

# Immigrant Integration and Immigrant Segregation

The Relationship Between School and Housing  
Segregation and Immigrants' Futures in the U.S.

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Cover photo by Gina Chirichigno.



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# Introduction

By Susan Eaton

No matter where you sit on the political spectrum, or how you feel or what you believe or think you understand about immigration, the numbers make one thing clear. The fate of the United States is tied up with the fate of its immigrants.

One in four children living in the United States has at least one parent who is an immigrant. The U.S. Census Bureau recently reported that 14 percent of US residents — or 44 million people — were born outside the country. This is among the largest shares of immigrants in the U.S. since the 1890's, when 14.7 percent of the nation's population was foreign-born. In 2014, data from the New American Economy shows that immigrants paid \$328.2 billion in local, state and federal taxes. In New Jersey, New York and California that year, immigrants paid more than 20 percent of the total paid in state taxes. In March 2019, New American Economy reported that Houston's immigrants generated more than a quarter of that regions gross domestic product (GDP).

As Dr. Martin Luther King and more recently, Congressman John Lewis remind us, our foremothers and forefathers may have come to this nation on different ships, but we are "all in the same boat now."

This report from Martha Cecilia Bottia helps us more clearly see this truth and act upon it constructively. This much-needed, thorough review of the existing scholarship on what is known (and still unknown) about the relationship between residential segregation and various outcomes for immigrants, is an important foundation on which to build inclusive, equitable housing and school policies. Bottia also clearly elucidates the various theoretical frameworks that have shaped our knowledge base about immigrants in the United States. Through this review of both theory and what's known, Bottia leads readers on a path toward a contemporary research agenda to better inform policy and practice.

As the scholar and long-time PRRAC board member john a. powell notes, we are living in a time of technological change, economic precariousness and demographic shifts. Such phenomena, powell explains, can trigger anxiety, which then typically elicit what he terms "breaking" or "bridging" reactions. Segregation falls into the "breaking" category. This is because it cordons off communities and institutions that have educational and economic opportunities and enables the privileged and powerful to hoard advantage. Policies and practices that bridge, on the other hand, build common ground and empathy by bringing people together across lines of difference to share institutions, power and opportunities in equitable and reparative ways.

We all have choices about how to think and act in the face of the cultural transformations reshaping our nation. This cogent report lays out the knowledge we need to help us make the right ones.

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*Policies and practices that bridge... build common ground and empathy by bringing people together across lines of difference to share institutions, power and opportunities in equitable and reparative ways.*

## About the Author

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A two-way bilingual class  
in Heber City, Utah

PHOTO: GINA CHIRICHIGNO

## Immigrant Integration and Immigrant Segregation: The Relationship Between School and Housing Segregation and Immigrants' Futures in the U.S.

Martha Cecilia Bottia, Ph.D.

It is a difficult time for immigrants in the United States. Regardless of citizenship status, reason to migrate, educational background, ethnicity, fluency in the English language, and legal status, immigrants are attacked by sectors of the government and the population. For instance, immigrants are sometimes considered threats to national security and takers of jobs from non-immigrant U.S. citizens. Being an immigrant in the U.S. requires a great deal of courage and strength to overcome the many fears and adversities that they and their family members encounter daily. In the face of these myriad challenges, millions of immigrants and their children must make decisions about where to attend schools and where to live. Immigrant status shapes children's experiences at schools and in the neighborhoods where they live. This report examines the effects of school and residential segregation on immigrant children's outcomes. The first part of the report is an in-depth consideration of the extant scholarly literature on this topic. I start by discussing the current situation of immigrants in the United States, offer a definition of immigrants, and mention several theoretical frameworks commonly utilized in the immigrant literature. Building on the above, I present a thorough review of scholarly literature regarding relationships between school and residential segregation and immigrants' outcomes. In the second section of this report, I employ a variety of data sources to identify general empirical trends regarding the segregation of immigrant children.



# Current Situation

Immigration is the human face of globalization in the 21st century (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2015). All around the world people move from their country of origin to a different nation due to economic, social, political, or another type of strife (Villalobos, Treviño, Wyman & Bejares, 2018). Migration provides opportunities for countries and communities to benefit enormously in matters of geopolitics, trade, and cultural exchange. Historically, migration has offered opportunities for millions of people worldwide to create safe and meaningful lives abroad and it has helped improve people's lives in both origin and destination countries (The International Organization for Migration, 2018). In fact, the number of international migrants reached 258 million in 2017, which is approximately 3.3% of the world's population. The dynamics and effects of immigration make it one of the most complex issues in contemporary society (Potts, 1990; Sassen, 2014) and a crucial public policy issue.

In this report, I will use the following terms and definitions: *foreign born* is anyone who is not a U.S. citizen at birth; *native born* is anyone born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or a U.S. Island Area or those born abroad of at least one U.S. citizen parent; *first generation immigrant* is anyone who is foreign born; *second generation immigrant* is anyone who is a U.S. native with at least one foreign-born parent; and *third-and-*



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*higher generation immigrant* is a U.S. native with both parents native born. Henceforth, whenever the term *immigrant* is used it acknowledges all individuals who are either first or second-generation immigrants.

The history of immigration in the United States dates to the beginning of this nation. U.S. immigration has occurred in waves, with peaks followed by troughs (Martin, 2013). The first wave of immigrants, prior to 1820, was of mostly English-speakers from the British Isles. The second wave, between the 1840s and 1850s was dominated by Irish and German Catholics. The third wave, between 1880 and 1914, brought over 20 million European immigrants to the United States. The fourth wave began after 1965, and has been marked by rising numbers of immigrants from Latin America and Asia. The proportion of immigrants as percentage of the U.S. population across the years has oscillated between a low of 4.7% during the 1970s and a high of 14.8% around 1890 (Migration Policy Institute, 2018).

Currently, approximately 14% of all U.S. residents are international migrants (United Nations, 2017). In fact, the United States has the largest number of immigrants in the world. As of 2013, over 40 million people were first generation immigrants and recently arrived, while some 36 million people were second generation immigrants, born in the U.S. to at least one immigrant parent. Currently, nearly one out of every four children in the US is a child of immigrants (Ornelas & Perreira, 2011). The population of first- and second-generation immigrant children in the United States grew by 51% between 1995 and 2014, to 18.7 million. Although the share of U.S. children who are immigrants has grown, it is important to point out that all the growth is due to growth of *second-generation* immigrants, increasing from 14 to 22% of all U.S. children between 1994 and 2014. By contrast, the share of first-generation immigrant children remained between 3 and 5% of all children within the same period of time (Child Trends, 2014). Immigrant children are an integral part of American society, and their education and well-being is deeply related to the future of the U.S. (Suárez-Orozco, C., Abo-Zena, & Marks, 2015). Importantly, although the share of immigrants in the U.S. is high, it is not as high as the peak of immigration the U.S. had during the 1890s.

*Given the substantial and growing numbers of immigrant children in the United States and their centrality to current domestic and global economic, political, and humanitarian issues, it is important to understand their present situation and their likely future.*

Given the substantial and growing numbers of immigrant children in the United States and their centrality to current domestic and global economic, political, and humanitarian issues, it is important to understand their present situation and their likely future. Immigrant youth increasingly experience segregation by race, poverty, and linguistic isolation, each of which are related to mostly harmful school outcomes (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008, 89).

# Who Are the Immigrants in the United States?

Immigrant children in the U.S. are an extremely heterogeneous group who differ in characteristics such as country of origin, educational levels, occupation, legal status, and reasons for leaving the home country. Over 80% originate in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Oceania, or the Caribbean — the rest come from Europe or North America. Fifty-five percent of all first- and second-generation immigrant children are of Hispanic origin, while Asian children make up 17 percent of all first- and second-generation immigrant children in 2014 (Child Trends, 2014).

Immigrants vary significantly in their levels of education and skill. Some immigrant parents are among the most educated people in the nation, while others have low levels of education and gravitate to sectors of the U.S. labor market that rely on low-skilled workers, such as agriculture, service industries, and construction (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2016). In addition, while most of the migration to the U.S. occurs legally (such as by a valid visa, green card, refugee status, asylum seeker status), it is estimated that 6.9% of U.S. students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade during 2012 had parents who were unauthorized immigrants (Current Population Survey, 2017).

The realities for these children are vastly different from those of children whose parents are legally in the country.

*The different reasons for migration create very different experiences for children during migration and introduce immigrant children to complex and sometimes unpredictable challenges.*

Families' reasons to leave their countries of origin are also very diverse and differentially impact immigrant children's lives. While some families might migrate to the U.S. for better employment or educational opportunities, others come for political asylum and/or to escape imminent danger in their home countries. The different reasons for migration create very different experiences for children during migration and introduce immigrant children to complex and sometimes unpredictable challenges (Adelman & Taylor, 2015).

As of 2016, almost 45% of immigrants (19.6 million people) reported having Hispanic or Latino origins, and many of these also reported living in urban areas that tend to have higher levels of poverty (Potochnick, 2014; Suarez-Orozco, C., Suarez-Orozco, M., & Todorova, I., 2008). Consequently, the vast majority of existing studies on immigrants focus on Latino children (particularly Mexicans and Mexican Americans), Asian children, and children who are English Language Learners (ELL). For example, Latino students now make up about 24% of the U.S. student population (Fry & Lopez, 2012) and approximately 63% of Latino children are immigrants still struggling to find their place in the American educational system and economy. Furthermore, according to a 2009 Pew Research Center report, 11% of Latino children are first generation immigrants and 52% are second generation immigrants (born in the U.S. to foreign born parents). Studies show that ELLs students (who are mainly US born children of immigrants who speak Spanish) tend to enter kindergarten with deficiencies in reading and mathematics and continue to struggle academically in standardized testing (Han, Lee, & Waldfogel, 2012).

A small but growing area of research aims to understand the diverse nature of immigrant subgroups – key for developing appropriate school policies and practices.

In summary, immigrant-origin youth are the fastest-growing student population in the country (Foxen, 2010) and are also more likely to be poor, experience residential mobility, and live in overcrowded housing than native-born children (e.g., Hernandez & Charney, 1998). In addition to language barriers, immigrant children often experience unique stressors associated with their migration (such as possible exposure to traumatic events preceding or during migration) and acculturation processes (Potochnick & Perreira, 2010) that make the study of immigrants extremely relevant to public policy. The current report provides an up-to-date summary of the literature on the relationship between school and residential segregation and immigrants' outcomes.



PHOTO: GINA CHIRICHIGNO



# Theoretical Frameworks

Most of the previously published studies on immigrants utilize similar theoretical frameworks that help explain the processes of how immigrants incorporate to societies. The most prominent theories include immigrant generational significance and optimism, traditional “assimilation” theory, and modern “assimilation” theories. Although I might not agree with the appropriateness of all these theoretical frameworks it is important to recognize their relevance in the immigrant literature.

## *Immigrant Generational Significance and Immigrant Optimism*

Immigrant generational status refers to the national origin of individuals and their parents. First-generation immigrants are those individuals who were born outside of the destination country with parents also foreign-born (Jia, 2017; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Ma, 2009). Second-generation immigrants are individuals born in the destination country who have at least one foreign-born parent (Jia, 2017; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Ma, 2009). According to the immigrant generational status and optimism perspective, student performance is conditional on immigrant generational status. Varying educational outcomes result from the differences in family communication about school experiences, family rules, and parental participation in school activities (Kao & Tienda 1995). Importantly, all of these vary between immigrants and non-immigrants and *further* vary within immigrants depending on their generational status.

The immigrant optimism hypothesis suggests that differences between immigrant and native parents are the essential ingredients explaining generational differences in performance among youth. According to this hypothesis, immigrant parents tend to have more hopeful beliefs and attitudes of what the future in their new society holds for their children (Kao & Tienda, 1995). Despite their marginalized status, immigrant parents believe that their children will achieve upward social and financial mobility even if they do not expect the same for themselves. For example, Foxen (2015) finds that the hopes and expectations of the immigrant parents of Latino youth are often optimistic. Empirical evidence using nationally representative data supports that such beliefs and attitudes propel their children’s success through teaching, reinforcing, and fostering successful habits and/or values (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Raleigh & Kao, 2010). Second-generation children therefore hold an advantage relative to natives and first-generation immigrants because they enjoy the higher optimism immigrant parents have and they have not adopted the oppositional forms of native peer culture (Ogbu, 1991). In addition, second-generation children suffer fewer limitations of language disadvantage due to the longer time their foreign-born parents have lived in the country (Kao & Tienda, 1995). Research on nativity gaps in achievement also show that first- and second-generation immigrants either equal or outperform their later generation peers in school (Gibson, 1988; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Schwartz & Stiefel, forthcoming; Zhou & Bankston, 1998).

The literature has also recognized that, while they benefit from “immigrant optimism”, immigrant children also face unique barriers that are potential obstacles for their academic trajectories. Immigrant children live in contradictory contexts with respect to their adaptation process to the U.S. culture (Harris 1999; Rumbaut 1999; Zhou 1997). While they are encouraged to adapt to the U.S. norms and customs, they are also encouraged to preserve the norms and cultures of their parents’ countries (Bottia, Valentino, Moller,

Mickelson & Stearns, 2016). They also face barriers linked to their SES, legal status, English learner status, hostility from the native population (Lopez & Stanton-Salazar, 2001), and a weaker understanding of the U.S. education system (Behnke, Piercy, & Diversi, 2004; Go?dziak, 2014; Viramontez Anguiano & Lopez, 2012; Contreras, 2009), all of which may harm immigrant students' short- and long-term school outcomes.

## **“Assimilation” Theory**

The classical theory of assimilation (Alba & Nee, 1997) refers to assimilation as “the social processes that bring ethnic minorities into the mainstream of American life” (Alba & Nee, 1997). It argues that migration leads to a situation of the “marginal man,” in which immigrants are pulled in the direction of the host culture but drawn back by the culture of their origin (Park, 1928; Stonequist, 1937). The route to integration is seen as linear, with one clear path and outcome. This theory encouraged a popular notion of immigrants achieving success in America through overcoming their cultural and linguistic deficiencies by learning English and acquiring common American customs (Rumbaut, 1997). This classic “assimilation” theory has also been critiqued because it proposes a single, uniform model of immigrant incorporation into the United States which is appropriate when the immigrants are a more homogeneous group. The utility of the classic “assimilation” theory to the situation of immigrants today is highly questionable given that new immigrants to the United States are primarily nonwhite (from Asia and Latin America) and come from a much wider variety of socioeconomic backgrounds than those in previous immigrant waves (Gans 1992; Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993).

Some scholars suggest that today’s immigrant children may be better off avoiding (or at least limiting) full-scale assimilation (Gans 1992; Portes and Zhou 1993) insofar as their experiences are not adequately represented by theories of assimilation derived from the experiences of earlier waves of European immigrants. In addition, the term assimilation causes discomfort to individuals who believe that adaptation processes into the culture of the receiving country does not require complete rejection of the home countries’ norms and customs. While immigrants certainly must adopt some of the basic guidelines of the recipient culture, they are by no means obliged to forget or set aside their own cultural norms. Many successful immigrant families have found that a more efficient and less ethically troublesome strategy is to include the best traits of both cultures, adapting to the recipient culture without necessarily leaving behind the language and customs of the country of origin.

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The classical theory’s inflexibility and its incapacity to account for the diverse characteristics of immigrant groups and their social contexts (Portes & Borocz, 1989) led to the development of modern assimilation theories. These modern assimilation theories include *segmented assimilation, ethnic boundaries and communities, social networks and embeddedness, and spatial assimilation*. All of these theories focus more on the different forces that drive immigration while promoting a deeper understanding of the social dynamics of ethnicity in American society (Alba & Nee, 1997; Portes, 1999).

*Segmented assimilation* theory as developed by Portes & Zhou (1993) differentiates the assimilation process as varying for different groups. This theory recognizes that American society is today extremely diverse and segmented and that therefore the assimilation paths new immigrants take are divergent. These paths include conventional upward (or “straight-line”) assimilation, downward assimilation, and “selective acculturation” (Portes and Rumbaut (1996, 2001)).

The *Ethnic boundaries and communities* approach is based on individuals’ and groups’ symbolic or cultural boundaries where they rely on identifying and distinguishing themselves from other groups (Alba, 2005). *Social networks and embeddedness* theory gives a critical role in the assimilation process to social networks, which facilitate the development and availability of resources for immigrant groups (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). Social capital/networks increase the ability of an immigrant community to capitalize on the associated density of these social clusters (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) and help them enter welcoming ethnic communities and receptive ethnic enclaves where they can be part of supporting and trusting networks with the residents (Alba et al., 1999). Lastly, *spatial assimilation* theory refers to the phenomenon of immigrant groups eventually moving away from ethnic enclaves or neighborhoods and into areas that are occupied predominantly by the majority group of the host society (Alba, Logan, Stults, Marzan, & Zhang, 1999).

...school and/or residential segregation of immigrants might reduce the possibility of contact between immigrants and natives and therefore might have important consequences for the education of immigrant youth and for the future of American society.

In this report, I will use *immigrant generational significance and optimism* and classical and segmented “*assimilation*” theoretical currents as frameworks to better assess findings in the vast literature regarding school segregation and immigrant academic achievement as well as residential segregation and immigrants short and long-term outcomes. Furthermore, to frame my discussion on the relationship between segregation and immigrant educational and residential outcomes, I will also draw from *intergroup contact theory* (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). *Intergroup contact theory* posits that positive contact experiences are important to reducing self-reported prejudice. For instance, Allport (1954) states that contact between groups, even in sub-optimal conditions, is strongly associated with reduced prejudice. According to the theory, contact situations improve intergroup relations by inducing positive affect and reducing negative affect such as anxiety or threat. If individuals do not feel anxious and instead feel comfortable, the contact situation will be much more successful (Everett, 2013). Importantly, school and/or residential segregation of immigrants might reduce the possibility of contact between immigrants and natives and therefore might have important consequences for the education of immigrant youth and for the future of American society.



# School Segregation and Immigrants' Outcomes

## Immigrant Students and the Schools They Attend

Schools are part of a larger social, cultural, political, and economic environment that has an important role in the development of children and societies. Schools offer opportunities to educate immigrant students through traditional coursework and to socialize them via the formal and informal processes provided within the school context (Callahan, 2008). In fact, schools are the first and maybe only influential point of direct experience with a “mainstream” socializing institution for many immigrant children (Laosa, 2001). Schools are also crucial for immigrant students because they influence active civic participation in early adulthood and are thus formative in developing participatory norms and practices (Callahan et al., 2008). Therefore, schools become an essential part of the adaptation process of immigrants.



US citizen children read the oath of allegiance

PHOTO: EMMA LEE

School segregation is defined as the process of separating students based on a social, cultural, academic, or racial condition, such as immigrant status (Dupriez, 2010). Importantly, this segregation can happen between schools and within schools (or in classrooms). Segregation within schools refers to ability grouping practices (also known as tracking), which involves allocation of educational resources and opportunities proportionate to students' prior academic achievement, ability, and interest, and with course availability (Mickelson, 2001). Tracks are differentiated by the rigor of their content and the nature of their instruction. Within-school segregation affects the distribution of teachers and peers to different groups of students (Conger, 2005), directly affecting disparities in student achievement (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997).

Currently, segregation levels are rising as a result of demographic shifts, continued housing segregation in many metropolitan areas, and a retreat by the courts in terms of active desegregation plans (Reardon, Grewal, Kalogrides, & Greenberg, 2012). Previous studies show that immigrant youth are increasingly experiencing school segregation by race, poverty, and linguistic isolation (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008, 89). Part of this segregation could be due to the fact that immigrants are concentrated in large metropolitan areas where school segregation is higher (Portes & Hao, 2004). Latino children (who account for 55% of all immigrant children) are more likely to attend segregated schools than any other ethnic group (Orfield & Ee, 2014; Ryabov & Van Hook, 2006; Logan, 2002; Van Hook and Balistreri, 2002). Overall, nearly 38% of Latinos attend schools that are 90-100% minority (Orfield & Lee, 2005) and given the extreme overlaps of poverty and racial concentration, Latinos who attend segregated minority schools are also very likely to attend poorer schools where they have fewer educational resources and lower student outcomes (UCLA, 2014). The situation for immigrant *Latino* children is likely to be even worse given that they are more likely to attend schools that are not only high-poverty and low-performing, but also hire teachers with little experience who are not likely to speak Spanish which leads to low teacher-parent engagement (Adair, 2015).

Studies also find that segregation within schools is equal to the segregation of immigrants across schools (Conger, 2005). Segregation of immigrants within classrooms might also become an obstacle for cross-ethnic contact, relations, and friendships.

Prior studies documenting experiences of “immigrant” children at school report that many immigrant children, independent of academic performance, often are perceived by educators as lazy, incompetent, less knowledgeable in the classroom, and less committed to learning (Verma, Molney & Austin, 2017). Many Latino immigrant students report that they experience racism in their school environments, teachers with lower expectations for them, and direct and indirect messages and behaviors at schools that negatively affect their self-identity in relation to U.S. racial categories (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011; Viramontez Anguiano & Lopez, 2012; Verma, Molney & Austin, 2017). In general, immigrant children in schools are likely to suffer four different forms of discrimination: negative interaction with staff and peers due to majority-culture prejudices, narrow learning experiences that are focused to demonstrate school outcomes under rigid accountability standards, low educational expectations, and the devaluation of primary languages that might lead to alienation from their families and communities (Adair, 2015; Foxen, 2010).

In addition, schools are crucial in creating or maintaining socioeconomic stratification and ethnocultural or linguistic isolation (Laosa, 2011). If immigrant students tend to be isolated in schools, their futures may be compromised. Despite the dramatic changes occurring in American society and the need to center attention on school characteristics that benefit all, racial segregation and poverty have not been the focus of education policy in recent years (Noguera, 2017). It is unclear if the high levels of segregation immigrant

students experience are the result of educational policies and/or if they are a consequence of changing demographics (Reardon & Owens, 2014), where more students have immigrant origins. In spite of the cause, the consequences of segregation on the academic achievement of immigrants is relevant and must be studied and discussed. The following section explores this topic.

## Important Characteristics of Immigrant Children

Immigrant youth have unique academic needs and strengths. On the one hand, the literature recognizes that first generation (those born outside of the US) and second generation (who have parents born outside of the US) immigrants appear to have an immigrant advantage that translates to higher grades than those of their third generation ethnic peers (Fulgini 1997; Glick & White 2004; Portes & Rumbaut 2006; Rumbaut 1999). Immigrant parents tend to strongly value education and hold higher expectations for their children (Gibson, 1988; Ogbu, 2004; Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Foxen, 2010) and this promotes their academic achievement (Kao & Tienda 1995; Portes & Rumbaut 2006). At the same time, immigrant children face unique barriers that are potential obstacles for their academic trajectories because immigrant children live in contexts that may undermine or complicate assimilation (Harris 1999; Rumbaut 1999; Zhou 1997). They also face barriers linked to their SES, legal status, English learner status, hostility from the native population (Lopez & Stanton-Salazar, 2001) and a weak understanding of the U.S. education system (Behnke, Piercy, & Diversi, 2004), all of which may harm immigrant students' short- and long-term school outcomes.

Immigrants are not a simple group to analyze, given the many differences that exist among them. Differences also exist among immigrant groups in terms of academic achievement. For instance, while Asian immigrants exhibit consistent academic advantages (except for the case of Hmong), Mexican immigrants frequently have lower academic performance (Portes & Hao, 2004). However, social class differences among members within a single ethnic group, as well as gender differences among youth, further complicate any analysis or descriptions of immigrants and their educational experiences.

When analyzing the achievement of immigrant children, Kao and Tienda (1995) highlight the importance of considering the roles of immigrant parents, their attitudes, and expectations. Although immigrant parents tend to have lower levels of education and of parental engagement and communication with schools (Lareau, 1989; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995) – mainly due to language barriers, stigmatization, micro-aggressions, fear of exposure and lack of familiarity with the education system (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010) – experts in immigrant students research believe that immigrant parents also often arrive to the U.S. with an optimism, hope in the future, and a recognition that schooling is the key to a better tomorrow (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2016). Over time, many immigrant youth – especially those in poor, segregated schools – lose hope and decide to leave school without the appropriate academic preparation and lacking communication and cultural sensibilities needed in today's global society.

Furthermore, a great proportion of immigrant students are also of undocumented status and/or have family members of undocumented status. In fact, a report of the Migration Policy Institute reports that 5.1 million

*...experts in immigrant students research believe that immigrant parents also often arrive to the U.S. with an optimism, hope in the future, and a recognition that schooling is the key to a better tomorrow.*



U.S. children under age 18 lived with at least one unauthorized parent during the 2009-2013 period (Capps, Fix & Zong, 2016). Public schools are also obliged under the federal constitution to provide K-12 education to undocumented students until they reach a mandated age (Plyler vs. Doe (457 U.S. 202 (1982))). Those things that impact the well-being of children who are undocumented or have an undocumented family member – ineligibility for services, psychological impacts related to fears of deportation and the stigmatization of an immigrant identity – give schools a prominent role in these children’s educational and psycho-social well-being.

## The Consequences of Immigrants’ School Segregation

For immigrant students as well as for the general population, the composition of the school attended influences student outcomes at three different levels: the societal, the school, and the individual level (Villalobos et al., 2018). The societal level pertains to the impact school composition has on social issues such as quality of democracy and levels of inequality (Corvalan & Vargas, 2015; Esteban & Ray, 2011). The school level refers to the relationship school composition has on experience and qualification of the teachers, dropout rates, achievement level, and English-speaking ability (Kelly 2007; Clotfelter et al. 2005; Borman & Dowling 2010; Breen & Jonsson 2005; Bottia et al 2017; Orfield & Lee 2005). The individual level is based on intergroup contact theory and considers the importance of exposure to diversity when developing attitudes toward minorities and levels of prejudice.

Contemporary assimilation theory highlights the importance of school contexts for shaping the adaptation patterns of immigrants (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Bean & Stevens, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Hence, there is an important role school composition might have on children of immigrants. Research findings on the effect of school segregation on immigrant children are divergent. While some studies find that concentration of immigrant students are detrimental to their outcomes (Rao, 2014; Moody, 2001; Janmaat, 2015; Shafiq & Myers, 2014; Conger, 2005), others determine that immigrant segregation has some mitigating effects (Conger, 2005; Goldsmith, 2003; Goldsmith, 2004). This disagreement is due in part to the immense diversity among immigrants in their country of origin, ethnicity, language spoken, motive of migration, documentation status, and immigrant generational status. In addition, whether immigrant segregation is deemed detrimental or beneficial often depends on the outcome analyzed.

### *The Negative Effects of Immigrant School Segregation*

Much of the educational research finds that students’ short and long-term outcomes are negatively affected by school segregation (Mickelson, Bottia & Lambert, 2013) and that children who learn in diverse environments tend to perform better in schools, have better job opportunities, and have better academic and social outcomes (Mickelson, 2008; Stewart-Wells, Fox & Cordova-Covo, 2016; Carter, 2009; Mickelson & Nkomo, 2012).

Many of these findings highlight that students exposed to higher levels of diversity at school (meaning lower levels of segregation) will develop higher levels of tolerance, more positive attitudes toward minorities, and lower levels of prejudice (Rao 2014; Moody 2001; Janmaat 2015; Shafiq & Myers 2014). Consequently, the lack of contact among people of different national origins generated by immigrant segregation lead to higher levels of prejudice and intolerance towards immigrants (Conger, 2005). Many studies conclude that



PHOTO: GINA CHIRICHIGNO

segregation of immigrant students is especially detrimental for immigrant children in an increasingly globalized and multicultural society and world and note that most schools across the United States are still very segregated (Gandara & Aldana 2014; Frankenberg, Garces & Hopkins, 2016; Orfield, et al., 2014). Many recent studies suggest that school resegregation is approaching pre-*Brown* levels.

Other studies also find that school composition is significantly related to the academic achievement of immigrant (foreign-born) Latinos: school SES has a positive effect and school minority composition has a negative effect on grades for these foreign-born Latinos (Ryabov & Van Hook, 2006). The negative effects that immigrant segregation might have on children's outcomes are particularly harmful for immigrants who are English learners (Gándara & Aldana 2014). Opportunities to develop friendships with those outside their ethnic group may be especially limited for immigrant children who are English learners in part due to low English proficiency and cultural differences. Yet the schooling context might become the only chance they

have to interact with peers who are English speakers (Ryabov & Van Hook, 2006). English language learners' academic outcomes are considerably diminished when they are segregated into classrooms where they lack exposure to other students who speak English (de Cohen, 2005). This occurs because exposure to peers who speak English is a known predictor of learning the language (Gándara & Orfield, 2012; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). In fact, Rumberger and Tran (2010) find that the level of segregation is the single factor under the control of schools that contributes to the difference in achievement between EL and non-EL students.

### ***Within School Segregation and Immigrant Students' Outcomes***

Regarding the ability grouping that takes place in American schools, many immigrant students and parents report feeling confused and frustrated due to language barriers and lack of cultural capital needed in the American schools (LeTendre et al., 2003). In fact, because of the language limitations and lack of familiarity with the U.S. educational system that many immigrant parents have, their children are often placed in lower tracks, subsequently leading to lower academic achievement and lower quality future job opportunities (Wagner, Dymes & Wiggan, 2017).

### ***Potentially Mitigating Effects of Immigrant School Segregation***

*The causes and consequences of immigrant segregation may be different from those of racial segregation for native students.*

Researchers have found that in some cases the children of immigrants are not affected in the same degree by school composition as are non-immigrants (Wells, 2010). Children of immigrants have relatively higher educational expectations and therefore appear to be differentially impacted by school composition. Some studies have found some helpful relationships between school segregation of immigrants and their academic outcomes. The causes and consequences of immigrant segregation may be different from those of racial segregation for native students. While immigrants tend to be an underprivileged minority, they also tend to perform comparatively well in school, indicating that isolation from native-born may in some circumstances be helpful for some immigrants (Conger, 2005).

Several studies find that a larger concentration of immigrant students is sometimes related to students' higher achievement (Goldsmith, 2003; Goldsmith, 2005). Referring to the particular case of Latino immigrants, Goldsmith (2003, 2005) stated that if immigrant parents' optimism, emphasis on education, and contact with the school improves school climate, then students in mostly immigrant schools will have an advantage over students in predominantly black and predominantly white schools (although predominantly white middle-class schools will be advantageous in other ways). The argument is that predominantly Latino schools are effective because many have a large proportion of students with optimistic immigrant parents that are involved in the education of their children (Kao and Tienda (1995). Therefore, clustering of immigrant parents may benefit the school. Additionally, immigrant youths who attend high schools with few whites may develop networks of mutual support that help them succeed in other areas like the job market.



Immigrant generational status has also proven to have a key role in determining the relationship between school composition and immigrant student achievement. Differences in generational status lead to stark differences in parents' and students' attitudes and involvement with and at school, where immigrants who migrated more recently tend to have parents with higher expectations and attitudes for the future of their children. Some authors (Gibson, 1988; Waters, 1999; Zhou & Bankston, 1998; Bean & Stevens, 2003) suggest that school contexts may be less important for foreign-born children than for children who are second and third generation given that the conservation of family ties may help some immigrant groups overcome some structural limitations, such as school socioeconomic segregation.

Although many studies find that the segregation of English learners (immigrants) has important negative effects for the outcomes of these students, some researchers point out that the segregation of English learners might have some advantages that cannot be overlooked. Their argument is that higher densities of English learner students make provision of specialized services more cost-effective and therefore to the prioritization of the provision of a good quality education to English learners (de Cohen, 2005). Callahan et al. (2008) find that ESL enrollment may be protective for second-generation Mexican-origin adolescents in high immigrant concentration schools, but it also showed some detriment for first-generation students in contexts with few other immigrant students (Callahan et al., 2008).

It is important to note that the idea that school segregation could have mitigating or positive educational outcomes on immigrant students is likely counterbalanced by the fact that most racially and ethnically segregated high schools are also high poverty schools. Abundant research recognizes the many educational disadvantages of attending poor segregated schools insofar as these schools have lower quality and quantity of opportunities to learn (Orfield & Lee, 2005).

The value of school integration for immigrant children is immense. The experiences that immigrant children have in their schools are foundational to how they see themselves as students and members of the larger communities. If immigrant students attend segregated schools, then they are less likely to overcome their lack of meaningful connections with schools, are less likely to have their unique needs attended, given their diversity of backgrounds and school staff will be less likely to overcome the negative assumption of immigrants because of their lack of information (Adair, 2015).

# Residential Segregation and Immigrants' Outcomes

## Immigrants and the Places Where They Live

As of 2016, the western United States is the region that receives the largest number of immigrants -14.6 million (Brown & Stepler, 2016). Although many more immigrants are moving to growing states such as North Carolina, Georgia, Arizona, South Carolina, and Tennessee, the majority of immigrants in the U.S. live in the six states of California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey.

Although the levels of segregation for immigrants are not as high as that for Blacks (Massey & Tannen, 2018), studies find that the level of residential segregation remains high for immigrants in general and Latino immigrants in particular (Cutler et al., 2008; Lichter, et al., 2010). Data from the 2010 Census reports that while Hispanics make up only 15% of the population, fully 45% of their neighbors are also Hispanic (Frey, 2010). Many immigrants live in urban systems that also tend to have higher levels of poverty (Potochnick, 2014; Suarez-Orozco, C., Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). In fact, increasingly immigrants are settling in cities (Singer et al., 2008, Massey, 2008). Consequently, immigrant children are over-represented in urban areas that tend to be highly segregated and tend to have high levels of poverty (Orfield, 2014). This situation is further intensified because in the majority of urban neighborhoods in the United States, immigration was associated with flight of native-born from these neighborhoods (Saiz & Wachter, 2011).



Preparing the buffet for a community dinner hosted by The Hazleton, PA ONE Community Center

PHOTO: EMMA LEE

Patterns vary across racial, ethnic and national origin groups. For example, levels of residential segregation are much higher for black immigrants than for Asian, Hispanic, and white immigrants (Williams & Collins, 2001). In addition, suburban Dominicans and Haitians live in worse residential areas than most other immigrant groups (Farrel & Firebough, 2016); and Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Mexicans experience extremely high levels of neighborhood inequality. Also, although aggregated data on Asian Americans (Teranishi, 2004) show that their residential segregation circumstances are not that bad, segregation patterns show a growing concentration of poor immigrant Asian American communities from Southeast Asia (Teranishi, 2004).<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, studies find that foreign-born immigrants (Hispanics, Asians, and blacks) are more segregated from native-born non-Hispanic whites than are their U.S.-born co-ethnics (Iceland & Scopilliti, 2008). This occurs in part because foreign-born Hispanics and Asians tend to have lower levels of income, lower ability in English language, and lower homeownership rates (Iceland & Scopilliti, 2008). Research also suggests that the acculturation level of immigrants conditions their residential preferences. The foreign-born, particularly those with five years or less in the United States and/or those with limited English proficiency, prefer substantially more same-race neighbors compared to their native-born and long-term-immigrant counterparts (Charles, 2000, 2001, 2002).

## Causes of Immigrant Residential Segregation

In general, researchers have concluded that the causes of immigrants' location patterns emerged mainly due to discriminatory market conditions but in some instances also due to voluntary choice (Zhu, Liu & Painter, 2014). However, the "choices" presented to immigrant families – particularly Latino immigrant families – are constrained by decades of segregative housing and land use policies that limit their ability to freely choose less segregated communities and schools (Rothstein, 2017; Iceland & Scopilliti, 2008).

### *Housing discrimination and government housing and land use policies limit access to wider housing markets*

Discriminatory housing practices include zoning that restricts groups to particular neighborhoods, historical and current federal housing programs that locate federal housing assistance primarily in higher poverty, segregated neighborhoods, redlining (denying or limiting financial services to certain neighborhoods based on racial or ethnic composition without regard to the residents' qualifications or creditworthiness), real estate agents steering racial groups to certain neighborhoods, neighbors' hostility, and unequal access to mortgage credit (Goering & Wienk, 1996; Holloway & Wylie, 2001; Meyer 2000; Krivo & Kaufman, 2004; Rothstein, 2017). There is a well documented history of discrimination in home seeking affecting Latino families, including immigrant Latino families. (Bowdler & Kamasaki, 2007 ). Furthermore, Bowdler and Kamasaki (2007) report that for first-generation immigrant Hispanics there might be additional discriminatory practices that are undercounted, such as, unreturned phone calls based on speech accent or national origin guessed from surnames.

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1 Note also that Puerto Ricans, probably due to their relatively higher level of African ancestry, have distinctively higher levels of segregation than other Hispanics (Williams & Collins, 2001); (Puerto Rican citizens are often included in analyses of immigrant groups in some immigration literature, even though they are not immigrants).





Somali girls play outside their apartment building in midtown Omaha

PHOTO: MATT MILLER

### *Immigration policy and initial settlement patterns for new immigrants*

“Family reunification” patterns occur when green card holders or legal U.S. residents sponsor a family member for immigration to the United States. Such patterns are common for both Hispanic and Asian immigrants and increase immigrants’ isolation. These migration patterns rapidly concentrate immigrants in a small number of metropolitan areas and neighborhoods (Logan 2001, Massey & Denton 1987) and generate “ethnic enclaves”.<sup>2</sup> By providing social, emotional, and informational support as well as cultural familiarity, these immigrant enclaves are seen as providing benefits for newly arrived immigrants (Wen, Lauderdale, & Kandula, 2009). Many immigrant families may want to live close to areas where others similar to them live because this helps them adapt to the country to which they have recently arrived (Portes & Zhou, 1993). The preference that immigrants have for settling initially in “ethnic enclaves” helps them gradually adjust to the US society (Acevedo-Garcia et al, 2003) and allows them to share resources and cultural amenities (Logan et al., 2002). In fact, Hispanic and Asian segregation tends to diminish as immigrants assimilate (Acevedo-Garcia et al, 2003).

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2 Ethnic enclaves are defined as geographic areas with high ethnic concentration, characteristic cultural identity, and economic activity (Abrahamson, 1996).



Settlement in more concentrated areas may also be a matter of necessity for immigrants who need to use public transit or need proximity to potential carpools (Cutler, Glaeser & Vigdor, 2008). Additionally, undocumented immigrants might prefer to cluster in the same areas, where their specific status can be hidden and exposure to native populations and law enforcement avoided (Hall & Stringfield, 2014).

### ***Housing discrimination and avoidance of perceived discrimination***

Researchers have noted that the majority group in a host society may perceive both the native poor populations and the newly arrived immigrant populations as being “the same,” and thus generalize their prejudices to include the newly arrived immigrant groups (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Given that discriminatory practices in the housing market against Hispanics and Asians have been widely documented (Turner & Ross, 2003), it makes sense to believe that discrimination plays a role in shaping the residential patterns of nonwhite immigrants (Iceland & Scopilliti, 2008).

Other reasons include language barriers, the fact that housing market choices are limited for lower income families and that immigrants are not able to afford to live in affluent white neighborhoods (Alba & Logan, 1991). In fact, Charles (2003) shows that segregation from whites declines substantially when Asian and Hispanic socioeconomic status improves as generations shift from immigrant- to native-born and as immigrants progress from higher- to lower-poverty neighborhoods over time - although this is far weaker for Mexican immigrants (Jargowsky, 2009).

## **Residential Segregation and Immigrants’ Outcomes**

The characteristics of immigrants’ residential locations limit or promote the success of these individuals’ labor and educational experiences and outcomes (Ternishi 2004; Lee, 2009; Gandara & Contrears, Logan et al., 2002; Zhu, Liu & Painter, 2014). Residential locations influence the economic, educational, and cultural opportunities available to individuals and have important effects on the schools, communities, and families of immigrants.

Evidence on the relationship between residential segregation and immigrants’ outcomes is not definitive. While some studies report higher levels of residential segregation as an obstacle to assimilation, upward mobility, and educational advancement, other research recognizes some advantages that living in an area with a higher number of immigrants might have on their employment status, earnings, health, and commuting behaviors (Zhu, Liu & Painter, 2014).

*Residential locations influence the economic, educational, and cultural opportunities available to individuals and have important effects on the schools, communities, and families of immigrants.*

### ***The Negative Effects of Immigrant Residential Segregation***

Many articles find that immigrant residential segregation or clustering in immigrant communities or enclaves has negative educational, labor, and health outcomes (Alegria et al., 2007; Lee, 2009; Zhu, Lui & Painter,

2014; Liu & Painter, 2012a; Chiswick, 1991; Lazear, 1999; Wen & Maloney, 2011). Residential segregation causes immigrant children to be isolated by ethnicity, poverty, and language (Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Orfield & Lee, 2006; Schwartz & Stiefel, 2011). This ethnic, socioeconomic and language segregation has negative effects on the quality of schools immigrant children attend: many immigrants end up attending overcrowded schools with lower expectations, lower academic standards, lower achievement levels, higher levels of school violence, and higher dropout rates (Gándara & Contreras, 2008; Tseng & Lesaux, 2009). Attendance at these lower quality schools is associated with immigrant students' lower educational achievement.

Research also supports claims that the residential location of immigrants is negatively related to labor market outcomes (Zhu, Lui & Painter, 2014). Liu & Painter (2012) find that living in an immigrant community can lead to worse labor market outcomes if job market opportunities are moving away from ethnic neighborhoods. Living in an ethnic enclave could also adversely affect immigrants' labor market outcomes in the long run because it could lower the rate of acquisition of host country-specific human capital (Chiswick, 1991; Lazear, 1999) by discouraging immigrants from interacting with natives, and therefore reducing the incentives for acquiring local skills, such as language. Similarly, Jargowski (2009) reports that the children of Hispanic immigrants have worse economic outcomes as adults if they lived in neighborhoods with high levels of concentration of poverty as children.

The literature also suggests possible negative health effects of immigrant residential segregation for Latino immigrants, based on health outcomes studied for the larger Latino population. For example, Wen & Maloney (2011) find that Latino residential isolation is significantly and positively related to the risk of obesity. Alegria et al. (2007) and Lee (2009) conclude that Latino residential segregation is also related to depressive symptoms and to lower levels of physical activity among Latinos (Osypuk, et al., 2009). These outcomes have not been specifically studied for Latino immigrants, but residential segregation of some Latino immigrants concentrates them in locations with deprivation-related problems (such as low SES, poor housing conditions, lack of health-promoting infrastructure, and the less inviting built environment) which affects their well-being (Jencks & Meyer, 1990). Furthermore, immigrant segregation is also related to increased exposure to stressors such as crime and poverty (Feldmeyer, 2009; Iceland & Scopilliti, 2008) and research has also found that immigrant women's power in family relationships might also be reduced when living in immigrant segregated contexts (Parrado et al., 2005).

### ***Potentially Mitigating Effects of Immigrant Residential Segregation***

A number of studies also report potentially "mitigating" effects of immigrant residential segregation on immigrant outcomes, mainly related to the labor market and health for first generation immigrants. For instance, residing in segregated immigrant areas increases access to ethnic networks that may help labor market outcomes (Zhu, Liu & Painter, 2014). Furthermore, neighborhood-based social networks and contacts link immigrants to jobs, making them less spatially constrained to the local labor market (Portes, 1998; Bertrand et al., 2000; Elliott & Sims, 2001). By facilitating information flow, social networks ease the job-matching process between workers and employers and increase efficiency on both ends (Rodriguez, 2004). Consequently, access to ethnic networks may help labor market outcomes, especially in times of economic hardship (Logan et al., 2002; Zhu, Liu & Painter, 2014).



PHOTO: GINA CHIRICHIGNO

Regarding health outcomes, several studies have found that there is a protective relationship between Latino and Asian residential segregation and health outcomes such as depression<sup>3</sup>, maternal smoking, birth outcomes, and consumption of high-fat foods (Mair, Diez Roux, Shen, Shea, & Seeman, 2009; Ostir et al., 2003; Kershaw, et al., 2013; Osypuk, et al., 2009; Vega & Sribney, 2011; Walton, 2009; Yang, et al., 2014). This can be explained by the tightly woven social networks that exist among co-ethnics (Bécares, et al., 2009) when they live close together. These high densities of co-ethnics may buffer the adverse association between discrimination and health and may also minimize the exposure to discrimination and help cope with the stress from discriminatory experiences (Yang, Zhao & Song, 2017). Living in immigrant segregated locations may reduce potential discrimination and consequently improve immigrants' overall health (Yang, Zhao & Song, 2017). Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that these outcomes of immigrants living in segregated neighborhoods are probably counterbalanced by the impacts of racial segregation and the fact that these neighborhoods are likely also poverty segregated neighborhoods. And, growing up in poor segregated neighborhoods is associated with negative health outcomes, lower brain development, higher depression rates, lower aspirations, etc.

In summary, previous research has identified various outcomes that are significantly related to immigrants' school and residential segregation. The nature and direction of these relationships vary and often shift with variations in research methodology and definitions of who immigrants are. Yet, the majority of studies emphasize that school and residential segregation of immigrants is associated with lower levels of academic achievement, smaller chances of integration and adaptation into the American society, lower quality schooling, decreased labor market opportunities, higher rates of depression, obesity, and more.

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3 The contradictory findings regarding Latinos living in co-ethnically concentrated areas and depressive symptoms may be explained by methodological differences among these studies. For example, if studies are focused on the population of both foreign-born and US-born Latinos or solely on recent immigrants, the age of the immigrants analyzed, the type of measures of co-ethnic concentration (Ornelas & Perreira, 2011).  
<https://scholarship.richmond.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1074&context=spcs-faculty-publications>



# Quantitative Data Analysis

We now turn to some descriptive data analyses to empirically assess the degree of immigrant school and residential segregation. Data are drawn from the American Community Survey Data, Common Core of Data, Educational Longitudinal Survey<sup>4</sup>, U.S. Census, and the United Nations Population Division.<sup>5</sup>

## Important Characteristics of Immigrants and Immigrant Children

There are vast differences in the ethnic and cultural background of immigrants in the U.S. Although most of the immigrants come from Latin American countries, the number of Asian American and Pacific Islander immigrants is also substantial and is growing at a faster rate than that of Hispanic immigrants (American Progress, 2017). Table 1 reports that the top 3 countries of origin for immigrants in the U.S. are Mexico, China, and India, followed by other Latin American and Asian origin countries.

**Table 1. Top 9 Country of Origin of migrants living in the U.S. as of 2017**

	# of people	Percent
1 Mexico	12,680,000	25%
2 China	2,420,000	5%
3 India	2,310,000	5%
4 Philippines	2,080,000	4%
5 Vietnam	1,410,000	3%
6 El Salvador	1,390,000	3%
7 Cuba	1,250,000	3%
8 South Korea	1,180,000	2%
9 Dominican Republic	1,070,000	2%

Source: United Nations Population Division and Pew Research Center.  
Percent do not add 100% because only Top 9 Nations are included.

4 The data used in this study come from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS), sponsored by the National Statistics for Educational Study (NCES). The ELS currently has data available for the years 2002 to 2012 and features student questionnaires, student assessments in both math and reading, parent questionnaires, teacher questionnaires, principal questionnaires, library/media questionnaires and a school facilities checklist (ELS, 2002).

5 Many of these data are older and do not reflect the many changes the immigrant population has experienced in recent years. Nevertheless, there is a limitation given the lack of nationally representative data available.

Table 2 presents data on children's socioeconomic status, educational backgrounds, race of friends, and language spoken, all by immigrant generational status.

**Table 2: SES, Educational Background, Friends, and Language Spoken by Immigrant Generational Status**

		Non-immigrants	First-generation immigrants	Second-generation immigrants
Socioeconomic Quartile	SES Quartile 1 (Poorest)	19.5	47.1	40.8
	SES Quartile 2	25.1	17.1	21.0
	SES Quartile 3	27.7	16.5	16.3
	SES Quartile 4 (Richest)	27.5	18.3	21.9
Parent's Education	Did not finish high school	11.5	47.0	42.4
	Graduated from high school	40.1	19.9	25.0
	Attended 2-year school	6.2	4.3	3.7
	Graduated from 2-year school	7.0	4.3	5.1
	Attended college	6.1	3.5	2.0
	Graduated from college	16.9	11.7	13.0
	Completed Master's degree	7.4	4.0	4.6
	Completed PhD, Md	4.8	5.3	4.2
Student's Language	English is NOT Student Native Language	2.6	74.3	49.3
	English is Student Native Language	97.0	23.0	49.6
Friends' Race	Missing Information	6.8	11.9	9.3
	American Indian/Alaskan	0.9	0.9	0.6
	Asian, Hawaii/Pacific Islander	2.1	13.6	13.2
	Black	13.4	8.0	8.6
	Hispanic	7.9	37.8	36.8
	More than one Race	1.6	1.8	2.5
	White	67.2	25.9	29.1

\* Author's calculations using ELS 2002 data.

Nationally representative data from the Educational Longitudinal Survey 2002 show that immigrant children come from less privileged backgrounds than non-immigrant children (See Table 2)<sup>6</sup>. For example, while 19.5% of the non-immigrants in the sample belong to the lowest socioeconomic quartile, more than 40% of the immigrants belong in the poorest socioeconomic quartile. Furthermore, the percent of first-generation immigrants who belong to this lowest quartile of SES is even higher (47%). Economic conditions vary substantially within immigrant groups depending on their country of origin.

In the same way, the educational background of immigrant children (as a whole) is much lower than the educational background of non-immigrant children. While only 11.5% of the parents of non-immigrant children did not finish high school, 47% of the parents of first-generation immigrants and 42% of the parents of the second-generation immigrants did not finish high school. This is suggestive of lower economic and educational resources available to immigrant students, which is associated with lower academic performance (Darling-Hammond, 2001).

Immigrant children also differ from non-immigrant students in the language they speak at home. While 74% of first-generation and 49% of second-generation immigrants do not speak English at home, this is true of only 2.7% of non-immigrants. These language differences point to the assimilation processes immigrants experience as they spend more time in the U.S. The sharp decline in English non-nativity between first- and second-generation immigrant students is evidence of adaptation to the customs of the

receiving culture. Although adaptation of this kind can be advantageous, there are benefits as well when immigrants maintain their native languages. In fact, speaking more than one language has many personal, intellectual, social, educational and economic advantages (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 2000) as long as immigrants also become proficient in English.

*Contact or interaction increases the quantity and quality of knowledge that natives have about immigrants' lifestyle and therefore fosters important affective ties through enhanced empathy and reduced anxiety*

### **Making Friends**

Contact theory emphasizes the importance of contact situations between immigrants and natives to induce positive affect and to reduce anxiety. Contact or interaction increases the quantity and quality of knowledge that natives have about immigrants' lifestyle and therefore fosters important affective ties through enhanced empathy and reduced anxiety (Aberson and Haag, 2007; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2008; Vezzali and Giovannini, 2012). The preferred measure of contact that is likely to increase positive affect is friendship (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Friendships involve having common goals, cooperation, equal status (in the contact situation), and institutional support. Therefore, friendships can define how much contact exists

between groups and can also measure levels of assimilation of immigrants. The bottom panel in Table 2 shows that Hispanics make up the largest share of friends of immigrant students (around 38% for first-generation immigrant and 37% for second-generation immigrants). By contrast, the largest share of friends of non-immigrant students are white and only 8% of friends of non-immigrants are Hispanic. In contrast to the clear language assimilation process of immigrants (moving from speaking non-English

6 Numbers in table 2 are percentages.

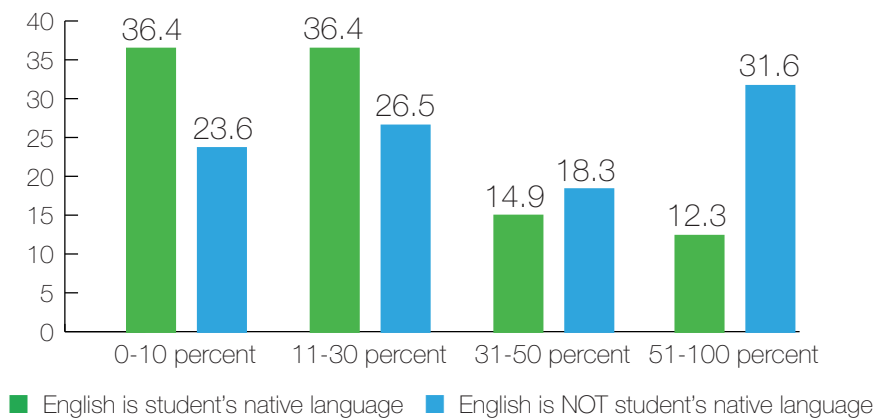


language at home to speaking English at home) suggested above, first- and second-generation immigrant children both maintain equally high proportions of friends of Hispanic origin. This could be evidence of an interest by immigrants to continue maintaining close links with people from their own ethnicity. Or, this may be the consequence of segregated schooling and residential contexts that limit immigrants' opportunities to interact with non-immigrant peers and develop friendships with those outside their ethnic group.

## Immigrant Students and the Schools they attend

Schools are an essential part of the assimilation process of immigrants and therefore become crucial to the future success of immigrant adaptation. Figure 1 suggests that schools attended by immigrant students have substantially higher levels of poverty concentration. While 32% of students whose native language is not English (proxy for immigrants) attend high-poverty schools (those with over 50% of 10th graders receiving free lunch), only 12% of native English-speaking students attend these schools. Given that poverty concentration at schools is one of the most powerful predictors of educational achievement gaps (Reardon, Robinson & Weathers, 2008), the student poverty rates that immigrant students experience might help explain the low academic performance of immigrant students.

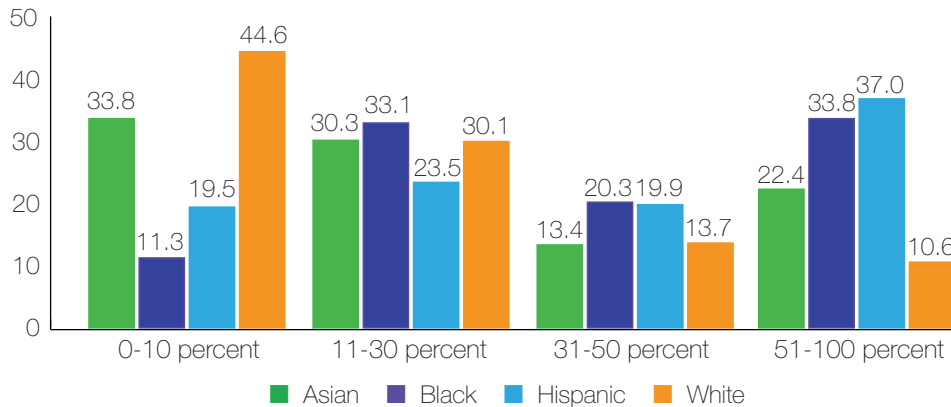
**Figure 1. Percentage of students with English as native language, by the share of 10th graders at school receiving free lunch**



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), High School Sophomores. Computation by NCES QuickStats on 1/22/2019.

Further analysis shows that there are important differences in the school poverty rates immigrant students experience depending on students' racial/ethnic backgrounds (See Figure 2). While approximately 37% of Hispanic immigrant students attend schools with more than 50% of 10th graders receiving free lunch, only 22% of Asian immigrants and 11% of white immigrant students attend schools with high concentrations of poverty.

Figure 2. Percentage of students with English not as native language, by the share of 10th graders receiving free lunch and race/ethnicity



\* Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), High School Sophomores. Computation by NCES QuickStats on 9/22/2019.

In addition to experiencing socioeconomic segregation, immigrant students are also more likely to attend schools with higher concentrations of safety problems. For example, based on calculations of 2002 freshman cohort ELS data, larger percentages of immigrant students (vs. non-immigrant students) report gang activity as a problem at their school (46% vs. 35%) and lower shares of immigrant students report that their school is a safe place (69% vs. 78%). Altogether, these data suggest that immigrant students have individual level language, educational, socioeconomic, and friendship characteristics that may correlate with lower academic success. Additionally, the schools that immigrant students attend have higher concentrations of poor children and experience higher levels of safety problems.

*...schools that immigrant students attend have higher concentrations of poor children and experience higher levels of safety problems.*

## School Segregation and Immigrants' Outcomes

Data show that, on average, the math and reading achievement of immigrant children is lower than that of non-immigrant children (See Table 3). Further, immigrants of Asian and White descent have higher math scores and similar reading score to non-immigrants, while immigrants of Hispanic and Black descent have significantly lower academic achievement in math and reading. In part, such results may arise because parents' educational level is one of the main predictors of individuals' educational and occupational success (Dubow, Boxer, & Huesmann, 2009) and Hispanic and Black immigrants tend to have lower levels of education compared to Asian and White immigrants.

Table 3. Average math and reading standardized test scores, by immigrant status and ethnicity

	Math	Reading
Non-immigrants	50.98	51.62
Immigrants	49.02	47.99
immigrant Hispanic	44.91	44.54
immigrant Asian	54.89	51.16
immigrant Black	47.06	47.44
immigrant White	52.99	53.14

Math min 22.49, max 79.85; Read min 22.57, max 78.76

\*Author's calculation using ELS data.

When school context is considered, we see that immigrant students obtain their highest average test scores at schools with lower percentages of students receiving free-or-reduced price lunch and their lowest scores at schools with the highest percentages (see Table 4). This is consistent with research on school poverty rates generally. Interestingly, the gap between scores of non-immigrants and immigrants is smallest at schools with extremely low and extremely high concentrations of students with free-or-reduced price lunch. This implies that immigrant students attending high-poverty schools achieve at similarly low levels to non-immigrant counterparts. In addition, immigrant students attending low-poverty schools score at similarly high levels to non-immigrant students. These data provide evidence that immigrant students are disadvantaged by socioeconomic segregation at schools, given that they are more likely to be poor and to attend poor schools (Elmelech, et al. 2002).

Table 4. Average Math and Reading Standardized Test Scores, by Immigrant Status and Percent Free or Reduced-Price Lunch at School Attended

School Percent Free-Lunch	Math Scores			Reading Scores		
	Non-Immigrants	Immigrants	Gap	Non-Immigrants	Immigrants	Gap
0-5	55.8	55.0	0.8	56.1	54.1	<b>2.0</b>
6-10	54.4	51.6	<b>2.7</b>	54.9	51.7	<b>3.2</b>
11-20	52.2	52.1	0.0	53.7	51.5	<b>2.2</b>
21-30	51.0	48.8	<b>2.2</b>	51.7	48.8	<b>2.9</b>
31-50	49.1	47.3	<b>1.9</b>	51.0	47.6	<b>3.4</b>
51-75	47.0	46.5	0.5	48.5	46.4	<b>2.1</b>
76-100	44.4	44.9	-0.5	46.6	45.5	1.0

Numbers in bold are statistically significant different (p<.01).

\*Author's calculation using ELS



Table 5 shows academic achievement by immigrant status and percent of students who are limited English proficient. In this case, immigrant students score the highest in both math and reading when attending schools with lower percentages of limited English proficient students. In fact, immigrant students outperform non-immigrant students when they attend schools with no limited English proficient students. Immigrant student achievement appears negatively affected by segregation, in this case by attending language-segregated schools.

**Table 5. Average Math and Reading Standardized Test Scores, by Immigrant Status and Percent Limited English Proficient at School Attended**

% of student body who is Limited or non-English proficient	Math Scores			Reading Scores		
	Non-Immigrants	Immigrants	Gap	Immigrants	Non-Immigrants	Gap
0	51.3	53.8	<b>-2.5</b>	52.6	54.2	<b>-1.6</b>
1-10	51.6	50.4	<b>1.2</b>	52.9	50.3	<b>2.6</b>
11-100	48.5	46.5	<b>2.1</b>	49.1	46.3	<b>2.8</b>

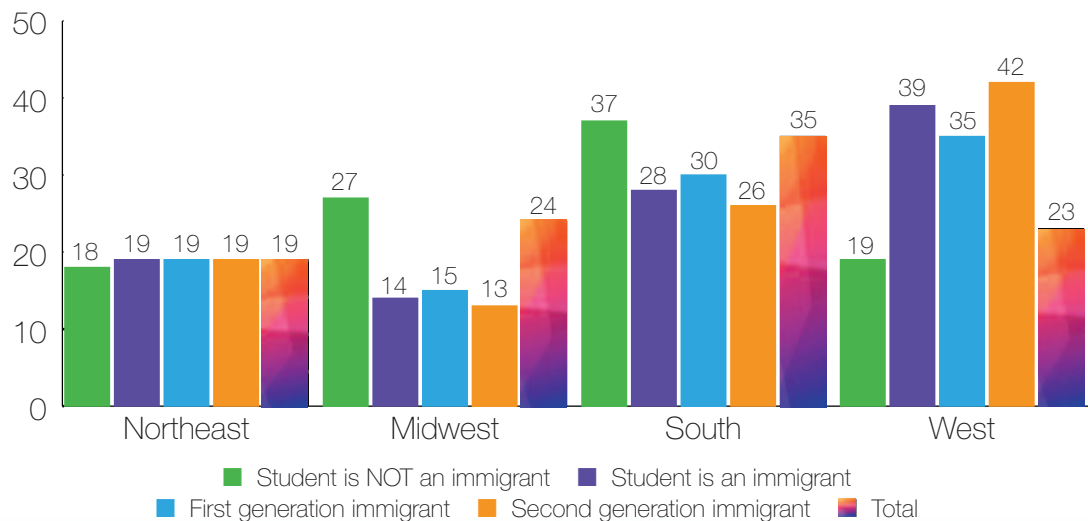
Numbers in bold are statistically significant different ( $p < .01$ ).

\*Author's calculation using ELS data.

## Immigrants and the Places they live

High percentages of immigrant students study and live in the Western region of the U.S. (39%), followed by the South (28%), the Northeast (19%) and lastly by the Midwest (14%). Interestingly, the percentage of first-

**Figure 3. Percentage of students of different immigrant backgrounds, by geographic region of school attended**

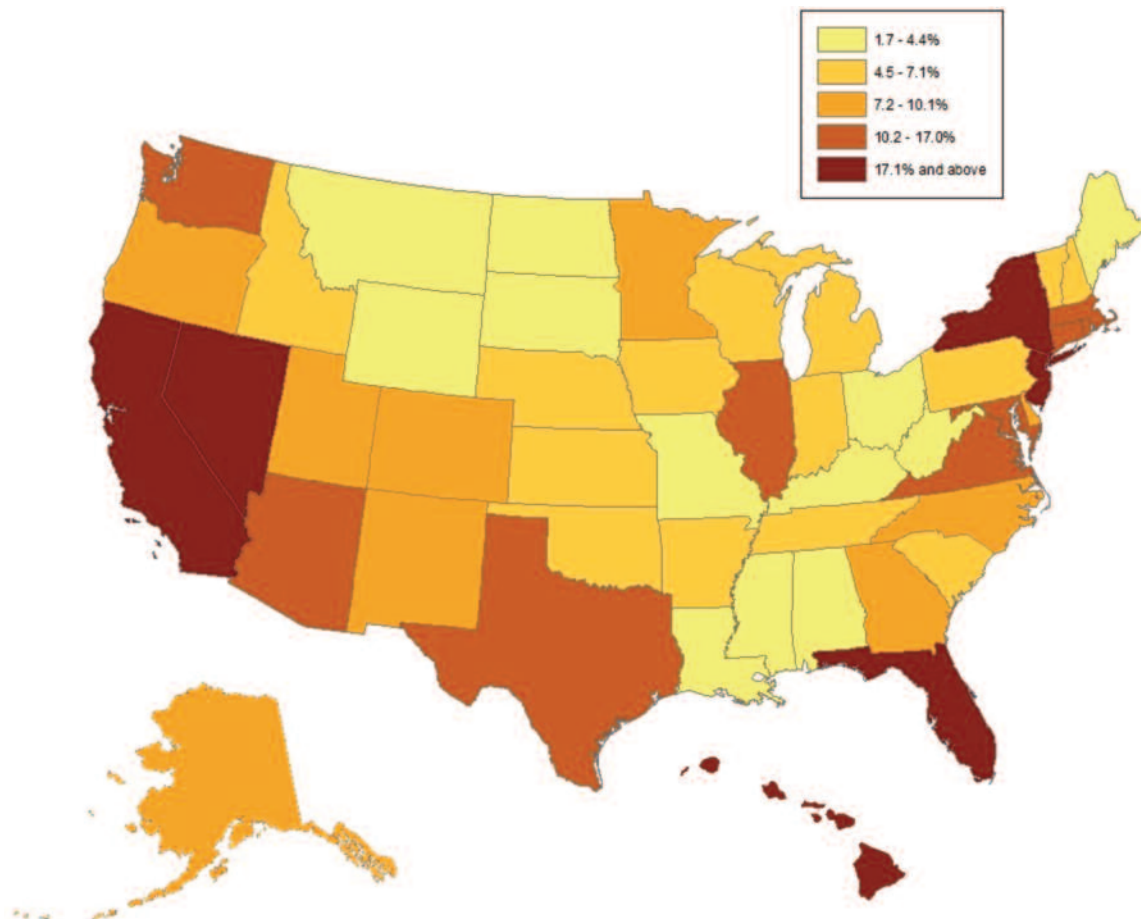


\*Author's calculation using ELS data.

generation immigrants is the highest in the Western region of the U.S. (42%), while the highest percentage of second-generation immigrants is in the South (35%). This suggests that many immigrants arrive to Western states in the U.S. and then with time and as they settle, they tend to move to Southern states.

Figure 4 depicts<sup>7</sup> the immigrant share<sup>8</sup> of total population in 2016. California, Nevada, New York, and Florida are the states with the highest percentages of immigrants, ranging between 20 and 27% of the state population. Given that Hispanics and Asians make up the majority of the immigrant population, I further present maps of the shares of Hispanic (Figure 5) and Asians (Figure 6) per state. Figure 4 is not

Figure 4. Immigrant Share of Total Population, 2016



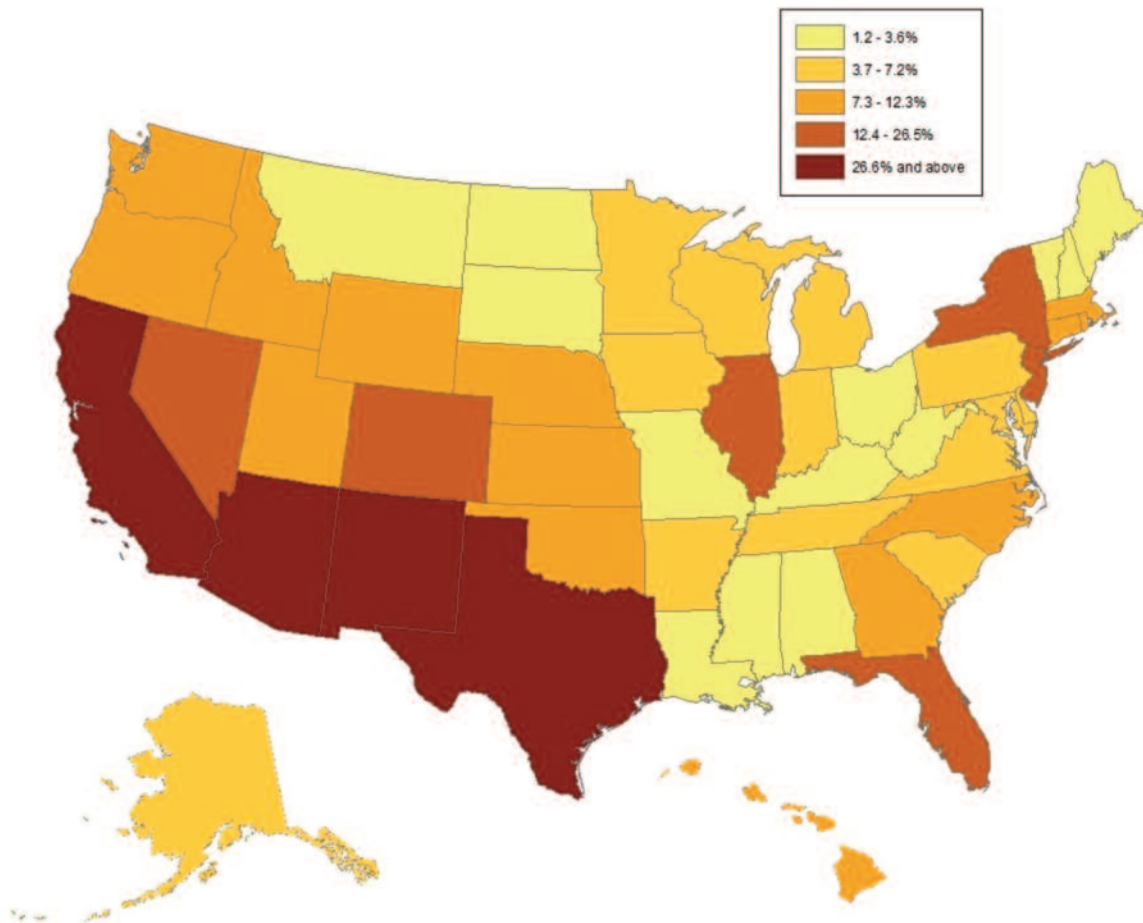
\*Data from Migration Policy Institute (MPI) tabulation of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2016 American Community Surveys (ACS), and 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census.

7 Appendix 1 provides a list of all the characteristics by state projected in Figures 4 to 10.

8 Immigrant share is here defined by the share of foreign-born or people residing in the United States who were not U.S. citizens at birth.

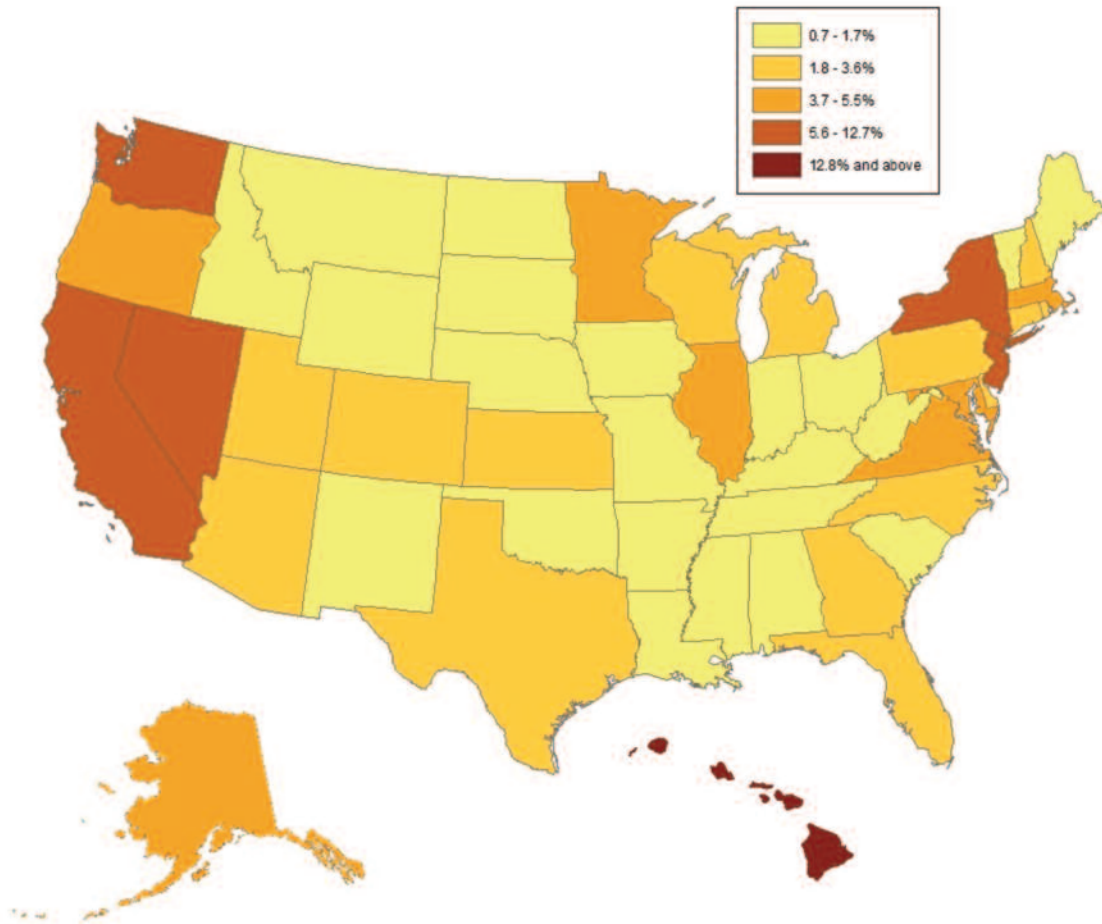
entirely consistent with Figures 5 and 6 because a large proportion of Hispanic and Asians are not immigrants, but instead have been living in the U.S. for generations. Therefore, although states like New Mexico have very high shares of Hispanics in the state, their share of immigrants is substantially lower. Similarly, although Asians are a large share of the residents in Washington, the percent immigrants in that state is not as high.

Figure 5. Hispanic Share of Total Population, 2009



\* Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 6. Asian Share of Total Population, 2009

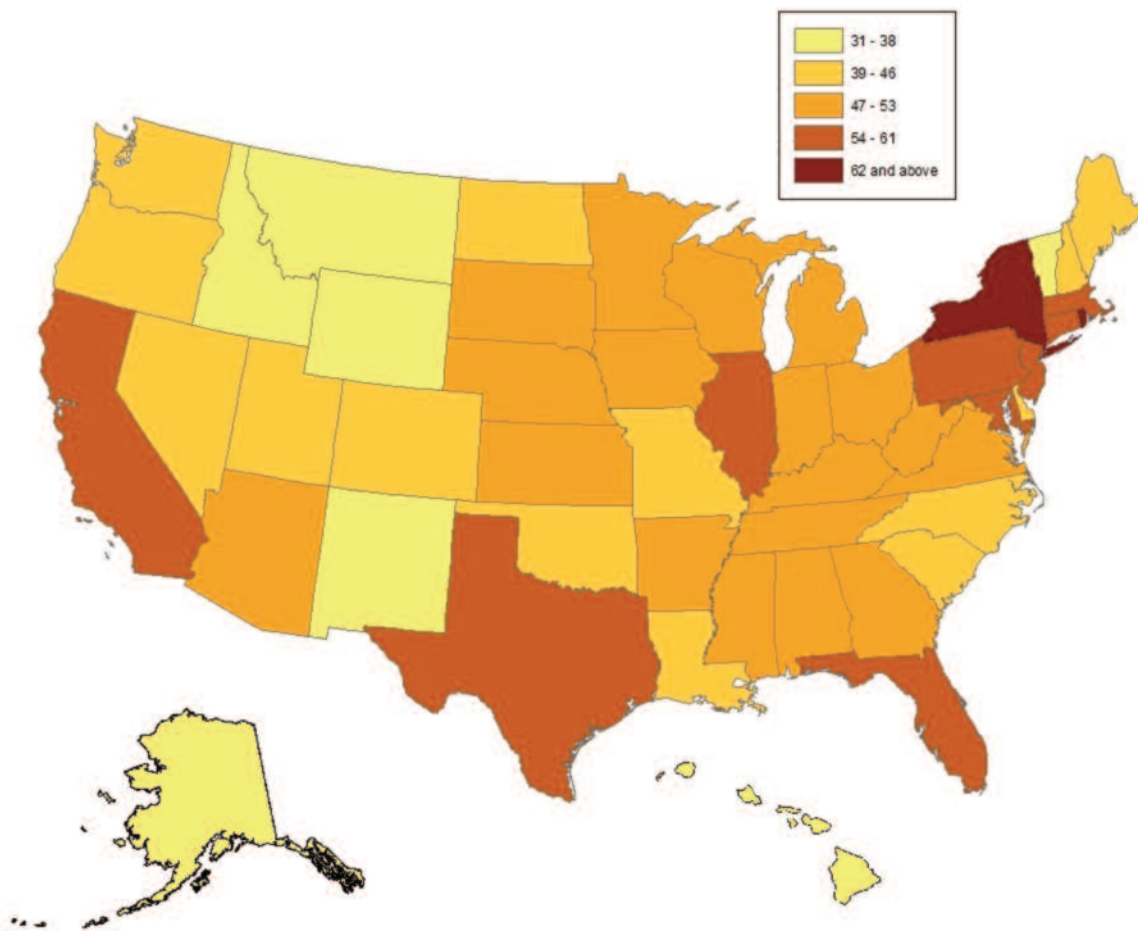


\* Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Figure 7 maps a racial segregation index calculated by Frey (2009). Dissimilarity indices range from 0 (complete integration) to 100 (complete segregation), with values indicating the percentage of the minority group that would need to move to different tracts in order to produce a distribution similar to the state. Figure 7 shows that the states where Hispanics are residentially most segregated from whites are New York (67), Rhode Island (66), Pennsylvania (61), Illinois (61) and Massachusetts (60). Of these states, only New York (23%) and Massachusetts (16.5%) have a proportion of immigrants 1.5 standard deviation above the mean (60). Because around 67% of the Hispanics in the U.S. are either first- or second- generation immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), this suggests that immigrants in the states of New York and Massachusetts experience very high levels of residential segregation from whites.

Figure 7. Hispanic-White Segregation Index, 2005-2009



\*Source: William H. Frey analysis of 2005-9 American Community Survey and 2000 US Census Cutoff of 60 index are states that have Hispanic-white segregations 1.5 standard deviations above the mean (48).

# Conclusion

Although the situation of immigrants in the United States has been studied extensively in the past, the need to understand the relationship between immigrants' educational and residential contexts only increases with time. The demographic composition of the U.S. has experienced dramatic changes and immigrants and minorities make up a larger share of the population every day. This report provides a summary of what previous studies have found regarding the relationship between school and residential segregation and immigrants' outcomes.



Leslie, a Rainier Valley (WA) student

PHOTO: WENDY CALL



*The most important conclusion of this report is that on balance, immigrant school and residential segregation is not a good thing.*

The most important conclusion of this report is that on balance, immigrant school and residential segregation is not a good thing. Therefore, in order to guarantee equal opportunities for the diverse population of immigrants in the U.S., individuals, organizations, and policy makers should work towards desegregating schools and neighborhoods where immigrant children study and live. Most of the literature finds a negative outcome for immigrants resulting from segregated schools and residential contexts, such as lower academic achievement, lower diversity acceptance, difficulties to broaden perspectives, difficulty in the adaptation into the American culture, etc. Furthermore, the quantitative analysis presented in this report finds support for the notion that the educational and residential segregation of immigrants is related to lower immigrants' academic achievement. Yet, our literature review also identifies potential mitigating effects of segregation for immigrants.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, this report



A two-way bilingual classroom in Kamas, Utah.

PHOTO: GINA CHRICHIGNO

<sup>9</sup> This finding may suggest that a critical mass of immigrant students may enhance learning and integration for immigrant students in integrated, predominantly non-immigrant schools.

recognizes that whatever advantages appear related to attending school and residing in segregated contexts are probably offset by the higher levels of poverty that typically also characterize such locations.

Findings largely reflect high levels of diversity among immigrants in terms of generation, country of origin, English language ability, socioeconomic status, and many other potentially salient factors. For example, while Hispanic immigrants tend to underperform academically and in terms of income, Asian immigrants tend to over-perform in both aspects. Furthermore, among Hispanic and Asian immigrants there are big differences depending on country of origin. Consequently, when studying immigrants one must be very cautious about making generalizing and definitive statements; what might be true for some immigrant subgroups might not apply to others. The substantial heterogeneity of the immigrant population suggests that immigrant outcome patterns are not well characterized by a single measure.

I propose certain areas for further study. First, there is a need to expand research on the unique educational experiences of various minority immigrant subgroups, considering the interplay between race and immigration status (Nguyen & Kebede, 2017). For example, there is a lacuna of research discussing the situation of Hispanic immigrants that come from South American countries, and/or studies exploring the case of Asians coming from less educated backgrounds. Second, research must be dedicated to identifying theoretical frameworks that better explain the lives of Hispanic immigrants. Currently, most of the extant theoretical literature is specific to immigrants with Asian backgrounds, and as such, may not apply equally to the lived experience of other types of immigrants. Third, given the growing proportion of immigrants in the U.S. and their potential to affect the political process, it is important to explore links between immigrant segregation and democratic participation/civic belonging (Teranishi, 2004). Fourth, research must focus on recognizing why and how segregation matters (Reardon & Owens, 2014), rather than exclusively focusing on whether there exists a relationship between segregation and immigrants' outcomes. Research should look deeper into the causal mechanism of why school and residential segregation have an impact on immigrants' outcomes. Fifth, research should explore the impact of high poverty schools and neighborhoods on immigrant educational attainment. And finally, new work should be devoted to measuring the extent of housing discrimination against Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander immigrant families.

*...immigrants' education and labor market outcomes will play a very important role in determining the nation's future.*

Immigrants and their children make up a large share of the population in the United States. Therefore, immigrants' education and labor market outcomes will play a very important role in determining the nation's future (Iceland & Wilkes, 2006). In a country that claims to advocate for equality and fairness, there is a great need to fight against immigrant school and residential segregation. This task is the responsibility not only of organizations working with and for immigrants but also of policymakers who must commit to combat immigrant segregation. As Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2016) state: "Embracing immigrant children and cultivating their full potential is the education challenge of our generation. The stakes are high: Their future is our future."



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## Appendix 1. Key Immigrant Related Characteristics, by State

State Name	Immigrant Share 2016	Hispanic Share 2009	Asian Share 2009	Hisp-White Seg Index 2005-9	Asian-White Seg 2005-9	Immigrants' Median Annual Income 2015	Difference Income Nonimmigrants vs. Immigrants 2016
ALABAMA	3.4	3.2	1.1	48	58	\$ 41,520	\$ 3,384
ALASKA	7.7	6.4	5.5	35	49	\$ 62,242	\$ 11,069
ARIZONA	13.5	30.8	2.6	50	39	\$ 40,414	\$ 13,178
ARKANSAS	4.6	6	1.2	51	59	\$ 41,218	\$ 825
CALIFORNIA	27.2	37	12.7	55	52	\$ 55,039	\$ 15,065
COLORADO	9.8	20.3	2.7	46	41	\$ 50,387	\$ 15,472
CONNECTICUT	14.4	12.3	3.6	58	42	\$ 60,893	\$ 12,480
DELAWARE	9.4	7.2	3	45	46	\$ 62,477	\$(1,299)
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	13.3	8.8	3.2	50	29	\$ 72,621	\$ 3,405
FLORIDA	20.6	21.5	2.4	56	43	\$ 43,202	\$ 7,773
GEORGIA	10.1	8.3	3	50	52	\$ 50,392	\$ 957
HAWAII	18.4	9	46.7	31	44	\$ 63,107	\$ 12,799
IDAHO	5.8	10.7	1.2	38	44	\$ 43,091	\$ 5,552
ILLINOIS	13.9	15.2	4.4	61	54	\$ 54,466	\$ 6,072
INDIANA	5.3	5.5	1.5	52	56	\$ 45,155	\$ 5,610
IOWA	5.1	4.5	1.7	50	55	\$ 41,747	\$ 13,554
KANSAS	7.1	9.3	2.3	51	53	\$45,309	\$ 9,607
KENTUCKY	3.5	2.7	1.1	50	59	\$ 43,213	\$ 2,091
LOUISIANA	4.1	3.6	1.5	43	58	\$ 42,374	\$ 3,504
MAINE	3.8	1.4	1	42	52	\$ 44,371	\$ 5,116
MARYLAND	15.3	7.2	5.2	57	51	\$ 73,723	\$ 2,522
MASSACHUSETTS	16.5	8.8	5.1	60	50	\$ 60,913	\$ 11,662
MICHIGAN	6.7	4.2	2.4	49	59	\$ 52,234	\$(1,249)
MINNESOTA	8.2	4.3	3.8	49	52	\$ 50,614	\$ 14,284
MISSISSIPPI	2	2.5	0.9	48	59	\$ 42,134	\$(1,582)
MISSOURI	4.1	3.4	1.6	44	53	\$ 48,783	\$ 1,507
MONTANA	2.1	3.1	0.7	36	46	\$ 43,658	\$ 3,568
NEBRASKA	7	8.4	1.7	52	51	\$ 38,783	\$ 17,715
NEVADA	20	26.5	6.9	42	35	\$ 47,836	\$ 6,763
NEW HAMPSHIRE	5.7	2.8	2	46	47	\$ 65,628	\$ 4,967
NEW JERSEY	22.5	16.7	7.8	59	49	\$ 66,235	\$ 8,587
NEW MEXICO	9.5	45.6	1.4	38	46	\$ 31,725	\$ 15,426
NEW YORK	23	16.8	7	67	61	\$ 53,460	\$ 9,543
NORTH CAROLINA	7.8	7.7	2.1	45	52	\$ 43,853	\$ 4,412
NORTH DAKOTA	3.2	2.3	0.9	40	53	\$ 40,068	\$ 17,783
OHIO	4.4	2.8	1.6	51	55	\$ 49,354	\$ 1,787
OKLAHOMA	5.8	8.2	1.7	45	54	\$ 42,456	\$ 6,597
OREGON	9.6	11.2	3.9	40	47	\$ 50,472	\$ 4,161
PENNSYLVANIA	6.8	5.1	2.5	61	57	\$ 51,834	\$ 4,143
RHODE ISLAND	14.1	12.1	2.8	66	50	\$ 45,503	\$ 15,710
SOUTH CAROLINA	4.8	4.5	1.3	42	50	\$ 43,892	\$ 3,581
SOUTH DAKOTA	3.6	2.9	0.9	47	50	\$ 37,923	\$ 13,465
TENNESSEE	4.8	4.2	1.4	51	56	\$ 42,428	\$ 5,110
TEXAS	17	36.9	3.5	56	53	\$ 45,326	\$ 13,407
UTAH	8.3	12.3	2.7	39	43	\$ 48,605	\$ 16,406
VERMONT	4.5	1.5	1.2	33	51	\$ 54,505	\$ 702
VIRGINIA	12.3	7.2	5	50	54	\$ 73,420	\$(7,935)
WASHINGTON	14	10.3	7.3	44	47	\$ 60,209	\$ 4,801
WEST VIRGINIA	1.7	1.2	0.7	52	63	\$ 48,460	\$(6,792)
WISCONSIN	5	5.3	2.2	53	53	\$ 47,575	\$ 8,450
WYOMING	3.2	8.1	0.9	31	54	\$ 40,145	\$ 19,544

Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) tabulation of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2016 American Community Surveys (ACS), and 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census. William H. Frey analysis of 2005-9 American Community Survey and 2000 US Census. U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Data on State Median Income from Campbell, C. & McMullen, L., 2017.









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