Education

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Immigrants entering the educational system are extraordinarily diverse, and their experiences resist facile generalizations. New immigrants add new threads of cultural, linguistic, and racial difference to the American tapestry of diversity. Some are the children of highly educated professional parents, while others have parents who are illiterate, low-skilled, and struggling in the lowest-paid sectors of the service economy. Some have received schooling in exemplary educational systems, while others arrive from educational systems that are in shambles. Some families are escaping political, religious, or ethnic persecution; others are motivated by the promise of better jobs and the hope for better educational opportunities. Some are documented migrants, while others are in a documentation limbo. Some come with the intention to settle permanently, while others engage in transnational strategies, living both "here" and "there." Some arrive in well-established immigrant-receiving communities with dense informational and tutoring networks that ease the entry of immigrant youth into the new educational system, while others move from one migrant setting to another, forcing students to change schools frequently. The educational experiences of immigrant youth thus vary substantially, depending on their specific constellation of resources and their context of reception.

How immigrant youth fare academically has long-term implications for their future well-being. While at the start of the 20th century there were occupational avenues that allowed social mobility for migrants who had little formal education, the new economy is largely unforgiving to those who do not achieve postsecondary education and beyond. Immigrants who are poorly schooled or unskilled will encounter daunting odds in today's globalizing economy. Many will be facing a life below the poverty line, on the lower rungs of the service sector of the economy. Today more than ever, schooling processes and outcomes are a powerful barometer of current as well as future psychosocial functioning.

Immigrants defy easy generalizations in terms of educational outcomes. Some

outperform their native-born peers. Children of immigrants are often the valedictorians of their high schools, and they tend to be overrepresented among the recipients of prestigious scholarly awards. Others demonstrate persistent school-related problems and high dropout rates. These immigrants tend to be "overlooked and underserved," particularly when they enter U.S. schools at the secondary level (Urban Institute, 2001). Findings from a number of recent studies suggest that while some are successfully navigating the American educational system, large numbers struggle academically, leaving school without acquiring the tools that will enable them to function in the highly competitive knowledge-intensive economy.

In addition to a pattern of variability of performance among diverse immigrant groups, a counterintuitive trend is emerging in data from a variety of disciplines. These studies have shown that newly arrived students from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia display highly adaptive attitudes and behaviors to succeed in school, yet the longer immigrant youth are in the U.S., the more negative they become in terms of school attitudes and adaptations. Rumbaut and Portes surveyed more than 5,000 high school students, comparing grade point averages (GPAs) and aspirations of first- and second-generation students. They found that length of residence in the U.S. was associated with declining academic achievement and aspirations. Research by Steinberg, Brown, and Dornbusch based on a national study of over 20,000 adolescents uncovered a similar trend of adverse academic and health trajectories across generations.

Most of the studies suggesting such declines over time have relied on cross-sectional (cross-generational) data. Data from the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation (LISA) study we codirected (1997–2003) assessed the academic performance and engagement of recently arrived immigrant youth and then examined changes over time. Quite strikingly, the grade point average of students coming from Mexico, Central America, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti all declined in a statistically significant manner (while a similar trend emerged for students of Chinese origin, the decline did not reach significance). The GPA of immigrant boys declined significantly more than that of girls for all groups. For both girls and boys, grades in the first two years were considerably higher than grades in the last three years. During the second year the GPAs of both girls and boys peaked, and from the third year on, both girls and boys experienced a steady decrease in GPA. We found that girls consistently had statistically significant higher GPAs than boys throughout the five-year period.

These data and others suggest that the new immigrant experience may complicate past patterns of unilinear assimilation, which indicate that over time and across generations, immigrants tended to do substantially better, eventually reaching parity with the mainstream population. Exposure to certain aspects of American socioeconomic structure and culture today appear to be negatively associated with academic attitudes as well as with the physical and psychological well-being of immigrant youngsters. How can we account for this?

The verdict is still out, but a number of factors are surely at play. First, the new economy is such that the "shop-floor mobility" of the factory era is no longer an option for most working-class immigrants; our hourglass economy limits opportunity for those with low levels of education and skills. Second, the optimism and resilience of many immigrants may erode over time as they encounter structural obstacles—segregation, poor schools, neighborhood violence, limited opportunities for status mobility—to their dreams. Third, both psychological and sociological evidence suggests that immigrant youth may indeed be assimilating but to somewhat dystopic American adolescent norms, which include negative attitudes toward schools and increased engagement in risky behaviors. Fourth, because the majority of young people of immigrant origin are "racially marked," the option of "passing" over the course of generations is no longer likely. Further, exposure to discrimination, disparagement, and being cast into low-status jobs across generations is corrosive to well-being and drive.

Here we will explore the factors implicated in the variability in educational performance and social adaptation of immigrant children by examining interdisciplinary contributions to this topic of growing importance.

Generational Patterns

It is important to distinguish generational differences in people of immigrant origin, as patterns of educational outcomes vary significantly according to generation and country of origin. Newcomers—often referred to as the first generation—are born abroad, spend their childhoods there, and receive the foundations of their education in their birthplace. The 1.5 generation is born abroad but arrives in the new homeland before age 13, so its members are exposed to U.S. schools and culture during their formative years. The second generation is born in the U.S. of foreign-born parents. All share immigrant parents and the repercussions of immigration within their families. In general, the first generation has the advantage of immigrant optimism and the ability to take a dual frame of reference in comparing their current circumstances with those in their homeland. The second generation has the advantage of full citizenship and a consistent exposure to English, facilitating both unaccented speech and curricular access.

Foreign-born nationals—the first generation who arrive as adults after their mid-twenties—generally come with their educational attainments in hand. There is considerable variation in educational attainment by country of origin; some arrive with backgrounds similar to those of the average U.S. citizen, others far exceed U.S. norms, and still others trail significantly behind (see Table 1). These adults generally come to work and are unlikely to encounter the educational system unless they go on to graduate school or take English as a Second Language courses.

Immigrants arriving before adulthood present quite a different challenge. Many enter the educational system at various points in their development, with an array

Table 1 Educational attainment of principal foreign nationalities in 2000

Country of birth	Total population	Percentage college graduates[a]	Percentage high school graduates[a]	Percentage immigrated 1990–2000
Total native-born[b]	250,288,425	24.4	83.3	
Total foreign-born[b]	31,133,481	24.1	61.8	42.4
Above U.S. average				
India	1,027,144	69.1	88.2	54.9
Iran	285,176	50.6	86.4	26.6
Former Soviet Union	618,302	47.3	84.0	69.7
Philippines	1,374,213	45.7	86.8	35.4
Korea	870,542	42.9	86.1	37.4
China	997,301	41.6	68.4	48.8
Near U.S. average				
United Kingdom	567,240	36.6	90.2	27.8
Canada	820,713	33.6	82.5	29.9
Poland	472,544	22.1	73.1	36.7
Colombia	515,206	21.8	72.0	45.1
Vietnam	991,995	19.2	61.6	44.7
Cuba	870,203	18.7	59.0	26.6
Jamaica	554,897	17.8	72.1	31.4
Below U.S. average				
Haiti	422,841	13.7	62.3	39.7
Dominican Republic	685,952	9.5	48.1	42.7
El Salvador	815,570	5.0	34.7	40.4
Mexico	9,163,463	4.2	29.7	48.6

Source: Adapted from Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait,* 3d ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), chap. 4. Original data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, authors' own 5% Public Use Microdata Sample, weighted data.

a. Persons aged 25 and older.

b. In this table, children born abroad to American parents are counted as native-born, not foreign-born.

of educational backgrounds. Some arrive with strong educational foundations (often stronger than those of their U.S.-born peers with similar levels of academic attainment) from their native land; as they enter American schools, their primary challenge is to acquire English skills concurrently with the academic credits required for graduation and college preparation. Others have repeated grades or have had interrupted schooling and are hence over-aged for their grade level; these youth not only need to play catch-up academically but also need to acquire academic English-language proficiency. This process is often a slow and frustrating one and all too often leads to barely gaining the necessary credits for high school graduation or to dropping out. Yet another group of young people—particularly those who migrate in adolescence with limited educational skills—arrive in the U.S. largely with the intention of working; while they may halfheartedly intend to pursue an educa-

Table 2 College graduates and high school dropouts among young adults aged 25–39, by immigrant generation and national origin, 1998–2002 (percentages)

	College graduate[a]			Not high school graduate[a]		
	First generation (foreign-born) age at arrival		Second generation	First generation (foreign-born) age at arrival		Second generation
National origin	13 or older	12 or younger	(U.S.-born)[b]	13 or older	12 or younger	(U.S.-born)[b]
Total U.S. immigrant origin[c]	26	29	34	34	18	9
Above U.S. average						
India	80	78	79	4	2	3
Iran	61	62	83	2	<1	2
China[d]	61	67	76	9	<1	2
Korea	51	59	66	2	1	5
Great Britain, Canada	54	43	36	7	8	5
Philippines	46	37	33	6	3	3
Near U.S. average						
Cuba	17	26	43	18	7	5
Jamaica, other West Indies	21	37	42	15	7	4
Colombia, Ecuador, Peru	23	29	33	19	13	5
Vietnam	16	39	55	25	8	7
Haiti	15	30	48	31	8	<1
Below U.S. average						
Puerto Rico[e]	20	11	13	30	29	22
Dominican Republic	11	11	25	41	24	8
El Salvador, Guatemala	4	10	21	61	33	12
Mexico	4	7	13	66	42	20
All other national origins	41	35	44	14	8	4

Source: Merged Current Population Survey (CPS) annual demographic files (March), 1998 through 2002. Adapted from Rubén G. Rumbaut, Min Zhou, Charlie V. Morgan, and Golnaz Komaie, "A Tale of Two Immigrant Metropolises: Ethnicity, Generation, and Social Mobility in Los Angeles and New York," in Susan K. Brown, Frank D. Bean, and Rubén G. Rumbaut, eds., *The Immigrant Metropolis: The Dynamics of Intergenerational Mobility in Los Angeles and New York* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, forthcoming).

a. Educational attainment for persons 25–39 years old.

b. Second-generation estimates are calculated from CPS parental nativity data, adjusting for 2000 Census population counts.

c. Includes all foreign-born persons (first generation) and all U.S.-born persons with at least one foreign-born parent (second generation).

d. Including Hong Kong and Taiwan.

e. Island-born Puerto Ricans, who are U.S. citizens by birth and not immigrants, are classified as "foreign-born" for purposes of this table; mainland-born Puerto Ricans with island-born parents are classified as "second generation (U.S.-born)."

tion concurrently, they often quickly drop out after "dropping in" to school and finding the settings unprepared to meet the educational challenges they present. (We see this pattern clearly when examining the performance of Mexican youth attending New York City public schools. Of those who arrive before elementary school, 47 percent graduate, while 30 percent who arrive before ninth grade graduate and an abysmal 17 percent who arrive after ninth grade graduate.)

It is interesting to compare the academic outcomes of young adults by country of origin and generation of arrival (see Table 2). In Table 1 we see the academic patterns of immigrants educated abroad who arrived as adults, and in Table 2 we see the patterns for youth from the first, 1.5, and second generations who were exposed to U.S. schools. It is interesting to note the close country-of-origin parallels in the two charts. Parents with more education are better equipped to teach their children how to study, access data and information, develop arguments, and structure essays, and can provide necessary resources, including additional books, a home computer, and tutors. In contrast, youngsters whose parents have little or no formal educational experience are often unable to manage these academic tasks.

When we compare the first, 1.5, and second generations for the countries of origin with levels of educational attainment similar to the U.S. average, we find that the second generation tends to do better than the 1.5 generation (arriving before age 13), which in turn tends to do better than the first (arriving after age 13). These differences probably reflect the linguistic advantage of consistent exposure to English, which provides an academic edge. We see a similar advantage among the groups above the U.S. average, with the exception of those arriving from Great Britain, Canada, and the Philippines—all countries with English-language educational systems. In these cases, the first generation reached the highest levels of attainment (reflecting, perhaps, a linguistic advantage combined with immigrant optimism and drive). For the groups who academically underperform when compared to their U.S.-born peers, the disadvantage of arriving after age 13 is clear, as they are far less likely to complete high school or go on to college than the second generation.

Structuring Opportunity

These tables indicate the range of educational backgrounds and trajectories that immigrants tend to experience. While parental education and newcomer students' educational experiences in the home country clearly contribute to patterns of academic performance in the U.S., other factors also influence academic performance.

Poverty. Although some young immigrants come from privileged backgrounds, large numbers of immigrant youth today, especially those originating in Latin America and the Caribbean, must face the challenges associated with poverty. Immigrant children are more than four times as likely as native-born children to live in crowded housing conditions and three times as likely to be uninsured. Poverty has

long been recognized as a significant risk factor for educational access. Poverty tends to limit opportunities, and it frequently coexists with a variety of other factors that augment risks, such as single parenthood, residence in violent neighborhoods saturated with gang activity and drug trade, and schools that are segregated, overcrowded, and understaffed. Children raised in circumstances of poverty are also more vulnerable to an array of psychological distresses, including difficulties concentrating and sleeping, anxiety, and depression, as well as a heightened exposure to delinquency and violence—all of which have implications for educational outcomes.

Segregated neighborhoods and schools. Where immigrant families settle strongly shapes the immigrant journey and the experiences and adaptations of children. Latino immigrants in particular tend to settle in deeply segregated and impoverished urban settings—indeed, Latino youth are now the most segregated students in American schools. In such neighborhoods, which offer few opportunities in the formal economy, informal and underground activities tend to flourish. Immigrants of color who settle in predominantly minority neighborhoods will have virtually no direct, systematic, and intimate contact with middle-class white Americans, which in turn affects a host of experiences, including cultural and linguistic isolation from the mainstream.

Segregated and poor neighborhoods are more likely to have dysfunctional schools characterized by an ever-present fear of violence, distrust, low expectations, and institutional anomie. These schools typically have limited and outdated resources and offer an inferior education. Buildings are poorly maintained, and as a rule classrooms are overcrowded. Textbooks and curricula are outdated; computers are few and obsolete. Many of the teachers may not have credentials in the subjects they teach. Clearly defined tracks sentence immigrant students to noncollege destinations. Lacking English skills, many immigrant students are enrolled in the least demanding and competitive classes, which eventually exclude them from courses needed for college. Such settings undermine students' ability to sustain motivation and academic engagement.

Undocumented status. LISA data suggest that undocumented students often arrive in the U.S. after multiple family separations and traumatic border crossings. Once settled, they may continue to experience fear and anxiety about being apprehended, being separated from their parents again, and being deported. Such psychological and emotional duress can take their toll on the academic experiences of undocumented youth. Undocumented students with dreams of graduating from high school and going on to college will find that their legal status stands in the way of their access to postsecondary education.

Seasonal migration. Data suggest that approximately 600,000 children travel with their migrant parents in the U.S. each year. Young people in seasonal migrant families face particular challenges. They experience multiple moves, frequent interrup-

tions in schooling, and harsh working and living conditions. Migrant children are the least likely to be enrolled in school. The lack of continuity in schooling (because of interruptions during the school year, the difficulty of transferring school records, health problems, and lack of English-language skills) contributes to their low attendance and to their high dropout rate (the dropout rate after sixth grade among these children is twice the national average, and typically these students reach only the eighth grade).

English-language acquisition. Most immigrant youth are second-language learners. English-language difficulties present particular challenges for optimal performance in the current context of high-stakes tests. Performance on tests such as the TAAS in Texas, the Regents Exam in New York, and the MCAS in Massachusetts has implications for college access. SATs are also a challenge and serve to limit entry into the more competitive colleges. Second-language acquisition issues can mask actual skills and knowledge, particularly around vocabulary and on subtle "trick" questions using double negatives in multiple-choice tests. Even when immigrant students are able to enter college while they are still refining their language skills, they may miss subtleties in lectures and discussions. They may read more slowly than native speakers and have difficulty expressing more complex thoughts on written assignments. This is likely to bring down their grades, in turn affecting access to graduate or professional schools.

Access to higher education. Many immigrants who complete high school graduate without the necessary credentials to be accepted into college. They are less likely than their native-born counterparts to have taken advanced science and mathematics courses. Among those who perform well academically, immigrants of Latino origin are least likely to have taken the SAT or to receive high scores on the test; they are also least likely to apply to college. Even when students of immigrant origin have the necessary academic credentials to enter college, many encounter strong socioeconomic and structural barriers that jeopardize their college attendance. They tend to be awarded less financial aid and are more likely to attend community college than four-year college, to study part-time rather than full-time, and to work rather than to take out student loans. These factors limit their ability to earn a bachelor's degree, and many of them leave college before completing their degree. Although college enrollment rates for high school graduates in the past decades have risen for both white and black students, there has been no consistent growth for Latino students, two thirds of whom are of immigrant origin. They are also less represented in graduate school than all other racial and/or ethnic groups and are less likely to receive financial aid to support their graduate studies.

Academic Engagement

While some immigrant youth thrive in American schools, many others face a myriad of structural obstacles that truncate their academic trajectories. There is no

doubt that such obstacles play a critical role in academic outcomes. Focusing exclusively on such structural issues, however, overlooks the crucial role of agency in the schooling experience.

In order to perform optimally on the educational journey, a student must be engaged in learning. When a student is engaged, she is both intellectually and behaviorally involved in her schooling. She ponders the materials presented, participates in discussions, completes assignments with attention and effort, and applies newfound knowledge to different contexts. Conversely, when academically disengaged, a student is bored, learns suboptimally, and tends to receive lower grades than he is capable of. In its most extreme form, academic disengagement leads to a pattern of multiple failures. In such cases, the student has stopped engaging in his schooling—he is habitually truant, rarely completes assignments, and shows little or no interest in the materials presented.

We claim that academic engagement has three discrete dimensions—cognitive, behavioral, and relational. Cognitive engagement refers to the student's intellectual or cognitive involvement with schoolwork. This dimension includes both intellectual curiosity about new ideas and domains of learning and the pleasure that is derived from the process of mastering new materials. Behavioral engagement refers to the degree to which the student actually exhibits the behaviors necessary to do well in school—attending classes, participating in class, and completing assignments. Relational engagement is the degree to which the student reports meaningful and supportive relationships in school, with adults as well as peers. These relationships can serve both emotional and tangible functions. Cognitive and behavioral engagements are viewed as the manifestations of engagement, while relational engagement is viewed as the mediator of these engagements. Relational supports can serve to mediate the effects of family and contextual risks on individual attributes.

LISA data suggest that patterns of academic engagement have implications for academic outcomes among immigrant youth, with relational engagement playing an important role in their academic trajectories. Academic engagement is a particularly important dimension of schooling, as it would appear to be malleable and hence a promising level for intervention.

Social Disparagement, Identity, and Academic Outcomes

Young immigrants who are subject to negative expectations will suffer in their academic performance. Cross-cultural data on a variety of socially disparaged immigrant minorities in a number of contexts suggest that social disparagement adversely affects academic engagement. The evidence indicates that the social context of reception plays an important role in immigrant adaptation. The work of George De Vos on immigrant minorities in various settings—Europe, Japan, and the U.S.—and the work of John Ogbu among native and immigrant minorities in the U.S. and elsewhere suggest that long-term, cross-generational patterns of structural in-

equality and social disparagement may generate cultural models, social practices, and psychological responses that keep some individuals from minority backgrounds from investing in schooling as a strategy for status mobility.

In cases where racial and ethnic inequalities are highly structured, such as for Algerians in France, Moroccans in Belgium, Koreans in Japan, and Mexicans in California, social disparagement often permeates the experience of many minority youth. Members of these groups are not only effectively locked out of the opportunity structure (through segregated and inferior schools and work opportunities in the least desirable sectors of the economy) but also commonly become the objects of stereotypes of inferiority, sloth, and inclinations toward violence, gang activities, and, in Europe, terrorism (the second-generation children of Muslim immigrants in Europe experience intense prejudice in the aftermath of the "homegrown" terrorist attacks in London and the earlier attacks in Madrid and Holland). Facing such charged attitudes, socially disparaged youth may come to experience the institutions of the dominant society—and specifically its schools—as alien terrain that reproduces an order of inequality. While nearly all immigrant and racial minority groups face structural obstacles, not all groups elicit and experience the same attitudes of social disparagement across generations. Furthermore, some immigrant groups elicit more negative attitudes—encountering a more negative social mirror—than others do. In U.S. public opinion polls, for example, Asians are seen more favorably and Afro-Caribbeans and Latinos more negatively.

Race and color continue to matter in American society. Mary Waters's data reveal that West Indian immigrants are shocked by the level of racism against blacks in the U.S. Though they arrive expecting structural obstacles such as discrimination in housing and job promotions, they find the intensity of both overt and covert racial prejudice and discrimination particularly distressing. Yet these black immigrants tend to share a number of characteristics that are protective and that contribute to their relative success in the new setting. Their children, however, after encountering sustained experiences of social disparagement, racism, and limited economic opportunity, begin to respond in cultural ways similar to those of African Americans, who have faced generations of exclusion and discrimination.

While cross-sectional data have been used to identify this transgenerational pattern, data from the LISA study suggest that a process of racialization that further excludes many immigrant youth from academic pursuits is unfolding at a rapid pace within a few years of migration. How is identity implicated in these rapid shifts?

Immigrant identities. Some youth develop and maintain a coethnic immigrant identity. They do so because they have limited opportunity to make meaningful contact with other groups in the new society, or in response to an understanding that other groups, such as native minorities, are even more socially disparaged than they are as immigrants. Caribbean immigrants may distinguish themselves from Af-

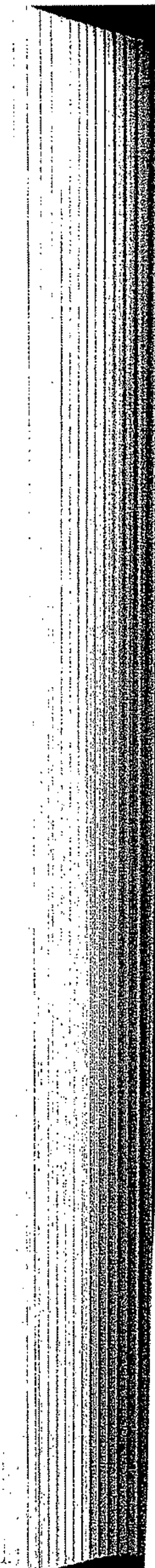
rican Americans in an attempt to ward off social disparagement and symbolic violence and to seek better opportunities.

Other young immigrants may develop an adversarial stance, constructing identities around rejecting—after having been rejected by—the institutions of the dominant culture. These children of immigrants are responding in similar ways to those of other marginalized youth, such as many inner-city, poor African Americans and Puerto Ricans, Koreans in Japan, Algerians in France, and Moroccans in Belgium and the Netherlands. If we look back to previous waves of immigration, many disparaged and disenfranchised second-generation Italian American, Irish American, and Polish American adolescents demonstrated a similar dynamic, including the development of elaborate delinquency-oriented gangs.

Like other disenfranchised youth, children of immigrants who develop adversarial identities tend to encounter problems in school, drop out, and consequently face unemployment in the formal economy. Among those engaged in adversarial styles, speaking the mainstream language of the culture and doing well in school may be interpreted as a show of hauteur and a wish to "act white." When immigrant adolescents acquire cultural models and social practices that view doing well in school as an act of ethnic betrayal, it becomes problematic for them to develop the behavioral and attitudinal repertoire necessary to succeed in school.

The children of immigrants who are not able to embrace their own culture and who have formulated their identities around rejecting aspects of the mainstream society may be drawn to gangs. In the absence of productive academic engagement and meaningful economic opportunities, gang membership can provide a sense of identity and cohesion for marginal youth during a turbulent stage of development. When combined with gang orientation, adversarial identities severely compromise the future opportunities of youth of immigrant origin, who are already at risk of school failure because of poverty, segregation, and discrimination. Such young people face increased odds of imprisonment: roughly half of all youth under the supervision of the California Youth Authority (for homicide, robbery, assault, burglary, theft, rape, drugs, arson, kidnapping, and extortion) come from immigrant-origin Latino homes; the delinquency rate among the youth of Korean origin in Japan is four times the rate among the majority Japanese; and approximately half of the French and Dutch prison populations are of immigrant origin.

Ethnic flight. The children of immigrant origin who shed their cultures structure their identities most strongly by identifying with the dominant mainstream culture. These youth may feel most comfortable spending time with friends from the mainstream culture rather than with their less acculturated peers. For them, learning to speak standard English not only serves an instrumental function of communicating; it also becomes an important symbolic act of identifying with the majority culture. Among these young people, success in school may be seen not only as a route for individual self-advancement but also as a way to move away from the world of the



family and the ethnic group, symbolically and psychologically. The rapid abandonment of the home culture implied in ethnic flight often results in the collapse of the parental voice of authority. Furthermore, lack of group connectedness can result in feelings of anomie and alienation.

Identification with the mainstream culture may result in weakening of ties to coethnics. These young people may be alienated from their less acculturated peers; they may have little in common with them or even feel that they are somewhat superior. While they may gain entry into privileged positions within mainstream culture, they will still have to deal with issues of marginalization and exclusion. They may find their peer group unforgiving of any behaviors that could be interpreted as ethnic betrayal. It is not necessary for the child of an immigrant to consciously decide to distance himself from his culture.

While there are gains for the immigrant youth who manage to "disappear" into the mainstream culture, there are also hidden costs—primarily in terms of unresolved shame, doubt, and even self-hatred. In earlier waves of European immigration, "passing" was a common style of adaptation among those who phenotypically resembled the mainstream. Passing is not easily available to today's immigrants of color, who mostly come from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia and who look visibly like "the Other."

Transcultural identities. In between the coethnic and ethnic-flight gravitational fields we find the large majority of children of immigrants. The task of immigration for these children is the crafting of a transcultural identity. These youth creatively fuse aspects of two or more cultures—the parental tradition and the new culture or cultures. In so doing, they synthesize an identity that does not require them to choose between cultures; rather, they are able to develop an identity that incorporates traits of both cultures while fusing new elements.

Among these young people, the culturally constructed social strictures and patterns of social control of their immigrant parents and elders maintain a degree of legitimacy. Learning standard English and doing well in school are viewed as competencies that do not compromise but enhance their sense of who they are. These people network with similar ease among members of their own ethnic group and with students, teachers, employers, colleagues, and friends of other backgrounds. A number of studies suggest that immigrant youth who manage to forge transcultural identities tend to be more successful in school.

Many who "make it" perceive and appreciate the sacrifices loved ones have made to enable them to thrive in a new country. Rather than wishing to distance themselves from their group, these youth come to experience success as a way to give back to their parents, siblings, peers, and less fortunate members of the community. Transcultural identities adaptively blend the preservation of the affective ties of the home culture with the instrumental skills required to cope successfully in the mainstream culture. They are most adaptive in this era of globalism and multicultural-

ism, serving both the individual and society at large. By acquiring competencies that enable them to operate within more than one cultural code, these young people are often effective cultural interpreters and bridge-builders between disparate groups.

Social Contexts of Learning

Companionship, a basic human need, serves to maintain and enhance self-esteem and provides acceptance, approval, and a sense of belonging. Instrumental social supports provide individuals and their families with tangible aid (such as baby-sitting, running an errand, or making a loan) as well as guidance and advice (including information and job and housing leads). These supports are particularly critical for disoriented immigrant newcomers. Indeed, LISA data suggest that relational engagement plays a critical role in moderating negative influences such as school violence and low self-esteem.

Affiliative motivations. For many immigrants, social relations are extremely important in initiating and sustaining motivations. While for mainstream white American students achievement is often motivated by an attempt to gain independence from the family, immigrant students are typically highly motivated to achieve *for* their families. Further, we have found that Latino students (more than Asian and Caribbean students) perceive that receiving the help of others is critical to their success.

The family. Family cohesion and the maintenance of a well-functioning system of supervision, authority, and mutuality are perhaps the most powerful factors in shaping the well-being and future outcomes of all children. For immigrant families, extended family members—grandparents, godparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins—are critical sources of tangible instrumental and emotional support. Immigrant parents (particularly those who work long hours and have limited schooling), however, are often unable to support their children tangibly in ways that are congruent with American cultural models and expectations. Further, in sharp contrast to U.S. expectations of parental involvement, many come from traditions that revere school authorities and expect parents not to advocate or meddle.

Communities and community organizations. Family cohesion and functioning are enhanced when the family is part of a larger community displaying effective forms of what Felton Earls has termed "community agency." Culturally constituted patterns of community cohesion and supervision can immunize immigrant youth from the more toxic elements of their new settings. Children who live in cohesive communities where adults can monitor their activities are less likely to be involved with gangs and delinquency and are more focused on their academic pursuits.

Youth-serving organizations, much like ethnic-owned businesses and family networks, can enrich immigrant communities and foster healthy development among

their young people by providing support to parents and families. Such urban sanctuaries, often affiliated with neighborhood churches or schools, provide youth with supervised out-of-school safe havens or "second home" settings. Staff can serve as culture brokers, bridging the disparate norms in place in children's homes and in school.

Mentoring relationships. In nearly every story of an immigrant youth's success there is a caring adult who took an interest in the child and became actively engaged in her life. Protective relationships with nonparent adults can provide these young people with compensatory attachments, safe contexts for learning new cultural norms and practices, and information that is vital to success in schools. Mentoring relationships may have special relevance for immigrant youth who have been separated from loved ones during the course of migration, with the attendant ruptures in significant attachments. Since immigrant parents and other adult relatives may be unavailable owing to long work hours or emotional distress, a mentor can engender new significant attachments, filling the void created by parental absence. Transcultural mentors of the same ethnic background can model the ways in which elements of ethnic identity can be preserved and celebrated as features of the receiving culture are incorporated into the young people's lives.

Peer relationships. Peers can also provide important emotional support that aids the development of significant psychosocial competencies in youth. By valuing (or devaluing) certain academic outcomes and by modeling specific academic behaviors, peers establish the norms of academic engagement. They may further support academic engagement by helping each other with coursework, exchanging ideas, and sharing college preparatory information. Because large numbers of young immigrants attend highly segregated poor schools, they may have limited access to school-savvy networks of peers.

Taken together, these networks of relationships can make a significant difference in educational outcomes. They can serve to help immigrant youth develop healthy identities and become motivated, and they can provide specific information about how to navigate schooling successfully.

Young people of immigrant origin are the fastest-growing sector of the student population in many advanced postindustrial democracies. The preponderance of evidence suggests that they arrive sharing an optimism and hope in the future that must be cultivated and treasured; almost universally they recognize that schooling is the key to a better tomorrow. Tragically, over time, however, many immigrant youth, especially those enrolling in impoverished and deeply segregated schools, face negative odds and uncertain prospects. Too many leave our schools without developing and mastering the kinds of higher-order cognitive skills and cultural sensibilities needed in today's global economy and society. The future of our country will

in no small measure be tied to the constructive harnessing of the energies of these new young Americans.

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The New Americans

A Guide to Immigration Since 1965

EDITED BY

Mary C. Waters & Reed Ueda

with Helen B. Marrow

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