

Educational Change and Demographic Change: Immigration and the Role of Educational Leadership

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Although the United States is a nation of immigrants, having been populated largely through waves of migration by people from nations and territories throughout the world (people of African and indigenous descent being the most notable exceptions to this pattern), immigration has historically been a source of controversy and conflict. Throughout American history, each wave of immigration has been greeted by hostility, discrimination, and, in some cases, fierce opposition from groups who arrived not long before. In each case, the right of new migrants to settle and reside in the United States has been challenged both on the basis of the perceived threat they posed to the economic security and well-being of those who came before and on the basis of their presumed cultural incompatibility with American social norms (Roediger, 1991). Ironically, even groups that today seem to be completely accepted and integrated within the social fabric of American society – Germans, Italians, Irish, and Jews – were once subjected to attacks and concerted opposition to their entry and settlement by others that charged they were unwanted and “unassimilable” (Brodin, 1992; Takaki, 1989).

This chapter examines the factors influencing how schools are responding to the demographic changes that are being brought about as a result of immigration. It focuses upon what educational leaders can do to address some of the educational controversies that often accompany demographic change. It will show that while many of the controversies that schools find themselves confronting are framed around questions related to language acquisition (English immersion vs. bilingual education) and to a lesser degree tracking (due to the tendency to place English-language learners (ELLs) in non-college prep classes) and student achievement, concerns and unease related to the changing nature of the American population are often at the root of these conflicts. Current trends suggest that as immigrants settle in communities throughout the United States and begin to transform the social landscape of American society, controversies over what role schools should play

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in integrating the children of immigrants and shaping the future of American society will become increasingly intense. Educational leaders who understand how to address the educational needs of immigrant students will be in a better position to respond to these controversies, and their leadership may prove to be extremely important to communities that are grappling with the changes that result from the arrival of new immigrants.

Many of the approaches described in this chapter for addressing the needs of immigrant students are entirely unaddressed by the predominant theories of educational change that are promulgated by mainstream educational researchers. In a departure from these technical approaches to leadership, the ideas presented here are part of a growing body of the theories-in-action literature which advocate an approach to narrowing of achievement gaps, examining achievement data, structuring literacy strategies, and employing various combinations of pressure and support to immigrant students in a manner that takes account of the dynamic nature of change in the social context that impacts schools and student learning (Bryk & Schnieder, 2003; Lipman, 2002; Noguera, 2004). Unlike educational theories that ignore ethnic, socio-economic, and linguistic differences among students, this chapter was written with the explicit purpose of providing concrete recommendations to educational leaders regarding what they can do to play a positive and supportive role in helping their schools and the larger society adjust to and capitalize on inevitable demographic change.

Understanding the New Immigration

Most demographers and economists predict that no matter how many guards are deployed at the southern border or how high the fences are erected, immigrants, both legal and undocumented, will continue to find ways to enter the United States.¹ As my colleague Marcelo Suarez-Orozco has put it, “[I]mmigration is not only our past, it is our destiny”.² Since 1990, the United States has experienced the greatest influx of immigrants in its history (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001), and once again, it finds itself embroiled in a bitter conflict over whether or not the new arrivals, particularly the undocumented, have a right to remain. Public schools find themselves at the center of the nation’s controversy over the rights of immigrant children because unlike other institutions that can deny undocumented immigrants access to services, the Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that public schools cannot (Fass, 2007; Rothstein, 1994). Historically, public schools in the United States have served as the primary institution responsible for integrating and assimilating waves of immigrant children (Fass, 1989; Olsen, 2000). Once again, they have been

¹For an example of such a prediction, see Clark (1998).

²Marcelo and Carola Suarez-Orozco (2001) are some of the leading scholars on the education of immigrant children. For a discussion of how immigrant children are faring in the nation’s public schools, see Kao and Tienda (1998) and Olsen (2000).

called upon to carry out this important task, particularly with respect to ensuring that immigrant children learn the English language. During the current period, schools must figure out how best to serve the needs of immigrant children within an increasingly hostile political climate. In such a context, educating a new generation of immigrant children has become a highly politicized project in many communities, and not surprisingly, many schools find themselves at a loss for how best to meet the educational needs of the immigrant children they serve.

Economic forces are largely responsible for driving the current influx of immigrants, and these forces work in two different directions. South of the border there is the ongoing reality of widespread poverty, gross inequity, unemployment, and underdevelopment in the Caribbean and Latin America, most especially Mexico, that serves as the primary *push* factor prompting migration. Liberalized trade policies such as NAFTA have in some cases contributed to economic hardships in the region and prompted large numbers of displaced farmers to migrate north.³ Others have been prompted to leave their home countries by war, natural disasters, and political unrest. Even in nations like Mexico, Columbia, Peru, and Trinidad where economic growth has occurred, the inequitable distribution of resources and wealth has driven the poor to find ways to migrate to the United States in pursuit of economic opportunity. Undoubtedly, for as long as imbalances in wealth and living standards between rich and poor regions of the world remain unaddressed, it appears unlikely that current trends will reverse.⁴

On the other side of the immigration equation lie the *pull* factors that draw immigrants to the United States, and for that matter other wealthy nations. First and foremost are the insatiable demands of the US economy for cheap labor. Several sectors of the US economy including agriculture, construction, food processing, hotels and restaurants, and healthcare are highly dependent upon legal and undocumented immigrant labor. The unwillingness of the US Congress to adopt laws that would legalize the movement of labor across borders has not prevented foreign workers from finding ways to secure jobs in industries desperate for their services. It is for this reason that some of the strongest proponents of a more liberal immigration policy have come from business organizations in the private sector. In addition to the search for jobs, once immigrants settle in an area their presence creates its own dynamic. Family unification is another major factor prompting immigration, as is news of opportunity in a new land in communities of origin (Valdez, 1999). The settlement of immigrants is never a random process. When immigrants move into a community, it is almost always because they have followed a path, a network, or

³For a discussion of how liberal trade policies such as NAFTA have contributed to migration from Latin America to the United States, see “Immigrants Come Here Because Globalization Took Their Jobs Back There” by Jim Hightower in *Lowdown*, February 7, 2008.

⁴Imbalance in wealth and the lack of economic opportunity in other parts of the Third World are also responsible for migration to Europe as well as internal migration in nations such as China and Russia. See *Many Globalizations* by Peter Berger and Samuel Huntington (London: Oxford University Press, 2002).

a channel created by those who arrive first or the employers who have drawn them there.

The current backlash against immigrants ignores the push–pull factors that drive demographic change. Instead, it appears that much of the opposition to immigration is due to two other significant considerations: (1) the greatest number of immigrants coming to the United States today are non-white and do not speak English as their first language. Their presence is transforming the racial and ethnic makeup of several communities (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2008); and (2) in some sectors, immigrant labor is being used to displace US-born workers because they can be paid substantially less (Valenzuela, 1999). Television commentator Lou Dobbs has emerged as one of the leading spokespersons of the backlash against immigration, and though he and other opponents of immigration often claim that their hostility is directed at illegal immigration and not immigrants generally, they typically refuse to acknowledge that the hostility is increasingly directed at foreigners generally. In fact, many of the punitive laws adopted by local governments and much of the harassment and even overt violence carried out by vigilantes have been directed at Latinos.⁵ In an act of remarkable hypocrisy, several prominent figures in both major political parties have attempted to curry favor among anti-immigration groups and have used rhetoric that has contributed to the attacks upon immigrants, even as they have also courted Latino voters. Similarly, no one within the federal government has publicly acknowledged the duplicity of the preoccupation with border security as it proceeds with the construction of a fence on the Mexican border while the longer Canadian border remains largely open and unobstructed.

Lurking in the background of the political debate over immigration is the growing awareness that by the year 2050 individuals regarded as “white” will no longer constitute the majority of US population.⁶ While a small number of racist organizations openly express alarm over this impending transformation, most mainstream politicians and civic groups generally do not. Instead, leaders like US Congressman Tom Tancredo, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, and Lou Dobbs frame their opposition to illegal immigration as a matter of national security, as a concern that immigrants are taking jobs from American citizens, and as an alarm that American identity and the English language are threatened by immigrants who refuse to assimilate.

While some of those expressing such concerns may legitimately fear the changes brought about by immigration, it is also true that the new immigration has evoked a backlash because it differs from previous patterns in two important respects. First, prior to the Immigration Act of 1965, the majority of immigrants settling in the United States came from Europe, and while many European immigrants experienced

⁵For a discussion of some of the attacks against new immigrants, legal and undocumented, by local governments and vigilante groups such as the Minute Men, see Chavez (2008)

⁶For a discussion of demographic trends and the emerging non-white majority, see the *California Cauldron* by Clark (1998). I use the term “regarded as white” because these racial classifications are not universally accepted and are subject to change over time. For a discussion of race as a social and political category, see *Racial Formation in the United States* by Omi and Winant (1986).

hostility and discrimination, today, few question their claims to citizenship in the United States. Since 1965, the overwhelming majority of new immigrants have been from Latin America and Asia, and though many Asians and Latinos have resided in the United States for generations, it is not uncommon for their citizenship to be questioned. As historian Ron Takaki has said with reference to Asian Americans, many are treated as though they are “forever foreign” (Takaki, 1989) because of a pervasive assumption that a person of Asian origin cannot be an “American”. A similar argument could be made regarding dark-skinned Latinos, who often experience a greater degree of discrimination and racial bias in schools and the workplace due to their phenotype (Fergus, 2004).

Additionally, whereas the settlement of new immigrants was once largely confined to the major cities on the east and west coasts, today immigrants are settling throughout the nation, in small towns, suburbs, and rural areas, wherever the demand for their labor is greatest. As they arrive in large numbers, immigrants invariably change the character of the communities, schools, churches, and workplaces where they reside. Even when they settle in communities where their labor is needed, in many cases their presence still generates conflict and tension with those who feel threatened or displaced by their presence. In many communities, older residents resent the changes that occur as immigrants who speak different languages and practice different customs transform the environment and local institutions. Even though there is considerable evidence that immigrants generally contribute more to local economies than they take and have been responsible for revitalizing a number of depressed cities and towns, many Americans still express opposition to allowing them to settle in this country.⁷

Though it is rarely discussed publicly, much of this backlash appears to be related to race, or more precisely to racism. Though there is ample evidence that a number of undocumented immigrants from Ireland and Canada reside in the United States, there have been no reports of immigration raids targeting these groups. Instead, in communities throughout the United States, Latinos have been the primary targets of political attacks against illegal immigration (Lovato, 2008). Documenting recent attacks against Mexican immigrants in Georgia and the complicity in these attacks by elected public officials, journalist Roberto Lovato writes,

... the surge in Latino migration (the Southeast is home to the fastest-growing Latino population in the United States) is moving many of the institutions and actors responsible for enforcing Jim Crow to resurrect and reconfigure themselves in line with new demographics. Along with the almost daily arrests, raids and home invasions by federal, state and other authorities, newly resurgent civilian groups like the Ku Klux Klan, in addition to more than 144 new “nativist extremist” groups and 300 anti-immigrant organizations born in the past three years, mostly based in the south, are harassing immigrants as a way to grow their ranks. (2008, p. 33)

While much of the hostility toward immigrants has been manifest in white communities, there have also been sporadic acts of violence directed at immigrants in

⁷For a discussion of how immigrants contribute to local economies, see Portes and Rumbaut (2002) and Riech (1992).

several historically African American communities. Particularly in Los Angeles and other communities throughout southern California, there has been a significant increase in violence and tension between recent Latino immigrants and older Black residents.⁸ Though both groups share a history of experiencing discrimination and racial injustice, in many communities they find themselves competing for jobs, services, political office, and control over the public schools.

Today, US immigration policy, or more precisely the question of how to control the borders and what to do about the estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants who now reside in the United States, has emerged as one of the most potent political issues of the 2008 electoral season. Against this backdrop, how public schools will be affected and respond to the changes brought about by immigration and the backlash to it will increasingly be a subject that educational leaders will not be able to avoid.

What Schools Can Do

Just as they have in the past with other immigrant groups, public schools will continue to serve as the primary institutions of socialization and support for immigrant children today (Katznelson & Weir, 1994). Given the growing hostility toward immigrants and their families (particularly the undocumented) and given the vast array of needs the poor immigrant children bring with them (i.e., they are more likely than other children to lack health insurance),⁹ providing immigrant students with a quality education that prepares them adequately for life in this country will require an expansive vision and commitment to enacting policies and programs that support the education and well-being of immigrant youth. The following is a brief listing of some of the strategies schools can adopt to meet the needs of the immigrant students they serve:

(1) Provide Support as Students Acculturate

Unlike their parents who arrived in the United States with their identities intact, immigrant youth often find themselves caught between two worlds, neither fully American nor fully part of the country of their parents (Jiobu, 1988). Many also arrive without having received formal education in their countries of origin. Such children are often not literate in their native language and, consequently, experience greater difficulty learning academic English (August & Shanahan, 2006; García, Wilksinson, & Ortiz, 1995). As they go through this

⁸For a discussion of the factors influencing racial conflict between African Americans and Latino immigrants in southern California, see "Beyond the Racial Divide: Perceptions of Minority Residents on Coalition Building in South Los Angeles" in TRPI Policy Brief, June 2007.

⁹For a discussion of the health challenges confronting immigrant children and their families, see Guendelman, Schaufler and Pearl (2001) and Capps, Fix, Ost, Reardon-Anderson and Passel (2004).

difficult acculturation process, immigrant youth are often susceptible to a variety of hardships and pressures that many adults, including their parents, do not fully understand. Some of these pressures include the following: a tendency to become alienated from adults and to be drawn toward gangs or groups involved with criminal activity, teen pregnancy, or dropping out of school altogether (Garcia, 2001; Zentella, 2002). Certainly, there are many immigrant youth that manage to avoid these pressures. In fact, in some schools, immigrant students are among the highest achievers, especially if they come to the United States as literates, with several years of education in the previous country, or from highly educated parents (August & Hakuta, 1997; Cummins, 1981; Kao & Tienda, 1998). However, for those whose parents are struggling financially and particularly for children of undocumented parents, the challenges they encounter both within and outside of school can be quite formidable.

Educators can respond to these challenges and mitigate the effects of hostility in the external environment in a variety of ways. For example, research has shown that one of the most effective means to counter the influence of gangs is to provide young people who may be susceptible to recruitment with a variety of extracurricular activities (that appeal to their interests to join) (Coltin, 1999). Additionally, scholars such as Ricardo Stanton Salazar (2001) and Angela Valenzuela (1999) have shown that when schools hire caring adults as teachers, counselors, and administrators – at least some of whom are from backgrounds that are similar to those of their students – they can have a positive effect on achievement, graduation, and college attendance. Such individuals can help in generating the kinds of social capital that middle-class students typically have access to by opening doors to internships, jobs, and various social services and by writing recommendations for admission to college (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

(2) Address the Needs of Transnational Families

Immigration often compels families to make tough choices about who will leave and who will remain, and these choices often take a toll on families. When the decision to leave is made, some families are forced to separate and leave children or even a parent behind, often with the hope that with time, reunification will be possible. The development of transnational families, separated by borders and thousands of miles, often results in children experiencing disruptions in school attendance (Ada, 1988). To ensure that relationships are maintained, usually immigrant parents send a child to their country of origin for 6 weeks during the middle of the school year. For educators who are concerned with academic progress, such a choice might seem nonsensical and even negligent, but to a family that is coping with the hardships caused by separation, such choices may be the only way to maintain the bonds of family.

Migrant workers often return to Mexico for several weeks during the winter because there is no work available during the non-growing season. Although they generally return to their jobs, it is often the case that their children lose instruction and may even lose their seats in classrooms because of adjustments that are made during their absence. Those interested in supporting immigrant

youth and their families must at the minimum demonstrate a capacity to understand the difficult choices transnational families face (Olsen, 2000). Finding ways to help reduce the strains caused by separation, while minimizing the losses in learning associated with extended absences, is an important pedagogical consideration for schools that serve large populations of Latino immigrant youth.

A growing number of schools have adopted strategies to support Latino youth who miss extended amounts of time because they are part of transnational families. For example, one elementary school in Los Angeles modified the academic year so that students could take off for 4 weeks at the end of December and beginning of January. An additional 2 weeks of school was added to the end of the year to make sure that students do not miss out on instruction (Gullatt & Lofton, 1996). A school in Texas located near the Mexican border established a cooperative relationship with a Mexican school across the border to ensure that its students received similar instruction in school while they are in Mexico. Finally, several schools in Miami and New York that serve immigrant youth, whose parents reside in the Caribbean, have hired social workers who are familiar with students' living arrangements and who can provide additional social and emotional support to youth in need (Ada, 1988). Such measures do not eliminate the difficulties experienced by immigrant youth who are separated from their families, but they do help to lessen the hardships they endure and demonstrate that the school is not interested in punishing students for a situation they cannot control. Employing staff with language and cultural skills to work effectively with immigrant youth and their families is also of vital importance, if trust and respect between home and school are to be established (Fix & Zimmermann, 2001; Valdez, 1999).

(3) Develop Full-Service Community Schools

Several schools that serve low-income immigrant students have adopted a community school approach to meeting student needs. The community school approach is an idea that can be traced back to the early writings of John Dewey. It is premised on the notion that the conditions for academic learning must include attention to the cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and moral development of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1988). The current movement of community schools began in the late 1980s when various organizations (e.g., Children's Aid Society, Communities In Schools, Beacon Schools) embarked on a reform strategy aimed at forming concrete relationships between schools and non-profit service organizations in school districts throughout the country. The initial rationale for these community school partnerships was based upon the recognition that the nutritional, mental health, and physical needs of low-income children are primary developmental issues that impact learning. In most cases, schools cannot respond to this broad array of needs without additional support (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005). During the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, the unmet social needs of poor children were exacerbated by changes in state and federal policies (e.g., Welfare to Work) that had the effect of compounding many of the difficulties facing poor children and their

families and overwhelmed community and school-based resources (Hayes-Bautista, 2002). The combination of these trends has made it increasingly clear that high-poverty schools are in need of assistance.

A number of schools serving low-income immigrant children have adopted the community school approach, sometimes called the full-service school. Schools such as Edison Elementary in Portchester, New York, and Henshaw Middle School in Modesto, California, have shown that when immigrant children are provided with access social services schools can do a better job at meeting their academic needs (Hall, Yohalem, Tolman, & Wilson, 2003). Many community schools maintain a full-time licensed social worker, and for some community schools like the ones operated by the Children's Aid Society, mental health services or wellness centers are staffed by two to four social workers and a part-time psychologist. Community schools also enlist health professionals, such as dentists, optometrists, and nurse practitioners, which allows students to receive their annual physicals and prescriptions on the school site. Additionally, community schools provide an extensive after-school programs that include academic enrichment and recreation. Many community schools also attempt to extend their services to parents and families by providing adult education classes in the evening and weekends. All of these services occur in schools that typically operate 10–12 h per day and 6 or 7 days a week. While the overall number of community schools remains quite low, recognition of the need to address the developmental domains of children (i.e., cognitive, social, emotional, moral, and physical) in the social institution in which they are most influenced and spend majority of their developing years continues (Epstein et al., 2002). There is also evidence that addressing the social, emotional, and health needs of children can also have a positive impact on their academic performance (Coltin, 1999).

Creating a community school generally requires resourcefulness and creativity on the part of the staff and administration. Principals who are entrepreneurial generally take the lead in establishing partnerships with non-profits, local government agencies and community groups to meet the needs of the students and families they serve. Additionally, community schools focus on building a sense of community by engaging parents as partners and providing workshops to them on topics that meet their needs.

(4) Make Sure that English-Language Learners Are Not Prevented from Enrolling in College Preparatory Courses

In many schools that serve recent immigrant students, a student's inability to speak fluent English, or more precisely to display a command over academic literacy, is used as a justification for locating the student in courses designated for ELLs. While such placements are generally warranted to ensure that recent immigrant students learn English, in too many schools, ESL (English as a Second Language) and other language support courses serve as a means of tracking ELLs into courses that fail to prepare them for college. To make matters worse, in many cases such courses also fail to provide students with the ability to acquire proficiency in English even after several years of placement.

Tracking on the basis of language difference is one of the factors that has been cited by researchers as contributing to the high drop-out rates that are common among recent immigrant students (Orfield et al., 2005).

Educational leaders can ensure that students learning English are not denied the opportunity to enroll in rigorous college prep courses by providing the teachers in such courses with training on how to work with ELLs. Professional development in sheltered English is one strategy that schools have used to effectively address the needs of ELLs in mainstream courses (Ruiz deValasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2001). More importantly, the schools that have demonstrated the greatest success in meeting the needs of ELLs make a deliberate effort to hire staff who can speak the language spoken by their students. Obviously, many schools are unable to make major changes in personnel in the short term and even those that are able to hire new faculty may have trouble recruiting bi-lingual teachers. Still, to the degree that educational leaders recognize the importance of providing all of their students with an education that prepares them for life beyond high school, they will find ways to ensure that their staff develops the capacity to meet the educational needs of the students they serve and will not allow their inability to speak English to be a permanent obstacle.

Immigration and America's Future

Like many immigrants today, earlier generations of European immigrants encountered hardships and discrimination. Despite the hostility they encountered, these groups gradually improved their social conditions and experienced the social mobility promised by the American Dream.

Schools played a major role in facilitating their social mobility by imparting the academic skills and the cultural competence needed to climb the economic ladder. Of course, social mobility often came with a price and some sacrifice. Many European immigrants found it necessary to abandon their native languages, to give up their cultures, and in many cases to "Anglocize" their names (Fass, 1989; Jiobu, 1988). For these groups, assimilation made social mobility possible, and over time, the early stigmas and hardships were gradually overcome (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963). Unlike many European countries where immigrants have never been fully accepted, in the United States groups that were once perceived as ethnically inferior were gradually accepted as full-fledged white Americans (Brodkin, 1999; Roediger, 1991).

The situation is very different for Latino immigrants and their children. Although Latinos represent the fastest growing segment of the US population and are now the largest minority group, it is not clear that the future will be as bright and promising for them as it was for European immigrants of the past. Globalization and de-industrialization have contributed to a worsening of circumstances for low-skilled Latino immigrants. Ironically, Latinos now constitute the ethnic group least likely to be unemployed, but most likely to be impoverished (Smith, 2002). This is

occurring because Latinos are generally concentrated in the lowest paying jobs and many lack the skills and education needed to seek better paying alternatives (Smith, 2002). Unlike European immigrants whose offspring reaped the rewards from the sacrifices of earlier generations, Latino immigrants are not experiencing a similar degree of success (Portes & Rumbaut, 2002).

Despite having been present in the United States for centuries, Latinos are over-represented among the ranks of the poor and low-income groups, and at least part of the reason for this is the pervasiveness of racialized inequalities, particularly within education. Today, Latino youth are more likely than any other ethnic group to be enrolled in schools that are not only segregated by race, but by class as well (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). In cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, where Latino youth comprise the majority of the school-age population, they are disproportionately assigned to schools that are over-crowded, under-funded, and woefully inadequate on matters related to educational quality (Garcia, 2001; Noguera, 2003, 2004; Oakes, 2002). Latino youth also have the highest high school dropout rates and lowest rates for college attendance (Garcia, 2001). In general, they are over-represented in most categories of crisis and failure (i.e., suspensions and expulsions, special education placements), while underrepresented in those of success (i.e., honors and gifted and talented classes) (Meier & Stewart, 1991).

Yet, in my work with schools, I often hear from administrators who speak favorably of the conduct of Latino immigrant students.¹⁰ Though not all are described as studious, most are characterized as well behaved, courteous and deferential toward adults. Beyond focusing on their behavior, educators must make sure that Latino immigrant students are not over-represented in remedial classes and Special Education, nor trapped in ESL classes that bar them from courses that prepare students for college.

Like their parents, many immigrant youth have the drive, the work ethic and the persistence to take advantage of opportunities that come their way (Kao & Tienda, 1998). Of course, it is risky to generalize or to overstate the importance of will and work ethic. For immigrant youth who live in communities where economic and social opportunities are limited and who have no ability to control basic circumstances that shape the opportunities available to them – namely, the schools they attend, the neighborhoods where they live, or the hostility of others to their presence – will and determination may not suffice. In fact, research on the socialization of immigrant youth shows that in a reversal of past patterns, assimilation no longer serves as the pathway into mainstream American culture and middle-class status as it once did for European immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2002). Instead, the evidence suggests that the socialization associated with acculturation and assimilation

¹⁰As a researcher and the Director of the Metro Center at NYU, I work with many schools throughout the United States. For a description of my research, see *City Schools and the American Dream* (NY: Teachers College Press, 2003).

often results in a lowering of the academic achievement and performance of Latino students (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).¹¹

Theoretically at least, education should serve as means for immigrant children to escape poverty. For this to happen, education must serve as a source of opportunity and a pathway to a better life just as it has for other groups in the past. For this to happen, schools must not treat immigrant children as though their inability to speak fluent English is a sign of cognitive or cultural deficit. They must reach out to their parents and work with them, and they must find partners who can provide the resources and support their children need.

As was true in the past, the children of the new immigrants will eventually end up in America's public schools. How educators, parents and policy makers respond to their growing presence and the controversies that result will ultimately determine whether or not immigration will be a source of strength or lead to greater polarization and conflict in the years ahead.

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¹¹In much of the sociological literature on immigration, it has been held that assimilation would lead to social mobility for immigrants. Second- and third-generation immigrants have generally fared better than new arrivals. For Latinos, available research suggests the opposite may be true.

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