At the start of the twentieth century most Americans lived on farms or in small communities where, on an ordinary day, they would not encounter unfamiliar faces. Few things underscore the differences between America then and now as dramatically as the size of the places in which most people lived and the thin dispersal of the population across the continent.

Most historical accounts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—at least outside the South—focus on a different view. The major themes are industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and imperialism. Drawn by plentiful jobs and relatively high wages, immigrants from eastern, central, and southern Europe poured into America, fueling the spectacular rise of its industry and the catalytic growth of its cities. During the same years, the products of American industry drove the search for new markets and the creation of the nation’s first empire. The unprecedented problems generated by massive demographic and economic transformation made “the response to industrialism” the leitmotif of politics and public policy. This narrative, of course, does not apply to the South, where separate labor markets and racial politics created a nation apart. Nor does it capture a fundamental fact about America: in the first decade of the twentieth century it remained a vast and lightly populated nation, most of whose people lived on farms or in villages and small towns. The America of conventional narrative—industrial and urban—clustered along a stretch of the northeastern and middle Atlantic coasts, extended partly across the Great Lakes, and appeared in places along the Pacific shore. A picture of small-scale settlements—not the smokestacks of Pittsburgh or the sidewalks of New York—captures the image of where most Americans lived.

It was, however, a moving picture composed of millions of immigrants entering America from other countries, rural people leaving farms
and villages for towns and cities, and men and women crossing the con-
tinent from east to west, displacing American Indians, gradually filling up the vast empty spaces of the nation. It was also a complex picture in which the ethnic character of communities varied by their regional location and size and where even small towns as well as cities were home to many immigrants and harbored men and women who followed diverse occupations.

The two Americas of the early twentieth century—one looking toward the past, one to the future—existed in tension, not isolation. Linked by transportation, trade, and communication, the older and newer versions of the nation joined in elaborate, mutually supportive networks that, in turn, attached them to the wider world during the first modern era of economic globalization. This first wave lasted from the late nineteenth century through World War I. This chapter is about its impact on social structure, demography, family, and life course. Refracted through technology, trade, finance, and migration, economic globalization widened patterns of inequality, pushed and pulled people across continents, and forced them to reconstruct their family strategies, redesign their governments, and redefine many of their ideas. The same might be said about the next significant wave, whose impact we are experiencing and debating today. In this sense, profound parallels join America at the start and end of the twentieth century. But parallels should not be extended too far—for we fail to understand the earlier America unless we realize that it was, also, a world utterly unlike our own.

What is astonishing about this complicated and contradictory world—so different from our own—is how recently it flourished. It was the world entered by the grandparents of working Americans in 2000, the world still visible when their parents were born. Surely, reflecting on what America was, rather than on what it was becoming, is a way to comprehend the rapidity and immensity of the changes that marked the century just ended.

What America Was

In 1900, more than half—54 percent—of the U.S. population lived in villages with fewer than one thousand people. Another 10 percent lived in towns of one to five thousand and only 36 percent in regional centers or cities of five thousand or more. Even in the first era of industrial capitalism, nearly two of every three Americans spent most of their days on farms or in villages and towns with fewer than five thousand residents (see photograph 1.1).

It is easy to forget that America’s early twentieth-century epoch of immigration, urbanization, and industrialization was also the golden age of American agriculture. In 1900, 44 percent of the nation’s land mass
was covered with farms, and most of the rest was prairie, mountain, or forest.4 Sandwiched between the farm depressions of the 1890s and 1920s, the agricultural prosperity of the century’s first two decades was reflected in the growth in the number of farms and farmers and in increasing land values. More than four of ten men in the United States worked as farmers or farm laborers.5 In the next decade the number of farms and the rural population both rose about 11 percent: by 1910, there were 6.4 million farms in the United States. What marked rural America was its diversity. Any attempt to capture it in a single snapshot founders on variety: crops varied by region; the ethnic mix of rural populations differed from place to place; tenancy and hired labor were far more prominent in some regions than in others; and local social structures and economies proved surprisingly complex.

Like the rural counties of which they were a part, America’s towns were remarkably diverse in their economies, demographics, and social structures. The places in which most Americans lived may have been
small, but they were at the same time complex, impossible to reduce to simple images or glib generalizations, though most of them, it is safe to say, played a critical role in trade. In *Village Communities*, a book sponsored by the Institute of Social and Religious Research, Edmund deS. Brunner explained the commercial functions of villages.

In the first place, the village is the shipping point for the community. . . . In the second place, the village is the storage point for such products as are not taken immediately to market. . . . In the third place, the village frequently adds to the value of the farmers’ product by manufacture. . . . Finally, the village assembles and sells to the farmer and his family most of the goods that they need, such as clothes, hardware, dry goods and groceries; and it even furnishes such things as credit, secondary education, and the professional services of the lawyer, the doctor, and the minister.  

By 1900, towns and farms composed a great Corn Belt that stretched from the middle of Ohio to the middle of Nebraska, reaching into the southern parts of South Dakota and Minnesota and the northern borders of Missouri and Kansas. A Winter Wheat Belt, located primarily in Kansas, reached south into the tip of Oklahoma and New Mexico and north into a corner of Nebraska. A Spring Wheat Belt ran north and west of the Corn Belt, through Minnesota, the Dakotas, and across the border into Manitoba. North and east of the Corn Belt stretched a huge Dairy Belt from New England and New York through Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. A Cotton Belt reached across the South from North Carolina into central Texas, touching only northwestern Florida and the northern section of Louisiana. And California, once a major source of wheat, was developing its specialty in fruits and vegetables. Still, everywhere, farms kept a variety of livestock and produced more than one crop—thus furnishing their own need for food as well as local markets. In 1910, 88 percent of farms raised chickens, 81 percent dairy cows, 74 percent horses, 68 percent swine, and 76 percent corn; 48 percent had fruit orchards. In the course of the century, this local diversity and potential self-sufficiency nearly disappeared, marking a great transition in the organization of agricultural life and weaving new webs of dependency between producer and consumer, town and country, agriculture and commerce.

Everywhere, crops increased in value. Per capita, between 1899 and 1909 crop value rose 66.4 percent overall. (By far the most profitable crop per acre in these years was tobacco.) Expenses for farm machinery and hired labor grew as well, though at different rates across the nation. The impressive growth in crop value and in the number of farms in the first decade of the twentieth century pales beside the astonishing doubling in the value of farm property. The total value of farm land increased 118 percent as the average value of an acre of farm land leaped from $15.57
to $32.40 in just ten years—a decade of only modest inflation. Increases, reflecting population growth and urbanization, varied by region from $61.32 in the East North Central census division to $16.06 in the West South Central. This rising land value inflated a bubble of prosperity that burst with devastating effect in the 1920s, initiating a fierce agricultural depression.

Although the demand for food—fueled by burgeoning cities—escalated rapidly, agricultural productivity rose only modestly. Indeed, as late as 1930, agricultural productivity, which grew by about two-thirds during the nineteenth century, was about the same as in 1880; it soared only after 1940. Between 1840 and 1910, mechanization accounted for between one-half and two-thirds of increased labor productivity. An early twentieth-century farmer tilled the land with sharper and more refined tools than his counterparts a century earlier, and the horse-drawn mechanical harvester, introduced in the 1830s, followed by the steam-powered thresher and seed drills, expanded his productive capacity. To take one example, the time needed to produce a bushel of wheat declined from 2.96 man hours between 1840 and 1860 to 0.71 in the 1900 to 1910 decade. Nonetheless, the great innovations that would transform farming—the internal combustion engine, electricity, telephones, and hybridization—lay in the future. America’s farms could barely keep up with the demands of its cities. In this situation, prices soared, giving American farmers their brief window of prosperity.

Along with increased demand, railroads—the source of cheaper and faster transportation—drew farmers into markets throughout the nineteenth century. During that period, farmers usually concentrated on production for commerce as rapidly as consumer demand and transportation permitted. Although huge farming operations developed in the Midwest and California, most farms remained relatively small family operations, and hired labor contributed only a minor share to farm production. Even though northern farms were often small and family run, by historical and world standards, most American farmers were highly commercialized and depended on national and international markets for their prosperity.

Not all farmers owned their land, however, and rising tenancy disturbed observers worried about loss of the nation’s Jeffersonian yeoman tradition. In North Carolina, the number of tenant farmers—augmented by the movement of former slaves into sharecropping—increased by one-third between 1880 and 1900. Around major trading centers, the rise was even more dramatic: more than half the farmers in Charlotte’s hinterland were tenants in 1900. Tenancy varied by ethnicity and region: 33 percent of native white farmers, 18 percent of foreign-born, and 74 percent of blacks were tenants. High rates of black tenancy occurred mainly in the South; in the middle Atlantic states, 79 percent of black farmers
owned their land, a situation roughly paralleled in the North and Midwest (see figures 1.1 and 1.2).\textsuperscript{14}

Observers at the time considered tenants poorly educated transients who overworked staple crops and exploited the soil. Tenancy, they feared, undermined the independence and character that resulted from land ownership. In fact, worried critics exaggerated the problem. Not only were many tenants good farmers, in the northern states they operated only a little more than a quarter of farms, and tenancy there appeared more a phase in the life cycle—a step on the ladder from hired hand to owner—than a permanent condition.\textsuperscript{15}

Rural America was home to an array of other industries besides agriculture, which, along with forestry, and husbandry, employed only six of ten adult men in even the smallest communities.\textsuperscript{16} Rural mining and gendered forms of rural manufacturing attracted industries employing women and children. Cigar and tobacco factories, silk mills, and factories making men’s and women’s clothes, to take three examples, ap-

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.1.png}
\caption{Percentage of Farmers Who Are Tenants, by Region and Age of Household Head, 1910}
\end{figure}

\textit{Note:} In most parts of the country, younger farmers were much more likely to be tenants rather than to own land. In the South, however, even among farmers in their forties and fifties, a large proportion remained tenants. \textit{Source:} Data from Ruggles et al. (2004).
What America Was

Figure 1.2 Tenants as Percentage of All Farmers, 1900

Note: Although farm tenancy was not unknown in the Midwest, the highest rates were in the South. In many counties, more than 60 percent of farmers were tenants, usually because of the proliferation of sharecropping. Source: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 197-(date uncertain).

peared in areas known for mining coal and iron. The silk industry, for instance, was found in the anthracite coal-producing portion of Pennsylvania. Jobs for women and children undoubtedly compensated for the seasonal layoffs of men who worked in rural manufacturing and mining and in slack times, unlike factory workers, in cities, could not find alternative work nearby.

A major industry in early twentieth-century America, mining employed more than a million workers; 47 percent of the value of its products came from coal with the next most important item, petroleum and natural gas, accounting for only 15 percent. It was, moreover, highly concentrated by geography: for instance, iron mining dominated the Lake Superior District encompassing Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin and anthracite coal mining Pennsylvania’s northeastern region. Mining’s products were worth more than $1.2 billion, an amount that had increased an astonishing 52 percent in the previous seven years. In large part, mining’s heightened productivity reflected increased use of machinery. But the use of machinery varied greatly by region, from 42 percent in Pennsylvania to 17 percent in Arkansas. The rise in horsepower
generated by steam—218 percent between 1902 and 1909—illustrates the mechanization of mining, as does the increased use of electricity—1,319 percent—in the same years. Mining’s growth depended on new sources of labor as well as on machines. This labor was supplied by recent immigrants, who, despite their concentration in cities, also found their way into rural America’s mines and onto its farms.

What America Was Becoming

The forces that changed this older America rode into towns and villages along railroad tracks, slipped in through electric wires, and sailed in on steamships. By 1902, there were 3,620 electric power stations across the nation, 75 percent of which were in towns with populations under five thousand. Between 1890 and 1902, the length of electric street railway tracks had increased 1,636 percent, from twelve hundred to twenty-two thousand miles. The transcontinental railroad had been completed in 1869, and by 1900 a dense network of railroads crisscrossed the nation, reaching into virtually every town and village. Transportation and power were two midwives of the new America; a third was communication—the telegraph that had revolutionized communications in the decades before the Civil War and, since the mid-1860s, linked continents under the Atlantic Ocean. In the early years of the twentieth century even newer, more exciting technologies, the telephone and radio, were coming into prominence as national systems of communication. They reached out to a growing and newly diverse population as immigrants from southern and eastern Europe changed the ethnic composition of the nation.

A Diverse, Mobile Nation

In the first decade of the twentieth century America’s population grew from 76 to 92 million—a large increase but, in percentage terms, the smallest since 1800, when fewer than 5 million people lived in what was then the United States. Numbers alone, however, do not tell the story of population growth in the early twentieth century, because the years from 1900 though 1910 saw what would prove to be the largest immigration in the nation’s history until the late twentieth century. By 1910, 14.5 percent of the population, and 20 percent of the workforce, was foreign born, and the number of immigrants was increasing much faster than the native-born population. (In 2000, by contrast, the foreign-born were 10.4 percent of the population.) Many others, of course, were not far removed from immigrant origins: about 20 percent had at least one parent born outside the United States. Not only did the immigrants surge upward in their
numbers, but they also arrived from new places. In 1900, more than two-thirds were from northwestern Europe; a decade later the proportion was less than half as immigrants from southern and eastern Europe increased by more than 3 million (over 175 percent). As a result, the share of the population born in Italy and Russia doubled and large numbers also arrived from Poland, Austria, Hungary, Romania, and Greece. In 1910, two-thirds of the adults from southern and eastern Europe had been in the United States ten years or less, compared to a little more than a quarter of those born in northern and western Europe. The massive wave of newcomers from southern and eastern Europe aroused apprehension, and in 1907 the U.S. Senate appointed a commission (the Dillingham Commission) to research the new immigration and make legislative recommendations. The commission issued its forty-two-volume report in 1911.

The old immigration had consisted of permanent settlers; the new of birds of passage, “individuals a considerable proportion of whom apparently have no intention of permanently changing their residence,” coming instead, in search of higher wages, the commission pointed out. The new immigration, moreover, had arrived “during a period of great industrial expansion and . . . furnished a practically unlimited supply of labor to that expansion.” A great many came to America intending to earn money and then return to their native lands. Among immigrants from a number of regions, notably Italy, other parts of southern Europe, and central Europe, rates of return were astonishingly high. Among others—the mid-nineteenth-century Irish escaping famine, and decades later Jews fleeing persecution—very few went back. During the five years from 1908 to 1912, which is the first period for which relatively reliable figures are available, 4.75 million immigrants arrived in the United States and 2.36 million non-citizens departed. The rate of return migration, then, was about 50 percent. More than 43 percent of Italians who left for the United States in the 1880s returned to Italy; this rate increased to 53 percent in the first decade of the twentieth century and 63 percent in the second. Equivalent numbers of non-Jewish emigrants from Greece, Hungary, Russia, and the Balkans went back to their native lands.

The reasons for return varied. In some cases, migrants were in fact seasonal laborers moving back and forth across the Atlantic; some return migrants were target earners who stayed in the United States long enough to save for a small business and comfortable life in their homeland; still others were dissatisfied with what they found or missed friends and family.

Most were unskilled laborers who came with little money. Many were illiterate. Recent immigration regulations, fortunately, had assured that “although drawn from classes low in the economic scale, the new immigrants as a rule are the strongest, the most enterprising, and the best in
their class.” Still, the commission worried, the new immigrants might lower wages, increase crime, overburden institutions, and fail to assimilate into American society as smoothly as—in the terms of the day—the less racially different older immigrants had done. Legislation, the commission agreed unanimously, should begin with this principle: “While the American people, as in the past, welcome the oppressed of other lands, care should be taken that immigration be such in both quality and quantity as not to make too difficult the process of assimilation.”

The commission’s recommendations touched off a debate that resulted in the now infamous legislation that in the 1920s introduced immigration quotas based on the nation’s population in 1890—thereby virtually shutting off all but a trickle of immigration from southern and eastern Europe, just as other legislation, beginning with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, had reduced immigration from Asia.

International migration was just one type of population movement ubiquitous in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America. Everywhere, both native-born Americans and immigrants were in flux, reshuffled between towns and cities, states, and regions, as well as between nations. Writing in the late nineteenth century, the astute British observer James Bryce observed,

Nowhere is population in such constant movement as in America. In some of the newer States only one-fourth or one-fifth of the inhabitants are natives of the United States. Many of the townfolk, not a few even of the farmers, have been till lately citizens of some other State, and will, perhaps, soon move on farther west. These Western States are like a chain of lakes through which there flows a stream which mingles the waters of the higher with those of the lower.

Indeed, Americans often did not stay in one place very long. Wherever historians have looked, the population of individual towns and cities turned over rapidly, less in rural than in urban areas, but still at remarkable rates.

The settlement patterns that resulted from population mobility, of course, did not spread evenly across the nation, and America emerged a spatial patchwork of ethnicities, one nation politically indivisible but demographically balkanized. Everywhere across America, even in rural New England where young people were leaving farms, the population of some counties grew while that of others shrunk. Population density, which averaged only 25.6 per square mile for the nation, was highest in the mid-Atlantic states and parts of New England—250 in New Jersey and 349 in Massachusetts, for example, and lowest in the West—1.6 in New Mexico and 4.4 in Oregon. The frontier may have officially closed, as the Census Bureau announced in the 1890s, but settlers had barely be-
gun to join the American Indians in the vast stretches from the Canadian to the Mexican borders west of the Mississippi (see figure 1.3).\textsuperscript{27}

Nonetheless, population was shifting out of villages and towns—places with fewer than 1,000 residents declined from 63 percent of households in 1880 to 42 percent in 1920; in the same years, cities grew, and the share of households in medium-sized towns held steady at around 10 percent.\textsuperscript{28} In 1906, one observer lamented:

Many towns are injured . . . by the proximity of stronger industrial and social centers. Their citizens go abroad for trade, for acquaintance, for social fraternization, and even for school and church. They look to the adjacent thriving village or city as their true centre with consequent alienation from their own political and social circle. The trolley widens the sphere of this influence; the rural delivery of mails diminishes contact with the village; and the telephone, though it unites the people, keeps them also apart.\textsuperscript{29}

Still, despite the loss of population and competition from large towns and cities, it is a remarkable and important fact to remember that even after World War I and decades of high immigration and rapid industrial-

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure_1_3.png}
\caption{Persons per Square Mile, U.S. Counties, 1900}
\end{figure}

\textit{Note:} In 1900, population concentrated in the Northeast and around the Great Lakes. Most of the nation remained lightly populated, with fewer than forty residents per square mile. \textit{Source:} Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 197-(date uncertain).
ization more than half of American households were still in villages and small or medium-sized towns.

Hundreds of thousands of native whites left the northeastern, southern, and midwestern states in the century’s first decade—only the West gained native-born residents. More than 1.1 million native whites, for instance, left the states in the north central census division and more than 1.3 million moved west—often following the same latitude—in just these ten years. (Farmers stayed in the same latitude to capitalize on their human and physical capital because their knowledge of soil conditions, crops, and other factors and the seeds and livestock were adapted to a specific climate.) The outcome was regional population diversity, with significant variation from state to state in the origins of their populations.

Clearly, in the early twentieth century, Americans were a restless, ambitious people, leaving their native states by the thousands in search of new opportunities. Except for the far West, 30 to 60 percent of adults had left the states of their birth (see figure 1.4). The lure of opportunity farther west drew many from the Midwest, sometimes to fertile land in a
nearby state, at other times to the shores of the Pacific, a destination and birthplace that relatively few abandoned. The Northeast, by contrast, held on to its residents in this period because industrial opportunity kept Massachusetts and adjoining states attractive. The South, as in so many other ways, remained a nation apart. Six of ten adults born in Mississippi, for example, remained there. What interstate movement occurred in the early twentieth-century South flowed mainly—though not entirely—to other parts of the region. In 1910, neither the Great Migration of African Americans nor the move of native whites into northern industry had begun. Thus, migration was common and immense—a great stream of Americans flowing through the nation. But it was a complicated stream, interweaving opportunity, location, and demography.

Massive population movements resulted in ethnic and racial differences among regions. Whites, including the children of immigrants, spread themselves relatively evenly across the nation, as did immigrants from northern and western Europe, though not in the South. The two groups most unevenly distributed were blacks and immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, whose residential patterns were mirror images: 73 percent of blacks lived in the southeast, and 75 percent of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe lived in the Northeast and elsewhere in the nation’s industrial heartland. The location of other newcomers also reflected particular migrant streams: Canadians in New England; Hispanics and Asians along the Pacific Coast; Hispanics near the southwestern border.  

In 1910, most immigrants—for instance, eight of ten from southern and eastern Europe—lived in cities. Immigrants, in fact, clustered in a small number of locations. In 1910, six states with 34 percent of the population were home to 57 percent of immigrants; five metropolitan areas—New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh—with 16 percent of the population housed 36 percent of the foreign born. (In 2000, immigrants were even more concentrated.) By contrast, three of five men, women, and children in rural and small-town America had been born in the United States to American-born parents. In fact, people of native stock were primarily rural: about three of every five adults lived in a place with a population under 1,000. In this they were almost the exact opposite of U.S.-born adults with immigrant parents. Nonetheless, a great many immigrants, more than one-third of those not in cities farmed in the Great Plains or Pacific regions. The most rural, however, were African Americans: 70 percent of blacks lived in communities of less than 1,000.

In early twentieth-century America, outside cities, the spatial separation of immigrants, blacks, and native-born whites resulted in “balkanized” settlement patterns, to use the demographer William Frey’s description of the late twentieth century. Blacks remained clustered in the
South; the new immigrants from eastern and southern Europe concentrated in industrial cities. Additionally, 55 percent of counties had no African American population, nearly 90 percent had no American Indian or Asian, and 38 percent had no foreign-born. Although immigrants from southern, central, and eastern Europe clustered in cities far more than in small towns or on farms, they did not find their way equally to all of urban America. In 1910, the largest two immigrant groups in New York City were from Russia and Italy, in Philadelphia from Russia and Ireland, in Buffalo from Germany and Canada, and in Chicago from Germany and Austria. Consider the proportion of foreign-born in four industrial cities reasonably close in size: Baltimore, 14 percent; St. Louis, 18 percent; Pittsburgh, 26 percent; Cleveland, 35 percent. In its social geography, America was becoming more a patchwork quilt than a melting pot.

**A Manufacturing Nation**

In early twentieth-century America, the spectacular development of manufacturing accompanied the new immigration, the redistribution of population, and the growth of cities. In fact, as the historical geographer D. W. Meinig describes them, all the prerequisites for a great manufacturing future had been in place by the Civil War: “the coal-iron-steam complex, the machine-driven factory, the new ‘American system’ of mass production, the space-conquering railroad, established areas and centers of specialized production and distribution, and all the vigorous workings and potentials of an essentially ‘unfettered market economy’ fueled by vast resources and growing population.” In every region of the country since the decades after the Civil War, manufacturing—driven mainly by steam engines (77 percent of industrial horsepower in 1900)—had taken off with stunning velocity. By 1900, America produced a third of the world’s industrial output—more than England, France, and Germany combined. The leading quality of American manufacturing—which was located in towns and cities across the nation—was diversity. In large and small work settings, in factories and the shops of craftsmen, Americans made everything (see photograph 1.2).

In the twenty years between 1870 and 1890, the size of workplaces—represented by the number of employees per establishment—doubled and then continued to grow early in the twentieth century. In the first decade, aside from small hand and neighborhood industries, the number of manufacturing establishments grew 23 percent, the number of wage workers in them 29 percent, and the value of their product 45 percent—a mark of the increased productivity that resulted from technological and organizational change. The nation’s manufacturing plants employed more than six and a half million wage workers and produced nearly $21 billion in products. Manufacturing reshaped the nation’s for-
eign trade as well as its domestic economy and surpassed agriculture as the dominant export. Indeed, as a share of total exports, manufacturing increased from 28 percent in 1860 to 60 percent in 1910. Despite these exports, consumer demand within the United States, fueled by high fertility and massive immigration, was so great that most production targeted domestic markets.36

As manufacturing activities spread across the nation, their old location in the Northeast gave way to a new concentration in the Midwest, with the South still home to very little industry.37 The result was a new industrial heartland, which Meinig defined as approximating a parallelogram whose corners were Milwaukee, St. Louis, Boston, and Baltimore (see figure 1.5). Its western boundary stretched to include Dubuque and the Davenport area, and its northeastern corner extended to the rivers of southern New Hampshire and Maine.

In 1900, despite the catalytic growth of manufacturing in the Midwest, New York and the New Jersey cities sharing its harbor ranked first on all measures of industrialism. New York’s $1.5 billion industrial product was about double Philadelphia’s and much higher than the next leading industrial city’s, Chicago’s $889 million. With economies composed of all

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Photograph 1.2  Ford Factory, First Moving Assembly Line, Detroit, 1913

By the second decade of the twentieth century, technology made it possible for industrialists to reorganize manufacturing using assembly lines. Automobile production led the way. Source: Courtesy of the Francis Loeb Library, Harvard Design School.
major trades, these cities shared a dazzling industrial diversity. Although textiles remained the largest industrial employer, iron and steel along with engineering and machinery led in investment and industrial output. These massive industries notwithstanding, the historian Walter Licht stresses, “it is the completeness of the manufacturing system that deserves emphasis.” Americans produced everything—and in settings that ranged from great iron and steel mills in Pittsburgh and huge meatpacking plants in Chicago to small manufactories turning out limited amounts of fine goods in cities and towns throughout the nation. To be sure, manufacturing was located disproportionately in large cities—home to 19 percent of the population in 1900, cities of over 100,000 produced 40 percent of the total value of manufacturing products. But small cities and towns remained significant industrial locations, too: those with a population under 10,000 produced 31 percent of the total value. Manufacturing was ubiquitous, diverse, and specialized.38

Figure 1.5  Total Manufacturing Production, U.S. Counties, 1900

Note: In 1900, manufacturing production was concentrated in a region bounded by Boston and Philadelphia in the east and Chicago and St. Louis in the west. Source: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 197-(date uncertain).
Within this diversity, three patterns of industrial development marked American industry: modern, traditional, and sweated. Modern firms were often found in large industries like iron and steel or railway car production. They were distinguished by above average wages, the use of technology, and modern management—they employed a high proportion of salaried workers. Within them, productivity and value-added per worker, not surprisingly, were also high. Traditional industries also paid above-average wages. But they used less advanced technology, and their management relied on fewer salaried employees. Their productivity and value-added were generally low. Neither modern nor traditional industries, it is important to remember, were distinguished by their size or rate of growth: they could be small or large, slow or fast growing. Sweated industries, by contrast, often had grown rapidly, paid low wages, and did not rely very much on advanced technology or modern management. Within them the value of product per worker remained low, but the value added by each worker was high—the result of sweated labor. Modern firms took the high road to the extraction of value from their workers, sweated firms the low. They were also the industries most likely to employ large numbers of women. Women who entered manufacturing, especially immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, were in fact found in the worst-paying industries more often than men.39

Within large industries, a range of wages separated workers by income—with the newest immigrants at the bottom. In the iron and steel industry, for instance, about 9 percent of male jobs were white collar, 36 percent crafts, 28 percent operatives, and 26 percent laborers. But they were distributed disproportionately by ethnicity: 13 percent of whites, no blacks, and 2 percent of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe held white-collar positions; 14 percent of native whites, 71 percent of blacks, and 59 percent of southern and eastern European immigrants were laborers. A similar pattern characterized the railway industry, in which 93 percent of the “new” immigrants, 42 percent of the “old,” and 68 percent of blacks were laborers—compared to 37 percent of the white male workforce.40

A wave of mergers concentrated the organization of manufacturing into huge companies whose power and operations stretched across the continent. International Harvester, U.S. Steel, and Standard Oil Trust represented enormous “horizontal consolidations of formerly competitive firms that took place in most sectors of American industry”—a form of organization soon reworked into vertical integration that controlled manufacturing from processing raw materials through marketing finished products. Vertical integration was pioneered by Swift and Armour in the meatpacking industry, which—in an astonishing burst of growth driven by consolidation and consumer demand—overtook iron and steel between 1900 and 1910 as the nation’s leader in the value of goods produced.41
Neither industrial consolidation nor growth, however, could have happened without increases in two other factors: capital and labor. In the late nineteenth century, capital came from a surge in investments. After the Civil War, banking laws became more favorable to industrial expansion and, in the 1890s, the introduction of industrial securities to stock markets made new sources of external finance available, which provided the capital for the expansion of manufacturing. In most places immigrants provided the labor. Newcomers from central, southern, and eastern Europe flooded into factories producing both durable and nondurable goods. Native whites, on the other hand, did not respond with anything like the same enthusiasm to the new opportunities opened up in manufacturing. Blacks, still largely in the South, were excluded. Among working men aged ten to sixty-four in 1910, 53 percent of Polish, 25 percent of Italian, 29 percent of German, and 31 percent of British immigrants worked in manufacturing compared to 16 percent of white and 11 percent of black Americans.  

**Cities Ascendant**

Most manufacturing growth took place in cities, and the result transformed the residential profile of Americans. Between 1910 and 1990, the share of the national population living on farms plummeted from 35 percent to 1.8 percent as the nation reorganized into a new urban hierarchy linking a transcontinental network of cities.  

The growth of industrial cities, of course, did not start in the twentieth century. In some parts of the nation, it can be traced to the 1840s and 1850s. The years 1900 and 1910, then, are less baselines for measuring change than arbitrary starting points for cutting into a process that had accelerated in much of the nation in the years after the Civil War. Writing in 1913, William Bennett Munro, professor of municipal government at Harvard, summarized the “the great urbanizing forces” transforming America: “It is the combination of cheap fuel for motive power, cheap labor, and cheap transportation which now determines the location and governs the growth of great cities.”

Across the nation, the average size of large cities (population more than one hundred thousand) rose 33 percent in the century’s first decade, medium size cities (twenty-five to one hundred thousand) 38 percent, and small cities (twenty-five hundred to twenty-five thousand) 36 percent. Although still increasing, the rural population grew much more slowly, only 11 percent. The degree and pattern of urbanization across regions, however, varied sharply. Most urbanized were the middle Atlantic states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York; New England was also heavily urbanized; the South remained the most rural.
though lightly populated, the Pacific Coast states were also surprisingly urban. Settlement there clustered along the coast: more than a third of the region’s people lived in one of the six cities with a population of more than one hundred thousand—making Pacific Coast urban growth spectacular. In California, the combination of commerce, service industries, foreign trade, and tourism meant that urban growth depended less on manufacturing; this pattern prefigured an alternate economic route that other cities would find later in the century.\textsuperscript{45}

Even in the early twentieth century, the links between metropolitan areas and agricultural hinterlands gradually gave way to central cities surrounded by suburbs. In 1910, central cities still dominated suburbs with a population of 17 million compared to 5 million, but suburbs were growing faster—a harbinger of things to come. (Because many central cities in this era grew by annexing their suburbs, the real difference in growth rates was probably even larger than statistics suggest.)\textsuperscript{46} Patterns of metropolitan size and growth, however, varied, highlighting the complexities subsumed under the general process of urbanization. Local influences—rail lines that made suburban commuting feasible or decisions about industrial location based on proximity to transportation, for instance—clustered manufacturing and population into a myriad of new urban patterns.

Nonetheless, by 1915 the nation functioned economically as a “vast network of cities” organized into an urban hierarchy. In the nineteenth century, the economic historian Carol E. Heim points out, agriculture and manufacturing in new regions drove spatial change, “expanding the boundaries of the economy.” In the twentieth century, by contrast, “extension of the system of cities” took “center stage.”\textsuperscript{47} This urban hierarchy—a shifting but powerful urban system—had been knit together inadvertently by national banking legislation. At its apex, “New York provided an array of financial and commercial services for the entire nation; Chicago was the principal financial and marketing center for a huge portion of the midsection of the country”—branching to Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Denver, Portland, Kansas City, San Francisco, Seattle, and Indianapolis, and beyond them to still another tier of widely separated cities: Quincy, Omaha, St. Joseph, and Spokane. St. Louis’s dominance extended southward to Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth. There is, in this historical creation of an urban hierarchy, a paradox. Within America’s federal system, cities were officially powerless; they were, and remain, creatures of state governments, their capacity to act autonomously circumscribed by state law. However, as Meinig points out, even in the early twentieth century, “insofar as one might choose to view the United States as a vast market and unified world of business and commerce it already functioned as a great system of cities.”\textsuperscript{48}
Rural-Urban Tensions

The spectacular growth of cities resulted in tensions between the older, rural America and the new urbanism. These tensions lay at the heart of late nineteenth-century politics. At the Democratic national convention of 1896, William Jennings Bryan warned advocates of the gold standard:

You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard; we reply that the great cities rest upon our broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.⁴⁹

Even as it acknowledged the ties that joined city and country, Bryan’s fiery rhetoric highlighted the tension between them. Underlying the bravado were resentment and insecurity that grew out of asymmetries in power. True, without farms the cities would starve. But city businessmen controlled the cost of transportation, access to credit, the supply of currency, and the conditions of international trade—factors that could bring success or failure to farmers. With agriculture depressed in the 1870s and 1880s, farmers had turned to new political movements—the Grange and Farmers Alliance—that spoke for rural interests. When farm prices collapsed in the depression of 1893, intense rural and western anger underwrote populism and, in 1896, with Bryan’s nomination and Free Silver as its banner, captured the Democratic Party. To a degree unimaginable in twenty-first century America, the currency issue aroused the passions animating the fierce partisan politics of the late nineteenth century—unimaginable to Americans but not to Europeans caught up in the debate over the euro in this second age of economic globalization.⁵⁰

With Bryan’s defeat by William McKinley, rural-based populism lost a major political battle. On the national political stage, the election of 1896 was a major defeat for a local and rural America in its confrontation with a national system of capital and commerce.⁵¹ The struggle, of course, was waged on other fronts as well. There, too, asymmetries of power resulted in the spread of urban hegemony, though not without significant resistance. Young women and men flocked from farms to cities, aging farmers moved to town, and farm families consumed the artifacts of urban culture in mail order catalogues. In politics, rural interests took second place to urban; in social life and culture, the lure of city lights and the comforts of towns threatened to depopulate farms and erode distinctive rural values. But agriculture, as we have seen, nonetheless prospered. Indeed, the first two decades of the twentieth century were a more prosperous time than farmers had ever known. Not surprisingly, rising prices for agricultural products and land muted farm-based protests. Instead, a
movement for rural social and economic change originated in the cities. Its audacious aim was the fusion of rural and urban life in a new American culture that resolved the tensions between what America had been and what it was becoming. The project began by attempting to recast the relations among families, communities, and public institutions—most notably, schools.

Urban-based critics of the countryside idealized rural life as the fount of national strength and virtue, but they worried about its future. President Theodore Roosevelt warned Americans “that the great recent progress made in city life is not a full measure of our civilization; for our civilization rests at bottom on the wholesomeness, the attractiveness, and the completeness, as well as the prosperity, of life in the country.”

As Roosevelt and other critics said, prosperity by itself neither measured the vitality of rural life nor guaranteed its future. Cityward migration threatened the agricultural labor supply and robbed the countryside of its most intelligent, energetic, and ambitious population. Depletion of the soil through exploitative farming methods threatened productivity while intemperance, stolidity, and excessive individualism blocked the organization, efficiency, and cooperation essential to successful modern agriculture. Underlying specific criticisms was the worry that rural Americans would fail to produce the agricultural products needed by an urban population whose expansion showed no signs of slowing.

When Roosevelt appointed a Country Life Commission in 1907, concern about rural life had been growing for a number of years. The commission was chaired by Liberty Hyde Bailey, a leading agricultural scientist who taught at Cornell, and composed almost entirely of non-farmers—a clear sign of the national and urban concerns that prompted its formation. After holding many hearings around the country and soliciting responses through questionnaires, the commission reported in 1909.

The commission wanted to haul rural society into the mainstream of modernity. Judged by historical standards, the American farmer never had been “as well off as he is today” in terms of both “earning power” and “the comforts and advantages he may secure,” but his progress had not kept pace with the “complete and fundamental change in our whole economic system within the past century. . . . In all the great series of farm occupations the readjustment has been the most tardy, because the whole structure of a traditional and fundamental system has been involved.” The results—“arrested” development, “marked inequalities,” “positive injustice”—were to be expected. Instead of a forward-looking spirit of cooperation, a commitment to the public good, and a healthy ambition, a narrow materialism undercut the future of rural America. “So completely does the money purpose often control the motive that other purposes in farming often remain dormant. The complacent con-
tentment in many rural neighborhoods is itself the very evidence of social incapacity or decay."

But the commission did not want to lay the blame for rural backwardness solely on country people. "The social structure," it pointed out, "has been unequally developed. The townsman is likely to assume superiority and to develop the town in disregard of the real interests of the open country or even in opposition to them. The city exploits the country; the country does not exploit the city." The goal was to fuse the best of country and city in a new American culture that transcended geography. "The good institutions of cities may often be applied or extended to the open country," it wrote. Thus, "country ideals, while derived largely from the country itself, should not be exclusive; and the same applies to city and village ideals. There should be more frequent social intercourse on equal terms between the people of the country and those of the city."

The commission did isolate a number of specific problems—for instance, inadequate rural mail delivery, the lack of parcel post, and poor highways. It criticized the working conditions of rural labor and the harsh isolation of women. It chided farmers for their poor methods and lamented the absence of effective social organizations, the excessive competition among rural churches, and the absence of cooperative economic practices. Most of all, it worried about the quality and relevance of rural education. "The subject of paramount importance in our correspondence and in the hearings is education. In every part of the United States there seems to be one mind, on the part of those capable of judging, on the necessity of redirecting the rural schools. There is no such unanimity on any other subject."

To both Country Life reformers and professional educators, nothing seemed to hamper rural education as much as its organization into a myriad of tiny, ungraded, one-room schools controlled by small, local school districts. In the conflicts over rural school consolidation, the tension between what America was and what it was becoming emerged with unmatched clarity. By pitting "those who were oriented toward the city and the larger society and deferred to outside expertise and authority against those who continued to stress the privacy of the local community, the sanctity of home rule, and the virtues of self-reliance," school issues, the historian Hal Barron points out, "highlighted the conflict between two competing visions of society."

Consolidation was the essential first step toward reducing the educational differentiation between country and city, but the challenge was immense: in the early twentieth century, to take one example, Iowa had about fourteen thousand country school districts and subdistricts, most with their own locally controlled one-room schools; about 65 percent of the state’s children were educated in country schools. Thus, the base for grass-roots opposition to reform, though widespread and potent, was
uncoordinated, lacking the consolidators’ resources and networks. Often overlooked by historians, district school consolidation was the major rural arm of administrative progressivism—the attempt to reform education through efficiency, professionalism, and systematic reorganization—and one of the most significant social movements in Progressive-era America. It was also a key platform of the Country Life Movement (see photographs 1.3 and 1.4).  

Reactions of rural parents to school consolidation paralleled rural responses to other modernizing, city-based technologies such as the telephone, electricity, and the automobile. Progressives who viewed them as backward, stubborn people, fearful and resentful of whatever was new, missed the point. They were, rather, cautious, anxious not to destroy their way of life or to give up local control, ready to ingeniously adapt new technologies to their own uses. Farm men and women, argues the historian Ronald R. Kline, “contested efforts to urbanize the farm by resisting each
new technology and then weaving it into existing cultural patterns in their own way.” One important difference, however, distinguished between resistance to school consolidation and other technologies. After an initial, fairly brief period of resistance, farm people adapted and then adopted the telephone and the automobile. Indeed, in the 1920s, they purchased automobiles and radios at extraordinary rates. But they did not give in on school consolidation for decades. More than any other force of urbanization, school consolidation struck close to the bone, blending issues of family, economy, and community into a powerful nexus of resistance and highlighting the tension between what America was and what it was becoming.60

Domestic Links
The unity of apparent opposites defined early twentieth-century America. The opulence of Fifth Avenue and the poverty of the Lower East Side,
the economic prosperity of the North and the backwardness of the South, the opportunities open to white immigrants and closed to black Americans: these, and many others that could be enumerated, point to multiple, simultaneous, and overlapping dualities and striking inequalities as the essence of the nation. But first appearances can deceive. For in none of the binaries did the two sides exist in isolation. In every instance, bonds of interdependence bound them in intimate, although frequently not harmonious, relations. In these tensions between seeming opposites the multiple meanings of the era were found. None of those dualities was more misleading than the contrasts between domestic and foreign, the fictive line that separated America from the rest of the world in the first modern era of economic globalization, or that which divided rural and urban, town and country.

*Nature’s Metropolis*, William Cronon’s magnificent history of nineteenth-century Chicago’s relations with its hinterland, explodes the binaries between town and country and city and nature. Chicago’s growth depended on the products of the countryside: grain, lumber, and livestock. In turn, the demands of the city’s market reshaped the countryside into what Cronon calls a “second nature” as hogs and cattle replaced buffalo, and prairie grasses gave way to grain. Less immediately visible, but no less powerful, links joined country merchants and farmers to Chicago through the extended reach of the city’s banks and suppliers.

Chicago’s experience underscores the superficiality of one of the great, enduring binaries in ideas about history: the separation of town and country, farm and city, rural and urban. It directs attention away from the separate features of the “America that was” and the “America that was becoming” and toward the tensions that linked them. These were, of course, perfectly obvious to observers at the time. In *The Country Town*, first published in 1906, Wilbert L. Anderson, a New England clergyman and student of rural life, contrasted the “age of homespun” with the “age of machinery” or the “age of cities” and described the “partnership” of the rural with the “urban population in one economic enterprise.” The age of homespun may have predated the age of machinery, but it did not disappear with the emergence of industrial cities. In the early twentieth century, the distinction between the two reflected space as much as time, and it was the contemporary links between them, not the succession of one by the other, which marked the era. Anderson tried to deflect attention away from the depletion of some rural villages and toward the larger picture: the “magnitude of the rural population and the rapidity of its increase.” Cities, he was clear, “may multiply and grow to an amazing extent without diminishing the rural population as a whole.”

Country and city are united in an indissoluble partnership, which is equitable and for their mutual profit. The farms feed and clothe the urban mil-
lions, forests and mines furnish dwellings and indispensable mechanism; the city repays the service in honest work, which its mills and factories make efficient in the highest degree. So great is the advantage of costly machinery, that the city can take the toll of its maintenance and even of its wealth out of the traffic, and then return to the rural partner what he needs of his product wrought into the form for consumption that the highest civilization approves.62

The growth of cities thus assured “corresponding rural development and prosperity.” Anderson was optimistic: within ten years agricultural overproduction had given way to “a condition in which the city and country are in delicate equipoise, with many intimations of the demands in the near future that will tax the resources of the farmer to the utmost.”63 Anderson may have been overly sanguine about the future of agriculture—in particular the size of the labor force that it would take to feed urban Americans and the continued tilting of the balance between supply and demand in favor of the farmer—but he was right about the urban-induced growth of agricultural prosperity in the early twentieth century and the intimate links between his “age of homespun” and “age of manufacture.”

The Circulation of Products

The links between town and country took many forms. Most apparent in some ways was the circulation of products: raw materials brought from farms to towns and cities for processing and, in many instances, returned in the form of finished goods—clothing, furniture, and canned foods. The urban “talent for exchange,” Anderson observed, worked so well that

in addition to his own grains, and meats, and fibres, passed through the processes of manufacture, the farmer receives for his labor furnishings and adornments for his home, books and papers for his instruction, and a liberal contribution to his bank account. The farm has a double significance for commerce, for from it are derived the materials of manufacture and trade, and to it return the rich products of the toil and skill of the city.

Manufacturers did more than meet rural demands; they induced them. In need of an outlet for the new products of mass production, manufacturers enlisted advertisers and merchants to enlarge rural markets. Faced with problems of distribution in some industries such as meatpacking and sewing machines, they constructed a national marketing system.64

In 1872 a salesman named Aaron Montgomery Ward with connections to the Grange, the leading farmers’ movement, opened a mail order house that within ten years offered rural families a catalogue with more than ten
thousand items. By 1890 he faced competition from an aggressive new mail order firm founded in 1886, Sears, Roebuck and Company, which also directed its wares to rural customers. Rising standards of rural consumption pointed to a circuit of culture as well as merchandise, in this case an asymmetrical exchange as “goods designed, manufactured, advertised, and sold by urban businesspeople,” permeated the countryside.65

The United States, Delos Wilcox pointed out, was rapidly becoming “a nation of cities, and even while the majority of the American people” remained “rural, so far as residence is concerned, the influence of the cities upon the national life” had grown “quite out of proportion to their population.” The city served as the “distributing centre of intelligence as well as goods.” It stood at the “centre of the complex web of national life.” A number of developments—“rural free [mail] delivery . . . systems of trolley lines focusing in the cities, the expansion of the mail order business, the concentration of the publishing interests”—all these placed cities in “direct and dominating relations with country people, making the country essentially suburban.” The trend of the age, said Wilcox, was “urban imperialism.”66

Although the products of farms and forests sustained urban populations, cities controlled both the processes that turned them into the mass produced goods and the sources of credit and capital that nourished agricultural expansion and trade. In these exchanges, cities held the greatest power, sending back to the countryside a new culture of consumption along with the products of mass production, setting the costs of transportation, and controlling credit. Relations between town and country may have been reciprocal, but they were uneasy, filled with tension, exacerbated by the cityward migration of rural people. Towns and cities were great magnets, drawing people, especially youths, away from farms. Between 1860 and 1920, the size of the urban population grew about nine times; the rural population scarcely doubled.67 Thus, people as well as products linked town and city.

**Finance, Communications, and Labor Markets**

Finance also linked town and country. The financial links that joined an older, rural America to the new nation growing up in the cities had their ultimate source in New York City. By allowing country banks to count deposits in New York as legal reserves, the National Banking Act of 1865 intensified their reliance on the metropolis’s banks, which had long served as correspondents for interregional or international transactions. The New York banks usually invested the money from country banks in short-term loans in the city. A shortfall anywhere in the nation could thus put pressure on New York to scramble for funds and raise interest rates. This pattern fluctuated with the seasons as money flowed from New
York to the interior in the fall to pay for crops and then back again during the rest of the year, notably in the spring when farmers spent what they had earned. Without a bank of last resort, the system remained unstable, subject to crises that, as in 1873, 1893, and 1907, swept across the nation. In 1913, Congress responded with the Federal Reserve System that, for the first time since the demise of the National Bank of the United States in the antebellum era, linked banks into a national financial system and completed the domination of the nation’s financial system by large, urban institutions.

A national financial system required a uniform currency. In nineteenth century United States, the multiplicity of local currencies acted as a brake on financial integration. Before the Civil War, more than five thousand different kinds of state bank notes circulated along with a bewildering variety of coins issued in Europe and Mexico. Starting in the 1860s with the National Banking Act, the federal government tried to force the substitution of a single national currency for the many state and local varieties. Although the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed considerable financial integration, including the spread of a national currency, a variety of notes remained in circulation until 1913 and the Federal Reserve system. Paper money did not, in fact, become entirely uniform until the 1920s.

The circulation of goods, the diffusion of a new culture of consumption, the migration of rural people to cities, and the integration of financial markets: all were links joining an older to a newer America. They were facilitated by innovations in communication, notably the telegraph in the nineteenth and the telephone and radio in the early twentieth century, which for the first time permitted the virtually instantaneous flow of information about prices, credit, markets, and products across vast distances at minimal cost. But none of these links would have been possible without dramatic innovations in transportation—methods of moving large quantities of goods quickly, efficiently, and at reasonable cost. Early in the nineteenth century the major transportation innovation had been canals. The Erie Canal spurred the economic ascendancy of New York City and Chicago, which, in effect, was its western terminus. For a time, it made Buffalo, the point where goods were transshipped from the Great Lakes to the Canal, one of the nation’s great cities. But by late in the century, canals had been eclipsed by railroads.

On May 10, 1869, the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads met in Utah, joining East and West in the first transcontinental railroad. The great era of railroad building, however, still lay in the immediate future. Between 1870 and 1910, railroad mileage increased from 53 to 243 thousand miles. In the decades between 1870 and 1890, the nation added one hundred and ten thousand miles of track; in the next twenty years it
completed nearly another eighty thousand. The introduction of Bessemer steel after the Civil War combined with organizational innovation made this spectacular growth possible. Before then, the small amount of steel the nation produced was twice as expensive as the iron used for tracks. In the decade after 1866, improved steel rails, which dropped in price and proved stronger and better than iron, facilitated the introduction of larger and heavier locomotives and increased the capacity of railroads to carry freight. At the same time, a host of organizational innovations by railroad managers not only facilitated the expansion of railroads but created the template for modern corporations.

Today, as railroads struggle to survive, it is hard to recall that once they drove the economy. In the late nineteenth century, railroads absorbed about 70 percent of the steel output, from 12 percent to 15 percent of coal, around 10 percent of lumber, and a very large share of foreign investment. Three large railroad lines—Central Pacific, Union Pacific, and Illinois Central—each employed more than ten thousand workers; in the 1880s, railroad construction reached its maximum employment, about 200,000 a year. In the same years, in both Britain and North America, financiers focused on mobilizing capital to invest in railroads. In the process, they forced financial institutions to modify their practices to service the new global economy. Until World War I, railroads were the nation’s second-largest consumer of capital, exceeded only by the construction industry.

Railroads, as historians have stressed, reduced the cost of freight and diffused goods across the nation. But they had three other key economic effects as well—all of which forged stronger links between the America of farms and villages and the new nation of manufacturing and cities. The railroad, first, freed economic growth from its dependence on proximity to the coast or inland waterways. Second, as the railroad penetrated the trans-Mississippi West it connected previously inaccessible resources to transportation. And, third, it fueled demand for natural resources—iron ore, fuel, lumber—and heavy manufactured products—for instance, steel, engines, and railway cars.

The intensified links between farm and city, forest and factory, East and West reinforced one another. Together, by the first decade of the twentieth century, they built a national economy and labor market unique in the world. Unlike its European counterparts, “the American market was essentially a mass market. It demanded and obtained large quantities of cheap low-to-medium quality goods with comparatively little variation from one part of the country to another.” It was, moreover, a market whose resources were found within the same nation state. British and German manufacturing required that large volumes of materials be imported; American manufacturing for the most part did not. It
did, however, require mobile labor. With resources irregularly distributed across the continent, manufacturing depended on the willingness of workers to remain on the move.\footnote{73}

With the help of self-replicating institutional networks, a relatively integrated labor market had emerged across the nation, with the exception of the South. Two features mark integrated labor markets. First, information moves quickly and easily between workers looking for jobs and potential employers located elsewhere. Second, both parties to the market—workers and labor—share the ability to respond quickly to labor shortages in different locations. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, helped by the telegraph, telephone, and post office, information about jobs and opportunities flowed along networks defined by kinship, ethnicity, friendship, and location. With railroads crisscrossing the nation and ticket prices falling, potential emigrants faced minimal difficulties in moving in search of better jobs and higher wages—special “emigrant trains” even offered reduced fares to the nation’s interior where demand for labor was high.\footnote{74}

Because it is difficult, if not impossible, to directly measure information flows and the speed with which workers and employers respond to labor shortages, empirical studies rely on indirect measures of which the most promising, for domestic as well as international markets, is wage convergence across different locations. “As the labor supply increases in the high-wage location and decreases in the low-wage location, the differences in wages will fall,” the theory contends. Of course, in the real world many factors intervene to make the process less than perfect. Workers do not have full information; they may have preferences unrelated to work that hold them to where they live; there are costs associated with moving. Nonetheless, over time, converging wages do signify an integrating national as well as international labor market. This national labor market linked all parts of the nation, with the exception of the far West and the South. Huge labor demands sustained higher wages in the West, but remained lower in the South than in the rest of the country. Although the flow of population from the low wage south Atlantic to the higher wage south central regions helped integrate labor markets within the South, until at least 1914 real wages there continued to decline relative to those elsewhere.\footnote{75}

In the decades after the Civil War, the South remained separated from national and international labor markets. Southern planters, politicians, and business people managed to exploit black labor through a host of techniques, such as laws that held them in virtual peonage or restricted travel, and the threat of violent reprisal reinforced by lynching. A captive labor force left little incentive to modernize and diversify a largely rural economy. But the reasons for the South’s distinctive labor market also go
beyond race, because poor white southerners also proved slow to move northward, despite a huge need for labor in an expanding manufacturing economy, which European immigrants eagerly filled. Instead, tradition joined with the absence of networks and labor market institutions to keep white and black southerners within the South. The Civil War had reinforced the historic separation of North and South and the reliance of northern industry on immigrant labor. Furthermore, southerners who might have welcomed unskilled or semi-skilled jobs in the North lacked the networks of friends and relatives that initiated and sustained the chain migration that brought waves of immigrant workers to the nation’s factories, mines, and railroads. Nor did employers, who might have wanted to turn to the South for low-wage workers, have any clearly defined means for finding and recruiting them. The South may have lost political nationhood in the Civil War, but on the eve of World War I it remained in many ways economically and socially a nation apart.

**Global Links**

The links that joined the older and newer Americas were global as well as homegrown. In fact, the years between the Gilded Age and World War I formed America’s first important age of economic globalization. The global economy’s reach extended from factory to farm and from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast. Consider, for example, Frank Norris’s description of the office of a large wheat rancher in California at the turn of the century:

> The office was the nerve-center of the entire ten thousand acres of Los Mer-tos, but its appearance and furnishings were not in the least suggestive of a farm. . . . no doubt, the most significant object in the office was the ticker. This was an innovation in the San Joaquin. . . . The offices of the ranches were thus connected by wire with San Francisco, and through that city with Minneapolis, Duluth, Chicago, New York, and at last, and most important of all, with Liverpool. Fluctuations in the price of the world’s crop during and after the harvest thrilled straight through to the office. . . . The ranch became merely the part of an enormous whole, a unit in the vast agglomeration of wheat land the whole world round, feeling the effects of causes thousands of miles distant—a drought on the prairies of Dakota, a rain on the plains of India, a frost on the Russian steppes, a hot wind on the llanos of the Argentine.

The first truly international economy reached not only from the grain markets of Liverpool to the wheat ranches of California, but also to every corner of the globe, economic historians Kevin H. O’Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson emphasize:
By 1914, there was hardly a village or town anywhere on the globe whose prices were not influenced by distant foreign markets, whose infrastructure was not financed by foreign capital, whose engineering, manufacturing, and even business skills were not imported from abroad, or whose labor markets were not influenced by the absence of those who had emigrated or by the presence of strangers who had immigrated. Poor regions had enjoyed significant convergence gains by erasing part of the gap between themselves and rich regions, and flourishing export sectors enjoyed the benefits associated with the global trade boom.

In America, the modern history of economic globalization moved through three phases: a period of intense globalization between the later nineteenth century and World War I; years of de-globalization—a turning inward in both public policy and economic activity—from, roughly, the 1920s through the 1950s; and the current era of re-globalization that started after World War II and accelerated in the 1960s. Although the overuse of “globalization” often robs the term of its precision and analytic power, we understand it to have a specific meaning. Economic globalization refers to increasing internationalization in four areas: trade in goods and services, financial markets, labor markets, and population flows. Together, the force of these connections reshaped the distribution of people and economic activity in space, the content and demography of work, the level of personal well-being, and the experience of individuals and families.

Trade and Finance

Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the share of exports and imports in gross domestic product (GDP) as the measure, the United States showed little increase in international economic activity. As a share of GDP, imports between 1870 and 1913 hovered between 6 and 7 percent and exports between 5 and 6 percent. But volume and share of GDP can reflect influences on supply and demand other than the integration of global markets, for instance, “population growth, colonization of empty lands, capital accumulation, technological change, and a variety of other factors.” These influences on GDP masked the growing internationalization of the U.S. economy, signified, according to O’Rourke and Williamson, by the convergence in the price of commodities—“the only irrefutable evidence that globalization is taking place.” In other words, the market for goods becomes increasingly worldwide with prices subject to the same influences wherever they originate.

For prices to converge at least one of two things must happen: transport costs or barriers to trade, such as tariffs, must fall. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, tariffs did not decline. (In Asia, however, with the opening of Japan, trade barriers disappeared with
lightning speed.) But transport costs plummeted spectacularly around the world—at an annual rate of about 1.5 percent over many years. The convergence of commodity prices followed. In 1870, the cost of wheat in Liverpool exceeded the cost in Chicago by 57.6 percent, in 1895 by 17.8 percent, and in 1912 by 15.6 percent—and these numbers almost certainly understate the decline. The pattern was repeated for other foodstuffs. For meat, the gap went down from 92.3 percent in 1895 to 17.9 percent in 1913. For cotton textiles, the price difference between Boston and Manchester was 13.7 percent in 1870 and 0 in 1913. The same trends marked prices in iron rails, pig iron, copper, hides, wood, coal, tin, and coffee. Price convergence took place, too, between Britain and Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Rio de Janeiro and was facilitated between London and Asia by the opening of the Suez Canal and the substitution of steam for sail on long distance routes, which reduced the time and cost of transport.81

International financial markets—highly integrated in the early twentieth century—supported the globalization of trade. Sustained by the gold standard and the complex of financial institutions in London, early twentieth-century capital flowed around the world searching for the highest returns. Three measures highlight this financial integration: capital accounts, the correlation between savings and investment, and the duration of capital flows. Capital accounts, which combine imports and exports, measure capital mobility. Aggregating them for twelve major nations yields a higher average for the pre–World War I period than from 1989 to 1996. The relation between savings and investments points in the same direction. Where international markets are integrated, the correlation between them should be low because capital should flow where returns are highest. This, in fact, was the case in the early twentieth century. In 1907, for instance, 40 percent of British savings was invested abroad, and, in sharp contrast to today, as primarily long-term investments. Investors bought government bonds and shares of railroads and other public utilities. Increasingly, therefore, returns to investors depended on developments around the world.82

Wages and Labor Markets

Global links, in fact, defined the “age of machinery.” International financial exchanges, wages, and labor markets provided the capital, incentives, and manpower that underlay America’s industrial ascendance. As the flows of international capital locked nations into a global financial system and the prices of commodities traded in increasingly integrated markets became more similar, the wages paid to ordinary workers also converged. In the early nineteenth century, the simultaneous impact of industrialization in labor-abundant Europe and the exploitation of rich
natural resources in labor-scarce America drove a huge gap between wages. The U.S. advantage over Great Britain in real wages soared from 40 percent in 1830 to 86 percent in 1846. In 1870, real wages were 136 percent higher in the New World than in the Old. By 1913, this gap had fallen 36 percent. Between 1870 and 1910, the wage gap between Britain and the United States dropped 17.2 percent. This wage convergence signaled the emergence of an international labor market.

More than any other factor, migration accomplished this internationalization of labor. The flow of people—even more than of commodities or capital—is both the source and the sign of economic globalization. Population flows across oceans and the American continent constituted two sides of the processes that integrated international and domestic economies in the years from the latter nineteenth century through World War I. Between 1850 and 1914, fifty-five million Europeans moved to North and South America and to Australasia. Emigration rates of fifty per thousand per decade and immigration rates of one hundred per thousand per decade were common in the years just before World War I; they have rarely been matched since then. In the four decades before World War I, this migration increased the labor force in the New World by a third and decreased it in the Old World by an eighth. Even California and Mexico in the last four decades of the twentieth century did not exceed these proportions. Constraints that had prevented poor European workers from seeking high wages in the Americas dissipated after 1870: the cost of transportation fell; remittances from the first generation of emigrants financed the migration of relatives; and, with the spread of industrialization across Europe, income rose in previously depressed regions, increasing family resources available for a move. As the impediments to emigration eased, workers found themselves pushed out of low-wage and drawn into high-wage countries, and redistributed around the world from areas of labor surplus to labor scarcity.

New “entrepreneurs of the international labor market” channeled many of the migration streams that linked country and city across both the Atlantic and the North American continent. These were “padrones” who recruited workers in southern Europe to supply areas of labor shortage in America and Canada and to railroad construction in the West. Once in the New World, laborers recruited by padrones remained subject to their control, commodities shuffled between work sites to meet shifting demands. “By linking diverse and isolated sites of labor demand such as Kootenay Landing, British Columbia, Bingham Canyon, Utah, and Minnesotan sugar beet fields with equally isolated sites of labor supply in the countryside of Italy, Greece, and Mexico,” the historian Gunther Peck writes, padrones “helped build truly international labor markets.”

In the United States, the redistribution of the global labor force registered in the spatial mobility of American workers, described earlier. Mo-
bility was one facet of the interaction between native and immigrant workers. The others were wages and structures of opportunity. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, immigrants took the least desirable jobs in the slowest-growing parts of the economy, freeing native workers to pursue higher wages in faster growing industries. As they entered the slowest-growing occupations, immigrants crowded out unskilled native workers, often motivating them to move west. For every additional one hundred immigrants entering northeastern states, Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson estimate, forty native workers left. The availability of immigrants for unskilled factory work also probably blocked black migration north to better jobs until World War I and the immigration quotas of the 1920s. Immigrants, who appear to have received the same wages as natives for similar work, flooded labor markets. Thus, despite the absence of wage discrimination, they lowered wages—either absolutely or by lowering the rate of increase that otherwise would have occurred. In the absence of immigrants, according to Hatton and Williamson, real wages would have been 4.7 to 5.9 percent higher after 1890, or 10.9 to 13.7 percent higher after 1879. Even in the older cities, however, immigration did not reduce opportunity structures for the native-born workers who remained. Their occupational rank, as measured by a socioeconomic index, rose as the numbers of immigrants increased. Immigrants entered at the bottom of the labor market queue, bumping the native-born workers who stayed up the ladder into better jobs. Immigrants may have reduced wages, but they also opened opportunities.

The displacement of native by immigrant workers worried the U.S. Immigration Commission, which studied the problem with care. Displacement, the committee concluded, was a complex phenomenon. Native-born Americans and immigrants from Britain and northern Europe were abandoning a number of industries, especially coal mining and iron and steel making; those who remained, however, moved up into more skilled jobs and, even, executive and technical positions, as immigrants from southern and eastern Europe flooded in; but their children refused to enter the same industries. This reluctance resulted from three influences: advanced education that enabled the move to better occupations, degraded working conditions accepted by recently hired unskilled workers, and the social stigma attached to occupations of the new immigrants.

The transnational integration of trade, finance, labor markets, and people marked the first era of economic globalization. They were, of course, the same factors that knit the northern United States into an integrated economy. Globalization and national economic integration were two sides of the same coin. Thus, international migration and population movement within the United States, usually written about separately by
historians and social scientists, were part of the same process—a redis-
tribution of labor representing a massive adjustment of supply and de-
mand linking an older, rural America to the age of machinery.

The consequences of this massive population movement across
oceans and continents were huge. It forever changed the nation’s de-
mography, and its political and cultural impact registered on every
aspect of American life, with reverberations that have not yet ceased. To-
gether with the other sources of discontinuous social and economic
change, it exacerbated inequalities and built into early twentieth-century
experience a tension between old and new that forced Americans to re-
design everything—from their governments to their families.

The Limits of Government

Governments—federal, state, and local—that fit an older, rural America
proved unsuitable for the age of manufacture. Their limits forced Amer-
icans to rethink the characteristics of the state and what it should do.

Early twentieth-century Americans remained a lightly governed peo-
ple. Federal, state, and local governments all began the century better
suited to an agricultural-commercial nation than to one dominated by
manufacturing and great cities. Compared to the end of the century, the
federal government was small. Excluding defense and the post office,
there were only 58,760 federal employees in 1901, or one for every 1,293
Americans. In 1999 the number was 1,685,000, or 1 for every 161. (The
post office, the great source of federal patronage, accounted for 70 per-
cent of federal civilian employees in 1901; reformed by Civil Service reg-
ulations, its share of federal civilian employment in 1999 had dropped to
32 percent.) Although it was small, the size of the federal government
was increasing faster than the population: the number of federal em-
ployees went up 132 percent between 1880 and 1900, and would grow
another 133 percent by 1910. In the same decade, population increased 21
percent. (Much of this growth in the federal workforce resulted from the
expansion of the armed services during the Spanish-American War and
the occupation of new territories and war in the Philippines.)

The cost of government grew less than the number of its employees—
98 percent in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and 25 per-
cent in the twentieth century’s first. Cost lagged behind employment
partly because of declining interest payments on the national debt,
which, swollen as a result of the Civil War, dropped from $95 million in
1881 to $40 million in 1900 and $21 million in 1910. The federal govern-
ment paid this interest and other expenses from sources of revenue quite
different from current-day ones. In 1900, it received 41 percent of its in-
come from customs and 52 percent from internal revenue, which, in turn,
received 82 percent of its revenue from excise taxes on alcohol and to-
bacco. The first federal income tax was coterminous with the Civil War; the modern version was introduced in 1913. With the importance of customs to federal income, it is not surprising that the tariff question dominated early twentieth-century politics. In an era of economic globalization, tariffs and free trade inevitably proved powerful and divisive issues. To its partisans, free trade promised unlimited benefits through the expansion of exports and consequent growth in jobs and income. To its opponents, by opening the nation to competition from lower wage economies, it threatened working-class incomes and jobs. This clash, so powerful in America’s first era of economic globalization, repeated itself nearly a century later in the debates over the North American Free Trade Agreement and other trade issues. Only the sides had changed. Whereas labor remained suspicious of unregulated international commerce, manufacturing interests, supporters of high tariffs a century earlier, were now, with a few exceptions, ardent champions of free trade.91

The largest single expense in the federal budget in the early twentieth century was veterans’ services and benefits (swollen by the late-nineteenth century expansion of Civil War pensions), which, in turn, was followed closely by the cost of the army and, at a distance, the navy, and interest on the public debt. Even with generous veterans’ pensions, the federal government, helped by high tariffs, still ran a surplus equivalent to almost 9 percent of its expenses. For a few fortunate decades its problem was how to spend its revenues, not how to increase them. Within the government, the Interior Department, a catch-all agency whose most important responsibilities included lands and railroads, Indian affairs and territory, patents, printing, and public documents had the most employees—7,699 in 1900—followed by the Treasury Department with 5,587. Other departments remained very small: State 101, Labor 103, Justice 143—tiny compared to now, even accounting for population increase.92

In the late nineteenth century the presidency remained a less powerful and far more informal agency than it became in the twentieth. Presidents concerned themselves mainly with dispensing patronage. James Bryce remarked, “The business of nominating is in ordinary times so engrossing as to leave the chief magistrate of the nation little time for his other functions.”93 The historian Morton Keller describes the office as “small in scale and limited in power, caught up more in the vicissitudes of party politics and patronage than in the formulation and conduct of public policy. Late nineteenth-century presidents had little say over the estimates, appropriations, expenditures, and policies of government bureaus and departments.” “He has less influence on legislation,” wrote Bryce, “than the Speaker of the House of Representatives.”94 At the start of the twentieth century, the president’s staff consisted only of “a secretary, two assistant secretaries, two executive clerks, four lesser clerks or telegraphers, and a few doorkeepers and messengers.” This weakness
and informality gave way in the early twentieth century. Already, late in the nineteenth century, McKinley’s administration had improved the efficiency of the presidential office. Indeed, heightened executive power during the Spanish-American War and the fierce politics of the late 1890s initiated the transformation of the presidency led by Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Nonetheless, the presidency began the century a faint shadow of what it would become by its end.

In 1885 Woodrow Wilson called Congress the “predominant and controlling force, the centre and source of all motive and regulative power.” With the presidency weak and in the absence of a capable, independent civil service, Congress, dominated by state party leaders, controlled fiscal and budgetary power and initiated legislation. It was also an institution undergoing change as the congressional leadership exerted increasingly tight control. The vehicle for congressional government was the committee system, through which Congress exerted administrative influence on the federal government.

Growth in the number of civil service positions following the Pendleton Act of 1883 and the presence of more skilled civil servants in the government’s technical branches—such as Carroll Wright at the Bureau of the Census, Walter Moseley at Agriculture, and Henry C. Carter at the Interstate Commerce Commission—improved its administrative capacity. Still, American national government remained far less professional and far weaker than its counterparts in England and continental Europe. Americans, by and large, Keller observes, lacked “any broad conception as to what the central government might do, save collect taxes, provide patronage, guard the coasts, fight Indians, and preserve order.” Expansion of the federal government’s activities to include the protection of children, provision for the elderly, the relief of unemployment, and the construction of housing would require a conceptual as well as an administrative revolution. This revolution is a central theme in the history of American government in the twentieth century, with vast consequences for every topic discussed in this book, as later chapters make clear. In the years before World War I, new beliefs about the uses of government remained just a glimmer on the federal horizon, but they had moved much closer to the center of state and local government.

Because of the way American federalism worked, crucial power over education, welfare, law enforcement, infrastructure, corporate charters, and other activities that affected the intimate experience of Americans on a daily basis remained with the states, which, in turn, often delegated them to cities, towns, and counties. In the late nineteenth century, many states, hostile to “active government,” wrote new constitutions or revised old ones that crimped state legislatures’ lawmaking powers. But strict constitutional language could not hold back the pressures of industrial growth and urbanization, which forced legislatures to intervene,
if reluctantly, in economic and social affairs. Thus, state governments extended their authority in education, social welfare, corrections, public health, and other important matters. “There is,” Bryce noted, “visible in recent constitutions a strong tendency to extend the scope of public administrative activity.”

Indeed, the early twentieth century witnessed the emergence of modern, activist state government. “Whereas the nineteenth-century state was spare, with little administrative muscle,” historian Jon C. Teaford observes, “during the course of the twentieth century, the state expanded beyond recognition, becoming a governmental gargantuan in comparison with its earlier self.” In these years, with their role redefined, “states emerged as dynamic molders of domestic policy and vital providers of government services.”

The growth of spending and employment illustrates the dynamic transformation of state government in the early twentieth century. State expenses increased much faster than population. Consider the growth in state spending in three periods: from 1880 to 1900, from 1900 to 1910, and from 1910 to 1920. In Illinois the percentage increase was 71 percent, 49 percent, and 116 percent compared to population increases of 57 percent, 17 percent and 36 percent. In Pennsylvania, a state that grew more slowly, spending also rose much faster than population. Even in the South, the pattern was the same. Considered on a per capita basis, the rise in spending becomes even more striking: in Illinois, which was not exceptional, from $2.75 in 1880 to $3.00 in 1900, $3.83 in 1910, and $6.09 in 1920. The second decade of the century was, in fact, the period of catalytic growth in state government and of major reorganization. Per capita state employment increased in Illinois from four per thousand to seven per thousand during the decade, numbers almost identical to Pennsylvania’s, whereas in Alabama it rose from two per thousand to three per thousand. (To pay for this growth, state governments began to experiment with financial reforms, notably by decreasing reliance on the property tax which, in 1902, was the source of 53 percent of all state tax receipts.)

As a result, the early twentieth century witnessed new specialized state administrative agencies, staffed increasingly by experts, and designed both to modernize and extend old responsibilities, such as education, and to administer new ones, such as mothers’ pensions or workers’ compensation. In the same years, the automobile posed entirely new problems for state governments, which carried most of the burden for financing highways, which they met through borrowing and levying new taxes. State highway department allocations leaped from $24 million in 1914 to $107 million in 1919, and $910 million in 1929.

“During the second decade of the twentieth century,” writes Teaford, “demands for administrative reorganization swept the nation.” Reformers emphasized the need to reorganize the executive branch and to re-
duce the “multitude of irresponsible state commissions and boards” that state legislatures had created in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first of the twentieth century. In their place, reformers advocated “a limited number of departments headed by gubernatorial appointees subject to the governor’s removal power.”\(^\text{103}\) The administrative history of Illinois’ state government illustrates these patterns. Between 1903 and 1914, the number of state boards and commissions proliferated, from approximately eighteen to sixty-one. Within a decade, by 1924, the government had been radically reorganized into ten departments under the executive branch and a small number of permanent boards and commissions. A new Department of Labor and Department of Public Welfare spoke not only to administrative reorganization but to new functions and a self-conscious professionalization widely shared throughout the nation.

Local government remains the hardest branch to describe. With more than ten thousand incorporated units, it took a variety of forms. In the South, the most important unit was the county, in New England the town. Elsewhere, Bryce described a third pattern that combined “some features of the first with some of the second, and may be called the mixed system. It is found, under a considerable variety of forms, in the middle and north-western States.” Everywhere, though, local autonomy remained strong. Municipal expert Delos Wilcox described American city government as a “chaos of forms.”\(^\text{104}\)

The problems identified by early twentieth-century urban reformers ring with an eerie familiarity. As they groped toward the definition of a novel urban form—the industrial city, as new in its time as the “edge city” is today, they wrestled with the consequences of recent immigration, the lack of affordable housing, the growth of poverty and homelessness, crises in public health and sanitation, and the impact of growing concentrations of wealth on society and politics. At the same time, they grappled with private corporations’ operations of municipal services and facilities, the heavy hand of state government, the weakness of mayoral executive authority, the corruption of machine politics, the inefficiencies and inequities of the courts, and the regressive and inadequate foundation of city finances on property taxes.\(^\text{105}\) By 1910, American urban government had acquired the underlying structures, critiques, and dilemmas that would endure for at least the next century.

Cities governed by political machines posed a special problem: reformers called them corrupt, inefficient, and impotent. “There is no denying,” Bryce claimed in an often-quoted observation, “that the government of cities is the one conspicuous failure of the United States.”\(^\text{106}\) Because they were (and are) creatures of state legislatures, cities retained limited capacity to control their own institutions and economies or to replace political machines. Home rule—defined as greater municipal au-
tonomy from the state—thus composed a key component of municipal reform.

Nonetheless, cities tried to meet the immense challenges they faced. With the growth of population and manufacturing, they found themselves confronted with wretched slums, unsanitary streets, inadequate infrastructure, and overcrowded schools. Municipal government suitable for an older America could not cope with the age of machinery. As Wilcox observed, “the world can never again be the same as it was before steam and electricity were engaged in the service of man, and one of the hardest problems for democracy to face is the necessary readjustment of political habits to fit the new conditions.”

As they exhorted Americans to grapple with new problems, Progressive-era writers on urban reform tried to steer a course between Bryce’s condemnation of American government—which they cited—and their own optimism about the possibilities of urban democracy. Within the chaos of early industrial cities they saw the potential for both civic revival and the development of innovative urban policies that harnessed the energy and vitality of cities and the fruits of technology to clean, effective, responsive governments. They were not naïve. They realized the obstacles. They thought, however, that the struggle was winnable and crucial. Cities, agents of a new “imperialism,” now dominated the country, and their power would only increase. In their character, therefore, lay the fate of the nation.

Like states, city governments in the early twentieth century responded to the age of machinery by expanding and modernizing and by redefining their roles. Among them, as among state governments, the second decade proved the crucial turning point, although some reforms had started in the 1890s. In 1913, Harvard municipal expert William Bennett Munro pointed to civil service reform, changes in election procedures, reductions in the size of municipal legislatures, the substitution of at-large for ward-based elections, and the increased authority of mayors. But, he asserted, “the real renaissance in American city government has come in the last ten or twelve years.”

Municipal spending also revealed the growth in city government. In Philadelphia, for example, expenditures grew 164 percent between 1913 and 1920 as population increased only 12 percent. From 1890 to 1913, municipal per capita expenses hovered around $25; in the next seven years they leaped to $58.87. In 1920, the City of Philadelphia employed 15,372 people excluding teachers, 12,817 under civil service. Most of these, 6,754, were employed in the Department of Public Safety and many of the rest, 3,239, in the Department of Public Works. The story in Chicago was similar. There, municipal expenses grew 201 percent between 1913 and 1920 as population increased only 15 percent.

These were, after all, years of tremendous accomplishments in cities,
Despite their often inefficient and corrupt governments, cities built water works, bridges, and schools. They dug sewer systems and tunnels for subways. They created parks, public health systems, and departments of public welfare, introduced zoning, and professionalized their courts. They employed experts and founded municipal reference bureaus. Between 1900 and 1920, for example, Philadelphia’s Bureau of Health, housed in the Department of Public Safety, became the Department of Public Health with its own network of specialized bureaus. The Bureau of Charities and Correction also became a department overseeing four specialized agencies, including Social Service (a term not used in 1900). Looking back from 1913, Munro pointed to progress on a number of fronts, with the result that in municipal services and infrastructure cities had “made more progress in efficiency during the last twenty years than they [had] in the preceding fifty.”

Thus, America’s early twentieth-century government, like its economy and population, looked back to what America was and forward to what it was becoming. Its weak authority, impermanent and unspecialized civil service, pervasive patronage, and diffuse structure worked reasonably well in a nation of widely scattered farms, villages, and towns, loosely connected to a few large cities. But it could not cope with the responsibilities and problems of the world’s leading industrial nation, with the flood of immigrants from new sources, the burst of urban growth, or the acquisition of an empire. In the strengthening of the presidency, the professionalization of the federal civil service, the expansion of state administrative authority and competence, and the initial modernization of municipal government lay a new idea of government and the basis of a government capable of confronting a transformed America. But government was modified and adapted, not wholly rebuilt. The old remained visible in the new, revamped rather than rejected. The same can be said of American families.

**Family Strategies**

Government was the public and families the private face of the process through which Americans negotiated the transition to the age of manufacture. In 1900 and 1910, the hand of government rested more lightly on the shoulders of families than it would later in the century. Still, like the divide between rural and urban or local and global, the division between public and private existed as much in the imagination as on the ground. In the real world, the links that joined them blurred the distinction between separate and autonomous spheres. One of those links, as we have seen, was education. Schools intervened between parents and children; with schools, governments tried to structure the daily patterning of family life. In the countryside, the tension between state and family around
schooling played itself out vividly in the contest over rural school consolidation. In cities, it appeared in myriad ways: rigid age grading, Americanization programs that introduced conflicts to the relations between immigrant parents and their children, and, most of all, in compulsory education, which moved decisions about how children should spend their time from parents to the state. Public authorities infringed more on the private space of poor than of well-off families. Child protection societies, nominally private but vested with state authority, could remove children from families in cases of suspected neglect or abuse, and their efforts focused almost exclusively on the poor. Even well-off families, however, felt the influence of the state on the most intimate aspects of their lives when they wanted to practice birth control and found access to contraception criminalized by state law.

In early twentieth-century America, families confronted difficult and delicate tasks. They looked for methods to at once protect and advance their interests in a context of momentous and discontinuous change. They met this challenge in countless different ways, but amid the numbing variety, two clusters of practices—or strategies—emerged: one anchored in the past, one pointing toward the future. What is interesting and distinctive about a great many families of this time is that they deployed both at once, registering the tension between the old and the new in their day-to-day lives.

Whether they think about them consciously or not, all families have strategies. All of them need resources and must make similar decisions: how to divide economic and domestic responsibilities; whether to bring relatives, friends, or boarders into the household; how many children to have (or at least to try to have); and how long children should remain in school. Family decisions about these matters reflect many influences—custom, culture, education—and are often inconsistent. But patterns as well run through the ways families respond to their life circumstances. Economic, demographic, and spatial changes register in the everyday lives of ordinary people who reorder their families and life plans to meet them.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, industrial working-class families faced enormous challenges. With few resources, immigrants needed to recreate households in a new country whose language they very often did not speak. The spectacular industrialization of the time structured the lives of a great many wage earners and their families around the daily rhythm of mills and factories and disfigured them with low wages, periodic layoffs, and industrial accidents. In the same years, urbanization drew young people from farms, disrupting family economies. Professional, technical, and business careers ratcheted up demands for human capital, the importance of education, and the cost of children. Yet, even middle-class families lacked a safety net. Without
public or private old-age pensions or unemployment insurance, with public assistance limited to miserly outdoor relief and wretched poorhouses, with private charity uncertain and scarce, aged, disabled, sick, or out-of-work individuals had only their families to whom to turn.

Although individual families responded to the tugs of obligation and modernity in many ways, two basic strategies emerged. What can be called the protective approach responded to change with conventional practices that looked inward, mobilizing families’ resources as bulwarks against a threatening, often bewildering new world dominated by unemployment, sickness, and untimely death. It emphasized large, complex households with multiple wage-earners, including children, and large families to manage short-term crises, accumulate collective assets, and shelter parents in old age. What can be called the anticipatory approach looked to the future, mobilizing discipline and human capital to equip families for competition in a tough, new economic environment. It stressed limiting family size, excluding non-members of the nuclear family, and educating children. To some extent, these strategies reflected differences in class, ethnicity, and gender, and one or the other often dominated the choices made by individual families. But they were not mutually exclusive. Rather, as they negotiated the tensions inherent in an era of immense change, families combined strategies creatively, devising their own ways of mediating between disaster and mobility.

American families at the beginning of the twentieth century were usually much larger than their counterparts at its end. But size was only one axis along which fundamental family change occurred. Not only were there more children, but assorted extensions—relatives, boarders, employees—swelled the size of many households.

All these generalizations are also valid for families in the mid-nineteenth century. It is not that there had been no change: every feature of families and the life-course was in motion. As a result, early twentieth-century families were in transition. In a great many instances, however, the past was still more visible than the future, and many families, uncertain about their prospects and worried about emergencies, hedged their bets, keeping a foot in each world.

Coming of age in early twentieth-century America also echoed familiar practices. As in the nineteenth century, many young people, who took a long time to negotiate the transition to independent adulthood, still spent several years between work and marriage living as boarders or servants in households other than their parents—a practice described in detail in chapter 3. In this slow transition, young people in early twentieth-century America reflected the experience of earlier generations more than they forecast the compressed passage to adulthood of the future.

Of course, all families did not change at the same rate, even if almost all were moving in the same direction. The pace varied by class, ethnic-
ity, race, gender, and location. For example, in older, stagnant communities, such as Chelsea, Vermont, it was retired parents who most often lived with kin. In Indianola, Mississippi, among poor, sometimes fragmented African American families, relatives were more often grandchildren, nephews and nieces, or siblings. Families based in professional and white-collar work were the first to adopt new family strategies. Working-class families followed more slowly, not because middle-class norms somehow trickled down or were diffused, but because it took longer for their life circumstances to change enough for new strategies to make sense. Within immigrant groups, the second generation usually pioneered new family forms when they surmounted the tenuous foothold in the American economy that had attached the first generation to the security of older family strategies. Widows were, in important ways, a case apart. Dependent throughout most of the twentieth century, as they had been in earlier times, on the wages of working children supplemented by income from boarders, their family strategies changed the least.

Most families, it is true, were nuclear: fewer than one in three housed a relative, as is clear in figure 1.6. But this is a misleading statistic because families were too large and death came too early for all but a small minority to include a member of the older generation at any one time. In fact, in the early twentieth century, most of the elderly lived with one of

![Figure 1.6 Presence of Relatives and Nonrelatives in Households, by Age of Householder, 1910](image)

**Note:** The composition of households varied across the life cycle. For example, relatives more often lived in households with older heads while nonrelatives (mainly boarders and servants) more often lived with younger families. **Source:** Data from Ruggles et al. (2004).
their children whenever they could. At the same time, families and households were fluid. Boarders, servants, and relatives moved in and out, constantly varying the composition of individual households.

Watched over time, at some point almost all households included members other than the nuclear family.116 (It is significant, as we point out in chapter 4, that the concept “nuclear family” first appeared in social science journals only in 1941.)

Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, families changed only modestly, though for the most part in directions that would accelerate later in the century. The average number of children, for instance, declined by 16 percent and the number of servants and employees living with families by 59 percent. Some trends, however, pointed in the opposite direction: the number of relatives held fairly steady, and the number of families with an employed child living at home increased by a quarter, and the number with boarders and lodgers by more than half. Families thus faced both forward toward the smaller, more stripped down competitive form most would assume in succeeding decades and backward toward a time when kinship obligations were stronger, children were integral to family economies, and education mattered less.

The decline in the number of children born to married couples pointed to the future. “Advancing civilizations,” warned Charles Franklin Thwing, president emeritus of Western Reserve University and Adelbert College, in a jeremiad reflective of the eugenic ideas prevalent at the time, “are in peril of becoming declining social stages by reason of a diminished birth-rate. The diminished birth-rate obtaining in France and in the early native stock of the United States is the cause of public lamentation.” It was, he noted, “more conspicuous in families of the Protestant than of the Roman Catholic faith,” and it was “most evident” among “what are known as the educated classes.”117 Thwing’s observations, if not his lamentation, were accurate. What demographers call the standardized fertility ratio fell 20 percent between 1880 and 1910. Clearly, couples were deciding to limit the size of their families. Ethnic and racial differences in fertility for the most part were not large, as is clear in figure 1.7. Black fertility, in fact, fell more precipitously as a percentage of previous fertility than native white. Among the new immigrants, fertility fell sharply between the first and second generations, although Italians continued to have more children than Russians (mostly Jews). Fertility rates did differ sharply, however, among occupations. Professionals, managers and proprietors, and business employees had the lowest fertility. Fertility was highest by far for agricultural families, and a little lower for manual workers, among whom laborers had the most children.118

To some extent, the number of children born to a couple depended on where they lived. On the boom and bust plains of Kansas, where land
Figure 1.7  Change in Standardized Marital Fertility Ratio, by Ethnicity and Occupation, 1880 to 1910

Note: Between 1880 and 1910, married couples began to have fewer children. This trend held among all ethnic and occupational groups except Italian-born. For example, marital fertility declined 27 percent among U.S. blacks and 13 percent among laborers. Source: Data from Ruggles et al. (2004).

1Number of children zero to four per 1,000 married women, fifteen to forty-nine years of age. Figures are age-standardized using the aggregate distribution of the married female population for the three census years.
was available and extra hands useful, families in Haskell County had many children. On the stagnant farms of rural Vermont, couples in Chelsea, worried about expenses, uncertain of the future, sharply limited the size of their families. In El Centro, California, and Indianola, Mississippi, places less touched by either the fever of land and crop speculation or the backlash of early globalization, couples practiced older forms of family limitation, increasing the spacing between births rather than adopting the more modern practice of choosing a target number of children.

For farm families, children usually remained an important economic asset, their labor central, not incidental, to family economies. The same incentives also often held true for manual workers. With one income inadequate to sustain a family, children’s labor sometimes prevented destitution and made buying a house possible. In Homestead, Pennsylvania, social investigator Margaret Byington found that among the families she studied with a total income of at least $20 a week, sons in English-speaking European families contributed 29 percent and in native white families 11 percent. “Some of these boys of nineteen or twenty earned as much as their fathers. The period before they leave home is, therefore, the high-water mark of financial prosperity for the family. During this time a home can sometimes be bought.”

Thus, among both farming and working-class families, children insured against homelessness and pauperization in old age. For white-collar groups, this calculus had begun to change by the early twentieth century. With education increasingly important to occupational success, the cost of children rose. With children in school rather than at work, many white-collar families needed to get by on one income, and large families became a burden rather than a source of support.

It was “both natural and right,” reasoned Delos Wilcox, “that the number of children in city homes should be reasonably limited; for under existing conditions, while a child in the country may become practically self-supporting at ten years of age or younger, a city child must ordinarily be an increasing burden upon the family until he is about grown to manhood.” Nonetheless, among all groups, income and living standards rose in the early twentieth century. With economic pressure reduced, families were able to think about a future that did not necessitate as many children. All faced rising expectations for schooling. In these circumstances, fertility went down among all families, although the size of the drop roughly paralleled class structure.

Overall, women remained a fairly small fraction, 12 percent, of household heads in these years. Because many of them were widows, the frequency with which they headed households increased with age: for instance, from about 20 percent of all households headed by a person aged fifty-five to seventy to 28 percent of those over seventy. Their economic stress was apparent. Compared to households headed by men, they contained nearly twice as many boarders and lodgers, more parents and sib-
lings, many fewer servants, and twice as many working children. To some extent, the ethnic distribution of women heading households tracked economic vulnerability: they were most common among poorer groups, the Irish, African Americans, second-generation Italians, and Russian Jews. But their vulnerability—not their race, ethnicity, or geographic location—dictated the household structures and strategies of widows.

Like their urban counterparts, families rooted in agriculture were changing fast. Farm families were larger; contained fewer boarders and more employees; and housed more parents, siblings, and grandchildren. But between 1880 and 1910, the number of employees fell by more than a third, and the size of farm households declined more steeply than others. As they balanced often precariously between past and future, farm families refracted the transitional status of American agriculture with its uneven prosperity, new urban and global markets, and declining family farms.

With one instructive exception—the role of boarders and lodgers—changes in both working- and middle-class families flowed in the same direction. Professional and white-collar workers, with the smallest families, sent their children to work least often. Along with managers and proprietors, however, they were the most likely to house their parents and siblings—they were, after all, the families with the most space and resources. In the early twentieth century, however, the social structure of boarding reversed (see figure 1.8). In 1880, boarders lived least often with farmers, laborers, and operatives. By 1910, the share of laborers’ households with boarders had doubled and operatives’ had increased as well. In fact, laborers and operatives now housed boarders and lodgers more often than any other occupational group.

As with other aspects of family life, the social structure of boarding was in transition in 1910. Professionals and others in white-collar occupations did not take in boarders less often. Rather, the swift rate at which boarding increased among the families of laborers and operatives reversed the rank order. Here was a signal of change. In 1880, boarding still reflected nineteenth-century practice. Young people lived in a condition of semi-autonomy, neither children nor independent adults. Through boarding, well-off families performed a public function, supervising young people in the years between the time they left home and married. In the twentieth century, this pattern reversed. Families began to take in boarders primarily as a way to supplement their income, not to watch over unattached youth. In this, they responded not only to their own changing preferences but as well to shifts in the social structure of demand as massive numbers of new immigrants desperately sought housing, very often, understandably, with families of similar ethnicity. Black families resembled those of immigrants. Like immigrants, they took in
boarders to augment their inadequate household incomes, and they also helped kin. Compared to whites, blacks more often housed boarders and relatives—only the relatives, more than among other groups, were grandchildren, cousins, aunts, and uncles. For hardship left many black families in fragments, with young children or unattached relatives in need of home and care.

Working children played an increasingly important part in older families. Overall, in 1910 families were 1.5 times more likely to include an employed child than in 1880 (see figure 1.9). In 1910, 52 percent of forty-five- to fifty-year-old parents, well over 60 percent of those in their fifties, and over 70 percent of those sixty or older lived with at least one working child. Within families of practically every rank, the prevalence of working children increased, though least often in families of professionals. They also were more prevalent among black than white families, but differences in race and ethnicity were not large.

It seems odd that more families included a working teenager in 1910 than in the late nineteenth century. With teenage school attendance rising, the trend should have gone in the opposite direction. “Education,” Thwing claimed, “has come to be the dominant force in modern American life.” Education also promoted individualism at the expense of families. “In education the family and the school exist for the individual. . . . The presence, therefore, of education, as the most potent of all social
Figure 1.9  Percentage of Households with a Working Child Present, by Ethnicity and Occupation of Household Head, United States, 1880 to 1910

Note: Children’s wages were a critical element of the family economy during the early 20th century. Between 1880 and 1910, the proportion of households with an employed child of any age increased among all occupational groups, except professionals, and among all ethnic groups as well. For example, among managers, the proportion with an employed child living at home rose 21 percent and among the German-born, 74 percent. Source: Data from Ruggles et al. (2004).
forces, has resulted in the appreciation of individualism and in the de-
preciation of the family.” Yet the number of working children within
families went up. For immigrant working-class families the logic is easi-
est to understand: more than other families, they needed the income
from teenage children just to get by. The growth of large industries
helped because it brought more jobs within reach; young people less of-
ten needed to leave home to find work. The burgeoning world of white-
collar work also opened large numbers of new clerical and sales jobs to
young people while they still lived with their parents. Nor was school a
clear alternative to work. Many youngsters combined them. Although
they appear two very different family strategies, work and school coex-
isted, often complementary rather than competitive. Teenagers and their
families frequently balanced individualism and family solidarity in
ways that defied Thwing’s overstated predictions.

By 1910, most children aged seven to fourteen attended school at least
part of the year; very few attended after the age of nineteen, when, in-
deed, attendance had dropped to 15 percent. Between 1880 and 1900,
teenage school attendance (defined here as age fifteen through nineteen)
remained at 30 percent. It then increased to 39 percent in 1910 and re-
mained there through 1920. By 1940, it had passed the halfway mark: at
56 percent, school attendance had become the norm for the majority of
teenagers. Thereafter, it rose each decade, reaching 80 percent in 1990. In-
creased teenage school attendance resulted from the spread of high
schools—the cutting edge of educational transformation in early twenti-
eth-century America. Indeed, high school graduation leaped from 9 per-
cent in 1910 to 40 percent in 1935.

School attendance, presented in figure 1.10, reflected the influence of
both family and community. Teenagers, not surprisingly, were more
likely to attend school if their parents spoke English and owned property.
Girls—reflecting the growth of clerical work described in chapter 2—also
stayed longer in school. Most influential, however, was the occupation of
parents: children of professionals led the way in school attendance, fol-
lowed not far behind by children of white-collar workers and self-em-
ployed parents. The chances that the teenage children of manual workers
would attend were much lower. Where youngsters had been born mat-
tered, too. Among youngsters with foreign-born parents, those who had
been born in the United States remained in school longer. More than 20
percent of Polish teenage boys born in the United States, for example,
went to school, compared to 9 percent of those born in Poland. Among the
new immigrants, Russians, whether born in Europe or in the United
States, were more likely to attend than Italians, Poles, or Germans and
Central Europeans. Among all the U.S.-born children of immigrants, sec-
ond-generation British and Irish youngsters went to school most often.

Investment in school constituted one component in the bundle of
What America Was

Figure 1.10  School Attendance, Persons Fifteen to Nineteen Years of Age, by Gender, Ethnicity, and Occupation of Household Head, 1910

Note: School attendance among older teenagers remained strongly dependent upon family background in 1910. The son of a professional was three times more likely to attend school than that of a laborer. The children of second-generation ethnics were generally more likely to attend than those of immigrants. Source: Data from Ruggles et al. (2004).
characteristics that distinguished Russian Jews from Italians and Poles. Jews moved more quickly into business and white-collar work and more rapidly reshaped their families along modern lines, reducing the number and prolonging the education of their children. Among blacks, major differences separated the northern and southern born. Northern-born black teenagers attended school almost as often as native whites, more often, even, than second-generation Russians. Although southern-born black teenagers attended less frequently, they went about as often as many second-generation ethnics. In Philadelphia in 1900, to take a concrete example, northern-born blacks sent more of their teenage sons to school than any other racial or ethnic group. Rates were high for their daughters, too, and even for those born in the South. Despite poverty, poor facilities, and segregation, black youngsters attended school in remarkable numbers—dramatic proof of commitment to education among a people whose faith, unfortunately, was not met with corresponding rewards.

The dynamics of school attendance also depended partly on the characteristics of communities. Attendance was high in socially and economically diversified small towns and rural areas—ones with a substantial middle class; it was low in large, ethnically diverse cities and manufacturing districts. In fact, the center of the high school movement economic historians Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz show (see figure 1.11), moved away from the large cities and manufacturing districts of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic and toward an “education belt,” extending “from the Pacific States through Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Indiana, and then jumping to New England.”

The situation in large cities is not hard to understand: clearly, the explosive growth of semiskilled jobs in manufacturing opened many opportunities for teenagers to trade the enforced dependence of school for the allure of wage-earning and to help working-class parents buffeted by the pressure of whirlwind change. In Philadelphia between 1850 and 1900, school attendance among all working-class boys aged fifteen to sixteen went down during the city’s massive industrialization. Attendance, in fact, fell most for the children of skilled workers—parents hit hardest by technological change and the eroding value of old skills—as distinctions between unskilled and semi-skilled workers began to collapse with the deskillling of much manufacturing work.

Many families held on to older ways of coping with economic insecurity and low incomes even as they embraced new ones. Young people contributed to family economies as they prepared themselves for a world in which advanced education promised heightened rewards. For families, prolonged school attendance—along with the decision to limit births and shed the expense of servants and household employees—was a response to the heightened cost of children and increased importance of human capital in an era of qualitative economic change.
The intricate family patterns etched onto America's social landscape in the early twentieth century led, then, to two dominant strategies: protective and anticipatory. The first responded to the pressures of poverty and crisis with long-standing practices for increasing income and security based on the family’s resources. Practiced by farmers, laborers, operatives, and many craftsmen, protective strategies combined sending children to work with taking in boarders and lodgers and, at the same time, keeping the number of their children high enough to guarantee security in old age. Women who headed households also practiced protective strategies, notably relying on the work of their children and income from boarders as well as help from co-resident relatives. Still, all families were changing in some of the same directions. Even the groups that practiced protective strategies were reducing their fertility and the size of their households. The protective strategy was a variation within a larger story.

Professionals and white-collar workers took another tack by responding to new structures of work and opportunity with anticipatory strate-
gies that tried to adapt to what America was becoming. As they reshaped their families and households, they began to strip away household extensions and send fewer of their children into the workforce. Concerned with the increasing cost of raising children, professional and white-collar workers also curtailed their fertility sharply and kept their children in school longer.

Many immigrants arrived in America accustomed to protective strategies, which they deployed in their often difficult struggles to survive in a new land. But their children, raised in America, by and large modified their parents’ family practices, thereby reducing distinctions among ethnic groups. Reduced marital fertility and prolonged school attendance point to anticipatory strategies among black families as well.

A great many families bridged the older American and the age of manufacturing by practicing both protective and anticipatory strategies at the same time, with the balance among different groups tipped one way or the other. In their personal lives, as they redefined ideas about family, they lived the tension that pulled the nation in opposing directions. And, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they worked out for themselves ways of mediating between the tugs of familiarity and the pressures for change.