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The U.S. and Canada constitute the North American region (**Figure 7.1**). The U.S. covers about 9,666,861 square kilometers (3,732,3976 square miles) including 48 contiguous states and two non-contiguous states: Alaska (northwest of Canada) and the volcanic islands of Hawai'i, 3220 kilometers (2000 miles) southwest of the North American continent in the Pacific Ocean. Canada covers about 9,970,610 square kilometers (3,849,652 square miles) including ten provinces and three territories. Canada is the world's second largest country after Russia. Whereas residents are spread thinly across the country with significant population concentrations in large cities, most Canadians live along a narrow band that stretches 322 kilometers (200 miles) along the Canadian border (**Figure 7.2**).

Figure 7.2 population dot map of US and Canada

Canada's political geography stretches from 49°N latitude to a few degrees beyond the Arctic Circle making it mostly a high latitude or "northern" country. The continental land mass of the U.S. (excluding Hawai'i and Alaska) is predominantly a mid-latitude country that occupies a swath of land area that drops down from Canada to a few degrees above the Tropic of Cancer (the tip of Florida). Both countries share many of the same physical features of rugged mountains in the west, older, more eroded, ones in the east; vast plains; and extensive coastlines on three oceans. Both possess established democracies modeled on European political traditions. Both have significant populations of native peoples. Both consolidated their leadership roles in the world economy early in the twentieth century. Currently, the U.S. and Canada are two of the world's most prosperous states. The North American region is certainly one of the most integral, if not the hub of the contemporary world system.

As with other New World lands, much of the recent history of these two countries is the result of European colonization. Because of this and because their current economic status is also comparable, academics as well as policy makers and government agencies treat the U.S. and Canada as constituting a coherent region. But as has been discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, we are in a period of dramatic and rapid change as the world's political borders are being dismantled or rearranged around the new economic relationships wrought by the accelerating globalization of capitalism. It is impossible to know conclusively what these new relationships will mean for the future of today's world regions. For example, although the regionalization framework for this book locates Mexico with Latin America, despite the fact that it too occupies the North American continental land mass, it is not inconceivable that in twenty years or so a new regionalization will combine Mexico (and possibly other countries in Central America) with the U.S. and Canada because of immigration, internal demographic changes, or because of the impacts of economic alliances like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). For the present, however, the U.S. and Canada persist in public imagination as well as in more formal political and economic frameworks as constituting a world region.

## **Environment and Society in North America**

Perhaps the most significant aspect of North America's physical geography is that it contains an almost unimaginable bounty of resources from the whole range of minerals, to vast forests, to fertile, highly productive land, to extensive fisheries, varied and abundant wildlife, and magnificent and unique physical beauty (**Figure 7.3**). Accompanying this extensive physical wealth has been the technological capability and the drive to exploit these resources to an extent that few other regions on Earth have been able to accomplish. One result of this combination of physical resources and human ingenuity is a region that experiences an extraordinarily high quality of life. A second result is a high level

of consumption that produces a region with high levels of air and water pollution, numerous sites--often on the fringes of major urban settlements--of soil contamination, an ongoing and very large problem of nuclear waste disposal, acid rain, extinct and endangered species, and increasingly frequent reports of insect and animal genetic mutations, just to name the most commonly known.

### **Figure 7.3 Satellite photo**

The physical geography of the region has been an important context for and a inescapable reminder of the enormous benefits and the sometimes devastating costs of the "North American way of life." For instance, The Mississippi-Missouri river system is the most extensive and navigable river system in the world. This system as well as the five Great Lakes (Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario) undeniably enabled the early and formidable growth of the interior of the North American region in ways that no railway system could have. At the same time that the river system enabled growth and prosperity, however, the engineering that has been applied to it (including its major tributaries) over a century or more has also irretrievably altered its ecosystem and exposed vast numbers of human settlements to extreme danger from flooding. Despite the awesome technological power that humans have developed, the physical world still acts as a centrally significant factor in North American regional growth and change.

### Landscapes

As **Figure 7.4** shows, the North American region is centered on a vast interior lowland. To the east are the Appalachian Mountains that descend gradually to the Atlantic coastal plain that becomes more broad the further south one travels. In the west the Interior Lowland is bounded at the outermost by the mountains and valleys of the Pacific coastal ranges, an intermontane set of basins, plateaus and smaller ranges, and finally the Great Rocky Mountain cordillera that rises steeply and imposingly from the western termination of the interior lowland region.

The western coastal formation sits along the fault line of two active crustal plates, the Pacific Plate and the Juan de Fuca Plate. Both plates are travelling northward rubbing against the more stationary North American plate upon which the continental landmass sits. The coastal area from San Diego through British Columbia to Alaska is subject to frequent tremors. Extreme and devastating earthquakes have occurred and are likely to occur again in the near future. The mountainous topography enabling extraordinary views of the Pacific Ocean has encouraged a great deal of home development in the Pacific coastal region and past earthquakes have destroyed many homes there. Extensive rains have also wreaked havoc where extraordinary feats of engineering have placed multimillion dollar homes on steep mountainsides. When the soil becomes saturated with rain water, **liquefaction** occurs and the soil literally moves in one massive slump carrying very large structures along with it.

### **Figure 7.4 Physiographic regions of North America**

The **intermontane** basin and plateau formation that lies between the coastal range and the Rockies includes three major physiographic provinces: the Columbia Plateau to the north, that begins at the headlands for the Columbia River; the Colorado Plateau in the south, which includes the erosional landscape of the Grand Canyon; and in between, the Great Basin in Nevada and Utah that includes extinct pleistocene lakes as well as the Great Salt Lake. Ranching and mining have historically characterized the Great Basin region, but recreation and tourism is now the leading economic sector. Copper mining, as well as oil, as, coal and uranium mining are still important primary sector activities in this region.

In addition, hydroelectricity is generated for much of the western U.S. from the many dams that have been built in this region.

The Rocky Mountains, extending from Alaska to northern New Mexico, constitute the eastern edge of the intermontane basin and plateau region. A significant aspect of both western and eastern North American mountain ranges is that their north-south orientation does not form a barrier to the southward flow of polar air masses or the northward flow of tropical ones. For places like Arizona, northward flowing air masses bring summer monsoonal precipitation patterns that enable unique forms of desert vegetation to occur. The summer and winter rains there allowed the ancestors of contemporary Native Americans to introduce the cultivation of beans, squash, and corn using sophisticated irrigation systems in a landscape that would otherwise seem inhospitable to subsistence agriculture. The absence of mountainous barriers to the north means that polar air sweeps down regularly in the winter months all the way into the mid-section of the Interior Lowlands.

The extensive Interior Lowland, that extends from the mouth of the MacKenzie River in Alaska to the Gulf of Mexico, can be subdivided into three provinces. The first of these is the Canadian Shield, a geologically very old region rich in mineral wealth. The second are the Interior Lowlands, a glaciated landscape that contains fertile soils and an abundance of lakes and rivers. This region is devoted mostly to agriculture with some industry present as well. The third subdivision is the Great Plains, an area that slopes gradually upward toward the Rocky Mountains. The Great Plains region is also delimited by the fact that it experiences more rainfall than the regions surrounding it. This is an area of extensive gently rolling and flat terrain with excellent soils and some of the world's most productive farms. Beef, pork, corn, soybeans and wheat are produced in here.

The major landform feature of eastern North America is the Appalachian Mountain chain. Surrounding it in its eastern and southern flanks is the coastal plain that can be divided into two subregions, the Piedmont area of hills and easterly sloping land, and the Gulf-Atlantic Coastal plain, a lowland area that extends from New York to Texas. The coastal plains are generally level with soils that are sandy and relatively infertile. Where agriculture does occur, it is intensive and scattered. For instance, the area of the lower Mississippi is an area of good soils and intensive agriculture. The Piedmont is the historic region of plantation agriculture—cotton, tobacco, corn—but much of the soil in this region is depleted or eroded from overfarming.

### Climate

Because temperature, precipitation, and terrain patterns combine to influence vegetation, and to some extent soil, it is important to understand the role that climate plays in the subregions of North America. With respect to temperatures, North America ranges from the Arctic Circle in the north, where very cold temperatures persist for most of the year, to very close to the Tropic of Cancer in the south, where warmer tropical temperatures are the norm. In short, North America contains nearly every type of climate condition possible with temperatures varying quite dramatically on any one day of the year from north to south. Of course, within-region differentials also occur due to the moderating influence of the oceans on three sides, the Gulf of Mexico, and the interior Great Lakes as well as mountains and plateaus. Generally speaking, central North America experiences the most dramatic ranges in hot and cold temperatures while the coasts have far less of a range due to the oceans' influence.

Climate differences also occur in the form of precipitation in the region from east to west, as a result of the rain shadow effect. While the east and west coastal areas tend to be mild and moderately wet, the interior is largely arid as the north-south mountain chains prevent moisture bearing clouds from moving inland to drop their moisture. Because of this, a moisture gradient exists that declines slowly but continuously from the east until the Rockies, Sierra Nevadas, and Cascades. Once beyond these mountains, the moisture gradient rises dramatically to the Pacific. In the southeastern part of the U.S., where no significant coastal ranges exist, moisture bearing clouds are able to more readily condense into rain. In the Arctic north, total precipitation approximates desert conditions due to the dominance of very stable air masses with low moisture content. It is also important to remember that the jet stream (as discussed in Chapter 2, p. 00) brings precipitation to most of the continent in the winter months. While the warmer parts of the region—in the southern U.S.—experience this precipitation as rain, the colder, more northerly parts experience snow. In areas around the Great Lakes, the warming effects of these large bodies of water add even more moisture to the mix bringing especially heavy snow storms to places like Buffalo, New York on the north eastern tip of Lake Erie and Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario on the channel between Lake Superior and Lake Huron.

As described in Chapter 2, climate is directly linked to vegetation and soil and the conditions for agriculture and forest growth. Overall conditions are very good for agriculture as one moves eastward until the precipitation gradient drops to a very low level just beyond the Interior Lowland and Great Plains region. Beyond that point, soil fertility is low and rainfall is limited and infrequent. Agriculture picks up again in the valleys along the Pacific coast. As expected, most of the agricultural productivity of the North American region is concentrated in the Interior Lowland and Great Plains region. Although natural conditions favor this region for the highest agricultural productivity, other parts of the North American region are also important agriculturally, largely because farmers there have overcome the natural barriers to production through fertilizers, irrigation, pesticides, and other technological applications. This is the case in the Pacific valley areas, for instance, where irrigation water drawn from the Colorado River enables agriculture to flourish. It is also the case in the Southwest where intensive irrigation enables very significant cotton and citrus production.

### Environmental History

The Europeans who arrived on the Atlantic coast of the U.S. and Canada beginning in the late fifteenth century encountered an environmentally diverse landscape thinly-populated by native peoples. These were the peoples who first “discovered” North America having traveled as Old World hunters and gatherers across the broad low-lying belt of **tundra** known as the Bering Land Bridge when sea levels dropped and more land was exposed. It is estimated that over 30,000 years ago they began the process of populating the continent and altering and permanently changing the environments they encountered. Despite what written accounts of initial contact record, European did not encounter a “pristine” or “virgin” land but one that had already been occupied and transformed by tens of thousands of years of human settlement.

Most archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and geographers believe that during the **Pleistocene Age** the gradual retreat of the great ice sheet that had once covered much of North America enabled the first group of Arctic hunters to cross from Siberia, between 20,000 and 35,000 and possibly up to 60,000 years ago, into present day Alaska (**Figure 7.5**). They moved into North America by traveling southward along the western edge of the North American icecap.

Because Canada was probably entirely covered by ice during this period, it is likely that people settled the southern part of North America before the northern part was free of ice and that the Inuit, who currently live in Canada's Arctic region, were the last of the aboriginal people to reach North America. These **Neolithic**, or Stone Age, hunters probably originally came from northern China/Siberia. The descendants of these first hunters gradually moved further and further southward into the North American continent advancing eventually into Mexico.

#### **Figure 7.5 Migration of neolithic hunters into the Americas**

There is abundant evidence that the ancestors of the Neolithic hunters eventually spread throughout North America (as well as Central America) and adapted their way of life to the particular conditions they encountered as they moved and settled. As they began to settle, agriculture was introduced in different places by different native groups. With game, fish, and wild and cultivated foodstuffs available, an economic system based on subsistence production and trade became established. The cultivation of maize spread to wherever it could be grown and new wild foods like potatoes and tomatoes were eventually domesticated.

Significant technological accomplishments also characterized the cultures of early North Americans. For example, in the area around the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, the Hopewell culture arose around 500 BC. Hopewell settlements were characterized by earthen mounds used for defense and later as burial sites (**Figure 7.6**).

#### **Figure 7.6 Temple Mound town in the Mississippi Valley**

For instance, in New England, prior to European contact, both hunter-gatherers and some shifting cultivation and villages existed among the indigenous peoples. Hunter-gatherers were mobile, moving with the seasons to obtain fish, migrating birds, deer, and wild berries and plants. Shifting agriculture was organized around the planting and harvesting of corn, squash, beans, and tobacco. For both groups, a wide range of resources were identified and used. The economy was based on need. Need was attended to by planting or foraging or through barter (e.g. corn for fish). Moreover, the prevailing ethos was to take only what was needed to survive. In addition to native peoples having no concept of private property, there is also no evidence that a profit motive existed pre-contact. Land and resources were shared in common. Still while native New England native peoples did appear to live in something of a balance with the natural resources they exploited, there was substantial vegetation change from their settlement and hunting (often using fire) activities which resulted in some species depletion. No concept of private property or land ownership.

Geographer and environmental historian William Cronon has shown that Europeans saw the natural world they encountered in North America much differently from the native peoples. Most importantly, they viewed resources as commodities to be accumulated not for personal use but to be sold for profit or export. The arrival of the Europeans meant that pressures upon natural resources were hugely accelerated especially for wood, furs, and minerals. In the Atlantic region, where European settlement first occurred, there was extreme exploitation of white pine, hemlock, yellow birch, beaver, and whales which led ultimately to deforestation and extinctions.

The arrival of the Europeans in North America meant a dramatic change in prevailing social understandings of the nature of land. Native perspectives about the communality and flexibility of land were replaced by European views of land as private with fixed boundaries. European settlers wanted to own and fence a plot of land which led eventually to the concentration of land in large private

farms, plantations, and haciendas. Increasingly, North American native peoples were forced onto less productive land or reservations, not allowed to hunt or gather on private lands or to move with seasons as they had previously.

## **United States and Canada in the World**

### North America before the Europeans

Fifteenth century European views of the world inherited from Ptolemy and other ancient geographers, did not include the existence of the North American landmass. And while sixteenth century Spanish missionaries and explorers identified the southern most section of present day U.S. and Mexico as of interest to their exploration and missionizing efforts, most of the rest North America, was considered to be of little consequence because it presented none of the appearances of grandeur and resource potential that the Aztec-Maya and Inca Empires of Latin America did (see Chapter 9). It is therefore especially remarkable, as geographer Robert Mitchell has noted, that: “. . . during the last 400 years this least promising part of the New World has been transformed, in the culture-bound terms of the development specialist, from one of the world’s most backward areas to its most advanced: a dynamic world comprising two vast political units, Canada and the U.S., that have created the earth’s most materially successful post-industrial societies. . .”<sup>1</sup>

Although the Inuit appear to have had trading relations with Norse settlers at L’Anse aux Meadows on the northern tip of Newfoundland at the end of the tenth century, the most significant interactions between newcomers and natives did not occur until five centuries later (**Figure 7.7**). **Figure 7.8** portrays the distribution of the native peoples of North America around 1600. The figure illustrates the great diversity of cultural groups that occupied the continent. When Columbus arrived in the Caribbean, he assumed he had reached the Far East, or the Indies, and he called the aboriginal peoples he encountered, *los indios*, or indians. And just as thousands of native languages existed at the time of European contact, there was no single word common to the diverse peoples who occupied the continent to describe themselves. As a result, the word Indian has endured as an extremely misleading and sometimes derogatory term for describing a wide range of North American cultural groups.

The estimates of the native population of North America at the point of European contact range widely between 1 million to 18 million individuals. More than anything, the differing estimates indicate how little is known about the peoples who were thriving in North America before the Europeans arrived. What is well-known is that there was no common culture, particularly no common language, among the many who first populated North America widely but sparsely. Native American scholar Jay Miller estimates that in 1492 North American native inhabitants spoke 2200 different languages with many regional variations as well. Tribal culture and local environmental conditions were the frameworks within which daily life was governed and lived.

### **Figure 7.7 Norse settlement in L’Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland (photo)** **Figure 7.8 Distribution of North American native peoples, 1600**

Europeans originally made contact with various individuals and tribes for help with resource extraction including animal furs, naval stores, such as tar and turpentine for shipbuilding, fish, and other primary sector products that would be exported back to the continent. The experience of the Dutch, French and English in North America also differed substantially from that of the Spanish in Latin America (as described in Chapter 9). The Spanish conquistadors vanquished sophisticated civilizations in order to plunder their gold and silver treasuries and make themselves irresistibly rich in the process. While the Dutch, French and

English were also interested in improving their financial situation, they encountered a very different set of cultures with no centralized system of social control that they could exploit as the Spanish had done with the Aztecs in Mexico. Instead, the eastern tribes Europeans first encountered in North America were small, autonomous groups, possessing a lively sense of rivalry and competition with their neighbors. While the Spanish were interested in massive occupation and exploitation, the Dutch, French and English considered exploration and colonization to be commercial ventures.

### Colonization and Independence

No other landmass already occupied by a diverse range of complex and widely-distributed societies, with the possible exception of Australia, has undergone such a dramatic transformation in such a short period of time. Moreover, lumping the settlers into one category of Europeans vastly simplifies the very complicated process of settlement that different peoples from different parts of Europe brought with them to North America. So, while the occupation by missionaries and settlers who came to North America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is widely known as the period of europeanization, **europeanization** was actually a highly selective process. Only a few western European countries—France, Spain, the Netherlands, and Great Britain—dominated colonization in the U.S.. And in Canada, the European colonizers were predominantly Britain and France. In both Canada and the U.S., Great Britain was far and away the most influential of the four, though others did have substantial impacts, particularly the French in Canada and the Spanish in the U.S.. It is also important to point out that even within the four countries who dominated North American colonization, different groups from different regions settled in different parts of North America. Finally, the unusual individuals and groups who assumed great risks in coming to North America represented only a small sample of their national cultures. As a result, the europeanization process, as it unfolded along the Atlantic seaboard of the U.S., was accomplished through the mixings of a very wide range of native and imported practices that eventually created distinct colonial cultures and societies in different places.

The process of European settlement was a complex one that relied on physical as well as mental negotiations. At the level of ideas, the Europeans understood there to be a direct relationship between the appearance of the landscape and the capacities of its inhabitants. A wild and untamed landscape needed taming and transforming and the apparent wildness of the native peoples suggested an inferior status for them in the grand scheme of building a “new world” on a new continent. As a result, interactions between native peoples and explorers and colonists routinely resulted in the overwhelming exploitation and abuse of the former by the latter. The history of colonial settlements, while at first peaceful, over time erupted into disputes over land claims that ended in violence and often outright massacres on both sides.

After a time, not only were there conflicts between tribal people and colonists, but direct conflict emerged between the various European groups who vied for control over land. Additionally, colonists fanned the flames of rivalry between opposed tribal groups by providing them with arms, thus elevating the level of technology and complicating the degree of violence that could be enacted. Finally, as has been widely documented, exposure to the Old World diseases that the colonists brought with them had a devastating impact on native population numbers. As native populations were decimated, defeated, or demoralized and pushed further into the interior of North America, the various European groups increasingly came into direct conflict. Small scale skirmishes and competition for land eventually led to the Seven Years War that began in

1755 and left the British more or less triumphant over the whole of the European inhabited territory of North America. In the following two decades, residents of the original thirteen colonies of the U.S. became disillusioned with their administrators in Britain—who were taxing them to help recoup the high cost of the Seven Years War—and launched their own war leading to the creation of a new independently nation in the late eighteenth century. In Canada, a bloodless separation from Great Britain would not occur until well into the nineteenth century.

Even before the American Revolution, however, a process of **americanization** had begun as a generation of individuals of European parentage born in the U.S. colonies felt less loyalty and fewer cultural ties with the mother country. As a result, a new ethos of liberalism, individualism, capitalism, and Protestantism emerged and gained currency and ultimately came to define an American national character. The successful outcome of the war with Britain left the continent with a robust new nation dominated by Anglo-American institutions with the addition of slavery. Canada remained a colony under British control composed of both French- and English-speaking settlers.

#### The Legacy of Slavery in the U.S.

Although all along the Atlantic seaboard of the U.S. and Canada the impact of European colonization in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was felt, the subsequent development of the U.S. South following the end of the revolutionary period differed dramatically from that of its northern neighbors (for location see **Figure 7.29**). Before the arrival of the Europeans, the area that now coincides with the southeastern U.S., was inhabited by a wide range of native tribes, among them the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole peoples. While the region was early on occupied by military personnel living in scattered outposts like Jamestown in Virginia, by the mid-seventeenth century, the military outposts had given way to tobacco farms. At first, **indentured servants** from Britain were the primary source of labor on the tobacco and later indigo and cotton plantations. Increasingly, however, slaves from Africa replaced the servants who had earned their freedom as disease, armed conflict, and demoralization reduced the native populations.

African slaves had been a well-established commercial staple of the Mediterranean well before the Spanish and Portuguese introduced them to their newly-captured territories in the Caribbean and Latin America thereby establishing the Atlantic slave trade (see **Figure 6.?**, p. 00 whichever is the one on the triangular trade in the Atlantic). By the early fifteenth century, Dutch and English raiders attacking Spanish and Portuguese ships were able to wrest control of the slave trade so that by the early seventeenth century, England became the dominant slaving nation. As a result, slaves were a part of the social and economic system of the American colonies beginning, practically simultaneously, with their inception. As an institution of formal social and economic organization, slavery endured in the South for over 250 years ending officially with the termination of the Civil War in 1870. Its legacy, however, continues to shape the landscape and identity of the region.

#### European Settlement of the Continent

With the creation of a new nation and the transformation of colonies into states, the steady but relentless process of European settlement of the North American continent accelerated, more so in the United States than in Canada, however. By the middle of the nineteenth century settlement in the U.S. had pushed beyond the Appalachian Mountains into the Interior Lowland region including the upper Ohio and Tennessee River Valleys and the interior South. France's loss of

control of Canada to Britain in 1763 had little impact on new settlement. By the end of the century, however, southern Ontario, in and around present day Toronto, became attractive to settlers (**Figure 7.9**).

**Figure 7. Canadian settlement patterns.**

Historian Frederick Jackson Turner in the U.S. and the Laurentian school in Canada have demonstrated the significance to the North American psyche of the frontier. They have argued that frontier settlement involved a continual process of national and personal reappraisal as well as of increasing geographical divergence as new settlers encountered new landscapes. It was also a process of sustained mobility so much so that mobility has come to be seen as a North American national characteristic. In the U.S. the movement of the frontier was continuous and mostly contiguous at least until settlers reached the Great Plains in the middle of the nineteenth century. In Canada, contiguous westward expansion was interrupted early on by the vast generally infertile, though heavily forested Canadian Shield that separated Ontario from the prairies. As **Figure 7.2** shows, many Canadian settlers leapfrogged across to the northern middle west in order to acquire suitable farmland.

In the U.S., the pace of westward expansion was accelerated by the federal government's decision in 1790 to dispose of public lands cheaply into private hands. By 1850, the development of the railroads reoriented the pace and direction of continental settlement—from the Pacific coast to the interior west—at the same time that it diminished the previous isolation of pioneer settlements. By the close of the nineteenth century, the frontier process had resulted in a set of rural and agrarian regions and sub-regions scaffolded across the continent. Each of these regions was defined by its own experiences of the history and particular conditions of settlement and by its distinctive regional economic development.

It should be recalled that the North American economy during this period was oriented to **agro-mercantile** activities. This means that the trading of crops and primary resources such as fish, timber and minerals, provided an economic base for the expanding population. Yet, in the U.S., by the mid-nineteenth century, a new economy based on manufacturing was rapidly gaining momentum along the northern Atlantic seaboard especially in and around southern New England and New York. At the same time the remainder of the U.S. and Canada was being settled by European immigrants, or their descendants, making their livelihoods largely by farming. By the early twentieth century, however, with the continent occupied from east to west by Europeans and Euro-Americans, the industrialization of the American economy was well on its way to transforming the American landscape from one of rural agricultural settlement to one of urbanization and industrialization. The 1920 census documented for the first time in U.S. history, that there were as many people living in cities as there were in rural areas. From that point onward, the U.S., and soon after Canada, became increasingly urbanized so that by the late twentieth century, seventy-five percent of the North American population lived in cities. In a period of 150 years, the region had gone from one where twenty percent lived in cities to one where currently 3 out of 4 do.

Urbanization, Industrialization, and Conflict

As mentioned, North America had experienced city building among native peoples long before the explorers and colonists had arrived. Yet the colonial era is the period when an extensive and intensive urbanization process began in earnest. The Europeans who colonized North America were part of commercial urban systems in their home countries. As they colonized the new lands they encountered, they responded to the need for central places for organizing commerce, defense, communication, and later administration and worship by

building cities. The Spanish colonizers founded cities in the Southwestern U.S. because cities were symbols of political and military authority. St. Augustine (Florida), Santa Fe, San Antonio, San Diego, Los Angeles illustrate the Spanish influence on American urbanization. The French explorers came not to settle but to reap commercial rewards and they established urban centers in order to facilitate the exchange of goods. Québec, Montreal, Detroit, St. Louis were early commercial ports (**Figure 7.10**) The Dutch also established urban settlements for trading centers including furs and slaves. Their most impressive accomplishment is New York City, once known as New Amsterdam, now North America's most important city.

**Figure 7.10 photo of St. Augustine**

With few exceptions, however, the British played the most important role in shaping North American urbanization and urban life. Sustained by trade based on an agrarian economy, the U.S. Atlantic coastal cities having been established by the English colonists were also oriented around a kind of corporate communalism tempered by notions of social and religious harmony. As geographer Alan Pred has shown, in addition to being administrative centers, Boston, Providence, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Charlestown, and Savannah were also ports and key nodes in a globally expanding mercantile system. As such, they enabled the transfer of resources, goods, and people not only from the interior hinterland into the cities but also outwardly to Europe. At the same time these cities received goods shipped from England for North American consumer markets. It is also important to point out that the colonists saw their burgeoning cities not only as commercial centers but also as places where new ideas could be hatched and nurtured and as hearths of "civilization" where old world cultural practices confronted those of the new world creating in the process uniquely North American urban places.

As sites of innovation and cradles of culture, cities were also largely though not exclusively, the places where, by the early nineteenth century, a new economy based on manufacturing was born and flourished. At first factories were located along the waterways of New England to take advantage of the power that could be harnessed from rushing rivers and streams that often dropped dramatically over steep falls (**Figure 7.11a & b**). By the mid-nineteenth century, manufacturing sites were springing up along the Atlantic seaboard from north of the Chesapeake Bay to Maine as well as in the interior in southern Ontario and southern Québec along the St. Lawrence River. By the end of the nineteenth century, the geography of manufacturing had spread westward to Cleveland, Detroit, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Chicago in the U.S. and Windsor, Hamilton, and Toronto in Canada. The New England, Mid-Atlantic, and upper mid-western areas in the U.S. interpenetrated with the lower central Canadian manufacturing sites and eventually became known as the North American Manufacturing Belt because of the high investments of labor, capital and land in a wide range of industrial activities from textiles to steel ( see **Figure 7.29**).

**Figure 7.11a & b photo of New England water powered mill with falls**

While industrialization was fueling the economies of the northern and mid-western areas of the U.S., by the mid-nineteenth century the differences between the northern and southern regions of the U.S. had become increasingly pronounced. The importance of commerce and industry to fueling the national economy made the cities of the North the most important ones. Although Charleston, Savannah and Norfolk were all ports, only Charleston was a deep water port. More importantly, however, was that the southern ports were less crucial as transfer points than those in the North since the South had many navigable inland rivers. Ships could simply pick up the agricultural products or raw materials or drop off their own cargoes by way of the rivers and eliminate the need to stop at the coastal ports. While the North's economy was more

diversified—based on commerce, agriculture, and industry—the South's was more simply tied to staple crop agriculture. Because the southern plantations produced much of their own food and clothing and most of the capital was invested in slave labor (that had no income for stimulating commercial exchange) the economy, as well as society and culture, made the South a very different region than northern U.S. and Canada. All of these differences, but more than anything slavery, and the economic issues that surrounded it, divided the southern states from the northern ones in highly volatile ways. By 1861 the division was so deep that the South formed a new government, the Confederate States of America, and attempted to secede from the U.S. in order to protect slavery and their agricultural economy: civil war ensued.

With the South in defeat following the end of the Civil War in 1865, territories in the West joined the Union as free states contributing people, resources, and capital to the burgeoning American economy. Fearing that the U.S., emboldened by the Civil War victory, might launch an invasion of Canada and responding to agitation among the French-speaking minority, the British Parliament passed The North America Act of 1867. The result was the creation of the Dominion of Canada dissolving its colonial status and effectively establishing it as an autonomous state within the world-system with its own constitution and parliament. All of the existing Canadian colonies joined the new confederation except British Columbia, which waited until 1871; Prince Edward Island, till 1873; and Newfoundland, which remained independent until 1949.

#### The Emergence and Consolidation of North American Hegemony

By the end of the nineteenth century, the core of the world-system had itself extended to include the Canada and the U.S.. The U.S., politically independent just before the onset of the Industrial Revolution, was able to make the transition from the periphery to the core because of several favorable circumstances. Vast natural resources of land and minerals provided the raw materials for a wide range of industries that could grow and organize without being hemmed in and fragmented by political boundaries. Populations, growing quickly through immigration, provided a large and expanding market and a cheap and industrious labor force. Cultural and trading links with Europe provided business contacts, technological know-how, and access to capital (especially British capital) for investment in a basic infrastructure of canals, railways, docks, warehouses, and factories.

Canada's path to core status was different and there are even some who would argue that Canada is not unequivocally a core country even now. While most of its population enjoys a high quality of life and high levels of economic productivity, Canada is certainly an atypical core country because it has never been highly industrialized and the primary sector continues to be a central sector of its economic structure. When industry did begin to grow and flourish in Canada after the First World War, most of it occurred in the mid-section of the country along a swath of land at the U.S./Canada border where American industrialization was also taking off. A substantial proportion of the industries that were built there were branch plants of U.S. manufacturers. Furthermore, Canada's most important trading partner is the U.S. which imports more than half of all Canadian exports. What has been most remarkable about Canada's place in the world economy is that it has been so successful as a **staples economy**. Staples are natural resources that are unprocessed or only minimally processed before they are exported to other areas where they are manufactured into end products. When staples are the centerpiece of the economy they result in a resource-based strategy of economic growth that is based on international markets for those product. Canada's success as a core country has been largely

the result of its staples-based links with more advanced economies like the U.S. and Britain. As a result, although Canada is part of the core, it is a somewhat weak competitor compared to the U.S. which, in fact, derives a lot of its strength from exploiting the uneven relationship between itself and Canada. In the last decade or so, the Canadian economy has actually become more diversified, however, through the development of the service sector (**Figure 7.12**).

**Figure 7.12 data on Canadian employment and economic structure**

As mentioned, industrialization in North America developed around pre-existing centers of urbanization and population, and was shaped by the resource needs and market opportunities of successive clusters of technology (see Chapter 1, p. 00). North America's industrial strength was established at the beginning of the twentieth century with the development of a new cluster of technologies that included the internal combustion engine, oil and plastics, electrical engineering, and radio and telecommunications. Because of its awesome industrial capacity, by the early twentieth century, the U.S. became the world hegemon displacing nearly two centuries of British dominance.

In addition to its economic strength, the U.S. achieved world hegemony through its political and military strength. The first sign of the U.S. flexing its political and military muscle came with the Monroe Doctrine which, although issued by President James Monroe in 1823, eventually became the most important foundation of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. Monroe contended that European powers could no longer colonize the American continents and should not interfere with the newly independent Spanish American republics. So long as Europe stayed out of the Americas, Monroe promised that the U.S. would not interfere with existing European colonies or with Europe itself.

The U.S. over time used the Monroe Doctrine to justify war with Mexico in 1846, and the annexation of Texas and expansion into California and Oregon. During the 1870s and 1880s the U.S. began to interpret the Monroe Doctrine both as prohibiting the transfer of American territory from one European power to another and as granting the U.S. exclusive control over any canal connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans through Central America.

In 1904 President Theodore Roosevelt, in what became known as the Roosevelt Corollary--a reassertion of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823--claimed that the U.S. could intervene in any Latin American nation guilty of internal or external misconduct. Other presidents used the Roosevelt Corollary to justify subsequent intervention in the Caribbean. Although reduced in scope from the 1920s through the 1940s, the U.S. used the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary to launch joint interventionist actions with other American republics. Subsequently, fearing the spread of communism in Latin America, the U.S. resumed unilateral actions without consulting its Latin American allies (**Figure 7.13**).

**Figure 7.13 U.S. imperialism 1898-1939 (map)**

Although desirous of new territories for their commercial potential, and often urged to war or other acts of aggrandizement by business leaders, U.S. militarism did not extend to an eagerness to get involved in European affairs and the country only reluctantly entered the First World War in 1916. Stunned by the nearly five million war casualties and the horror of the first highly technological engagement in history and eager to protect its growing economy, the U.S. subsequently entered a period of relative isolationism, rallying around the slogan of "America First." Although President Franklin Roosevelt declared U.S. neutrality with respect to the European war in 1939, by 1942, the country had entered the

Second World War. The end of the war marked a turning point in U.S. political and economic prowess as American loans helped to rebuild war-torn Europe and Japan. Allied victory and America's participation in the war effectively solidified the country's status as a world hegemon and ensured the dominant participation of the U.S. in a number of subsequent wars including the Persian Gulf War and Korea and Vietnam. All these wars were fought in the name of the Cold War which pitted the capitalist U.S. against the communist Soviet Union for the hearts, minds, and territories of peoples throughout the globe. With the Cold War culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a new era of global cooperation has dawned with the U.S. government and American transnational corporations still leading the way, though with markedly less militaristic fervor.

## **Peoples of the U.S. and Canada**

The 2000 census estimated the U.S. population at X people. Whites constitute over four fifths of that total; blacks, about 12 percent; Asians and Pacific Islanders, about 3 percent; and Native Americans, about 1 percent. Hispanics, who may also be counted among other groups, make up about 9 percent of the total American population. The main language is English, although Spanish is also an important and widely spoken language. While the U.S. is popularly considered a Protestant (including Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, and Episcopalians) country, Roman Catholics form the largest single religious group. The largest non-Christian religion is Judaism and other non-Christian religions such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism also have significant followings.

A significant aspect of the geography of U.S. religion is its regional variation. For example, the Bible Belt, that stretches from Texas to Missouri, is dominated by Protestant denominations, many of them fundamentalist and evangelist. Mormons, or the Church of the Latter Day Saints, are concentrated in Utah, where over 75 percent of the population are adherents. Large Catholic communities exist throughout the Southwest, just to name a few regions based on religious affiliations.

Canada has a population of roughly 30 million people. Canadians are predominantly of British origin (about one-third). The second largest majority is people of French origin who make up about one quarter of the population. There is also a large population of mixed British and French origin. The remaining population groups are small with blacks making up less than 2 percent and indigenous peoples making up nearly 4 percent. While the U.S. population is distributed widely, if somewhat thinly, across the country from east to west and north to south, with heavy concentrations along the coastal areas and in parts of the mid-west, Canada's population distribution reflects difficult environmental constraints and crucial American economic connections such that nearly three-quarters of the population inhabit a narrow belt along the U.S. border. Canada's largest religious denomination is also Roman Catholic with nearly half of that population living in Québec (**Geography Matters: Secessionism and Québec**). The largest Protestant denomination is the United Church of Canada followed by the Anglican Church of Canada.

### **Geography Matters: Secessionism and Québec**

Most of Canada's Roman Catholic population is concentrated in and around Québec as a result of early French influence. There is also a substantial Jewish population in Montreal. Ukrainian Orthodox communities are clustered throughout the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba and Buddhists and

Hindus are concentrated mostly in the Canadian cities where large numbers of Asian immigrants have settled such as Vancouver and Toronto.

As mentioned previously, the European settlers who colonized the U.S. and Canada largely displaced the indigenous groups who were already occupying the continent. Through colonization and later westward expansion, these groups were reduced in number and pushed into new and usually more marginal areas of occupation. **Figure 7.14** shows the current distribution of native peoples in the U.S. and Canada. In the U.S., native peoples were mostly settled onto reservations through treaties with the U.S. government. American Indian nations who reside on reservations are granted a form of limited political sovereignty.

#### **Figure 7.14 current distribution on Native North Americans**

In Canada, native peoples were also settled onto more than 2250 separate pieces of land known as reserves. The interactions between immigrants and the Native Peoples of Canada, also known as the First Nations or **aboriginals**, were little better than they were in the U.S.. Encounters between aboriginals and Europeans in Canada began to increase in the sixteenth century through trade deals, the exchange of goods, intermarriage and friendships. Contact between the Old World and the New, resulted in high rates of mortality for the First Nations as diseases (typhoid, influenza, diphtheria, plague, measles, tuberculosis, and scarlet fever) ravaged the vulnerable populations. It is estimated that after nearly two hundred years of European contact the aboriginal population of Canada was reduced by as much as ninety-five percent.

The last fifty years of the twentieth century have seen many members of the Canadian First Nations organizing to protect their cultural rights and reclaim the land that was taken from them. New treaties have been signed and vast areas of territory have been returned as hunting and fishing rights have also been restored. As is also the case in the U.S., the last several decades have seen the increasing growth of a free enterprise economy among Canada's aboriginal groups. Involved in all sectors of the economy—from oil production to tourism—the future of many First Nations people has some bright spots in it.

#### Immigration

As societies founded upon European colonization and settlement, both the U.S. and Canada have varied and extensive immigration histories (**Figure 7.15**). The history of U.S. immigration is frequently discussed in terms of waves, since the numbers and types of immigrants ebbed and flowed over time (**Figure 7.16**). It is generally agreed that there have been three major waves of immigration into the U.S. with the first one occurring between 1820 and 1870, the second between 1870 and 1920, and the third began in 1970 and continues through the present. In between these waves is an extended period of declining immigration that lasted from the mid-1930s to the 1970s. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the population of the new nation was largely dominated by English colonists and African slaves in addition to small numbers of Irish, Dutch, French, and Germans. The first large wave (1820-1870), where overall immigration rose sharply to 2.8 million individuals, involved large numbers of Irish and German migrants as the number of English immigrants declined relatively. The Irish who migrated were mostly peasants who came because the potato famine had devastating effects on the economy and their daily lives. The Germans who came were mostly skilled craft workers who were seeking new opportunities in a burgeoning country.

#### **Figure 7.15 European settlement**

#### **Figure 7.16 United States immigration, 1800-2000**

In the second wave (1870-1920), in addition to the continuing stream of "old" immigrants from northern and western Europe, "new" immigrants from southern

and eastern Europe joined the flow into the U.S.. Between the 1870s and the 1880s, the absolute number of immigrants rose dramatically from 2.8 million to 5.2 million. Widespread economic depression in Europe and North America in the 1890s led to a decline in absolute numbers of immigrants (3.6 million) that rose again in the first decade of the twentieth century to an all time high of 8.8 million. This wave carried peasants, skilled workers, and successful merchants. This second wave of immigration significantly changed the ethnic composition of the U.S. in subtle and dramatic ways. For example, where there had been 250,000 Jews, mostly of German origin, in the U.S. in the 1870s, by 1927 there were over 4 million fleeing Russia and the crumbling monarchies of eastern Europe. The cohort of German Jews who had migrated before 1870 were "reformed" and highly acculturated into American middle class life because merchants and professionals they brought their middle class respectability with them. But the Jews who migrated after that date were peasants, "orthodox" in their religious observance with little formal education. This second wave of immigrants caused widespread backlash from first wave immigrants. By the early twentieth century, anti-Catholicism flared up directed at immigrants from Italy, Sicily, Poland and Ireland. The new immigrants began to be blamed for everything from causing economic depression to destroying the character and moral fiber of the U.S. worker. Viewing immigrants as dangerous to U.S. values, the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act was passed in 1924 imposing quotas on the numbers of new immigrants who would be allowed to enter the U.S.. The intention of the quotas was explicitly racial and the impact was to reduce by half the foreign born population. The "national origins" quota system remained in force until 1965 when the Hart-Cellar Act restructured the entire immigration system.

The third immigration wave (1970-present) is substantially different from the other two in that large numbers of migrants have been coming from Asia and Latin America. While Asians have been part of American immigration history since the mid-nineteenth century, Latin American migration to the U.S. is a twentieth century phenomenon that has increased since the changes brought about by the Hart-Cellar Act and the Immigration and Reform and Control Act of 1980. By 1990, Mexico had become the largest source region of immigrants to the U.S.. The 2000 census shows that Mexicans now make up x percent of U.S. foreign born population. Most of the recent Mexican immigration into the U.S. has been to California, Texas and Arizona, although there is a sizable Mexican population in Chicago and in smaller cities as a result of the involvement of Mexican workers in the picking of fruits and vegetables in the agricultural fields and the meatpacking industry of the American mid-west. It is important to point out, however, that the Gadsden Purchase in 1853 had the effect not only of transferring a great deal of Mexican land to the U.S. but also a large number of Mexican people. Many well established Mexican settlements became U.S. settlements overnight as parts of present day Arizona and New Mexico were transferred to U.S. control. As a result, many Mexican surnamed individuals are long time residents having been U.S. citizens for nearly five generations. Asian immigrants are the fastest growing immigrant group in the U.S. accounting for x percent of the population in 2000. The Asian diaspora to the U.S. is highly urbanized with substantial populations living in San Francisco (x percent), Los Angeles (x percent), New York, and Seattle (x percent). The Asian migration stream to the U.S. is composed largely of individuals from China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan.

The most recent wave of immigration is largely the result of the dislocating effects of contemporary globalization and the attraction of the U.S. as a mythical place to live out a dream where the rewards of hard work and self-improvement

are a better life for you and an even better one for your children. While over time, the “new” immigrants of the second wave have largely been assimilated into mainstream American life experiencing increasing prosperity and social mobility in later generations, third wave immigrants continue to confront racism and bigotry in personal and structural forms. The website of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which investigates **hate crimes**, shows that of the 7,947 hate crime incidents reported to them during 1995, sixty-one percent were motivated by racial bias. Religious bias, anti-gay bias, and anti-immigrant bias are also important motivators of hate crimes which include everything from arson to murder and rape. Groups such as the Aryan Nation have been linked to racists and hate motivated criminal behaviors in both the U.S. and Canada. What is most disturbing is that, despite 200 years of residency in the U.S., African-Americans are still outsiders in white American society (see **Geography Matters, How Race is Lived in America**). No other immigrant group has been the object of such intense and extended discrimination and exclusion as African-Americans, many of whose ancestors were brought to the United States forcibly as slaves. In nearly all cases, new immigrants have tended to live in neighborhoods dominated by members of their own ethnic group. Over time, however, most second or third generation immigrant groups have moved out of these ethnic ghettos and on to more ethnically mixed residential areas. **Ghettos** are residential communities dominated by a particular ethnic group. Although originally a European term used to describe the residential areas of the Jewish population, the term ghetto in the U.S. has come to be associated with poor African-Americans, who in most major cities, continue to live outside the urban mainstream in ghettos centrally located in nearly every major U.S. city.

#### **Geography Matters 7.2: How Race is Lived in America**

The immigration history of Canada is very similar to the U.S. with at least one significant difference. The French dominated the settler stream into Canada well into the eighteenth century but by around 1750, other immigrant groups from Britain and Ireland joined the stream as they had in the U.S.. In addition, Canada received some immigration from the U.S. at least until 1810 when restrictive British policies made it difficult for Americans to immigrate. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Canada and the U.S. had very similar experiences of immigration including the restrictions that curtailed inflows of new migrants until the late twentieth century. Today, Canada is a primary destination for Asian migrants who make up nearly fifty percent of the immigrant stream

As with all European settler societies such as Australia and South Africa, the range of ethnic groups that have migrated—whether voluntarily or not—combine to create a complex and diverse culture. Both Canada and the U.S. have experienced migrations streams from all over the world. For example, in Los Angeles, New York, Toronto and Vancouver, all popular destinations for aspiring migrants, the number of nationalities represented in their populations is impressive. In Garden Grove, a city that has one of the highest immigrant populations in Los Angeles County, the school system must deal with a total of sixty-five different foreign languages among its student population. While the variety and range of national groups can potentially contribute to rich and interesting local and national expressions of culture, it is also the case that culture difference can be seen as threatening to those who wish to protect a particular view of what it means to be American (**Figure 7.17**).

#### **Figure 7.17 photo of a poster of Proposition 227 on bilingual education**

It is widely held that the U.S. and Canada, though sharing a similar immigration history have reacted quite differently to the new immigrant groups in their midst. In the U.S., the dominant metaphor for the absorption of immigrants into the nation has been the melting-pot. According to the melting-pot metaphor, the integration of immigrants occurs through the intermingling of diverse ethnicities

into a single national “alloy.” The melting pot process is another word for **assimilation** which is the process by which peoples of cultural backgrounds who occupy a common territory achieve sufficient cultural solidarity to sustain a national existence. The melting pot metaphor implies first that the products of the melting pot will become culturally indistinguishable with all members sharing a similar blended cultural composition. It also implies that natives will also be irreversibly changed by their contact with newcomers in the melting pot. The result is an American national identity that transcends the particularities of each of its components such that out of the vast ethnic diversity of the U.S. emerges a single, culturally unified people.

The melting pot metaphor and the public policies it has created have come under a great deal of criticism. In the U.S., the melting pot has been replaced by the notion of multiculturalism which is a liberal response to the demands by post-1970s ethnic and other groups to allow their culture formal recognition and respect. It still remains the case, however, that in the U.S. the process of immigrant incorporation has been to blend the native American culture with the immigrant, with the native one dominating the mix.

In Canada, the situation for immigrants has from early on been somewhat different from assimilation as Canadian popular opinion and public policy have advocated something more akin to **multiculturalism** where each ethnic group has the right to demand that their “native” culture be officially recognized. This right includes protection and support to function in one’s native language in the home as well as in official or public realms. The ideal form of multiculturalism is premised on the belief that immigrants should not have to give up any of their original cultural attributes. Under multiculturalism it is not technically possible for a single unified national identity, to which all Canadians could relate, to emerge. Instead, multiculturalism leads to ethnic coexistence where diverse groups share the same national space but not the same cultural systems.

#### Internal Migration in the United States

In addition to foreign immigration, **internal migration**—the movement of populations within the national territory—has also played an important role in both countries. In the U.S. three important and overlapping waves of internal migration over the past two centuries have altered the population geography of the country. As with a great deal of migration activity, these three major migrations were tied to broad-based political, economic, and social changes. The first wave began in the mid-nineteenth century and increased steadily through the twentieth century. This wave has two parts. One part consisted of massive rural-to-urban migration associated with industrialization. The second part was characterized by the large movement of people from the settled eastern seaboard and Europe into the interior of the country (**Figure 7.18**). This westward expansion, which began spontaneously during the British colonial period, in blatant disregard for British restrictions to such expansion, became official settlement policy after the American Revolution. The federal government thereby encouraged migration over the course of more than a century as part of the country’s expansionist strategies. The idea was to alleviate urban crowding in the East and to offset economic pressures in burgeoning eastern areas by promoting the idea of the self-sufficient farmer. Despite an emphasis on rural settlement, between 1860 and 1920, the U.S. was transformed from a rural to an urban society as industrialization created new jobs and as increasingly redundant numbers of agricultural workers (along with foreign immigrants) moved to urban areas to work in the manufacturing sector. Since the 1920s the U.S. has continued the process of the urbanization of the populations so that in 2000, x

percent of Americans are city-dwellers. The process has been quite similar for Canada making urbanization the dominant settlement process for each.

**Figure 7.18 Trails westward**

The second great migration wave, which began early in the 1940s and continued through the 1970s, was the massive and very rapid movement of mostly African-Americans out of the rural South to cities in the South, North, and West (**Figure 7.19**). Although African-Americans already formed considerable populations in cities such as Chicago and New York before the onset of this wave, the mechanization of cotton picking pushed additional large numbers of these people out of the rural areas. Tenant cotton picking was a major source of livelihood for deep-South African-Americans until mechanization reduced the number of jobs available. At the same time, pull factors attracted them to the large cities. In the early 1940s, large numbers of jobs in the defense-oriented manufacturing sector became available as other urban workers joined the war effort. This second wave of migration can be seen as part of a wider pattern of rural-to-urban migration among agricultural workers as industrialization spread globally.

**Figure 7.19 African-American migration**

After the war, a more important catalyst drove this migration: the increasing emphasis on high levels of mass consumption, which reoriented industry toward production of consumer goods and which in turn stimulated large increases in the demand for unskilled and semiskilled labor. The impact on the geography of racial distribution in the U.S. was profound.

The third internal migration wave began shortly after the Second World War and continues into the present. Following the end of the war and directly related to the impact of governmental defense policies and activities on the country's politics and economy, the region of the U.S. lying below the 37<sup>th</sup> parallel—now commonly called the Sunbelt—experienced a 97.9 percent increase in population. At the same time, the Midwest and Northeast, known as the Snowbelt or Rustbelt, together grew by only 33.3 percent. **Figure 7.20** shows a U.S. regional map illustrating the changes, in terms of percentages, for the years 1980 to 2000. This map shows that the western, southwestern, and southeastern states have experienced substantial population increases.

**Figure 7.20 Rustbelt/Sunbelt**

The first evidence of **suburbanization**--the growth of population along the fringes of large metropolitan areas--can be traced back to the late eighteenth century, when real estate developers looked beyond the city for investment opportunities and wealthy city-dwellers began seeking more scenic residential locations. Later, residents fled to the suburbs to get away from the new immigrants and their increasing hold over urban machine politics.

The process was rapidly accelerated, however, with the introduction of new transportation technologies—first horse-drawn streetcars, then intraurban rail services and, finally, automobiles. Each innovation in transportation allowed people to travel longer distances to and from work within the same or shorter time period. They chose to move to the suburbs in massive numbers, not in the least because the suburbs were, arguably, considered by many to be more healthful places to raise a family. Suburbanization continues today in both the U.S. and Canada with a new wrinkle being added, a slight reversal of migration from urban to rural areas as retirees especially search out the good life on the far fringes of the metropolitan core in small towns like Bisbee, Arizona and the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia (**Figure 7.21**).

**Figure 7.21 photo of Bisbee, Arizona**

The most compelling explanation for the large-scale population shift characteristic of the third migration wave is the pull of economic opportunity. Rather than re-investing in upgrading the aged and obsolescent urban industrial

areas of the Rustbelt, venture capital was invested in Sunbelt locations, where cheaper land and labor costs made the introduction of manufacturing and service-sector activity more profitable. The 2000 census shows a decrease in the rate of in-migration to the Sunbelt, but the changes in the geography of population at the beginning of the twenty-first century are dramatically different from the patterns of 150 years ago. This new population distribution illustrates the way in which political and economic transformations play an especially significant role in shaping individual choice and decision making.

### Cultural Contributions

Despite the discrimination and bigotry that immigrants have experienced in becoming members of North American society, they have made significant and transformative contributions to enriching North American culture and influencing taste around the world. Music, art, literature, dance, architecture, film, photography, sports, fashion, journalism, and cuisine have all been shaped by the contributions of immigrants, not to mention the impact of immigrants on science, medicine, and technology (**Figure 7.22**). The influence of immigrants on music has been particularly impressive. Country, bluegrass, jazz, the blues, and rap are all types of music that all originated in the U.S. but with deep roots in the Old World. From jazz to rap, African-Americans have been responsible for musical innovations that have been widely accepted, applauded, and imitated throughout the world.

### **Figure 7.22 photo Alice Waters**

The early twentieth century origins and particularly U.S. expressions of jazz have been influential world-wide at the same time that they reveal a complex but clear lineage back to the African musical roots that slaves left behind in the wake of their terrible Atlantic passages. West African folk music forms one of the central foundations of jazz. But jazz was also influenced by European popular and light classical music of the 18th and 19th centuries. The earliest documented jazz style was Dixieland jazz and it emerged out of New Orleans played by white musicians who recorded the sound on a phonograph record and went on to become a sensation in the U.S. and Europe. Soon black jazz groups--the originators of the jazz style that worked through ragtime, marches, hymns, spirituals and the blues--were able to capitalize on the popularity of white Dixieland largely through the improvisational style of trumpeter Louis Armstrong. Armstrong migrated to Chicago in the 1920s, influencing local musicians and stimulating the evolution of the Chicago style. About the same time as jazz caught on in Chicago, Harlem was emerging as a center for jazz organized around a highly technical, hard driving piano style. Regional variations on the original dixieland style emerged in the urban areas where significant populations of African-Americans had settled. Jazz continued to flourish from the 1930s through the 1950s with important regional flavors being developed. In the 1960s jazz began to lose popularity as audiences embraced mainstream rock and roll, which had itself been influenced by jazz and the blues. In the 1980s, jazz experienced a revival as a serious form of music which it continues to enjoy today.

The game of baseball is another uniquely U.S. innovation and it too has enjoyed widespread popularity beyond the United States, especially in the Caribbean countries like the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Cuba, but also in Europe and Japan, among other places. The composition of many American major league baseball teams demonstrates just how popular this American sport has become world wide. As a high stakes commercial enterprise, baseball has travelled well beyond the continental confines. Consider the following: on opening day of the Major League Baseball season in 2000, nearly a quarter of all

the players on the thirty team rosters were from foreign countries outside the U.S. and Canada. These include Aruba, Australia, Colombia, Cuba, Curacao, Dominican Republic, England, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Venezuela, and the Virgin Islands. The New York Yankees, Atlanta Braves, Florida Marlins and Montreal Expos led all major league teams with ten non-North American players each (Figure 7.23 ).

**Figure 7.23 map of the countries of origin of MLB players**

Canadian culture tends mostly to represent a mix of immigrant and British settler influences. Perhaps the most significant aspect of Canadian culture is the fact that it has had to battle the tremendous influence of commercialized U.S. culture which, because of its geographical proximity has been enormously difficult to resist. Canada has been very aggressive in its attempt to ward off the invasion of American cultural products and has developed an extensive and very public policy of cultural protection against the onslaught of music, television, magazines, films, and other art and media forms.

In early 1995, for example, the Canadian government levied an 80 percent excise tax against Time, Inc.'s Canadian version of *Sports Illustrated* because they did not think it was Canadian enough. The authorities complained that too many of the articles were directed at U.S. sports issues and not enough at Canadian ones. Other government bodies, such as the National Film Board of Canada and the Canadian Radio and Television Commission, are also active in monitoring the media for the incursion of culture. For example, 30 percent of the music on Canadian radio must be Canadian. Nashville-based Country Music TV was discontinued from Canada's cable system in the early 1990s and replaced with a Canadian-owned country music channel. Besides regulating how much and what type of culture can travel north across the border, the Canadian government also sponsors a sort of "affirmative action" grant program for its own culture industries (Figure 7.24 ).

**Figure 7.24 photo of Crash Test Dummies**

Although heavily exposed to American cultural products, Canadians have been able to produce distinctively Canadian film and literary pieces. Some of the most highly regarded authors among anglophone audiences are Canadians. These include Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, Robertson Davies, *Deptford Trilogy* and many other highly respected novels, Annie Proulx, *Shipping News*, and Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*. Prominent francophone writers in Canada include, Michel Tremblay, *Les Chroniques du Plateau Mont-Royal*, Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, Gabriel Roy, *Bonheur d'occasion*.

Certainly the most significant aspect of North American culture is the fact that it has been globalized and is widely imitated--and often embraced as much as it is vilified--around the world. Many scholars argue that "globalization" is really just a euphemism for "americanization" and it is difficult to argue against this perspective. It is also important to recognize, however, that just as U.S. culture is circulating intensively beyond its continental borders, other cultures have come to influence U.S. culture in numerous and distinctive ways. The following examples help to illustrate the fact that the globalization of culture, though largely dominated by the U.S. is not exclusively so. 1999 was the year when other core countries began to exert a major cultural influence on the U.S., for instance. It was the peak year of *Pokémon* trading cards and related commercial products manufactured in Japan. It was also a popular year for *Teletubbies*, a British children's television show that has become a serious rival to the American made Sesame Street. And with a one-two punch Britain also delivered the Harry Potter children's fiction trilogy that occupied first, second, and third place for months and months and months on the *New York Times* fiction bestseller list. Clearly,

globalization has made it possible not only for North American culture to circulate widely but for other cultural products from other parts of the world to penetrate U.S. culture as well. It will be interesting to see what impacts the flows on different cultures into North America will have for exiting traditions and practices.

## **Regional Change and Interdependence**

Today the U.S. and Canada together produce over one quarter of the world's GNP. The U.S. has the world's largest economy; Canada, the ninth largest. Their resources are extensive and varied and their ability to exploit them is high. As part of the recent restructuring of the global economy discussed in Chapter 2, the various regions of both the U.S. and Canada have experienced significant transformations in their economies, societies, political institutions, and even their physical environments. In this section we examine those changes and their implications paying particular attention to the ways in which economy and politics have been reorganized to facilitate contemporary globalization and how social groups and the physical environment have shaped and been shaped by these changes.

### The New Regional Economies

Political, economic, and social geographers would agree that the most important transformation of the last 25 years has been the rise of the service economy and the relative decline of manufacturing as the most significant employment sector in the U.S. and the second most significant employment sector in Canada. This phenomenon as it occurred in the U.S. was partially described in a previous section where the most recent wave of internal migration, the movement of Americans from the Rustbelt to the Sunbelt, was discussed. The rise of the U.S. Sunbelt is a classic case of how regional core-periphery patterns are modified to facilitate the accumulation of capital (as discussed in Chapter 1). Between the 1960s and the 1970s, the historic core of North American industrialization, the Manufacturing Belt, began to experience economic problems in the form of high labor costs and aging infrastructure, mostly manifested in outdated technology systems. Once-peripheral region of the country, the South and Southwest began to become attractive to investors. The military had become an important investor in this region during the Second World War where bases had been established and training exercises had occurred. Following the war's end, the government continued to invest in this region as it built up its military capacity over the Cold War. Thus, by the 1960s, the South and the Southwest had substantial infrastructural development and a high level of technological sophistication organized around military applications—which have historically preceded the application of technology for civilian purposes.

As the micro-chip revolution dawned, numerous places in the South and the Southwest were ripe for civilian investment opportunities, possessing abundant land, labor forces that were highly educated at the same time that they were unused to unions and high wage rates. The result was a shift, that has since been rebalanced, in the core-periphery patterns of the U.S. as the profitability of old, established industries in the Manufacturing Belt, or the Rustbelt as it came to be called, declined compared to the profitability of new industries in the fast-growing new industrial districts of the Sunbelt, which is what the South and Southwestern U.S. came to be called. Once the profitability differentials between the two places became significant, disinvestment began to occur in the Rustbelt. Manufacturers there began to reduce their wage bill by cutting back on production; to reduce their fixed costs by closing down and selling off some of their factory space and equipment; to reduce their spending on research and development for new products. This disinvestment, in turn, led to

deindustrialization in the formerly prosperous industrial core region of the **Deindustrialization** involves a relative decline (and in extreme cases an absolute decline) in industrial employment in core regions as firms scale back their activities in response to lower levels of profitability (**Figure 7.25**). In effect, technological innovations in computerized production systems enabled new industrial applications and investors and manufacturers began to look around for new places in which to invest and build. Innovations in transport and communications technology, combined with these production innovations created *windows of locational opportunity* that resulted in the movement of capital investment in manufacturing away from the old industrial districts of the Manufacturing Belt and into small towns or cities in the Sunbelt region of the U.S., to suburban fringe areas near some of the old industrial districts, and offshore to other countries that had lower cost workforces.

**creative destruction**: the withdrawal of investments from activities (and regions) that yield low rates of profit, in order to reinvest in new activities (and new places).

#### Figure 7.25 Spiral of deindustrialization

Meanwhile, the capital made available from disinvestment in the Rustbelt became available for investment by entrepreneurs in new ventures based on innovative products and innovative production technologies. Old industries and a large proportion of an established industrial region was “dismantled” in order to help fund the creation of new centers of profitability and employment. This process is often referred to as **creative destruction**, something that is inherent to the dynamics of capitalism. Creative destruction provides us with a powerful image to understand the need to withdraw investments from activities (and regions) yielding low rates of profit, to reinvest in new activities (and, often, in new places).

The process does not stop there, however. If the deindustrialization of the old core regions is severe enough, the relative cost of their land, labor, and infrastructure may decline to the point where they once again become attractive to investors. As a result, a see-saw movement of investment capital occurs, which over the long term tends to move from developed to less-developed regions—then back again, once the formerly developed region has experienced a sufficient relative decline. “Has-been” regions can become redeveloped and revitalized, given a new lease on life by the infusion of new capital for new industries. This is what happened, for example, to the area in and around Pittsburgh in the 1980s, resulting in the creation of a postindustrial economy out of a depressed industrial setting. USX, the Steel group of companies, reduced its work force in the Pittsburgh region from more than 20,000 to less than 5,000 between 1975 and 1995. These losses have been more than made up, however, by new jobs generated in high-tech electronics, specialized engineering, and finance and business services.

The dramatic and often very painful changes that occurred around the decline of the Rustbelt and the rise of the Sunbelt have resulted in a major reorganization of the U.S. regional landscape (see **Figure 7.29**). The new technology systems--using robotics, telematics, biotechnology, and other knowledge-based systems--that have emerged and been refined and improved over the last twenty-five years, have helped to encourage the growth of new regions with very different economic bases than they possessed only twenty-five years ago. While the Rustbelt experienced extreme and crippling decline in the 1970s and early 1980s, by the mid 1990s it was again booming having reorganized its economy and political institutions around service related employment. The Sunbelt has maintained its strong economy and has continued to experience phenomenal population growth into the twenty-first century. Its economic base is a rich mix of different economic sectors from resource extraction to knowledge based industries. The Intermountain West, an area known historically for ranching and other primary sector activities, has made its presence felt by expanding its

economy to include more service based activities by mixing tourism and recreational activities with product support service activities, as well as second home and retirement residential developments. Some high technology development is also part of the mix, especially in and around the places where universities are located such as the Denver and Albuquerque metropolitan regions. Cascadia is another region that has begun to boom due to the restructuring of the U.S. economy over the last two decades. This region is heavily involved with the full range of economic sectors from high technology research, development, and manufacturing to farming, forestry and fishing.

The new regional geographies of the U.S. have resulted in massive population redistribution so that over fifty percent of the Americans now live west of the Mississippi River where one hundred years ago the reverse was true. In the last fifteen years, based on the dramatic changes brought about by the emergence of a fifth technology system, (see Chapter 1, p. 00) a “new economy” has emerged in North America (see **Geography Matters: The New Economy**). The new economy, though caused by the practical implementation of the elements of the fifth technology system, is also about the dramatic transformation of work and the labor force, markets, and the nature of competition between regions. In addition to reshaping regional economies, this new economy is also affecting great changes in local and regional politics as well as the relationship between regional and national politics, particularly in federal elections.

### **Geography Matters: The New Economy**

#### Restructuring the State

The U.S., like Canada, is a **federal state** which is a form of government where power is allocated to units of local government (province/state, county, and city/town government) within the country. Federalism leaves many political decisions to the local governments. During the first hundred years of the U.S. republic, the federal government spent most of its time directing attention to regulating commerce. But by the late nineteenth century, urged by constituents across the country, the federal government began to take more and more of an active and direct role in regulating and supporting all aspects of American social and economic life particularly with respect to social welfare provision, infrastructure development such as dams and highways, and transferring large amounts of tax dollars to contractors for the buildup of American defense systems during the Cold War. Because the state was so heavily invested in all aspects of American society but especially in the economy, when the global economy experienced shock waves during the 1970s brought about by the oil crises and the falling rate of profit, the government was hit very hard. And as corporations and business in the U.S. and elsewhere searched for remedies to their economic problems, the government did as well and imposed dramatic restructuring upon its own operations and programs.

The changes in core-periphery patterns of U.S. regions that have been brought about by the recent restructuring of the national and global economy were facilitated both by state intervention and retrenchment as well as changes in the popular understanding of the role of government. As deindustrialization accelerated in the Rustbelt, government agencies in the Sunbelt helped to lure investment to their region by offering tax breaks and holidays, providing needed infrastructure and providing subsidies for private investment. While the view that government's primary responsibility was as a guarantor of social welfare had dominated popular understanding since the recovery efforts launched during the New Deal in the 1930s, by the 1970s and 1980s, as local governments in the Rustbelt were declaring bankruptcy and the federal government was

accumulating massive debt, popular opinion changed and the role of government was reconfigured. Since the late 1980s, it has become routine for local governments to act more as entrepreneurs than as managers of the social welfare. As a way of cutting back its mounting debt, the federal government began to shed its responsibilities for social welfare provision devolving these responsibilities to states and localities. It also began to shut down military bases throughout the country as the fall of the Berlin Wall signaled the end of the Cold War. With decreased responsibilities for social welfare and military spending, the federal government has reoriented its role away from these functions and toward a more active practice of facilitating the free flow of trade and the operations of transnational corporations abroad.

Since independence, Canada has fostered a government that has been far more inclined to social welfare provision than the U.S. Though it should be pointed out that Canada also has a tradition of entrepreneurialism in government. Many scholars of Canadian history believe that federation of the former Canadian colonies into the Dominion of Canada was driven by capitalists interested in supporting the burgeoning industrialization of the country. More recently, in addition to continuing its tradition of social welfare provision, the state in Canada has accelerated its entrepreneurialism by directing support to expanding its tertiary and quaternary sector particularly with respect to high technology development.

### Wealth and Inequality

Democratic politicians in the 2000 presidential campaign confidently used a recycled Republican slogan (from an earlier Reagan campaign) to garner votes by asking U.S. voters if they were better off since the Democrats had taken office eight years previously. While globalization and the new economy has helped to improve the employment opportunities and level of wealth of many in the U.S., it has also seriously set back many others (**Table 7.** ). From the impact of transnational agribusiness corporations on U.S. farmers to the impact of increasing wealth for some on the cost of housing for everyone, the structural transformations in the U.S. economy have left many people behind. In 1996, 36.5 million in the U.S. (or 13.7 percent of the population) lived in families that did not earn enough to rise above the official poverty threshold. And though many fewer individuals and families are on welfare than there were in 1982 when Bill Clinton was first elected president, many of those former welfare recipients are employed in very low paying jobs that provide insufficient income to support themselves and their families. Although there are many widespread types of poverty that occur among people in the U.S., poverty incidence can be roughly categorized into two geographic groups: rural poverty and urban poverty. Another form of diminishing economic wellbeing is declining household incomes that don't result in official poverty but can dramatically reduce the living conditions of individuals and households.

#### **Table 7. Growing Income Disparity (NYT)**

In the U.S. poverty definitions are hard to pin down. Since poverty thresholds were established in 1978 no new criteria have been offered by the Office of Management and Budget for determining poverty in the 2000s. This is a serious problem with important policy implications that the state has still not addressed. For instance, a family of two adults and two children with an income of \$15,911 was not counted as officially poor in 1996, because their income was too high. Assuming that a family of four with an income below this level is living in poverty, statistics show that one in five children in the U.S. lives in poverty. It is likely that up to 40 percent of American children will experience poverty, because families move in and out of poverty over time. The U.S. has the highest child poverty rate

of 18 industrialized nations, according to a United Nations survey. One reason is that the U.S. also has the lowest government benefits to families with poor children. Another reason is the stagnation of wages at the lower end of the wage spectrum. In short, the minimum wage is inadequate for improving the lives of poor families.

Widespread instances of rural poverty and reduced income circumstances in the U.S. have tended to result either directly or indirectly from the transnational corporatization of agriculture and other primary sector activities such as mining. For instance, the number of family farms that have been in crisis since the early 1980s continues to grow. The **farm crisis**—the financial failure and foreclosure of thousands of family farms across the Midwest—has not ceased, although it no longer gets the media attention it once did when Hollywood movie stars and rock stars championed the cause of the small farmer against the giant corporation. Farming is decreasingly a family business enterprise, the sort that was believed to constitute the backbone of the American economy once upon a time. Farming is increasingly becoming a corporate business run by transnationals who are able to use massive economies of scale to buy land and seed and fertilize it more efficiently, and process and market the products of the harvest (see **A Day in the Life: La Verne Neal**). So while most of the American economy is buoyant and booming and food prices are lower on account of transnational production practices, many rural areas in the U.S. are experiencing a painful restructuring that is impoverishing small farmers and ranchers and depopulating large parts of rural America as the real estate is sold off to corporations and farmers and ranchers move to towns and cities to seek other ways of making a living. Canada has also experienced a precipitous drop in agricultural employment with the accompanying social distress (**Figure 7.26**). A second aspect of the way in which the growth of transnational corporations has affected rural Americans is in the departure of rural food processing industries to other U.S. regions or parts of the globe where labor is cheaper and environmental regulations less stringent (**A Day in the Life: Linda Lord**).

**A Day in the Life: LaVerne Neal**

**A Day in the Life: Linda Lord**

**Figure 7.26 Canadian agricultural employment, 1961 and 1991**

Urban poverty is just as grinding and difficult as rural poverty, though the reasons for and the outcomes of it may differ. While rural poverty tends to affect poor white Americans, urban poverty tends to affect poor Americans of color. A particularly pressing component of contemporary urban poverty is the high cost of urban housing. In Silicon Valley, California, for example, many people with full-time jobs are homeless because the cost of real estate is so extraordinarily high. Where the median income is \$82,000 and an average of 63 people a day become millionaires, people with non-technology related jobs cannot compete in the housing market. Silicon Valley is a startling illustration of the gap between rich and poor in the U.S. that is widening every day. Consider the eye-opening contrasts between the following two related stories. A four bedroom contemporary-style house in Palo Alto was offered on the local real estate market for \$2.2 million in the early months of 2000. Because of the scarcity of housing in this, the most expensive housing market in the country, the house sold for \$3.2 million, while a one-bedroom cottage listed for \$495,000 sold for \$750,000. Contrast the astronomically high cost of housing in Palo Alto with the fact that 34 per cent of the estimated 20,000 homeless people in Santa Clara County (where Palo Alto is located) had full-time jobs in early 2000 which is up 25 per cent from 1995. There are at least two particularly disturbing aspects of housing poverty situations in very wealthy urban areas like Palo Alto. The first is that the homeless figures do not reflect all those individuals and families who are doubling up in single apartments or paying several hundred dollars to sleep in

someone's garage or on their living-room floor. The second is that it is not just the minimum wage workers who constitute the ranks of the homeless in places like Palo Alto, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle. Teachers, police officers, firefighters, commissioned salespeople, entry level high technology workers—all people who make more than \$50,000 a year and would be comfortably middle class in many other places—are using homeless shelters and soup kitchens to survive. As a *New York Times* article on Silicon Valley housing problems exclaimed: "At the richest time in the richest region in the richest nation in the world, less than 30 per cent of households here can afford to buy a house."<sup>1</sup>

The gap between rich and poor in the U.S. is indeed widening as this somewhat atypical but very real example from Silicon Valley substantiates. Between the mid-1980s and 1990s, average household income (in real terms) rose by less than 1 percent. And while the average income of the poorest one-fifth of households in the increased by only 0.1 percent, the top one-fifth of households saw their average income jump by 20 percent. In the late 1990s, 5 percent of the population held 21 percent of the wealth. In 1999, the bottom four-fifths of the population claimed only fifty percent of the economic pie. One reason for this is that nine-tenths of the growth in the economic pie went to the richest one percent of households, which last year averaged \$515,600 after taxes. **Figure 7.27** illustrates the enormous wealth disparity that characterizes U.S. society. The map shows that poverty is greatest in rural areas—along the Texas/Mexico border, in Appalachia, and in the Deep South; wealth is more typically concentrated in urban/suburban areas. The map also shows the irony of enormous wealth geographically sitting side by side with extreme poverty.

#### **Figure 7.27 Wealth and Poverty**

### Environmental Challenges

Although North American industries have either curtailed much of their polluting processes, thanks to decades of federal environmental protection legislation, or have moved to manufacturing sites outside of the U.S., various regions of the country still face serious and persistent environmental challenges. **Acid rain**, generated by industrial processes and automobile emissions continues to pose a challenge around the Rustbelt on both sides of the U.S./Canada border. Along the U.S./Mexico border air and water pollution from the maquila industry is also a problem. Ironically, many manufacturing concerns migrated to the Mexican side of the border to escape the strict environmental regulations imposed by the government on industries. Able to pollute with very little restriction, these firms are dumping toxins into regional rivers and airsheds. Ironically, pollution does not recognize national boundaries and much of the pollution generated by these American firms operating in Mexico crosses the border back into the via southward flowing rivers and airsheds that encompass both countries. The legacy of past pollution-generating industrial practices also remains a problem with the government currently overseeing the cleanup of over x **superfund sites**, locations where extreme pollution has occurred but remained unremediated years and sometimes decades. The Rocky Flats defense weapons manufacturing site is a prime example of this problem. Jus x miles outside of the city of Boulder, CO and another x miles from Denver, the site is highly contaminated with plutonium, a radioactive substance that was used in the construction of missile systems.

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<sup>1</sup> Nieves, E., "Many in Silicon Valley Cannot Afford Housing, Even at \$50,000 a Year," *New York Times*, p. 16, National News Section, Sunday 20 February 2000.

But the most serious environmental challenge North Americans face is their seemingly insatiable appetite for resource consumption. The set of images in **Figure 7.28** pictorially illustrates the high pattern of North American consumption. What is implied below the surfaces of these images is the amount of energy that is consumed both to manufacture all these products and to operate and maintain them. In x, American energy consumption was x, compared to x another core country with much lower consumption, and x a peripheral country which is among the lowest per capita energy consumption on Earth. With developing countries such as China with its huge population dramatically increasing its energy consumption, the impact of the high level of energy consumption among core countries such as the U.S., combined with increasing energy consumption among newly industrializing countries will create serious challenges to Earth supply of energy resources.

**Figure 7.28 comparable photos from the Material World**

### **Core Regions and Key Cities**

In the last twenty-five years the core regions of North America have shifted and been restructured as the economy has deployed and absorbed the implications of the fifth technology system transformation. As older regions have reconfigured their economic bases, new regions have emerged on the cutting edge of technology and related industries. Even regions that have been less pivotal to the North American economy have reorganized their economies to some extent so they can participate more actively in the revolutionary changes that are underfoot (**Figure 7.29**). As the twenty-first century begins, however, there are three regions that are the clear pacesetters in innovation and dynamism. These are regions where the population has concentrated in large cities manufacturing products and providing services for the areas surrounding them. These core regions are the central axes of North America's regional geography.

**Figure 7.29 map of core regions**

Pacific Rim and the New Economy

One of the core regions of the west is the Pacific Rim, a region encompassing the western portion of the state of California and oriented around the three key coastal cities of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego and the inland state capital of Sacramento. The Pacific Rim, more generally, includes all the nations bordering the Pacific Ocean as well as the island countries situated in it. The Pacific Rim as a global region has grown dramatically both economically and politically over the last twenty years. In an attempt to improve trading relations among the many countries that are part of the Pacific Rim, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation was established in 1989. Both the U.S. and Canada are members.

The North American Pacific Rim core region extends from the Pacific Ocean eastward to the Sierra Nevada Mountain chain that runs the length of the state (see **Figure 7.29**). This region is the birthplace of the new economy conceived in Silicon Valley and now widely dispersed throughout many parts of North America. Through flows of trade, information, capital and people the global Pacific Rim region connects the North American economy to the diverse and growing economies of the East, South East, and South Asia, and the many Pacific Island nations thousands of miles away from California across the Pacific Ocean.

While it might seem odd to consider a part of one state to be a core region, it is important to be aware of just how productive, dynamic and central, the California economy is to the rest of the North American region. **California's GDP is x, if it were an independent country, it would possess the x largest economy in the world. It has a population of x, and one of the highest immigration rates in North America.** It is the most dynamic region of the North American west.

But for a long time in North American regional history, California was part of a distant frontier, a sleepy and economically inconsequential realm that contributed little to the national economy. Since the Gold Rush of 1849 and the massive migration of population to California in the twentieth century, the Pacific Rim has matured into a region that contains x Fortune 500 companies, numerous excellent public and private universities each containing a respectable share of prize-winning faculty, a unique culture that is premised upon wealth, health, and an active lifestyle built upon excellent weather and a variety of natural environments from oceans to mountains. It is certainly the open attitude, the willingness to take risks, and the proximity of excellent institutions of higher learning that have helped to catapult this once rather marginal realm into the forefront of dynamism and change in the North American economy.

The urban system of this region is critical to linking the various sections of its geographical vastness into a coordinated whole. In addition to the four key cities mentioned above, other elements of the region are also critical to its success. The Pacific Rim region, besides containing the knowledge industry and high technology landscapes of Silicon Valley, UC Berkeley, Stanford, UCLA, UC Santa Cruz, also contains important agricultural landscapes in the Central and Imperial Valleys that are linked to other knowledge based institutions such as the Agricultural School at UC Davis. Important transformations in biotechnology and other agricultural innovations have been fostered in the Pacific Rim. These changes have helped to transform the practice and output of agriculture around the world at the same time that they have reconfigured the North American food system and cultural tastes with respect to food at the same time. The Pacific Rim region also contains a respectable share of manufacturing activities that revolve around everything from textile and clothing production to aerospace and automobile manufacturing. Finally the region is also heavily involved in tertiary and quaternary sector activities as the main core cities contain an array of banking, real estate, and insurance functions as well as legal and related services. And, of course, Hollywood, near Los Angeles, is the main home of the U.S. film industry.

#### Los Angeles

Geographers and planners at UCLA, and the University of Southern California, including Michael Dear, Ed Soja, Jennifer Wolsch, Mike Davis, and Allen Scott, have provided a rich array of work on the complexity of Los Angeles including its remarkable success stories as well as its darker underside of poverty and racism creating a school of academics who are committed to understanding Los Angeles as the prototypical North American city of the twenty-first century.

Los Angeles is a fairly old U.S. city, however, having been founded in 1781. Today it is the second largest city in the U.S. with a 2000 population of x,xxx,xxx residing within the city limits and another xx million in the surrounding metropolitan area. It is also one of the most multiethnic of all North American cities. For most of its early years Los Angeles was part of Mexico and existed as a small village surrounded by agricultural estates called *ranchos*. In 1850, when California became a state, Los Angeles was still a small settlement with a population under 2,000. When the Southern Pacific Railroad tied into Los Angeles in 1872, the city was launched into a growth phase from which it still has not ceased. But perhaps the most central story of the growth of Los Angeles is a twinned one: the story of water and transportation. The Los Angeles basin is a semiarid realm with nearly all of its rain falling in the winter and spring months. Without and secure and substantial supply of water, people could migrate all they wanted but they could not survive. Roman Polanski's film *Chinatown* captures the intrigue and political machinations that surround the story of building a

massive aqueduct that would transport water from the Owen's Valley, in the Mojave Desert, hundreds of miles away, across the San Gabriel Mountains and into the Los Angeles Basin. Other water supply projects have continued to enable Los Angeles to maintain its awesome pace of growth throughout the twentieth century .

A second feature of Los Angeles that must be described is the origin of its low-lying urban form which was enabled by the introduction of the electric streetcar and interurban train during the early years of the twentieth century. These forms of urban transportation encouraged decentralization by allowing people to move out to suburban tracts and still easily commute to the central business district or other employment sites. From 1900-1940 Los Angeles was the fastest growing city in the When the truck and the automobile were introduced during this period they helped to fuel decentralization even more so. And by mid-century, Los Angeles already had an extensively developed freeway system.

Much of L.A.'s economic structure has been build on manufacturing. In addition to the motion picture industry, the metropolitan area manufactures garments, furniture, and defense and aerospace products. The Second World War as well as the Cold War made L.A, the site of some of the largest weapons manufacturing suppliers in the nation. The Los Angeles area also has a strong service economy. If the Los Angeles metropolitan region were a separate country, it would possess the world's eleventh largest economy based on its GNP, surpassing Austria and India.

The 2000 census also shows that Los Angeles persists as a gateway for immigrants with over twenty-five percent of the nation's immigrants settling in the metropolitan region. It is probably the most ethnically diverse metropolitan region in the U.S. as well with whites now representing fewer than forty percent of the total population. Fully fifty percent of Los Angelenos speak another language other than English at home. The fashion district in downtown L.A. is a prime example of the implications of these transformation in the demography of the metropolitan region<sup>2</sup>. Once the stronghold of Jewish garment merchants and manufacturers who migrated from New York in the 1950s to establish L.A. as the nations leading center for sportsware and women's apparel, the fashion district is now dominated by Middle Eastern immigrants. Home to 5,000 companies employing over 50,000 people the garment district takes in about \$8 billion a year in wholesale and retail sales (**Figure 7.30**). Fortunes are clearly being made here and savvy new immigrants are making them. But it is also the case that the fashion district has a reputation for low wages and sweat shop condition. As a consequence, it was the object of demonstrations at the Democratic Convention held in L.A. in 2000. Los Angeles is a metropolitan region of dramatic contrasts where television stars make millions of dollars per episode as garment workers with little or no English, struggle to make ends meet. It is also an important reminder that at the local scale, even in a region of enormous wealth, the periphery can exist, tooth by jowl, with the core.

**Figure 7.30 Los Angeles fashion district (photo)**

San Francisco

Also once part of Mexico, San Francisco was transferred to U.S. control in 1846. One year after the transfer, gold was discovered near Sacramento and men flocked from all parts of the country and the world to pan for it. Over the course of the year following the discovery of gold in the Sierras, San Francisco's

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<sup>2</sup> Kotkin, J., "Casbah for Clothes is Bustling in California," *New York Times*, p. 6, Business Section, Sunday 20 August 2000.

population soared from 1000 to 25,000 and began on a short path that would lead to its becoming one of the key urban settlements in the West. From mid-century, San Francisco began to build the economic structure that would secure its urban prominence. In addition to excellent port facilities, the city also developed a respectable banking system that was able to capitalize on Mother Lode gold and Comstock Lode silver arriving from the Sierras on a regular basis. Real estate development—some of the finest Victorian architecture in the country—was one result of San Francisco's position as the main depository for the enormous mineral wealth of the state's interior region. Geographer George Henderson has shown how the capital amassed from the gold rush was later deployed to finance the agricultural boom in California's Central Valley, one of the most productive growing areas in the country.

Like Los Angeles, San Francisco was also a destination for a wide array of immigrants from Asia, Central America, South America, and Europe as well as Americans of European origin. It was during this period that San Francisco's Chinatown emerged, to some extent to serve Chinese immigrant miners, but also those who had worked on the transcontinental railroad. Geographer Susan Craddock has written about the complex relationship that San Franciscans of European origin had with Chinese immigrants. She shows how the Chinese were blamed for nearly every ill that befell the urban area, from cholera to venereal disease, despite the fact that there was little evidence to support these claims. By the end of the nineteenth century, as anti-Chinese racism began to subside somewhat, Chinatown became a major tourist attraction and, until recently, was the largest Chinatown in the U.S..

But certainly the most famous event in San Francisco history was the 1906 earthquake that measured somewhere between 7.9 and 8.25 on the Richter scale. While the death toll was probably somewhere around 3000, devastation also occurred in the form of fires that spread rapidly throughout the city destroying 28000 buildings including all of downtown and most of the city's commercial and residential areas. The post-earthquake reconstruction of San Francisco took place during the height of the Progressive era and many impressive buildings from that period exist side by side in the downtown area with more contemporary commercial architecture of the later twentieth century.

San Francisco is also a city known for radical labor politics, a legacy that has its origins in the early twentieth century. Labor organizations were involved in most aspects of the economic life of the city from the construction trades to the shopfloor. In addition, urban labor organizers were influential in organizing throughout the region also bringing agricultural workers into the union fold. By the end of the 1930s there were more members of the Communist Party in San Francisco than in any other U.S. urban area.

From the late nineteenth century to the present, San Francisco has served as the hub of the San Francisco Bay area region that extends north to the wine country and south to the farming regions of Salinas Valley. It is a key urban region with a diverse economic base that includes government, education, finance, insurance, real estate, manufacturing, and agriculture processing. It is also the urban region that houses Silicon Valley, the birthplace of the microchip and the North American computer revolution. As a city with a strong pro-labor history, it is also a city of relatively high social tolerance, despite early periods of egregious racism. It is often humorously referred to as California's premier "left coast" city. Today, San Francisco is one of the U.S.'s most populous centers of gay culture and hosts one of the most colorful and irreverent parades in the country's public celebration calendar, the Gay Pride Parade.

## Sense of Place Feature: Silicon Valley

### Cascadia and Internationalism

A second core region is north of the Pacific Rim. This is Cascadia which includes Alaska, parts of the Canadian Yukon and Northwest Territories, British Columbia, and Alberta, as well as the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. At the core of the Cascadian region are the key cities that anchor the populous corridor that runs from Vancouver through Seattle to Portland (**Figure 7.31**). Cascadia is a relatively new and dynamic region oriented around high technology. An important additional hallmark of Cascadia is its internationalism that is manifested in ignoring, if not actually erasing, the cultural, political, and economic borders of four Northwestern states, two Canadian provinces and two territories (see **Figure 7.29**).

#### **Figure 7.31 photo of Seattle**

What makes Cascadia unique is that it is a unusually unified international region that has a global outlook. Cascadia is physically larger than the European community and, if it were an independent nation, it would rank as the world's tenth largest economy in terms of its annual GDP (an estimated \$250,000 billion). The region employs more than 8 million people with a steady rate of employment growth. The Washington-British Columbia border is the busiest of any along the 2500 mile U.S./Canada border and the region contains four exceptional ports (Portland, Tacoma, Seattle, and Vancouver). Seattle is the leading west coast container port and Vancouver is the busiest in terms of volume shipped. Most importantly for its global positioning, the region is the closest place in North America to Japan, Hong Kong, and China.

The economic structure of the region is also diverse and includes the world's largest aerospace industry, the Boeing company, which employs over 100,000 people and was the number one exporter in the U.S. in the 1990s. Cascadia is also home to the third largest computer software development center in the North America with over 1000 software companies including Microsoft, the largest in the world.

Cascadia, as its name might suggest, is also a growing center for environmental technology and biotechnology as well as being a very popular destination for outdoor tourism, from skiing to sea kayaking. Within the next few years tourism is expected to be the largest employer and generator of foreign currency in the Pacific Northwest.

Despite all this cooperation and phenomenal economic growth, there are fears that there may be too much growth in Cascadia. There is a fear, for instance, that so much growth will unbalance the region with cities growing at the expense of their hinterlands. The Vancouver metropolitan area could become extraordinarily prosperous while Idaho languishes; or worse, Vancouver might be subsumed under the dominant orbit of Seattle. There is also very real and widespread concern that so much growth—more people, more cars, more houses, more roads—will add to the already existing problems of crime, pollution, traffic congestion, and water supply in the burgeoning urban regions. The Cascadian region is a young region so it is too soon to tell what its future will be. It is clear, however, that it is a serious competitor to the other two core regions of North America in terms of its influence over global economic and cultural processes.

### Vancouver

Perhaps the most spectacularly beautiful city in North America, Vancouver is also one of its most atmospheric. Located along the west coast of Canada where the Fraser River cuts across the Coast Mountains and empties into the Strait of Georgia sits the sparkling city of Vancouver, the metropolitan center of the province of British Columbia and a key node in the urban hierarchy of Cascadia. Nestled between the ocean and snowcapped mountains, Vancouver's downtown cozily fills a narrow sloping peninsula. The urban region possesses waterfront views, charming beaches, an expanse of parkland and mirrored skyscrapers that twinkle beguilingly by night and reflect the bustling life of the city and harbor by day. To the southeast, Vancouver sprawls outward and upward to the forested slopes of the Coast Mountains and the vast wilderness of the British Columbia interior.

At only 22 kilometers (about 13.5 miles) distance, Vancouver is Canada's closest major urban center to the U.S.. It is Canada's third largest city and its fastest growing, due in large part to the volume of traffic through its port facilities. The Port of Vancouver ships raw materials from the Canadian interior—lumber, wheat, and minerals—handling more dry tonnage than the ports of Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, San Francisco, and San Diego combined. Vancouver claims the title of “gateway to the Far East.” This is no empty boast as the region maintains a pivotal role in linking the North American continent to the Pacific Rim. The Pacific Rim commercial connections have been reinforced, as geographer Katharyne Mitchell has shown, by the large influx of wealthy Hong Kong Chinese, the so-called “yacht people”, who have migrated to Vancouver in extraordinary numbers. With impacts on all aspects of every day life—schools, religion, food, and shopping among them--the most talked about impact of the Hong Kong migration to Vancouver has been on property values which have skyrocketed since the mid-1980s, making Vancouver one of the most costly cities to live in North America. Despite the astronomical increases in real estate prices, Vancouver continues to be an attractive destination for migrants from all over the world. Between 1987 and 1992 the population increased by seventeen per cent. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the population is expected to have grown by a phenomenal fifty percent. The downtown population is now the fastest growing on the North American continent.

Culturally, the Vancouver region contains both high art and counterculture. It possesses a world class museum and symphony orchestra, as well as dance and theater companies on the cutting edge of contemporary art. In terms of popular culture, it is now North America's largest film and television production center after Los Angeles and New York. The *X-Files* television show is made in Vancouver and is just one of many famous movies and programs produced there.

Vancouver also has a counterculture that nurtures avant-garde art galleries, clubs and bars. One of the most irritating aspect of the counterculture for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency is the lax attitude Vancouver authorities have toward marijuana—particularly the growing of it. A recent *New York Times* article suggests that permissive attitudes among Vancouver residents about marijuana has turned the region into a major North American producer for some of the drug's strongest strains.<sup>3</sup> While pot farmers in the U.S. and Mexico grow marijuana plantation style, the cooler climes of British Columbia require an indoor growing regime where plants have been genetically modified to reach potency levels ten times that of Woodstock-era weed. The Royal Canadian mounted

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<sup>3</sup> Brooke, J., “Home-Grown Drug Business Boom in Vancouver,” *New York Times*, p. 3, International Section, Sunday 27 August 2000.

police estimate that there are about 9000 marijuana “grow operations” in Vancouver supporting a \$1 billion a year export industry, putting it right behind lumber and tourism, British Columbia’s leading economic sectors. The booming marijuana industry is evidence of some of the negative impacts of Vancouver’s phenomenal recent growth. Taxes are the highest of any city in North America. Coupled with extraordinarily high real estate prices, finding a reasonably priced place to live is extremely difficult in most parts of the metropolitan region. There is also high unemployment and underemployment among young people as a lot of low wage jobs, largely in tourism, dominate employment opportunities. With “B.C. Bud” prices double on the U.S. side of the border, marijuana farming offers a lucrative alternative to low wages or no job at all. Add permissive attitudes to the fact that technical support for marijuana growing is widely available throughout the region and all the ingredients are available for a boom industry.

British Columbian attitudes toward marijuana are also evidence of the differences in national character between the U.S. and Canada. Canadians tend to be more tolerant and inclusive than Americans, also somewhat self-deprecating and ironic. Americans are passionate about choice and equality of opportunity but are less willing to tolerate challenges to public order. While Canadian national identity is institutionalized in the wide availability of social welfare programs and a reputation for international cooperation, American national identity is oriented more toward creating safeguards to ensure individual opportunity and self-definition.

#### The North American Core

Moving east across the North American continent, a third core region is the old Manufacturing Belt encompassing the realm primarily around the key cities of New York and Chicago as well as Montreal and Toronto. The North American Core also encompasses the most populous corridor in the U.S. that runs from Washington, DC to Boston, known as **Megalopolis**, and a similar one that runs from Windsor to Quebec in Canada, known as “**Main Street**” (**Figure 7.32**). Although dubbed the Manufacturing Belt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because it constituted the industrial powerhouse of the two countries, the label at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a misnomer as manufacturing employment has dropped dramatically since the 1960s and quaternary economic employment now dominates the region. We call this the core of the core: the North American Core.

#### **Figure 7.32 maps of megalopolis and Main Street**

The history of this core region is instructive because it embodies the damage as well as the new growth that cycles of capital investment and disinvestment can visit upon people and place. The cities of the old Manufacturing Belt (New York, Chicago, Toronto, Boston, Montreal, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Windsor, Hamilton, Québec City, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Cleveland, to name the most populous ones), already thriving industrial centers in the late nineteenth century, were connected through the early railroad network. As a result, they were well placed to take advantage of crucial economic shifts that broke upon North America between 1880 and 1920. These included the general upsurge in demand for consumer goods; the increased efficiency of the telegraph system and postal services; advances in manufacturing technologies; and the opening up of the national market through the continued extension of the railroad. Individual cities specialized in particular industrial products (grain milling in Minneapolis, agricultural tools and equipment in Chicago, brewing in Milwaukee and St. Louis, coach building and furniture in Cincinnati), producing in volume for the national market rather than local ones. This specialization in turn required an increase in commodity flows between the

cities of the old Manufacturing Belt, which bound the region even more closely together.

By the mid-twentieth century however, the requirements of a new technology systems--using robotics, telematics, biotechnology, and other knowledge-based systems—overwhelmed the ability of the region to respond and disinvestment in the form of deindustrialization occurred. For much of the 1970s and 1980s, the old Manufacturing Belt suffered population loss and capital flight as workers, entrepreneurs, and investors went to other parts of the North American region and the world to take advantage of more attractive employment and investment opportunities. But by the early 1990s, the old Manufacturing Belt was showing signs of recovery and by the middle of the decade it had regained its dominance. As **Table 7.2.1** shows, the key indicators of the new economy substantiate that a large proportion of the North American Core states are especially active participants in the new economy as they hold the largest share of the top places. Of the top ten ranked states, five are North American Core states (Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Delaware), the other five are scattered among three fast growing and relatively newer regions: Cascadia, the Pacific Rim, and the New West.

It is therefore no exaggeration to claim that the North American Core, with the metropolitan region of New York as its primary city, is also the primary core region of North America. While Cascadia and the Pacific Rim possess dynamic and complex economic structures with growing populations and lively cultures, they have not yet superceded the power—economic, political, and cultural--that the North American Core commands. While the North American Core has been built upon urban regions, all of which experienced significant and wrenching declines brought about by the economic crises of the mid-1970s, it has all also enjoyed remarkable renewal as these former heavy industrial urban areas replaced the outmoded components of the old economy (crumbling physical infrastructure, heavy dependence on unionized labor, inflexible production systems) with the more effective and leaner components of the new economy (high technology and knowledge- based jobs, high levels of venture capital investment, a non-unionized workforce).

It is important to point out, however, that although the North American Core is once again prosperous, having remade itself as a new economy player, not all areas of the region are enjoying that prosperity. Newark, New Jersey, a city that sits across the Hudson Bay in the long shadow of New York City, is still surrounded by pockets of extreme poverty, despite other pockets of progress and prosperity. Newark was the site of riots in the very hot summer of 1967 where other cities, also with large African American populations, violently erupted protesting the institutionalized racism of American society epitomized in the extreme poverty of too many of its black citizens. Over three decades later, Newark is hardly better off than it was in 1967. Although a \$200 million performing arts center has been built along with hundreds of middle class townhouses, and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and the New Jersey Institute of Technology are undertaking new construction, Newark continues to lose population as more and more manufacturing jobs disappear. Those who remain more likely than ever to be poor.<sup>4</sup>

#### New York

New York has been the premier urban center of North America since the early nineteenth century, eclipsing Boston at the end of the Revolutionary War. Over

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<sup>4</sup> For more details see: Smothers, R., "In Riot's Shadow, a City Stumbles On," New York Times, p. 1, Monday, 14 August 1997.

the last two centuries New York has attracted the largest population (x,xxx,xxx in 2000)—and usually the most polyglot—and the most advanced and dynamic economy of any of its competitors both in North America and abroad. A series of forces enabled New York to catapult to the top of the national urban hierarchy and, by 1920, to the top of the global urban hierarchy. In the nineteenth century, New York proved especially hospitable to innovation and new commercial elites and its port became the primary center for trade with Europe. The Erie Canal (1817-1825) expanded the city's hinterlands to the far western end of the Great Lakes. By 1867, the Canal carried nearly seventy percent of all commerce, double that of all the national and regional railroads combined turning New York into North America's entrépot. By 1850, seventy percent of imports and exports passed through the port of New York. With such an enormous volume of trade under its control, the urban region naturally also attracted bankers, financiers, stock, produce, and cotton exchanges, shippers, warehousing, law practices, insurance companies; in short, the full range of economic institutions.

The economic base of New York gradually shifted from commerce to light manufacturing over the course of the nineteenth century. Between 1850 and 1950, clothing and garment manufacturing employed upwards of fifty percent of the population. The predominance of light manufacturing attracted cheap labor most of whom were immigrants from Europe. By 1860, the foreign born constituted nearly fifty percent of the population. The explosive growth and population and the economy resulted in dramatic physical development. Because the core of the New York metropolitan region, Manhattan, is a long narrow island (20.9 kilometers (13 miles) north to south; 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) east to west), building had to reach skyward to accommodate growth for both residences and economic activity. Tall buildings are emblematic of New York so much so that at various times over the last century, the world's tallest building was in New York: The Park Row Building (1899), the Singer Tower (1908), the Metropolitan Life Tower (1909), the Woolworth Building (1931), the Empire State Building (1931). In 1974, New York had as many 60-story buildings as all of the rest of the world combined and twice as much office space in its central business district as any other CBD on earth (**Figure 7.33**). With building densities intensifying in Manhattan as the New York economy continued to prosper, by 1950, the resident per square mile density for Manhattan was a staggering 86,730 as compared with Chicago at 16,165 and Los Angeles at 4,391. In 1898, political consolidation combined Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island into a single political unit increasing the land area to 299 square miles.

#### **Figure 7.33 World Trade Center**

The 1950s was also the beginning of the end of manufacturing as the primary economic base for New York. Between 1950 and 1990, seventy percent of New York's manufacturing jobs were lost. Approximately 250,000 jobs in wholesale and retail were also eliminated. As industry declined and took related jobs with it, growth occurred in the service sector, a significant proportion of which were in finance, insurance, and real estate. But many banking jobs were also lost in the late in the 1980s and early 1990s as large corporations "downsized" their workforce or left the metropolitan region altogether. As a result of a declining tax base with the departure of jobs and people, New York City government experienced fiscal crises as increasing demands for services, expanding welfare rolls, and deteriorating infrastructure placed a heavy burden of a shaky budget. In 1975, the city nearly went bankrupt but was saved when the State of New York intervened. New York's municipal debt was \$22.5 billion in 1995.

Since 1995, however, the economy of New York, as throughout North America, has improved dramatically. New York, and its economic institutions, at the beginning of the twenty-first century is strong. It has a highly transnational

population with over 150 nations represented among its documented immigrants. For the first time in the city's history, no single ethnic group constitutes a majority of the population. Employment is at x, the real estate market is x, average wage is x, . A prosperous population of highly educated and skilled workers has increased the demand for housing and raised the value of real estate to astronomical levels in Manhattan. Geographer Neil Smith has shown that the housing market has responded by gentrifying areas of the city that were traditionally occupied by lower income workers and immigrants. Gentrification has resulted. **Gentrification** is the process whereby the middle class, also known as the gentry, move into areas where real estate values have plummeted because of political and economic disinvestment. Gentrifiers transform the housing stock, which is usually architecturally interesting and structurally sound, making it difficult for the residents who first lived there to afford the higher rents or taxes that ensue from redevelopment.

### **Distinctive Regions and Landscapes**

Beyond North America's core regions and principal metropolitan areas lie numerous other landscapes and regions whose relationship to the environment, history, economic contribution, or political background makes them distinctive. The Prairie provinces of Canada are critical to world wheat market and to Canada's strong economy. Flat rolling grasslands in a semi-arid climate characterize this landscape. New England and the Maritime Provinces are not only visually charming, as they reflect some of the earliest impacts of colonial architecture, but they are economically and politically significant for both historical and contemporary reasons (**Figure 7.34**). New England is the home of the North American industrial revolution and currently contains an important center of high technology development clustered around some of the oldest and most prestigious educational institutions in the region. Its environment is one of woodlands and rolling terrain with villages and towns regularly punctuating the natural landscape. Similarly, Atlantic Canada is also steeped in the colonial past. Like New England it possesses charming fishing villages and a ruggedly breathtaking coastline, but even more austere, in some ways than its southern neighbor. Like northern New England, however, Atlantic Canada has been largely left behind by the most recent restructuring of the economy. As the Canadian population moved in greater numbers westward to the Pacific, Atlantic Canada has become more peripheral. This is especially so since the cod fishery has collapsed due to overexploitation. Atlantic Canada is attempting to make a comeback, however, through investments in the high technology economy, particularly through job development in telemarketing. While progress is encouraging in that direction, it is important to point out that Atlantic Canada as well as northern New England remain mostly peripheral to the larger North American economy.

#### **Figure 7.34 Village green, Bradford**

The U.S. South is also distinctive from the other regions of North America in terms of environment, history, politics, and culture. Even within the region there is a great deal of variation, particularly with respect to coastal and inland areas as well as the deep South (the states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and South Carolina), and the other Southern states (Kentucky, Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and sometimes Texas). Whereas the deep South is often called the Bible Belt, because of the attachment of much of the population to Protestant fundamentalism, states like Florida, for instance, hardly qualify as part of the Southern region as their populations are ethnically diverse and their orientation is more cosmopolitan than rural. For instance, two of Florida's key cities—Miami and Tampa—have strong economic, political, and cultural connections to South and Central America. The South has also produced a distinctive literary voice from Carson McCullers (*A Member of the Wedding*)

and William Faulkner (*The Sound and the Fury*) to the more contemporary Dorothy Allison (*Bastard Out of Carolina*). Hawai'i, disconnected from mainland U.S. far off in the Pacific, is also a unique region with the thick gloss of americanization overlying Polynesian cultural roots and a strong connection to South Asia, especially Japan.

Settlement patterns, agricultural patterns, physical landscape, dominant culture, history, economy, and society have all contributed to making the various regions of North America distinct and interesting. The various groups who have lived and worked across the North American region have left telling legacies that have been embraced, ignored, sometimes destroyed, but often "remodelled" by the groups who have followed. The distinctive landscapes of North America, like elsewhere around the globe, can often be recognized at any number of scales, from a commercial airliner looking down upon the center-pivot irrigation schemes of the New West, to the front yards of Mexican American residences in the Southwest.

### Northern Frontier

The Northern Frontier, including the new territory of Nunavut, (created in 1999 out of the eastern portion of the Northwest Territories and turned over to the control of the region's First Nations), sits at the apex of the North American continent. As **Figure 7.29** shows, the Northern Frontier is a vast area, occupying about one-third of Canada (an area roughly the size of India) and home to only 60,000 people, nearly half of whom live in or around the settlement of Yellowknife. The distinctiveness of the Northern Frontier landscape lies in the fact that wildlife inestimably outnumber people (and in the most northerly parts, human habitation is impossible); that much of the region is beyond tree line while mountain chains in the east and west rise majestically from the slope and sedimentary plain of the interior of the region; that short growing seasons make it impossible to sustain agriculture; and that ice, snow, or **permafrost** are the norm. The Northern Frontier is a place of incredible, near unimaginable beauty with relatively little impact from humans across its vast extent.

Nunavut, which is the largest territorial unit within Canada, is home to about 22,000 people most of whom are Inuit and this also makes the Northern Frontier unique. In response to claims by native peoples for land and political power, the Canadian government began to negotiate settlements beginning in the 1970s. While millions of acres of land and control over it have been ceded to native peoples in the last twenty-five years, Nunavut stands out as a monumental concession and an important indication of Canada's ability to make substantial reparations for its imperial past.

Nunavut, until its transfer to native peoples, was the central and eastern part of the Northwest Territories. Covering about 2 million square kilometers (about 772,000 square miles), Nunavut includes Baffin and Ellesmere islands and the surrounding region, stretching almost to the North Pole. For the most part, Nunavut is a flat **tundra** where average temperatures range from -32° C (-25° F) in January to 5° C (41° F) in July. Wildlife is abundant including white fox, caribou, and seals. Geological surveys have shown that Nunavut is rich in copper, lead, silver, zinc, and iron. But the severity of the climate prohibits any kind of large scale mining. The settlement pattern of the Inuit is along the coast of Hudson Bay and the Labrador Sea.

While the northern portion of the Northern Frontier is sufficiently inhospitable to deter human settlement, the southern part is inhabited and, moreover, is the

destination for adventure tourists. For instance, the area in and around the settlement of Yellowknife, the largest city in the Northern Frontier, is relatively developed with transportation linkages and other aspects of urban infrastructure (see **Sense of Place: Yellowknife**). The area around Yellowknife is also home to native peoples, the Dené Nation who are attempting to fight off the encroachment of any additional development in the region in order to protect their culture.

#### **Sense of Place: Yellowknife**

#### *The Plains and Prairies*

At the geographic center of North America lies a region whose economy is primarily based up agricultural production and related activities. The Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) in Canada and the Great Plains and Interior Lowlands in the U.S. (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) taken together constitute the Plains and Prairies region. As with all regionalizations, this one is somewhat arbitrary, because although there are many similarities shared by these states and provinces, there are also some substantial differences. The similarities, which are the basis for this regionalization, consist of: 1) location in the interior of the continent; 2) prairie/plains environment based on a range of grassland ecosystems; 3) high agricultural productivity; and, 4) predominance of rural landscape settlement patterns. Most importantly, this region produces more agricultural output than any other place of comparable size on Earth. While the U.S. portion of the Plains and Prairies tends also to include large scale industry, the Canadian side is involved in mineral and oil extraction. Moreover, as **Figure 7.35** illustrates, various subregions within this larger agricultural region specialize in different crops or food products. And, whereas in the Canadian portion of the region, the grasslands are bordered by extensive forests, in the U.S. portion there is little forested land of any significance.

#### **Figure 7. product map of the Plains and Prairies region**

The Plains and Prairies region was settled mostly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Many of the settlers in the region were migrants from the eastern part of the U.S. and Canada who were pushing westward looking for better opportunities beyond the rapidly urbanizing areas of the east. Europeans were also a significant part of the migrant stream to the Plains and Prairies, including large numbers of German, Scandinavian, and Ukrainian immigrants. Unlike the dense settlement patterns that characterize much of the Manufacturing Belt, settlement in this region is widely spaced but fairly regular with neat and prosperous appearing homesteads.

While the Plains and Prairies cultural landscape is dominated by rural settlement, it is also home to many substantial and important urban regions. In Canada, Edmonton and Calgary in Alberta, and Winnipeg in Manitoba are important regional centers and act as critical nodes in the Canadian national urban system ultimately linking Canada to the rest of the globe. In the U.S., the Plains and Prairies region is anchored by Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Cincinnati, Minneapolis-St. Paul, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Omaha. Chicago sits at the top of this regional urban system and acts as primary transportation hub for the region in addition to offering a complete range of quaternary level services. The other cities are more subregional centers with each offering slightly different services for the particular needs of the economic specialties of its economic hinterland. For instance, Minneapolis-St. Paul specialized in flour milling and the grain trade acting as a collection point for the harvests of its hinterland. Its location as a rail hub enabled it to become a central place for linking the Plains and Prairies region to western North America. Today, Minneapolis has diversified

its economic base building high level services upon agricultural processing activities.

Not surprisingly, although the Plains and Prairies region possesses a highly efficient and productive economic base, it is also a region experiencing a significant decline in rural employment opportunities as corporate farming increasingly becomes the norm. In an attempt to create a new employment base for its formerly farming (and sometimes mining) residents, many of the more rural counties have encouraged telemarketing and related companies to locate in their jurisdictions. North Dakota is one just state where telemarketing employment opportunities are booming.

While the Plains and Prairies constitutes an important North American region linking the U.S. and Canada around large scale agricultural production, it should be pointed out that there are some strains in the relationship between the two countries. The recent controversy over genetically modified food has begun to drive a wedge between farmers on the two sides of the border. While farmers seem largely willing to continue to sow their fields with genetically engineered seeds, Canadian farmers are beginning to grow wary, and in some cases even litigious, over the use of genetically modified seeds. Canadian farmers are now beginning to act more like Europeans than North Americans when it comes to the genetically engineered food controversy. One Saskatchewan farmer, for instance, is suing Monsanto, a biotechnology transnational corporation, claiming a genetically modified oil-seed rape (canola) which probably blew in from his neighbor's field, has established itself on his farmland and has now "contaminated" his crops.<sup>5</sup>

### New West

The New West, sometimes also called the Intermountain West, is a region that encompasses ten states, though the borders of the region are not entirely consistent with state borders, determined more by the edges of the Rocky Mountains in the east and the Sierra Nevadas in the west (see **Figure 7.29**). It is a landscape of many contrasts with some of the most spectacular scenery—deep canyons, majestic mountains, unique deserts—in the U.S.. The New West occupies an area of dry climates, basin and range (north-south trending mountains) topography, thin vegetation, and a general absence of many perennial surface streams. Wildfires, droughts, floods and landslides are a continuing threat in the region. President Clinton declared the summer of 2000, "worst fire season in memory" for example, thousands of wildfires were burning in various parts of the New West. As geographer William Riebsame has demonstrated cartographically, another important aspect of the New West is that fully one-half of it is federal land, one-quarter of which is national forest (**Figure 7.36**). The traditional economic base of this region was built upon mining, ranching, and logging with ranches, small settlements, and cities spread seemingly haphazardly across the landscape, their location largely determined by the presence of a water source.

### **Figure 7.36 percent of public lands in each state**

The traditional pursuits of this region, however, are being rapidly overtaken by a new economic orientation. Despite the climatic dryness and the sometimes biblical dimensions of the natural disasters, the New West is one of the fastest growing regions in the U.S.. The previously dominant primary sector industries are now second to a rapidly growing service sector that includes everything from tourist oriented services—like food preparation and mountain bike rentals—to high technology services—like software development. Besides moving for

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<sup>5</sup> "Food Fight," *The Economist*, p. 22, 23 December 1999.

regionally-generated jobs, many migrants are moving to the New West as “lifestyle refugees”, individuals escaping the grind of high stress urban lives who move their jobs with them and telecommute from their homes. In fact, some of the fastest growing areas of the New West are its rural counties where retirees and still economically active adults are seeking a quieter, gentler way of life: but a life that still has at least one of each of the amenities they left behind like Starbucks, upscale food markets and restaurants, high tech sportswear shops, and the like. Colorado contained ten of the fastest growing counties in the country between 1990-95. Idaho, Colorado, Montana, Arizona, and Utah grew faster than all the remaining states during 1995. The rural orientation of the new migrants is in sharp contrast to past settlement geographies of the west where migrants tended to settle in cities, more so even than they did in the east.

But urban growth is also being fed by the new migration to the west. And one of the fastest growing of the New West’s urban places is Las Vegas, which during most of the 1990s was the fastest growing city in the country (see **Sense of Place: Las Vegas**). The phenomenal growth of New West urban areas like Las Vegas (as well as Salt Lake City, Denver, Albuquerque, Phoenix, and Tucson, for example) raises the nagging problem of adequate water supply and whether such unprecedented growth can continue in a region that has very little of it. Residents of the New West in no way appear to want to limit their water usage. In places like Phoenix or Palm Spring—with their green lawns, ubiquitous swimming pools and fountains, and elaborate outdoor landscaping, driving a 300 gallons a day per resident water habit—residents appear not to know they live in an arid climate. Add to the inappropriate residential use, the vast amounts of water used by agriculture and ranching and it is undeniable that the extravagant use of water in the arid New West is causing serious environmental and human problems in the region.

#### **Sense of Place: Las Vegas**

In Las Vegas, the earth has subsided by five feet due to groundwater pumping. Subsidence is a problem in other urban areas throughout the New West as well. In places like Phoenix, excessive outdoor watering has created a humid microclimate encouraging the growth of pollen and moulds that cause serious health problems for the population.

A second significant problem of the New West is the clash of cultures between long term residents and new migrants. Geographer Bryant Evans has written about the conflicts between newcomers and long term residents in the old mining town of Bisbee, Arizona. There the long term residents are likely to have been associated with the copper mines. Newcomers have moved to Bisbee because they like the small town atmosphere, relatively inexpensive housing, and the beautiful setting. Long term residents and newcomers have come into conflict over the significance of the Lavender Pit, a giant open pit mine that is no longer active. Newcomers see the mined landscape, this enormous, graded concave depression in the ground as an eyesore and a reminder of corporate irresponsibility toward the environment. Natives see it as a symbol of the difficult life of mining and the hard work they endured to help contribute to the growth and development of the nation. The conflict between these two groups is emblematic of the sorts of conflicts that occur between long term residents and newcomers throughout the New West.

#### **Summary and Conclusions**

In this chapter we examined the North American region looking specifically at the similarities and differences within and between Canada and the U.S.. While there is much parallelism in the history of the two countries, there is also much that is different. Differences in the type of early European settlement, political

independence, and economic history and structure have helped to shape differences in political and economic structure, among other things. The same is true of subregional differences. And while the differences between the two countries are many and there have even been episodes of outright conflict, there is also a long history of cooperation and other forms of interaction between them. Still, many critics of U.S./Canada relations would argue that “cooperation” and “interaction” are euphemistic terms for the heavy-handed dominance that the U.S. exerts over much of Canadian economic, cultural, and social life.

Canada and the U.S. continue to enjoy a strong relationship despite the friction that regularly emerges between them. The U.S. continues to be the largest importer of Canadian exports and Canada continues to import a significant amount of U.S. produced goods. The U.S. and Canada also have a reciprocal relationship when it comes to capital with the U.S. investing large amounts in Canadian industry and new economy ventures and Canada investing in U.S. real estate, among other things. The trade alliances that created one market between the two countries continue to unite them.

The influence of the North American region on the world continues to be substantial. While U.S. economic, cultural, and political ideas are likely to dominate the processes of globalization, Canada will remain an important player in the development of the Pacific Rim and in the peaceful resolution of international conflict.

**Key Terms**

aboriginals

acid rain

airshed

americanization

assimilation

creative destruction

deindustrialization

gentrification

ghetto

hate crimes

europianization

farm crisis

federal state

indentured servants

internal migration

Main Street

Megalopolis

multiculturalism

permafrost

staples economy

suburbanization:

superfund site

tundra

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Gone with the Wind, Margaret Mitchell

Uncle Tom's Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe

Moby Dick, Herman Melville

Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain

Lonesome Dove, Larry McMurtry

The Klondike Fever, Pierre Berton

Oak Island Gold, Williams S. Crooker

A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present, Ward Churchill

The Ambassadors, Henry James

Beloved, Toni Morrison

Leslie Marmon Silko

Willa Cather

Thomas, Sheree, ed. *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction From the African Diaspora* (Aspect/Warner)  
Westside: Young Men and Hip Hop in L.A., William Shaw, Simon & Schuster  
Nature's Metropolis, William Cronon.

**Music**

Bill Monroe, What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul (Rounder),  
bluegrass  
Robert Johnson, Mississippi Delta blues  
NPR Radio Program: "American Routes", all varieties of American music.

**Film/Video**

*Well-Founded Fear*, Michael Camarini and Shari Robertson, Directors, Distributed by  
(about refugee asylum in the U.S. immigration service)

*The Life and Times of Harvey Milk*

*The Black Robe*

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<sup>1</sup> R.D. Mitchell, "The North American Past: Retrospect and Prospect," in R.D. Mitchell & P.A. Groves (eds.) *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1987, p. 3.