

Conventional Wisdom Tells Us . . . Immigrants Are Ruining This Nation

For most of the 20th century there was a steady and significant decline in the percentage of immigrants making up the U.S. population. But now, immigration is once again on the rise, and many Americans find this unsettling. Is immigration ruining this nation? This essay reviews the historical impact and future trends of immigration in the United States.

“Why don’t you go back where you came from?” “Immigrants are taking our jobs!” “They don’t send us their best.” These are familiar taunts often directed at **immigrants**. Here in the United States, these taunts are often born of ethnic and racial **prejudice**.

Immigration has always been a fact of American life. The earliest European settlers were immigrants to the 3 to 8 million Native Americans who already occupied the continent. In the first census, in 1790, approximately one in five Americans was an “immigrant” slave brought from Africa (U.S. Census Bureau 2002). And the 1850 census (the first to collect data on nativity) noted that 10% of the U.S. population was foreign born (Zong, Batalova, and Hallock 2018). The Mayflower Society claims that presently there are tens of millions who are able to trace their heritage to the original 102 passengers landing near Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620 (Mayflower Society 2007). Our immigration past has not been lost on our leaders. Franklin Roosevelt observed (and the point was later reiterated by the great communicator Ronald Reagan), “All of our people all over the country—except the pure-blooded Indians—are immigrants, or descendants of immigrants, including even those who came over on the *Mayflower*.”

The U.S. immigration experience can be divided into four major waves. The earliest wave consisted mostly of English but also of Scottish, Irish, and German immigrants who arrived in the United States long before official

Immigrants

Individuals who have left their homelands in pursuit of a new life in a new country

Prejudice

A prejudgment directed toward members of certain social groups

entry records started to be recorded in 1820. The second major wave occurred between 1820 and 1860, as many people who were being pushed out of Europe by forces of industrialization relocated to the United States and joined the westward expansion of the nation. About 40% of the immigrants who arrived during this period were from Ireland alone. The third wave occurred between 1880 and the outbreak of World War I. During this period, more than 20 million immigrants from southern and eastern European nations arrived in the United States. Most of these immigrants moved to East Coast and Midwest cities. By 1910, more than half of the workers in New York City, Chicago, and Detroit were immigrants. These three waves of activity were followed by an immigration lull (between 1915 and 1965) brought about by two world wars, the Great Depression, and the appearance of U.S. immigration quotas. We are currently in a fourth wave of immigration that started after 1965. This wave has a decidedly different look than previous waves, given a shift in origins of immigrants from European to Latin American and Asian countries. The current wave also reflects a change in U.S. immigration policies that gives preference to family members of those already residing in the United States and to skilled workers in demand by U.S. employers. Nineteen percent of the foreign born currently residing in the United States today came here since 2010. The current wave also is distinguished by an increase in the number of unauthorized immigrants entering the United States (MPI 2018).

The United States is the top destination for world migrants (Zong et al. 2018). In 2017, the foreign born in the United States numbered 44.5 million and accounted for 13.7% of the population—the highest percentage since 1910 (Tavernese 2018). Most immigrants (76%) in the United States are here *legally*, a fact known by less than half of the public (G. López and Bialik 2017; Pew Research Center 2018a). In 2016, almost half of all immigrants in the United States were **naturalized citizens** while just over half consisted of a variety of noncitizen statuses: that is, legal permanent residents, legal residents on temporary visas (such as students and temporary workers), and the group that is the source of much controversy, unauthorized immigrants. In 2016, 1.18 million immigrants became legal permanent residents (LPRs) or “**green card holders**,” bringing the total of green card holders to just over 13 million (Center for American Progress 2017; Zong et al. 2018). Family relationships or employer sponsorship are the basis for most immigration visa applications (U.S. Department of State 2017). (See Box 20.1 for a list of immigration terms.)

The United States has the most unauthorized residents of any country—currently estimated at approximately 11 million. In 2015, about 3.4% of the U.S. population consisted of unauthorized immigrants (this figure is down from 4% in 2007) (Krogstad, Passel, and Cohn 2017). About 42% of unauthorized immigrants *entered* the United States legally but overstayed the terms of their visas (Center for American Progress 2017). Perhaps the most troubling part of the unauthorized population are the children caught up in it. Brought here by parents or others, these kids are caught up in a quagmire not of their own making. President Obama established the DACA program to assist these children and young adults by making them a low priority for deportation, but in 2018 President Trump attempted to terminate this program. (To date, federal appeals courts have ruled against this effort by the Trump administration.)

Naturalized citizens

Legal immigrants (at least 18 years of age) who have lived in the United States for at least five years, paid application fees, undergone a background check, and passed English and civics tests.

Green card holders

Foreigners granted visas that allow them to live and work permanently in the United States, also known as legal permanent residents or legal immigrants.

BOX 20.1**IMMIGRATION TERMS**

Aliens: Citizens of a foreign country. The United States distinguishes four legal statuses for aliens: legal immigrants, temporary legal migrants, refugees, and unauthorized migrants.

DACA Program and recipients: A program established by the Obama administration to protect immigrant children/young adults brought into the United States without authorization. DACA recipients must meet program eligibility requirements to obtain relief from deportation as well as work authorization. About 700,000 have signed up for the program (aka DREAMers) but must file renewal application every two years. The Trump administration rescinded the program in March 2018, but a subsequent federal district court judge ruled that the program could not be terminated and new applications must be accepted.

Foreign-born population: Total number of all U.S. residents who were born in a foreign nation with no U.S. citizenship (the number includes those who have become naturalized citizens).

Green card holders: See **Legal immigrants**

Illegal aliens: Foreigners in the United States without valid visas. (This term is found to be offensive by some.)

Immigrants: Individuals who have left their homelands in pursuit of a new life in a new country. See also **Foreign born**

Legal immigrants (aka legal permanent residents [LPRs] or green card holders): Foreigners granted visas that allow them to live and work

permanently in the United States, also known as legal permanent residents or green card holders. After five years, legal immigrants can apply to become naturalized citizens.

LPRs: Legal permanent residents; see **Legal immigrants**

Naturalized citizens: Legal immigrants (at least 18 years of age) who have lived in the United States for at least five years, paid application fees (\$680), undergone a background check, and passed English and civics tests.

Refugees and asylees: Foreigners allowed to stay in the United States because of fear of persecution in their home countries. (Location at time of application distinguishes refugees and asylees: refugees are generally outside of the United States and asylees are in the U.S. at the time of application.) The president sets the number of refugees the United States will accept each year. Refugees are required to apply for green cards after living in the United States for a year and may apply for citizenship after living in the country for five years.

Temporary legal migrants: Foreigners in the United States for specific purposes (e.g., visiting, studying, or working). The United States issues 25 types of non-immigrant visas, including B-visas for tourists, F-visas for foreign students, and H-visas for foreign workers. In 2016, 42.7 million individuals entered the U.S. on temporary visas—most entered as tourists.

Unauthorized migrants (aka illegal aliens): Foreigners in the United States without valid visas.

Source: Zong, Batalova, and Hallock 2018.

Your Thoughts . . .

Unauthorized immigrants are frequently identified as illegal aliens or illegal immigrants. This use of the “illegal” preface is controversial and rejected by those saying that “illegal” is not an acceptable status characterization for individuals. In recent years, some news organizations have decided to refrain from using “illegal” when referring to undocumented migrants (Toobin 2015). What do you think? Is the term *illegal alien* or *illegal immigrant* pejorative? Is it neutral? Or is this an instance of what some call PC (politically correct) language?

Despite our nation's immigration background, public opinion polls between the 1960s and 1990s indicated that a majority of Americans were in favor of reducing immigration levels in the United States. This restrictive sentiment abated somewhat during the economic good times of the late 1990s, but after 9/11, Americans once again began expressing greater concern about immigration issues and asking political leaders for immigration reform. By the summer of 2013, a USA Today/Pew Research Center poll found that 50% of Americans felt it extremely or very important that the president and Congress enact immigration legislation *immediately*. Yet that same poll showed that Americans were conflicted about what the legislation should mandate (Page 2013). Perhaps this conflict helps us understand the lack of progress the country has made over the last few years on immigration reform—we are not of one mind about how best to deal with immigration as we move forward.

Given America's immigration history, the current calls for reform seem somewhat ironic. We find ourselves casting doubt on the value of immigrants in a nation long considered the "land of immigrants." To be sure, our immigrant roots are well established. As evidenced by annual parades and festivals, a great many "hyphenated-Americans" take pride in their diverse ancestral roots. At the same time, our daily newspapers, television newscasts, blogs, campaign promises, as well as presidential tweets document a growing chorus of anti-immigration sentiments. The tragic events of September 11, 2001, prompted many Americans to rethink the wisdom of freely embracing foreigners. Building a 700-mile wall along the Mexican border, increasing the number of border patrol agents, mandating a nationwide employee verification system, implementing new surveillance technology (including the use of drones), and implementing travel bans are all part of the current immigration debate. Do these sentiments reflect a new anti-immigration trend? Or are these anti-immigration sentiments more common and long-standing than we realize?

The immigration history of the United States is nothing if not complex. Despite the message delivered by the Lady in the Harbor, the United States has seldom

BOX 20.2

SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT THE NEWS: ZERO TOLERANCE . . . FOR SEPARATING FAMILIES

While Americans have divergent views on immigration policies, in the summer of 2018, we were largely of one mind about what *not* to do with immigrant families crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. In the spring of 2018, the Trump administration launched a new "zero-tolerance" policy: Families entering the country illegally would have their children taken from them and put into separate detention facilities. The children would be processed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) while the parents would be prosecuted (for a misdemeanor) through the criminal justice

system. The public was quick to react upon learning that the policy had resulted in over 2,500 children being held in detention, often in locations unknown to parents and at times even unknown to program officials. The Trump administration reversed the policy after days of protest and after the DHHS was not able to effectively tell Americans what happened to the children, especially those 5 and younger. A U.S. district court judge set a deadline for reuniting the families, but when deadlines passed in July 2018 hundreds of children were still separated from their parents.

greeted immigrants with totally open arms. Descendants of the first immigrant settlers, White Anglo-Saxon Protestants from England, were slow to welcome other newcomers. Rather, they expressed concern about “new” and undesirable immigrants and organized against those arriving from Germany, Ireland, Poland, Italy, and other White ethnic countries (Fallows 1983). The 1850s saw the rise of a political party—the Know-Nothings—whose unifying theme was decidedly anti-immigration. In the 1860s, James Blaine of Maine sought to curb Catholic immigration by seeking an amendment to the U.S. Constitution banning states from providing aid to schools controlled by religious groups. His efforts established the groundwork for restrictions on government aid to religious schools and the school voucher debate (L. Cohen and Gray 2003). In the same decade that the Statue of Liberty first beckoned immigrants to our shores, a group of U.S. residents founded the first all-WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) country club; these residents also established the Social Register, a list identifying the exclusive “founding” families of the United States (Baltzell 1987). In the 1920s, President Hoover freely expressed clear anti-immigration sentiments when he encouraged New York City’s mayor, Fiorello La Guardia, the son of immigrants, to go back where he belonged. The mass migration period of 1880 to 1924 saw nativists and politicians working hard to restrict immigration. Campaigns to impose literacy tests in order to hold the tide on immigration were repeatedly mounted in the late 1800s and early 1900s. And from 1921 to the mid-1960s, the government used a quota system to regulate and limit immigration. In 1924, the Johnson–Reed Act capped total immigration at 155,000 per year. The act prioritized immigration from Anglo-Saxon nations and imposed strict limits on the number of immigrants coming from southern and eastern Europe; immigrants from the African continent were capped at 1,200 and virtually no immigration from Asia was permitted (Patterson 2018). In 1965, Congress passed a new law that replaced quotas with a complex system that grants priorities to three categories: foreigners with relatives living in the United States, people needed to fill vacant jobs, and refugees. Such policies produced major shifts in immigration patterns (more and more immigrants originating in Latin America and Asia) and ultimately renewed calls for immigration reform (Martin and Midgley 2006). These examples suggest that, although the United States proudly touts its immigration history, immigration in the United States has always been characterized by a love–hate relationship.

Americans’ love–hate stance toward immigration may be the product of certain core **cultural values**. We are a nation strongly committed to economic opportunity and advancement. At various times and for various parties, the labor of immigrants has provided one sure route to economic betterment. For example, estimates suggest that nearly half of colonial-era European immigrants came to America as indentured servants who were willing to work off their debts for a chance at a better life in the new land. The forced immigration of African slaves provided cheap labor for the South’s labor-intensive agricultural development (Daniels 1990). The construction of the transcontinental railroad and the economic development of the West depended on the willing and able labor of Chinese immigrants, and Japanese immigrants were welcomed as cheap, reliable labor for Hawaiian sugar plantations. By 1910, immigrants constituted 14% of our national population, yet they made up more than one-half of the industrial labor force (National Park Service 1998). During World Wars I and II, young Mexican men were invited into the United States as guest workers (via the Bracero program) to help fill the farm labor shortages that developed as

Cultural value

A general sentiment regarding what is good or bad, right or wrong, desirable or undesirable

American soldiers were shipped overseas for combat duty (Martin and Midgley 2006). In short, immigration has benefited many U.S. enterprises, industries, corporations, and war campaigns.

The ties that link immigrants to traditional American cultural values have not only benefited big business but also advanced the lives of countless immigrants. Indeed, the crush of immigrants in the mid-19th century was prompted by the immigrants' hopes that they could escape their own poverty via the economic expansion that was taking place in the United States. Such promises of economic betterment continue to attract immigrants to our shores, even amid current trends toward economic globalization. The promise proves a potent one: Work in America is a winning proposition and a pull for many laborers of the world. See Table 20.1 for some compensation figures for production workers of various countries.

The cultural emphasis on economic advancement and opportunity helps explain the affinity between the United States and immigrants, but such emphasis also helps explain our long history of resisting immigrants. American tolerance for immigrants decreases whenever immigrants prove a threat to the economic well-being of "native" American workers. Indeed, the strongest support for immigration restrictions has often come from organized labor (Schuman and Olufs 1995). Recall that Chinese immigrants played a critical role in the construction of the transcontinental railroad. However, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was passed when Chinese immigrants began to be viewed as a threat to the

TABLE 20.1 ● Hourly Compensation Costs in Manufacturing in Select Locations, 2016 (in U.S. dollars)

Country	Dollars per Hour
Philippines	2.06
Mexico	3.91
Turkey	6.09
Brazil	7.98
Poland	8.53
Hungary	8.60
Taiwan	9.82
Czech Republic	10.71
Portugal	10.96
Slovakia	11.57
Estonia	11.60
Argentina	16.77
United States	39.03

Source: Adapted from The Conference Board, "International Comparisons of Hourly Compensation Costs in Manufacturing, 2016—Summary Tables." <https://www.conference-board.org/ilcprogram/index.cfm?id=38269>

White labor force. Similarly, Mexicans were welcome immigrants to the United States during the labor shortages imposed by World Wars I and II and again during the farm labor shortages of the 1950s. However, in the 1960s and the 1980s, when traditionally White labor jobs were in jeopardy, attempts were made to stem the flow of Mexican immigrants (Martin and Midgley 2006; Schuman and Olufs 1995). And today, we once again hear the arguments that immigrants are taking jobs from Americans and are responsible for falling wages.

In the 1990s, economic changes created a double bind for the traditional American workforce. Specifically, many low-wage jobs left the United States for more profitable locations abroad. (Again, see Table 20.1 to understand the financial incentives that tempted employers to move jobs out of the United States.) At the same time, more and more foreign workers entered America and offered direct competition for the low-wage jobs that remained. Add to the mix one other development emerging from the economic boom of the 1980s and the limited number of American students in the science and engineering fields: A growing demand for highly skilled temporary workers. College-educated immigrants are eligible for tens of thousands of work permits (H-1B visas) each year (the current annual cap is 85,000 visas per year—65,000 for workers with a bachelor's degree and 20,000 more for workers with a master's degree). These immigrants are very much in demand by American businesses, especially high-tech industries. (Immigration services reached the statutory limit for 2018 H-1B visas *within the first week* of the 2018 filing period.) H-1B visa holders can stay in the United States as long as employers are willing to sponsor them. But opponents to this influx of highly skilled immigrants argue that the group only serves to undermine the job opportunities and wages of their American counterparts (Jordan 2018). Thus, the immigration squeeze on American workers is felt by those at both ends of the skills spectrum. In 2017, 17.1% of U.S. workers were foreign born (up from 13.3% in 2000). Among foreign-born workers, 32.3% worked in managerial or professional occupations (vs. 41.3% of native-born workers), 23.9% worked in service occupations (vs. 16.1% of native-born workers), and 14.9% worked in production, material moving, construction, and maintenance occupations (vs. 11.0% of native-born workers) (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018g). Clearly, these economic realities play a significant role in fueling current anti-immigration sentiments. Yet despite popular views of the economic downside of immigration, immigrants do more to “grow the economy” than to hurt it. There is little evidence that immigrants adversely affect the employment or wages of native-born workers. And there is much evidence that high-skilled immigrants help spur innovation and job creation (think start-up companies). All immigrants “spur” the economy via their consumerism and second- and third-generation immigrants make a sizable financial contribution via paid taxes and other economic activity (Preston 2016).

Americans' anti-immigration attitude is further explained by some basic processes of group dynamics. We refer specifically to conventional patterns by which **in-groups** and **out-groups** develop. These groups are frequently ranked relative to their tenure in the country, but each wave of immigration to a country establishes new population configurations. In general, the most established immigrant groups cast themselves in the role of the in-group. Such groups define themselves as the “senior” and thus most valid representatives of a nation. These in-groups cast those that follow them in the role of out-groups. Recent arrivals are stigmatized as elements foreign to an established mold (Spain 1999).

In-group A group whose members possess a strong sense of identity and group loyalty and hold their group in high esteem

Out-group Group that is considered undesirable and is thought to hold values and beliefs foreign to one's own

Research demonstrates that members of an in-group carry unrealistically positive views of their group. At the same time, in-group members share unrealistically negative views of the out-group (Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis 2002; Lyons, Coursey, and Kenworthy 2013; Tajfel 1982). As groups improve their status, they are more likely to display in-group bias (Guimond, Dif, and Aupy 2002). Threats to in-groups can increase the derogation of lower-status out-groups (Cadinu and Reggiori 2002; Hopkins and Rae 2001). Low-status minorities are the most susceptible to in-group devaluation (Rudman, Feinberg, and Fairchild 2002). Exposure to prejudice about out-groups can increase the negative evaluations of those groups and hinder social ties with them, thus reinforcing destructive social dynamics (Levin, VanLaar, and Sidanius 2003; Lyons et al. 2013; Valentino, Brader, and Jardina 2013). Because newcomers are viewed relative to those with earlier claims, the very process of immigration perpetuates social conflict. Indeed, the mechanics of immigration seem to guarantee a hostile boundary between the old and the new, between established ethnic groups versus recent arrivals.

Your Thoughts . . .

The United States has long been a nation that has opened its heart and door to those afraid to stay in their countries of birth—that is, to refugees and those seeking asylum. But in 2017, the United States set out on a path that appears to be closing our nation's heart and ports of entry to these desperate people. The president sets the ceiling for the number of refugees that are admitted each year. For 2017, President Trump dropped the ceiling from 110,000 to 50,000 and for 2018, the ceiling was dropped again to 45,000. For 2019, the cap will be scaled back still further and set at just 30,000 refugees being resettled in the United States. With these reductions, the U.S. has stepped back from being a leader for helping the world's most vulnerable. Can we be a great nation if we retreat from our defining national values?

In light of Americans' historical relationship with immigrants, should we simply dismiss current anti-immigration sentiments as "business as usual"? Perhaps not.

As the United States entered the 20th century (1900–1909), 92% of immigrants were of European origins. Indeed, these European origins are frequently credited with facilitating past immigrants' transition to U.S. culture. The many shared customs and characteristics and the spatial dispersion of various European ethnic groups facilitated the **assimilation** of each new European immigrant wave. But the last several decades have seen a dramatic change in regional background of immigrants to the United States: As late as the 1960s, roughly three-quarters of immigrants had European roots but by 2014 this number had declined to just 11% (Zong and Batalova 2015).

Today, the vast majority of immigrants are from Asian or Latin American nations. Table 20.2 lists the top 10 countries of origin for legally permanent immigrant residents in 2016. By 2060, Hispanics are expected to make up about 28% and Asians just over 9% of the U.S. population (Vespa, Armstrong, and Medina 2018). These shifts in immigration and population patterns should hardly be cause for concern, however. The immigration history of these new groups, like the history of previous immigrant groups, has largely been a story

Assimilation The process by which immigrant groups come to adopt the dominant culture of their new homeland as their own

BOX 20.3**SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT THE NEWS:
“DOWN” FOR THE COUNT WITH THE 2020 CENSUS?**

It's a relatively rare but extremely important event: The U.S. Census. Once every 10 years, the government is mandated by the Constitution to count the number of people in the United States. The accuracy of the count matters—it is used in determining the number of Congressional seats. The count also impacts the allocation of federal monies to state and local governments for schools, hospitals, roads, public services, and so on. We have been doing this counting since 1790, and the 2020 Census is expected to be the most technologically advanced census yet. But there is growing concern that the 2020 count may not be as accurate as possible. In March 2018, the Commerce Secretary instructed the Census Bureau to add a question about citizenship to the 2020 Census. Critics of this new question argue that it will lead to


a serious *undercounting* of persons—that is, persons who fear their answers to the citizenship question will be used against them. Such a fear is being fed by the Trump administration's agenda for combatting illegal immigration. To be sure, undercounting has always been a problem for the Census; plenty of people don't want the government poking around in their business and are not interested in being counted. But undercounting is a serious problem in certain minority communities. For instance, it has been estimated that the Hispanic population was undercounted by 775,000 in the 2010 Census. If the citizenship question results in even greater undercounting of people, the results could be quite costly to states with large Hispanic populations—that is, California, Texas, and Arizona.

BOX 20.4**SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT THE NEWS: BUILD IT . . . IF YOU CAN**

In the 2016 presidential campaign, *candidate* Trump promised voters that if elected he would build a wall on the southern border and have Mexico pay for it. Recently, we experienced a partial government shutdown (the longest in history) over the president's request for \$5.7 billion for the wall. What will ultimately happen? Hard to say, for every mile of “the wall” we can expect a wall of resistance. Currently Texas property owners are fighting

the government's “eminent domain” claims for taking ownership of their property in order to build the wall. Others think the costs for building a wall are too high. (Mexico says it won't pay for the wall.) And still others find the idea of a wall along the southern border downright unneighborly (and inconsistent with our core national principles). We will have to keep our eye on this one as the campaign season heats up again.

of success. Sixty-five percent of the Asian population is in the labor force, with 52% in management, business, science, and arts occupations. Sixty percent of the Asian community own homes, and the median value of those homes is over \$400,000. The median income for Asian families is over \$96,000 and 74% of Asian families have private health insurance (U.S. Census 2017g). Over 53% of the Asian community 25 years of age and older have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. In 2016, 56% of those eligible to vote were registered to vote compared to 39% of the total population (U.S. Census 2017h).

TABLE 20.2 ● **Top 10 Countries of Origin for Legal Permanent Immigrants to the United States, 2016**


Country	Total Number	Percentage
1. Mexico	174,534	14.7
2. China	81,772	6.9
3. Cuba	66,516	5.6
4. India	64,687	5.5
5. Dominican Republic	61,161	5.2
6. Philippines	53,287	4.5
7. Vietnam	41,451	3.57
8. Haiti	23,584	2.0
9. El Salvador	23,449	2.0
10. Jamaica	23,350	2.0

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Hispanic immigrants to the United States can point to similar triumphs. While economic conditions of Hispanic Americans tend to lag behind national averages, the median family income was just under \$50,000 in 2016 and there were 1.3 million Hispanic families with incomes of \$125,000 or more (U.S. Census Bureau 2016c; 2016d). In 2016, 21% of Hispanic workers were in management, business, science, and arts occupations. The number of Hispanic-owned firms increased by nearly 5% from 2014 to 2015. In 2015, a total of \$325.4 billion in sales was reported by male and female Hispanic entrepreneurs (U.S. Census Bureau 2017i). The educational profile of Hispanics has improved greatly in recent years. In 2017, 70.4% of Hispanics were high school graduates and 17.2% had a bachelor's degree or higher. Over the last several years, roughly the same percentage of Hispanic high school graduates as White high school graduates have been enrolling in college immediately after high school. The Hispanic drop-out rate in 2016 was roughly half of what it was in 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] 2017b). And in terms of politics, the Hispanic vote will surely receive more and more attention in local, state, and national elections as the number of Hispanic voters continues to grow—Hispanics currently make up 11% of the electorate (CNN 2018).

While the faces of immigrants have changed in the past 50 years, intergenerational assimilation and upward mobility are still the norm. There is a very clear positive association between length of time in the United States and both income and homeownership rates (though it takes a long time for the foreign born to reach parity with their native-born age-mates). Likewise, there is a clear **inverse relationship** between length of U.S. residency and poverty and lack of health insurance. Immigrants also keep pace with native-born Americans in terms of entrepreneurial activity (Camarota 2012). And the eventual mastery of the

Inverse relationship One where the values of two variables move in opposite directions, aka negative relationship or association

English language is another key to immigrants' economic success. Historically, the shift from speaking another language to speaking English has occurred over three generations. (German-speaking immigrants of the mid-19th century clung to their native language for many generations, with some only dropping it upon U.S. entry into World War I [Economist 2017b]). Among recent immigrants, however, the shift is occurring within two generations. The share of Hispanic immigrants who are Spanish dominant drops to 6% among second-generation Hispanics. While nearly all foreign-born Hispanic parents report speaking Spanish with their children, less than half of third-generation Hispanic parents do so (M. H. Lopez, Krogstad, and Flores 2018). Age at arrival, length of time in the United States, and level of education as well as the influence of English-dominated mass media are all factors that hasten the acquisition of fluency in English (Rumbaut 2009). This faster turnaround time may also reflect the current reform mood of the country. The Trump administration is pushing a "merit"-based policy that would give preference to immigrants able to speak English *before* coming to the United States.

Your Thoughts . . .

It is often noted that language is the glue that holds a group together and the bedrock of national identity. Is there merit to the argument for making English the official language of the United States? Or should we go so far as to mandate "English only" as a way of fostering full integration of immigrants?

Given the current mood of the nation, it is perhaps no surprise that more and more immigrants are seeking U.S. citizenship (naturalization). During the 1950s and 1960s, the average number of immigrants naturalizing each year was fewer than 120,000. For the 2000s, that yearly average jumped to approximately 680,000. In 2008, an all-time record was set for the number of immigrants who became naturalized citizens: 1.04 million. For the 753,060 who naturalized in 2017, the average time lapse between becoming a legal permanent resident and becoming a citizen was seven years (Witsman 2017). (See Box 20.1 for conditions for naturalizing.)

In light of the general success rates posted by recent immigrants in general and by many Asian and Hispanic Americans, we must consider that current anti-immigration sentiments may be based on issues of race and ethnic differences. New, non-European immigrants may lack the physical and cultural similarities necessary for eventual acceptance as part of society's in-group.

If immigration and population trends develop as predicted, anti-immigration sentiments fueled by issues of race may get worse before they get better. Demographers project that between 2016 and 2060, the U.S. population will grow from 326 million to 404 million. Over this same period, the foreign-born population will rise from 44 million to 69 million and the percentage of foreign born will reach a historic high of 17% (exceeding the previous high in 1890 of nearly 15%). The year 2030 is expected to be a demographic turning point for the United States: By 2030, immigration is expected to overtake *natural* population increase (the result of more births than deaths) as the primary driver for population growth. Between 2020 and 2060, the non-Hispanic White population is expected to fall from 199 million to 179 million. By 2060,

Multiculturalism

A perspective that accentuates rather than dilutes ethnic and racial differences and embraces an ideology of equality

one in three Americans are projected to be a race other than White. Over the next several decades, multiracial individuals will be the fastest-growing segment of the population (Vespa et al. 2018). If these projections of demographic change are accurate, future immigration, in a very profound sense, will change the status quo. The practice of assimilation may necessarily give way to **multiculturalism**. Such an environment might strip in-groups of dominance and power. In contrast to the adversarial stance of the in-group/out-group design, a multicultural structure demands that all groups be viewed as equally valued contributors to the mainstream culture.

Immigration projections suggest that the United States is moving closer to being a microcosm of the world. Our nation will experience an increase in the diversity that already characterizes the younger generations of Americans. Such changes could bring us closer to fully realizing the motto that appears on all U.S. currency: *E Pluribus Unum*, one formed from many. Thus, current and future attitudes toward immigrants in America will hinge on our readiness to deal with fundamental population changes.

Certainly, some Americans will resist this development, arguing that it threatens our national identity and changes our national face. Contemporary movements against bilingual education and for a national language offer evidence of such resistance. Nevertheless, others will view our changing population as a positive economic opportunity. Consider the fact that economists forecast a very different world for coming generations of Americans. More and more of us will be earning our livings in the service sector of an increasingly global, postindustrial economy. The Bureau of Labor notes that two-thirds of the 30 fastest-growing occupations will require some post-secondary education (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017f). In recent years, the education level of immigrants has been increasing—78% of immigrants from India and 74% of immigrants from Taiwan hold at least a bachelor's degree versus 32% of native-born Americans (Zong et al. 2018). Science and engineering jobs also are expected to have a high growth rate in the years ahead. Immigrants are important for feeding STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) jobs. In 2017, a higher percentage of naturalized than native 25- to 34-year-olds held bachelor's degrees in STEM fields (28% vs. 18%). Also in 2017, a higher percentage of naturalized than native 25- to 34-year-olds were employed in STEM occupations (NCES 2017b). Some studies also indicate that bilingualism is associated with positive educational outcomes (Lutz and Crist 2009; Portes 2002; Proctor et al. 2010). Indeed, globalization makes multilingualism a way of life and a pathway to empowerment as well as a valuable resource in a tight job market. Currently, 60% of English-speaking Hispanics are bilingual (Krogstad and Gonzalez-Barrera 2015). About one in four students in our public schools speak a language other than English at home (M. Anderson 2015). A majority of ELL (English Language Learner) students come from families speaking Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese at home (other common home languages include Vietnamese, Russian, and Korean) (NCES 2017c). Many educators believe that encouraging development of both home and school languages is the best path for student development and outcomes. As we move further into an era of jobs for a world economy, bilingualism will be an extremely valuable trait.

Framed in this way, new immigration patterns may help supply us with a new source of **cultural capital**. Interestingly enough, as we witness various indicators attesting to the force of globalization, we also see more and more ethnic groups asserting their identities and pushing for political recognition and

Cultural capital

Attributes, knowledge, or ways of thinking that can be converted or used for economic advantage

autonomy (Guillen 2001). By their familiarity with cultures now central to the world market, immigrants to the United States may well give our nation a competitive edge on a global playing field. Once again, immigrants to the United States may be the national resource that makes the United States a significant player in a new world economy.

Learning More About It

In *Immigrant America: A Portrait*, 4th edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut present a highly readable account of the complexities of immigration in America and mobilize data in the service of dismantling myths and misconceptions.

Vivian Louie, in *Keeping the Immigrant Bargain: The Costs and Rewards of Success in America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2012), examines

the success of the children of Dominican and Colombian immigrants and offers insight into why some immigrant groups do better than others in their new adopted homeland.

Julie Dowling and Jonathan Inda's edited volume, *Governing Immigration Through Crime* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), presents a collection of readings on current punitive practices directed at immigrants and the immigration process.

Going Online for Some Second Thoughts

The Population Reference Bureau offers an interactive map that provides basic data on the percentage of foreign born in each state: <https://www.prb.org/usdata/indicator/foreign-born/snapshot/>.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly the INS) offers a wealth of information on immigration. Visit its website at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>.

Separate the fact from fiction about the 11 million-plus undocumented immigrants in the United

States by accessing the link "Undocumented Immigrants: Myths and Reality" at the Urban Institute's website: www.urban.org/publications/900898.html.

You can find a migration infographic showing global trends at <https://www.prb.org/infographic-global-migration/>.

The Migration Policy Institute offers a wealth of information on immigration. Visit it at <http://migrationpolicy.org/>.

Now It's Your Turn

1. Do some research on refugee resettlement in the United States. Which communities help resettle these people? What are the demographic characteristics of these communities?
2. Conduct several in-depth interviews with people who were born in other countries and immigrated to the United States. Find out about the conditions of their immigration, the reception they

received in their new communities, and, if appropriate, the reception they received at their new workplaces or their new schools. Try to vary the immigration background of your interview subjects; that is, choose individuals who came from different countries. Consider whether one's status as an immigrant functions as a master status (see Essay 6 or 12).

3. Use your own college community to locate children of recent immigrants. Prepare an interview guide that will allow you to explore whether these individuals exist in two social worlds or cultures. (For example, how do language, food, fashion patterns, and so on vary from school to home?)

Do not copy, post, or distribute