
This book is a compilation of nine separate chapters dealing with the themes of migration, assimilation, and acculturation of Asian immigrants in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. The connecting theme running through the entire volume is the “impacts of global, national, and local dynamics on Asian immigrants/transmigrants,” and the purpose of the book is to illustrate how these immigrants themselves “have transformed suburban demographic, socioeconomic characteristics, economic and political structures, and local residential and commercial landscapes” (pp. 21–22). Contributing authors to this volume come predominantly from a background and education in geography and sociology, which directly influences the material, methods, and conclusions reached in the varied case studies. Viewing the historical processes of community organization, settlement, and change through a geographically based spatial and first-person sociological perspective offers a unique critique of the Chicago School model of assimilation within immigrant communities in developed countries. All the contributors attempt to deconstruct the traditional view of assimilation as an inevitable force, by viewing modern ethnic suburbs as a means of resistance.

Li kicks off the volume (Introduction) by summarizing some important historical precedents that have laid the groundwork for modern immigration studies. Her perspective on the ethnic suburb (ethnoburb) is taken up in most of the other chapters. Ethnoburbs are a relatively new type of community, whereas historically many immigrants lived and worked in socially and economically isolated urban enclaves. Over the course of the 20th century, ethnoburbs made up of immigrant populations achieved a certain level of wealth and affluence, and many migrants from these urban enclaves moved into areas previously dominated by a primarily non-Asian, Caucasian population. These ethnoburbs, Li states, “offer ethnic minority people the opportunity to resist complete assimilation into the white cultural and social ‘norms’ of the host society” (p. 17). Ethnoburbs have the additional potential to empower residents to enter the global labor and economic market, and begin to shape the host communities themselves. The residents of these new forms of community in the modern globalized world could shape the host society as much as, if not more than, they themselves have been shaped by the assimilation and acculturation processes.

The rest of the volume deals with different ethnic Asian immigrant groups across four Pacific Rim nations. Joseph Wood (Chapter 1) analyses identity, place making and change in a Vietnamese ethnoburb in Virginia which came into being
primarily after the United States’ involvement in the Vietnam War. Smith and Logan (Chapter 2) use decades of census records and spatial analyses to document the movement of various Asian groups into Flushing, New York from the 1960s to 2000. The authors discuss how these ethnoburbs began, and how this Asian immigrant influx helped rejuvenate the deteriorating community of Flushing. Li’s major contribution (Chapter 3) to the volume is her examination of the spatial and demographic transition of Chinese communities within the greater Los Angeles area. She highlights the theme of migration of Asians from the traditionally static yet robust ethnic enclave (i.e. Chinatown) to the surrounding, affluent neighborhoods, giving rise to new ethnoburbs. Laux and Thieme (Chapter 4) analyze the Korean settlement patterns in the greater Los Angeles area, while Li and Park (Chapter 5) examine the white-collar or skilled labor migration to the Silicon Valley of California and the resultant community formation. Other chapters look at the Chinese social landscape of Toronto (Chapter 6), the economic effects of the Hong Kong Chinese on Canada’s western seaport of Vancouver (Chapter 7), the social structure of the Chinese in Sydney, Australia (Chapter 8), and finally the changing face of immigrating Chinese in Auckland, New Zealand (Chapter 9).

All of the chapters advocate the proposed theme of looking at how modern ethnoburbs are insulating Asian communities from assimilation within the host society, and how, at the same time, these communities provide cohesive support for these immigrant groups to enter a global capital and labor market. A major weakness of this volume, however, is that the majority of contributors write about Chinese communities; the remaining couple of chapters are on the Vietnamese in Virginia and the Koreans in Los Angeles. While this might be an outgrowth of a fledgling field of studies focused on these Asian communities, a broader array of ethnic groups might have helped to solidify the pan-ethnicity function of ethnoburbs in explaining modern immigrant communities.

A major contribution of this volume as a whole is the push toward the study of managerial or skilled labor classes of the immigrants, in direct opposition to earlier research which was largely limited to the laboring or blue-collar class. The skilled labor immigrant population directly affects the movement of capital inside and outside the host country, thus helping to formulate new ethnic communities and bring about business opportunities that impact both the immigrant and the native economic, political, and social systems. Overall, this volume’s contents present a holistic approach to the study of immigration and its effects on the migrant and non-migrant populations, by including all socioeconomic classes in the analysis, as opposed to older models of analysis that tended to focus on a particular group or sub-group within these communities.

By and large, the strengths of this book outweigh the weaknesses that arise from a relatively limited variety of case studies. Ethnoburbs are going to be at the