

and Science Study, conducted with middle-school students during 1994–95, to compare the effects of class size around the world. “While Americans squabble over whether class size should be 18 or 25 students,” they observe, “teachers in [South] Korean schools routinely face classrooms of more than 50 students.” In fact, the best-performing countries generally tended to have larger classes.

The researchers studied 18 countries, taking advantage of the natural variations in class size between grades to determine whether smaller was better. “We looked at whether seventh graders in a particular school performed better than the same school’s eighth graders (relative to the national average for their respective grades) when, on average, the seventh-grade classes were smaller than the eighth-grade classes.”

In only two of the 18 countries—Greece and Iceland—did smaller classes seem to

improve student performance. The results in 12 of the remaining countries were statistically insignificant: Class size made no difference. In four others (including the United States), there wasn’t enough variation in class size from one grade to the next to produce a meaningful verdict.

In Greece and Iceland, however, the authors found “substantial” benefits from reducing class size: “Students scored just over two points higher for every one student fewer in their class.” Why? The difference may be in the quality of the teachers, West and Woessmann speculate. The two countries rank relatively low in per pupil spending and teacher salaries—and, presumably, in teacher quality. Apparently, better teachers can handle bigger classes. “Smaller classes appear to be beneficial,” the authors conclude, “only in countries where average teacher quality is low.”

## *When America Was Really Diverse*

“The People of British America, 1700–75” by Alan Taylor, in *Orbis* (Spring 2003), Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1528 Walnut St., Ste. 610, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102–3684.

Many Americans retain from their school days an image of 18th-century emigrants coming to British America of their own free will in search of liberty, and becoming more united as the revolution neared. But the demographic reality was very different, observes Taylor, a historian at the University of California, Davis.

By one estimate, the United States had a higher proportion of non-native speakers in its population in 1790 than it did in 1990. Many of the newcomers spoke African languages. “Most [emigrants] were enslaved Africans forced across the Atlantic to work on plantations raising American crops for the European market,” Taylor writes. “During the 18th century, the British colonies [including the West Indies] imported 1.5 million slaves—more than three times the number of free immigrants.”

Even so, he notes, “the colonial white population remained more than twice as large” as the population of enslaved Africans. The harsh conditions of slavery accounted for much of the gap. “In 1780 the black population in British America was less than half the total number of African emigrants received during

the preceding century, while the white population [was three times] its emigrant source.”

Virtually all of the 275,000 slaves imported into British America during the 17th century went to the sugar plantations of the West Indies, where extremely harsh conditions kept the death rate high and the birthrate low.

As the slave trade expanded in the 18th century, more slaves were taken to the Chesapeake and Carolinas. “On the colonial mainland,” says Taylor, “slave births exceeded their deaths, enabling that population to grow through natural increase, especially after 1740.” The mainland imported 250,000 slaves during the colonial period, and it sustained a black population of 576,000 by 1780. (The British West Indies had only 350,000 slaves in 1780, even though 1.2 million had been brought to the islands over the preceding two centuries.)

Meanwhile, emigration from England declined, from 350,000 in the 17th century to only 80,000 between 1700 and 1775—and at least 50,000 of these were convicted felons who were sold into indentured servitude. As



*Britain recruited many non-English colonists for the New World, including these German Moravians shown building a stockade at Gnadenshütten, near present-day Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.*

England's economy and military might grew in the early 18th century, imperial officials began looking elsewhere for colonists—chiefly, Scotland, Ireland, and Germany. “The new recruitment,” says Taylor, “invented America as an asylum from religious persecution and political oppression in Europe” (so long as the immigrants were Protestants). The

years 1700 to 1775 brought 145,000 Scots—many of whom preserved their Gaelic speech and customs—and 100,000 Germans. These foreigners outnumbered English newcomers 3 to 1. Thomas Paine was not indulging in his usual hyperbole when he declared, “If there is a country in the world where concord would be least expected, it is America.”

## *Smart but Single*

“How the B.A. Gap Widens the Chasm between Men and Women” by Andrew Hacker, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 20, 2003), 1255 23rd St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

The growing gender gap on America's campuses may be ushering in a new era of life without marriage for educated women, contends Hacker, a political scientist at New York City's Queens College. It's happened before, though on a smaller scale: Through the early decades of the 20th century, graduates of women's colleges such as Vassar, Wellesley, and Bryn Mawr were less likely to wed. (“Only our failures marry,” M. Carey Thomas, a legendary Bryn Mawr president, defiantly proclaimed.)

Though, as Hacker notes, the term *spinster* “has disappeared, as has a presumption of celibacy,” the gendered disparity in numbers is a fact: For every 100 women who received a bachelor's degree last year, only 75 men did. The gap, he says, is making it harder for edu-

cated women to find equally educated mates.

Not so long ago, he points out, the collegiate sexual tables were turned: For every 100 men who obtained a college degree in 1960, only 54 women did. Such women were more likely to find husbands who'd also graduated, and the surplus of college-educated males meant that women who'd skipped higher education had a better chance of “marrying up.” Secretaries wed young executives; nurses wed doctors.

Today, however, it is men who increasingly “marry up”: Nearly 40 percent of married female graduates ages 25 to 34 have less educated husbands. But many educated women these days are unwilling to “marry down,” Hacker asserts. “As more and more women have experienced