Learning objectives

To separate myths from facts regarding the characteristics of immigrants in the United States

- Motives for immigration
- Assimilation
- Reception in the US
- Health status
- Education and skills
- Impact on economy and ‘costs’
- English language learning
- Undocumented immigrants and public policy
Myth #1: Most immigrants come to the US for economic motives
Motives for Coming to the US:

1. Family Reunification

2. Employment
Family Reunification

Family reunification as a proportion of total immigration, 1995-2001

(Source: INS Statistical Yearbook, 2001)

Source: McKay, MPI, 5/03
Myth #2:

Contemporary immigrants to the US ‘don’t assimilate’ as rapidly as immigrants who came in the 1900’s
In the 1920’s

46% of Italians and 33% of Poles who had emigrated between 1899 and 1924 returned to their home countries.
For most European groups, the assimilation of the second generation was partial. Indeed, the well-known studies of this generation depict in general individuals whose lives were profoundly affected by their ethnic origins, who mostly resided in ethnic communities and exhibited in a variety of ways thinking and behavior characteristic of the group, as well as some degree of loyalty to it…It was only in the third, and in some cases the fourth generations that the powerful undercurrent of assimilation came unmistakably to the surface.”

Alba and Nee, 1997
Myth #3:

Americans do not welcome new immigrants/
Americans do welcome new immigrants
Pride in being “a nation of immigrants”
Largest number of immigrants in history
35.7 million in 2005

Source: ACS, 2005
Refugee Admissions

The United States is by far the largest of the 10 “traditional” refugee resettlement countries; it has historically accepted more refugees for resettlement than all other countries combined.
History of xenophobia
The Irish as ‘unmixable’ in the American pot, 1889

Source: The Marchand Collection, UC Davis
An Irishman Looks at an Ape in a Cage, 1891

Source: The Marchand Collection, UC Davis
Dorothea Lange photographs of internment of American citizens of Japanese Ancestry, 1942

Note: 2/3 of interred were US citizens. Source: Dinitia Smith, NYT 11-6-06;
Gallup Polls on Whether Immigration Should be Kept at Current Levels, Increased or Decreased
**NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Poll, 2004**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are too many immigrants in the US today**</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immigrants do not pay their fair share of taxes***</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immigrants are a burden on our country***</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The federal gov't is not tough enough on immigration***</td>
<td>61%</td>
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CBS/NYT Poll March, 2007

“Illegal Immigrants Should be Given a Chance to Keep Jobs”
“ Illegal Immigrants Should be Deported”

NYT/CBS News Poll, NYT 4-22-07
Myth #4: Immigrants are not as healthy native-born Americans
Immigrant Health Advantages: Compared with native-born Americans, first generation immigrants experience:

- Lower mortality
- Longer life expectancies
- Fewer disabilities
- Better birth outcomes
- Fewer chronic health conditions

(National Longitudinal Mortality Study 1979-89) Singh and Siahpush, 2001, Chronic conditions (Chen et al 1996) incl CHD, allergies, hypertension, asthma, stroke
Percent of Immigrants with Physical Health Problems by Years in the U.S.

Percent of Immigrants with Risk Behaviors by Years in the U.S.*

*sexual activity, delinquency, smoking and use of controlled substances
Health of Children of Immigrants

- Risk Behaviors
- Physical Health Problems
In what Rumbaut calls the “paradox of assimilation”, length of time in the U.S. is positively correlated with increases in low birth weight infants, cancer anxiety and depression and general mortality.
“The more 'they' become like 'us', immigrants and immigrant children fail to maintain their initial health advantages... The process is poorly understood, but may be the result of the adoption of our poor health behaviors and life styles, leaving behind resources (social networks, cultural practices, employment in their field of training, etc), and ways in which the settlement process wears down hardiness and resilience.”

Noh and Kaspar, 2003, p25
Diet and Exercise as “Protective Factors”

39% of a sample of 6,637 foreign-born adults reported increased consumption of junk food and meat, higher body mass indices (BMI) and decreased consumption of healthy foods, such as fruits, vegetables, fish and rice since arrival in the US.

Akresh, 2006
Children in Poverty in the United States, 2000
Compared to children of native-born parents the children of immigrants:

- Live in families that are substantially poorer
- Have limited access to health care or insurance

Reardon-Anderson, Caps and Fix, 2002
Myth #5: Immigrants are less educated and less skilled than US-born residents
Immigrants Have Higher Proportion of Workers at Both Extremes

Academics and scientists

Laborers
Myth #6: Immigration hurts the economy
Open letter from 500 economists*, June, 2006

“Immigration is a net economic gain for America and its citizens and "the greatest anti-poverty program ever devised."

*including 5 Nobel Laureates
“On average, US natives benefit from immigration. Immigrants tend to complement (not substitute for) natives, raising natives’ productivity and income.”

“Careful studies of the long-run fiscal effects of immigration conclude that it is likely to have a modest, positive influence.”
The Graying of the U.S. Population

Projected Increase in U.S. Population Over Age 65

Projected Changes in Labor Force 1998-2008:
(3 Million Fewer Workers Ages 25-44)

Source: Dohm, 2000
Jobless Rate Hits 5-Year Low

By JEREMY W. PETERS, NYT November 4, 2006
Future Low Skilled Job Needs in US

Percent of projected openings 2000-2010 by training required

Source: Paral, 2006 using BLS Data
Few Natives Available for Low-Skilled Jobs

Non-High School Graduates in 2005:

Native-born: 12 %
Foreign-born: 33 %
Foreign-born Hispanics: 54 %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BL:S: occupations with largest job growth, 2004-2014</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jobs requiring short or moderate on-the-job training</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retail salespersons</th>
<th>Receptionists</th>
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<tr>
<td>RNs</td>
<td>Landscaping and groundskeeping workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service reps</td>
<td>Truck drivers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janitors and cleaners</td>
<td>Computer software engineers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waiters and waitresses</td>
<td>Maintenance and repair workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food preparation and serving</td>
<td>Medical assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home health aides</td>
<td>Executive secretaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursing aides and orderlies</td>
<td>Sales reps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and operations managers</td>
<td>Carpenters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal and home care aides</td>
<td>Teacher assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School teachers</td>
<td>Child care workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountants and auditors</td>
<td>Food preparation workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office clerks</td>
<td>Maids and housekeeping cleaners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laborers and freight, stock and material movers</td>
<td>Truck drivers, delivery services</td>
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The paradox of "an ever-expanding low-skilled foreign-born population in an economy that seems to have no place for poorly skilled workers"

Waldinger and Lichter

*How the Other Half Works*
Myth #7: Immigrants Cost More than They Contribute
How much do you cost?
Immigrants pay the same taxes as US-born residents

- Income taxes
- Property taxes
- Sales taxes
- Business taxes
- Property taxes
- Fewer tax breaks
Studies often over-state the cost of immigration by measuring costs before adults reach working age.
National Research Council Study of the Fiscal Impacts of Immigration

“In fact, most immigrants tend to arrive at young working ages, which partly explains why the net fiscal impact of immigration is positive under most scenarios.”

Source: Smith and Edmonston, 1997
Costs and Benefits of Migration

“In addition to filling labor needs, immigrants also increase the demand for goods and services, that, in turn, increase the demand for labor”

World Economic and Social Survey, 2004  http://xrl.us/g7tc
The uneven geographic distribution of immigrants creates an uneven geographic distribution of the costs as well as the benefits of immigration."

Jeanette Money, 1999
Myth #8: Immigrants don’t learn English
Population Growth of English Language Learners

Source: Batt and Sunderman, 2005
Age at entry determines ease of English language acquisition
By the second generation the majority of immigrants speak fluent English, and *begin to lose fluency in their native languages*
Spanish as predominant language:

First-generation Latinos: 72%

Second-generation: 7%

Source: Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation
Study cited by Council of Economic Advisors, June 2007
Myth #9:

Undocumented (‘illegal’) immigrants are criminals
Restrictions Under NAFTA for Meeting the Demand for Workers:

- on the one hand, the free flow of capital, goods, and services has been expanded

- on the other hand, the flow of labor has been the subject of massive enforcement efforts and legal restrictions

If you are a low skilled worker, there is essentially ‘no line’ to get into to come to the US to live and work here legally.
Percentage of Employment-Based Visas Issued for Low Skilled Jobs: 2002

Source: Jachimowicz, 2004
Myth #10: A fence will solve ‘the problem’

Source: Wayne Cornelius, 2006
Increases in US Border Spending and Increases in Unauthorized Immigrants 1990-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Border Spending</th>
<th>Unauthorized Immigrants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>$594 million</td>
<td>3.5 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$4.6 billion</td>
<td>12 million</td>
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Source: $\$: van Hook, Bean & Passell, MIS, 9/1/05; 2004 $\$: AILA Im Pol in Focus v 3(5),11/04; People: Passell, MIS 9/05 ; 2006 figures from [www.cbsnews.com](http://www.cbsnews.com) “CBS Poll: Most Support Immigration Reform” 6/20/07
“Afraid to leave, in case they can’t come back”

*Economist Magazine, 12/13/06*

Workers in San Joaquin Valley, California
Reduction in Fines to Employers

Less Pain for Employers

According to some estimates, the number of illegal immigrants entering the United States has generally risen since 1992. Yet administrative actions against businesses who employ them have declined.

**AVERAGE ANNUAL IMMIGRATION**

2.0 million

**WARNINGS OF IMPENDING FINES ISSUED TO EMPLOYERS OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS**

1,500

Source: Pew Hispanic Center

Sources: I.N.S., Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Gov’t. Accountability Office

Source: Porter, 2006 (NYT)
Policy Implications
Globalization has greatly increased the demand for low skilled workers.
The US issues almost no immigrant visas to low skilled workers and few sanctions to employers.
Increasing numbers of unauthorized immigrants.
Lack of integration policies or path to legalization.
Widening inequality of poor and disenfranchized immigrants.
Unauthorized immigrants increasingly stereotyped as ‘unassimilable’.
Inequitable distribution of the fiscal benefits of immigration.
The Future?

- More diversity
- Continued aging
- Greater need for young workforce
- More political clashes on immigration
The Need

- Immigration reform that is based on more than myths
- Balanced assessment of the stresses and benefits of immigration
- Discussion of the values underpinning immigration policies
- Ethical leadership
- CIR policies that will promote *integration*