

#### The opportunity structure for immigrant enterprise

The first precondition for business development is a need that the immigrant firm can service competitively. Such demands arise first in the immigrant community, which has a special set of wants and preferences that are best served, and sometimes can only be served, by those who share those needs and know them intimately, namely, the members of the immigrant community itself. Generally, those businesses that first develop are purveyors of culinary products – tropical goods among Hispanics, for example, or Oriental specialties among the Asians. Businesses that provide “cultural products” – newspapers, recordings, books, magazines – are also quick to find a niche in the immigrant community. The important point about both types of activities is that they involve a direct connection to the immigrants’ homeland and knowledge of tastes and buying preferences – qualities unlikely to be shared by larger, native-owned competitors.<sup>23</sup>

Immigrants also have special problems – caused by the strains of settlement and assimilation and aggravated by their distance from the institutionalized mechanisms of service delivery. Consequently, the business of specializing in the problems of immigrant adjustment is another early avenue of economic activity, and immigrant-owned travel agencies, law firms, realtors, or accountancies are common to most immigrant communities. Such immigrant businesses frequently perform a myriad of functions far above the simple provision of legal aid or travel information and reservations.

To a large extent, these are services that are confidential, unfamiliar, and unintelligible to the newcomer unaccustomed to American bureaucratic procedures. In some cases, they may impinge on the often du-