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Summary

Alejandro Portes and Alejandro Rivas examine how young immigrants are adapting to life in the United States. They begin by noting the existence of two distinct pan-ethnic populations: Asian Americans, who tend to be the offspring of high-human-capital migrants, and Hispanics, many of whose parents are manual workers. Vast differences in each, both in human capital origins and in their reception in the United States, mean large disparities in resources available to the families and ethnic communities raising the new generation.

Research on the assimilation of these children falls into two theoretical perspectives. Culturalist researchers emphasize the newcomers' place in the cultural and linguistic life of the host society; structuralists, their place in the socioeconomic hierarchy. Within each camp, views range from darkly pessimistic—that disadvantaged children of immigrants are simply not joining the American mainstream—to optimistic—that assimilation is taking place today just as it has in the past. A middle ground is that although poorly endowed immigrant families face distinct barriers to upward mobility, their children can overcome these obstacles through learning the language and culture of the host society while preserving their home country language, values, and customs.

Empirical work shows that immigrants make much progress, on average, from the first to the second generation, both culturally and socioeconomically. The overall advancement of the immigrant population, however, is largely driven by the good performance and outcomes of youths from professional immigrant families, positively received in America. For immigrants at the other end of the spectrum, average socioeconomic outcomes are driven down by the poorer educational and economic performance of children from unskilled migrant families, who are often handicapped further by an unauthorized or insecure legal status. Racial stereotypes produce a positive self-identity for white and Asian students but a negative one for blacks and Latinos, and racialized self-perceptions among Mexican American students endure into the third and fourth generations. From a policy viewpoint, these children must be the population of greatest concern.

The authors cite two important policy measures for immigrant youth. One is to legalize unauthorized migrants lest, barred from conventional mobility channels, they turn to unorthodox means of self-affirmation and survival. The other is to provide volunteer programs and other forms of outside assistance to guide the most disadvantaged members of this population and help them stay in school.

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The rapid growth of the immigrant population in the United States is one of the most important demographic and social trends confronting this society. Close to 13 percent of the U.S. population today is foreign-born. In 2008, 1.11 million immigrants were admitted for legal permanent residence; another 72,000 as refugees and asylees.[1] Although the flow of unauthorized immigration slowed in the wake of the economic crises beginning in 2007, the resident unauthorized population approaches, according to the best estimates, 12.5 million.[2]

Among the most important social consequences of this large immigrant flow are the reconstitution of families divided by migration and the procreation of a new generation. Unlike adult immigrants, who are born and educated in a foreign society and whose outlook and plans are indelibly marked by that experience, the children of immigrants commonly become full-fledged members of the host society with outlooks and plans of their own.[3] If their numbers are large, socializing these new citizens and preparing them to become productive and successful in adulthood becomes a major policy concern.

That is the challenge facing the United States today. The rapid growth and diversity of this young population have naturally sparked worries and questions about its future. We review in the next section the various theoretical perspectives that researchers have advanced on the question of how young immigrants are adapting to life in the United States and shaping their futures, but first it is necessary to make some important preliminary distinctions. Although public discourse and some academic essays treat this young population in blanket terms, the truth is that the term *migrant children* conceals more than it reveals because of the heterogeneity of its component groups.

First, there is a significant difference between children born abroad and those born in the host society. The former are immigrant children, while the latter are children of immigrants—the first and second immigrant generation, respectively. Research points to major differences in the social and cultural adaptation of the two groups.[4] Another distinct group, the "1.5 generation," includes children born abroad, but brought to the host society at an early age, making them sociologically closer to the second generation.

Vast differences in the human capital origins of these populations and in the way they are received in the United States translate into significant disparities in the resources available to families and ethnic communities to raise a new generation in America.

These young immigrants also differ by their countries of origin and their socioeconomic background. It turns out, though, that the two characteristics overlap to a large degree because immigration to the United States has divided into two streams. One is made up of highly skilled professional workers coming to fill positions in high-tech industry, research centers, and health services. The other is a

larger manual labor flow seeking employment in labor-intensive industries such as agriculture, construction, and personal services.[5] Professional migration, greatly aided by the H1-B temporary visa for highly skilled workers that was approved by Congress in 1990, comes primarily from Asia, mainly from India and China, with smaller tributaries from the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan. Manual labor migration comes overwhelmingly from adjacent Mexico, and secondarily from other countries of Central America and from the Caribbean. To the disadvantages attached to their low skills and education are added those of a tenuous legal status, as the majority of these migrants come surreptitiously or with short-term visas.[6]

To the extent that migrant workers, either professional or manual, return promptly to their countries of origin, no major consequences accrue to the host society. In reality, however, many of them, both professionals and manual workers, stay and either bring their families or create new families where they settle. Over time, the divide in the major sources of contemporary migration has given rise to two distinct pan-ethnic populations in the United States—"Asian Americans," by and large the offspring of high-human-capital migrants, and "Hispanics," the majority of whom are manual workers and their descendants.[7] Vast differences in the human capital origins of these populations and in the way they are received in the United States translate into significant disparities in the resources available to families and ethnic communities to raise a new generation in America. Naturally, the outcomes in acculturation and social and economic adaptation vary accordingly.

The research literature has focused on these differences, although it has been largely oblivious of their historical origins, treating "Hispanic" and "Asian" as almost timeless, immanent categories. In examining research findings about the adaptation of migrant youths from these distinct groups, it is important to keep in mind that adaptation is not a process that happens to a child alone. Rather, it entails constant interaction with others. Language and cultural learning, for example, involve not just the individual but the family, with parents and children commonly acculturating at different paces. Similarly, self-esteem and future aspirations are not developed in isolation or even under the influence of families alone. And many circumstances (including, for example, age of migration) shape the varied types of social interactions that migrant children will have in the host society.

Theoretical Perspectives on the Future of the Second Generation

Social scientists have offered a range of perspectives on the future of this large cohort of immigrant children, each with its own implications for both the second generation and society as a whole. In this section, we outline briefly these contrasting perspectives; later we review empirical findings bearing on them. Researchers' explanations of and predictions about the social and economic assimilation of children of immigrants vary according to their views on the nature of assimilation, the extent to which assimilation will take place, and the segment of society into which the children of immigrants will assimilate.

Theoretical perspectives fall into two groups that may be labeled "culturalist" and "structuralist." Culturalist views emphasize the relative assimilation of immigrants into the cultural and linguistic mainstream; structuralist perspectives emphasize the newcomers' place in the socioeconomic hierarchies

Table 1. An Overview of Theoretical Perspectives on Assimilation

Perspective	Primary proponents	Views toward assimilation	Empirical basis
		Cultural perspectives	
Hispanic challenge	Samuel Huntington	Pessimistic, not happening	Theoretical
The new melting pot	Richard Alba and Victor Nee	Optimistic, occurring just as in generations past and transforming society's mainstream	Secondary review of historical and contemporary research on immigrant assimilation
		Structural perspectives	
Second-generation advantage	Philip Kasinitz, John Mollenkopf, Mary C. Waters, and Jennifer Holdaway	Optimistic, the second generation is situated in a social and cultural space that works to its advantage.	Cross-sectional study of second-generation young adults in New York City
Generations of exclusion	Edward Telles and Vilma Ortiz	Pessimistic, Mexican Americans stagnating into the working class or assimilating into a racial underclass	Longitudinal study of three-plus generations of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles and San Antonio
Segmented assimilation	Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut	Mixed, assimilation may help or hurt social and economic outcomes depending on parental human capital, family structure, and contexts of incorporation.	Longitudinal study of second-generation youths in San Diego and South Florida from early adolescence to young adulthood
Age of migration	Rubén Rumbaut, Dowell Myers, and Barry Chiswick	Mixed, native-born youths and those arriving at an early age have definite linguistic and educational advantages. Migrants arriving in adolescence are at risk.	Analysis of 2000 census data and various Current Population Survey data

of the host society and focus on such areas as occupational achievement, educational attainment, poverty, early childbearing, and incarceration. The two broad types of assimilation need not have parallel outcomes. For instance, an individual who is fully assimilated into society's cultural and linguistic mainstream can still experience poor outcomes in the labor and educational markets. Conversely, an individual may not become fully integrated culturally and still do well both economically and occupationally. For the most part, these views have been formulated by U.S. scholars and are grounded on the American experience. Although the body of research on the European second generation is growing fast, no comparable set of theories has emerged so far. Table 1 presents a summary of the views to be reviewed next.

Culturalist Perspectives

Cultural theories range from pessimistic to optimistic in their view about how and how well immigrants and their children are joining American society's mainstream. At the pessimistic end is the belief championed by political scientist Samuel Huntington that children of immigrants are not assimilating.[8] In this "Hispanic challenge" view, certain groups—Hispanics in particular—have arrived in such large numbers in concentrated parts of the country that they are not inclined to acculturate. Immigrants and their children resist learning English, place allegiance in the interests of their ethnic communities and home countries, and reject the traditional Anglo-Protestant culture of the United States.[9]

Huntington's perspective is not rooted in original empirical research, but is rather a response to what he perceives to be cultural forces within the immigrant community that prevent current immigrants from assimilating. Critics have had no difficulty countering his theoretical assertions with evidence that immigrants are capable of assimilating culturally and linguistically. For instance, there is

little evidence that children of immigrants avoid learning English or that they continue to use their native languages past the second generation.[10] Nevertheless, Huntington's Hispanic-challenge theory remains important because it resonates with a certain set of the American public that continues to suspect, evidence to the contrary, that immigration harms the institutions of the nation.

On the more optimistic side of the culturalist approach are those researchers who have dusted off the traditional melting-pot theory for the twenty-first century. They argue that cultural and political assimilation continues to take place just as it has in the past and that immigrants assimilate not into specific segments of society, but rather into a broad mainstream that is simultaneously changed by them. The champions of the "new melting-pot" viewpoint, Richard Alba and Victor Nee, describe assimilation as "something that frequently happens to people while they are making other plans."[11] Although assimilation may take time, they say, the children of today's immigrants and subsequent generations will eventually join the body of society, even if they do not ultimately achieve upward mobility.

In Alba and Nee's new melting-pot view, exposure to the host society and assimilation are inevitable. For policy makers, this view implies the need to increase the exposure of children of immigrants to the institutions of the mainstream by, for example, accelerating their learning of English and providing migrant children and their families with information about educational programs and occupational opportunities. The challenge is to avoid the suggestion, implicit in the old melting-pot perspective, that assimilation essentially means imposing the dominant culture on newcomers.[12] As supporters of the new melting pot see it, the mainstream is changing along with immigrants: assimilation is a two-way process. According to Alba and Nee's perspective, assimilation is occurring. Social thinkers should be concerned more with its nature and mechanics than with its factual existence.

Structuralist Perspectives

Structuralist perspectives too can be organized by their degree of optimism about the future of immigrants and their children. According to the more pessimistic "generations-of-exclusion" hypothesis, so named after the book of that title by sociologists Edward Telles and Vilma Ortiz, immigrants and their children are isolated from the opportunities for mobility offered by the mainstream, not because they avoid assimilation, but because they belong to heavily disadvantaged ethnic and racial groups. In the generations-of-exclusion view, Hispanic immigrants and their descendants move into communities and segments of society that have been racialized—that is, identified in negative racial terms—and marginalized. Past waves of immigrants from Europe were able to assimilate both culturally and economically by gradually elbowing their way into the more privileged "white" segments of the American racial hierarchy.[13] By contrast, today's Hispanic immigrants, whose roots are European, risk becoming a distinct race with consistently worse outcomes than whites.

The research of Telles and Ortiz into Mexican American communities over several generations has borne out many of the expectations of this racialization view.[14] In 2000, they re-interviewed Mexican Americans who had been part of a 1965 study of the social condition of the Mexican American community. They then constructed a longitudinal data set following the original respondents

and their descendants into the third, fourth, and sometimes fifth generation. Most members of those latter generations, they found, still lived in predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods, married within their ethnicity, and identified as Mexican. Socioeconomic gains made between the first and the second generations stalled thereafter, as poverty rates in the third and fourth generations stayed high and educational attainment fell.

According to the generations-of-exclusion perspective, children of immigrants can expect to assimilate into the racial and ethnic categories seen as "theirs" by the host society. Outcomes, therefore, will not differ much across generations. These children will not join an all-inclusive American "mainstream," but rather settle into their place in a segmented and racially divided society. From a policy perspective, the aim would be to integrate the second and subsequent generations socially and economically primarily using the same strategies used to address racial and ethnic inequalities among native-born minorities.

Proponents of another structural theory, the "second-generation advantage," see benefits for children of immigrants from living in two societies and cultures. Empirical support for the idea of a second-generation advantage comes from a study of young adults in New York City conducted by Philip Kasinitz and his colleagues.[15] The study finds that members of the second generation supplement their searches for employment by tapping into immigrant social networks and by making use of resources and institutions established to aid native racial minorities achieve upward mobility.[16]

At its core, the second-generation-advantage perspective is that the information and support available to youths who exist at an intersection of several social and cultural currents give them a significant edge for upward mobility. From a public policy standpoint, the aim would be to maximize the ability of these youngsters to make use of their distinct resources. Part of doing so is recognizing that children of immigrants have multiple pathways for transitioning successfully to adulthood.

Between optimism and pessimism lies "segmented assimilation," a structural view that does not automatically predict positive or negative outcomes. From this perspective, the forces underlying second-generation advantage may indeed be at play, but specific groups of immigrants face distinct barriers to upward mobility. Three forces—the co-ethnic community, government policy toward these groups, and the groups' race and ethnicity—can work either to raise or to lower the barriers to successful assimilation. Supporters of segmented assimilation focus less on whether children of immigrants are assimilating and more on the segment of society that is their destination. They see assimilation not as leading automatically upward into the middle class, but also as potentially leading downward.[17]

The segmented-assimilation perspective is supported mainly by findings of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) by Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut. The CILS followed thousands of second-generation youths in San Diego and South Florida from middle school through high school and into post-college young adulthood. The original survey, conducted in 1992–93, interviewed a sample of 5,266 eighth- and ninth-grade students statistically representative of the universe of second-generation youths in these grades. This sample was

followed and re-interviewed in 1995–96, approximately by the time of high school graduation for most respondents. A random sample of 50 percent of parents was also interviewed at the same time. The final follow-up survey took place in 2002–03, when respondents had reached young adulthood. Approximately 70 percent of the original sample was contacted and re-interviewed. By following the youths through these vital years in personal development, Portes and Rumbaut were able to define predictors of their key social and economic outcomes later in life.

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According to the segmented-assimilation approach, the life trajectories of the second generation are predicted by the racial, labor, and socioeconomic sectors of the host society into which their parents were incorporated and by the resources at their parents' disposal to aid their offspring.[18] Each child must negotiate the advantages and disadvantages of his specific family background. Racial discrimination can severely diminish the life chances of second-generation youths who are identified by the host society as belonging to a disadvantaged minority. The sector of the labor market to which these youths gain access can also affect their lifetime economic well-being, especially because the U.S. labor market has become increasingly divided, with highly technical and well-paid occupations at the top, low-paid menial occupations at the bottom, and few opportunities in between. A youth's access to quality education will determine his ability to gain well-paid future employment at the top of this "hourglass" labor market.

Because of the importance of parental resources and the community context into which new immigrants are received, families of migrants entering the labor force at the bottom of the occupational hourglass can expect minimal upward mobility. But poorly endowed immigrant families can overcome their situation through "selective acculturation." Their children can learn the language and culture of the host society while preserving their home country language, values, and customs—simultaneously gaining a solid foothold in the host society and maintaining a bond with their parents' culture.[19] These children are thus in a better position to overcome the disadvantages suffered by their parents because they are protected from the negative effects of discrimination and the lure of gangs and street life.

Selective acculturation is distinct from second-generation advantage in that it is a strategy employed by parents and the immigrant community rather than by children themselves and is not common to all members of the second generation. Whereas the benefits of second-generation advantage depend on how well children situated between cultures can make use of community networks, the benefits of selective acculturation depend on the extent to which parents and a cohesive co-ethnic community prevent children from assimilating to the disadvantaged segments of the host society and induce them to retain key aspects of their home culture. Policy makers evaluating children of immigrants from

a segmented-assimilation perspective would recognize that assimilation does not necessarily bring about positive social or economic outcomes and that preserving elements of the parental culture and resisting uncritical acceptance of all features of the host nation can produce the best payoffs.

An emerging perspective that can also be classified within the structuralist camp emphasizes how birthplace and age at migration can shape subsequent educational and occupational outcomes. Rubén Rumbaut gave impetus to this view with his analysis of outcome differences among children born abroad and brought to the United States at different ages and native-born children of foreign or mixed parentage (the second and "2.5" generations).[20] Dowell Myers and his colleagues later built on the idea by finding a "gradient of socioeconomic outcomes" for Mexican immigrant women who arrived in the United States at different ages. Predictably, those who arrived as young girls became more proficient in English than did those who came as adolescents. Early arrivals also had significantly higher rates of high school graduation, though their advantage declined in terms of college graduation rates or access to white-collar occupations.

Similarly, Barry Chiswick and Noyna Deb-Burman concluded that youth who immigrated as teenagers had worse educational outcomes than did native-born youths of foreign parentage and native-parentage youths.[21] In terms of policy, the age-of-migration perspective points to the importance of programs targeted on adolescent immigrants, especially those from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. The linguistic and educational disadvantages of such youths can become insurmountable barriers to mobility without strong and sustained external assistance.[22]

Empirical Analysis of Adolescent Outcomes

In this section, we review certain key outcomes of the migrant adaptation process during adolescence. For reasons of space, we limit the review to those outcomes for which a substantial research literature has accumulated, leading to significant findings for both theory and policy.

Aspirations, Expectations, and Academic Performance

Much of the empirical work on immigrant adolescent adaptation focuses on the shaping power of aspirations and expectations—and for good reason. Sociologists and psychologists have provided consistent evidence of the influence of aspirations and expectations on adolescent outcomes. The underlying rationale is straightforward: adolescents who aspire to a university education may or may not fulfill their aspirations; but those who do not so aspire will not get that education. In this sense, adolescent aspirations are a necessary condition for subsequent achievement.

Empirical work on migrant children's aspirations is based primarily on databases such as the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS); the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health); the Panel Study of Income Dynamics; and the census Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS). Some studies draw on the publicly available CILS, while many others make use of ad hoc samples. The literature features a bewildering variety of definitions of outcomes and of units of analysis. Some studies differentiate between aspirations as symbolically ideal goals and expectations as realistic ones. Others lump the two as joint

indicators of general ambition. Some studies focus on parental expectations, others on those of migrant youths. Samples may be partitioned across generations—from the first to the second and even the 2.5 generation—and across individual nationalities, races, and pan-ethnicities.

Aspirations and Expectations: Areas of Agreement. Rather than review individual studies, we focus on general areas of agreement and cite sources. In general, studies in this area converge on five key points. First, immigrant children and children of immigrants (that is, the first and second generations) tend to have higher ambition (aspirations or expectations, or both) than their third-generation and higher counterparts and have generally superior academic performance.[23] The research supports Grace Kao and Marta Tienda's concept of "immigrant optimism" and Portes and Rumbaut's "immigrant drive." Generally speaking, studies agree with the hypothesis of second-generation advantage.[24] Second, immigrants of different national origins vary significantly in both ambition and performance. Asian-origin groups tend to have higher and more stable expectations and to perform better in school; Mexican and other Latin-origin groups and those from the black Caribbean scatter toward the opposite end of the spectrum.

These differences are partly attributable to parental socioeconomic status, but they do not entirely disappear after family status controls are introduced—that is, when the comparison is between groups with similar status.[25] These findings support segmented assimilation and, more broadly, the generations-of-exclusion perspective taken by Telles and Ortiz. Third, parents and peers powerfully influence the ambitions of both immigrant and native-parentage children, though that influence differs significantly by racial and ethnic group and immigrant national origin.[26] Fourth, girls consistently have higher ambition and perform better than boys, while older youngsters have lower aspirations and worse grades than their grade-school counterparts.[27] Finally, aspirations and academic performance are strongly correlated, although it is hard to say which causes which. The most plausible interpretation is a causal loop where these outcomes reinforce each other.[28]

Aspirations and Expectations: Novel Findings. Specific studies advance novel findings that point toward other important trends. Cynthia Feliciano, for example, emphasizes that parental status before migration has distinct effects on ambition and performance.[29] Ambition and performance thus depend less on absolute socioeconomic status than on status relative to the average in the country of origin. Krista Perreira and her colleagues and Patricia Fernández-Kelly highlight the importance of cultural capital brought from the country of origin. Although material capital may be higher among natives in the home country, cultural capital tends to be stronger among immigrants and their children, and it leads to a sustained upward drive. Perreira and her colleagues find, however—in support of the Telles and Ortiz generations-of-exclusion hypothesis—that cultural capital dissipates by the third generation.[30]

Kao and Tienda find that minority youths' aspirations are uniformly high in the early secondary grades, but that black and Hispanic students tend to lower their aspirations, while the ambition of whites and Asians remains stable through the high school years.[31] This conclusion confirms earlier findings that very high aspirations voiced by minority youths early in life may not be realistic.

In one intriguing study, Vivian Louie reports that Dominican-origin adolescents are more optimistic about their long-term prospects than are their Chinese-origin counterparts, despite their objectively lower academic performance. Louie attributes these differences to the specific frames of reference used by both groups. Dominican-origin youths tend to compare themselves with their counterparts in the island, leading them to assess their future optimistically; the Chinese, by contrast, compare themselves with their high-achieving co-ethnic peers and thus have more pessimistic expectations of their own chances.[32]

Self-Identification and Self-Esteem

Along with their aspirations and expectations, the self-identities and self-esteem of children of immigrants are key to their assimilation. Self-identities are the topic of a burgeoning literature that has produced a vast array of findings. Researchers' fascination with this topic is noteworthy because, as their work shows, identities are highly malleable, shifting significantly over time and across social contexts.[33] The question is how such a mutable and "soft" variable could have awakened so much interest. Part of the answer is that shifting self-identities lie at the core of the challenges faced by adolescents caught between different cultural worlds. For the most part, parents want their adolescent children to preserve at least some elements of their own identity and culture, while the host society, particularly schools, pulls in the opposite direction. Second-generation youths have been described as "translation artists" as they struggle with and eventually learn to meet these disparate expectations.[34]

Self-identities are also important because, under certain circumstances, they can trigger collective mobilizations in opposition to the existing sociopolitical order. The massive and violent protests in the suburbs of French cities in 2005 were largely triggered by disaffected second-generation youths who mobilized against what they saw as their permanently subordinate position in French society. Contrary to the "republican" ideology of the French state that sees its residents either as citizens or as immigrants and refuses to recognize any domestic ethnicities, these French-born youths often refuse to call themselves French.[35] Similarly, in California in 1994, American-born youths of Mexican origin mobilized in vast numbers against Proposition 187, the ballot initiative that prohibited illegal immigrants from using state social services, which they saw as a direct threat to their and their parents' identity.[36]

Self-Identity: Areas of Agreement. Research on self-identity too yields convergent empirical findings. We summarize five such findings and cite specific studies. First, place of birth and length of residence in the host society are powerful determinants of self-identity. The native-born second generation is significantly more likely to identify itself with the United States than are youths born abroad and brought to the United States in infancy. Other things being equal, the effect of length of residence for youths born abroad but brought to the new home country at an early age (the 1.5 generation) runs in the same direction. These trends are supported by both U.S.-based research and studies conducted in various European countries.[37]

Second, parental effects on self-identities are inconsistent. Higher parental status facilitates identification with the host society, while having a two-parent family in which both parents were born abroad slows it. High parental education commonly facilitates selective acculturation, which is reflected in the use of hyphenated self-identities. Poorly

educated parents who adhere closely to their culture of origin, in part by adopting an authoritarian style of parenting, can cause their adolescent children to reject the parental culture and national identity—what social scientists call "dissonant acculturation."[38] Third, education promotes a dual or "transnational" identity. Educated second-generation youths are generally tolerant of ambiguity and capable of incorporating diverse elements from different cultures. Instead of a pan-ethnic label, such as "Hispanic" or "Asian," they usually adopt a hyphenated American identity, such as Cuban American or Chinese American.[39]

Fourth, repeated incidents of discrimination by the receiving society lower self-esteem and trigger a reactive ethnicity among migrant youths. That experience often leads them to adopt a nonhyphenated national label, such as "Mexican," or to move from an American self-designation (hyphenated or not) to a pan-ethnic one.[40] Finally, immigrant youths of color such as blacks, mulattoes, mestizos, and Asians are more likely to experience discrimination and, hence, to develop a reactive ethnicity and adopt ethnic labels that they usually regard as very important. In contrast, children of white immigrants who adopt the nonhyphenated identity of the host society (that is, "American") tend to regard their self-designation as less salient.[41]

Self-Image: Other Findings

The American racial hierarchy has resulted in a plurality of self-designations among children of immigrants. The specialized literature distinguishes four basic categories: nonhyphenated Americans, hyphenated Americans, pan-ethnics, and nonhyphenated foreign nationals.[42] Contrary to optimistic views, not everyone joins the mainstream. Indeed, if joining the mainstream means adopting a nonhyphenated American identity, only a minority of second-generation youths do so. Most adopt other labels, not randomly but along patterned lines. As noted, hyphenated American identities are more common among more educated immigrant families, which adopt a path of selective acculturation.

Nonhyphenated foreign identities, such as "Mexican" and "Cambodian," are found among recent members of the 1.5 generation and also among those reeling from experiences of discrimination toward reactive ethnicity.[43] Pan-ethnic categories, such as Hispanic, are adopted by children disaffected with authoritarian parents and undergoing dissonant acculturation and by formerly "American" youths as a form of reactive ethnicity. It can also be used as a sign of conformity with the American ethnic hierarchy and the place a person occupies in it.[44]

Once adopted, for whatever reason, these pan-ethnic labels become stable and powerful. Among children of Latino immigrants, in particular, the pan-ethnic label "Hispanic" or "Latino" often ceases to be a purely ethnic category to become a "race." Table 2 reproduces data from CILS showing that although first-generation parents from Latin America seldom confuse their ethnicity with their race, their offspring do so commonly. For instance, although 93 percent of Cuban parents considered themselves "white," only 41 percent of their children agreed; the rest had mostly migrated to the pan-ethnic Hispanic as their "race." The same pattern is observable among second-generation Nicaraguans and other Latinos. Mexican American youths split between the pan-ethnic label Hispanic (25.5 percent) and their national origin label Mexican (56.2 percent) as their race.

Studies of specific national groups have yielded original and interesting findings.

Table 2. Racial Self-Identifications of Latin American Immigrants and Their Children, by Percent

National origin	Respondent	White	Black	Asian	Multiracial	Hispanic, Latino	National origin (Cuban, Mexican, etc.)	Other
Cuba	Parent	93.1	1.1	0.3	2.5	1.1	0.5	1.4
	Child	41.2	0.8	—	11.5	36.0	5.5	4.9
Mexico	Parent	5.7	—	2.1	21.6	15.9	26.1	28.5
	Child	1.5	0.3	—	12.0	25.5	56.2	4.5
Nicaragua	Parent	67.7	0.5	1.6	22.0	5.4	0.5	2.2
	Child	19.4	—	—	9.7	61.8	2.7	6.5
Other Latin countries	Parent	69.5	4.6	0.8	17.8	2.3	1.9	3.1
	Child	22.8	1.9	—	14.7	52.9	4.6	3.1

Source: Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study parental and first follow-up survey. Reported in Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Legacies* (University of California Press and Russell Sage Foundation, 2001), table 7–7.

Mary Waters, for example, found that self-identifications of second-generation West Indians split between a black American identity, an ethnic or hyphenated identity, and an immigrant identity. Youngsters who identify as black Americans tend to perceive more discrimination and lack of opportunities in the United States and therefore adopt a reactive self-designation. Those who identify as ethnic West Indians, hyphenated or not, perceive more opportunities in the United States and try hard to retain basic elements of their home culture as a means to achieve those opportunities. This effort, along with the solidarity shown to their parents, reflects a pattern of selective acculturation.[45] Similarly, Benjamin Bailey's study among Dominican Americans in Providence, Rhode Island, highlights their use of Spanish as a means to defend their "right" to a Hispanic identity, fending off the black designation foisted on them by the host society.[46] Further, Vivian Louie reports that the use of Spanish, plus frequent trips to the Dominican Republic, facilitates the adoption of a more cosmopolitan "transnational" identity among Dominican youngsters seeking to combine elements of both cultures.[47]

Self-Esteem: Convergent Findings. Self-esteem has been the topic of many sociological and social psychological studies of the second generation. Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, developed by sociologist Morris Rosenberg almost fifty years ago, has been the instrument of choice in this research. Not surprisingly, repeated incidents of discrimination are found to lower adolescent self-esteem, as does a history of conflict with parents reflecting dissonant acculturation. Both Latino and Asian immigrants have reported these negative patterns.[48] High self-esteem is associated with both higher educational aspirations and higher academic performance, although the causal direction of these links has not been clearly established.[49]

Interestingly, self-esteem does not appear to vary significantly among adolescents who adopt different ethnic identifiers. One possible reason is that selecting an ethnic label is a way to protect self-esteem, both among youths undergoing selective acculturation and among those adopting a more critical reactive stance. Lisa Edwards and Andrea Romero found, for example, that Mexican-descent youths make use of vigorous coping

strategies, such as engaging with co-ethnics and adopting a pan-ethnic or nonhyphenated national identity, to protect their self-esteem from the stress of discrimination.[50]

Making use of the longitudinal data in the CILS, Portes and Rumbaut developed a predictive model of self-esteem by selecting determinants at average age fourteen and applying the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to the same sample three years later. They found gender to be significant, with girls displaying lower average self-esteem despite their higher aspirations. Dissonant acculturation, as reflected in heavy parent-child conflict in early adolescence, significantly lowered self-esteem later in life. Conversely, selective acculturation, as indexed by fluent bilingualism, increased it. With all other predictors controlled, Southeast Asian–origin youths (Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese) displayed the lowest self-esteem of all national origin groups.[51]

Other studies among Latin-origin youths, such as those by Stephanie Bohon and her colleagues, indicate that Cuban Americans tend to have significantly higher self-esteem than their Latin-origin counterparts.[52] The CILS data confirm this finding, especially when Cuban Americans are compared with Mexican Americans: self-esteem scores of the former exceed those of the latter by 25 percentage points. Such differences disappear, however, in multivariate regressions, indicating that they are primarily caused by factors such as parental status, length of U.S. residence, and fluent bilingualism.[53]

Linguistic Adaptation

Learning the language of the host society is indisputably a major precondition for moving ahead in it. More contested is the value and role of retaining parental languages. In a largely monolingual country such as the United States, nativist critics have repeatedly denounced the existence of linguistic enclaves, extolling the value of "English immersion" programs as a means to fully integrate foreigners into the American mainstream.[54] In a more academic vein, Hyoung-jin Shin and Richard Alba in the United States and Hermut Esser in Germany have argued that preserving the use of foreign languages yields little in the way of economic returns to the second generation and that the key priority is to acquire fluency in the host-country tongue.[55]

Linguistic Adaptation: Areas of Agreement. Research in linguistics, educational psychology, and sociology takes a more positive view of preserving foreign language use and converges in the following three points. First, fluent bilingualism is associated with higher cognitive development. Second, fluent bilingualism is associated with higher academic performance and higher self-esteem in adolescence.[56] Third, fluency in the language of the host society is almost universal among second-generation youths; fluency in the parental languages is much less common.[57]

Linguistic Adaptation: Other Findings. The direction of causal influence between bilingualism and cognitive development and between bilingualism and academic performance has not been clearly established. In a pioneering longitudinal study of Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican students, Kenji Hakuta and Rafael Diaz found that fluent bilingualism was a positive and significant influence on subsequent academic performance.[58] Data from CILS confirm this association, but not its causal direction. Nevertheless, recent studies consistently report that students coming from a bilingual and bicultural background have higher test scores, higher

probability of high school graduation, and a higher probability of attending college.[59] In all likelihood, the relationship between cognitive development and bilingualism is mutually reinforcing. For linguist J. Cummins, the cognitive advantage of bilinguals lies in their ability to look at language rather than through it to the intended meaning, thus escaping the "tyranny of words."[60]

In addition to its positive link with cognitive development, fluent bilingualism also keeps open the channels of communication with parents and allows second-generation youths to acknowledge and value aspects of the parental culture, thus promoting selective acculturation. By contrast, in the United States, English monolingualism among children combined with foreign monolingualism among parents has been found to produce dissonant acculturation in adolescence.[61] Ted Mouw and Yu Xie report that fluent bilingualism improves school performance when parents are foreign monolinguals, but that the effect ceases to be significant when parents become fluent in English. They attribute this difference to the influence of parental aspirations on children's performance and the differential capacity of parents to communicate these goals to their offspring.[62] In other words, parents who are foreign monolinguals are able to convey and explain their aspirations to children who are fluently bilingual in a way that they could not if the children had lost the parental language. Once these parents have acquired fluency in English, they can convey their views and aspirations even if their children have become English monolinguals. This pattern —with both parents and children learning the language of the host society—is defined as "consonant acculturation."

Mexican American novelist Richard Rodriguez put the consequences of English monolingualism and subsequent dissonant acculturation in a more poignant personal vein: "I knew that I had turned to English only with angry reluctance. . . .I felt that I shattered the intimate bond that once held the family close. . . .I was not proud of my mother and father. I was embarrassed by their lack of education. . . .Simply what mattered to me was that they were not like my teachers."[63]

Determinants of bilingual fluency in the second generation include, predictably, two-parent families where both parents were born in a foreign country and the use of a foreign language at home. Another predictor is parental status, with higher-status parents having greater resources for sustaining dual-language fluency in their children. Gender is also important, with females more likely than males to be bilingual—a characteristic attributed to the greater tendency of girls to remain at home and, hence, be more susceptible to parental cultural influences.[64]

Portes and Rumbaut report that, by age seventeen, only 28.5 percent of the CILS sample could be classified as fluent bilinguals. Among Asian-origin youths, the figure was lower than 10 percent; among Latinos, it hovered around 40 percent. The difference is attributable to the lack of a common language among Asian immigrants and to greater resources for linguistic preservation among Latin Americans. Interestingly, differences in bilingual fluency among the Asian and Latino second generation correlate with differences in self-esteem favoring the latter, despite their lower average family status.[65]

Adult Outcomes

The empirical literature addressing adulthood, when decisions and events of childhood and adolescence crystalize into durable outcomes, is marred by several shortcomings.

First, there is a strong tendency among researchers to lump data into pan-ethnic categories, which obscure more than they reveal.[66] The label "Hispanic," for example, combines multiple national origin groups and multiple generations, concealing the considerable differences among them. The label "Asian" is still more egregious, because the groups so labeled do not even share a common language. Second, studies of the second generation in adulthood have been mostly cross-sectional "snapshots in time," relying on retroactive reports—survey questions asking respondents to recall and report events that took place in the past, often many years earlier—to measure events occurring in earlier life stages. Such designs suffer two major flaws. First, they cannot establish a reliable causal order among variables, because retroactive reports about earlier "causes" are easily colored by subsequent events. Even more important, adult samples—even those drawn randomly—exclude members of the relevant population who have for various specific reasons fallen off the universe used for sampling. In the case of the second generation, key outcomes indicative of a downward assimilation path, such as being imprisoned for a felony, being deported (in the case of the 1.5-generation youths), or leaving the country for various reasons, remove those individuals from the population normally used as a sampling frame. Ensuing findings inevitably yield an over-optimistic account of the assimilation process.

Two main data sources for the evaluation of adult outcomes remain. The first is analysis based on a combination of decennial census and quarterly Current Population Survey (CPS) data. The second source is one of the few longitudinal studies conducted so far on the second and higher generations.

One of the pivotal studies based on publicly available census data was conducted by Rumbaut, who used 2000 census data for the foreign-born population and adjusted results on the basis of combined 1998–2002 CPS data to yield estimates for the second generation. Thus defined, the foreign-born population of the United States in 2000 numbered 33.1 million and the second generation 27.7 million. Some 40 percent of the foreign-born arrived in the United States as children under eighteen.[67] Table 3 summarizes the extensive tables constructed by Rumbaut on the basis of these data for the foreign-born who arrived as children (under eighteen) and the native-born of foreign parentage—the second generation "proper." The table includes data for three major Latin American national origin groups, including Mexicans; three Asian groups; and, for purposes of comparison, native-parentage whites and blacks of the same age cohort.

Results of the Rumbaut study can be summarized as follows. First, all national origin groups make significant progress from the first to the second generation in educational attainment, with second-generation outcomes approaching average outcomes for native whites. Second, although all national origin groups make educational progress, second-generation Mexicans and Central Americans fall significantly behind native whites in rates of high school completion and college graduation. Second-generation Cubans are even with whites, and all Asian national origin groups exceed native-white educational averages in both the first and second generations. Third, male incarceration rates increase for all national origin groups between the first and second generations. Mexican incarceration rates increase the most, and all Latin American second-generation rates significantly exceed the native-white figure. By

Table 3. Assimilation Outcomes across Generations, by Percent, ca. 2000

National origin	Foreign-born*		Native-born**		Foreign-born*	Native-born**	Foreign-born*		Native-born**	
	Education						Female fertility rate**** Ages:			
	High school dropout	College graduate	High school dropout	College graduate	Male incarceration rate***		15–19	20–24	15–19	20–24
All children of immigrants	31.4	23.2	11.6	27.3	1.25	3.50	3.3	19.7	2.6	17.4
Latin American origin										
Cuban	16.9	22.9	9.1	36.7	2.79	4.20	2.3	18.1	1.8	11.4
Guatemalan/ Salvadoran	53.1	6.4	22.5	23.8	0.75	3.04	4.5	22.9	3.0	16.5
Mexican	61.4	4.3	24.1	13.0	0.95	5.80	5.5	30.2	5.0	25.2
Asian origin										
Chinese	9.0	58.0	3.6	72.5	0.30	0.65	0.3	1.9	0.4	0.9
Indian	6.7	59.4	5.9	72.0	0.29	0.99	0.7	4.3	0.36	1.6
Korean	3.2	59.6	3.2	69.4	0.38	0.94	0.5	3.9	0.2	2.8
Native parentage										
White	—	—	9.1	30.7	—	1.71	—	—	1.9	15.6
Black	—	—	19.3	14.1	—	11.61	—	—	4.5	22.5

Source: Rubén G. Rumbaut, "Turning Points in the Transition to Adulthood," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28 (November 2005): tables 2–4.
*Adults aged 25–39, restricted to those who arrived in the United States as children under 18.
**Adults aged 25–39. Data are for individuals with at least one foreign-born parent.
***Adult males, aged 18–39, in correctional institutions at the time of the 2000 census.
****Females of the indicated ages who had one or more children at the time of the 2000 census.

contrast, Asian incarceration rates are very low in both the first and second generations. Fourth, female fertility rates in adolescence and early adulthood decline across generations for all Latin national origin groups, but they decline least among Mexican Americans. Mexican fertility rates far exceed those of native-white females and are even higher than the native-black figures, which are the next highest. Fifth, Asian fertility rates are extremely low and decline further between generations. Both rates represent but a fraction of the native-white figures.

As a whole, these findings from the Rumbaut study are congruent with the segmented-assimilation hypothesis. They also provide support for the new melting-pot perspective advanced by Alba and Nee, with its vision of an inclusive mainstream, by showing significant average educational progress and declines in fertility rates from the first to the second generations.

The first source of longitudinal data for evaluating adult outcomes is CILS, described previously. Because CILS is the empirical basis for the segmented-assimilation model, it is not surprising that its results support this perspective. Although the CILS study suffers from several limitations, including an original sample restricted to two metropolitan areas and significant attrition by the final survey, its main strength is that it is longitudinal, repeatedly observing the same sample of people over time, thus preventing the censoring of negative assimilation outcomes. It also establishes a clear time order among variables. Table 4 and figures 1, 2, and 3 present a summary of results from the final CILS survey, when

Table 4. Adaptation Outcomes of Children of Immigrants in Early Adulthood, 2002–03, by Percent unless otherwise specified

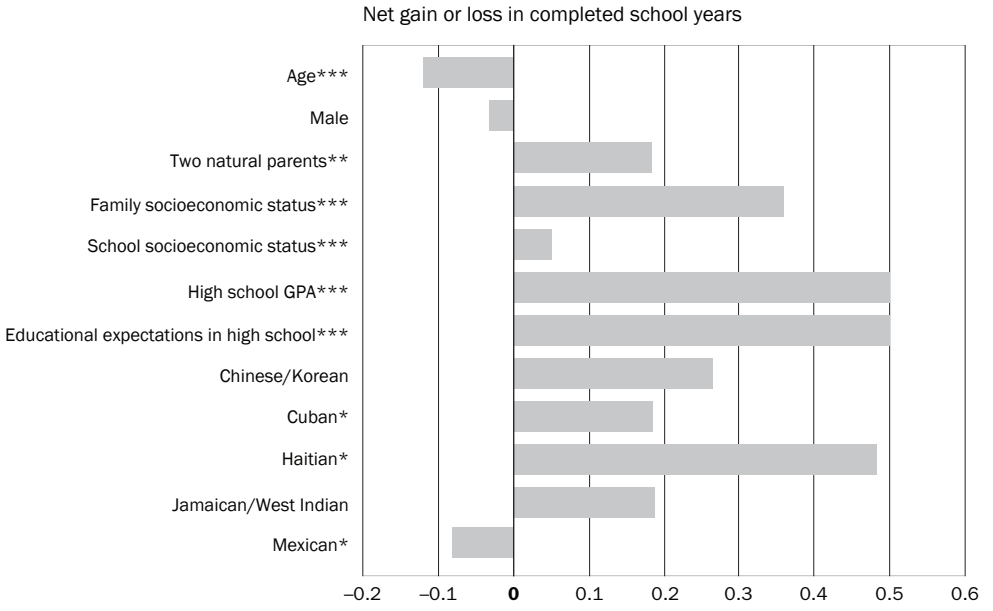
National origin	Outcome									
	Education		Family income*		Unemployed**	Had at least one child		Incarcerated***		
	Mean years	**Percent high school only or less**	**Mean ($)**	**Median ($)**		**Total**	**Females**	**Total**	**Males**	**Number**
Cambodian/ Laotian	13.4	46.7	36,504	24,643	15.5	22.9	31.1	4.6	10.5	158
Haitian	14.4	15.3	33,471	26,000	18.8	24.7	30.8	7.7	14.7	97
Jamaican/ West Indian	14.6	17.6	39,565	29,423	9.5	24.5	25.4	6.0	18.2	159
Mexican	13.4	37.9	39,589	32,828	9.2	40.8	48.0	9.3	17.0	424
Chinese/ Korean	15.5	6.8	47,723	31,136	14.8	6.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	62
Cuban****	15.3	8.1	103,992	69,737	3.0	3.0	0.0	3.2	3.7	135
Filipino	14.5	15.9	64,986	55,167	9.5	19.7	24.8	3.8	5.8	593
Total*****	14.3	22.5	55,624	41,668	8.5	20.3	24.9	5.1	9.2	3,249

Sources: Children of Immigrants Longitudinal final survey, 2002–03; William Haller, Alejandro Portes, and Scott M. Lynch, "Dreams Fulfilled, Dreams Shattered," *Social Forces* (forthcoming, 2011); and Alejandro Portes, Patricia Fernández-Kelly, and William Haller, "The Adaptation of the Immigrant Second Generation in America," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 7 (2009): 1077–104.
*Respondent's family income, whether living with parents or spouse/partner.
**Respondents without jobs, whether looking or not looking for one, except full-time students.
***Self-reports supplemented by searches of publicly available information on incarcerated persons in the Web pages of the California and Florida corrections departments.
****Sample limited to respondents who attended private bilingual schools in Miami during the first survey, 1992–93.
*****The average age of the final follow-up sample was twenty-four. Results uncorrected for sample attrition. See text for explanation.

respondents had reached an average age of twenty-four. Table 4 presents the data broken down by major national origin groups; figures 1, 2, and 3 summarize results of a series of multivariate models predicting educational and occupational achievement in adulthood, as well as events indicative of downward assimilation.[68]

Findings from table 4 and figures 1–3 can be summarized in four main points. First, significant and nonrandom differences across second-generation national origin groups generally correspond with the known profile of the first generation in terms of human capital and also in the way they were received in the United States. Early school dropout, for example, ranges from a low of 6.8 percent among Chinese and Koreans to a high of 47 percent among Cambodians and Laotians. Similarly, teenage child-bearing rates among females range from 0 percent for second-generation Chinese, Koreans, and Cubans to a remarkable 48 percent among Mexican females. Second, good early school grades and positive early educational expectations significantly increase educational attainment and occupational status while preventing downward assimilation. Third, having higher-status parents and being raised by both natural parents also raise educational levels and powerfully inhibit downward assimilation. Fourth, even after controlling for parental variables and early school context and outcomes, there are still differences among national origin groups, especially those associated with a disadvantaged upbringing. Mexican American youths, for example, have a net 19 percent greater chance of experiencing events associated with downward assimilation; the figure rises to 33 percent among

Figure 1. Determinants of Educational Attainment of Children of Immigrants in Early Adulthood, 2002–03



Sources: William Haller, Alejandro Portes, and Scott M. Lynch, "Dreams Fulfilled, Dreams Shattered," *Social Forces* (forthcoming, 2011); Alejandro Portes, Patricia Fernández-Kelly, and William Haller, "The Adaptation of the Immigrant Second Generation in America," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 7 (2009): 1077–104.
Note: Bars represent net effects in completed school years with other variables controlled. Statistical significance is signaled by asterisks as follows: probability of a chance effect is less than 5 in 100 = *; less than 1 in 100 = **; less than 1 in 1,000 = ***.

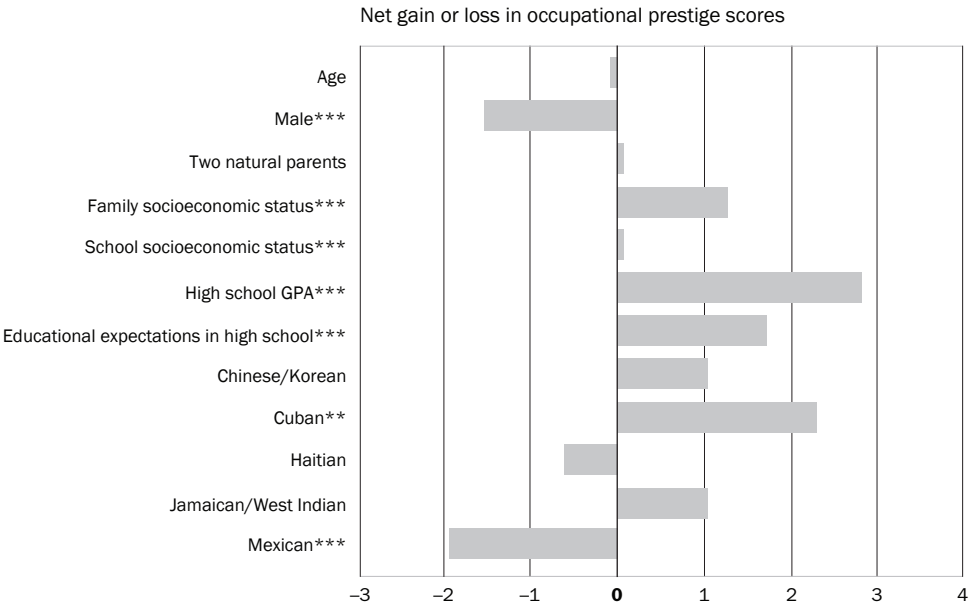
second-generation Haitians and to 46 percent among Jamaicans and other West Indians.

Findings in table 4 and figures 1–3 are uncorrected for attrition. Separate analyses showed that mortality for the sample in the final CILS survey was predicted mainly by low family socioeconomic status and single-parent families—the same two factors that also lower achievement and raise the incidence of downward assimilation. Correcting for sample attrition, therefore, would simply inflate the follow-up sample and further increase observed inequalities among youths from different family backgrounds.

The second source of longitudinal data in this field is the survey of Mexican Americans by Telles and Ortiz, which furnished the empirical basis for the generations-of-exclusion thesis. Although findings are limited to a single national origin group, they go beyond earlier studies in tracing how the assimilation process unfolds after the second generation. The fundamental, and disturbing, finding of the study is that although there is educational progress between the first and second generations, subsequent generations stagnate educationally and occupationally. They never catch up with the native-white averages.

For instance, the odds that the Mexican high school graduation rate will equal the white high school graduation rate rise from only .06 among first-generation immigrants to .58 among their second-generation children, but then decline to .30 among members of the fourth and fifth generations. (Odds less than 1

Figure 2. Determinants of Occupational Attainment of Children of Immigrants in Early Adulthood, 2002–03



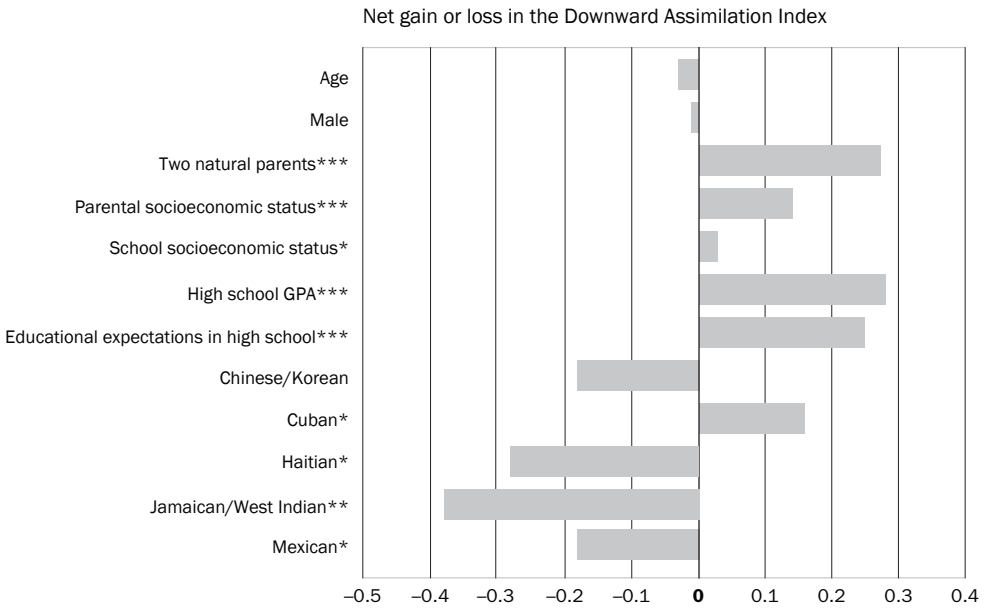
Sources: William Haller, Alejandro Portes, and Scott M. Lynch, "Dreams Fulfilled, Dreams Shattered," *Social Forces* (forthcoming, 2011); Alejandro Portes, Patricia Fernández-Kelly, and William Haller, "The Adaptation of the Immigrant Second Generation in America," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 7 (2009): 1077–104.
Note: Bars represent net effects in Treiman occupational prestige scores with other variables controlled. Statistical significance is indicated by asterisks as defined in figure 1.

indicate a lower probability than whites; .58 indicates that second-generation Mexicans are .58–to–1 as likely to graduate from high school as whites.) The odds of achieving a college degree follow a similar course—from .12 in the immigrant generation to .28 in the second, declining again to .12 in the fourth and higher generations.[69]

After examining a number of possible determinants of this persistent handicap, Telles and Ortiz pin primary responsibility on the "racialization" of Mexican American children, who are stereotyped by teachers and school authorities as inferior to white and Asian students and treated accordingly. This treatment becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, as Mexican-origin youths close ranks to defend themselves against discrimination, abandoning aspirations for high academic achievement and coming to reject members of their own group who retain such aspirations.[70] Telles and Ortiz summarize the experience as follows: "The signals and racial stereotypes that educators and society send to students affect the extent to which they will engage and persist in school. Racial stereotypes produce a positive self-identity for white and Asian students but a negative one for blacks and Latinos, which affect school success. . . .Racialized self-perceptions among Mexican American students generally endure into the third and fourth generations."[71]

These conclusions contradict optimistic accounts of the assimilation process across generations, as well as the notion of an

Figure 3. Determinants of Upward Assimilation among Children of Immigrants in Early Adulthood, 2002–03



Sources: William Haller, Alejandro Portes, and Scott M. Lynch, "Dreams Fulfilled, Dreams Shattered," *Social Forces* (forthcoming, 2011); Alejandro Portes, Patricia Fernández-Kelly, and William Haller, "The Adaptation of the Immigrant Second Generation in America," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 7 (2009): 1077–104.
Note: Bars represent net effects in the Downward Assimilation Index with other variables controlled. Effects have been reflected so that positive scores indicate upward assimilation. Statistical significance is indicated by asterisks, as defined in figure 1.

all-inclusive mainstream. They confirm the segmented-assimilation hypothesis on two points. First, immigrants' reception by the host community plays a decisive role in assimilation outcomes. Second, the achievement drive that first-generation immigrants seek to transmit to their offspring dissipates with increasing acculturation.

Policy Implications

From this review, it is evident that the assimilation of immigrants and their children to the host societies is not simple, homogeneous, or problem-free. Empirical work shows that, on the positive side, much progress is made, on average, from the first to the second generation, both culturally and socioeconomically. On the less rosy side, many individuals and entire groups confront significant barriers to advancement, either because they lack economic resources and skills or because they are received unfavorably by the host community.

The varied theoretical perspectives differ widely in the specific assimilation outcomes they regard as being most important. For researchers of the culturalist school, it is most important for immigrants and their children to acculturate, shedding their old ways and language and becoming undifferentiated from the rest of the American population. Whether they move upward is less important than that they cease to be "foreign." Huntington's Hispanic-challenge view is that immigrants in general and Hispanics in particular do not want to join the mainstream. Although Alba and Nee's new melting-pot perspective provides a more nuanced account, with attention to socioeconomic outcomes, their overall

emphasis is still on children of immigrants' joining the mainstream and losing their ethnic distinctiveness in the process.

Structuralist writers are much more concerned with socioeconomic outcomes. While the second-generation-advantage thesis of Kasinitz and his colleagues fits within this school, its optimistic conclusions are largely predicated on second-generation youths in New York City becoming "true" New Yorkers; it does not seem to matter much if, in the end, they attain only rather mediocre jobs. The remaining perspectives are more mindful that immigrants and their descendants can fully acculturate and still neither move upward occupationally and economically, nor be accepted into native middle-class circles. The aspirations of immigrant parents clearly line up more closely with the structural than the cultural viewpoint: the parents generally care much less that their offspring join an undifferentiated mainstream than that they move ahead educationally and economically.

If upward mobility is the goal, the data at hand indicate that many migrant children are not making it. The overall advancement of this population is largely driven by the good performance and outcomes of youths from professional immigrant families, positively received in America, or of middle-class refugees who have benefited from extensive governmental resettlement assistance[72] and, sometimes, from strong co-ethnic communities. For immigrants at the other end of the spectrum, average socioeconomic outcomes are driven down by the poorer educational and economic performance of children from unskilled migrant families who are often handicapped further by an unauthorized or insecure legal status. From a policy viewpoint, these children must be the population of greatest concern.

A first urgent policy measure is the legalization of 1.5-generation youths who are unauthorized migrants. These children, brought involuntarily into the United States by their parents, find themselves blocked, through no fault of their own, from access to higher education and many other everyday needs, such as driver's licenses, because of their status. This is not an insignificant population. In 2008, it was estimated to number 6 million and included almost half of immigrant youths aged eighteen to thirty-four.[73] As Rumbaut and Golnaz Komaie put it: "For foreign-born young adults, an undocumented status blocks access to the opportunity structure and paths to social mobility. It has become all the more consequential since the passage of draconian federal laws in 1996… and the failure of Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform."[74]

"DREAM Acts" repeatedly introduced in the U.S. Congress to regularize this population and grant them access to opportunities open to others have stalled. Passage of such legislation is urgently needed lest the situation of this large 1.5-generation population devolve into a self-fulfilling prophecy in which youths barred from conventional mobility channels turn to gangs and other unorthodox means of self-affirmation and survival.

The limited longitudinal data available on the adaptation of migrant children point to the importance of volunteer programs and other forms of outside assistance to guide the most disadvantaged members of this population and help them stay in school. A recent study based on the final CILS survey found that respondents who had managed to succeed educationally despite having poor and undocumented parents and an otherwise handicapped upbringing had consistently been supported by volunteers who came to their schools and

exposed them to a different social world.[75] The same study found that cultural capital brought from the parents' home country provided a significant boon because it anchored adolescent self-identities and strengthened their aspirations. These cultural memories helped fend off discrimination and maintain a disciplined stance toward schoolwork.

Cultural capital from the home country sustains and is sustained by selective acculturation. By contrast, dissonant acculturation across generations deprives youths of cultural capital. As they lose contact with or even reject the language and culture of parents, whatever resources are embodied in that culture effectively dissipate. Rejecting parental cultures may facilitate joining an amorphous mainstream, but often at the cost of abandoning those social and social psychological resources that assist structural mobility. The available evidence supports the paradox that preserving the linguistic and cultural heritage of the home countries often helps migrant children move ahead in America.

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