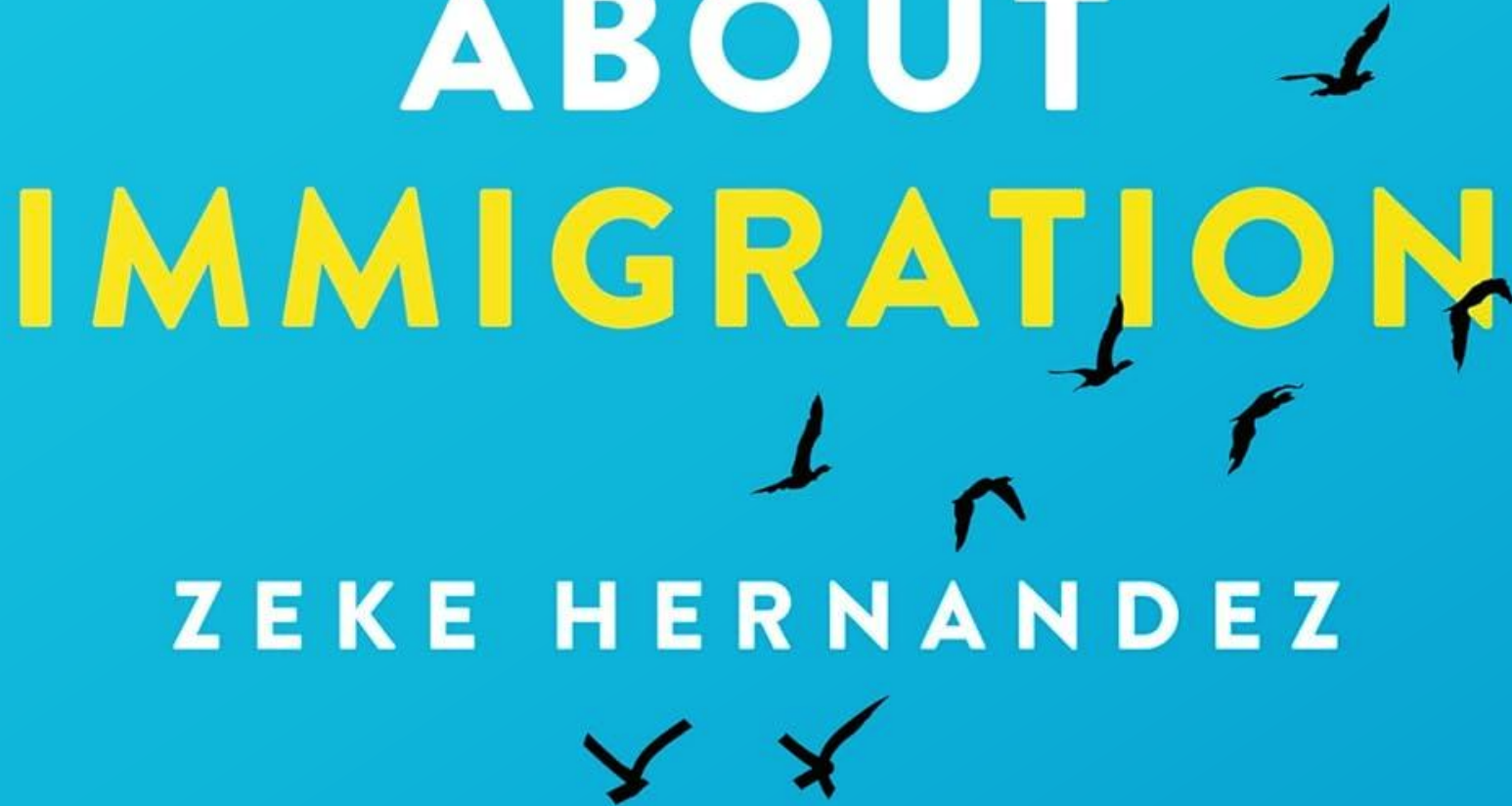


WHY SUCCESSFUL
SOCIETIES WELCOME
NEWCOMERS

THE
TRUTH
ABOUT
IMMIGRATION



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READING GUIDE

The Truth About Immigration

Thank you for reading this book!

Immigration is a controversial topic. Just thinking about it makes some people anxious. So before anything else, just relax! This book is meant to take the anxiety out of the subject by engaging with the best available evidence as illustrated by stories of people and places that you'll find highly relatable.

It's OK to bring your preconceived notions about immigrants to this book. We all have them! The questions in this guide are meant to help you identify those preconceived notions and update them when necessary.

You'll find three questions for each chapter. For the best results, read the questions before reading each chapter and write down your answers while reading. For even better results, compare your notes and answers with someone else. You can do that with a friend, significant other, or book group.

While each chapter is unique and tackles a different issue, there's a unifying structure to all the chapters:

- A commonly-accepted but incorrect mental model about the issue
- A discussion of the most cutting-edge research evidence on the issue
- An updated, more accurate mental model about the issue arising from the evidence
- Stories and examples that illustrate one or more of the above

Those four elements of the structure aren't always presented in the order, but they're always there. If you understand that structure, it'll be easier to follow the key argument of each chapter and of the book as a whole.

Good luck! And if you want to ask any questions or share your ideas, follow the author of any social media platform.

PART 1

Introduction

1. What preconceived notions about immigration do you bring to this book? Reflect on how you've been exposed to both the villain and the victim narratives about immigrants. How have these messages affected you?
2. How does the author set the stage for a discussion on the economic and social impacts of immigration?
3. What is your initial reaction to the author's claim that societies strongly benefit from welcoming immigrants? What would you need to know to convince you that the claim is factually correct? (It's best if you write this down before reading the other chapters, so you can see if the author convinces you at the end.)

Chapter 1: The Invasion of Idaho

1. How does the example of Idaho challenge the typical narrative about immigration and economic impact?
2. How did you do on the immigration quiz? What does this tell you about your perceptions on the topic and about where you get information about it?
3. In what ways is our current debate about immigration similar to and different from the debate that led to the 1924 National Origins Act?

Chapter 2: Immigration = Investment = Jobs

1. What is the immigration-investment-jobs triangle? Why is it not commonly discussed in conversations about immigration and the economy?
2. Can you think of examples of the immigration-investment-jobs triangle in your own community? (If this seems hard at first, try looking up the origins of some of the companies in the place where you live.)
3. Reflect on any surprising data or examples that illustrate the investment effects of immigration. How does this alter or reinforce your views?

Chapter 3: Immigrants Make Us More Innovative

1. Why does the author distinguish between immigrants' contributions to "highbrow" vs. "lowbrow" innovations? Can you list at least three innovations in each of the two categories that have enriched your life?
2. [Highbrow Innovations | Lowbrow Innovations]
3. What stories and studies from the chapter were most compelling in demonstrating the role of immigrants in driving innovation?
4. How does the evidence in this chapter challenge you to rethink how novel technologies, products, and companies arise?

Chapter 4: Newcomers Fill Public Coffers

1. What was your reaction to the author's personal story about relying on public programs during graduate school? Did it reinforce or change your preconceived notions about immigrants and public coffers?
2. The author emphasizes that the effect of immigrants on public resource consumption depends a lot on whether you're thinking about the short vs. long-run, or at the local (city, state) vs. federal level. What is one improvement we could make to address these imbalances across places and across time?
3. Do you agree with the conclusion that popular programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid would quickly become defunded without more immigration? Why or why not?

Chapter 5: Do Immigrants Steal Jobs?

1. What was your belief about the impact of immigrants on the jobs and wages of native workers before reading this chapter? How did you develop this belief?
2. The author uses the example of his friend the carpenter as a means of engaging in a dialogue with someone skeptical about the evidence in this chapter. Pretend that you're having a conversation with the carpenter. How would you explain the fact that immigrants—even unskilled—actually create jobs and increase wages for native workers?
3. The stories of Katie Malnight, Saw Klo Futurestar, and Jenny Rios illustrate the “win-win possibilities” that arise when companies hire immigrant workers. What are those win-wins and why do they take work to achieve?

Chapter 6: Much More Than Talent

1. Why is the title of this chapter “much more than talent”? In what way does working and living with foreign-born people expand the possibilities for native-born people?
2. This chapter presents several statistics showing that the US is becoming increasingly dependent on skilled foreigners in key sectors of the economy. Do you believe that the country is in a “talent war” with other countries? Why or why not?
3. The author uses stories and evidence from the sport of soccer to make his main argument. Do you find this convincing? Can you think of examples from other contexts that illustrate the same point?

Final Thoughts on the Economy: What's the Catch?

1. The author argues that bad mental models have led both experts and non-experts to draw incorrect conclusions about the economic effects of immigration. What are those bad assumptions?
2. Pretend that you're an economist responsible for updating your country's policies to extract the greatest possible benefits from immigration. What policies would you adopt based on the evidence in the first half of the book?
3. What economic issues do you think the author failed to address or did not address properly in the first half of the book?

PART 2

Chapter 7: Integration, Not Assimilation

1. What's the difference between integration and assimilation? Why does that distinction make a difference when we think about the success of immigrants in adapting to the receiving society?
2. The author goes through the facts on economic, political, and cultural integration. Out of those three, which one surprised you the most? Why?
3. This chapter covers several stories about how we over-idealize past waves of immigrants and are over-afraid of the future when we worry about how current waves of immigrants will change our country. How does the evidence in this chapter challenge the way you think of both the past and the future of immigration?

Chapter 8: Immigration Makes You Safer

1. The author shares a story about a dinner conversation in which his son expresses a common misconception that immigrants commit more crimes than others. Why is this such a common misconception when the evidence to the contrary is so strong and consistent?
2. This chapter (and the next one) speaks a lot about the media's role in perpetuating inaccurate information about immigrants. Where do you get news about immigration? How does that affect your perceptions?
3. Do you believe the author's argument that "the real national security threat is not allowing immigrants in? Why or why not?

Chapter 9: Welcoming Newcomers—The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

1. Reflect on your interactions with people of different nationalities. When are those interactions positive and productive? When are they negative and unproductive? How does the psychological model in the “good conflict, bad conflict” section help explain those experiences?
2. The author covers several reasons we struggle to accept newcomers. Which ones did you already know about and which ones surprised you?
3. What principles from this chapter might help improve relationships between locals and newcomers in your community? How would you implement those principles if you were a leader in your community?

Chapter 10: But What About Illegal Immigrants?

1. The author uses the story of Les Miserables as an analogy for the debate about unauthorized immigration. Do you identify more with Javert or with the Bishop of Digne in your views on this issue? Did reading this chapter change your mind about anything?
2. Of the many statistics and facts about undocumented immigrants in America, which surprised you the most? Why?
3. What does the author mean when he says that “the economy doesn’t care” how an immigrant arrives in the country? How would you challenge this point?

Chapter 11: How to Fix Our Broken Immigration System

1. What key flaws in the current immigration system does the chapter identify? How do those flaws relate to the problem of undocumented immigration?
2. Reflect on the reforms proposed by the author. Which do you think would be most effective and why?
3. How does the chapter suggest these reforms would benefit not just immigrants but also the broader society?

Conclusion: Don't Be Afraid. Be Factually Optimistic.

1. After reading both the economic and social arguments presented, how has your view on immigration changed, if at all?
2. What does the author mean by being “factually optimistic” about immigration? What changes can you make in what you read and who you interact with to be more factually optimistic?
3. How will your conversations about immigration change as a result of reading this book?

