

Immigration: Shaping and Reshaping America

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Introduction

About 95,000 foreigners a day arrive in the US. Most are not immigrants intending to settle in the U.S. Over 90,000 are nonimmigrant tourists, business people, and foreign students and workers who are welcomed at airports and border crossings. About 3,000 are immigrants or refugees who have been invited to become permanent residents of the United States, and 1,000 are unauthorized foreigners, usually Mexicans, who evade border controls, enter the US, and settle.

Is the arrival of so many foreigners to be welcomed or feared? There is no single answer, which helps to explain why Americans are ambivalent about immigration. The United States has always celebrated its immigrant heritage, and American leaders often recount the story of renewal and rebirth brought by newcomers from abroad. At the same time, Americans have worried since the days of the founding fathers about potential economic, political, and cultural change caused by immigration.

Since September 11, 2001 there is a new worry about foreigners—the fear that some may harm Americans. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, the US government took steps to identify potential terrorists in the US, and to prevent others from entering. Political leaders stated clearly that they did not want to shut the door to immigrants and nonimmigrants, but they also made it plain that they wanted to root out terrorists and those who support them. The US today is grappling with the right balance between welcoming foreigners and protecting Americans.

For its first 100 years, the US facilitated immigration, welcoming foreigners who could help to settle a vast country. Beginning in the 1880s, the US began to bar certain types of foreigners -- prostitutes, low-skilled contract workers, and Chinese—ushering in the phase of qualitative restrictions on immigration. In the 1920s, the US developed the current qualitative and quantitative restrictions on foreigners wishing to immigrate. A major change in 1965 switched priority for entry from people with selected national origins to those with relatives in the US and foreigners whom US employers wanted to hire. The result was a shift from mostly European to mostly Latin American and Asian immigrants. There are few limits on nonimmigrant visitors, and their number grew rapidly in the 1990s, with a surge in tourist and business visitors, as well as rising numbers of foreign students and foreign workers. Illegal immigration also rose in the 1990s, making immigration a contentious public policy issue in the 21st century.

Immigration and integration are much-debated issues, and the debate is framed by the extreme views of those who advocate “no immigrants” and those who advocate “no borders.” The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), for example, charges that immigrants contribute to population growth and environmental degradation, displace low-skilled American workers, depress wages, and threaten the cultural bonds that hold Americans together. Consequently, FAIR in the 1990s called for a sharp reduction in immigration—from one million a year to perhaps 150,000 a year—

which would have the added benefit of allowing recent arrivals and Americans time to adjust to one another.

At the other extreme, *The Wall Street Journal*, the leading U.S. newspaper for the business world, advocated a five-word constitutional amendment: “there shall be open borders”—in a 1990 editorial.¹ The *Journal* advocated high levels of immigration chiefly for economic reasons—more people mean more consumers and more workers, which helps the economy grow. Groups such as the Organization of Chinese Americans and the Emerald Isle Immigration Center favor immigration from particular countries or regions. The Catholic Church and some other religious organizations oppose immigration controls because they believe that national borders artificially divide humanity.² Other groups support continued immigration because they think it is a defining part of the American national identity.

Some expected the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks to increase support for restricting immigration. However, government officials such as then INS Commissioner James W. Ziglar drew sharp distinctions between immigrants and terrorists, saying of the 19 hijackers, “These weren't immigrants. They were terrorists.” Laws giving the federal government more authority to investigate and detain foreigners, making it harder for some foreigners to obtain visas and requiring them to register when they enter the US, and tracking the entries and exits of foreign students and other foreign visitors were enacted in 2001 and 2002, but the number of immigrant settlers and nonimmigrant visitors did not drop sharply.

The United States is a nation of immigrants, as reflected in its motto *e pluribus unum*—from many, one. U.S. presidents frequently remind Americans that, except for Native Americans, they or their forebears left another country to begin anew in the United States, and that immigration permits individuals to better themselves financially while strengthening the United States. Yet immigration also brings many changes, changes that raise fundamental questions for Americans. Who are we? What kind of a society have we built, and whom shall we welcome to it? What should we do to encourage the integration of newcomers? How should we deal with those who arrive uninvited?

This *Population Bulletin* examines current immigration patterns and policies in the United States, reviews the peaks and troughs of immigration flows, and provides an historical perspective on contemporary trends. US immigration policy has and will continue to change in response to immigration flows and their impacts on Americans. Resolving the

¹ An editorial on July 3, 1986 first made this proposal, which was repeated in an editorial on July 3, 1990.

² Archbishop Roger Mahoney of Los Angeles has been quoted as saying: “The right to immigrate is more fundamental than that of nations to control their borders.” Nicholas Capaldi, ed., *Immigration: Debating the Issues* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1997): 17.

fundamental economic, social, and political issues raised by immigration requires weighing the choices or tradeoffs between widely shared but competing goals in American society.

Immigration Patterns and Policies

Over 9 million immigrants were admitted to the United States between 1991 and 2000—an average of 900,000 a year. The volume of immigration flows has been increasing since the 1950s. The inflow was about 600,000 immigrants a year in the 1980s, 450,000 in the 1970s, and 330,000 in the 1960s. The origins of immigrants have been changing. During the 1960s, most immigrants were from Europe; now they are mostly from Latin America and Asia (see Figure 1).

Over half of the people “admitted” as immigrants each year are already living in the United States with a temporary visa or some other legal status, or as undocumented aliens. Changes in immigration law can skew the immigration admission data. For example, more than 1.8 million immigrants were admitted in 1991, although many had lived in the United States for years--1991 marked their change to legal immigrant status under legalization programs of 1987 and 1988. In 2001, about 61 percent of the 1.1 million immigrants “admitted” were already in the US and had their status adjusted to immigrant.

Figure 1--Immigration by decade & source: p 16 INS Yearbook, 2000—better to update Figure 1 in 1999 bulletin

Box 1-- Immigrants, Refugees, Nonimmigrants, and Unauthorized Aliens

The laws of the United States define all persons within its borders as U.S. citizens or aliens – aliens are persons who are citizens of another country. Aliens may be immigrants; refugees or asylees; nonimmigrants; or unauthorized foreigners.

Immigrants are citizens of other countries who have been granted a visa that allows them to live and work permanently in the United States and, generally after five years, to become naturalized U.S. citizens. Immigrant visas used to be green, and immigrants are still often referred to as “greencard holders.” In the past, most immigrant visas were issued to foreigners at US consulates in their home countries. In the 1990s, this changed, and today most immigrant visas are issued by the INS inside the US.

Refugees are persons outside their country of citizenship who fear persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion if they return. Some are resettled as immigrants every year in the United States: the number—80,000 in FY01-- is determined annually by the President in consultation with Congress.³ Asylum applicants arrive in the United States and request safe haven here: their number depends on how many aliens show up asking to be recognized as refugees—58,688 applied in FY01. Most asylum applications are rejected, but applicants judged to be in need of protection are allowed to resettle in the US. There was a backlog of 304,000 asylum applications on September 30, 2002.

Nonimmigrant visa holders are persons who are granted temporary entry into the United States for a specific purpose, such as visiting, working, or studying. In FY96, 32.8 million nonimmigrants were admitted--90 percent were temporary visitors for pleasure (tourists) or business. Nonimmigrants who enter and leave the US several times are counted each time, but Mexicans with border crossing cards that allow shopping visits and Canadian visitors are not included in these admissions data.

The United States has 25 types of nonimmigrant visas. These include A1 visas for ambassadors, B2 visas for tourists, P1 visas for foreign sports stars who play on US teams and TN visas for Canadians and Mexicans entering the US to work under NAFTA. Some foreigners are able to visit to the US without a visa. The Visa Waiver Pilot Program permits visitors from 28 countries, mostly in Europe, to enter without visas if they have round trip tickets.⁴

Unauthorized, undocumented, or illegal migrants are foreigners in the United States without valid visas. The INS estimated there were 7 million unauthorized foreigners in the US in 2000, up from 3.5 million in 1990. About 4.8 million or 70 percent of the unauthorized were Mexicans. The INS believes a Census Bureau estimate of 8.7 million unauthorized foreigners in 2000 includes 1.7 million “quasi-legal foreigners.” There may have been an undercount of unauthorized foreigners in the census, so that, even if quasi-legal foreigners, such as foreigners with Temporary Protected Status, are considered legal, there may have been about eight million unauthorized foreigners in 2000.

³ Refugees become immigrants after one year in the US, and the US does not always admit the number of refugees authorized. For example, there were 69,304 refugee admissions in FY01.

In FY01, some 1,064,318 immigrants were admitted legally -- “through the front door.” There are four types of front-door immigrants. The largest category by far is for relatives of US residents. In 2001, 64 percent of immigrants were granted entry because family members who already lived in the US formally petitioned the US government to admit them (Table 1).

Spouses, children and parents of US citizens may enter the US without limit--there are no quotas that lead to queues--and 443,000 entered in FY01. The other types of family unification immigrants are numerically limited, so that resident noncitizens who want family members to join them and US citizens sponsoring their brothers and sisters for immigrant visas may wait a long time for their relatives. In Fall 2002, Mexican permanent residents could expect to wait seven years for their spouses and children to be granted immigrant visas, and US citizens from the Philippines sponsoring brothers and sisters could expect to wait 21 years.⁵

Many foreigners do not wait to come until their immigrant visas are available—they enter the US as tourists or students, and then remain, or they enter and stay as unauthorized foreigners. Some of the unauthorized foreigners in the US are waiting for immigrant visas—a million applications are pending at the INS for foreigners in the US seeking to adjust their status to that of immigrant. Under the 245(i) provision of immigration law, foreigners in the US can pay a \$1,000 fine and adjust status rather than return to their country of origin and receive an immigrant visa from a US consulate. However, another provision of immigration law is that, if a foreigner is unlawfully in the US for more than 1 year, she is barred from legal re-entry for 10 years. Thus, unauthorized foreigners waiting for immigrant visas walk a tightrope, hoping to receive immigrant visas before they are detected, removed, and barred from legal re-entry for 10 years.

The second-largest group are immigrants (and their family members) who were admitted for economic or employment reasons. Employment-based immigration includes priority workers with “extraordinary ability” in the arts or sciences, multinational executives, workers holding professional or advanced degrees, clergy, and wealthy investors as well as low- and unskilled workers. In 1990, some U.S. businesses and other groups feared a shortage of skilled labor, and Congress in the Immigration Act of 1990 raised the annual limit on the number of employment-

⁴ The INS is considering reducing the normal time that a tourist can remain in the US from the current six months to 30 days. Because of economic problems that could lead to unauthorized immigration, Argentina was removed from the Visa Waiver Pilot Program in January 2002.

⁵ Waiting lists are published monthly in the DOS Visa Bulletin, http://travel.state.gov/visa_bulletin.html

preference immigrants from 54,000 to 140,000 a year.⁶ There are several categories of employment-based visas,⁷ but relatively few of the 179,195 employment-based immigrants admitted in 2001 were “aliens with extraordinary ability,” 3,376, or multinational managers and executives, 9,783. The largest group are foreigners with at least a BA, 20,115, or other skilled workers, 19,320, including cooks that US employers request to fill jobs that they say cannot be filled with US workers.⁸ Over 90 percent of employment-based immigrants are already in the US and receive their visas by adjusting to immigrant status.

The third group of immigrants is that of refugees and asylees: 10 percent of immigrants in 2001 were foreigners who gained the right to become Americans because of persecution at home. In FY96, about 40 percent of the refugees who arrived were from the ex-USSR, followed by 16 percent from Bosnia. **Refugees and asylees wait only one year after they are admitted to become eligible for citizenship, instead of five years like ordinary immigrants.**

The fourth major group is the diversity category, which provides 50,000 immigrant visas a year for nationals of countries that sent fewer than 50,000 immigrants in the previous 5 years; the goal is to introduce more variety into the stream of immigrants to the US. Applicants are chosen by an annual lottery, to which 9 to 12 million foreigners apply. Many are found to be unqualified—a third in recent years—but 42,015 diversity immigrants were admitted in 2001.⁹ Because many Asians and Latin Americans are

⁶ The number can go above the annual 140,000 limit if there are unused visas from earlier years.

⁷ Employment-based immigration includes five visa categories: priority workers with "extraordinary ability" in the arts or sciences or multinational executives; members of the professions holding advanced degrees; BA professionals and skilled and unskilled workers; special immigrants, including ministers; and investors.

⁸ The process of testing the US labor market for US workers is called labor certification, and it is not closely supervised. In July 2002, Capital Law Centers in suburban Washington DC was found to have fraudulently obtained immigrant visas for 2,700 foreigners, each of whom paid \$8,000, because they were needed workers. Capital Law Centers filed petitions on behalf of restaurants such as Shoney's and Applebee's for cooks, saying no US workers were available, and they were approved. The fraud was discovered only when the government mistakenly sent an approved certification to one of the restaurants, not to Capital Law Centers. Tom Jackman, “Lawyer Convicted of Bilking Immigrants,” Washington Post, December 12, 2002, B2.

⁹ Applicants for diversity immigration visas must: (1) be nationals of countries that sent fewer than 50,000 immigrants to the US during the past five years in the immediate family or employment preference categories and, (2) have a high school education or its equivalent or

admitted in other categories, most diversity visas go to nationals of African and European countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria, Ukraine and Poland.

The diversity program addressed an unintended consequence of the 1965 amendments to US immigration law. Giving priority to family unification meant that, after 1965, US immigration policy favored the relatives of those who had recently immigrated. Visas reserved for economic/employment immigrants favored those with ties to US employers. This made it difficult for immigrants from other countries that had not recently been sending immigrants, such as Ireland, to establish the family and business networks needed to set chain migration in motion. During the first three years of the program, 40 percent of diversity visas were reserved for Irish immigrants.

The “other immigrants” category includes NACARA entrants, who are Cubans and Central Americans already in the US, allowed to become immigrants because it was presumed that, if they were removed from the US, they would suffer "extreme hardship." The Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act of 1997 presumed extreme hardship for some nationalities, and allowed other Central Americans to individually prove removal would cause extreme hardship and receive immigrant visas. The Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 1998 extended that option to some Haitians in the US.

Table 1. Alien Entrants to the US in FY2001

Foreigners Entering the US, FY2001	Number of Persons FY2001
Category	
Immigrants	1,064,318
Immediate relatives of US Citizens	443,035
Other family-sponsored immigrants	232,143
Employment-based	179,195
Refugees and Aslyees	108,506
Diversity immigrants	42,015
Other Immigrants	59,424
Estimated Emigration	220,000
Nonimmigrants	32,824,088
Visitors for Pleasure/Business	29,419,601
Foreign Students	688,970
Temporary Foreign Workers	990,708
Illegal Immigration	

within the past five years have two years of work experience in a job that requires at least two years of training or experience.

Apprehensions	1,387,486
Deportations	176,984
Estimated illegal population (2000)	7,000,000
Additional illegal settlers per year (1990-2000)	350,000

Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2001
Statistical Yearbook.

www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/statistics/2000ExecSummary.pdf

Once they reach the United States, immigrants normally stay. The INS estimates that between 1901 and 1990, the number of people emigrating from the United States was equivalent to about 31 percent of the number immigrating. Emigration peaked during the depression of the 1930s, when more people moved out of the United States than moved in. Emigration during the 1980s was estimated to be 1.6 million, equivalent to about 22 percent of immigration.¹⁰ In making population projections for 1995 to 2050, the U.S. Census Bureau assumed that 220,000 U.S. residents would emigrate each year.

Nonimmigrant visa holders are people who come to the United States to visit, work, or study. The United States is eager to attract most types of nonimmigrants—airlines and hotels advertise for foreign tourists—so there are no limits on most categories of nonimmigrants. The number of nonimmigrants tripled in the past 20 years, primarily because of the growing number of tourists and business visitors.

Foreigners also arrive to work temporarily in the United States, and their presence is more controversial. There were almost one million admissions of temporary foreign workers in FY2001, and 40 percent were professionals with at least a BA degree, coming to the US to fill a job that requires a BA degree. H-1B workers are allowed to bring their families with them, and to adjust to immigrant status if they can find a US employer to sponsor them during the six years they can remain in the US. About half of the H-1B workers are from India, and most are employed in computer-related jobs. During the 1990s dot.com boom, the annual limit of 65,000 was reached well before the end of the year, and computer firms twice persuaded Congress to raise the limit to the current 195,000 a year (INS data on admissions count workers each time they enter the US).

The expanding H-1B program led to a debate over US employer preferences, foreign workers, and US education. Those in favor of expanding H-1B admissions argued that US employers needed easy access to the “best and brightest” of the world’s workers,

¹⁰ Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1996* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997): 196.

and that the US government should not erect barriers between US employers and needed foreign workers. They argued that foreign students dominate graduate school programs in math, science, and engineering, so it should be expected that US employers would want to hire the best graduates of US universities.

Critics countered that there is no shortage of US workers interested in computer sciences and similar jobs, only a shortage of US workers willing to work long hours for low wages and short careers in fast-changing industries. The critics point out that most students graduating from US universities in science and math with BA degrees are US citizens, but most do not pursue advanced degrees because they do not find the resulting extra earnings and opportunities sufficient to warrant the trouble and expense. High-tech firms, critics emphasize, often screen applicants by computer, and wind up interviewing and hiring fewer than two percent of those who apply for jobs. A 1996 report on the H-1B program by the U.S. Department of Labor's inspector general concluded that the program should be abolished because most US employers use it as a "probationary employment tryout program for illegal aliens, foreign students, and foreign visitors," so that the program winds up legalizing foreigners whom the sponsoring employer has already hired.¹¹

Another important category of nonimmigrants is that of foreign students. Some 688,790 foreign students were admitted to the United States in FY2001, and the Institute of International Education, which counts foreign students enrolled at US colleges and universities, reported that a record 582,996 were enrolled in 2001-02. India sent the most students to the United States, 66,836; followed by China with 63,211; and Korea, Japan and Taiwan. The University of Southern California had 5,950 international students, 20 percent of the 30,000 enrolled; New York University had 5,504 and Columbia University, 5,116. Private universities have the highest percentages of foreign students, most of whom pay full tuition.

Foreign students became more controversial after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks because one of the hijackers had entered the US with a student visa to study English at a language school, but never showed up for classes. Approval for two hijackers for pilot training was sent to a Florida school six months after they died in the September 11 attacks. In an effort to track foreign students while they are in the US, the Student Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was launched. Colleges are to report data on foreign students over the Internet, so that the US government becomes aware of students who were admitted to the US but did not enroll in classes.

Foreigners in the US legally are "immigrants" or "non-immigrants." **Unauthorized foreigners**, also referred to as illegal aliens, deportable aliens and undocumented

¹¹ DOL inspector general report.

workers, are persons in the US in violation of US immigration laws. No one knows exactly how many unauthorized foreigners are in the United States: the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) apprehended 1.4 million in FY2001; 95 percent were Mexicans caught just inside the US border.¹²

In the mid-1990s, the INS changed its border enforcement strategy, shifting from an attempt to apprehend unauthorized aliens to deterring their entry by adding agents, fences, lights, and cameras in the urban areas where most illegal entry attempts are made. In these areas, such as San Diego-Tijuana and El Paso-Juarez, apprehensions have fallen sharply. However, many migrants turned to smugglers, many of whom attempted illegal entry in the deserts and mountains of Arizona. The guides, known as *polleros* or *coyotes*, who lead migrants in groups of 20 to 40, sometimes abandon those who cannot keep up, or fail to provide water or make transportation arrangements, so that an average of one migrant a day has been dying for the past several years attempting illegal entry.

If unauthorized foreigners are found inside the US, the INS attempts to remove them in one of two ways: voluntary return and removal or deportation. Mexicans inside the US may choose to be returned “voluntarily” to Mexico, which means they are fingerprinted, photographed and taken back across the border usually by bus, but are not usually prosecuted if they are apprehended again in the US. Removal or deportation, on the other hand, means that an immigration judge, who is not an INS employee, listens to the INS argue why the foreigner should be deported, and to the foreigner argue why he should be allowed to remain. The trial ends when the judge allows the foreigner to stay or orders deportation. Deported foreigners can be prosecuted if they re-enter the US. In 2001, some 176,984 foreigners were removed formally from the US; 80 percent of those removed were Mexicans.

Public Opinion

Americans worry that immigration is increasing the size and changing the characteristics of the population. Public opinion surveys conducted between 1965 and 1993 consistently showed that a majority of Americans wanted both legal and illegal immigration reduced, and fewer than 10 percent of those surveyed agreed that immigration should be increased.¹³ There is often a difference between elite and mass opinion—support for immigration rises with income and education. In a summer 2002

¹²Apprehensions record the event of capturing an unauthorized alien, and are not a count of individuals; one alien apprehended 5 times is recorded as 5 apprehensions.

¹³ In 1953, for the only time in the past 70 years, did more than 10 percent of the public favor increasing immigration. Julian Simon, *The Economic Consequences of Immigration* (New York: Blackwell, 1989): 350

poll, 55 percent of the public said legal immigration should be reduced, compared to 18 percent of opinion leaders.¹⁴

Public opinion often changes with economic circumstances. During the late 1990s, when the economy expanded and unemployment rates were low, public opinion became less restrictionist. A 1997 poll, for example, found that fewer than 50 percent of Americans wanted immigration reduced or stopped, but 63 percent were concerned about immigrants taking jobs from Americans or causing racial conflict, and 79 percent were concerned that immigrants were overburdening the welfare system and pushing up taxes.¹⁵

A January 1999 Public Policy Institute of California poll found opinion shifting as the economy boomed--52 percent of Californians considered Mexican immigrants a benefit to the state because of their hard work and job skills, while only 36 percent described them as a burden for their use of public services and schools. When asked if the federal government's stepped-up efforts to prevent unauthorized entries (known as Operation Gatekeeper) would help to prevent illegal immigration, 13 percent agreed, 51 percent thought they would make some difference, and 35 percent thought they would make no difference.¹⁶

Terrorism and a weakening economy made Americans more restrictionist at the start of the 21st century. A Fox News opinion poll in November 2001 found that 65 percent of Americans favored stopping all immigration during the war on terror, and a January 2002 Gallup poll reported that 58 percent of Americans thought immigration levels should be decreased, up from 45 percent in January 2001. However, in what a Los Angeles Times article called "the most significant development in the national immigration debate is what hasn't happened: No lawmaker of influence has moved to reverse the country's generous immigration policy, which for more than three decades has facilitated the largest sustained wave of immigration in U.S. history."¹⁷ The reason

¹⁴ Chicago Council on Foreign Relation. 2002.
www.worldviews.org/detailreports/usreport/html/ch5s5.html.

¹⁵ This poll of 800 adults, conducted July 31-August 17, 1997 for the PBS TV show, "State of the Union," was reported in Susan Page, "Fear of Immigration Eases," *USA Today*, October 13, 1997, online edition

¹⁶ <http://www.ppic.org/publications/CalSurvey5/survey5.ch5.html>

¹⁷ Patrick J. McDonnell, "Wave of U.S. immigration likely to survive Sept. 11," Los Angeles Times, January 10, 2002.

is that most Americans agreed with INS Commissioner James W. Ziglar, who said repeatedly: "These weren't immigrants. They were terrorists."¹⁸

Many politicians and researchers dismiss public concerns about immigration by pointing out that, throughout U.S. history, fears that the United States was accepting too many and the wrong kinds of immigrants proved to be unfounded. Benjamin Franklin, for example, worried that German immigrants arriving in the late 1700s could not be assimilated. Why, he asked, should "Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us, instead of our Anglifying them?"¹⁹ Less than two centuries later, a descendent of these immigrants, Dwight Eisenhower, was elected president of the United States. At the end of the 20th century, some immigrants who adopted U.S. citizenship have been entrusted with high-level public office, including U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and General John M. Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1993 to 1997.

America continues to celebrate its immigrant heritage with mass naturalization ceremonies on July 4, ceremonies designed to associate immigration with the founding of the United States. Politicians remind Americans that they share an immigrant legacy. In light of this revered immigrant heritage, those who want to restrict immigration often sound "un-American." Those who favor reducing immigration normally justify their position with the following arguments:

- Immigration adds to U.S. population growth and, therefore, to environmental problems related to population growth.
- Immigrants depress wages and working conditions in the labor markets where they are concentrated, and they compete with native-born residents for some jobs.
- Immigrant workers are willing to work at low wages, which discourages businesses from modernizing and impedes U.S. competitiveness in the world economy.
- The large number of Hispanic and Asian immigrants are changing the ethnic composition of U.S. population and raising difficult questions for Americans. Should public schools support retention of the immigrants' language and culture? Should minority immigrants be given preference in university admissions, job opportunities, and business contracts?

These concerns demonstrate that attitudes toward immigration and questions about the social and economic integration of immigrants are linked. The fortunes of immigrants, and their effects on the economy, the political system, schools, and society affect attitudes toward additional immigration.

¹⁸ Quoted in Patrick J. McDonnell, "Wave of U.S. immigration likely to survive Sept. 11," Los Angeles Times, January 10, 2002.

¹⁹ Carl N. Degler, *Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America*, 2d ed. (New York: Harper&Row, 1970): 50

Mexico-US Migration and NAFTA

About a quarter of the immigrants arriving in the United States today are from Mexico. In 1800, Mexico and the US had populations of roughly equal size, six million, and Mexico's GDP per capita was about half that of the US. Northern Mexico (the southwestern US states) was transferred to the United States by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), ending a war that began when American settlers moved into Mexican territory and rebelled. The relatively few Mexican residents of what is now the southwestern United States became Americans and for a time the populations on each side of the border stayed pretty well put.

That changed when the US government approved the recruitment of Mexican workers for US farm jobs between 1917 and 1921,²⁰ and again between 1942 and 1964. Both of these Bracero programs were strongly opposed by US unions and church groups concerned about US workers, but farmers argued that there was a wartime emergency to win government permission to recruit Mexican workers. During the second Bracero program, some 1 to 2 million Mexicans gained legal work experience in the US. Millions of others came illegally, and their presence was regularized in a process that US government publications described as "drying out the wetbacks:" unauthorized Mexicans inside the US were taken to the border, issued work permits, and returned to the farms on which they were found.

Under the 1942 agreement between the Mexican government and the US government, US employers had to pay the cost of transporting Braceros from their place of recruitment in Mexico to US farms. Mexicans soon learned that by moving close to the border they could improve their chances of being selected, since that lowered transportation costs. When the Bracero program was stopped in 1964 as a means of improving wages and opportunities for Mexican Americans, there were hundreds of thousands of Braceros and their families living in Mexican border cities. To provide them with jobs, Mexico and the US modified their trade laws to allow the creation of maquiladoras, factories in Mexico that import components, assemble them into finished goods, like TVs, and then re-export the resulting products to the US. The maquiladoras never provided many jobs for ex-Bracero workers--virtually all Braceros were men, and the maquiladoras hired mostly women--but they drew even more Mexicans to the border area.

There was relatively little illegal Mexico-US migration during the 1960s and 1970s, one reason why Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers union could win contracts with California farmers for better wages and benefits for farm workers. But then the Mexican economic crash of 1982 and the ensuing devaluation of the peso gave new incentives for emigration from Mexico. US farmers and other employers turned to labor contractors to

²⁰ Some of these first Bracero program workers also worked for the railroads.

assemble crews of new Mexican workers to harvest crops, clean buildings, and do construction work. There were no penalties on US employers who knowingly hired unauthorized workers. The worst that could happen to them was that the INS would surround the farm or factory and try to catch their workers.

Largely because of the rising number of unauthorized or illegal Mexican workers, Congress enacted the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which imposed penalties on US employers who knowingly hired unauthorized workers. It also legalized the presence of 2.7 million unauthorized foreigners in the US, 85 percent of them Mexicans. Within a short time of its enactment it became apparent that IRCA had not discouraged illegal immigration. Worker identification was not included in the law, enforcement was underfunded and ineffective, fraudulent documents were widely used by workers, migration networks were strengthened by legalization, and illegal Mexican-US migration increased. The US, in effect, put up a “keep out” sign at the border, but once inside the US, unauthorized foreigners were free to respond to “help wanted” signs.

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was large-scale legal and illegal Mexico-US migration: the best estimates are that the number of Mexican-born US residents rose from __ in 1980 to 4.5 in 1990 and 9 in 2000. The Mexican-origin population in the US, (defined as a person born in the US or Mexico to at least one Mexican-born parent,) is estimated to be 22 million. The fact that at least 9 percent of living persons born in Mexico have moved to the US, and that hundreds of thousands are on waiting lists for immigrant visas, suggests that there is considerable emigration pressure in Mexico. There have been two responses to this emigration pressure: the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and stepped-up border controls.

NAFTA is a trade and investment agreement between Canada, Mexico, and the US that has permanently lowered barriers to flows of goods and money with the aim of speeding up economic and job growth in the all three member countries, as the theory of comparative advantage predicts.²¹ NAFTA was proposed by Mexico as a way to solve the country’s debt crisis and restore economic and job growth. Mexico had borrowed heavily in the early 1980s in the expectation that oil prices would remain high, and when oil prices fell, Mexico had both a recession and debts. Many in the US opposed NAFTA, fearing, as 1992 presidential candidate Ross Perot asserted, there would be a “giant sucking sound” as US jobs went to Mexico. However, there was bipartisan support for NAFTA as the best way to assure long-term economic growth in Mexico, and Congress

²¹ Comparative advantage is an economic theory that finds that, if countries specialize in producing the goods in which they have a comparative advantage, as when Mexico produces TVs and the US airplanes, and Mexico trades TVs for airplanes, the economies of both countries will be larger.

narrowly approved the agreement; one of the hoped-for side effects was reduced Mexico-US migration.

NAFTA went into effect on January 1, 1994, and some Americans thought that Mexico-US migration would quickly stop. Instead, it continued, and included so-called banzai runs, in which Mexican smugglers massed groups of 50 to 80 migrants on the Mexican side of the port of entry at San Diego, and directed them to run north into the southbound lanes of traffic into the US. Governor Pete Wilson, who maintained that providing services to unauthorized foreigners accounted for 10 percent of state spending in the early 1990s, used footage of these banzai runs in TV ads to win re-election and support for Proposition 187, the never-implemented state law that would have established a screening system to prevent unauthorized foreigners from obtaining state-funded services.²²

In 1995, Mexico suffered its worst-ever recession, losing about 10 percent of formal sector jobs. The US provided financial assistance to stabilize the Mexican economy and, as President Clinton said, "to better protect our borders." Mexico recovered from the crisis, but wages fell so sharply in dollar terms that they are still not back to 1993 levels. During the late 1990s, Mexico-US migration continued despite economic and job growth, giving rise to the theory that "cumulative causation" had established networks linking Mexican villages and US jobs that were so strong that neither US border controls nor employer sanctions can stop migrants.²³ Cumulative causation explains how a migration flow, once set in motion, can assume a life of its own, much as a snowball rolling down a hill gathers speed and size, so that migration can beget more migration if underlying demand and supply factors do not change.

The U.S. Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development in 1990 explained how freer trade and economic integration was the best long-term way to unwanted migration: "expanded trade between the sending countries and the United States is the single most important remedy" for such migration (1990, p. xv). But the Commission also warned that "the economic development process itself tends in the short to medium term to stimulate migration, "that is, the same policies that accelerate economic and job growth in Mexico may also temporarily increase Mexico-US migration." That increase came to be known as the "migration hump", referring to the curve in graphs of migration.

²² Many of Proposition 187's provisions were included in 1996 immigration reforms (see below), but not the requirement that K-12 schools verify the legal status of pupils.

²³ Massey, Douglas S., Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone. 2002. *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*. Russell Sage. www.russellsage.org/

The Mexico-US migration hump was anticipated by those familiar with Mexican and US agriculture.²⁴ About 35 percent of Mexicans lived in rural areas and were dependent on agriculture for most of their earnings in the early 1990s; they received subsidized water and other inputs, and could sell their corn to the government for about twice the world price. Since Iowa produces about twice as much corn as Mexico, and at about half the price, NAFTA was expected to displace millions of Mexican corn farmers, and it was expected that they would switch to growing tomatoes and other labor-intensive to export to the US. However, growing fruits and vegetables requires capital, skills and access to markets that most small Mexican farmers did not have, so instead of expanding in Mexico, labor-intensive agriculture expanded in California and elsewhere in the US in the 1990s, creating a demand for Mexican workers in the US.

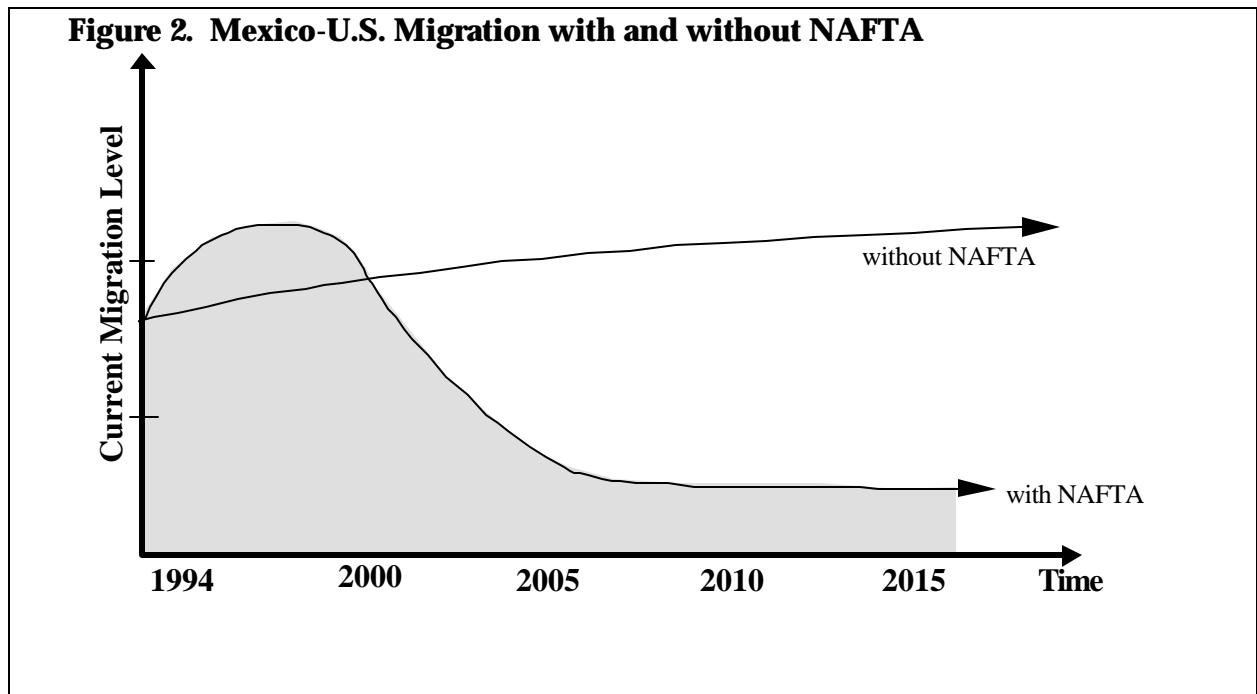
North American agricultural integration produced a migration hump, more Mexico-US migration in the 1990s, but Mexico-US migration should eventually fall as Mexico becomes better at exporting goods, especially as Mexican farmers learn how to produce labor-intensive crops. Mexico has increased its exports of many labor-intensive commodities, and its production would increase much faster if US enforcement made it more difficult for US farmers to hire unauthorized Mexican workers. And just as Mexican workers can produce food in Mexico for export to the US, they can pack meat, process poultry, make shoes and sew clothes for export rather than moving to the US to do these things. Guacamole, for example, is increasingly made in Mexico and exported, rather than made in restaurant kitchens in the US.

Mexico-US migration is at a crossroads in 2003. For most of the 20th century, Mexico and the US were “distant neighbors” whose major economic link was the migration of rural Mexicans to rural America. Mexico-US relations changed in the mid-1980s, when Mexico sought to emulate the East Asian miracle economies by fostering export-oriented growth. During the 1990s, economic integration symbolized by NAFTA accelerated as Mexico-US migration increased. Mexican politics changed along with its economy, and in 2000 Mexico elected its first non-PRI party president in 70 years, Vicente Fox, who made improving conditions for Mexican migrants in the US his government’s top foreign priority. President George W. Bush was sympathetic, and Mexico during the summer of 2001 pushed hard for what it called a “whole enchilada” migration package— legalization for unauthorized Mexicans in the US, a new guest-worker program, ending deaths and violence along the border, and having the US exempt Mexico from immigrant visa ceilings.

Just before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Presidents Bush and Fox met in Washington DC, where Bush said: “the huge majority of Mexicans among us are hard-

²⁴ Martin, P.L. 1993. Trade and Migration: NAFTA and Agriculture. Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics. www.iie.com

working people who contribute to our communities and economy, and simply want the best for their families ...our desire is to make it easier for an employer looking for somebody who wants to work and somebody who wants to work to come together, but that in itself is a complex process."²⁵ Fox responded: "The time has come to give migrants and their communities their proper place in the history of our bilateral relations...we must, and we can, reach an agreement on migration before the end of this very year [2001]." After the terrorist attacks, US attention shifted to security against terrorism (see below).



Four Waves of Immigration

Three processes -- colonization, coercion and immigration -- superimposed a new population on the Indian peoples of North America. In the 16th and 17th centuries, English colonists established the framework of the society that became the United States. They built communities at Jamestown and Plymouth, seized control from the Dutch in New York, and overran various French and Spanish settlements. In this way, the colonists established English as the public language and England's common law as the model for the US legal system.

Two types of coercion also contributed to the peopling of America: the importation of African slaves (who were 19 percent of the U.S. population in 1790), and the incorporation of Native American, Spanish, and French populations as the United States expanded westward. Other population groups became Americans involuntarily

²⁵ Quoted in Fox Visits Bush. 2002. Migration News, Vol 9. No 10. October.

through political deals, war settlements, or purchase of territory. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 made Americans out of the French residents of this territory. Mexicans in California, New Mexico and Texas became American in 1848 as a result of the Mexican War. 50 years later, the United States acquired Puerto Rico in the settlement of the Spanish-American War, and in 1917 Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens.

The third and most important source of Americans was immigration. In 1789, when the former British colonies had become one country, the word “immigrant” entered the language to denote the voluntary process of an alien coming to an established nation. Immigrants and their descendants, added to the colonials, the slaves, the native Americans, and their descendants, are the American people of today.

The flow of immigrants has fluctuated with economic conditions in the United States and abroad and with U.S. immigration policies. For these reasons, the tally of annual arrivals has peaks and troughs. The four major peaks are referred to as the four major waves of immigration.

Figure 3--Immigration to the United States--by year, 1820-2001--update from 1999 PRB with INS

The **first wave** of immigrants arrived before entries were recorded in 1820. The English made up 60 percent of the population in 1790, but there were also Scots, Scots-Irish, Germans, and people from the Netherlands, France, and Spain. A mixture of religious, political, and economic factors motivated these migrations. German sectarians sought religious freedom in Pennsylvania; Spaniards looked for Christian converts in Florida and the southwest; and the Puritans in Massachusetts sought to establish a community restricted to members of their faith. Religious freedom was made possible by political and economic freedom: the absence of coercion by overlords and the chance to prosper in a new land.

These early immigrants took big risks. Starvation, disease, and shipwreck probably killed more than one in 10 of those who set sail for America. Historians estimate that more immigrants than slaves died en route to the New World. Slaves often had more food and protection than ordinary passengers because the death of a slave was a business loss for the slave owners who had arranged their passage.²⁶ The cost of travel was equivalent to four to six months of a laborer’s wages in England, and many potential immigrants indentured themselves to an employer in the United States who would pay for their passage. Indentured workers were legally bound to work for as long as five years for the employer who paid their passage. A third of immigrants arriving in 1776 had become indentured to secure passage

²⁶ Stanley Lebergott, *The Americans: An Economic Record* (New York: Norton, 1986): 182-85

The **second wave** of immigrants, who arrived between 1820 and 1860, fit well with American eagerness for people to help push back the frontier. Peasants displaced from agriculture and artisans made jobless by the industrial revolution were desperate to escape from Europe. New arrivals sent what came to be called “American letters” back to Europe, encouraging friends and relatives to join them. Steamship and railroad companies sent agents around Europe recruiting customers to fill their ships and trains.

Between 1820 and 1840, over 750,000 German, British, and Irish immigrants arrived, and during the next 20 years, another 4.3 million came from those countries(see figure 3). About 40 percent of these second-wave immigrants were from Ireland, escaping poverty and famine. Roman Catholics predominated in the second wave, and by 1850 the Roman Catholic Church was the largest denomination in the United States, though Protestants of various kinds outnumbered Catholics.

The **third wave** of immigrants started in 1880, when almost 460,000 arrived, and ended with the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, when 1.2 million immigrants entered. During the third wave, over 20 million southern and eastern Europeans came, mostly to the eastern and Midwestern states. Several hundred thousand Chinese, Japanese, and other Asian laborers settled in the western states.

The shift in national origins can be seen by comparing the homelands of the immigrants who entered during two peak immigration years: 1882 and 1907. Of those arriving in 1882, 87 percent came from northern and western Europe, and 13 percent came from southern and eastern Europe. In 1907, only 19 percent of immigrants were from northern and western Europe and 81 percent were from southern and eastern Europe. The immigrants who arrived in 1907 also included the first large numbers of people of Jewish and Eastern Orthodox religions.

By the early 1900s, the frontier was closed, and most newcomers found factory jobs in the eastern and midwestern cities. The number of immigrants was large: More than 1 million immigrants arrived annually in six of the first 14 years of the 20th century. By the time of the 1910 census, foreign-born residents accounted for nearly 15 percent of the U.S. population and about 24 percent of the U.S. labor force. In 1910, immigrants made up more than one-half of all operatives in mining, steel, and meatpacking. Foreign-born men made up more than one-half of the work force in New York, Chicago, and Detroit.²⁷

There was an **immigration pause** between 1915 and 1964. Immigration ceased as war erupted in Europe. When immigrants began to arrive again in the 1920s, their entry was

²⁷ Vernon J. Briggs, *Mass Immigration and the National Interest* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992): 56-7

curtailed by the introduction of numerical limits, or “quotas.” Then the severe economic depression of the 1930s discouraged foreigners moving to the United States. As Hitler’s dictatorship became more threatening, there were calls on the Roosevelt administration to give more generous treatment to those fleeing Nazi Germany. But the United States did not admit large numbers of refugees until after World War II, when the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 led to the entry of more than 400,000 Europeans. The Refugee Relief Act of 1953 permitted the admission of another 190,000. Including the refugee flows, an average of 250,000 immigrants entered per year through the 1950s.

During the 1940s and 1950s, immigration from Mexico and other Western Hemisphere nations became increasingly important. In the 1940s, about one-third of the 1 million immigrants whose arrivals were recorded were from the Western Hemisphere. The Western Hemisphere share climbed to 40 percent in the 1950s. Legal immigrant admissions did not reflect the volume of Western Hemisphere immigration because many migrants were unauthorized. Between 1940 and 1960, for example, 360,000 legal Mexican immigrants were admitted, but in one year alone (1954), over 1 million Mexicans were apprehended and sent back as illegal entrants.

Fourth-wave immigrants began arriving in the United States after 1965, when the preference system changed. Instead of giving priority to immigrants based on their national origins, with preference to those from northern and western Europe, the new system gave priority to people with U.S. relatives, and to a small number of people with outstanding accomplishments or skills. These changes, coupled with prosperity in Europe, altered the composition of U.S. immigrants. During the 1970s, the first decade that the law was effective, less than 20 percent of U.S. immigrants were Europeans.

There are many similarities between immigration at the beginning of the 20th century and at the start of the 21st. The number of immigrants arriving annually during the peak years—over 1 million—is about the same, although the foreign-born accounted for more of the U.S. population in 1900 (15 percent) than in 2000 (11 percent). The economy was undergoing fundamental restructuring, from services to information at start of the 21st century, and from agriculture to industry in the early years of the 20th. Both waves brought people from countries that had not previously sent large numbers of immigrants, raising questions about language, religion, and culture.

U.S. Immigration Policies

Immigration policies aim to determine how many, from where, and in what status immigrants arrive. These policies have gone through three major phases: *laissez-faire*, qualitative restrictions, and quantitative restrictions.

Laissez-Faire – 1780-1875

During its first hundred years, the United States had a *laissez-faire* policy toward immigration. Federal, state, and local governments, private employers, shipping

companies and railroads, and churches were free to promote immigration to the United States. Some policies of the federal government indirectly encouraged immigration. Subsidizing railroad construction, for example, led to the recruitment of immigrant workers by private railroad companies. High tariffs kept out European goods and thus created a demand for more workers in American factories. The federal government relied on immigrants to staff the army-- immigrants were about a third of the regular soldiers in the 1840s, and an even higher proportion of many state militias.²⁸

The hunger for manpower and the libertarian principles of the new nation brought immigrants a generally favorable reception. Although there were fears that immigrants would alter the culture and customs of the United States, the neat match between Europeans seeking opportunity and an America in need of people overcame such fears and the immigration door remained wide open.

The Naturalization Act of 1790 established the principle that an immigrant could acquire citizenship after several years of residence in the United States.²⁹ No fees or admissions tests were imposed on immigrants, but after 1819, the federal government required ship captains to collect and report data on the immigrants they brought to the US.

The big influx of Roman Catholics from Ireland and Germany in the 1840's set off the first organized anti-foreign movement in the nation's history, the "Know Nothing" movement, which was embodied in the American Party. Groups of Protestant clergymen, journalists, and other opinion leaders formed the Order of the Star Spangled Banner within the party to urge the reduction of immigration from non-Anglo-Saxon countries. To maintain secrecy, members were instructed to answer any inquiries about the Order with the words "I know nothing about it." The American party won 70 congressional seats in the federal election of 1854, but the majority of congressmen did not respond to the flurry of anti-immigrant feeling and no restrictions were imposed. Immigration slowed before the Civil War and slavery replaced immigration as the major political issue of the day.

Qualitative Restrictions – 1875-1920

After the Civil War, public attention turned again to immigration. The growing numbers of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe aroused concerns and fears among the overwhelmingly Protestant and rural American populace. Writing in 1901, Woodrow

²⁸Briggs, *ibid*, p. 45

²⁹The 1790 Act permitted white persons of "good moral character" to acquire citizenship after 2 years' residence. The period was briefly extended to 14 years in 1798, and has been 5 years since 1800.

Wilson, who was later elected president, shared the popular antagonism to the immigrants:

“Immigrants poured in as before, but...now there came multitudes of men of lowest class from the south of Italy and men of the meanest sort out of Hungary and Poland, men out of the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence; and they came in numbers which increased from year to year, as if the countries of the south of Europe were disburdening themselves of the more sordid and hapless elements of their population.”³⁰

The fear of foreigners led to the imposition of qualitative restrictions aimed at barring certain types of immigrants. In 1875, convicts and prostitutes were barred. The Immigration Act of 1882 added paupers and “mental defectives” to those who could not immigrate to the United States. And for the first time, it barred immigration from a particular country—China. The 1882 Act barred Chinese immigration for 10 years, and the ban was renewed every decade until 1943.

Beginning in 1897, Congress approved legislation providing that only people who could read and write be admitted as immigrants. The aim was to cut down the numbers of immigrants, particularly of peasants from southern and eastern Europe, where literacy rates were low. Three presidents, however, vetoed literacy tests. President Wilson’s third veto was overridden in 1917 and a law was passed that required that future immigrants over age 16 had to know how to read in one language. The literacy test did not achieve its purpose, and in 1907, the U.S. House of Representatives commissioned a study that laid the foundation for the use of national origin as the chief criterion for selecting immigrants. It concluded that immigrants from southern and eastern Europe had more “inborn socially inadequate qualities than northwestern Europeans.”³¹

Quantitative Restrictions – Since 1921

In 1921, Congress imposed restrictions on the annual number of immigrants allowed into the United States. In 1924, it set an annual limit of 150,000 immigrants, plus accompanying wives and children. The immigration legislation of the 1920s also established a quota system -- the national origins formula -- that aimed to maintain the then-current ethnic and racial make-up of the United States. The Immigration Act of May

³⁰Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1901) Vol 4 pp 212-213

³¹Quoted in Oscar Handlin, *Memorandum Concerning the Origins of the national Origin Quota System*, Hearings Before the President’s Commission on Immigration and Naturalization, 82nd Congress, 2nd sess. (Washington, D.C. U.S Government Printing Office, 1952)p.755

26, 1924 prescribed that the maximum number of immigrants from any country in the Eastern Hemisphere would be "a number which bears the same ratio to 150,000 as the number of inhabitants in the United States in 1920 having that national origin bears to the number of white inhabitants of the United States."³²

The national origins formula gave preference to immigrants from northern and western Europe. During the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, over 80 percent of all immigrant visas went to people from northern and western European countries, 14 percent to eastern and southern Europeans, and 4 percent to people from other Eastern Hemisphere countries. The limits specified in the 1924 act did not apply to immigration from Western Hemisphere countries such as Mexico.

In the 1930s, the rise of political and racial persecution in fascist Europe brought no change in American immigration law, which did not make special provision for refugees, and the requirement that an applicant for a visa have a sponsor was applied in routine fashion. Thus only about 250,000 of the Europeans attempting to escape persecution by the Nazis were admitted. Many of those who were turned away later died in labor and death camps.³³

After World War II, President Harry S Truman and some congressional reformers sought to abolish the discriminatory national origins system, but their efforts failed. Congress passed the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952 over Truman's veto and left the quota system intact. In the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy also proposed eliminating preferences for immigrants from specific regions or countries, and giving priority for immigrant visas instead to close relatives of U.S. citizens and foreigners with special skills and abilities that would benefit the United States. Kennedy did not live to see his bill considered, but by 1965, the momentum of the civil rights movement provided enough force to eliminate racial and ethnic discrimination in American immigration law. Under the 1965 amendments to the INA, about 80 percent of the immigration slots were given to immigrants joining family members or relatives in the United States. No limit was placed on the number of immediate relatives who could move to the United States if their U.S. relatives were citizens. For the first time, Asians were treated like other immigrants, and also for the first time, limits were placed on immigration from the Western Hemisphere.

Immigration Reforms—1980-2002

³²House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary, House report 1365, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, February 14, 1952, p37. Each country was guaranteed at least 100 visas, so that 154,477 visas were available annually.

³³Robert Devine. *American Immigration Policy: 1924-1952*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957) p104.

Until the 1980s, U.S. immigration law could be described as a complex system that changed once each generation. The accelerating pace of global change affected migration patterns, however, and Congress responded with three major changes in immigration laws between 1980 and 1990, three more in 1996, and anti-terrorism laws with effects on immigration in 2001-02.

1980-1990

The first change during the 1980s was an expansion of the definition of refugees. From the 1950's until 1980, the United States defined refugees as persons fleeing communist dictatorships or from political violence in the Middle East, and offered those who escaped the chance to settle in the United States. The United Nations, in the 1953 Geneva Convention, defined a refugee more broadly, as a person living outside his or her country of citizenship who was unwilling to return because of a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. With the Refugee Act of 1980, the United States adopted the Geneva Convention definition both to select refugees in camps who wanted to resettle in the US, and to determine whether foreigners seeking asylum in the United States deserved refugee status.

The number of refugees allowed to settle in the United States is set each year by the president, in consultation with Congress.³⁴ During the 1990s, the number of authorized admissions fell from about 120,000 to 90,000, and then to 70,000 in 2002 and 2003. Most refugees are resettled in the US with the help of NGOs such as Immigration and Refugee Services of America, with the federal government reimbursing the organizations for the cash, medical assistance, and job and language training they provide to newly arrived refugees.³⁵

The second major policy change involved illegal immigration. During the 1970s, Congress, federal commissions, and the press reported on the increasing number of foreigners, mostly Mexicans, who were entering the United States and staying without permission. Presidents Ford and Carter appointed commissions to study the effects of illegal immigration on the US economy and society. These commissions concluded that illegal migrants adversely affected unskilled American workers and undermined the rule of law, and that the federal government should undertake new efforts to reduce such migration.³⁶ The best way to deal with illegal immigrants who had put down roots, they said, was to legalize their status by granting them amnesty. The best way to

³⁴ Refugees are "admitted" as immigrants in INS data one year after they arrive in the US.

³⁵ See <http://www.refugeesusa.org/>

³⁶ Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy (SCRIP), *U.S. Immigration Policy and the National Interest* (Washington, DC: SCIRP, 1981).

discourage future illegal immigration was to impose penalties, or “employer sanctions,” on U.S. employers who hired illegal immigrants.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 embodied this historic bargain. It legalized 2.7 million unauthorized aliens and, for the first time, made it unlawful for US employers to knowingly hire new workers without verifying their right to work in the US. The legalization program succeeded in that most eligible aliens became legal immigrants. However, legalization also proved to be an incentive for more illegal immigration, especially from Mexico, primarily because of the Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) program. The SAW program, through which 40 percent of the legalizations occurred, offered legalization to people who could prove they had worked for at least 90 days in agricultural jobs in the United States. The SAW program was riddled with fraud.³⁷ The employer sanctions part of the law also did not work as intended. The INS was slow to establish effective strategies to enforce it, and unauthorized workers found ways to buy false documents to present to employers.

By the late 1980s, the hope that illegal immigration had been reduced by IRCA, and the belief that immigration of skilled workers was vital to American competitiveness in global markets, provided the basis for the Immigration Act of 1990 (IMMACT). The 1990 law raised the previous annual ceiling on immigration from 270,000, plus immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, to 675,000 including relatives, plus refugees. Within this global cap, IMMACT added new immigration slots such as diversity visas—to increase immigration from Ireland and other countries that had sent few immigrants in recent times.

Table 2. Numerically-Limited Immigration in FY2000, same table, and #'s are slightly different on p A1-3 of 2000 yearbook

Immigration Changes in 1996

In the early 1990s, there was much debate about immigration, but little significant new legislation.³⁸ But pressure for reform intensified, and 1996 proved to be a watershed

³⁷ Under the SAW program, unauthorized aliens merely had to assert that they had done at least 90 days of farm work in 1985-86 to be qualified for legalization. The screening of their applications was so cursory that, for example, applications were approved in which the applicants claimed to have picked crops for 92 days in a harvest that lasted only 50 or 60 days. Some successful applicants made patently false claims, such as to have picked strawberries from ladders. Martin, Philip L. 1994. Good intentions gone awry: IRCA and U.S. agriculture. *The Annals of the Academy Of Political and Social Science*, Vol 534: 44-57. July

³⁸ Significant legislation in the early 1990s included the Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992, which permitted Chinese nationals living the United States in 1989-1990 to adjust to permanent resident status, and the North American Free Trade Agreement, which permitted

year for immigration legislation, as Congress approved three major immigration-related laws: The Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA).

These laws were motivated by concern about terrorism, especially the role of asylum applicants in the 1994 World Trade Center bombing; the desire to find savings to balance the federal budget and to end perceived abuses of U.S. welfare by immigrants; and frustration with continued illegal immigration. The 1996 anti-terrorism law changed criminal law concerning foreigners, making it easier to detain aliens convicted of crimes committed in the United States without bail and to deport them when they had served their sentences. The same law made it easier for the INS to exclude foreigners who arrive at airports without proper documents and seek asylum in the United States. They can be subject to “expedited removal” and barred from legal re-entry if they cannot make a credible case that they face persecution at home.

The new welfare law radically changed the way all low-income residents, especially new legal immigrants, receive benefits. Until the fall of 1997, when PRWORA came into force, immigrants generally received the same benefits from the federal government as citizens. PRWORA made most legal immigrants who entered the United States after August 22, 1996 ineligible for federal means-tested welfare benefits unless they were refugees, veterans of the U.S. Armed Services, or had worked at least 10 years in the United States. PRWORA was expected to save about \$54 billion in its first six years, with 45 percent of the savings coming from denying welfare benefits to legal immigrants. However, in 1997-98 Congress approved amendments that restored the eligibility of many legal immigrants who lived in the United States on August 22, 1996 for welfare services, and Congress went further in 2002, approving Food Stamps for immigrants who had lived in the US at least five years.

The third 1996 law, IIRIRA, included three sets of measures to reduce illegal immigration and further tighten the access of legal immigrants to welfare. First, it called for 1,000 more Border Patrol agents each year for five years, bringing the total from 5,175 in 1996 to almost 10,000 by 2000. Second, IIRIRA introduced a pilot telephone verification program to enable employers to verify the status of newly hired workers, and for social service agencies to determine the legal status of applicants for benefits. Social service agencies must verify the legal status of those applying for benefits, but employer participation in the verification program is voluntary.

Third, in an attempt to make sure that future immigrants will not need public assistance, IIRIRA required US residents who sponsor immigrants for admission to have higher

some Canadian and Mexican professionals to enter the United States for employment. See Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbook, 1996*: A.1-21-22

incomes than were previously required, and to sign legally binding pledges to support the immigrants they sponsor. Sponsors must have annual incomes that are at least 125 percent of the poverty-line income for their own family plus the relatives they sponsor. The poverty line for a family of four in 2002 is \$18,100, so a couple sponsoring two parents for immigrant visas would have to show an income of at least \$22,625.

During the late 1990s, Congress enacted legislation to regularize the status of Central Americans who had come to the US during the civil wars in their countries in the 1980's but had been refused asylum. Haitians also were later allowed to seek immigrant status if returning to Haiti would be an "extreme hardship."

The INS became one of the fastest-growing federal agencies, as Congress approved funds to hire more Border Patrol agents. For much of 2000, the US and Cuba focused on Elian Gonzalez, the six-year old Cuban boy rescued by fishermen on Thanksgiving Day 1999 and brought to Miami. Elian was turned over to relatives there. They refused to give him up to his father, who came from Cuba to take him home. In April 2000, the INS took Elian from the Miami relatives, and in June, he returned to Cuba.

Responses to Terrorism, 2001-02

On September 11, 2001, foreigners in the US hijacked four commercial planes. Two were flown into the World Trade Center towers in New York City, bringing them down and killing 3,000 people. President Bush declared war on terrorists and the countries that harbor them, and Congress enacted legislation to fight terrorism.

The behavior of the hijackers demonstrated that the US did not have effective systems for checking applicants for visas overseas, checking persons seeking entry to the US against criminal databases, or tracking foreigners inside the US. Several of the hijackers had been able to obtain driver's licenses and ID cards because states did not require proof that the applicant was legally in the US. It was widely noted that even though the hijackers entered the US legally, they could have slipped into the US with unauthorized foreigners over the Mexican or Canadian borders.

Congress approved anti-terrorism legislation that affected immigrants, such as the Uniting and Strengthening America Act by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act of 2001, which expanded the government's power to conduct electronic surveillance, to detain foreigners without charges and to penetrate money-laundering banks. USA Patriot provided additional funds for border security and granted the US Attorney General the power to detain any foreigner who he/she certifies is a danger to US national security. The federal government detained and held in secret some 1,200 foreigners in the aftermath of September 11. None were found to have terrorist links, and most were deported for violating immigration laws.

The Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act (EBSVERA) of 2002 added 3,000 immigration inspectors and investigators, required universities to keep better track of foreign students, and heightened scrutiny of visa applications from applicants of countries deemed sponsors of terrorism. The Student Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS) aims to track students in the US, and to tighten requirements on the schools that, in effect, allow foreign students to enter the U.S. by admitting them for study. Visas to visit the US are issued at US consulates abroad, but the information submitted by applicants from most Middle Eastern countries must be sent to Washington to be checked against databases operated by the FBI and the CIA.

Perhaps the most important change after September 11 was in the organization of the INS within the executive branch of government. There were many calls in the late 1990s to reorganize and restructure the agency, which enforces immigration laws and provides immigration benefits, such as work authorization and naturalization. In 2003, the INS was moved into a new Cabinet agency, the Department of Homeland Security, and enforcement was separated from services.

The Effects of Immigration

Immigration and US Population

Immigration has a major effect on the size, distribution, and composition of the U.S. population. Because fertility and mortality have reached relatively low levels in the United States, immigration's role in the growth of the national, state, and local populations has increased in recent decades. Immigration contributed a third of the total population increase between 1990 and 2000.³⁹ The foreign-born population (which includes resident nonimmigrants) has increased accordingly, from 19.8 million in 1990 to 31.1 million in 2000.

Because immigrants have characteristics different from those of native-born Americans, they are making the American populace more diverse (Box 2). Until the 1990s, these effects were confined largely to the immigration states—California, New York, Texas, and Florida—but they have since spread throughout the US.

In 2000, the US had 281 million residents, about six million more than expected: there were 211 million white residents, 35 million Hispanics,⁴⁰ 35 million Blacks, and 10 million Asians.⁴¹ For the first time, the number of Hispanics exceeded the number of

³⁹ There were 19.8 million foreign-born residents in 1990, and 31.1 million in 2000. The US population was 249 million in 1990, and 281 million in 2000.

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⁴¹ In 1990, these numbers, respectively, were 200 million; 22 million; 30 million; and seven million.

Blacks. Hispanics have Spanish-speaking ancestry but may belong to any race; about 66 percent of US Hispanics are of Mexican descent.

Once we get new pop projections—we will update.

If current fertility, mortality, and immigration patterns continue, the Census Bureau projects the US population to be 338 million in 2025 and 404 million in 2050 (Stat Abstract, 2001, p17—but not based on 2000 Census). Under those assumptions, the composition of the population at mid-century would be 53 percent non-Hispanic white, 14 percent African American, 24 percent Hispanic, and 9 percent Asian. The Census Bureau assumed a net influx of 820,000 legal and illegal immigrants annually in making these projections.⁴²

Assuming ___ newcomers per year, the number of foreign-born persons (the first generation) is projected to rise from 25 million in 1996 to 42 million in 2025, and the foreign-born share of the U.S. population is projected to increase from 10 percent to about 14 percent. For some purposes, especially in discussing the demographic impacts of immigration, analysts combine immigrants and their U.S.-born children, the first and second generations; the children are U.S. citizens, but they are in the United States because of their parents' immigration. In 1995, first- and second-generation Americans were about 20 percent of the U.S. population. If net legal and illegal immigration averages 820,000 per year, first- and second-generation Americans are projected to be about one-third of the U.S. population in 2025.⁴³

Figure 4. US Population by Race and Ethnic Group—redo p 23. I cannot find newer projections to 2050 than the 1996 ones that we used.

Some analysts contend that immigration can “keep America young” or “save Social Security” by improving the ratio of contributors of tax dollars to recipients of public benefits.⁴⁴ Demographic analysis, however, reveals that current levels of immigration have a small effect on the median age of U.S. residents, and on the dependency ratio—the number of people of working-age in relation to the number of children and elderly. The Census Bureau projected the U.S. median age to rise to 38 by 2050 from 34 in 1995, assuming immigration of 880,000 people per year. If immigration had ceased after 1995, the U.S. median age by such a calculation would be two years greater, 40 years, in 2050.

⁴² US Census Bureau. 1996.

⁴³ James P. Smith and Barry Edmonston, eds., *The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1997: 76-134

⁴⁴ Ben Wattenberg, *The Birth Dearth: What Happens When People in Free Countries Don't Have Enough Babies?* (New York: Pharos Books, 1987).

Because most immigrants are Asians and Hispanics, immigration will slow the aging of the U.S. Hispanic and Asian populations, but will have little effect on the non-Hispanic white or black population. In 1995, the median age was 37 years for non-Hispanic whites, 29 years for blacks, 26 years for Hispanics, and 31 years for Asians. With no further immigration, Hispanics would have a median age of 31 in 2025; with immigration, the median age would be 28 years. The median age of Asians would be 39 years without and 36 years with immigration. The median age of non-Hispanic whites is projected to rise to 43 years under either immigration scenario.

How does immigration affect dependency, the need of working-age residents to support children and the elderly? The U.S. social security system transfers funds from current workers to retired workers. Thus its ability to pay benefits depends on demography—the number of workers and retirees—and economics, the earnings and taxes collected from workers and employers.

Immigration increases the size of the U.S. labor force, but has a small effect on the dependency ratio—the number of children and older people who need to be supported in proportion to the number of workers. The U.S. labor force, 129 million in 1995, is projected to be 138 million in 2025 without immigration, and 153 million with immigration. In 2025, there would be 2.7 workers per elderly dependent without immigration and 2.5 workers per elderly dependent with immigration.⁴⁵

Immigrants are mostly young people who have children. Because immigrants have a higher fertility rate than the native-born population, their presence increases the ratio of dependent children to workers. In 1995, there were 1.7 children per worker. By 2025, there are projected to be 1.8 child dependents per worker with current levels of immigration, compared with 1.7 children per worker with no more immigration. In other words, net immigration of 820,000 per year would add 2 million elderly to the United States population in 2025, 15 million persons to the U.S. labor force, and 14 million children to the U.S. population. By 2020, net immigration of 820,000 per year would add 14 million children and 2 million elderly people to the United States population and 15 million people to the U.S. labor force.

Box 2—The Foreign-born Population

The US has always had a significant foreign-born population, but it reached an all-time high of 32.4 million in the March 2002 Current Population Survey, 11.3 percent of US residents. During the peak years of immigration early in the 20th century, the number of foreign-born residents was lower, but their share of US residents was higher. In 1910, for example, there were 13.5 million foreign-born residents, but they were 15 percent of US residents.

⁴⁵ Smith and Edmonston, *The New Americans*: 76-134.

Most foreign-born residents arrived recently. The 1990 Census reported 19.8 million foreign-born residents, while the March 2002 CPS reported 32.4 million, suggesting that 64 percent of the 2002 foreign-born residents arrived since 1990. California had 9.1 million foreign-born residents in 2002, 28 percent of the total, followed by New York with 4 million and Florida and Texas, 3 million each—the Big 4 states had 59 percent of America's foreign-born. However, the sharpest increases in foreign-born residents were in other states, such as Nevada, where the foreign-born population rose from 105,000 to 386,000, and NC, where it rose from 115,000 to 381,000.

Americans often refer to all foreign-born residents as immigrants, but not all of them are that. Between 1 and 2 percent are nonimmigrants, such as foreign students and workers, some of whom will return to their countries of origin. Another 9 million are unauthorized foreigners, which means that only about 62 percent of the foreign-born residents are immigrants.

Some 29.8 percent of the foreign-born residents in 2002 were born in Mexico, followed by China, 4.5 percent,⁴⁶ the Philippines, 4.4 percent, and India, 4 percent. About 55 percent were born in Latin America, 26 percent were born in Asia and the Middle East, and 14 percent were born in Europe.

Foreign-born residents 18 and older are more likely than the US-born to be in the US work force, but they are younger, less educated, and have lower annual earnings. The average age of a US-born worker who worked a full-time schedule at least part of 2001 was 41, and median earnings were \$31,200. For foreign-born residents, the average age was 39, and median earnings were \$24,000. However, the sharpest contrast is with foreign-born residents who arrived since 1990: their average age was 32 and median earnings \$20,000. These low earnings reflect the fact that 35 percent of these recent arrivals were not high school graduates.⁴⁷ By contrast, fewer than 8 percent of US-born residents had not finished high school.

Foreign-born residents were 14.5 percent of the 121 million US workers employed full-time for at least part of 2001. Immigrants were 44 percent of private household workers, 42 percent of those with non-managerial farming occupations, and 20 percent of operators, fabricators and laborers.

About 16 percent of foreign-born residents, and 11 percent of US-born residents, had incomes below the poverty line in 2002. By country of origin, about 26 percent of those

⁴⁶ Includes those born in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

⁴⁷ This paragraph based on Camarota, Steven. 2002. Immigrants in the US—2002. Center for Immigration Studies. November.

born in the Dominican Republic were poor, as were 20 percent of those born in Mexico and Pakistan, and 20 percent of those born in Cuba and Honduras. About 24 percent of households headed by foreign-born residents obtained a means-tested federal benefit in 2001, versus 16 percent of households headed by a US-born resident—the most common benefit used by both groups was Medicaid. Country of origin data for welfare use track poverty data—59 percent of households headed by a person born in the Dominican Republic obtained a means-tested federal benefit in 2001, 36 percent of those headed by a person born in Mexico, 35 percent of those headed by a person born in Cuba, and 33 percent of those headed by a person born in Haiti.

Foreign-born residents are in their prime childbearing years, so the percentage of births to foreign-born women is higher than their share of US residents. In 2001, 22.5 percent of the 4 million births were to women who were born outside the US; 63 percent of Hispanic births were to mothers born outside the US (National Vital Statistics Report, Vol 51, No 2, December 18, 2002, p 45)

Economic Effects

Most immigrants come to the United States for higher wages and more opportunities, and their work has significant effects on the U.S. economy and labor market. Like U.S. citizens, most working-age immigrants seek jobs, earn wages, pay taxes, and consume public services. In 1997, the National Research Council (NRC) concluded that the economic benefits from legal and illegal immigration add \$1 billion to \$10 billion per year to U.S. Gross Domestic Product, largely because immigration holds down U.S. wages and thus prices, and increases the efficiency of the economy.⁴⁸ Thus, immigration is a net positive economic factor, but a very small factor in an \$8 trillion economy that normally expands by \$300 billion a year.⁴⁹

The NRC report emphasized that the most important economic issues are distributional. Who benefits and who suffers from immigration? In particular, how does the presence of new arrivals affect settled immigrants and Americans similar in education and skills to the new arrivals? How quickly do immigrants climb the American job ladder? The NRC found that most of the economic benefits of immigration accrue to the immigrants themselves, to owners of capital, and to highly educated U.S. residents. The fact that highly educated U.S. residents benefit from immigration, and that immigrants, when ranked by years of education, are at the extremes of the distribution, means that immigration tends to increase inequality.

⁴⁸ Smith and Edmonston, *The New Americans*: 135-65.

⁴⁹ The employment rates--the percentage of immigrants versus natives of the same age and sex--of immigrants have been declining, reflecting what the NRC termed the increased difficulty that recent immigrants have finding US jobs(p5-17). For example, in 1990, 22 percent more native-born women worked than immigrant women aged 25 to 34.

Among recent arrivals, 30 percent of the foreign-born population had an undergraduate, professional, or graduate degree in 1997, compared with 24 percent of U.S.-born Americans ages 25 and older (see Figure 5). At the other end of the distribution, about 34 percent of the immigrants did not finish high school, versus 16 percent of the U.S.-born. Because education is the best predictor of a person's earnings, these percentages help explain the growing inequality between foreign born and U.S.-born Americans, and within the foreign-born population.

Figure 5 Immigrants by education--update Fig 5 of 1999 PRB

Labor Market Effects

Immigration changes US labor markets (Box 3). In 1986, the President's Council on Economic Advisors (CEA) summarized the labor market effects of immigrants as follows:⁵⁰

"Although immigrant workers increase output, their addition to the supply of labor . . . [causes] wage rates in the immediately affected market [to be] bid down. . . Thus, native-born workers who compete with immigrants for jobs may experience reduced earnings or reduced employment."⁵¹

Box 3. Immigration Tradeoffs

Immigration is often characterized as good or bad for the country. Few public policy choices are contests between good and bad. They are instead arguments about which of two goods deserves higher priority, which is precisely the reason that they are subjects of debate. For example, adjusting interest rates upward can lead to lower inflation, which is a desirable result, but away from fuller employment, a competing good. Similarly, reducing trade barriers can stimulate exports, helping some employers and workers, but increase imports, leading to the failure of other businesses and the loss of jobs. There is no easy way to balance the tradeoffs between competing outcomes.

Decisions on the three basic immigration questions entail making such tradeoffs:

- How many immigrants should be allowed to enter?
- From which countries should they come?
- How should the government enforce immigration rules?

⁵⁰ Council of Economic Advisors. 1986. *The Economic Effects of Immigration*. Washington: Council of Economic Advisors. 213-234.

⁵¹ Council of Economic Advisors, *The Economic Effects of Immigration* (Washington, DC: Council of Economic Advisors, 1986), 213-34 quoted on p221

Agriculture, a sector employing large numbers of Mexicans for the past 60 years, affords an example of the tradeoffs. Americans want to pay low prices for food. They also want farm workers, like other US workers, to have decent wages and working conditions. To achieve both goals, Congress permitted Mexican workers to enter and provide low-cost labor on farms, and then tried to alleviate the poverty of farm workers and their children with special education, health, and housing programs. These special programs, however, have not prevented farm workers from being among the poorest American workers.⁵² There are tradeoffs between these competing goods—inexpensive food and decent farm wages.

If the US wants both cheap food and decent farm wages—competing desirable goods—it is useful to determine precisely what the tradeoffs are between them. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistic's Consumer Expenditure Survey, there were 109 million "consumer units" in 2000, with an average of 2.5 persons, 1.4 earners and two vehicles. The average household had an annual income of \$44,600 before taxes and \$41,500 after taxes; average consumer unit expenditures were \$38,000.⁵³

These household expenditures included \$5,200 for food (14 percent). Food spending was split 58-42 percent, including \$3,000 for food eaten at home (eight percent, or \$58 a week) and \$2,200 for food bought away from home.⁵⁴ Expenditures on fresh fruits (\$163) and fresh vegetables (\$159) totaled \$322 a year, or \$6.20 a week. To put this spending on labor-intensive commodities in perspective, the average household spent 15 percent more on alcoholic beverages, \$372 a year, than on fresh fruits and vegetables, \$322.

Farmers received an average 16 percent of the retail price of fresh fruits in 2000, and 19 percent of the retail price of fresh vegetables, so \$322 from the consumer means \$56 to the farmer ($0.16 \times 163 = \$26 + 0.19 \times 159 = \30). Farmers do not pay all of this \$56 to farm workers— farm labor costs are typically less than a third of farmer revenue, meaning that farm worker wages and benefits are less than \$18 per household a year, or less than one half of one percent of average annual spending. This means that consumers who pay \$1 for a pound of apples, or \$1 for a head of lettuce, are giving 16 to 19 cents to the farmer, and 5 to 6 cents to the farm worker.

⁵² The evolution and effectiveness of these programs is examined in Martin, Philip L. and David Martin. 1993. *The Endless Quest: Helping America's Farm Workers*. Boulder: Westview Press. <http://www.hcacademic.com>

⁵³ (<http://www.bls.gov/cex/>)

⁵⁴ Other significant expenditures were housing and utilities, \$12,300; transportation, \$7,400; health care, \$2,100; apparel, \$1,900; entertainment, \$1,900; cash contributions, \$1,200; and tobacco products, \$300.

About two-thirds of 2.5 million US farm workers were born abroad. It is hard to determine how much wages would rise if foreign workers were not available, but in 1966, one year after the end of the Bracero program, the fledgling United Farm Workers union won a 40 percent wage increase for grape harvesters.⁵⁵ Average earnings were \$7.56 an hour for US field and livestock workers in 2000, according to a USDA survey of farm employers, and a 40 percent increase would raise them by \$3 to \$10.58. If this wage increase were passed fully to consumers, the 5 to 6 cent farm labor cost of a pound of apples or a head of lettuce would rise to 7 to 9 cents, and the retail price would rise by 2 to 3 cents.

For a typical household, a 40 percent increase in farm labor costs translates into a two to three percent increase in retail prices ($0.175 \times 0.33 = 6$ percent, farm labor costs rise 40 percent, and $0.4 \times 6 = 2.4$ percent), so total spending on fruits and vegetables would rise by \$8, from \$322 a year to \$330 a year. However, for a typical seasonal farm worker, earnings could rise to \$11,200 a year, up from \$8,000.

Are the savings on fresh produce due to immigration worthwhile? The migrants are better off, earning 5 to 10 times more in the US than they would at home. US farmers and their bankers are also better off, enjoying higher profits and therefore higher land prices. US and foreign consumers of US commodities pay less for fresh produce. The critical question is whether these benefits are more valuable than having farm work performed and rewarded like other work in America. The way this question is answered is a major determinant of US immigration policy, especially with respect to Mexico.

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Research interest and policy concern focuses on how immigrants affect those in the bottom half of the labor market. Governments have long protected vulnerable low-wage workers by establishing minimum wages and regulating hours of work; there are also education and training programs to help workers improve their job skills and thus their earnings. The 1960s “war on poverty” and civil rights movement reinforced the U.S. commitment to improving conditions at the bottom of the labor market through employment and training programs for less skilled workers, and affirmative action for workers from population groups that suffered discrimination in the past.

Economists and other social scientists have used three kinds of studies to examine the labor market effects of immigrants in detail: case studies, econometric studies, and economic mobility or integration studies.

⁵⁵ Martin, Philip. 1996. *Promises to Keep: Collective Bargaining in California Agriculture*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.

Case studies examine a particular industry or occupation. Many of the first immigration studies were case studies that were undertaken after a strike by U.S. workers resulted in their replacement by immigrants. When farm workers in southern California went on strike for a wage increase in 1982, for example, many lost their jobs. There was no direct competition between new migrants and established workers, however. The unionized workers were displaced in a competition between employers. The unionized harvesting association lost business to farm labor contractors (FLCs) who hired nonunion and often unauthorized workers. The harvesting association went out of business, and the union workers lost their jobs.⁵⁶

Case studies show that immigration can displace established workers and depress wages by adding vulnerable workers to the labor supply. This scenario conforms to accepted labor market theory, but the actual effects on wages and employment are indirect and hard to measure.⁵⁷ Once employers begin hiring newly-arrived workers through FLCs, for example, hiring and supervision can change. Local workers may not learn about job vacancies if the FLCs find additional workers by asking current employees to bring in their friends and relatives. Such network hiring helps explain why many garment shops in New York or Los Angeles have Mexican, Chinese, or Thai seamstresses, but not a mixture of the three. Network hiring also explains how the owners of office buildings in Los Angeles in the 1980s came to replace unionized U.S.-born black janitors with immigrants hired by cleaning contractors.

Econometric studies consider how immigration, wages, and employment interact in a city labor market, or they compare labor markets among cities. They begin with the assumption that, if immigrants depress wages or displace workers, then the more immigrants there are in a city, the greater the observed wage depression or job displacement, especially in comparisons across cities with different shares of immigrant workers. Econometric studies might study the influence of immigration on the wages and unemployment rates of blacks, Hispanics, and women in Los Angeles by comparing them with similar groups in Atlanta, which has a relatively small immigrant population.

In the 1980s, to the surprise of economists, such studies found few wage or labor market effects related to immigration. In 1990, George Borjas summarized the research literature by saying “modern econometrics cannot detect a single shred of evidence that immigrants have a sizable adverse impact on the earnings and employment

⁵⁶ Mines, Richard and Philip L. Martin. 1984. “Immigrant workers and the California citrus industry.” *Industrial Relations*, Vol 23, No 1. January: 139-149.

⁵⁷ General Accounting Office. 1988. *Illegal Aliens. Influence of Illegal Workers on the Wages and Working Conditions of Legal Workers*. Washington. General Accounting Office PEMD-88-13BR. pp39-41.

opportunities of natives in the United States.”⁵⁸ One well-known econometric study concluded, for example, that the 1980 influx of Cuban immigrants to Miami in the Mariel boatlift had no measurable negative effect on the wages and employment of local workers. During the four months of the boatlift, Miami’s labor force increased by 7 percent, but there were no significant differences between wage and job opportunities for native-born workers in Miami and in other U.S. cities.⁵⁹ This suggested that the immigrants generated enough economic activity to offset any negative effects their presence might have on the wages or job prospects of local workers.

As more data became available in the 1990s, however, researchers were able to measure some of the labor market and wage effects of immigration that economic theory predicted. The most important new evidence involved studies of migration patterns within the United States, which found that workers who must compete with immigrants were moving away from the cities that were attracting the most immigrants—presumably to avoid competing with them in the labor market. The effects of immigration on wages and unemployment in Los Angeles or Houston were thus dissipated throughout the United States in a process that demographer William Frey called “the new white flight.”⁶⁰

Econometric studies also began to acknowledge that the effects of immigration have been hard to measure because a large majority of workers in a city are not in competition for the types of unskilled jobs usually held by newly arrived immigrants. The wages of government employees are set at federal or state levels, and the earnings of many union workers are determined by national or regional collective bargaining agreements. If workers who compete with unskilled immigrants move away and the workers who do not compete remain, the effect of immigrants will not be detected in the city’s labor market.⁶¹

Econometric studies have found that the labor-market effects of unskilled immigrants are probably small, but that they may be significant in particular industries and areas, like the garment industry or the meatpacking industry. Agriculture is probably the U.S.

⁵⁸ George J. Borjas, *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants on the U.S. Economy* (New York: Basic Books, 1990): 81.

⁵⁹ David Card, “The Impact of the Mariel Boatlift on the Miami Labor Market,” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 43 (1990): 245-57

⁶⁰ William H. Frey, “The New White Flight,” *American Demographics* (April 1994): 40-48; and George J. Borjas, “The Economics of Immigration,” *Journal of Economic Literature* XXXII (December 1994): 1667-717.

⁶¹ William H. Frey, “The New White Flight,” *American Demographics* (April 1994): 40-48; and George J. Borjas, “The Economics of Immigration,” *Journal of Economic Literature* XXXII (December 1994): 1667-717

industry most dependent on unauthorized workers. In the late 1990s, almost 50 percent of the 2.5 million U.S. farm workers were unauthorized foreigners, despite the legalization of over 1 million illegal farm workers in 1987 and 1988. Farm workers who were legalized moved on to nonfarm jobs, which created a vacuum that drew in more unauthorized workers and helped keep farm worker wages and benefits among the lowest in America.

Economic mobility, or integration, studies investigate how immigrants and their children are faring in the United States. Their starting point is the fact that “immigrants on average earn less than native workers [and] this gap...has widened recently...[as] the skills [years of education] of immigrants have declined relative to those of the native-born.”⁶² The average educational level of immigrants has been rising, but the educational level of U.S.-born residents has risen faster, which explains the widening education gap. Because education is the best predictor of a person's earnings, the fact that the US-born residents have more years of schooling helps to explain the growing inequality of income among people living in America, in particular between foreign-born and U.S.-born Americans and within the foreign-born population.

One of the most important issues for society and the economy is whether those who immigrate to the United States are so energetic and ambitious that their earnings will quickly catch up to and even surpass those of their native-born counterparts. Economist Barry Chiswick conducted research in the 1970s that found just such a catch-up pattern for immigrants who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s. The immigrant men Chiswick studied initially earned 10 percent less than did similar U.S.-born men. But the drive and ambition that prompted them to migrate enabled the migrants to close the earnings gap after an average of 13 years in the United States, and to earn six percent more than similar U.S.-born men after 23 years in the United States.⁶³ The immigrants' motivation and ambition, it seemed, could expand the U.S. economy and raise average earnings.

Migration expert George Borjas, however, contended that Chiswick's study captured a unique set of circumstances: the influx of highly skilled Asian immigrants after 1965 policy changes and a booming U.S. economy. In 1970, the average immigrant earned 1 percent more than the average U.S.-born worker. However, not all immigrants caught up in earnings, including Mexican and Central American immigrants. During the 1970s and 1980s, the proportion of Mexicans and Central Americans among immigrants rose, and so did the earnings gap— Mexican and Central American immigrant men had 25 percent to 40 percent lower earnings than similar US-born men in 1970, and 50 percent

⁶² Smith and Edmonston, *The New Americans*: 5-33

⁶³ The immigrant men were compared to US-born men of the same age and education. Barry Chiswick, “The Effect of Americanization on the Earnings of Foreign-Born Men,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 86 (October 1978): 897-921.

lower earnings in 1990. Instead of catching up to Americans in earnings, Borjas concluded that immigration could expand the low-income population.⁶⁴

Economists tend to look at US earnings to measure economic integration, but some social scientists emphasize other factors, such as the success of immigrants in starting their own businesses. Immigrant-owned businesses are highly visible in many cities, where their restaurants, dry-cleaning and tailoring establishments, and small stores are patronized by immigrants and natives alike. Immigrant entrepreneurs exemplify the energy that newcomers add to the U.S. economy while helping to revitalize cities.⁶⁵

Is self-employment a sign of immigrant success or does it reflect difficulties finding “regular” employment? In an industrial economy, moving from self-employment to a paid job usually brings better pay and benefits. Self-employed farmers leave the land to seek employment in cities, for example. Self-employment is usually countercyclical: it increases during recessions and declines when the economy is booming. When rural migrants lose their jobs in the city, for example, they may return to the land and self-employment. In the service economy: “Self-employment rises during recessions when regular jobs may be harder to find and laid-off executives may enter self-employed ‘consulting.’”⁶⁶

Some social scientists who study immigrant communities regard immigrant self-employment as a sign of success and upward mobility. In an influential 1985 book, Alejandro Portes and Robert Bach described how Cuban immigrants formed an “ethnic enclave” in Miami that enabled them to start businesses that created jobs for themselves and for fellow Cubans.⁶⁷ Instead of seeing self-employment as the failure to get a “real job,” Portes and Bach argued that the self-employment showed how immigrants could take advantage of business opportunities in their communities.

⁶⁴ Between 1970 and 1990, the proportion of the U.S. male labor force who had not completed high school by age 25 fell from about 40 percent to 15 percent, while the proportion of immigrants without a high school diploma fell only from 48 percent to 37 percent. See George Borjas, “Assimilation and Changes in Cohort Quality Revisited: What Happened to Immigrant Earnings in the 1980s?” National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 4866 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, September 1994).

⁶⁵ Alejandro Portes, ed., *The Economic Sociology of Immigration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995): 29. See also “Immigrant Entrepreneurs,” *Research Perspectives on Migration* 1, no. 2 (January/February 1997): 11-12.

⁶⁶ Randall Filer, Daniel Hamermesh, and Albert Rees, *The Economics of Work and Pay* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996): 364; and Borjas, *Friends or Strangers*: 163.

⁶⁷ Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach, *Latin Journey: Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).

The highest rates of self-employment for foreign-born employed persons 25 and older in 2002 were Koreans, 26 percent, Iranians, 25 percent, Italians, 20 percent, and Pakistanis, Canadians, and Russians, 19 percent each. But overall, only about 10 percent of foreign-born persons were self-employed, versus 11 percent of the US-born.⁶⁸

Fiscal Effects

One of the most debated questions of the 1990s was whether immigrants “pay their way” in the United States. Do the taxes paid by immigrants cover the cost of the public services they use, including schools, welfare, health care, and transportation systems? The answers are complex and depend in part on how well we can measure both the short-term and long-term fiscal effects of immigrants. The answers may also depend on the point of view of the investigator.

Analysts inclined to look at the positive effects of immigration have argued that immigrants generally provide a fiscal surplus because most immigrants are young. They are in their working and taxpaying years and do not draw social security or health benefits.⁶⁹ Furthermore, although immigrants are taxed like U.S. citizens, they are not eligible for all publicly provided services. In particular, illegal immigrants, who also pay taxes, are excluded from almost all welfare benefits, as well as unemployment insurance and non-emergency health care services. Children living in the United States illegally, however, may attend public schools on the same basis as any citizen or legal resident.

Several states, including California, Florida and Texas, sued the federal government to recover the cost of providing public services to unauthorized foreigners. Though the legal suits were rejected by the courts, they stimulated research about the amount of taxes paid by immigrants and the costs of providing services to immigrants. The NRC reviewed the fiscal impact studies prepared in support of these suits and reached two major conclusions. First, an immigrant’s fiscal balance—the taxes paid minus the cost of services consumed—depends primarily on the immigrant’s earnings. In California, households headed by Latin American immigrants received, on average, almost \$5,000 more in federal, state, and local services than they paid in taxes in 1996, largely because they had lower than average incomes and thus paid lower taxes, while they had more children attending public schools than households headed by U.S.-born Californians.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ This paragraph based on Camarota, Steven. 2002. *Immigrants in the US—2002*. Center for Immigration Studies. November.

⁶⁹ Smith and Edmonston, *The New Americans*: 52-61

⁷⁰ Smith and Edmonston, *The New Americans*: 52-61.

California households headed by U.S.-born persons paid, on average, \$2,700 more in federal taxes than they received in federal benefits, while immigrants had exactly the opposite fiscal balance—they received \$2,700 more in federal benefits than they paid in federal taxes. The average native-born household paid \$1,200 more in taxes to cover the deficit in California. Researchers applied these state estimates to the total U.S. population, and calculated that the 89 million households headed by a U.S.-born person paid an extra \$200 each in 1996 to cover the gap between taxes paid and services consumed by 9 million immigrant-headed households. The immigrant deficit amounted to \$15 billion to \$20 billion per year for the United States.⁷¹

The NRC study also confirmed the imbalance among the federal, state, and local government taxes paid by immigrants and the expenditures made for their benefit. The taxes paid by immigrants are mostly income taxes withheld by the federal government. These revenues pay for social security and health care benefits for older residents. State and local taxes paid by immigrants are often low because of they have low earnings. The services consumed by immigrants, however, such as education for their children, are mostly paid by state and local governments. These and similar findings have prompted many states to request a revenue-sharing arrangement with the federal government to deal with the fiscal impacts of immigrants.

These fiscal studies are snapshots of taxes paid and the cost of services provided at a point in time. If immigrants' earnings rise over time, so will their tax contributions and the fiscal deficit may decrease. Similarly, the cost of providing education to immigrant children today could be regarded as an investment that will reward the country with higher-income workers tomorrow. The NRC analysis attempted to glean a longer-term significance from these snapshots. The researchers projected future population, immigrant and native earnings, taxes, and use of government services. They also examined typical life-cycle trajectories for children who attend public schools, pay taxes during their working lives, and then rely on publicly supported health and social security services after they retire.

The NRC concluded that the long-term economic value of an immigrant depends strongly on his or her age at arrival and his or her years of education. "If the policy goal were to maximize the positive contribution of immigration to public sector budgets, that could be achieved by policies favoring highly educated immigrants and not admitting immigrants over age 50."⁷² On average, adult immigrants arriving with less than a high school education impose a net fiscal cost on the United States of \$89,000 over their lifetimes and those with a high school education cost \$31,000 over their lifetimes (see Figure 6). Adult immigrants with more than 12 years of schooling provide a \$105,000

⁷¹ Smith and Edmonston, *The New Americans*: table 6.3

⁷² Smith and Edmonston, *The New Americans*: table 6.3

lifetime gain for the United States—the value of the taxes they paid exceeded the value of benefits received by this amount in 1996 dollars.

Figure 6 The Long-Term Fiscal Impact of One Immigrant, p 32 in 1999

Naturalization and Politics

At its founding, the United States established two important principles: all persons in the United States are to have full and equal rights, and all persons born in the United States are automatically citizens of the United States. The United States is still striving to undo the effects of the major exception to these rules - -slavery. The effort to undo the effects of slavery and discrimination against African-Americans has included anti-discrimination measures and preferences for minorities that cover immigrants as well as the descendants of slaves.

U.S. laws have always made few distinctions between citizens and non-citizens who are legal residents. Legal immigrants have been able to live where they please, seek any job (except for federal government jobs), and buy a house, land, or business without restriction. The basic constitutional rights, including the right of free speech and the free exercise of religion, are extended to legal and unauthorized immigrants. Citizens of other countries cannot vote in public elections, but they can vote and hold office in U.S. labor unions and in private organizations such as churches, foundations, and fraternal groups.

To become a naturalized citizen, an immigrant must be at least 18 years old, have been legally resident at least five years (three years for spouses of U.S. citizens), and pass a test of English and civics. Typical questions asked on these tests include “Where is the White House located?” and “Name one right guaranteed by the First Amendment.”⁷³

In the past, fewer than half of the immigrants to the United States have naturalized, although the proportions vary substantially by country of origin. Most of the immigrants admitted in 1977 became eligible to naturalize in 1982; by 1995, about 46 percent were citizens (see Figure 8). Among the leading countries of origin, immigrants from China, the former Soviet Union, and the Philippines were most likely to become citizens, while those from Mexico and Canada were least likely.

Figure 7. Naturalization by 1995 of Immigrants Admitted in 1977 use Fig 7 from 1999 PRB

⁷³ Australia, Canada, and New Zealand have more relaxed requirements for citizenship, with shorter residence requirements, simpler tests, and lower fees. Most Western European countries have more difficult naturalization procedures than those in the US.

Percent 1977 and 1982 Immigrants Naturalized by 1995

	1977 Entrants	1982 Entrants
China, PRC	65%	52%
Soviet Union	65%	61%
Philippines	63%	63%
Korea	59%	37%
India	59%	44%
Columbia	51%	38%
Cuba	47%	31%
All Countries	46%	41%
Jamaica	45%	30%
Dominican Republic	29%	23%
United Kingdom	23%	17%
Mexico	22%	14%
Canada	18%	13%

Mexicans, like Canadians, have had low rates of naturalization. Many Mexicans in the United States expect to return to Mexico someday. Before 1996 changes in Mexican law, Mexicans who became naturalized US citizens were denied certain rights granted only to Mexican citizens—such as the right to own and inherit land in Mexico. In general, the probability that an immigrant in the United States will naturalize increases with age, education, income, and English-language ability. The fact that Mexican immigrants are younger, poorer, and less likely to speak English than are immigrants from some other countries also helps explain why relatively few Mexicans naturalize.

In 1996, naturalization became a major political issue. Vice President Albert Gore launched a “Citizenship USA” drive in April 1995 with the goal of eliminating the backlog of 600,000 immigrants who had applied for naturalization. Some of these applicants had been waiting for two years for their applications to be processed. Under “Citizenship USA,” new applicants were promised naturalization within six months.ⁱ Republicans accused the Clinton Administration of expediting naturalization in order to add Democratic voters before the coming election.

“Citizenship USA” speeded up the naturalization process, producing a record 1 million naturalizations in FY1996, but not all of the foreigners who were naturalized had had the required FBI fingerprint checks to ascertain that they had not committed a crime in the United States. The INS tightened its procedures to insure that all applicants are screened for criminal records, which lengthened wait between application and naturalization. The number of immigrants electing to naturalize fell to about 600,000 a year in FY2001 and FY2002.

The mid-1990s surge in naturalizations has several causes, including:

1. Rising levels of immigration in the 1980s. Many of the 2.7 million unauthorized foreigners who were legalized in 1987-1988 became eligible to naturalize beginning in 1995.
2. The INS's Green Card Replacement Program, launched in 1993. Legal immigrants, eligible to apply for citizenship after five years residence, had to obtain new counterfeit-resistant immigration visas and, for a few dollars more, they could naturalize.
3. Reactions to the 1996 laws that made many non-citizens ineligible for welfare benefits. In order to preserve their access to benefits, some immigrants naturalized.
4. Citizenship USA streamlined the naturalization process and encouraged naturalization.
5. Many immigrant countries of origin approved some version of dual nationality, so that immigrants who became US citizens would not lose citizenship and rights in their countries of origin.

Many analysts expect naturalized immigrants to affect voting patterns. This has not yet happened on a national scale. Non-Hispanic whites cast 81 percent of the votes in the 2000 election, and a higher percentage of votes in 2002, when turnout was down. In 2000, the 35 million Hispanics included 13 million adult US citizens, and six million of them voted, accounting for about five percent of US votes cast. Latinos cast 13-14 percent of the vote in California in 1998 and 2000, but only 10 percent of the vote in 2002.

It may be decades before rising numbers of naturalized Latino and Asian voters significantly affect national elections, although they already make a difference in local elections.⁷⁴ Latinos are still a small part of the electorate, and they vote in much lower numbers than average. Latinos cast 13-14 percent of the vote in California in 1998 and 2000, but only 10 percent of the vote in 2002. Education and age continue to be more reliable predictors of whether and how citizens will vote than whether or not they are U.S.-born or foreign-born. Numerous studies show that citizens with more education are more likely to vote and that, regardless of education, young people are less likely to vote than are older people. Immigrants tend to have many of the characteristics associated with a low voter turnout: they have a young age profile, lower than average

⁷⁴ DeSipio, Louis. 1996. *Counting on the Latino Vote: Latinos as a New Electorate*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press

incomes and education, are less likely to own a home, and are more likely to belong to a racial or ethnic minority. Even after accounting for these factors, however, naturalized citizens are less likely than U.S.-born citizens to register and vote.

Immigrants in American Society

During the 19th and early 20th century, the leading metaphor for the incorporation of newcomers to America was a fusion of peoples in a “smelting pot” (Ralph Waldo Emerson), “cauldron” (Henry James) or “crucible” in which “immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality nor characteristics.”⁷⁵ The hero of Israel Zangwill’s popular play of 1908, “The Melting Pot,” cried out “Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians - into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American!”

Reality was more complex. There is always a tension between the newcomers’ desires to keep alive the culture and language of the community they left behind, and their need and wish to adapt to new surroundings and a different society. The balance between these competing forces changed over time, but three principles guided what is now called integration:

- America was generally open to all kinds of immigrants. In the words of George Washington: “The bosom of America is open to receive not only the Opulent and respectable Stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions; whom we shall welcome to a participation of all our rights and privileges.”
- No ethnic group should establish a formally recognized political identity. Nothing bars the formation of a Mexican-American political party, but the two-party tradition and the belief that American citizens act politically as individuals, not as members of officially defined ethnic groups, has discouraged such political parties.
- No ethnic or national origin group would be required to give up its character and distinctive qualities. Each immigrant group was free to maintain some of its cultural heritage and institutions.

Box 4. Melting-Pot vs. Salad Bowl or Integration vs. Pluralism

Two prescriptions for the accommodation of immigrants in American society put forward over the last century reflect the immigrants’ dilemma and still characterize the two sides in the ongoing debate about the accommodation of immigrants: integration and pluralism. The integrationist (assimilationist) aims at eliminating ethnic boundaries while the pluralist (multiculturalist) aims at maintaining them. For integrationists, American democracy is composed of equal individuals; for pluralists, it is an equality of groups. For the integrationist, what counts is what the citizen thinks and believes; the pluralist wants to conserve the awareness of where he came from.

⁷⁵Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York, Henry Holt, 1920), pp. 22-23.

Taken to their logical extremes, both positions are absurd, and neither has been realized in the United States. The melting pot ignores the persistence of memory, and the importance of the home culture. An exclusive emphasis on integration overlooks the fact that ethnic affiliation persists among many Americans after the second and third generations, long after the language and knowledge of the “old country” has been lost.

The pluralists’ insistence on group identity, on the other hand, limits the freedom of individuals to choose their loyalties for themselves. It assumes that ethnic boundaries remain fixed and overlooks the divisions within ethnic groups. It ignores the evidence that in an open, heterogeneous society like that of the United States, people work, make friends and marry outside their ancestral communities.

The integration versus pluralism debate is played out in many venues: in college dorms, should students be placed with others of the same race and/or ethnicity, or should they be mixed with students from unfamiliar backgrounds? Should school children be grouped for instruction according to their home languages, or should they be brought together in English-language classes from the start? How much instruction in public schools may be carried on in languages other than English? In the workplace, may employees converse among themselves in languages other than English?

In 1984, the historian John Higham proposed a system of “pluralistic integration.” Pluralistic integration asserts that there is a common US culture, to which all individuals have access, while sustaining the efforts of minorities to preserve and enhance their own integrity. In practice, this means that public funds should not be used to promote differences between racial and ethnic groups: “No ethnic group under these terms may have the support of the general community in strengthening its boundaries, [but] ethnic nuclei are respected as enduring centers of social action.”⁷⁶ Another scholar of immigration, Larry Fuchs, used the term “kaleidoscope” to emphasize the dynamics of change: immigrants adapt and change, and so does American society.⁷⁷

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At no time in American history has the process of integration been easy or trouble-free (see Box 4). The open hostility that was expressed toward certain racial and ethnic groups in the past is surprising by today’s standards. In 1930, for example, after Congressman Fiorella La Guardia (R-NY) rebuked President Herbert Hoover, he received a letter that read: “the Italians are predominantly our murderers and bootleggers,” and invited La Guardia and his Italian American supporters to “go back to

⁷⁶Higham, op. cit., p.244. See also “Multiculturalism and Universalism: A History and Critique” in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 45 No 2 (June 1993)

⁷⁷ Fuchs, Lawrence H. . 1991. *The American Kaleidoscope : Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture*. Wesleyan Univ Press.

where you belong" because "like a lot of other foreign spawn, you do not appreciate this country which supports you and tolerates you."⁷⁸ Today, no public official is likely to offer such advice to Chinese American Gary Locke, who was elected governor of Washington in 1996. Governor Locke, like La Guardia, is the son of immigrants.

In the 1990s, integration can be regarded as a glass half full or half empty. The Changing Relations study, which investigated immigrant communities in six cities in the 1980s, found that—despite segregation in jobs and housing, and communication impeded by lack of a common language—newcomers and natives in a number of U.S. cities were cooperating to achieve local goals, such as obtaining government benefits or improving their neighborhoods.⁷⁹ The report also noted that immigrants were not integrating into the broader community in cities with large immigrant populations. Economic restructuring had created fears in many communities that the immigrants threatened the jobs of longer-term residents. Integrating immigrants is likely to be different in the early 21st century than it was in the early 20th century. In the early 1900s, many Americans first interacted with immigrants when they moved from farm to city.⁸⁰

The U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform (CIR) recommended that the federal government do more to “Americanize immigrants” to help them integrate into U.S. society. The CIR emphasized that Americanization, or accommodating and integrating immigrants, is a two-way street. The United States expects “immigrants to obey our laws, pay our taxes, respect other cultures and ethnic groups. At the same time, we ... also incur obligations—to provide an environment in which newcomers can become fully participating members of our society.” The CIR recommended federal grants to communities with large numbers of immigrants to create resource centers in which immigrants and the native-born could interact. The CIR urged U.S. businesses to do more to help integrate immigrants: “Those business groups in particular who lobby for high levels of immigration must make a far greater effort not only to support

⁷⁸ E. Digby Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964): 30.

⁷⁹ Robert Bach, *Changing Relations: Newcomers and Established Residents in U.S. Communities* (New York: The Ford Foundation, 1992): 49

⁸⁰ Only 35 percent of the 75 million Americans in 1900 lived in urban areas. The small communities where most Americans lived in the early 1900s could be homogeneous even as the country as a whole was becoming more diverse. Immigrants and Americans interacted in a common “new land”—cities. Thomas Archdeacon, “Reflections on Immigration to Europe in Light of U.S. Immigration History,” *International Migration Review* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 525-48

immigration, but also to support immigrants, through English classes, naturalization and civic education.”⁸¹

Language and Education

The 2000 census reported that 47 million residents older than age 5, 18 percent, spoke a language other than English at home, 15 million more than in 1990. The number who spoke Spanish at home was 28.1 million, while 2 million spoke Chinese, 1.6 million spoke French, 1.4 million spoke German, 1.2 million spoke Tagalog, and 1 million each spoke Italian and Vietnamese (see Table 3).

Table 3 Language Spoken at Home, 2000

Language Spoken At Home: 2000 Census

Population 5 years and over	262,375,152
Speak only English	215,423,557
Speak a language other than English	46,951,595
Spanish or Spanish Creole	28,101,052
French (incl. Patois, Cajun)	1,643,838
German	1,383,442
Italian	1,008,370
Chinese	2,022,142
Tagalog	1,224,247
Vietnamese	1,009,627
Korean	894,062

Source: Census 2000

In the United States, the shift from speaking another language to speaking English has usually occurred over three generations. Adult immigrants commonly did not learn English well. Their children were usually bilingual, using their parents’ language at home and English at school. English often became dominant as the children of immigrants entered the workplace. The grandchildren of immigrants—the third generation—typically speak only English.⁸²

The shift to English may be accelerating among recent immigrants, and may occur within two generations rather than three generations.ⁱⁱ Most immigrants settle in U.S. cities, where they are more likely to be exposed to English than were workers in farms and factories earlier in the century. A recent study found that the children of immigrants in Miami, for example, preferred English for their everyday communication.ⁱⁱⁱ Another

⁸¹ Becoming an American: Immigration & Immigrant Policy. 1997.

<http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/cir/97Report1/titlepgs/titlepgs.htm>

⁸² Francois Grosjean *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism*, Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1982, Chapter 2.

survey found that even though most Mexican-born U.S. residents spoke Spanish at home, almost two-thirds of U.S.-born persons of Mexican ancestry used English at home.⁸³

Immigrants and their children would benefit from acquiring English language ability even more rapidly. Poor English skills are associated with lower earnings in a high-tech society. Earlier immigrants could farm or work in factories or build railroads without speaking English. But in today's service-dominated economy, English-speaking ability is required for nearly all but the lowest-paying jobs. One study found that "among immigrant men who spoke a language other than English at home, those who were not fluent in English earned only about half as much as those who were."⁸⁴ Another study concluded: "those in the United States who speak English "well" or "very well" have 17 percent higher earnings than those with less fluency ... The analysis suggests that spoken dominant-language proficiency is an important determinant of earnings and presumably other measures of economic success among immigrants."⁸⁵

Most immigrants want to learn English. A survey of residents of Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican origins found over 90 percent agreed that "all U.S. citizens and residents should learn English."⁸⁶ But acquiring a new language is a difficult undertaking for an adult, particularly for an adult who works long hours. There are frequently long waiting lists for English classes for adults. There is no federally financed program to teach English to adult speakers of other languages, although states use federal adult education grants along with their own funds to provide English instruction.

Public Education

⁸³Rodolfo O. de la Garza, Luis De Sipio, F. Chris Garcia, John Garcia, and Angelo Falcon, *Latino Voices*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1992, p. 42.

⁸⁴ Alejandro Portes and Richard Schaufler, "Language and the Second Generation: Bilingualism Yesterday and Today," in *The New Second Generation*, ed. Alejandro Portes (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996): 8-29

⁸⁵Joseph R. Meisenheimer II, "How Do Immigrants Fare in the U.S. Labor Market?" in *Monthly Labor Review*, December j1992, p. 17. This conclusion is echoed by other studies: "those in the United States who speak English "well" or "very well" have 17 percent higher earnings than those with less fluency . . . The analysis suggests that spoken dominant-language proficiency is an important determinant of earnings and presumably other measures of economic success among immigrants." Barry Chiswick and Paul Miller, "Language in the Immigrant Labor Market," in Barry Chiswick(Ed). *Immigration, Language and Ethnicity: Canada and the U.S/* (Washington DC: The AEI Press, 1992) p 277.

⁸⁶ de la Garza, De Sipio, Garcia, Garcia, and Falcon, *Latino Voices*: 98

Lack of English language skills is also a major issue for the nation's schools. Students who have difficulty understanding an all-English curriculum are often referred to as limited-English proficient (LEP), a term whose definition varies from state to state and between federal agencies. These students can also be referred to as English-language learners.⁸⁷

In the 2000-01 school year, there were 3.4 million students in primary and secondary schools receiving LEP services, including 1.5 million in California and 570,000 in Texas.⁸⁸ There are two major approaches to teaching English to students fluent in another language. Each approach has its own philosophy and assumptions about what is appropriate for students with different linguistic backgrounds. In English-as-a-second language (ESL) instruction, priority is given to rapid acquisition of English. Children of various language backgrounds receive instruction in English for all subjects, but the English is modified by specially trained teachers so English-learners can more easily understand it. Teachers provide an appropriate context for the students to help them with the new language.

The other approach is bilingual education, under which children are taught to read and write in their home languages before shifting their language of instruction gradually to English. Older children who are new to English are taught such core subjects such as math, science and history in their home languages while they are learning English. The aim of bilingual education is to ensure that limited-English students are taught material with the same intellectual content as other students while these students gain competence in English.

Educators do not agree on which teaching method is best. The NRC recently concluded that the most successful programs have three similar characteristics: "some native language instruction, especially initially; for most students; a relatively early phasing-in of English instruction; teachers specially trained in instructing English-language learners." These three characteristics are not present in many school programs. In schools with bilingual programs, instruction in a non-English language, mostly Spanish, may continue for five, six, or seven years. In other schools, many children starting school without speaking English are taught in English by teachers who have had no training in teaching children in a language that is not their own.

Most non-English-speaking students come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, which presents other handicaps for excelling in school. The NRC found

⁸⁷ National Research Council, *Improving Schooling for Language-Minority Children: A Research Agenda* (Washington, DC: Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, 1997).

⁸⁸ <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/overview/xls/table10.xls> Accessed January 26, 2003

that 77 percent of English-language learners in a sample of schools were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, compared with 38 percent of all students in the sample.

The debate about bilingual education is especially vociferous in California, which has about 45 percent of the nation's limited-English school children. In June 1998, California voters approved Proposition 227, the English for the Children initiative, by a 61 percent to 39 percent margin, ending bilingual education and requiring most non-English-speaking children to be placed in special English classes for one year and then shifted to regular classes. Early assessments suggest that reading and math scores of students in English immersion classes were higher than test scores in bilingual programs.⁸⁹ Since then Arizona and Massachusetts have ended bilingual education, also by voter initiative, but Colorado voted to continue teaching LEP children in their native language.

The debate about bilingual education involves much broader issues than the best way to teach non-English-speaking children. One debate concerns whether newcomers should quickly be integrated into mainstream America, or whether newcomers should be encouraged to retain their distinctive cultural attributes and their native languages—and whether the public schools should help immigrants maintain their language and culture. If schools give priority to rapid English-language learning, does that show concern for their future success in the United States, or is it “Anglo cultural imperialism”? Is bilingual education a form of minority patronage that creates public employment for members of particular ethnic groups? Should immigration policy be changed to favor people who already know English, as it does in Canada (English or French), Australia, and New Zealand?

Strong feelings about the role of English often overwhelm educational considerations in the debate over bilingual education. Should the United States establish English as its official language? Would a prohibition against the use of other languages be an affirmation that English is the common language of the United States, or would establishing English as the official language be a rebuff to speakers of other languages and a handicap to the work of government? Such questions involve the public education system in much broader issues and feelings about immigrants, integration, and national character.

⁸⁹ The former head of the California Association of Bilingual Educators, who predicted disaster with Prop 227, said he changed his mind about English immersion: “The kids began to learn -- not pick up, but learn -- formal English, oral and written, far more quickly than I ever thought they would. You read the research and they tell you it takes seven years. Here are kids, within nine months in the first year, and they literally learned to read.” Jacques Steinberg, “Increase in Test Scores Counters Dire Forecasts for Bilingual Ban,” *New York Times*, August 20, 2000.

An Unfinished Nation

Past immigration flows to the United States resemble waves, with the number of immigrants increasing to peak levels, and then falling into troughs. The fourth wave of U.S. immigration, which began in 1965, has been climbing since the early 1980s, and early in the 21st century, a million immigrants a year are being admitted, with no end in sight. Many Americans want the federal government to take steps to reduce immigration, so that in historical perspective the current period would be the peak of the fourth wave. Others are comfortable with current levels of immigration.

The United States is a nation of immigrants that first welcomed all newcomers, later excluded certain types, and since the 1920s has limited the number of immigrants with an annual ceiling. Immigrants and refugees arrive through America's front door, which was opened wider in 1990 to accommodate more relatives of U.S. residents and more workers desired by US employers. But the fastest growth in entries in the 1990s was through side and back doors, as nonimmigrant tourists, foreign workers and students, and unauthorized foreigners arrived in larger numbers.

Research on the economic, social, and political effects of immigration does not provide clear guidelines for policy. Overall, immigrants have minor effects—for better or worse—in the huge American economy and labor market. Most immigrants are better off financially in America than they were at home, but many arrive with minimal education and skill levels and find it hard to advance to better jobs in the American labor market. State and local governments, meanwhile, point out that the taxes paid by immigrants go mostly to the federal government, while state and local governments bear the brunt of the costs of providing services to them.

Most immigrants to the United States do not become naturalized citizens. Instead, they live as permanent residents, but keep their original nationality. In 1996, laws were enacted that made non-citizens ineligible for some welfare benefits, which prompted a record 1 million foreigners to naturalize. U.S.-born children of immigrants are citizens at birth, regardless of whether their parents were naturalized citizens or even illegal immigrants.

U.S. immigrants are often isolated from native-born Americans, as they were in previous periods of mass immigration. Their isolation is reinforced by housing and job segregation and language barriers. There are many examples of cooperation between natives and immigrants, however, and signs that immigrant children may be acquiring English faster than did previous immigrants.

For the foreseeable future, America seems likely to remain the world's major destination for immigrants. Our history and traditions suggest that, within a few decades, most of today's immigrants will be an integral part of the American community, albeit a changed community. But past success does not guarantee that history will repeat itself.

There are concerns about the size and nature of today's immigrant population, especially about arrivals through the side and back doors. As the nation searches for an immigration policy for the 21st century, the United States—and the immigrants who are on their way here—are on a journey to an uncertain destination.

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ⁱ“Naturalization Controversy,” *Migration News* 3, no. 10 (October 1996).

ⁱⁱCalvin Veltmann, *The Future of the Spanish Language in the United States* (Hispanic Policy Development Project Washington, DC and New York, 1988): Chapter 8.

ⁱⁱⁱ Alejandro Portes and Richard Schauffler, “Language and the Second Generation: Bilingualism Yesterday and Today,” in *The New Second Generation*, ed. Alejandro Portes (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996): 8-29.