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## Chapter 10

### CONCLUSION

#### The Forging of a New America: Lessons for Theory and Policy

Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut

#### Assimilation and Pluralism

The two general theories, or metaphors, that for so long have dominated the discourse on the fate of immigrants in America—assimilation and ethnic pluralism—do not fare very well in light of the evidence in the preceding chapters. True, supporters of the assimilation perspective can point to the near-universal adoption of English, the equally rapid loss of foreign languages, and the widespread shift to American fashions and lifestyles as evidence that the new second generation is indeed “melting.” But against this conclusion rises an equally solid body of evidence pointing to a universal shift from American identities to ethnic ones, increasing perceptions of discrimination against one’s own group, and an overall reassertion of heritage and cultural distinctness that bodes ill for predictions of future national homogeneity.

Neither is it the case, according to the findings reported in the preceding chapters, that full assimilation carries with it the promise of educational and future occupational success. Learning English is, of course, a precondition for such outcomes, but the loss of parental language fluency drives a wedge within immigrant families, reducing parental guidance and control at a crucial time in the lives of these adolescents. There is, in addition, a consistent decline in drive and work effort paralleling accul-



turation and, among some groups at least, the business and professional success of the first generation translates into a more slackened attitude toward academic work, higher rates of school attrition, and greater conflict with still goal-driven parents.

If assimilation theory does not provide a good framework for comprehending this complex set of findings, it would be equally risky to assert that pluralism does so. The rediscovered national identities and cultural origins among today's children of immigrants do not represent linear continuations of what their parents brought along. They are rather a "made-in-the-U.S.A." product born of these children's experiences of growing up American. As such, these reaffirmed ethnicities and perceptions of discrimination are integral parts of the process of acculturation, as it takes place in real life. Second-generation youths who loudly proclaim their Mexicanness or Haitianess often do so in English and with a body language far closer to their American peers than to anything resembling their parents' culture.

Almost 40 years ago, Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan summarized their study of descendants of European immigrants and domestic migrants in New York City by stating that the key point about the vaunted melting pot was that "it did not happen" (1970: xcvi). By this, they meant that enduring and important differences characterized the respective ethnic communities and that, contrary to the desires and predictions of assimilationists, they were not at all in a process of dissolution. The other side of the argument, of course, is that the Italians, Jews, Irish, and Puerto Ricans of New York City became something quite different from what their migrant forebears had been. They each became American in their own way as the product of the interaction between what the group brought by way of skills, traditions, and language and what it encountered in the big metropolis. This was the melting pot that *did* happen.

In other cities and with different national origins, the same process is taking place today. Results presented in each of the preceding chapters show how the interaction between immigrant parents' characteristics and contexts of reception plays itself out for different nationalities, forging distinct but undeniably American personalities and outlooks. These findings also make abundantly clear that the process can be quite difficult and yield outcomes at variance with the rosy predictions of a uniform linear ascent. Assimilation to American society undoubtedly takes place, but the key question is to *what sectors* of the society and in what conditions does this shift occur. For it is not the case that a vast

host nation receives each immigrant group with the same attitude or bestows on each the same doses of benevolence and assistance.

## Segmented Assimilation and Its Types

Findings from the studies presented in this book illustrate how segmented the process of assimilation has become. In some instances, high human capital among immigrant parents combines with a relatively neutral or favorable context of reception to produce rapid mobility into the middle class. These families possess the necessary wherewithal to support an advanced education for their children. At the same time, the very success of achieving a comfortable middle-class lifestyle often leads to conflict between parents bent on maintaining their traditional values and ambitions and their thoroughly acculturated offspring. The case of Filipino immigrants and their children, analyzed in careful detail by Yen Le Espiritu and Diane L. Wolf (Chapter 6), approximates this situation.

In other cases, socioeconomic success depends less on advanced educational credentials in the first generation than on the possession of entrepreneurial skills and a favorable context of reception that facilitates the construction of solidary ethnic communities. Although immigrant parents may not reach advanced professional positions, their success at small business, combined with dense social networks, provides a supportive environment for the educational and occupational advancement of the second generation. In these instances, parental authority is buttressed by co-ethnic ties, leading to a more paced process of acculturation and less social distance between generations. The diverse Cuban enclave in Miami, constructed by the first generations of exiles from the island and analyzed by Lisandro Pérez (Chapter 4), provides a close approximation to this type of assimilation. So does another group of refugees—the Vietnamese—whose positive reception by the U.S. government provided the grounds for the reconstruction of families and communities and the emergence of bounded solidarity. The compelling results for children growing up in the Vietnamese community of San Diego, including their comparatively greater drive to achieve than that found among Cuban-American youth in Miami public schools, are analyzed by Min Zhou (Chapter 7).

A number of immigrant groups combine little professional or entrepreneurial skills with an unfavorable governmental and societal recep-



tion. The challenges of adaptation to a foreign environment, considerable to begin with, are magnified by the hostility of the surrounding environment. Poverty is the lot of most immigrants in this situation and, with it, regular exposure to the lifestyles and outlooks of the most downtrodden segments of the native population. Children of these immigrant families seldom have the opportunity to assimilate into middle-class American circles but every opportunity to do so into those of the native poor and the underclass. This occurs at the same time that the economic and social difficulties faced by their families prevent the emergence of well-structured ethnic communities capable of reinforcing parental authority. Downward rather than upward assimilation is a real possibility for children growing up under these conditions.

By far, the most important group among those exposed to these circumstances is the Mexican Americans. As David Lopez and Ricardo D. Stanton Salazar make clear in Chapter 3, Mexican immigration has been going on for so long as to spawn several "old" second generations. Yet the lot of today's Mexican immigrant children may be even worse than those of their predecessors because of persistent external discrimination, the disappearance of industrial job ladders, and the increasing educational requirements of a technology-driven economy. The size of Mexican immigration dwarfs that of any other national group, while its continuing poverty and adaptive difficulties present a major challenge for the future. The extent to which Mexican American youths manage to overcome these barriers or, on the contrary, fall further behind will play a central role in the long-term character of their ethnic community and of the cities and states where it concentrates.

However, contrary to some statements in the literature suggesting that the threat of downward assimilation is an exclusively Mexican problem, several of the preceding studies show that other sizable immigrant nationalities are also at risk. They include Nicaraguans, a group whose high original expectations were dashed by an unwelcome official reception and subsequent severe handicaps in the southern Florida labor market. As a consequence, the study by Patricia Hernandez-Kelly and Sara Curran (Chapter 5) shows that even professional Nicaraguan families have difficulties guiding their children, as their tenuous legal status translates into precarious employment that leads, in turn, to poor housing and low-quality schools. Despite considerable human capital, Nicaraguans have been unable to reproduce the Cuban pattern of upward class development because they lacked the crucial element of a benevolent and supportive external environment.

The pattern is even more evident in the two predominantly black minorities in the CHS sample. Haitian immigrants in southern Florida have suffered not only from a generally hostile governmental reception but from widespread social and labor market discrimination as well. Combined with the low average human capital of the first generation, this has produced what is arguably the most impoverished immigrant community in the region. As the Stepicks and their associates show in Chapter 8, the process of assimilation of the Haitian second generation inexorably leads into black America, as mainstream society fails to make any distinction between immigrant and native blacks and discriminates against them in equal fashion. Given their poverty, Haitian immigrants seldom join the African-American middle class but instead settle in close proximity to the most downtrodden sectors of the native minority. In Miami's inner-city schools, Haitian-American youths are regularly exposed to patterns of acculturation inimical to educational achievement and upward mobility. Surrounded by a weak ethnic community, only parents and families stand as barriers to socialization into this path.

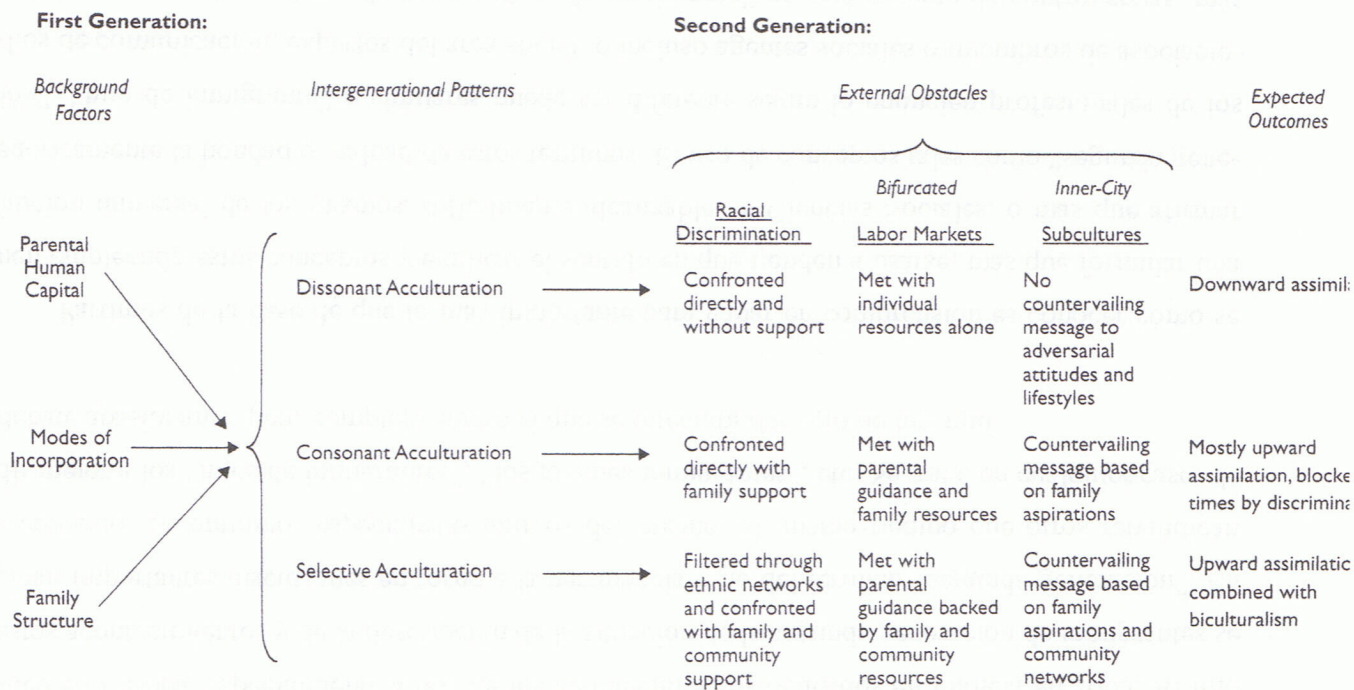
Jamaican and other West Indian immigrants are subject to similar external discrimination, and as Philip Kasnitz, Juan Bartle, and Inés Miyares point out (Chapter 9), they are also in the process of "fading to black."<sup>3</sup> However, in their case, an unfavorable context of reception is partially balanced by the educational and occupational credentials of many parents, their fluent (and distinctly accented) English, and their commitment to preserve their culture and aspirations. Perhaps more than among any other nationality, West Indian assimilation represents a contested terrain where downward pressures stemming from external discrimination are countermanded by the intellectual and material resources of families and their commitment to see their children through.

### Paths of Acculturation

Figure 10.1 reproduces the theoretical model that guided our own analysis of general results from the CHS surveys, which is presented in a separate companion volume, *Legacies* (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Although authors of chapters in the present book were entirely free to analyze the data in their own terms and wrote their chapters independently of our own, it is worth noting that their results are mostly in agreement with the sequences posited by this model. The studies of individual



Figure 10.1. The Process of Segmented Assimilation: A Model



nationalities support the proposition that there is no single assimilation path detectable in the second generation and, moreover, that different outcomes are influenced by the experiences and achievements of the first. The adaptation process registers individual variants and exceptions but, by and large, it follows a predictable sequence where outcomes build on each other, with earlier successes and failures decisively affecting future outlooks, identities, and achievements.

First-generation resettlement is decisively influenced by what immigrants bring with them in the way of skills, experiences, and resources and the environment that receives them. The concept of modes of incorporation (Portes and Rumbaut 1996) was coined to highlight the basic and separate components of this context of reception, consisting of official policy toward specific nationalities; public receptivity, indifference, or rejection toward them; and the character and resources of preexisting co-ethnic communities. Modes of incorporation are important because they can facilitate, alter, or prevent the deployment of individual skills. This is illustrated poignantly by the experience of downwardly mobile Nicaraguan professional families and, in contrast, by that of post-1980 Cuban refugees whose generally modest educational credentials are compensated by the protection of the ethnic enclave (Fernandez-Kelly and Curran, Chapter 5; Pérez, Chapter 4, in this volume).

The combination of these initial factors determines the socioeconomic status of immigrant families and the character of the communities that they are able to create. These affect decisively, in turn, relationships between parents and children. The storm and stress of the adolescent years, marked by a growing generational gap, are compounded, in the case of immigrant families, by a contest between two cultures often at odds over values and normative expectations (Rumbaut and Ima 1988; Rumbaut 1991, 1994). As shown by the CILS parental survey, all parents, regardless of nationality, tend to harbor high achievement expectations for their children. They do so, however, within the context of cultures that commonly put much more emphasis on parental authority and children's family obligations than is the rule in the United States.

In earlier publications, we have developed a typology of intergenerational relations in immigrant families to distinguish the principal paths that this cultural confrontation can take (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Portes and Zhou 1993). *Consonant acculturation* occurs as parents and children learn the language and culture at approximately the same pace



and adjust their behavior accordingly. More educated parents and those fluent in English are more likely to come closer to this path, as they are better able to understand and empathize with changes in their children's lives. Among major nationalities in the CILS sample, Filipinos appear most likely to approximate this path because of their high average education, knowledge of English, and relative absence of strong ethnic communities. However, as the study by Espiritu and Wolf points out, this is not entirely the case, as clashes of expectations still occur between parents and children and increasing awareness of racial discrimination brought about by the fast pace of acculturation in this group can lower children's self-esteem and encourage a reactive ethnicity. As these authors note, assimilation is anything but a panacea, even among these comparatively privileged families.

Much more problematic, however, is the opposite situation. *Dissonant acculturation* takes place when children's learning of English and introjection of American cultural outlooks so exceed their parents' as to leave the latter hopelessly behind. This path is marked by sharply higher levels of family conflict and decreasing parental authority because of divergent expectations and children's diminishing regard for their own cultural origins. Parents in this situation often complain that they cannot control their children since their entreaties and attempts at discipline are often ignored. Working-class immigrants and those lacking the support of strong co-ethnic communities are at greater risk of moving along this path because their own poverty reduces the authority of their directives, which are further weakened by lack of external validation. The dramatic accounts of Haitian and Nicaraguan families in the respective chapters of this book provide illustrations of this path. Parents enjoining their youths in Creole or Spanish to abide by the norms of their culture may have little to show for it. Their own enviable situation stands as a negative model, showing in their children's eyes that such allegiance does not pay.

In between these extremes is a third alternative marked by a partial learning of the host culture along with retention of significant elements of the culture of origin. *Selective acculturation* is commonly associated with fluent bilingualism in the second generation. Bilingualism preserves channels of communication across generations even when parents remain foreign monolinguals. In other situations, partial loss of parental languages is compensated by supportive networks in the immigrant community. In every instance, the key element in selective acculturation is the absorption by second-generation youths of key values

and normative expectations from their original culture and concomitant respect for them. While such a path may appear inimical to successful adaptation in the eyes of conventional assimilationists, in fact it can lead to better psychosocial and achievement outcomes because it preserves bonds across immigrant generations and gives children a clear reference point to guide their future lives.

As Zhou's study of the Vietnamese community in San Diego and Pérez's study of the Cuban enclave in Miami show, selective acculturation is commonly grounded on densely knit networks, capable of supporting parents' cultural outlooks and expectations. Pérez notes that fluent bilingualism is far more common among children attending private Cuban schools at the core of the ethnic enclave than among those in assimilation-oriented public schools. Zhou demonstrates that fluent bilingualism, although less common among Vietnamese-Americans, significantly increases self-esteem, reduces depressive symptomatology, and increases educational aspirations.

### Barriers to Adaptation

Equipped with the material and moral resources that their families and communities can make available and placed along one or another path of acculturation, second-generation children face the various barriers to successful adaptation created by the host society. Of these, none is more important than discrimination. As noted in our introduction to this volume and elaborated by Lief Jensen in Chapter 2, the new second generation comes overwhelmingly from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia, and the majority of its members are considered nonwhite according to American racial norms. The CILS data show a clear gradient in perceptions of racial and ethnic discrimination—from a relatively low level among children of Cuban, Canadian, and European parents to very high levels among the offspring of Haitian and West Indian immigrants.

A key and common finding of the studies of individual nationalities is the progressive ethnicization of self-identities during adolescence. That is, instead of becoming more American with the passage of time, second-generation youths increasingly shift to ethnic- and racial-minority identities, ranging from the panethnic labels into which they are commonly classified (Asian, black, and Hispanic) to a reactive embracing of their parents' nationality. This common trend reflects the infla-



ence of external discrimination and growing awareness by children of the place they occupy in American hierarchies of race and social status. But even this pervasive process is modified by the paths of acculturation followed by immigrant families.

Children undergoing dissonant acculturation accompany this identity shift with greater signs of psychological maladjustment, including lower self-esteem and more frequent depression. Filipino Americans, in particular females, provide evidence of this association (Espiritu and Wolf, Chapter 6). By contrast, selective acculturation protects individuals against the psychosocial traumas of external discrimination. Despite their tendency to shift to panethnic identities, Cuban Americans in Miami still possess the highest levels of self-esteem and lowest perceptions of discrimination in the CILS sample (Pérez, Chapter 4). Among the Vietnamese as well, more reassertive national identities are also associated with higher self-esteem and aspirations (Zhou, Chapter 7).

A second barrier to successful second-generation adaptation lies in the presence of alternative behavioral models inimical to educational achievement. The emergence of these oppositional models in the inner city is linked to a long history of racial discrimination and segregation against domestic minorities, analyzed in detail by various authors (Barraera 1979; Massey and Denton 1993; Tienda and Stier 1996; Vigil 1988; Wilson 1987). The key point is that recent immigrants confront these realities as a fait accompli that can derail the achievement of higher educational and occupational status among their offspring. The CILS parental survey shows that immigrant parents combine high ambition for the future with a widespread fear that their children will fall victim to these deviant lifestyles. This fear leads some parents to the extreme of sending their young back home to be educated under the protection of kin and away from American streets (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

In Chapter 2, Jensen reports that immigrant families tend to disproportionately settle in larger metropolitan areas and, within them, in central cities. An unexpected consequence of this settlement pattern is to put immigrant children in close contact with the cultural models of the inner city. This contact takes place in the streets and in the schools, raising a daily challenge to parental goals and normative expectations. The influence of this encounter is again significantly affected by paths of acculturation. Children ensconced in well-structured communities, undergoing selective acculturation tend to be unaffected by oppositional messages and models. As Zhou (Chapter 7) makes clear, this psy-

chological shield is not contingent on parents' socioeconomic status but depends instead on the character of their families and networks. Even poor immigrant communities, such as the Vietnamese in San Diego, can effectively insulate their young provided that they maintain a high level of institutional integration and solidarity. In such cases, the messages of institutional integration and solidarity. In such cases, the messages that education does not pay and that school conformity is "acting white" are effectively countermanded not by parents but by an entire web of social relations. The opposite is, of course, the case for children undergoing dissonant acculturation. The pervasive influence of drugs and gangs is confronted in isolation as second-generation youths grow progressively distant from their parents. Although this situation does not necessarily guarantee downward assimilation, it places these children at risk, as the study of the Haitian case illustrates (Chapter 8). The cumulative character of immigrant adaptation is nowhere more evident than in those instances where poverty stemming from low human capital leads to settlement in downtrodden urban areas and where weak ethnic communities associated with a negative mode of incorporation deprive immigrants of a vital social resource at a key moment in their children's lives.

The CILS surveys followed students only as far as the end of high school and, hence, provide no information on their occupational lives. It stands to reason, however, that occupational success will be determined by their qualifications and by labor market demand. As members of the new second generation enter adulthood, they confront a labor market in the midst of a momentous transition, taking it away from its old industrial base and toward an information-driven service economy. This transition has spelled the partial end of traditional blue-collar occupational ladders and concentrated labor demand on two sectors: unskilled and low-paid service employment and well-paid non-manual service jobs requiring advanced training (Morales and Bonilla 1993; Sassen 1991; Wilson 1987).

As the studies in this volume show, occupational aspirations among all second-generation groups are consistently high. However, the possibilities of their fulfillment, and with it, the achievement of a middle-class or higher lifestyle vary widely. The cumulative character of the process of adaptation, observed so clearly in these results, leads to the expectation of a significant bifurcation in early occupational attainment, with some individuals and groups gaining access to jobs requiring at least a college degree, while others see their opportunities restricted to manual work little better than that performed by their



parents. While first-generation immigrants may have readily accepted such jobs as a ticket to life in America, their offspring are keenly aware of their stigmatized character. Frustration of their lofty aspirations and the prospect of a life spent in dead-end menial work may lead some of these youths to drift into alternative, deviant forms of employment. To the extent that the cumulative disadvantages of a negative mode of incorporation, weak ethnic communities, and dissonant acculturation culminate in labor market abandonment, the nation faces the prospect of a new rainbow underclass where new ethnicities join those already marginalized at the bottom of society. Along with individual and collective success stories, the studies presented in this volume offer reason to believe that this dismal outcome is not unrealistic, at least for some members of the new second generation.

### Lessons for Theory

The explanatory model presented in Figure 10.1 can be interpreted as a specific instance and illustration of three broader theoretical notions: path dependence, the role of social capital, and the decisive importance of structural embeddedness in constraining individual action. The concept of path dependence in economics, akin to the sociological concept of cumulative causation (Becker 1963; Portes 1995), refers to the progressive narrowing of options for action brought about by the accumulation of past decisions and events. The creation of ethnic niches in specific sectors of the labor market (Waldinger 1986, 1996; Waters 1999; Wilson 1987) offers a good example. Once a firm has started to meet its labor needs with workers of a particular ethnic origin, the operation of social networks will lead to the identification and hiring of new workers of the same ethnicity to fill new vacancies, leading cumulatively to the effective monopoly of employment opportunities. Managers of such firms find their employment decisions constrained by the operation of this path-dependent process.

In our case, cumulative causation operates as a series of distinct paths where initial characteristics and the reception of newly arrived immigrants facilitate future access of the second generation to both moral and material resources or prevent it. Such access, or lack thereof, in turn determines the probabilities of a successful upward path versus downward assimilation. It is possible, but not likely, that children of impoverished immigrant parents living in inner-city neighborhood and

attending custodial public schools will graduate from an elite college. It is equally possible, but not likely, that children of immigrant professionals or entrepreneurs ensconced in a social environment that promotes bilingualism and selective acculturation will end up in drug gangs and in prison. Path dependence for second-generation children operates as a "funnel" in which opportunities for success appear abundant and open to all at the start but are progressively restricted by the operation of forces rooted in the individual's social context.

Of these, none is more important than family and community networks. *Social capital* is defined as the ability to gain access to needed resources by virtue of membership in social networks and larger social structures (Bourdieu 1985; Portes 1998). From the standpoint of the recipient, resources acquired through social capital have the character of a gift since they are not purchased in the market but obtained freely or on concessionary terms. For second-generation youths, the key resources are those that facilitate access to good neighborhoods and schools, prevent dissonant acculturation, and promote academic achievement. Not surprisingly, offspring of economically advantaged parents can gain ready access to these resources. But those whose parents are poor can also do so through their possession of social capital. The first source of such gifts is the family itself, where intact and extended units have a decisive advantage over single-parent households. Family solidarity can operate to pool the social and economic resources necessary to escape dysfunctional neighborhoods or, barring this, to limit the damage caused by external racism and deviant subcultures.

It is often the case, however, that barriers confronting the second generation prove overwhelming to families, and this is when co-ethnic communities come into play. Bounded solidarity operates as a source of social capital by reinforcing parental authority and expectations for the future. This invaluable resource cannot be purchased in the market but depends instead on the density and strength of networks grounded on a common origin. Children may initially perceive such networks as restrictive, but the effective constraints that they create yield significant benefits in the long run. Social capital is the factor accounting for the paradox that more successful integration to American society does not depend on complete acculturation but rather on selective preservation of immigrant parents' culture and the collective ties that go with it.

The concept of modes of incorporation represents a specific instance of structural embeddedness of individual action. The structures in question are those of the receiving government, society, and preexisting eth-



nic community. Together, they function to place individuals in different positions at the entry of the funnel of adaptation, determining the extent to which individual skills can be put into play and the level of social capital available to first-generation parents. This perspective is, of course, directly opposed to theories of immigrant assimilation that focus primarily or exclusively on individual human capital. These theories, which have been advanced by some economists (see Borjas 1990, 1999), either neglect the role of contextual forces in determining immigrant adaptation or portray them in superficial ways.

Contrary to such views, the findings from the preceding chapters and from the CILS study in general consistently point to the constraints and opportunities created by the social structures that incorporate newcomers, regardless of the latter's ambition or level of skills. Immigrants with high aspirations and advanced educational credentials can be prevented from putting them to use and placed on a downward assimilation path by the operation of forces over which they have little control. Others with much poorer personal endowments may find themselves in an upward mobility course out of extensive government assistance and strong community support. The concept of structural embeddedness can be envisioned as a second "funnel" of immigrant adaptation, one that does not operate through time, like the one described earlier, but through successive levels of generality. Governmental policies and societal conduct and outlooks operate to mold local structures, including the character of ethnic communities. These, in turn, directly affect individuals, determining the extent to which human capital can be put into play and social capital accessed for normative regulation of the second generation.

### Lessons for Policy

On balance, results from the CILS surveys indicate that there is reason for concern about the future of the second generation. While most of these children will adjust well and will readily integrate into the mainstream of society, others are at risk of downward assimilation as an outgrowth of the forces just discussed. An enlightened, proactive policy would seek to reduce the numbers of those so exposed at present rather than confront the problem when it is too late. Unfortunately, there are two reasons not to be overoptimistic about the likelihood of such policies. First, social problems in America are seldom addressed until they

have matured into full-blown pathologies. By that standard, the challenges to adaptation of the new second generation do not qualify. Instead, attention focuses on the concentrated poverty, violence, gangs, and drugs, rendering large sectors of American cities nearly uninhabitable. These problems are addressed at present with common disregard for the fact that the down-trodden minorities most directly affected by them are actually the children and grandchildren of former migrants—Southern blacks, Puerto Ricans, and earlier Mexican immigrants. The likelihood that the offspring of today's labor immigrants may follow a similar path and confront the same fate in the future has yet to enter American public consciousness.

Second, the policy positions that have garnered most favor with the American electorate are more likely to promote this dismal outcome rather than prevent it. Nativism, which seeks to reduce immigration to the minimum and isolate those who stay in a position of social inferiority, triggers predictable reactive processes leading to ethnic re-assertiveness, withdrawal from normal mobility channels, and hostility toward mainstream institutions. The aftermath of the passage of Proposition 187 in California is only the latest example of the lamentable results of nativist policies and of the explosive divisions that they create (López and Stanton-Salazar, chapter 3 in this volume; Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

Forceful assimilationism does not seek to expel newcomers but to integrate them as quickly as possible into the American mainstream (Unzu 1999). English immersion and the rapid loss of foreign languages and cultures promoted by assimilationist policies weaken immigrant parents' authority and help drive a wedge between generations. A common outcome is dissonant acculturation with its sequel of negative effects. The paradox is that, in seeking to make "good Americans" out of the second generation, English immersion and similar programs undermine the single resource that poor immigrant youths have to succeed: namely, the social capital inherent in their families and co-ethnic communities. In the programmatic scenario promoted by forceful assimilationism, schools and immigrant families work at cross-purposes, with negative consequences for both.

Despite the presence of large numbers of professionals and entrepreneurs in today's first generation, the majority of immigrants are still poor workers. The best chance for educational achievement and economic ascent among their children lies in selective acculturation. Unfortunately, this path has no political constituency at present so that



its successes are often accomplished against and not with the support of educational and other mainstream institutions. The simplest and most effective proactive policy in support of today's second generation would consist of reversing this drift: backing up immigrant parents and the sense of self-worth and ambition grounded on their cultural past. As a basis for policy, selective acculturation is not the same as multiculturalism, for it does not seek to promote the emergence of quasi-permanent separate collectivities but rather to integrate effectively the new immigrant generations into the ladders of socioeconomic mobility of American society. It does so by helping these children preserve what assimilationism and dissonant acculturation take away from them—a clear sense of their roots, the value of fluency in a second language, and the self-esteem grounded on strong family and community bonds.

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