

Cracks in the Schoolyard— Confronting Latino Educational Inequality

Edited by

Gilberto Q. Conchas
with Briana M. Hinga

Foreword by
Amanda Datnow



TEACHERS COLLEGE PRESS

TEACHERS COLLEGE | COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK AND LONDON

Published by Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027

Copyright © 2016 by Teachers College, Columbia University

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the publisher.

Figure 3.1 courtesy of Nancy Acevedo-Gil. © 2013 by Nancy Acevedo-Gil. Used by permission.

Figure 9.1 is from Wikipedia, Creative Commons Free Share.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cracks in the schoolyard : confronting Latino educational inequality / edited by Gilberto Q. Conchas ; with Briana M. Hinga ; foreword by Amanda Datnow

pages ; cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8077-5703-1 (paperback)—ISBN 978-0-8077-5704-8 (hardcover) ISBN 978-0-8077-7413-7 (ebook)

1. Hispanic Americans—Education. 2. Discrimination in education—United States. 3. Educational equalization—United States. I. Conchas, Gilberto Q.

LC2669.C73 2015

371.829'68073—dc23

2015033789

ISBN 978-0-8077-5703-1 (paperback)

ISBN 978-0-8077-5704-8 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-0-8077-7413-7 (ebook)

Printed on acid-free paper

Manufactured in the United States of America

22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Uncertain Futures

Educational Attainment and the Children of Undocumented Mexican Immigrants in the Greater Los Angeles Area

Leo R. Chavez

You become depressed, you become very depressed. You work so hard and now what? You start questioning yourself. Is it worth it? Was it worth it? And what now? You have two options. Either you take the college route because education is education, and I'm learning and I like what I'm learning, and I'm going to continue to learn. Or you take the other route, where you just say, that's it. I'm just going to start working. It wasn't worth it. My mom or my dad, or my neighbor, was right. Why am I still going to school if I am not going to be able to continue with my education? So two paths, you have to decide which one to take.

—Lupe, 21 years old, brought to the United States from Mexico at age 8

This chapter examines postsecondary education and two related factors, Spanish and English language usage and income, among the children of Mexican immigrants in the greater Los Angeles area. Interviews with 1.5-generation children of Mexican immigrants, second-generation U.S.-born children of Mexican immigrants, and three-plus-generation Mexican Americans find that language, education, and income are interrelated aspects of integration. Contrary to much heated public discourse on immigration, language acculturation is occurring rather rapidly among the children of Mexican immigrants in the greater Los Angeles area and there are obstacles to educational attainment and income—specifically related to immigration status. These findings contribute to the larger immigration debate by showing that it is not the children of immigrants who do not want to learn English or succeed educationally. These young people face significant obstacles to social and cultural

Cracks in the Schoolyard—Confronting Latino Educational Inequality, edited by Gilberto Q. Conchas, with Briana M. Hinga. Copyright © 2016 by Teachers College, Columbia University. All rights reserved. To reprint any portion of this chapter, please request permission from Teachers College Press via Copyright Clearance Center, <http://www.copyright.com>

integration, which will not improve until a more permanent solution, such as national comprehensive immigration reform, occurs.

Lupe's comments reflect the depth of her anguish at her uncertain future as an undocumented child of immigrants in California. Ultimately, she decided to attend the University of California. Lupe's comment also suggests the struggles faced by the children of Mexican and other Latin American undocumented immigrants as they confront obstacles to their integration into U.S. society. Lupe underscores the significance of President Obama's 2012 policy for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and the post-2014 election policy to extend DACA deportation relief to those undocumented youth over 31 years of age who originally did not qualify for DACA. Often lost in the controversy over these policies is the fundamental disadvantage the children of undocumented immigrants, especially those undocumented youth themselves, face integrating into society.

This chapter examines postsecondary education and two related factors, Spanish and English language usage and income, among the children of Mexican immigrants in the greater Los Angeles area. The data examined are based on interviews with adult children of immigrants collected almost 10 years before DACA and its recent expansion, and yet they underscore the need for much broader, comprehensive immigration reform. The data are important because they show that the adult children of immigrants, whether they are legal immigrants, undocumented immigrants, or U.S.-born citizens, face many challenges to furthering their education and economic mobility. DACA may help alleviate some of the obstacles experienced by undocumented children of immigrants, who can work and not fear deportation while the program exists. Some of these young people we interviewed would have been included under the original DACA and others are now included under DACA's extension. Importantly, not all of these youth will choose to participate in DACA due to fears that they themselves or their families may face future issues of deportability. To understand why this fear exists, and to understand why a more comprehensive immigration reform is difficult to accomplish, I first begin with conceptualizing who the children of immigrants are. I then provide a brief discussion of the way public discourse and public policies have framed the lives of children of Mexican immigrants as a threat to U.S. society.

THE CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS

To appreciate what the obstacles to social integration are—and to consider their efforts to overcome them—we need to begin by asking, who are the children of immigrants? Children of immigrants include those brought to the United States as children and those who were born in the United States (second generation). Immigration and citizenship status further differentiates the children of immigrants. Those who were born outside the United States came either as legal entrants or unauthorized entrants, whereas those who were born in the United

States are citizens. A level of complexity is added by their parents, who themselves could be unauthorized immigrants, legal residents, or naturalized citizens.

The literature refers to the 1.5 generation as those who migrated at a young age (typically under 15 or 16 years old) in recognition of the fact that most or all of their schooling and much of their cultural and social development occur in the host country (Olivas, 2012; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rincón, 2008; Rumbaut, 2004). According to the Pew Hispanic Center's research, there were 1.5 million undocumented children under age 18 living in the United States in 2008 (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

Although there are many similarities between the unauthorized 1.5-generation and the second-generation children of immigrants, there is an important difference between them—that is, their relationship to citizenship status (Bean, Brown, & Rumbaut, 2006). Catarina, a 21-year-old University of California student with a 3.9 grade point average, brought to the United States when she was 8 years old, makes clear the way she views the significance of being in the 1.5 generation and an unauthorized immigrant:

In different ways, the way you see culture, how strong you feel about your ethnic identity, I find it that it's different from the people I've met, who are let's say, who consider themselves Mexican American. I'm not Mexican American, I was not born here and I feel very attached to my native country. I'm sure that within one generation like my family [this will change]. . . . Having the barriers that I had, or not having all the opportunities that I see that a lot of the [U.S.-born] students have and they might not be taking advantage for different reasons. I know I'm no one to criticize their decisions, but I think that's what really makes me consider myself a Mexican. I am immigrant, immigrant Mexican. Because you have to belong to a group, and let's say you don't have the opportunities that a Mexican American has, because you don't have the social security. So you have to make the decision, I don't fit in here, they don't want me in here, then I fit here, with Mexicans.

Most notably, some of the 1.5 generation experienced a condition of illegality because of their unauthorized entry into the United States. Because moving from illegal status to a legal permanent resident has become much more difficult as a result of changes in U.S. immigration law, most notably the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, many 1.5-generation adults continue to live in the United States without proper documentation from the federal government (Bunis & Garcia, 1997).¹

Illegal refers to unauthorized residents who entered the country without permission from government authorities, or they may have entered with permission—tourist or student visas—but then overstayed visa end dates. “Illegality,” as Coutin (2007) observed, has meant that “individuals can be physically present but legally absent, existing in a space outside of society, a space of ‘nonexistence,’ a

space that is not actually 'elsewhere' or beyond borders but that is rather a hidden dimension of social reality" (p. 9). A slight variation on Coutin's representation is that to be illegally present is not to be "outside of society" but to be allowed to participate in some aspects of society, schooling, for example, but not others, such as work. As a condition, being "illegal" contributes to subjective understandings of the world and to identity, and therefore should be kept as a concept and social identifier (Coutin, 2000; De Genova, 2002; Menjívar, 2006; Suárez-Navaz, 2004; Willen, 2007).

Cultural and social integration of the children of undocumented immigrants are as easy to characterize as, say, labor market participation or income (Hirschman, 2013). Culture is neither a thing, nor a quantity, nor something that grows linearly by the year. Culture and culture change are more ephemeral, often captured indirectly. Moreover, changes in cultural beliefs and practices can occur in various directions at once, often making causal statements difficult. Individuals and groups learn from one another as they socialize; share and exchange ideas, styles and preferences; attend schools and religious services; and marry. *Assimilation*, *acculturation*, and *hybridization* (blending), and joining the "mainstream," are terms we use to capture the changes taking place among immigrants, their descendants, and other members of their communities and the nation (Alba & Nee, 2003; Chavez, 2006).

To integrate implies that people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds are brought together into unrestricted and equal association ("to become integrated"). Several factors influence integration, not the least of which is immigration status (Bravo-Moreno, 2009, 2012; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Massey & Pren, 2012). Because undocumented children grow up steeped in U.S. culture, their illegality poses fundamental dilemmas. They must often make critical life decisions within the constraints caused by their status, as Lupe's earlier comment illustrates. Importantly, the integration of the children of immigrants must not be viewed as an either/or situation, integrated or not integrated. Rather, integration is affected by a myriad of factors that are often in flux. Even the status of illegality is not fixed, because laws exist for regularizing an unauthorized status, although they have become much more restrictive over time.

President Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy, which includes the more recent extension of that policy, allows undocumented immigrants brought as children, the 1.5 generation, to request a grant of relief from the Department of Homeland Security (Chavez, 2013; Gonzales & Terriquez, 2013). In addition, the U.S. Congress could pass immigration reform that would provide further, broader avenues for status regularization, as it did in 1986 with the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). IRCA resulted in 70% of the nation's undocumented immigrants between 1986 and 1988 moving into a legal status, typically legal permanent residency (Yoshikawa & Kholoptseva, 2013). The point here is that we must not consider illegality as the only factor affecting attachment to U.S. society, nor should it be the focus of policy on social and cultural integration of immigrants and their children (Jones-Correa & de Graauw, 2013).

At the same time, we must not minimize the effect that regularizing the status of undocumented 1.5 children of immigrants would have on their integration (Massey, 2013).

THE LATINA/O THREAT NARRATIVE

Over the last 50 years, the discourse on immigration in the United States has turned decidedly more alarmist, especially in relation to Mexican and other Latin American immigrants, what I have called the Latina/o threat narrative (Chavez, 2001). The often vociferous debate has expanded to include U.S.-born Latina/os, whose reproduction, both biological and social, has been characterized as a threat to the nation (Chavez, 2013). The threat is based on a set of beliefs: that Mexican and other Latinas are unable, or unwilling, to control their fertility; that Latina/os, led by Mexicans and Mexican Americans, are unwilling to integrate socially, are unwilling to learn English and U.S. culture, and are preparing to take over the Southwest United States (Bravo-Moreno, 2006; Chavez, 2004).

The Latina/o threat discourse places the children of Mexican immigrants in an ambiguous position, as their alleged threat is extended to Mexican Americans whose families have lived multiple generations in the United States. For example, American conservative political scientist Samuel P. Huntington (2000) raised the alarm of a Mexican takeover: “The invasion of over 1 million Mexican civilians is a comparable threat [as 1 million Mexican soldiers] to American societal security, and Americans should react against it with comparable vigour. Mexican immigration looms as a unique and disturbing challenge to our cultural integrity, our national identity, and potentially to our future as a country” (p. 22).

Political commentator Pat Buchanan also emphasized the threat of the growing Latina/o population on MSNBC (March 24, 2009): “Mexico is the greatest foreign policy crisis I think America faces in the next 20, 30 years. Who is going to care . . . 30 years from now whether a Sunni or a Shia is in Baghdad or who’s ruling in Kabul? We’re going to have 135 million Hispanics in the United States by 2050, heavily concentrated in the southwest. The question is whether we’re going to survive as a country.”

The politics surrounding immigration is also reflected in public policies and laws. Two examples from President Obama’s administration make this point clearly. First, President Obama responded to public concern about immigration by increasing the threat of deportation for undocumented immigrants. In 2009, a total of 387,790 people were deported, a 5% increase over 2008, the last year under George W. Bush’s administration (Medrano, 2010). However, in a dramatic change in policy, the Obama administration in August 2011 began reviewing all deportation cases in order to focus on criminals. Those who have not been convicted of a crime would possibly receive a suspension of deportation and be allowed stay and also be able to apply for work permits (Preston, 2011). Nonetheless, by the end of March 2012 the review of about 300,000 pending deportation cases had only

resulted in 2,609 men and women being allowed to stay temporarily in the United States (Chavez, 2013).

Second, President Obama initiated the DACA program on June 15, 2012. DACA allows the Department of Homeland Security to grant relief to undocumented individuals who have been ordered to leave the country, or to grant relief to undocumented individuals who come forward but who have not undergone removal proceedings. DACA deferred forced removal for 2 years. To be eligible, an undocumented immigrant must have come to the United States under age 16; be under age 31 as of June 15, 2012; have lived continuously in the United States since June 15, 2007; have not committed a felony or significant misdemeanor; have not posed a threat to national security; and have pursued an education or military service. On November 20, 2014, President Obama expanded DACA to include those over 31 years of age who came to the United States before turning 16 years old. Importantly, DACA does not provide a path to legal permanent resident status or citizenship. Individuals who come forward under DACA face possible deportation in the future, unless Congress passes comprehensive immigration reform and provides permanent relief—that is, a path to citizenship. Meanwhile, individuals who receive deferred action are considered in the United States under the color of law and can apply for employment authorization and government benefits such as a driver's license (Winograd, 2012).

The public debate over immigration and possible threats posed by the children of undocumented immigrants frames issues of education attainment as well as social and cultural integration. Lupe's comment at the beginning of this chapter indicates the despair some undocumented youth can feel given their limited choices for education and work. Interviewees such as Lupe would have been too old for the DACA program but may be eligible for the extension to those over 31 years of age. DACA would open the possibility for Lupe and others like her to possibly gain relief from deportation, work, and gain a measure of integration. Another interviewee, Amalia, spoke specifically about how she views integration and belonging:

I think if you have obstacles to integrating, one, they don't want you to integrate. Obviously, they have the obstacles for you not to integrate, so you get to the point where you know what, I don't want to integrate, whether you will eventually want me to integrate for any reason, I am no longer willing to integrate. . . . After September 11, I felt American. And it's amazing because regardless of political inequalities, I think of my life and what would it have been if I had not been here. And here I am. There are obstacles, but it's better. It's better here even with the inequalities. I guess it's human nature. We just want something better.

The prevalence of the Latina/o threat narrative has led to counter-narratives, especially among the 1.5 generation, those known as The DREAMers, which refers to the Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act).²

Rather than passively accept this state of affairs, many undocumented students across the country have rallied under the banner “Undocumented and Unafraid” and formed a number of organizations, such as Immigrant Youth Justice League and The DREAM Act Coalition, with the goal of promoting federal legislation that would provide them with a way to legalize their status, allow them to attend colleges and universities, receive federal financial aid, join the military, and pursue other avenues for social integration.

This discussion of the narrative of threat aimed at Latina/o youth, public policies, and activism by the children of immigrants frames postsecondary educational attainment, as well as related factors such as language use and income.

IMMIGRATION AND INTERGENERATIONAL MOBILITY CASE STUDY IN LOS ANGELES

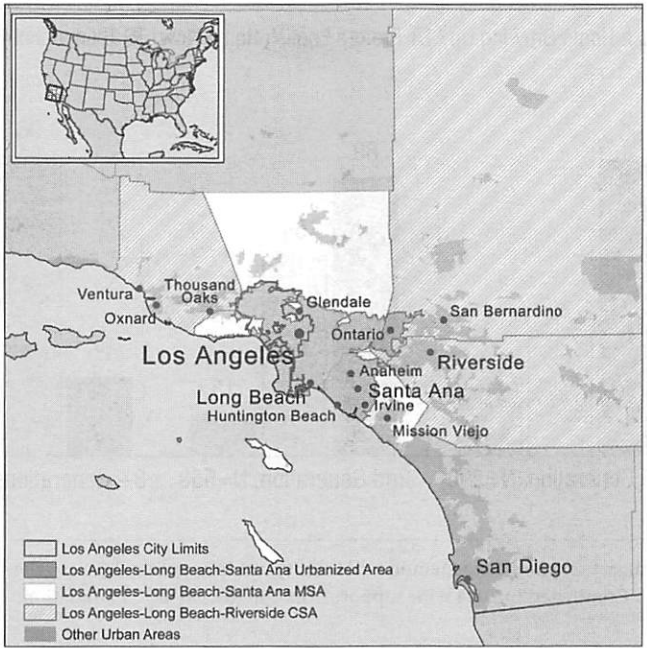
To examine the language, education, and economic integration of the adult children of immigrants in the greater Los Angeles area, I drew from the Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA) project. IIMMLA’s co-principal investigators were Rubén G. Rumbaut, Frank D. Bean, Susan K. Brown, Leo R. Chavez, Louis DeSipio, Jennifer Lee, and Min Zhou. Conducted in 2004, with support from the Russell Sage Foundation, we targeted the young adult children of immigrants from large immigrant groups in the five-county metropolitan Los Angeles area (from Ventura County in the north to Riverside and San Bernardino counties in the south—see Figure 9.1) and used a random telephone survey to gather information from 4,780 persons ages 20 to 40 who had at least one immigrant parent.

The study was designed to be a random probability sample of persons whose parents’ national origin was Mexican, Central American (Salvadoran or Guatemalan), Chinese (from both the mainland and Taiwan), Filipino, Korean, and Vietnamese, residing in households with telephones in the greater Los Angeles area. Because of the centrality of the Mexican-origin group to the immigrant experience in Los Angeles, we oversampled the Mexican population.³ This chapter will focus on the Mexican-origin respondents. The IIMMLA project surveyed adult Mexican immigrants (125), 1.5-generation children of Mexican immigrants (190), second-generation, U.S.-born children of Mexican immigrants (553), and three-plus-generation Mexican Americans (401).

EXAMINING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Language, education, and income are interrelated aspects of integration. Saying they are interrelated does not mean they all move simultaneously, in lockstep fashion. The children of immigrants may acquire English proficiency relatively

Figure 9.1. Map of the Greater Los Angeles Area



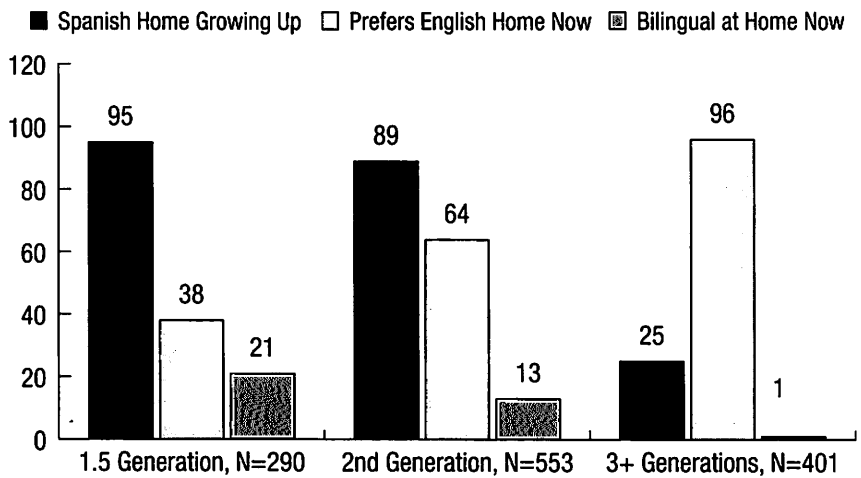
quickly, but how this translates into educational and economic attainment is influenced by many factors, not the least of which are family dynamics; social attitudes, such as the Latina/o threat narrative; and immigration status.

Language

Language use is both emotional, a source of ethnic pride, and instrumental, key to educational and economic success. In terms of the former, Lupe pointed out that bilingualism has definite benefits and she would try to ensure her children could speak Spanish. As she said, “One is a culture thing. If you know Spanish and if you’re Mexican, or that’s your cultural background, you have to teach [children] some culture. It’s essential for their identity, self-identity, self-esteem, and two languages, especially here, let’s say in the United States, and in California, Spanish and English, that’s plus.”

Despite the emotional and even implicit economic benefits, the generation after Lupe’s will probably prefer to speak English in even higher proportions. Nearly all the adult children of Mexican immigrants in the Los Angeles area grew up in homes where Spanish was spoken (Figure 9.2). Clearly, their parents were Spanish speakers who communicated to their children in their native language.

Figure 9.2. Language Use at Home Among Mexican-Origin Interviewees Growing Up and Now, in Percentages

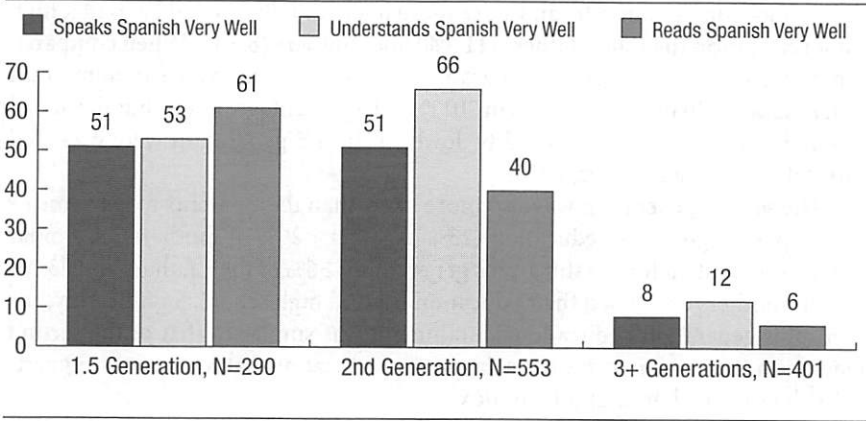


Source: Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA) project. Conducted in 2004 with support from the Russell Sage Foundation.

However, many of these adult children of immigrants now prefer to speak English at home, with the U.S.-born second generation (64%) almost twice as likely as the 1.5 generation (38%). Only 25% of those with three or more generations in the United States spoke Spanish at home when growing up, and now almost all (96%) prefer to speak English at home.

This shift from Spanish to English can occur rapidly, from migrant parents to their U.S.-born children and succeeding generations. Moreover, while the children of immigrants may speak Spanish, only about half said they spoke it very well (Figure 9.3). They do, however, indicate a higher level of comprehension than speaking. By the third-plus generations, there is a marked decrease in those who indicate they can speak, comprehend, and read very well in Spanish. Despite Lupe's desire for her children to be bilingual, the education system in California does not appear to function well to develop bilingualism or retention in speaking and reading Spanish. Rather, the children of Mexican immigrants move rapidly along a path of English acquisition. These patterns suggest linguistic acculturation is occurring among the Mexican-origin population in California. National data underscore the findings for the greater Los Angeles area; about 92% of the U.S.-born children of Latin American immigrants speak English well or better according to the 2000 U.S. Census.⁴ Does this acquisition of English mean that the children of immigrants are moving rapidly in terms of educational attainment? If so, we would expect to see increased rates of postsecondary education across generations.

Figure 9.3. Mexican-Origin Interviewees who Speak, Understand, and Read Spanish Very Well, in Percentages

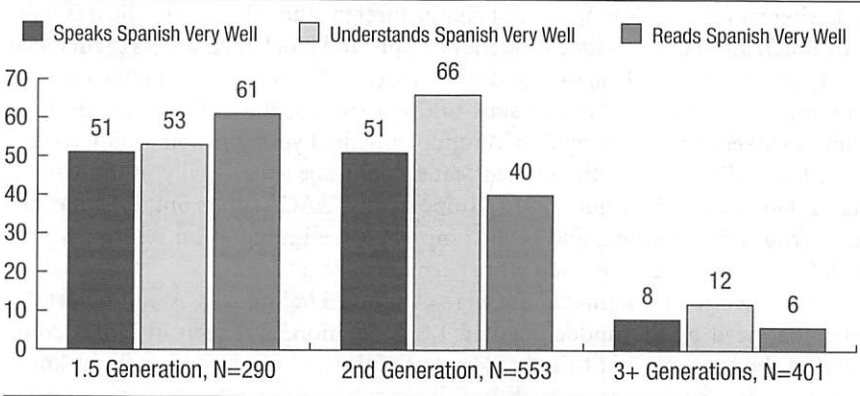


Source: IIMMLA, 2004.

Education

The most striking pattern in educational attainment is the difference between Mexico-born and U.S.-born children of Mexican immigrants. As depicted in Figure 9.4, many (37%) of the 1.5 generation did not finish high school, compared to only 19% of the second and later generations. Fewer (38%) of the 1.5 generation took courses at the college level or graduated with a college degree or advanced degree, compared to the second (53%) and third-plus generations (55%).

Figure 9.4. Educational Attainment, Mexican-Origin Interviewees, in Percentages



Source: IIMMLA, 2004

Each of the generations examined improved on their parents' educational attainment. The 1.5 generation surpassed their fathers' (19%) and mothers' (14%) high school completion rate, and were more likely to have moved beyond a high school education than their fathers (11.7%) and mothers (8.5%). When compared to national data, the 1.5 generation examined here surpassed Mexican immigrant high school graduation rates (24% in 2011) by 13 percentage points, but the actual graduation rates nationally would be lower if the 1.5 generation were excluded (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013).

The second generation was also more likely than their parents to get some or all of a post-high school education (23% of fathers; 20% of mothers). A similar pattern was evident for the third-plus generations; 36% of their fathers and 23.3% of their mothers continued their education beyond high school. Significantly, the third-plus generation's educational attainment was similar to that of the second generation, rather than a dramatic drop-off in educational attainment as suggested by the so-called immigrant paradox.

Although the children of immigrants have surpassed their parents' education levels, they still lag behind their White and Black counterparts in the Los Angeles area. As noted above, we also collected information from 406 third-plus generation Whites and 405 Blacks. Both Whites (75.9%) and Blacks (64.9%) were more likely to have some college or finished college compared to the little more than half of the 2nd generation and third-plus Mexican-origin subjects in the study.

Immigration status places obstacles to educational attainment for the 1.5 generation. Almost half of the 1.5 interviewees were unauthorized when they first came to the United States, and 19% were still undocumented immigrants at the time of the interview. In the United States, undocumented children have access to education at the primary and high school level as a result of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1982 decision in the *Plyler v. Doe* case (Olivas, 2012). Access to college, however, has had a more complicated history and varies by state. Some states do not allow undocumented students access to publicly funded colleges and universities, whereas others allow access but charge foreign student tuition, which is typically much more than in-state residency tuition, and block their access to financial aid. California currently allows undocumented students access to public colleges and universities and they pay in-state tuition (Abrego, 2008). However, until the temporary relief provided by DACA, undocumented young people who were educated in California and the United States could not work legally in the United States (Gonzales & Terriquez, 2013). Importantly, DACA offers only a temporary relief from this dilemma, and only comprehensive immigration reform, with a path to citizenship, can provide more permanent relief.

The interviews examined here were conducted before DACA and reflect the dilemma faced by the undocumented 1.5 generation, and seen in Lupe's comment at the beginning of this chapter. At the time, young people did not know if getting an education was worth it if they could not work legally. These obstacles to education and work are reflected in education and income findings. The 1.5-generation children of Mexican immigrants who came to the United States

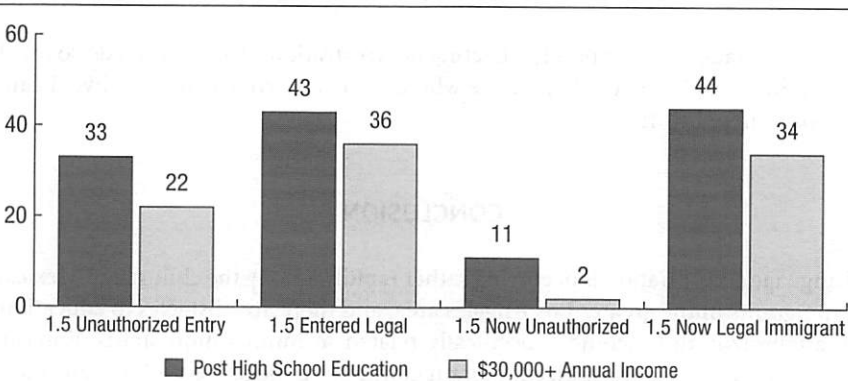
without authorization were less likely (33%) than those who entered legally (43%) to have had education beyond high school, compared to 44% of all immigrants in California in 2009, according to the American Community Survey (Chavez, 2013). However, only 11% of those in the 1.5 generation who were still undocumented immigrants at the time of the interview acquired any education beyond high school. They faced the dilemma Lupe spoke of and could not find a way to overcome the obstacles.

One last point on immigration status and how the Latina/o threat narrative concerns the U.S.-born children of undocumented immigrants. Because these children are U.S. citizens, they should have no problem going to school. All their parents should have to show is that they reside in the school's district, and they can do this with a utility bill, a rent receipt, or some other document with an address on it. However, there have been many cases of school administrators asking parents to prove that they are legal residents of the United States, a practice that has led some parents not to enroll their children into public schools. The problem is widespread enough to cause the U.S. Justice and Education departments to take action by issuing guidelines on appropriate identification required of immigrant parents (Phelps, 2014).

Effects on Income

Education and income are clearly interrelated. National data indicate that Mexican immigrants (including 1.5 generation) had a median personal income of \$20,000 in 2011 (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013). However, the advantage of the data examined here is that we are able to tease out the relationship between generation and immigration status. The first two columns on the left of Figure 9.5 show the effect of entering

Figure 9.5. Post-High School Education and Personal Income, Mexican-Origin 1.5-Generation Interviewees by Immigration Status at Time of Entry into United States and Now, in Percentages



the country without authorization compared to entering as a legal immigrant. There is a clear penalty paid for unauthorized entrants, who were less likely than legal entrants to have some postsecondary education and less likely to earn \$30,000 or more.

Interviewees who continued as undocumented immigrants into adulthood fared much worse than those who are now legal immigrants. Only 11% of those in the 1.5 generation who were still undocumented at the time of the interview had some postsecondary education and only 2% had personal incomes of \$30,000 or more. This pales in comparison to those who attained legal status, among whom 44% had some postsecondary education and 34% had incomes of \$30,000 or more. (As an additional comparison, 34% of the second and 41% of the third-plus generations in the survey had \$30,000 or higher incomes.)

The data clearly state that when undocumented 1.5-generation interviewees try to work or even just engage in everyday activities most citizens and legal residents take for granted, their illegality comes into question. As Lupita—another undocumented respondent—explains:

I didn't want to break the law, but everything you do is illegal because you are illegal. Everything you do will be illegal. Otherwise you can't live. But I am still afraid. I don't want to jeopardize anything. I mean, I guess I am just ashamed. I looked [for work] in most restaurants and they would be like "Why do you want to work for us if you have a B.A.?" So, I am going to have to lie and I am going to have to tell them that I just dropped out of high school. But eventually they are going, it is going to come out, I know it. The people [working] at those places, like the cooks and the cashiers, they are either really young people, and I feel really old, like what am I doing there if they are all like 16, 17 years old. The others are like señoras who are 35 and have little kids; they dropped out of school, but because they have little kids they are still working at the restaurant. Thinking about that, it makes me feel so fucking stupid. And like the factories, too, because they ask me, "*Que estas haciendo aqui?*" ["What are you doing here?"] You can speak English. You graduated from high school. You can work anywhere." They don't stop bugging me. (Quoted in Gonzales & Chavez, 2012, p. 264)

Catarina made a similar point, reflecting her frustration: "I know I can do so much more, but I can't because I can't live wherever. I can't choose where I live. I can't choose where I work."

CONCLUSION

Language acculturation is occurring rather rapidly among the children of Mexican immigrants in the greater Los Angeles area, and there are obstacles to educational attainment and income—specifically related to immigration status. Entering the country as an unauthorized migrant continues to negatively affect educational attainment and income. This pattern has not improved since this study was conducted; indeed, continued unauthorized status is far worse. These findings

suggest that significant improvements in social and cultural integration will not occur until a more permanent solution to the obstacles faced by the 1.5 generation is found. More specifically, social and cultural integration would be greatly enhanced by opportunities to move from an unauthorized status to that of a legal permanent resident, the so-called path to citizenship. However, policymakers find it difficult to agree on comprehensive immigration reform because, in part, of the discourse of the Latina/o threat elaborated above.

The children of Mexican immigrants will continue to carry the burden of the inability of politicians to find a rational and comprehensive solution to the presence of undocumented immigrants. While they are learning the language and culture of the United States, the children of Mexican immigrants are not encountering a level playing field in education or the labor market. Short-term solutions such as DACA only alleviate the anxieties and obstacles for some of the 1.5 generation for a short period. More comprehensive solutions are needed to give the children of Mexican immigrants a better chance at a more substantive level of social and cultural integration. However, this would entail a new discourse, not one of threat but of contribution and belonging.

The problem is that continuing the present course is not a solution. For the children of undocumented immigrants, their subjective understanding of their place in society is that of being “unwanted” and “discardable.” They view society as willing to leave them in a political and social limbo, one in which they are present physically but not present legally. Even citizen children of undocumented immigrants often feel they carry the stigma of their parents’ immigration status (Chavez, 2013). These are not unwarranted beliefs, but the result of experiencing life in the United States, a life in which their future goals are often placed on hold. Their lives are sidetracked and derailed seemingly without concern by the larger society.

To repeat Amalia’s poignant lament above: “Obviously, they have the obstacles for you not to integrate, so you get to the point where you know what, I don’t want to integrate, whether you will eventually want me to integrate for any reason, I am no longer willing to integrate.” Such despair among the children of undocumented immigrants reflects the very real obstacles to their educational mobility and social and cultural integration. Although finding policy solutions that would reduce these obstacles is mired in many fundamental disagreements over immigration, and obscured by the Latina/o threat narrative, one thing the whole nation should agree on is that these young people are part of the future in the United States. As such, their future opportunities for educational and economic mobility and integration should be enhanced, and not limited, for their own good and for the good of the nation.

NOTES

1. The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act is available at <http://www.uscis.gov/ilink/docView/PUBLAW/HTML/PUBLAW/0-0-0-10948.html>.

2. The DREAM Act provides a 6-year-long conditional path to citizenship that requires completion of a college degree or 2 years of military service. To qualify, a person must have entered the United States before the age of 16; been in the United States at least 5 consecutive years prior to the bill's enactment; must have graduated from a U.S. high school, obtained a General Educational Development Test diploma, or been accepted into a college or university; must be between the ages of 12 and 35 at the time of the application; and must have a good moral character. However, the DREAM Act has been in Congress, in some form, for years without passage. Each time the DREAM Act comes up for a vote in Congress, The DREAMers' hopes are raised, only to be deflated (Abrego, 2006, 2011; Negron-Gonzales, 2009; Olivas, 2012; Ramirez, 2008).

3. The sample included individuals other than these national groups who are not considered here, including U.S. Whites, African Americans, other Latin Americans than those mentioned above, other Asians, and Middle Easterners.

4. IPUMS-USA, Census 2000, 5% Extract. Children Ages 6–15.

REFERENCES

- Abrego, L. J. (2006). "I can't go to college because I don't have papers": Incorporation patterns of Latino undocumented youth. *Latino Studies* 4, 212–231.
- Abrego, L. J. (2008). Legitimacy, social identity, and the mobilization of law: The effects of Assembly Bill 540 on undocumented students in California. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 33(3), 709–734.
- Abrego, L. J. (2011). Legal consciousness of undocumented Latinos: Fear and Stigma as barriers to claims-making for first- and 1.5-generation immigrants. *Law & Society Review*, 45(2), 337–370.
- Alba, R. D., & Nee, V. (2003). *Remaking the American mainstream: Assimilation and contemporary immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bean, F. D., Brown, S. K., & Rumbaut, R. (2006). Mexican immigrant political and economic incorporation. *Perspectives on Politics*, 4, 309–313.
- Bravo-Moreno, A. (2006). *Migration, gender and national identity: Spanish migrant women in London*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Bravo-Moreno, A. (2009). Socio-cultural belonging in legal limbo. In T. Rahimy (Ed.), *Representation, expression and identity: Interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 53–68). Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press.
- Bravo-Moreno, A. (2012). Negotiating identities in school settings: "Latinos" in Madrid and Buenos Aires. In L. Wikander, C. Gustafsson, & U. Riis (Eds.), *Enlightenment, creativity and education: Politics, politics, performances* (pp. 209–230). Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Buchanan, P. (2009, March 24). Buchanan on MSNBC. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4F-eMIO_rXE.
- Bunis, D., & Garcia, G. X. (March 1997). New illegal-immigration law casts too wide a net, critics say. *Orange County Register*, 31, 1.
- Chavez, L. R. (2001). *Covering immigration: Popular images and the politics of the nation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Chavez, L. R. (2004). A glass half empty: Latina reproduction and public discourse. *Human Organization*, 63(2), 173–188.

- Chavez, L. R. (2006). Culture change and cultural reproduction: Lessons from research on transnational migration. In J. Stockard & G. Spindler (Eds.), *Globalization and change in fifteen cultures: Born in one world and living in another* (pp. 283–303). Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth.
- Chavez, L. R. (2013). *The Latino threat: Constructing citizens, immigrants, and the nation* (2nd ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Coutin, S. B. (2000). Denationalization, inclusion, and exclusion: negotiating the boundaries of belonging. *Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 7, 585–594.
- Coutin, S. B. (2007). *Nations of emigrants: Shifting boundaries of citizenship in El Salvador and the United States*. Ithaca, NY, and London, England: Cornell University Press.
- De Genova, N. P. (2002). Migrant “illegality” and deportability in everyday life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31, 419–447.
- Gonzales, R. G., & Chavez, L. R. (2012). “Awakening to a nightmare”: Abjectivity and illegality in the lives of undocumented 1.5 generation Latina/o immigrants in the United States. *Current Anthropology*, 53(3), 255–281.
- Gonzales, R. G., & Terriquez, V. (2013). How DACA is impacting the lives of those who are now DACAmented: Preliminary findings from the National UnDACAmented Research Project. Immigration Policy Center, Center for the Study of Immigrant Integrant, University of Southern California. Retrieved from <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/how-daca-impacting-lives-those-who-are-now-dacamented>
- Gonzalez-Barrera, A., & Lopez, M. H. (2013). A demographic portrait of Mexican-Origin Hispanics in the United States. *Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends* (May 1). Retrieved from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/05/01/a-demographic-portrait-of-mexican-origin-hispanics-in-the-united-states/>
- Hirschman, C. (2013). The contributions of immigrants to American culture. *Daedalus*, 142(3), 26–47.
- Huntington, S. P. (2000, December). The special case of Mexican immigration: Why Mexico is a problem. *The American Enterprise*, 20–22.
- Jones-Correa, M., & de Graauw, E. (2013). The illegality trap: The politics of immigration & the lens of illegality. *Daedalus*, 142(3), 185–198.
- Massey, D. S. (2013). America’s immigration policy fiasco: Learning from past mistakes. *Daedalus*, 142(3), 5–15.
- Massey, D. S., & Pren, K. A. (2012). Unintended consequences of US immigration policy: Explaining the post-1965 surge from Latin America. *Population and Development Review*, 38(1), 1–29.
- Medrano, L. (2010, August 12). Obama as border cop: He’s deported record number of illegal immigrants. *The Christian Science Monitor*, p. A24.
- Menjívar, C. (2006). Liminal legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants’ lives in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111, 999–1037.
- Negron-Gonzales, G. (2009). *Hegemony, ideology & oppositional consciousness: Undocumented youth and the personal-political struggle for educational justice*. Institute for the Study of Societal Issues, Working Paper No. 36. Berkeley, CA: University of California.
- Olivas, M. A. (2012). *No undocumented child left behind: Plyler v. Doe and the education of undocumented school children*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Passel, J. S., & Cohn, D. (2009). *A portrait of unauthorized immigrants in the United States*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.
- Phelps, T. M. (2014, May 9). Anti-immigrant school bias called “troubling.” *Los Angeles Times*, A9.

- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Preston, J. (2011, August 23). U.S. issues new deportation policy's first reprieves. *The New York Times*, A15.
- Ramirez, E. (2008, August 13). Should colleges enroll illegal immigrants? *U.S. News & World Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/articles/education/2008/08/07/should-colleges-enroll-illegal-immigrants.html>
- Rincón, A. (2008). *Undocumented immigrants and higher education: Sí se puede*. New York, NY: LFB Scholarly Publishing.
- Rumbaut, R. G. (2004). Ages, life stages, and generational cohorts: Decomposing the immigrant first and second generations in the United States. *International Migration Review*, 38, 1160–1205.
- Suárez-Navaz, L. (2004). *Rebordering the Mediterranean: Boundaries and citizenship in southern Europe*. New York, NY: Berghahn Books.
- Willen, S. S. (2007). Toward a critical phenomenology of “illegality”: State power, criminality and abjectivity among undocumented migrant workers in Tel Aviv, Israel. *International Migration* 45(3), 8–38.
- Winograd, B. (2012, November 16). DACA approvals surpass 50,000. *Immigration Impact*. Retrieved from <http://immigrationimpact.com/2012/11/16/breaking-daca-approvals-surpass-50000/>
- Yoshikawa, H., & Kholoptseva, J. (2013, March). *Unauthorized immigrant parents and their children's development: a summary of the evidence*. Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/COI-Yoshikawa.pdf>