

# Children of Immigrant Families: Analysis and Recommendations

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**A**s the 21<sup>st</sup> century progresses, our nation will become increasingly dependent on the current generation of children, a generation that is dramatically more diverse than previous generations.<sup>1</sup> Racial/ethnic minorities, in aggregate, are destined to become the numerical majority in the United States within the next few decades.<sup>2</sup> This dramatic shift in demographics is being driven by immigration and fertility trends with the number of children in immigrant families growing rapidly in nearly every state across the country. According to the 2000 Census, 1 of every 5 children in the United States was a child of immigrants—that is, either a child who is an immigrant or who has at least one immigrant parent.

Regardless of how one might feel about our nation's immigration policies, there is no turning back the clock on the children of immigrants already living here, most of whom are U.S. citizens. Who these children grow up to be will have a significant impact on our nation's social and economic future. Will we have a cohesive society—or one rife with intergenerational and intercultural conflict? Will we have a prosperous economy—or one struggling with a labor force dominated by low-wage earners? Will we have a strong safety net for the elderly,

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*Opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are not to be considered those of The Packard Foundation.*

poor, and disabled—or will the taxes to support historic entitlement programs become prohibitive?

In this journal issue, the strengths and challenges that set children of immigrant families apart from the mainstream population are explored. For example, compared with children of U.S.-born parents, children of immigrants are more likely to be born healthier and to live with both parents. They also are more likely to be living in poverty and to be without health insurance. Although indicators of child well-being vary widely based on the family's country of origin, the overall trends are dominated by the large number of immigrants from Mexico, Asia, Central America, and the Caribbean. (See Figure 1.) Parents with limited English skills emigrating from these regions tend to be poorly educated and have limited job prospects. Some are legal immigrants, some are refugees, and some are undocumented. Thus, while the children in these families often share the same hardships experienced by other children from low-income families, what is needed to help them overcome these hardships requires a greater understanding of each group's unique circumstances.

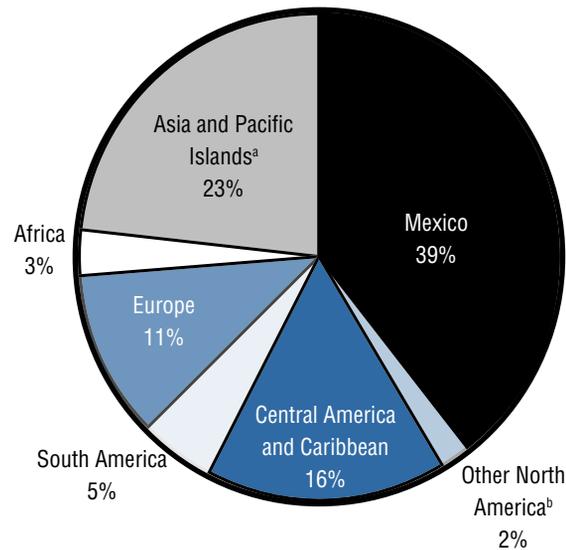
Investing in the healthy development of all our nation's children, including children of immigrants, is to invest in a brighter future—not just for these children themselves, but for our entire nation. All society benefits by providing this segment of our population with the education and supports they need today to become America's productive, engaged citizens of tomorrow.

## Strengths of Immigrant Families

Immigrant families generally come to America with many strengths, including healthy, intact families,

Figure 1

## Children of Immigrants by Region of Origin, 2000



<sup>a</sup> The Indochinese countries of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

<sup>b</sup> Includes Canada, Bermuda, and Cape Verde.

Source: Based on data from the Census 2000.

strong work ethic and aspirations, and for many, a cohesive community of fellow immigrants from the same country of origin. These strengths can help to insulate children of immigrants from various negative influences in American society, but they are not always sufficient to keep children on pathways to success over time.

### Healthy, Intact Families

According to several measures, children born to immigrant mothers are healthier than those born to U.S.-born mothers, on average. For example, infant mortality rates are lower among immigrant mothers, and their babies are less likely to be born with low birth weights.<sup>3</sup> Also, children of immigrants are reported to experience fewer health problems across a wide range of conditions—from injuries and physical impairments, to infectious diseases and asthma.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, children in immigrant families are more likely than children in U.S.-born families to live with two parents in the home, with a father who works and

a mother who does not work. As detailed in the article by Hernandez in this journal issue, the percentage of children of immigrant families living in a single-parent household is only about 16%, compared with 26% for children of U.S.-born families.

Children of immigrants are also more likely to live with a large extended family that can help provide child care and other household support. Nearly 40% live with other relatives and non-relatives in their homes, compared with about 22% for children of U.S.-born families. Although, as Hernandez notes, overcrowding can place a strain on resources, parental time, and even the ability to find a quiet place to do homework, large households also can provide many social and economic benefits.

### Strong Work Ethic and Aspirations

Immigrant families generally come to America eager to improve their standard of living. Parents are willing to work hard, and they expect their children to do the

same. According to data provided by Hernandez, the parents in immigrant families are almost as likely to be working as those in U.S.-born families (97% versus 99%).<sup>5</sup>

Children of immigrants typically are imbued with a strong sense of family obligation and ethnic pride, and with the importance of education. As a result, the children of immigrants tend to have high educational aspirations and are less likely than children of U.S.-born families to engage in risky behaviors such as substance abuse, early sexual intercourse, and delinquent or violent activity.<sup>6</sup> Studies show that they also tend to spend more time doing homework and that they do better in school, at least through middle school. For example, although their reading test scores are somewhat lower, 8th-grade children of immigrants have slightly higher grades and math test scores than their counterparts of the same ethnicity in U.S.-born families.<sup>7</sup>

According to the National Center on Education Statistics, the dropout rate is higher for children of immigrant parents than for children of U.S.-born parents, but the rate is calculated based on the number of 16- to 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in high school and have not graduated.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the rate includes a large number of older foreign-born children—especially Hispanics—who never attended U.S. schools. The dropout rate for non-Hispanic children of immigrants is considerably lower than the U.S. average (6% versus 11%).

### **Community Cohesion**

When immigrant families arrive in America, they often settle in communities with others from their same country of origin. Fellow immigrants in these communities can facilitate a family's adjustment, helping them learn to navigate new systems and institutions (such as schools) and to find jobs.<sup>9</sup> As noted in the article by García Coll and Szalacha in this journal issue, such communities also can be supportive of the child's emotional and academic adjustment by reinforcing cultural values and parental authority, and by buffering them from the negative influences of mainstream society. The role of a cohesive, culturally-consonant community can make a critical difference in helping youth maintain positive aspirations despite the challenges they face as newcomers to this country.

## **Challenges Faced by Children of Immigrants**

Although possessing many strengths, immigrant families also confront many challenges. The children in these families often must navigate the difficult process of acculturation from a position of social disadvantage with limited language skills and minimal family and institutional support.

### **Less-Educated Parents**

Children in immigrant families are far more likely than children in U.S.-born families to have parents who have not graduated from high school. Among all children with U.S.-born parents, 12% have mothers, and 12% have fathers, who are not high school graduates. In contrast, among children with foreign-born parents, 23% have mothers, and 40% have fathers, who are not high school graduates. As Hernandez observes in his article, the lower level of parental educational attainment in immigrant families has major implications for child well-being and development. Poorly-educated parents are less able to help their children with homework, and less able to negotiate educational and other institutions to foster their children's success. Across a wide range of socioeconomic indicators, children whose parents have more education tend to fare better than those whose parents have less education.

### **Low-Wage Work with No Benefits**

Over the past 30 years, the industrial base of the United States has shifted from manufacturing to services and, more recently, to technology and communication. As discussed in the article by Nightingale and Fix in this journal issue, this shift has resulted in a widening of the wage gap between those with high levels of education and skills, and those without. For the most part, immigrant parents find themselves on the bottom side of this wage gap. They are over-represented among workers who are paid the least, and are most in need of training to improve their skills and earnings. Immigrants represent about 11% of the U.S. population, but they account for 20% of the low-wage labor force, often with limited access to benefits. They are more likely than U.S.-born workers to have only part-time and/or partial-year work (25% versus 21%), and they are less likely to have private, employer-provided health insurance for their children (55% versus 72%).

### Language Barriers

Among all children in this country, 18% speak a language other than English at home. Among children in immigrant families, 72% speak a language other than English at home. While the ability to speak two languages has potential benefits, if no one in the household speaks English well, the family is likely to encounter difficulties finding higher wage employment, talking with children's teachers, and accessing health and other social services. Census data indicate that among children in immigrant families, 26% live in linguistically-isolated households where no one age 14 or older has a strong command of the English language.

### Discrimination and Racism

Many children of immigrants and their families must contend with discrimination and racism. García Coll and Szalacha describe in their article how social position, racism, and segregation can set children of color and children of immigrants apart from mainstream populations, and how schools serving primarily children of color are likely to have fewer resources, lower teacher expectations, and patronizing attitudes toward students of non-mainstream cultures.<sup>10</sup> They maintain that for these students, schools can come to be perceived as instruments of racial oppression, and efforts to advance through education as hopeless.<sup>11</sup> Thus, while children from immigrant backgrounds enter school with very positive attitudes toward education, by adolescence they can become disillusioned, and their attitudes toward teachers and scholastic achievement can turn negative.<sup>12</sup>

### Poverty and Multiple Risk Factors

Poverty rates for children in immigrant families are substantially higher than for children in U.S.-born families. According to the official poverty measure, 21% of those with immigrant parents live in poverty, compared with 14% of those with U.S.-born parents. If families with incomes up to twice the poverty level are included, the differences are even more dramatic: 49% of those with immigrant parents live in poverty, compared with 34% of those with U.S.-born parents.<sup>13</sup>

Poverty often means lack of access to quality health care and education resources, which can lead to children's poor health and school failure. In fact, studies indicate that the health and academic achievement of children

of immigrants deteriorates as exposure to mainstream American culture increases, perhaps due to the negative effects associated with poverty, such as poor diet, destructive behaviors, and racial/ethnic stratification.<sup>14</sup> As noted by Edelman and Jones in this journal issue, poverty accentuates racial disparities in children's health, and poor health and poverty spiral together in a vicious circle that injures all children.

Negative developmental outcomes for children have been linked to a variety of risk factors, such as having a poorly-educated mother, and/or living in a household that is poor, linguistically-isolated, or headed by a single parent. Moreover, research suggests that while children are generally resilient to a single risk factor, the effects of multiple risk factors—regardless which they are—can work synergistically to undermine a child's healthy development.<sup>15</sup> Data presented in the Hernandez article show that children in immigrant families are more than twice as likely as those in U.S.-born families to experience two or more risk factors.<sup>16</sup>

### Lack of Supports

The provision of supports for low-income families to enable parents to better care for their children is a longstanding tradition in this country, and studies show that work programs and supports that increase parental employment and income have positive impacts on indicators of child well-being.<sup>17</sup> In terms of access to such programs, until fairly recently, legal immigrants were generally eligible under the same terms as citizens. But, as detailed in the commentary by Greenberg and Rahmanou in this journal issue, the 1996 federal welfare reform law imposed a wide range of restrictions on immigrant eligibility for federal public assistance programs and the impact has been dramatic.

Between 1996 and 2001, the share of non-citizens receiving assistance from programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Food Stamps, and Medicaid, dropped significantly. Moreover, though targeted to excluding non-citizens, participation rates have fallen among citizen children as well—especially those living in families with non-citizen parents—even though they remain eligible for benefits. Reasons include parents' confusion or lack of knowledge about eligibility, language barriers, and fear of adverse immigration consequences. Although four of every five

children of immigrants are U.S. citizens, many are in “mixed status” families—that is, living in households where some members are not citizens—and their parents fear involvement with government agencies. This is especially true for parents who are in the country illegally. In April 2004, it was estimated that of the 33 million foreign-born persons living in the United States, about 9.3 million are undocumented.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, immigrants afforded refugee status are provided access to a variety of supports enabling them to improve their economic stability and status more quickly.<sup>19</sup> Refugees’ relatively more secure economic circumstances likely contribute to the research findings that suggest that compared to other children with similar family characteristics, children of refugees do better in school at least until middle school.<sup>20</sup>

## Variation across Different Countries of Origin

Under the surface of these overall trends, there is substantial variation in immigrant families’ assets and challenges across different countries of origin. In general, those families emigrating from West and Central Europe, and from other English-speaking countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and India, for example, tend to have more advantages and face fewer challenges, compared with those emigrating from Mexico, Central America, the non-English-speaking Caribbean, and Indochina.<sup>21</sup> To have a significant impact on improving the health and well-being of children in immigrant families, it is important to focus on the unique circumstances of the groups who are struggling the most to succeed in this country. (See Figure 2.) There are some similarities among these groups, but also some significant differences. Individual and family characteristics, reasons for immigration, and the social context families find upon their arrival, all play important roles in understanding these differences.

### Families from Mexico

Over 5.1 million children in this country are children of immigrants from Mexico. They are part of a new wave of Mexican immigrants, both documented and undocumented, streaming into the country in search of economic opportunity. They join a large community of Mexican Americans that have lived across the Southwest

United States for hundreds of years,<sup>22</sup> but their ties to family in Mexico remain strong.<sup>23</sup>

In many ways, immigrant families from Mexico embody the description of strengths outlined above. Rates of infant mortality and low birth weight are lower, and they are more likely to be living in intact families with two parents and multiple siblings, than are immigrant families—or U.S.-born families—overall.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the proportion with a working parent is on a par with immigrant children in general, at just over 96%. Finally, there are many large, well-established Mexican-American communities throughout the country that can ease their transition, helping parents to find jobs and promoting children’s cultural connections.

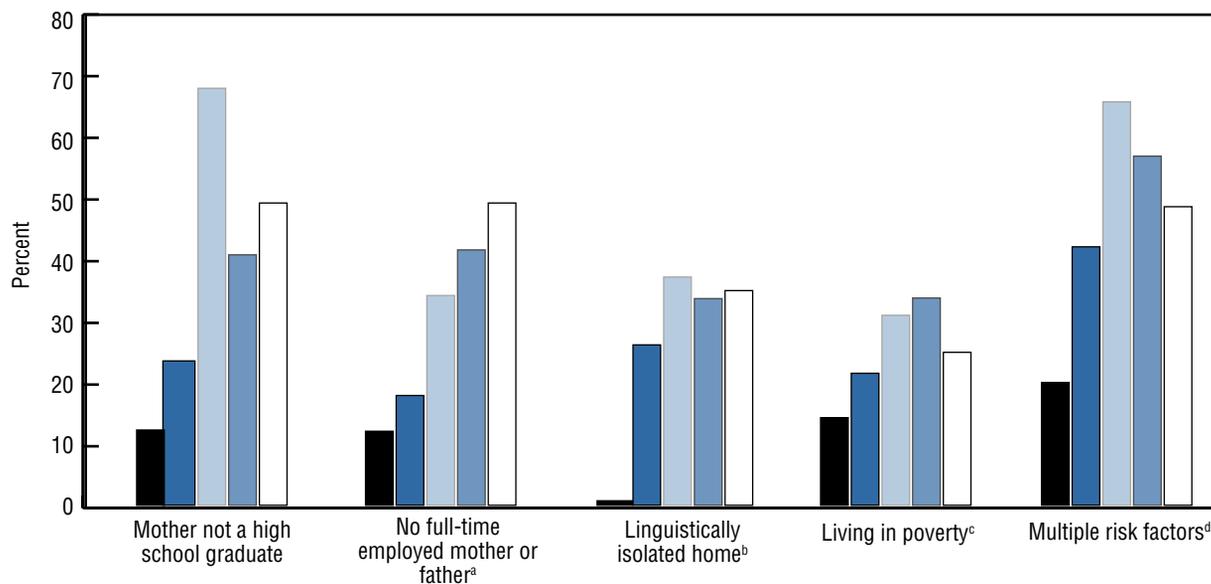
At the same time, immigrant families from Mexico also share the litany of challenges outlined above—to an extreme in some cases. For example, the level of parental education among Mexican immigrant families is very low. Children in such families are least likely among all immigrant groups to have a parent who has graduated from either high school or college. Thus, their parents often are less able to help their children with homework and less knowledgeable about the steps needed to gain entrance to college. Also, although nearly all children in immigrant families from Mexico have at least one parent who is employed, they are much more likely than children in immigrant families overall to have parents working only part-time or partial-year, and to be living in poverty. (See Figure 2.)

To some extent, the lack of full-time work and high poverty rate can be explained by the low levels of parental education. Also, many cannot speak English well: About 70% of Mexican immigrant parents, and about 38% of their children, have only limited English skills.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the fact that many are undocumented further compromises their employment opportunities and access to other supports. Census data suggest that about 60% of all foreign-born residents from Mexico—about 4.8 million residents total—were here illegally as of 2000.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, Mexican Americans must contend with a long history of stigmatization, economic exploitation, and racial exclusion.<sup>27</sup> While Mexican American communities provide supports for new immigrants, the types of jobs they have connections to are often at the bottom of

Figure 2

Challenges Faced by Children of Immigrant versus U.S.-Born Parents



KEY:

- U.S.-Born Parents
- Immigrant Parents
- Parents from Mexico
- Parents from the Dominican Republic
- Parents from Indochina

<sup>a</sup>Full-time work defined here as working at least 48 of 52 weeks a year, and working at least 35 hours during the weeks worked.

<sup>b</sup>A linguistically isolated home is defined as a household where the majority of the household members do not speak English well.

<sup>c</sup>Family income is less than the official poverty threshold.

<sup>d</sup>A child experiencing at least two of the following: (1) living in a linguistically isolated household; and (4) living in a one-parent family.

<sup>e</sup>Indochina includes the Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Source: Based on data from Census 2000 issue.

the economic ladder. This not only affects the employment opportunities of the parents, but also the academic aspirations of the youth. When children of Mexican immigrants perceive discrimination and prejudice in U.S. society, they can become disillusioned and reject academic goals as not for them.<sup>28</sup>

**Families from the Dominican Republic**

Approximately 350,000 children in the United States

have parents who emigrated from the Dominican Republic. These families, along with other families from non-English-speaking Caribbean countries, have come to this country primarily in search of economic opportunity, and much the same as their fellow immigrants from Mexico, their ties to their homeland also remain strong.<sup>29</sup> Again, about 96% of the children have parents who are employed, but compared with children in families from Mexico, an even greater proportion have

parents who are working only part-time or not year round, and are living in poverty. (See Figure 2.)

Although a large percentage have limited English skills, on the positive side, parent education levels are significantly higher. The share of children in Dominican families with mothers and fathers who have graduated from high school is nearly double that of children in Mexican families, and the share with parents graduating from college is nearly triple. Also, a much smaller percentage—only about 13%—of foreign-born residents from the Dominican Republic are here illegally, according to Census Bureau estimates.<sup>30</sup>

On the negative side, however, a much greater proportion of children in Dominican families live in a one-parent family: 37% are living in families with a single parent, compared with 15% for children in Mexican families, and 16% for children in immigrant families overall. In addition, while Dominican families often settle in communities with other families from their country of origin, their ethnic acculturation vis-à-vis mainstream society can nevertheless be jarring. Light-skinned Dominicans viewed as “white” in their homeland can find that in the United States they are more often identified as “black,” exacerbating identity issues for Dominican youth. Fearing that their children are at risk of joining the drug culture and inner city gangs, a growing number of parents are sending their children back to the Dominican Republic to be educated.<sup>31</sup>

### **Families from Indochina**

Approximately 687,000 children of immigrant families from Indochina—the Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam—are currently living in the United States. Their families have come here, for the most part, as refugees following the Vietnam War. As discussed in the article by Yang in this journal issue, the children in these families have little in common with the “model minority” of Asian Americans who achieve high levels of educational and occupational success in this country. Nearly three decades after the beginning of their families’ refugee flight from Southeast Asia, many children continue to struggle with formal education due to limited English skills, discrimination, miscommunication, and feelings of alienation.

Similar to the children in families from Mexico, the proportion of children in Indochinese families living in intact

families with two parents and multiple siblings is high relative to other immigrant and U.S.-born groups. Unlike their counterparts from Mexico, however, families from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam often arrived in the United States with no established community of compatriots to ease their adjustment, and instead tended to rely on various government programs and supports afforded them due to their refugee status.<sup>32</sup> As noted earlier, studies suggest that the availability of these resources helped Indochinese families to achieve greater economic security and stability than would be expected otherwise based on family characteristics.<sup>33</sup> But it has also resulted in greater dependence on these supports. The proportion with no working parent—either part-time or full-time—is highest among all the immigrant groups analyzed, at just over 8%. In addition, the level of parent education among children in Indochinese families is low compared with immigrant groups overall, and the proportion living in a linguistically-isolated family is second only to children in families from Mexico.

The trauma experienced in Southeast Asia before coming to the United States, as well as the sudden, involuntary departure from their homeland, often with little preparation or resources, sets these families apart from most other immigrant groups. As Yang describes, children in these families often lack adequate supports to bridge their two worlds: parents with high aspirations for them, but who often are rooted in the past, suffering from depression and trauma-related illnesses, and unable to communicate with the outside world; and mainstream society’s racism and discrimination, often embodied in school staff with low expectations about the children’s ability to succeed. According to Yang, without a greater appreciation of Southeast Asian history and culture, and a means to promote better communication between parents and teachers, children in Indochinese families may internalize society’s negative expectations and give up on school.

### **Strategies for the Future**

Although immigrant parents are generally optimistic about the many opportunities this country offers to them and their children, they also fear the possible dangers of their children becoming Americanized—that is, alienated from the culture of their country of origin, and more likely to become involved in risky behaviors such as substance abuse, early sexual intercourse, and delinquent or violent

activity. Especially among immigrant families with few economic resources, assimilating into American culture can have negative consequences for their children's health and well-being. While children of immigrants may start out with better health and higher educational aspirations, these strengths can dissipate over time. As adolescents, children of immigrants are more likely to report involvement in risky behaviors the longer they have lived in the United States.<sup>34</sup> At each stage of development, further efforts are needed to ensure that children in immigrant families have access to the resources they need to help them stay on positive pathways to success.

### **Young Children Ages Birth to Eight**

For disadvantaged young children, early learning experiences can be especially important to leveling the playing field as children enter school, as noted in the article by Takanishi in this journal issue. When programs are extended into kindergarten and the early elementary grades, positive outcomes are even further enhanced. Special education classes are another important vehicle for providing supports to children experiencing difficulties in school. Yet, despite high levels of disadvantage and difficulties, children in immigrant families tend not to participate in these programs. Understanding how early education and special education programs fit with immigrant parent beliefs and values regarding early socialization will be crucial to improving access to these programs and other services that support young children's development and well-being.

### **Middle Childhood**

During middle childhood, the development of positive attitudes toward school, academic achievement, and aspirations for the future can have major implications for children's success as adults. As discussed in the article by García Coll and Szalacha, in order to provide appropriate supports to children in immigrant families, it is critical to understand how experiences with racism and discrimination and perceptions of diminished life opportunities can influence their pathways through middle childhood. The unique strengths of immigrant families, as well as their added sources of risk, must be acknowledged and incorporated into strategies to counteract the negative messages children of immigrants may be receiving about themselves during this critical stage of development.

Moreover, the research suggests that maintaining respect for parental authority is linked to children's ability to stay

on positive developmental pathways, and that for children in immigrant families, preserving connections to their cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining parental authority.<sup>35</sup> Yang notes that community-based organizations can play a useful role in reinforcing cultural ties and fostering healthy communication between students, parents, and teachers, but unfortunately, most communities lack such programs.

### **Adolescence**

For adolescents to transition successfully to adulthood, several elements are key: finishing school, acquiring work skills, postponing parenthood, and being physically and mentally healthy. In particular, as noted in the articles by Fuligni and Hardway, by Nightingale and Fix, and in the commentary by Miller, acquiring strong skills in math, science, and technology will be increasingly important to securing well-paying jobs in the future, as well as to maintaining the competitiveness of the U.S. economy.

Overall, youth from immigrant families appear to be doing just as well, or even better, than their peers from U.S.-born families in terms of their physical and mental health, and avoidance of high risk behaviors. However, there is evidence that adolescent well-being declines the longer families have lived in the United States.<sup>36</sup> Also, while the vast majority of teens in immigrant families attend school, they are more likely than those in U.S.-born families to be behind grade and not to graduate—especially those in immigrant families with origins in Mexico, Central America, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Indochina, who account for over half of all children in immigrant families.

To improve the educational prospects of youth in immigrant families, Fuligni and Hardway chronicle the barriers to access and use of high quality institutions and programs that must be overcome, including poor school quality, lack of financial supports and health insurance, and lack of outreach to immigrant and limited-English proficient families. All society suffers when youth fail to reach their potential. For example, as cited by Pérez in this journal issue, increasing the college completion rate of today's Hispanic 18-year-olds by as little as three percentage points would increase their lifetime contributions to social insurance programs such as Social Security and Medicare by about \$600 million.<sup>37</sup> Given that a large number of older Hispanic youth have never attended U.S. schools, special outreach programs may be needed to bring this group into the educational system.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Studies show that on average, because of their lower incomes, larger households, and lack of English-language skills, immigrant families contribute less to public revenues and cost more in terms of use of services.<sup>38</sup> Implementing programs that promote the healthy development of children in immigrant families and that provide them with opportunities for achievement more equal to those enjoyed by children in U.S.-born families clearly places an added financial burden on society. However, failure to implement such programs will also place a financial burden on society—a burden that is likely to grow over time as these children enter adulthood, and their lifetime earnings and tax contributions are less than what they might have been had they received more supports early in life. To assure a cohesive society, a prosperous economy, and a strong safety net for the elderly, poor, and disabled into the next century, more attention must be paid to meeting the developmental needs of the large number of children in immigrant families now living in this country, especially those who are at greatest risk of failure.

In some ways, the needs of children of immigrants are the same as for other vulnerable low-income children, and efforts to support the positive development of all disad-

vantaged youth would undoubtedly help to address a wide range of their challenges as well. A variety of strategies to mobilize policy support for vulnerable children, both inside and outside the immigrant community and across generations, are discussed in the commentaries by Kaufmann and Lay, and by Novelli and Goyer.

At the same time, current strategies aimed at addressing poverty in general are not always appropriate for this population as their situation is unique in several ways. For example, children in immigrant families tend to live in two-parent families with at least one working parent, so programs that are aimed at promoting marriage and greater work effort are less likely to be effective in boosting the incomes of these families. Instead, immigrant families are more likely to need help dealing with low education levels and lack of access to supports and programs due to their citizenship status. Most importantly, for many, efforts to enhance their English language skills are critical.

Throughout this journal issue, the authors offer many suggestions of steps that could and should be taken to improve the life prospects of all our nation's children, especially children in immigrant families. Key recommendations reflecting their suggestions are summarized on adjacent page.

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## Recommendations

### 1 - Preschool and Special Education

Federal, state, and local education agencies should expand the availability of quality programs and strengthen outreach efforts to encourage more children of immigrants to attend preschool and kindergarten, and to access special education resources when appropriate.

### 2 - Parent Support Groups

Schools should promote the formation of parent support groups for those families with limited English skills to facilitate communication between parents, teachers, and students, and ensure all parents understand the requirements for their children to enter college.

### 3 - After-School Activities

Community-based organizations in immigrant communities should expand efforts to provide after-school activities that reinforce the children's cultural values and heritage, while at the same time improving their English language skills by working with children and parents together in family literacy programs.

### 4 - History and Culture

To promote better cross-cultural understanding, schools should include in their curricula the history and culture of the major immigrant groups in their local community.

### 5 - Math, Science, and Technology

Schools should strengthen their courses in math, science, and technology to ensure all students are well-prepared to compete in the increasingly technology-based labor market that is emerging.

### 6 - Bilingualism

Federal, State, and local education agencies should encourage bilingualism for all students—enabling children of immigrants to maintain ties with their heritage, and enabling children of U.S.-born families to be better prepared for life and work in a global society.

### 7 - Enhanced Outreach Efforts

Social service agencies and other institutions should strengthen their bilingual staff and/or work with community-based organizations to enhance outreach efforts to facilitate greater access to benefits for eligible children in immigrant families.

### 8 - Children of the Undocumented

Federal, state, and local agencies should explore ways to reduce, and eventually eliminate, the barriers to access to critical supports and resources for children of parents who are undocumented.

## ENDNOTES

1. Only about 20% of those currently age 65-69 are not of white European descent, but this figure doubles to about 40% for those currently age 5 to 9, according to population estimates as of April 2000 from the U.S. Census Bureau.
2. For a detailed discussion of these trends, see the article by Hernandez in this journal issue. Throughout this article, statistics cited are from this article unless otherwise noted.
3. Landale, N.S., Oropesa, R.S., and Gorman, B.K. Immigration and infant health: Birth outcomes of immigrant and native-born women. In *Children of immigrants: Health, adjustment, and public assistance*. D.J. Hernandez, ed. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1999, pp. 244–285. See Table 1 in the article by Hernandez in this journal issue.
4. Hernandez, D.J., and Charney, E., eds. *From generation to generation: The health and well-being of children in immigrant families*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1998, pp. 107–109.
5. See Appendix 6 in the article by Hernandez in this journal issue. Percentages include those working part-time and only part of the year, as well as those working full-time year-round.
6. See the article by Fuligni and Hardway in this journal issue.
7. See note 4, Hernandez and Charney, 1998, pp. 90–97.
8. National Center for Education Statistics. *Dropout rates in the United States: 1999*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education, NCES, 2001.
9. Portes, A., and Rumbaut, R.G. *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001.
10. See, for example, Ogbu, J. Minority coping responses and school experience. *Journal of Psychohistory* (1991) 18(4):433–456; and U.S. General Accounting Office. *School finance: Per-pupil spending differences between selected inner city and suburban schools varied by metropolitan area*. Report no. GAO-03-234. Washington, DC: USGAO, December 2002, pp. 3–4.
11. See note 9, Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, p. 60.
12. Portes, A., and Zhou, M. The second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (1993) 530:74–96; and Rumbaut, R.G. Children of immigrants and their achievement: Relating family and school to engagement, aspirations, and achievement. *CEIC Review* (May 2001) 10(4):9–11,13.
13. See the article by Hernandez in this journal issue for a more detailed discussion of various poverty measures.
14. Many health problems and risk behaviors tend to increase with length of residency in the United States and from one generation to the next. See note 4, Hernandez and Charney, 1998.
15. Sameroff, A., Seifer, R., Barocas, R., et al. Intelligence quotient scores of 4-year-old children: Social-environmental risk factors. *Pediatrics* (1987) 79:343–350.
16. See Figure 7 in the article by Hernandez in this journal issue.
17. See, for example, Zaslow, M.J., Moore, K.A., Brooks, J.L., et al. Experimental studies of welfare reform and children. *The Future of Children: Children and Welfare Reform* (Winter/Spring 2002) 12(1):79–95.
18. Population Resource Center. *A nation of immigrants: Current policy debates meet new social science research*. Congressional staff briefing. Washington, DC. April 19, 2004. Materials available online at <http://www.prcdc.org/programs/immigration04/immigration04.html>.
19. Under the Refugee Act of 1980, individuals determined to be fleeing persecution in their homelands are eligible to receive cash and medical assistance, employment preparation and job placement, skills training, English language training, social adjustment and aid for victims of torture. See the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement Web site at <http://www2.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/geninfo/index.htm>.
20. See note 9, Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, pp. 242–245.
21. Indochina refers to the Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.
22. Lopez, D.E., and Stanton-Salazar, R.D. Mexican Americans: A second generation at risk. In *Ethnicities: Children of immigrants in America*. R.G. Rumbaut and A. Portes, eds. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001, pp. 57–90.
23. See Zhou, M. Contemporary immigration and the dynamics of race and ethnicity. In *America becoming: Racial trends and their consequences, vol. 1*. N.J. Smelser, W.J. Wilson, and F. Mitchell, eds. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2001, pp. 200–242.
24. They also are much more likely to have relatives and other persons living with them in their households. Across all groups analyzed, children of Mexican immigrants have the highest rate of overcrowding: 67% (versus an immigrant average of 47%, and a U.S.-born average of 11%). See Appendix 3 in the article by Hernandez in this journal issue.
25. See Appendix 8 in the article by Hernandez in this journal issue.
26. U.S. Census Bureau. *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2003*. Washington, DC: 2004, table no. 7; and U.S. Census Bureau. *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2002*. Washington, DC: 2003, table no. 43.
27. See note 22, Lopez and Stanton-Salazar, 2001.
28. See note 22, Lopez and Stanton-Salazar, 2001. For further discussion of this topic, see also the article by Garcia Coll and Szalacha in this journal issue.
29. See Grasmuck, S., and Pessar, P. Dominicans in the United States: First- and second-generation settlement. In *Origins and destinies: Immigration, race, and ethnicity in America*. S. Pedraza and R.G. Rumbaut, eds. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1990, pp. 280–292.
30. See note 26, Census, 2004 and 2003.
31. See note 9, Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, pp. 98–99.
32. See Zhou, M. Straddling different worlds: The acculturation of Vietnamese refugee children. In *Ethnicities: Children of immigrants in America*. R.G. Rumbaut and A. Portes, eds. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001, pp. 187–228.
33. See note 9, Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, pp. 46–49, 80–82.
34. See note 4, Hernandez and Charney, 1998, p. 6.
35. See note 9, Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, p. 54.
36. See note 4, Hernandez and Charney, 1998, p. 6. See also note 9, Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, pp. 98–102.
37. Sorensen, S., Brewer, D.J., Carroll, S.J., and Bryton, E. *Increasing Hispanic participation in higher education: A desirable public investment*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1995.

38. Vernez, G., and McCarthy, K.F. *The costs of immigration to taxpayers: Analytical and policy issues*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1995.