Chapter 3

A New Wave of Immigrants, 1890s–1920s

AS THE NINETEENTH CENTURY progressed, industrialization spread southward and eastward in Europe. Uprooted peoples left their farms and villages, moved into towns and cities, crossed national boundaries, and traversed the oceans. In this worldwide movement millions of uprooted Europeans dispersed. Warsaw, Berlin, Vienna, Naples, and London were as much inundated by newcomers as were New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Germany, France, Brazil, Argentina, and Great Britain received hundreds of thousands of immigrants. However, the United States, with its higher standard of living and reputation for being a land of golden opportunity, attracted the largest number. Between the early 1880s, when southern and eastern Europeans began impacting American immigration statistics, and 1930, when the combination of restrictive legislation and a major depression established barriers, the United States received a total of 27 million immigrants.

After 1890 newcomers from northern and western Europe continued coming to American shores, but they had less impact. Of the 788,992 immigrants of 1882, for example, the nineteenth century's peak year for immigration, 250,630 were from Germany, whereas only 32,159 were from Italy, 27,935 from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and 16,918 from Russia and the Baltic countries. In 1907, the peak year for early twentieth-century migration, of the 1,285,349 recorded entrants only 37,807 came from Germany, whereas 298,124 came from Italy, 338,452 from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and 258,943 from Russia and the Baltic States.

Just as the Germans, Irish, and Scandinavians had before them, southern and eastern Europeans were escaping from economic strangulation and despair. Southern Italians, especially, fled horrendous conditions, including unemployment, high birth rates, overpopulation, and cholera and malaria epidemics. Many Italian peasants lived in houses of skew (straw) or even in rock caves and abandoned Greek tombs. Often, one-room shacks housed people and livestock together. An agricultural laborer earned 8 to 32 cents a day in Sicily but rarely worked an entire year. Furthermore, while the population in Italy increased by 25 percent from 1871 to 1905, the economy slackened. Wheat, citrus fruits, and wine, commodities that were the mainsprings of the

Italian rural economy, declined drastically in price on the world market. The resulting poverty made some Italian arrivals in the United States declare afterward, "we would have eaten each other had we stayed."

Some northern Italians had left the country earlier in the nineteenth century. After national unification in 1859, though, relaxed emigration restrictions and expanded steamship advertising combined with a depressed economy to induce southern as well as northern Italian men and boys, and a few women, to seek their fortunes in the New World. Many went to Brazil and Argentina, but depressions in those countries in the 1890s encouraged emigrants to opt for the United States even though it too experienced severe economic woes. The comparative prosperity and opportunities here, which were communicated in letters and reported by returning immigrants, finally resulted in a deluge of emigrants, many of whom left Italy through Naples. Between 1876 and 1930 more than 5 million Italians sailed for the United States. Table 3.1 indicates the peak years for Italian arrivals.

Jews ranked second to Italians among the immigrants. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries over 2 million of them left eastern Europe, more than 70 percent coming from Russia. Over 90 percent of the Jews headed for the United States, the remainder going to cities in central and western Europe, Canada, and Latin America. While others were victimized by a changing agricultural economy, the Russian Jews were aliens in the land of their birth. Russian laws, with few exceptions, restricted them to life in enclosed settlements (mostly in eastern Poland and western Russia), curtailed their educational and occupational opportunities, and conscripted Jewish youths for years of military service. Things were made still worse by violence. The assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881 set off a wave of government-condoned pogroms—brutal beatings, killings, and lootings—which lasted for about 30 years. Jews never knew where or when the terror would strike next. A particularly devastating pogrom in the city of Kishinieff in 1903 involved 2,750 families; 47 people were killed and 424 were wounded, many Jewish homes were burned, and Jewish shops were pillaged. The massacre received worldwide attention and vastly increased the number of Jews emigrating from Russia. As a consequence of these east European migrations, the Jewish population in the United States soared from about 250,000 (mostly of German descent) in 1877 to more than 4 million in 1927.

The Slavic groups—which included Russians, Ruthenians (Ukrainians), Slovaks, Slovenes, Poles, Croatians, Serbs, and Bulgarians—together accounted for about 4 million of the new arrivals in the United States. Each of these ethnic groups had a distinctive language, set of customs, and historical experience, but most dispersed themselves throughout the country and

Table 3.1 Italian Immigration in Peak Years, 1905–1920

Year	*Number*
1905	316,797
1906	358,569
1907	298,124
1909	280,351
1912	267,637
1913	376,776
1920	349,042

SOURCE: Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Reports*

either set up separate enclaves or blended in with other Slavic groups. Many were mistakenly identified in the census tracts or lumped together as Slavs and otherwise ignored.

The Poles, the largest of the Slavic groups, were counted separately after 1899, and as a result we know that after the Italians and the Jews, they were the third largest element among early twentieth-century immigrants. Well over a million Poles arrived before World War I; their coming can be attributed to the acute poverty in territory controlled by Russia and the suppression of Polish culture and nationalism in the sections of Poland under Austrian domination. The Poles, like practically all other Europeans, were influenced by letters from compatriots who had already settled in the United States. Many of these were published in newspapers, while others circulated widely in the villages.

Several other groups came to the United States for similar reasons. Among them were about 1 million Magyars from Hungary, perhaps 400,000 Greeks, 233,000 Portuguese, 105,000 Czechs, 70,000 or 80,000 Armenians, and thousands of Syrians escaping from Turkish tyranny; about 90,000 Japanese came from Asia and Hawaii. World War I temporarily interrupted the major flow, but in the 1920s another 800,000 Italians, 160,000 Scots (more than the entire colonial migration from Scotland), almost 500,000 legally accounted-for Mexicans (many more crossed the border illegally), and over 400,000 Germans streamed into this country.

One of the most overlooked groups was the Basques, who settled in the Great Basin (the area roughly between Salt Lake City and the Sierra Nevada

Mountains in eastern California, which includes most of Nevada, southeastern Oregon, and southwestern Idaho) at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Their homeland, Basque country on the Iberian peninsula in Europe, had been taken over partially by France in 1789 but mainly by Spain in 1839. Since generation after generation of Basques produced larger families than the local economy could absorb, grown children frequently emigrated. There were and are Basques in many Latin American countries, and the Basques also populated California during the Spanish and Mexican periods. Today Boise, Idaho contains the largest Basque contingent outside the Iberian peninsula. Other Basque colonies are in eastern Oregon, California, Nevada, Wyoming, and Colorado. Since the Basques are Caucasians, they have not been enumerated separately in either immigration figures or census returns. Including members of the second and third generations, there are more than 20,000 Basques in the West today.

In recent decades many Koreans, Asian Indians, and Filipinos have immigrated to the United States in large numbers, but they were not the first of their groups to arrive. Several thousand Koreans went to Hawaii around the turn of the century. They had been recruited to work in the sugar cane fields. Most were males who came to make money and return home, but some came as families; both men and women labored in cane fields. A thousand or so went from Hawaii to the United States, where they usually settled in California. About 80 percent of these Californians were men who became agricultural workers. Asian Indians, numbering 6,500, also came to work in agriculture. Their main location was the Imperial Valley of California. Often called "Hindoos," these overwhelmingly male immigrants from Punjab were Sikhs. In the United States about half married Mexican women. When Congress barred the immigration of Korean and Asian Indian workers, Hawaiian cane growers turned to Filipino men to replace them. Filipinos also came to the West Coast, where they too labored in agriculture, in Alaskan canneries, or as domestic servants. Few brought their families, and like many Chinese, Koreans, and Asian Indians, they lived chiefly in bachelor societies.

Caribbean immigrants, who often went to other places in the Caribbean and Latin America in search of work, also began coming to the United States. Bahamians headed for Florida to pick crops, and after 1900, they tended to settle in Miami where they worked as construction laborers and as service personnel in the expanding tourist industry. A larger group of black immigrants went to New York City. They were mostly English speakers, but some from Haiti and Martinique spoke French, and formed their own communities and published their own newspapers. Cuban immigrants at first ar-

rived as political exiles during the nineteenth century. These were middle-class immigrants, but others came in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to work in the cigar making industries of Key West and Tampa, Florida.

Arabs also arrived after 1880. These immigrants from Syria or Lebanon, like others, left because of economic reasons. During World War I living conditions in the Middle East were particularly harsh. But in addition, the people had heard from Protestant missionaries about the wonders of America. The early waves arriving before World War I were mostly Christians. Most settled in New York City; others peddled throughout the United States. As a result, small Arab communities eventually developed in places such as Detroit, Washington, D.C., and Iowa. Other Lebanese immigrants worked in factories in New York City, Maine, and Michigan.

Except for the Irish, the majority of European and Middle Eastern immigrants consisted of young adult males. Among European immigrants, 78 percent of the Italians, 95 percent of the Greeks, and about half of the Jews were male. From Asia, Japanese immigrants, like the Chinese before them, were overwhelmingly male. Although many men sent for their wives and children, others hoped to make their fame and fortune and return to their native countries. Few made fortunes, but many returned.

Intelligent estimates of how many foreigners returned to their native countries range from a high of nearly 90 percent for the Balkan peoples to a low of 5 percent for the Jews. We do know that in the period between 1908 and 1914, immigration officials recorded 6,703,357 arrivals and 2,063,767 departures. During these years, more than half the Hungarians, Italians, Croatians, and Slovenes returned to Europe. For the most part returnees included a high percentage of single men. A number of Italian men migrated annually to Italy in the fall, returning to the United States the next spring. Availability of jobs determined their movement. During the winter months, many Italians in railroad, construction, and mining work saw no point in remaining unemployed in the United States. From 1908 through 1916, 1,215,998 Italians left. This back-and-forth migration virtually ceased by the mid-1920s after the quota system went into effect.

Eighty percent of the new immigrants settled in the northeastern quadrant of the United States, roughly delineated by Washington in the southeast, St. Louis in the southwest, the Mississippi River, Canada, and the Atlantic Ocean. Two thirds of the immigrants could be found in New York, New England, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey; sizable numbers also gravitated toward states like Illinois and Ohio. Relatively few went to the South.

Major cities, especially New York and Chicago, proved particularly attractive because of the jobs available, their location as major transportation

depots, and the presence of compatriots who could help the immigrants adjust to the New World. A majority of the Jews and many Italians remained in New York City. Other groups also found city life desirable. According to the census records of 1910, about three quarters of the population of New York City, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and Boston consisted of immigrants and their children. Foreign enclaves also dominated cities like Philadelphia, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Buffalo, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Providence. In 1916, 72 percent of San Francisco's population spoke a foreign language in addition to English.

Although some habitats naturally had more to offer than others, no *area* of the United States escaped the immigrants' attention or proved totally unsuitable to all groups. Thus one could find—then as now—Italians in Louisiana, Michigan, and Colorado; Hungarians and Greeks in Florida; Slavs in Virginia; Mexicans in Illinois; Irish in Montana; Armenians in Massachusetts and California; Basques in Idaho and Oregon; Serbs and Croatians in Nevada; German Russians in North Dakota; and Jews in Arizona and New Mexico. Foreigners, including the English, Russians, Lithuanians, Poles, Magyars, and Italians, outnumbered the native-born throughout the Oklahoma coalfields by a margin of 2:1 in 1890. One Oklahoman noted, "You name it and they were all workin' together here. And they got along just fine too." Certainly these immigrants constituted minorities in the states where they lived, but it is significant that so many places in the United States afforded opportunities to the venturesome.

The immigrants came with high hopes, and although in some places they got on well, in general they were unprepared for the coolness with which so many Americans received them. Like those who had come earlier, the new immigrants were often stereotyped as representatives of some kind of lower species. None of the newer groups escaped contempt. Greeks were physically attacked in Omaha, Nebraska and forced out of Mountain View, Idaho. A New Englander, observing some Poles weeding rows of onions, commented: "Animals, they work under the sun and in the dirt; with stolid, stupid faces." On the West Coast, San Franciscans created an international incident by segregating the fewer than 100 Japanese students in the city's schools.

Italians, who outnumbered all other twentieth-century European immigrants, were one of the most despised groups. Old-stock Americans called them "wops," "dagos," and "guineas" and referred to them as the "Chinese of Europe" and "just as bad as the Negroes." In the South some Italians were forced to attend all-black schools, and in both the North and the South they were victimized by brutality. In 1875 *The New York Times* thought it "perhaps hopeless to think of civilizing [Italians] or keeping them in order, ex-

cept by the arm of the law." Other newspapers proclaimed that Italians were criminal by nature, and a supposedly intelligent and sympathetic observer wrote that Italians "are as a race simpleminded and often grossly ignorant." University of Wisconsin sociologist E.A. Ross, one of the Progressive Era's most outspoken bigots, explained that crime in Italy had declined significantly since the migrations began "because all the criminals are here." Americans were fortified in their beliefs about southern Italians because many northern Italians, who had arrived here decades earlier, also regarded their compatriots from the south as "an army of barbarians encamped among us."

Jews experienced similar problems. In colonial America they had not been allowed to vote, and the restriction lasted, in some states, well into the nineteenth century. Not until New Hampshire removed its barriers in 1877 did American Jews have the franchise in every state. Even where there were no Jews, prejudice and misconceptions abounded. On stage Jews almost always appeared as scoundrels. To have portrayed male Jews in a sympathetic or admirable vein, one scholar tells us, "would have been in defiance of the centuries-old tradition that in the drama the Jew must be the villain or the object of derision."

When the east European Jews arrived, they were often scorned, even by German Jews. The Germans, who had arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, did not want Russian, Galician, and Rumanian Jews in their midst. German Jews had achieved considerable success in the United States and had absorbed the nation's values; many had even refurbished their religious practices, bringing them more into line with Protestantism. The stampede of east European Jews, with their long beards, peculiar clothing, and staunch devotion to an orthodox faith that seemed strange to many Americans, threatened members of the established Jewish community. They envisioned, correctly, an increase in anti-Semitic feeling, which would affect their hard-won respectability. Their views were most specifically stated in an 1894 issue of the *Hebrew Standard*: "The thoroughly acclimated American Jew . . . has no religious, social or intellectual sympathies with the east European Jew. He is closer to the Christian sentiment around him than to the Judaism of these miserable darkened Hebrews." But the American Jews could do nothing to stem the east European tide, nor could they stop other Americans from lumping all Jews together. Once they recognized these facts, they reversed their position and did what they could to help the newcomers adjust to life in America.

Although the German Jews eventually reconciled themselves to having their coreligionists from eastern Europe in the United States, other Americans did not. Beginning in the 1870s, latent or often privately uttered anti-

Semitism emerged into the open and struck first at those Jews who were the most Americanized. The New York Bar Association blackballed a Jew who applied for membership in 1877; a City College of New York fraternity did the same thing a year later; and a major resort hotel in Saratoga Springs, New York, barred a longtime guest, Joseph Seligman, one of New York City's leading bankers. Thereafter, clubs, resorts, and private schools increasingly turned away Jewish patrons. Hostility toward Jews knew no geographical bounds. In the 1890s, Jewish merchants in the South had their stores wrecked and were harassed by threats to leave town. In a New Jersey mill town several days of rioting resulted after a local firm hired fourteen Jews. By the Progressive Era, open discrimination prevailed in housing and employment. Hotels displayed signs proclaiming NO JEWS ALLOWED, and job advertisements specified CHRISTIANS ONLY.

No amount of prejudice or hostility toward the newcomers, however, prevented employers from putting the greenhorns to work. The industrial sections of the country needed cheap labor and foreigners provided the necessary hands. Older immigrants and native-born workers would not tolerate conditions the immigrants had to accept, and so toward the end of the nineteenth century Slavs and Italians replaced British, Irish, and Germans in Pennsylvania coal mines; Portuguese, Greeks, Syrians, Armenians, and Italians worked alongside French Canadians in the New England textile mills; east European Jews and southern Italians took over the jobs formerly held by the Irish and Germans in New York City's garment factories; and the Japanese on the West Coast did the agricultural and menial tasks that had formerly been the province of the Chinese. The United States was certainly not paradise for the foreigners. However, one immigrant residing in Chicago probably summarized the majority feeling when he wrote to his mother in Europe: "Nowhere there is heaven, everywhere misery, in America no good, but still better than in the [old] country."

Because immigrants felt more comfortable working and living among friends and relatives, ethnic groups concentrated in particular industries and occupations. The Slavic groups located in the mining and industrial regions of western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and New York. They also provided the bulk of the labor in Chicago's slaughterhouses and Pennsylvania's steel mills, where they were considered desirable because of "their habit of silent submission, their amenability to discipline and their willingness to work long hours and overtime without a murmur"—or, as the Pittsburgh *Leader* bluntly put it, because the east European immigrant made "a better slave than the American." About one third of the Poles also went into farming in the Northeast and the Midwest. They did truck gardening on Long Island, cultivated tobacco, onions, and asparagus in the Connecticut Valley, and planted corn and wheat in the north central Midwest.

Greeks avoided farming but went into industry or operated small businesses of their own. One survey at the beginning of the twentieth century found that about 30,000 to 40,000 of the 150,000 Greeks in the United States were laborers in factories or in railroad construction gangs. But others peddled fruit and vegetables or maintained shoeshine and ice-cream parlors, flower shops, restaurants, or confectioneries. The association of Greeks with candy and food was proverbial. Chicago became the center of their sweets trade, and in 1904 a Greek newspaperman observed that "practically every busy corner in Chicago is occupied by a Greek candy store." After World War II Greeks still maintained 350 to 450 confectionery shops and 8 to 10 candy manufacturers in the Windy City. Most Americans still connect the Greeks with restaurants, and for good reason. Almost every major American city boasts fine Greek eating establishments, a tradition that goes back more than half a century. After World War I, for example, estimates were that Greeks owned 564 restaurants in San Francisco alone.

Italians settled everywhere and entered almost every occupation, or so it seems at first glance. They built subways in New York, manufactured cigars in Florida, and made wine in California. In Chicago they manned the stockyards, and in San Francisco they caught fish. They constituted a large segment of New England's textile workers and were second only to the Jews in New York's garment trades. They provided gang labor on railroads and construction projects and worked underground in the bituminous coal fields of Illinois, Kansas, and Oklahoma, the iron mines of Michigan and Minnesota, and the copper and silver mines of Colorado, Arizona, and Montana. In 1894 they constituted all but one of New York City's 474 foreign-born bootblacks; in 1897, 75 percent of the city's construction workers. They moved into public sanitation departments in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. In 1911 a federal commission found that they accounted for the largest number of common laborers of any ethnic group in America.

But Italians also yearned for the security of their own businesses, and as soon as they were able, they bought pushcarts or opened small stores. In New York City they dominated the fruit business in all its phases, from produce market to retail outlet. They opened shoe-repair shops, restaurants, groceries, and bakeries. Some made spaghetti, others made candy. Many cut hair, and by 1910 more than half the barbers in New York City were Italian. Italians are also responsible for much of the opera that exists in the United States.

Unlike the Italians, who left Europe for the most part illiterate and unskilled, 67 percent of the Jewish males who arrived in the early part of the twentieth century were classified as skilled workers. This figure compared with an average of 20 percent for all other male immigrants. Most of the Jews utilized their craftsmanship in New York's garment trades, which employed

half the city's Jewish workers. On the eve of World War I, in fact, 70 percent of all workers in New York's clothing industry were Jews. Other Jewish workers found jobs in cigar factories and distilleries, as printers and bookbinders, and as skilled carpenters. For the unskilled, a peddler's pushcart often opened the path to settled retail trade throughout the country, while the enormous numbers of Jews, with their special dietary needs, gave rise to the establishment of kosher butchers, grocers, and neighborhood candy stores, which also sold soda water, newspapers, stationery, tobacco, and sundries. Jews also found opportunities in music and the theater, and in the early decades of the twentieth century they made up half the actors, popular songwriters, and song publishers in New York City.

Outside the big cities, in the Rocky Mountain area for example, Basques have been associated with sheep raising in the West's Great Basin. They have been herders, foremen, buyers, transporters, and ranch owners. When they arrived in the 1870s and 1880s, they were valued for their shepherding skills but despised as a minority. Some people referred to them derogatively as "Bascos," likened them to "Chinamen," and described them as filthy, treacherous, and meddlesome. Nevertheless, they maintained their calm and went about their work. Shepherding is a lonely, monotonous task, but the Basques excelled at it. Their culture values people who succeed in physically arduous tasks that also require grit and determination. One analyst opined that the Basque "sees physical labor and adverse working conditions as a personal challenge which affords an opportunity to merit the approbation of his peers." Basques dominated the western sheep industry from the end of the nineteenth century, but they also entered a wide variety of industrial and professional activities.

Many Japanese immigrants on the West Coast became truck farmers. Beginning as farm laborers, they managed to acquire their own places, raising food for local markets. In the Hood River Valley of Oregon they won a reputation for their apple orchards. In cities such as Los Angeles and Seattle they operated small businesses. They ran hotels, fruit and vegetable stands, barber shops, restaurants, and laundries. Whether farms or businesses, these were family enterprises. Japanese men, who began the immigration stream, sent for their wives and children back home. If they were single, they married young Japanese women by proxy. These "picture brides," as they were called, arrived in America without having seen their new husbands. Many were shocked to find men older than they appeared in their pictures. One remarked, "When I first saw my fiancé, I could not believe my eyes. His hair was grey and I could not see any resemblance to the picture I had. He was forty-six years old." But once here, brides worked beside their husbands when the children were in school.

Like most of the immigrant men who preceded them, the latest newcomers expected their wives to stay at home to raise children and run the family. Girls were socialized to become wives and mothers. But immigrant families were so poor that they needed the wages of daughters, who often went to work at an early age. Those few women who came on their own to the New World were expected to live with relatives and contribute to the family coffers until they had families of their own. Work was rigidly segregated by gender, and women usually took low-paying jobs in the garment shops of Chicago and New York or in the mill towns of New England.

Of course, married women could stay at home and earn money just like women of yore. In Johnstown, Pennsylvania, women had few opportunities outside of the home, but with many single men coming to work in the mills, they could take in boarders. The 1900 census found more than half of all east central European households with lodgers. This meant "more overcrowding, less privacy, more drinking and fighting, and an exhausting seventeen hours a day of work for the wife who had to cook, clean, scrub, wash, iron, carry water and do the shopping." Obviously caring for boarders was undesirable and women tried to avoid it. Thomas Bell's novel of Slovak life, *Out of This Furnace*, noted how when times were good in Pittsburgh's mills, families tried to avoid having lodgers, but all too often, as the statistics make clear, it became an economic necessity.

Women found other ways to earn money while remaining at home. Mothers and daughters did needlework or made artificial flowers to be sold on the streets. One girl told a New York State investigating committee, "When I go home from school, I help my mother to work. I help her earn the money. I do not play at all. I get up at 6 o'clock and I go to bed at 10 o'clock." Reformers at the turn of the century considered home work involving children or in unhealthy occupations such as rolling cigars to be especially harmful to their health, and they gradually convinced legislative bodies to outlaw it. With inspectors in short supply, the laws were not always enforced.

Wherever the newcomers labored, employers sapped them of their energies before replacing them with fresh recruits. Industrial accidents proliferated. The infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City in 1911 took 146 lives, mainly young women. One fireman who watched the women leap to their deaths told of the horror. "They hit the pavement just like hail. We could hear the thuds faster than we could see the bodies fall." Construction and railroad workers also frequently met with fatal injuries, as did newcomers in the Pittsburgh steel mills. Even where the workers were fortunate to escape alive, working conditions often ensured irreparable damage to health. In Riverside, California, Armenian cement makers inhaled dust and poisonous gases emitted in the large, overheated grinding rooms. In

Chicago, Greek teenagers slaved in shoeshine parlors from 6 A.M. to 8 P.M. Afterward, the boys cleaned the stores before being allowed to return to barrackslike dwellings for a supper of stale bread and watery soup. The yearly earnings of a shoeshine boy were $160 to $180. A Hungarian immigrant complained about his experiences in a Pittsburgh steel mill: "Wherever the heat is most insupportable, the flames most scorching, the smoke and soot most choking, there we are certain to find compatriots bent and wasted with toil." In New York home sweatshops, whole families bent over coats and suits with their sewing needles.

In labor camps, where many immigrant men worked, conditions were as bad as in the cities, if not worse. Armed guards patrolled isolated labor camps in Georgia and West Virginia, and beatings with iron bars and gun butts kept the men at their jobs. When a Hungarian immigrant tried to escape from a Georgia lumber camp, his bosses went after him with trained dogs. When they caught him, he was horsewhipped and then tied to the buggy for the return trip. Peonage, though illegal, was widely practiced. Eventually, charges were brought against this particular lumber camp and the owners had to stand trial. As the Hungarian peon recalled, a peculiar kind of justice was enacted. "Of all things that mixed my thinking in America," he later wrote, "nothing was so strange as to find that the bosses who were indicted for holding us in peonage could go out free on bail, while we, the laborers, who had been flogged and beaten and robbed, should be kept in jail because we had neither money nor friends." In a West Virginia labor camp Italian workers slept in wooden boxcars where "the dirt of two years covered the mattresses. Roaches and bedbugs livened the walls and held undisputed sway of the beds and their immediate surroundings. . . . All doors were closed at night. No windows, no air. Nothing seemed to have been left undone to reduce human beings to animals." The workday for these men lasted from 5 A.M. to 4 P.M. with an hour off for lunch. They were never given morning breaks because the *padrone* who controlled them resisted: "The beasts must not be given a rest. Otherwise they will step over me."

Greek and Italian *padrones*, or labor agents, exercised great control over the immigrants. The *padrones*, who had come to the United States earlier, spoke English and arranged jobs and found living accommodations for their later-arriving compatriots. Men and boys were sent to railroad and construction gangs, lumber camps, and factories. A *padrone* collected the salaries of everyone under him, or else a prior fee for placement, and kept a portion for himself as his commission. He also performed sundry tasks like writing letters and sending money back home for those unable to do so themselves. Often, and accurately, accused of taking advantage of those who placed their trust in him—the record of abuses committed by the *padrones* is replete with reports

of decrepit rooming houses and vanishing payrolls—the *padrone* nonetheless performed the valuable services of easing the adjustment to the New World and of obtaining a man's initial position for him. In 1897 two thirds of the Italian workers in New York were controlled by *padrones*, but as the immigrant numbers increased and the states began to regulate labor agents, the need for these intermediaries lessened. By the beginning of the twentieth century in Chicago and on the eve of World War I in New York, the number of *padrones* had declined considerably.

Although new immigrants had little trouble finding jobs—either with or without the assistance of the *padrones*—the wages paid rarely provided for a family's subsistence. One scholar discovered that in a Pittsburgh steel district where a family needed $15 a week to survive, two thirds of the recent immigrants earned $12.50 a week, while the other third took home less than $10. Tales abound of garment workers earning 8 cents an hour; others made $1.25 for a full week's work. Prior to World War I, residents of New York City required a yearly wage of $876 to maintain a minimum standard of living, yet most families earned less. Among all immigrants, Armenians, Jews, and Greeks generally fared better than Poles, Slovaks, southern Italians, and Serbs.

Wages were especially low for immigrant women who found jobs in the garment industries, in laundries, or as domestics. Yet these jobs were more desirable than others. Less fortunate women who arrived alone and without money ended up as prostitutes in the nation's red-light districts. Indignant and moralistic reformers sometimes exaggerated the extent of the "white slave" traffic, but prostitution certainly existed. One muckraking journalist described the plight of some of these women in New York City.

> Just north of Houston Street are the long streets of signs where the Polish and Slovak servant-girls sit in stiff rows in the dingy employment agencies, waiting to be picked up as domestic servants. The odds against these unfortunate, bland-faced farm girls are greater than those against the Galician Jews. They arrive here more like tagged baggage than human beings, are crowded in barracks of boarding-houses, eight and ten in a room at night, and in the morning the runner for the employment agency takes them with all their belongings in a cheap valise, to sit and wait again for mistresses. . . . Just below this section of Poles and Slavs lies the great body of the Jews. . . . These girls are easily secured. . . . In many cases the men who obtain control of them do not even speak their language.

With working-class life so desolate, union organization made firm headway. Garment workers in New York and Chicago went out on strike in 1910

and after long struggles finally won the right to collective bargaining. In an industry run by tyrannical foremen and profit-hungry owners, unions like the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) pioneered efforts to establish safety and sanitary codes and to obtain shorter hours and higher wages. The people in the garment trades—owners, workers, and union organizers—were predominantly Jewish (and secondarily Italian), and this was the case well into the twentieth century. In 1924 Jews constituted 64 percent of the ILGWU members, and as late as the 1940s they made up 75 percent of the members of Dressmakers Local 22 in New York City. As the decades passed, however, Jews concentrated in the upper echelons of management in both factories and unions and were replaced in the rank and file by blacks, Latin Americans, and Asians.

Although trade union leaders were usually men, there were exceptions. One of the most notable examples of women leading strikes occurred in the "Great Uprising" of 1909 in the shirtwaist factories of New York City, when 20,000 workers walked out and began the process of organizing the industry. Jewish women became leaders in the strike and in unionization. Some historians have suggested that it was not the poor working conditions of the shops alone that triggered female activism, but also the radical culture of their European background. Others think that Jewish families gave their young women more freedom than did Italian families, and this may account for the greater Jewish participation. Whatever the exact cause, young Jewish women took the lead, answered the call, and played a major role in organizing garment workers. Many of these women, such as Rose Schneiderman and Clara Lemlich, remained active in union and radical politics for years.

Garment workers who struck in 1909 had the support of middle-class reformers, and two years later their cause was greatly strengthened by the Triangle Fire. While the strikes of New York's women garment workers became famous, historians have noted that Polish women struck Detroit's cigar makers in 1916 and Italian, Polish, Lithuanian, Greek, Syrian, Armenian, and Portuguese daughters and wives participated in the Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile strike of 1912.

The beginnings of union organization and the continuous replenishment of workers at the lowest job levels by newer immigrants provided minorities with opportunities to upgrade their positions and move away from the slums. It is remarkable, in retrospect, how people survived and continued to work and hope for better lives when they were mired in such depressed conditions. Whole neighborhoods were filthy, foul smelling, and overcrowded. In cities like Boston, New York, and Chicago houses adjoined stables, and offal, debris, and horse manure littered the streets. Piles of garbage in front

of buildings or in narrow passageways between houses gave rise to stomach-turning odors and a large rat population. Population density was astronomical, some sections of Chicago, for example, having three times as many inhabitants as the most crowded portions of Tokyo and Calcutta. In 1901 a Polish neighborhood in the Windy City averaged 340 people per acre, and a three-block area housed 7,306 children. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Italian sections of New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago seemed little better. One survey taker found that 1,231 Italians were living in 120 rooms in New York; another reporter could not find a single bathtub in a three-block area of tenements. In Chicago a two- or three-room apartment might house an Italian family of parents, grandparents, several children, boarders, and cousins. A 1910 survey revealed that many of Philadelphia's Italian families had to cook, eat, and sleep in the same room, while most shared outhouses and a water hydrant—the only plumbing facility available—with four or five other families. In addition, many Italians kept chickens in their bedrooms and goats in their cellars. In 1901 New York passed a tenement-house law requiring that all new buildings have windows 12 feet away from the opposite building, toilets and running water in each apartment, and solid staircases within each structure. But it was many years before a majority of the newcomers occupied such houses.

Although members of various groups shared similar working and housing conditions, it would be a mistake to suggest that they also had common aspirations. All, of course, desired decent homes, well-paying jobs, and the opportunity to maintain their own lifestyles free of strife. But ethnic groups differed in cultural ethos and the ways in which they chose to attain their goals. Their attitudes toward family, education, religion, success, philanthropy, and community affairs differed considerably. Moreover, values of the various groups frequently collided with the dominant strain in this country, a factor that sometimes created new problems.

The non-British minority groups spoke a foreign language when they arrived in America, and this placed an immediate stigma upon them. For their own emotional security they chose to live in neighborhoods inhabited by people like themselves; as a result they had even less reason to learn English quickly. Immigrant women felt particularly isolated because they rarely left the insulated community. Many of the men were also cut off from interaction with other groups, especially when they worked with their compatriots in similar occupations, a situation that further retarded the assimilation process. As one Italian put it, "When I arrived in New York I went to live with my *paesani* [countrymen]. I did not see any reason for learning English. I did not need it for everywhere I lived, or worked or fooled around, there were only Italians." Habits of dress, food preparation, and religious practices were also

retained by the immigrants. But children, educated in the United States, could not accept or feel completely at home with all of their parents' ways. Although they did not sever cultural ties, immigrant children tried to harmonize as much of their parents' values as they could with the demands of American society. Inevitably, such efforts created intergenerational strains.

Italians, for example, placed little importance on *individual* success or accomplishment. A person was supposed to enhance the family's fortune or honor, not his or her own. Only members of the family and their close blood relations were considered important and trustworthy. All outsiders were strangers to whom one had no responsibilities. Family honor had to be defended to the death, if necessary, but society's laws were of little moment. "Individual initiative was virtually unknown," one scholar tells us, and "all actions had to receive the sanctions of tradition and custom." Most of the Italian immigrants seemed to follow the advice contained in a southern Italian proverb: "Do not make your child better than you are."

The Italian *contadini* (peasants), who had a history of oppression, linked education with class, status, and nobility. It was regarded as something that peasants—and women—could not aspire to. Education might be financed with surplus wealth, but most immigrant families could barely sustain themselves on what they earned. The *contadini* also had other reasons for being wary of the schoolhouse. In Italy, historian Rudolph Vecoli tells us, "educated persons were regarded with mistrust; in the old country, the priest and professor had been among the exploiters. Immigrant parents prized education solely for its utilitarian value; reading in itself was thought to be an idle, and perhaps injurious, pastime." Southern Italian immigrants therefore did not encourage their children to excel in reading. As soon as the law allowed, they pulled their offspring out of school and sent them to work. Material advancement was what counted.

Some Italians, of course, did not subscribe to these views. The first American of Italian descent to become a governor and a United States senator, Rhode Island's John O. Pastore, had a mother who was impassioned with achieving American middle-class respectability. She made her sons wear fresh shirts every day and admonished them, "Make yourself liked; make people respect you." New York City's first Italian American school principal recalled his father's urging, "Go to school. Even if it kills you." But these were the exceptions. Before World War II, few immigrant Italians graduated from high school or attended college. One survey of Italian children in St. Louis found that a majority went beyond the sixth grade for the first time in the 1930s. In 1940 only 1 percent of residents on the "Hill"—the Italian area in St. Louis—had graduated from high school, and only 13 percent had done so in 1970.

Southern Italian attitudes toward religion and the Church also differed considerably from those of most Americans and other immigrants. Nominally Roman Catholic, Italians as a whole did not share the Irish dedication to the faith. Unlike American Protestants, who are not always dutiful in their attendance at church services but who tend to maintain a respect for the institution and its members, most Italians regarded the church as "a cold and almost puritanical organization." Moreover, they looked upon the priests as they had in Italy, "as lazy, ignorant hangers-on who merely earned their living off the community." It was not that Italians lacked religious beliefs, but rather that their customs differed from those of the dominant Irish Catholics. They were flexible about doctrine, ignorant of many traditional aspects of Roman Catholicism, and devoted to their festivals and *festas*. The southern Italian immigrant feared "the evil eye" and its effects, and, as one historian tells us, "through the use of rituals, symbols, and charms, they sought to ward off evil spirits and to gain the favor of powerful deities."

Irish domination of the American Catholic Church caused further problems. The Irish hierarchy looked down upon the Italians. One said, "When they are told that they are about the worst Catholics that ever came to this country, they don't resist, or deny. If they were a little more sensitive to such remarks they would improve faster. The Italians are callous as regards religion." An 1884 census of 50,000 Italians in New York City showed that 48,000 of them "neglected church services." Italian men left it to the women to attend mass and to keep the faith. One scholar remarked of his father, "Typical of males of contadino origins, my father had been an infrequent churchgoer, attending Mass only on major holidays like Christmas and on those traditional occasions when family loyalty made presence compulsory—weddings and funerals."

Eventually the Church appointed Italian-speaking priests to serve in predominately Italian parishes. Father Antonio Demo, who headed a parish from 1898 to the Great Depression, helped his New York flock find jobs and deal with authorities; he even worked with Protestant groups on mutual concerns. Italian women were also recruited by Church officials to train as nurses and teachers. As successive generations of Italians Americanized, they adhered more closely to the dominant standards of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States.

Immigrant Italians rarely united for community programs. Southern Italians were devoted to their families and had some loyalty to members of their villages or communities in Italy, but they lacked an overall ethnic commitment. Italian mutual-benefit societies existed in the United States, but for the most part they helped comparatively small numbers. Regional dialects and lack of widespread written communication, as well as a diversity of

thought, actions, and lifestyles, divided Italians of different provinces and regions and made any kind of group organization almost impossible in the United States. Not until 1967, in fact, did the Italian-American Civil Rights League band together to protect and defend those of Italian descent from abusive treatment by other Americans.

On the other hand, Jewish success in this area won the admiration of numerous groups. In 1908, when the New York City police commissioner asserted that many criminals were Jewish, Jews protested vigorously. A New York Italian newspaper remarked approvingly: "The Jews are all connected to each other, and, when they believe a patent offense has occurred to their colony, they act as one man."

Pogroms in Russia from 1903 to 1906 provided a focus for organized Jewish efforts to help their brethren in distress, and led to the formation of the American Jewish Committee, an organization composed of and representing the Americanized German Jewish community. The Committee pledged itself to protect the civil rights of all Jews throughout the world. In 1913 midwestern Jews organized another defense organization, B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League (ADL), four weeks after an Atlanta jury convicted a Jew, Leo Frank, of murder primarily, as B'nai B'rith and other Jews saw it, because he was a Jew. The ADL, dedicated to combating prejudice in the United States wherever it existed, was the first such general defense organization founded in this country, and over the years has been quite successful in curbing the effects of prejudicial behavior.

Jews differed from Italians in a number of other ways. The east Europeans were more religiously observant; unlike for the Italians, becoming more American for Jews meant a weakening of religious ties. Moreover, the Jewish faith embodies ethical prescriptions that make charity a social obligation, and most Jews still accept that view. For those who seek honor and prestige within the Jewish community, philanthropy is a necessity. Respect and appreciation go to those involved in humanitarian endeavors.

This sense of *noblesse oblige*, combined with fears that east European Jews would exacerbate anti-Semitism among non-Jews, motivated German and Americanized Jews to help the newcomers adjust to life in America. To acculturate their European cousins, German Jewish individuals and agencies supported educational institutions that trained foreigners to speak English, started a Yiddish-language newspaper for Lower East Side ghetto dwellers, and funded the Jewish Theological Seminary to train Americanized Conservative, rather than Orthodox, rabbis. No efforts were spared to bring Jews into the mainstream of American life. And to prevent them from becoming a burden on society, wealthier and more established Jews in the United States financed homes for orphans, delinquents, and unwed mothers as well as new Jewish hospitals.

East European Jews accepted whatever assistance they got; they also endeavored to provide their own facilities. They too established charitable organizations to help the needy, and devoted themselves to the quest for culture. Between 1885 and 1915 they started over 150 Yiddish-language newspapers, journals, and yearbooks. The best known of those was Abraham Cahan's *Forward*. At its height before World War I, it was the ghetto's leading daily and over the years the most widely read Yiddish newspaper in this country. In addition, Jews established successful theater groups, and participants like Paul Muni, Jacob Adler, and Molly Picon went on to Broadway and Hollywood. East European Jews attended concerts and lectures and afterward moved on to the most popular cultural institution on the Lower East Side, the café or coffeehouse, where they would debate endlessly about plays, poets, pianists, politics, and the direction society was taking.

More than anything else, however, the Jews sought knowledge. New York City's Educational Alliance had a regular daily attendance of 500 and a waiting list of 1,000 for English classes, which were given at all hours of the day and 6 evenings a week. The poorest Jewish families saw to it that their children attended public school, and teachers generally praised the youngsters for their industry and deportment. By 1915 Jews made up 85 percent of the student body at New York's free but renowned City College, one fifth of those attending New York University, and one sixth of the students at Columbia.

Like all other immigrant groups, Jews were more enthusiastic about educating boys than about teaching girls. But Jewish women had a tradition of literacy in the Old World. Whereas Italian and other immigrant families took their girls out of school as soon as possible, Jewish parents were much more supportive of female education. It no doubt helped that Jews were better off than many other immigrants and did not always have to send young women to work. There were also practical reasons for educating girls: well-trained women could help their husbands and fathers in the many small family businesses. And as the white-collar economy began to expand after 1910 it offered a wider variety of opportunities. Teaching was another profession open to women. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, over half the women college students in New York City were Jewish. They later provided the greatest number of new public school teachers.

Jews who lived outside New York City did not have a million-plus coreligionists to support a full and rounded community life. Accordingly, most relinquished Old World customs at a faster pace. It is for this reason, in fact, that first- and second-generation New York City Jews remained where they landed. Rural areas, small towns, and even some of the bigger cities simply could not provide the cultural and educational opportunities as well as the Jewish sense of community so essential to these east European newcomers.

Other immigrants also sought to maintain their own cultures in the United States. For the Magyars in America, both social and religious life revolved around the Church. The Poles were also devoted to the Roman Catholic Church and supported the institution generously. On the other hand, they thought less highly of education or advancing their children's positions in society. For most of the east central European Catholic peasants, home ownership was clearly the primary goal. Children may have been expected to learn to read and write, tutored in the group's rich history and traditions, and inculcated in the precepts of their faith, but as one Polish-American second-generation male complained, "Immigrant parents often thoughtlessly sacrificed their children's future to the exigencies of their own survival, sending them off to jobs when they should still have been in school or college."

Some parents, however, made decisions about education deliberately and without qualms, and in this regard their views were reinforced by the local priest, who "urged 'hard-working creatures of God' to exercise humility and patience suitable for their condition planned by 'Almighty Providence.'" Many ethnics agreed with such pronouncements. Too much education, they believed, was inappropriate for their youth.

Two scholars, Ewa Morawska and Helene Lopata, have written extensively on this phenomenon. Morawska explains that among east central European Slavs:

> Popular consensus in the village still considered education acquired by formal schooling to be a pursuit for the nobility, a fancy of the higher orders; "It is all right for the rich man, but not for a poor, stupid peasant." In the virtually unanimous testimony of eyewitnesses—peasant-born memoirists, writers, publicists, and politicians—prolonged schooling and too-visible concern with formal education alienated those peasants who possessed it from the rest of the village. For most, the only accepted and comprehensible purpose of schooling for a peasant son at the turn of the century was still the priesthood.

Helene Lopata, writing about the Poles, describes the almost identical thought patterns:

> The traditional peasant attitudes toward formal education were very negative, intellectual matters being defined as the province of the nobility and the intelligentsia; schooling was seen as an economic waste and a source of intergenerational problems. . . . The only school system the immigrants trusted to rear their children was the parochial school, which was expected to teach them Polish Catholicism and moral values.

Among most of the Slavs and southern Italians, education past the age of fourteen was deemed wasteful due to the family's loss of their children's income. Morawska found in her research, in fact, that many priests in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, as a matter of course signed papers indicating that underage children were in fact a year or two older so they could obtain work legally. Other religious Catholics, like Mexicans and French Canadians, shared these beliefs. One scholar has written, in fact, that among French Canadians "formal schooling was devalued. Education beyond a basic level—reading, writing, and simple arithmetic—was required only for children who would join a religious order." It would take several generations before these views began to change; not until after World War II, and especially since the 1960s, do we find significant reevaluations of such thoughts among the descendants of the Slavs, Italians, and French Canadians. (The Mexicans will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.)

On the other hand, in those groups that recognized the importance of education both in itself and as a tool for socioeconomic advancement, children and grandchildren of immigrants moved into the middle and upper classes much more quickly than did individuals whose parents frowned on too much learning. Among those who prized education were the Czechs, Japanese, Armenians, and Greeks. Japanese immigrants, who by law could never become citizens themselves, often made incredible sacrifices so that their children might go to high school and college. Armenians surpassed all other incoming groups between 1899 and 1910 with a literacy rate of 76 percent. Once in this country they, along with the Japanese and Greeks, "devoured" education. A common admonition of the Armenian parent to his child went, "My son, don't be ignorant like me—get an education and be a man." "The Czechs," on the other hand, "came from a country where universal compulsory education was strictly enforced. A sense of literacy was thus ingrained in the Czech immigrant, and it was not unusual for parents to aspire toward a college education for their children in the United States." Greek children, no matter how poor their parents or how lowly their status, were "socialized to postpone immediate gratifications for a future goal. For a majority of Greek parents, that goal was to see their children . . . move up the social scale through the avenue of education, business, and commerce outside the Greek ethnic community."

The Greeks also tried to instill in their children the language and heritage of the old country while making sure they became accomplished in the United States. They encouraged their offspring to prepare for the professions, especially law and medicine, because in Greece these were considered the most prestigious fields. One scholar tells us that among Greek Americans "education of the young became a byword in community after community,"

while a Chicago schoolteacher claimed, "I think I have found the Greeks the brightest and quickest to learn." Greek American children performed their required chores, but when someone asked one man why his fourteen-year-old son was not out working, the father responded, "My boy will stay in school. He must study at home after school. He must be a good student; he must become a good man."

In the Greek American community the *kinotitos*, or community council, was the governing body of the people. It provided for the establishment of churches and schools, hired and fired priests and teachers, and exerted a continuing influence on Greek affairs. The feelings of the group were almost always reflected in the actions and statements of the *kinotitos*. For recreation the Greeks flocked to their *kuffenein*, or coffeehouses. These served as community social centers where men smoked, drank, conversed, and played games in what became literally places of refuge after a hard day of work or escapes from dank and dreary living quarters. No Greek American community was without its *kuffenein*, and one chronicler reported that in Chicago before World War I "every other door on Bolivar Street was a Greek coffee house."

Many of the ethnic groups that came to the United States felt an attachment or loyalty to their native countries, but none surpassed the Greeks in their devotion to, or involvement with, the homeland. In the United States, Greek Americans divided into factions and argued vigorously the ramifications of politics in Greece. Many Greeks were fervently attached to their mother country and hoped to return. Although large numbers remained in the United States, they were slow to take out American citizenship, which to many meant a renunciation of their heritage.

Like the Greeks, the east central European Slavs remained attached to their compatriots and were reluctant to become American citizens. The ocean crossing did not lead to changed values or outlooks, and unlike the fiercely independent Greeks, the Slavs in general did not perceive the United States to be a place where additional effort would increase their opportunities to move up the socioeconomic ladder. Nor did they seem to consider social mobility a realistic possibility for their children. They accepted the so-called natural superiority of the upper classes as part of God's order on earth and these views, which were sanctioned by both religion and custom, were deeply ingrained in them. They resisted pressures to Americanize and lived the life encapsulated by an old Galician village proverb: "There is not equality among angels in heaven; there will never be any on earth. A peasant is always a peasant, a gentleman a gentleman: Amen."

The numerous fraternal and social organizations immigrants established further attested not only to their reluctance to relinquish their heritage and

beliefs but also to their desire to enrich their lives in America among compatriots who shared their values. Among the groups actively promoting the maintenance of traditional cultures were the South Slav Socialistic Federation, which played a key role in aiding Yugoslav workers in the United States; the Ukrainian Women's Alliance (which became the Ukrainian Woman's League of America in 1925), which taught illiterates how to read while promoting the goal of a national Ukrainian state in Europe; and the Croatian Catholic Society, formed in Gary, Indiana, in 1922. The Greeks had two major ethnic associations: GAPA (Greek American Progressive Association) and AHEPA (American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association), organized in Atlanta in 1922. The former strove to perpetuate the Greek culture; the latter wanted to help smooth the path to acculturation. The variety of ethnic associations across the country also included the Garibaldina Society—Italian, formed in Los Angeles in 1885; the Young Men's Serbian Society of Tonopah, Nevada; and the Hungarian Verhovay.

Along with the ethnic societies were numerous newspapers that recorded the groups' events. In the larger cities, like Chicago and New York, the different immigrants often had a choice of several daily and weekly newspapers in their own languages. In some of the smaller communities, however, choices of foreign-language newspapers were understandably smaller or nonexistent. Among some of the numerous periodicals that recounted events in the old country and offered suggestions for coping with life in America were the *Ukrainian Chronicle*, the *Slovenian Proletarac*, and the *Bolletino del Nevada*. In the 1920s, among the foreign-language press in Utah, an observer listed *Beobachter* (German), *Bikaben* (Danish), *Utah Nippo* (Japanese), and *To Fos* (Greek).

In another area of the West, the Basques also took pride in and strove to maintain their culture. Their language is Europe's oldest, although the Spanish takeover of Basque lands in 1839 caused it to become diluted with Spanish words; it is so complex that in this country most of the children have not learned it and speak only English. Although the Basques married one another during the first generation, the passage of time and their involvement with other people made this difficult to continue. Nonetheless, the Basques do gather periodically. Since 1928 they have held an annual Sheepherder Ball in Boise, and there is also a midsummer St. Ignatius Day picnic to honor their patron saint. Many western universities have made an effort to preserve Basque culture. The University of Oregon has a collection of Basque songs and stories; the University of Nevada offers a course in the Basque language; and the University of Idaho collects Basque historical items.

Ethnic organizations were often segregated by gender. Just as men ran political groups and worked outside the home, they dominated the formal eth-

nic groups. Yet women had their own organizations in churches and participated in social and union activities. Jewish women attended the educational programs offered to their communities and Italian women participated in the street religious festas. In the informal world of immigrant life, men and women frequently went separate ways. The saloon or bar culture was basically for men. Describing Polish workers, one historian noted, "Men had their own world—the corner saloon, where immigrant males could meet their friends and drink away the tiredness of the day." Sporting clubs were also for men. Italian men, for example, went to neighborhood saloons to play cards or to the local parks to play bocce. Urban immigrant boys played stickball in the streets, or if they were lucky, attended the numerous clubs to play basketball.

Women's economic role in the home was also a social role, for the home was "woman's place." They spent their free time meeting with friends and relatives or participating in church activities. They often frowned on the male saloon culture. Stories abound in immigrant communities of men drinking up their earnings or deserting their wives. Immigrant organizations aided those in distress, but not always successfully; and as noted, the plight of women heading households with many small children was precarious at best. For young single women the world of "cheap amusements" proved attractive. They went to amusement parks, attended dances, and patronized nickelodeons, so common in immigrant neighborhoods. These women were being introduced to the emerging world of consumerism, which in the long run would take them away from their ethnic communities. During the twentieth century, movie houses, department stores, mass advertising, radio, and the other forms of an emerging mass culture would have a profound influence on the lives of immigrants and their children.

Growing consumerism and greater distance from Old World culture was part of the ongoing process of Americanization. Once begun, assimilation could not be stopped. For most groups each succeeding generation had fewer ties to the old country and was more directly involved with American society. Children and grandchildren forgot the language of previous generations, joined trade unions that cut across ethnic lines, and moved away from urban ghettos. In this fashion they gained a strong foothold in the mainstream of American life.