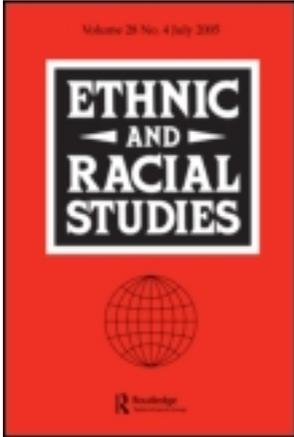


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Review Symposium

Generational succession in the Big Apple

Philip Kasinitz, John H. Mollenkopf, Mary C. Waters and Jennifer Holdaway, **INHERITING THE CITY: THE CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS COME OF AGE**, New York and Cambridge, MA: Russell Sage Foundation and Harvard University Press, 2008, vii + 420 pp., \$45.00.

Reviewed by Richard Alba, Nancy Foner and Rubén G. Rumbaut, with a response by Philip Kasinitz, Mary C. Waters and John H. Mollenkopf.

Abstract

Inheriting the City presents the results of a major research project on the children of immigrants in New York City, focusing on eight groups, five of which are immigrant groups: Dominicans; South Americans from Colombia, Ecuador and Peru; English-speaking West Indians; the Chinese; and Russian Jews. The three comparison groups are native whites, native blacks, and Puerto Ricans. The symposium allowed three critics who have followed this project from its earliest phases to assess the results and the authors to respond to the issues raised by their commentaries.

Keywords: Assimilation; culture; immigration; proximal groups; race; second generation.

Introduction: generational succession in the Big Apple

Peter Kivisto

When the historian of immigration Marcus Lee Hansen (1990 [1938]) speculated about American immigrants and their generations in a lecture that was subsequently published by the Augustana Historical Society on ‘The problem of the third generation immigrant’, he did so at a time when mass migration had come to a halt. Without the

infusion of newcomers, the children and grandchildren of immigrants confronted the challenges associated with fitting into the larger society without having to respond to the presence of ‘greenhorns’ from the country of origin. Hansen’s famous thesis or ‘law’ offered a psychological explanation for why (so he thought) the children would seek to forget their origins while the grandchildren would make an effort to remember.

Few scholars today are prepared to engage in such broad generalizations about the social psychology of generations of ethnics – or about any other aspect of their adjustment to American society. In part this is because the voluminous body of scholarship devoted to immigrants and ethnics has revealed that reality was and is far too complex to be reduced to simple, uniform formulas depicting societal processes. To make things even more challenging, sociologists who are studying today’s immigrants and their offspring, in contrast to historians and historical sociologists who have examined the past, do so *in medias res*, as immigration continues – and it is not entirely clear where we are in the current migratory wave.

When it became clear that the immigration reform legislation of 1965 had made possible a new and dramatic wave of mass migration to the United States, sociologists very quickly responded by becoming engaged in studying the impact of migration on the immigrants themselves, while also to a lesser extent analysing the impact that the immigrants have had on both the receiving and, later with the advent of transnational studies, sending societies. With the passage of time the children of the immigrant generation have grown up, and sociologists have increasingly begun to focus attention on these ethnics, including not only those defined as the second but also the members of what has become known as the 1.5 generation.

It is within this context that the book at hand needs to be located. *Inheriting the City* represents the fruits of a major research project seeking to determine how well the offspring of the largest immigrant groups in New York are doing. The project was made possible by funding provided by the Russell Sage Foundation, an institution also responsible for two distinct but parallel research efforts. The earliest of these is the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study [CILS], which was conducted in two metropolitan sites, Miami/Ft. Lauderdale and San Diego. Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut, the principal investigators, reported on their findings in *Legacies* (2001). Just as the New York team of researchers learned from and built upon this earlier research, so the Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles [IIMMLA] study, conducted by a team of investigators headed by Rumbaut and Frank Bean, has taken into account lessons learned from the New York study.

This review symposium originated as an Authors-Meet-the-Critics session at the Eastern Sociological Society annual meeting on March 20, 2009 in Baltimore. I invited three critics who had been following the progress of this project from its earliest stages through to the end to provide their candid assessments of *Inheriting the City*. Rumbaut was an obvious choice, given his involvement in the two other major studies to date of the second generation. Richard Alba's work, especially his coauthored book with Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream* (2003), has played a singularly significant role in contributing to the revitalization of assimilation theory, albeit in revised form. Kasinitz and his colleagues have clearly found value in this work, and thus his assessment of their conclusions regarding the impact today's children of immigrants are having on reshaping the mainstream seemed particularly germane. Finally, Nancy Foner, in addition to having a clear sense of how immigrants past and present are both similar and different, also knows New York well. Indeed, as the author of *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration* (2002), she is particularly well suited to raising the question about whether the story told in *Inheriting the City* is essentially a New York story.

It is clear that, like the session organizer, the three critics are in the main convinced that the work of Kasinitz and his colleagues is a major accomplishment, one that will serve to set a standard for future research. At the same time, each critic identifies various perceived shortcomings and lacunae and points to areas of concern. Three of the book's four authors – Kasinitz, Mollenkopf and Waters – attended the ESS meeting and they responded to the critics in the coauthored comments presented below. Given that the book's conclusions offer grounds for guarded optimism about the future of the second generation, the authors seek to clarify why they think we have reason for optimism, while offering caveats to their general assessment.

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The second generation and growing diversity in the American future
Richard Alba

Inheriting the City is a breakthrough study that will reorient research on the second generation in the United States. The book provides an invaluable corrective to the pessimistic character of much recent research, especially that aligned with the segmented-assimilation framework, which appears to indicate that a large portion of the second generation stemming from Latin American and Caribbean immigrations will be barred from the American mainstream. Those earlier studies assume, however, a rigidly stratified society, especially along racial lines. *Inheriting the City* reveals a more complex and nuanced picture, one with much more opportunity for advance by the children of immigrants and much more room for them to impact and change the larger society.

The study will force the field to rethink the overly simplified trajectories of incorporation that appear in the theoretical formulations guiding much recent empirical research. Thus, the field needs to recognize that, in a statistical sense at least, the basic storyline of the second generation is one of social advance beyond the status of immigrant parents. The downward assimilation trajectory posited by segmented-assimilation theory, intriguing though it may be in a theoretical sense, is uncommon.

So, too, is the pathway of success arising from keeping one's distance from the American mainstream. The most successful groups in *Inheriting the City*, the Chinese and Russian Jews, are those that have made the most use of mainstream institutions. To interpret their relatively optimistic findings, Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters and Holdaway (hereafter, KMWH) emphasize in their conclusion the special position of the second generation as a culturally in-between generation whose members can draw upon the cultures of their immigrant homes and of the surrounding society. One convincing example of the potential advantages of this situation is described by KMWH in terms of the pressures to move out of the parental home that many members of native groups feel. By being able to stay longer with their parents, members of the second generation can free themselves to some extent from economic pressures and concentrate on their education.

The significance of these and other findings is bolstered by the extraordinarily high quality of the empirical research on which *Inheriting the City* is based. The collaboration among the authors extended over more than a decade, during which they fielded a large-scale survey of the second generation in the New York City region, carried out in-depth interviews with large samples of key

second-generation groups and native comparison ones, and sponsored participant observation research in some key institutional sectors.

Inheriting the City forces us to rethink also the fundamentals of our tools for assessing the situation of the second generation. One of these fundamentals concerns the standards we use for evaluating socioeconomic advance. At one point, KMWH quote a passage from Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller (2005) that intimates a view that remains very common. Portes and his colleagues write:

The promise of American society, which makes so many foreigners come, lies in the access it provides to well remunerated professional and entrepreneurial careers and the affluent lifestyles associated with them. At the same time, it is obvious that not everyone gains access to those positions and that, at the opposite end of society, there is an unenviable scenario of youth gangs, drug dictated lifestyles, premature childbearing, imprisonment and early death. Immigrant families navigate between these opposite extremes seeking to steer their youths in the direction of the true mainstream.

The view in this paragraph is consonant with the hourglass metaphor for the US labour market, which foresees a shrunken middle squeezed between expanding opposite ends. Perhaps for this reason, the passage gives no overt attention to the broad middle of the socioeconomic spectrum, where in fact most of the second-generation advance occurs, as KMWH find. All too often, sociological research on the second generation has overlooked or downplayed the significance of movement into the mid-section of the occupational structure, where in fact the greatest number of jobs are available. In reality, the intergenerational mobility experienced by the second generation, especially that portion of it that grew up in homes headed by low-wage immigrant workers, such as is typically the case for the Dominican-American second generation, has involved short distances, from, say, a janitor in the immigrant generation to an electrician in the second; but it is mobility, nevertheless. This was as true for the southern and eastern European second generation of eighty years ago as it is for the children of present-day immigrants (Waldinger and Perlmann 1997; Foner 2000).

This is not to say that the book wholly subscribes to a sunny view of the assimilation prospects for the contemporary second generation. In one central respect, the book strikes me as ambiguous and can be read as consistent with a version of segmented assimilation. The ambiguity arises from the standard the authors use to judge the success of each second-generation group: namely, by comparison with the ethnographically proximate host (Eschbach and Waters 1995). This standard of evaluation suggests that groups are differentiated by the trajectories of their members and that, to employ one characterization of segmented

assimilation that appears in the famous article by Portes and Zhou (1993), they are in the process of joining distinct segments of US society. These are not precisely the same segments as posited by Portes and Zhou, but segments are involved, nevertheless. The book does not actually say that these are the destinations of different trajectories, but the inference lies near at hand.

Moreover, when one takes into account the situation of the proximal group to which each second generation is being compared, at least one of them, the Dominicans, is arguably not doing very well. They are compared to Puerto Ricans, a group with one of the highest rates of poverty to be found in the US. The Dominican second generation, while doing better than its immigrant parents, still shows a high rate of out-of-wedlock childbearing, low earnings and other disadvantages.

Consequently, the book raises a question that remains hanging at the end: is the integration of the second generation strengthening the existing ethno-racial stratification system? If it is, then its societal impact is the opposite of what we would expect according to conventional assimilation theory. The question becomes all the more pressing as we think about the third generation, now in its nascent phases for the groups KMWH analyse. For the members of the third generation are much less likely to possess the second-generation advantage of straddling different cultures. They are more likely, one could justifiably hypothesize, to look like the native minority groups to which the second generation is being compared.

The findings of *Inheriting the City* strongly suggest that in some respects second-generation integration is strengthening overall ethno-racial stratification. Certainly, there is a very clear and consistent hierarchy among the second-generation groups – in terms of educational life chances, for example. In general, the Hispanic and West Indian groups are doing on average substantially less well than the white and Asian groups.

However, there are other respects in which that integration may be working against the US system of stratification, and I want to focus on them for a moment. As the book's findings suggest, a key phenomenon here is the heterogeneity within groups and, arguably, the increasing contingency in the impact of ethno-racial categories of membership. I take my cue here in part also from the election of Obama. It fair to say that, several years ago, almost no one would have given a black man a realistic chance to be elected President of the US, and Obama's ascendancy does some real damage to our conception of how race works in the US. For one of the primary features of racial subordination, according to sociological theorizing, is that members of the minority are not in positions of authority over members of the majority. Yet here we Americans are with a black man as commander in chief. Obviously, the election does not cancel any of the enormity of

the burdens of the average African American in a racially stratified system. But it does point up that the constraints of black race no longer operate in the same way for all black Americans. There is a new, or at least newly growing, contingency that depends on social characteristics other than race.

Growing heterogeneity within ethnoracial groups – perhaps the word ‘categories’ should be substituted for ‘groups’ here – is a reasonable inference from the findings that KMWH present, as well as from other data. Let me take the discussion to the other side of the United States to elaborate further on this point. In *Generations of Exclusion* (2008), Edward Telles and Vilma Ortiz cast Mexican Americans as a racialized ethnic group, whose third- and fourth-generation members continue to be mostly excluded from the American mainstream and to suffer ethnoracial penalties in many domains of their lives, such as schooling and residential context. However, a close reading of the book’s evidence points up numerous signs of heterogeneity within the Mexican-descent population. Much of this heterogeneity is associated with variables that indicate social detachment from the core of the group – for instance, geographical mobility (proxied by the variable Telles and Ortiz label as ‘telephone interview’) and descent from an intermarriage in the prior generation. Being intermarried oneself is also important. These variables are linked to living in a social environment that resembles that of class-similar Anglos. At the extreme, the nexus among them is associated with departure from the Mexican-American group in the sense that Mexican-descent individuals no longer readily describe themselves with one of the appropriate ethnic identities. Tariq Islam and I (2009) have found in tracking birth cohorts of US-born Mexican Americans across censuses that the cohorts shrink much more than can be accounted for by mortality. The implication is that some individuals are leaving the Mexican-American category for another. One category that is growing contains non-Hispanics, typically whites, who acknowledge having some Mexican ancestry.

This heterogeneity within groups is likely to continue increasing for the foreseeable future, if only because of demography. The cohorts that are reaching young adulthood contain many more members of minority groups and fewer (in absolute numbers, not just percentages) native whites, implying that minorities will replace departing whites on some of the higher rungs of the social ladder (Alba 2009). *Inheriting the City* prepares us to better understand the growing diversity at all levels of American society that lies in our future. Like all great research, it takes us several steps down the path of understanding and forces us to rethink the set of questions that need to be addressed next.

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The second generation comes of age in contemporary New York

Nancy Foner

Inheriting the City is a landmark book that deepens, indeed alters, our understanding of the trajectories and experiences of today's immigrant second generation, who represent an ever-growing proportion of the US population. The book is also a guide to appreciating a changing New York City. New York is the nation's quintessential immigrant city, and the inflows of the past few decades have had a dramatic impact. In 2005, 37 per cent of the city's 8.2 million people were immigrants; with their American-born children, the figure was over 50 per cent. Immigrants and their children increasingly *are* the city, so that understanding the experiences of the second generation in New York is crucial.

The book is based on a remarkably impressive research effort, including a telephone survey with more than 3,000 young adults (aged 18 to 32) in the New York metropolitan area, over 300 in-depth interviews, and ethnographic research in a variety of settings. The survey and interviews mainly focus on young adult children of immigrants in five groups (Dominican, West Indian, Chinese, South American, and Russian), but a great strength of the research design – and the book – is that the study also includes native-born comparison groups: native blacks, native whites, and Puerto Ricans. The authors have brought to the project a deep knowledge of New York and its institutions, Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters all having written extensively about the city's immigrant and native minority populations.

In assessing the book's contributions, what stands out, perhaps above all else, is that contrary to gloom and doom predictions in much of the social science literature, *Inheriting the City* reveals a more upbeat picture. Most members of the second generation are making progress.

We are not talking, in most cases, about huge leaps forward but generally about modest advances. Most of the children of immigrants have more education, earn more money, and work in more mainstream occupations than their first-generation immigrant parents, mostly in the lower-middle-class service economy. Have they closed the gap with native whites? No, and the authors say – and I agree – it is unrealistic to expect this in a single generation. But in every group, the second-generation young adults are doing at least somewhat better than natives of the same race. Two second-generation groups – Chinese and Russians – even substantially outpace native whites on some measures, including college graduation rates.

So what explains this relatively optimistic picture? And why are some groups doing better than others? It is no surprise that parents' education is a big factor in second-generation achievement. So is race, which gives some immigrant groups access to white neighbourhoods with better schools without causing a rapid white exodus. Parental education and race go a long way toward explaining why the children of Russian Jewish immigrants – one of their two remarkable success stories – are doing so well.

But the book also makes clear that culture matters. There has been a great reluctance in sociology to give culture much, if any, causal weight in mobility studies – it is seen as 'blaming the victim' and conservative, even reactionary, to attribute the problems of the poor to culture.

The authors say that they are nervous about giving culture much weight – 'We have some trepidation', they write, 'in saying that culture counts' (p. 18). But, I am glad to report, they have overcome this trepidation. The book is important in illuminating how culture operates in second-generation mobility, and in this way (and because of the prominence of the authors) will help to legitimize culture as an analytic tool in immigration studies.

Culture, of course, is not static, as they make clear. And it is highly contingent on social structure. But values, expectations, norms, and beliefs influence how people behave and make decisions. Indeed, one of the 'second-generation advantages' they write about is the ability of the children of immigrants to draw on and combine aspects of their parents' – and American – culture in ways that can contribute to success.

Cultural patterns are among the factors that help to explain the great Chinese puzzle – why this group is so successful even though two-thirds of the Chinese immigrant parents in the study had very low

levels of education. Cultural explanations of course are not the whole story, and the book provides a detailed argument about how multiple factors operate, including the nature of class diversity in Chinese communities and high degree of connection between middle- and working-class immigrants, the fact that the Chinese face little racial discrimination in the housing market, and the role of the model minority stereotype in teacher expectations.

What they also point to is the role of family values and patterns in keeping Chinese immigrant parents together (and helping to account for higher household incomes) and leading the Chinese second generation to put off marriage and childbearing until they have finished school and started their careers. Other aspects of Chinese culture, which the book does not emphasize, may also be involved, including the high value and intense emphasis that Chinese immigrant parents place on their children's education. The book also downplays the role of the thriving network of Chinese after-schools, including language schools. Even if, as the authors argue, Chinese language schools are 'remarkably unsuccessful in teaching second generation young people to read and write Chinese' (p. 247), from a mobility perspective they may encourage and reinforce habits of study as well as parental values about the importance of schooling. Moreover, as David Lopez has suggested in another context, they do so in a setting that is controlled within the ethnic community – rather than provided by benevolent outsiders – thereby reinforcing a sense of identity and cultural pride.

An important contribution is the analysis of how living at home affects mobility patterns. Second-generation young adults, the authors argue, have benefited from the fact that extended family households are an acceptable, in some cases even preferable, option, which is a plus in a city with a tight housing market and many local colleges. Whereas native white and minority young people cannot wait to move out to become adults, the second generation often think it is OK to stay at home in their late teens, twenties, and sometimes even early thirties, which means they can go to college without incurring heavy debt and save money to buy homes.

So far this all sounds upbeat and encouraging. But *Inheriting the City* is no Panglossian or utopian view of second-generation prospects. One of the second-generation groups in the study, Dominicans, is not doing well and, in the authors' words, presents 'the clearest cause for concern'. Looking ahead, the authors also offer some sobering reflections. As they note in the conclusion, their study began in good times in New York. In a declining economy, the fortunes of the second generation no doubt will be less rosy, though unfortunately economic declines have come upon us in a much more severe form than the authors might have predicted. Now that we are in the midst of

a serious economic recession, the situation of many second-generation people they studied is likely to have taken a turn for the worse, especially since most had only some college education and worked in relatively low-paying lower-middle-class jobs. A topic for further research is to investigate how the second generation fares in difficult economic times. To what extent, in such circumstances, will the second-generation story be one of 'stagnation and pessimism' (p. 365), or will the second-generation advantages touted throughout the book continue to stand the children of immigrants in relatively good stead?

It is possible, too, that the distressing situation of the Puerto Ricans in their study is a bellwether of things to come for the third generation. They did not find second-generation decline, but we cannot rule out declines for the third generation: 'The continuing disadvantages faced by native African Americans, the status of the New York-born Puerto Ricans, the poverty and incarceration of many second-generation Dominicans, and high levels of discrimination reported by even relatively well-off West Indians point to the possibility of third generation decline' (p. 365).

And this leads to the question of how much the account in this book is a New York story. The very groups in the study represent New York's special ethnic mix. West Indians are a huge group in New York, but are virtually absent in most other gateway cities. More than half of the Dominicans in the United States live in New York City. Mexicans, who constitute nearly a third of the immigrant population and more than a quarter of the second generation in the nation as a whole, are not included in this study. This is understandable, since Mexicans have only become a significant immigrant population in New York since 1990, but it means that the most important – and perhaps the most problematic – immigrant group in the nation is missing. (By 2006, it should be noted, given the phenomenal recent increase in their numbers in New York, Mexicans were the fourth largest immigrant group in the city.)

New York also stands out for its remarkable racial and ethnic diversity as well as its long history as an immigrant gateway. Practically everybody in New York has a close immigrant connection given the huge current immigration and the city's immigration history. It is no big deal, as the book puts it, to have immigrant parents in New York. Second-generation New Yorkers benefit from an array of institutions created by previous generations to help earlier immigrants, from settlement houses to labour unions. Many of the respondents attended colleges within the City University of New York, the largest urban public university in the nation.

New York also has a much lower proportion of undocumented immigrants than many other urban gateways – and in fact in this

study, most of the parents who had been undocumented at some point had managed to legalize their status, something that is much harder to do today. These and other factors peculiar to New York may give second-generation New Yorkers certain advantages that they lack elsewhere in the country – a subject that other studies clearly will have to explore.

The book has fascinating material on a host of other topics. One is ‘second-generation transnationalism’ – the conclusion being that transnationalism is not very important in most of the second-generation groups the authors studied. Visiting the home country can actually make the second generation feel more American than before. There is a superb discussion of how becoming black and Latino has some positive consequences – enabling some second-generation New Yorkers to take advantage of civil rights era institutions and practices such as affirmative action and diversity programs. And to mention a final topic, there are differences from the second generation in the past. Today, at a time when ethnicity is often celebrated, the authors write that the second generation, unlike in earlier eras, rarely feel ashamed of their parents’ language and are often proud of their ability to bridge two worlds.

Inheriting the City, to conclude, is an outstanding contribution filled with incisive and nuanced analyses. It gives us new data and new ways of looking at the trajectories and experiences of the contemporary second generation. It also has the great virtue of being a wonderfully written book filled with compelling portraits and stories that allow us to appreciate, in all their complexity, ‘the struggles and joys experienced by young adults coming of age in a tough town’ (p. 2). And to end with a New York perspective – and with the title of the book – it tells us how the children of immigrants coming of age today are making their way in a city they have inherited from previous waves of immigrants, a second generation that will, in the process, inevitably change and revitalize New York, and in this way leave a new inheritance for those that follow.

E Pluribus, New York

Rubén G. Rumbaut

Almost half a century ago, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan peered *Beyond the Melting Pot* – the one that never happened, as they famously pronounced – to assess the persistence of ethnicity and of ethnic interest groups in this country’s biggest city by far, and the social, economic and political situation of ‘the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City’. In their 1963 book, they remarked on the ‘oddity’ that throughout New York’s

history large waves of migrations had come in twos: the Irish and Germans in the 1840s, the Italians and Jews in the period from the 1880s to the 1920s, the blacks and Puerto Ricans especially in the post-World War II period of the 1940s and 1950s. In a lengthy 1970 postscript they reassessed their earlier analysis, finding much to reinforce it but adding a sense of astonishment at what the 1960s had brought that they never anticipated.

Surely that astonishment would pale in comparison to the transformations ushered in by the era of international migration which followed, the start of which no one saw coming then, and the end of which no one can prognosticate now. Today, remarkably, more than half of all of New York City's young adults are immigrants or children of immigrants. And this time, the newcomers to New York have not come in twos, but in an awesome diversity that is now 'Inheriting the City'.

In their brilliant book so entitled, Philip Kasinitz, John Mollenkopf and Mary Waters, with Jennifer Holdaway (who joined the project later but played a key role in carrying it out), have brought to fruition an extraordinary decade-long research effort to take again the pulse of New York's ethnic groups, new and old. They focus specifically on 'the new second generation' of young adult children of immigrants, which they define in the broadest sense to include both *US-born* children of one or two immigrant parents, as well as *foreign-born* children who migrated to the US by the age of 12 – a *de facto* grouping, comprising '1.5', '2.0', and '2.5' generational cohorts (Rumbaut 2004). Their work also became a study of 'coming of age' and of the transitions to adulthood of their sample of 18–32-year-olds (leaving the parental home, finishing their education, entering full-time work, marriage and children). And it became as well a study of New York City as a site of incorporation – a majority-minority city with its 'rough and tumble tolerance' and a storied tradition of absorbing newcomers, where no one immigrant group predominates (as do Mexicans in Los Angeles or Cubans in Miami), and where incorporation processes take place amid continuing immigration and with more 'transnational' connections than in the past.

For all the lively debate about so-called straight-line or bumpy or segmented assimilation, the authors felt the debate was chiefly speculative in the absence of hard data on young adults' outcomes. Back in 1996, when they began their pilot project, Alejandro Portes and I were just completing the second wave of our CILS surveys in Miami and San Diego, following a panel of more than 5,000 youths from mid- to late adolescence, through the end of high school – but at that time we had not yet envisioned doing a third follow-up, as we were to do years later when our respondents were in their mid-twenties. CILS nonetheless served as a model for the NYC study, much as their

study would go on to inform not only some of the items used in the CILS third-wave instrument, but even more so the IIMMLA survey carried out in greater Los Angeles in 2004, which was closely modelled after the NYC study. The NYC project pioneered the study of the new second generation in early adulthood, with a cross-sectional telephone survey of a sample of 3,415 young adults in a ten-county greater New York area, enriched by in-depth open-ended interviews with a one-in-ten sub-sample of their respondents (N = 333).

In a classic understatement, the authors note that their study ‘does not tell a simple story’. Their data – and there are tons of it – ‘provide exceptions for every generalization and require caveats for every assertion’. Among many other things, their analysis ranges widely and deeply into the divergent origins of the immigrant parents, their families of origin, the children’s neighbourhoods growing up, the schools as sorting mechanisms, the young adults’ first and current jobs, occupations and earnings, enclaves and ghettos, participation in the informal economy, arrests and incarceration, early and delayed childbearing, language, religion, transnational ties, civic and political engagement, prejudice and discriminations . . . all of which is sketched vividly and engagingly in vignettes drawn from the qualitative interviews. Along the way they demolish linear simplicities. And they focus on a paradox of the immigrant experience: immigrants come to improve their lives and their children’s, yet the parents often fear ‘losing their kids to the streets’ and to the dangers (and freedoms) of their adoptive society.

The authors are keenly aware that the US remains very much an ethnically and racially stratified society and so they sought a research design that permitted comparisons of different ‘immigrant groups’ with comparable ‘native stock’ ethnoracial groups, or what they call ‘proximal hosts’. That is, in assessing ‘progress’ or ‘assimilation’ (as if those two terms were synonymous), they asked: progress compared to whom? assimilation into what? And so they sought to compare, for example, immigrant Dominicans and South Americans to native Puerto Ricans, West Indians to African Americans, Russian Jews to native whites; for them, such an immigrant–native contrast was meant to compare Latinos to Latinos, blacks to blacks, whites to whites. While that particular phrasing, and framing, risks sliding into facile categorization, the authors insightfully tackle the issues of meaning and measurement in the analysis of ethnicity in their chapter on ‘Ethnic identities’ (which I will make required reading for my students). They are keenly conscious of the ways in which categories reify ‘groupness’; they insist that in referring to ethnic group differences they mean differences in ‘central tendencies’ – their respondents ‘do not come in neat ethnic packages’ – and that when they say ‘Chinese’ or ‘Russian’ they are talking about people who

immigrated in specific historical contexts and represent specific regional, class, linguistic, political and occupational segments of their countries of origin. 'By itself, ethnicity explains nothing', they write, yet neither are ethnic differences sheer myths; in the end, huge differences in social and economic outcomes clearly obtain among these groups.

Still, in the application of their group comparisons, they are less successful in living up to those caveats. Let me live up to the role of critic by bringing up two ways in which the manner that group data are presented raises more problems of meaning and measurement than it solves: one involves their categorization of distinct ethnic groups, and the other their contrast of generational differences. Their study revolves around the differences among eight groups: five 'immigrant groups' vs. three 'native-born comparison groups'.

The five 'immigrant groups' are: Dominicans, South Americans, West Indians, Chinese, and Russian Jews. All but the Dominicans encompass not discrete national origins but complex aggregations (sometimes necessitated by sample size problems). For example, the South American pan-ethnic grouping mixes Colombians, Ecuadorians, and Peruvians, who came at different times under different conditions, and some more than others in undocumented statuses. The West Indians include Jamaicans, Guyanese, and peoples from eleven other former slave plantation societies of the English-speaking Caribbean. The Chinese include polar-opposite migration streams (about a third of the Chinese parents had college degrees, more than a third lacked a high school degree), from China, Taiwan, and pre-1997 Hong Kong, and others of Chinese descent from Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia as well as the Caribbean and South America, reflecting a variety of linguistic backgrounds (Cantonese, Mandarin, Fuknese, Taiwanese and other dialects, including Hainan and Hakka), with a majority (56 per cent) reporting no religion. The 'Russian Jews' came from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, and the rest from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and the Caucasus. They reported speaking thirteen different languages growing up: not just Russian but Armenian, Azerbaijani, Estonian, Farsi, Georgian, Hebrew, Hungarian, Kazakh, Lithuanian, Tajik, Ukrainian, and Yiddish. But all shared the common solidarity of being Jews, though not necessarily religious ones. (All of this in turn is complicated further by the fact of substantial intermarriage among parents of different nationalities, including some US-born parents.)

The three 'native groups' are: 'native whites' (one-third of whom described themselves as Italian, a quarter as Irish, and a sixth as Jewish); 'native blacks' (most of whom migrated from Southern states during and after both World Wars); and Puerto Ricans. In principle, these 'native groups' were intended to represent *third* or higher

generations (i.e. the native-born offspring of native-born parents), but among the Puerto Rican respondents, two-thirds of their parents were born on the island (their median age at arrival on the mainland was 17, so that half of them migrated from Puerto Rico as adults), making most of them *second* generation; only one-third of the Puerto Rican parents were born on the mainland (the '3rd + ' generations).

Generationally, too, there are significant asymmetries between the 'immigrant groups'. As noted before, these mix foreign-born '1.5' with US-born second-generation respondents. Some have one foreign-born parent and one US-born parent (i.e. '2.5' generation); and some of the foreign-born parents themselves came as children to the US, which shaped their own acculturation and that of their children. Of the Russian Jews, only 12 per cent are second-generation; 61 per cent are 1.5ers; and 27 per cent actually came as teenagers, not as children aged 12 or under (what I have called '1.25') – all of which leads to significant differences in language, identity, and other acculturative outcomes. The majority of the Chinese were '1.5' too, but the majority of the Dominicans, South Americans and West Indians were US-born second generations.

Yet in group comparisons throughout the book, none of these differences (generational and ethnic) are taken into account in the quantitative analyses – which consist with few exceptions of simple bivariate three-dimensional bar graphs. It is unfortunate that for such a rich survey data set, only three multivariate analyses are presented (one of educational attainment, one of earnings, one of the likelihood of voting in the 1996 Presidential election), and even those are limited (e.g. the regression predicting educational attainment was restricted to the 47 per cent of the sample who were 24 or older) and scarcely elaborated in the text; yet those regressions provided valuable generalizable results.

Some important themes – notably, arrests and incarceration – were covered only in passing, and then as part of a subsection on the informal economy in the chapter on work and occupations. Yet they pose significant exceptions to the diagnosis of 'second-generation advantage' on which the book concludes – all the more when the sample is drawn from random digit dialing of households, which necessarily excludes the institutionalized population, especially young men in prison, a feature that tends to bias the results toward a more positive profile. Recent studies, however, of Dominicans in Providence and Mexicans in Los Angeles and San Antonio, and from IIMMLA in southern California, are pointing to a deterioration of certain outcomes (such as involvement of the criminal justice system) in the *third* generation of long-term groups such as Mexican Americans, rather than the second generation (Rumbaut 2008; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Itzigsohn 2009).

Given the fact that for most contemporary immigrant groups the third generation is only embryonic at present, its analysis will need to wait for a new generation of scholars. But there is much more to do now than wait for the Godot of the new third generation. *Inheriting the City* is a superb, exceptionally well written study that will be read profitably for many years to come. It is also one that cries out for comparisons with, and a meta-analysis of, the findings of other such surveys of young adult children of immigrants in North America and Europe – i.e. in other sites of incorporation that may differ profoundly from New York. It should keep many of us busy for a long time to come.

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Reflections on the second generation

Philip Kasinitz, Mary C. Waters and John H. Mollenkopf

Given the generosity of these reviews and our great respect for these reviewers, it is not easy for us to respond. The few criticisms they make of *Inheriting the City* are so intelligent, fair minded, and well argued that it seems churlish to belabour these small points of disagreement. Wiser authors would probably simply smile and say 'thank you'. However, even after all of these years, we still find it impossible to pass up the opportunity to talk about the second generation.

When we began this project in the mid-1990s, none of us would have predicted that shortly after the book was published, America would elect a black second-generation American to be President of the United States. Indeed, most observers were decidedly pessimistic about the ability of American society to incorporate new immigrants and their descendants at the time we started thinking about this study. Scholarship on concentrated poverty and persistent racial segregation gave rise to the worry that America would not be up to the task of integrating a huge new second generation that was mostly being 'racialized' as 'non-white'. Cultural conservatives felt that the

immigrant parents were unwilling or unable to fully embrace US ways. Across the spectrum, many were concerned that a post-industrial, 'hourglass-shaped' economy would limit labour market opportunities for newcomers in a way that the rapidly industrializing America of the previous century had not.

Against the background of these pessimistic assumptions, some of which we initially shared, it is not surprising that some read the guarded optimism of *Inheriting the City* as a departure from conventional wisdom. We surveyed second-generation young adults in and around New York City whose parents had come from China, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Russia. On the whole we found they were making modest but quite real educational and occupational gains over their parents and their racial or ethnic peers with native-born parents. While most of the immigrant parents held low-level 'immigrant jobs', their adult children worked in jobs like those of native background New Yorkers their age. All groups had higher rates of high school and college graduation than their native comparison groups: Dominicans had higher educational outcomes than Puerto Ricans, West Indians than native blacks, and the Chinese surpassed everyone, including native whites. Despite fears that they would not assimilate culturally, the second generation was overwhelmingly fluent in English. And while few made the leap from immigrant poverty to the university-trained professions in one generation, most had made the move into the stably employed working class. As Alba suggests, this may be in part because the economy may not be as 'hourglass-shaped' as is widely assumed.

Further, while many social scientists – and immigrant parents – worried that being 'caught between two worlds' would yield tension and cultural confusion for the second generation, we found that they could also use their 'in between-ness' as an advantage, not just a problem. Indeed, the children of immigrants found a variety of ways to put this 'second-generation advantage' to good use, combining the best of their parents' culture with a native's sense of entitlement to the best that America has to offer.

Having said that, we do not have a 'Panglossian' view of the second generation, as Foner rightly notes. It faces stark racial divisions. While the Chinese and Russian Jewish respondents experienced nearly universal upward mobility, the picture was decidedly more mixed for South American, Dominican and West Indian respondents. While these groups were making real economic progress, it was generally modest even though the study was conducted in a period of rapid economic growth. With the New York region's economy now in a tail-spin, their situations are probably more difficult. Many black and Latino children of immigrants reported harrowing encounters with American racism and we should not underestimate the difficulty of

growing up in communities beset by crime and gang violence. We do not suggest that 'second-generation advantage' is some sort of cure-all that will inevitably propel the children of immigrants forward. Indeed we conclude our book with a plea that the children of immigrants of colour continue to have access to affirmative action programs. We do believe, however, that being 'between two worlds' is as much a help as a hindrance and that findings from our study and others show that the pessimism of much of earlier research was overstated. We stand by that conclusion.

As Alba notes, the question of whom to compare the second generation with is both methodologically and theoretically complicated. Our decision to compare the second-generation groups with proximate native groups who are similarly 'racialized' in US society (as opposed to comparing them with the children of native whites) tacitly recognizes the degree to which assimilation is indeed segmented along racial and ethnic lines. At the same time, we want to point out that incorporation into native racial and ethnic minority communities and institutions can also foster upward mobility, and the expansion of minority institutions in post-civil rights America opens opportunities as well.

Foner and others have raised the question of whether ours is a 'New York story' – and our findings unique to that city. New York does indeed play an important role in our analysis, since we argue that positive or negative local institutional arrangements and cultures always shape the context of reception. This is particularly true in the United States, which lacks a national incorporation policy and puts the responsibility instead on local institutions that vary greatly across localities (the educational system in particular). The New York metropolitan area has a long history of immigrant incorporation, a white mainstream with many members who have immigrant grandparents or great-grandparents, and a large and diverse immigrant population. These are undoubtedly factors that help immigrants to integrate and society to integrate them compared to areas where immigrants are a recent phenomenon and the native-born population strongly old stock in its ethnic history. But the latter areas are no more 'representative' of the American experience either. Our point is that comparative studies must take into account the histories, demographics, and institutional arrangements of the receiving contexts. Whether we can generalize the New York experience to other US cities is an empirical question, but, given the long history of immigration to many of them, we do not think that the nation's largest city is always an outlier.

Rumbaut is quite correct that our study, like all research on the contemporary second generation, owes an enormous debt to the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study [CILS] that he and

Alejandro Portes directed and the theoretical formulations that that landmark study provided. It is also closely connected to the later IIMMLA study in Los Angeles. While the interpretations of these studies may generate some disagreements, they are all part of an extended conversation. Rumbaut is also right to call attention to the limitations of presenting data in bivariate tables and bar charts. While writing the book, we struggled with balancing accessibility versus presenting quantitative details and complexities. In the end, we decided against including many regression tables in an already data-laden book. More detailed multivariate analysis of this rich data set, both by us and by others, has been and will continue to be published in other scholarly venues.

Finally, as *Ethnic and Racial Studies* is a premiere venue for international comparison on this topic, it seems only right to offer a few brief speculations as to why second-generation incorporation looks different in the United States than in Europe. It is clearly not because the US has more racial tolerance – if anything the opposite is true. Nor does the US have better official integration policies. Many European countries have public policies designed to integrate immigrants and their children, something the United States has largely left to the voluntary sector. The US does, however, have certain historical advantages, many of which result from policies not originally intended to integrate immigrants, but which end up having that effect.

The first is unqualified birthright citizenship. The fact that the children of immigrants who are born in America are automatically citizens – even if their parents are not legally authorized to be in the US – has greatly facilitated second-generation upward mobility. Second, for all of its huge problems, the American educational system tends to be more flexible, less rigidly tracked, and provides more ‘second chances’ than those of most European countries. Many of our respondents were able to avoid the public schools where the children of poor minority groups were concentrated. In Europe, they often attend what are sometimes called ‘black schools’. Almost half of our second-generation respondents were attending or had graduated from a four-year college or university. While some of these institutions were of a lower quality than the average European university, only a small share of the European second generation have attended such an institution. Third, the limited nature of the American welfare state encourages (indeed forces) immigrants to enter and remain in the labour market, women as well as men. Many European countries have pushed the immigrant parents out of the labour force, many of the mothers have never had any working experience, and their children have faced barriers to employment. Instead, immigrants and their children have been sustained through welfare support and social housing. While they have a higher standard of living than the non-working minority poor

in the US, this arrangement also engenders native-born resentment against immigrants and their children and allows them to be socially constructed as an unproductive group. Finally, while US civil rights laws and practices, such as affirmative action and anti-discrimination legislation, were designed to redress injustices suffered by African Americans, they benefit the many children of immigrants who are racialized as 'black' or 'Hispanic' and thus qualify for inclusion in diversity initiatives in universities and corporate workplaces. While the European Union has adopted rules designed to diminish discriminatory treatment of immigrants and their children, one can identify only a few instances of what Europeans call 'positive discrimination'.

We nevertheless conclude on a note of caution. On the whole, America is reaping benefits from its relatively immigrant-friendly economic and civic structure. Yet the US Congress has adopted legislation since 1996 that has greatly restricted the opportunities available to undocumented immigrants and their children. The parents of the young people we wrote about in *Inheriting the City* came to the US at a time when it was still fairly easy for their parents to obtain legal status. Although many originally entered the country without authorization, most eventually obtained legal status. This is less true for the immigrant parents of those who are now entering adulthood, especially for those whose parents came from Mexico, a group that was too recently arrived for us to study in New York. The children of today's undocumented immigrants may come to feel the level of estrangement evident among much of the European second generation, especially when they face severely blocked chances for higher education and employment. America needs to recognize that undocumented immigrants and their children are already integral parts of our economy, society, and culture, if not our polity. It ill serves American democracy to continue to exclude them from full membership in the nation.

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