

Lecture 15

Construction Sites

What Drives Variation concerning Ethnic Identities?

- In the last few lectures, we concluded that ethnic groups are not static, but change with a variety of contingencies
- Chapter 5 gave us answers for specific case studies about what drives ethnic identity
- In the next few chapters and lectures, we ask:
What factors are likely to play a significant role in the construction of race and ethnicity whenever that process occurs?

Two Important Categories

- Identity construction is driven by two important factors.
 - 1.) **Situations in which find themselves** (this lecture we add the details of what “situation” means).
 - 2.) Attributes and resources the groups bring with them to their situations (focus of next chapter)

Critical Sites

- Six critical sites are important:

Politics, labor markets, residential space, social institutions, culture, daily experience.

Each of these sites is an “arena” in which identity construction occurs.

Empirically these are difficult to separate (they operate together). We pull these ideas apart for sake of clarity.

For each site, we need to think about the **opportunity** and **constraints** that groups encounter.

Politics

- **Power:** the differential ability of human groups to influence the decisions and relationships that have consequences for their lives.
- We are concerned here with how the political system creates opportunity and constraint for different groups.

Politics

- Power works at both the formal level (government) and informal level (social ideologies as discussed with Social Dominance theory)
- Enhanced political opportunities (refugees)
- Reduced opportunities (slaves, lack of citizenship)

**THE LARGER THE POWER DIFFERENTIAL
BETWEEN ETHNIC OR RACIAL GROUPS,
THE GREATER ABILITY TO SHAPE SOCIAL
BOUNDARIES.**

Politics

- **Political Systems and Boundary Maintenance** (Examples in US, Malaysia, Fiji)
- **Forms of Political Organization and Informal Practices** (Soviet Union, US immigrants, South Africa)
- **The Political Construction of Ethnicity** (

Labor Markets

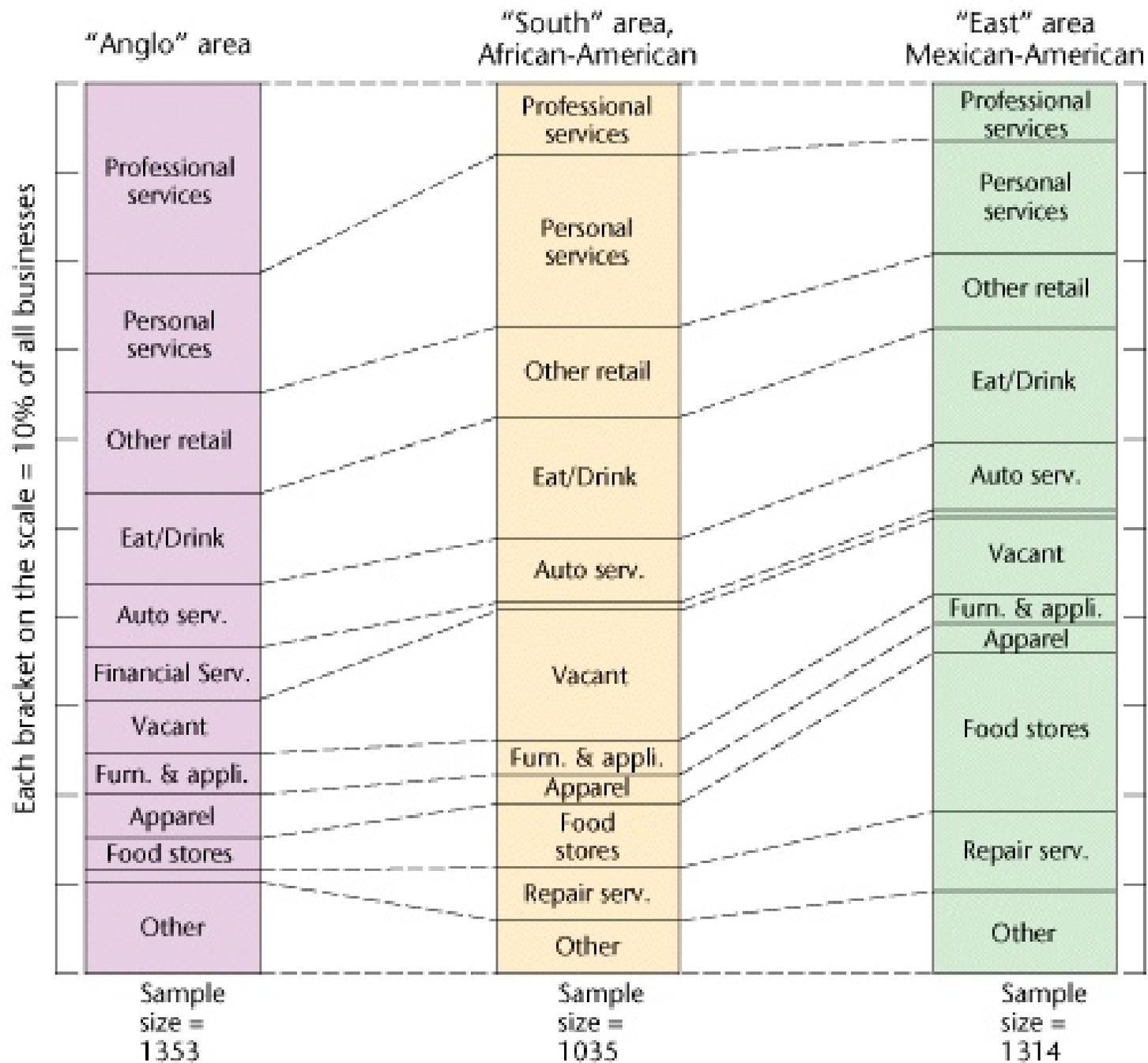
- Work is an essential human activity that forms a number of categories within societies
- Societies usually have a “division of labor”
- **These categories form ready-made categories for ethnic/racial identities to form.**

Ethnicity and Occupational Concentrations

- Multiethnic societies often create an ethnic division of labor in which certain occupations are dominated by a certain type of group.
- Examples: Slave societies, interaction with gender stratification

Ethnicity and business activity

- Differential ethnic preferences give rise to distinct patterns of purchasing goods and services
- These differences are reflected in the business types and services offered in different ethnic neighborhoods of a city
- Keith Harries made a detailed study of businesses in the Los Angeles urban area comparing three different ethnic neighborhoods

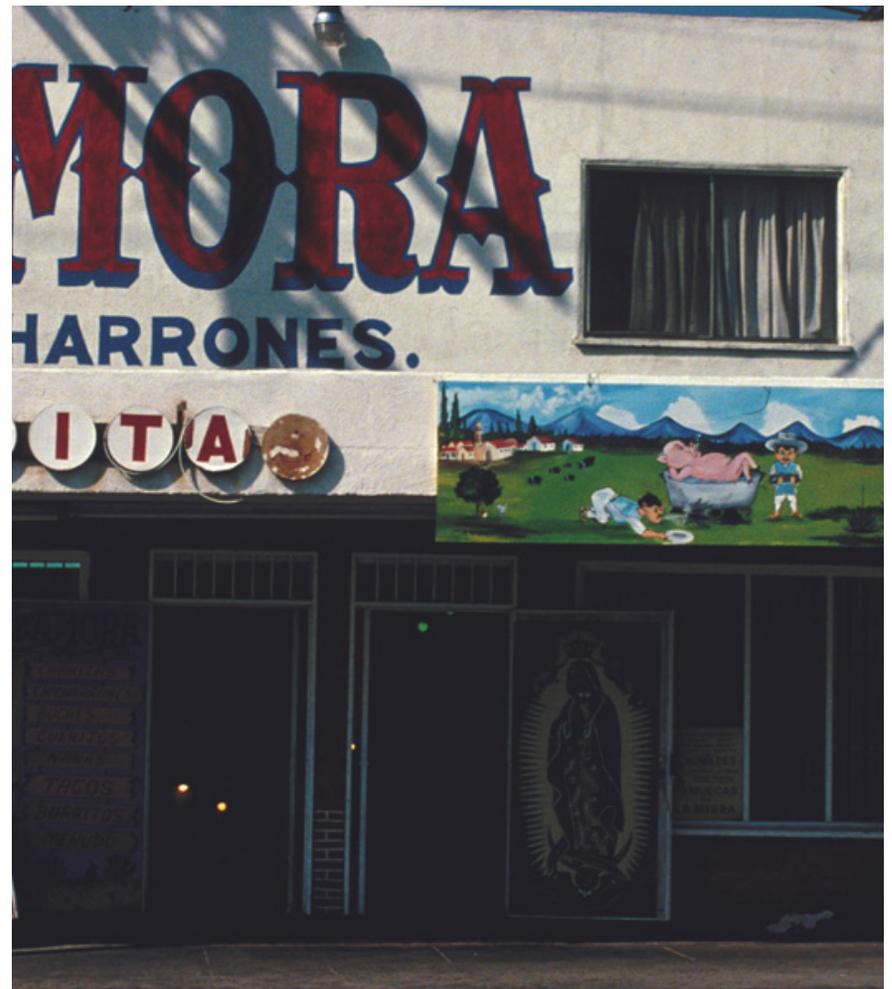


Ethnicity and business activity

- East Los Angeles Chicano neighborhoods
 - Reflects dominance of small corner grocery stores and fragmentation of food sales among several kinds of stores
 - Large number of eating and drinking places is related to Mexican custom of gathering in cantinas, where much social life is centered
 - Abundant small barbershops provide one reason why personal service establishments rank so high

Ethnic Business: East Los Angeles

- This Latino/Chicano neighborhood has a prevalence of restaurants, food stores, auto repair shops, immigration and other services.
- This restaurant specializes in carnitas – pork.



Ethnicity and business activity

- Black south Los Angeles
 - Secondhand shops are very common
 - No antique or jewelry stores
 - Only one book-stationery shop
 - The distinctive African-American shoeshine parlor is found only in south Los Angeles

Ethnicity and business activity

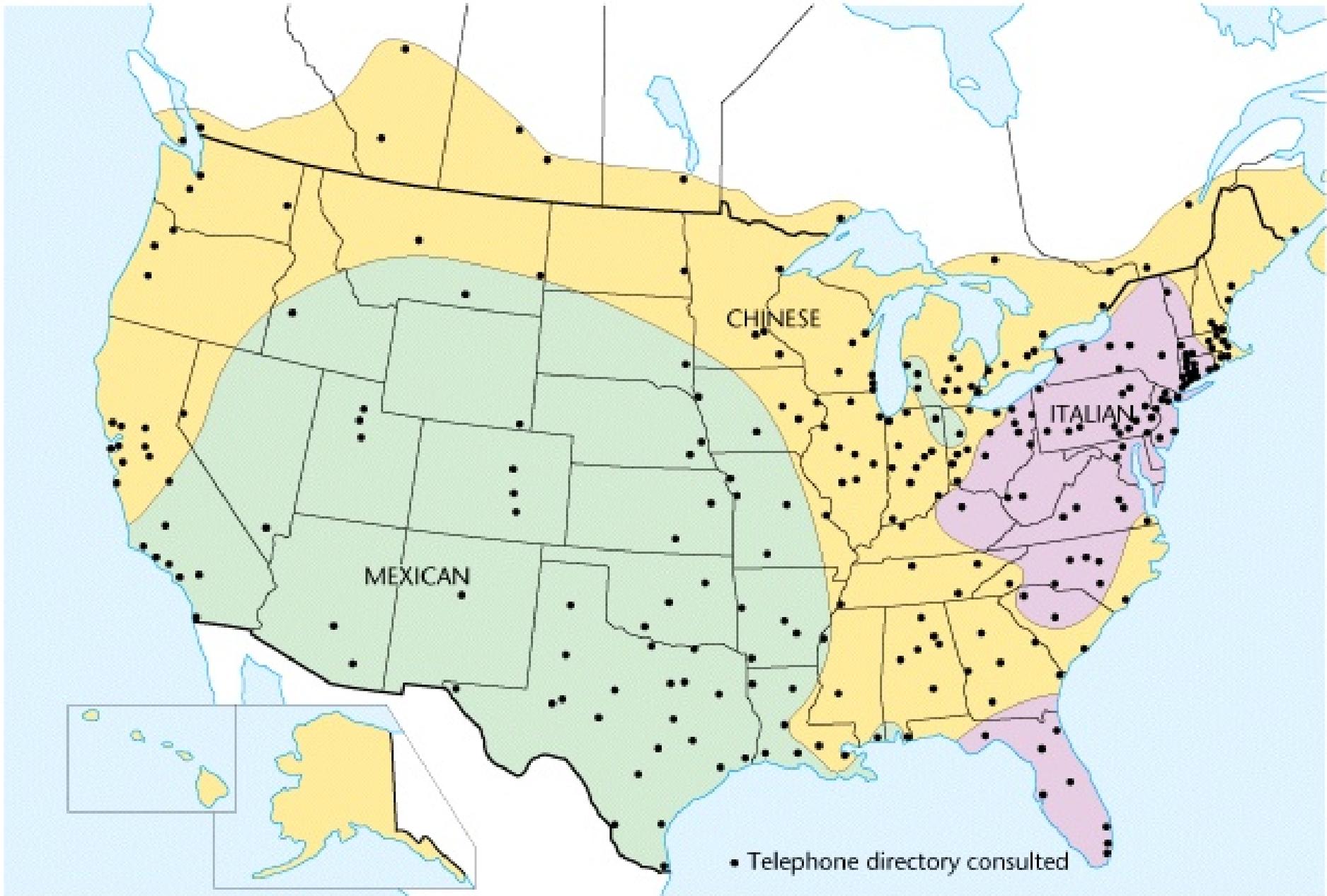
- Anglo neighborhoods
 - Rank high in professional and financial service establishments, such as doctors, lawyers, and banks
 - Professional and financial establishments are much less common in non- Anglo neighborhoods
 - Furniture, jewelry, antique, and apparel stores are also more numerous
 - Full-scale restaurants are also more common

Ethnicity and type of employment

- Ethnic group and job type is sufficiently strong to produce stereotyped images in the American popular mind
 - Irish police
 - Chinese launderers
 - Korean grocers
 - Italian restaurant owners
 - Jewish retailers

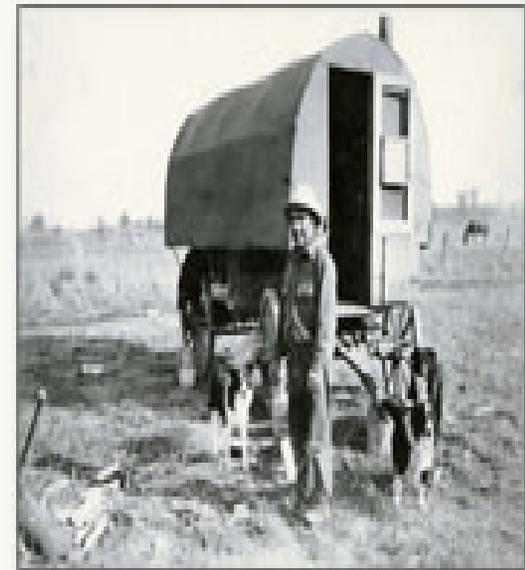
Ethnicity and type of employment

- Certain groups proved highly successful in marketing versions of their traditional cuisines to the population at large
 - Chinese, Mexican, and Italian
 - Each dominates a restaurant region far larger than their ethnic homelands, islands, or neighborhoods



Ethnicity and type of employment

- Italians in northeastern United States still control the terrazzo and ceramic tile unions
- Czechs dominate the pearl button industry
- Earlier Basques concentrated in sheep ranching areas of the American West where they were herders



Jose Erquiaga

The Dynamics of Labor Concentrations

- Concentrations are the result of a number of factors

Ethnic preferences

Coercion (slavery)

Timing (what was needed when groups came)

Skills and background of immigrants

Residential Space

- Residential opportunity. Sometimes like work, people cannot choose where they will live.

Forces the limit choices:

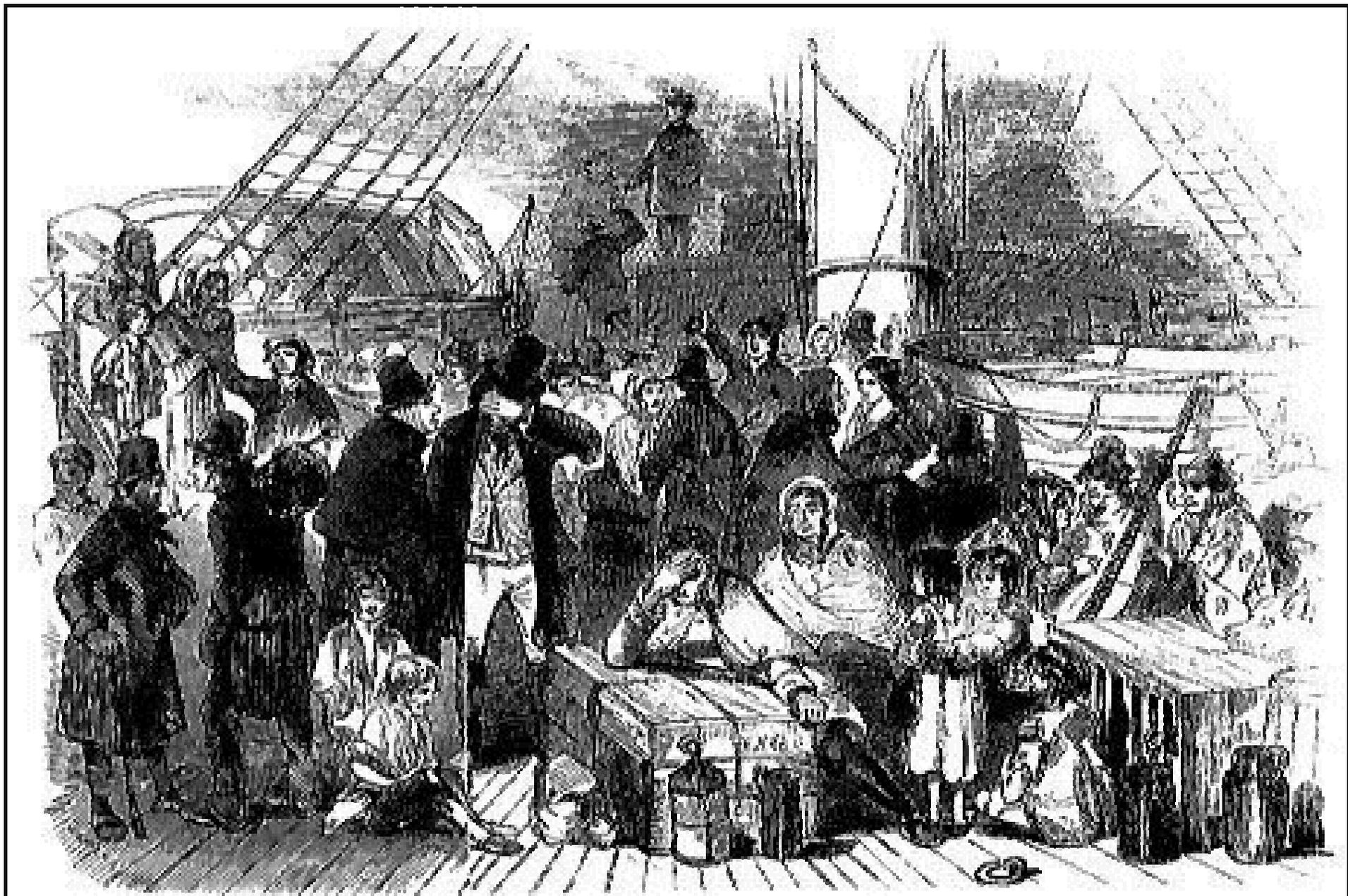
Discrimination, pricing, labor markets and residences, social networks.

Whatever the origin of residential restriction, the effect may be the same: reinforce an ethnic or racial boundary

Concentration: Boundedness, Exhaustiveness, Density

Concentration (for occupation or residence) is important, but other factor also needed

- **Boundedness:** Extent to which positions in labor or residence markets are available **only** to group members
- **Exhaustiveness:** Only opportunity to available to group members
- **Density:** Conditions that foster interpersonal interactions.



Irish emigrants depart Liverpool for North America.

Pictorial Times - 1846

GENERALIZED LAND-USE TYPES

-  INDUSTRIAL AND RAILROAD PROPERTY
-  CEMETERIES, PARKS AND OTHER RELATIVELY LARGE TRACTS OF PUBLIC PROPERTY
-  VACANT PROPERTY

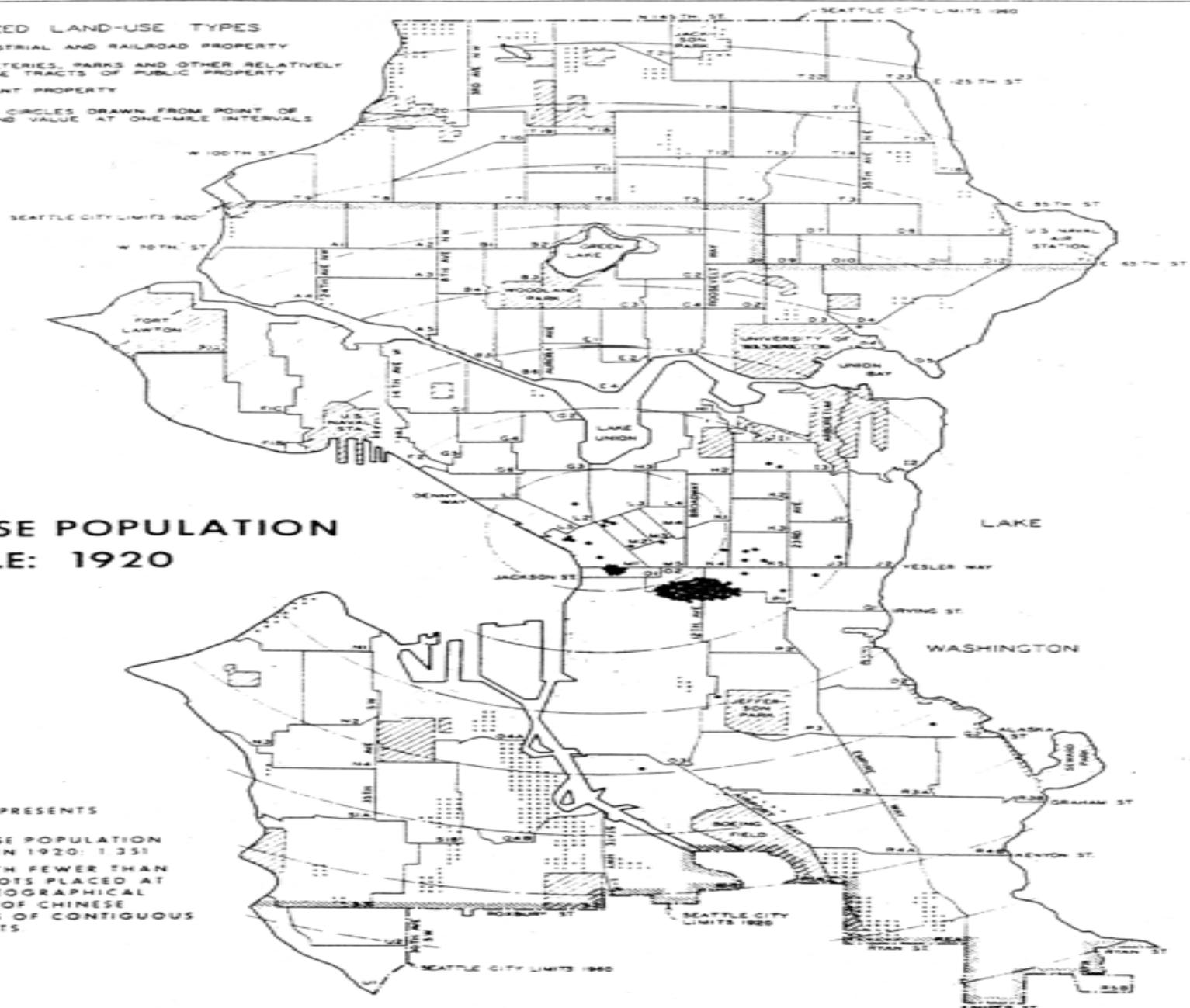
CONCENTRIC CIRCLES DRAWN FROM POINT OF HIGHEST LAND VALUE AT ONE-MILE INTERVALS

**CHINESE POPULATION
SEATTLE: 1920**

EACH DOT REPRESENTS
10 PEOPLE

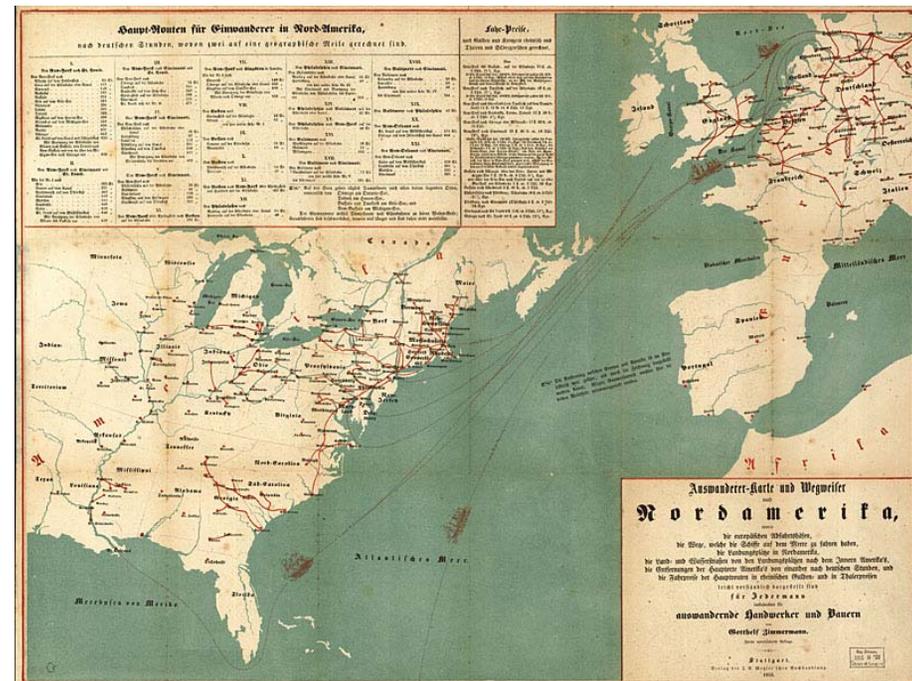
TOTAL CHINESE POPULATION
WITHIN CITY IN 1920: 1,351

IN AREAS WITH FEWER THAN
10 CHINESE DOTS PLACED AT
ESTIMATED GEOGRAPHICAL
MEAN POINT OF CHINESE
POPULATIONS OF CONTIGUOUS
CENSUS TRACTS.



Where are People Going?

- Individuals tended to follow their group and settled close to their extended families



Social Institutions

- Institutions other than political institutions are important such as schools, churches, service organizations, credit unions, and retail services.
- Do groups come and find these institutions accessible and understandable, or are they barred from them?
- When available, ethnic or racial identities are **REDUCED**.

Social Institutions and Identity

Salience

- Two reasons for saliency increase
 - 1.) Denial of institutional access (discrimination) is a form of social closure. This forms a strong boundary mechanism.
 - 2.) Denial of institutions forces groups to create their own institutions (sometimes this is easy, but sometimes it is not)

Intermarriage and Ethnicity

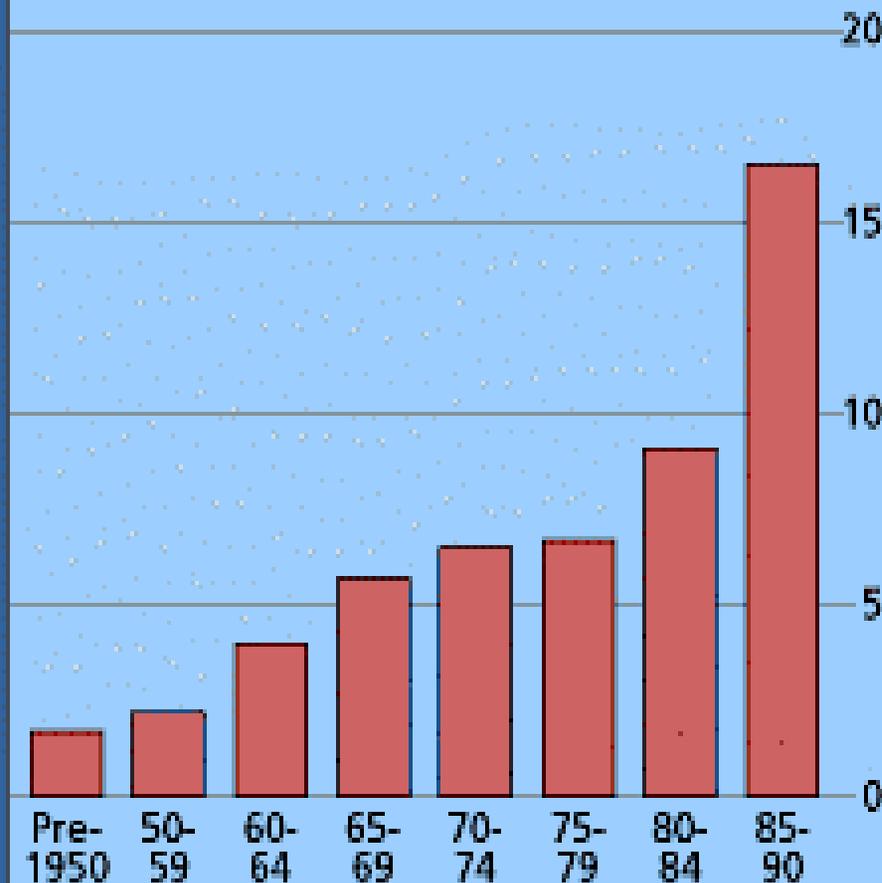
- Intermarriage seems like a plausible source of ethnic heterogeneity that will dilute identity boundaries
- But this may not always happen

Example: emergence of pan-Asian ethnicity

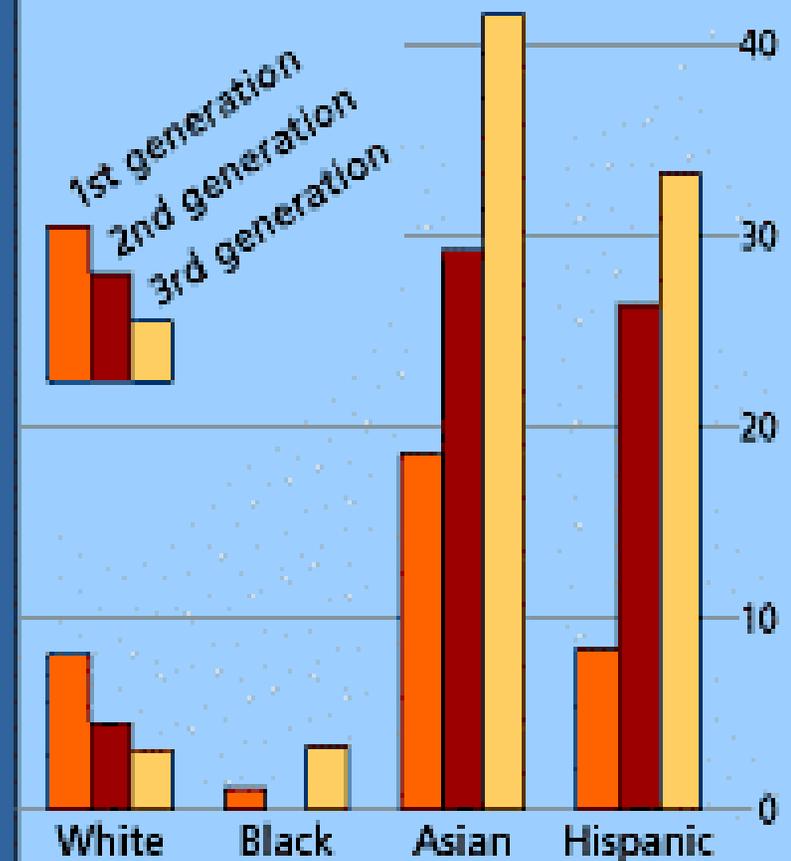
Overall, more **exogamy** and less **endogamy** should reduce ethnic/racial salience

5 Becoming American

Immigrants who speak no English, 1990
by year of entry, %



Intermarriage by generation
as of 1994, %



Source: "From Newcomers to New Americans", by Gregory Rodriguez, National Immigration Forum

Culture

- Human live in the material and political world, but also in a world of ideas and understandings.
- In this chapter we are concerned not with an ethnic groups culture, but with the general cultural ideas of the society at large.

Culture

- **Categories of Ascription:** How does the culture conceptualize and talk about groups?
- **Classification Schemes:** sometimes there are specific ways of categorizing groups (outsiders and ethnicization; Example from New Guinea)
- **Classification and Government Policy** (colonial creation of “tribes” in Africa)
- **Status Attributions** (White and Black)

US Culture and Nativism

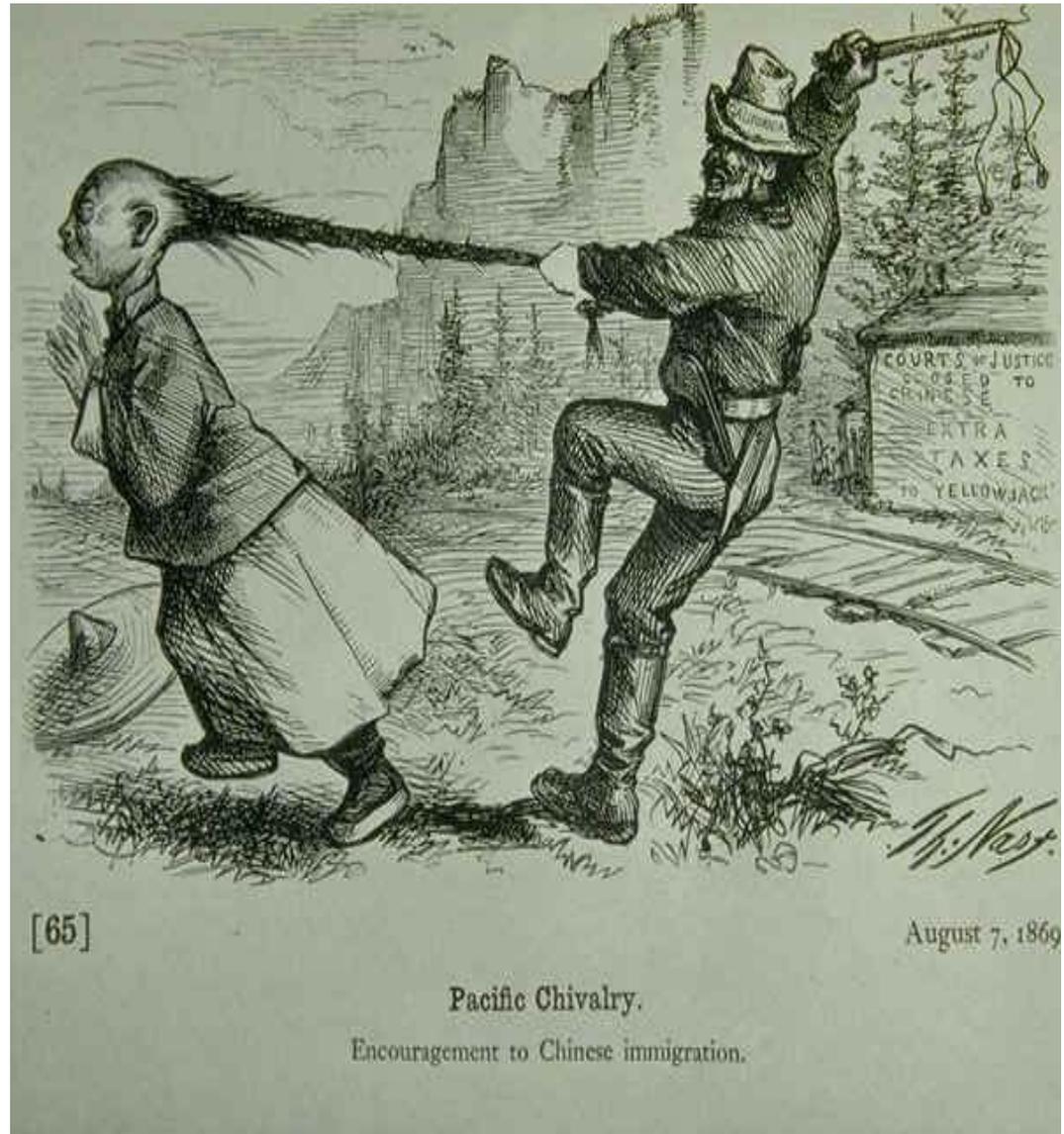
- Nativism
 - Favoritism towards native-born Americans; socially acceptable discrimination against non-natives



Chinese Cartoons

Thomas Nast's political cartoons scrutinized various aspects around the issue of Chinese labor.

“Pacific Chivalry: Encouragement to Chinese Immigration” (1869), depicts a Chinese man about to be hit by an American. The railway in the back implies that Chinese railworkers are being maltreated by Americans, whilst working hard for them.



Chinese Cartoons

Various political cartoons thematize that Chinese labor was cheap, efficient and abundant.



“The Comet of Chinese Labor,” Thomas Nast

Daily Experience

- Informal interactions within and between groups; events spark notions of “us” and “them”
- Examples: violent events, daily reminders of discrimination, situation comedies, TV ads

Summary

- Good spend some time reviewing Table 6.1 on page 190
- Evaluate how different contextual factors are likely to INCREASE or DECREASE ethnic or racial identities.