Between 1820 and 1920, some 40 million people immigrated to the United States. This wave of newcomers, mostly from Europe, transformed American society on almost every level: its neighborhoods and parishes and cities, its popular culture, its accent and dialect, its religion, and its cuisine.

The United States is now experiencing a second wave of mass immigration, this one beginning in the 1960s and including people not just from Europe but from all over the world. Over the past four decades, well over 20 million newcomers have arrived (not counting undocumented immigrants), a rate that exceeds the pace of the first mass immigration. Since the 1960s, the United States has averaged about a half million newcomers each year, but this number has frequently risen above 750,000 and has been more than 1 million on several occasions (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2003, p. 11).

The record for most immigrants in a year was set in 1907, when almost 1.3 million people arrived on these shores. If undocumented immigrants were added to the recent totals, this century-old record might well have been eclipsed several times since the 1960s.

Will this new wave of immigrants transform the United States once again? How? Who are these new Americans? Where do they come from and what are they seeking? What do they contribute? What do they cost? Will they assimilate and adopt the ways of the dominant society? What are the implications if assimilation fails?

We have been asking questions like these throughout this text, and in this chapter, we will apply them to a variety of immigrant groups that are both newcomers and growing rapidly. We have already covered several large groups that have recently increased in size because of immigration: Mexican Americans in Chapter 7 and Chinese Americans in Chapter 8. In this chapter, we’ll look at some smaller groups, dealing first with some Hispanic and Caribbean groups, then with some groups from Asia and the Pacific Islands, followed by Arab Americans, and, finally, recent emigrants from Africa. In the last section of the chapter, we will examine
some of the issues that have arisen as the
United States confronts the challenges of
absorbing these millions of newcomers.

Each of the groups covered in this chapter
has had some members in the United States
for decades, some for more than a century.
However, in all cases, the groups were quite
small until the latter third of the 20th century.
Although they are growing rapidly now (and,
all together, account for as much as 50–60%
of all immigrants in any one year), all remain
relatively small, and none is larger than 1% of
the population. Nonetheless, some groups will
have a greater impact on American culture
and society in the future, and one—Arab
Americans—has already become a focus of
concern and controversy because of the events
of September 11, 2001, and the ensuing war
on terrorism.

RECENT EMIGRATION FROM
LATIN AMERICA, SOUTH AMERICA,
AND THE CARIBBEAN TO THE
UNITED STATES

Emigration from Latin America, the
Caribbean, and South America to the United
States has been considerable, even excluding
Mexico. Exhibit 9.1 shows a rapid increase
beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the
turn of the century, with an average of about
200,000 immigrants each year. Generally,
emigrants from these regions (minus Mexico)
have been about 10% of all immigrants since
the 1960s.

The sending nations for these immigrants
are economically less developed, and most
have long-standing relations with the
United States. We have already discussed
(see Chapter 7) the role that Mexico and
Puerto Rico have historically played as
sources of cheap labor and the ties that led
Cubans to immigrate to the United States.
Each of the other sending nations has been
similarly linked to the United States, the
dominant economic and political power in
the region (Portes, 1990, p. 162).

Although the majority of these immigrants
bring educational and occupational qualifica-
tions that are modest by U.S. standards, they
tend to be more educated, more urbanized,
and more skilled than the average citizens of
the nations from which they come. Contrary
to widely held beliefs, these immigrants do
not represent the poorest of the poor, the
“wretched refuse” of their homelands. They

Exhibit 9.1 Emigration From Central and South America and the Caribbean to the United States,
1940s–2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1941-50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-60</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-70</td>
<td>15000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-80</td>
<td>30000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-90</td>
<td>50000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-2000</td>
<td>80000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>90000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>100000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>110000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers for 1940s–1990s are averages per year for the decade. Numbers for 2001, 2002, and 2003 are
actual numbers.
tend to be rather ambitious, as evidenced by their willingness to attempt to survive in a society that has not been notably hospitable to Latinos or people of color in the past. These immigrants are not just fleeing poverty or joblessness; many are attempting to pursue their ambitions and seek opportunities for advancement that are simply not available in their country of origin (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, pp. 10–11).

This characterization applies to legal and unauthorized immigrants alike. In fact, the latter may illustrate the point more dramatically, because the cost of illegally entering the United States can be considerable—much higher than the cost of a legal entry. The venture may require years of saving money or the combined resources of a large kinship group. Forged papers and other costs of being smuggled into the country can easily amount to thousands of dollars, a considerable sum in nations in which the usual wage is a tiny fraction of the U.S. average (Orreniou, 2001, p. 7). Also, the passage can be extremely dangerous and can require a level of courage (or desperation) not often associated with the undocumented and illegal. Many Mexican would-be immigrants have died along the border, and many other immigrants have been lost at sea (for example, see “Dominicans Saved From Sea,” 2004).

We should also note that this immigrant stream is quite diverse and includes French, British, and Portuguese traditions as well as Spanish. These immigrants come from more than 20 nations, including Jamaica, Grenada, Belize, Guatemala, Peru, and Brazil. Some are highly educated professionals, whereas others are farmhands, political refugees, skilled technicians, or the wives and children of U.S. citizens.

Rather than attempting to cover all of these groups, we will select four to serve as case studies and consider emigrants from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, El Salvador, and Colombia. Together, these four groups comprise a little less than 10% of all immigrants in recent years and about 20% of the emigrants from Central and South America and the Caribbean to the United States. These four groups had few members in the United States before the 1960s, and all have had high rates of immigration over the past four decades. However, the motivation of the immigrants and the immigration experience has varied from group to group, as we shall see below.

**Four Case Studies**

Exhibit 9.3 displays some of the salient characteristics of three of our case studies using data from the 2000 census. These data reflect the “newness” of these groups: Each has a high percentage of foreign-born members, and, predictably with so many members in the first generation, proficiency in English is an important issue. Although Colombians approach national norms in education, the other two groups have relatively low levels of human capital (education), and all are well above national norms in terms of poverty.

National information on Haitians is not available from the U.S. Census, but independent studies and other sources of information indicate that they are roughly comparable to Dominicans and Salvadorans and have a high percentage of foreign-born, low English proficiency, low levels of education, and high levels of poverty. For example, one study of the Haitian community in Florida found that only 30–40% of parents had completed high school, and more than 80% of families had incomes lower than $25,000 per year (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Exhibit 9.4 presents information on occupational distribution for the males and females of three groups. Consistent with their low levels of education, the men of all three groups (particularly Salvadorans) are underrepresented at the management and professional (M&P) level (the jobs with the highest levels of prestige and rewards) and are overrepresented in service jobs and manual labor jobs, usually in the least desirable, secure, and rewarding of these jobs. Roughly the same pattern holds for the females, with Salvadoran women especially overrepresented in the service sector (often as poorly paid domestics and nannies).
Exhibit 9.2  Map of Central and South America and the Caribbean Showing the Dominican Republic, Haiti, El Salvador, and Colombia

Exhibit 9.3  Characteristics of Groups From Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Colombia, and Haiti

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Present Population</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
<th>% Foreign-born</th>
<th>% “Poor” Englisha</th>
<th>% HSb</th>
<th>% BAc</th>
<th>% Poord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>281,421,906</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominicans</td>
<td>799,768</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvadoreans</td>
<td>708,741</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombians</td>
<td>496,748</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitians</td>
<td>548,199e</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


a. Percent of group with “ability to speak English less than ‘very well.’”
b. Percent high school graduates.
c. Percent college graduates.
d. Percent of families below the poverty line.
Exhibit 9.4a  Major Occupational Groupings: Males

Exhibit 9.4b  Major Occupational Grouping: Females

Of these three groups, Colombians come closest to the national norms, again reflecting their higher levels of human capital.

Although these groups share some characteristics, they are also quite different from each other. The biggest difference is between Haitians, who come from a French tradition and speak Creole (a dialect of French), and the other groups, all three of which are Hispanic. The groups also differ in their “racial” characteristics, with Haitians and Dominicans more African in appearance, Colombians more European, and Salvadorans more Indian. The groups tend to settle in different places. Three of the groups (Dominicans, Haitians, and Colombians) are clustered along the East Coast, particularly in New York, New Jersey, and Florida, whereas Salvadorans are more concentrated on the West Coast (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2003).

Finally, the groups differ in the conditions of their entry or their “contact situation,” a difference that, as we have seen, is quite consequential. Haitians and Salvadorans are more likely to be political refugees fleeing brutal civil wars and political repression, whereas Dominicans and Colombians are more likely to be motivated by economics and the employment possibilities offered in the United States. We will consider each of these groups briefly and explore some of these differences further.

**Dominicans**

The Dominican Republic shares the Caribbean island of Hispaniola with Haiti. The island economy is still largely agricultural, although the tourist industry has grown in recent years. Unemployment and poverty are major problems, and Dominicans average less than 5 years of education (http://www.nationmaster.com/country/dr/Economy).

Immigration is motivated largely by economics, and Dominicans compete for jobs with Puerto Ricans, other immigrant groups, and native-born workers with lower levels of education and job skills. Although Dominicans are limited in their job options by the language barrier, they are somewhat advantaged by their willingness to work for lower wages, and they are especially concentrated in the service sector as day laborers (men) or domestics (women). Dominicans maintain strong ties with home and are a major source of income and support for the families left behind.

In terms of acculturation and integration, Dominicans are roughly similar to Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, although some studies suggest that they are possibly the most impoverished immigrant group (see, for example, Camarota, 2002).

A high percentage of Dominicans are undocumented, and many spend considerable money and take considerable risks to get to the United States. If these less visible members of the community were included in the official, government-generated statistics used in Exhibits 9.3 and 9.4, it is very likely that the portrait of poverty and low levels of education and job skills would be even more dramatic.

**Haitians**

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and most of the population relies on small-scale subsistence agriculture for survival. Estimates are that 80% of the population lives below the poverty line and that less than one-third of adults hold formal jobs. Only about half the population is literate, and Haitians average less than 3 years of formal education (http://www.nationmaster.com/country/ha/Economy).

Haitian immigration was virtually nonexistent until the 1970s and 1980s, when thousands began to flee the brutal political repression of the Duvalier dictatorship, which—counting both father (“Papa Doc”) and son (“Baby Doc”)—lasted until the mid-1980s. In stark contrast to the treatment of Cuban immigrants (see Chapter 7), the United States government defined Haitians as economic refugees ineligible for asylum, and an intense campaign has been conducted to keep Haitians out of the United States. Thousands have been returned to Haiti, some to face political persecution, prison, and even death; others have been incarcerated in the United States. In the view of some, “during the 1970s and 1980s, no other
immigrant group suffered more from U.S. government prejudice and discrimination than Haitians” (Stepick, Stepick, Eugene, Teed, & Labissiere, 2001, p. 236).

What accounts for this cold, negative reception? Some reasons are not hard to identify. Haitians bring low levels of human capital and education. This creates concerns about their ability to support themselves in the United States and also means that they have relatively few resources with which to defend their self-interest. In addition, Haitians speak a language (Creole) that is spoken by almost no one else. This sharply limits the networks and alliances available to the group. Perhaps the most important reason for the rejection, however, is that Haitians are black and must cope with the centuries-old traditions of rejection, racism, and prejudice that are such an intimate part of American culture (Stepick et al., 2001).

One important study of Haitians in South Florida found that this combination of factors—their hostile reception, their poverty and lack of education, and their racial background—combined to lead the Haitian second generation (the children of the immigrants) to a relatively low level of academic achievement and a tendency to identify with the African American community. “Haitians are becoming American but in a specifically black ethnic fashion” (Stepick et al., 2001, p. 261). The ultimate path of Haitian assimilation will unfold in the future, but these tendencies—particularly their low levels of academic achievement—suggest that few of the second generation are likely to move into the middle class (Stepick et al., 2001, p. 261). This trajectory would be consistent with the predictions of the segmented assimilation model (see Chapter 2 and later in this chapter).

Salvadorans

El Salvador, like Haiti and the Dominican Republic, is a relatively poor nation with a high percentage of the population relying on subsistence agriculture for survival. It is estimated that about 50% of the population is below poverty level, and there are major problems with unemployment and underemployment. About 80% of the population is literate, and the average number of years of school completed is a little more than 5 (http://www.nationmaster.com/country/es/).

El Salvador, like many sending nations, has a difficult time providing sufficient employment opportunities for its population, and much of the pressure to emigrate is economic. However, El Salvador also suffered through a vicious civil war in the 1980s, and many of the Salvadorans in the United States today are actually political refugees. The United States, under the administration of President Ronald Reagan, refused to grant political refugee status to Salvadorans, and many were returned to El Salvador. This federal policy resulted in high numbers of undocumented immigrants and also stimulated a sanctuary movement, led by American clergy, that helped Salvadoran immigrants, both undocumented and legal, to stay in the United States. As was the case with Dominicans, if the undocumented emigrants from El Salvador were included in official government statistics, the picture of poverty would become even more extreme.

Colombians

Colombia is somewhat more developed than most other Central and South American nations but has suffered from more than 40 years of internal turmoil, civil war, and government corruption. The nation is a major center for the production and distribution of drugs to the world in general and the United States in particular, and the drug industry and profits are complexly intertwined with domestic strife. As reflected in Exhibit 9.3, Colombian Americans are closer to national norms of education and income than other Latino groups, and recent immigrants are a mixture of less skilled laborers and well-educated professionals seeking to further their careers. Colombians are residentially concentrated in urban areas, especially in Florida and the Northeast, and often settle in areas close to other Latino neighborhoods. Of course, the huge majority of Colombian Americans are law abiding and not connected with the drug trade, but still,
they must deal with the pervasive stereotype that pictures Colombians as gangsters and drug smugglers (not unlike the Mafia stereotype encountered by Italian Americans).

CONTEMPORARY EMIGRATION FROM ASIA AND THE PACIFIC ISLANDS TO THE UNITED STATES

Emigration from Asia and the Pacific Islands to the United States has been considerable since the 1960s, averaging close to 300,000 per year and running about 30–35% of all immigrants. As was the case with Hispanic and Caribbean immigrants, the sending nations are considerably less developed than the United States, and the primary motivation for most of these immigrants is economic. However, the Asian and Pacific Island immigrant stream also includes a large contingent of highly educated professionals seeking opportunities to practice their careers and expand their skills. Whereas these more elite immigrants contribute to the image of “Asian success” (see Chapter 8), other Asian and Pacific Island immigrants are low-skilled, less educated, and undocumented. Thus, this stream of immigrants, like Chinese Americans, is bipolar and includes a healthy representation of people from both the top and the bottom of the occupational and educational hierarchies.

Of course, other factors besides mere economics attract these immigrants to the United States. The U.S. has maintained military bases throughout the region (including South Korea and the Philippines) since the end of World War II, and many Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants are the spouses of American soldiers. Also, U.S. involvement in the war in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s created interpersonal ties and governmental programs that drew refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

As before, rather than attempting to cover all the separate groups in this category, we will concentrate on four case studies and consider emigrant groups from India, Vietnam, South Korea, and the Philippines. Together, these four groups comprise about
half of all emigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands, and Exhibit 9.5 displays their volume of immigration.

**Four Case Studies**

Exhibit 9.7 repeats Exhibit 9.3 for the four Asian and Pacific Islander groups, again using data from the 2000 census. Note that all four groups are small and that they include a high percentage of foreign-born members. In contrast with Hispanic and Caribbean immigrants, however, note that two of the groups (Indians and Filipinos) have much lower percentages of members not fluent in English, three groups actually exceed national norms for education (e.g., Indians have $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the national norm for
college-educated members), and two are well below national norms for poverty. Although Vietnamese Americans rank lower on measures of education and poverty, the picture presented by this table underscores the idea that many of the immigrants from these four groups are well prepared to compete in the American job market.

Exhibits 9.8a and 9.8b reinforce the impression that many Asian and Pacific Islander groups bring high levels of human capital. Indian and South Korean males are overrepresented in the highest occupational group and underrepresented among manual laborers. Indian and Filipino women are also overrepresented in the highest occupational grouping, but Vietnamese women are overrepresented in the lowest. Otherwise, the occupational distribution of both genders is roughly similar to national norms.

As we have done so often, we must note the diversity across these four groups. First, we can repeat the point made in Chapter 8 that the category “Asian and Pacific Islander Americans” is an arbitrary designation imposed on peoples who actually have little in common and who come from nations that vary in language, culture, religion, “racial” characteristics, and scores of other ways. More specifically, these four groups are quite different from each other. Perhaps the most striking contrast is between Indians, many of whom are highly educated and skilled, and Vietnamese Americans, who have a socioeconomic profile that more closely resembles non-Asian racial minorities in the United States and who challenge the stereotype of Asian success.

Part of the difference between these two groups relates to their contact situations and
can be illuminated by applying the Blauner hypothesis. Indian immigrants are at the "immigrant" end of Blauner’s continuum. They bring strong educational credentials and are well equipped to compete for favorable positions in the U.S. occupational hierarchy. The Vietnamese, in sharp contrast, began their American experience as a refugee group fleeing the turmoil of war. Although they don’t fit Blauner’s "conquered or colonized" category, most Vietnamese Americans had to adapt to American society with few resources and few contacts with an established immigrant community. The consequences of these vastly different contact situations are suggested by the data in Exhibits 9.8a and 9.8b.

These groups also vary in their settlement patterns. Most are concentrated along the West Coast, but Indians are roughly equally distributed on both the east and west coasts, and the Vietnamese have a sizable presence in Texas, in part related to the fishing industry along the Gulf Coast.

**Indians**

India is the second most populous nation in the world, and its population of more than 1 billion people incorporates a wide variety of different languages (India has 19 official languages, including English); religions; and ethnic groups. Overall, the level of education is fairly low. The population averages about 5 years of formal schooling, and only about 50% of females and 70% of males are literate. However, about 10% of the population does reach the post-secondary level of education, which means that there are roughly 100 million (10% of 1 billion) well-educated Indians looking for careers commensurate with their credentials. Because of the relative lack of development of the Indian economy, many members of this educated elite must search for career opportunities abroad, and not just in the United States.

It is also important to note that English is the language of India’s educated class, a
legacy of India’s long colonization by the British. Thus, Indian immigrants tend to be not only well educated but also English-speaking (hence, the low percentage of members with “poor English” in Exhibit 9.7). Emigration from India to the United States was low until the mid-1960s, and the group was quite small at that time. The group more than quadrupled in size between 1980 and 2000, and Indians are now the third-largest Asian American group today (behind Chinese and Filipinos).

As is reflected in Exhibits 9.7, 9.8a, and 9.8b, Indian immigrants tend to be a select, highly educated and skilled group. According to the 2000 census, Indians are very overrepresented in some of the most prestigious occupations, including computer engineering, physicians, and college faculty (U.S. Bureau of the Census, n.d.-d). Indian immigrants are part of a worldwide movement of educated peoples from less developed countries to more developed countries. One need not ponder the differences in career opportunities, technology, and compensation for long to get some insight into the reasons for this movement. Other emigrants from India to the United States are more oriented to commerce and small business, and there is a sizable Indian ethnic enclave in many cities (Kitano & Daniels, 1995, pp. 96–111; Sheth, 1995, pp. 169–198).

The image of relative affluence for this select stream of immigrants is reinforced by Exhibit 9.9. Indians are underrepresented in the lowest income categories and overrepresented in the highest, a pattern that contrasts sharply with other “racial” minorities and with the bipolar distribution of Chinese Americans.

South Koreans

Emigration from South Korea to the United States began at the turn of the 19th century, when laborers were recruited to help fill the void in the job market left by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. This group was extremely small until the 1950s, when the rate of immigration rose because of

![Exhibit 9.9 Distribution of Income for Whites and Asian Indians, 1999](image-url)
refugees and “war brides” after the Korean War. Immigration did not become substantial, however, until the 1960s. The size of the group increased fivefold in the 1970s and tripled between 1980 and 2000 but is still less than 0.5% of the total population.

Recent emigrants from South Korea consist mostly of families and include many highly educated people. Although differences in culture, language, and race make South Koreans visible targets of discrimination, the high percentage of Christians among them (almost half of South Koreans are Christian—http://www.nationmaster.com/country/ks/Religion) may help them appear more acceptable to the dominant group. Certainly, Christian church parishes play a number of important roles for the Korean American community, offering assistance to newcomers and the less fortunate, serving as a focal point for networks of mutual assistance, and generally assisting in the myriad chores that immigrant communities have often performed (Kitano & Daniels, 2001, p. 123).

Korean American immigrants have formed an enclave, and the group is heavily involved in small businesses and retail stores, particularly fruit and vegetable retail stores or green groceries. According to one study, Koreans had the second highest percentage of self-employment among immigrant groups (Greeks were the highest), with about 24% of the group in this occupational category (Kritz & Gurak, 2005, p. 36). Another data source, also based on the 2000 census, shows that Koreans have the highest rate of business ownership among 11 different minority groups (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002), including other enclave minorities. Japanese Americans had the second highest rate (108 businesses per 1,000 population), Chinese Americans were third (104 per 1,000 population), and Cuban Americans were fourth (101 per 1,000 population). In contrast, racial minority groups with strong histories of colonization and exclusion were at the bottom of the rankings: African Americans (24 businesses per 1,000) and Puerto Ricans (21 per 1,000) (see also Pollard & O’Hare, 1999, p. 39; Kim, Hurh, & Fernandez, 1989; Logan et al., 1994; Min, 1995, pp. 208–212).

As is the case for other groups that have pursued this course, the enclave allows Korean Americans to avoid the discrimination and racism of the larger society while surviving in an economic niche in which lack of English fluency is not a particular problem. However, the enclave has its perils and its costs. For one thing, the success of Korean enterprises depends heavily on the mutual assistance and financial support of other Koreans and the willingness of family members to work long hours for little or no pay. These resources would be weakened or destroyed by acculturation, integration, and the resultant decline in ethnic solidarity. Only by maintaining a distance from the dominant culture and its pervasive appeal can the infrastructure survive.

Furthermore, the economic niches in which Mom-and-Pop green groceries and other small businesses can survive are often in deteriorated neighborhoods populated largely by other minority groups. There has been a good deal of hostility and resentment expressed against Korean shop owners by African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other urbanized minority groups. For example, anti-Korean sentiments were widely expressed in the 1992 Los Angeles riots that followed the acquittal of the policemen who had been charged in the beating of Rodney King. Korean-owned businesses were some of the first to be looted and burned, and when asked why, one participant in the looting said simply, “Because we hate ‘em. Everybody hates them” (Cho, 1993, p. 199). Thus, part of the price of survival for many Korean merchants is to place themselves in positions in which antagonism and conflict with other minority groups is common (Kitano & Daniels, 1995, pp. 112–129; Light & Bonacich, 1988; Min, 1995, pp. 199–231; see also Hurh, 1998).

Filipino Americans

Ties between the United States and the Philippines were established in 1898 when Spain ceded the territory after its defeat in the Spanish-American War, and the United States maintained a strong military presence
there until very recently. The nation has been heavily influenced by American culture, and English remains one of two official languages. Thus, as reflected in Exhibit 9.7, Filipino immigrants are often conversant in English, at least as a second language.

Today, Filipinos are the second largest Asian American group, but their numbers became sizable only in the past few decades. There were fewer than 1,000 Filipinos in the United States in 1910, and by 1960, the group still numbered fewer than 200,000.

Exhibit 9.10 Arab Americans, 1990 and 2000 (Totals and Largest Ancestry Groups)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% of all Arab Americans</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% of all Arab Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab Americans</td>
<td>860,354</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1,189,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest ancestry groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>394,180</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>440,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>129,606</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>142,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>78,574</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>142,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian</td>
<td>48,019</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>72,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordanian</td>
<td>20,656</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>39,734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>19,089</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>38,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>23,212</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>37,714</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Exhibit 9.11 Characteristics of Arab Americans and Eight Sub-Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation of Origin</th>
<th>% of U.S. Population</th>
<th>% Foreign-born</th>
<th>% “Poor” English</th>
<th>% HS</th>
<th>% BA</th>
<th>% Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordanian</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


a. Percent of group with “ability to speak English less than 'very well.'”
b. Percent high school graduates.
c. Percent college graduates.
d. Percent of families below the poverty line.
Most of the recent growth has come from increased post-1965 immigration. The group more than doubled in size between 1980 and 2000. Many of the earliest immigrants were agricultural workers recruited for the sugar plantations of Hawaii and the fields of the West Coast. Because the Philippines became a U.S. territory in 1898, Filipinos could enter without regard to immigration quotas until 1935, when the nation became independent.

The most recent wave of immigrants is diversified and, like Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans are bipolar in their educational and occupational profiles. Many recent immigrants have entered under the family preference provisions of the U.S. immigration policy. These immigrants are often poor and compete for jobs in the low-wage secondary labor market (Kitano & Daniels, 1995, p. 94). More than half of all Filipino immigrants since 1965, however, have been professionals, especially those in health and medical fields. Many female emigrants from the Philippines were nurses actively recruited by U.S. hospitals to fill gaps in the labor force (Amott & Matthaei, 1991, p. 245). Thus, the Filipino American community includes some members in the higher-wage primary labor market and others who are competing for work in the low-wage secondary sector (Agbayani-Siewart & Revilla, 1995, pp. 134–168; Espiritu, 1996; Kitano & Daniels, 1995, pp. 83–94; Mangiafico, 1988; Posadas, 1999).

**Vietnamese**

A flow of refugees from Vietnam began in the 1960s as a direct result of the war in Southeast Asia. The war began in Vietnam but expanded when the United States attacked communist forces in Cambodia and Laos. Social life was disrupted, and people were displaced throughout the region. In 1975, when Saigon (the South Vietnamese capital) fell and the U.S. military withdrew, many Vietnamese and other Southeast Asians who had collaborated with the United States and its allies fled in fear for their lives. This group included high-ranking officials and members of the region’s educational and occupational elite. Later groups of refugees tended to be less well educated and more impoverished. Many Vietnamese waited in refugee camps for months or years before being admitted to the United States, and they often arrived with few resources or social networks to ease their transition to the new society (Kitano & Daniels, 1995, pp. 151–152). The Vietnamese are the largest of the Asian refugee groups, and contrary to Asian American success stories and notions of model minorities, they have incomes and educational levels comparable to colonized minority groups (see Exhibits 9.7, 9.8a, and 9.8b).

**ARAB AMERICANS**

Emigration from the Middle East and the Arab world to the United States began in the 19th century but has never been particularly large. The earliest immigrants tended to be merchants and traders, and the Arab American community has always been constructed around an ethnic small-business enclave.

The Arab American community has grown rapidly over the past several decades but still remains a tiny percentage of the total population. Exhibit 9.10 displays information on group size and growth rates broken down by ancestry group. These data are from the U.S. Census and may very well underestimate the actual size of the group. For example, one source estimates total group size at more than 3 million (see http://www.allied-media.com/Arab-American/Arab%20American/Arab%20Demographics.htm)

As displayed in Exhibits 9.11, 9.12a, and 9.12b, the Arab American community ranks relatively high in English ability, income, and occupation. In the 2000 census, 81% of Arab Americans reported that they were fluent in English, and Arab Americans exceeded national norms in terms of high school and college graduates. In fact, every subgroup within the Arab American community exceeded national norms in terms of percentage of college graduates by a considerable
Exhibit 9.12a  Major Occupational Groupings, Arab Americans (Males)


Exhibit 9.12b  Major Occupational Groupings, Arab Americans (Females)

margin. Similarly, the group as a whole and most of the sub-groups compare favorably to national norms in terms of poverty.

Data on occupational patterns in Exhibit 9.13 show an overrepresentation in the highest occupational group for men and women. Consistent with their enclave orientation, Arab American men are overrepresented in sales and underrepresented in occupations involving manual labor. Arab American women are also heavily involved in sales but in proportion to U.S. women in general. One study, using 1990 census data and a survey mailed to a national sample of Arab American women in 2000, found that immigrant Arab American women have a very low rate of employment, the lowest of any immigrant group. The author’s analysis of these data strongly suggests that this pattern is due to traditional gender roles and family norms regarding the proper role of women (Read, 2004).

Arab Americans are diverse and vary along a number of dimensions. They bring different national traditions and cultures and also vary in religion. Although Islam is the dominant religion, many Arab immigrant groups are Christian.

Residentially, Arab Americans are highly urbanized, and almost 50% live in just five states (California, New Jersey, New York, Florida, and Michigan). This settlement pattern is not too different from the other recent immigrant groups except for the heavy concentration in Michigan, especially in the Detroit area. Arab Americans account for 1.2% of the total population of Michigan, a far higher representation than in any other state. Arab Americans make up 30% of the population of Dearborn, Michigan, making it the most Arab city in the nation. (On the other hand, the greatest single concentration is in New York City, which has a population of about 70,000 Arab Americans.) These settlement patterns reflect chains of migration, some set up decades ago. Exhibit 9.13 shows the regional distribution of the group and clearly displays the clusters in the Northeast, Michigan, Florida, and Southern California.
September 11 and Arab Americans

There has always been at least a faint strain of prejudice directed at Middle Easterners in American culture (e.g., see the low position of Turks in the earliest social distance scales; most Americans probably are not aware of the fact that Turks and Arabs are different groups). These vague feelings have intensified in recent decades as relations with various Middle Eastern nations and groups worsened. For example, in 1979, the U.S. embassy in Teheran, Iran, was attacked and occupied, and more than 50 Americans were held as hostages for more than a year. The attack stimulated a massive reaction in the United States in which anti-Arab feelings figured prominently. Continuing anti-American activities across the Middle East have been countered with a backlash of resentment and growing intolerance.

These earlier events pale in comparison, of course, to the events of September 11, 2001. Americans responded to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by Arab terrorists with an array of emotions that included bewilderment; shock; anger; patriotism; deep sorrow for the victims and their families; and—perhaps predictably in the intensity of the moment—intensified prejudicial rejection of Middle Easterners, Arabs, Muslims, and any group that seemed even vaguely associated with the perpetrators of the attacks. In the nine weeks following September 11, more than 700 violent attacks were reported to the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, followed by another 165 violent incidents in the first nine months of 2002. In this same time period, there were more than 80 incidents in which Arab Americans were removed from aircraft after boarding because of their ethnicity; more than 800 cases of employment discrimination; and “numerous instances of denial of service, discriminatory service, and housing discrimination” (Ibisch, 2003, p. 7).

Anti-Arab passions may have cooled somewhat since the multiple traumas of September 11, but the Arab American community faces a number of issues and problems including profiling at airport security checks and greater restrictions on entering the country. Also, the USA Patriot Act, passed in 2001 to enhance the tools available to law enforcement to combat terrorism, allows for long-term detention of suspects, a wider scope for searches and surveillance, and other policies that many (not just Arab Americans) are concerned will encourage violations of due process and suspension of basic civil liberties.

Thus, although the Arab American community is small in size, it has assumed a prominent place in the attention of the nation. The huge majority of the members of the community denounce and reject terrorism and violence, but, like Colombians and Italians, they are victimized by a strong stereotype that is, at least occasionally, applied uncritically and without qualification. Relations between Arab Americans and the larger society are certainly among the tensest and most problematic of any minority group, and given the continuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the threat of further terrorist attacks by Al-Qaeda or other groups, they will not abate any time soon.

EMIGRANTS FROM AFRICA TO THE UNITED STATES

Our final group of New Americans consists of emigrants from Africa. As displayed in Exhibit 9.14, emigration from Africa to the United States has been quite small over the past 50 years. However, there was the usual increase after the 1960s, and Africans have comprised about 5% of all immigrants in the past few years.

Exhibit 9.15 shows the total number of sub-Saharan Africans in the United States in 1990 and 2000, along with four of the largest subgroups. The number of Africans more than doubled over the decade, and this rapid growth suggests that these groups may have a greater impact on U.S. society in the future.

Exhibit 9.16 provides an overall view of all African immigrants along with the four largest sub-groups. The category “African” is extremely broad and encompasses destitute black refugees from African civil wars and relatively affluent white South Africans.
Exhibit 9.14  Emigration From Africa, 1940s–2003

Exhibit 9.15  African Immigrant Groups

| Sub-Saharan Africans, 1990 | 506,188 |
| Sub-Saharan Africans, 2000 | 1,183,316 |
| Nigerians                  | 164,691  |
| Ethiopians                | 86,918   |
| Cape Verdeans             | 77,103   |
| Ghanians                  | 49,944   |


In the remainder of this section, we will focus on the four sub-groups rather than this very broad category.

Clearly, although they may be growing, these four groups are tiny minorities with no one nationality group reaching as much as one tenth of one percent of the total population. Three of the four groups (the exception being Cape Verdeans) have a high representation of first-generation members, and all report relatively high levels of English fluency. Also, three of the four (again excepting Cape Verdeans) compare favorably with national norms in terms of education and poverty levels. These characteristics mark these groups as relatively elite and affluent immigrants, more like Arabs and Indians, not refugees or laborers like Haitians and Vietnamese.

The impression of relatively high status for emigrants from Africa is reinforced in Exhibit 9.17. The men of two of the groups (Ghanians and Nigerians) tend to be overrepresented at the highest occupational levels,
whereas Ethiopian men are proportionally represented in all four occupational classes. Only Cape Verdeans occupy relatively low positions in the workforce. They are underrepresented in the professions and management and overrepresented among service workers and manual laborers.

The women of these groups are considerably more varied in their occupational profiles than the men. Among other patterns, we can see that Nigerian women, like the men, are overrepresented in the professions and management and quite underrepresented among manual laborers and that Cape

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**Exhibit 9.16** Characteristics of Africans and Four Sub-Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation of Origin</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
<th>% Foreign-born</th>
<th>% “Poor” English</th>
<th>% HS(^b)</th>
<th>% BA(^c)</th>
<th>% Poor(^d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>281,421,906</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africans(^e)</td>
<td>1,183,316</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>164,691</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopian</td>
<td>86,918</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Verdean</td>
<td>77,103</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghanian</td>
<td>49,944</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(a\). Percent of group with “ability to speak English less than ‘very well.’”

\(b\). Percent high school graduates.

\(c\). Percent college graduates.

\(d\). Percent of families below the poverty line.

\(e\). Africans may be of any race.

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**Exhibit 9.17a** Major Occupational Groupings, Four African Groups (Males)

![Graph](representing data)

Verdean women have an occupational profile very similar to the men of their group.

How can we explain these patterns? First of all, Nigeria and Ghana are former British colonies, so the high level of English fluency in these groups is not surprising. All four nations suffer from economic underdevelopment, and most African immigrants are motivated by a search for work and sustenance, with emigrants from Nigeria, Ghana, and Ethiopia competing for positions in the higher reaches of the job structure.

Cape Verde is the exception to the pattern of English-speaking African immigrants with relatively high levels of human capital. Cape Verde is a tiny island nation off the west coast of Africa. It was colonized by the Portuguese in the 15th century and has been an important port for commercial shipping since that time. This maritime link to the larger world is part of what connected Cape Verde to the United States. Although the nation is politically stable, droughts and other economic difficulties have motivated many to seek their fortunes elsewhere, and there are now more Cape Verdeans living abroad than on the islands (http://www.nationmaster.com/country/cv). These immigrants bring relatively low levels of human capital and are more likely to find employment in service industries or in manual labor.

**SUMMARY: MODES OF INCORPORATION**

As the case studies included in this chapter (as well as those in Chapters 8 and 9) demonstrate, recent immigrant groups can occupy very different positions in U.S. society. One way to address this diversity of relationships is to look at the contact situation, especially the characteristics the groups bring with them (their race and religion, the human capital with which they arrive) and the reaction of the larger society. There seem to be three main modes of incorporation for immigrants in the U.S.: entrance through the primary or secondary labor markets (see Chapter 4) or the ethnic enclave. We will consider each
pathway separately and relate it to the groups discussed in this chapter.

**Immigrants and the Primary Labor Market**

The primary labor market consists of more desirable jobs with greater security, higher pay, and benefits, and the immigrants entering this sector tend to be highly educated, skilled professionals and businesspeople. Members of this group are generally fluent in English, and many were educated at U.S. universities. They are highly integrated into the global urban-industrial economy, and in many cases, they are employees of multinational corporations transferred here by their companies. These immigrants are affluent, urbane, and dramatically different from the peasant laborers so common in the past (e.g., from Ireland and Italy) and in the present (e.g., from the Dominican Republic and Mexico). The groups with high percentages of members entering the primary labor market include Arab, Colombian, Indian, and Filipino immigrants.

Because they tend to be affluent and enter a growing sector of the labor force, immigrants with professional backgrounds tend to attract less notice and fewer racist reactions than their more unskilled counterparts. Although they come closer to Blauner’s pure immigrant group than most other minority groups we have considered, racism can still complicate their assimilation. Anecdotal evidence of discrimination for these high-status immigrants is common. In a *New York Times* article about anti-Asian prejudice, for example, Tun-Hsu McCoy, who immigrated more than 30 years ago and holds a PhD in physics, is quoted as saying, “Every Asian can tell you that we have all encountered subconscious discrimination. People don’t equate an Asian face with being an American” (Polner, 1993, p. 1).

**Immigrants and the Secondary Labor Market**

This mode of incorporation is more typical for immigrants with lower levels of education and fewer job skills. Jobs in this sector are less desirable and command lower pay, little security, and few (if any) benefits and are often seasonal or in the underground or informal economy. This labor market includes domestic work, construction, the garment industry, gardening and landscaping, and some forms of criminal or deviant activity such as drugs and prostitution. These workers are commonly paid “off the books,” and their working conditions are unregulated by government authorities or labor unions. Many immigrant workers in the garment industry, for example, work in “sweatshop” conditions reminiscent of 19th-century conditions.

The employers who control these jobs often prefer to hire undocumented immigrants because they are easier to control and less likely to complain to the authorities about abuse and mistreatment. The groups with high percentages of members in the secondary labor market include Dominicans, Haitians, Salvadorans, Vietnamese, and the less skilled and less educated kinfolk of the higher-status immigrants.

**Immigrants and Ethnic Enclaves**

As we have seen, some immigrant groups—especially those that can bring financial capital and business experience—have established ethnic enclaves. Some members of these groups enter U.S. society as entrepreneurs—owners of small retail shops and other businesses—while their less skilled and educated co-ethnics serve as a source of cheap labor to staff the ethnic enterprises. The enclave provides contacts, financial and other services, and social support for the new immigrants of all social classes. Of the groups covered in this chapter, Arabs, Koreans, and Asian Indians have been particularly likely to follow this path.

**Summary**

This classification suggests some of the variety of relationships between the new Americans and the larger society. The stream of immigrants entering the United States is extremely diverse and includes people ranging
from the most sophisticated and urbane to the most desperate and despairing. The variety is suggested by considering a list of occupations in which recent immigrants are overrepresented. For men, the list includes biologists and other natural scientists, taxi drivers, farm laborers, and waiters. For women, the list includes chemists, statisticians, produce packers, laundry workers, and domestic workers (Kritz & Gurak, 2005).

IMMIGRATION: ISSUES AND CONTROVERSIES

How Welcoming Are Americans?

One factor that affects the fate of immigrant groups is the attitude of the larger society and, particularly, the groups in the larger society that have the most influence with governmental policymakers. Overall, we can say that native-born Americans (even those with immigrant parents) have never been particularly open to newcomers, and the history of this nation is replete with movements to reduce immigration drastically or even eliminate it completely. We have already mentioned some of the anti-immigration movements directed against Mexicans (Chapter 7) and against the Chinese and Japanese (Chapter 8), and in Chapter 10, we will cover the (ultimately successful) efforts to stop European immigration in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Here we will look at attitudes and reactions to the contemporary immigrants.

First, although Americans have a lot of reservations about immigration, it seems that attitudes are somewhat more open now than in the past. Exhibit 9.18 shows some results of surveys administered to nationally representative samples for four different years between 1996 and 2004 (National Public Radio, 2004).

The high point of resistance in this period was in 2001, when nearly 60% of the respondents agreed that immigration should be decreased. The most recent results show that support for decreasing immigration has dropped to about 40%, a particularly interesting decline given the reactions to the terrorist attacks of September 11 summarized earlier.

What concerns do Americans have about immigration? One common set of concerns revolves around economics. About half of the respondents to the 2004 survey were concerned that immigrants might take jobs from native-born workers, and almost two thirds (62%) were concerned that immigrants do

Exhibit 9.18  Percent Stating That Immigration Should Be Decreased

![Graph showing the percentage of respondents stating that immigration should be decreased from 1996 to 2004. In 1996, about 50% responded, in 2001, about 60%, in 2003, about 50%, and in 2004, about 40%.]

not pay their fair share of taxes. These concerns were particularly strong among respondents who believed that the U.S. economy was performing only at a fair or poor level. Thus, there seems to be a correlation between pessimism about the economy and perception of immigrants as threats, a relationship that recalls earlier material on competition and prejudice (e.g., the Noel hypothesis and the Robber’s Cave experiment). We will address the grounds for these concerns below.

**Views of the Immigrants**

Interestingly, the survey (National Public Radio, 2004) also questioned a sample of immigrants and found that their attitudes and views differed sharply from native-born respondents on a number of dimensions. For example, the immigrants were more likely to see immigration as a positive force for the larger society and more likely to say that immigrants work hard and pay their fair share of taxes.

More relevant for the ultimate impact of the contemporary wave of immigration, the survey found that only about 30% were sojourners (i.e., ultimately planning to return to their homeland), a finding that suggests that issues of assimilation and immigration will remain at the forefront of U.S. concerns for many decades.

The survey also showed that immigrants are very grateful for economic opportunities available in the United States, with 84% agreeing that there are more opportunities to get ahead here than in their country of origin. On the other hand, the immigrants were ambivalent about United States culture and values. For example, nearly half (47%) said that the family was stronger in their homeland than in the United States, and only 28% saw U.S. society as having stronger moral values than their homeland.

**Costs and Benefits**

Surveys show that Americans are especially concerned about the economic impact of immigration. Is this concern justified? Do immigrants take jobs, swell the welfare rolls, and claim more in benefits than they contribute in taxes?

These issues are complex, and the conclusions of researchers are commonly contradictory and inconsistent (see Kritz & Gurak, 2005, for an overview). Whereas some research (especially projects conducted on a local level) shows negative impacts, other studies (especially those done at the national level) find that immigrants contribute more than they cost. For example, a study conducted by the National Opinion Research Council (1997) found that immigrants are a positive addition to the economy. They add to the labor supply in areas as disparate as the garment industry, agriculture, domestic work, and college faculty (National Academy of Sciences, 1997).

Other researchers have found that low-skilled immigrants tend to find jobs in areas of the economy in which few U.S. citizens work or in the enclave economies of their own groups, taking jobs that would not have existed without the economic activity of their co-ethnics (Heer, 1996, pp. 190–194; Smith & Edmonston, 1997). One important recent study of the economic impact of recent immigrants concluded that there is a relatively small effect on the wages and employment of native workers, although there does seem to be a negative consequence for earlier immigrants and for African Americans (Bean & Stevens, 2003, pp. 221–223).

Another concern is the strain that immigrants place on taxes and services such as schools and welfare programs. Again, these issues are complex and far from settled, but contrary to the concerns of many Americans, some research projects suggest that immigrants (especially legal immigrants working in the mainstream economy) cost less than they contribute. Taxes are automatically deducted from their paychecks, and their use of such services as unemployment compensation, Medicare, food stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and Social Security is actually lower than their proportional contributions. Although undocumented immigrants can have very negative impacts on localities, their use of services is generally limited by their vulnerable legal status (Marcelli & Heer,
1998; Simon, 1989). Bean and Stevens (2003, pp. 66–93), in their recent study, find that immigrants are not overrepresented on the welfare rolls. Rather, the key determinant of welfare use is refugee status, and groups such as Haitians, Salvadorans, and Vietnamese—who arrive without resources and, by definition, are in need of assistance on all levels—are the most likely to be on the welfare rolls.

Final conclusions about the impact and costs of immigration must await further research. For now, we can say that the fears and concerns, although not unfounded, may be confounded with and exaggerated by prejudice and racism directed at newcomers and strangers. The current opposition to immigration may be a reaction to who as much as to how many or how expensive.

Finally, we can repeat the finding of many studies (e.g., Bean & Stevens, 2003) that immigration is generally a positive force in the economy and that, as has been true for decades, immigrants, legal and illegal, continue to find work with Anglo employers and niches in American society in which they can survive. The networks that have delivered cheap immigrant labor for the low-wage secondary job market continue to operate, and frequently, the primary beneficiaries of this long-established system are not the immigrants (although they are grateful for the opportunities), but employers, who benefit from a cheaper, more easily exploited workforce, and American consumers, who benefit from lower prices in the marketplace.

Is Contemporary Assimilation Segmented?

In Chapter 2, we reviewed some of the patterns of acculturation and integration that typified the adjustment of Europeans who immigrated to the United States before the 1930s. Although the process of adjustment was anything but smooth or simple, these groups eventually Americanized and achieved levels of education and affluence comparable to national norms (as we shall see in Chapter 10). Will contemporary emigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean experience similar success? Will their sons and daughters and grandsons and granddaughters rise in the occupational structure to a position of parity with the dominant group? Will the cultures and languages of these groups gradually fade and disappear?

Final answers to these questions must await future developments. In the meantime, there is considerable debate on these issues. Some analysts argue that assimilation will be segmented and that the success story of the white ethnic groups will not be repeated. Others find that the traditional perspective on assimilation—particularly the model of assimilation developed by Milton Gordon—continues to be a useful and accurate framework for understanding the experience of contemporary immigrants. We will review some of the most important and influential arguments from each side of this debate and, finally, attempt to come to some conclusions about the future of assimilation.

The Case for Segmented Assimilation

Sociologist Douglas Massey (1995) presents a particularly compelling argument in favor of the segmented assimilation perspective. He argues that there are three crucial differences between the European assimilation experience of the past and the contemporary period that call the traditional perspective into question. First, the flow of emigrants from Europe to the United States slowed to a mere trickle after the 1920s because of restrictive legislation, the worldwide depression of the 1930s, and World War II. Immigration in the 1930s, for example, was less than 10% of the flow of the early 1920s. Thus, as the children and grandchildren of the emigrants from Europe Americanized and grew to adulthood in the 1930s and 1940s, few new immigrants fresh from the old country replaced them in the ethnic neighborhoods. European cultural traditions and languages weakened rapidly with the passing of the first generation and the Americanization of their descendants.

For contemporary immigration, in contrast, the networks and the demand for
cheap labor are so strong that it is unlikely that there will be a similar hiatus in the flow of people. Immigration has become continuous, argues Massey, and as some contemporary immigrants (or their descendants) Americanize and rise to affluence and success, new arrivals will replace them and continuously revitalize the ethnic cultures and languages.

Second, the speed and ease of modern transportation and communication will help to maintain cultural and linguistic diversity. A century ago, emigrants from Europe could maintain contact with the old country only by mail, and most had no realistic expectation of ever returning. Most modern immigrants, in contrast, can return to their homes in a day or less and can use telephones, television, e-mail, and the Internet to stay in intimate contact with the families and friends they left behind. According to one recent survey (National Public Radio, 2004), a little more than 40% of immigrants return to their homeland at least every year or two, and some (6%) return every few months. Thus, the cultures of modern immigrants can be kept vital and whole in ways that were not available (and not even imagined) 100 years ago.

Third, and perhaps most important, contemporary immigrants face an economy and a labor market that are vastly different from those faced by European immigrants of the 19th and early 20th century. The latter group generally rose in the class system as the economy shifted from manufacturing to service (see Exhibit 4.3). Today, rates of upward mobility have decreased, and just when the importance of education has increased, the schools available to the children of immigrants have fallen into neglect (Massey, 1995, pp. 645–646).

For the emigrants from Europe a century ago, assimilation meant a gradual rise to middle-class respectability and suburban comfort, even if it took four or five generations to accomplish. Assimilation today, according to Massey, is segmented, and a large percentage of the descendants of contemporary immigrants—especially many of the Hispanic groups and Haitians—face permanent membership in a growing underclass population and continuing marginalization and powerlessness.

The Case Against
Segmented Assimilation

Several recent studies have resurrected the somewhat tattered body of traditional assimilation theories. These studies argue that contemporary assimilation will ultimately follow the same course followed by European immigrant groups 100 years ago and as described in Gordon’s theory (see Chapter 2). For example, two recent studies (Bean & Stevens, 2003, and Alba & Nee, 2003) find that most contemporary immigrant groups are acculturating and integrating at the “normal” three-generation pace. Those groups (notably Mexicans) that appear to be lagging behind this pace may take as many as four to five generations, but their descendants will eventually find their way to the primary job market and the cultural mainstream.

Studies of language acculturation show that English-language proficiency grows with time of residence and generation (Bean & Stevens, 2003, p. 168). We discussed these patterns in Chapter 2 (see Exhibits 2.4 and 2.5). In terms of structural integration, contemporary immigrant groups are narrowing the income gap over time, although many groups (e.g., Dominicans, Mexicans, Haitians, and Vietnamese) are handicapped by very low levels of human capital at the start (Bean & Stevens, 2003, p. 142). Exhibits 9.19a and 9.19b illustrate this process with respect to wage differentials between Mexican males and females of various generations and levels of education. Looking first at “All workers,” Mexican males who are recent immigrants earn a little less than half of what white males earn. The differential is lower for more recent immigrants, lower still for Mexican males of the second and third generation, and lowest for the more educated members of those generations. For females, the wage differential also shrinks as the generations pass and level of education increases.
Exhibit 9.19a  Wage Differential of Mexican Workers Relative to White (Males)

Exhibit 9.19b  Wage Differential of Mexican Workers Relative to White (Females)

SOURCE: Bean and Stevens (2003, p. 139).
However, note that for third-generation, college-educated females, the wage differential shrinks virtually to zero, indicating complete integration on this variable.

Note how these patterns support the traditional perspective on assimilation. The wage gap shrinks by generation and level of education, and integration is substantial by the third generation (although complete only for one group). This pattern suggests that the movement of Mexican immigrants is toward the economic mainstream, even though they do not close the gap completely. Bean and Stevens conclude that this pattern is substantially consistent with the “three-generation model”: The assimilation trajectory of Mexican Americans and other recent immigrant groups is not into the urban poor; the underclass; or the disenfranchised, disconnected, and marginalized. Assimilation is not segmented but is substantially repeating the experiences of the European groups on which Gordon based his theory.

Summary

How can we reconcile these opposed points of view? In large part, this debate concerns the nature of the evidence and judgments about how much weight to give to various facts and trends. On one hand, Massey’s points about the importance of the postindustrial economy, declining opportunities for less educated workers, and the neglect that seems typical of inner-city schools are very well taken. On the other hand, it seems that even the least educated immigrant groups have been able to find economic niches in which they and their families can survive and eke out an existence long enough for their children and grandchildren to rise in the structure, a pattern that has been at the core of the American immigrant experience for almost two centuries.

Of course, this debate will continue and new evidence and interpretations will appear. Ultimately, however, unless immigration stops (which, as Massey points out, is extremely unlikely) and the fate of the descendants of the last immigrant groups is measured, the debate cannot be resolved.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Americans are particularly concerned with undocumented immigrants, and many are frustrated with what they see as ineffective government efforts to curtail this flow of illegal aliens. For example, in a 2004 survey (National Public Radio, 2004), 72% of the respondents said they were “very or somewhat concerned” about this problem, and 66% agreed that the government was “not tough enough” on undocumented immigrants.

There is no question that the volume of illegal immigrants is huge. In 2000, it was estimated that there were 8.5 million people living in the United States illegally, more than double the number in 1992 (Martin & Widgren, 2002, p. 13). By 2006, the number of illegal immigrants had grown to an estimated 11 to 12 million (Campo-Flores, 2006, p. 39). Some undocumented immigrants enter the country on tourist, temporary worker, or student visas and simply remain in the nation when their visa expires. In 2000 alone, more than 33 million tourists and more than a million additional temporary workers and foreign students entered the United States, and these numbers suggest how difficult it would be to keep tabs on this source of illegal immigrants. Others cross the border illegally in the hope of avoiding the border police and finding their way into some niche in the American economy. The very fact that people keep coming suggests that a very high percentage of them succeed.

A variety of efforts have been made to curtail and control the flow of illegal immigrants. Various states have attempted to lower the appeal of the United States by limiting benefits and opportunities. The best known of these attempts occurred in 1994 when California voters passed Proposition 187, which would have denied educational, health, and other services to illegal immigrants. The policy was declared unconstitutional, however, and was never implemented. Federal efforts to decrease the flow of illegal immigration include proposals to limit welfare benefits for immigrants, increase the size of the Border Patrol, and build taller and...
wider walls along the border with Mexico. Following his re-election in 2004, President Bush proposed a “guest worker” program to try to control some of the flow of illegal immigrants. Similar programs have been implemented in the past (see Chapter 7). A guest worker has a temporary work permit and is expected to return to his or her country of origin when the work permit expires. President Bush’s program would also provide means by which undocumented immigrants could apply for citizenship.

The U.S. Congress debated the President’s proposal and a variety of immigration reform laws in the spring of 2006, which evoked strong public reactions. Whereas some citizens lobbied for much stricter border control, others, mobilized in part by Mexican American civil rights organizations, staged demonstrations across the nation demanding equitable treatment and expressing opposition to the more punitive immigration policies that have been proposed. Some of the demonstrations attracted very large crowds, including 500,000 in Los Angeles and 300,000 in Chicago (Campo-Flores, 2006, p. 38).

Although Americans will continue to be concerned about illegal immigrants, it seems unlikely that much can be done (within the framework of a democratic, humane society) to curtail the flow of people. The social networks that deliver immigrants—legal as well as illegal—are very well established, and the demand for cheap labor in the United States is simply insatiable. In fact, denying services, as envisioned in punitive policies such as Proposition 187, may make illegal immigrants more attractive as a source of labor by reducing their ability to resist exploitation. For example, if the children of illegal immigrants were not permitted to attend school, they would become more likely to join the army of cheap labor on which some employers depend. Who would benefit from closing public schools to the children of illegal immigrants?

RECENT IMMIGRATION IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The current wave of immigration to the United States is part of a centuries-old process that spans the globe. Underlying this immense and complex population movement is the powerful force of the continuing industrial revolution. The United States and other industrialized nations are the centers of growth in the global economy, and immigrants flow to the areas of greater opportunity. In the 19th century, population moved largely from Europe to the western hemisphere. Over the past 50 years, the movement has been from south to north. This pattern reflects the simple geography of industrialization and opportunity and the fact that the more developed nations are in the northern hemisphere.

The United States has been the world’s dominant economic, political, and cultural power for much of the century and the preferred destination of most immigrants. Newcomers from around the globe continue the collective, social nature of past population movements (see Chapter 2). The direction of their travels reflects contemporary global inequalities: Labor continues to flow from the less developed nations to the more developed nations. The direction of this flow is not accidental or coincidental. It is determined by the differential rates of industrialization and modernization across the globe. Immigration contributes to the wealth and affluence of the more developed societies and particularly to the dominant groups and elite classes of those societies.

MAIN POINTS

• Since the mid-1960s, immigrants have been coming to the United States at nearly record rates. Some of these immigrant groups have co-ethnics who have been in the U.S. for years (e.g., Mexicans or Chinese), but others are “New Americans,” and we focus on these groups in this chapter. How will this new wave of immigration transform America? Will the immigrants assimilate? How?
- Emigrants from Central and South America and the Caribbean are diverse. Some are driven by economic needs, whereas others are political refugees. They are an important source of cheap labor, and many are undocumented.
- Emigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands are diverse and include many highly educated people along with the less skilled, “war brides,” and refugees. Several of these groups have formed economic enclaves.
- Arab Americans, like other New Americans, have been growing rapidly in number, and their local communities tend to be centered on economic enclaves. The events of September 11 make this group a special target for hate crimes and security concerns.
- Emigrants from Africa remain a relatively small group, and many bring high levels of education and occupational skills, although others are concentrated in the lower levels of the occupational structure.
- Contemporary immigrants are generally experiencing three different modes of incorporation into U.S. society: the primary labor market, the secondary labor market, and the enclave. The pathway of each group is strongly influenced by the amount of human capital they bring, their race, the attitude of the larger society, and many other factors.
- Relations between immigrants and the larger society are animated by a number of issues including: relative costs and benefits of immigration, concerns about undocumented immigrants, and the speed of assimilation. One important issue currently being debated by social scientists is whether assimilation for New Americans will be segmented or will ultimately follow the pathway established by immigrant groups from Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries.

**QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW AND STUDY**

1. What differences exist between these New Americans in terms of their motivations for coming to the U.S.? What are the implications of these various “push” factors for their reception and adjustment to the U.S.?

2. Compare Asian and Pacific Islander immigrant groups with those from the Caribbean and Central and South America. Which group is more diverse? What differences exist in their patterns of adjustment and assimilation? Why do these patterns exist?

3. Compare and contrast the experiences of Arab Americans with Asian and Pacific Islander groups and with Hispanic and Caribbean groups. How do they differ in terms of human capital and settlement patterns? Why do these differences exist? What are the implications of these differences for assimilation?

4. Compare and contrast African immigrants with the other groups. How do they differ, and what are the implications of these differences for their adjustment to the larger society?

5. What, in your opinion, are the most important issues facing the United States in terms of immigration and assimilation? How are these issues playing out in your community (if at all)? What are the implications of these issues for the future of the United States?

6. Will assimilation for contemporary immigrants be segmented? After examining the evidence and arguments presented by both sides, and using information from this and previous chapters, does either side of the debate seem more credible? Why? What are the implications of this debate? What will the U.S. look like in the future if assimilation is segmented? How would the future change if assimilation is not segmented? Which of these scenarios is more desirable for immigrant groups? For the society as a whole? For various segments of U.S. society (e.g., employers, labor unions, African Americans, consumers, the college educated, the urban underclass, etc.)?
INTERNET RESEARCH PROJECTS

A. Update and Expand This Chapter by an Internet Search

Many of the groups covered in this chapter have Web sites dedicated to them (e.g., Arab Americans are the subject of http://www.allied-media.com/Arab-American/Arab%20American%20Demographics.htm). Select several of the groups covered in this chapter and conduct a search for relevant Web sites. See what you can learn about the concerns and situation of each group and compare the information to what has been presented in this text. What information can you collect about their socioeconomic profile? What can you learn about their point of view on the United States and their treatment by the larger society? What issues are most important for them (e.g., learning English, job discrimination, hate crimes, availability of welfare services, etc.)?

B. Update and Expand This Chapter With Census Data

The 2000 census collected an array of information about most of the groups covered in this chapter, and the information is available online. Go to www.census.gov and click on “American Factfinder” on the left-hand panel of the home page. Next, click on “Data Sets” on the left-hand panel and select “Census 2000, Summary File 4” and “Quick Tables.” On the next window, click “Add” to move the United States to the bottom window and click “Next.” Choose a table from the list in the next window (e.g., QT-H3. Household Population and Household Type by Tenure: 2000) and click “Add” and “Next” and choose a racial group or an ancestry group. The selected table will be displayed for the total population and for the subgroup(s) you selected. Extend the analysis in this chapter by comparing groups with each other and with the total population.

FOR FURTHER READING


Landmark studies of New American groups whose findings are generally consistent with the segmented assimilation hypothesis.


Landmark studies of contemporary immigrants that find that assimilation is generally following a course consistent with the “traditional” model of assimilation.