tion and renewal of the downtown business core. Under the federal urban renewal program, cities employed federal aid to clear downtown and near-downtown sites for new convention centers. Under the Urban Development Action Grant program, communities built hotels and convention centers in an effort to lure visitors to their central business districts. Today, these same communities continue to invest their dollars, and such federal grant aid as they can secure, in similar efforts to redeem declining downtowns with dollars from tourists and convention goers.

All too often, these efforts have assumed that saving a downtown saves an entire city, that the economic well-being of a Cleveland or Cincinnati or St. Louis depended upon a central business district attractive to people from somewhere else. And where the same cities faced fiscal problems and constraints that made it impossible for them to invest in new convention centers, stadiums, arenas, and shopping malls, the development of these public facilities was regionalized—shifted to the county, metropolitan region, or state level.

Thus, even as the circumstances of city governments have become more perilous, convention centers have managed to stand above the storm, drawing upon the political resources of state governments or broader metropolitan areas. This regionalization of convention-center finance stands in sharp contrast to the limited resources available for other physical and capital needs in older urban centers, to say nothing of the demand for basic public services. Yet, at the same time that urban analysts have argued in favor of moving beyond the limits of current cities to larger, more geographically and economically inclusive metropolitan governments, downtown interests and big-city business leaders have adopted precisely that strategy to secure their very different view of urban revival—protecting downtown values from "erosion."

Are the children of today's immigrants making it?

JOEL PERLMANN AND ROGER WALDINGER

THIRTY years after the Hart-Celler Act brought a wave of new immigrants to the United States, their children are reaching adulthood. These children of immigrants have only recently become a sizable presence in American schools and are just now moving from the schools into the labor market. But recent studies by Herbert Gans, Alejandro Portes, Ruben Rumbaut, and Min Zhou—all leading students of American ethnic life—outline, with clarity and acuity, reasons for concern: Having originated from everywhere but Europe, today's newcomers are visibly identifiable in a mainly white society still not cured of its racism. Moreover, changes in the structure of the U.S. economy aggravate discrimination's ill effects. While the poorly educated immigrant parents seem to have had no trouble finding jobs at the bottom of the economic ladder, the shift toward knowledge-intensive jobs means that the next generation will have to do well in school if they wish to surpass the achievements of their parents. But, with big-city schools in more trouble

than ever before, the outlook for successful passage through the educational system seems dim. As second generation expectations are unlikely to remain unchanged, we can count on a mismatch between the aspirations of immigrant children and requirements of the jobs that they seek.

The other major factor influencing scholarly views of today's immigrant children has to do with the past. The descendants of the last great migration started out at the very bottom, but they have now either caught up with, or surpassed, their WASP betters of yore. While one might find cause for comfort in their success story, future developments are likely to follow a different, less hopeful path. To begin with, the people of the last great immigration, from the 1890s to the 1920s, shared a common European heritage with the then-dominant WASPs, blunting discrimination's edge. The old factory-based economy also allowed for a multi-generational move up the totem pole. Immigrant children could do better if they just hung on through the high-school years, after which time well-paying manufacturing jobs would await them. The third or fourth generation would continue on through college and beyond, completing the climb from proletarian to plumber to professional. By contrast, the recent restructuring of the U.S. economy gives the children of today's immigrants no time to play catch-up, requiring strong and early performance as the condition for advancement.

Is the pessimism of Gans, Portes, Zhou, and others justified? When we consider second-generation upward mobility in the past, and compare it to the prospects of second-generation mobility today, we think not.

Second-generation lessons

The 1890-1920 wave, heavily dominated by immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and the last mass immigration to occur before legislation choked off the European flow, provides the crucial reference point. Compared to their predecessors, the immigrants of the turn of the century were far more likely to converge on the nation's cities, and far less likely to move into agriculture—in striking parallel to the situation today. These immigrants of the turn of the century

encountered an economy very different from the postindustrial capitalism of late-twentieth-century America. However, their situation was far closer to the present than to the American economy of 1850 or before.

The 1890-1920 wave included relatively few immigrants from Mexico, Asia, and the Caribbean, of course, which some will argue makes comparisons impossible. We disagree. The issue is whether today's immigrant children are likely to adapt in ways that parallel or diverge from the trajectory followed by their second-generation predecessors who were overwhelmingly of southern and eastern European origins. The real question about race is whether being an Asian, black, or Mexican immigrant is a big handicap for today's immigrants, a handicap that distinguishes them from southern and eastern Europeans of the last wave. Asian, black, and Mexican immigrants faced especially destructive discrimination in 1900; the situation is radically different today.

The great majority of the 1890-1920 immigrants entered the American economy and class structure near the bottom, dramatically below the average native-born family's position. True, there were entrepreneurs among the immigrants—mainly persons with a background in trade or crafts (as among Jews) or unskilled laborers who somehow managed to move into entrepreneurial endeavors. Nonetheless, in 1910, immigrants from all major groups, save the British, were far more likely to work at the least skilled jobs than were native whites of native parentage, and all were less likely to work in white collar jobs of any sort. Low levels of literacy also distinguished these groups from natives and from late-nineteenth-century immigrants from northwestern Europe. Just over half of the "other eastern and southern Europeans" reported that they could read, and just over half of the Italians could not speak English, for example. Though Jews entered America at occupational and literacy levels above their counterparts from southern and eastern Europe, they still began with quite a disadvantage compared to the native born. The children of immigrants were less likely than the children of natives to remain in school, and those who remained in school were more likely to have fallen behind in grade attainment.

Getting ahead: the historical record

There are two kinds of studies of the economic mobility of European immigrants. The first is a set of historical studies of mobility among European immigrants and their children. The second is based chiefly on the "ancestry" question of the 1980 and 1990 Censuses; it provides novel information on individuals who are later-generation descendants of immigrants—third, fourth, fifth, or subsequent generations. These two strands of research treat populations that do not quite connect. The first group focuses on immigrants and their children; the second, on descendants of any generation. The research results highlight this gap: The historical studies of social mobility tend to show that ethnic differences in the economic standing of groups remained very important into the second generation; the outcome studies based on ancestry show that eventually these differences disappeared.

The studies of social mobility in America were mostly conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, when they were a staple among the then new social historians. Associated most closely with the name of Stephan Thernstrom, these studies came to a crashing halt in the late seventies, in part because of an increasing disenchantment with quantification among historians, and in part because the research on social mobility in particular quickly reached a conceptual impasse. These studies had sought to explore the extent to which upward mobility characterized American life. Several conclusions emerged: first, that social mobility in America had indeed been considerable; second, that it was not as great as stated in the most naive versions of the rags-to-riches stories of the Horatio Alger type; and third, that the quality of the data, not to mention the quantitative training of most social historians, was too poor to determine whether the extent of American social mobility varied much across time and place and whether American social mobility differed much from European rates of mobility.

The historians were also interested in educational differences among ethnic groups, but historical information on school achievement was rare. The U. S. Census began asking about grades of school completed only in 1940, and the question

that had been asked earlier, whether a given child was in school in the census year, was a poor proxy for school performance. The studies that did manage to include information on schooling supported the generalization, obvious from published surveys of the time, that the children of native-born parents were more likely to be in school, and in the higher grades, than were the children of immigrants. Some immigrant groups differed dramatically in the amount of schooling their children received, although much of this difference is easily explained by dramatic differences in the levels of economic well-being of the families. Nonetheless, there do appear to have been some significant ethnic differences in years of schooling completed by different ethnic groups, even when all measurable family background factors are taken into account. The different levels of schooling between the Jews and other immigrant groups from southern and eastern Europe, such as the Italians, is a case in point.

Another easily observed line of division is between immigrants from less and more economically developed parts of Europe (as for example, the Slavs and Italians, on the one hand, and the British, Germans, or Scandinavians, on the other, circa 1910). The extent to which schooling contributed to upward mobility for different ethnic groups varied for two reasons. First, the children of some immigrant groups received more schooling than the children of other groups. Second, even comparable amounts of schooling may have been somewhat more beneficial (measured in terms of occupational or income attainments) to the children of one immigrant group than to the children of another immigrant group—for many reasons. Again, contrasts between Jews and others have been made in the literature. However, the truly glaring ethnic difference in terms of returns to schooling involves the low degree of occupational advancement experienced by relatively better educated blacks in the North compared to various groups of whites with the same education.

For our purposes, the most important observation to be made about the historical literature is that it raised the question of the *extent* of mobility by group, much more than the *paths* to upward mobility. But it is precisely the latter question that lies at the heart of today's debate. Did this second

generation owe its mobility to the availability of semi-skilled factory jobs? And does the decline in those jobs today mean that progress is now blocked?

Whatever the differences among European groups historically, the ancestry studies from the 1980-90 censuses by Stanley Lieberson, Mary Waters, and others demonstrate that, for European-origin groups, socioeconomic assimilation has been largely accomplished. The rank ordering of well-being today is generally unrelated to that at the turn of the century, with only Jews deviating markedly from this generalization. However, the matter of mobility pathways is once again largely unaddressed.

We note one curious and important exception to the sociological studies of ancestry that stress convergence. George Borjas, a leading policy analyst on immigration issues, shows that 1910 literacy levels in the immigrants' country of origin were correlated to the economic position of their descendants for almost a century. Of course, there may be convergence today, or differences may last. Nevertheless, because Borjas's writings are widely read and cited by policy analysts in connection with immigration-restriction issues, this divergence of emphasis regarding the long-term character of immigrant absorption should not be ignored.

We believe, considering all this research, that the "catching up" occurred not in the first or second generations but in those later generations on whom data are hard to obtain. By the third generation, the levels of intermarriage among groups of European origin became very high. The ancestry question bypasses this problem by throwing it in the lap of the respondent: With whom does he or she identify? Yet, if our goal is to understand socioeconomic mobility from the second generation to the present-day generation, we need the sort of data the genealogist wants—the actual ethnic ancestors of individuals, not the subjective identities of the present generation. Much more than the scarcity and complexity of data are involved here. The substantive significance of all this is that the socioeconomic assimilation of the immigrants' descendants occurred at the same time that the meaning of ethnic descent became complex and indistinct.

The Mexican factor

Given the distinctive economic characteristics of the post-1965 immigrants, one might not have expected the discussions of their children's prospects to have turned so pessimistic so quickly. In contrast to the immigrants of 1890-1920, concentrated at the bottom of the occupational distribution, socioeconomic diversity is a salient feature of the new immigrants.

High-skilled immigrants have played a modest, but significant, role in immigration to the United States ever since the enactment of the Hart-Celler Act in 1965. Notwithstanding charges that America's immigrants are of "declining quality," the 1990 Census found that a college degree was as common among all immigrants as among natives (one out of five). Moreover, the high skilled are often present at levels well above the U.S. average, with the college-graduate share ranging from 27 percent among Russians to 65 percent among Indians. Consequently, a good proportion of the recent arrivals begin not at the bottom but in the middle class or above. In contemporary Los Angeles, for example, coveted professional occupations have become immigrant concentrations. More than 35 percent of the pharmacists in the Los Angeles region are foreign born, as are more than 25 percent of the dentists, and more than 20 percent of the engineers, computer specialists, and physicians.

At the same time, many of today's immigrants do start at the bottom. Thus, in 1990, 5 percent of all U.S.-born adults, but 18 percent of foreign-born adults, had not received any secondary schooling. We can refine this contemporary native-immigrant comparison in a crucial way: A great share of the immigrants coming in at the bottom are from Mexico. Indeed, in 1990, 22 percent of the foreign-born population in the United States was born in Mexico; the next most prominent source country, the Philippines, accounted for less than 5 percent. If we look at the immigrants from the many other sending countries—eight-tenths of the whole—we find that the educational achievements of native- and foreign-born adults no longer appear very different. The foreign born are actually more likely to have reached college than the native born. In other words, were it not for the immigration of Mexicans, immigration would be 80 percent as large as the current one,

and its members, on average, would begin their progress through the American economy no worse off, on average, than other Americans who are not immigrants. The usual generalizations about contemporary immigration provide no hint of this reality.

Mexicans loom large among the foreign-born population, but even more so among the children of the foreign born.

TABLE 1

Characteristics of Immigrant Children, aged 0-17, 1990

	1st Gen.	2nd Gen.	All Imm. Kids	3rd-plus
Head College Graduate				
Total	20%	22%	21%	23%
Mexican	3%	4%	4%	8%
Non-Mexican	27%	30%	30%	23%
Head Single Parents				
Total	25%	18%	20%	25%
Mexican	23%	19%	20%	39%
Non-Mexican	25%	17%	19%	25%
Head Upper White-Collar				
Total	16%	22%	21%	25%
Mexican	4%	6%	6%	13%
Non-Mexican	21%	30%	28%	25%

Source: Oropesa and Landale, 1995

Note: 1st Gen. = born abroad; 2nd Gen. = born in U.S. of at least one foreign-born parent; All Imm. Kids = first plus second generations.

Roughly one out of every three immigrant children has at least one Mexican-born parent. Because those parents live under depressed socioeconomic circumstances, the size and characteristics of the Mexican population strongly influence the overall profile of today's second generation. Table 1 supplements the usual comparison of the children of immigrants and natives with a further contrast between Mexicans and all other immigrants. The four indicators displayed in Table 1—percent of children living in households where the head is on public assistance, or a single parent, or a college graduate, or employed in an upper white-collar occupation—are based on research done by others and not meant to be determinative. Still, they too suggest a pattern more nuanced than one would expect given the prevailing view of the second generation. On

three of the four indicators, the children of all immigrants are living in less desirable circumstances than their native-born counterparts. But that disadvantage disappears when the Mexican population is excluded from the analysis. Indeed, according to these indicators, the children of the other foreign born are better off than the children of the native born.

One is hard pressed to argue that today's immigrant children—Mexicans excepted—are starting out from circumstances less favorable than those of the past. And they may indeed be better: To note that 30 percent of today's non-Mexican second generation lives in a household where the head has a college degree is no trivial observation in light of the historical experience—especially when the level for all natives is seven percentage points lower.

Regardless of comparisons to immigrants past, today's debate asks about the effect of the "new economy." While the new economy may render the children of non-Mexican immigrants vulnerable, it must be having about the same influence on the children of the native born. The new economy may indeed confront children with "missing rungs" on the ladder—but no more so, on average, than it does for children of native-born families. The Mexican immigrant population, therefore, stands most at risk; and its magnitude makes immigrants as a whole appear distinctively exposed to the winds of economic change. By contrast, at the turn of the century, no single group could have altered the generalization that most immigrants were much more likely than natives to start out near the bottom. That generalization applied to every one of the major southern and eastern European groups—the relatively better-skilled Jews included.

Not black and white

But what about race? The European immigrants of 1890-1920, write Portes and Zhou, were "uniformly white"; consequently, "skin color reduced a major barrier to entry into the American mainstream." Gans concurs: "While dark-skinned immigrants from overseas cultures will also acculturate, racial discrimination will not encourage their assimilation, at least not into white society."

"Race," as historian Barbara Fields has argued, explains

nothing but is something that has to be explained. So contentions such as these beg the question at hand: Under what conditions do such distinctions among groups gain significance? A look at other societies demonstrates that neither skin color nor any other physical attribute is a necessary condition for the erection of racial divisions. The central complaint of modern European anti-Semites was precisely that the Jews had become indistinguishable from everyone else. And current French attitudes are far less antagonistic to black Africans or Antilleans than to North Africans. Yet the latter are frequently blond and of fair complexion.

We may see nineteenth-century European immigrants as uniformly "white" today. But that is not the way they were seen then. John Higham's classic, *Strangers in the Land*, showed the influence of racial thinking—with its distinctions among "Nordic," "Alpine," and "Mediterranean" races—common among intellectual and political elites who framed the immigration-restriction legislation of the 1920s. As applied to the European immigrants, those racial classifications often employed visible physical features, including skin color. In the nineteenth century, the Irish were considered a "race" and regularly characterized as "savage," "simian," "low-browed," and "bestial." Black Americans were referred to as "smoked Irishmen," suggesting that these two groups were then looked at through a remarkably similar racial lens. Later observers stressed the "Saracen blood" of the southern Italians, whose "dark complexion ... sometimes resembles African more than Caucasian hues." Similar doubts about the "whiteness" of immigrants were extended to Slavs and Jews.

Moreover, these racial divisions faded at a very gradual pace. Social scientists today will make sport of turn-of-the-century sociologist E. A. Ross, whose book *The Old World and the New* contains such gems as this quote from a physician who claimed that "the Slavs are immune to certain kinds of dirt. They can stand what would kill a white man." As late as 1945, a Universiy of Chicago sociologist, W. L. Warner, and his co-author, Leo Srole, could distinguish between "light" and "dark" "Caucasoids"; the latter, "a mixture of Caucasoid and Mongoloid" blood, were expected to undergo a glacially paced assimilation—anywhere from six generations to "a very long time in the future which is not yet discernible."

It could not have been more than a few years after 1945 that Warner and Srole's "dark Caucasoids" became "white ethnics." Racial perceptions changed as the Irish, Poles, Italians, and Jews moved ahead; in this sense, for the descendants of the European immigrants, race was an achieved, not an ascribed, status. Yet today we are told that the earlier immigrants were able to move ahead because they were white, and that the immigrants of today will have trouble doing so because they are not white. At best, this view drastically needs to be fleshed out with historical detail and more nuance; at worst, it mistakes cause and effect.

The new immigrants and blacks

The recent historical treatment of "whiteness" attends to the processes by which European immigrants distanced themselves from natives of African descent. In the words of social historian Robert Orsi, "Proximity—real and imagined—to the dark-skinned other was pivotal to the emergence" of the hyphenated identities that the European ethnics established in their own quest for acceptance in America. The struggle for place in a contested, ethnic order provided ample motivations for the newcomers to resolve any ambiguity over how their racial identity was to be defined. As Orsi writes, the "effort to establish the border against the dark-skinned other required an intimate struggle, a contest against the initial uncertainty over which side of the racial dichotomy the swarthy immigrants were on and against the facts of history and geography that inscribed this ambiguity on the urban landscape." Labor competition furnished additional incentives, though, as the Italians often found themselves pitted against the Irish, and the Irish against the Germans, the conflict over jobs does not suffice to explain why they all became white. But they did; and, in becoming white, the immigrants and their descendants also became party to strategies of social closure that maintained black exclusion and ensured more stable employment and better wages for others of their own kind.

Can today's immigrants draw on a similar ethnic card? The answer is not yet in, but there is no question that they certainly can try, especially when it comes to differentiating them-

selves from poorer, less educated African Americans who fall at the bottom of the racial order. We all know about the tensions that suffuse the relations between African Americans and the new middleman minorities that run businesses in the Harlems and Watts of today's United States. These conflicts enable entrepreneurial, but visibly identifiable, immigrants to move to the advantaged, "white" side of America's racial division.

It is not that difficult to imagine that professional or entrepreneurial immigrants find rewards for falling on the "right side" of the color divide. We suggest that the same can even be said for the labor migrants, whose presence so many Americans now seem to dislike. That distaste notwithstanding, urban employers in New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago have come to prefer them to native-born American blacks.

As in the past, such racial conflict coexists with tensions among workers of diverging national or regional attachments. In Roger Waldinger's interviews with employers in the Los Angeles region, he repeatedly heard reports of bad blood between Mexicans and various Central American groups, as well as of intra-ethnic conflict within Central American populations. Nevertheless, far more Latino hostility seems to be directed towards blacks. "And I have to tell you that there is natural resentment between the two races," reported one manager referring to blacks and Latinos. "They do not get along well together in manufacturing." The owner of a large furniture company, with almost 40 years in the business, reported that

> the shop has always been 98 percent Latino. I have hired some blacks. But you put two men on a machine, Mexicans won't work with a black. [They will] aggravate him till he quits. They can't make it inter-racially. I'm not going to be a sociologist and tell them "you're in the same boat, you ought to work together." The only place where we have blacks is in the trucks, because they work by themselves.

Today, as at the turn of the century, the second generation will benefit from their parents' efforts to distance themselves from native blacks. But there is a rejoinder to the argument just advanced, namely the contention that the geographic and ethnic origins of the new immigrants leave them in no position to play the "race card." From this perspective, the influence of the past is important in that it defines today's newcomers as "people of color." Consequently, immigrants from Latin American, the Caribbean, or Asia will not be able to avoid being treated like a caste, unlike earlier immigrants.

One need only look at the present dynamics of white-Asian relations today to realize that the argument for this sort of historical continuity falls short. It is not just that legislated racial divisions now seem curiously barbarous; in crucial respects, the eradication of the legal barriers is paralleled by changes in social conditions. Asians at the bottom of the class structure there may be; but Asians throughout the class structure there are as well, in impressive numbers. And the educational achievement of large numbers of Asians ensures that, for significant numbers of second-generation Asians, the disappearance of low-skilled factory jobs will not be relevant to their economic advancement. Moreover, trends in intermarriage between the offspring of new Asian immigrants are far closer to historic trends in immigrant-native intermarriage than to historic trends in black-white intermarriage.

In contrast to the pattern that prevailed during the great immigrations of 1830-1920, a plurality of "races" is now evident in large numbers, nationwide. At the same time, white, Asian, Hispanic, and Native-American groups are intermingling in large numbers. The conjunction of these two facts alone may help diminish the significance of the black-white divide in American life. Another relevant factor is that a large portion of the numerous Latin American arrivals come with an interracial legacy, having "Indian" and/or black ancestors as well as white ancestors, adding a new layer of complexity to the race equation in America. The arrival of these new immigrants may end up helping to erode the centrality of the black-white divide.

The end of classifications?

Acknowledging these tendencies, we think, yields a pessimistic and an optimistic scenario. The pessimistic scenario suggests that the crucial line will remain between blacks and all others. Some "segmented assimilation" will occur, leading a

fraction of the second generation to integrate into the black population and the rest into some, as yet, undefined category that may not be "white" in any meaningful sense. All we lack to make this scenario more plausible is a term in the popular culture to replace white—a term that can include Asians and Hispanics easily enough and that essentially means "native-born and not black." If that term does emerge, it would be a worrisome development.

The more optimistic forecast rests on the evolution of black-white relations themselves. It may seem worse than polyannish in a period of black-white tension to insist on the prospect for qualitative change in relations across that divide. Nevertheless, during the last presidential race, Republican leaders donned sackcloth and ashes because Colin Powell would not run as their candidate for the presidency. By contrast, during the previous great wave of immigration, a president who ate lunch at the White House with a black was obliged to claim that the luncheon was necessitated by busy schedules and was not a social function.

One needn't argue that black-white dynamics are at a happy pass to understand that they have shifted enormously for the better in the past six decades. It is significant that black-white intermarriage remains low; but, with 10 percent of young black men now marrying whites, intermarriage is no longer negligible and continues to increase. If the social class and educational situation of inner-city blacks is a national disaster, there is, nevertheless, also a serious growth in the black middle class and in black collegiate enrollment. The point is simply that the black-white divide, while remaining salient, is different from what it once was.

One measure of change, even in the most recent years, is the fate of the phrase, "the Browning of America." It no longer seems likely that the crucial divide of the future will be between non-Hispanic whites and all others who would be loosely united as "browns." Indeed, the term "the Browning of America" is as common today as was the term "the Greening of America" a generation ago—and about as reliable in predictive value. Another measure, along a different dimension, is the problem that federal agencies have in their attempts to fit the children of racial intermarriages into their racial classification systems. In our reading, these problems should be viewed as symptoms of transition to a time when those classifications seem quaintly passé.

Quotas, Jews, and Asians

There is little question that many, possibly even most, of today's second-generation children are heading upward, as exemplified by the large number of Asian students enrolled in the nation's leading universities, some the children of workers, others the descendants of immigrants who moved right into the middle class. The rapid Asian ascent evokes parallels with the past, most clearly the first- and second-generation Russian Jews who began appearing at the City College of New York, and then Harvard, Columbia, and other prestigious schools shortly after 1900. If there is similarity between past and present experiences of second-generation movement into the middle class, we are more struck by the distinctive institutional reactions to the Jewish, and later the Asian, inflows into higher education.

The history of the quotas against Jewish students is well known. By the second decade of the twentieth century, the number of Jews seeking admission to elite academic institutions was still a relatively small minority of the Jewish age cohort, but the numbers were nonetheless large enough to create a notable presence and to discomfit the then-dominant WASPS. By the end of the 1920s, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and a host of other institutions, including public state universities, had all adopted measures that restricted Jewish enrollment. Professional schools followed suit. Decisive in changing these restrictive policies was the new legal and social environment that emerged during World War II and thereafter. By the 1960s, public opinion had changed, along with the law, ending the era of anti-Jewish discrimination in higher education.

An echo of this earlier controversy arose in the 1980s, amidst charges that prestigious colleges, private and public, had established quotas against Asians, just as they had against Jews several decades before. Asian students with records comparable to those of their white counterparts were not doing as well when it came to admission to the most selective, private institutions.

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And Asian enrollments, which had been rising quite sharply in the late 1970s and early 1980s, suddenly flattened out at schools like Princeton, Brown, Harvard, and Stanford.

If the pattern was reminiscent of the earlier Jewish experience and the underlying cause familiar—competition with white elites over scarce and valued resources—the controversy worked itself out very differently. In contrast to the earlier experience, Asian administrators, faculty, and students were numerous and influential, sufficiently so that their voices could not be ignored. Several of the universities accused of discrimination—Princeton, Harvard, Stanford, and Brown, to name just a few—took a critical look at their own admissions practices and then took steps that led to significant increases in Asian-American admissions.

Unlike the Jews, who in the 1920s and 1930s were isolated politically and intimidated by a rising tide of anti-Semitism, Asian-American organizations were able and willing to use political influence; which, in turn, galvanized the scrutiny of outside monitors. In California, admissions policies at UC Berkeley became highly suspect; then, as political scientist Don Nakanishi has described, the state's leading Democratic politicians "held numerous fact-finding hearings, intervened by bringing together university officials and Asian-American community leaders, passed special resolutions on admissions, and had the state Auditor General undertake an unprecedented audit of admissions policies." In Washington, both liberals and conservatives kept the spotlight on allegations of discrimination in admissions. The Office of Civil Rights undertook a major investigation of Harvard, eventually clearing it of charges of discrimination (though it did find that Asians suffered from preferences granted to alumni children and athletes).

There are a number of lessons to be drawn from the story of Asian and Jewish efforts to scale the ivy walls. In the strongly nativist, anti-Semitic environment of the 1920s and 1930s, organized efforts to overturn discriminatory practices were of little avail. Hence, the second generation was forced to fall back on the institutions of the ethnic community, which by the 1930s included civil-service employment as well as a large business sector. Changed power relations after World War II upended the exclusionary practices put into place during the inter-war years. Once quotas were removed, the Jewish presence on campuses swelled.

The Asian controversy arose in a completely different historical moment: Earlier struggles against discrimination—the struggles over the Jewish quotas themselves, the post-World War II political climate, and, not least, the civil-rights movement—had changed the rules of the game. It had become far more difficult for dominant groups to engage in strategies of social closure than it had been earlier in the century. The advantages derived from the more open society of the late twentieth century should temper generalizations about the determining position of skin pigmentation in the fate of the new second generation of immigrants.

The hourglass economy

But there is still the change in the economy to be considered. Portes and Zhou, as well as Gans, argue that the mismatch between aspiration and opportunity is greater today than before. In their view, the conundrum of the contemporary second generation lies in the continuing transformation of the U.S. economy. The manufacturing economy of old allowed immigrants and their descendants to advance economically and socially in the course of three of four generations. By contrast, occupational segmentation today has (in the words of Portes and Zhou) "reduced the opportunities for incremental upward mobility through well-paid, blue-collar positions." The declining viability of small business is thought to reduce the possibilities for advancement among immigrants' descendants. And the general stalling of mobility reduces the chances for ethnic succession: Jews and Italians followed the Irish into the public sector, as the latter moved on to more lucrative pursuits. Today's civil servants are unlikely to enjoy the same options, closing off this path of mobility for today's second-generation immigrants. Thus emerges the "hourglass economy"—many good jobs at top, many bad jobs at bottom, few decent jobs in the middle. How then will the second generation move up? This economic problem, coupled with the racial origins of the second generation, drives scholars like Portes and Zhou and Gans to their pessimism.

An exception to the hourglass effect is the offspring of the

large fraction of immigrants who arrive with useful skills and educational attainments—let us say, educational attainments comparable to the median among American white workers. These immigrants can and do support an extended education for their second-generation children. The children of immigrants comprise 41 percent of the first-year students enrolled in the City University of New York—a rate that leaves immigrant children over-represented in the third largest public system of higher education in the United States by a factor of almost 50 percent. The New York experience is not unique: Nationwide, 74 percent of all college-age immigrants are enrolled in some form of post-secondary schooling, as opposed to 65 percent among the native born; likewise, in-school rates for 18- to 21-year-old immigrants are above native-born levels.

But what of the rest? First, recall that it is not only the supposed decline in demand for low-skilled work in the "new economy" that matters; there is also the matter of the supply of low-skilled workers, given several decades of high-volume immigration. The ratio of the two is what determines the fortunes of low-skilled workers, whether native or foreign born.

But this consideration aside, it does seem likely that the less educationally successful of today's second generation, especially those from the immigrant families entering near the bottom, will run into trouble. But do they differ, in this respect, from their counterparts of the past? Questions about the future of yesterday's second generation were a commonplace earlier in the century. At the time, contemporaries did not fret over the possibility that large numbers of jobs would remain at the bottom of an hourglass economy. Nevertheless, they observed that increasing proportions of decent jobs required extended levels of schooling. They also pointed out that the children of workers, generally, and the children of immigrant workers, in particular, would not obtain those jobs, unless they remained in school longer than it seemed their wont to do. The situation is remarkably similar today.

Finally, it should be emphasized that most employed persons without college degrees are neither immigrants, nor their children, nor native-born racial minorities. Thus, if the new hourglass economy obstructs the upward mobility of the children of immigrants or blacks, it thereby confronts American

society, and all of its working-class families, with a very serious problem. For once it would seem true that we really can ignore ethnicity and focus on class.

Second-generation revolt?

The immigrants arrive willing to do the jobs that natives won't. However low the jobs may fall in the U.S. hierarchy, they still offer wages and compensation superior to the opportunities back home. Having been exposed to different wage and consumption standards from the start, the children want more. Such attitudinal changes inhere in the immigration process itself. Following MIT economist Michael Piore, who discussed this pattern in his 1979 study of migrant labor, *Birds of Passage*, we call this "second generation revolt." But Portes and Zhou emphasize an additional, alarming factor. Today's immigrants converge on central cities, where they live in close contact with earlier established, native minorities. Proximity to African Americans and Mexican Americans yields exposure to the "adversarial" norms of "marginalized youth." As immigrant children come into contact with the reactive subculture developed by native minorities, they undergo a process of "socialization" that "can effectively block parental plans for intergenerational mobility."

In the concept of an "oppositional" or "adversarial" culture we see the influence of the anthropologist John Ogbu. According to him, African Americans and other, supposedly similar groups respond to the experience of oppression and exploitation in America by creating an oppositional culture. On the one hand, the legacy of discrimination breeds ties of extraordinary, kinlike solidarity. Not only does group loyalty take primacy over the quest for individual achievement but any effort to break out from the pack is seen as a betrayal of the group and appropriately sanctioned. On the other hand, African Americans have pursued a strategy of cultural inversion, as have the other subordinated groups, responding to mainstream society's rejection by repudiating the mainstream and its values. As anthropologist Douglas Foley puts it, "This sort of occupational logic dictates that they must choose between being occupationally successful (white) and culturally successful (black). Quite ironically, the battle to preserve their ethnic

culture becomes the very thing that dooms castelike minorities of color to academic failure."

But just as second-generation revolt is not a phenomenon distinctive to African Americans, or Ogbu's other caste-like minorities, there is good reason to assume that an oppositional culture does not characterize today's second generation alone. As we've emphasized, discrimination and stigmatization were well-known to the earlier generations of European immigrants. Whatever the faults of today's multicultural education, it could not possibly be as dismissive of the immigrants' background and culture as were the Americanization programs of the 1920s or 1930s. A common reaction to Americanization must have been resentment and opposition.

Nor should we forget that the virtue of solidarity has always been especially cherished by the working class. Consider Pete Hamill's memoir, *A Drinking Life*, about growing up as the son of an Irish immigrant in Brooklyn during the 1940s:

> In the final three years of grammar school at Holy Name, I always finished at the top of the class in grades, averaging 98 or 99, was placed on the honor roll and granted awards for general excellence. But there was an assumption that if you got good grades you must be soft, a sissy, or an AK—an ass kisser. This was part of the most sickening aspect of Irish-American life in those days: the assumption that if you rose above an acceptable level of mediocrity, you were guilty of the sin of pride. You were to accept your place and stay in it for the rest of your life; the true rewards would be given to you in heaven, after you were dead. There was ferocious pressure to conform, to avoid breaking out of the pack; self-denial was the supreme virtue ... it was arrogant, a sin of pride, to conceive of a life beyond the certainties, rhythms, and traditions of the neighborhood. Sometimes the attitude was expressed directly, by my friends or the Big Guys, or some of the men from Rattigan's [bar]. More often, it was implied. But the Neighborhood view of the world had fierce power. Who did I think I was? Who the *fuck* did I think I was? Forget these kid's dreams, I told myself, give 'em up. Do what everybody else does: drop out of high school, go to work, join the army or navy, get married, settle down, have children.

That the precise cultural content of the division related by Hamill is not that which Ogbu describes does not mean that it was less oppositional.

Youth rebellion of old

Caroline Ware's book on the Italians of Greenwich Village in the 1920s and the 1930s sounds the same themes of skepticism toward the value of education, combined with cultural conflicts between school and community. "Among the boys in the district," she wrote, "it had always been very much the code to hate school. Although there is nothing unique in boys' antagonism to school, the intensity with which the local boys hated school was conspicuous." As Ware tells it, conflict had various roots: The curriculum and teachings had little in common with what the children learned in the streets; the schools disregarded the cultural background of the children; they also rejected the behavioral norms that the children had acquired at home, which "often set the children vigorously against the school." Writing contemporaneously, Leonard Covello recounts a similar story about the Italians of East Harlem; there the accent lies on the extraordinary cohesion of the Italian community and on the way in which parental pressures and children's preferences converged to produce high dropout rates by the high-school years.

Composed 25 years later, Herbert Gans's description of the Italians of Boston's West End, *The Urban Villagers*, differs only in degree: The students are poorly motivated; the parents are ambivalent; the schools clash with the attractions of the children's peer groups; the "junior high school principal's main problem [is] truancy, and the parental acquiescence concerning this." The school was "anathema to many" of the teenagers, in large measure for the reasons adduced by Ware 25 years earlier: It sought to train them for a way of life diametrically opposed to the one they had been prepared for at home. And a good part of that opposition stemmed from the parents' rejection of middle-class society and its values as well as their hostility toward individualistic striving.

Moreover, the accommodation to the routine of working-class life was often made grudgingly, and few of the 16-year-old boys who dropped out of high school, as did Hamill, made a beeline for the factory. Instead, they spent their time on the street corner, hanging around, drinking liquor, and getting into fights; Hamill describes the "times of the gangs," in pages differing little from those of today's newspaper, only in that the arsenal of violence was not as complete. Whether gangs

were present or not, the nature of the youth labor market made for an extended "moratorium," as economist Paul Osterman termed it, in which youth were excluded from positions of the primary or craft type. Instead, they bounced from one more or less casual job to another. Unstable employment was compatible with that form of protest against the routines and aims of both school and work described by Gans as "action-orientation": Youth "want the material appurtenances of modern life—especially cars and spending money—and they want to be freed from the routine-seeking society which 'bugs'—or imposes on—them." The youth labor market provided plenty of jobs, however boring and badly paid. With such bland alternatives, action-orientation could persist until other commitments forced a reckoning with routinization.

Thus the historical evidence suggests that an "oppositional culture" can emerge from the immigrant working-class experience without exposure to a "proximal host" comprised of visible, stigmatized, native-born minorities. It also suggests that the time frame for immigrant accommodation was extended and that we should not expect the transition to take longer today. Are there subtle differences between the rebellion of Piore's second generation, Ogbu's caste-like minorities, and the youth passing through Portes and Zhou's lowest path of segmented assimilation? There may be. But we are struck by how much is common among these descriptions, and how much of it is class based. And so we are reminded of the findings of the English sociologist Paul Willis. In describing rebellion among English youth, he shows us working-class adolescent revolt, pure and simple, with no ethnic dimension whatsoever.

Whether mainly or only partly a class phenomenon, the youthful revolt described in the paragraphs above is almost certainly conditioned by the subsequent opportunities that working-class children encounter. School could be flouted with relative impunity, as long as there was a vibrant factory-based economy accessible to unsuccessful students through the help of relatives and friends. The stronger the industrial economy, the greater the value placed on manual work, which in turn sanctioned youth rebellion and gave it a ritualized form.

Though the literature is fragmentary, it appears that these same circumstances persist, in attenuated form, in the remaining ethnic working-class enclaves in the Northeast and Midwest. One can certainly expect that similar conditions come into play in Los Angeles, where there is a thriving factory-based economy, and where Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans are moving into the ranks of the skilled working class. But outcomes are sure to take a different form in a deindustrialized city like New York or a service-based city like Miami, where school drop outs have few alternatives and the erosion of the industrial economy has sorely devalued manual work. As these are also the conditions that have intensified the "oppositional culture" among native minorities, it may be common experience, and not exposure, that causes self-defeating rebellion among the children of the inner city, whether of foreign- or native-born roots.

Future prospects

The descendants of the last great immigration to the United States have now moved far up the totem pole; from the perspective of the 1990s, it is hard to imagine that their adaptation to America could have turned out differently. But this view of an inexorable climb up the social ladder is certainly not how the children and grandchildren of the European immigrants experienced the process themselves. Their beginnings, as we have noted, were not particularly promising; nor were the established groups of the time ready to accept the newcomers and their descendants. Even the most skilled of the lot, the Jews, found that rapid acculturation and the acquisition of schooling were not sufficient to open doors. The acquisition of full membership was an uncertain, protracted process to which the immigrants and their descendants contribued—both through attempts to undo obstacles to progress and to place themselves on the white side of America's racial divide.

At a minimum, this portrait of the past suggests that, overall, the children of the post-1965 immigration begin with disadvantages no greater than those encountered by immigrant children before. On the one hand, the class composition of today's immigrants is more heavily weighted toward the middle class than was true earlier in the century. And on the other hand, American society is more receptive to immigrants—in large measure because of efforts by earlier groups of outsiders

(including native-born blacks) to widen access to opportunity.

We would conclude with two points—the relevance of class and agency. *Class*: While America's new immigrant population is extraordinarily diverse, its overwhelmingly largest component—the Mexicans—falls at the very bottom of the skill ladder; the Mexicans are even more heavily represented among the immigrants' children. Absent the Mexicans, today's second generation looks little different from the rest of the American population in socioeconomic characteristics. Those characteristics are not sufficient to guarantee satisfactory adjustment to the economy of the next generation; but the same can be said for young, third-generation-plus Americans of any ethnic stripe. The immigrant children most notably at risk are the Mexicans (most notable, surely, in numbers and as notable as any other immigrant group in the low level of economic well-being). It is the presence of a single large group, so far below the others in skills, that distinguishes today's from yesterday's second generation. However, we note that the advent of the new economy means trouble for the children of the native-born members of America's working class, who also find themselves in conflict with the middle-class values and expectations of schools. These are the main reasons why we should worry about the future for the offspring of Mexican immigrants and of other less-skilled newcomers.

Agency: As did their predecessors, the children of today's new immigrants will transform America. The relatively high class background of so many immigrant children makes it more likely that they will do so quickly and on their own terms—witness the contrast between the Jewish and Asian fate in higher education. That higher class standing is also likely to change the import of race, historically fluid except at the black-white divide, and currently under rapid transition even there. One can certainly imagine that some section of African Americans, Latin Americans, and Asian Americans will find themselves pigeonholed in some new, but stigmatized and subordinated "other" category. But there are other possibilities; and the ever growing ethnic diversity of American life—thanks, in large measure to immigration itself—suggests that these other possibilities are more likely. We expect that today's second generation will make itself busy reshaping the meaning of race—an endeavor to be pursued with at least some success.

Telling the poor what to do

LAWRENCE M. MEAD

PATERNALISM is coming to American social policy. The trend is most visible in welfare policy, where adults are increasingly required to work or stay in school if they want to receive government assistance. In fact, today "welfare reform" largely means that the government seeks to supervise poor citizens. But paternalism can be seen elsewhere as well, for example, in policy toward the homeless, where shelters increasingly set rules for their residents, and in education, where states have instituted tougher standards for school children. Some drug programs test addicts for compliance, and the criminal justice system has experimented with closer monitoring of offenders on probation and parole.

Sometimes, paternalism is directed toward the general population. Government does many things to prevent citizens from hurting themselves; it must do so, because people are not completely self-reliant. For example, government makes credit-card companies state their interest rates on unpaid balances