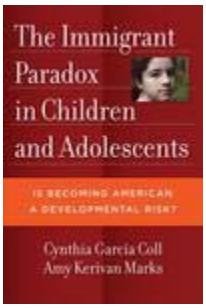
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How and Why Living in the United States Is a Risk to Development and Resilience of Immigrant Children and Adolescents

A Review of

The Immigrant Paradox in Children and Adolescents: Is Becoming American a Developmental Risk?
by Cynthia García Coll and Amy Kerivan Marks (Eds.)
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The authors who contributed to Cynthia García Coll and Amy Kerivan Marks's edited volume *The Immigrant Paradox in Children and Adolescents: Is Becoming American a Developmental Risk?* provide numerous reasons that we should be concerned and knowledgeable about the children of immigrants. Immigration to the United States has reached historic proportions in terms of sheer numbers of new arrivals as well as in the significant surge in the number of the immigrant children of those immigrants. Children of immigrants account for almost one fourth (24 percent) of all children in the United States and are leading the racial–ethnic transformation of the country, according to Hernandez, Denton, Macartney, and Blanchard (see Chapter 1).

The effective integration of immigrants in educational, work, and community settings is essential for the well-being of this country's future (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). This volume dovetails very nicely with the American Psychological Association's Presidential Task Force Report on Immigration, scheduled to be reviewed by the Council of Representatives in February 2012.

García Coll and Marks's edited book focuses on variables that influence the educational, health, and behavioral outcomes among immigrant children and adolescents across a variety of nationality groups, ages, and immigrant generations. In particular, their compilation of evidence-based work examines the *immigrant paradox*, which is the perplexing set of findings that first- and second-generation immigrant children often display less risky behavior and better health and educational achievement than do their more acculturated native-born peers.

This is perplexing, given that children of immigrants are often viewed as posing challenges to the American health and education systems because of various disadvantages, such as lack of fluency in English and entering a new and sometimes unwelcoming society, according to Hernandez et al. (Chapter 1) and Fuligni (Chapter 13). Overall, a number of studies document a pattern of worsening developmental outcomes as acculturation into American culture proceeds. As some children of immigrants become "more American," the worse their chances are for positive developmental outcomes when compared with their less acculturated peers.

The scholars who contributed to this edited book primarily use empirical research to contribute to the

knowledge and understanding about resilience as well as challenges among U.S. immigrant child and adolescent populations. The findings are complex and nuanced; patterns of findings vary across ethnic–racial subgroups and by the developmental age range studied. Those looking for simple answers or explanations will be disappointed. Yet, this is one of the first major contributions to help us begin to understand the complexities of the immigrant paradox and provides numerous implications for researchers, providers of services, educators, and policy makers.

For a couple of decades now, various measures have demonstrated astonishing, unexpected findings of resilience among immigrants. For example, babies of immigrant women and immigrant adults have been reported to have better health outcomes on a variety of indexes such as birth weight, infant mortality, adult obesity, cardiovascular functioning, longevity, and mortality when compared with native-born or later generation immigrants (Argeseanu Cunningham, Ruben, & Venkat Narayan, 2008). In addition, recent findings in education have shown that more highly acculturated immigrant youths display less academic excellence and/or more risky behaviors than do their less acculturated peers (see Introduction, this volume).

This book presents findings from several major surveys. For example, Hernandez et al. (Chapter 1) used data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), which provides information about important features of family and socioeconomic circumstances for children whose parents differ in their English fluency. Hernandez et al. explored national data commissioned by the National Academies/Institutes of Medicine about health and risk behaviors (having sex, delinquent or illegal behaviors, violence, use of controlled substances) among adolescents with origins from nine countries or regions: Mexico, Cuba, Central/South America, Puerto Rico, China, Philippines, other Asia, Africa/Afro-Caribbean, and Europe/Canada.

Because the sample sizes in the available data sets were large enough and because socioeconomic status was controlled, the researchers were able to draw reliable conclusions. For example, they found that for all groups studied, except for children with Puerto Rican origins, the first generation of most immigrant groups had fewer health problems than did third and later generation Whites. But the number of groups experiencing more health problems than do Whites increased by the second generation and still further by the third and later generations; and only the Chinese are slightly healthier than Whites.

Various authors present theories and research findings to provide a variety of explanations for this paradox. They provide theoretical frameworks and research findings that examine the contexts of families, peers, school, and neighborhoods. Complex processes involving interactive, bidirectional associations are viewed between the child and his or her environment, over time, in an individual's life, and across generations. Turney and Kao (Chapter 4) and Bui (Chapter 6) use complex statistical analyses to help isolate causal explanations, given the fact that multiple environments interact over time.

For example, understanding the paradox requires attending to *acculturation*, the process by which an individual or group encounters a new cultural context and begins a series of complex social, interpersonal, and context-sensitive psychological processes of assuming new cultural attitudes, abilities, and traditions while maintaining (or not maintaining) those from the individual's culture of origin.

The immigrant generational category is also important to determine. *First generation* refers to someone who is born abroad; some researchers distinguish youths who enter the United States before the age of five and designate them as the 1.5 generation, as the age of entry has different implications for their development. Those born in the United States with one or both parents born abroad are second generation, and third-generation children are those born to U.S.-born parents.

Other findings are intriguing. A collection of studies found consistent evidence of an immigrant paradox in risky behaviors in adolescence. More highly acculturated or later generation youths reported being engaged in substance use and abuse, unprotected sex, and delinquency more often than did their less acculturated or first-

generation peers for most groups except Asians, according to Bui (Chapter 6). Some school programs emphasizing academics and school engagement seem to help prevent juvenile delinquency for White and Black adolescents, but only partially for Hispanic youths.

Clearly, more research is needed to understand why some ethnic groups show the paradox for some outcomes but not others and why some interventions are effective for some groups but not others. In regard to studies about risky behaviors, something appears to be happening in development later in childhood and into adolescence that establishes the behavioral and delinquency paradox patterns, so future research should target understanding behavior problem patterns in middle childhood and early adolescence (see Chapter 4).

In regard to overall educational outcomes, Pong and Zeiser (Chapter 9) describe studies that show that Latinos and Asians have very positive attitudes about school, across all ages, but more recent immigrants show an advantage over second and third generations, having the most positive attitudes of all groups studied. However, positive attitudes do not translate into positive academic outcomes for Latinos, but they are associated with high achievement for Asian groups. Some explanations for differences include variations in ethnic enclaves (both positive and negative influences on schooling outcomes) and parents' knowledge of how to make use of educational programs, resources, and institutions (see the Introduction and Chapter 12).

Hao and Ma (Chapter 12) suggest that the self-selection effects of immigrant parents (high motivations, upwardly mobile orientation, and huge hopes for their children) and the agency of their children (who appreciate what their parents have done for them and believe that it is their responsibility to the family to do well in school) at least partially provide explanations for the immigrant paradox. Indeed, self-selection (the most motivated and skillful individuals migrate while others stay behind) has also been hypothesized by Buriel (Chapter 2) and Fuligni (Chapter 13) to at least partially explain the first-generation advantage. And Conger and Atwell's work (Chapter 10) reveals benefits of bilingualism. For example, a second-generation advantage in math scores was observed for native-born students living in non-English-speaking homes.

Family values may be a major mechanism protecting less acculturated youth from poor academic achievement. Such values include the importance of education, the value of hard work, and a sense of family obligation. Children benefit from supportive parents with a good work ethic and ties to the community in which they live. Eighty-two percent of immigrant children live with two parents, compared with 71 percent of children in native-born families. Quality of schools and other public resources are also factors that are considered (see Chapter 10).

One of the strengths of this volume is that evidence of the immigrant paradox is described by examining interdisciplinary work from psychology, sociology, anthropology, and geography. Psychology has much to offer if it capitalizes on the potential of multidisciplinary science and the interprofessional application and communication of knowledge.

Recommendations by various authors include support of policies such as the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (The "DREAM" Act), which is a bill that would provide pathways to citizenship by granting a six-year conditional permanent legal residency to undocumented students who meet certain criteria. Several authors such as Crosnoe (Chapter 3) and Fuligni (Chapter 13) recommend attending to access to institutionally regulated resources and suggest that they may be more important than socioemotional ones.

The Immigrant Paradox in Children and Adolescents is intended for advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and colleagues in the area of immigration or ethnic studies, sociology, psychology, and education. Policy makers and practitioners may also benefit from the information contained in this book.

One of the authors' hopes is that widespread negative views of immigrants and their children be informed and challenged by the mounting data available in the social sciences literature, rather than perpetuated by more

ideological impulses; they express concern about the disconnect between research and policy toward children of immigrants. The editors and many of the authors also call for more research, since what we do not know or understand about the immigrant paradox still outweighs what we do know.

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