INFORMING IMMIGRANT FAMILIES ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL CHOICE IN NEW YORK CITY: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj
New York University

Prepared for School Choice and School Improvement:
Research in State, District and Community Contexts
Vanderbilt University, October 25-27, 2009

NATIONAL CENTER ON School Choice
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY Peabody College

This paper is supported by the National Center on School Choice, which is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) (R305A040043). All opinions expressed in this paper represent those of the authors and not necessarily the institutions with which they are affiliated or the U.S. Department of Education. All errors in this paper are solely the responsibility of the authors. Do not cite without author's permission. For more information, please visit the Center website at www.vanderbilt.edu/schoolchoice/.

Informing Immigrant Families about High School Choice in New York City: Challenges and Possibilities

Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj
New York University

Introduction

Children in immigrant families[1] are the fastest-growing sector of the school-age population in the United States today. These youth, between fifty-five and sixty percent of whom have geographic origins in Latin America, currently account for over twenty percent of all children in the United States (Hernandez, Denton & Macartney, 2007). It is projected that by 2010, children of immigrants will represent twenty-five percent of the country's primary and secondary-school age population (Hernandez, 2009). The exponential growth in the size of the immigrant-origin student population in the United States has come at a time when earning at least a high school diploma has never been more important for long-term personal and professional stability. While at the start of the twentieth century people with limited formal education were able to achieve some degree of social and economic mobility, the current knowledge economy is largely closed to those who do not attain post-secondary credentials (Katz & Goldin, 2008). Thus, assisting immigrant families' integration[2] into school systems and ensuring that immigrant-origin students are provided with equal opportunities to obtain the academic credentials they need to succeed have become critical mandates of receiving countries and education systems across the globe.

[1] The phrase "children in immigrant families" refers to both first generation (immigrant) children and second generation (U.S.-born) children of at least one immigrant parent (see Hernandez, et al., 2007). It will be used interchangeably with "immigrant-origin children" throughout this paper.

[2] "Integration" is preferred over the more controversial term "assimilation" to refer to the processes by which immigrants adapt to and participate in new societies and these societies adjust to receiving newcomers. For more on these theoretical concepts and the debates surrounding the term "assimilation" see (Alba & Nee, 2003; Entzinger, 2000; Freeman, 2004; Gans, 1992; Geddes & Favell, 1999; Glazer & Moynihan, 1963; Gordon, 1964; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Vermeulen & Pennix, 2000 and Warner & Srole, 1945).

More than fifty years after the historic Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education* to end the practice of race-based school assignments, considerable school segregation along racial/ethnic and class lines remains. In fact, according to a report from the Harvard Civil Rights Project, Black and Latino students are three times as likely as White students to be in high poverty schools and twelve times as likely to be in schools in which almost everyone is poor. These youth also attend predominantly minority schools in disproportionate numbers (Orfield & Lee, 2005). The severe isolation of low-income children of color, many of whom come from immigrant homes, constitutes a significant challenge to successful immigrant integration and to social equality more generally. In addition, the latest results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that racial/ethnic and class-based disparities in primary and secondary grades students' academic performance persist (Rampey, Dion, and Donahue, 2009). Along with growing school segregation, many scholars, policy-makers, educators, and citizens understand this so-called "achievement gap" to be one of the most pressing educational and social justice issues of our time (Berliner, 2006; Klein & Sharpton, 2009; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Rothstein, 2004).

Scholars have long pointed to the concentration of low-income children of color in high poverty, racially segregated, and low-performing schools as a key explanatory factor of race- and income-based differences in academic achievement (Coleman et al., 1966; Orfield & Lee, 2005; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Since the early era of school desegregation school choice policies— ranging from magnet and charter schools to vouchers, controlled choice, or open enrollment plans— have been implemented, in part, to address these longstanding problems in education. Districts across the United States have adopted school choice with renewed vigor in recent years in the face of poor student performance on

international exams, the widespread academic failure of disadvantaged students, and glaring inequities in students' access to high quality educational opportunities. According to the Education Commission of the States (2007) and the Center for Education Reform (2007), forty states and the District of Columbia have charter school laws, and all but four states have some form of inter- or intradistrict open enrollment policy. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that 1.4 million of the country's 50 million public school students, or 2.8 percent of the total, are currently being educated in charter schools, only one of a variety of choice options (cited in Dillon, 2009). Finally, the National Center for Education Statistics (2006) reported that between 1993 and 2003, the percentage of children enrolled in assigned public schools declined from 80 to 74 percent while the percentage of students enrolled in chosen public schools increased from eleven to fifteen percent. This trend away from assigned public schools and toward chosen public schools generally held across sex, grade, poverty, parental education, and geographic groupings. It was also seen among both White and Black students but, notably, not for Hispanic students.

Accessing quality educational options for students through participation in any number of school choice programs requires a significant amount of knowledge and time investment on the part of families (Andre-Becheley, 2005; Buckley & Schneider, 2007; Hamilton & Guin, 2005; Medina, 2008; Schneider, Teske & Marschall, 2000; Teske, Fitzpatrick & Kaplan, 2007). Navigating these often complex and bureaucratic processes may be particularly difficult for low-income immigrant parents who, on top of the challenges associated with poverty, were raised and educated outside of the United States, may face language barriers, and may lack some of the critical contextual knowledge they need to fully understand educational practices, policies, and expectations in their adoptive country. Few studies have examined poor immigrant families'

experiences with school choice. Furthermore, little is known about how the expectations of parents' knowledge, behavior, and resources embedded in choice policies align with or depart from different immigrants' social practices, cultural models, and resources or about the implications of these convergences and divergences for immigrants' participation in school choice. An investigation of school-based and district-wide approaches to informing families about school choice represents one entry point into understanding the challenges that immigrants may face in comprehending these typically unfamiliar policies and procedures. Such research may also answer questions about the gaps between what schools assume that parents and students know and what they actually do understand. Finally, studies that engage the topic of immigrants and school choice stand to contribute to larger bodies of work on home-school conflicts in education and on immigrant integration more broadly.

This paper uses ethnographic data from research in three middle schools in Queens, New York and analyzes school choice publications created and distributed by the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) to answer questions about how the district and school-level communication strategies and materials facilitate and/or complicate Latin American immigrant families' understanding of the choice process. New York City is home to one of the largest and most heterogeneous immigrant populations worldwide. The city's diversity coupled with the fact that participation in school choice is mandatory for all students who wish to attend public high school in the district make New York City an interesting place to examine immigrant families' experiences with this one aspect of educational integration[3].

[3] Educational integration is understood to include both children (students) and their families. Schooling is often conceived as a family endeavor, and, particularly with young children, some degree of parent involvement in decision-making is generally required (Brofenbrenner, 1986; Epstein, 1995). Therefore, throughout this paper, educational integration will refer to the ways in which both parents and children integrate into the school system through efforts on the part of the school/education system to inform them schooling policies and practices (e.g. enrollment procedures, tracking, expectations, norms) and their own efforts to learn about and participate in different stages of the education process. Specific strategies to assist immigrant students in language learning or to

Three main questions drive this paper. First, what do the central district office responsible for high school choice and middle school personnel do to inform students and families about high school choice in New York City? What materials do they provide, events do they organize, and resources do they dedicate to explain the high school choice process to middle school families? Next, in light of the materials, events, and school-based supports that exist, how might Latin American immigrant parents' language proficiency, cultures, and educational backgrounds impact their understanding of the process and, therefore, their ability to assist their children in applying to suitable and high quality schools? Finally, in what ways, if at all, do district and school-level communication and outreach efforts take into account the range of supports that immigrant families may need to understand and participate in school choice? In other words, is there evidence that the NYCDOE or individual schools consider the possibility that some families, particularly those of immigrant origin, may be unfamiliar with the concept of school choice, may approach it from a distinct cultural perspective, and may require additional guidance? The data for this paper are derived primarily from ethnographic observations, focus groups with middle school guidance counselors, interviews with guidance counselors and school-based parent liaisons ("parent coordinators,") and informational materials developed and distributed by the NYCDOE and the three middle schools.

In exploring the ways in which the NYCDOE and individual middle schools engage with families to explicate the complex process of choosing high schools, four key findings emerged. First, the NYCDOE publications and the school personnel leading informational events about high school choice rarely mentioned school quality measures (e.g. graduation rates, test scores, student satisfaction) among the important school characteristics to consider when selecting

---

provide other academic supports—while important aspects of educational integration in their own right—do not directly relate to this study's focus, and as such, will not be addressed in this paper.

schools. The virtual non-existence of school quality discussions is remarkable in light of the substantial investment that the NYCDOE has made over the last few years to develop publicly available data-driven reports about each school in the district. Next, there was considerable variation in the availability and quality of translation and interpretation services at the different middle school events. In a related vein, observations revealed instances in which, even when translation and interpretation services were provided, direct linguistic translation was insufficient to convey the meaning of a complicated or unfamiliar concept to immigrant parents. Instead, translation that included culturally-relevant background and contextual information or, *cultural translation*, appeared to be a more promising method of sharing information about high school choice with Latin American immigrant families. Finally, the NYCDOE relied heavily on web-based resources and the Internet as a means of disseminating information. Consequently, people with restricted access to computers or limited computer literacy seem to be at a distinct disadvantage in terms of access to school choice materials. Taken together, the results of this research suggest that, despite a few key exceptions where nuanced and culturally-sensitive translations were provided to parents, the NYCDOE and individual middle schools with large, low-income Latin American immigrant populations demonstrate limited sensitivity to the specific needs and potential challenges that these immigrant families may face in comprehending and ultimately navigating the city's high school choice process.

The discussion below begins with a brief review of some of the main conversations in the contemporary school choice literature. It also identifies a number of the key gaps in this literature with regard to immigrants and school choice. This is followed by a summary of the extensive scholarship on home-school conflicts as it relates to Latin American immigrant families' experiences with the U.S. school system. Next, I describe the methodology and

research sites and provide an overview of the New York City high school choice process, its goals, and the diverse portfolio of high schools from which students make their choices. A more in-depth discussion of the study's main findings and their significance for current school choice and integration research follows. The paper concludes with implications and recommendations for future research.

School Choice in the Research Literature

School choice reforms have been at the center of public and political conversations about education and equity since their inception. Most empirical studies of school choice have focused on evaluating the outcomes of these policies by examining three indicators: (1) the academic achievement of students in choice programs compared to those in non-choice public schools (Buckley & Schneider, 2005; Chubb & Moe, 1988; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Gamoran, 1996; Hess & Loveless, 2005; Martinez, Godwin & Kemerer, 1996; Teske, Schneider, Roch, & Marschall, 2000), (2) the impact of choice on school segregation (Frankenberg & Lee, 2003; Gill, 2005; Hill & Guin, 2002; Wells & Crain, 1997), and (3) the implications of district choice programs for existing public schools and students attending these schools (Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Goldhaber, Guin, Henig, Hess, & Weiss, 2005; Hanushek, 2002; Hoxby, 1998, 2002; Teske et al., 2000). Evidence on the effects of school choice in each of these areas is highly contested, and scholars are pursuing new and increasingly sophisticated ways to measure the impact of school choice on student achievement and equity (Berends, Mendiburo, & Nicotera, 2008; Berends, Springer, & Walberg, 2008; Buckley & Schneider, 2007; Chakrabarti, 2008; Ross, 2005; Saporito, 2003).

The question of whether students who participate in choice differ from those who do not is another chief concern in the school choice literature. Decades of research has shown that on

average, students from higher socio-economic backgrounds enroll in "choice" schools at higher rates than their more disadvantaged peers. Studies in districts with open enrollment plans, voucher programs, magnet school options, and inter-district choice have all concluded that there is in fact a "creaming effect," in which children of higher educated parents with more material resources are more likely to participate in choice (Archbald, 1988; Armour & Pieser, 1998; Godwin, Kermerer & Martinez, 1998; Goldring & Hausman, 1999; Goldring, Hoover-Dempsey, Rowley, & Pachuki, 2004; Wells & Crain, 1997). The stratification trends are less clear in the case of charter schools, many of which are located in impoverished urban neighborhoods and, thus, attract a lower-income student population. However, activists and researchers alike continue to debate the merits of charter schools and other choice programs on equity grounds (see Betts & Loveless, 2005; Fuller, Elmore, & Orfield, 1996; Hill, 2002; Rofes & Stulberg, 2004; Stulberg, 2008; Wells, 2002; Wells, Scott, Lopez & Holme, 2005).

While social stratification and equity concerns have motivated studies of school choice for many years, an examination of the trends in immigrant families' participation in choice has been conspicuously absent from this literature. In fact, few studies disaggregate by immigrant origin, and, therefore, little is known about how the enrollment patterns of children of immigrants compare to those of their native-origin peers. Immigrant families in the United States, particularly those from Latin America, are disproportionately poor (Fass & Cauthen, 2008; Shields & Behrman, 2004), and they are often unfamiliar with educational opportunities such as choice (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). It would therefore stand to reason that these families participate less frequently in optional school choice programs than other groups. Given the growing share of children of immigrants in U.S. schools, however, it is increasingly important to learn more about their experiences with school choice. Research on New York City's mandatory

high school choice process represents a unique opportunity to capture a population of students and families often absent from school choice analyses.

Despite the lack of empirical studies of immigrants and school choice, there is much to learn from the existing evidence of how parents gather information about choice programs and the different strategies that schools and districts employ to inform them about choice options. As with participation in school choice, sources of information tend to vary by class and education-level. Whereas lower income parents and parents with less education rely heavily on school-based sources of information and formal channels such as the radio, newspaper, and television (Andre-Becheley, 2005; Hill, 2008; Schneider, et al., 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Teske, Fitzpatrick & Kaplan, 2007), parents with higher education levels tend to depend more on social, professional, or informal information networks (Lareau, 2003; Schneider, et al., 2000; Teske & Marschall, 2000; Teske, et al., 2007). Researchers have discovered differences along racial/ethnic lines as well, and Schneider and his colleagues (2000) found that Black and Latino parents were more likely to use school-based and formal outlets, and they depended less on friends, family, or social contacts. These findings were not surprising given the strong correlation between race/ethnicity and class background. The salience of social networks for families of higher socio-economic status links strongly to earlier work on the interaction between class background and the significance of social networks in a person's life (Coleman, 1995; Lareau, 1987, 2003).

The role of school districts in providing information to families about school choice is featured prominently in the scholarship as well. Districts employ a range of outreach strategies such as mailing flyers, distributing pamphlets and school directories, advertising on television and in the print media, hosting community events, and increasingly, using web-sites and e-mail

notices. These efforts have achieved variable success in reaching diverse segments of the public. The Parent Information Centers (PICs) that operated in six Massachusetts school districts with school choice plans are one of the most extensively researched examples of district-based information and outreach (Fiske, 2002; Glenn, McLaughlin, & Salganik, 1993). These Centers were easily accessible by public transportation, and counselors gave visitors written materials in multiple languages about the different school options available. Notably, counselors were not allowed to make specific recommendations to parents and students, and independent evaluations found that even after PICs were established, many parents selected low-quality schools (Glenn, McLaughlin, & Salganik, 1993). Other districts, such as the large, urban Southern California district in Andre-Becheley's (2005) qualitative study on intra-district choice, rely on more traditional outreach methods, and are considerably less attentive to the varied needs of the public.

Related studies have investigated the extent to which parents understand their district's school choice policies and how well informed they feel. This literature is perhaps most closely linked to the questions motivating this study of New York City's efforts to explain high school choice to immigrant-origin families. On the whole, the results are disconcerting: multiple studies have demonstrated that most parents, lower and higher income alike, tend to have limited understanding of school choice policies and procedures and lack accurate information about test scores, demographics, and other data about the different schools in the district (Henig, 1996; Schneider et al., 2000; Smrekar & Goldring, 1999; Van Dunk & Dickman, 2004). Although this can be explained, in part, by the school districts' failure to make some of this basic information easily accessible to parents (see Buckley & Schneider, 2007; Schneider et al., 2000 for accounts of the difficulty in accessing school-level data,) it reflects a potentially larger underlying issue of

the mismatch between district communication strategies and parents' information-gathering behaviors.

The extant school choice literature provides a comprehensive foundation on which studies of how parents' immigrant backgrounds influence their comprehension of and participation in school choice plans can build. Furthermore, our limited understanding of the disconnect between districts, school, and families regarding school choice information—immigrant and non-immigrant alike—calls for deeper investigation into this issue. Examining the interactions between districts, schools and immigrant families who may have the widest cultural, social, and linguistic gaps to bridge may offer insight into where district efforts to inform all families about these complex, bureaucratic processes fall short.

Home-School Conflicts for Latin American Immigrant Families

While we know little about immigrants' experiences with school choice, and more specifically, how immigrant parents metabolize information about choice programs provided by districts, the role of culture in exacerbating or attenuating school failure has been an object of scholarly inquiry for many years. Researchers have examined how differences in home and school cultures, practices, norms, values, and expectations have impacted child development, parent-child relationships, identity formation, and academic achievement (Bankston, Caldas & Zhou, 1997; Delpit, 1995; Garcia-Coll & Magnuson, 2000; Gibson, 1988; Lareau, 1989, 2000; Ogbu, 1978, 1987, 1991; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). These studies have covered considerable ground in illuminating how an individual student's background interacts with the socio-cultural context of a school environment, a pedagogical practice, or policy to put him/her at a relative advantage or

disadvantage. The absence of this type of cultural analysis applied to questions of school choice and access represents one of the most significant lacunae in these literatures.

A substantial body of work also highlights the primacy of cultural values in explaining how and why many low-income immigrant parents interact with schools in the ways that they do (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, 1992; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valdes, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002). This scholarship foregrounds the need to investigate the assumptions about shared knowledge and values embedded in school policies and practices: a dangerous form of the "hidden curriculum" (Apple, 1982; Giroux & Purpel, 1983; Hollins, 1996). Much of the research on low-income Latin American immigrant parents' involvement in their children's schooling in the United States has shown that they tend to defer to teachers on academic matters, avoid challenging the school administration on educational decisions, and rarely make requests (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Reese et al., 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Suarez-Orozco, 1989; Valdes, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002). Their behaviors and attitudes, while corresponding to the cultural scripts and expectations of their countries of origin, are often contrary to common conceptions of what constitutes "good" and involved parenting in the United States. Their actions (or assumed "inaction" as the case may be) contrast starkly with the behavioral patterns of many middle-class parents, such as those in Lareau's studies (1989, 2003), who do not hesitate to make demands of teachers or request additional support for their children. As a result, Latin American immigrant parents are often demonized for not caring about their children's education (for a more detailed discussion see Valencia & Black, 2002). In this way, the children whose parents are not clued into the implicit rules of the education game are doubly disadvantaged. This research literature substantiates the importance of considering institutional responsibility in perpetuating or combating educational inequality. Analysis of the

information that districts and schools provide, what they do and do not make explicit, and how they engage with or fail to engage with families around school choice or other school policies and practices may serve to identify the unarticulated aspects of dominant culture that immigrants (and perhaps native groups as well) may have greater difficulty accessing. Such research may also help to explicate the larger factors that contribute to the misalignment between home and school-based practices.

Studies of immigrant generational differences, while limited in scope as it relates to parent involvement in their children's schooling, is relevant to this discussion as well. Scholars of immigration have long been interested in investigating how patterns of social integration, economic mobility trajectories, and academic achievement vary according to immigrant generation. Much of this research has focused on comparing the experiences and life-course outcomes of first generation (immigrant) youth and second generation (U.S.-born) children of immigrants or examining within-group variation by national origin (See Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, 2008; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). Few studies have in fact examined how parents' immigrant generation (e.g. being a first generation immigrant parent versus a U.S-born second generation parent) impacts their engagement with schools, their understanding of school expectations and policies, or their conception of appropriate forms of involvement. Taylor Haynes' (2006) research on Latino[4] parents' involvement in their children's education offers one of the rare analyses of these questions. She finds that:

> First-generation Latinos, who have low to medium levels of education and are lower-income…feel comparatively less efficacious and welcome at school [and] adopt a role which leaves the education of their children to teachers…Their second-generation counterparts, by virtue of their cultural and social capital,

[4] The original author's terminology has been preserved here.

> create roles for themselves which include working in concert with school officials (p.257).

Taylor Haynes' work serves as a powerful reminder that immigrants, particularly people of the same national origin or of similar ethnic and cultural background, should not be taken as an *a priori,* homogeneous group. Instead, researchers should pay careful attention to internal differences among assumed group members. Moreover, there is a need to explore variation on factors like parents' immigrant generation that tend to be frequently overlooked in studies of immigrants' experiences generally, and with their children's schooling specifically.

Research Methodology

The research presented here involved observations of a series of events related to New York City's high school choice process held at three large middle schools in Queens, New York; observations of city-wide informational events; focus groups with middle school guidance counselors; and interviews with parent coordinators at these middle schools. Compilation and analysis of the school choice materials developed by the Office of Student Enrollment Planning Operations (OSEPO) at the New York City Department of Education also formed a key component of the study. These data were collected as part of a larger ongoing mixed methods comparative study of Latin American immigrant and African American families' experiences with high school choice in New York City.

Ethnographic observations were conducted at school-based events for parents and students about high school choice including workshops about how to fill out the high school application form and high school fairs held at individual middle schools. During these observations, participants went about their regular activities without interference, and I took notes on who attended the events; the format and content of the information provided by school personnel; whether translation and interpretation services were available; the type and quality of translation and

interpretion (e.g., contextual information included versus purely direct linguistic translation); the questions that parents asked; and the interactions between parents and school personnel and among parents. These observations enabled me to learn in detail about the various school-based communication efforts, compare the different middle schools' approaches to outreach, and perhaps most importantly, monitor interactions between students, parents, and school personnel at events specifically designed around school choice.

Focus groups with guidance counselors at the middle schools constituted another principal part of the data collection. These group discussions centered on the guidance counselors' roles in preparing middle school students and families for participation in high school choice, their explanations for the different outreach strategies employed, and their perspectives on the strengths and drawbacks of the choice process generally. In addition, focus group prompts asked participants to reflect on their experiences working with immigrants families on high school choice and the challenges they have witnessed these families encounter during the process. Informal and semi-structured interviews with individual guidance counselors and parent coordinators at each middle school followed a similar protocol to that used in guidance counselor focus groups. The aim of these interviews was to understand each informant's particular role vis a vis the high school choice process, his/her participation in and assessment of the effectiveness of school-based and district-wide outreach to inform families about high school choice, and his/her reflections on working with immigrant families on choice.

Document analysis complemented the ethnographic observations and interviews by connecting the form and content of the school choice publications created by the New York City Department of Education with narratives from school personnel and observations of workshops and other outreach events. OSEPO produces a host of materials about high school choice in

New York City including a 600-page *Directory of New York City Public High Schools* that is distributed to each eighth grade student at the start of the school year. This office also develops shorter brochures and pamphlets that offer tips for parents about working with their children to select high schools. Consideration of the type of media used (e.g. electronic, print), its accessibility (language, technological requirements), the content of the information provided, and the criteria emphasized in how to determine appropriate school selections factored into the analysis of these materials. Finally, as with analysis of the live interpretations provided at events, to investigate the concept of cultural translation I examined whether the translated documents included contextual or background information or if they simply translated words and concepts in purely linguistic terms.

Site Selection

New York City's historic and enduring role in the United States' immigration narrative and its current leadership in urban school reform make it a fitting location to explore immigrant families' educational integration experiences. With over three million foreign-born residents (New York City Department of Planning 2007), New York City is one of the most dynamic centers of immigration in the United States, and, in fact, the world. The diversity and scope of immigration to New York City is unparalleled; however, cities and towns all over the country are now faced with the challenge of working with immigrants to facilitate their social integration and help them learn about unfamiliar institutions and policies. What makes New York City an ideal place to study the integration experiences of immigrants and their children is the fact that, unlike many other urban immigration hubs that tend to have one or two dominant national-origin groups, it is home to multiple, large immigrant communities. According to the 2007 American

Community Survey, the "Hispanic[5]" immigrants in New York City alone hailed from the Dominican Republic (358,376), Mexico (178,713), Ecuador (135,043), and Colombia (74,026), among many other countries. Consequently, even a study that focuses exclusively on Latin American immigrant families and school choice stands to yield important, new comparative data on integration.

As the largest single school district in the United States, the size of the immigrant-origin student population in New York City public schools is considerable. Although the precise enrollment of children of immigrants is not made publicly available, according to self-reported data in the Home Language Identification Survey (NYCDOE 2008b) an estimated 42 percent of students speak a language other than English at home. This figure serves as a rough proxy for the percentage of students from immigrant families. During the 2008-2009 school year, Hispanics were the largest racial/ethnic group of students enrolled in New York City public schools (39.4 percent) followed by Black (30.6 percent), Asian/Pacific Islander (14.6 percent), and White students (14.4 percent) (NYCDOE 2009). Moreover, Spanish-dominant students comprised over two- thirds of the English Language Learner student population. The relevance of a study about Latin American immigrants and school choice is clear, then, given their substantial population share in New York City as well as across the United States.

High School Choice in New York City

School choice has been a fixture of the educational policy landscape in New York City for decades. A longstanding district policy requires all eighth grade students who plan to attend

[5] The terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" are often used interchangeably in studies that include people who trace their origins to Spanish-speaking parts of Latin America and the Caribbean (Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2002). Most government agencies use the term Hispanic in their survey materials and in public data. This author prefers the term Latino but will use the term Hispanic when referencing work that originally employed it. A sample of Latinos may include the third generation as well as first and second generation children of immigrants. Therefore, data on Latinos does not necessarily describe children of immigrants from Latin America exclusively.

a public (non-charter) high school in New York City to participate in the high school choice process. According the NYCDOE website, "The high school admissions process is centered on two principles: equity and choice." In a system that is responsible for educating approximately 300,000 students in high school alone, realizing these goals can be a difficult endeavor.

Each year, the 85,000 eighth grade students who participate in high school choice must choose from among 600 programs in the approximately 400 public high schools across New York City's five boroughs. These schools and programs vary widely in terms of size, quality, and academic outcomes. Although the district has shown gains on a number of educational indicators (including graduation rates and percentage of students reaching proficiency on the NAEP) in recent years, there continues to be an undersupply of high performing high schools. According to Hemphill and Nauer's (2009) analysis of the four-year graduation rates for the Class of 2007, only 38.3 percent of schools with graduating classes that year had a graduation rate of 75 percent or higher. This figure includes students graduating with a Regents diploma as well as those who received the less rigorous local diploma. Starting with the 2012 cohort (students who entered ninth grade in fall 2008), the local diploma will no longer be awarded, and all students must pass five Regents exams with a score of 65 or better to graduate. If the Regents diploma is used as the threshold for graduation, Hemphill and Nauer's (2009) analysis shows that only 12.6% of high schools had a graduation rate of 75 percent or above in 2007.

Graduation rates constitute only one measure of school quality; however, given the significance of obtaining a high school diploma for lifetime earnings (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008), they are a particularly important metric to consider. Schools in New York City also vary dramatically in terms of size, concentration of low-income students, safety record, teacher stability, and student satisfaction, among other characteristics. The unevenness in school

quality is evidenced in the publicly available Progress Reports, Annual School Report Cards, Quality Reviews, and Learning Environment Surveys published by the NYCDOE[6].

New York City high schools run the gamut in terms of size, theme/specialization, and admissions criteria. Over 200 small schools (with enrollments below 600) have been created in New York City since 2002, adding to the supply of small schools from earlier reform movements. The number and proportion of high school students attending small schools in New York City have grown to around thirty percent (Hemphill & Nauer, 2009). The majority of students, however, continue to attend large, comprehensive high schools that serve more than 1400 students (Ibid). In addition to small schools and large, comprehensive high schools, students attend career and technical high schools, small learning communities within high schools, and charter schools, (which do not participate in the high school choice process.) Moreover, high schools can be divided into seven categories according to the different mechanisms by which students gain entry. The most competitive (and often highest performing) schools admit students based on their scores on the Specialized High School Admissions Test, an exam that is offered annually to students in the fall of their eighth grade year. Other schools, namely, those that specialize in visual and performing arts, require students to audition. Screened schools—the third category of schools—tend to be academically rigorous and in high demand, and these schools rank applicants based on their seventh grade academic average, standardized test scores, attendance, and punctuality. Limited unscreened schools are generally the new, small high schools, and they have no grade or test score requirements for acceptance but give priority to students who attend a school information session. Educational option schools ("Ed-opt") constitute the next category. These schools choose students according to a Bell Curve whereby sixteen percent of students accepted are in the high reading range, 68 percent are

[6] To access these reports go to http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/default.htm

in the average reading range, and sixteen percent are in the low reading range. In addition, any student scoring in the top two percent on the seventh grade reading exam who lists an educational option school first is guaranteed to match. Zoned schools are large comprehensive high schools that give priority to students who live in a defined geographical area. Finally, unscreened schools have no admissions requirements, and a computer randomly selects students for admission.

Although a variation of the current high school choice process has existed in New York City for years, its current iteration was launched in the 2003-2004 school year and was modeled after the matching process for American physicians, the National Resident Matching Program (Abdulkadiroglu, Pathak, & Roth, 2005). The official goals for the modified matching formula were to increase the likelihood that a student would be assigned to his/her top choice school and to distribute low-achieving students as evenly as possible across high schools (Hemphill & Nauer, 2009). To that end, the latest revision expanded the number of schools/programs that students could rank on their application to twelve. During the 2008 matching process, the NYCDOE boasted a 90 percent success rate at matching students with one of their twelve choices (NYCDOE 2008a). In 2009, nearly 50 percent of all applicants received their first choice and 80 percent were matched with one of their top three (cited in Hemphill & Nauer, 2009). However, that same year, 7,500 students were still rejected by all of their choices and had to participate in supplementary rounds (Ibid).

Each eighth grade student receives an individualized application form in early October and is required to return a completed form by the first week of December. Students are allowed

to list, in order of preference, up to twelve programs[7] and/or schools to which they would like to apply. The application is printed with their final grade point averages from seventh grade, their latest (seventh grade) standardized test scores in reading and math, and average yearly attendance. These data determine a student's eligibility for certain "screened" schools and programs that have specific attendance, grades, and test score requirements. In addition, where applicable, the student's local zoned high school is listed at the top of the application. Under New York City's current open enrollment plan, students are not automatically assigned to a zoned school. Whereas prior to the 2003-2004 redesign, students were automatically guaranteed a seat in their local zoned high school, the new system now requires students to list their zoned school as one of their twelve options. In fact, not all students even have a zoned high school because, since 2002, twenty-one large high schools have been closed for poor performance (cited in Hemphill & Nauer, 2009).

Oversight of the high school choice process falls under the auspices of the Office of Student Enrollment and Planning Operations (OSEPO), housed in the district's central administrative offices in Manhattan. Much of the school choice policy and the related informational materials are developed in this office, but middle schools are granted considerable autonomy in determining how to work with students and families to complete the applications. OSEPO does not require that middle school personnel attend trainings about high school choice, but they organize optional workshops and offer support for guidance counselors upon request (Hemphill & Nauer, 2009). Finally, according to researchers at the Center for New York City Affairs at the New School (Hemphill & Nauer, 2009) district administrators reportedly expect that middle school guidance counselors will review all of the high school applications before

[7] Some schools host multiple "programs" that are organized around different themes or specializations. On their applications, students list individual programs within a school and/or if they are applying to a school with no programs, just the school itself.

they are submitted. Yet, there is negligible monitoring of school-based efforts around high school choice.

Sample

Across the five boroughs of New York City, Queens has the largest foreign-born population (1,097,814) and with that, the largest number of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America (ACS 2007). The ethnic, racial, religious, and geographic diversity of Queens' residents has been widely documented (see Gregory, 1998; Khandelwal, 2002; Park, 1997; Ricourt & Danta, 2003; Sanjek, 1998), and the national origins of the Latin American immigrants in span from Argentina to Mexico (Ricourt & Danta, 2003). As a result, the school-based research for this study has taken place in middle schools in Queens.

The three middle schools included in the study were selected based on two primary factors: their location in densely populated Latin American immigrant neighborhoods and the demographic features of the students enrolled at the school. I looked for schools with, relative to the district-wide averages, large "Hispanic" student populations (fifty percent or above), a high percentage of recent immigrant students (five percent or above), a high percentage of students classified as English Language Learners (twenty percent or above), and a high rate of poverty (indicated by the percent of students eligible for free lunch.) In addition, I tried to find schools of similar size and grade distribution—in this case, large middle schools with over 1500 students across grades six through eight. The pertinent student demographic information for each of the three middle schools and district-wide averages are provided in Table 1 below. The third middle school in the study, IS 545 (pseudonym), has a larger Asian student population than the other two schools; this school was selected explicitly for this reason. Building variation into the study by including one school with greater ethnic diversity, and specifically, a larger Asian population,

would allow me to examine the effects on Latin American immigrant families' school choice experiences of participating in a more ethnically balanced and diverse school community. However, only differences in school outreach efforts will be addressed in this paper.

Table 1: School and District-wide Demographic Information (Based on data from June 2009)

School Name	Total Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% English Language Learner	% Recent Immigrant	% Eligible for Free Lunch
New York City School District	1,018,546	American Indian: 0.41%, Asian/Pacific Islander: 14.6% Hispanic: 39.3% Black: 30.6% White: 14.4%	14.4%	N/A	N/A
IS 725	2,103	American Indian: 0.10% Asian/Pacific Islander: 10.9% Hispanic: 80.4% Black: 6.7% White: 1.8%	37.9%	10.8%	80.7%
IS 633	1,899	American Indian: 0.11% Asian/Pacific Islander: 9.16% Hispanic: 85.2% Black: 3.6% White: 2.0 %	24.2%	8.6%	75.2%
IS 545	1,681	American Indian: 0.06% Asian/Pacific Islander: 35.5% Hispanic: 55.0% Black: 2.4% White: 7.1%	19.9%	5.1%	71.5%

Results

School Quality Excluded from Important School Choice Considerations

This research examined city-wide and school-based outreach events pertaining to high school choice and publications created and distributed by the New York City Department of Education. The analysis focused on the content of the information provided, which criteria were emphasized in how to choose a school, the availability of the materials in printed versus electronic format, and the availability and quality of translated materials and interpretation

services. The most striking aspect of the information that the NYCDOE and individual middle schools provide to students and families about high school choice is the exclusion of school quality from the list of important decision-making factors in school selection. This major criterion is conspicuously absent from the various publications as well as from the live presentations made by NYDOE staff and middle school personnel. Instead, students' academic and extra-curricular interests, school location, and school size are repeatedly highlighted as vital characteristics to consider when choosing schools. Furthermore, aside from a brief paragraph description hidden within the 600-page high school directory, families receive no explicit instruction about the type of school quality information that is publicly available or how to access it. This is remarkable given the number of school-level reports produced by the NYCDOE that provide detailed data on a range of measures of school quality.

The *Directory of the New York City Public High Schools* is the most comprehensive resource that OSEPO publishes and distributes to families. This directory, the size of a telephone book, is comprised of over 600 pages of individualized descriptions of the approximately 400 high schools in New York City. Each page includes the school's address, contact information, programs offered, and eligibility requirements. At the beginning of the directory, general information about the school choice process is provided. Namely, this section reviews the different types of schools and describes the various selection methods. A short list of the different data reports created by the New York City Department of Education and a link to the website where they can be accessed appears near the end of the preface. It is buried between a paragraph about the services available for students with special needs and a list of schools deemed "in needs of improvement" (SINI) by the State of New York. Each of the three main reports— the Progress Report, Quality Review, and Learning Environment Survey— is

described in a single sentence. The elements that factor into a school's Progress Report grade ("school environment," "student performance," and "student progress") are also identified and defined.

It is notable that this one-page description of the accountability reports, located at the end of the preface of a 600-page book, is the only place in the entire directory in which some of the traditional school quality metrics—graduation rate, Regents passing rate, and credit accumulation—are mentioned by name. These important data points are not provided on the individual school pages, however, and the onus of finding this information about each school is thus placed on students and parents. Furthermore, while the directory's discussion of these indicators is quite limited in scope and does not explicitly use the language of "quality," it is the only publication reviewed that made reference to using these data as a tool to evaluate and compare school performance.

The other major high school choice publications that OSEPO develops are revealing in the strategies that they suggest parents and students employ when reviewing and selecting schools. For example, "Choosing A High School," is a pamphlet that is distributed at a city-wide informational event hosted by OSEPO, made available on the NYCDOE website, and shared electronically with middle school guidance counselors. This roughly 15-page document includes a "student interest inventory" consisting of questions about a student's interests and career goals, willingness to travel far distances to school, preferences for school size, and English language skills or need for English as a Second Language (ESL) services. All of the publications distributed at middle school events emphasize a student's interests, school location, and school size as important selection criteria, and this is repeated throughout the presentations on how to choose schools as well.

The individual middle school events, while varied in terms of audience size and availability and quality of interpretation services, offered nearly identical information and instructions to that which parents would find in the OSEPO publications. All three middle schools held high school choice workshops for parents on evenings in mid or late October. The turnout ranged from approximately ten parents and students at IS 633 to between 150 and 200 parents and students at both IS 725 and IS 545. The format of the events was similar across schools— an hour-long PowerPoint presentation led by a guidance counselor or the school's parent coordinator followed by a brief question-and-answer session. The content of the presentation was generally uniform as well due to the school personnel's use of a PowerPoint presentation template provided by OSEPO. In addition, a variety of printed materials were distributed to attendees at the start of each event. These included copies or shortened versions of NYCDOE publications, a calendar of city-wide high school choice events such as high school fairs and workshops, and a list of school open houses being held across the city.

Echoing the main messages transmitted in the OSEPO publications, the themes of students' interests, school location, and school type/size were prominently featured in each school's presentation. In fact, all of the guidance counselors and parent coordinators leading the workshops discussed location, and more specifically, the distance of a school from a student's home and time required to travel to and from school, more frequently than any other topic. The presenters at all three schools even went so far as to encourage families to do a "test-run" of the travel distances to different schools during school transit times. This strong emphasis on school location as a key and or perhaps even primary criterion for applying to a school contrasted with the lack of discussion of school quality metrics such as graduation rates, credit accumulation, and Regents passing rates at any of the school-based workshops.

Variation in Availability and Quality of Translation and Interpretation Services

To achieve the most basic level of equity, all parents must, at a minimum, receive information about high school choice in a language that they understand. It is too often the case, however, that schools and districts fail to even meet this minimum threshold. The fact that all OSEPO's publications are available on the NYCDOE website in the nine most commonly spoken languages (English, Spanish, Haitian-Creole, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Urdu, Bengali and Arabic) signifies the district's recognition of the linguistic diversity and translation needs of the families served by New York City schools. In fact, in September 2006, after substantial lobbying efforts by the New York Immigration Coalition, Advocates for Children, and other community-based organizations, the NYCDOE created a Translation and Interpretation Unit to provide on-demand translation and interpretation services to schools and the district-at-large. This represented an important step forward in overcoming the persistent language barriers that immigrant parents face when dealing with their children's schools. However, few of the translated materials, particularly the high school directory, were made available in printed format to the families and schools in this and other studies (Hemphill & Nauer, 2009). As a result, despite the NYCDOE's ostensible commitment to providing translated documents to families, ultimately, non-English literate parents continue to be at a distinct disadvantage.

The content of the school-based presentations about high school choice was virtually identical across sites; conversely, the interpretation services provided at the middle school workshops were quite varied. Whereas at one school, a native Spanish-speaking guidance counselor translated each PowerPoint slide to Spanish on the spot, at another school, the only interpretation provided was in the form of a fifteen minute question-and-answer session after an hour-long presentation conducted entirely in English. The latter event was the most extreme

example of a school's failure to provide adequate translation and interpretation services. It serves to illustrate the severity of the obstacles that non-English-speaking immigrant parents may face in learning about and understanding school choice.

IS 545 hosted its major high school choice informational event, "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the High School Application Process" in late October, slightly more than a month before the final application was due. The event began with Megan Dowd[8], the school's parent coordinator, announcing to an audience of approximately 200 adults and children that there would be no simultaneous interpretation, but, rather, a volunteer interpreter would help her respond to Spanish-speaking parents' questions after the English portion of the program was completed. She then asked that all of the people requiring interpretation sit together at the back of the auditorium in order to prepare for the question-and-answer session at the end. After her announcement, approximately one-third of the audience moved to the back of the auditorium.

The main presentation at IS 545 consisted of a roughly one-hour long PowerPoint slideshow in English led by a White, male guidance counselor. As he reviewed each slide, he also provided additional commentary and offered tips to students and parents about how to effectively search for schools. Once the slideshow was finished, Ms. Dowd approached the group of parents and students at the rear of the auditorium awaiting interpretation. She explained that Mrs. Ramirez, a Spanish-speaking parent volunteer, would translate parents' questions and her answers. Mrs. Ramirez, a diminutive Latina woman whose children attend IS 545, stood in the aisle next to Ms. Dowd. One parent asked a question about the "Ed-opt" schools and the selection mechanism for these schools. Ms. Dowd responded in English to Mrs. Ramirez, explaining the Bell Curve allocation of slots to students based on their reading scores. Before she was able to translate into Spanish, Mrs. Ramirez had to ask Ms. Dowd to clarify her response

[8] All names have been changed.

at least three times. In this way, she evidenced her limited familiarity with the details of the high school choice process or, at a minimum, her confusion about the different school selection methods.

Ms. Ramirez' poor understanding of the high school choice process was only one of the problems with the interpretation provided to parents at IS 545. When she spoke to parents in Spanish, Mrs. Ramirez' voice projected poorly over the conversations that individual parents were having at the front of the auditorium with guidance counselors; people in the audience struggled to hear both the questions that other parents were asking and Mrs. Ramirez' translated answers. Ten minutes after the interpretation session began, a voice came over the loudspeaker and announced that the school building would be closing and people must get ready to leave. Most of the parents in the Spanish-speaking section, many of whom already appeared frustrated, got up and exited the auditorium.

The inadequate provision of interpretation services at IS 545 failed the Latin American immigrant families who attended the event on multiple levels. It also reflected a lack of awareness and/or negligence on the part of the school personnel who planned the event to take into account the audience's needs. First, the assumption that the same people who require interpretation of the English-language presentation would be likely to generate specific questions and would benefit from a Q&A session is faulty. Next, due to the limited time allocated and the chosen format of the interpretation session, virtually none of the information covered in the hour-long presentation was conveyed to the Spanish-speaking parents. Finally, the parents who sat for interpretation missed out on a valuable opportunity to speak with their child's guidance counselor individually since many eighth grade counselors were in attendance. Instead, they

wasted time and learned very little about high school choice while other parents took advantage of the guidance counselors' presence at the event.

At the other end of the spectrum, I.S. 725 offered immediate, comprehensive and well-informed interpretation services to Spanish-speaking parents in the audience. Mr. Sanchez, a guidance counselor of Ecuadorian origin, stood at the front of the auditorium next to Ms. Perolli, his colleague who was leading the workshop in English. After each PowerPoint slide and commentary in English, Mr. Sanchez translated her explanations to Spanish. The fact that Mr. Sanchez is a bilingual guidance counselor who works directly with students on high school choice means that he is intimately familiar with the process and could understand and then translate all of the details and nuances that Ms. Perolli covered in her presentation. This benefited the Spanish-speaking members of the audience because they received all of the information that had been provided in English. For example, one of the PowerPoint slides showed a sample application form. When she reached this slide, Ms. Perolli advised:

> You should list the programs according to preference. If you are not crazy about your zoned school but you are willing to have your child go there, put it last. Anything you put below your zoned school doesn't matter because once they get down the list to the zoned school they will automatically assign you to the zoned school [meaning that the student was not matched to any of the schools higher up on the list.] If you don't put the zoned school, there is a chance that your child won't get any of the schools on his list and will have to go to the supplementary round.

Mr. Sanchez' verbatim translation relayed to Spanish-speaking parents Ms. Perolli's suggested strategy of putting the zoned school last in order to ensure the student a seat in at least one school. Parents do not receive to this sort of additional information when they read translated materials alone. If equitable access to information is to be achieved, immigrant parents need careful, detailed interpretation of everything that guidance counselors say in English. An estimated 7,500 students or nearly nine percent of the eighth graders who applied in

2009 did not get matched to any high school in the first round of applications (Hemphill & Nauer, 2009). This figure attests to the importance of knowing about how to use one's zoned school as a default option. By translating every bit of commentary offered during the workshop, Mr. Sanchez ensured that Spanish-speaking parents received equivalent information and guidance to that of the other families in the audience.

The Limits of Linguistic Translation

The availability of interpretation services and the degree to which the translations approximate the information provided to parents in English are two possible measures of a school's effectiveness in adequately informing Latin American immigrant parents about high school choice. However, even when accurate translations and interpretation are given, they may not be sufficient to explicate the intricacies of complex bureaucratic processes such as high school choice. Rather, immigrant parents who were born, socialized, and educated in countries with different school practices, policies, social mores, and cultural models may require translations that include contextual background and implicit cultural and social knowledge. Thus, a third consideration is whether or not the translations take into account the reality that some immigrant parents may be less familiar with certain norms, expectations, and quotidian school-practices. In the course of conducting observations of middle school workshops, I witnessed the failure of straight linguistic translations to effectively communicate information to parents on a number of occasions. These ethnographic data also contain a few poignant examples where school personnel went beyond simply translating directly and, in one case, even articulated parental rights that are often assumed to be universally known. These illustrative moments differentiate cultural from linguistic translation, supplying evidence of the relevance of

the concept of *cultural translation* and highlighting the potential value of including culturally-sensitive, contextual details in translated communications to Latin American immigrant parents.

The limits of linguistic translation were perhaps most powerfully revealed when, at one middle school event, a Spanish-speaking woman repeatedly expressed confusion about the meaning of the phrase "Specialized High School Admissions Test." Nine of the most elite and competitive schools in the New York City public school system require students to take a standardized exam for admission. Each year over 20,000 students sit for the "Specialized High School Admissions Test" to vie for approximately 4,000 spots at these schools. A key component of New York City's "portfolio of schools," the specialized high schools and the entrance exam itself are referenced in each of the NYCDOE publications and at every city-wide and middle school-based workshop. The direct Spanish translation of the phrase, "Specialized High School Admissions Test" to *examen especializado* is sprinkled throughout the school choice materials and was used countless times in presentations. Over the course of the observations, however, it became evident that many Spanish-speaking parents did not understand what the phrase actually referred to. For example, after hearing Mrs. Ramirez use the term *examen especializado* in one of her translations during the question-and-answer session at IS 545, one woman stood up and asked aloud:

> Que es especializado? Es como en mi pais con las humanidades o letras? No es como en nuestros paises, verdad? *What is specialized? Is it like in my country, choosing [an academic track like] humanities or letters? It's not like in our countries, right?*

Neither Mrs. Ramirez nor any of the other Spanish-speaking parents in the audience responded to the woman's question—perhaps because they did not hear her or because no one else understood what the phrase meant. Regardless of the reason, the comment itself serves to demonstrate her evident confusion with a grammatically correct, yet conceptually limited

translation of an important element of the larger choice process. High achieving students who may be strong candidates for gaining admission to one of the prestigious exam schools stand to lose out if they or their parents do not know what it takes to apply to these widely coveted schools.

A focus group with guidance counselors and the parent coordinator at IS 725 elicited another example of the weakness of linguistic translation without embedded cultural knowledge. In this instance, the unsuccessful translation attempt involved notices sent home to parents about the Learning Environment Survey—a survey distributed to teachers, students, and parents at every school in New York City that is used to evaluate the school environment. While not directly related to high school choice, this example brings to life the ways in which apparently straightforward attempts at communication with immigrant families may miss the mark entirely.

In the course of a discussion with the guidance counselors and Ms. Torres, the parent coordinator, about the school's outreach and communication strategies with families generally, Ms. Torres, recounted:

> "The flyers [sent home to parents about filling out the Learning Environment Survey] are translated into Spanish, but parents still come in with the flyers, and they don't know what they mean."

Ms. Torres and the rest of the guidance staff did not understand what could have possibly been wrong with the flyers. In this way, the mismatch between school personnel's comprehension of immigrant parents' backgrounds and needs and the depth and the breadth of support and information that they may require to understand messages sent from their children's school is put into sharp relief. If parents do not have a notion of what the Learning Environment Survey is or why they should fill it out, and if they have no reference point in the education

system in their countries of origin, simply translating the words into Spanish may not be enough to convey meaning and produce understanding.

The Possibilities of Cultural Translation

In the midst of countless missteps in the middle schools' and district's provision of information to immigrant-origin families, a few promising episodes occurred. In these cases, school personnel included some of the necessary contextual information and *cultural translation* in their explanations of the high school choice process. In her work comparing the ways in which middle and working class parents interact with their children's schools, Annette Lareau (1989) demonstrates how middle class families understand their rights and responsibilities as parents to include making special requests for specific teachers, offering unsolicited suggestions about curriculum, and lodging complaints about school practices with teachers or administrators. Conversely, she finds that working-class parents often show a sense of deference to authority and generally do not intervene in their children's schooling to the same extent, even when encouraged to do so. In many low-income Latin American immigrant families, the tendency to view school personnel as the ultimate authority on a child's academic education and to avoid confronting or challenging them may be even more exaggerated (see Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Reese et al., 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Suarez-Orozco, 1989; Valdes, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002). Explicitly stating the school's expectations of parents as well as their rights to ask questions, request meetings, or appeal for specific supports or services (for themselves or for their children) may be one way to help low-income and immigrant parents develop some of the cultural capital that has historically produced educational advantages for children in middle class homes.

The articulation of parental and student rights and responsibilities constitutes a critical element of cultural translation. School personnel's impromptu comments made in the course of their planned presentations about high school choice often contained the most valuable insights and suggestions; some of these comments also exemplify this form of cultural translation. At one point during the workshop held at IS 633, Ms. Jean-Baptiste, the parent coordinator, mentioned the importance of attending the open house events at prospective high schools. After reviewing some of the open house dates that had been scheduled, Ms. Jean-Baptiste then remarked that, if parents and students were unable to attend a scheduled open house, they should contact different high schools directly to set up personal visits. With this unscripted remark, she shared with the exclusively immigrant audience (of approximately ten adults) some important knowledge that they otherwise may not have had about their privileges and responsibilities as parents of eighth grade students applying to high school in New York. Whether conscious or not, by telling parents about their "right" to call schools and make requests for visits, Ms. Jean-Baptiste equipped them with valuable cultural capital. This cultural capital may, in fact, help them navigate school choice and learn about different school options. Asserting the propriety of requesting a school tour represents an important support for families who may be less familiar with the cultural norms and expectations in the United States. This is especially true for low-income Latin American immigrant parents who come from traditions in which making requests of schools is not customary or condoned.

Reliance on the Internet as a Primary Method of Disseminating Information

The increasing ubiquity of the Internet and growing computer literacy across many age, income, geographic, and racial/ethnic groups has led companies, governments, individuals, and school districts alike to rely progressively more on web-based sources of information. The New

York City Department of Education is no exception to this trend. The practice of referring students and families to websites and other electronic resources related to choosing a high school is widespread in New York City, and it comes as a detriment to many low-income, Latin American immigrant families.

Immigrant families experienced considerable difficulty accessing translated versions of the *High School Directory* in printed form. Although the directory is made available in nine languages on the NYCDOE's website, parents in all three middle schools complained about the school's failure to provide printed Spanish copies. These results echo Hemphill and Nauer's (2009) findings that, for the past two years, the directory has been made available to few middle schools in any language other than English. There are serious costs and time implications associated with downloading and printing a 600-page document, and it is unlikely that all families who need translated versions will do this. In addition, beyond the single page description of each high school found in the directory, virtually no information is readily accessible about schools outside of their individual web pages. This is also true for the school-level reports that include data on the main quality indicators. These reports can only be retrieved through the main NYCDOE website. As a result, access to information about school quality is even more elusive for the people on the disadvantaged side of the "digital divide."

The New York City Department of Education also depends heavily on third party websites for tools to assist families with school choice. In a number of OSEPO publications, students and parents are referred to Internet-based resources such as Hop Stop.com or the Metropolitan Transit Authority to get estimated travel times to different schools. Guidance counselors and parent coordinators repeatedly suggested that parents visit these websites as well during their workshops and presentations. Moreover, many of these web-based resources are

available in English only, thereby compounding the difficulties for people who cannot read in English. For many immigrant families, the NYCDOE's reliance on websites and electronic documents may combine with their existing language barriers, lack of familiarity with the U.S. education system, and poverty to dramatically hamper their efforts to understand and effectively participate in the process of finding a suitable high school for their child.

Discussion

Barriers to Low-Income Immigrants' Access to School Choice Information

Immigrant parents with minimal English skills and limited financial resources face considerable challenges in learning about high school choice in New York City and how to successfully negotiate the process. Inadequate provision of translation and interpretation services constitutes perhaps the most basic and fundamental obstacle. The implications of a district's or a school's failure to meet parents' linguistic needs, however, may transcend the issue of an information vacuum. When parents make an effort to attend a school event and the school neglects to provide information that is comprehensible to them, these parents might take this as a signal that the school does not value them. Moreover, it might dissuade them from attending events in the future or from reaching out to their children's teachers and guidance counselors. Ultimately, poor or insufficient translation may alienate immigrant families and potentially multiply the struggles that many low-income immigrant-origin students already experience in school.

A more subtle, yet similarly powerful challenge to immigrant families' comprehension of school choice is related to the quality of the translations that they receive. This question of quality refers to two main elements: First, it refers to interpreters' comprehension of the content material and their ability to translate the details that are provided in English. Direct translation

of words may not be enough to explain the intricacies of a bureaucratic process like high school choice. Therefore, a second aspect of quality refers to the level of *cultural translation* or, the degree to which a translation embeds additional contextual information about English terms, U.S.-specific concepts, and assumed knowledge about rights, expectations, and norms.

Employing bilingual guidance counselors may be one effective way to offer Spanish-speaking parents access to virtually identical information to that of their English-speaking counterparts. However, the realities of school budgeting and supply of such personnel in the marketplace mean that every middle school with a large Latin American immigrant-origin student population may not be able to hire a bilingual guidance counselor. Furthermore, linguistic translation alone is frequently insufficient to equip immigrant families with what they need to successfully negotiate school choice or many other educational policies. Even if certain information is not provided in the original version of a document or presentation, understanding the consumer public includes recognition that some knowledge is culturally-bound and must be communicated. In fact, often what is not articulated in straight linguistic translations is more meaningful than what is, and it may be necessary to unpack the implicit social and cultural messages embedded in seemingly neutral policies such as school choice. Providing *cultural translations* represents one potential avenue to achieve this. Such translations may also serve to help immigrant parents generate valuable cultural capital and challenge the "hidden curriculum" (Apple, 1982; Giroux & Purpel, 1983; Hollins, 1996) that has previously contributed to cycles of social reproduction and inequality. Finally, incorporating *cultural translation* into school outreach practices may resolve some of the seemingly endless communication breakdowns between school personnel and immigrant families that contribute to the range of home-school conflicts discussed earlier.

For immigrant families with low-level computer skills, restricted access to the internet, and minimal English literacy, the limited availability of non-electronic and translated resources functions as another formidable obstacle to obtaining information about school choice. While there are obvious benefits in terms of cost savings and convenience of using its website to post announcements, reports, and documents, the NYCDOE excludes a considerable segment of the public when it replaces printed materials with electronic versions and reduces mailings in favor of e-mailed notices. The consequences for low-income, Latin American immigrants may be especially severe since access to computers tends to correlate directly with one's income level (Dimaggio & Hargittai, 2001; Hoffman & Novak, 1998), and because translated versions of many of the major NYCDOE reports and publications are exclusively available online. The NYCDOE's reliance on third-party websites only intensifies the problem. Like the inadequate interpretation and translation, this asymmetric provision of information also symbolizes the district's inattention to the range of resources, skills, literacy levels, and languages that must be satisfied for families to be fairly and equally informed about the high school choice process. Finally, it may further serve to deter immigrant parents from engaging with their children's schools generally.

That all families will investigate and consider traditional school quality measures— including graduation rates, test scores, and student satisfaction— in their selection process should not be taken as a given; some families may not be aware of the importance of or need to evaluate schools according to these metrics. In fact, many low-income Latin American immigrants come from countries and cultures in which competition, choice, and school quality comparisons are not a routine part of the educational process. These parents often assume, at

least initially, that all schools in the United States are good or at least better than the schools in their countries of origin (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

The fact that OSEPO publications and school-based workshops were nearly devoid of reference to school quality as an important criterion for school selection amounts to one of the most egregious errors in the district's and schools' work to inform families about high school choice. Research has shown that low-income and minority families tend to rely more heavily on school-based sources of information about school policies and educational opportunities than middle-class families (Andre-Becheley, 2005; Hill, 2008; McDonough, 1997; Schneider, Teske & Marschall, 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Excluding from informational materials and events a discussion about what constitutes a high quality school, how to access this information, and why seeking it out is a critical part of the high school selection process puts those families who do not already know this at a distinct disadvantage.

Given the current emphasis in federal, state, and district accountability frameworks on traditional school quality indicators such as graduation rates and student proficiency, it is surprising that the official district school choice materials virtually ignore these data points. It is even more striking considering the substantial investment that the NYCDOE has made, both financially and politically, in creating school-level reports and making them available to the public. The Office of Accountability of the New York City Department of Education has spent millions of dollars in the past few years to develop the Progress Reports, Learning Environment Surveys, and Quality Reviews. A review of Hemphill and Nauer's (2009) data on the actual number of high performing high schools in New York City relative to the total, however, helps to elucidate why the district may not mention school quality or these reports in its school choice publications and presentations: according to their analysis, in 2007, only 38.3 percent of schools

achieved four-year graduation rates of 75 percent or higher. This statistic alone demonstrates the vast undersupply of high performing high schools in New York City. Encouraging families to investigate schools on the basis of these metrics might only call attention to the fact that the NYCDOE currently does not have enough schools to meet student demand. With these data as context, it is less surprising then, that the NYCDOE and middle school personnel make scarce reference to the available data and reports in their work with families on high school choice.

Implications

This preliminary research offers a small window into one district's high school choice process and how its failure to recognize the extent of low-income Latin American immigrant families' needs for guidance, translation, and interpretation services may interrupt efforts to achieve equitable access to high quality education. Through its examination of the obstacles that immigrants face in gathering information about school choice, this study also delves into the nuanced process of immigrant educational integration. The results illuminate how unsuccessful dissemination of information and inadequate translation and interpretation—about school choice or any other regulation, policy, or procedure—may explain longstanding conflicts and misunderstandings between schools and immigrant families and may thwart the larger social goals of facilitating immigrant families' integration.

The United States has seen spectacular growth in its immigrant population in recent decades, not only in traditional gateway cities, but, increasingly, in cities and states that have never before received large numbers of immigrants (Singer, 2004). These post-1965 immigration waves have been accompanied by a rise in the number of children of immigrants being educated in American schools. Thus, understanding immigrant families' experiences with integration across multiple social realms—not least of which is the education system, and

learning about the various supports these families may need to be successful have taken on unprecedented urgency.

Informing immigrants of their rights and responsibilities as members of society and explaining different bureaucratic procedures is only one element of the larger work of assisting integration. Yet, as this research shows, successfully reaching out to immigrant families and communicating critical information is decidedly more involved than what may be expected. Knowledge about how to negotiate different institutional relationships, environments, and processes (e.g. finding an appropriate high school for one's child as part of a school choice plan) constitutes a valuable form of cultural capital that, by virtue of having been educated and socialized outside of the United States, many immigrant parents may lack. Linguistic translation rarely includes essential background and contextual information—clues that immigrant parents often need to be fully educated about the "rules of the game." Effective support of immigrant integration would include cultural translations of policies and procedures (educational or other) and would make explicit social norms, expectations and rights that are too often assumed to be common knowledge. Hence, cultural translation should replace linguistic translation as the standard of service.

The problems with New York City's approach to explaining high school choice to students and families do not only reside in the content of the materials and in the translations provided. Many families, above all those of low-income immigrant backgrounds, may require individual guidance to make well-informed decisions about a child's educational pathway. In their study of how parents search for schools, Teske, Fitzpatrick, and Kaplan (2007) find that low-income parents tend to rely on people more than printed materials to obtain the type of "soft facts" that they were most interested in learning about a potential school. Current opportunities

for parents to speak directly with school personnel to ask questions about different schools are inadequate. With caseloads of up to 400 students each, it is virtually impossible for guidance counselors to find time to spend time with each student. Schools with large numbers of low-income and immigrant-origin students should receive additional budget allocations to cover the cost of providing such necessary, personalized support in making school selections. In addition, schools' engagement with families around high school choice should begin well before students reach the eighth grade (or whenever decisions are required.)

A number of gaps in the school choice literature and in the research on educational integration remain. Additional studies that capture immigrant families' experiences with high school choice directly and include data based on their own narratives are needed to illuminate the challenges they face, their sources of information, and how and why immigrant students and families end up making the school selections they do. Current studies of school choice also tend to overlook the role of children in school-choice decisions. Investigating the experiences of adolescent children of immigrants might be particularly telling given the complicated dynamics in families where children act as translators and cultural brokers for their parents (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Research that compares the experiences of different immigrant groups with school choice such as low-income Latin American and Chinese immigrants may shed light on cultural and structural factors that complicate their negotiation of this or other bureaucratic processes. Comparative studies of immigrant and non-immigrant families may also deepen current understandings of the salience of immigration as an explanatory factor of variation in ability or likelihood to participate school choice. Finally, a focus on the supply-side of this equation, that is, the schools that eventually receive the students participating in the choice process is warranted. Further examination of how, if at all, different schools reach out to

students and families and whether they target certain students and ignore others would round out the picture of the multifaceted process of school choice.

References

Abdulkadiroglu, A., Pathak, P.A., and Roth, A.E. (2005). Practical Market Design: Four Matches, The New York City High School Match. *American Economic Review* 95(2): 364-367.

Alba, R., and Nee, V. (2003). *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Andre-Bechely, L. (2005). *Could It Be Otherwise? Parents and the Inequities of Public School Choice*. New York: Routledge.

Apple, Michael W. (1982). *Education and Power*. New York: Routledge.

Archbald, D. (1998).*Magnet schools, voluntary desegregation, and public choice theory: Limits and possibilities in a big city school system.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Armour, D.J., and Peiser, B.M. (1998). Interdistrict choice in Massachusetts. In P.E. Peterson and B.C. Hassel (Eds.), *Learning from school choice* (pp.157-186). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Bankston, C.L., Caldas, S.J., and Zhou. M. (1997). The Academic Achievement of Vietnamese American Students: Ethnicity as Social Capital. *Social Focus* 30: 1-16.

Berends, M., Mendiburo, M., and Nicotera, A. (2008, March.) *Charter School Effects in an Urban School District: An Analysis of Student Achievement Growth.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY. Retrieved July 2, 2009 from: http://www.vanderbilt.edu/schoolchoice/publications.html

Berends, M., Springer, M.G., and Walberg, H.J. (Eds.) (2008). *Charter School Outcomes.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Berliner, D.C. (2006). Our Impoverished View of Educational Research. *Teachers College Record* 108(6): 949-995.

Betts, J.R. and Loveless, T. (Eds.) (2005). *Getting Choice Right: Ensuring Equity and Efficiency in Education Policy*. Washington: The Brookings Institution.

Bourdieu, P. (1977a). Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction. *Power and Ideology in Education* (J. Karabel, and A.H. Halsey, Eds.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1977b). *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* London: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P., and Passeron, J.C. (1977). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture.* London: Sage.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, 22:723-42.

Buckley, J., and Schneider, M. (2005). Are Charter School Students Harder to Educate? Evidence from Washington, DC. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 27(4): 365-380.

_____. (2007). *Charter Schools: Hope or Hype?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Center for Education Reform (2007). *Charter Schools.* Retrieved on 25 August 2008 from: www.edreform.com/index.cfm?fuseAction=stateStats&pSectionID=15&cSectionID=44

Chakrabarti, R. (2008). Can Increasing Private School Participation and Monetary Loss in a Voucher Program Affect Public School Performance? Evidence from Milwaukee. *Journal of Public Economics*, 92: 1371-1393.

Chubb, J.E., and Moe. T.M. (1988). Politics, Markets, and the Organization of Schools. *The American Political Science Review* 82(4):1066-1087.

Coleman, J. (1995). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology* 94(supplement): 94-120.

Coleman, J., Campbell, E., Hobson, C., McPartland, J., Mood, A., Wienfeld, F., and York, R. (1966). *Equality of Educational Opportunity.* Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Education.

Coleman. J.S., and Hoffer, T. (1987). *Public and Private High Schools.* New York: Basic Books.

Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1991). Involving parents in the schools: A process of empowerment. *American Journal of Education,* 100(1): 20-46.

_____. (1992). School Matters in the Mexican-American Home: Socializing Children to Education. *American Educational Research Journal* 29(3):495-513.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* New York: The New York Press.

Dillon, S. (2009, 22 June). Education Chief to Warn that Inferior Charter Schools Harm the Effort. *The New York Times*, p.A10.

DiMaggio, P., and Hargittai, E. (2001). From the 'Digital Divide' to 'Digital Inequality': Studying Internet Use as Penetration Increases. Working Paper #15, Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.

Education Commission of the States (2007). Open Enrollment: 50-State Report. Retrieved on 25 August 2008 from: http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=268

Entzinger, H. (2000). The Dynamics of Integration Policies: A Multidimensional Model. In Koopmans, R. and Statham, P. (Eds). *Challenging Immigration and Ethnic Relations Politics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 701-712.

Fass, S., and Cauthen, N.K. (2008). *Who Are America's Poor Children? The Official Story.* New York: National Center for Children in Poverty.

Fiske, E.B. (2003). Controlled choice in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In *Divided We Fail: Coming Together Through Public School Choice* (pp.167-208). New York: Century Foundation Press.

Fiske, T. and Ladd, H.F. (2000). *When Schools Compete: A Cautionary Tale.* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Frankenberg, E., and Lee, C. (2003). *Charter schools and race: A lost opportunity for integrated education.* Cambridge: Harvard University, Civil Rights Project.

Freeman, Gary P. (2004). Immigrant Incorporation in Western Democracies. *International Migration Review* 38(3): 945-969.

Fuller, B., Elmore, R.F., and Orfield, G. (1996). Policy-Making in the Dark: Illuminating the School Choice Debate. In B. Fuller and R.F. Elmore. (Eds.) (1996). *Who Chooses? Who Loses? Culture, Institutions, and the Unequal Effects of School Choice* (pp. 1-21). New York: Teachers College Press.

Gamoran, A. (1996). Student Achievement in Public Magnet, Public Comprehensive, and Private City High Schools. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 18(1): 1-18.

Gans, H.J. (1992). Second Generation Decline: Scenarios for the Economic and Ethnic Futures of the Post-1965 American Immigrants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15:173-192.

Garcia-Coll, C.T., and Magnuson, K. (2000). Cultural differences as sources of developmental vulnerabilities and resources: A view from developmental research. In S.J. Meisel and J.P. Shinkoff (Eds.), *Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention* (pp.94-111). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Geddes, A., and Favell, A. (1999). *The Politics of Belonging: Migrants and Minorities in Contemporary Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Gill, B. (2005). School Choice and Integration. In J.R. Betts and T. Loveless (Eds.), *Getting Choice Right: Ensuring Equity and Efficiency in Education Policy* (pp. 130-145). Washington: The Brookings Institution.

Giroux, H., and Purpel, D. (1983) (Eds.) *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education*. Berkeley, California: McCutchan Publishing Corporation.

Glazer, N., and Moynihan, D.P. (1963). *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Italians, and Irish of New York City.* Cambridge: MIT Press and Harvard University Press.

Glenn, C., McLaughlin, K., Salganik, L. (1993). *Parent Information for School Choice.* Boston: Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning.

Godwin, R.K., Kemerer, F.R., and Martinez, V.J. (1998). Comparing public choice and private voucher programs in San Antonio. In P.E. Peterson and B.C. Hassel (Eds.), *Learning from school choice* (pp.275-306). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Goldhaber, D., Guin, K., Henig, J.R., Hess, F.M., and Weiss, J.A. (2005). How School Choice Affects Students Who Do Not Choose. In J.R. Betts and T. Loveless (Eds.), *Getting Choice Right: Ensuring Equity and Efficiency in Education Policy* (pp. 101-129). Washington: The Brookings Institution.

Goldring, E., and Hausman, C. (1999). Reasons for parental choice of urban schools. *Journal of Education Policy,* 4(5): 469-490

Gordon, M.M. (1964). *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Gregory, S. (1998). *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hamilton, L.S., and Guin, K. (2005). Understanding How Families Choose Schools. In J.R. Betts and T. Loveless, *Getting Choice Right: Ensuring Equity and Efficiency in Education Policy* (pp. 40-60). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Hanushek, E.A. (2002). Will Quality of Peers Doom Those Left in the Public Schools? In P.T. Hill (Ed.), *Choice with Equity*, (pp. 121-140). Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press.

Haynes, K. T. (2007). Negotiating Constraints and Opportunities for Capital (Trans)Formation: Stories of Latino Parents' Involvement in Their Children's Education. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 67A(8).

Hemphill, C., and Nauer, K. (2009). *The New Marketplace: How Small-School Reforms and School Choice Have Reshaped New York City's High Schools*. New York: Center for New York City Affairs, The New School.

Henig, J.R. (1996). The Local Dynamics of Choice: Ethnic Preferences and Institutional Responses. In B. Fuller and R.F. Elmore (Eds.) (1996). *Who Chooses? Who Loses? Culture, Institutions, and the Unequal Effects of School Choice* (pp. 95-117). New York: Teachers College Press.

Hernandez, D. (2009, March). *Generational Patterns in the U.S.: American Community Survey and Other Sources*. Paper presented at The Immigrant Paradox in Education and Behavior conference, Providence, RI. Retrieved May 15, 2009 from http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Education/paradox/presenters/hernandez/index.html

Hernandez, D.J., Denton, N. A., and Macartney, S.E. (2007). *Children in Immigrant Families – The U.S. and 50 States: National Origins, Language, and Early Education.* Albany, NY: Child Trends & the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, University of Albany, SUNY.

Hess, F.M., and Loveless, T. (2005). How School Choice Affects Student Achievement. In J.R. Betts and T. Loveless, *Getting Choice Right: Ensuring Equity and Efficiency in Education Policy* (pp. 85-100). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Hill, L. (2008). School Strategies and the "College Linking" Process: Reconsidering the Effects of High Schools on College Enrollment. *Sociology of Education* 81: 53-76.

Hill, P.T. (Ed.) (2002). *Choice with Equity*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press.

Hill, P.T., and Guin, K. (2002). Baselines for Assessment of Choice Programs. In P.T. Hill (Ed.), *Choice with Equity*, (pp. 15-49). Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press.

Hoffman, D.L., and Novak, T.P. (1998). Bridging the Racial Divide on the Internet. *Science*, 280: 390-391.

Hollins, E.R. (1996). *Transforming Curriculum for a Culturally Diverse Society*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hoxby, C.M. (1998). What do America's "traditional" forms of school choice teach us about school choice reforms? *Economic Policy Review* 4(1): 47-60.

_____. (2002). How School Choice Affects the Achievement of Public School Students. In P.T. Hill (Ed.), *Choice with Equity*, (pp. 141-177). Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press.

Kasinitz, P., Mollenkopf, J.H., Waters, M.C., and Holdaway, J. (2008). *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age.* New York and Cambridge, MA: Russell Sage Foundation and Harvard University Press.

Katz, L.F., and Goldin, C. (2008). *The Race between Education and Technology.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Khandelwal, M. (2002). *Becoming American, Being Indian: South Asian Immigrants in Multicultural New York.* Ithica: Cornell University Press.

Klein, J.I., and Sharpton, A. (2009, January 12). Charter Schools Can Close the Education Gap. *The Wall Street Journal*: A13.

Lareau, A. (1987). Social Class Differences in Family-School Relationships: the Importance of Cultural Capital. *Sociology of Education* 60:73-85.

___. (1989). *Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education.* London: Falmer.

___. (2003). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

McDonough, P. (1997). *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Medina, J. (2008, December 9). Even an Expert's Resolve Is Tested by the City's High School Admissions Process. *The New York Times*, p.A32.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2006). *Trends in the Use of School Choice: 1993 to 2003.* Statistical Analysis Report. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

_____. (2008). *The Condition of Education 2008*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

New York City Department of Education (2008a). *Directory of the new York City Public High Schools, 2008-2008.* Office of Student Enrollment Planning Operations, New York.

_____. (2008b). *New York City's English Language Learns: Demographics.* Office of English Language Learners. New York.

_____. (2008c). *The Class of 2007 Four-Year Longitudinal Report and 2006-2007 Event Dropout Rates.* New York: Office of Accountability.

_____. (2009). Total Student Population, City-wide (as of 15 May, 2009). Accessed 18 June, 2009 from: http://schools.nyc.gov

Noguera, P., and Wing, J.Y. (Eds.) (2006). *Unfinished Business: Closing the Racial Achievement Gap in Our Schools.* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Ogbu, J.U. (1978). *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective.* Orlando, FLA: Academic Press.

____. (1987). Variability in minority responses to schooling: Nonimmigrants vs. immigrants. *Interpretive Ethnography of Education: At Home and Abroad*, (G. Spindler and L. Spindler, Eds.). Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

____. (1991). Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities in Comparative Perspective. *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities* (M.A. Gibson and J.U. Ogbu, Eds.). New York: Garland Publishing.

Orfield, G., and Lee, C. (2005). Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality. *The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University.*

Park, K. (1997). *The Korean American Dream: Immigrants and Small Business in New York City.* Ithica: Cornell University Press.

Portes, A., and Rumbaut, R. (2001). *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Portes, A., and Zhou, M. (1993). The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 530: 74-96

Rampey, B.D., Dion, G.S., and Donahue, P.L. (2009). *NAEP 2008 Trends in Academic Progress* (NCES 2009–479). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.

Reese, L., Balzano, S., Gallimore, R., and Goldenberg, C. (1995). The Concept of *Educacion:* Latino Families and American Schooling. *International Journal of Educational Research* 23(1):57-81.

Ricourt, M., and Danta, R. (2003). *Hispanas de Queens: Latino Panethnicity in a New York City Neighborhood.* Ithica: Cornell University Press.

Rofes, E., and Stulberg, L.M. (Eds.) (2004). *The Emancipatory Promise of Charter Schools: Toward a Progressive Politics of School Choice.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Ross, K.E. (2005). Charter Schools and Integration: The Experience in Michigan. In J.R. Betts and T. Loveless (Eds.), *Getting Choice Right: Ensuring Equity and Efficiency in Education Policy* (pp. 146-175). Washington: The Brookings Institution.

Rothstein, R. (2004). *Class and Schools. Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*, Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute.

Rumberger, R. W., and Palardy, G. J. (2005). Does Segregation Still Matter? The Impact of Student Composition on Academic Achievement in High School. *Teachers College Record* 107(9):1999-2045.

Sanjek, R. (1998). *The Future of Us All: Race and Neighborhood Politics in New York City.* Ithica: Cornell University Press.

Saporito, S. (2003). Private choices, public consequences: Magnet school choice and segregation by race and poverty. *Social Problems,* 50(2): 181-203.

Schneider, M., Teske, P., and Marschall, M. (2000). *Choosing schools: Consumer choice and the quality of American schools.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Shields, M.K., and Behrman, R.E. (2004). Children of Immigrant Families: Analysis and Recommendations. *The Future of Children* 14(2): 4-15.

Singer, A. (2004). *The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways*. The Living Cities Census Series, Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

Smrekar, C., and Goldring, E. (1999). *School Choice in Urban America: Magnet Schools and the Pursuit of Equity.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (2001). *Manufacturing Hope and Despair: The School and Kin Support Networks of U.S.-Mexican Youth.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Stulberg, L.M. (2008). *Race, Schools & Hope: African Americans and School Choice After Brown.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Suárez-Orozco, C. and Suárez-Orozco, M. M. (1995). *Transformations: Migration, Family Life, and Achievement Motivation Among Latino Adolescents.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

_____.(2001). *Children of Immigration.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Suárez-Orozco, C. and Suárez-Orozco, M. M., and Todorova, I. (2008). *Learning a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society.* Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University.

Suárez-Orozco, M.M., and Paez, M.M. (2002). The Research Agenda. In M.M. Suárez-Orozco and M.M. Paez, (Eds.), *Latinos Remaking America,* (pp. 1-37). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Teske, P., Fitzpatrick, J., and Kaplan, G. (2007). *Opening Doors: Low-Income Parents Search for the Right School.* Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington.

Teske, P., Schneider, M., Roch, C., and Marschall, M. (2000). Public School Choice: A Status Report. In D. Ravitch, *City Schools: Lessons from New York City,* (pp. 313-365.) Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008). *Current Population Survey.* [Electronic Version]. Washington, DC: Author.

Valdes, G. (1996). *Con Respeto: Bridging the Distance between Culturally Diverse Families and Schools: An Ethnographic Portrait.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Valencia, R. R., and Black, M.S. (2002). "Mexican Americans Don't Value Education!"- On the Basis of the Myth, Mythmaking, and Debunking. *Journal of Latinos and Education* 1(2):81-103.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Van Dunk, E., and Dickman, A. (2004). *School Choice and the Question of Accountability*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Vermeulen, H., and Penix, R. (2000). *Immigrant Integration: The Dutch Case.* Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.

Warner, W.L., and Srole, L. (1945). *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups.* New Haven, CT: ale University Press.

Wells, A.S. (Ed.) (2002) *Where Charter School Policy Fails: The Problems of Accountability and Equity.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Wells, A.S., and Crain, R.L. (1997). *Stepping over the color line: African-American students in white suburban schools.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Wells, A.S., Scott, J.T., Lopez, A., and Holme, J.J. (2005). Charter School Reform and the Shifting Meaning of Educational Equity: Greater Voice and Greater Inequality? In J.Petrovich and A. Stuart Wells (Eds.), *Bringing Equity Back: Research for a New Era in American Educational Policy* (pp. 219-243). New York: Teachers College Press.