

PERPETUAL MOTION

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MIGRATIONS AND CULTURES: A WORLD VIEW. By *Thomas Sowell*. New York: Basic Books. 1996. Pp. xii, 516. Cloth, \$27.50; paper, \$16.

Human beings are constantly on the move. Americans are probably the most peripatetic people in the industrialized world, with nearly twenty percent of us each year changing the location of our homes within the United States.¹ Our mobility, however, is insignificant when compared with the migrations of peoples who cross the ocean leaving their societies far behind and casting their lots with new, altogether alien ones.

Intercontinental migrations of this kind, of course, have proceeded ever since the first communities dispersed by foot across the globe in search of food, water, land, and security. In migrating, these groups have transported more than their families and possessions; they have also carried with them their language, art, religion, values, skills, practices, perspectives, and social institutions — their unique cultures.

The distinctiveness of these migrant cultures, and the myriad ways in which they have altered the societies in which they have been transplanted, are the subjects of Thomas Sowell's stimulating book. Sowell, an academic economist who has long been a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, has devoted a long and distinguished career to exploring these phenomena empirically, usually relying heavily on the field research of others. In his earlier works,² Sowell amassed social science and historical data, much of it cross-national, to challenge certain assumptions that are widespread among policymaking and intellectual elites as well as much of the general public. Exhibiting an admirable combination of academic technique, analytical seriousness, iconoclastic audacity, and

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1. See p. 43 n.181 (citing DIANA DEARE, U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY: MARCH 1990 TO MARCH 1991 (Current Population Reports P20-463, 1992)). Sowell adds that internal migrations by Americans exceed all migrations by all foreigners to the U.S. P. 43.

2. His books include ETHNIC AMERICA: A HISTORY (1981), PREFERENTIAL POLICIES: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE (1990), RACE AND CULTURE: A WORLD VIEW (1994), and RACE AND ECONOMICS (1975).

ideological pugnacity, he rejected the credo of universalistic liberals and egalitarians that humans are really all the same beneath the surface. Quite the contrary, he insisted, individuals differ from one another in the most fundamental respects — in how they perceive, think, value, express themselves, and behave. These differences, moreover, are most dramatically manifested in their economic performance, which reflects different commitments to a variety of economic virtues. These virtues include the propensity to work incredibly hard at jobs often disdained by the native population,³ be unusually productive,⁴ take entrepreneurial risks,⁵ build strong families and communal institutions, invest in education and other human capital, practice extreme thrift and self-denial, constantly innovate, and so on.

Opposing the view of most social reformers, Sowell maintained that these different commitments do not primarily reflect differences in the objective conditions that prevail in the larger societies where the individuals live, such as the level of economic development and discriminatory attitudes. Instead, he argued, these differences in economic and social behavior have almost everything to do with the individuals' underlying values and practices, which in turn are shaped by the distinctive cultural patterns of their ethnic and religious groups. Finally, and most emphatically, Sowell rejected the notion, cherished by some advocates of multiculturalism, that because all cultures are different, each of them equally deserves society's respect and protection, if not nurturance. Instead, he insisted, some cultures are more economically successful and hence more worthy of emulation than others — at least if wealth is a value.⁶

THE ANALYTIC PROJECT

Migrations and Cultures recapitulates these themes of individual striving, cultural determinism, group differences, and economic standards of achievement — but it plays them out on a global scale. Sowell has selected six ethnic groups for special attention: Germans, Japanese, Italians, Chinese, Jews, and the Indians of

3. This was notably true of the Indians in Africa, p. 316, the Italians in Argentina, pp. 152-53, and the Jewish, Chinese, and Parsee Indian middleman minorities everywhere, pp. 29-32.

4. Sowell notes that Chinese workers on rubber plantations were more than twice as productive as their Malay counterparts at the same unskilled jobs. P. 191.

5. For example, Sowell refers to the willingness of immigrant groups to extend credit, on the basis of refined knowledge and judgment of individuals' ability to repay, to those rejected by conventional lenders. *See, e.g.*, pp. 33, 318.

6. He assumes throughout that economic success is praiseworthy in itself and also is conducive to success in other realms, such as politics and high culture. As noted below, he insists that the causality runs in this direction and not the other way around. *See infra* note 47 and accompanying text.

south Asia. In their destination countries, large fractions of each of these groups, albeit to different extents,⁷ acted as a "middleman minority," by which Sowell means that its members predominate in occupations that facilitate the movement of goods and services from the producer or supplier to the consumer, without necessarily physically transforming such goods and services. Middleman functions include retailing, wholesaling, moneylending, brokerage, and the like. Throughout the world, Sowell notes, the economic functions performed by middlemen are widely misunderstood and underappreciated. The middlemen who perform these functions, moreover, tend to cultivate different skills and attitudes than the rest of the population and arouse particularly virulent hostility and discrimination. As a result, these groups have been obliged to develop unusually adroit survival skills (pp. 27-35). *Migrations and Cultures* is both a catalogue of those skills and an account of how the six groups have deployed them as minorities in societies across the globe.

Drawing on an impressive array of secondary sources ranging widely over time and space, Sowell traces each group's dispersion around the world and describes the patterns of family, communal and religious life, occupations, economic activity, political participation, and institution building that the groups' members have exhibited in the diverse nations and regions in which they have settled.⁸

All six groups have been economically successful in their destination countries.⁹ Indeed, they have usually become more successful than the native populations with whom they had to compete there, despite daunting initial disadvantages and continuing barriers.¹⁰ Their successes, however, were invariably hard won and took

7. Sowell is not too clear on this point, but his descriptions of occupational patterns seem to indicate that the Chinese, pp. 228-29, Indians, p. 368, and Jews, pp. 306-07, were the classic middleman minorities in almost all of their destination countries, while the Germans, p. 103, and Japanese, p. 137, were more likely to concentrate initially in agriculture. The Italians, at least in the United States, primarily entered the construction trades. Pp. 163-64.

8. In the German case, for example, he focuses on the German migrations to Russia, the United States, Brazil, Paraguay, and Australia; the chapter on Indians develops their experience in Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Guyana, Trinidad, the United States, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Fiji.

9. A comparison of economic patterns and achievements *among* the six groups would have been an interesting and perhaps illuminating extension of his analysis, even if such a comparison had to be confined, for methodological reasons, to an individual country like the United States in which all groups reside in large numbers. Such a comparison might have also provided an important comparative benchmark — (relative) economic *failure* — which is missing from Sowell's account except insofar as he compares the economic performance of each of the six groups to the sometimes inferior performance of the natives of the group's destination countries. Unfortunately, however, he does not pursue this line of inquiry.

10. Sowell cites studies showing that over a period of 10 to 15 years, Black, White, and Chinese migrants to the United States and to Canada and Britain have risen beyond parity with the native populations. P. 38. A recent study comparing immigrant and native earnings in the United States finds a mixed picture in which Japanese, Korean, and Chinese immigrants begin with wages much lower than native-born workers and reach parity with them

considerable time to consolidate. What makes their progress even more extraordinary is the fact that in almost every case, certain personal attributes that the groups brought to the destination country, or the social conditions that they encountered there, posed enormous obstacles to their progress, or even survival. The list of disadvantages is long: abject poverty and lack of skills,¹¹ ignorance of the native language, racial difference, disease, ethnic insularity, harsh discrimination and sometimes violence at the hands of the native population, limited opportunities to marry and form families, and political exclusion. Often, moreover, they were also greeted by unpromising material and economic conditions, sometimes even less propitious than the ones from which they had so desperately fled. In some cases, as with the Black Sea Germans, the Jews in Germany and eastern Europe, and the Indians in some African regions, the newcomers' economic vitality generated bitter hostility from the native populations, forcing them to remigrate. Although obliged to start over with many of the same disadvantages that they encountered in their earlier migrations, these groups nevertheless managed to replicate and even enlarge their success.

Sowell hopes to explain why these remarkable records of accomplishment against long odds are so consistent within and, to some extent, across these groups.¹² As a methodological matter, the global context of his study provides a provocative setting in which to draw explanatory inferences. First, the six groups differed enormously from one another with respect to race, language, religion, and other demographic variables, even including the gender ratio of their migrating populations.¹³

Second, some of the countries of origin generated remarkably diverse *intragroup* migrations. The Indian migrants, for example, included Gujaratis who went primarily to Africa, Guyana, and Fiji where they have dominated commerce; Tamils who settled in Malaya and Ceylon where most worked as laborers; Chettyars who went to other parts of Asia where they often dominated the moneylending business; and Jains who took their diamond industry skills overseas (pp. 311-12, 367-68).

Third, the groups' countries of origin were very different in terms of their geophysical features — climate, soil, terrain, water supply. The migrants had adapted to these features in their coun-

within 10 to 15 years, Europeans begin with comparable wages and remain at parity, and Mexicans enter with very low wages and never catch up. See ROBERT F. SCHOENI ET AL., *THE MIXED ECONOMIC PROGRESS OF IMMIGRANTS* at xiv (1996).

11. This was notably true of the Italians, who constituted perhaps the largest emigration from a single country in history. Pp. 173-74.

12. He does not explicitly compare the six groups' levels of performance, but considers each notably successful. See *supra* note 9.

13. See discussion of sex ratios *infra* notes 31-33 and accompanying text.

tries of origin by adopting patterns of occupation, agricultural practice, community life, diet, and dress that were peculiarly suited to those countries. But the diversity among migrants in their original conditions and cultures went well beyond the differences among the countries from which they came. Even *within* countries of origin — especially the immense land masses of China and India but also within the smaller ones of Italy, Germany, and Japan — localities exhibited their own distinctive geophysical conditions and cultural patterns. Migrants from those localities brought those further variations with them to their new homes. As migrant streams often flowed disproportionately from particular localities within each country of origin,¹⁴ the migrants transplanted these intragroup differences to the destination country.

Fourth, the destinations of the six groups differed. All of the groups sent sizable cohorts to the United States and Australia, and the groups overlapped to an extent in some other countries, but the six migration streams established their own distinctive axes.¹⁵ Finally, the groups' migrations also occurred at different times,¹⁶ were prompted by different historical circumstances, and were received differently by the native populations and by their governments.¹⁷

This striking heterogeneity in the geographical and demographic patterns of migration makes for an exceedingly complicated and

14. For example, Sowell observes that the Japanese migrants to Hawaii originated in different and poorer regions of Japan than those who migrated to the mainland United States. P. 119. These local intracountry-of-origin differences in migration patterns were especially important in Italy. For example, northern Italian migrants in the 1901-13 period, Sowell reports, overwhelmingly went to European destinations while 91% of the southern Italians, virtually all unskilled workers, crossed the Atlantic. Pp. 141, 143.

Within each country of origin, the geographical sources of migration were diverse but also sometimes highly concentrated. For example, most Italian immigrants to Australia before World War II came from relatively unpopulated areas of Italy; more than half of the Indian migrants to the Middle East in 1979 came from Kerala state, which contained less than 3% of India's population. P. 5. Of the pre-World War I Chinese immigrants to the United States, a majority came from Toishan, just one of 98 districts in Kwangtung province. P. 177.

But the migration patterns were sometimes even more localized than this. Thus Sowell reports that "rates of emigration varied enormously between very similar provinces and villages in Italy, even when they were located near each other, for one community might have overseas contacts and the next community not." P. 145 (endnote omitted).

15. Sowell notes that more than 90% of all Japanese in the Western Hemisphere lived in just two countries, Brazil and the United States, p. 113, and 90% of Jews in the world live in just five countries, with nearly three-quarters of the total living in the United States and Israel, p. 234.

16. The temporal dimension of migrant flows also affects their destinations, and these shifts can be sharply discontinuous. Sowell observes that half of the Germans who left from 1816 to 1830 emigrated to South America, but after 1830 about 90% went to the United States. P. 52.

17. For example, the Volga Germans were actively recruited and subsidized by Catherine the Great, who hoped to use their settlements as models of efficient agriculture that the Russian peasants might emulate. P. 59. They encountered great hostility, however, at the local level. Pp. 59-60.

potentially messy story. The great challenge for the analyst, then, is to extract from this welter of diversity some general truths about the determinants of the economic success and social integration of outsider groups. Sowell's methodological strategy is to exploit the fact, strongly established by his data, that some remarkable commonalities can be discerned within these evident differences. If these six groups, so heterogeneous vis-à-vis one another and internally, nevertheless managed to achieve so much economic progress despite such formidable obstacles in so many and varied venues, their common success might provide important information bearing on why ethnic groups perform as they do and why some do better than others. At the very least, their common successes under such disparate conditions would tend to cast doubt on some familiar explanations of group differentials, particularly explanations that emphasize conditions such as poverty, ignorance, hostility, and discrimination, which all of these groups faced but still managed to overcome in inhospitable country after inhospitable country.¹⁸ If the analyst can also extract from this bewildering heterogeneity certain common cultural and behavioral patterns, and if he can then link those patterns to the groups' economic successes, alternative explanations of those successes — and perhaps of other groups' failures¹⁹ — may emerge.

Such linkages, if firmly established, might even support prescriptions for programmatic change. Sowell stresses, for example, a strong theme in much of his earlier work: the folly and mischief of judging the discriminatory character of a society or economy, as some affirmative action advocates do, according to how different groups are distributed in particular occupations. Skills, he maintains, are not randomly distributed in any one society, and they hardly become more equally distributed when they are transported across borders or oceans (p. 375).

[O]ne of the clearest facts to emerge from these worldwide histories of various racial and ethnic groups is that gross statistical disparities in the "representation" of groups in different occupations, industries, income levels, and educational institutions have been the rule — not the exception — all across the planet. Moreover, many of these disparities have persisted for generations or even centuries.²⁰

18. "Virtually no wealthy people emigrated from India to Africa," Sowell reports, "even though there have been Indians who acquired great wealth in various African countries." P. 313. Few of the Italians who emigrated to the western hemisphere possessed skills when they arrived. P. 174.

19. I have already noted that the absence of analysis regarding group failures, in a study focusing on group successes, constitutes an analytical failing of the book. See *supra* note 9.

20. Pp. 371-72. He adds that

[R]acial, ethnic, or national minorities who have owned or directed more than half of particular industries in particular nations have included not only the six groups considered here but also the Lebanese in West Africa, Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, Britons in Argentina, Belgians in Russia, and Spaniards in Chile. . . . Minority predominance in

Disparities in achievement, he insists, can reflect differences in values and lifestyle,²¹ which in turn can be — indeed, must have been — at some point in the past for all groups — self-consciously (or group consciously) — cultivated or rejected. Thus, Sowell's analysis may yield practical and policy payoffs as well as intellectual ones.

On the other hand, attempts to identify, explain, and influence group differences are famously controversial, even incendiary. Such efforts frequently generate allegations — some well-founded, some not — of racism, sexism, or other invidious attitudes which emphasize and exploit such differences. The bitter dispute over studies purporting to establish the magnitude and sources of group-specific differences in I.Q. is a cautionary tale,²² as is the ugly history of eugenics, a movement fueled largely by efforts to isolate and stigmatize certain groups as inferior and to locate the root of their inferiority in biological endowment.²³ Where highly and almost universally valued goals such as academic achievement and economic success are concerned, observations about group disparities are likely to be seen as normatively loaded assertions about which groups or cultures are superior or inferior rather than simply as descriptive statements about varied group preferences of the some-like-chocolate, others-like-vanilla genre. Such analyses must therefore be undertaken with the utmost care and seriousness; at the same time, punches should not be pulled. *Migrations and Cultures* easily passes this test.

THE QUESTION OF CULTURE

Sowell maintains that the economic successes of migrant ethnic groups are rooted in culture, and not in biology, environment, or even history (pp. 375-77). He believes that certain ensembles of values and practices constitute distinct cultures and that certain of

particular industries and occupations has been common at local levels as well. In the early nineteenth century, over half the newspapers in Alexandria were owned by Syrians. In the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century, Armenians owned 209 of the 250 cotton cloth factories in the province of Astrakhan. Beginning in the 1960s, most of the installers of underground cable in Sydney, Australia were Irish. In the 1990s, more than four-fifths of all the doughnut shops in California were owned by people of Cambodian ancestry.

P. 372 (endnotes omitted).

21. In support of this cultural capital hypothesis, Sowell cites evidence indicating that Black-White differences in the United States in income and infant mortality rates decline or disappear when one controls for important cultural variables. Pp. 382-83.

22. The firestorm of controversy that erupted over RICHARD J. HERRNSTEIN & CHARLES MURRAY, *THE BELL CURVE* (1994) is merely the most recent skirmish in a long war over the meaning and use of I.Q. scores.

23. See generally DANIEL J. KEVLES, *IN THE NAME OF EUGENICS* (1985). For a recent review of these arguments in the immigration context, see Dorothy Nelkin & Mark Michaels, *Biological Categories and Border Controls: The Revival of Eugenics in Anti-Immigration Rhetoric*, 17 INTL. J. OF SOCIOLOGY & SOC. POLY. (forthcoming Spring 1997).

these cultures are more successful economically than others. Members of groups in which those cultures already flourish may have easier access to these values and practices, just as fluency in a particular language comes more readily to those who have been reared in households where it is habitually spoken. But it is these values and practices that conduce to economic success, not membership in any ascriptively defined group.

The idea of culture, then, is utterly foundational in Sowell's analysis. It is unfortunate, therefore, that this notion is also suspiciously flexible, maddeningly ambiguous, and ultimately elusive. He evidently conceives of the cultures that promote economic success at a level of generality so abstract that they can include quite different ways of life that quite different groups have crystallized in quite different economic forms. Precisely such abstraction, of course, is essential to his analytical project. After all, he is seeking both to explain how certain ways of life are transformed as they are carried to and transplanted in new environments, and also to identify the values and practices that animate those transformations. He writes:

It is easy enough to understand how immigrants from an agricultural background in the cold lands of Scandinavia would settle in agricultural communities in the cold lands of Minnesota or Wisconsin, or how Chettyar money-lenders from India would become money-lenders in Burma or Malaya. What is more challenging is to understand how unskilled workers from southern China would become retailers throughout Southeast Asia and in the Caribbean and North America [p. 8]

Cultures, he says, "cover a broad spectrum of human concerns, from things as superficial as modes of dress to things as deeply felt as what one is prepared to die for" (p. 379). Between these extremes are the values and practices — the "human capital" — of special interest to Sowell, the economist: meticulous work habits, perseverance, social cohesion, law abidingness, risk taking, family unity, future orientation, and the like.²⁴

How do we know these precious cultural attributes when we see them and how do we know that they exist in certain groups more than others? These are important questions, given the subjectivity of values and the ambiguous signification of practices. Sowell does not really discuss these conceptual and methodological issues. Instead, he employs three main indicia of cultural values and prac-

24. His list of cultural commitments is long and often quite specific. "Cultures differ," he notes, "in the relative significance they attach to time, noise, safety, cleanliness, violence, thrift, intellect, sex, and art. These differences in turn imply differences in social choices, economic efficiency, and political stability." P. 379. He adds that "language and physical appearance . . . fertility patterns, technology, philosophy, social customs, and institutions of government" will also vary by culture. P. 380.

tices: groups' cultural reputations as reported by his mostly academic sources, descriptions of certain objective institutions and practices that group members have established, and inferences about cultural values that he draws from the fact of their economic success in the face of obstacles. These indicia, of course, are merely proxies (and crude ones at that) for the underlying phenomena that are truly of interest to us, and such indicia beg a number of fundamental questions about evidence and causality. Still, if these data and interpretations are not as rigorous as one might wish, they are nonetheless highly plausible. We would be foolish to dismiss them until we have something better.

What is the source of these cultural values and practices? What, according to Sowell, made the southern Italians notably hard working and yet lacking in entrepreneurial initiative,²⁵ while their countrymen from the north were disproportionately successful as entrepreneurs in the United States (pp. 164, 167)? Sowell ascribes the southerners' industriousness to the exigencies of their hard-scrabble life on unyielding soil in Italy; elsewhere he opines that having brought few occupational skills with them they nevertheless managed to exploit their "inner strength and inner values" (p. 174). But where did these inner values come from, and why did the northerners, on this theory, evidently possess them in even greater degree?

Sowell does not advance a comprehensive theory of the formation and change of cultures; he simply asserts that they exist and that they somehow persist over time and space. Yet how cultures arise and then manage to endure are questions that both go to the heart of his theory and lack self-evident answers. Indeed, the very existence of a culture should puzzle an economist like Sowell. In economic or evolutionary theory, of course, it is not difficult to explain why some cultures endure while others decline. Some values and practices are more economically efficient, politically sustaining, militarily functional, and morally and spiritually fulfilling than others. As such, they possess strong properties of survivability when cultures clash and compete — as they inevitably do in trade, migration, religious struggle, and war.

But again, what causes a culture to establish itself in the first place? In the language of economic theory, after all, a culture is a pure public good²⁶ and a costly one at that. Until it takes hold and becomes habitual, it requires of its practitioners much sacrifice —

25. Interestingly (and perhaps inconsistently), Sowell maintains that the Italians in Argentina were far more entrepreneurial than their native-born counterparts, especially in retailing. Pp. 152, 154. He also cites the remarkable fact that the foreign-born owned 60% of all the real estate in Buenos Aires earlier in this century. P. 154.

26. See Paul A. Samuelson, *The Pure Theory of Public Expenditure*, 36 REV. ECON. & STAT. 387 (1954) (defining public goods as goods that can be enjoyed in common such that

time, self-discipline, imagination, and experimentation — without any assurance that it will survive. However, those who wish to produce a public good like culture cannot appropriate its benefits for themselves but must share them with free riders who will not bear any of its costs. Since everyone would prefer to be a free rider, no one will make the investment necessary to produce and sustain the culture.

All of this assumes rationality, of course, and one might say that cultures are the very antithesis of rational products, arising instead out of more opaque spiritual and psychological needs and the little-understood processes that propel communal identity formation. Sowell, however, does not make this move. Insofar as one can discern his implicit theory of culture, it seems largely materialist, rationalist, and functionalist — fully in the spirit of economic theory. Thus he emphasizes the value-shaping role of soil, climate, topography, and water supply, and the rational, functional adaptations of people to these geophysical factors as they develop their occupational patterns and social mores.

Here, Sowell sometimes seeks to have it both ways. Thus, he attributes both the meticulousness of the Japanese and the brute physicality of the southern Italians to the poor agricultural conditions in their homelands (pp. 111, 146). Nor can such geophysical factors adequately explain the pronounced cultural differences that sometimes persist between groups that live for long periods of time in close proximity and material similarity to one another, such as Native Americans and their immediate neighbors. And while he mentions some striking instances in which cultures decline (he cites Rome) or suddenly flourish (the Scottish Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century), he fails to explain why these and other abrupt reversals of cultural fate and effectiveness, despite apparent geophysical, normative, and habitual continuities, do not count as evidence against his theory that culture — which is supposed to reflect these continuities — drives performance (pp. 380-81). In the end, then, he does not really dispel the deep and fascinating mystery about the ultimate sources and economic consequences of culture.

THE SELECTIVITY AND DIVERSITY OF MIGRATION

Migration, we know, is a highly selective process. Migrants are not simply a random sample of the population in the country of origin. Even before leaving their homeland, they are special, differing in a number of important respects from the demographically similar people whom they leave behind. They also differ from the

one individual's consumption does not affect the amount of the good available to another individual).

migrants from other countries and from the natives of the countries to which they go. After all, the mere fact that migrants are prepared to uproot themselves, abandon all that is familiar (and sometimes familial), and trust that they can establish themselves in a strange land and prosper there suggests that they are more audacious, enterprising, self-confident, and risk taking than those who stay at home. Migrants are seldom the most abjectly poor in the country of origin; “[t]hose a notch or so higher on the economic scale could more readily gather together the passage money and might be a notch or so higher because they had more initiative or more skills or experience.”²⁷ Nor do migrants always go from poorer countries to wealthier ones; the more general pattern, exemplified by the German and Flemish migrants to eastern Europe, is that migrants go to places, rich or poor, where they can be more productive.²⁸

If immigrants are already special before they migrate, their experiences in the destination country make them even more so. Those who migrate and later return to their countries of origin — a significant fraction of all nonrefugee migrants²⁹ — find themselves to be even more different from the countrymen whom they left behind than they were when they originally departed. In a sense, they become aliens in their own countries, different not only in their new skills and lifestyle but in ideas and values (pp. 22-25). These differences can become so great that the returning migrants feel a need to cluster with other returnees in enclaves that are quite distinct from the surrounding society and that engender its resentment (pp. 22 nn. 110 & 111, 145). Often, one supposes, those back home welcome the remittances that migrants send back more than the returning migrants themselves.³⁰

The economic progress of those migrants who settle permanently in the destination country does not necessarily ensure their rapid integration into the larger society. One of Sowell's most interesting findings is that some of the same social conditions that

27. Pp. 36-37. One might add that those at the very bottom are likely to lack the sense of optimism required to undertake the arduous project of migration.

28. Pp. 42-43. This theory bears an interesting relationship to George Borjas's claim that high-skill immigrants tend to move from areas of higher income equality to areas of lower income equality (where their skills will yield a greater return) and that low-skill immigrants move in the opposite direction (so that they will be less disadvantaged). See GEORGE J. BORJAS, *FRIENDS OR STRANGERS: THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRANTS ON THE U.S. ECONOMY* 16-18 (1990).

29. Sowell cites estimates that nearly 24 million of the 30 million people who left the Indian subcontinent in the century after the mid-1830s returned and that 60% of the southern Italian, Croatian, and Slovenian immigrants to the United States during the early 20th century returned home. P. 25.

30. These remittances are immense and constitute major elements of the economies of the countries of origin. Sowell reports some striking data on this. See, e.g., pp. 21-22, 114, 145.

facilitate the group's economic success may also retard its assimilation. Perhaps the most important factor promoting assimilation is the rate at which the immigrant group marries members of the destination society.³¹ This intermarriage rate is in turn powerfully affected by the sex ratio of the migrants, which can vary considerably even within a particular group going to the same country. For Germans in the state of South Australia in the last half of the nineteenth century, he reports, there were almost as many female immigrants as male ones; as a consequence, they continued to marry within the group and established isolated German-speaking enclaves. In contrast, the sex ratio among German immigrants in the state of Victoria was four males for each female, which resulted in frequent intermarriage with non-Germans and relatively few ethnic enclaves.³² The sex ratio among the Japanese in Brazil was about 3:2 (p. 131), and almost all Japanese in Brazil came in family groups (p. 131). In Brazil, the resulting high rate of in-group marriages minimized the degree of the group's interaction and competition with the host society (p. 131). The remarkably insular Italian marriage patterns in the United States represent another example.³³ In the short run, migrants' intermarriage with natives engendered increased interaction, competition, and hostility toward migrants in the host society; in the long run, however, it surely promoted assimilation and the attenuation of ethnic identities.

Like a person rummaging through a fine antique store, the reader of Sowell's account of migrations can hardly avoid coming across some interesting but unexpected miscellany. Many claims are surprising only because they reflect a comparative perspective often lacking in even the most thoughtful commentators on immigration. Examples include his claims that: the World War II internment of Japanese civilians was "an even bigger disaster . . . in Canada than in the U.S." (p. 123); that German prejudice against Jews and other groups historically "tended to be less rather than more prevalent, as compared to other Europeans — or to Asians or Africans, for that matter" (p. 103); that the prejudice against the Chinese has been greater and more violent in Asia than elsewhere (p. 227); and that the Japanese communities in the United States

31. Even today, barriers to intermarriage also exist *within* some of the immigrant groups, such as Indians, along the lines of language or religion. See p. 332. Sowell notes, however, that caste lines among migrating Indians became less important in some destination countries like Guyana, Trinidad, and Malaysia. Pp. 333, 349. Interestingly, he relates the differential survival of caste distinctions in various destination countries to the length of the voyage there, which compromised the physical separation on which such distinctions rely. P. 351.

32. Pp. 95-96. The most extreme male imbalance may have been among the Chinese in the United States during the late nineteenth century when the sex ratio reached 27:1. As a result, the Chinese population steadily declined. Pp. 220-21.

33. Sowell reports that 97% of Italian men in 1920 were married to Italian wives and that even as late as 1950 this was still true of more than three-quarters of them. P. 162.

during World War II felt much greater loyalty to the United States than those in Brazil felt to Brazil, despite being subjected to harsher treatment here (p. 107). Some of his data are shocking and must indelibly alter our images of earlier migrations. He notes, for example, that seventeen percent of the immigrants on ships bound for the United States during the mid-nineteenth century died either on the way or on arrival (p. 39), a mortality rate that begins to approach even the ghastly toll of the "middle passage" voyages of the slave trade.³⁴

DISCRIMINATION AND IMMIGRANT SUCCESS

At a time when all immigrant-receiving countries — other than the United States — are accepting fewer legal immigrants, it is worthwhile to consider how government policies toward immigration have evolved. Some countries once welcomed and even subsidized immigrants, recognizing their potential for spurring economic development. The Czars, for example, invested heavily in creating settlements for the Volga Germans whom they hoped would serve as agrarian models for their own, more backward subjects (p. 59). Brazil, like many American states in the nineteenth century, also subsidized immigrants whom they hoped would settle and develop their vast frontiers (p. 156). But it is dismaying to observe how even national economic self-interest often yielded to xenophobia, as governments initiated, or capitulated to, the most repressive policies excluding, harassing, exploiting, expelling, and killing even their most productive immigrants.³⁵

Some immigrant groups were resilient enough to survive even the harshest forms of discrimination. Sowell reports, for example, that although the internment of the Japanese in the United States reduced the internees' income in the immediate post-war years, they achieved economic parity with Americans by 1959; in Canada, where the internments were even more damaging economically, their rebound was "spectacular" (pp. 118, 124). The growing social acceptance of the Japanese after their internments in countries as disparate as Peru, Australia, and the United States was also stunning (p. 139). In 1959, only sixteen years after the repeal of the

34. Upper estimates of mortality rates during the middle passage approach thirty percent. See HERBERT S. KLEIN, *THE MIDDLE PASSAGE: COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE 137, 265-68* (1978); see also DAVID ELTIS, *ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE ENDING OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE* (1987).

35. Sowell mentions as examples the expulsions of Jews from medieval Europe, Indian Chettyars from Burma, Moriscoes from Spain, and Indians and Pakistanis from Uganda. P. 46. I have already mentioned the Japanese internments in the United States, some of which were initiated by Latin American countries (although not Brazil) that sent their Japanese residents to the United States for internment. See p. 134.

virulently racist Chinese Exclusion Act, Chinese family income in the United States approximated the national average (p. 226).

What are we to make of these remarkable triumphs of so many immigrant groups in so many unwelcoming societies? Could it be that anti-immigrant animus, which so cruelly and perversely disadvantaged these groups in the short run, actually strengthened their economic and often social positions in the long run? In some paradoxical way, might hostility and discrimination promote the survival and prosperity of the very group (if not always of each member) that they hope to exclude?

This is an intriguing question. Given the fact that most if not all destination countries today display xenophobic attitudes and policies,³⁶ it is also an extremely timely and relevant one. To ask it, of course, is emphatically *not* to countenance discrimination, which inflicts undeserved suffering on innocent, admirable people.³⁷ Instead, such a question invites us to consider the subtle dynamics of immigrants' progress, to reconsider some long-held assumptions, and to wonder anew at the strength of the human spirit and the persistence of coherent cultures under conditions of extreme adversity. It is to this question that I devote the remainder of this review.

Before considering how discrimination might paradoxically work to the eventual advantage of a victimized immigrant group (although not to all individual members), one should recognize three important complications that Sowell does not, and perhaps cannot, adequately explain. First, not all immigrants' stories have happy endings; indeed, many do not, at least if we look only at the first generation — the immigrant himself. I previously noted that Sowell's data reveal the immense return migration flows experienced by some groups.³⁸ He suggests that many of these returnees succeeded as immigrants and came home as wealthy men. We must assume, however, that many, perhaps even most, of the returnees did not fulfill the dreams that had impelled them to migrate and many of these came home to resume the limited opportunities that they had hoped to escape.

Second, Sowell's data, while impressive in their range and depth, are necessarily limited to the six ethnic and national groups

36. For a crude taxonomy of restrictionist attitudes, including xenophobia, see Peter H. Schuck, *The Treatment of Aliens in the United States*, in *PATHS TO INCLUSION: THE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES AND GERMANY* (Peter H. Schuck & Rainer Munz eds., forthcoming 1997). For another account of xenophobia, see Gerald L. Neuman, *Aliens as Outlaws: Government Services, Proposition 187, and the Structure of Equal Protection Doctrine*, 42 *UCLA L. REV.* 1425 (1995).

37. That discrimination often also redounds, with a just perversity, to the perpetrators' disadvantage by depriving them of the benefits of the immigrants' skills provides but cold comfort to the victims.

38. See *supra* note 29.

that he describes. Although their diasporas were quite large (especially the Chinese and Indians), they do not begin to include all of the great migrations in recent history. The representativeness of his data, then, remains uncertain. They exclude, for example, the outflows from the Arabian peninsula, many Asian migrants, groups from the Mahgreb and sub-Saharan Africa, those from eastern Europe (other than the primary migration of Jews and the secondary migration of Germans), and the immense flows north from the Caribbean and South and Central America. Some of the groups that Sowell canvasses have been more successful than others; so too have some of the groups that he does not include.³⁹

Third and most important, the diverse immigration experiences *within* Sowell's six groups cast considerable doubt on the adequacy of his cultural explanation for group successes abroad. As noted earlier, he attributes these differences in economic performance largely to the *premigration* variations in local cultures, habits, skills, economic opportunities, and physical resources that divided each group in its country (or in the case of Jews, countries) of origin. To be sure, he does mention some of the *postmigration* conditions — economic geography, local attitudes toward migrants, the availability of market niches, demographic pressures for intermarriage, and so on — that greeted each diaspora's subgroups as they settled in different destination communities and countries. He maintains that these conditions, together with the traditions and values the group's members carried with them, shaped their experiences in their new homelands. But if these conditions contributed to their success in the destination countries as well, then it was not the group's *premigration* culture (as Sowell would have it) that explains their success but rather some unspecified, perhaps indeterminate, combination of pre- and postmigration factors.

It seems almost self-evident that any persuasive theory purporting to explain differential success among immigrant groups would have to take account of such a combination of pre- and postmigration factors. After all, how else are we to explain the fact that immigrant groups that have succeeded in the United States and Canada have fared relatively poorly in some of their other destination countries? A leading migration scholar, Myron Weiner, makes the point cogently:

Second-generation Arabs and Turks appear to be doing better in the United States than they are in France and Germany. Culture in these cases is presumably the same, yet the outcomes differ. The ease with which citizenship is acquired, the acceptance of cultural and religious

39. The same mixed picture was provided by the most widely read earlier work comparing the progress of different immigrant groups in the United States. See NATHAN GLAZER & DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN, *BEYOND THE MELTING POT: THE NEGROES, PUERTO RICANS, JEWS, ITALIANS, AND IRISH OF NEW YORK CITY* (1970).

diversity by the host population, and educational opportunities may be factors in explaining the differences.⁴⁰

In short, an immigrant group's performance may be powerfully shaped by its values, habits, and skills, but those factors are inevitably mediated by more external, less controllable factors such as legal and political institutions and the attitudes and behavior of inhabitants in the destination country.

Sowell would surely not deny the importance of these external factors. After all, if a group's culture is powerfully influenced by the geophysical and institutional conditions in its country of origin, as he insists, then it can hardly be doubted that the same kinds of factors would influence the group's success in the destination country. Nevertheless, Sowell makes a problematic choice in his selective theoretical account: he emphasizes group culture as the crucial intervening variable between those conditions in the country of origin and the group's performance in the destination country, but then fails to incorporate the destination country's institutional and attitudinal variables into his causal theory. He wants to insist on the explanatory power of a single factor — albeit one, as we saw, that is diffusely defined — that social scientists (not to speak of more careless commentators) too often neglect. By doing so, however, he forgoes the opportunity to incorporate other factors into his theory — factors that would produce a less striking and original⁴¹ but more comprehensive and ultimately persuasive account of immigrants' diverse experiences.

Invidious discrimination, as Sowell painstakingly demonstrates, is an important part of those experiences in almost all cases. Even when the host government welcomed immigrants, as in the case of Czarist Russia and the Volga Germans, the populace tended to receive them with hostility and recrimination.⁴² The great puzzle is to understand why this discrimination did not in the end defeat the efforts of the newcomers to prosper and assimilate. An answer might be of great value to contemporary immigrant groups and ethnic minorities that must devise strategies for dealing with the continuing animus that their presence arouses in almost all societies.

40. Myron Weiner, *Nations Without Borders: The Gifts of Folk Gone Abroad*, 75 FOREIGN AFF. 128, 131-32 (1996) (reviewing MIGRATIONS AND CULTURES: A WORLD VIEW).

41. Originality, of course, is a matter of degree. Sowell's emphasis on the distinctive characters and cultures of groups, on the geophysical origins of these differences, and on their behavioral effects has many illustrious antecedents. See 1 & 2 BARON DE MONTESQUIEU, *THE SPIRIT OF LAWS* (Special Edition 1984); BERNARD BAILYN, *THE PEOPLING OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA: AN INTRODUCTION* (1986); THOMAS JEFFERSON, *NOTES ON THE STATE OF VIRGINIA* (1995).

42. See *supra* note 17.

IMMIGRANTS IN POLITICS AND MARKETS

Sowell offers a solution, and it is one that will seem counter-intuitive, perhaps even subversive, to many readers. I also suspect that it will particularly offend those who actively advocate the group interests of immigrants and minorities in the public domain. Sowell believes that immigrants' interests are best advanced not through political action but through successful participation in the market. Paradoxically, discrimination can promote economically functional behavior by immigrants. Because they are excluded by the majority from ethnic preferences in certain politicized sectors of the economy, they may redouble their efforts to acquire education and economic skills that will make such preferences unnecessary. They may also gravitate to other less politicized sectors where they face reduced competition and can accumulate enduring advantages.⁴³ Deprived of opportunities in the extractive or manufacturing industries or as corporate employees, they may gain expertise in the middleman functions so vital to modern economies and in the professions where potentially lucrative self-employment and independence beckon.⁴⁴ Thrown back by discrimination on their own resources, they may rely upon family members and community ties which can entail economic efficiencies.

Sowell explains the dramatic decline in virulent anti-Japanese discrimination thus: "behavior and performance are more effective ways of changing other people's minds than moral crusades or emotional denunciations" (p. 139). But the social consequences of a group's success are more convoluted and remorselessly perverse than this pollyannish lesson suggests. Indeed, as Sowell shows elsewhere in this book and as others have also shown, a group's economic success has often heightened, rather than reduced, such hostility.⁴⁵ Indeed, he himself reports that the Chinese have aroused more hostility than other immigrant and minority groups that are much more prosperous than the Chinese (p. 228), that Jewish achievements have magnified anti-Semitism everywhere, indeed particularly "in those societies most desperately in need of the special skills of Jews" (p. 307), and that the economic success of the Tamils in Ceylon has engendered bitter hostility and discrimination by the native Sinhalese (p. 354). Surely then the larger truth, which Sowell's evidence supports but his tendentiousness obscures, is that both responses to immigrant success, admiration and animus, can

43. This has been the experience of the Chinese in Malaysia, for example. See p. 197. On the other hand, many Chinese entrepreneurs have evaded these preference restrictions by employing Malay fronts in so-called "Ali-Baba" enterprises. P. 196.

44. See discussion of middleman functions, *supra* note 7 and accompanying text.

45. See, e.g., Amy L. Chua, *The Privatization-Nationalization Cycle: The Link Between Markets and Ethnicity in Developing Countries*, 95 COLUM. L. REV. 223, *passim* (1995).

coexist; indeed, they can and do coexist at the same time, in the same society, even in the same individual.⁴⁶

As a well-known neo-conservative economist, Sowell's preference for market-based solutions to social problems hardly comes as a shock. Even so, the historical evidence that he adduces on the relationship between immigrant groups' economic progress in the destination countries and their lack of involvement in the politics of those countries is provocative. He reports that in destination country after destination country, economic assimilation of the group *precedes* its acquisition of political influence, not the other way around. The most prosperous immigrant groups, he states, have not advanced themselves through ethnic group politics; their political activity has occurred *after* they gained economic power.⁴⁷

An aversion to politics in the destination countries would not be surprising. After all, these groups originated in societies governed by nonparticipatory or repressive regimes; hence they bore with them no tradition of organized pluralistic politics even when they migrated to relatively participatory societies. Moreover, none of these groups, with the exception of the Chinese in Malaysia, constituted a large enough fraction of their new society for ethnic group solidarity to seem like a viable strategy for political success.⁴⁸ Indeed, group-based political action would carry grave risks of bitter retaliation by the dominant ethnic groups.⁴⁹ Finally, it was often the public sector that most actively excluded immigrant groups, as South Africa did with respect to Indians (pp. 330-31).

Where members of immigrant groups have played prominent or leadership roles in politics — for example, Germans and Italians in the United States, Jews in Australia, and Japanese in Peru — they have almost always done so, Sowell claims, as otherwise-established, economically independent individuals rather than as

46. Sowell reports that “[t]he Chinese in Indonesia have long been considered the most assimilated Chinese community in Southeast Asia but this has not prevented them from being also the most repeatedly and violently attacked.” P. 205. He also notes that despite the economic success of the Chinese in Indochina, an estimated 70% of the one million refugees who left Vietnam in the late 1970s were Chinese, and half of Kampuchea's Chinese population of 400,000 were killed during this period. Pp. 212-13.

47. Sowell ascribes this pattern to the immigrant Germans in the United States and in Australia, pp. 79, 97, the Japanese in Canada and Peru, pp. 124-25, 128, 137, the Italians in Argentina and elsewhere, p. 155, and the Jews and the Chinese almost everywhere, p. 218. On the other hand, some of his data seem inconsistent with this pattern. He notes, for example, that the overseas Chinese were disproportionately active in union and Communist movements in Southeast Asia and that the same was famously true of Jewish immigrants. P. 190. He also traces Indian political activism in Kenya. Pp. 325-26.

48. Even in New York City at the height of their migration there, the Italians constituted only 7.4% of the population. P. 161.

49. Chinese immigrants have experienced such recrimination throughout southeast Asia. Pp. 181-213. Indians suffered at the hands of independence movements both in Africa, where they had supported such movements, p. 326, and in Ceylon, where they had remained aloof from politics, pp. 356-58.

ethnic group activists or representatives.⁵⁰ Many immigrants, of course, participated in political organizations in which ethnic solidarity was viewed as an important electoral asset, as in the “machine” organizations that dominated the governments of some American cities. Typically, however, these ethnic groups joined such organizations as elements of larger, multiethnic and trans-ethnic coalitions in which the dominant incentives for action were individual material benefits, not group-oriented programmatic goals and public goods. Moreover, as Sowell and others have argued, those groups, such as the Irish in the United States, that managed to gain political patronage and public sector jobs through such organizations paid a high price for their political success, though one not noticed at the time. They were slower to achieve market power, economic independence, and social assimilation than those groups that eschewed politics for private sector rewards by focusing their energies on the cultivation of entrepreneurial, market-oriented skills.⁵¹

Again, this tradeoff is not surprising. All individuals, whether native born or immigrants, must make an ensemble of strategic decisions about how they will invest their scarce resources. Compared with the native born, immigrants have ordinarily been more constrained in their choices because they traditionally entered their new society with more limited resources.⁵² Their most important choice, like that of all individuals, is whether to invest in present and near-term rewards or instead to sacrifice those rewards in the hope of longer-term returns. This choice in turn leads to other, more specific ones — between investing in themselves or in their families; between immediate employment or education; between consumption and saving; between cultural insularity or assimilation; between learning the new language rapidly or more slowly; between

50. Sowell points out, for example, that Fiorello LaGuardia, the popular mayor of New York City for more than a decade, failed to carry the Italian vote in his 1941 re-election campaign against an Irish opponent. P. 166. This single example, of course, hardly establishes Sowell's claim; indeed, many contrary cases in which ethnic solidarity at the polls was decisive could readily be cited. See, e.g., DONALD L. HOROWITZ, *ETHNIC GROUPS IN CONFLICT passim* (1985).

51. Pp. 232-33. To support this claim, Sowell points to the Chinese experience: in countries (like Indonesia) where this generally apolitical group was more politically active, it did not seem to do better. Pp. 205-06. Without more, however, this assertion is hardly persuasive, as it does not consider the possibility that the Chinese, absent their political action, would have done even worse. Still, there is much to be said for Sowell's general claim, and other commentators have concurred in it. See BORJAS, *supra* note 28; GLAZER & MOYNIHAN, *supra* note 39.

52. I say “traditionally” because the immigration policies adopted by those relatively few destination countries that now accept immigrants on a normal flow basis have increasingly tended to require immigrants to possess levels of education, occupational skill, language, or wealth that may already rival or exceed those of the native-born population. At the very least, these requirements will enable new immigrants to achieve parity within a relatively short time. See SCHOENI ET AL., *supra* note 10.

pursuing individual goals or group goals; between public sector and private sector occupations. In reality, of course, such choices are not always quite as stark as I have presented them; for example, immigrants may work full time *and* go to school, and they may retain their cultures of origin while *also* seeking to learn new folkways. Inevitably, however, their tradeoffs are difficult and poignant. They must choose, and their choices, on average, will have far-reaching consequences for them and their families. The aggregate of such choices will significantly affect the future of their group and of their new society.

IMMIGRANT ASSIMILATION

Sowell's evidence strongly suggests that the most economically successful immigrant groups have chosen to devote their energies and resources primarily to the pursuit of relatively future-oriented, family-oriented, market-oriented, assimilationist, apolitical, and individualistic strategies of economic and social advancement.

Of these strategies, assimilation seems the most elusive; its definition is ambiguous and its preconditions are both temporally and behaviorally uncertain.⁵³ The terms of trade between the immigrant's retention of his traditional culture (even as he transforms it under the influence of the destination society) and his induction into, and acceptance by, the new are under constant negotiation.⁵⁴ Even the effects of assimilation on group survival are not clear cut; as Sowell reminds us, the degree of Jewish assimilation had little effect on their ultimate fate during the Holocaust; they were more fully integrated into German and Polish society than elsewhere in Europe, yet they suffered annihilating losses there as well as in countries like the Soviet Union where they were less assimilated (pp. 267-70).

Even for the stunningly successful groups that Sowell presents, for example, the *pace* of assimilation has varied among and within different immigrant groups over time and place according to demographic factors (for example, sex ratio) that affect intermarriage rates, geophysical and cultural insularity, popular hostility, and other conditions. Moreover, some behaviors that can retard assimilation in the short run may foster it in the longer term. Sowell notes, for example, that the Japanese in Brazil, like other upwardly mobile but slow-to-assimilate groups, advanced largely through

53. A vast literature exists on the subject. The classic study in the U.S. context is MILTON M. GORDON, *ASSIMILATION IN AMERICAN LIFE* (1964). For recent analyses of the subject in the U.S. and German contexts, see *PATHS TO INCLUSION*, *supra* note 36.

54. These creative and destructive tensions are, of course, the sources of great literary and artistic creations in every immigrant society.

self-employment.⁵⁵ George Borjas, a labor economist who specializes in immigration, argues that the traditional immigrants' strategy of exploiting ethnic market niches such as specialized restaurants and retailing, a strategy that is usually viewed as promoting economic skills, entrepreneurship, and assimilation, has its darker side. Such a strategy, he suggests, may consign immigrants to their ethnically defined enclaves, making it more difficult for them to break out and compete in larger, more cosmopolitan markets in which scale economies and new products, services, and skills are rewarded (p. 137). On the other hand, sociologists of immigration like Alejandro Portes emphasize that communal insularity, while delaying full assimilation, may nevertheless create a vital breathing space for the immigrants' children, the crucial second generation. This allows these children to learn the language and essential norms of mainstream society while at the same time rejecting, under the intense cultural tutelage of their immigrant parents, the more destructive, adversarial native subcultures that surround and threaten to seduce them.⁵⁶

Sowell's theory and data cannot resolve these somewhat competing claims about assimilation any more than they can rigorously differentiate the interrelated roles of immigrant values and skills, geophysical and demographic factors, and destination country institutions and receptiveness in shaping the fates of immigrant groups. But in underscoring both the primacy of individual economic achievement in the social progress of groups and the relative insignificance of ethnic politics to that progress, he turns on its head much of the conventional wisdom among ethnic group leaders in the United States and elsewhere. In this respect, Sowell heightens the relevance of the work of social scientists — work that he does not cite — who are skeptical about the tenor and effectiveness of modern ethnic politics, especially in the United States. In contrast to those who view ethnic and pan-ethnic appeals as providing a solid grounding for the advancement of immigrants' interests,⁵⁷ these skeptics argue that contemporary minority group politics tends to emphasize the rhetoric of protest, symbolism, and separatism at the cost of strong political organization, accountable leadership, broad coalition building, sound policies, and real economic

55. See BORJAS, *supra* note 28, at 169-76.

56. See Alejandro Portes, *Children of Immigrants: Segmented Assimilation and Its Determinants*, in *THE ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY OF IMMIGRATION: ESSAYS ON NETWORKS, ETHNICITY, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP* 248, 250-51 (Alejandro Portes ed., 1995).

57. See, e.g., YEN LE ESPIRITU, *ASIAN AMERICAN PANETHNICITY: BRIDGING INSTITUTIONS AND IDENTITIES* (1992); BILL ONG HING, *MAKING AND REMAKING ASIAN AMERICA THROUGH IMMIGRATION POLICY 1850-1990* (1993).

gains.⁵⁸ In their view — and in Sowell's — such a politics constitutes a model for acceptance that upwardly mobile immigrants should not emulate. At best, in this view, it distracts them from their vital need to acquire individual economic skills, construct durable communities, and adopt social identities and linkages firmly anchored in the American mainstream. At worst, it encourages them to adopt ideological styles and agendas that can help to generate the kind of harsh, backlash politics that in 1996 produced the most xenophobic spate of legislation in more than four decades.⁵⁹

THE FUTURE OF IMMIGRATION POLICY

Sowell says little about the present and future of immigration policy, yet his subject — the migration of cultures — is so central to the immigration debate that he cannot help but offer some general advice. Migrating cultures compete with those that they encounter in their diasporas, and the competition proceeds at many levels — economic, military, religious, linguistic, technological, ideological, aesthetic, normative, physiological, and even bacteriological. Often, the immigrants demand or evoke responses from the dominant culture of the receiving country. In some cases — he mentions affirmative action and multicultural policies in the United States, Canada, and Australia — the demands for change may come less from the immigrants than from the natives, and they may increase the costs of absorbing immigrants, including the level of natives' hostility (p. 387).

After noting that immigration has both positive and negative consequences for the receiving country depending on the cultures that the immigrants carry with them, Sowell makes two acute, interesting observations. First, "domestic ideological agendas may make it impossible to be selective in admitting immigrants from different nations, leaving as alternatives only loss of control of the borders or restrictive policies toward immigrants in general" (p. 388). This seems a fair characterization of the way in which Congress has perceived the politics of immigration in the United States and explains much of the harshness of the 1996 legislation.⁶⁰ Second, after noting that formal schooling and desirable human capital are not the same, he states that "the transportation of bodies and the dissemi-

58. See, e.g., PETER SKERRY, *MEXICAN-AMERICANS: THE AMBIVALENT MINORITY* (1993); JAMES Q. WILSON, *NEGRO POLITICS* (1960).

59. See the immigration provisions of the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009; the Anti-Terrorist and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-132, 110 Stat. 1215; and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-103, 110 Stat. 55.

60. See *supra* note 59 and accompanying text.

nation of human capital have become increasingly separable operations, so that the historic role of immigration in advancing nations need not apply to its future role. . . . Neither technological nor managerial human capital requires mass immigration for its diffusion" (pp. 389-90). Whether other forms of human capital such as "can-do" optimism and energy, a strong work ethic, future orientation, religious piety, traditional family values, and faith in education and in America do in fact require — and justify — continued immigration he does not say. It remains, however, a crucial question for American public debate.

The future of American immigration policy, and indeed the future course of American society more generally, may well depend on which prescription for immigrant progress — Sowell's individualistic, apolitical, market-oriented strategy of human and social capital accumulation, or the politics of ethnic protest advocated by many minority group leaders — gains the allegiance of the large number of recently arrived and future immigrants. If past is prologue, the vast majority of them will continue to follow Sowell's preferred path to full membership in American society. In that process, they will — often with some sense of loss — gradually attenuate, transform, and shed their ethnic group identities.

But past is not always prologue. Indeed, it is not even past; instead, it survives to help shape the future. The experiences of recent immigrants to the United States are almost certainly more diverse than at any other time in American history, if only because our immigration stream is now more diverse than ever before in national origins, linguistic, racial, cultural, and relative educational and skill-level terms. This kaleidoscopic range of experiences and perspectives, which have served us well in the past, provides much reason for optimism about immigration; it also gives some ground for fresh concern.⁶¹ Only time will tell whether the optimism or the concerns are borne out. In the meanwhile, the perennially stirring, compelling drama of individual and cultural migration continues.

61. For a recent effort to capture this mixed picture, see Peter H. Schuck, *Alien Rumination*, 105 *YALE L.J.* 1963 (1996) (reviewing PETER BRIMELOW, *ALIEN NATION* (1995)).