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Context and importance of the problem

As we enter the second decade of the 21st century the lives of hundreds of millions of people are shaped by the experience of migration: 214 million as transnational migrants, approximately 740 million as internal migrants, and millions more as immediate relatives left behind (UNDP, 2009). While mass migration is reshaping economies and societies the world over, many facets of immigration remain overlooked, misunderstood, or neglected. The dominant approaches to the study of mass migration privilege labor factors, economic variables, demographic forces, and in recent years, border controls, undocumented immigration, and immigration *qua* security (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Qin, 2005). Though these approaches have generated some scholarly consensus, important aspects of mass migration remain unexplored.

The most fundamental and indivisible unit of migration is the family. While at the manifest level immigration is often driven by labor, demographic, and economic variables below the surface immigration's enduring root is the family. Immigration is an ethical act of, and for, the family. Immigration typically starts with the family and family bonds sustain it. Immigration will profoundly change families as well as the societies in which immigrants settle. The children of immigrants are the fruit borne of immigration (C. Suárez-Orozco & M. Suárez-Orozco, 2002). These children are a fast-growing sector of the youth population in nearly every immigration-dependant country today including Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden. *In the United*

States, the country with the largest number of immigrants in the world (now at over 40 million), approximately one quarter of all youth are of immigrant origin (16 million in 2010) and it is projected that by 2040 over a third of all children will be growing up in immigrant households (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007). The transition of immigrant origin children to our country is a topic of scholarly interest and policy relevance.

Critique of policy option

Just as schools face the challenge of educating growing numbers of immigrant students, the process of globalization imposes yet another demand on education. Schools today must nurture ever more complex skills, competencies, and sensibilities in students to equip them to engage in the globally-linked economies and societies of our time, prepare them to become globally conscious and competent citizens facing increasingly complex problems and choices in the public and political spheres (Hugonnier, 2007; Levy & Murnane, 2007; Cheng, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Sattin-Bajaj, 2010). *Accountability and high stakes testing swept the nation as the largest educational policy initiative in recent history precisely at the time when the mass arrival of immigrant origin students was taking place. These educational policies are blind to the needs of immigrant students and have unintended detrimental consequences.* Research suggests that it takes five to seven years of optimal language teaching and learning before immigrant English language learners can be ready to compete in timed high stakes test regime of Leave no Child Behind. *The charter school movement, likewise, has largely ignored and*



avoided engaging new immigrant students and their families, thus, locking them out of this significant educational opportunity (Sattin-Bajaj and Suarez-Orozco, 2010). Hence, the most significant educational policy experiments of the past decade, have failed to align with the largest growing population of new students. *In order to effectively support these students' academic achievement and development, educators require a firmer grasp of the cultural psychology of immigration, the vicissitudes of immigrant academic language acquisition, a greater degree of pedagogical flexibility, cultural competency, and responsiveness than has been previously demanded of them.* Below I highlight two critical policy domains relevant to the academic achievement of immigrant children: language and family supports.

Policy recommendations

1- Supporting Language. More school districts and school leaders must recognize the value of promoting and preserving native language fluency while simultaneously developing students' reading, writing, and oral communication skills in the new language (see the various studies in Meier & Morehouse, 2008; see also Christensen & Stanat, 2007). Numerous examples of innovation in the realms of new and heritage language instruction and promotion exist in widely divergent contexts in multiple nations.

In British Columbia, Canada, the Ministry of Education has implemented a program for new language development that is being recognized and lauded by experts across a range of fields (see Christensen & Stanat, 2007). In the primary grades, language instruction focuses on immersion with English Language Learners receiving up to six hours per week of systematic language support. At the secondary level, English Language Learners participate in a three-phase preparation program divided into reception, transition, and integration before they move to mainstream instruction. At each level of

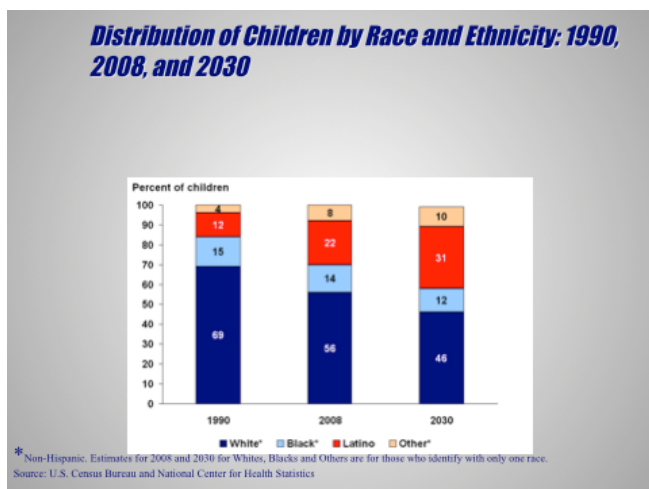
schooling, teachers receive specialized training to prepare them to provide high quality academic and language instruction. By designing a systematic, research-based approach that understands language learning to be at the heart of student academic progress and providing a comprehensive set of resources to support this process, including setting a high standard for the education of immigrant-origin children, Canada has innovated programs deserving to be further studied and emulated (for other exemplary programs in Canadian education for immigrants, see Lacey, 2008 and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2003). Other such proven programs exist in Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand (see Meier & Morehouse, 2008).

2-Supporting the Family. Families support the schooling of children with resources, by valuing, education, and establishing a standard of expectation. They can also actively scaffold children as they complete school assignments. Immigrant parents who work long hours, lack financial resources, and may have limited schooling are at a distinct disadvantage in this regard. Immigrant parents may be unable to tangibly support their children in ways that are congruent with the new country's cultural models and material expectations. Moreover, some parents may lack knowledge about what is expected of them or what they can do as parents to assist their children academically. As a result, this is an area ripe for conflicts, misunderstandings, and lost opportunities for collaboration between schools and immigrant families. Community-based organizations in many countries have recognized the existence of considerable home-school barriers and have implemented initiatives designed to address them by informing immigrant parents of their rights, responsibilities, and expected roles. For example, AVANCE-El Paso is a branch of a national program that works to equip low-income parents with skills and resources to support their children's development in the early years. Recently recognized with a prestigious E Pluribus



Unum Award by the Migration Policy Institute's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, the AVANCE-El Paso program currently operates in multiple schools in El Paso and southern New Mexico where it works with predominantly immigrant families. Families participate in adult literacy classes and receive parenting education, and the impact on student outcomes has been remarkable. While the majority of AVANCE-El Paso participants are considered “economically disadvantaged,” the children have shown higher standardized test scores, better high school graduation rates, and higher college enrollment rates than their peers in the district. For a comprehensive overview of policies and programs supporting immigrant families and children make the transition to new societies, see <http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/immigration/pathways/>

Visuals



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