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Authors

Zhou, Min
Gonzales, Roberto G

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Divergent Destinies: Children of Immigrants Growing Up in America

Min Zhou[1] and Roberto G. Gonzales[2]

[1] Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles; email: mzhou@soc.ucla.edu

[2] Graduate School of Education, Harvard University; email: roberto_gonzales@gse.harvard.edu

Key Words

Second generation, 1.5 generation, undocumented youth, segmented assimilation, immigrant advantage, immigrant selectivity, DACA

Abstract

More than a quarter century of research has generated fruitful results and new insights into the understanding of the lived experiences of the new second generation, which broadly includes both native-born and foreign-born children of immigrant parentage. We critically review the burgeoning literature on the divergent trajectories and unequal outcomes of this new second generation. Given recent changes in immigration policy and in both contexts of exit and reception for new immigrants, we pay special attention to the significance of selectivity and immigration status. We begin by revisiting the canonical literature on assimilation and presenting the original formulation of the segmented assimilation theory as a critique. We, then, assess the impressive body of empirical research and discuss alternative concepts, models, and paradigms. We conclude our review by discussing the implications for future research on the children of immigrants.

INTRODUCTION

The new second generation, which broadly includes both native-born and foreign-born children of immigrant parentage, has come of age in significantly large numbers since the early 1990s and constituted an integral component of contemporary immigrant America. As of 2016, children under age 18 living with at least one immigrant parent made up more than a quarter (70 million) of the US child population. In immigrant families, 88 percent (15.9 million) of these children were native-born (Zong et al. 2018). In addition, the last two and a half decades have seen a growth in the number of children impacted by undocumented status. Nearly half of all undocumented immigrants were parents of minors. As of the mid-2000s, nearly 17 million people were living in mixed-status immigrant households, with at least one undocumented family member. Among the children of undocumented immigrants, more than 4.5 million are native-born citizens, 1.1 million are foreign-born who are also undocumented, and 1.5 million are young adults who have been in the United States since childhood (Batalova & McHugh 2010, Migration Policy Institute 2018).

While demographics are complex and continually evolving, this new second generation has grown into roughly two cohorts in the new millennium: an older cohort that has now transitioned to adulthood and parenthood; and a younger cohort that constitutes a sizable segment of the student population in K-12 schools and colleges. Like their immigrant parents, this new second generation is highly diverse in its origins and socioeconomic backgrounds. But unlike their parents, many of whom would have a "homeland" to return to, members of the 1.5 and second generation grow up as Americans with few real or symbolic connections to their parents' countries of birth (Portes & Zhou 1993, Zhou 1997). More importantly, it is these children of immigrants, rather than their foreign-born parents, that largely determine the long-term effects of immigration on the character of American society (Bean et al. 2015, Kasinitz et al. 2010, Portes & Rumbaut 2014, Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008, Yoshikawa 2011, Zhou & Bankston 2016).

Scholarship on the children of contemporary immigrants in the United States has grown into a significant area of intellectual inquiry in migration studies since the early 1990s (Alba & Nee 2003, Bean et al. 2015, Gonzales 2016, Dreby 2015, Kasinitz et al. 2010, Lee & Zhou 2015, Luthra et al. 2018, Perlmann 2005, Portes & Rumbaut 2001, Portes & Rumbaut 2014, Smith 2005, Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 1995, 2001, Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008, Telles & Ortiz 2009, Waters 2001, Yoshikawa 2011, Zhou & Bankston 1998). In 1997, *The Annual Review of Sociology* published the first review essay on the new second generation, which posed a set of urgent questions:

> "… how are we to understand these children's adaptation to their role as citizens and full participants in American society? How do migration processes, contexts of reception, and biculturalism impact the process of becoming American? Has assimilation continued to lead to upward social mobility? Has the younger generation of today's immigrants been able to assimilate into American society, following the path taken by the "old" second generation arriving at the turn of the [20th] century and advancing beyond their parents' generation?" (Zhou 1997, 64)

These questions have since created the basis of a new area of intellectual inquiry in migration studies. More than a quarter century of research has generated fruitful results and new insights into the understanding of the lived experiences of the new second generation. The aim of

this essay is to critically review the burgeoning literature in this area. Given recent changes in immigration policy and in both contexts of exit and reception for new immigrants, we also pay special attention to the significance of selectivity and immigration status. We begin by revisiting the canonical literature on assimilation and presenting the original formulation of the segmented assimilation theory as a critique of the classical perspective. We, then, evaluate the impressive body of empirical research and the development of alternative concepts, models, and paradigms. We conclude our review by discussing the implications for future research on children of immigrants.

ASSIMILATION AND INCORPORATION: CLASSICAL AND ALTERNATIVE FORMULATIONS

Immigration scholars have long sought to understand the processes by which newcomers assimilate into the host society and incorporate into its polity and institutions. In the scholarly literature, the term "assimilation" is often used interchangeably with "incorporation," as well as "adaptation" and "integration." While the interchangeable use of these terms creates problems of conceptual clarity, a more common understanding rests on the premise that "assimilation" refers to the outcomes of actions taken at the individual level, whereas "incorporation" refers to the ways in which actions of individuals impact the whole group (Barkan 2006, Ramakrishnan 2013). Collectively these actions form group patterns. For our understanding of the children of immigrants, both assimilation — the extent to which they acquire the habits, attitudes, and modes of life of the host society and the extent to which their national or ethnic origins become insignificant in determining their outcomes of social mobility — and incorporation — the extent to which institutional barriers are removed for immigrant groups to fully participate in the host society and access equal opportunities, resources and rights, regardless of race/ethnicity and national origin — have remained the most fundamental problems in the field of migration studies (Alba & Nee 2003, Zhou & Bankston 2016).

The Classical Assimilation Perspective

Classical assimilation theories operate on the premise that the host society consists of a single mainstream, dominated by a majority group (in the case of the United States, White Anglo-Saxon Protestants), to which immigrants of diverse backgrounds must abandon their old cultural ways—including language, values and norms, behavioral patterns, and anything ethnic—and learn to adapt. Ultimately, their success is measured against the standards set by the dominant group, or by how much they become indistinguishable from the members of that dominant group. Even though immigrants initially find themselves in a situation akin to the "marginal man," being simultaneously pulled in the direction of the host culture while drawn back by the culture of their homelands, they are gradually immersed in a race relations cycle of contact, competition, accommodation, and assimilation in a sequence of succeeding generations (Park 1928).

The early formulation of the classical assimilation theory emphasized economic forces (impersonal competition) and social forces (contact, communication and cooperation) to the neglect of group agency and structural constraints. Later theoretical developments consider the potency of contextual and institutional factors, such as phenotypical ranking and the racial/ethnic hierarchy, to be of paramount significance in determining the rate of assimilation (Warner &

Srole 1945). From this perspective, distinctive cultural characteristics, such as old-world cultures, native language, and ethnic enclaves, as well as ethnicity, were seen as burdensome baggage hindering successful assimilation. But these ethnic disadvantages should have fading effects on subsequent generations, whose members would adopt the primary language of the host society as their primary medium of communication and become increasingly similar to natives in lifestyle, mannerism, outlook, and worldview. Place of birth and length of time since immigration were thus considered vital in predicting assimilation outcomes. Although complete acculturation of an ethnic group to the dominant American way of life may not ensure that ethnic group's full social participation in the host society, all immigrants were expected first to free themselves from their old cultures in order to begin rising up from marginal positions (Gordon 1964).

The classical notion of assimilation has occupied a prominent place in sociology since the early part of the twentieth century (Gordon 1964, Park 1928, Warner & Srole 1945). America mostly absorbed the great waves of immigrants who arrived primarily from Europe at the late 19th century and early 20th century. German, Irish, and Italian Catholics, Polish and Russian Jews, and most other Eastern European immigrants achieved acceptance among an initially hostile native WASP population, and their offspring were absorbed into society's white majority through residential, educational, and occupational mobility and intermarriage without much trace of their ethnic distinctiveness (Alba 1984, Gans 1979, Waters 1990). But beginning in the mid-1960s, new patterns of assimilation and incorporation began to emerge that challenged early views of assimilation.

Alternative Perspectives: Neo-Assimilation v. Segmented Assimilation

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Hart-Celler bill into law, altering the country's demographic landscape and creating new patterns of immigration and incorporation. The act relaxed immigration restrictions and created new family- and employment-based preference categories for admission. Policy relaxation opened up immigration from Asia and Africa (Zhou and Bankston 2016). Meanwhile, migration from Latin America surged *despite* rather than because of the act (Massey and Pren 2012). Prior to 1965, there were no numerical limits on immigration from the Western Hemisphere. But the 1965 act curbed immigration from the region to 120,000 annually. The change led many U.S. employers, accustomed to flexible sources of labor, to view undocumented migration as their only source of cheap labor. In addition, development and globalization in countries of both emigration and immigration created vastly different contexts of exit and reception for newcomers and their children, leading to greater racial and socioeconomic complexity of the United States.

This changing reality challenges previous conceptions about assimilation. In particular, there has been considerable debate among scholars as to whether structural and human constraints affect the pace *or* the direction of assimilation (Portes & Rumbaut 2001, Rumbaut & Komaie 2010, Telles & Ortiz 2009). Whereas some scholars argue that structural changes in American society have actually created smoother and more diverse paths to assimilation for contemporary immigrants than their counterparts at the turn of the 20th century (Alba 2016, Perlmann 2005), others suggest that structural barriers have delayed the incorporation process of certain immigrant groups (Bean et al. 2015). And still others argue that many of the structural barriers—persistent discrimination, harsh immigration policies, and labor exploitation—translate into long-term disadvantages locking some groups into a permanent underclass (Gonzales 2016,

Massey et al. 2002, Telles & Ortiz 2009, Valdez 2006, Zhou & Bankston 2016). The scholarly debate has prompted alternative theoretical formulations and stimulated empirical research.

In their seminal book, *Remaking the American Mainstream*, Alba and Nee (2003) responded to the changes in contemporary immigration by suggesting that all immigrants and their descendants would eventually assimilate, though not necessarily in a single direction or toward a single core, as predicted by classical theories. They reconceptualized the American mainstream as one that encompassed "a core set of interrelated institutional structures and organizations regulated by rules and practices that weaken, and even undermine, the influence of ethnic origins per se," that included members of formerly excluded ethnic or racial groups, and that contained not just the middle class or affluent suburbanites, but also the working class or the central-city poor (p. 12). They cited a general shift toward English language use, growing educational advancement, increasing intermarriage, and movement toward symbolic ethnicity as evidence of continuing, albeit highly uneven, assimilation. In recognizing that assimilation and its outcomes are variable, Alba and Nee acknowledged some scenarios for downward mobility across generations, especially for those of low socioeconomic backgrounds and of racial minority status. However, they also argued that, because racial boundaries used to exclude those socially defined as non-whites have become flexible and changing, assimilation would continue to occur, that the second generation would do better than the first generation, and that the scenario of eventual assimilation of immigrant minorities into the host society's mainstream would be irreversible. Thus, the concept of "assimilation," while remaining relevant in contemporary American context, is redefined as the "decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences" across generations (Alba & Nee 2003, 11).

The segmented assimilation theory, in contrast, critically questions whether post-1965 immigrants would follow the footsteps of those of their earlier counterparts. The original theory was formulated from the premise that the U.S. society is highly stratified by race/ethnicity and class and that racial and class stratifications interact to produces segmented pathways and outcomes of incorporation (Portes & Zhou 1993, Portes & Rumbaut 2001). Three major patterns are discernible. The first is the classical upward-mobility pattern, which entails acculturation and incorporation into the normative structures of the host society's mainstream by severing ethnic ties, unlearning old-world values, norms, and behavioral patterns, and adapting to the white middleclass culture. The second is the downward-mobility pattern, which involves acculturation and incorporation into the host society's margins. The third is an ethnic upward-mobility pattern, which results in socioeconomic incorporation into the host society's mainstream with lagged or selective acculturation *and* deliberate preservation of an ethnic group's values and norms, social ties, and community institutions (Portes & Zhou 1993, Portes et al. 2009, Zhou 2015).

The segmented assimilation theory emphasizes the interaction between immigrants' human capital, family socioeconomic status, and host-society's receiving contexts to predict divergent trajectories and varied outcomes of incorporation. As such, segmented assimilation diverges from classical and neo-classical perspectives with regard to the effects of these interacting forces — contexts of exit and reception — that operate beyond individual-level factors (Portes & Rumbaut 2014, Xie & Greenman 2011, Zhou 2015). The context of exit involves a set of pre-migration characteristics, including the class status already attained by immigrants in the homelands, the human, cultural and social capital resources (such as money, knowledge and cultural literacy, job skills, social connections) to the new country, and immigrants' values and customary practices. These tangible and intangible resources are shaped

by immigrant selectivity to affect not only individuals and families, but also the national origin group as a whole. The context of reception includes a set of host-society factors corresponding to group-level characteristics, including group position, public attitudes, government policies, and the strength of the pre-existing ethnic community. The segmented assimilation theory posits that particular contexts of exit and reception *interact* to create distinctive ethnocultural patterns and strategies of socioeconomic integration, giving rise to group specific modes of incorporation with opportunities or constraints for group members, independent of individual and family SES and other main demographic characteristics (Zhou 2015).

From the segmented assimilation perspective, national origin is used as a proxy for modes of incorporation predicting outcomes, which are empirically measured by observable SES indicators, such as education, occupation, and earnings in comparison to the native-born population or the host society's dominant group (Portes et al. 2009, Stepick & Stepick 2010, Waldinger & Catron 2016). The theory produces two propositions as succinctly extrapolated by Portes and his associates (2009): (1) downward assimilation, measured by school failure, risky behaviors, teenage pregnancy, and incarceration, exists and affects a sizeable proportion of the new second generation, and (2) incidents of downward, stagnant, or upward assimilation are not random but are patterned by the set of exogenous causal determinants associated with the modes of incorporation.

Both theories of neo-assimilation and segmented assimilation offer unique insights into the understanding of the new second generation and have served as powerful alternative perspectives to this growing field of inquiry. At the core of the conceptual difference between neo-assimilation and segmented assimilation, however, is perhaps the issue of the reference group—to whom are the members of the second generation compared in measuring assimilation outcomes. Proponents of the segmented assimilation theory focuses on group-level parity with the host-society's dominant group or general population while those of the neo-assimilation theory focuses on changes in individual characteristics intergenerationally or the first generation of the same national origin groups (Alba 2016; Alba & Nee 2013, Kasinitz et al. 2010, Portes & Rumbaut 2014). For example, compared to first-generation Mexican immigrants, the second and third generation of Mexican Americans achieved the biggest gains in educational and occupational achievements and they were more likely than other more highly educated groups to feel successful (Lee 2014). But compared to non-Hispanic whites or the general US populations, significant gaps in educational, occupational and income attainments persist with visible signs of stalled and downward mobility (Portes et al. 2009, Telles and Ortiz 2009). Assessing the extent to which today's second generation are successfully assimilating, thus, requires understanding the ways in which the process may be changing (Brown & Bean 2006). In the discussion that follows, we review the empirical evidence bolstering contrasting perspectives.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Divergent Trajectories and Unequal Outcomes

More than a quarter century of empirical research has shed important light on the current state of the new second generation in the United States. Existing empirical evidence seems to show significantly different group-based outcomes that underscore the real concern of segmented assimilation (Portes et al. 2009). First, inter-group differences in outcomes are patterned

systematically. Early studies analyzing the 1990 census showed that, while immigrant adolescents, especially from Asia, were as likely as their native-born peers to be enrolled in high school, non-enrollment among youth of Hispanic and Caribbean origins was much higher than for their native-born peers and peers of other national origins. What's more, high rates of school non-enrollment and disadvantaged labor market outcomes were not reduced with longer exposure to American society (Hirschman 2001, Sassler 2006, Valdez 2006).

Longitudinal research, such as the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), also suggests that patterns of intergroup differences in educational attainment exist in early adolescence and persist into high school, translating into diverse labor market outcomes in young adulthood (Portes & Rumbaut 2001, 2014, 2017, Portes & Hao 2002, Portes et al. 2009, Rumbaut 2008, Zhou et al. 2008). Furthermore, intergroup differences in incidents of arrest and incarceration are equally notable, with Chinese and Cuban males on the low end, Jamaicans, West Indians, Salvadorans, Mexicans, and other Latin American immigrants on the high end, and Laotians and Cambodians in between (Portes et al. 2009, Rumbaut 2008). While inter-generational progress is remarkable, there is strong evidence to suggest an Asian advantage in educational and occupational achievements and a Latino disadvantage, driven by structural barriers and measured by high school dropout, at-risk behaviors, incarceration, and teenage or nonmarital childbearing (Greenman & Xie 2008).

Second, for some national origin groups, patterns of stalled or downward mobility are highly visible and persistent. Low skilled immigrants, like Mexicans, America's largest immigrant group, are especially at risk. Livingston and Kahn (2002) examined the wages of first-, second-, and third-generation Mexicans using the 1989 Latino National Political Study and the 1990/1991 Panel Studies of Income Dynamics. They showed that first-generation Mexicans, men and women alike, earned lower wages than their second– and third–generation counterparts. However, once human capital characteristics were controlled for, wages steadily declined across generations, a salient pattern that is consistently revealed in other studies (Hirschman 2001, Sassler 2006, Valdez 2006, Waldinger et al. 2007). Similarly, Perlmann (2005) compared rates of educational achievement and earnings returns to human capital for the children of Southern and Central Europeans in 1950 and children of Mexicans in 2000 using U.S. census data. He found that comparatively, the children of Mexican immigrants were doubly disadvantaged, both by their lower educational achievement and by the lower earnings returns to education. Based on longitudinal data along several dimensions, including education, occupation, income, language, intermarriage, residential segregation, identity, and political participation, Telles and Ortiz (2009) found significant trends of generational stagnation or decline. Their longitudinal study showed rapid and complete assimilation by the second generation in terms of English language acquisition and development of strong American identities, but slower rates of assimilation along the domains of religion, intermarriage, and residential integration (Telles & Ortiz 2009). In addition, while educational attainment peaked in the second generation, it declined for the third and fourth generations. Importantly, the authors cite institutional barriers — chronic underfunding of schools serving Mexican students, persistent discrimination, punitive immigration policies — as the major sources of the Mexican disadvantage (see also Gandara & Contreras 2009).

Third, family characteristics matter. The effect of family SES — levels of parental human capital and financial resources — has remained strong and significant across national origin groups on children's mobility. This reflects a commonly known aspect of class reproduction.

However, for some immigrant groups, family SES appears to be a less significant determinant, suggesting that family SES interacts with ethnic resources to produce desirable outcomes. For example, Zhou and Bankston (1998) found that the children of poor Vietnamese refugees were able to bypass the disadvantaged social environment in a low-income neighborhood to move ahead in society. The authors develop an ecological model of co-ethnic social relations to suggest that families do not function in isolation and that children of low SES backgrounds can do well in school when families are well integrated into, and receive support from, their ethnic community. Kasinitz and his associates (2010) found that, in New York City, the children of Chinese working-class immigrants fared better than their middleclass white peers. These scholars explain that these Chinese working-class families utilize their ethnic channels, such as Chinese language newspapers and media, as well as ethnic churches and other organizations, to learn how to navigate the American educational system effectively. Lee and Zhou (2015, 2017) also found that the children of Chinese immigrants and Vietnamese refugees whose parents had less than a high school education graduated from college at nearly the same rate as their middle-class peers because they have access to ethnic capital.

Fourth, there exist some striking intervening processes that are consequential. Varying family SES upon arrival at the individual and/or group level is intertwined with the immediate contexts of settlement that different immigrant groups encounter (Feliciano 2006; Portes et al. 2009). Low SES channels immigrant families into poverty stricken and high crime neighborhoods, with under-performing schools, drugs and gangs, and high rates of single parenthood and premature childbearing. The underprivileged neighborhood context exacerbates low SES to increase the risk of downward assimilation. These interactive processes affect the children of Mexican and Afro-Caribbean immigrants disproportionately (Haller et al. 2011, Kroneberg 2008, Portes et al 2009, Pong & Hao 2007, Martinez et al. 2006). On the other hand, the CILS data reveal that the children of high family SES status generally experience a process of *consonant acculturation* where parents and children jointly learn and adapt to the cultural and behavioral patterns of the host-society's middleclass mainstream. In contrast, the children of low family SES status often experience *dissonant acculturation* where the cultural and behavioral patterns that children learn are incongruent with those promoted by their parents. The scholars conclude that, even though dissonant acculturation does not necessarily produce downward assimilation, it makes this outcome more probable because of the lack of family resources and parental authority in effective parenting (Portes et al. 2009). But other scholars note that dissonance acculturation is the exception, not the norm (Waters et al. 2010).

The Second Generation Advantage and the Point of Reference

The thesis of "second generation advantage" was advanced as a critique of the concept of segmented assimilation (Alba & Nee 2003, Kasinitz et al. 2010). In their book *Inheriting the City*, based on the Immigrant Second Generation in Metropolitan New York (ISGMNY) study, Kasinitz and his associates (2010) provide revealing mobility portraits of the children of Anglophone Afro-Caribbeans, Dominicans, South Americans (Colombians, Ecuadorans, Peruvians), Chinese, and Russian Jews, with native-born African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and whites as native reference groups. The authors show that all children of immigrants under study were generally doing better than their respective native-born comparison groups with regard to key mobility indicators such as education, English language use, labor market incorporation, and earnings. Moreover, all members of the second generation benefited from having more options than their immigrant parents to simultaneously maintain ethnic cultural beliefs and practices and

create new norms and beliefs as they were moving ahead in society. These children of immigrants prefer to speak English and are fluent in the language. They tend to move out of jobs associated with ethnic economies and into the mainstream economy, which is associated with higher overall incomes. Furthermore, the trend of intergenerational mobility — how well the children fare in comparison to the parental generation — is also remarkable across different immigrant groups.

The findings from an innovative immigrant generation cohort method, which considers outcome measures over the life cycle, also show strong evidence of greater intergenerational progress for the new second generation than is commonly reported though not all aspects of second-generation socioeconomic status rose at the same rate (Park & Meyer 2010). The second-generation advantage — the children of immigrants fare better than their respective native-born racial groups and better than the foreign-born generation of the same national origin — suggests that assimilation into American society and upward mobility are occurring even among immigrant groups of relatively disadvantaged origins (Alba & Nee 2003, John 2014, Waldinger & Feliciano 2004, Waters et al. 2010).

However, gauging successful incorporation is also a matter of the point of reference (Lee 2014, Tran & Valdez 2017). Unlike immigrants who are likely to view their lives in terms of a "dual frame of reference," the children of immigrants establish their point of reference in the United States and come to identify with "the dominant paradigm of adolescent ambivalence" (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001). Using the subject-centered approach, Lee and Zhou (2015) find that when comparing themselves to their parents, the children of Mexican immigrants are more likely to feel successful than are the children of Asian immigrants, whose college graduation rate is more than triple that of their Mexican peers but who tend to look to their more successful second-generation co-ethnics as their point of reference (Lee & Zhou 2015; Zhou & Lee 2017). In the second-generation advantage model, the reference group used is the native population of the racial group. For example, West Indians fared better than African-Americans, Dominicans did better than Puerto Ricans, and Russian Jews, grouped together with Chinese, did better than native whites, with no sign of downward assimilation (Kasinitz et al. 2010).

When using foreign-born coethnics as the reference group, the second generation advantage is most striking among children of Mexican immigrants. For example, the high school graduation rate among children of Mexican immigrants is more than double that of their immigrant parents and the college graduation rate (17 percent) is more than double that of their fathers (7 percent) and triple that of their mothers (5 percent), and few immigrant groups in the United States display such extraordinary intergenerational progress (Lee 2014).

Diverging from the second-generation advantage model, the segmented assimilation model uses non-Hispanic whites, or the general US native population, as the point of reference. From this perspective, immigrant offspring of low SES family background and racial minority status are at a higher risk than others of being trapped in the host society's racial stratification system (Portes et al. 2009; Telles & Ortiz 2008). While a young person from Mexican heritage with a high school degree may have outpaced his or her parents in educational attainment and other measures of social and spatial mobility), the lack of a college degree in today's economy may still hamper social and economic mobility. In contrast, the offspring of high SES families are cushioned from downward assimilation, even when they do not attain the same SES levels as

their immigrant parents, as is the case of Filipino Americans (Zhou & Xiong 2005). The optimistic outlook of "second generation advantage" might overlook two important pieces of evidence: first, a sizeable minority is *not* managing to overcome structural challenges; second, this minority is disproportionately of certain national origins. Young men and women from this sizable minority are also assimilating, but they are being channeled into the bottom segment of the US society, which is not conducive to their upward mobility (Portes et al. 2009).

Immigrant Selectivity and Group-Based Ethnic Capital

For the new second generation, diverse pathways lead to significant differences in socioeconomic outcomes, but the general trend of second generation progress is also striking. Underlying these diverse empirical findings is the observation that immigrant selectivity structures such patterns. Empirical evidence clearly suggests the presence of an immigrant paradox, indicating that immigrant children fare better than their native-born peers of the same national or ethnic origin and that immigrant children of low family SES sometimes fare better than the children of native minorities of higher family SES (Hao & Woo 2012, Hofferth & Moon 2016, Kao & Tienda 1995). This immigrant paradox is not merely produced by immigrant optimism but also by ethnic capital which underscores the significance of selectivity.

Operationalizing selectivity as the average level of educational attainment (in years) of immigrants of a national origin group vis-à-vis that of non-immigrants in their country of origin, Feliciano (2005) found that most immigrant groups in the United States were positively selected, but that the degree of positive selectivity varied, with Indians at the high end and Mexicans at the low end. She argued that selectivity drove the general American perception about the overall educational profile of a particular immigrant group. That is, for example, a large number of Mexicans with lower than average levels of education migrate to the United States to take up low-wage employment. Their size and visibility contribute to the impression that Mexican immigrants are largely uneducated.

In a follow-up study, Feliciano (2016) also noted that higher premigration educational status at the group level positively influences perceived parental aspirations and the educational expectations of second-generation youths beyond individual family SES. Lee and Zhou (2015) built on the concept of educational selectivity and refined it in terms of hyper-selectivity, high selectivity, and hypo-selectivity to capture variations in group-level human capital. The refined concept of selectivity is measured by the percentage of college graduates, rather than by average years of schooling, and includes two relative components: 1) the overall percentage of college graduates of an immigrant group vis-à-vis that of their nonimmigrant counterparts in the home country, *and* 2) the overall percentage of college graduates of the immigrant group vis-à-vis that of natives in the host country. Hyper-selectivity refers to higher percentages of college educated immigrants vis-à-vis nonimmigrants in the homeland and natives in the host land, and hypo-selectivity, the opposite. While most immigrant groups are highly selected, some are *hyper*-selected while others are *hypo*-selected. For example, Chinese are hyper-selected, while Mexicans are hypo-selected: nearly 50 percent of foreign-born Chinese aged 25 years or over in the United States had at least a bachelor's degree, compared to about 4 per cent of adults in China and 28 per cent of average Americans. By contrast, only 5 per cent of foreign born Mexicans in the United States had a college degree compared to 16 per cent of Mexicans in Mexico and 28 per cent of average Americans (Lee & Zhou 2015).

By linking a group's pre-migration characteristics to post-migration circumstances, hyper- or hypo-selectivity captures not only what resources (tangible or intangible) immigrants and their families have at their disposal upon arrival, but also how these pre-migration resources or disadvantages reproduce themselves at the group-level to enable or hinder individual group members in their quest to upward social mobility (Zhou & Bankston 2016, Zhou & Lee 2017). Based on a qualitative study of adult children of immigrants in metropolitan Los Angeles, Lee and Zhou (2015) find that hyper-selectivity (as opposed to hypo-selectivity) of contemporary immigration significantly influences the educational trajectories and outcomes in the members of the 1.5 and second generation beyond individual family or parental socioeconomic characteristics, leading to group-based advantages (or disadvantages) that are consequential. Their data show that the children of hyper-selected immigrant groups who begin their quest from more favorable *starting points*, are guided by a more constricting *success frame*, and have greater access to *ethnic capital* than those of other immigrant groups. In turn, hyper-selectivity gives rise to *stereotype promise,* a boost in performance that comes with being favorably perceived and treated as smart, high-achieving, hard-working, and deserving students. Their analysis also suggests that, while so-called positive stereotypes may help boost academic performance of Asian Americans in school, the same stereotype can also reproduce new stereotypes that hinder their access to opportunities for career promotions and leadership positions in the workplace (Zhou & Lee 2017).

Particularly noteworthy is that hyper-selected national origin groups, overrepresented by the well-educated and highly skilled, are likely to generate stronger ethnic capital, often via the development of the ethnic community, to benefit all group members, including those of low SES backgrounds. For example, while immigrant neighborhoods in urban areas often experience decline due to high concentrations of poverty, some ethnic enclaves lodged within these neighborhoods may thrive and generate ethnic capital and ethnic social environments conducive to social mobility for co-ethnic children. Take Los Angeles' Koreatown as a case in point. Koreatown is a typical urban neighborhood dominated by ethnic minorities (93 percent), foreign born (69 percent), and the poor (31 percent). Most residents are recent immigrants of relatively low SES backgrounds from South Korea, Mexico, and Central America. Korean immigrant children tend to do better in school than their Latino peers even when they come from families with similar income levels. This is not because Korean families value education more than Mexican families, but rather because they have access to additional ethnic resources, such as the ethnic system of supplementary education that includes a range of nonprofit and for-profit institutions offering academic tutoring and enrichment, standardize test preparation, college readiness programs, and related counseling services. In contrast, because of high proportions of the low-skilled and undocumented individuals, the Mexican community in Koreatown, lacks similar ethnic resources to supplement children's education despite strong parental values toward education. Yet, neighborhood-based resources created by the Korean community are not accessible to other ethnic groups sharing the same space (Zhou 2009).

The Limitations of Undocumented Status

Given the significant differences in the processes and outcomes of immigrant incorporation between and within national origin groups, immigration status has become one of the most salient features of inequality (Chavez 2013, Massey 1999, Menjivar 2006, Smith 2008). Recent changes in immigration policy have made it difficult for undocumented immigrants to adjust their status and have extended enforcement efforts from the border to the nation's interior,

which further heighten its profound impacts (Gonzales & Raphael 2017). The children of undocumented immigrants grow up amid an increasingly harsh context of limitation and intense enforcement efforts that have sown fear and anxiety within large, settled immigrant populations (Del Real 2018, Garcia 2018, Lopez et al. 2017). Recent studies have provided an important window through which to understand the influence of undocumented status on the incorporation of undocumented immigrants and their native-born children as well as their foreign-born undocumented children (Abrego 2006; Bean et al. 2011, Dreby 2010, Gonzales 2016, Yoshikawa & Kalil 2011)). Due to barriers stemming from their immigration status, undocumented immigrants live in precarious conditions that narrowly circumscribe their social and economic mobility and mark their everyday lives with fear and uncertainty. For undocumented 1.5 generation and the second generation of undocumented immigrant parentage, these precarious conditions increase the risks for a number of developmental and educational vulnerabilities from early childhood through young adulthood (Bean et al. 2015, Brabeck et al. 2015; Ortega et al. 2009, Yoshikawa 2011).

In many ways, immigration status (and immigration policy, for that matter) matters more at present than it did 25 years ago. Current research in this area has highlighted the significance of undocumented status as a barrier to mobility, indicating that the consequences of illegality for the undocumented 1.5 generation begin to surface in adolescence when undocumented children make critical life course transitions (Abrego 2006, Dreby 2015, Enriquez 2017, Gleeson & Gonzales 2012, Gonzales 2011, 2016). Owing to their legal inclusion in K-12 schools, the childhood experiences of undocumented children parallel those of their citizen peers. As such, they develop personal and professional aspirations in line with their experiences of inclusion (Abrego 2006, Gonzales 2011). However, as they reach adolescence, undocumented youngsters find that immigration status plays a much more constricting role in their everyday lives, as they encounter problems in obtaining driver's licenses, acquiring after school jobs, registering to vote, and applying to college (Gonzales 2011). They also become increasingly aware of the social stigma their identities as undocumented immigrants carry in the host society, and hence choose to conceal their undocumented status from peers and school personnel, which further limits their participation in activities and constrains their social networks (Abrego 2008, 2011, Gonzales 2016, Patler 2018). This process, characterized as the "transition to illegality," is often accompanied by feelings of despair, a decline in academic performance, and a retooling of future expectations (Gonzales 2011, Gonzales et al. 2018).

Yet, while unauthorized status constrains the lives of undocumented immigrant youth, individual experiences are stratified by other demographic characteristics, including race, class, education, and place of residence (Alba et al. 2014, Gonzales & Buciaga 2018, Marrow 2018, Massey 2008). Research on the undocumented 1.5 generation across racial and class backgrounds has demonstrated differential experiences of Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Black immigrants. For lighter skinned immigrants and those from higher social class backgrounds, the stigma of being undocumented is tempered by fewer negative interactions with authorities, and less fear of deportation (Cebulko 2018). Cebulko (2018) has termed this intersection of racial and social class advantage as "privilege without papers" (p. 225).

Studies also point to differences shaped by educational trajectories. Having access to an advanced curriculum, adult mentorship, and social support can provide some undocumented youth with the means to overcome challenges related to their undocumented status and to pursue a postsecondary education (Gonzales 2010). For those undocumented youth who make

successful transitions to postsecondary education, these pursuits slow down the transition to illegality and allow them to, at least temporarily, bypass illegalized daily life and clandestine employment (Gonzales 2016).

Additionally, the consequences of undocumented status can vary widely across geographies. Due to congressional inaction on immigration, and the devolution of immigration policy to local governments, undocumented young people face a complex web of policies at the state, county, and municipal levels (Martinez 2014, Silver 2018). Many young people living in places with more inclusive policies can access driver's licenses, in-state college tuition, and a lessened fear of deportation. In contrast, those living in places with more restrictive policies often face increased surveillance and exclusion from higher education (Gonzales & Buciaga 2018, Marrow 2018). Local contexts of reception also stratify experiences. Rural communities, in particular, tend to lack the organizational infrastructure, institutional resources, and networks of support within and beyond the ethnic community to promote social mobility for undocumented immigrants and their children (Gonzales & Ruiz 2014, Marrow 2018, Massey 2008).

As undocumented young adults complete the transition to illegality, early advantages begin to dissipate. Despite advanced degrees, social inclusion, and other accomplishments, illegality operates as a "master status" (Gonzales 2016). It is not that other auxiliary statuses do not matter (Enriquez 2017), it's just that illegality is more consequential in circumscribing access to the polity (Gonzales and Burciaga 2018).

The fates of many undocumented youth began to change in 2012 when President Obama initiated the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, providing eligible undocumented youth access to work authorization, social security numbers, and temporary relief from deportation. In addition to DACA's provisions, every state plus the District of Columbia have passed legislation permitting DACA beneficiaries to obtain driver's licenses. As of early 2018, more than 814,000 individuals had been granted DACA status, of an estimated 1.9 million eligible youth and young adults. Recent studies on DACA recipients' experiences have highlighted the significance of deportation relief on individuals' mental and emotional well-being and positive effects on educational and employment outcomes (Gonzales et al. 2016, Gonzales et al. 2018, Patler & Pirtle 2018, Wong et al. 2015). Distinct from their unDACAmented counterparts, DACA recipients have better employment opportunities and higher earnings. They also have access to driver's licenses, opportunities to build credit, and new forms of health care to which their unDACAmented peers lack access (Gonzales et al 2016, Terriquez 2015, Wong et al. 2015). While DACA does not override exclusions from financial aid, earnings through lawful employment allow DACA beneficiaries opportunities to save money and meet college expenses, and access to better jobs that match their educational preparation incentivizes further investments in education and training.

The widening gap between DACAmented and unDACAmented young people attests to the importance of immigration status on outcomes of incorporation. Despite DACA's material, social, and psychological benefits, however, the temporary and partial nature of DACA does not offer long-term and permanent relief. Given the configuration of mixed-status families, vulnerability associated with undocumented status continues to persist beyond the individual.

CONCLUSION

The children of contemporary immigrants are in a much more complex situation than can be explained by uniformly pessimistic or uniformly optimistic interpretations. We have learned from empirical studies that the new second generation is generally doing better than their parents. Yet, it may be premature to conclude that members of the 1.5 and second generation will sooner or later move into the mainstream middle class, or to refute the segmented assimilation theory, as the following findings are striking: (1) intergroup differences in measurable outcomes of incorporation are systematic and persistent; (2) the risk of downward assimilation is disproportionately high among certain national origin groups; (3) family SES is of paramount importance, but the effects on immigrants and their children are moderated by immigrant selectivity and modes of incorporation; and (4) blocked access caused by a lack of legal status renders the conventional mobility path through education irrelevant, breaking the link between educational achievement and desirable labor market outcomes.

Just exactly *how* national origin interacts with race, family SES, immigration status, immigrant selectivity, and receiving contexts to produce the immigrant paradox and divergent outcomes has remained unresolved, partly due to the conceptual muddle and partly due to data limitation. In the existing research, most studies are either quantitative or qualitative in methodology. Sophisticated quantitative models have been developed to examine intergroup differences in outcomes but tend to produce similar results that largely miss the group-specific nuances, dynamics, and mechanisms of processes. Qualitative studies are attentive to details of these processes but have limited generalizability. Coherent integration of these two methodological approaches is still lacking. We recognize persistent barriers inherent in studying undocumented immigrants. But when it can, future research should aim to refine measures and models through a more nuanced mixed methods approach to accurately capture the contextual factor at the meso- and macro-levels of analysis. By innovatively engaging in mixed-methods research design and longitudinal data collection, we can gain a better understanding of the reasons beyond family SES and acculturation that account from intergroup disparities. While the best research methodologies and data can ensure more accurate predictions for future possibilities, only time can tell about the real assimilation outcomes beyond the second generation.

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