by the forces of world capitalism, they end up pursuing the very competitive values of capitalism that created their own oppression. This often meant providing whatever service or commodity will sell, irrespective of its moral character or impact on the nonimmigrant community, in which they do business but do not reside, and hence feel no moral responsibility for its well being. This is a strong indictment indeed of the social cost of immigrant entrepreneurship, as exemplified by the Los Angeles Korean community. Having come this far in their analysis, Light and Bonacich feel compelled to end with a moral suggestion: that these immigrants have an alternative, which is to join together with oppressed peoples (i.e. American born minority groups) to construct a social order that is based on concern for all humanity, regardless of ethnicity.

—Evelyn Hu-DeHart
University of Colorado, Boulder


Since the passage of the immigration acts of 1965, a large number of skilled Asians have migrated to the United States. Scholars have noticed this trend, labelling these, along with other skilled third world sojourners, “the new immigration.”

*Contemporary American Immigrants* deals with three of the most numerous Asian nationalities to enter the U.S. since 1965: Filipinos, Koreans and Chinese. The book explores their experience through three sources of data. First, the author offers a short description of each population’s history of migration to the United States. Second, census data regarding their present status is summarized. Finally, the decade-old census of 1980 is updated with information from the author’s own non-random sample survey of 849 immigrants who entered the U.S. from 1980-1985.

Because Mangiafico served as a high-ranking consular official at the U.S. Embassy in Manila and made research visits to embassies in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Seoul, he brings special knowledge and insight to the process of immigration from the Pacific Rim. His comments regarding the number of visa applications from these nations and the various techniques would-be immigrants develop to subvert regulations are among this book’s major contributions.

After reviewing numerous sources of data, Mangiafico concludes that despite popular stereotypes and the predictions of some demographers, the most recent entrants to the United States from Asian nations—many
of whom entered the U.S. on the basis of family relations rather than because of skills—continue to be highly educated, skilled and upwardly mobile. For example, 35.9% of Asian immigrants over age 25 who entered the U.S. between 1970 and 1980 had a college education—twice the proportion of native born Americans in the same age group.

 Readers will find Mangiafico’s summaries of Filipino, Korean and Chinese immigration to be useful and easily accessible sources of data. However, they may be disappointed by the author’s exclusion of more community-oriented, ethnographic and theoretical information about these groups. For example, the very different styles of ethnic self-help and community development revealed by these three populations receive little attention.

 Further, while the author has gleaned substantive information about Filipino, Korean and Chinese immigrants from various primary sources, he generally disregards the theoretical arguments that scholars offer to explain why these immigrant groups follow distinct patterns of adaptation. Downplaying the complex factors that determine a group’s economic adaptation—discrimination, degree of English language competence, access to traditions for amassing investment capital, the availability of low cost imported goods, the nature of ethnic communities—the author deals with variations in patterns of structural integration by referring to psychological outlook: “Comfortable, acquisitive—but ‘playing it safe’—these Filipino immigrants do not appear to have the degree of ambition, drive, or forward vision that will place them in leadership positions.” In contrast, “Energetic, hardworking, and willing to take risks, these Koreans are building for the future, rather than living for the day.” Such simple explanations do little to increase our understanding of such a complex and politically controversial topic as ethnic economic behavior.

 If Mangiafico had addressed the social structural reasons for immigrants’ styles of adaptation, attending to issues of community and taking seriously theories of immigrant integration Contemporary American Immigrants would have provided a more valuable contribution to our knowledge of the new immigration.

 —Steve Gold
  Whittier College