population centers encounter difficulties attracting patrons. The GAO study found that a few tribes (for example, the Pequot, a Connecticut tribe that operates Foxwoods, the nation's wealthiest casino) are doing very well; about half of all the Indian casino revenues were generated by just eight facilities that had incomes of over $100 million each. However, a majority of tribes had revenues of less than $15 million (U.S. General Accounting Office 1997), and their overall impact on tribal economic development was modest, at best. The Oglala Sioux of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, for example, earned $1 million annually from their casinos—about $38 per capita (Kilborn 1997). Despite widely publicized examples of casino-generated wealth, the vast majority of American Indian people have yet to experience an economic renaissance.

European Americans

The migratory movement of European peoples from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries has been the greatest in human history. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, more than seventy million people have emigrated from Europe; about three-fourths of this number have come to the United States. The uprooting that millions of European immigrants experienced comprises one of the most dramatic sagas in American—indeed, world—history. This massive migration and its impact on American society, and the experience of European immigrants and their descendants have been widely described and debated among social historians and sociologists (Handlin 1951; Taylor 1971; Jones 1960, 1976; Seller 1977; Daniels, 1990; Dinnerstein, Nichols, and Reimers 1996; Dinnerstein and Reimers 1987; Bodnar 1985; Archdeacon 1983).

For nearly two centuries—from the beginning of the seventeenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century—the European population of America was overwhelmingly Protestant and British. The first European immigrants to settle permanently in what is now the United States were almost exclusively English. The first substantial English migration occurred between 1607 and 1660. The economic, legal, and political traditions that English settlers brought to America established an English foundation for American institutions, language, and culture. Although ethnic groups who later migrated contributed substantially to the distinctively American nature of political, economic, and social institutions, language and culture, they were also forced to adapt to the cultural and social systems that the English had established.

Although the English comprised the greatest proportion of the total colonial population, the middle colonies [New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware] contained substantial settlements of Germans, Dutch, Scotch-Irish, Scots, Swedes, and French Huguenots. Because the middle colonies contained the greatest variety of European cultures, they provided a context within which interethnic relations among European peoples in American society can first be observed. Here the ideal of America as a melting pot, in which diverse cultures come together to form a new people, was first formulated. In 1782 a Frenchman, Hector St. John de Crèvecœur, wrote the following:

"What then is the American, this new man. . . . Here in America individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world." (Crèvecœur 1782/1957:39)
As we will consider more fully in Part 3, the idealistic notion of the melting pot has greatly influenced later conceptions of how the various cultures comprising the American people have adapted and interacted (for many people, how they should adapt and interact).

However, relations between ethnic groups in the middle colonies sometimes fell short of this ideal. Spurred by William Penn’s promotional efforts during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, many Germans settled in Pennsylvania, where they formed prosperous farming communities. Because they insisted on maintaining their own language, churches, and culture, their presence generated some of the earliest recorded conflicts among European ethnic groups in America. In 1752 Benjamin Franklin expressed the widely held fears of the “Germanization” of Pennsylvania:

_Why should the Palatine Boors [Germans] be suffered to swarm into our Settlements, and by herding together establish their Language and Manners to the Exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of Anglifying them . . .?_ (Cited in Dinnerstein and Reimers 1987:7)

Thus, colonial attitudes toward immigrants were marked by considerable ambivalence. This same uncertainty still characterizes America’s response to ethnic diversity. Throughout the American experience, immigrant groups have been regarded both positively and negatively. On the one hand, immigration has provided a steady source of labor that has fueled the country’s economic development and expansion. Until the twentieth century, inducements in the form of land, jobs, and exemption from taxation were offered to encourage settlement and to assist American economic development. Americans have also celebrated the idea of America as a haven for the oppressed, as in Emma Lazarus’s classic poem, “Give me your tired, your poor / your huddled masses yearning to breathe free . . .,” which is inscribed on the Statue of Liberty.

On the other hand, the concern expressed by Benjamin Franklin over the impact of ethnic diversity on the society’s institutions has been a persistent one. Lazarus’s poem further characterizes those “tired,” “poor,” “huddled masses” as “wretched refuse,” and, in fact, many immigrant groups have been perceived as undesirable wretched refuse. In practice, Americans have been less charitable than their idealized accounts indicate. Americans have frequently rejected ethnic differences as alien and as a threat to American political, social, and cultural institutions. Some ethnic groups in particular have been rejected or excluded as un-American and incapable of assimilating. Thus, while the labor of immigrants was accepted, their cultural traditions usually were not.

In 1790 when the first United States census was taken, the population of the new American nation numbered nearly four million. It was overwhelmingly British in composition, with the English comprising 60 to 80 percent of the population, and with other people from the British Isles [Scots, Welsh, and Scotch-Irish] contributing substantially. Between 1830 and 1930, the United States population experienced dramatic growth and change. During this period, the nation changed from a small group of tenuously related state governments to the most politically and economically powerful nation on earth. The area of European settlement moved progressively westward at the same time that the country became the world’s leading industrial nation.

Peoples of many lands contributed to this dramatic growth. During the century between 1830 and 1930, nearly 35 million immigrants entered the country, swelling its
total population to more than 123 million (see Figure 2). In contrast to the relative ethnic homogeneity of colonial immigration, the immigrants who arrived in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represented many different countries and peoples, including German, Russian, Mexican, British, Polish, Japanese, Scandinavian, Irish, Italian, Slavic, Greek, Chinese, and Portuguese. European immigration since 1790 has been divided into two broad categories: "old" immigrants from northern and western Europe and "new" immigrants from southern and eastern Europe (see Figure 3).

The "Old" Immigration

Immigration to the United States increased dramatically throughout the nineteenth century. In the peak year of the 1830s, slightly more than 70,000 immigrants entered. By the 1850s, this annual figure had increased to 400,000; by the 1880s, to 650,000; and by the first decade of the twentieth century, there were several years in which more than one million immigrants were admitted.

Until the 1890s, immigration was drawn principally from countries of northern and western Europe: Germany, Ireland, Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales), and Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, and Denmark). With the exception of the Roman Catholic Irish, the old immigration was substantially Protestant. These groups, again

![Graph showing immigration to the United States, 1821-1995]

*IRCA adjustees refers to a special category of immigrants—illegal aliens who, under the provisions of the Immigration and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), were permitted to apply for regular permanent resident status in the United States. By 1994 virtually all those eligible for permanent residence had achieved that status.

FIGURE 2 Immigration to the United States, 1821–1995
with the exception of the Irish, the first immigrant group to settle primarily in cities, were attracted by the opportunities of free or relatively cheap land, and therefore often settled in the rural areas of the country. There were several common factors in their countries of origin that led people to emigrate: drastic population increases, displacement of traditional handicraft industries by the Industrial Revolution, an upheaval in agriculture that transformed traditional agrarian land patterns, and the migration of substantial numbers of people from rural to urban areas. Above all, the promise of economic opportunity lured people to the United States.

The *New* Immigration

European immigration to the United States reached its peak between 1890 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914. During this period, the United States received more than 14 million immigrants. As dramatic as the numerical increase was the shift in the sources of immigration. Prior to the 1880s, immigrants had come almost exclusively from northern and western Europe. By the first decade of the twentieth century, however, more than 70 percent of all immigrants came from southern and eastern Europe.
This shift brought large numbers of immigrants from a great variety of countries—Greeks, Croatians, Italians, Russians (primarily Jews), Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, and Lithuanians. These groups were culturally different from those who had previously migrated to this country. Unlike the old immigration, which was heavily Protestant and followed agricultural pursuits, the new immigrants were overwhelmingly Roman Catholic or Jewish, and, although they may have originated in rural areas or small towns, were drawn primarily to the economic opportunities in the rapidly expanding cities. The changes in the ethnic composition of this immigration caused "native" whites to fear the impact of non-English cultures on American institutions.

The shift in immigration patterns coincided with the flowering of the ideology of "scientific" racism, which reached its height about the turn of the twentieth century. As noted in the introduction to Part 1, at this time scientific and lay opinion concurred in the idea of the inherent mental and moral inferiority of all those who were not of Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic ancestry. To the already existing conceptions of black, American Indian, and Asian inferiority was added the notion of the racial inferiority and the unassimilability of immigrant groups from southern and eastern Europe. Never before or since have racist ideologies been so pervasive and so intellectually respectable in the United States as they were at this time. Moreover, these racist ideologies, which have had an enduring impact on policies and practices in American society throughout the twentieth century, were given intellectual legitimation by the nation's social and intellectual elites—the "best and brightest."

Such beliefs in the racial and cultural inferiority of new immigrants provided the foundation for American immigration policy from 1917 to 1965. The first general restrictive legislation, passed in 1917, was a literacy test, which was used precisely because it was believed to discriminate against "new" immigrants, limiting their numbers while still permitting substantial numbers of "old" immigrants to enter. In the 1920s, even more stringent restrictive measures were enacted, each one assuming the desirability of restricting immigration in order to include those from the countries of the "old" immigration. In 1921 and 1924 further legislation designed to curtail new immigration was enacted. Finally, in 1929, the National Origins Quota Act, which was based on the rationale of ensuring the maintenance of Anglo-Saxon "racial" purity, went into effect. The law limited total immigration to 150,000 annually and established numerical quotas for each nation. Derived by a complicated calculation, each nation's quota was supposed to be "in proportion to its [the nation's] contribution to the American population." The measure assigned the highest quotas to those nations of northern and western Europe whose "racial" stock was believed to be closest to that of the original settlers of the country and who were therefore considered more assimilable and more desirable. More than four-fifths of the total quota was allocated to countries of the "old" immigration. For instance, Great Britain had an admission quota exceeding 65,000, but Italy was allocated fewer than 6,000, Hungary fewer than 1,000, and Greece a mere 310. Reflecting the racist assumptions on which it was based, the law excluded most Asians and Africans completely. These blatantly racist immigration policies were retained virtually intact until 1965, when the Immigration Act, which we will describe more fully in Part 4, was enacted.

Despite fears that they were undesirable and unassimilable and that they represented a threat to American society, the descendants of new immigrants, today referred to as white ethnics, have achieved socioeconomic attainments comparable to
descendants of the old immigrants (see also Model 1988). In Article 23, "The New Immigration and Ethnicity in the United States," Douglas Massey contends that "the remarkable amalgamation of European immigrants into the society and culture of the United States is a historical fact." By almost any measure, descendants of southern and eastern European immigrants [Italians, Jews, Poles, Greeks, Hungarians] have become culturally and structurally assimilated into American life to a degree that few would have predicted even as late as the end of World War II. Indeed, Milton Gordon (Article 12), in his classic discussion of the process of assimilation in American life, which was published in 1961, contended that, although the descendants of the "new" immigrants had become culturally assimilated into the mainstream of American life, they remained structurally unassimilated—that is, they were living, working, and marrying within their own separate worlds. However, a scant decade later, Andrew Greeley was able to celebrate what he termed the "ethnic miracle." Greeley contended that, despite their lowly socioeconomic status three generations earlier, "the ethnics have made it." By the early 1970s Jews had attained the highest income levels of all European ethnic groups in American society, and they were followed by Irish, German, Italian, and Polish Catholics, not by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Moreover, when parental educational levels were held constant, Catholic ethnics showed higher educational achievement than any other European groups except Jews. Writing nearly twenty years later, Richard Alba ("Assimilation's Quiet Tide," Article 15) has confirmed that the trends toward greater structural assimilation that Greeley identified have become even more pronounced. "Assimilation was, and is, a reality for the majority of the descendants of earlier waves of immigration from Europe. . . . Long-term processes . . . have whittled away at the social foundations for ethnic distinctions . . . [and produced] a rough parity of opportunities to attain such socioeconomic goods as educational credentials and prestigious jobs. . . ."

Despite their economic and educational achievements, many white ethnics still retain a sense of cultural identity with their ethnic and national roots (Waters 1990). But, as we noted in the introduction to Part 1, increasingly people of European descent, no matter what their ethnic or national origins, are subsumed within the broad category of "white," and their ethnic identity [as, for instance, Irish, Italian, English, Norwegian] increasingly has become what Gans has characterized as "symbolic"—that is, primarily of ritual or symbolic significance but of little consequence on a daily basis.

In 1990, three-fourths of the American people were identified by the U.S. census as non-Hispanic whites. However, primarily because of their lower fertility and immigration rates, the white population is projected to decline to less than two-thirds of the total population in 2020 and to about only one-half of the American people by 2050 (Day 1993). In Part 3 we will examine in greater depth some of the competing explanations for differences in adaptation among ethnic groups in American society. Moreover, because the experience of European American ethnic groups often serves as an implicit and unspoken background to current discussions of multiculturalism and the future of ethnic integration in American society, in Part 4 we will explore some of the implications and consequences of the "quiet tide" of assimilation of European ethnic groups to which Alba refers.