, began to actively recruit farm laborers from Mexico. Later, during World War II, the United States government entered into a formal agreement with Mexico to supply laborers to relieve the labor shortage in the United States. This *bracero* program [from the Spanish *bracear*, to swing one’s arms, indicating manual labor] was renewed from time to time, with modifications, until 1964, but

was controversial with some groups in Mexico and the United States (outside the United States agricultural business community) because of the perception that Mexican workers were exploited, living and working in poor conditions. Leobardo Estrada et. al. in the article *Chicanos in the United States A History of Exploitation and Resistance* (in *Majority and Minority*, ed. Norman Yetman, fifth edition, 1991) and White, Limerick, Sánchez, and others describe various aspects of the lives of Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century.

Sánchez's book, subtitled *Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1950*, describes, for example, the work of the California Commission on Immigration and Housing, formed in 1913 to oversee the state's immigrant program. Among its several functions, it investigated living and working conditions, and established programs to "Americanize" Mexicans and other immigrants. Sánchez states that initially some persons associated with the Commission "envisioned an agency which would promote mutual accommodation between the native-born and foreign-born, with a focus on 'immigrant gifts' – the cultural strengths that foreigners brought with them to American society."⁸ By 1923 however, the California political climate had become more nativistic and the Commission was dismantled. Sánchez quotes a spokesperson outlining a new approach to Hispanic immigrants: "Our task is...to assimilate and amalgamate these people as part of our American race, and to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government."⁹ For example, part of the new strategy was to encourage Mexican women to change their traditional diet – rice, beans and fried food – and replace it with bread and lettuce and broiled foods. Malnourishment was "not blamed on lack of food or resources, but rather on 'not having the right varieties of foods containing constituents favorable to growth and development.'" He quotes another directive as stating that "sanitary, hygienic, and dietic measures are not easily learned by the Mexican. His [sic] philosophy of life flows along the lines of least resistance and it requires far less exertion to remain dirty than to clean up."¹⁰

Until 1925, Mexico was the only Hispanic country in the Western Hemisphere for which the Census Bureau kept individual immigration statistics; other Hispanic immigration was indicated as from either Central America or South America. In 1925, the Bureau began to specify Cuban immigration, in 1932 the Dominican Republic, Haiti and El Salvador, and in 1953 Jamaica. In *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census and the History of Ethnicity in the United*

States, Clara Rodríguez conveys some of the complexity of the relationship between the United States and its “neighbors to the South” as she describes the changing definition of the term “Hispanic” used by the United States Census Bureau:

[I]n 1930...first- and second-generation Mexicans were [considered for census purposes to be] of the “Mexican race” unless they were determined by the (usually white) census interviewer to be definitely white, Negro, Indian, Chinese, or Japanese....In 1940, the census dropped the Mexican category and stated that all Mexicans were to be reported as “white” unless they were determined by the census interviewer to be “definitely Indian or of other Nonwhite races.”¹¹

She writes that even today, the confusion over the term “Hispanic” is formidable, including among “Hispanics.” She mentions the controversy over the wording of census questions on the 1980 and 1990 census pertaining to Hispanics identifying their “race” as white, black, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or “other race” on the census. With regard to the 1990 census, she writes “[w]hereas less than 1 percent of the non-Hispanic population reported they were ‘other race,’ more than 40 percent of Hispanics chose this category.” She finds that “Latinos viewed the question of race as a question of culture, national origin, and socialization, rather than simply biological or genetic ancestry or color.”¹²

European Immigration

Almost 90 percent of the more than 33 million persons who immigrated to the United States between 1820 and 1920 were from three European countries – Germany, Ireland and Italy. The majority of German and Irish immigrants arrived in the United States in the last half of the nineteenth century and most of the Italians in the first two decades of the twentieth. Each group had a unique experience in their reasons for immigrating and their early experiences in American society.

Irish immigration is usually portrayed as the consequence of the physical and economic suffering of the Irish people due to the potato famine in that country 1846-1847. However scholars of Irish history point out that there had been several other potato crop failures in the nineteenth century, and while the 1846-1847 famine was particularly severe, more than half of Irish immigration to the United States occurred after 1860, after the effects of the 1846-1847 famine had faded (1.9 million immigrated to the United States up to 1860, and 2.6 million between 1860 and 1930). Irish immigration to the United States was the result of a

combination of factors – some economic and others political and cultural. Handlin summarizes the Irish situation as “...a crowded island, a remorselessly rising population, avaricious absentee landlords, and English policy that discouraged the growth of industry...”¹³ In 1850, 42 percent of the foreign born population in the United States was Irish. Overall, the Irish made up almost 13 percent of the total number of immigrants to America.

Because of their particular circumstances, most historians describe Irish immigrants as seeing themselves as exiles from their homeland. The point is also made that while many Irish immigrants expressed their intention to return to Ireland when conditions were better, in fact the Irish repatriation rate was very low compared with other major European immigrant groups. Another characteristic of Irish immigration is that in United States, the Irish concentrated in large urban centers in the Northeast – principally New York and Boston. In those cities, the Irish occupied disproportionately the lowest level of the employment hierarchy – unskilled laborers (males) and domestic servants (females) – and lived in the most depressed housing. Daniels suggests, however, that this underclass description is somewhat overstated, as Irish who were in a position to relocate outside of the Northeast fared much better, perhaps because they possessed some resources on arrival or had skills which allowed them to avoid marginal employment. It also may be that because their numbers outside the northeast were small, these Irish were not seen as a threat to other groups with whom they came in contact. Most historians also point out the succeeding generations of Irish in the United States were generally able to improve their economic status and social position.

The Irish had several advantages over immigrants from other countries in that they spoke English and were generally familiar with Anglo-Saxon political institutions, but they also had a distinctive handicap for the time in that they were Catholic and had to deal with religious prejudice in a predominantly Protestant cultural and political environment. Thomas Sowell, in *Ethnic America A History*,² and Lawrence Fuchs both observe that Irish Catholicism was able to come to terms with its minority status in the United States. “So strong was the acceptance by Irish Catholics of principles of American freedom that the American bishops at the First Vatican Council in 1869-1870 spoke in opposition to two dogmatic constitutions aimed at protecting their church against the dynamic changes sweeping the Western world.”

¹⁴ Sowell suggests this lack of religious militancy was at least partly because the Irish had

suffered under an established church in their native land, and had accepted that in the United States the freedom all churches enjoyed was sufficient for them; they had been convinced of the advantages of a separation of church and state. Daniels notes too, that Irish immigration transformed the Catholic Church in the United States. He writes that the number of Catholic churches in New York City increased from two in 1826 to thirty-two by 1863, and of that latter number, seven were German, one French and twenty-four Irish. He also observes that the dominance of Irish-heritage clergy, established in this period, persists in the Catholic Church in the United States to this day.

Many books document the Irish experience in the United States. Steven Erie describes one aspect of the Irish experience in *Rainbow's End Irish-Americans and the Dilemma of Urban Machine Politics 1840-1985* [1988]. He analyzes how Irish politicians began to gain political power in places like Boston and New York and how they used their power. Erie suggests that the difficulties of the Irish in their native land contributed to their politization in the United States, which, with their “natural” abilities and the liberal qualification for male suffrage in the United States, allowed them to succeed in urban politics.

In *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town 1875-1925* [1989], David Emmons offers a view of Irish immigration different from Irish experience in Northeast urban centers. Irish immigrants were attracted to Butte, Montana primarily because of the reputation of Marcus Daly, an Irishman who had become successful enough to offer Irish and non-Irish workers steady, well-paying, albeit dangerous work, in the copper mines in Montana. Butte was a different experience for Irish male and female immigrants because in that town, Irish made up a significant portion of the population and there their ethnicity, religion and occupation were a source of pride, respect and political and economic power. Also they were, virtually by default, expected to and did assume political and social leadership.

Germans constituted the largest component of nineteenth century European immigration to the United States, but almost all scholars of the period point out that the very term “German” was deceptive as there was no German state prior to 1870. Even after that date, classification was difficult as many immigrants who spoke German as their primary language, and who had a predominately German cultural perspective, may have been identified as of Polish, Hungarian or some other central or eastern European nationality and immigrants from those countries identified as Germans. In comparison to most Irish or

Italian immigrants, the typical German immigrant was more likely to possess technical skills and gain skilled employment in the United States – one estimate is that thirty-seven percent of German immigrants were in skilled employment as butchers, bakers, cabinetmakers, distillers and machinists, etc.; another twenty-five percent worked in agriculture. Germans who lived in urban settings were usually in small to mid-sized towns, in contrast to the Irish and Italians – Daniels writes that about forty percent of German immigrants lived in cities of twenty-five thousand or more, whereas a sizeable majority of Irish and Italians lived in large cities.¹⁵

Daniels describes a debate among historians and other academics about the employment of German immigrant women. The traditional argument has been that “because many immigrant women were housewives or otherwise employed at home, they were less likely to learn English and become acculturated as immigrant men.” He cites research by Kathleen Conzen that this may not have been the case:

Noting that it was quite common for immigrant girls as young as eleven and twelve to be hired out to Yankee families as day helps, [Conzen] suggests that ‘domestic service not only augmented family incomes and provided nest eggs, but it brought an important segment of the immigrant population – the future mothers of the second and third generations – into intimate contact with middle-class American home life.’ They quickly learned English, [and] adopted American dress... Many [immigrant] young men in a heavily German city like Milwaukee, by contrast, lived and worked solely among German speakers.¹⁶

There were both Protestants and Catholics among German immigrants, therefore nativists could not invoke religious prejudices against Germans as a group. Germans were also perhaps less vulnerable to critics because they were not as concentrated in blighted, urban environments and therefore were not seen as a “debased” and potentially “radical” underclass. Despite Conzen’s and Daniels’ statements above, language was an issue for Germans in the United States. In certain areas, the relatively affluent, skilled, and educated Germans sought to have German as the primary or sole language of instruction in their children’s’ local schools. Daniels writes that in 1860, 80 percent of German children in St. Louis attended non-public schools. By 1880 however, that figure had been reduced to 20 percent, due, in part, to a backlash by voters. In the first few generations of significant German immigration, German language publications flourished. Sowell states that by the

mid-nineteenth century, there were twenty-seven daily German newspapers distributed among fifteen cities in the United States and well over two hundred other German publications. Anti-German sentiments associated with World War I ended most German language publications and German language instruction in the relatively few schools where it had survived to that time.

Most Italian immigration to the United States occurred in the first two decades of the twentieth century – of the 8 million Italians immigrating to the United States between 1820 and 1920, three-quarters immigrated during this period. Scholars find that Italian immigrants, like the Germans, had less a national identification than is normally implied by a nationality label. Sowell writes that Italian culture at that time held family ties to be of primary importance – “transcending competing claims of country, religion, and morality.”¹⁷ Daniels describes the Italian perspective as an “...extreme parochialism that caused Italians to regard themselves as citizens of a village or town, not a nation.”¹⁸ This may account for another of Daniels’ observations that “[a]s Italians were relatively late to arrive and did not have a great propensity to become naturalized, their political participation was low and few Italian-Americans won or were appointed to high political office.”¹⁹

There were significant differences within the population of Italian immigrants. Early Italian immigrants were from southern Italy and were poorer, had fewer job skills, less education, and lower literacy rates than Italians who came the United States later, often from northern Italy. This group tended to be more parochial than later Italian immigrants who came predominately from the north of the country, were better educated and had skills. Lawrence Fuchs reports an incident which describes the type of the prejudice and passion that could be directed against Italians and other immigrant groups: In 1930, the Mayor of New York City, Italian-American Fiorello LaGuardia criticized President Herbert Hoover on a policy matter. Fuchs quotes Hoover’s response, “you should go back to where you belong and advise Mussolini on how to make good honest citizens in Italy. The Italians are predominately our murderers and bootleggers... like a lot of other foreign spawn, you do not appreciate the country which supports and tolerates you.”²⁰ Fuchs notes that Hoover was possibly unaware that LaGuardia has fought in the United States Army during World War I. Fuchs also records Woodrow Wilson’s observations about immigrants in 1901: “men of the sturdy stocks of the north of Europe’ made up the main force of immigrants, but now ‘multitudes of men of the lowest class from the south of Italy and men of the meaner sort

out of Hungary and Poland' who had 'neither skill nor energy nor an initiative of quick intelligence'"²¹ In San Francisco, A. P. Giannini, son of an Italian immigrant, founded the small "Bank of Italy," in the largely Italian neighborhood of North Beach. In 1928, he renamed his business the "Bank of America," according to at least one author, to avoid publicizing its Italian heritage at the time Benito Mussolini was becoming notorious. As the Bank of America, Giannini's enterprise developed into one of the largest banking networks in the world. One characteristic that set Italian immigrants apart from other nineteenth and early twentieth century European immigrants is their significant return migration, estimated variously at thirty to fifty percent.

Other European Immigration

Between 1860 and 1920 over two million immigrants came to the United States from Scandinavia. Daniels observes that by the early nineteenth century, these countries had well developed bureaucracies, therefore much more is known about these immigrants than in known of the much larger groups of immigrants from say, Italy or "Germany." The traditional picture of the Swedish immigrant to the United States is that of a farmer, but Daniels notes that Swedes also settled in urban environments – Chicago, for example became the second largest Swedish city in the world, and the legacy of Scandinavian immigration persists to more recent times: in 1979, the population of Norway – 4.1 million – was about the same as the number of Americans claiming Norwegian ancestry at that time. In the United States, most Norwegian immigrants settled in rural areas, and more than half of all Norwegians resided in three states – Wisconsin, North Dakota and Minnesota. Both the Swedes and Norwegians established many newspapers in their native languages, but this did not interfere with the formation of strong, even emotional, attachments to their adopted country.

The general picture of Eastern European immigration is of many different peoples – Poles, Jews and Hungarians, etc. – almost all of whom were very poor, often oppressed due to their religion, ethnicity or powerlessness, but who had made a decision to attempt to better their lives in the New World. Daniels lists at least 26 ethnic groups from Eastern Europe who contributed to the "flood" of immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is a very confusing picture. Figures from the 1910 Census show that three countries – Russia, Austria and Germany – contributed thousands of immigrants listing

Polish as their mother tongue, and that immigrants from more than three dozen countries (but mostly from Russia) listed Yiddish or Hebrew as their first language. Immigrants coming from Hungary listed more than a dozen different languages.

Asian Immigration

Several features of the first century (1840-1940) of Asian immigration to the United States set it apart from European immigration in the same period. One of those features was noted at the beginning of the paper – in this period Asian immigration was miniscule compared with European immigration – some 33 million Europeans vs. approximately one million Asians. Secondly, Asian immigration in the period consisted almost entirely of two nationalities - Chinese and Japanese; third, early Asian immigration, primarily Chinese, was actively encouraged both in the United States and in China, and finally, Asian immigration was almost exclusively to the West Coast of the United States.

Daniels, in *Coming to America*, and George Takaki in *A Different Mirror* both describe a China in great turmoil by the middle of the nineteenth century. Economic conditions were poor and parts of the country were unstable politically and militarily, including the Canton area, from which about 90 percent of Chinese immigrants to the United States came. At the same time, the economy in the United States, particularly on the West Coast, was booming. The California Gold Rush of 1848, and a decade later the construction of the western portion of the transcontinental railroad, created a great demand for laborers, and American entrepreneurs and the United States government encouraged Chinese immigration to fill this need.

The Chinese came but the gold boom subsided relatively quickly and the demand for railroad laborers peaked by 1867. In this situation, white Americans took a new look at the Chinese and began to feel threatened by their different appearance and customs, and their willingness to work for very low wages. Takaki identifies the profound difficulties Asians had in “blending in” in the United States. He quotes an essay by Aiji Tashiro “The Rising Son of the Rising Sun,” which makes clear the situation faced by Chinese and Japanese, (and blacks) in “assimilating.”

The Jablioskis, Idovitches, and Johannsmanns streaming in from Europe...[were able] to slip unobtrusively into the clothes of ‘dyed-in-the-wool’ Americans by the simple expedient of dropping their guttural speech and changing their names to Jones, Brown or Smith. Tashiro knew that it

would make no difference for him if he changed his name to Taylor... outwardly he possessed the marked characteristics of his race.²²

Another charge frequently made against immigrants of any nationality, particularly immigrants employed as unskilled laborers, is that they were willing to work too cheaply, which drove down wages and displaced “native” workers. Takaki finds that businessmen such as the railroad magnate Charles Crocker, who had encouraged Chinese immigration when he needed cheap labor, were able to “degrade the Chinese into a subservient laboring caste” by calling upon a “dominant ideology that defined America as a racially homogeneous society and Americans as white.”²³

Among the different immigrant groups, the Chinese immigrant population in the United States suffered several unique handicaps – one of these being United States law. The Naturalization Act of 1870 denied Asian immigrants citizenship by stating that United States citizenship was available only to “white persons and persons of African descent.” (Ethnic Chinese (and anyone else) born in the United States were citizens under the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment: “All persons born...in the United States... are citizens of the United States and of the State in which they reside....”) The State of California, where Chinese immigrants were concentrated, added to the restrictions afflicting Chinese immigrants by making it illegal for non-citizens to own property. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act which banned immigration of Chinese laborers. The Act was extended for fixed terms in 1892 and 1898, and extended indefinitely in 1904. Daniels calls this act “the first significant inhibition on free immigration in American history.” The ban was not total, certain categories of Chinese – those seen as no economic threat such as businessmen, and the wives and children of those Chinese already in the United States – were allowed to immigrate.

For cultural reasons and because of the nature of the work the Chinese had been recruited for in the United States, few Chinese women had immigrated initially. Because the Exclusion Act made it impossible for significant numbers of Chinese women to immigrate after 1882, the Chinese community in America was doomed to suffer for a long time an imbalance in the numbers of male and female Chinese in the country. Researchers estimate that the gender ratio among Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century was on the order of twenty-to-one. This, and the very low rate of intermarriage between Chinese immigrants and non-Chinese in the United States, meant that the number of ethnic Chinese in the

United States grew very slowly, and for many years the age distribution of Chinese in the United States was skewed to older age groups.

The majority of Chinese lived in the urban centers of California – San Francisco, Los Angeles and Sacramento. Another 20 percent worked in mining, and a similar number as laborers; others were employed in shoe manufacturing and agriculture. Takaki writes that Chinese (and, as will be seen later, Japanese) immigrants made a significant contribution to California agriculture. Drawing on their experience as farmers in the Pearl River Delta in China “...the Chinese shared their agricultural knowledge with their white employers, teaching them how to plant, cultivate, and harvest orchard and garden crops.” He quotes historian Carey McWilliams as stating “ [the Chinese] were a vital factor, one is inclined to state the vital factor, in making the transition [from wheat to fruit farming] possible.”²⁴

Daniels suggests that racism led some scholars to not recognize the Chinese as immigrants. Their argument was that because significant numbers of Chinese at some point returned to China (though not necessarily permanently), they should be seen as sojourners in the United States. Daniels suggests this argument was due more to the inability of whites to conceive of non-whites as citizens, rather than the Chinese repatriation rate. In fact the Chinese rate-of-return was not significantly different from other nineteenth century immigrant groups. Daniels cites estimates that between 1848 and 1882, “perhaps 300,000 Chinese entered the United States but with some portion of the immigrants returning, the Chinese American population hit an intercensal peak of perhaps 125,000 in the early 1880s.”²⁵ As noted earlier, Chinese were concentrated in California. In 1870, 78 percent of Chinese in the United States lived there, and 21 percent in other Western states. By 1930, the Chinese had begun to disperse – with 50 percent in California, 10 percent in other Western states, and 40 percent in the rest of the United States.

A postscript on Chinese immigration. After the devastating 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco, a number of Chinese decided it was time to return to China and bring back their “wives” and “children,” who as “family members” could enter the country. Because there was no way for authorities to challenge claims that the “records” of the marriages and births had been destroyed in the fire, another small “wave” of Chinese entered the country.

There were significant differences in the patterns of Japanese immigration to the United States compared with Chinese immigration. One difference was that Japanese immigrants came to the United States much later than the Chinese, and were, for the most

part, reacting to economic difficulties in their own land – there was no one soliciting their immigration as laborers as was the case with the Chinese. In 1853, a United States naval fleet under the command of Commodore Matthew Perry had coerced the Japanese into opening their country to foreign intercourse, reversing a 250-year Japanese policy of virtually complete isolation. In response, the Japanese began a vigorous and successful program to modernize their country, but modernization was also disruptive to Japanese society and the economic and other dislocations it brought created a willingness on the part of some Japanese to emigrate. The Japanese divided their early immigration between Hawaii, which at the time already had a predominantly “Asian” population, and the West Coast of the United States. In Hawaii, the Japanese became a sizable portion of the population and a powerful minority group. In California, they were a small percentage of the population and much less powerful, but, if anything, more concentrated in the two major California cities – Los Angeles and San Francisco – than were the Chinese.

Another difference between the Chinese and Japanese experiences was that from the beginning, significant numbers of Japanese women immigrated to the United States. In time, this created a substantial *Nisei* (second) generation of native-born citizens of Japanese ethnicity, and because they were citizens, they were eligible to own property. Daniels cites census figures which indicate that as of 1940, more than two-thirds of the 125,000 Japanese in the United States were native-born citizens, but just over half of the 75,000 Chinese were citizens.²⁶ Another difference was that Japanese were not the subject of exclusion acts as were the Chinese. Although undeniably “Asiatic,” the Japanese government and military had become strong by 1900. These strengths enabled the Japanese government to influence United States policy to avoid humiliating exclusion acts against Japanese immigration. But the Japanese government was also realistic. Noting the strong anti-Asian sentiments both on the West Coast and in Congress, it entered into a “Gentlemen’s Agreement” with the United States in 1908, in which it pledged itself to discourage Japanese immigration. Because the Japanese government was much more in control of its domestic population than was the Chinese government theirs, this agreement effectively halted Japanese immigration, thereby avoiding any official federal or state governmental action.

As noted above, Japanese settlement in the United States was primarily on the Pacific Coast. In 1900, 50 percent of the 24,000 Japanese living in the continental United States lived in California, and another 25 percent in Oregon and Washington. By 1930, there were

119,000 Japanese living in the continental United States with 70 percent in California alone. In California, they transformed the state's agriculture through hard work, an entrepreneurial spirit and timely entry into the industry. Between 1880 and 1910 agriculture in California grew more than tenfold. "As early as 1910, Japanese farmers produced 70 percent of California's strawberries, ...by 1940 they grew 95 percent of the fresh snap beans..." Between 1900 and 1920, the acreage farmed by Japanese in California increased from some 4600 acres to over 450,000 acres. In the latter year, "the production on their farms was valued at \$67,000,000 – approximately 10 percent of the total value of California crops."²⁷ Takaki also discusses the implications of Asian-American economic and scholastic achievement in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century, which has earned them the label description "model minority," and has also generated jealousy and resentment in certain portions of American society.

There are many sources for what Gary Okihiro calls "Family Album History" descriptions of individual Asian immigrant's experiences in the United States. In the chapter of that title in *Margins and Mainstreams Asians in American History and Culture*, Okihiro offers several vivid pictures of the experiences of individual Asian immigrants, as does Evelyn Nakano Glenn in the essay *The Dialectics of Wage Work and Japanese-American Women and Domestic Service, 1905-1940* in *Unequal Sisters*, ed. Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz [1990].

Today, Japanese who Aiji felt would never "blend in," fight to preserve their cultural heritage, in the same way Italians, and Germans once did. In a recent article in the New York Times Mineya Navarro writes of Nisei inhabitants of that overflowing melting pot — Los Angeles — who attempt to preserve some semblance of Japanese culture among a Nisei population who for the most part have never been to Japan and do not speak Japanese even as a second language. Statistics also indicate that Nisei are "outmarrying" to whites and other Asians to such a degree that Larry Hajime Shinagawa, director of the Center for the Study of Culture, Race and Ethnicity at Ithaca College in New York, finds that most Japanese-Americans face only two directions — assimilating into "whiteness" or adopting a "pan-Asian identity."²⁸

Prior to 1921, the basic elements of United States immigration policy had been set by the 1790 statute which identified only "free white persons" as eligible for citizenship, the several Chinese Exclusion Acts of the 1880s and 1890s, and the Gentlemen's Agreement

with Japan. Under the 1790 law, naturalization for free white persons could be secured after two years residence in the United States; in 1795, Congress lengthened the residency requirement to five years, where it remains today. Under these laws, approximately 33 million persons immigrated to the United States. In 1921, Congress passed the National Origins Quota Act, which set a limit on immigration from each European country to three percent of the number of persons of each country resident in the United States as of 1910, and set the quota for immigration from China, Japan and Korea at zero; in 1924, the Johnson-Reed Act lowered the country-by-country quota to two percent and left the Asian quota at zero. The effect of these two acts was to lower the total annual immigration from approximately 600,000 through 1924, to approximately 300,000 annually between 1925 and 1930. Between 1930 and 1945, the number immigrants to the United States dropped to around fifty thousand per year due to the effects of the Great Depression and World War II.

By 1945, there was a general recognition among politicians and other interested individuals and organizations in the United States that significant changes needed to be made in United States immigration law. One of the perceived deficiencies of the National Origins Quota and Johnson-Reed Acts was that they had not allowed the United States to respond adequately to the needs of tens of thousands of persons displaced by war and the threat of war in the 1930s and 1940s. This perception was reinforced by a sense of responsibility to respond, after World War II, to the needs of persons fleeing from Eastern European countries, which were coming under the control of the Soviet Union. In his 1947 State of the Union message, President Truman called upon Congress to “find ways whereby we can fulfill our responsibilities to these suffering and homeless refugees of all faiths.”²⁹ One response was the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, the first legislation in United States history that set refugee policy as distinct from immigration policy, establishing a quota of 250,000 for displaced persons, a quota which quickly became “overdrawn.”

The Immigration Act of 1952, also called the McCarran-Walter Act, provided for an annual overall immigration quota of one-sixth of one percent of the population of the United States and eliminated immigration quotas based on the demographic profile of any ethnic or national group in the United States. The Act specified maximum numbers of immigrants for certain regions of the world, and token quotas for China, Japan, the Philippines and Korea. It also provided for non-quota entry into the country for immediate

relatives of United States citizens and for other selected cases. Under this Act, the average number of immigrants entering the United States increased as listed below.

<u>Period</u>	<u>Average Annual Immigration</u>
1946-1950	170,000
1951-1960	250,000

The next major change in immigration policy and law was the Immigration Act of 1965, which was inspired, at least in part, by the efforts of the domestic Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s to end discrimination in the United States based on race, gender or national origin in American society. Most experts at the time agreed that President Lyndon Johnson and other prominent politicians who wrote and fought for the law completely misunderstood and underestimated its potential impact. As he signed the Act into law in the evocative setting of the Statue of Liberty, Johnson stated: “This bill that we sign today is not a revolutionary bill. It does not affect the lives of millions. It will not reshape the structure of our daily lives...”³⁰ In fact, the Act was revolutionary, scrapping, for example, all regional and nation-by-nation quotas, and establishing a parallel non-quota immigration path for persons in certain categories, for example displaced persons. These changes allowed the number of immigrants to increase from an average of about 250,000 per year in the last full decade prior to its coming into force, to over 900,000 per year in the period 1991-2000.

<u>Period</u>	<u>Average Annual Immigration</u>
1961-1970	330,000
1971-1980	450,000
1981-1990	730,000
1991-2000	910,000

As the numbers of immigrants increased, the profile of ethnicity and national origins of immigrants to the United States changed. In the decade ending in 1950, more than half of immigrants to the United States still came from Europe (1.7 million, with around two hundred thousand each from Italy, Germany and the Great Britain), 40 percent from the Americas (around 1.3 million total, with more than four hundred thousand each from Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean) and most of the balance from Asia. As noted earlier, in the decade 1991-2000, more than nine million immigrants entered the United States – 45 percent from the Americas (half of those from Mexico), 30 percent from Asia (Philippines,

China and Korea each with more than three hundred thousand, and India and Vietnam each more than two hundred fifty thousand) and only about 15 percent from Europe.

There were many reasons for these changes. European immigration decreased as the Western European economies flourished in the decades after the War, and Eastern Europeans were barred from emigrating. Latin American and Asian immigration increased, in part because the quotas had been eliminated and because the populations of many Latin American and Southeast Asian countries experienced frequent political, economic and military turmoil. Also, in the 1960s and 1970s the United States made special provision for admission of refugees/displaced persons from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Cuba. Although persons in those categories have historically been part of immigration to the United States, the increase in the numbers of persons in these categories were a new element in post-1965 immigration.

The change in the composition of immigrants entering the United States revitalized the debate about immigration and citizenship, a debate which is older than the country itself. This debate includes such fundamental questions as What makes an American? What does it mean to “assimilate” into American society and is “assimilation” a good thing? Can the nation control immigration, and if so, what controls are appropriate in a democracy? What effect does immigration have on a democratic society like that in the United States? Fuchs, Takaki and many others make reference to the decidedly non-multicultural views of some of our Founding Fathers. Benjamin Franklin’s pamphlet *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind* asks “Why should the Palatine Boors be suffered to swarm into our Settlement, and by herding together establish their Language and Manners to the Exclusion of ours?” He then divides the peoples of the world into black, “tawney” [e.g. Asians], “swarthy” [Spaniards, Italians, French, Russians, and others] and white, and with respect to their potential place in American society asks (rhetorically?) “[W]hy increase the Sons of *Africa* by Planting them in *America*, where we have so fair an Opportunity, by excluding all Blacks and Tawneys, of increasing the lovely White and Red?” However, Franklin does reflect on his sentiments, and implicitly suggests the difficulty that many individuals and many nations have in treating these issues: “But perhaps I am partial to the Complexion of my Country, for such Kind of Partiality is Natural to Mankind.”³¹ Even by 1751, when the pamphlet came out, the complexion of Franklin’s country included all of his categories.

David Hollinger, in an article titled *Amalgamation and Hypodescent: The Question Of Ethnoracial Mixture in the History of the United States*, discusses the “problematic” idea of the melting pot, the most familiar metaphor applied to the United States in attempting to characterize the process of immigration and assimilation.

Was the idea to melt down the immigrants and to then pour the resulting formless liquid into preexisting cultural and social molds modeled on Anglo-Protestants ...or was the idea instead that everyone, Mayflower descendants and Sicilians and Irish and Ashkenazi and Slovaks, would act chemically upon each other so that...a new compound would emerge? ³²

Hollinger then identifies and discusses two narratives of United States history. The first he calls the “narrative of the frontier,” most prominently put forth by Fredrick Jackson Turner. This narrative “was keyed by the encounter of Europeans with a geographical environment defined by the absence of people. Indians did not really count as people as their land was uninhabited by Turner’s definition.” It describes United States history as the story of white American settlers filling that void. The second narrative, the “narrative of amalgamation,” is in Hollinger’s term, “antithetical” to the frontier narrative. It “is keyed instead by the encounter of human beings with each other, across the lines of many communities of descent, in a series of intimacies and counter-intimacies fostered by a range of economic and cultural forces.” Hollinger explains that he makes the comparison with Turner not because of the inherent strength of Turner’s thesis but instead “to underscore the difference between Turner’s historiographical era and ours.” ³³

Douglas Massey, in his article *The New Immigration and Ethnicity in the United States*, writes that despite the diversity of the different nationalities and ethnic groups who have immigrated to the United States, they have become Americans: “[n]o matter what one’s opinion of the melting pot ideology, the remarkable amalgamation of European immigrants into the society and culture of the United States is a historical fact....” ³⁴ It is interesting that Massey mentions only “European” immigrants.

Historians have used metaphors other than “melting pot” to refer to assimilation and the type of society that results from assimilation, including “mosaic” and “rainbow.” Fredrick Jackson Turner used the phrase “salad bowl” to suggest that the constituent parts of the population are mixed together but retain their individual characteristics, that is they are not melted together into a form where the individual components are indistinguishable one another. Lawrence Fuchs prefers the term “kaleidoscope,” as he argues that “American

ethnicity is kaleidoscopic, i.e. ‘complex and varied, changing form, pattern, color...continually shifting from one set of relations to another, rapidly changing.’”

Massey suggests that “new” (i.e. post-1965) immigrants have faced conditions significantly different from those faced by earlier immigrant groups. He argues, for example, that the many immigrants who came to the United States between 1840 and 1930, subsequently benefited from a sixty year “hiatus” of relatively low immigration. This gave the subsequent generations of those “old” immigrants “breathing space,” time to assimilate. “With each generational transition, ethnic identities and the meaning of ethnicity itself shifted until finally most groups moved into the ‘twilight of ethnicity.’”³⁵ Further, during much of the low-immigration period, there was significant economic growth in the United States, which gave the immigrants and their descendants, opportunity for social and economic advancement. One of Massey’s concerns for the new immigrants are that there is little evidence they will have a “breathing space,” and that the economic environment in the United States can provide new immigrants the same kind of economic opportunities that were available to old immigrants. He also presents research suggesting that the new immigration is even more concentrated geographically in a few areas of the country than was the old. He cites research by others that finds that this concentration is pushing “natives” into other areas, further isolating immigrants and making assimilation more difficult.

Others, including for example Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., are also concerned over the trajectory of multicultural society in the United States. Schlesinger acknowledges that “American history was long written in the interests of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males” and has, at times, been falsified by omission and distortion.³⁶ Schlesinger argues that in recent years, histories written to redress historical omissions and other inaccuracies have, in many cases, gone too far:

The recent apotheosis of ethnicity, black, brown, red, yellow, white, has revived the dismal prospect that in melting-pot days Americans thought the republic was moving safely beyond – that is, a society fragmented into separate ethnic communities. The cult of ethnicity exaggerates differences, intensifies resentments and antagonisms, drives ever deeper the awful wedges between races and nationalities.³⁷

Schlesinger argues that “uncontrolled immigration is an impossibility,”³⁸ therefore it is necessary to decide what are appropriate criteria of control in America. He writes that “the future of immigration policy depends on the capacity of the assimilation process to continue

to do what it has done so well in the past: to lead newcomers to an acceptance of the language, the institutions, and the political ideals that hold the nation together.”³⁹ He accuses “multiculturalists” as being, very often, ethnocentric separatists, who see little in the Western heritage beyond Western crimes. He finds that this ethnocentrism has a powerful presence in schools in the United States and in a chapter titled “The Decomposition of America,” he decries the campaign for bilingualism. “[B]ilingual education in its current version [1998] does more to maintain Spanish than teach English . . . Institutionalized bilingualism shuts doors. It nourishes self-ghettoization, and ghettoization nourishes racial antagonism.” He quotes Alfredo Mathew Jr., a Hispanic civic leader: “[Bilingualism] encourages concentrations of Hispanics to stay together and not be integrated.”⁴⁰ Benjamin Franklin would have applauded.

The historians of immigration to the United States articulated a number of interpretations—interpretations that, after Handlin, have described and explained the history of the nation, as well as the experiences and contributions of those who have adopted this country as their own. The Founding Fathers would have found it difficult to grasp the magnitude and impact of European immigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, Franklin’s “Palatine Boors,” and “torrents” of other European immigrants adopted American culture and shaped that culture. If the first period of immigration would have been difficult for Founding Fathers to imagine, the current immigration environment would have been impossible. According to the “Los Angeles Almanac” “there are at least 224 identified languages in Los Angeles County and . . . 92 languages have been specifically identified among students of the Los Angeles Unified School District.”⁴¹) The first Japanese and Chinese immigrants, despite the initially inauspicious immigration environment for them, flourished but, at the same time, their descendents ponder their demise as distinct racial groups. Whether the “new immigrants” will be able, or will want, to assimilate in the same way that generations of Irish, German, Italian and Japanese have in the past, is unpredictable. In the United States, immigration has always been a contentious issue, which drew (and continues to draw) energy from foreign and domestic conditions and attitudes. The diversity of the new immigration, and the realities of the old, challenge the teacher of history to put aside traditional white, Eurocentric perspectives and adopt new perspectives that not only include all immigrant groups but also preserve the strengths of the American nation—a nation that has attracted almost 70 million

immigrants in its history.

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 - Table 3. Immigrants admitted by region and country of birth: fiscal years 1989-2002.

Table 4. Immigrants admitted by type and selected class of admission: fiscal years 1986-2002.