

Helping Young Refugees and Immigrants Succeed

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Looking into the Future

Both the aid organizations providing concrete relief and the scholars studying the situation of young immigrants and refugees are "aiming at a moving target," in the sense that future developments, on the one hand, may in minor and even major ways redefine what it means to be an immigrant and, on the other hand, may more or less dramatically alter the societal structure into which young immigrants are received.

Modern communication and transportation technologies make it increasingly easier for immigrants to stay in touch with their old homelands and to migrate back and forth frequently. This has led some observers to expect the emergence of a new type of transnational migrants. In his contribution, Roger Waldinger, however, points out that the increased potential for transnational contacts does not necessarily mean that today's immigrants actually maintain strong transnational ties. He finds that, even in an age of globalization, immigrants tend to root themselves strongly in their new homeland.

In the concluding chapter, Richard Alba and Hui-shien Tsao discuss the long-standing racial/ethnic hierarchy in the United States that provides the structural framework for the life chances of young immigrants (and everybody else). This hierarchy may be in flux. The authors point out that demographic trends (the relative decline in the number of European Americans who are available to fill the higher occupational echelons) and institutional forces (affirmative action) increase the opportunities for non-European minorities to be upwardly mobile. Yet, as the authors caution, it remains to be seen what the eventual outcome of this period of potential liminality will be.

Home Country Farewell: The Withering of Immigrants' "Transnational" Ties

Roger Waldinger

Since the late twentieth century, "globalization" has been the order of the day. With international migration bringing the alien "other" from the third world to the first, and worldwide trade and communications amplifying the feedbacks traveling in the opposite direction, the view that nation-state and society normally converge has waned. Instead, social scientists are looking for new ways to think about the connections between "here" and "there," as evidenced by the interest in the many things called "transnational." Those studying international migration evince particular excitement. Observing that migration produces a plethora of connections spanning "home" and "host" societies, these scholars proclaim the emergence of "transnational communities" (see Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992, Smith and Guarnizo 1998, Portes 2003, Levitt, DeWind, and Vertovec 2003, and accompanying articles in *International Migration Review*, v. 37, 3).

Evidence of ties that the scholars call "transnational" abounds. While some migrants do move to settle and others settle despite initial plans to the contrary, today's mass international migrations also entail movements of other types, including return migration, repeat migration, and circular migration. Moreover, the movement of so many people across borders generates a huge, subsequent flow of information, goods, and perhaps, most importantly, money, moving back and forth across borders. Changes in technology appear to amplify the impact of these exchanges. Though

the simple letter did a remarkably good job of knitting together distant transoceanic contacts during the migrations of the last turn of the century, today's migrants can communicate with the stay-at-homes in any number of ways, doing so with a speed and immediacy that, in the view of many experts, keeps migrants and stayers firmly connected. Likewise, shifts in receiving societies also facilitate the expression of home place attachments. Whereas ties to home and host country were previously seen as mutually exclusive, today's political and ideological environment appears to many scholars as more relaxed: in particular, the shift from melting pot to multiculturalism has legitimized the expression of, and organization around, home country loyalties.

If some scholars look at today's immigration and see home place connectedness as its distinguishing feature, others examine the same reality and find that old country ties inevitably give way to new, just as in the past. As Richard Alba and Victor Nee (2003) have argued in their recent, eloquent defense of assimilation, *Remaking the American Mainstream*, the United States of the turn of the twenty-first century is again demonstrating its extraordinary capacity to dissolve ethnic ties. As Alba and Nee explain, the attenuation of home place connections derives from the dynamics of the migration process itself. Immigration is motivated by the search for a better life, a quest that usually has no inherent relationship to assimilation. Only in some instances is assimilation self-consciously embraced; often, it is precisely the end that the immigrants wish to *avoid*. Nonetheless, the effort to secure a better future—find a better job, a safer neighborhood, a higher-quality school—confronts immigrants with the need to choose between strategies of an “ethnic” or a “mainstream” sort. Insofar as the better future is found in a place where out-group contacts are more plentiful than in the neighborhoods or workplaces where the newcomers begin, the new Americans are likely to select “mainstream strategies”—and thereby progress toward assimilation, whether wanted or not. In the process, ties to the countries from which the immigrants stem inevitably lose salience; even though connections and connectedness may not totally wither, they lose practical relevance, retaining mainly symbolic value.

Whether indeed it is transnationalism or assimilation that best illuminates today's unfolding reality, the crucial question has to do with change over time. Since home country connectedness is an integral part of the immigrant phenomenon, one expects recent immigrants to be maintaining close and regular contacts with the people they left behind. Likewise, as contemporary immigration is at once massive and continuing, it is no surprise to find that it has generated the infrastructure needed to facilitate “here-there” contacts and exchanges of all sorts, and thereby also reducing their costs.

But what of the long term? Right from the beginning, skeptics of the transnationalist perspective contended that it was all a matter of spurious correlation: yes, there are lots of “here-there” flows, but control for time spent in the United States, and the degree of home country connectedness, dramatically declines. While debate over the question continues unabated, scholarly attention increasingly focuses on the experiences of the immigrants' children—whose behavior will determine whether home country attachments will exercise an enduring influence on the American scene.

On the whole, the essays assembled in Peggy Levitt and Mary Waters's pioneering collection, *The Changing Face of Home: Transnational Lives of the Second Generation* (2002), provided little supporting evidence for the strong versions of transnationalism, according to which a substantial share of today's immigrants live in social fields effectively spanning host and home societies. While the book's contributors clearly show that second generation home country connectedness persists, regular home country involvements engage a relatively small portion of today's immigrant offspring, for whom the “here-there” tie is at best of modest salience. To be sure, as Levitt and Waters note, even selective transnational engagements can add up. But when as ardent a scholarly transnationalist as Peggy Levitt is forced to conclude that “there may still be a small, but important number who continue to contribute to the political, economic, and social life of their ancestral homelands” (Levitt 2002: 145), one realizes that the phenomenon in question bears little relationship to transnationalism as condition of being—which is what this particular suffix means.

This disappointing conclusion notwithstanding, the debate is hardly over; rather, it has just begun. To begin with, the research is still at a very early stage. As argued by Alejandro Portes (2003), most of the relevant research on “immigrant transnationalism” has been conducted using qualitative techniques, and most of the qualitative studies suffer from the deficiency of having sampled on the dependent variable, illuminating the incidence of second generation home country involvement, without being able to tell us much about its prevalence. To some extent, scholarly appreciation of the range and correlates of immigrant transnationalism has improved, thanks to results generated by the “Comparative Immigration and Entrepreneurship Project,” a survey of Colombian, Dominican, and Salvadoran immigrants undertaken by Alejandro Portes and his associates. However, caution is advised when generalizing beyond the three relatively small, sociologically distinctive populations in question. Not only are these particular groups unlikely to be representative of the Latin American – origin population living in the United States, the samples, themselves, are unlikely to be representative of the three specific populations in question, as the survey conducted by the Comparative

Entrepreneurship and Immigration Project entailed a significant referral element. As shown by Jose Itzigsohn and Silvia Giorguli Saucedo (2002), levels of transnationalism are generally much higher among the sample's referral component, as compared with those randomly surveyed.¹

As it happens, we can do better: there are now a number of large, representative samples containing data that allow us to explore the importance of home country versus sending country involvements of the new Americans. While none of those surveys provide information on the behavior and attachments of the children of immigrants, they do allow us to examine a reasonable proxy group, namely, those immigrants who arrived in the United States as children, under the age of 13. This group, commonly labeled as the "1.5 generation," is unlikely to behave just like the members of the "true" second generation, that is to say, the U.S.-born children of foreign born. Nonetheless, as many other studies have shown, the 1.5 generation bears a close resemblance to the "true" second generation on a broad variety of indicators—a reason for us to assume that the same pattern will hold when we shift the focus to look at the relative importance of sending and receiving country attachments.

This chapter makes use of the public use data sets from four large-scale surveys: the 1999 *Washington Post*/Kaiser Family Foundation National Survey of Latinos, the 2001 Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS), the 2002 Pew Hispanic Center National Survey of Latinos, and the 2004 Pew Hispanic Center Survey of Mexican Migrants. The Kaiser and the 2002 Pew Hispanic surveys were nationally representative ones, using highly stratified, random digit dialing samples to obtain foreign-born respondents. The PNAAPS involved a semi-random sample of Asian American households in the metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, New York, Honolulu, San Francisco, and Chicago. The 2004 Survey of Mexican Migrants was conducted among Mexican migrants visiting consular offices in the United States, as they were applying for a *matricula consular*, an identity card issued by Mexican diplomatic missions. Unlike the first three surveys, the latter was a purposive survey, especially likely to capture undocumented immigrants, seeking identity documents from the Mexican government. While caution needs to be used in generalizing from this sample to the broader Latino population, this is precisely the group most likely to maintain close home country connections, which is why any possible differences between first and 1.5 generation respondents are of particular interest.

The use of multiple surveys yields both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, consistency—defined not so much by point estimate as by modal pattern—lends confidence in the reliability of results. On the downside, coverage is not comprehensive, with the full range of relevant

topics not covered by any of the surveys. As a totality, however, the surveys do cover many of the issues in question, allowing us to take a broad, multidimensional look at the phenomenon.

In this chapter, I use these data to compare 1.5 generation immigrants, as defined earlier, with first generation immigrants, defined as persons born *and* raised abroad. The chapter provides new evidence, both on the linkages that tie first and 1.5 generation immigrants to the countries from which they have come *and* on the new connections to the United States that are developing as the immigrants put down roots. I break the complex of "here-there" ties into several components:

1. *Home country engagements, including travel, remittances, and home country politics*
2. *Identity and attachment*
3. *U.S. political participation*

Findings

Cross-border exchanges and ties: While the mass migrations of the turn of the last century produced a huge traffic of correspondence, coming and going across the Atlantic, today's mass migration occurs at a time when communication is instantaneous. Changes in technology have made it possible for migrants to communicate with their friends and relatives living back home while ever intensifying competition among the providers of telecommunication have driven costs down. As a result, almost any immigrant can afford to spend a few hours per month communicating with relatives still living back home.

Although there can be no doubt regarding the *potential* for regular cross-border communication, the surveys suggest that the reality falls a good deal short of the possibilities that current technology allows. Among the Asian immigrants polled by the PNAAPS, roughly two-thirds were in regular contact (once a month or more frequently) with persons living in the home country. The Pew survey of Mexican migrants found even higher, though again not universal, levels of regular home country communication, a pattern to be expected considering the fact that this survey sampled a much more recently arrived population. Nonetheless, in both cases the 1.5 generation respondents were significantly less likely to engage in regular home country communication than were the first generation respondents. Not only is the difference large, but the proportion falling out of regular contact is sizeable, reaching the one-third level among the Mexican 1.5ers and exceeding the half-way mark

among the 1.5ers polled by the PNAAPS, as can be seen from Table 18.1 (table 18.1).

Travel is yet another way by which immigrants are said to maintain their regular home country connections. As shown by both the PNAAPS and the Pew National Survey of Latinos, the great majority of immigrants are likely to have taken at least one trip back home after migration to the United States. That rates of return travel should converge among Latino and Asian immigrants is striking: on the one hand, Asian immigrants have greater resources and are more likely to possess legal status, both of which are characteristics likely to be associated with return travel; on the other hand, distances involved are much smaller for the Latinos, which implies that costs were correspondingly reduced. Most importantly, perhaps, generation makes little difference in either group, with the great majority of both first and 1.5 generation respondents likely to report having taken at least one trip to their former home country.

Quite a different pattern, however, emerges when the focus shifts to the sending of remittances. A majority of immigrants appear *not* to send home remittances. However, the proportion engaged in remittance sending involves a large minority; among Latino immigrants that fraction may come close to one-half. Given the size of the denominator, one can readily understand the interest that remittance sending generates among home country governments and international development agencies.

The high and growing levels of remittance dependency among many of the emigration-sending countries in the Western Hemisphere also explain why governments should be concerned about the prospect that the flow of remittances may one day falter. The results from the Kaiser and 2002 Pew surveys indicate that those worries are indeed well founded, with members of the 1.5 generation significantly less likely than members of the first generation to send remittances to their former home countries. If roughly one-half of all Latino first generation immigrants send home remittances, it appears that only one-quarter to one-fifth of the 1.5 generation do the same. Depending on the perspective, the latter may be considered high or low. Sending remittances is a tangible expression of solidarity and connection with people living in another country, and thus evidence that assimilation is far from complete. On the other hand, the fact that most 1.5 generation immigrants have fallen out of the group of remittance senders testifies to the long-term power of the forces cutting ties to former home countries. In this respect, findings from the Survey of Mexican Migrants are telling. While remittance levels are high among both generational categories, the disparity between the two is very sizeable, with 1.5 generation respondents only about 60 percent as likely as their first generation counterparts to send home remittances.

Table 18.1 Cross-border engagements

	Routine cross-border exchanges				Home country politics			
	Sends remittances	One trip or more	Calls home country less than 1x mo	Voting	Any participation	Has election credential	Belongs to hometown association	
Kaiser 1999								
all	41%			25%				
first generation	45%			28%				
1.5 generation	24%			4%				
PNAAPS 2001								
all		79%	61%		6%			
first generation		79%	63%		5%			
1.5 generation		81%	41%		11%			
Pew 2002								
all	47%	72%		15%				
first generation	50%	72%		16%				
1.5 generation	21%	69%		10%				
Pew Mexican Migrant Survey 2005								
all	79%		85%			42%	14%	
first generation	81%		87%			44%	14%	
1.5 generation	48%		65%			16%	16%	

Note: Tests are for significance of differences between first and 1.5 generations; bold = $p < .01$.

Social and economic ties are probably the most important of the home country connections maintained by immigrants; nonetheless, participation in home country politics has been an immigrant perennial. The clamor for home country voting rights is clearly growing, at least among some immigrants with the resources needed to make their voice heard. Likewise, home country political organizations are extending their infrastructure to the United States, on the lookout for funders, but also responding to the emigrants' persistent interest in home country politics.

From the surveys emerges the following picture. At the high end of the spectrum, the Kaiser survey suggests that a quarter of Latino immigrants have voted in their home country at least once since moving to the United States; at the lower end, the PNAAPS indicates that barely 6 percent of Asian immigrants have had any involvement in home country elections since movement to the United States (in part probably due to one-party rule in several large Asian countries). Among Asian immigrants, the 1.5 generation appears to have experienced somewhat higher levels of participation than has the first generation, though in either case, it is a very small minority. Among Latinos, the 1.5 generation reveals much lower levels of home country involvement than does the first.

As other studies have shown, interest in home country voting is often limited to an immigrant elite, who possesses the resources needed to maintain active involvement in home country matters. Pressures from immigrant elites yield responses from sending country officials eager to maintain the flow of remittances and other investments, and also to convert the immigrants into ethnic lobbyists. Nonetheless, home country leaders are often wary of demands for political participation, for ethical, self-interested, as well as practical reasons. Among the latter, a key concern involves the means of verifying eligibility for participation. As suggested by the Pew Survey of Mexican Migrants, that worry is indeed well grounded: only 42 percent of all respondents claimed to have a Mexican voter credential in their possession, which suggests that even among these recently arrived immigrants, who are most likely to retain strong interest in developments back home, the potential for participation is unlikely even to reach the halfway mark. Among the 1.5ers, however, possession of the credential is much rarer—an indicator that, along with results from the Pew and Kaiser surveys, strongly points to detachment from home country politics among this group of immigrants who moved to the United States as young people.

Yet another indicator of homeland-oriented interest is the formation of hometown associations. The 2005 Pew Mexican Migration Survey asked respondents whether they were involved in a sports, civic association, or club with people from their home country or hometown. Roughly one

out of every seven respondents answered "yes"; 1.5ers were as likely as their first generation respondents to be involved in associations of this sort. These responses are consistent with the results of other research, all of which indicate that civic activity undertaken by immigrants in the United States but oriented toward hometowns or homelands engages a small proportion of the immigrant population. Considering the underlying denominator, however, the absolute number of persons so involved is large; given the resources available to these immigrant activists, moreover, the impact that any collective activity *might* yield on hometowns or home societies is far from trivial. As regards the relative importance of transnational versus territorializing processes, however, these data further underline the attenuation of home country ties.

National attachment and identity: Clearly, immigrants continue to maintain connections to their old home country, albeit at levels that vary greatly, depending on the dimension, and with 1.5 generation immigrants generally more detached than the first. But even while money and people continue to move back and forth between receiving and sending countries, settlement proceeds ahead. The myth of return is a common component of the immigrant experience; nonetheless, most immigrants realize that migration to the United States involves a permanent change. The surveys suggest that among Latinos, roughly two-thirds plan to stay in the United States for good; among Asian Americans, the level is close to three-quarters. Whereas many members of both the first and 1.5 generations expect that residence in the United States will be permanent, plans to stay for good are endorsed by considerably higher levels of the 1.5 generation, regardless of survey and/or ethnic background. Once again, as can be seen from Table 18.2, results from the 2005 Survey of Mexican Migrants are telling: even among this group of relatively recent arrivals, many lacking legal status, expectations of return are low (table 18.2).

Like many immigrants before them, today's new Americans are seeking to combine the new and old, even as they put down roots in the United States. For example, two-thirds of both first and 1.5 generation respondents, when polled by the Pew Hispanic Center in 2002, said that their core self-identity was linked to their country of origin. On the other hand, the majority of first generation respondents continue to think of the home country as their real home, but barely one-third of the 1.5 generation respondents chose the same response. Although limited, the data on identification and attachment suggest that the immigrants are "in-between," shifting loyalties and allegiances toward the United States, even as they are trying to remain true to the people and places they have left behind.

U.S. Political Participation: As the burgeoning literature on "immigrant transnationalism" has shown, connections linking sending and receiving

Table 18.2 National attachment and identity: The United States versus home country

	<i>will stay in the United States</i>	<i>real home is home country</i>	<i>self-identity: home country</i>
Kaiser 1999			
all			
first generation			
1.5 generation			
PNAAPS 2001			
all	78%		
first generation	94%		
1.5 generation	77%		
Pew 2002			
all	65%	61%	68%
first generation	63%	65%	69%
1.5 generation	83%	36%	63%
Pew Mexican Migrant Survey 2005			
all	64%		
first generation	62%		
1.5 generation	86%		

Note: Tests are for significance of differences between first and 1.5 generations; bold = $p < .01$.

countries are easy to find, in large measure because connectedness is an inherent aspect of the migration phenomenon. For that reason, the frequently repeated claim that migrants “*may* continue to participate in the daily life of the society from which they emigrated but which they did not abandon” (Glick-Schiller 1999: 94, emphasis added), amounts to little more than the null hypothesis. The crucial issue, rather, as correctly noted by Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick-Schiller (2003: 1003), concerns “the relative importance of nationally restricted and transnational social fields” (table 18.3).

While this is a question to which little of the literature has yet responded, a comparison of migrant political participation in receiving and sending countries yields insight into the relative importance of territorial versus trans-state factors. As noted earlier, relatively few migrants engage in home state politics. One might suspect that immigrants might be similarly detached from politics in their adopted land. In contrast to the last era of mass migration, political machines are no longer actively mobilizing immigrant voters, and weakened party structures provide no

Table 18.3 U.S. political participation (naturalized citizens only)

	<i>Registered voter</i>	<i>Voting</i>	
		<i>Ever voted</i>	<i>Voted last presidential election</i>
Kaiser 1999			
all	74%	70	53%
first generation	75%	68	49%
1.5 generation	77%	74	64%
PNAAPS 2001			
all			48%*
first generation			
1.5 generation			
Pew 2002			
all	82%	72%	
first generation	84%	73%	
1.5 generation	75%	67%	
Pew Mexican Migrant Survey 2005			
all			
first generation			
1.5 generation			

Note: Tests are for significance of differences between first and 1.5 generations; bold = $p < .01$.
* sample of citizens too small for further disaggregations.

ready substitute. Citizenship requirements are steeper than before, with the result that naturalization rates have declined; furthermore, a large portion of the immigrant population lacks legal status, and thus is disconnected from American politics on a long-term basis.

Notwithstanding all the trends that might foster detachment from the U.S. political system, the available data show that, among naturalized immigrants, receiving society political participation is far more common than sending society participation. Among immigrant Latinos, the surveys indicate that three-quarters or more of the naturalized citizens report that they are registered to vote. Not all registered voters go to the polls, but the Pew and Kaiser surveys suggest that, at least occasionally, the great majority do. By contrast, the Kaiser survey, which asked about voting in the last presidential election, indicates that regular electoral participation is less common.

Generational differences, however, are slight, though survey results are not fully convergent. In general, it seems fair to say that 1.5 generation

respondents manifest levels of participation that are comparable to those of first generation respondents, a convergence that is remarkable in light of the facts that (a) the former are younger than the latter and (b) political participation generally grows with age. Thus, contrary to the claims that transnational migration involves "the process of simultaneous incorporation into immigrants' states of origin and settlement" (Glick-Schiller 1999: 286), these data point to a different pattern. Rather than immigrants maintaining more or less constant links to the home society while establishing comparable connections to the host society, home country involvements actually falter, proving greatly outpaced by levels of host society participation.

Conclusion

Like the turn of the twentieth, the turn of the twenty-first century is an age of mass migration, with large numbers of people seeking to move from poorer to richer countries. To get from one place to another, the migrants make use of the one resource on which they can almost always count—namely, support from one another, which is why social connections between veterans and prospective movers lubricate the migration process.

In the mythology of the classic countries of immigration, the newcomers are arriving in order to build a life in the new land. In reality, it is often not the case, as the migrants instead want to take advantage of the gap between richer and poorer places to accumulate resources intended to be used upon return back home. Although some migrants eventually act on their plans, for others return turns out to be a myth, as roots get established in the country of arrival, whether wanted or not.

Considering the centrality of migrant networks, the myriad of migration strategies, and the uncertain, transitional nature of the migration process, connections linking origin and destination places are ubiquitous, no less characteristic of today's age of mass migration than of that of the past. But if the ongoing advent of new immigrants keeps here-there connections refreshed, the long-term tendency goes toward the attenuation of those contacts, as relevant social ties and loyalties get transplanted from old to new homes (see Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004). Although immigrant offspring—whether born or raised in the host society—are likely to retain affection for the old home country and at least some home country connections, their lives and identities get firmly rooted in the nation-state society in which they are making their lives.

That generalization holds even for the young people studied in this chapter, who would be the ideal candidates to retain home country attachments. As shown, home country connectedness is limited. While most immigrants view the United States as home, the 1.5ers have put down deeper roots and have steadily cut back their involvements in, and ties to, the countries where they were born. Although we still know too little about participation in U.S. institutions, the available indicators tell us that, for all immigrants, host country engagement is a good deal higher than the forms of home country involvement identified by the various surveys we have used.

Although the long-term trends are clearly toward settlement in and commitment to the United States, this chapter also shows that immigrants are in a process of transition. Some immigrants do sever all ties to their old home countries; however, a significant minority continues to engage in a variety of home country – oriented activities. But the best way to characterize the immigrants' "here-there" connection is to describe them as still "in-between": the immigrants are moving along a trajectory of shifting loyalties and allegiances toward the United States, even as they are trying to remain true to the people and places that they have left behind. Persons impatient with immigrants' progress might insist these home country connections be cut, and the sooner the better. The better approach is simply to let developments follow their own course: with time, the immigrants will find their own way to go from "there" to "here."

Notes

1. Itzigsohn and Saucedo explain that "about a third of the sample (37.7 percent) was selected through referrals and snowball chains with different points of entry. The reason for the purposive selection of one third of the sample was that the principle focus of the survey was to study transnational practices. The referral section of the sample attempted to reach people who engage in transnational practices to insure that there were enough cases of transnational migrants in the sample" (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002: 769). As shown in Table 3 of the article (p. 776), the level of transnational practices was consistently higher within the referral than within the block sample: for example, 46 percent of the referral sample participated occasionally or regularly in a hometown association versus 14 percent of the random sample, 45 percent of the referral sample sent money for projects in a hometown versus 14 percent of the random sample, 31 percent of the referral sample participated in local sports clubs linked to the home country versus 10 percent of the random sample, and 60 percent of the referral sample participated in charity organizations linked to the home country

versus 15 percent of the random sample. As shown in Appendix Table 2, the two samples also differed along other variables, likely to influence the outcomes: for example, citizens comprised 50 percent of the referral sample but only 24 percent of the random sample, highly educated persons (with 13 or more years of schooling) made up 63 percent of the referral sample but only 26 percent of the block sample, and men were 70 percent of the referral sample but only 45 percent of the random sample. Thus, Portes's description of the traits of the "transnationals" (as quoted in the previous paragraph) seems to largely reflect the characteristics of the members of the referral sample.

Is There a Looming Period of Liminality for Race and Ethnicity in the United States?

Richard Alba and Hui-shien Tsao

Social scientists take for granted that racial and ethnic origins play a critical, though hardly the exclusive, role in determining the life chances of Americans, including where they live, how much education they get, what kinds of jobs they do, and whom they marry. An enormous literature establishes that this assumption is generally warranted. For some of the most salient racial divides in the United States, such as that between blacks and whites, that literature also demonstrates that numerous differences in life chances have remained stable for decades. One particularly significant instance concerns residential life chances, which not only involve who the neighbors will be, but what the "quality" of the neighborhood is—reflected in the risk of criminal victimization, the adequacy of the schools, or other ways. The research on residential segregation reveals the stability of black-white differences in these respects for at least half a century (Massey and Denton 1993, Logan, Stults and Farley 2004). In this sense, a crystallized racial/ethnic order could be said to exist in the United States, with whites occupying the top position and African Americans at the bottom, with others somewhere in between.

There are sound reasons to think that this order influences the chances for success of the second generation. The segmented assimilation theory about the incorporation of new immigrant groups asserts as much (Portes and Zhou 1993), and empirical research sustains the view that the children of immigrants find themselves in a society where their options are