Racial Fault Lines
The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California

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INTRODUCTION

California has experienced a distinct and unique history of race and ethnic relations, one whose fundamental pattern took shape during the last half of the nineteenth century. This pattern departs in many ways from the more familiar nineteenth-century one between European Americans and African and Native Americans in other regions of the country. The conquest of Western America through the U.S.-Mexico War of 1846-48 forged a new pattern of racialized relationships between conquerors, conquered, and the numerous immigrants that settled in the newly acquired territory. While longstanding race relations developed elsewhere were essentially binary in character, the United States' mid-nineteenth-century annexation of what is today the Southwest would incorporate three new cultural groups into existing racial patterns: the Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese populations. The structural position these ethnic groups would occupy was largely unscripted, unfettered by a historical legacy predetermining their "group position" in the new state. ¹

This history unfolded during a period of momentous political upheaval in the United States, one reverberating with intense sectional strife and the catastrophic effects of the Civil War. Moreover, it marked the moment in American history when the slave-based economic system in the southern United States was being successfully subordinated to the ascending capitalist social order of the more industrialized North. The ultimate triumph of modern capitalism was accompanied by a fierce struggle among various racial and ethnic groups for position within the emerging new class struc-
ture. Opportunities for individual and collective advancement were contested bitterly among the native-born and immigrant populations residing in every region of the country. The history of this competition between European-American immigrants and blacks in the northern and southern United States is well known and remains deeply rooted in the national consciousness.  

This contestation for group position at the national level was extended into the Far West with the United States' acquisition of over one-third of Mexico through the U.S.-Mexico War. The Gadsden Purchase of 1853 completed the United States' transcontinental expansion to the Pacific coast in the mid-nineteenth century. In the fifty-year period from 1803 to 1853 the United States increased its size tenfold through the acquisition of nearly 2.3 million square miles of land formerly claimed by France, Spain, England, and Mexico.  

In so doing, it laid the basis for the introduction of a new pattern of group relationships in the California territory during the next fifty years.

Our scholarly understanding of the historicity of "race" and racialized group relationships in the Far West, however, has developed largely in the shadow of the black/white encounter, and we continue to view racial matters in these paradigmatic terms. Further, academics have typically examined these racial patterns on the national level or have focused on parts of the country other than the American Southwest. This has led to three related consequences: (1) we tend to see "race relations" as a binary and bipolar relationship, a perspective that offers little understanding of what happens when more than two racialized groups are competing; (2) we often view race and class hierarchies as neatly corresponding or symmetrical, as in the prototypical slaveowner/slave relationship; and (3) we generally assume that racializing discourses and practices are derived from or mask other, more fundamental underlying structures such as the class relationship between capital and labor. California disproves these simplistic assumptions and provides unique opportunities to study both the evolution of racializing discourses and the hierarchical structuring of racial inequalities in a context where more than two racialized populations contest for group position within the social structure.

At its most fundamental level, this historical-sociological study traces the broad outlines of what Michael Omi and Howard Winant have termed "racial formation" in California during the last half of the nineteenth century. Omi and Winant define racial formation as "the process by which social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turned shaped by racial
They introduce the term "racialization to specify the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group." In so doing, they underscore the fact that "racialization is an ideological process, an historically specific one."

In this regard, Stuart Hall has astutely noted the formative role of the ideological process in structuring hierarchical relations of group inequality. While acknowledging that historically specific "events, relations, [and] structures do have conditions of existence and real effects, outside the sphere of the discursive" he reminds us that "how things are represented and the 'machineries' and regimes of representation in a culture do play a constitutive, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event, role. This gives questions of culture and ideology, and the scenarios of representation—subjectivity, identity, politics—a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life."*

In outlining the contours of this racialization process, I argue that there existed an "elective affinity" between the material interests of whites at different class levels and the racial ideologies that simultaneously structured the new Anglo-dominated society in California. Neither the material interests of class actors alone nor the ideological process pertaining to racial formation ultimately determined the way hierarchies of group inequality were constructed. Rather, it was the simultaneous interaction of both structural and ideological factors that ultimately shaped the trajectory of the historical experiences I explore.

Both the discursive dimensions of this racialization project in California and the material structuring of racialized group relationships there are best understood as unfolding within the context of the capitalist transformation of the region and the ensuing competition between various ethnic populations for group position within the social structure. For various sectors of the European-American population, located at different levels within the emergent class structure, racializing discourses and practices served as mechanisms to create, extend, or preserve their social position in the period during which white supremacy was being systematically institutionalized.

The particular success of European-American men in securing a privileged social status was typically exacted through contentious, racialized struggles with Mexicans, Native Americans, and Asian immigrants over land ownership or labor-market position. These competitive struggles for valued social resources, in turn, had direct consequences for the invidious discourses that inscribed racial difference and provided popular ideological support for California's white supremacist origins. The nineteenth-century transformation of Mexican California, therefore, provides a unique oppor-
tunity for exploring the complex process whereby newly racialized relationships are forged and contested historically. Far from corresponding in any simple way, California's emergent hierarchies of racial and class inequality were mutually constitutive in ways that only historical analysis can explain. 9

The Varieties of Racialized Experiences

I came initially to my reading of racial and ethnic relations in California assuming that the experience of each cultural group would be similar to that of other minorities subjected to white supremacy. However, I was repeatedly struck by major differences. Why, for example, was the indigenous Indian population treated so differently from the indigenous Mexican population after California's annexation in 1848? The California Indians endured unrelenting vilification as "uncivilized savages" and were subjected to violent decimation or ruthless segregation at the extreme margins of European-American society. The Mexican population, on the other hand, was ambiguously deemed "half-civilized" and ambivalently integrated into an intermediate status within the new society. Yet most Mexicans were dark complexioned mestizos with significant Indian ancestry. Why did they escape the harsh fate which befell their full-blooded counterparts?

The answer to these questions, I learned, stemmed from the different social evaluations that European Americans made of the racial status of these two cultural groups. Spanish colonization of the Southwest had conferred upon Mexicans a "white" racial status, Christian ancestry, a romance language, European somatic features, and a formidable ruling elite that contested "Yankee" depredations. Less cultural distance existed between European-American immigrants and "half civilized" Mexicans than between whites and other racialized, non-European ethnic groups. Mexicans, particularly the California elite, were as a result generally perceived as worthy of at least partial integration and assimilation into the new social order.

After U.S. annexation of California, the property-owning Mexican ranchero class mounted a losing battle against European-American immigrants for political and economic control of California. Mexicans gamely combated Anglo encroachment into California, effectively utilizing the legal rights that U.S. citizenship extended to them. Land was the major point of contention between the upper-class rancheros and white immigrants in the nineteenth century. The "decline of the Californios" and an
increased immigration from Mexico at the turn of the century, however, would dramatically change the nature of Anglo-Mexican relations after 1900. Thereafter, this led to a reconfiguration of internal class divisions among Mexicans and altered the basis of group contention between Mexicans and European Americans from land to labor conflict. The nineteenth-century Mexican experience was in many ways unique and without parallel in the state.

No serious consideration, on the other hand, was ever given to integrating the California Indians into Anglo society, because of their "savage" culture and "heathen" traditions and rituals. Unlike Mexicans, they were categorically deemed nonwhite, politically disenfranchised, and ruthlessly segregated from European Americans in the state. Since they also occupied land that white settlers coveted, Indians in rural backwaters of the state were largely viewed as a troublesome obstacle in the path of Yankee progress and civilization. The California Indians became the metaphorical "devils of the forest" in the white mind, mere extensions of the wilderness Anglos needed to transform. As a consequence, the California state government launched a systematic policy of sanctioned decimation that resulted in the murder of as many as eight thousand Native Americans by white settlers and military units. Ultimately, Indians were either isolated on federal reservations in California's rural hinterland, succumbed to disease and malnutrition, or were violently eliminated through genocidal pogroms. Indians were consigned to marginal roles in the new political economy.

What was to become of the non-European immigrant population that made their way into California during this turbulent period? Would their fate parallel the experience of California's Mexican or Indian populations? Although other minorities migrating to California were also subordinated to European Americans, their histories differed significantly from the indigenous Mexican and Indian. The presence, or threatened presence, of blacks initially weighed heavily on Anglo-Americans after California's annexation. White immigrants intensely debated territorial issues such as slavery, free Negro migration, and the overall status of blacks. The black population was viewed largely as a symbolic threat to California's becoming a "free" state. Their arrival as slave laborers during the Gold Rush led segments within the white population, particularly miners, to virulently oppose their further immigration. Although these efforts ultimately were unsuccessful, blacks remained unwelcome because of their association with a slave system that was antithetical to the society being created in California. Consequently, blacks were relegated to the lower end of the
new class society. They were largely segregated from whites or sought refuge in the creation of autonomous black towns. 10

Chinese and Japanese male immigrants became yet another concern for European Americans during the late nineteenth century. These laborers were a principal source of cheap manpower that Anglo developers and capitalists required to successfully develop the state's mining, railroad, and agricultural industries. However, the "heathen Chinee," and later the Japanese "Yellow Peril," attracted intense opposition from segments of the white working class and self-employed, petit bourgeois commodity producers. White immigrants in these classes railed against the fundamental threat that these Asian immigrants posed to their rights and entitlements as "free white persons" in the new state.

As a consequence, the Chinese were initially subjected to widespread hostility from the European-American population. They too were categorically deemed nonwhite and therefore ineligible for the same rights held by white citizens. Moreover, anti-Chinese hysteria was punctuated by widespread antipathy to their "pagan idolatry," peculiar customs and attire, non-European features, and purported threat to white women. This virulent ethnocentrism and sexual hysteria over the large Chinese male population facilitated the rapid enactment of discriminatory legislation designed specifically to curb their symbolic or real competition with European Americans at various class levels. This opposition by skilled white workers competing with Chinese laborers in various urban industries culminated in the federal enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. The Chinese immigrant population that arrived in California during the 1860s bears the ignoble distinction of being the first immigrant group to be prohibited from immigration to the United States on the basis of racial status.

Both the dispossession of Indians and Mexicans and the economic restrictions imposed on black, Chinese, and Japanese immigrant workers contributed directly to the realization of European-American class aspirations in the state. Each ethnic group was racialized in unique ways and came to represent a different kind of class-specific obstacle to the life chances that the white population in the territory claimed for themselves. This arrogant sense of entitlement by the European-American population helped propel the racial stigmatization and structural subordination of California's minority populations. In succession, each group bore the stigma of being defined as an inferior race and accorded a subordinate structural position within the new white supremacist society. 11

Why these cultural groups followed such divergent courses, however, requires more systematic sociological explanation. Why did these histories
unfold in a context where race, rather than class, served as the key organizing principle of hierarchical relations of inequality? What were the specific symbolic and material factors that contributed to the economic mobility of certain groups and the disadvantaged status of others? What were the gendered dimensions of these class-specific, racialized histories? How, for instance, were relations between men and women of different cultural groups structurally mediated by the racialization process and the imposition of a new class system? What specific role did sexuality play in the structuring and imposition of racialized class relations among Californians during this period?

The Master Narrative of "White Supremacy"

The answer to these questions can be found in the way that race and the racialization process in California became the central organizing principle of group life during the state's formative period of development. Although California's ethnic populations were racialized in different ways, and the specific manifestations of racial and ethnic conflict were unique to California, at its most basic level it represented the extension of "white supremacy" into the new American Southwest. Historian George Fredrickson defines white supremacy as "the attitudes, ideologies, and politics associated with blatant forms of white or European dominance over 'nonwhite' populations." The attempt to make race or color a basis for group position within the United States was defined initially during the colonial period when notions of "civility" and "savagery," as well as clear distinctions between "Christians" and "heathens," were used to inscribe racial difference and divide humankind into distinct categories of people. These notions provided the basis upon which European immigrants differentiated themselves from the diverse populations they encountered during their expansion into the Far West.

The cultural division of the world into different categories of humanity led white, European Americans in California to arrogantly privilege themselves as superior to non-European people of color. Although European Americans were situated unambiguously at the top of this social hierarchy, the racialized populations did not share a common structural position. Racialized relations in the state reverberated along a number of racial fault lines; they did not assume a simple binary form or erupt along one principal fault. The allocation of "group position" along these social strata was the outcome of both cultural and material considerations. California Indians, for example, were singled out as the complete an-
tithesis of white Californians and were summarily relegated to the very bottom of the racial hierarchy. White immigrants believed that the indigenous population was the lowest level of humankind imaginable. The California Indians wore little clothing, were perceived as horrendously ugly and dirty, ate foods "Americans" deemed unpalatable, and practiced tribal rituals and ceremonies that were anathema to European Christian practices. In short, they were cast as the extreme incarnation of all that was both uncivilized and heathen.

Other cultural groups were judged less harshly and placed between the extreme ends of the racial hierarchy. Mexicans, for instance, were perceived as much closer culturally to European-American immigrants than to their Indian counterparts. The Mexicans' mixed European ancestry, romance language, Catholic religious practices, and familiar political-economic institutions elevated them above all other cultural groups in the white man's eyes. Moreover, the continued political influence of the powerful Californio elite during the latter nineteenth century further attenuated more virulent expressions of anti-Mexican sentiment and allowed Mexicans to challenge Anglo-domination for a time.

Black and Asian immigrants, finally, were culturally deemed to be somewhere between the "half civilized" Mexican and "uncivilized" Indian populations. Although antiblack animosity was widespread, blacks who settled in California were at least Christian, spoke English, and had—after years of enslavement—assimilated important European cultural patterns. Most white immigrants grudgingly acknowledged this, a fact that contributed directly to blacks not becoming the major target of racist initiatives in California that they were elsewhere in the country.

Americans perceived Asian immigrants, on the other hand, to have fewer redeeming qualities and group attributes. While they too were unambiguously deemed nonwhite, these immigrants carried the extra burden of being a "peculiar" people who spoke a completely unintelligible Eastern language, had "abhorrent" culinary tastes, dressed "strangely," and practiced a form of "pagan idolatry" clearly at odds with Judeo-Christian religious traditions. In cultural terms, Chinese and Japanese immigrants, therefore, were perceived initially as more like the uncivilized and heathen Indian population than any of the other cultural minorities in the state.

In sum, European-American immigrants in nineteenth-century California inherited and routinely relied on eurocentric cultural criteria to hierarchically evaluate and racialize the various cultural groups they contended with in California. This process clearly privileged and elevated the status of white immigrants in the social structure and placed below them, in...
descending order, the Mexican, black, Asian, and Indian populations. This racialization process and conferral of group position in the state had important social consequences for the life chances of all racial and ethnic groups during the last half of the nineteenth century. It was not until the early decades of the twentieth century that this hierarchy of group position underwent major reconfiguration.

Racialization and the Contestation of Racial Status

It has become axiomatic in sociological research to view racial categories as sociohistorical constructs whose meanings vary widely over time and space. How people are defined as "white" or "nonwhite" is never a self-evident process. Because race is fundamentally a socially conferred status whose anthropological and biological underpinnings are dubious at best, how and where racial lines are drawn is an open question and the possibility for contestation always exists. Outcomes of struggles to define different ethnic groups in racial terms have been largely contingent on the collective power of the groups involved. Lacking any clear "objective" criteria other than phenotype and ancestry, conflict over the racial designation of groups in California devolved into questions over which group had enough power and influence to enact its interests. Consequently, the racial formation process that codified racial status in California was the result of political struggles contested at the state level.

One key aspect of the racial formation process in California was the differential racialization of the various cultural groups that settled within this geographical region. The very way in which racial lines were defined became an object of intense political struggle. Even before the granting of statehood in 1850, adjudicating the racial status of the indigenous Mexican and Indian population in the territory assumed crucial importance. California's State Constitutional Convention of 1849 fiercely debated how these racial lines were to be drawn and, consequently, who would and would not be extended the franchise and other important citizenship rights. In the final analysis, Mexicans were socially defined as "white" and extended citizenship while the California Indians, like Indians elsewhere, were deemed "nonwhite" and ineligible for citizenship. This question was crucial for groups on both sides of the racial divide, for the way these lines were construed structurally advantaged or disadvantaged collectivities competing for position in the state's new class structure.

The complexities of the racialization process in California between 1850
and 1900 are also vividly reflected in the case of Chinese immigrants. Unable to transcend the traditional binary racial categories utilized in the early nineteenth century, the 1854 case of People v. Hall decreed that the Chinese were generically "Indians" and, therefore, nonwhite. Despite this curious determination, there is evidence that some Chinese immigrants were mistakenly granted U.S. citizenship between 1850 and 1882. The naturalization court apparently mistook them for "free white persons." 13 The 1893 case of Saito v. U.S. ruled that Japanese immigrants were, like the Chinese, also nonwhite (the Japanese, however, were deemed "Mongolian" instead of "Indian") and, consequently, were equally ineligible for citizenship. There remained some ambiguity as to the status of some Japanese and it is estimated that at least 420 Japanese immigrants were granted citizenship before 1910. Federal restrictions placed on Japanese immigration after that date, plus the unequivocal ruling in Ozawa v. U.S. in 1932 legally confirmed the popular belief that the Japanese were, in fact, "aliens ineligible for citizenship." 14 The social motivation of the political undertaking conferring racial status continued to be apparent in early-twentieth-century California in the case of immigrants from Armenia and India. In 1909, for example, federal authorities classified Armenians as "Asiatics" and consequently denied them naturalized citizenship. The Halladjian decision ruled shortly afterwards, however, that Armenian immigrants were indeed Caucasian due to their history, ancestry, and physical appearance. 15 This proved fortuitous for the Armenians as their racial status exempted them from the Alien Land Laws of 1913 and 1920 which prohibited the ownership and lease of California farm land by "aliens ineligible for citizenship," a euphemism for Japanese immigrants. Another curious turn in American racial thinking occurred in the case of Asian Indians. In the 1910 U.S. v. Balsara and 1913 Ajkoy Kumar Mazumdar decisions, the federal courts held that Asian Indians were Caucasians and entitled to the same rights as "free white persons" to become naturalized citizens. A few years later, however, in the 1923 case of U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind, Asian Indians were suddenly denied the right to naturalized citizenship because they were not "white" according to the "understanding of the common man" and because they were not of northern or western European stock. 16 A year after the Thind decision, Congress enacted the 1924 Immigration Act, which effectively denied immigration quotas to people ineligible for citizenship, namely all nonwhites. The racialization of various non-European groups during the last half of the nineteenth century also facilitated the construction of social bounda-
ories around the white population. Michael Omi and Howard Winant have argued that the racial categorization of European Americans as "white" was forged at the national level during this period. Despite nativistic attempts to classify Southern Europeans, the Irish, and Jews as "nonwhite," these efforts were "effectively curbed by the institutionalization of a racial order that drew the color line \textit{around} rather than \textit{within}, Europe."\footnote{17}

The influx into California of a diverse European-American population, both foreign and native born, created a process in which ethnic differences among these groups was overshadowed by the construction of a collective racial designation as "white." European Americans drawn into competition and conflict with the nonwhite populations repeatedly referred to themselves in racial terms, as "white," rather than primarily defining themselves as Irish, French, English, German, or any other ethnicity. While these ethnic designations may have had importance among European Americans themselves, such identities were subsumed by the racialization process. White supremacist practices, in other words, forged a collective identity among European Americans in the state that crystallized around their racial status as a "white population."

In this regard, Omi and Winant have perceptively argued that

by stopping short of racializing immigrants from Europe after the Civil War, and by subsequently allowing their assimilation, the American racial order was reconstituted in the wake of the tremendous challenge placed before it by the abolition of slavery. With the end of Reconstruction in 1877, an effective program for limiting the emergent class struggles of the later nineteenth century was forged: the definition of the working class in \textit{racial terms}—as "white." This was not accomplished by any legislative decree or capitalist maneuvering to divide the working class, but rather by workers themselves. Many of them were recent immigrants, who organized on racial lines as much as on traditionally defined class lines. . . Thus the very political organization of the working class was in important ways a racial project. The legacy of racial conflicts and arrangements shaped the definition of interests and in turn led to the consolidation of institutionalized patterns (e.g. segregated unions, dual labor markets, exclusionary legislation) which perpetuated the color line \textit{within} the working class.\footnote{18}

Although class conflict within the white population had important consequences for the racial antagonism that flared in nineteenth-century California, it did not overshadow or functionally structure the way racial lines were drawn. The nineteenth-century transformation in local class structure was dependent upon the prior question of who was to be granted privileged access to the class structure. This, I will argue, was primarily a racial issue. Contrary to Karl Marx's expectation at the time, the salience of racial
status did not diminish in the face of the expanded nineteenth-century proletarianization of the working class and polarization of class forces. Although class divisions and conflict were manifested openly, these lines were not the primary stratification dividing California's diverse population. The tremendous immigration of European and non-European immigrants into the state after annexation resulted in a hierarchy of group inequality in which race, not class, became the central stratifying variable. The primary racial division of Californians into white and nonwhite categories cut at right angles across the newly emergent class lines that divided capitalists, petit bourgeois commodity producers, and an increasingly segmented working class composed of free wage laborers and individuals held in precapitalist relations of production.

The White Man's Burden and Entitlement in California

The imposition of a new racial order and attendant class structure in nineteenth-century California was greatly facilitated by popular ideologies that gave voice to the superordinate political and economic position of European Americans in the state. Two powerful ideas reflecting this white supremacist sentiment were fervently embraced by European-American men during the United States' westward expansion: "Manifest Destiny" and the "free labor ideology."

The United States' usurpation of Mexican territory laid the basis for rapidly transforming what would become the American Southwest along new sociocultural, political, and economic lines. This mission became the "white man's burden"—to extend their dominion over all obstacles placed in their path and to bring civilization and Christianity to the uncivilized heathens they encountered. During this period white Americans widely accepted the idea of populating all of the North American continent with a homogeneous white population. They believed it was their providential destiny to expand to the Pacific coast, bringing with them their superior political institutions, notions of progress and democracy, and their own economic system of production. Public support for extending national boundaries found fertile ground in this tumultuous period of expansion and reached its most explicit political expression in the notion of Manifest Destiny.

During the mid-nineteenth century, white supremacist practices also became intertwined inextricably with economic doctrines concerning the role of "free labor." As historian Eric Foner has shown, a free-labor
ideology was widely embraced by European Americans at all class levels. White men in particular enthusiastically supported the vision of the social world this ideology promoted: an expanding capitalist society based on free wage labor. Those fervently advocating free-labor doctrines accepted the right to private property and economic individualism and fervently believed that free labor created all value. Moreover, they maintained that everyone could aspire to and achieve economic independence in a free society and that "today's laborer would be tomorrow's capitalist." 19

The free labor ideology associated with the Republican Party during the mid-nineteenth century helped crystallize the beliefs of European-American men about their entitlement to privileged economic mobility in the new territories. It also specifically colored the way Anglo Californians initially assessed the various minority groups they competed with for position in the state's new class structure. Free-labor adherents believed that social mobility and economic independence were only achievable in a capitalist society unthreatened by nonwhite populations and the degrading labor systems associated with them. European Americans repeatedly associated nonwhite people with various unfree labor systems that ostensibly threatened their superordinate social standing and class prerogatives in California.

Like Manifest Destiny, the underlying tenets of the free-labor ideology squarely affirmed the superior position of European-American men and helped delineate the subordinate status that people of color would occupy in the Far West.20 As a consequence, racial lines in California quickly became linked with class divisions in unexpected and complicated ways. Outward struggles over access and group position within the class system were given concrete form and substance by the underlying racialized struggle among its chief protagonists.

The powerful impact of white supremacist notions like Manifest Destiny and the free-labor ideology had important material consequences for these contesting groups. The competition for access to valued social resources did not result, however, in purely symmetrical hierarchies based on class and race. Far from simply paralleling each other, California's new class hierarchy and racial order were mutually constitutive and intersected in complex and shifting ways that were historically contingent.

How groups were accorded access to the ownership of productive property and proletarianized within the working class was not a random selection process impervious to popular perceptions of racial differences. Who gained access to land, owned businesses, became skilled workers, and, more generally, was subjectively placed in either a "free" wage-labor
market or an "unfree" labor system was fundamentally determined on the basis of race. Access to every level of the capitalist system of production introduced in nineteenth-century California was largely determined by this status. Although this capitalist economy became a highly competitive system by the late nineteenth century, it remained an institution that limited social mobility to white, European-American men.

White Californians repeatedly claimed primary access to privileged positions within the system of production and effectively thwarted attempts by the nonwhite population to compete with them on an equal footing. Nineteenth-century legislation enacted in the interest and at the behest of European Americans cemented the placement of California's nonwhite minorities in various unfree labor situations (such as slavery, indentured servitude, contracted labor, etc.) or guaranteed their exclusion altogether from certain skilled occupations and self-employment opportunities. European Americans jealously sought to protect their privileged group position in California through the use of discriminatory social closures that impeded equal access to social mobility. Racial status clearly shaped each group's life chances and served as the primary basis for determining whether one was granted access to different strata within the new class structure.

The judicial decisions that formally conferred racial status in nineteenth-century California, therefore, had important consequences for the historical trajectories of each of these groups in California. As each of these "nonwhite" groups entered into competition with European Americans at different class levels after 1850, a series of protracted conflicts erupted along a number of racial fault lines. This was registered in white opposition to black, Chinese, and Sonoran miners in the 1850s; to Chinese workers in urban industries in the 1870s and 1880s; and to Japanese small farmers at the turn of the century. Racial enmity and bitter economic struggle with white competitors punctuated minority history in California during the nineteenth century. White antipathy crystallized most intensely in the case of Native Americans, Mexicans, Chinese, and, to a lesser extent, African-American and Japanese immigrants.

There emerged during this period a strong symbolic association between different minority groups, on the one hand, and various precapitalist economic formations on the other. White antipathy toward Mexicans, Native Americans, and Chinese and Japanese immigrants was typically couched within the rubric of this "free white labor"/"unfree nonwhite labor" dichotomy: Mexicans became inimically associated with the "unproductive," semi-feudal rancho economy that European Americans rap-
idly undermined after statehood; Indians with a "primitive" communal mode of existence that white settlers ruthlessly eradicated through violence and forced segregation; and Asian immigrants with a "degraded" unfree labor system unfairly competing with and fettering white labor. The class-specific nature of contention between these racialized groups and the European-American populations were all cast in terms of these symbolic associations.

White economic mobility and dominance in California required both the subordination of minority populations and the eradication of the precapitalist systems of production associated with them. Anglo entitlement to California's bounty could only be actualized when the symbolic and material threat these minority populations posed was effectively neutralized or overcome. The chapters that follow examine the major features of these historical contestations and specifically explore the sociological factors that shaped the divergent courses of the Mexican, Indian, and Asian immigrant experiences in nineteenth-century Anglo California.

Chapter 1 places the racial contestation in nineteenth-century California in historical-sociological perspective by situating it within the broader backdrop of racial and ethnic relations in the United States. It does so by foregrounding the centrality of "white supremacy" and illustrating how "Manifest Destiny" and "free labor" sentiments influenced the trajectory of racial and class conflict in California after U.S. annexation. These racializing ideologies provided the lens through which the new cultural groups European Americans encountered in California were racially stigmatized and structurally subordinated.

The central body of this study is composed of six historical-sociological essays that assess the major features of the Mexican, Native American, and Asian immigrant experiences. Part 1 focuses on the class-specific nature of the Mexican encounter with European Americans in the new state. Chapter 2 examines, on a statewide basis, the various factors that contributed to the divergent experiences of the Mexican ranchero and working classes. Chapter 3 provides a detailed case study of how this process unfolded in one particular Southern California county. It also provides a window into the complex interplay of class and racial forces that led to the differential placement of Mexicans, Native Americans, and Asians in the new social structure.

Part 2 is devoted to a broad-ranging analysis of the nineteenth-century experience of the California Indians. Chapter 4 assesses the cultural factors and racial discourses used to stigmatize Indians and justify their decimation through state-initiated pogroms. Chapter 5 analyzes factors that con-
tributed to Indians playing a marginal role in the new capitalist economy introduced in California after 1848. It also chronicles the dismal failure of the federal government's policy of forcefully relocating thousands of California Indians onto segregated reservations.

Part 3 assesses the racialized class conflict between European-American working class and Chinese and Japanese immigrants in nineteenth-century California. Chapter 6 surveys the bitter, statewide clash between Chinese workers and European-American entrepreneurs and laborers. Chapter 7 provides a detailed, county-level analysis of the way anti-Chinese sentiment was displaced onto Japanese immigrants at the turn of the century. It does so through a careful examination of the class forces and racial issues that culminated in the first successful, minority-led strike against powerful agribusiness interests in California—the Oxnard Sugar Beet Workers' Strike of 1903.

The epilogue summarizes the major findings of this study and explores their implications for our broader understanding of the complex interplay between class, race, and ethnicity in the United States and for contemporary racial politics. It also briefly raises the autobiographical issues that were so central to the initial development of this comparative historical study.
Chapter One
"We Desire Only a White Population in California" the Transformation of Mexican California in Historical-Sociological Perspective

In his comparative study *White Supremacy*, historian George Fredrickson astutely observes that "race relations are not so much a fixed pattern as a changing set of relationships that can only be understood within a broader historical context that is itself constantly evolving and thus altering the terms under which whites and nonwhites interact."  

1 California's racial and ethnic patterns give ample support to this understanding of race relations in the United States, and so I want to begin by characterizing both the "historical context" within which California's racialization process evolved as well as the "terms under which white and nonwhite interacted." This requires situating California's various racial histories within the broader history of race relations in the United States and clarifying the underlying social dynamics of the new state. In so doing, I want to argue that California's racial patterns were not monolithic but contained multiple racial histories that were unique in their own terms while also sharing elements with the racial formation process elsewhere in the United States.

For analytical clarity on these matters it is useful to turn to the important early work by sociologist Herbert Blumer. Writing in a period when sociological analysis focused attention on race prejudice as an irrational manifestation of individual pathologies, Blumer recognized that race relations were fundamentally organized at the group level, through a "collective process by which a racial group comes to define and redefine another racial group."  

2 He suggested that an analysis of racial matters "should start with a clear recognition that it is an historical product. It is set
originally by conditions of initial contact. Prestige, power, possession of skill, numbers, original self-concepts, aims, designs and opportunities are a few factors that may fashion the original sense of group position. Subsequent experience in the relation of the two racial groups, especially in the area of claims, opportunities and advantages, may mold the sense of group position in diverse ways.  

Blumer appreciated the complex relationship between the stigmatization of social groups on the basis of physical characteristics and ancestry and the struggle for "group position" among racial and ethnic populations in this country. In fact, "the sense of social position emerging from this collective process . . . provides the basis of race prejudice" and crystallizes "four basic types of feelings" among the superordinate racial group: (1) a feeling of superiority, (2) a feeling that the subordinate group is intrinsically different and alien, (3) a feeling of proprietary claim to certain areas of privilege and advantage, and (4) a fear and suspicion that the subordinate race harbors designs on the prerogatives of the dominant race.

In drawing our attention to the relationship between racial ideology and social structure, Blumer made central "the sense of proprietary claim" of the dominant racial group in the structuring of racialized relationships among these ethnic populations. This sense of entitlement, according to Blumer, rested primarily on "either exclusive or prior rights in many important areas of life. The range of such exclusive or prior claims may be wide, covering the ownership of property such as choice lands and sites; the right to certain jobs, occupations, or professions; the claim to certain kinds of industry or lines of business; the claim to certain positions of control and decision-making as in government and law."

Frank Parkin's insightful work in social stratification theory has also shown how these sentiments of superiority and entitlement to valued social rewards are structured historically. Working in the Weberian tradition, Parkin has argued that status monopolies, or "social closures," have historically served as institutional mechanisms that structure and reproduce racial and ethnic hierarchies in this country. According to Parkin, these closures refer to "the process whereby social collectivities seek to maximize rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles. . . . This monopolization is directed against competitors who share some positive or negative characteristic; its purpose is always the closure of social and economic opportunities to outsiders." At their most basic sociological level, then, these closures represent attempts by one group of people to secure for themselves a privileged position in the social structure at the expense of stigmatized and subordinated social groups.
Since they typically entail the creation of a group of legally defined inferiors, such actions represent the use of power in a downward direction and "can be thought of as different means of mobilizing power for the purpose of engaging in a distributive struggle" over valued social rewards.  

These important sociological principles allow us to view the racialization process in nineteenth-century California, and the United States more generally, as a contestation over privileged access to either productive property (i.e., physical capital such as land or factories) or positions in a highly stratified labor market. Consequently, the broad historical context in which these racial lines were drawn and class-specific relationships constituted provides the main sociological framework informing this study.

**Racialization and White Supremacy in Historical Perspective**

I have suggested that the racialization process that evolved in nineteenth-century California was primarily an extension into the new territory of what Fredrickson has characterized as "white supremacy": the "attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise of blatant forms of white or European dominance over 'nonwhite' populations . . . making invidious distinctions of a socially crucial kind that are based primarily, if not exclusively, on physical characteristics and ancestry. In its fully developed form, white supremacy means 'color bars,' 'racial segregation,' and the restriction of meaningful citizenship rights to a privileged group characterized by its light pigmentation." 

Furthermore, Fredrickson argues that this systematic and self-conscious attempt to make race or color a basis for group position within American society was initially defined during the colonial period and the years following Independence. He contends that such action reflects "a long and often violent struggle for territorial supremacy between white invaders and indigenous people" that was part and parcel of the global European colonial expansion inaugurated during the "Age of Discovery." Starting with the small colonial settlements of the seventeenth century, Anglo-Saxon colonists established dominion over North America by successfully appropriating Indian communal land and transforming it into private property within an emergent capitalist economy. According to Fredrickson, "Land hunger and territorial ambition gave whites a practical incentive to differentiate between the basic rights and privileges they claimed for themselves and what they considered to be just treatment for the 'savages' who stood
in their path, and in the end they mustered the power to impose their will.  

The white colonists contesting the native peoples of North America for control of coveted land brought with them well-developed assumptions about themselves and the people they encountered. As Fredrickson has shown, fundamental to these assumptions were the differentiations between Christians and heathens and between civil and savage peoples. These eurocentric binary distinctions provided the cultural standard by which European settlers initially racialized the "nonwhite" black and Indian populations they confronted in America and were later used to differentiate the new cultural groups European Americans encountered during their mid-nineteenth-century expansion into the Southwest.

According to Fredrickson, the notion of "heathenism" initially "reflected the religious militancy nurtured by the long and bitter struggle for supremacy in the Mediterranean between Christian and Islamic civilizations. . . . In the fifteenth century, when Spain and Portugal were in the vanguard of Christian resistance to Islamic power, the Pope authorized the enslavement and seizures of lands and property of 'all saracens and pagans whatsoever, and all other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed.' This harsh and unremitting attitude . . . was carried by the Spanish and Portuguese empire-builders of the sixteenth century to the New World and parts of Africa and Southeast Asia." As a consequence, through the notion of heathenism religion became pivotal in socially differentiating the diverse populations that encountered one another in the course of European colonial expansion.

What typically differentiated "civilized" human beings from "savages" in the European mind was whether or not "they practiced sedentary agriculture, had political forms that Europeans recognized as regular governments, and lived to some extent in urban concentrations." To these three factors we might add difference in the social organization of kinship, gender, and sexuality. Fredrickson persuasively argues in White Supremacy that Europeans widely believed that civility was the original state of mankind and that "after the dispersal of the progeny of Noah after the flood some branches of the human race lost their awareness of God and degenerated into an uncivilized state. Sometimes this descent into barbarism and savagery was linked directly to the Biblical curse of Ham, which would later be used to justify African slavery." Fredrickson further reminds us that Europeans drew upon classical thought when making their assessments of the newly encountered peoples. Although "Aristotle had maintained that even barbarians were social beings, Europeans had be-
lieved since the Middle Ages that some men were so wild and uncouth that they wandered in the forests and had no society of any kind. This category of ultra-
barbarians or pure savages, who allegedly lived more like beasts than men, seemed to many Europeans of the sixteenth and seventeenth century appropriate for
peoples like . . . the North American, Caribbean, and Brazilian Indians, who were commonly thought to be wilderness nomads utterly devoid of any religion or
culture.”

These were the lines around which Europeans since the Renaissance and Reformation distinguished themselves from the diverse populations they encountered during
the Age of Discovery. Notions of civility and savagery and clear distinctions between Christians and heathens provided the ideological basis for a social order that
stigmatized the Indian population initially encountered in New England as well as the West Africans imported as slaves. Fredrickson argues, however, that these
categories “were not yet racist in the nineteenth-century sense of the term because they were not based on an explicit doctrine of genetic or biological inferiority; but
they could provide an equivalent basis for considering some categories of human beings inferior to others in ways that made it legitimate to treat them differently from
Europeans.”

Beginning in the colonial period, America’s English settlers drew upon these value-laden notions to craft a collective identity based upon the categories English, Christian, free, and, above all, white, and specifically defined in opposition to another, nonwhite category of people, initially Native Americans and Africans. According to Winthrop Jordan’s study of this period, White Over Black:

When referring to the Indians the English colonists either used the proper name or called them savages, a term which reflected primarily their view of Indians as uncivilized. . . .
When they had reference to Indians the colonists occasionally spoke of themselves as Christians, but after the early years almost always as English.

In significant contrast, the colonists referred to Negroes and in the eighteenth century to blacks and to Africans, but almost never to Negro heathens or pagans or savages. Most
suggestive of all, there seems to have been something of a shift during the seventeenth century in the terminology Englishmen in the colonies applied to themselves. From the
initially most common term Christian, at mid-century there was a marked drift toward English and free. After about 1680, taking the colonies as a whole, a new term appeared—
white.

In Iron Cages, his comparative study of race relations in the nineteenth century, historian Ronald Takaki has proposed that these opposing identities increasingly
equated European Americans with the mind and non-
whites with the body. All that was rational, civilized, and spiritually pure was set off from that which was irrational, uncivilized, and tied to the body. Anglo-Saxon men became civilized republican men of virtue, devoting their lives to hard work, frugality, sobriety, and the mastery of both their passions and their lives. The nonwhite, in contrast, became the foil for the lofty self-image that white men accorded themselves. They were associated with qualities such as filth or dirtiness, impurity, vice, intoxication, and the lascivious indulgence of carnal "instincts." European Americans projected onto people of color all the qualities of depravity that they had difficulty repressing in themselves. 20

White Americans also believed that they needed to control these evil qualities if they were to prosper economically and achieve salvation. In this context, labor assumed a spiritual dimension; belief in the dignity of labor was pervasive in colonial America and found its clearest expression in the Protestant Ethic, which held that all persons had a divinely appointed calling that expressed their service to God on earth. It was also a way of ascertaining whether they were among those predestined to enter heaven. Individual economic advancement in this world was regarded as a Christian duty to which all aspired. Success in one's calling necessitated strict self-discipline; to this end, the elect were guided by Christian virtues such as honesty, frugality, diligence, punctuality, sobriety, and prudence. There was no Christian value in poverty; in fact, poverty was disdained as a sign of God's disfavor. It was seen as a product of individual shortcomings and vices such as laziness, drunkenness, or extravagance. 21

The initial distinctions Europeans made between themselves and nonwhites had significance for the social organization of the colonial economy. In addition to assuming a divinely appointed, spiritual dimension, individuals' economic positions generally reflected their racial status as well. Access to various economic opportunities was cast largely in racial terms. Questions of who owned property, became property, and entered "free" and "unfree" labor markets were answered in racial terms. These associations were not simply the product of irrational prejudices or ethnic chauvinisms: they had deep material moorings in the social organization of economic life.

The English colonial population, for instance, institutionalized labor status distinctions among themselves through the introduction of indentured servitude. As many as one-half to two-thirds of Anglo-Saxons who emigrated during the colonial period came as indentured servants. In return for passage to America they provided upward of seven years of unremunerated labor. 22 Indentured servants, however, were insufficient in
number to meet labor needs and were expensive to retain; moreover, they often negotiated successfully for favorable terms and freely entered the wage labor force upon completion of contractual obligations. Because of these complications, chattel slavery ultimately proved more expedient and profitable than indentured servitude. Economic advantage intersected with racial prejudice to forge the equation associating whites with free and nonwhites with unfree labor. The temporary subordinate labor status of Anglo-Saxon indentured servants and the permanent, inheritable slave status of blacks put these differences into broad relief. Slavery economically subordinated this nation's black population to Anglo-Americans, and their second-class social and political status structurally ensured that blacks could not compete effectively with Anglo-Americans at any level of the social structure.

Unlike blacks, the Indians of North America generally were not seen as a useful laboring population worthy of even a subordinate place in the Anglo-Americans' economy. Although attempts were made during the colonial period to enslave Indians, they proved unsuccessful, because of Indian susceptibility to European-American diseases, their sparse population in the colonial region, their ability to effectively flee enslavement and exact reprisals, and their unwillingness to adapt to the system of production that white Americans had introduced. As a result, in Anglo conceptions of progress, Indians were generally seen as obstacles to civilization. They became extensions of the untamed territory Europeans confronted in America. The traditional hunting and gathering of Indian subsistence, as well as their social-cultural world, were anathema to the society whites were creating in America. Indians remained "savages" and "heathens" in the eyes of the colonial population.

In The Ethnic Myth, sociologist Stephen Steinberg has noted that at its inception the United States was remarkably homogeneous both ethnically and religiously. He reminds us that by Independence the colonial population was overwhelmingly white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant and that in 1790 over three-quarters of the U.S. population had origins in the English-speaking states of the British Isles; 61 percent were of British descent and another 17 percent of Scotch and Irish extraction. A smaller number of Germans, Dutch, and Swedish settlers and a minute proportion of other nationalities accounted for the remaining population. Despite the initial presence of a few Jews and Catholics, nearly 99 percent of the colonial population was Protestant.

According to one historian, by the late 1840s most Americans either thought of themselves as the descendants of English immigrants (bound
together by a common culture and a common language) or as part of the superior, "American" race drawn from the very best stock of western and northern Europe. The distinctive cultural values and world view of this population provided the normative standards by which other groups were later judged. The language and dominant customs of America were English, and all non-English groups immigrating to the United States were expected to conform fully to English culture.

Moreover, at a time when its population was still relatively homogeneous, the new nation decreed that only whites were eligible for U.S. citizenship and access to the opportunities generated by economic development. Neither African Americans nor Native Americans were accorded the legal rights and social status of free white men. The explicitness of this color line was captured clearly in one of the first congressional statutes enacted after Independence. Debates over naturalization led to enactment of the Naturalization Act of 1790, which stipulated that only "free white persons" were eligible for citizenship and the rights held by white men in the country. Although this statute imposed restrictions on immigration, its supporters did not want to discourage the immigration of white Europeans. In this regard, Steinberg observes that "long before the onset of mass immigration, there was a deeply rooted consciousness of the nation's Anglo-Saxon and Protestant origins. From the beginning, the nation's political institutions, culture, and people all had an unmistakably English cast, and despite denominational differences, Protestantism was the near-universal creed. The early stirring of nativism clearly signaled the fact that however much the nation might tolerate foreigners in its midst, it was determined to protect its Anglo-Saxon and Protestant legacy." The symbolic significance of this legislation cannot be overstated. Eligibility for citizenship was not meaningfully altered until one hundred and sixty-two years after this statute's enactment, when the Walter-McCarran Act of 1952 eliminated the racial basis for United States naturalization.

The importance of racial status to the colonial and post-Independence economy laid the foundation for its continued centrality during the period of widespread immigration to the United States in the nineteenth century. Rapid economic development and industrialization during this period provided the structural foundations upon which further economic and social opportunities were systematically granted or denied on the basis of race. In this regard, Robert Blauner has argued in *Racial Oppression in America* that white European immigrants historically benefited from a labor market organized along racial and ethnic lines. In addition to advantages gained from voluntary immigration, white immigrants experienced more rapid
social and economic mobility due to "the association of free labor with people of white European stock and the association of unfree labor with non-Western people of color." 28

This overriding racial labor principle placed white immigrants in the free, wage-labor sector of the economy while relegating nonwhites to precapitalist labor systems. It had tremendous implications for the initial employment opportunities accorded immigrant groups and also for their collective movement up the occupational hierarchy. From the beginning, European immigrants had a foothold in the most dynamic centers of the economy and rose successfully to semiskilled and skilled positions. Racial minorities, on the other hand, were largely denied access to the industrial jobs that enabled millions of white immigrants to attain a modicum of social and economic mobility.29

Thus, the racialization process profoundly affected the social positions immigrants assumed upon entering this country. Beginning in the colonial period and continuing after Independence, race and ethnicity served as the basis upon which access to particular positions in the class structure was largely determined.30 This was seen most clearly in the Southern slave economy but was also discernible in the capitalist sectors of the Northeast and West. The social organization of the economy mediated the broad allocation of groups into various class positions. This gave the nation's class structure in many regions a decidedly racial and ethnic form—European ethnic groups being disproportionately placed at the upper end of the class system and racial minorities at the bottom.

Historically, differential access to valued social rewards have shaped the course of ethnic and race relations in the United States. Their unequal extension to white and nonwhite groups via social closures led to divergent mobility routes and different "life chances" for these groups. Not every ethnic population that entered into competition with whites equally threatened their mobility aspirations, nor were they equally granted access to important institutional spheres. It is here that each group's collective attributes (such as their internal class stratification, gender composition, population demographics, literacy rates, occupational skills, employment background, physical differences from the white population, collective association with precapitalist labor systems, and explicit cultural factors such as values, religion, and ethnic traditions) were critically important. This complex of factors explicitly delineated these groups in racial terms and historically conditioned their mobility opportunities and potential conflict with the white population.

These collective attributes primarily served as benchmarks whereby the
white population further differentiated itself from minorities. These perceived differences became the basis for group stigmatization that ultimately fueled racial antagonisms. They also were drawn upon to justify the enactment of discriminatory legislation designed to impede minority economic competition with European Americans. In sum, a complex matrix of attributes have at every historical moment shaped the broad contours of white competition and conflict with the racialized population in the United States. Let us now turn to how this drama unfolded in California after it passed from Mexican control to that of the United States in 1848.

The Peopling of Anglo California, 1848–1900

The United States' annexation of California and the momentous discovery of gold in 1848 sparked the rapid immigration of a diverse population into the newly acquired territory. It transformed California from a sparsely populated Mexican frontier department to a new state in which European-American immigrants quickly provided the mainstay of its population. Population demographers have noted that as late as 1848 the total non-Indian population in California was estimated at approximately fifteen thousand, or scarcely one person to every ten square miles. The majority of these individuals were Mexican Californians, followed by a few thousand European Americans, who had settled in the territory prior to U.S. annexation, and a smattering of individuals from other parts of the world. Although estimates vary considerably, California's Indian population in 1850 is generally thought to have numbered approximately 100,000 men, women, and children.

Between 1848 and 1870, however, the state's population rose to well over half a million people. The vast majority of the new inhabitants who settled in the state were young and male. According to historical demographer Doris Marion Wright, "In 1850, for example, 73 percent of the residents in the state were between the ages of 20 and 40, and 92 percent of them were males. . . . When the census was taken in 1860 the number of females was still less than 30 percent of the total population of the state, and ten years later it had increased to only 37 percent." Aside from this stark gender imbalance, another important demographic feature of the new state's early population was the significant presence of a foreign-born stock. In 1850, the foreign-born population already comprised 24 percent of the state's total population. By 1860 the percentage rose to 39 percent and declined slightly ten years later to 37 percent. Further, the principal source of the foreign-born population in California shifted dramatically
during this early period. In 1850, for example, Mexico provided the single largest segment of the foreign-born population (6,454 of 22,358 foreign-born individuals enumerated on the census; as will be discussed in chapter 3, many of the foreign-born Mexican population were Sonoran miners who typically returned to Mexico after the gold rush). The Mexican-born population was followed by European immigrants from England (3,050), Germany (2,926), Ireland (2,452), and France (1,546). By 1860, China had become the source of the largest foreign-born population in the state (34,935 of 146,528 foreign-born individuals). Chinese immigrants were followed numerically by Irish (33,147), German (21,646), English (12,227), and Mexican-born (9,150) immigrants. Ten years later, Chinese immigrants remained the single largest foreign-born population in the state, followed by individuals from the British Isles, Germany, France, and Mexico. 36

The class background of the European-born population was apparently not as diverse as one might have expected. The Irish immigrants who came to California, for example, had been displaced largely by the introduction of labor-saving devices in the spinning and weaving trades and by the fluctuations in Ireland's agriculture industry. According to Wright, they were "not of the poorest classes but were persons who could get together enough money to pay for their passage." 37 Speaking the same language and sharing the same cultural heritage as Anglo-Americans made Irish immigrants more assimilable than other European and non-European immigrants emigrating at the time.

California's German and French immigrants were also drawn from occupational strata in their native lands that in California were still in the nascent stages of development. Many German immigrants, for example, were from farming backgrounds and were more likely to venture into this industry than to seek their fortunes in the gold mines. They were described in one state report as "mostly all tillers of the soil, and invariably bring money with them to purchase lands." 38 Their occupational backgrounds facilitated their dominance in the grape industry and the grocery business, and their overrepresentation as mechanics and skilled laborers. Moreover, being northern European, these immigrants learned English quickly and more readily adapted to the pace of the new Anglo-dominated society. 39

Similarly, the French immigrants who settled in the state were not generally impoverished or drawn from the peasant class. Instead, the "majority of those who arrived in California from France . . . were largely from the middle class; many of them were skilled mechanics, while others were drawn from the professions. Some came hoping to establish commercial
houses, but most of them, especially during the extensive emigration of the early years, expected to dig for gold. . . . [T]hey came confident that the new life would be better than the old." 40 Unlike German or Irish immigrants, however, the French were not as rapidly assimilated into the Anglo-American population in California. According to one contemporary, the French were described as adhering "much to their own habits and society, and seem stoutly determined against acquiring the English tongue."41

The largest segment of California's new population in 1870, however, were native-born Americans: immigrants drawn from various regions of the country and persons born in the state. Unfortunately, Wright has little to say about the class background of this population. She does document, however, their regional origins and notes that they comprised 76 percent of the total state population in 1850, 61 percent in 1860, and 63 percent in 1870. According to Wright, most of the native-born, American immigrants in 1850

were from the northern section of the United States, although the West was a close competitor. Over the next two decades the West was by far the largest contributor to California's population, while the percentage of residents born in the South grew successively smaller. Thus in 1860 the Southerners in the state numbered less than 29,000, whereas there were more than 74,000 persons from the northern section of the country. In 1870 the difference between the contribution of these two sections was even more marked; not quite 28,000 Southerners were reported in that year, while the number of those born in the North approximated 85,000.42

As we will see, the regional origins of the American immigrant population had tremendous implications for the type of society they sought to create in the state. California's Northern and Western immigrants, who carried with them antislavery and "free labor" sentiments, played a key role in the racial conflict that raged during the last half of the nineteenth century. Wright attests to the pivotal role these immigrants played in nineteenth-century California:

Evidently during this period there was little doubt as to what sort of community California was destined to be. It was fairly obvious that Anglo-American civilization would predominate, and that, although there might be a number of Chinese or Mexicans or French in the region, the social and political and economic institutions were as clay in the hands of Americans from the United States. Foreigners who were not readily absorbed by the dominant society formed their own groups, but these did not seriously threaten the Anglo-American ascendancy. The northern Europeans were most readily assimilated, and in those instances in which a diversity of cultural heritages led to conflict, the newcomers usually accepted the customs of their adopted land.43
By 1900, California's population had skyrocketed to over one and a half million persons. Although the population was now largely European-American, other cultural minorities comprised a sizable segment of the state's total population. For example, the indigenous Mexican population remained relatively small, numbering 10,000 to 15,000 between 1848 and 1900. California Indians experienced a dramatic decline in their total population during this period. Most sources agree that the estimated 100,000 Indians in 1850 dropped precipitously to about 20,000 in 1870 and reached its nadir of approximately 17,500 in 1900. 44

The number of other nonwhite immigrants in the state also fluctuated greatly during this period. The Chinese immigrant population, for instance, rose to its highest point in California at over 75,000 in 1880. It then declined slightly in 1890 (72,000) before settling at approximately 45,000 at the turn of the century. Japanese immigrants did not comprise a significant part of California's population until 1890 when just over 1,000 were enumerated on the state census. By 1900, the number of Japanese immigrants in the state rose sharply to over 10,000.45 Blacks, on the other hand, remained a very small segment of the state's total population throughout the nineteenth century. Black immigrants numbered around 5,000 in 1860 and 1870 and climbed to just over 6,000 in 1880. The black population in the state would increase steadily after that date to over 11,000 at the turn of the century.46

The Capitalist Transformation of Mexican California

The diverse population that settled in California during the last half of the nineteenth century quickly entered into a competitive struggle over social resources and group position within the state's new class structure. Unequal access to the mobility opportunities engendered by capitalist development unleashed bitter conflict among the various ethnic populations: Native American, European, Mexican, African, Chinese, and Japanese. Western historian Patricia Limerick has succinctly assessed this racialized contention and social transformation in *Legacy of Conquest:* "Race relations [in the American Southwest] parallel the distribution of property, the application of labor and capital to make the property productive, and the allocation of profit. Western history has been an ongoing competition for legitimacy—the right to claim for oneself and sometimes for one's group the status of legitimate beneficiary of Western resources. This intersection of ethnic diversity with property allocation unifies Western history."47
The principal difference between the precapitalist economy of the Mexican period (1821–1848) and that which European Americans introduced after the United States-Mexico War was the predominance of a formal free-wage labor system: the coercive and paternalistic class relations of the Mexican period were quickly replaced by the instrumental and impersonal class relations of capitalism and its apparatus of legal enforcement. It was a period in California's history when once prominent Californios such as Mariano Vallejo, José del Carmen Lugo, Pío and Andrés Pico, Pablo and Antonio De la Guerra, Manuel Dominguez, Ygnacio Del Valles, and Juan Bandini were displaced by nineteenth-century European American entrepreneurs and developers with names like Wells, Giannini, Huntington, Stanford, Hollister, Spreckles, Scott, Bard, Teague, and Oxnard.

Beginning quickly in the northern section of the state and expanding more slowly into southern California, white speculators and developers gained private control of land and created the basis for industrial development and the capitalist transformation of the state. Mining became the first major industry organized along a new system of production. The introduction of quartz and hydraulic mining techniques in the early 1850s rapidly transformed gold mining from an individual, labor-intensive undertaking to a corporate, capital-intensive venture. By 1860, there were over 7,000 firms engaged in gold-mining operations employing approximately 46,000 persons. For nearly two decades mining was both the single largest source of employment and the largest capital investment sector in the state.48

The mining industry's growth quickly led to the establishment of numerous small-scale businesses in the state. Gold-rush immigration resulted in the opening of merchandise stores, hotels, bank, restaurants, and saloons. Most of these concerns were family-run ventures that European Americans quickly monopolized. These small business ventures typically employed only a few wage workers. By 1860 there were also approximately 1,450 manufacturing firms in the state with a capital investment of $11 million. These firms were comprised of both small and large-scale employers who in 1860 paid wages estimated at $5.5 million.49

Mining's importance for the state's new economy waned after 1859. The annual gold yield reached $50 million in that year. Thereafter, the annual yield declined steadily until it stabilized at approximately $17 million in 1879, where it remained for the next thirty years. The decline in the importance of mining was accompanied by the rapid growth of extensive grain production and the further development of urban manufacturing. The most important new industry in this period, however, was the railroad industry, which dominated the expanding economy in the late 1860s and
1870s. It rapidly became the first "big business" in California and emerged as the largest employer of wage laborers for nearly twenty years.  

Agriculture succeeded the railroads as the center of economic development during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The emergence of capitalist agriculture presupposed the resolution of a number of technological, climatic, and social obstacles. Adaptation to unfamiliar farm land, improvement in the state's transportation network and irrigation methods, and technological innovations such as the refrigerator car occurred during the late 1870s and 1880s. Expansion of the domestic market, the organization of growers' associations, and the avoidance of exorbitant commission fees extracted by "middlemen" helped agriculture become an extremely profitable venture. In the process, California's farm labor force expanded dramatically, from 19,000 workers in 1870 to over 119,000 by 1900.  

Capitalist agriculture rapidly passed through two phases of development in California. The 1870s and 1880s were characterized by extensive farming on small-scale operations by a large class of self-employed or petit-bourgeois farmers. Grains such as wheat, barley, and corn became the main crops, and although the state market burgeoned, the principal markets for these products were the East Coast and England. By 1872 approximately two-thirds of the agricultural goods grown in California were destined for markets outside the state. During the late 1880s and the 1890s, extensive farming gave way to intensive, large-scale capitalist farmers became dominant in the industry. Under their leadership production shifted from grains to fruits and vegetables. In 1879 intensive crops accounted for only 3.9 percent of the value of all crops produced in California, but by 1899 their value had risen to 43.3 percent. During these twenty years, the annual value of intensive crops rose from $2.8 million to $52 million.  

By the turn of the century, California's new economy had passed through its formative stages. Most vestiges of the precapitalist, rancho economy of the Mexican period, which relied on Indian peonage and slavery, had vanished irrevocably by the end of the nineteenth century. By the early 1900s, California became a quintessential capitalist society based on free wage labor. The vision of the early white settlers who immigrated to the state had been realized in less than fifty years, as capitalist replaced California and incoming European-American settlers replaced Indian villagers and Mexican small landholders and pobladores (town dwellers).  

Three major groups composed the new class structure at the turn of the century. At the top were the European-American landholders and businessmen whose names are so prominent in California's history. These entre-
preneurial capitalists employed large numbers of wage workers and invested substantial sums of money in developing the mining, manufacturing, railroad, and agricultural industries. The next class comprised small-scale independent businessmen and small farmers who owned or leased land. This "middle class" was predominantly self-employed and occasionally hired a few workers. At the bottom of the new class hierarchy was the rapidly expanding laboring class. As the availability of farm land and opportunities for self-employment diminished, thousands of incoming white and minority immigrants were drawn into the capitalist labor market and became part of California's multiracial working class.

Access to the best skilled and semiskilled jobs, however, was largely reserved for the white population. European Americans rapidly monopolized the most coveted employment opportunities and gained virtual control of the middle and upper tiers of the new class structure. It soon became apparent that avenues for social mobility and other fruits of unbridled capitalist development were to be reserved jealously for a single group: the white "producing class." Its members alone were seen as the "value carriers" of the new social order; only they would enjoy the enormous opportunities that rapid economic development made possible. Nonwhite populations, on the other hand, continued to be viewed as unwelcome obstacles to the economic mobility of European Americans.

"Manifest Destiny" and the "Free Labor Ideology"

The rapid transformation of Mexican California into a white masculinist preserve for European-American men found popular support in racializing ideologies that rationalized the superordinate position of the white population. In the century after the American Revolution, as Reginald Horsman has argued, two powerful ideas reflecting this sentiment were ingrained in the Anglo-American psyche and drawn upon during the United States' westward expansion: Anglo-Americans believed "that the peoples of large parts of the world were incapable of creating efficient, democratic, and prosperous governments; and that American and world economic growth, the triumph of Western Christian civilization, and a stable world order could be achieved by American commercial penetration of supposedly backward areas." European Americans saw it as their providential mission to settle the entire North American continent with a homogeneous white population, bringing with them their superior political institutions, notions of progress and democracy, and economic system. The United
State's incursion into sovereign Mexican territory in the war of 1846–48 was only the most explicit political expression of this notion of "manifest destiny."

In symbolic terms, the notion of manifest destiny implied the domination of civilization over nature, Christianity over heathenism, progress over backwardness, and, most importantly, of white Americans over the Mexican and Indian populations that stood in their path. United States' dominion over what was then Mexican territory laid the basis for rapidly developing the region along new socio-cultural, political, and economic lines.

Another important rationalization of white supremacy over the indigenous Mexican and Indian inhabitants of the new American Southwest grew out of the "free labor" ideology of the antebellum Republican Party. Historian Eric Foner demonstrates that, during the mid-nineteenth century, white Americans of all classes—the European-American working class, petite bourgeoisie, and self-employed proprietors—accepted the social world this ideology promoted: an expanding capitalist society based on free labor, individualism, market relations, and private property.

The sanctity of free labor had a long history preceding the widespread immigration of European Americans into California during the mid-nineteenth century. Since the colonial period, white Americans had sought to establish a society unencumbered by the precapitalist feudal ties that had shackled peasants in Europe. They sought to build a society in which free labor was the source of all value as the embodiment of bourgeois ideals. An outgrowth of the Protestant ethic, this commitment found expression in numerous political doctrines, for example, the "producer ethic" of the Jacksonian period. Andrew Jackson viewed the "producing class" in society as all occupations involved directly in the honest production of goods, such as farmer, planter, skilled and unskilled laborer, mechanic, and even small businessmen and independent craftsmen. These productive workers—whether agricultural or industrial, self-employed or wage laborers—constituted the honorable and creative elements of society and included persons traditionally considered part of the middle class or petite bourgeoisie. They were viewed as having interests antagonistic to those of the wealthy, proprietors—slaveholders, big businessmen, industrialists, bankers, monopolists, and speculators—who were excluded from the "producing class" as profiting directly from the honest labor of others.58

A significantly different and more influential version of the free labor ideology, however, was formulated by the Radical Republicans in the decades preceding the Civil War. According to Foner, the Republican
Party's antislavery rhetoric represented much more than mere opposition to slavery. It also signified "an affirmation of the superiority of the social system of the North—a dynamic, expanding capitalist society whose achievements and destiny were almost wholly the result of the dignity and opportunities which it offered the laboring man." Unlike the Jacksonian version, Republican ideology did not seek radically to subvert the United States' class structure. On the contrary, free labor thought was entirely consistent with the underlying tenets of competitive capitalism. Its advocates believed that free labor created all value but that "the interest of labor and capital were identical, because equality of opportunity in American society generated a social mobility which insured that today's laborer would be tomorrow's capitalist." This vision deeply influenced the social, political, and above all, economic relations eventually forged between the majority and the minority populations in California.

The "Baneful Influence" of Nonwhite Labor in California

The associations made by European Americans between nonwhite labor and unfree labor systems had tremendous import for the racial conflict that erupted in California after 1848. White Americans sought to create a society in which the presence of any labor system that threatened free white labor would be eradicated. Given the historical context in which the free labor ideology flourished, slavery was what initially preoccupied the white population immigrating to California. The introduction of black slavery, or the widespread use of other unfree laborers, threatened the creation of the capitalist society European Americans envisioned in the area. As a result, the status of blacks in California loomed as a question of more than symbolic significance to free labor advocates.

Because of widespread migration of persons from the Northeastern seaboard of the United States into California after 1846, sentiment on this issue crystallized around the entrance of California into the union as a free state. This commitment to a system of free labor was captured vividly in editorials of the first English-language newspapers published in California. On March 15, 1848, nearly two years before statehood was granted, editors of The Californian unequivocally argued against the territory becoming a haven for unfree labor:

We desire only a White population in California; even the Indians among us, as far as we have seen, are more a nuisance than a benefit to the country, we would like to get rid of them... [W]e dearly love the Union, but declare our
positive preference for an independent condition of California to the establishment of any degree of slavery, or even the importation of free blacks. 61

Expression of this free labor sentiment was also echoed by the editor of The California Star a few days later:

We have both the power and the will to maintain California independent of Mexico, but we believe that though slavery could not be generally introduced, that its recognition could blast the prospects of the country. It would make it displeasing for the White man to labor for his bread, and it would thus drive off to other homes the only class of emigrants California wishes to see: the sober and industrious middle class of society. 62

White male opposition to the introduction of slavery in California was widespread in these early years. Purveyors of the free labor ideology expressed the belief that slavery inevitably led to decadence, laziness, and economic degeneration in the free white population. Their opposition to slavery was not based on lofty abolitionist convictions, but rather on the belief that slavery would inevitably degrade free white labor and undermine white workers’ entitlement to economic development in the state. Slavery would effectively discourage white migration and settlement by stunting economic development, crippling society, and making white social mobility virtually impossible. The presence of an exploitable slave labor force would invariably drive enterprising white men from occupations leading up the economic ladder and thus undermine their dreams of becoming rising capitalists. It would lead to an economy headed by slaveholders and others who would profit from the exploitation of an unfree labor force. Thus, from the free labor perspective the recreation of a Southern society in California ran counter to the interests of the majority of the state’s earliest white immigrants.

These free labor sentiments were salient during the California State Constitutional Convention debates on slavery and the immigration of free Negroes. Convened in the fall of 1849, forty-eight delegates from districts throughout California met at Monterey to draft the state constitution. Submission of this document to Congress, after its ratification by the people in the territory, was a necessary prerequisite to the admission of California into the Union. The question of slavery was first raised on September 10, 1849. While outlining articles for the proposed “Declaration of Rights” of the new constitution, delegate W. M. Shannon of Sacramento, a lawyer originally from New York, moved to insert a section specifically prohibiting slavery in the territory. Shannon’s motion stipulated: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, unless for the punish-
ment of crimes, shall ever be tolerated in this state." No objections were raised to Mr. Shannon's motion and the proposed section was adopted unanimously without debate. 63

This opposition to the introduction of slavery in California was not a sign of an enlightened social attitude toward black people. It reflected a common belief that the presence of blacks or any nonwhite group associated with unfree labor posed a real or symbolic threat to the status of free white labor in the state. This was vividly demonstrated during the convention debates on whether or not to prohibit free Negro immigration into the state. Although the convention did not approve such an exclusion (largely from political considerations affecting California's rapid admission into the Union by Congress), debates on the matter illustrated the pervasiveness of free labor sentiment and the delegates' general antipathy toward the presence of nonwhites.

Perhaps the most explicit proponent of the free labor ideology was Delegate O. M. Wozencraft from San Joaquin. Wozencraft, formerly from Ohio and Louisiana, staunchly supported the prohibition of free Negro immigration:

If there is just reason why slavery should not exist in this land, there is just reason why that part of the family of man, who are so well adapted for servitude, should be excluded from amongst us. It would appear that the all-wise Creator had created the negro to serve the White race. We see evidence of this wherever they are brought in contact; we see the instinctive feeling of the negro is obedience to the White man, and, in all instances, he obeys him, and is ruled by him. If you wish that all mankind should be free, do not bring the two extremes in the scale of organization together; do not bring the lowest in contact with the highest, for be assured the one will rule and the other must serve. 64

Wozencraft's position reflected a belief, shared with other Northern men, that blacks, whether free or slave, would unfairly compete with free white labor. Such competition already existed in the North and would surely flourish in California if blacks were allowed to emigrate freely. During debates on the prohibition of free Negro immigration, Wozencraft implored delegates to consider the evils that such immigration would inflict on the white workingman.

I wish to cast my vote against the admission of blacks into this country, in order that I may thereby protect the citizens of California in one of their most inestimable rights—the right to labor. . . . I wish, so far as my influence extends to make labor honorable; the laboring man is the nobleman in the truest
acception of the word; and I would make him worthy of his high prerogative, and not degrade him by placing him upon a level with the lowest in the scale of the family of man.

I desire to protect the people of California against all monopolies—to encourage labor and protect the laboring class. Can this be done by admitting the negro race? Surely not; for if they are permitted to come, they will do so—nay they will be brought here. Yes, Mr President, the capitalists will fill the land with these living laboring machines, with all their attendant evils. Their labor will go to enrich the few, and impoverish the many; it will drive the poor and honest laborer from the field, by degrading him to the level of the negro.

The golden era is before us in all its glittering splendor; here civilization may attain its highest altitude and the Caucasian may attain his highest state of perfectibility. We must throw aside all the weights and clogs that have fettered society elsewhere. We must inculcate moral and industrial habits; we must exclude the low, vicious, and depraved.

No better statement of the virtue of free labor, and the Northern Republican critique of the South, can be found in the debates that shaped the foundation of California's entrance into the union as a free state. But Wozencraft was not alone in using free labor arguments to oppose free Negro immigration. During the debates on this issue, Delegate H. A. Tefft, a Northerner representing San Luis Obispo, also argued against the "introduction into this country of negroes, peons of Mexico, or any class of that kind." Tefft claimed that such immigration would "degrade white labor" and make it impossible for Anglos "to compete with the bands of negroes who would be set to work under the direction of capitalists." San Francisco delegate W. M. Steuart, a lawyer formerly of Maryland, similarly opposed black immigration because of what he termed "its baneful influence." In his estimation it was "utterly impossible to unite free and slave labor" in one state. Even those who favored free Negro immigration often did so as a matter of expediency. Delegate Shannon, for example, favored free Negro immigration because "the necessities of the territory require them." Shannon believed that free Negroes were "required in every department of domestic life (in California)"; it did not matter to him if "they were baboons, or any other class of creatures."

Shannon's belief in the degrading influence of "other class[es] of creatures" was shared by other convention delegates and by the white population in California more generally. These sentiments later provided the lens through which other racialized ethnic groups also were viewed as posing a threat to the white population immigrating into the new state at mid-century.
Neutralizing the Presence of Blacks in Anglo California

Given these sentiments, it is not surprising that the same 1849 California State Constitutional Convention initially relegated blacks to second-class legal status. The first draft of the "Right to Suffrage" emphatically stated that only "white male citizens of the United States" would be entitled to vote. 67 No serious thought was given to enfranchising blacks who settled in California. To the contrary, one motion adopted by the Convention stated that "Africans, and descendants of Africans" were to be exempted from the right to suffrage. 68 Despite the later deletion of this explicit reference to blacks, there was no ambiguity in the minds of white Californians: blacks were nonwhite and, therefore, not eligible for the citizenship rights reserved exclusively for white men.

The subordinate political status of blacks in California carried tremendous implications for their "life chances" in the state. They were denied the rights to vote, to hold public office, to testify in court against white persons, to serve on juries, to attend public schools, or to homestead public land. 69 It was not until 1870, with the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, that blacks were granted the same legal rights as white citizens in California. Furthermore, it was not until 1880 that the segregated school system created for black (and Indian) children in the state was formally abolished. 70

Widespread white antipathy toward blacks was also expressed in numerous attempts made to prohibit their immigration. An interdiction against free Negro immigration into California was formally approved at the 1849 Constitutional Convention. This section was deleted later when it became apparent to delegates that it might delay or even threaten congressional approval of statehood. Rather than hazard that possibility, the convention decided to leave the issue to the first state legislature. 71

Subsequently, bills prohibiting free Negro immigration were introduced unsuccessfully in the California State Legislature in 1850, 1851, 1855, and 1857. A final attempt to bar blacks from entry into the state was made by Assemblyman J. B. Warfield in 1858. 72 The near passage of the Warfield Bill resulted in the large-scale exodus of many blacks in California to Victoria, British Columbia. An estimated four hundred to eight hundred blacks left for Canada in the spring of 1858, over 15 percent of their total population in the state. Life for the more than four thousand who remained was marred by continued discrimination and white hostility. 73

Despite opposition to black emigration, hundreds of Northern free
Negroes came to California as independent miners during the Gold Rush. Others were brought into the state as slaves from the American South. According to historian Rudolph Lapp, "Coastal city free blacks, many from Massachusetts as well as New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland, came largely by the Panama route and some around the Horn. From the upper Mississippi valley states many earned their way as employees of the overland companies. From the slave states hundreds of blacks came with their gold-hunting masters, some with the promise of freedom in California if rewards of mining were great enough. By 1850 there were 962 Afro-Americans in California, mostly in the Mother Lode counties, probably half of them slaves." The vast majority of these black immigrants settled in the six mining districts of northern California: Sacramento, Mariposa, El Dorado, Calaveras, Yuba, and Tuolumne.

Despite the constitutional prohibition against slavery of 1849, from 1848 until 1856 slaveholders were granted continued legal possession of black slaves brought into the state. Slaves often were "hired out" to other parties by masters who found it more profitable to do so when returns from mining were scant. Through this arrangement a slaveholder received from $150 to $300 a month for the use of "rented" slaves who toiled as cooks, waiters, domestic servants, or mine workers for their temporary employers. Their presence quickly raised the ire of a white population overwhelmingly committed to free labor sentiments; they did not want California to succumb to the "damning influence" of unfree black labor. Nevertheless, the power of slaveowners was extended with the passage of the state's 1852 Fugitive Slave Law. Provisions of this bill affirmed the right of a slaveholder to obtain a warrant for the arrest and return of fugitive slaves or simply to seize such a slave himself. The 1852 law further permitted former slaves to satisfy outstanding claims their owners may have had to their labor by working off their debts in California. This provision notwithstanding, there are numerous instances during this period when fugitive slaves were openly sold in the state. In other cases, blacks brought into California under an agreement with their owners to work for their freedom were often forcibly seized after satisfying their obligations and reenslaved by masters.

With the decline in mining opportunities in the mid–1850s, most free blacks left the mining region for urban centers such as San Francisco and Sacramento. By 1860, the largest black populations in the state resided in San Francisco (1,176 persons), followed by Sacramento (468 residents). Blacks in these northern California cities, as well as in towns like Stockton and Marysville, were racially segregated into separate communities or
Blacks in San Francisco during the 1850s also were prohibited from using the city's three public libraries and relegated to sections reserved for "colored" people in other public facilities.  

Blacks in San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton, and Marysville overwhelmingly were employed as unskilled day laborers. A few others toiled as bootblacks, porters, waiters, bell-ringers, laundymen, cooks, stewards, and barbers, although a handful successfully established modest businesses such as furniture stores, clothing stores, boardinghouses, and saloons, and a very few even became doctors or engineers.

The overrepresentation of blacks at the bottom of the new occupational structure largely reflected their subordinate legal-political status in the state. Smoldering competition and resentment between black immigrants and the large Irish population in California played a pivotal role in this subordination. According to Lapp, "Rivalry between the Afro-American and Irish working-class communities had arisen out of job competition at the lowest rung of the labor ladder in the early decades of the nineteenth century. This hostility in New England and New York then spread to the West Coast. The attitude of blacks toward unions is easy to understand since the emergence of unionism was so often associated with black exclusion from jobs." Thus, the earlier competition between white and black labor elsewhere was partially reenacted in California during the 1860s and 1870s.

Despite the racial hostility they endured in the state, the black population in California grew steadily in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Although blacks accounted for only one percent of the total state population at the time, the number of blacks in the state reached over 11,000 by 1890. Whereas during the gold rush period blacks were heavily concentrated in northern California, this new population settled largely in the southern part of the state. "The near doubling of the state's black population by 1890 is explained by the real estate and land boom in southern California, which produced a black population gain in Los Angeles County from 188 in 1880 to 1,817 in 1890, a tenfold increase. In the same general area similar sharp increases took place. In 1880 the Fresno County black population was 40 and by 1890 it was 457. Even Kern County went from 4 to 130 in that ten-year period." The successful completion of the transcontinental railroad also contributed to this population increase as many black railroad workers (especially sleeping car porters and "redcaps") settled or retired with their families in southern California. Also important in redirecting their settlement was the continued hostility by white trade unionists toward black labor in the
northern part of the state. According to Lapp, "In the turn-of-the-century decades unionism made significant strides in San Francisco but was deterred in Los Angeles by powerful antunion sentiment among employers led by Harrison Gray Otis, owner of the Los Angeles Times. . . . Blacks planning migration to California were often urged to avoid San Francisco and to go instead to Los Angeles, which was considered a ‘good town for colored folks.’" 84

The intense animosity toward blacks in San Francisco even caused many blacks to move across the bay to Alameda County and contribute to the significant increase of Oakland's black population. By 1900, there were over one thousand blacks in that community, an increase that occurred during a decade when the northern California black population either remained steady or numerically declined.85

Although antiblack sentiment was widespread, white Californians were never drawn into the same frenzied competition with blacks as they were with the thousands of Chinese immigrants who also immigrated into the state during the gold rush period. California's black population was never allowed to effectively compete with European-American immigrants in the state and, consequently, were never perceived as the same formidable threat that other racialized groups posed for white men. Repeated attempts to thwart black immigration, to deny blacks important human and civil rights, and to relegate them to the bottom of the new class structure militated against the eruption of widespread economic competition between black and white Californians.

The same, however, can not be said in the case of the indigenous Mexican and Native American populations. Their ruthless subordination was essential to the successful introduction of the new Anglo-American society in California. Its realization required the immediate dispossession of Mexicans and Indians from land needed for the development of the new political economy and class structure. Control of Mexican rancho estates and Indian tribal lands was a fundamental prerequisite for this economic transformation. The Mexican ranchero class became the first formidable barrier to the realization of Anglo class aspiration in the state.

The next chapter chronicles the process by which Anglos struggled to undermine the superordinate position held by the rancheros during the Mexican period and successfully reorganize the underlying basis of production in the newly acquired territory.
PART ONE
RACIAL AMBIGUITIES, CLASS REALITIES, AND "HALF CIVILIZED" MEXICANS IN ANGLO CALIFORNIA
Chapter Two
"The True Significance of the Word 'White'"

Given their free-labor sentiments and their profound belief in "Manifest Destiny," European Americans migrating into the new American Southwest could have been expected to despise completely the Mexican population they encountered in California. Although these prejudices undeniably affected their initial impressions of Mexican society, white immigrants actually assigned Mexicans an intermediate location in the new society they imposed in the region. Indeed, compared to the treatment ultimately afforded other racialized groups in California, the experience of Mexicans in the nineteenth century was without parallel.

For complex reasons, Mexicans occupied a qualitatively different "group position" from that of Indians, blacks, and Asian immigrants in the new racial hierarchy. Nineteenth-century relations between Mexicans and Anglos in California were powerfully determined by the class divisions within the two populations, divisions that led to divergent historical experiences for the Mexican working class and the ranchero elite. The introduction of a new, Anglo-dominated class structure led to bitter contention between powerful Mexican rancheros and European-American capitalists for control of the most arable land in the state. The strife that developed between the old Mexican ruling class and Anglo capitalists initially overshadowed the ethnic conflict that occurred at other class levels.

Unlike black, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants, for example, Mexican workers were not initially perceived as a formidable obstacle to white working-class aspirations, primarily because of such demographic factors
as the relatively small size of the Mexican population, the low percentage of adult male laborers, and their concentration away from urban economic sectors employing white laborers. By 1900, however, these class lines had been blurred, if not obliterated, as the ranchero class irretrievably surrendered its earlier privileged position. These changes, plus widespread Mexican immigration during the 1910s and 1920s, set the stage for a twentieth-century experience qualitatively different from that of the nineteenth.

Another unique feature of Anglo-Mexican relations at the time was the ability of upper-class Mexicans to resist European-American encroachment and protect themselves from the intense racial animosity and virulent discrimination that Anglos inflicted on other groups during the nineteenth century. This was principally the result of important political rights Mexicans gained at the onset of American control of California, rights based on the guarantees extended by treaty and by the U.S. Constitution and largely denied Indians, blacks, and Chinese and Japanese immigrants. For example, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo enabled Mexicans to obtain U.S. citizenship rights in 1849. Citizenship carried with it suffrage, which empowered Mexican elites to politically challenge Anglo control in areas of Mexican concentration. The citizenship rights Mexicans came to enjoy, though often circumvented, nevertheless protected them from the more onerous discriminatory legislation enacted against other racialized groups.

The claimed European descent of the Mexican ranchero elite, the so-called gente de razón (literally, “people of reason”), also facilitated the assimilation of segments of the upper class into European American society. The cultural distance between these Mexicans and European Americans proved less extreme than that between white immigrants and the unambiguously “nonwhite” populations. One important measure of the perceived assimilability of upper-class Mexicans was clearly evident in the degree of intermarriage between old Californio families and prominent Anglo immigrants. In sharp contrast, the Mexican working class was generally viewed like other racialized groups. Their degraded class status, combined with their inability to claim “pure” European ancestry, contributed to Anglo perceptions that they were unassimilable and certainly unworthy of intermarrying. Unprotected by the status European ancestry afforded the gente de razón, they were much more vulnerable to having their political and legal rights violated with impunity.

This chapter examines the major features of the unique nineteenth-century Mexican experience in Anglo California, focusing specifically on the divergent fates of the Californio elite and the Mexican working class.
The class divisions of the Mexican period (1821-46) laid the basis for these class-specific experiences. Remnants of the old Mexican class structure persisted after 1848, coexisting briefly with the emerging capitalist sector as part of the new social formation. These old and new class divisions structurally placed the Mexican ranchero and working classes into divergent types of conflict with European Americans at different class levels. By way of background to this history, let us first turn to a brief assessment of the Mexican society that structured group relations among Californios prior to U.S. annexation of the territory.

The Class Structure of Mexican Society in Alta California

Class and race relations in Mexican California were fundamentally structured by the land-tenure system introduced after Mexican independence from Spain in 1821, when the Mexican National Congress enacted a liberal policy of granting large tracts of unoccupied land to individuals and encouraged further territorial settlement through the Colonization Act of 1824. This act provided the legislative basis for the rapid development and expansion of private land grants. More than seven hundred such grants, each of up to eleven square leagues (approximately 49,000 acres), were issued by the Mexican government between 1833 and the American occupation in 1846.

The land-tenure system led to the rapid crystallization of a class structure dominated by individual families monopolizing ownership of immense expanses of land known as ranchos. According to historian Leonard Pitt, in 1849 “an estimated two hundred Californio families owned 14 million acres of land in parcels of from 1 to 11 leagues (nearly 4,500 acres to the league).” He also notes that a mere forty-six of these Californios dominated political as well as economic affairs in California during the Mexican period. The de la Guerra family of Santa Barbara, for example, amassed fourteen separate land grants comprising over 488,000 acres. The Carrillo family of Los Angeles acquired over seventeen claims encompassing approximately 320,000 acres of land. Other Mexican grantees with multiple holdings included the Pico family with 700,000 acres, the Vallejo family with 294,000 acres, and the Yorba family with 218,000 acres. These ranchos were semifeudal institutions similar to those found throughout New Spain and Mexico in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Below the ranchero class was an intermediate stratum composed largely
of rancheros and farmers with smaller holdings, skilled rancho laborers and foremen, artisans in the Mexican pueblos, and a few territorial and local officials. This stratum consisted largely of mestizos (mixed racial ancestry) and was typically viewed as a "middle class" by travelers visiting California during the Mexican period. This nonranchero population, particularly the déclassé Mexican laborers in the pueblos, were contemptuously viewed as "greasers" by Anglos visiting Mexican California. For example, the historian Hubert Howe Bancroft described this stratum as "the baser stock of Hispano-Californians . . . [the] greasers." 6

At the bottom of the Mexican class structure of Alta California were the subjugated Indian population and a few mestizos. Most of the Indians who worked the ranchos had formerly worked on the Spanish missions and were bound to their new employers in three principal ways. Some secularized Indians "voluntarily" attached themselves. These Indians were given a subsistence existence by landholders in exchange for their labor. A second group was bound through debt peonage. Before indebted Indians could leave an area they were required to prove they were free of outstanding debts to rancheros. Finally, when sufficient labor could not be secured by noncoercive means, rancheros resorted to kidnapping and directly enslaving Indians. An open traffic in Indian women and children for use as ranchero servants also flourished during the Mexican period. Although Mexican law formally abolished slavery in 1829, it proved impossible to enforce in the isolated northern frontier of Alta California. Moreover, this type of enslavement flourished and was typically rationalized by rancheros as necessary retaliation for Indian vandalism and thievery. 7

Indians laboring on large ranchos generally were not remunerated through wages. The few laborers who received cash payment were usually skilled workers such as vaqueros (cowboys) or mayordomos (foremen). Vaqueros, for example, periodically received modest wages of twelve to fifteen dollars per month plus room and board, while mayordomos were paid approximately sixteen dollars per month. Unskilled Indian laborers occasionally received from three to ten dollars per month or were given grain or colored glass beads. As a rule, however, the Indian population on these large estates received only food, clothing, and shelter. 8

The Indians attached to any individual rancho ranged from a mere handful to several hundred. The Yorba family of Los Angeles utilized twenty-six Indian servants to maintain their twenty-five room house. An additional one hundred laborers tended to the livestock on their 114,480-acre rancho. In northern California, Mariano Vallejo relied on an es-
imated six hundred Indian vaqueros and laborers to work his 66,000-acre Rancho Petaluma and 90,000-acre Rancho Suscol. John Sutter, one of the few Anglos given a land grant in Alta California by the Mexican government, held an estimated six to eight hundred Indian workers on his 160,000-acre rancho estate near Sacramento.  

Indian workers performed numerous tasks on these rancho estates. Many tended the livestock that provided the basis of the hide and tallow trade with foreign merchants who frequented the California coast by the late 1820s. These laborers also assisted in the annual matanza or slaughter that occurred in late summer. Others helped prepare the hides and tallow. A number of skilled workers labored as tanners, shoemakers, harnessmakers, carpenters, wine makers, plasterers, and dairymen, and a few also cultivated the small garden plots that provided fruit, vegetables, and grains for use on the ranchos.  

While Indian men generally toiled in field activities, a gendered division of labor assigned Indian women to serve principally as personal servants in the ranchero’s home, where they ground corn, washed clothes, and spun and sewed cloth. A visitor to Mariano Vallejo’s home in 1844 found Indian women performing these essential tasks. Doña Vallejo told her guest that:

> Each of my children, boys and girls has a servant who has no other duty than to care for him or her. I have two for my own personal service. Four or five grind corn for tortillas. . . . About six or seven are set apart for service in the kitchen. Five or six are continually occupied in washing the clothes in the house; and finally, nearly a dozen are charged to attend to the sewing and spinning; for you must know that, as a rule they are not much inclined to learn many things. . . . All these servants whom we have in the house are very much attached. They are not accustomed to ask for money, nor do they have any fixed wages. We give them all they need. When they are sick we care for them as though they belonged to the family. When their children are born, we act as godfathers and godmothers, and we take charge of the education of their children. When they want to go some great distance to see their relatives, we give them animals and guards for the journey. In a word, we treat the servants as friends rather than servants.

Doña Vallejo’s paternalism reflected a sentiment common among the ranchero class. This paternalism was similar to that which bound black slaves to white masters in the antebellum South. It was not merely an expression of the rancheros’ benevolence, as it helped morally justify their exploitative use of Indian labor. Indians were viewed as stepchildren of the ranchero class, as dependents bound by a series of mutual duties and responsibilities as well as binding compadrazgo (godparent) relationships.
The ranchero class tended to the daily needs of their Indian wards while Indians, in exchange, performed the labor needed to ensure the smooth operation of the rancho estate.

The paternalism that characterized ranchero-Indian relations was vividly captured in an interview with Salvador Vallejo in 1844. This prominent ranchero told one of Hubert Bancroft's associates collecting data for his History of California that:

Many of the rich men of the country had twenty to sixty Indian servants whom they dressed and fed... Our friendly Indians tilled our soil, pastured our cattle, sheared our sheep, cut our lumber, built our houses, paddled our boats, made tile for our homes, ground our grain, slaughtered our cattle, dressed our hides for market, and made our burnt bricks; while the Indian women made excellent servants, took good care of our children, made every one of our meals... Those people we considered as members of our families. We loved them and they loved us; our intercourse was always pleasant. 13

As many as four thousand Indians in California were pressed into service on these immense Mexican ranchos. In northern California many Pomo, Wappo, Patwin, Maidu, Plains Miwok, and Central Valley Yukots fell victim to this exploitative relationship. In the southern part of the state the Luiseno, Cupeno, and Serrano Indians suffered a similar fate while the Gabrieleno and Chumash Indians experienced the final stages of extinction. 14

Many American visitors to California during the Mexican period openly attested to the exploitative treatment of these Indians. During his visit to the Vallejo estate at Sonoma in 1842, an American named George Simpson described the conditions of Vallejo's Indians in these terms:

During the day we visited a village of General Vallejo's Indians, about 300 in number, who were the most miserable of the race that I ever saw, excepting always the slaves of the savages of the northwest coast... They are badly clothed, badly lodged, and badly fed... Though not so recognized by law, yet they are thralls in all but the name, borne to the earth by the toils of civilization superadded to the privations of savage life, they vegetate rather than live... This picture which is a correct likeness not only of General Vallejo's Indians, but of all of the civilized (i.e. former mission Indians) aborigines of California... 15

A similar observation was offered by James Clyman, a trapper traveling through California in 1846 who described the handling of Indians held by John Sutter at his fort near Sacramento. "The Capt. [Sutter] keeps 600 to 800 Indians in a complete state of Slavery and I had the mortification of..."
seeing them dine I may give a short description 10 to 15 Troughs 3 to 4 feet long were brought out of the cook room and seated in the Boiling sun all the labourers grate and small ran to the trough like so many pigs and feed themselves with their hands as long as the troughs contained even a moisture."  

Despite their maltreatment, Indian laborers were crucial to the survival of Alta California. Their value was recognized by the Mexican and those few Anglo rancheros who dominated the regional economy. John Marsh, for example, extensively used Indian laborers on the rancho he acquired in 1837. The Indians, probably Bay Miwoks and Northern Valley Yokuts, manufactured the adobe bricks for his Rancho Los Medanos, ploughed and cultivated his fields, and set traps and collected furs. In return, Marsh fed them, clothed them, and attended to their medical needs. In a letter on the "Aborigines of California," Marsh candidly acknowledged that "throughout all California the Indians are the principal laborers; without them the business of the country could hardly be carried on."  

**Racialized Images of Mexican "Greasers" and the "Gente De Razon"**

White immigrants venturing into California after 1848 were initially repulsed by the existence of an economic system based on servile labor. The Mexican cattle-raising economy did not require the direct cultivation of the territory's fertile land and thus was not a fully "civilized" society in European-American eyes. This seemingly "unproductive" use of such a precious resource kindled intense white antipathy toward the Californios and led to their portrayal as idle squanderers unworthy of the good fortune they possessed. In the view of one Anglo traveler visiting California in the early 1840s, "Nature doing everything, man doing nothing" was the essence of the Mexican economy.  

The sectional sentiments of northern white immigrants, particularly their antipathy to slave societies, clearly colored their attitudes toward the society and people they encountered in California. At first glance, white immigrants perceived little difference between the ranchero elite and the southern plantation slaveholders. Nothing offended Anglo speculators and developers more than contending with yet another "aristocratic" class whose continued prosperity impeded their own aspirations. Holding the Protestant Ethic and white Anglo-Saxon values as the criteria for evaluating Mexicans, Anglos believed that California's undeveloped state was
simply the product of the Californios' cultural backwardness and lack of self-discipline. To overtake this class was no crime, for Anglo Americans were required to follow God's injunction to make the land fruitful, prosperous economically, and attain their divinely appointed calling.

Given these sentiments, it is not surprising that European Americans believed Mexicans were an "indolent" people, whose backwardness reflected their having poor personal habits and collective deficiencies such as laziness or a penchant for extravagances. These disparaging evaluations were "class metaphors" fueled by class-specific perceptions of Californio society, especially of the ranchero elite. The Anglo image of Mexicans as "lazy" was more than just a disparaging ethnic stereotype; the class-specific nature of these perceptions has not been fully appreciated.

European-American evaluations of Mexicans were generally sensitive to the class-based differences among this population. Consider for the moment Richard Henry Dana's well-known travel account, *Two Years Before the Mast*. Therein he paints the Mexican rancheros as "thriftless, proud, and extravagant, and very much given to gaming." While traveling in California in 1835, Dana disapprovingly lamented the absence of industry in the territory and made special note of the idleness of the Mexican elite. "The Californians," he wrote, "are idle, thriftless people, and can not make anything for themselves. The country abounds in grapes, yet they buy bad wine made in Boston and brought round by us, at an immense price. . . . Their hides too, which they value at two dollars in money, they give for something which costs seventy-five cents in Boston; and buy shoes (as like as not, made of their own hides, which have been carried twice round Cape Horn) at three and four dollars."

Dana was not the only European American who judged the Mexican ranchero class harshly for their lack of economic initiative and industriousness. Even Alfred Robinson, an Anglo merchant who married into the prominent de la Guerra family of Santa Barbara, shared this unflattering assessment. In his autobiographical *Life in California*, Robinson condescendingly described the Californio elite as "generally indolent, and addicted to many vices, caring little for the welfare of their children, who like themselves, grow up unworthy members of society."

Some historians of the period have mistakenly attributed the rancheros' "indolence" and "thriftless" behavior to a dysfunctional value system stressing "an orientation toward the present." The Californios' penchant for making "pleasure the chief end of work" and reveling in the conspicuous consumption of food and drink at their innumerable bailes (dances), fandangos, and elaborate feasts ostensibly reflected this value system.
There is little doubt that the Californios were fond of cultural-religious events that highlighted their superior status. The extravagance of Californio bailes, for instance, often involved the ostentatious display of precious silk and lace rebozos (shawls) and gowns, as well as elegant men’s suits embossed with gold and silver. These displays, however, merely reaffirmed the status distinctions that were so central to semifedal Mexican society. The Californios, after all, had only recently come into their wealth and status. Most rancheros had humble origins as Spanish soldiers or officials before being granted immense expanses of land. Conspicuously displaying their newly acquired wealth and social standing was merely a way of reaffirming the privileges this class enjoyed during the Mexican period. Unfortunately, the Californio’s opulence and extravagant squandering (such as the merriment involving gold dust-filled cascarrones, or hollowed-out eggs) held little value to most European Americans. Given the traditional Protestant value system which stressed hard work and frugality, it is not difficult to see why white newcomers witnessing these festivities would characterize them as flagrant examples of the spendthrift ways of an anachronistic gentry.

Most European-American travelers found little of value in assessing Mexican society. While they generally denigrated Mexican society in its entirety, some observers perceptively noted the class differences that internally stratified it. The readily apparent privileged station of the ranchero elite was described by Richard Henry Dana in 1840:

There are but a few of these families in California; being mostly those in official stations, or who, on the expiration of their offices, have settled here upon property which they have acquired. . . . These form the aristocracy; intermarrying, and keeping up an exclusive system in every respect. They can be told by their complexions, dress, manner, and also by their speech; for, calling themselves Castilians, they are very ambitious of speaking the pure Castilian language, which is spoken in a somewhat corrupted dialect by the lower classes.  

Dana was particularly struck by the symmetry with which class divisions overlay differences in ancestry and skin color. He particularly noted that the Californio elite appeared to be composed largely of fair-complexioned individuals who proudly proclaimed their European ancestry. According to Dana, "From this upper class, they go down by regular shades, growing more and more dark and muddy, until you come to the pure Indian. . . . Generally speaking, each person’s caste is decided by the quality of blood, which is itself, too plain to be concealed, at first sight. Yet the least drops of Spanish blood, if it be only a quartoon or octoon, is sufficient
to raise them from the rank of slaves, and entitle them to a suit of clothes . . . and to call themselves Espanoles, and to hold property, if they can get any." 

The claimed or real European ancestry of the Californio elite provided an important basis upon which they differentiated themselves from the more déclassé indigenous mestizo and Indian population in California. European-American travelers, on the other hand, often viewed their purported European ancestry, and implicit claims to civility, with open derision. The Californios were neither truly "white" in the northern European or Anglo-Saxon sense of the term, nor were they simply "uncivilized" Indians. Terms such as "semincivilized" or "semibarbarian" best capture the collective judgment European Americans made of Mexicans prior to the U.S.—Mexico war. Although some Californios could in fact trace their ancestry back to Spain, this did not lessen the contempt to which they were initially subjected by European Americans. Still, although they were not fully accepted as equals, their ostensible European ancestry and formidable class position did insure that white immigrants could not dismiss them as easily as the mixed or pure-blood indigenous populations.

The Privileged Political Status of Mexicans in Anglo California

One important measure of the unique social position that Mexicans came to occupy in the new Anglo society after annexation is clearly evident in their legal-political status in California. It highlights their intermediate "group position" as well as the modicum of deference and respect that European Americans grudgingly accorded the "half civilized" Californios. As noted previously, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 guaranteed "all the rights of citizens of the United States" to those Mexicans who chose to remain in what is now the American Southwest one year after the treaty's ratification. This international agreement virtually tied the hands of white convention delegates when the issue of suffrage for Mexicans was raised. The California State Constitutional Convention of 1849 formally granted Mexicans the same citizenship rights as "free white persons" in California.

The Mexicans' distinctive mixed-blood ancestry apparently played a pivotal role in the extension of U.S. citizenship to them. Unlike other minority groups in California, some Mexicans were arguably part of the "white race." White immigrants generally made racial distinctions among
the Mexican population on the basis of the clearly perceptible class and somatic differences. Those whose class position and ostensible European ancestry placed
them at the top of the hierarchy during the Mexican period, the "gente de razon," were reluctantly viewed as "white" by Anglo Americans. The dark complexioned,
mestizo population (the "greasers" or gente sin razon—literally, "people without reason"), on the other hand, were viewed as "nonwhite" and not significantly different
from pure-blood, Indian "savages" in the state.

Consequently, the designation of the Mexican population as "white" was not simply a matter of skin color or actual European ancestry but of the way European
Americans came to define what they meant by race. Delegate Botts, for example, openly admitted that he "had no objection to color, except in so far as it indicated
the inferior races of mankind." He was amenable to the extension of the suffrage clause to worthy Mexicans so long as it was denied "the African and Indian races." 27

During debates on suffrage for Mexicans one Anglo delegate, W. S. Sherwood of Sacramento, also openly stated that he did not wish to "debar the Spanish" from
voting. Despite the fact that this population was "darker than the Anglo-Saxon race," he considered them "white men" and therefore entitled to vote.

Similarly, Delegate W. M. Gwin, who earlier had opposed the granting of the franchise to the "pure uncivilized Indians," ultimately (if reluctantly) conceded that "the
descendants of Indians should not be excluded from the franchise." Delegate Kimball Dimmick of San Jose echoed this sentiment, commenting that "the mixed race,
descended from the Indians and Spanish," should be permitted "to enjoy the right of suffrage as liberally as any American citizen." He had no objection to those who
had a small amount of "Indian blood in their veins." In support of his view he noted that even "some of the most honorable and distinguished families in Virginia are
descended from the Indian race." 28

Don Pablo de la Guerra, a prominent ranchero and delegate from Santa Barbara, similarly argued that the term "white" was a reference to European ancestry and
social standing, not merely to skin color. During the suffrage debate de la Guerra stated that "it should be perfectly understood in the first place, what is the true
significance of the word 'White.' Many citizens of California have received from nature a very dark skin; nevertheless, there are among them men who have heretofore
been allowed to vote, and not only that, but to fill the highest public offices. It would be very unjust to deprive them of the privilege of citizens merely because nature
had not made them White.” 29 Ironically, de la Guerra further noted that if the Anglo delegates used the word “white” only as a term intended to “exclude the African race” from the franchise, then he was in agreement with this usage.30 The final approved version of the new article of the constitution formally disenfranchised both Indians and blacks in California. Those entitled to vote were “White male citizens of the United States and every White male citizen of Mexico, who shall have elected to become a citizen of the United States.”31

This decision enabled the Californio elite to utilize their status as free white citizens to effectively challenge and resist the more onerous measures European Americans used to subordinate other racialized groups in California. Under ranchero leadership, Mexicans retained an important degree of political influence after statehood and even held political control of important communities in California for a number of years. For example, in his social history of Mexicans in southern California, Albert Camarillo found that the California elite retained political control of Santa Barbara as late as 1876. Despite being a numerical minority in that city after 1870, they remained a politically influential group until the early 1880s. Mexicans also enjoyed a modest degree of political success in Los Angeles and San Salvador, where the Mexican electorate constituted an important voting bloc well into the late 1860s.32 The experience in San Diego, however, provided a sharp contrast. There, the Californio elite never contested the political domination of Anglo Americans; many had even supported the United States during the U.S.-Mexico War.33

From their stronghold in southern California, the Mexican population also helped elect a number of statewide representatives between 1850 and 1876. Prominent rancheros such as Pablo de la Guerra and José María Covarrubias (Santa Barbara), Andres Pico and Ygnacio del Valle (Los Angeles), Mariano Vallejo (Sonoma), and M. Pacheco (San Luis Obispo) served as senators and state assemblymen during the first legislative sessions. A Californio even occupied the governor's chair in 1875 when Romualdo Pacheco of Santa Barbara, who had been elected lieutenant governor in 1871, served out the final year of Newton Booth's term.34 Governor Booth had vacated the position after his election to the U.S. Senate. By the time Pacheco assumed the governor's chair, however, Mexicans no longer had major statewide political influence. According to historian Leonard Pitt, the election of 1851 was a "turning point" for the Californios. Despite the election of Mexicans to a number of legislative offices after that year, the tremendous influx of Anglo voters into the state rendered the Mexicans' political influence marginal.35
The principal beneficiaries of the rights accorded Mexicans were the ranchero elite who remained politically influential in the state. They were primarily among those nominated and elected to public office during the period. Although technically entitled to these same rights, members of the Mexican working class were never viewed by Anglos as political equals of the old ranchero elite. Despite being eligible for citizenship rights, the Mexican working class was not afforded any better treatment than other racialized groups in the state. Some racially discriminatory legislation, in fact, was specifically enacted against this segment of the Mexican population during the period. One such law was the 1855 Vagrancy Act targeting "idle" Mexicans in the state. Popularly known as the "Greaser Act," this bill sanctioned the arrest and imprisonment of individuals guilty of vagrancy or levied fines against them, which they were forced to pay either in cash or through temporary labor service. 36

Given perceptible class differences among Mexicans and their ambiguous racial status in the eyes of some European Americans, it is not surprising that their legal rights were not always respected. This is particularly true in the case of the working class. They were often denied their legal rights by being categorized as Indians. One notable instance reflects the ease with which anyone with a dark complexion could be so treated. Manuel Dominguez, who served as an elected delegate to the California State Constitutional Convention of 1849 and as a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, traveled to northern California in April 1857 to enter testimony in a San Francisco courtroom. Before Dominguez could testify, however, the Anglo lawyer for the plaintiff objected to his taking the witness stand. The lawyer argued that Dominguez was an Indian and therefore ineligible to enter testimony. The judge upheld the objection and dismissed Dominguez. 37 Although Mexicans were legally accorded the same rights as free white persons, actual extension of these privileges to all segments of this population was quite another matter.

European-American Ambivalence Toward Mexican Assimilation

The class-specific treatment of Mexicans in the polity also had its parallel in European-American ambivalence about the assimilation of Mexicans into Anglo culture. Class-based status differences among Mexicans directly shaped views about their suitability for the new Anglo society. Nowhere was this perception more apparent than in attitudes toward intermarriage.
Unlike blacks, Indians, or Asian immigrants, Mexicans were the only ethnic population in California during the nineteenth century that Anglos deemed worthy to formally marry. The various antimiscegenation statutes that prohibited intermarriages between white Americans and other racialized groups were not enacted against Mexicans. This social tolerance toward Anglo/Mexican amalgamation was, nonetheless, rigidly circumscribed along predictable class lines. Only the daughters of the California elite were viewed as appropriate partners for European Americans, especially for white men of means. Occurring with less frequency were marriages between Californio men and middle-class Anglo women. Even more uncommon, and subject to greater social sanctions, were unions between Anglo men and women and lower-class Mexicans.

Generally speaking, freely entered marital unions by men and women from both dominant and subordinate status groups can be taken as a measure of a host society's openness to amalgamation. The existence of de jure or de facto discrimination against such intermarriage (codified in antimiscegenation laws) clearly reflects a society's desire to maintain formal racial or ethnic boundaries and reinforce status distinctions.

Historians continue to investigate the frequency of these Anglo-Mexican intermarriages. Richard Griswold del Castillo estimates that between 1850 and 1880 these endogamous marriages ranged from 12.2 percent (1850) to 8.7 percent (1880) of Mexican marriages in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, Griswold del Castillo does not indicate if these marriages were predominantly between white men and upper-class Mexican women. In another study, historian Ronald Woolsey estimates that approximately 35 percent of Mexican marriages in Los Angeles between 1860 and 1870 were with Anglos. Like Griswold del Castillo, Woolsey also does not indicate if these intermarriages were predominantly between Anglo men and Mexican women. (Methodological differences and use of different archival sources [manuscript census schedules or marriage certificates] account for the wide disparity in these figures.)

Given their privileged status during the Mexican period, it is not surprising that the Californio elite occasionally arranged marriages between their daughters and wealthy Anglos in an attempt to forestall their complete loss of influence. These Anglos had the financial resources and business acumen the new political economy required and which the rancheros sorely lacked. Indeed, Anglo sons-in-law provided some defense against the most egregious injustices that some European Americans inflicted upon rancheros. Negotiations with unscrupulous lawyers, merchants, and others
who preyed on the ignorance of the Californios was but one important advantage that such intermarriages provided.

For their part, European Americans also were not oblivious to the advantages of marrying into wealthy ranchero families. With eligible white women being scarce in the territory, fair-complexioned, upper-class Mexican women were among the most valued marriage partners available. While white men derived a degree of status from marrying the Californio's daughters, more important were the tangible political and economic opportunities that such unions afforded. These marriages provided strategic access to land held by the old elite. Thousands of acres passed into the hands of Anglo men as part of the inheritances some Californio women brought to marriage. Moreover, Anglo sons-in-law were often the first ones given access to land sold by rancheros desperately needing cash.

Numerous marriages occurred during the nineteenth century between wealthy European-American settlers and upper-class Mexican women. No matter how sanctimoniously shrouded these marriages were in religious and romantic terms, these Californio women were arguably being "trafficked" between the old and the emerging ruling classes. Such women may be viewed as the tribute offered by the pragmatic old ruling class to the new. They often became the exotic prize that many Anglo men arrogantly believed were part of the spoils of conquest.

Before statehood, well-known Anglo settlers such as Alfred Robinson, John R. Cooper, Abel Stearns, William G. Dana, and Thomas Larkin married daughters of the Mexican ruling elite. These "Mexicanized Anglos" played a key role in ameliorating animosity toward Mexicans in the postwar transition period. Although these Anglos were few in number, they were socially well-respected and often important figures in the economic affairs of the territory. Historian Leonard Pitt estimates that "two dozen of them owned one third of southern California's developed land in estates as large as 60,000 acres." After statehood, prominent Californians such as Stephen Foster, Robert S. Baker, James Winston, and Henry V. Linsey also married into the California class. Important Califorino families such as the Yorbas, Sepulvedas, Bandinis, Picos, and Dominguezes celebrated the marriage of their daughters to Anglo immigrants. According to Pitt, these marriages between the old Mexican ruling elite and prominent Anglos "made the Yankee conquest smoother than it might otherwise have been."

Less common, because they violated white men's exclusive access to white American women, were marriages between the sons of elite Cali-
fornios and European-American women. Juan Sepulveda's son and Ramualdo Pacheco, the former governor of the state, were among the few Mexican men who successfully transgressed this norm and married middle class Anglo women. So too did Platon Vallejo, son of Mariano Vallejo of Sonoma, who married a young white woman he met while attending medical school in Syracuse, New York. 45

Many of the sons and daughters of the ranchero elite who married Anglos were described by contemporary observers as being of "Caucasian origin." If this observation is correct, it would seem to indicate that intermarriage was selective and favored the more fair-complexioned members of elite families. There is little evidence that many marriages occurred between Yankee men and mestizo women. But one such union did occur between George Carson and Victoria Dominguez, daughter of the dark-complexioned Manuel Dominguez of Los Angeles. Carson married Doña Dominguez in 1857 and moved into his father-in-law's rancho in 1864 in order to manage the elderly man's business affairs. After his death in 1882, Don Manuel Dominguez's dwindling 24,000-acre estate was divided among his six daughters and their spouses.46

The Class and Gendered Representations of Mexicans in Anglo California

This symbolic trafficking in upper class Californio women was accompanied by the emergence of a dichotomous image of Mexican women reflecting the salience of class lines among this population. One popular representation veiled her in positive terms: chaste, beautiful, and charming. Nearly all nineteenth-century accounts by Anglo settlers and visitors in California represented the rancheros' wives and daughters in these terms. For example, Alfred Robinson wrote in Life in California that "there are few places in the world, where in proportion to the number of inhabitants, can be found more chastity, industrious habits, and correct deportment, than among the women of this place."47 Similarly, in Two Years before the Mast, Richard Henry Dana noted, with some surprise, the degree of chastity observed by these women. Although Dana questioned the virtue of some of these women, he believed them to possess "a good deal of beauty."48

Given their high estimations of themselves, white men generally believed that Mexican women welcomed their advances. This arrogant sentiment was clearly reflected in a popular wartime folk song of the period:
Already the senoritas
Speak English with finesse.
"Kiss me!" say the Yankees,
The girls all answer "Yes!"

This white male attitude toward Mexican women was also expressed in a poem published in Boston in June 1846. Aptly entitled "They Wait for Us," it reflected the dominant racial stereotypes of Mexicans at the time—men being lazy and women being available. The poem's contribution to these popular representations lay in fusing an explicitly sexual theme to the Yankee's masculinist thrust into Mexico at midcentury:

The Spanish maid, with eye of fire,
At balmy evening turns her lyre
And looking to the Eastern sky,
Awaits our Yankee chivalry
Whose purer blood and valiant arms,
Are fit to clasp her budding charms.

The man, her mate, is sunk in sloth—
To love, his senseless heart is loth:
The pipe and glass and tinkling lute,
A sofa, and a dish of fruit;
A nap, some dozen times a day;
Sombre and sad, and never gay.

A less poetic expression of European–American sexual bravado was baldly conveyed by a veteran Anglo miner in a letter to the Stockton Times on April 6, 1850. In the course of characterizing the animosity toward Mexicans born of wartime experiences, he stated flatly that most Anglos believed that "Mexicans have no business in this country. . . . The men were made to be shot at, and the women were made for our purposes." Indeed, white men in California believed that their superior status entitled them to all of the bounty available in the new state. Mexican women, it appears, were often seen as mere spoils of war awaiting the amorous embrace of the white man's "valiant arms."

Unlike the elite Californio's daughters, however, lower-class Mexican women were rarely viewed and represented in positive terms. In fact, they were derisively portrayed in Anglo travel literature as sexually promiscuous women of ill-repute. This class-specific, dichotomous image of Mexican women in the Anglo mind simultaneously devalued lower-class Mexican women, who were deemed unworthy of marrying upstanding white men, while elevating the status of the elite women, who were openly
courted. Although all Mexican women were viewed as available to white men, only the more fair-complexioned Californio women were loftily viewed as pure and chaste, an image they shared with middle-class European-American women. The unique status of elite Mexican women in Anglo society was a product of their privileged class position; it did not have a counterpart among other racialized women in California during the period.

These European-American perceptions of class-based differences among Mexican women also had a corollary in their representations of Mexican men. Lower-class Mexican men generally were seen as libidinally uncontrolled and sexually threatening. The Anglo mind conjured an image of them as "rapacious" and "hot-blooded" creatures who wantonly lusted after innocent white women. The inferior class position and mestizo ancestry of these men contributed directly to these negative sexual representations, which were clearly the product of the way class and racial stratification lines in California shaped popular perceptions. 52

At the Borders of Heathenism and Savagery

Religion was another factor contributing to potential assimilability. Despite widespread European-American hostility to Mexican society, Mexicans were much closer to white Americans in their religious beliefs and cultural sensibilities than were other racialized groups. Mexicans were, after all, a Christian people whose conversion under colonization by Spain had elevated them from the "heathenism" rampant in the territory. White immigrants were not, for instance, as alarmed by Mexican religious practices as they were by the more repulsive practices of California Indians or the Chinese "pagan idolators" who arrived after statehood. Although anti-Catholic sentiment among European Americans existed in the state, Mexican Catholics were at least a God-fearing people and therefore seen as more closely approximating European-American notions of civility.

During the postwar period many Californios were pleasantly surprised by the Bear Flaggers' deference to Church interests, protection of mission property, and respect of Catholic marriage traditions. Many Yankee Catholics who settled in racially segregated communities, such as Los Angeles, even attended ethnically mixed services. Historian Leonard Pitt has argued that tolerant Anglo attitudes toward Mexican Catholics in southern California helped mollify tensions during the turbulent period after U.S. annexation. He suggests that the strongest drive for religious conformity came
from within the Catholic Church, which became the "prime mover for acculturation." Rather than confronting Protestant hostility from Yankee "blond-haired heretics," Mexican Catholics were coaxed into adopting American Catholic traditions and forms of worship.

Elements of the Catholic Church's "Americanization" program included changes in church personnel (typically Americans replacing Mexicans), diocesan reorganization, and the introduction of Baltimorean Church institutions such as bilingual parochial schools, orphanages, hospitals, and newspaper publications. These institutions functioned as acculturating mechanisms that drew religious boundaries and ethnic bonds among Mexicans and other Catholic populations in the area. As a consequence, Catholicism provided a stabilizing basis for Mexicans' ethnic identity and facilitated their structural integration into Anglo society in a period of intense political and economic upheaval. 53

The presence of prominent "Mexicanized gringos" was also critical to the early stages of this selective assimilation. Individuals such as Abel Stearns, John R. Cooper, William G. Dana (Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s uncle), and John Warner converted to Catholicism during the Mexican period, married into Californio elite families, and became economically influential. Their close relationship with the Californio elite led them to serve as mediators against the most virulent Yankee anti-Catholic sentiment. Others such as John Downey, Benjamin Hayes, and Stephen Foster generously helped finance the Church's reform efforts and also promoted ethnic harmony on religious terms. 54

European-American attitudes toward Mexicans at the time were also shaped by other cultural considerations such as language. Unlike the completely alien tongues spoken by Asian immigrants or the California Indians, which were discordant to Anglos' ears, Mexican Spanish was at least a European romance language, which they had greater facility in comprehending. This shared linguistic tradition appears to have facilitated communication between both groups as Spanish-speaking Anglos and English-speaking Mexicans helped bridge cultural barriers before and after statehood. Because of the concessions agreed to after the U.S.-Mexico war, Anglos also acquiesced to the publication of all state laws in Spanish. In fact, such bilingual publication was specifically mandated in the 1848 California State Constitution. Although Anglos would not honor this commitment in later years, this proviso had no parallel in the experiences of other "nonwhite" groups or even foreign-born, white immigrants in the state. 55 The Mexicans' status as a conquered people who were nominally European, and at least partially "civilized" in the white man's eyes, posi-
tioned them to exact state-sanctioned concessions from Anglo society that other groups found impossible to secure.

Given European-American cultural assessments of Mexicans, it is not surprising that some Californios successfully made important inroads into the new social order. This partial integration largely befell the second generation, particularly the sons of the old rancho elite. They gained access to Anglo public institutions and secured occupational niches that rapidly accelerated their structural assimilation. Throughout the period from 1850 to 1900, for instance, a small segment of the Mexican upper class attended state-financed public schools. Some of the sons of the ranchero elite even attended the University of California after its founding in 1869. Many later became professionals securely ensconced in privileged spheres of the class structure that were closed to other racialized groups. 56

Romualdo Pacheco’s colorful career best typifies the upper reaches of these second-generation Californio success stories. Born the son of a Santa Barbara army officer in 1831, the young Pacheco was educated in the Sandwich Islands and served as a supercargo on various trading vessels plying the California coast during the Mexican period. After U.S. annexation, Romualdo managed his family rancho in San Luis Obispo and parlayed his privileged status into a state assembly seat in 1862. He later served in the state senate and was successfully elected state treasurer in 1863. He relinquished this post four years later to his kinsman, Ramon Pacheco, and eventually became the Republican party’s candidate for lieutenant governor in 1871. In February 1875 he served out the remaining year of Governor Booth’s term when the state leader took an interim seat in the U.S. Senate. Upon leaving state office, Romualdo Pacheco also served as a northern California congressman before devoting his time to personal business ventures in San Francisco.

Another native-born Californio político of this generation was Reginaldo del Valle, son of Ygnacio del Valle of Los Angeles. The young del Valle succeeded Antonio Coronel as “boss” of the “Spanish vote” in this region during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Born in 1854, del Valle studied law and passed the bar in 1877. He was elected state assemblyman in 1880 (serving as president of the Assembly in 1881) and state senator in 1882. He later served as chairman of the 1888 state Democratic convention as well as on numerous government boards and civic communities before his death in 1938. 57

Not every member of the second generation led such illustrious lives as these two. Many followed alternative paths that generally led them into the middle or lower end of the new class structure. Some took their turn at
becoming agriculturalists in the emerging agribusiness industry, a fate most of their ranchero fathers were unprepared to successfully embark upon. Sons and grandsons of elite families such as the Ramirez, Pico, Castro, Coronel, and Olivera clans became farmers on small parcels of subdivided rancho land. Blas Lugo, for example, turned to farming a small family plot after he unsuccessfully tried his hand at law. A few of the young gentry found financial success in real estate. Relying on the sale of family land, the Sepulveda brothers from Los Angeles owned four thousand acres of San Pedro's best land, worth an estimated five hundred to two thousand dollars an acre in the 1880s. They parlayed their business success into a life in the finest residential area of San Pedro and membership in Anglodominated fraternal orders. 58

Others made inroads into the sheep industry, which provided a transitional link between the old ranching economy of the Mexican period and the new agriculture industry of the American period. Given the limited opportunities within Anglo society, a few apparently gravitated to activities that labelled them as "thieves" or "bandits." Renowned local families such as the Castros, Sepulvedas, Vallejos, Amadors, and Lugos contributed to a breed of native-born "badmen" accused—often falsely—of preying upon European Americans and committing countless crimes such as highway robbery, stage holdups, and cattle rustling.59

The modest structural integration of segments of the ranchero class, however, was not paralleled by the Mexican working class. Sons and daughters of this class had little opportunity to attend public schools, to prosper economically, or to marry and mingle socially with upstanding European Americans. White Americans were acutely aware of the class differences within the Mexican population and viewed the largely mestizo working class as unassimilable. Their ambivalence toward the social integration of all Mexicans was clearly the product of the way class lines internally stratified this population both before and after U.S. annexation of California. These class-specific lines, and the gender-specific experiences therein, carried profound implications for the degree to which Mexicans would grudgingly be accorded an intermediate "group position" in the new Anglo society.

Dispelling the Anachronistic Mexican Ranchero Class

Although U.S. annexation of California may have led to the modest cultural assimilation of some Mexicans, this social accommodation did not
also lead to their wholesale structural integration into the new capitalist economy. While some sons of the ranchero elite may have achieved some success in securing a niche in the new economy, the same cannot be said for the class as a whole. Statehood brought with it the rapid displacement of the Mexican ranchero class, as privately held land was transferred on a massive scale from Mexican hands into that of Anglo immigrants between 1848 and 1880.

This process was set in motion by the enactment of the Federal Land Law of 1851 which empowered a Board of Land Commissioners to verify Spanish and Mexican land grants in California. The right to retain ownership to these granted lands was initially conferred to Mexican citizens in the Southwest under provisions in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The Land Commission convened between January 1852 and March 1855, adjudicating 813 claims brought before them. The vast majority of these claims, over three-fourths, were adjudicated in favor of the claimants. Sixteen of the eighteen cases the government presented against Mexican rancheros before the U.S. Supreme Court were decided in favor of the original claimants. These cases involved the sixteen most strategically situated properties in Marin, Alameda, and Sonoma counties such as Mariano Vallejo's 44,380-acre Rancho Petaluma and Domingo Peralta's Rancho San Ramon.

Nevertheless, in the process of defending their claims, the Californios' position was greatly weakened. While most Mexican claimants ultimately retained possession of their granted estates, they did so only after years of expensive litigation before the Land Commission, District Court of Appeals, California State Supreme Court, and, on occasion, the U.S. Supreme Court. The average time devoted to settling these disputed claims was seventeen years. This protracted and often bewildering litigation exacted a tremendous toll on the ranchero class. Legal fees to white lawyers were exorbitant, often forcing the Californios to sell portions of their holdings in order to meet their financial obligations. On some occasions, rancheros conveniently transferred ownership of portions of their newly certified titles to the lawyers who had represented them in U.S. courts. Overall, these white lawyers were unscrupulous in their dealings with the ranchero class, often scandalously defrauding them. One early European-American pioneer who befriended many of the Californios in southern California candidly characterized the demise of the ranchero class in the following way:
The Californians were very ignorant of business and this perhaps had been one of the greatest sources of their misfortunes. It has exposed them to the numberless traps that have been laid by designing and unprincipled foreigners to cheat them out of their property. The Land Commission, full of defects as it was, also contributed to defraud them when its object was to protect them in the rightful possession of their lands. Between the poor ignorant native and the lordly Land Commission, in too many cases the medium of communication was the lawyer, often crafty and dishonest, who in securing the approval of a title took half of the land as his fee, or even more when the pretext of appeals could be used to advantage. In countless other ways have their simplicity and ignorance been taken advantage of to the impoverishment of their estates.  

Individuals coveting the fourteen million acres of land formerly held by the Californio elite resorted to other questionable tactics to achieve this divestiture. Property transferred hands through outright sales, unlawful "squating" on Mexican land, bankruptcy proceedings, and in payment for personal indebtedness resulting from extravagant expenditures, gambling, delinquent property taxes, and usurious interest rates to moneylenders and land speculators.  

This dispossession had a devastating effect on the old ruling families. According to one historian, of the forty-five "principal men" of the old regime, representing the twenty-five most prominent Californio families, the vast majority "went to their graves embittered. . . . [T]hey were a ruling class militarily conquered, bereft of national sovereignty and a constitutional framework, and alienated from their land, homes, civil rights, and honor. They had retained little else besides their religion and a thin residue of honorary political influence."  

From the European-American point of view, the demise of the ranchero elite was simply the product of their inability to adapt to the tempo of the new social order. They perceived this as an inevitability given the old elite's lack of business acumen and spendthrift proclivities; it was the necessary price that "progress" exacted. The Anglo's remorseless assessment of the ranchero's decline is vividly captured in Alfred Robinson's postscript to Life in California, where he attributes the Californios' fate to commonly-held sentiments about the role their "indolence" and "passivity'' played in their deteriorating status: "The early Californians, having lived a life of indolence without any aspiration beyond the immediate requirement of the day, naturally fell behind their more energetic successors, and became impoverished and gradually dispossessed of their fortunes as they idly stood by, lookers-on upon the bustle and enterprise of the new world."
before them, with its go-aheadativeness and push-on keep-moving celebrity." That the Californios' value system reflected the social organization of the semifeudal society that this gentry class enjoyed throughout New Spain cannot be denied. These traits were, from a European-American point of view, "dysfunctional" in the new free-labor economy they introduced in the state.

However self-serving assessments such as Robinson's may now appear, the actual fate of individual rancheros was a personal tragedy. Although they were far from innocent victims of Anglo chicanery (their own widespread use of exploited Indian laborers makes such a defense impossible to advance), their demise had devastating consequences. Ygnacio del Valle provides us with a mild example of the fate that befell this elite. His holdings during the Mexican period covered nearly 48,000 acres of land in the mountains north of San Fernando Mission near present-day Newhall. By 1861 he retreated to his beloved Rancho Camulos in order to cover losses, resulting in a decline of his private property to a mere 1,500 acres. He was forced to mortgage this estate in 1879 to the Newhall family for $15,776. According to one source, the "gracious and charitable" Newhall family never pressed the bill, which grew enormously due to the high interest rate negotiated. Don del Valle went to his grave the following year without having paid off the debt.

Even more lamentable was the impact on Don Julio Verdugo, who mortgaged his Rancho San Rafael (comprising present-day Glendale and part of Burbank) in order to repair the deteriorating estate and meet outstanding financial obligations. In 1861 he signed a $3,445.37 loan at 3 percent monthly interest (36 percent a year). By 1870 the mortgage had ballooned into a debt of $58,750. This precipitated a foreclosure and sheriff's sale at which his lawyers bought the 36,000-acre Rancho San Rafael and forced the sale of his Rancho La Cañada. Thereupon, Don Verdugo retreated to neighboring Rancho Los Felix. He eventually subdivided and sold large parcels of this estate in order to settle outstanding debts and taxes. In 1871 an American court ordered the subdivision of the 6,600-acre Los Felix, ultimately leaving the former ranchero's children with a meager inheritance of 200 acres; a pittance in light of the ranchero's former wealth.

A similar fate befell Don Juan Bandini. Once one of the richest men in southern California, Bandini gave up ownership of his Rancho Jurupa to his son-in-law Abel Stearns in August 1859. The former baron died a broken man three months later.
The Proletarianization and Structural Subordination of the Mexican Working Class

Unlike the bitter discord between the old and the emerging propertied classes, relatively little conflict flared between the European-American and Mexican working classes during the nineteenth century. The only notable instance of class-specific hostility between Mexicans and Anglos at this level erupted in the mining regions during the Gold Rush. Here Sonoran miners and independent white miners were pitted against each other in direct economic competition.

Approximately thirteen hundred native Californians entered the mining region in the early phase of the Gold Rush. Hostility toward them from "fist-swinging Oregon Yankees" was not moderated by their claim that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed them the same rights to work the mines, and most quickly abandoned the mines. Replacing them were thousands of Mexicans from Sonora, Peruvians, and Chileans. Anti-Mexican sentiment was principally directed at the highly successful Sonoran miners, who were categorically deemed "foreigners" at this time. These Sonorans were, according to one authority, "more visibly mestizo, less consciously Spanish than the Californians," and as a result, "seemed 'primitive' by local standards." The negative image of Mexicans as "foreigners" was further darkened with the taint of unfree labor systems by the arrival of Mexican patrons who brought bands of Indian and mestizo workers into the mining region, typically paying for their upkeep in return for half the gold they mined.

The success of the Sonorans, who were highly skilled miners, evoked the wrath of Anglo miners, who bitterly protested their "unfair competition." White miners typically came as independent, self-employed individuals seeking their fortune in an openly competitive environment. In this context, nothing infuriated them more than to compete with "bondsmen" tied to an "overlord" or patron. Anglos made little distinction between Sonoran independent miners and those Mexicans working in the mines as bondsmen for Mexican patrons and local rancheros. The success of both, but especially of the latter, was seen as, or at least rationalized as, cheapening and degrading the value of white labor.

The hostile treatment of Mexican nationals and Latin Americans in the mines was partially fueled by the specter of slavery that their presence evoked. According to historian Leonard Pitt, these Latin miners "came into California precisely when the Yankees felt most irritated on this score and
could see most clearly the parallels between Negroes and their masters, on the one hand, and the peons and patrons, on the other. Yankee prospectors ejected from the mines with equal vigor any combination of bondsmen and masters. . . . The prospectors put into effect a local code prohibiting the mining operation of all master-servant teams, whatever their relationship.  

To compound matters, Anglos' resentment intensified when enterprising Sonorans managed to reap large profits from the sale of thousands of pack mules in the mining regions. This activity had unfortunate consequences when "Sonoran peddlers marched into the mines and sold 10,000 pack mules in three years, thereby depressing the price of mules (from $500 to $150 a head in a matter of weeks) and of freight rates (from $75 to $7 per hundredweight in two months)." The Sonorans' business activities provoked the bitter ire of local Anglo entrepreneurs, who sought the mass expulsion of these business rivals. This competition between white miners and Latin Americans for economic position in the mining region led to the enactment of the Foreign Miners' Tax Law of 1850, a clear example of an attempt at social closure. The statute required a twenty-dollar mining permit from all "foreigners" in the mines. The bitter strife that followed the passage of this legislation led to thousands of Latin Americans fleeing the region and seeking their fortunes elsewhere. In due course, some relocated in bustling urban centers such as San Francisco and Stockton, a few fled to Southern California, while others simply returned en masse to Mexico or other parts of Latin America.  

Although anti-Mexican hostility flared throughout California, particularly in the southern section of the state, a unique aspect of the Mexican experience during this period was the relative absence of class-specific conflict between native-born, working-class Mexicans and white workers. This is accounted for by both demographic factors and the early pattern of Mexican working-class employment during the late nineteenth century. The Mexican population was relatively small; as noted above, from 1850 to 1900 the permanent Mexican population hovered around just thirteen thousand. The rapid increase in California's overall population after the Gold Rush quickly rendered Mexicans a minority. This occurred initially in northern California and by the early 1870s in southern California as well.  

California's population increased more than sixfold between 1848 and 1850, from approximately 15,000 to nearly 93,000 people. Even as early as 1850 Mexicans comprised only 11 percent of the state's total population.
Between 1860 and 1900 the total number of Californians rose from 380,000 to nearly 1.5 million. By 1900 Mexicans accounted for no more than 1 or 2 percent of the state population. In that year, Mexicans were numerically surpassed by the Chinese and Native American populations and were about as numerous as black and Japanese immigrants. Moreover, the Mexican population in the state was principally concentrated in southern California, where they did not extensively compete with urban white workers. Furthermore, unlike the Chinese and Japanese population at the time, the Mexican population had a fairly equal sex ratio. As a result, fewer Mexican men were directly competing with white laborers, a fact that undoubtedly also mitigated against widespread working-class antagonism.

The slow integration of Mexican workers into the Anglo-controlled labor market also contributed to the surprisingly low level of racial conflict with European-American workers. Unlike racialized immigrant groups such as the Chinese, who were initially recruited as cheap laborers and rapidly integrated into the new economy, Mexican workers were a belated addition to the capitalist labor market. From 1850 to 1880, numerous Mexican workers in southern California, for instance, remained largely tied to occupations in the traditional Mexican economy. Many continued to work on Mexican ranchos in the seasonal rodeos (roundups) and matanzas (slaughters). Others retained employment as harness makers, saddlers, silversmiths, trasquiladores (sheepshearers), and vaqueros. As a consequence, Mexican workers were not fully integrated into this labor market until the late 1870s and 1880s.

The gradual decline of the Mexican pastoral economy during the 1870s and 1880s, however, forced Mexicans into the evolving capitalist labor market. The number of Mexican skilled workers employed on ranchos and in such Mexican pueblos as Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and San Diego declined appreciably, because of the loss of rancho land to European Americans and its conversion from "unproductive" cattle raising to agriculture. In the pueblos, this shift also contributed to the inability of skilled Mexican craftsmen such as cigar makers, shoemakers, and hatmakers to compete successfully with white merchants selling Eastern manufactured goods. Unskilled Mexican urban workers were also affected negatively. They were propelled into new forms of unskilled employment in the burgeoning urban economy where they were structurally integrated at the bottom end of the emerging labor market.

Mexican entrance into this market also coincided with the belated
development of the employment sector in areas where Mexicans were most heavily concentrated. Employment opportunities in the new Anglo labor market did not fully emerge in southern California until the 1880s, two or three decades after it initially took root in the northern California mining and manufacturing industries. By 1880 approximately 85 percent of the male Mexican work force in Santa Barbara and San Diego and 65 percent in San Salvador (near San Bernadino) and Los Angeles labored as unskilled or semiskilled manual workers. They became construction laborers, street graders, pick and shovel workers, and teamsters, and toiled in numerous other menial jobs in the emerging cities of southern California.

At the same time, their limited access to employment opportunities compelled them to take jobs in new industries like agriculture where unskilled labor was in great demand. By the early 1900s, Mexicans had become the principal source of farm labor in the southern California counties of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Tulare, and Ventura. It was here, in the southern California farm labor market, that the first expressions of Mexican working-class opposition to agribusiness interests initially emerged. Successful unionization and strike activity among Mexicans first took place in the southern California community of Oxnard in 1903. (The issues and events leading to this successful effort are explored in detail in chapter 7.)

In sum, because Mexicans remained tied to the pastoral economy in southern California, a part of the economy most European Americans had no interest in entering, they did not pose a major threat to the white working class. Although some Mexicans and Indians were coercively incorporated into the Mexican rancho system, their unfree labor status did not ignite the same widespread white antipathy that the presence of blacks did. Their small numbers and initial concentration in the most undesirable sectors of the new economy effectively militated against white working-class antagonism.

Widespread labor-market conflict between Mexican laborers and the white working class did not occur until the early decades of the twentieth century. Not until the massive immigration of Mexicans during this period did organized white labor become alarmed by their presence in the state, and mounting white unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s eventually intensified animosity toward these Mexican immigrants. This hostility paralleled that faced by Chinese and Japanese immigrants decades earlier. Moreover, the immigration of thousands of Mexican peasants to California after 1900 also led to a metaphorical "darkening" of the Mexican image in the white man's mind. The earlier moderating influence of the
Europeanized Californios had diminished as this elite was displaced and/or absorbed into Anglo society. The class and ethnic integration of the ranchero class, plus the rapid immigration of a largely mestizo Mexican peasantry, contributed to a major reinscription of the popular image and representation of Mexicans in the state. 81

Conclusion

The Mexican experience in nineteenth-century Anglo California differed significantly from that of other racialized groups in the new state. The central conflict engendered between European Americans and Mexicans was a very class-specific struggle between Mexican rancheros and Anglo capitalists who bitterly contested control of the state's best farm lands. The white male businessmen and developers who ventured into California after 1848 sought their fortunes in a free state. The realization of their economic aspiration required the undermining of the Mexican economy and its reorganization along capitalist lines. White immigrants believed that only an economy structured this way held promise for the rapid development of the territory. Guided by Protestant values and a commitment to white supremacy, these free-labor advocates sought to rapidly undermine the society Mexicans had created in California. The dispossession of the rancheros who dominated the territory was an essential feature of this process.

This conflict notwithstanding, some segments of the Mexican population were structurally integrated into Anglo society more easily than other racialized groups. This was the result of their being deemed a "half civilized" population because of the Europeanized culture they had adapted through their initial colonization by Spain. As a consequence, there was less cultural distance between European Americans and Mexicans (principally the ranchero class) than with other racialized ethnic groups. Mexicans spoke a romance language, held Christian beliefs, and practiced traditions that placed them closer culturally to Anglo Americans than Indians or Asian immigrants.

Moreover, given their at least partial European ancestry, Mexicans were also legally defined as a "white" population in the state. The citizenship rights Mexicans were granted through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo included the right to vote, hold public office, offer testimony in U.S. courts, freely own and homestead land, and ostensibly enjoy the same privileged political status of European Americans. These rights momentarily empowered Mexicans, principally the ranchero elite, to contest white male domination and avoid the discriminatory legislation that structurally subor-
ominated other racialized groups during this period. This rather anomalous historical circumstance would, of course, become subject to major reconfiguration with the demise of the ranchero class and widespread immigration from Mexico after the turn of the century. Thereafter, labor conflict replaced contention over land as the principal basis of group antagonisms between European Americans and Mexicans in the state.