

ISSUE 2



Is Third World Immigration a Threat to America's Way of Life?

YES: Mark Krikorian, from *The New Case Against Immigration* (Sentinel, 2008)

NO: Jason L. Riley, from *Let Them In: The Case for Open Borders* (Gotham, 2008)

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Mark Krikorian, the executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, presents the case against immigration. He emphasizes the changes in America that make immigration less beneficial for America. The current immigrants are not much different than immigrants in the past century but they do not fit the new America as well as the past immigrants fit the old America. One part of the story is that the new America will not assimilate immigrants well.

NO: Jason L. Riley, an editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, applauds immigration because it will propel, not impede, economic growth. America has a flexible labor market, where both employers and employees can change the work situation as they need or desire. "In the end, employers, workers, and consumers are all better off." America has a labor shortage that immigrants help fill without taking jobs in the aggregate from Americans. Riley also argues that new immigrants assimilate much like the old immigrants did.

Before September 11, 2001, many Americans favored the reduction of immigration. After the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by immigrants, some felt even stronger about limiting immigration. But is immigration bad for America, as this sentiment assumes, or does it strengthen America?

Today the number of legal immigrants to America is close to 1 million per year, and illegal ("undocumented") immigrants probably number well over that figure. In terms of numbers, immigration is now comparable to the level it reached during the early years of the twentieth century, when millions of immigrants arrived from southern and eastern Europe. A majority of the new

immigrants, however, do not come from Europe but from what has been called the "Third World"—the underdeveloped nations. The largest percentages come from Mexico, the Philippines, Korea, and the islands of the Caribbean, while European immigration has shrunk to about 10 percent. Much of the reason for this shift has to do with changes made in U.S. immigration laws during the 1960s. Decades earlier, in the 1920s, America narrowed its gate to people from certain regions of the world by imposing quotas designed to preserve the balance of races in America. But in 1965, a series of amendments to the Immigration Act put all the world's people on an equal footing in terms of immigration. The result, wrote journalist Theodore H. White, was "a stampede, almost an invasion" of Third World immigrants. Indeed, the 1965 amendments made it even easier for Third World immigrants to enter the country because the new law gave preference to those with a family member already living in the United States. Because most of the European immigrants who settled in the early part of the century had died off, and few Europeans had immigrated in more recent years, a greater percentage of family-reuniting immigration came from the Third World.

Immigrants move to the United States for various reasons: to flee tyranny and terrorism, to escape war, or to join relatives who have already settled. Above all, they immigrate because in their eyes America is an island of affluence in a global sea of poverty; here they will earn many times what they could only hope to earn in their native countries. One hotly debated question is, What will these new immigrants do to the United States—or for it?

Part of the debate has to do with bread-and-butter issues: Will new immigrants take jobs away from American workers? Or will they fill jobs that American workers do not want anyway, which will help stimulate the economy? Behind these economic issues is a more profound cultural question: Will these new immigrants add healthy new strains to America's cultural inheritance, broadening and revitalizing it? Or will they cause the country to break up into separate cultural units, destroying America's unity? Of all the questions relating to immigration, this one seems to be the most sensitive.

In 1992, conservative columnist Patrick Buchanan set off a firestorm of controversy when he raised this question: "If we had to take a million immigrants next year, say Zulus or Englishmen, and put them in Virginia, which group would be easier to assimilate and cause less problems for the people of Virginia?" Although Buchanan later explained that his intention was not to denigrate Zulus or any other racial group but simply to talk about assimilation into Anglo-American culture, his remarks were widely characterized as racist and xenophobic (related to a fear of foreigners). Whether or not that characterization is justified, Buchanan's question goes to the heart of the cultural debate over immigration—the tension between unity and diversity. In the selections that follow, Krikorian contends that immigrants are harming the United States both economically and culturally. He argues that America today does not assimilate immigrants very well, so more immigration will adversely affect American life. Riley counters that the accusations against immigrants are false and that immigrants contribute greatly to America.

The New Case Against Immigration

Introduction

It's not the immigrants—it's us.

What's different about immigration today as opposed to a century ago is not the characteristics of the newcomers but the characteristics of our society. Immigrants are what they've always been: not the poorest of the poor but one step up from the bottom, strivers looking for better lives for their children, coming from rural or small-town backgrounds in traditional—what we would call third-world—societies. But the changes that define modern America—in our society, economy, government, and technology, for example—are so fundamental that our past success in dealing with immigration is simply no longer relevant.

This is a new argument. It's not that previous critiques of immigration have been wrong—indeed, much of what follows in this book is based on the outstanding work of others over the years. Instead, the source of the problems created by immigration has usually been located in differences between *immigrants* past and present rather than in differences between *America* past and present. Immigrants in the past, it is said, were white, but now they're not; they used to want to assimilate, but now they don't; or they used to be self-sufficient, but now they seek out government assistance. We've all heard the laments: "My grandpa from Sicily learned English, and my grandma from Minsk got by without welfare—what's the problem with immigrants today?" The problem is that the America your grandparents immigrated to a century ago no longer exists. . . .

In short, mass immigration is incompatible with a modern society. As Hudson Institute scholar John Fonte has written, "It's not 1900 any more."

The subsequent chapters will spell out exactly how the changes that distinguish a modern, mature society are incompatible with continued immigration, but for now it will suffice to say that they paint a picture of a country fundamentally different from the past. Some examples:

ECONOMY. A century ago, what economists call the primary sector of the economy (farming, fishing, hunting, and herding) still employed more Americans than any other, as it had since the dawn of humankind. Today only 2 percent of our workforce occupies itself in this way. Meanwhile, the tertiary

sector (service industries) now employs 80 percent of working Americans, and the percentage is climbing.

EDUCATION. Along with the change in the economy, education has become more widespread. Nearly a quarter of American adults had less than five years of schooling in 1910; as of 2000, that figure is less than 2 percent.

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GOVERNMENT. In 1900, total government spending at all levels equaled about 5.5 percent of the economy; by 2003, it was more than 36 percent. Total government employment (federal, state, and local) went from a little more than 1 million in 1900 (about 4 percent of the workforce) to more than 22 million in 2000 (more than 16 percent of the workforce).

LIFESTYLE. America's population was still 60 percent rural in 1900; in 2000, only 21 percent of Americans lived in rural areas (and only a tiny fraction were involved in farming). The average household went from more than 4.5 people to a little more than 2.5, while the number of people per room in the average house fell from 1.1 in 1910 to 0.4 in 1997.

Other changes are harder to quantify but are just as real in marking modern society as a break with the past: a weakening sense of community and civic engagement, increased religious skepticism, a greater sense of responsibility for the less fortunate, rejection of racial and religious discrimination, and concern for our stewardship of the natural world.

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These social changes marking national adulthood don't mean that mass immigration was out of place during our country's adolescence. America ended up a stronger nation because of the mass-immigration phase of our development, a phase that extended for seventy-odd years, from the late 1840s until the early 1920s. Had we not experienced that period of mass immigration, our population, derived mainly from descendants of a relatively small number of preindependence settlers, would still have grown rapidly, but it would have been smaller; in 1990, about half of America's population was attributable to post-1790 immigrants and their descendants. The first part of the immigration phase, dominated by northern Europeans, helped settle much of the land; this happened both because some immigrants went directly to the Midwest and West to establish farms and ranches and because others moved to eastern cities, filling in behind old-stock Americans who had moved west. The latter part of our nation's adolescent immigration phase was dominated by immigrants from eastern and southern Europe who settled mainly in the cities and contributed mightily to industrialization.

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The closing of the frontier was irreversible—once it was gone, there was no way to get it back. But prospective immigrants continued to be available in abundance. And so, starting with the 1965 immigration law, America resumed its adolescent policy of immigration, leading to the largest wave of newcomers in its history. The total foreign-born population has ballooned, from fewer than

10 million in 1970 (less than 5 percent of the nation's population) to nearly 38 million in 2007 (12.6 percent of the population). Annual legal immigration—the number of people awarded permanent residency, potentially leading to citizenship—has gone from fewer than 400,000 in 1970 to nearly 1.3 million in 2006. And illegal immigration has become a major phenomenon, with today's illegal population totaling perhaps 12 million and growing by around half a million each year.

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The objective of this book is to demonstrate how this new immigration wave clashes with modern America, how a policy that served us well in our adolescence is harmful in our maturity.

Assimilation: The Cracked Melting Pot

The most important long-term measure of success in immigration is assimilation. The American model of immigration has been based on turning immigrants and their descendants fully into Americans: Theodore Roosevelt summed up this Americanization tradition when he wrote that "if the immigrant who comes here does in good faith become an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with every one else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed or birthplace or origin."

This is unlike the practice of other countries, such as Germany or the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms, and even our own historical lapses (African slavery, the Know-Nothing movement, and the Bracero program for Mexican guest workers), which all have one thing in common—the willingness to employ the labor of foreign workers without admitting them to membership in the society.

This process of Americanizing immigrants was tumultuous and wrenching for everyone involved but eventually very successful. The descendants of those who came in generations past—from Ireland or Poland, Mexico or Sweden, China or Germany, Britain or Armenia—have indeed become one people. This has been possible, of course, because American nationality is not based on blood relations, like a biological family, but is more like a family growing partly through adoption, where new immigrants attach themselves to their new country and embrace the cultural and civic values of their native-born brethren as their own.

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But this offer of complete adoption into the American nation was always based on the requirement that the immigrant "assimilates himself to us." Such assimilation is more than the surface changes that are easily observed; future Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis put it well in a 1915 speech:

But the adoption of our language, manners and customs is only a small part of the process. To become Americanized, the change wrought must be fundamental. However great his outward conformity, the immigrant is

not Americanized unless his interests and affections have become deeply rooted here. And we properly demand of the immigrant even more than this. He must be brought into complete harmony with our ideals and aspirations and cooperate with us for their attainment. Only when this has been done, will he possess the national consciousness of an American.

This adoption of "the national consciousness of an American" is what Hudson Institute scholar John Fonte calls patriotic assimilation—an identification with Americans as the immigrant's new countrymen, converting, in a secular sense, from membership in one national community to membership in another. . . .

Unfortunately, the conditions of modern society make such assimilation increasingly difficult. It is characteristic of modern societies that they have great difficulty in assimilating large numbers of newcomers into the model of a territorial nation-state, with a common language and civic culture helping to cultivate the patriotic solidarity necessary for both mutual sacrifice and respect for individual rights.

This is not because of any intrinsic differences between immigrants past and present; the simple fact that most immigrants now come from Latin America and Asia, rather than from Europe, is of less importance with regard to assimilation than some observers seem to think. Instead, it is *we* who have changed.

Our modern society is different in two major ways that relate to assimilation, one practical, the other political. The first, practical, difference is that modern technology now enables newcomers to retain ties to their homelands, even to the extent of living in both countries simultaneously; thus, becoming "deeply rooted here," in Brandeis's words, is simply less likely to happen. This leads to what scholars call transnationalism—living in such a way as not to be rooted in one nation, but rather living across two or more nations. As one student of the subject has put it, "Transnational communities are groups whose identity is not primarily based on attachment to a specific territory. They therefore present a powerful challenge to traditional ideas of nation-state belonging."

Second, and perhaps more important, is the political change. Elites in all modern societies, including ours, come to devalue their own nation and culture and thus recoil from the idea that newcomers should even be required to adopt "our language, manners and customs," let alone "be brought into complete harmony with our ideals and aspirations"—assuming we can even agree, in this contentious age, on what those ideals and aspirations are. This loss of confidence expresses itself in an ideology of multiculturalism, which rejects the idea of bonds tying together all members of a society.

The combination of these two modern traits—transnationalism and multiculturalism—means that mass immigration today is much less likely to result in the kind of deep assimilation of the vast majority of immigrants and their children that is necessary for immigration to be successful. This is true regardless of the characteristics of the immigrants—their legal status, country of origin, or even level of education—because the problem is inherent to modern society and the way that modernity limits our ability to replicate the successes of the past.

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Either to maintain his own cognitive balance or preserve his professional viability in academia, [Robert Putnam a political scientist and professor at Harvard University] tries to explain away the socially corrosive effects of mass immigration by arguing that in the long run "successful immigrant societies have overcome such fragmentation by creating new, cross-cutting forms of social solidarity and more encompassing identities." That is indeed what successful immigrant societies like ours have done—in the past. But these "cross-cutting forms of social solidarity and more encompassing identities"—in other words, an overarching American identity held by people of different ethnic groups and classes and regions and religions—are precisely what modern societies have greater trouble developing, for the reasons, both technological and ideological, that this chapter has explored.

In short, Americanization is much more difficult under modern conditions than in the past. Rather than turning out new Americans who are "blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh of the men who wrote that Declaration," mass immigration today is helping transform the United States into what one anthropologist approvingly calls "one node in a post-national network of diasporas." Ending mass immigration does not guarantee the restoration of a common civic culture, but continuing it does guarantee that any attempt at such restoration will fail.

Economy: Cheap Labor versus Modern America

The key to the economic facet of the conflict between mass immigration and modern society is the fact that immigration floods the job market with low-skilled workers, creating what economists call a slack, or loose, labor market. This results in a buyer's market for labor, where employers can pick and choose among workers rather than having to compete with one another to attract and keep staff.

This has two major implications for the economy: First, a loose labor market reduces the bargaining power of workers compared to employers, resulting in lower earnings and less opportunity for advancement for the poorest and most marginal of Americans. And second, by artificially keeping wages lower than they would be otherwise, mass immigration reduces the incentives for more-efficient use of labor, slowing the natural progress of mechanization and other productivity increases in the low-wage industries where immigrants are concentrated.

In other words, while immigration certainly increases the overall size of our economy, it subverts the widely shared economic goals of a modern society: a large middle class open to all, working in high-wage, knowledge-intensive, and capital-intensive jobs exhibiting growing labor productivity and avoiding too skewed a distribution of income.

Economic Change

Immigration has always added workers to the economy, of course, but today is different because our economy has changed dramatically since the end of

the first great immigration wave. When millions of Irish and Germans and Scandinavians and Italians and Jews and Slavs crossed the Atlantic, America was still settling vast swathes of empty land and undergoing the titanic process of industrialization. A century ago, what economists call the primary sector of the economy (farming, fishing, and so on) still employed more Americans than any other, as it had everywhere since the dawn of humankind. Today, only 2 percent of our workforce occupies itself in this way. Meanwhile, we've passed through the industrial phase of economic development and entered the postindustrial era, with the tertiary sector (the service industry overall) employing fully 80 percent of working Americans, and the percentage is climbing.

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Into this twenty-first-century economy we have resumed the importation of what amounts to nineteenth-century foreign labor. Between 1980 and 2000, immigration increased the number of workers in the United States by nearly 10 percent and the number of high school dropouts by 20 percent, causing what economists call a supply shock—a sudden infusion of a particular resource (in this case, labor, especially low-skilled labor). And this shock to the labor market is likely to continue indefinitely, barring a change in federal policy; from 2000 to 2005, 8 million more immigrants arrived, the majority of them with no education beyond high school.

The contrast with American workers is stark: Only about 8 percent of native-born workers today have less than a high-school education, but almost 30 percent of immigrant workers do. What's more, while immigrants account for about 15 percent of all workers, they make up nearly 40 percent of workers lacking a high-school degree, resulting in an artificially bloated low-skilled labor force.

This gap between native and immigrant skills has been growing as the economy and society have modernized. In 1960, immigrant men were only about 25 percent more likely to be high-school dropouts than native-born men; by 1998, after the huge wave of low-skilled immigration, immigrants were nearly *four times* more likely to be dropouts. Of course, the process of modernization has been going on everywhere, so the proportion of immigrants who lack a high-school education has also been falling over the years, but much more slowly than among Americans, causing the gap to widen.

Reducing Wages

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The effect of the ongoing surge of immigration on the income of low-skilled Americans is a textbook case of supply and demand. In fact, in his famous textbook, economist Paul Samuelson wrote specifically about the pre-1965 tight-border policies: "By keeping labor supply down, immigration policy tends to keep wages high." He stated the basic principle: "Limitation of the supply of any grade of labor relative to all other productive factors can be expected to raise its wage rate; an increase in supply will, other things being equal, tend to depress wage rates."

The National Research Council, in a wide-ranging study of immigration, concluded that in economic terms, immigration "harms workers who are substitutes for immigrants while benefiting workers who are complements to immigrants." In other words, since immigrants are disproportionately low skilled, it is low-skilled American workers who see their wages drop as immigrants expand the pool of people competing for jobs appropriate to their skill level. The NRC report estimated that immigration was responsible for nearly half the decline in wages of high-school dropouts between 1980 and 1994. At the same time, higher-skilled workers may gain, as the services that low-skilled workers provide (like lawn-mowing or valet parking) become cheaper and as the high skilled can specialize more.

In fact, immigration's overall economic benefit to Americans already here (as opposed to the simple increase in the total size of the economy) comes specifically from lowering the wages of American workers who compete with the immigrants. The National Research Council found that Americans as a whole received an economic benefit of between \$1 billion and \$10 billion per year from immigration, a tiny amount in what was, at the time of the report, an \$8 trillion economy. But this small net economic benefit arises from the redistribution of wealth away from the poor and toward the rest of society; the report found that the poorest tenth of American workers (high-school dropouts who compete with immigrants) suffer a 5 percent cut in wages because of immigration, which is then redistributed to the rest of the American workforce, making the average person with at least a high-school education a minuscule two tenths of 1 percent richer.

In other words, immigration takes a figurative pound of flesh from one low-skilled American worker, who already has little to spare, and then slices it thinly among nine other better-educated Americans, who are more prosperous to begin with, giving each of them a barely noticeable benefit. And of course, even that small benefit is swamped by the extra cost in government services generated by low-skilled immigration, as discussed in the next chapter.

More recent research has found a quite pronounced loss to native-born American workers. Harvard economist George Borjas has found that the immigration wave of the 1980s and 1990s caused a drop in the annual earnings of all categories of American workers, including a 3.6 percent drop for male college graduates and a 7.4 percent drop for male high-school dropouts. Lest these numbers seem small, Borjas calculates that immigration reduced the average American high-school dropout's income in 2000 by about \$1,800, while the American college graduate saw his salary reduced by \$2,600.

Since education is not distributed evenly among Americans, some groups of American workers will experience a disproportionately large effect from immigration. Borjas found that the immigrant influx from 1980 to 2000 caused the annual wages of native-born white workers overall to fall 3.5 percent, but those of black workers fell 4.5 percent, and the wages of native-born Hispanic workers fell 5 percent. As he writes: "The adverse impact of immigration, therefore, is largest for the most disadvantaged native-born minorities."

Jason L. Riley



Let Them In: The Case for Open Borders

... **T**his book expounds on two general themes. The first is that, contrary to received wisdom, today's Latino immigrants aren't "different," just newer. The second is that an open immigration policy is compatible with free-market conservatism and homeland security. I explain, from a conservative perspective, why the pessimists who say otherwise are mistaken. I argue that immigrants, including low-skill immigrants, are an asset to the United States, not a liability. Immigrants help keep our workforce younger and stronger than Asia's and Europe's. As entrepreneurs, they create jobs. As consumers, they generate economic activity that results in more overall economic growth. By taking jobs that over-qualified Americans spurn, they fill niches in the workforce that make our economy more efficient and allow for the upward mobility of the native population.

An immigration policy that acknowledges these economic realities would provide more, not fewer, legal ways for immigrants to enter the country. That, in turn, would go a long way toward reducing illegal entries. It would also alleviate pressure on the border and free up our overburdened patrols to track down terrorists, drug dealers, and other serious threats to our welfare. Unfortunately, as things stand, our border security officers spend most of their time chasing migrants who come north to mow our lawns and burp our babies. A guest-worker program for such individuals would help regulate the labor flow and isolate the criminals, thus making us much safer than any wall along the Rio Grande.

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The reality is that America's foreign labor force helps to propel economic growth, not impede it, because the U.S. job market, properly understood, is not a zero-sum game. The number of jobs in the United States is not static. It's fluid, which is how we want it to be. In 2006, 55 million U.S. workers (or just less than 4.6 million per month) either quit their jobs or were fired. Yet 57 million people were hired over the same period. In a typical year, a third of our workforce is turning over. In about half of those cases the separation is voluntary; in the other half, the worker has been shown the door. But either way, this messy churn, which can disrupt lives and even make obsolete entire industries, has positive macroeconomic consequences in the long run.

That's because flexible labor markets, the kind that minimize the costs to a business of hiring and firing employees, enable workers and employers alike to find the employment situation that suits them best. Flexible labor markets make it easier for an employee who doesn't like a job, is let go, or simply feels underappreciated by his boss to find another position somewhere else. And flexible labor markets make it more likely that an employer will expand his workforce, or take a chance on a job seeker who isn't very skilled or perhaps has a spotty record.

A better fit between employers and employees increases productivity and prosperity and makes markets more responsive to consumer demand. In the end, employers, workers, and consumers are all better off. Immigrants, be they Salvadoran dishwashers, Indian motel operators, or Russian microbiologists, increase the fluidity of U.S. labor markets. Access to fewer of them would reduce the flexibility that makes America so productive.

A nation's ability to produce goods and services determines its wealth. Productivity, defined as the quantity of goods and services produced from each hour of a worker's time, is why some nations are wealthier than others. It's a major reason why GDP per capita in the United States was \$39,676 in 2007, but only \$29,300 in France, \$6,394 in Ukraine, and \$1,237 in Mozambique. Productivity, writes Harvard economist N. Gregory Mankiw, "is the key determinant of living standards" and "the key determinant in growth of living standards." For our purposes, the question is whether immigrant labor ultimately contributes to America's productivity and economic growth, or detracts from it.

Fundamentally, immigration to the United States is a function of a labor shortage for certain kinds of jobs here. Of course, work is not the only reason foreigners migrate to America, but judging from their overrepresentation in the labor force, and the fact that immigrants (excluding refugees) resort to welfare less often than the native-born population, we know that work is the main reason they come.

Rather than appropriating jobs from natives, however, immigrants are more likely to be simply filling them—and often facilitating more employment opportunities in the process. The job-displacement myth, which fuels so much of the national immigration debate, can be rebutted empirically. In 2006, for example, there were around 146 million workers in the United States, and 15 percent, or 21 million, were foreign born. If immigrants are stealing jobs, 21 million U.S. natives, or something approximating that number, should have been out of work. But as economics reporter Roger Lowenstein noted in a July 2006 *New York Times Magazine* article, "the country has nothing close to that many unemployed. (The actual number is only seven million.) So the majority of immigrants can't literally have 'taken' jobs; they must be doing jobs that wouldn't have existed had the immigrants not been here."

The reason that immigrant workers tend not to elbow aside natives for jobs and depress wages has to do with the education and skills that foreigners typically bring to the U.S. labor market. Most immigrants fall into one of two categories: low-skilled laborers or high-skilled professionals. One-third of all immigrants have less than a high school education, and one-quarter hold

a bachelor's or advanced degree. Most native workers, by contrast, are concentrated betwixt those two extremes. Hence, immigrant workers tend to act as complements to the native U.S. workforce rather than substitutes. There is some overlap, of course, but this skill distribution is the reason immigrants and natives for the most part aren't competing for the same positions.

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A 2007 study published by economist Giovanni Peri analyzed the effects of immigrant labor on California, a state that wasn't chosen arbitrarily. The Golden State, the nation's most populous, is home to nearly a third of all foreign-born U.S. workers. Los Angeles, the nation's second-largest city after New York, is nearly half Hispanic. In the past decade, California's population growth has been almost entirely due to immigration, much of it illegal. The term "Mexifornia" has entered the lexicon. If, as conventional wisdom holds, immigration does in fact have a negative impact on the job security of Americans, California is one of the more likely places that the phenomenon would be manifest.

Yet Peri, a professor of economics at the University of California at Davis, found "no evidence that the inflow of immigrants over the period 1960–2004 worsened the employment opportunities of natives with similar education and experience." With respect to wages, he found that "during 1990–2004, immigration induced a 4 percent real wage increase for the average native worker. This effect ranged from near zero (+0.2 percent) for wages of native high school dropouts and between 3 and 7 percent for native workers with at least a high school diploma." In other words, immigrants tended to expand the economic pie, not displace native workers. These foreign workers lifted all socioeconomic boats; it was just a matter of how much.

At first blush, Peri's findings might seem counterintuitive. It's assumed that because immigrants increase the supply of labor, they necessarily decrease both the wages and the employment opportunities of the native workers. If most immigrant workers were interchangeable with U.S. natives, that might indeed be the case. But the assumption is problematic because immigrants on average aren't stand-ins for natives.

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Peri found that since workers with different levels of education perform different tasks, the majority of native-born workers—high school graduates with some college—experience benefits, more than competition, from the foreign-born workers who are concentrated in high and low educational groups. The result is a more efficient domestic labor market, which leads to more capital investment, higher overall economic growth, and, ultimately, more choices for consumers.

But it also leads to better jobs and higher pay for American workers, explains Peri. "In nontechnical terms," he writes, "the wages of native workers could increase because the increased supply of migrants is likely to put native workers in jobs where they perform supervisory, managerial, training, and . . . coordinating tasks, which makes them more productive." More workers also

means more consumers, "so that immigration might simply increase total production and demand without depressing wages."

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In 1994 economist Richard Vedder of Ohio University, working with Lowell Gallaway and Stephen Moore, conducted a historical analysis of immigration's impact on the entire U.S. labor force. They found "no statistically reliable correlation between the percentage of the population that was foreign-born and the national unemployment rate over the period 1900–1989, or for just the postwar era (1947–1989)." Moreover, Vedder found that if there is any correlation between immigration and unemployment, it would appear to be negative. Which is to say that higher immigration is associated with lower unemployment.

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Like Peri, Vedder concluded that the reason immigration doesn't cause unemployment is because immigrants help enlarge America's economic pie. "Immigrants expand total output and the demand for labor, offsetting the negative effects that a greater labor supply might have," he writes. "They fill vital niches at the ends of the skill spectrum, doing low-skilled jobs that native Americans rebuff (at prevailing wages) as well as sophisticated high-skill jobs."

Among high-skilled immigrant workers, these dots are perhaps easier to connect. Think of a silicon chip manufacturer in the United States that hires a bright immigrant engineer from China to redesign its products with the goal of making them more cost-efficient and marketable. If the hire is a success, the firm winds up making more chips, which requires more employees. These additional hires—from the managers to the secretaries—are all more likely to be U.S. natives. So are the additional advertisers and marketers who will be sought as the company expands. Why? In part because the skills necessary to do those jobs generally include a familiarity with the native language and culture that a recent immigrant is less likely to possess. As for the American consumer, he's now getting a better product, more choices, and lower prices. Thus has an immigrant hire resulted in more jobs for U.S. natives, not fewer, and increased overall productivity.

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Of course, high-skill immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Southeast Asia do more than create extra jobs for U.S. employers. They also seem to have a knack for creating entirely new companies that employ thousands of people. Lucky for us. Technology firms, in particular, have made possible the U.S. productivity boom of the past decade. And immigrants have had a hand in starting a disproportionate number of the most successful ones—from Google and eBay to Yahoo! and Sun Microsystems.

A National Foundation for American Policy paper by Stuart Anderson and Michaela Platzer assessed the impact of immigrant entrepreneurs and professionals on U.S. competitiveness. Between 1993 and 2006, the

immigrants started 25 percent of U.S. public companies that were venture-backed. These businesses employed some 220,000 people in the United States and boasted a market capitalization that "exceeds \$500 billion, adding significant value to the American economy."

... Linguistic assimilation is key, not least because it amounts to a job skill that can increase earnings. And while restrictionists claim otherwise, there's simply no evidence that Latinos are rejecting English. "The model that we have from the European experience," sociologist Richard Alba told me in an interview, "is that the children of immigrants born in the U.S. grow up in homes where they learn, to some extent, the mother tongue. They understand it and may speak it, but they prefer English. And when they grow up, they establish homes where English is the dominant language."

According to 2005 census data, just one-third of immigrants who are in the country for less than a decade speak English well, but that fraction climbs to nearly three-quarters for those here thirty years or more. There may be more bilingualism today among the children of immigrants, but there's no indication that Spanish is dominant in the second generation. The 2000 census found that 91 percent of the children and 97 percent of the grandchildren of Mexican immigrants spoke English well. Nor are there signs, bilingual-education advocates notwithstanding, that immigrant parents *want* their children speaking Spanish. A 2002 Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Foundation survey found that 89 percent of Latinos "believe immigrants need to learn to speak English to succeed in the United States."

Longitudinal analyses also reveal that homeownership is up and poverty is down among the Latino immigrants. Using as his sample California, which has the country's largest concentration of Mexican foreign nationals, Myers notes that 16 percent of Latinos arriving in the Golden State in the 1970s owned homes by 1980. But more than 33 percent owned homes by 1990, and over half by 2000. The average rate of homeownership nationally was just over 66 percent in 2000.

The 2000 census found that the foreign-born poverty rate had fallen slightly, to 19.1 percent from 19.8 percent in 1990. Myers reports that this small decrease was not due to an influx of more prosperous immigrant groups, such as Asians. The disaggregated data show that poverty fell among Latinos and Asians alike. Nor can it be attributed to a temporary upturn in the economy, since the economic conditions measured in the 1990 and 2000 censuses were similar. Again using as his sample California, Myers found that poverty reversal was directly attributable to the maturing of California's immigrant population. Longer-residing immigrants generally experience substantial improvements in poverty, but in the past those gains were overshadowed by the increasing numbers of newcomers. He explains: "Now that the longer-settled immigrants are beginning to outweigh the newcomers in number, the force of upward mobility is no longer being offset by the relatively high poverty of newcomers, and the total poverty rate of the foreign-born has turned around."

Myers is hardly the only social scientist to notice Latino upward mobility,

study in the 1990s, sociologists Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut found substantial second-generation progress among Latinos in Miami and Fort Lauderdale as well. Nationwide cross-generational studies show the same results. In 2006, economist James Smith of the RAND Corporation found that successive generations of Latinos have experienced significant improvements in wages relative both to their fathers and grandfathers and to the native whites with whom they compete for jobs. And Roger Waldinger and Renee Reichl, two UCLA social scientists, found that while first-generation Mexican men earned just half as much as white natives in 2000, the second generation had upped their earnings to three-quarters of their Anglo counterparts.

...

Assimilation is less about immigrants adopting our culture than about immigrants adopting our values. And America has been uniquely successful in this regard. Canada has utterly failed to bridge its linguistic divide. French Canadians in Quebec aren't just pro-French language but also anti-English. The United States has as many French Canadians as does Canada, and a large percentage of them live in New England, yet there has been no such tension on this side of the border.

...

The key to the success of the U.S. assimilation model, says Peter Salins, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, is that "we put so much more stress on shared values rather than shared cultures." In an interview, Salins explained that immigrants find America's values and ideals as attractive as its economic opportunities. Yes, they come here to get rich, but it's more than that. It's also our value framework, with its emphasis on individual initiative and individual opportunity. Foreigners like the fact that you can make more money *because* you are hard-working or diligent or clever.

Salins says the other major value component is our civic institutions. We're the land of liberty and democracy. Here, people can say what they want, be what they want, do what they want. These are attractive values. And Americans are much more concerned about people sharing their values than sharing their cultural artifacts.

...

Key elements of America's Anglo-Protestant culture, [Salins] says, "include: the English language; Christianity; religious commitment; English concepts of the rule of law, the responsibility of rulers, and the rights of individuals; dissenting Protestant values of individualism, the work ethic, and the belief that humans have the ability and the duty to try to create a heaven on earth, a 'city on a hill.'"

Nothing indicates that today's immigrants, like those who came before them, don't share Huntington's commitment to those ideals.

...

For all the loud talk of late, the American public seems not to have lost confidence in the melting pot. If it had, you'd know it. There would be "English-only"

signs and militarized border zones. There would be ubiquitous police checkpoints and far-right political parties like France's National Front. Michelle Malkin would be considered a serious pundit, not Ann Coulter without the nuance.

Of course, there is some bigotry and stupidity out there, which we'll always have. But when people really believe they can't live another day with other kinds of people, they don't send e-mails to *The O'Reilly Factor*. They engage in ethnic warfare. You get the Serbs and the Croats in the Balkans, the Hindus and the Muslims in India, the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda. What we have in America is periodic grumpiness, short-lived sniffing about the most recent arrivals, a vague and ambivalent disdain that doesn't settle too deeply into the psyche. Americans still believe that our assimilationist model is working, even if the elites on the left and right who claim to speak on their behalf do not.



POSTSCRIPT



Is Third World Immigration a Threat to America's Way of Life?

Former representative Silvio Conte (R-Massachusetts) said at a citizenship ceremony, "You can go to France, but you will never be a Frenchman. You can go to Germany but you will never be a German. Today you are all Americans, and that is why this is the greatest country on the face of the earth." At one time, America's open door to immigrants was one of the prides of America. For some people, like Riley, it still is. He thinks that immigration is making America stronger. Many people disagree because they fear the consequences of today's immigration. Krikorian worries that the new immigrants will not assimilate very well in America as it is today. The results could be tragic.

The following works describe or debate the immigration issue: Mary C. Waters and Reed Ueda, with Helen B. Marrow, eds., *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration since 1965* (Harvard University Press, 2007); Jane Guskin and David L. Wilson, *The Politics of Immigration: Questions and Answers* (Monthly Review Press, 2007); Spencer Abraham and Lee H. Hamilton, *Immigration and America's Future: A New Chapter: Report of the Independent Task Force on Immigration and America's Future* (Migration Policy Institute, 2006); Nancy Foner, ed., *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2004); Carol M. Swain, ed., *Debating Immigration* (Cambridge University Press 2007); and Lina Newton, *Illegal, Alien, or Immigrant: The Politics of Immigration Reform* (New York University Press, 2008).

Stanley Lieberson and Mary C. Waters, in *From Many Strands* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1988), argue that ethnic groups with European origins are assimilating, marrying outside their groups, and losing their ethnic identities. Richard D. Alba's study "Assimilation's Quiet Tide," *The Public Interest* (Spring 1995), confirms these findings. Latinos, however, are assimilating more slowly. Dowell Myers, in *Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Contract for the Future of America* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2007), emphasizes the positive benefits of immigration for America. Several major works debate whether immigrants, on average, benefit America economically and whether they are assimilating. Sources that argue that immigrants largely benefit America include Julian L. Simon, *The Economic Consequences of Immigration*, 2nd ed. (University of Michigan Press, 1999), and *Immigration: The Demographic and Economic Facts* (Cato Institute, 1995). Aviva Chomsky, "They Take Our Jobs!": *And 20 Other Myths about Immigration* (Beacon Press 2007). Sources that argue that immigrants have more negative than positive impacts include George Borjas, *Heaven's Door: Immigration Policy and the American Economy* (Princeton

University Press, 1999); Roy Beck, *The Case Against Immigration* (W. W. Norton, 1996); Patrick Buchanan, *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization* (Thomas Dunne Books, 2002); and Otis L. Graham, Jr., *Unguarded Gates: A History of American's Immigration Crisis* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

