EDUCATION AND IMMIGRATION

GRACE KAO, ELIZABETH VAQUERA AND KIMBERLY GOYETTE

Education and Immigration

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Education and Immigration

Grace Kao, Elizabeth Vaquera, and Kimberly Goyette

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Contents

1 Education and the American Dream
2 Becoming American (or Not): Paths to Assimilation
3 Historical Overview of Immigration
4 Educational Attainment and Socioeconomic Status of Immigrant Adults
5 Educational Achievement and Outcomes of Children in Immigrant Families
6 Language and Educational Success
7 Conclusion

References
Index

To our husbands, Jeff, Steve, and Michael, for their
love and support

and

To our families for their sacrifices that made it possible for
each
of us to experience our own immigrant families

1

Education and the American Dream

Picture the following family:

It is 1989; Juanjo is a 14-year-old boy. He is the son of a Mayan family from Guatemala, who fled the country trying to escape the civil war. They first moved to Mexico, but due to the lack of economic opportunities, they continued their migration north. The family recently arrived to the US, and upon their arrival, they applied for asylum, but the US denies their petition. They cannot return to their home country, so Juanjo's parents decide to stay in the US – undocumented. After they contact an acquaintance who migrated to the US a few years earlier, they are able to find an affordable apartment in a poor neighborhood in the town of Jupiter, Florida. First because of the war in Guatemala and then because of the constant moving, Juanjo has not attended school regularly since he was nine. He is now in the US and about to start classes in his local school half-way through the school year. Neither he nor his parents speak English.

Now imagine this other family:

In the year 2000, Hyunsuk's parents leave South Korea and establish their residence in Torrance, California. They migrate to the US because her father, who has a degree in management and finance, was offered an upper management position. They buy a house in an upper-

middle-class suburban neighborhood, afforded by her father's high-paying job. Her mom also has a Bachelor's degree, but for now she will stay home taking care of her daughter, who is only two, until it is time to start primary school. Having learned English in school back in South Korea, Hyunsuk's parents can speak some English and they decide they will only speak to their daughter in English since they are now not just Korean, but Korean American.

Introduction

The United States is a country of immigrants. Immigration is a key part of why America is considered the land of opportunity. But what does it mean to be an immigrant in America? In this "land of opportunity," anyone could come to the US and expect to be treated just like anyone else. In the idealized vision of America, immigrants from all walks of life can live and flourish in a country where one's race, ethnicity, religion, or class background does not matter. A person could arrive to America without a dime in his or her pocket and without being able to speak a word of English, could "make it" after working hard because America offers freedom and equal opportunity for all.

The crux of the aspirations of the average immigrant (and arguably the average American) is motivated by the notion that one can achieve the American Dream through hard work and perseverance, and, ultimately, hard work and perseverance are rewarded by upward mobility via their children's educational achievement. For both the native-born and immigrants alike, education is seen as the best way to achieve upward socioeconomic mobility. Almost universally, parents want their children to do well in school and to go to college, so that they may one day have a "'good' job," a house, a family, and make a comfortable

living. Immigrant adults may be willing to suffer as newcomers in a strange, unfamiliar land because of the belief that their (American-born or American-raised) children will learn to speak accent-less English, go to college, and obtain a secure, well-paying job (Zhou 1997).

Education – and in particular achievement and attainment – is an important way to judge how well immigrants “fit in” or assimilate into the US. Educational attainment usually refers to the number of years of schooling one receives, or the degrees one earns (such as a Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree, etc.). Educational achievement refers to the grades, test scores, or other indicators that measure performance in school (such as your grade point average (GPA) or SAT score). Of course, achievement and attainment are not completely different from each other, but researchers often study these outcomes separately from one another. Arguably, there is no better single indicator of success for individuals and families than their educational attainment, or the number of years they attend school. Parents and children would no doubt view themselves or others with a Master’s degree as more successful than those who dropped out of high school. However, opportunities to succeed in the US, whether in education or any other realm of life, are not the same for all individuals. Race, ethnicity, gender, national origin, and the ability to speak English fluently are important in shaping the very different lives experienced by immigrants.

Stories about immigrants in books and popular movies often portray those who arrive to the US as foreigners and aliens at first, but they eventually “learn the ropes,” or assimilate, and then become “true” Americans. What does it mean to become an assimilated American? The ideal immigrant (as portrayed by Ben Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt, for example) quickly sheds his or her “foreign” ways and becomes an English-speaking American without a “hyphenated” identity – like Chinese American or Mexican

American. He or she no longer identifies with his or her motherland, and later marries a native-born American and lives undetected among them. An indicator and result of successful assimilation is that an individual attains as much and as good an education as those who are not immigrants, as well as a similar type of job as another individual whose family has lived in the country over several generations.

Stories about assimilation often imply that immigrants are welcome when they become "American." However, not every immigrant has the chance to become "fully" American. Although the US presents itself as a "land of opportunity" that provides "equal chances" to everyone, a closer look through the past and present, as well as at personal and group experiences, tells a different story. Always implied, and often explicit through US immigration and citizenship laws, as well as popular attitudes towards racial, ethnic, and national-origin groups, is the reality that only individuals of certain racial, ethnic, and national origins have the potential to assimilate into (white) America. Hence, some immigrants were seen as "unassimilable" – that is, they would never become wholly American. Interestingly, the category of people who do not "fit in" has evolved over time – this group has included African Americans, Irish, Italians, Poles, Jews, Chinese, Japanese, Asian Indians, Mexicans, and arguably all immigrants who are not seen as "white."

Those immigrants who do "fit in" are perceived to bring ideas and skills that allow America to thrive and become great. Indeed, many of our greatest statesmen, scientists, artists, and so forth were immigrants themselves (think of scientists such as Enrico Fermi and Albert Einstein, or inventor Alexander Graham Bell, or architects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Hideyo Noguchi, and I.M. Pei, or politicians such as Henry Kissinger, or naturalist John Muir). Because America is seen as the "land of opportunity," it attracts "the best and the brightest" from all over the world

and can draw workers with specific skills that are in short supply in the US.

On the other hand, immigrants who do not “belong” or assimilate are often portrayed as “cheap laborers” who unfairly compete with “real” (white and sometimes black) American workers. The perception is that these foreign-born workers are willing to do the same jobs for less money, which drives down wages and increases unemployment among native-born Americans. Outspoken opponents of immigration argue that the foreign-born, particularly those who migrate illegally, drain the resources of our schools, hospitals, and other public services. They portray this group as not wanting to assimilate by learning English, or adopting “American” customs, which they believe further weakens the social fabric of America. These immigrants have been typically caricatured as uneducated, lazy, prone to crime, and simply inferior to (white) Americans.

In this book, we explore theories of how immigrants come to be assimilated into US society – whether the process approximates a “straight line,” with immigrants becoming more culturally and socially similar to the native-born over generations, or whether the process is not straightforward, with some immigrants assimilating into the native-born middle class, while others join the ranks of the urban poor. We review theories that suggest that retaining parts of one’s culture prior to immigration is helpful for some immigrants’ achievement and attainment in the US. We also discuss the belief that immigrants hold advantages in educational achievement and attainment, especially over native-born minorities, because they compare themselves favorably to their peers who did not immigrate and are therefore optimistic about their chances of educational success in the US.

Throughout the book, we ask our readers to keep in mind some questions to help them assess which of the possible descriptions of immigrants’ assimilation fits best. First, how

does the way in which an immigrant comes to the US in the first place matter? Second, how does the reception of the group by the US matter for whether immigrants become "fully American?" Do US laws and policies shape the ability to become assimilated? Third, does it matter what types of jobs are available, where you live, and whether you have a community of co-ethnic peers if you are a recent immigrant? Does an immigrant's ability to speak English and/or the language of his or her parents affect socioeconomic outcomes? Finally, how do race, ethnicity, gender, and national origin shape all of the above? Does it matter for an immigrant's path to assimilation if he is Hispanic from Mexico, or if she is Asian from India? Throughout the book, we encourage readers to think about how race, ethnicity, and national origin of contemporary immigrants are central in thinking about their educational outcomes. Immigrants in the US not only arrive from an increasingly diverse set of countries, but also from a wide variety of racial and ethnic groups.

Throughout the book, we encourage our readers to think about both race and ethnicity as analytically, although not always practically, distinct (Hartmann and Cornell 2007). Ethnicity refers to identities that are chosen or assumed. Often, an individual can decide to adopt his or her ethnic identity. Race is typically assigned. People are placed in racial categories and judged according to that classification, whether or not they want to be. Race may be considered (we argue incorrectly) more "natural" or biologically determined or physiologically based than ethnicity, which is more often related to a place or social group from which a person came. Racial classifications are systematically related to how power and resources in a country are distributed. Ethnicity may also be related to power and resource distributions in a society, but it is often less strongly so. In this chapter, we assert that it is important to understand the ways in which race, ethnicity, and immigrant

status overlap when we think about the educational outcomes of these newcomers. In the next section we present a brief overview of the basic socio-demographic characteristics of the immigrants who currently reside in the US.

Today's Immigrant Population

Currently, over 38 million immigrants live in the United States (Gryn and Larsen 2010). This represents about 13% of the US population. Immigrants arrive to the US from all over the world, but, unlike immigrants who arrived during the 1800s and early 1900s, most of the immigrants today do not come from Europe. Among the foreign-born population in 1960, 75% had European origins (Grieco 2010). In contrast, by 2007, only 13.1% had European origins. In 1960, those from Latin America accounted for only 9.4% of the foreign-born population. By 2007, this number was 53.6%. Similarly, in 1960, only 5.1% of the foreign-born hailed from Asia; but by 2007, Asians accounted for 26.8% of the foreign-born population (Grieco 2010). Together, approximately three-quarters of the foreign-born population in 2009 came from Latin America and Asia. In 2009, Mexico alone accounted for 30% of the foreign-born population (Passel and Cohn 2009).

There is also a growing number of immigrants who come from Africa – although they still account for a minority of all immigrants in the US, adding about 4% of the foreign-born population (Grieco and Trevelyan 2010). The increase of immigration from Africa started in the 1960s with the end of European colonialism and the creation of many independent nation-states in sub- Saharan Africa. Many (mostly white) immigrants decided to migrate given the turmoil of these geopolitical changes, but migration of black Africans

followed shortly thereafter. While many of these immigrants chose Europe as their destination, the numbers of those who migrated to the US started increasing during the 1980s as the European economies began to weaken. In the ten years between 1980 and 1989, 129,000 immigrants arrived from Africa to the US. In the six years between 2000 and 2005, the number of immigrants arriving from Africa to the US had increased to 353,000 (Kent 2007).

The majority of the newer immigrants (those who have arrived since 1965) are not white and their prospects for assimilation and equal outcomes in school and elsewhere remain uncertain. Further, understandings about race and ethnicity vary across different regional and national contexts, so immigrants can be somewhat surprised when they are classified by a distinctly American racial system different from one with which they are familiar. For example, individuals from Spain may be surprised to find themselves grouped together with other “Hispanics” rather than with “(white) Europeans.” People from China may not expect to be grouped with “Asians” that include Cambodians or South Asians.

Immigrant Status of Youth

Because this book focuses on education, we will spend much time discussing school-aged immigrants, that is, children and youth. In the US, children in immigrant families account for almost one in four school-aged children in the US and this figure is expected to increase to two in five by 2020 (O’Hare 2004). Thus, immigrant children form a sizeable portion of the student population and are an integral part of the social fabric of the US. Their socioeconomic advancement in the country largely depends on their educational success.

Immigrants and their children are often referred to by their generational status. Throughout this book, we use the

phrase *first generation* to refer to individuals who were born outside the United States and usually arrived to this country as adults. The *second generation* are individuals who were born in the US but have at least one immigrant parent. Finally, the *third and beyond generation* (which we will primarily refer to as *third generation*) are individuals who were born in the United States to native-born parents. We collapse the third and beyond generation for two reasons. First, as we focus on post-1965 immigration, there are virtually no fourth generation individuals who hail from that period. Second, their grandparents' birthplace is usually unknown from survey data with nationally representative samples. Thus, most social science studies usually cannot differentiate individuals who are third generation (native-born individuals with native-born parents but with foreign-born grandparents) from their fourth, fifth, etc. generation counterparts.

In this book, we often group children of the first and second immigrant generation using the term *children from immigrant families*. These children may themselves be US-born or foreign-born, but have immigrant parents. It is important to keep in mind that nativity, citizenship, and legal US residence are individual characteristics, and any "immigrant" family (in which, for example, the parents are foreign-born) may have children who were only born in a foreign country, only born in the US, or both US-born and native-born. These households may include those who are US citizens, legal permanent residents, or undocumented immigrants.

As you read through the chapters of the book, it is important to keep in mind that *children from immigrant families* are a very heterogeneous group. They range from children who were born and went to school in the US with well-educated, foreign-born parents who speak perfect English and may also have experienced all of their schooling in the US, to immigrant youth who arrived at age 17 with no

knowledge of English and whose parents have very little education and who do not speak English.

In order to capture the importance of age of arrival for those who migrated before adulthood, Rumbaut (2004) proposed a specific terminology to differentiate among immigrant children according to their developmental stage and their age upon arrival to the US. He coined the term “decimal” generations, which, while they complicate the study of immigrants and immigration, are useful in understanding the diverse experiences of immigrants both in school and in their later integration into the labor market.

What are the “decimal generations” and what is their relationship to the educational outcomes of immigrants? The 1.25 generation typically refers to those who migrated as teenagers, that is, they spent their formative years in the country of origin. The 1.5 generation refers to those who arrived before adolescence, and who have experienced some education abroad and some in the US. Finally, the 1.75 generation is composed of those who arrived as preschoolers and will only have experienced US educational institutions. Because they arrive to the US at different ages, there is great variation among these “decimal generations” in how well they adapt to American schools and how fast they learn English. For example, a child who arrives at age 2, when he or she is just starting to learn and develop language skills, will have a very different experience from a 12-year-old who has completed a number of years of education in his or her country of origin, has had time to develop friendships in that country and has a mastery of their non-English mother tongue. Most likely the discordant experiences of the latter example are not comparable to those of the former (Orellana 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). For that reason, researchers are trying to be more meticulous with their classification of these youngest immigrants. The experiences of the 1.75 generation are expected to be closer to those of the second generation

(children born in the US to immigrant parents) than to their 1.25 generation counterparts. Unfortunately, most available data sources do not provide enough information to differentiate immigrants into the decimal generations, and others have sample sizes that are not large enough to perform detailed analyses. Thus, often researchers cannot directly test the assumptions behind Rumbaut's finer categories. Throughout this book, we have highlighted research that discusses the decimal generations; however, you will notice that data analyzed for this volume did not provide such detail.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity among Immigrant and Native Youths

As we have already mentioned in this chapter, immigrants are very diverse in their countries of origin and racial and ethnic makeup. In order to provide a more detailed account of this diversity, we illustrate it with some tables. Table 1.1 presents the generational status by the race/ethnicity of children aged 0–18 in 2007–8. This table presents the percentage of Asians, Hispanics, blacks, and whites who are first, second, or third and beyond generation. We add the first and second generations of children together as they both have immigrant parents. First, note that among children aged 0–18, 5.1% are Asians, 15.7% are black, 21.2% are Hispanic and 57.3% are white. In the overall population, the vast majority of individuals are third and beyond generation (74.8%), while 3.3% are first generation, 18.9% are second generation, and a total of 22.3% are first or second generation children with immigrant parents.

Each race/ethnic group has a very different profile by immigration status. Examine each of the row percentages in the table. For example, among Asian American children, approximately 13.9% are first generation, 64% are second

generation, and 17.2% are third generation and beyond. Almost 78% live in an immigrant family. So, for almost all Asian Americans today, immigration is something they have experienced first-hand and that may continue to shape their opportunities and lives.

For Hispanics, about 8.3% are first generation, 50.4% are second generation, and 37.4% are third generation and beyond. About 58.8% of Hispanic youth live in an immigrant family. Despite the association between Hispanics and immigration in the US media, a sizeable group of Hispanic children (37.4%) are native-born with native-born parents. This is in part due to the history of Mexican incorporation in the US. A large portion of today's Western and Southwestern US was a part of Mexico prior to the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that marked the end of the Mexican-American War. This includes the entire modern state of Arizona, which recently passed restrictive anti-illegal immigration measures (S.B. 1070; Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhood Act, 2010) in 2010. One of its statutes is that anyone can be asked to produce "papers" that document their legal status. In a state that is 30% Hispanic, one suspects that Hispanics, even those whose families have lived for many generations as both Mexicans and Americans on this land, are more vulnerable than whites to increased surveillance that results from this law. Because of their ethnic classification, even those Hispanics who may not have direct experiences of immigration may be treated as though they are newcomers.

Table 1.1 Generational Status by Race/Ethnicity: Children Ages 0–18: 2007–2008 1st Generation

	1st Generation	2nd Generation	1st + 2nd Generation	3rd + Generation		
	Foreign-born children of immigrants	Native-born children of immigrants	Children of immigrants	Native-born children of natives	% Total	Total N
Asian	13.9%	64.0%	77.9%	17.2%	5.1%	3,739,000
Black	1.8%	9.5%	11.4%	84.0%	15.7%	11,619,000
Hispanic	8.3%	50.4%	58.8%	37.4%	21.2%	15,667,000
White	1.0%	6.1%	7.1%	91.0%	57.3%	42,324,000
All	3.3%	18.9%	22.3%	74.8%		
Total N	2,455,000	14,000,000	16,455,000	55,293,000		73,902,000

For black youths, only about 1.8% are first generation compared to 9.5% who are second generation, and 84% who are third generation and beyond. This implies that, for most African Americans in the US, immigration is not something that influences their daily family lives. This is even more the case for white youths, of whom only 1% are first generation compared to 6.1% who are second generation. The vast majority (91%) are third generation and beyond. Again, this means that for almost all white youths, immigration is something that their families did not recently experience.

What are some of the implications of these patterns? First, for most white and black youths, immigration is not something that affects them personally. For many Hispanics and Asians, however, it is an overarching aspect of their daily lives. Second, because the vast majority of today's immigrants come from Latin America and Asia, when we think about the experiences of immigrant youth, we are largely thinking about the experiences of Hispanics and Asian Americans. In a way, it is very difficult to separate how much being an “immigrant” or being “Asian” or “Hispanic” shapes the educational outcomes of the members of those groups.

The Educational Attainments of Immigrant Adults

How well children do in school, what schools they attend, or how far they go are shaped by the experiences of their parents. Thus, in order to understand the educational outcomes of youth, we also need to understand those of their parents, the adults in immigrant families. Important differences in educational outcomes might be expected from those who immigrate as adults compared to those who arrive as children, and those who are born in the US and live in immigrant families. This is even true for individuals whose families come from the same countries and have the same racial and ethnic backgrounds. In other words, the educational experiences of immigrant children, immigrant adults, and their native-born children need to be understood separately. While there are undoubtedly overlapping circumstances among all of them, there are important differences that mark their everyday lives such as English language proficiency, bilingual fluency, the observance of particular cultural traditions, or even the country they consider "home." It is important to account for age at immigration when looking at the educational outcomes of immigrant children and their parents. Immigrants who arrive as children may complete their education in the US in its totality or in several countries. Undoubtedly, their experiences are not comparable to those who arrive to the US as adults. Age at immigration typically determines how and how much education is completed in either country.

As schooling experiences differ amongst adult immigrants, so do their levels of educational attainment. Some immigrants have only completed a few years of primary school, while many others have MAs and PhDs from top national and international institutions. In the US, some immigrant adults may have attended poorer public schools, perhaps with minority and other immigrant children, which

did not well prepare them for college in the US, while others went to the best private schools that enabled their enrollment at elite institutions. In other words, adult immigrants arrive to the US on very unequal playing fields, and often these inequalities are further reinforced or even exacerbated among their children after they settle in the US, due to their racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic positions within the country.

The educational trajectories of adult immigrants largely determine their opportunities in the US in terms of where they live, with whom they socialize, and to which jobs they aspire. Their educational level is primarily what determines how and where they are absorbed within the US labor market. Their position in the US economy is also likely to be determined by where they live, the levels of education they have, and whether they find jobs where they can use the skills they may have acquired in their country of origin. The US receives immigrants with various levels of education, from those with very few skills, to highly skilled individuals. As you can imagine, life in the US is very different for a Guatemalan immigrant who arrives to the US as an agricultural worker and who only completed primary school in Guatemala compared to the everyday experiences of an English scientist who graduated from the University of Cambridge and who is later hired as a professor by Harvard University. Their levels of schooling outside of the US largely determine the starting position of these immigrants to the US.

Where immigrants live and with whom they socialize and work further amplifies racial and ethnic differences among immigrant families. Individuals tend to spend time with friends who are most similar to them. So, for instance, a well-educated family from India will also know other well-educated Indian families. Children in these families benefit from their association with their parents’ friends and the children in those other families. On the other hand, the

average immigrant from Mexico has very low levels of education. Mexican immigrant families will most likely settle in neighborhoods with other Mexicans, most of whom also have low levels of education, and, consequently, lower earnings. Neighborhoods with high concentrations of such immigrants may be associated with lower-quality schools, due both to the relatively modest revenue generated by local property taxes and the lower average parental education of children at school. Moreover, race and ethnicity play an important role in determining the social status of immigrants – it is likely that a white immigrant from Canada or the UK will be treated very differently in the labor market compared to a Latino immigrant from Honduras, even if all of these immigrants had comparable educational credentials.

Further, the socioeconomic position of the immigrants who arrive as adults to the US cannot be thought of as an outcome solely determined by their educational backgrounds. Ample research demonstrates that some immigrants may not receive the same returns to education compared to native-born individuals as well as to each other (Gibson and Carrasco 2009; Kao 1995; 1999; Kao and Tienda 1995; Keller and Tillman 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Zhou and Bankston 1994). Their educational backgrounds may produce differential patterns of integration for contemporary immigrants. Thus, the place of education or where immigrants complete their education – either in the United States or abroad – is important in determining the [income] returns to education. The devaluation of immigrants' educational attainment may produce a mismatch between immigrants' educational attainment and their occupation after arrival. This, in turn, may lead immigrants to be either over- or underqualified relative to their coworkers. For instance, someone who is a surgeon in Russia may work as a medical technician in the US, suggesting that some immigrants may find it difficult to

be hired in jobs where they can use their educational credentials, but there are important differences by country of origin. Immigrants from Latin American and Eastern European countries are more likely to end up in unskilled jobs than immigrants from Asia and industrial countries (Mattoo et al. 2005). The next chapters will explore in detail why and how these unequal opportunities related to education and job opportunities take place in the US.

While the educational histories of immigrant families may be as numerous as the number of immigrants in the US, there are some general patterns of how their socio-demographic characteristics relate to their eventual educational outcomes. The countries they grew up in, whether or not they arrived to the US as children or adults, the kinds of neighborhoods they settle in, whether or not they are fluent in English, and what race or ethnicity they are classified as in the US may provide some of the explanations for why some immigrant groups have better educational outcomes than others. These and other factors help us to understand why some immigrants have been able to use education in pursuit of the “American Dream,” while, for others, education has been less successful as a route to social mobility.

Education and the American Dream for Immigrant Families

Education provides numerous benefits to both immigrant and native-born individuals. These benefits range from higher social status, lower unemployment and poverty rates, higher earnings, greater likelihood of marriage, better physical and mental health, better educational outcomes for their children, and even lower rates of death (e.g. Behrman

and Stacey 1997; Lleras-Muney 2005; Schnittker 2004; Stevens et al. 2008). Census reports on educational attainment highlight the importance of obtaining an education on earnings. According to 2006 data, adults 18 years and older with a Master's, professional, or doctoral degree had a median income of approximately $80,000, while those with less than a high-school diploma had a median income of about $20,000 (Current Population Survey 2009). Other studies demonstrate that the benefits of obtaining higher levels of education go beyond earnings. Highly educated immigrant and native-born individuals also have better health and report higher levels of happiness (Franzini and Fernandez-Esquer 2006; Hao and Johnson 2000; Zhang and Ta 2009). Education not only allows individuals access to better paying and more prestigious jobs, but it also gives individuals the tools to make better informed choices in everyday life. These can range from the skills to communicate with children's teachers, their own doctors or lawyers, or simply reading sales contracts.

Beyond the benefits of education on earnings and health, education has important implications for the children of immigrants. As we discussed earlier, education is, without a doubt, one of the primary mechanisms through which class advantage is transferred from one generation to the next. Status attainment scholars from The Wisconsin School of the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated how schooling is the key intermediary between family origins and future labor force outcomes (Jencks et al. 1983; Sewell et al. 1976). Schools are the institutions responsible for providing those resources to individuals, which are key to their future socioeconomic success. Arguably, schools may be even more important when these resources are not available at home. This is one of the reasons why schooling is especially important to immigrants and the children of immigrants. For immigrant parents with little formal schooling and those who do not speak English, the educational outcomes of their children

may be the main avenue through which the family is able to improve its socioeconomic standing.

Education and the Americanization Dream for Immigrant Groups

The consequences of having an educated populace go well beyond the individual and the family. On a societal level, cities, states, and nations have a direct interest in the education of the whole population given the many benefits that come with successful educational outcomes. Better educated residents earn more money to spend and invest in the local or national economy. They help to attract industries that need more educated workers, which in turn provide more tax revenue to cities and nations. An educated citizenry attracts more highly educated residents who may work in high-status professional jobs. Cities and neighborhoods with these more advantaged residents tend to have better schools, parks, and other community services.

For immigrants, the promise of universal education in the United States offers the opportunity for their children to go to college and to fully live the "American Dream." Moreover, schooling provides one of the main tools with which immigrants can become acquainted with the social expectations and norms in the US. Having the knowledge of these norms and expectations is what the general public and social scientists think of when they talk about the assimilation of immigrants. Thus, while we can consider schooling and education in terms of the subjects that are taught within the classrooms such as history or mathematics, schools serve an extremely important purpose that extends well beyond the content of the subject

areas. Schools are also one of the primary institutions of socialization to American life. This means that in addition to teaching reading, mathematics, or science, schools also socialize children to become successful, well-adapted, and productive citizens in society.

Our beliefs that the US is a democracy and a meritocracy depend on the availability of free schooling to all youths (Bowles and Gintis 1977; 1986). In a society where the state provides free education so that anyone can go to school, if each student's performance is gauged using universal and objective criteria, we as a society believe that a real meritocracy exists. If anyone can go to school and earn high marks, then anyone can get a good job and make a good living. This is, in essence, the American Dream, which relies on the ideal of equal opportunity for all. In other words, schools are supposed to "level the playing field" that results from inequalities in family resources. Much of the recent debate on school reform is informed by these beliefs (Gray et al. 1996). The American public believes that schools can and should fix any remaining race, ethnic, and class inequalities in educational outcomes.

What is most relevant for the adaptation of immigrant children is the role that schools have always played in "Americanizing" youth. Historian Michael Katz argues that the development of the state-sponsored public school in the mid-1800s had much to do with the assimilation of Irish immigrants to the US. The Irish (who were also predominantly Catholic) were seen as "alien, uncouth, and menacing" (Katz 1987: 18). Indeed, if the Irish were viewed in such a negative light, one can only imagine the level of hostility that would have existed towards other immigrant and racial minority groups, such as the Japanese. This "Americanization" continued to be a primary function of the public schools through the twentieth century when this institution was central to instilling "American" values into