



From Immigrants to Americans: The Rise and Fall of Fitting In

Jacob L. Vigdor

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Immigration has always caused immense public concern, especially when the perception is that immigrants are not assimilating into society the way they should, or perhaps the way they once did. Americans are frustrated as they try to order food, hire laborers, or simply talk to someone they see on the street and cannot communicate with them because the person is an immigrant who has not fully adopted American culture or language. But is this truly a modern phenomenon? In *From Immigrants to Americans*, Jacob Vigdor offers a direct comparison of the experiences of immigrants in the United States from the mid-19th century to the present day. His conclusions are both unexpected and fascinating. Vigdor shows how the varying economic situations immigrants come from has always played an important role in their assimilation. The English language skills of contemporary immigrants are actually quite good compared to the historical average, but those who arrive without knowing English are learning at slower rates. He continues to argue that today's immigrants face far fewer "incentives" to assimilate and offers a set of assimilation friendly policies. *From Immigrants to Americans* is an important book for anyone interested in immigration, either the history or the modern implications, or who want to understand why today's immigrants seem so different from previous generations of immigrants and how much they are the same.

Co-published with the Manhattan Institute

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