

CHAPTER 1

STRANGERS NO MORE

The Challenges of Integration

Immigration is transforming Western Europe and North America. The origins of this massive inflow date back to the middle of the twentieth century, a period of recovery and expansion after the devastations of worldwide economic depression and war. The numbers are astounding. The United States has the largest foreign-born population of any country in the world, with around forty million immigrants (as of 2012), while the combined member states of the European Union are home to approximately 50 million people who have moved across borders and are living outside the country of their birth. In the United States, immigrants and their children account for nearly a quarter of the population, and the figure is even higher in Canada; in the largest Western European countries, it is generally about a fifth.

If the numbers are impressive, their implications are even more remarkable. Western Europe, on one side of the Atlantic, and the United States and Canada, on the other, all have to deal with incorporating millions of immigrants whose cultures, languages, religions, and racial backgrounds often differ starkly from those of most long-established residents. In Europe, societies that previously thought of themselves as homogeneous have seen the rise of ethnic, religious, and racial diversity. In Canada and the United States, immigration has long been part of the national story, but immigrants now hail from new places and are seen, in racial and ethnic terms, as more different than ever before.

How European and North American societies are to meet the challenges of this new diversity is one of the key issues of the twenty-first century. A central question is how to integrate immigrants and their children so that they become full members of the societies where they now live. Full membership means having the same educational and work opportunities as long-term native-born citizens, and the same chances to better their own and their children's lot. It also means having a sense of dignity and belonging that comes with acceptance

and inclusion in a broad range of societal institutions. The struggle for inclusion is likely to become ever more intense in the coming decades in the context of shifting demographics in Europe and North America. There is every sign that there will be a continued demand for immigration, creating inflows of new arrivals in the years ahead, and, at the same time, young people of immigrant origin will constitute a larger and larger share of young adults.

The challenges of integration are complicated by the widespread resistance of natives to immigrants and their children. There are anxieties about whether the newcomers will fit in and fears that they will undermine the basic foundations of established ways of life. These concerns are prominent in popular writings and the media. They are evident in opinion polls. They feature in some academic writings. And they have been voiced and exploited by politicians.

A widely acclaimed 2009 book by journalist Christopher Caldwell, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, argues that immigration there is exacting a “steep price in freedom” and bringing “disorder, penury, and crime.” Princeton Islamic scholar Bernard Lewis has said that by the end of this century Europe will be “part of the Arab West, the Maghreb.” On the other side of the Atlantic, massive waves of Hispanic immigration, according to the late Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington, are eroding America’s national identity, and, if continued, will turn the United States into a country of two languages, two cultures, and two peoples without a shared historic cultural core. In the American media, Mexican immigrants and their children are often portrayed as unwilling to integrate—“unassimilable separatists”—and as a threat to existing institutions.¹

National opinion polls reveal a high level of concern. About half of Americans and Europeans polled in a 2011 survey said that immigration is more of a problem than an opportunity.² Anxieties about newcomers’ ability to integrate have spilled over into the political sphere as well. In Europe, anti-immigrant rhetoric is a staple of right-wing politicians and political parties. In 2014, France’s xenophobic National Front came in ahead of all the country’s other parties in the European Parliament elections with a quarter of the vote. The Netherlands’ Geert Wilders, who has called for an end to Muslim immigration and the banning of the Koran, was voted the second most popular politician in his country in two national polls in 2009; and his Party for Freedom topped the polls four years later. In the United States, nativistic fears have been pivotal in many state and local elections, especially in places like Arizona, at or near the border with Mexico.

This book gets behind the rhetoric, exaggerations, and fear-mongering to examine what is really happening and why. The core issue is the integration of immigrants and their children. We approach this issue through a comparative—transatlantic—perspective.

As one might expect, the comparison reveals parallels as well as differences in how immigrants and their children are faring in Europe and North America

and in the opportunities provided within different institutional arenas. But it does more than this. The value of comparing societies is that it enables us to spot where integration seems to be proceeding successfully and where it is not. Systematic comparison is essential, we believe, if lessons are to be drawn from the experience with immigration in diverse societies. Indeed, comparison lends itself to exploring ideas about borrowings, or features of institutions in one or more societies that appear worthy of emulation in another.

Comparisons cast differences into sharper relief; in particular, they bring out the distinctive ways that societies meet similar challenges of integration and shed light on unexpected outcomes. As a consequence, they give us new perspectives on each country and can offer new insights into each country's own internal dynamics. To paraphrase sociologist Reinhard Bendix, a comparative lens increases the visibility of processes and structures in one society by highlighting similarities and differences with another. It can reveal features that, because they are more or less "constant" within a society, like its political system, might otherwise be ignored or taken for granted. A comparative approach, as historian George Fredrickson observes, thereby enlarges our understanding of the institutions and processes being compared.³

Comparing the European and North American immigrant experiences highlights an array of historically rooted and durable social, political, and economic structures and institutions—from educational and political systems to legal frameworks and religious arrangements—that create barriers, as well as possible bridges, to integration for immigrants and their descendants in different societies. It points, as well, to the impact of other factors, including characteristics of the immigrant flows to each country, the nature of specific government policies, and a range of current social and economic trends. While there are definite transatlantic contrasts, no simple and consistent North America-Europe divide emerges; national differences within Europe and within North America matter. At the same time, there are some remarkable similarities among countries with very different institutional structures and immigration histories. To put it another way, there are no clear-cut winners or losers: each society fails and succeeds in different ways. Our goal is to identify the factors that impede or facilitate integration and to understand how they operate—and why—in distinctive national contexts.

Our comparison encompasses six key countries. On the North American side, one is the United States. This is hardly surprising given its size and importance as an immigration society and that we are U.S.-based sociologists who have spent much of our careers exploring immigration's impact there. We also include Canada, which, like the United States, is a classic settler society, but with significant contrasts, including different integration and admissions policies. Canada is often touted as a model of successful integration so that adding it to the mix helps to better understand the dynamics of immigrant inclusion and evaluate claims about immigrant integration there.

In Western Europe, the countries in our study are Britain, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. All four have received huge numbers of immigrants since the end of World War II. Indeed, taken together, they are home to half of the European Union's foreign born. The four countries represent a range of institutional approaches to immigration, and a substantial literature is available about immigrants and their children in each of them. An added advantage is that one of us has done research on immigrants and their children in France and Germany, the other has written about immigration in Britain and the Netherlands.⁴

In each country, our focus is mainly on groups we describe as "low status," such as Mexicans in the United States, North Africans in France, and Turks in Germany. The immigration flows to most countries, of course, are diverse and include groups with considerable human capital, whose members often take well-paid and prestigious positions, for example, in medicine and engineering. (One of every three immigrants to the United States is university educated; and a number of professions, such as those in science and engineering, are disproportionately staffed by these immigrants, who come mostly from Asia.⁵) But many immigrant groups are dominated by individuals arriving with low levels of education, who typically end up in poorly paid, sometimes off-the-books jobs that are frequently dirty and sometimes dangerous and demeaning. These immigrants are also stigmatized because of their ethnicity or race; they stand out because they look different in the eyes of the native majority and because they have different cultural backgrounds and, in some cases, religions. Members of low-status groups face the greatest barriers to integration in both the immigrant and the second generations. Our focus on these groups takes in large portions of the immigrant-origin populations in all the countries we study except for Canada, whose entry policies have been unusually selective. In Canada, the best approximation we can find are the groups labeled "visible-minority" immigrants, a term used there to refer to nonwhites, mostly from Asia and many well educated.

We explore the dynamics of integration in multiple ways. Our analysis runs the gamut from understanding the progress of those with immigration backgrounds in terms of educational attainment and political office to the impact and extent of residential segregation and growing economic inequality. We investigate the role of national identities and intermarriage as well as the barriers based on race and religion. This examination to a large degree draws upon a synthesis of the existing research literature, but it also incorporates our own analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data.

WHAT IS INTEGRATION?

Integration lies at the heart of our analysis. It is therefore important to clarify what we mean by the concept as well as to spell out some of our basic assump-

tions about the dynamics of change among immigrants and their children. “Integration,” as we understand it, refers to the processes that increase the opportunities of immigrants and their descendants to obtain the valued “stuff” of a society, as well as social acceptance, through participation in major institutions such as the educational and political system and the labor and housing markets. Full integration implies parity of life chances with members of the native majority group and being recognized as a legitimate part of the national community. (By “native majority” we mean, in North America, later-generation Americans or Canadians of European descent and, in European countries, those with long-established ancestry; unless otherwise indicated, we use the term “native” to refer to those born in a country to parents who were also born there, while the phrase “immigrant origin,” includes both immigrants and their descendants.)

For members of low-status immigrant groups, integration processes over time—often, across generations—tend to improve their economic, social, and political situations. The integration concept also applies to groups in which many arrive with higher status than is average for the native majority; it has to do with their ability to gain positions in key institutional sectors commensurate with their qualifications and talents so that, for example, an immigrant surgeon is not relegated to a low-level healthcare position and her professional abilities are acknowledged by colleagues, staff, and patients.

Integration occurs in relation to a “mainstream” society. The mainstream can be thought of as encompassing those social and cultural spaces where the native majority feels “at home” or, in other words, where its presence is taken for granted and seen as unproblematic. The mainstream includes public institutions such as schools and government, more informal social settings such as neighborhoods inhabited in large numbers by the native majority, and accepted ways of behaving, which, needless to say, typically differ to some extent among different native subgroups (as defined, for example, by social class or region). While the native majority is found in mainstream settings as a matter of definition, these need not be exclusive in ethnic and racial terms; members of other groups, such as Muslim or Latin American immigrants and their children, may enter them and be accepted. The terms under which this can happen determine the ease or difficulty of integration.

Moving to and settling in Europe or North America inevitably involves change on the part of immigrants as they adjust to life there, and this is especially so when they come from societies with customs, values, and institutions that differ markedly from those in the new country. At the most basic, immigrants typically learn to eat different foods than they are used to and to speak new languages. The children who grow up in immigrant homes are affected more profoundly by the culture and institutions around them than the immigrants themselves, who arrived as adults and spent their formative years steeped in home-country ways. The children, learning from their peers in

school or on the street and from the mass media, acquire tastes and knowledge that make them quite different from their immigrant parents. Usually, the children have at least as much in common with their native majority age-mates as they do with their own parents, as they listen to popular music, for example, and adopt the latest fashion styles. As they mature, they may begin to distance themselves in other ways from immigrants, taking jobs in the mainstream labor market that put them in a world beyond their parents' ken. They usually go much further in school than their parents, at least when the parents are low-wage immigrants from such regions of the world as Latin America or Africa.

The changes may not all be beneficial or benign; some can have negative repercussions for immigrants and their children. Low-status immigrants in Europe and North America are commonly confined to the bottom rungs of the job ladder. Too often, they confront racial or ethnic prejudice and discrimination from members of the native majority. So may their children who, owing to disparate treatment in schools and the labor market, sometimes drop out of school or occasionally turn to illicit activities; either may be an early step on a pathway to permanent disadvantage. When members of a particular group are stigmatized on the basis of race and ethnicity and disadvantaged in educational and employment opportunities—on a large scale—these are signs of its emergence as an ethnoracial minority or, as in the United States, of possible assimilation into an existing minority population.⁶

Changes do not take place in only one direction. The presence of immigrants and the second generation alters the communities in which they live and, in some ways, the larger society as well. An obvious form of impact is on food, as immigrant cuisines, often modified for European or North American tastes, enrich the offerings in the new society. The Turkish *döner kebab* has become the most popular fast food in Germany, and more salsa than ketchup is sold in the United States. But the impact can be much deeper as new attitudes and values seep into the mainstream culture.⁷ If we look back in time in the United States, for example, the educational advance of Jews in the mid-twentieth century had a huge impact on many elite universities, which previously defined themselves as Christian institutions and even had Protestant denominational affiliations. The new intellectual culture forged by Jews and liberal Protestants gradually turned universities into temples of “established nonbelief,” to use historian George Marsden’s phrase, and spread beyond them to help forge a civic culture of religious tolerance.⁸

In talking about these sorts of changes, the words, and to some extent, the concepts have shifted over time and still differ between the United States and the other countries we are considering. In the past, “assimilation” was the central idea, promoted by theorizing about the European immigrant-group experience in the United States. This idea has made a comeback there as a way to

think about immigration-related changes, refurbished by purging the concept of its past, unsavory ethnocentric associations and by bringing it up to date for the twenty-first century.⁹ In Canada and in most of Western Europe, “integration” has become the main way to talk about immigrant-group inclusion. Its adoption reflects in many quarters an opposition to the “assimilation” concept and its presumed assumption (false, in our view) of one-way cultural change.

How different are these ideas really? The theorizing about assimilation was inspired by the U.S. experience with immigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It especially addresses the processes by which members of originally low-status and/or ethnoracially excluded groups, such as southern Italians and Russian Jews at that time, were able to enter the societal mainstream and attain life chances on a par with those of members of the dominant group. Assimilation theory posits that in general there is a relationship between cultural and social assimilation, on the one hand, and drawing close to the mainstream and the life chances of the native majority, on the other. In its latest version, though, it does not presume there is a specific sequence among these dimensions. Rather, there is typically a mutual interaction, as individuals and families are motivated to undertake various forms of assimilation by the attraction of greater opportunities in the mainstream; and achieving social mobility through mainstream institutions often entails constraints that accelerate some forms of assimilation (in language and in speech patterns, for example). Because assimilation envisions that majority and minority group differences may attenuate over time, it also includes the possibility that the social distinctions involved—or in other terms, the boundaries that separate groups—may weaken, eventually reaching the point where they hold little relevance for the everyday life of most “group” members.¹⁰

The integration concept, by comparison, is agnostic about cultural and social change. Many scholars who use the term “integration” reject the relevance of the cultural and social dimensions of assimilation and view the assimilation concept as questioning or devaluing the autonomy of immigrant families to decide on important sociocultural aspects of their lives. Dutch researchers Hans Vermeulen and Rinus Penninx observe that the term “integration” was introduced into the discourse of several European countries in order to replace assimilation and “to indicate a greater degree of tolerance and respect for ethnocultural differences.”¹¹

Assimilation, it must be pointed out, does not necessarily produce cultural homogeneity. The mainstream can expand to take in elements of immigrant-group cultures, and so encompass cultural difference, at least to some degree. There is perhaps no better example than the inclusion of immigrant religions in the mid-twentieth-century United States, an example that is all the more pertinent because religion is seen as the foundation of salient immigrant/native divisions in Western Europe today. In the early twentieth century, when Jewish

and Catholic immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were landing in American ports in unprecedented numbers, the U.S. mainstream was defined as “Christian,” a term opposed to Roman Catholicism as well as non-Christian religions. Non-Protestants were seen as outsiders, and the boundary that excluded them was defended by such actions as restrictions on the admission of Jews to elite universities, where privilege was minted, and by the mass mobilization of white Protestants to defeat the Catholic presidential candidate, Al Smith, in the election of 1928.¹² Yet, in the end, the mainstream expanded and was redefined as “Judeo-Christian,” an expansion that accompanied post-World War II mass assimilation. To be sure, the struggle for inclusion was not a seamless process, but a product of contestation and conflict—even as late as 1960, the campaign of John F. Kennedy for president, the watershed event for Catholic inclusion, brought forth significant Protestant opposition. Moreover, during the twentieth century Judaism and Catholicism in the United States underwent changes that made them resemble American Protestant models more. But Jews and Catholics did not become carbon copies of Protestants. The crucial point is that the once salient boundaries separating them from Protestants faded while, at the same time, they retained distinctive religious identities, beliefs, and practices. The end result was the incorporation of the children and grandchildren of Irish and southern and eastern European immigrants into a “remade” American mainstream.

What is apparent is that there is considerable overlap between the assimilation and integration concepts, and both apply to our major concern in this book: the extent to which immigrants, and especially their children, are able to participate in key mainstream institutions in ways that position them to advance socially and materially. “Parity” with members of the native majority is too strong a standard to use given the historic recency of the large immigration streams coming to Western Europe, the United States, and Canada. An additional issue in assessing the social and economic position of immigrant minority groups is that large proportions of adult members are first-generation immigrants, and the second generation is still concentrated in youthful ages. The relevant question is whether specific groups such as North Africans in France or Mexicans in the United States appear to be blocked from social and economic advancement or, alternatively, seem to be on a promising trajectory.

While either concept might be applied to this question, we will speak mainly of “integration.” We choose this word in recognition of its greater acceptability on the international scene; we want to avoid the impression that an analysis by two Americans is conducted solely from a U.S. perspective and will inevitably vindicate a U.S. model of incorporating immigrant groups (it will not). At the same time, we will take up some topics that are generally considered under the heading of “assimilation”—intermarriage, for example, as an indicator of weakening boundaries and decreasing differences between social groups. That concept rightly applies in those cases.

GRAND NARRATIVES AND SCHOLARLY CONTROVERSIES

In examining the integration of immigrants and their children, our analysis raises questions about a number of “grand narratives” or overarching ideas, which attempt to provide all-encompassing explanations for cross-national differences and similarities; these ideas loom large in transatlantic comparisons and, in some cases, have been widely assumed true by the general public.

The ideas are not always explicit about the mechanisms that are presumed to foster integration. But beneath the surface, two sorts of general mechanisms can be discerned: those that enhance the access of immigrants and their children to valuable social resources, such as income or education, and promote greater equality between immigrant and native groups; and those that enlarge the circle of membership in the national community, helping immigrants and the second generation to avoid marginalization as “them,” in opposition to “us” of the majority group. The mix between these two sorts of mechanisms varies in the different narratives, though not always in an obvious or clear way.

National Models One grand narrative that is widely influential concerns models, ideologies, or public philosophies of immigrant integration that are rooted in national cultural and historical traditions. The emergence of national models in the literature on immigration can be traced back to scholarly accounts in the 1990s seeking to explain why different European countries developed distinctive integration policies and conceptions of citizenship. Rogers Brubaker’s comparison of French and German citizenship regimes and Adrian Favell’s of the role of national philosophies of integration in shaping policy frameworks in France and Britain provided the groundwork for subsequent analyses of national models and their impact. In France, the emphasis has been on the Republican model and its strongly assimilationist principles; in Canada, on multiculturalism, with its stress on the legal and political accommodation of ethnic diversity; and in Germany, on what is often described as the ethno-cultural conception of nationhood.¹³ Not every one of the six countries we consider fits neatly into such schemes, but in each some key relevant themes can be identified. The United States is sometimes characterized as de facto multiculturalist because it lacks laws and policies that directly promote and shape assimilation and tolerates multiple languages (though their survival times are often short) as well as many other manifestations of cultural origins, although it also sometimes is characterized as assimilationist.¹⁴

One argument is that these national models determine how immigrants become part of their new societies, to a large extent because the models not only shape the willingness of nation-states to acknowledge immigrants as ethnic minorities with distinct needs and cultural rights, but also influence policies and political decisions that have wide-ranging effects. In this light, for example,

German laws for citizenship, which until 2000 denied birthright citizenship to the children born on German soil to most immigrant parents (so-called *jus sanguinis*, based on parental citizenship rather than birthplace), have been seen as a reflection of its ethnocultural model, while the French insistence on assimilation to French culture and discomfort with openly religious practices such as the Islamic headscarf are viewed as a reflection of its paradigmatic approach. Whether labeled a “public philosophy, a policy paradigm . . . or a national cultural idiom,” the concepts “attempt to show how social reality is structured by pre-existing ideas about a nation’s self-understanding, and how such ideas frame at once social interactions, institutional arrangements, [and] policy outcomes.”¹⁵

Among the many questions is whether the assumptions in the scholarly literature about the national models of integration are accurate. There is disagreement, for example, about whether the Dutch actually had a multicultural model in the late twentieth century and if, and how much, the British have moved away from multiculturalism to an emphasis on cultural assimilation to British values.¹⁶ Critiques of the “national model approach” point out as well that national models of integration are not fixed, but change over time, often in quite dramatic ways.

A key issue on both sides of the Atlantic is the relative importance of models of integration as compared to institutional arrangements and structures in explaining cross-national differences in immigrant integration. Indeed, the models’ connections to public policy and social, political, and institutional practices are often limited and contradictory. State-supported programs, for example, may develop in response to on-the-ground political, economic, and social realities that contradict or have nothing to do with the models.¹⁷ Yet in the end, the basic issue is not whether national models or ideologies of integration exist—they do, at the very least in public discourse—but how, and to what degree, they influence the range of opportunities available to immigrant minorities and their ability to participate and feel included in mainstream institutions.

Political Economy Another grand narrative views the nature of a country’s political economy as fundamental. This approach has its origins in typologies analyzing the character and role of different political economy regimes in advanced Western societies, specifically institutional variations in the regulation of the labor market and the provision of social welfare by the state.¹⁸ The typologies developed to distinguish these variations have been elaborated in different ways by different authors, with the classification of Gøsta Esping-Andersen describing social welfare regimes as liberal, corporatist-statist, or social democratic as the most seminal. Drawing on the classification developed by Jonas Pontusson, we employ a simplified variant that divides the countries in our analysis into two groups: the United States, Canada, and Britain as lib-

eral market economies in contrast to the German, French, and Dutch social market economies or social welfare states. In the latter, the economy is more heavily regulated by the state, which in addition provides workers with greater social protection against the vagaries of the labor market in the form of government benefits. To give one example, with respect to the protection of workers against dismissal—reflected in mandated procedures employers must follow and severance pay they must provide—France, Germany, and the Netherlands are clustered at the high end, while Britain, Canada, and the United States anchor the low end, according to OECD rankings.¹⁹

The benefits of social welfare regimes have been widely noted in the social science literature as protecting immigrant families from a fall into poverty and ensuring that they have the financial means to live decent lives; in the liberal market economies, many immigrants are forced to choose bad jobs over unemployment, yet still may not earn enough to lift their families out of poverty, thereby affecting their own and their children's prospects. At the same time, it could be argued that employment in liberal market economies, even at the low end of the labor market, promotes some degree of integration for immigrants and may provide possibilities for developing potentially useful social networks and additional skills.

At root, the central question is whether the nature of the political economy is as paramount as this grand idea assumes. Is the liberal market/social market economy distinction able, for example, to explain differences in immigrant employment and poverty rates among the six countries and, equally important, in noneconomic domains such as immigrant residential patterns and second-generation educational achievements?

Settler Societies Then there is a perspective prominent in cross-national comparisons of immigration that emphasizes the position of the United States and Canada as settler societies, with deep histories of immigration, distinct from the Old World societies of Europe. The underlying assumption is that the settler societies are more successful in integrating contemporary immigrants and their children because immigration has been an essential element in their establishment and development. In Canada and the United States, large-scale immigration played a decisive role in the conquest and peopling of sparsely occupied territories; as nations, they were founded, populated, and built by immigrants (including hundreds of thousands of forced immigrants, African slaves, in the United States). The result is that immigration is a fundamental part of the origin myth, historical consciousness, and national identity in both countries.

In Western Europe, by contrast, mass immigration did not occur until after nation-states had been in place for some time. European states were mainly formed through disputes over borders or consolidation of population groups who had lived in a particular region for centuries, not by new arrivals who dis-

placed and almost wiped out an indigenous population. Even though migrations across borders, such as the Huguenot flight from Catholic France to England, Prussia, and the Dutch Republic in the sixteenth century, and rural to urban movement to nearby countries in the 1800s, played an unmistakable role in European history, the main international migration experience of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was one of emigration, chiefly to the Americas, north and south, by tens of millions of Europeans. As a result, it has been argued, immigration (especially from other continents) has not been a core part of European identity the way it has been in North America, or of European countries' past nation-building processes.²⁰ The implication is that the settler societies will thus extend a warmer welcome to immigrants and be more confident about their integration—and more comfortable about bringing immigrants and their children into the national fold.

How much does the settler/nonsettler society difference matter to the success of integration? Are there ways in which European countries differ as contexts of reception from the United States and Canada because they lack a self-conscious immigration story? Whatever their histories, all the countries in our study are *now* societies with substantial proportions of first- and second-generation immigrants: to what extent does this shared present reality overshadow their different settlement pasts? Moreover, an overemphasis on the position of the United States and Canada as settler societies minimizes the role of other aspects of their histories in shaping national ideologies, identities, and discourses and can lead to disregarding differences between the two countries that have significant consequences for integration. Stressing the advantages of the settler societies can also lead to overlooking ways in which they may be less successful than European countries in providing opportunities for immigrants and their children.

American Exceptionalism This leads to another “grand” idea—U.S. exceptionalism—about which much has been written, particularly in terms of the differences between the United States and Western Europe. One common popular claim is that the United States has been an exceptionally—some would say, uniquely—open society, welcoming immigrants and quickly investing them with membership rights, including access to America’s historically broad escalator of mobility into the middle class. But how exceptional really is the United States in incorporating immigrants? More fundamentally, is the notion of American exceptionalism a productive way to think about transatlantic comparisons of immigrant minorities?

American exceptionalism has a long history in American social theory and historical writings. On one side, writings about it often have a congratulatory tone, emphasizing that the United States is exceptional among nations in its early democracy and republican tradition, its frontier spirit and mobility opportunities, and in picking and choosing the best of its many European legacies

(though, we must point out, recent research demonstrates that social mobility in the United States now lags behind the levels in most economically advanced societies²¹). On the other side, many liberal American social scientists have adopted a critical approach—what John Torpey calls the “bad exceptionalism thesis”—which sees the United States as distinctively harsh and ungenerous, lacking the more robust welfare-state arrangements that have been characteristic of Western European countries and that provide economic and social protections for their populations.²² Also, there is the sordid history of slavery and legal segregation on its home soil—a “bad” feature of the United States that stands out from Europe, and that has surprisingly complex effects for immigrants in the United States today.

Clearly, there are ways that the United States is unique as an immigrant society, and we will point to them throughout this book. The problem, though, is that the “exceptionalist” framework ignores or downplays similarities between the United States and European countries, to say nothing of Canada. To put it another way, this idea has a tendency to overemphasize or blow out of proportion U.S.-Europe differences, not unlike what Sigmund Freud famously characterized as the “narcissism of small differences.”

In any case, as Aristide Zolberg points out, there are “many exceptionalisms,” indeed as many “exceptionalisms” as there are countries of immigration.²³ Our aim, as we have said, is to systematically analyze cross-national commonalities and variations in search of factors that seem fruitful for integration. This gets us away from either demonizing or celebrating the United States. Either would be wrong—and too simple. The key questions are not just what is distinct, or exceptional, about immigrant integration in the United States, but also what is particular to Canada and each of the four European countries in our study. Moreover, what are the similarities or parallels in the integration process in the United States and elsewhere?

Convergence The final grand idea or narrative—stressing convergence—shifts the ground to emphasize the erasure or decline of differences among nations rather than ways they stand out from each other. A major topic in scholarly discussions is whether, and to what degree, we are witnessing a convergence process that undercuts national differences in the responses to and effects of immigration in Europe and North America.

The basic gist of convergence approaches is that Western Europe and North America are becoming more similar with regard to state policies concerning immigrants, especially policies toward citizenship, cultural practices, and social welfare benefits.²⁴ In explaining this growing convergence, the emphasis is on common domestic and international pressures and societal structural features as well as on mutual borrowing or emulation. Convergence theorists point to the basic principles of liberal democracies in the context of mass immigration; the emergence, particularly within Europe in light of the European

Union's increasingly important role, of transnational and postnational norms, laws, and rules undermining or diminishing the significance of nation-states; and the need to deal with similar sets of problems arising from the challenges of integrating the growing number of immigrants and their children. The recent period of mass immigration coincides with the rise of new globalizing forces. As one scholar puts it, modern-day transportation and telecommunications, among other changes, have led to "convergent modes of social and cultural transformation associated with the globalizing of cultural forms."²⁵

But how extensive and significant is convergence in government policies and practices in bringing the countries of Europe and North America closer together? Does it make more analytic sense to speak of *relative* convergence given that marked national differences remain? After all, we are not yet living in a postnational world; it is too early to declare the end of historically rooted national distinctions.²⁶ Should we give up the quest for convergence altogether because nations may converge in some ways and diverge in others, given the "ramshackle, multifaceted, loosely connected sets of regulatory rules, institutions, and practices in various domains of society" that affect immigrant incorporation—so that it is impossible to speak of an overall convergence trend or process?²⁷ School systems in different countries, to take one example, are notoriously resistant to change and are rooted in educational institutions and traditions that often predate large-scale immigration. How would the notion of convergence apply to them?

As this review of analytic perspectives indicates, our focus is mainly on the national rather than the local plane. It is not that we fail to recognize the importance of local contexts, such as cities, for the integration process.²⁸ Anyone who has lived in New York City, as we have done, has to recognize that it is a very different location for immigrants and their children, than is, say, Houston. In fact, one of us has written extensively on this topic.²⁹ However, the big ideas about how integration may vary across contexts are pitched at the national level, and there is considerable work to be done in comparing national contexts. This book is the proof.

THE ULTIMATE STAKES

Immigration is quite literally changing the face of the West. The rich societies of North America and Western Europe are facing a transition of enormous consequence during the coming quarter century as a result of irreversible demographic changes wrought by immigration, combined with the aging of their native majority populations. This looming shift can be described as a "diversity transition" because the adult population will come to include fewer individuals from the native majority and more from immigrant homes. Diversity will be increasingly a matter of second-, and even third-, generation individuals

who have grown up and been educated in these societies and can claim insider status, although given low overall fertility rates (especially in parts of Western Europe) and aging populations, pressures for continued inflows of first-generation immigrants will also be strong. In looking ahead, it is clear that the economic, cultural, and social vitality of West European, American, and Canadian societies will be affected by their ability to integrate young adults of immigrant origins and draw on their talents.

This transition will be deeply felt in the group of active-age adults and therefore in the labor market, civic institutions, and the polity. It will be accelerated by a phenomenon that was universal in Western societies at the end of World War II: the baby boom. The baby boomers, who in the United States in 2014 were between the ages of 50 and 68, will be retiring during the next several decades. This massive group is on average well educated and includes the first cohorts to experience mass higher education; and the baby boomers are well positioned in the labor market, occupying a disproportionate share of the most skilled and best-paying jobs.³⁰ The question that will have to be faced on both sides of the Atlantic is who will replace them? The young adults coming of age in the period ahead will include fewer members of the native majority and many more individuals from immigrant or other minority backgrounds. Unless these young people are successfully integrated into the larger society, they will not be able to effectively compete for the better positions being vacated by the baby boomers.

The prospect of the demographic transition sharpens the edge of some of the most important questions about integration. How will this transition, and the replacement process it entails, affect opportunities for immigrants and their children as well as their inclusion and acceptance in the mainstream society? If, as we have said, a major challenge is how to integrate the children (and, in some cases, the grandchildren) of the immigrants so they can participate in the labor force and other institutions on a par with natives, we have to ask how successful the societies of North America and Western Europe have been in pursuing integration. This question is all the more freighted with significance because large numbers of immigrant-origin children in most Western countries face substantial disadvantages in reaching educational parity with children from native backgrounds, given not only the limited education of immigrant parents but also the stigmatization they experience owing to their national origin, phenotypic appearance, or religion.

Quite obviously these questions are as much about the societies themselves as they are about the immigrant minorities. We do not, of course, claim powers of prognostication about outcomes that cannot be known for decades. Still, the chapters that follow provide clues about the impact of sustained immigration and growing diversity on the countries in our study in the years to come. Are these societies on their way to successful integration of immigrants and, even more importantly, the second generation? Will they thereby avoid sharp divi-

sions along ethnic, racial, and religious lines in the opportunities for social mobility and personal development open to young people from different backgrounds? Or, alternatively, are social cleavages opening up between the native population and some of the immigrant-origin groups? Such cleavages, which can be reflected in unequal opportunities, segregation by residence, or other indicators of limited social contacts, would suggest the emergence, or in some cases the expansion, of permanently disadvantaged minority groups.

These are the ultimate stakes.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

The first step in understanding the challenges of diversity is to appreciate how Western European and North American countries became so diverse in the first place and who the new groups are. We thus begin, in chapter 2, by exploring the role of post–World II immigration laws and policies of the six countries in giving rise to the mix of new social groups on their social landscapes. We organize the discussion mainly in terms of types of immigrants who have arrived, in varying number and proportion: labor immigrations, high human-capital immigrations, postcolonial migrations, and refugee and asylum inflows; and we consider the role of subsequent family reunification. We also examine the challenges of controlling immigration and how open (or closed) the six countries are to continued arrivals from abroad. In addition, the chapter sketches the demographic impacts of immigration, revealing the rapidly increasing diversity of working-age populations found throughout the wealthy West.

The next two chapters focus on domains, economic and residential, that immigrants must deal with early on in the settlement process, although these beginnings can have long-term, even intergenerational, consequences for integration. Chapter 3 looks at the economic situations of the immigrants. They have uprooted themselves in the search for better economic prospects, but profound changes in the economic structures of the rich societies of the West in recent years raise serious doubts about whether their aspirations will be fulfilled and therefore about the starting point for the next generation. This chapter explores the implications of growing labor market inequality and precarious work for the economic incorporation of immigrants, including rates of labor force participation, unemployment, and risks of poverty. The emphasis is on how immigrants are doing compared to natives in the countries where they live, with the emphasis—as in all the chapters—on low-status immigrants.

Chapter 4 turns to the residential contexts of immigrant families, which also affect the starting point for the second generation. Fears that immigrants and their children will end up living in “parallel societies” like the black ghettos of American cities are vastly overblown. Nevertheless, neighborhoods of immi-

grant concentration, at least for low-status groups, may create marked disadvantages. We examine the actual extent, and consequences, of residential segregation, also looking at the role of public policies in shaping these patterns. Neighborhoods are often the places where immigrant minorities and native majorities have initial contacts and thus where the impacts of immigration on the mainstream society are particularly salient. In this vein, we consider the emergence of “super-diverse” neighborhoods.

The following two chapters consider two fundamental social divisions, race and religion, that could affect the ability of some immigrant-origin groups to eventually achieve full integration. Chapter 5 puts the spotlight on race, with a stress on the special position of the United States. While color-coded race is a source of stigma in Canada and Western Europe, it is a more severe barrier in the United States, especially for immigrants of African ancestry and their children, owing to the legacy of slavery, legal segregation, and ghettoization. Yet, the paradox of racial dynamics in the United States is that they have also had some positive consequences for immigrants there, who are overwhelmingly people of color from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean. The heritage of the U.S. civil rights movement and legislation of the 1960s, as well as the sheer presence and size of the native black population have provided immigrants in the United States with certain advantages that they lack in Europe and Canada.

If racial divisions are a defining characteristic of the United States, religious cleavages seem their nearest equivalent in Western Europe. Religion dominates discussions about immigrant integration there, and the core issues concern Islam. Anti-Islam sentiment, of course, is hardly absent in North America, but religion is not the kind of bright boundary between immigrants and native-born residents that it is in Western Europe. Chapter 6 describes how immigrant religion generally has become a more significant social divide, a greater challenge to integration, and a more common source of conflict with mainstream institutions and practices in Western Europe than in the United States (with Canada positioned between the two). We analyze the reasons for this difference between the two sides of the Atlantic, and also consider possible changes in the future that may make Islam less of a barrier for immigrant-origin populations in Europe, and blur some of the distinctions among the six countries found today.

In the subsequent three chapters we investigate domains involving long-term integration, and thus processes that can span the generations or primarily affect the second generation. Chapter 7 deals with the political integration of immigrant groups. Entry into the inner precincts of power is a paramount indicator of the overall inclusion of newcomer groups. Our focus is on the ability of politicians from immigrant backgrounds to be elected to office, which we argue is the gold standard for political inclusion, bringing rewards of societal power and a voice in political decisions. We provide data on the success of

immigrant-origin groups in winning positions in local, regional, and national legislatures in the six countries of our study; probe the factors that explain the differences in electoral representation; and consider whether, and to what degree, convergences in national laws and policies have reduced the importance of national differences in political integration and may continue to do so in the future.

In chapter 8 we zero in on the group that is the key to the future, the second generation. Educating the children of immigrants is one of the greatest challenges facing the countries of Western Europe and North America today. The progress of these children has implications for their own and their families' futures, and, on a wider canvas, for the labor forces in the countries where they live. This chapter addresses such critical questions as: To what extent do educational systems reproduce inequalities between native and immigrant-origin students? What kinds of opportunities do schools provide, especially for immigrant children from disadvantaged backgrounds? And, when it comes to the adult world of work, how far do these opportunities allow the children of immigrants to go?

Chapter 9 takes the analysis of the second generation further by examining a subjective topic: feelings of belonging. At bottom the issue is the extent to which the children of immigrants feel truly at home in the societies where they are living, and whether they are seen by others as perennial outsiders. In exploring identities, our key questions are how, and to what degree, a national identity is extended to those of immigrant background. A related subject concerns intermarriage or—more broadly, since family partnerships are increasingly formed without marriage ceremonies—mixed unions. We look at the acceptability of the descendants of new immigrants by dominant majority groups through an analysis of mixed unions, examining both the frequency and consequences of these most intimate of relations.

The concluding chapter has three main goals. The first is to sum up the lessons learned from the comparisons in the preceding chapters and to assess how immigrants and their children are likely to fare in the different countries in the context of the impending demographic transition of the next several decades. The second goal is to consider the ideas and perspectives raised previously—what we have called the “grand narratives”—in light of the evidence provided throughout the book. Finally, we turn to policy implications of our study, evaluating remedies commonly suggested by others, and putting forward some of our own, which may help reduce the barriers immigrant-origin groups encounter and ease their struggles for inclusion on both sides of the Atlantic. These are issues of signal importance since the future of these societies will depend, to a large degree, on how well they manage the integration of immigration-driven ethnic, racial, and religious diversity.