

# **Inheriting the City**

*The Children of Immigrants  
Come of Age*

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## Conclusion: The Second Generation Advantage

I think I have benefitted from being Colombian, from being Hispanic. It's the best of two worlds. You know that expression? Like being able to still keep and appreciate those things in my culture that I enjoy and that I think are beautiful and at the same time being able to change those things which I think are bad.

23-YEAR-OLD COLOMBIAN WOMAN

Our research was initially motivated by worries about second generation decline. Like many other social scientists, we were concerned that the children of recent immigrants might be at risk of downward assimilation as they become Americans. We feared that many would earn less than their immigrant parents, get less education, have lower levels of civic participation in their new society, and become more alienated. We also suspected that upwardly mobile children of immigrants might achieve success largely by remaining tied to the ethnic communities and economic niches of their parents. In contemporary America, we speculated, the most successful immigrant families might be the ones who kept large parts of "mainstream" American culture at bay.

Although we found examples of these two scenarios, neither turned out to be common. On the whole, second and 1.5 generation New Yorkers are already doing better than their immigrant parents. The Chinese and Russian Jews have demonstrated particularly rapid upward mobility. This upward trajectory is partly explained by their parents' premigration class backgrounds and "hidden" human capital—but, particularly among the Chinese, even those from working class backgrounds or with poorly educated parents have sometimes achieved stunning upward mobility. Not surprisingly, those second generation respondents who belong to groups that the context of reception has racialized as black or Hispanic have a more mixed record. For these individuals, racial discrimination remains a significant factor in shaping their American lives. Yet even here, most of the chil-

dren of immigrants are exceeding their parents' levels of education, if only because the parents' levels were quite low. West Indians, the group in the greatest danger of being negatively racially stereotyped, show real gains over their parents and their native born peers on a number of fronts.

All the second generation groups earn as much or more than the comparable native born group. Controlling for age and gender, Dominicans and South Americans earn more than Puerto Ricans, West Indians earn more than native blacks, and the Russians and Chinese are on par with native whites. In terms of educational attainment, whether or not one controls for age, gender, and parental education, Dominicans and South Americans are doing better than Puerto Ricans, West Indians are doing better than African Americans, Russian Jews are doing better than native whites, and the Chinese are doing better than everyone. While less likely to be working full time than their staggeringly work-oriented immigrant parents, the Chinese and the Russian Jews are either working or going to school full time in slightly higher numbers than native whites (mainly because more are still attending school); the levels of the other second generation groups exceed those of African Americans and Puerto Ricans and, except for the Dominicans, are approaching the rates of native whites. While there are significant differences among the second generation groups in how many get involved in criminal activities, arrest rates are about the same as those of native whites even in those groups whose members are most likely to have had brushes with the law. Moreover, these arrest rates are well below those of native born minority counterparts.

Many respondents of African descent report experiencing racial discrimination, particularly from the police. The experience has clearly left many individuals feeling uncomfortable with their status as "Americans" and alienated them from some aspects of American life. Yet, the second generation group most identified as "black" and most likely to experience such discrimination—West Indians—is also the group most likely to participate in neighborhood and civic affairs and to be interested in New York politics. West Indians vote in numbers comparable to native whites, if somewhat below the very high proportion of native African Americans.

This rapid incorporation into American life does not stem from the second generation's maintaining social or cultural ties with the parents' immigrant communities. The group experiencing the most dramatic upward mobility—the Chinese—is actually the least likely to retain the parents' language. Members of every second generation group who

work in predominantly ethnic work sites earn less than those who work in mainstream settings. At the same time, today's second generation does not seem overly concerned about shedding those ties or losing ethnic distinctiveness.

Like the 23-year-old Colombian-American young woman quoted earlier, members of the second generation are happy to acculturate "selectively," to use Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) phrase, taking what works the best in their parents' communities and combining it with the best of what they see around them among their native peers. Many respondents cheerfully report that they do not feel fully a part of their parents' immigrant communities nor do they see themselves as fully "American"—a term they use to describe the native whites whom they know primarily through television. Compared to past second generations, the children of immigrants today seem remarkably at ease about living between different worlds. They rarely see their parents' foreignness as posing a serious problem.

This level of second generation incorporation is particularly striking when compared to that of their counterparts in Western Europe. The 2005 riots in France brought worldwide attention to the problems of youth and young adults whose parents are immigrants and who have faced limited socioeconomic mobility. Many of the rioters in Paris live in the suburbs with staggeringly high youth unemployment rates. These unemployed, underemployed, and alienated youth evidently engaged in criminal behavior as a challenge to a racist society that they believe permanently relegates them to an urban underclass. As such, they became symbols of the possible second generation decline throughout Western Europe. For all of the city's problems, New York's relatively open economy, its overtly ethnic and pro-immigrant politics, and the myriad of its educational "second chances" have served the second generation fairly well—far better than they have served our native minority populations.

Despite the city's achievements, how the children of immigrants in and around New York City are incorporated into society remains problematic. Many young people have received substandard educations in the city's worst public schools. Although many of the second generation are working, their jobs often hold limited possibilities for advancement in an economy of stagnant or declining real wages. All too few individuals have found their way through educational routes into the highest-paying professions in the city. On the other hand, these problems are not unique to

the children of immigrants but generally face all young working class New Yorkers and are less severe for the children of immigrants than for members of native minority groups.

We should note that the differences among the "centers of gravity" of second generation groups are as large as the overall difference between them and the native born minority groups. The variation within each of the groups is large as well. In the sense that different groups are being incorporated into different parts of American society, their assimilation has indeed been segmented. But this segmentation has not always produced the results predicted by earlier scholarship. Moreover, incorporation turns out to work differently in different spheres of social life. The groups who have done best in the mainstream economy show low levels of civic engagement and political participation, for example. Neither the straight line assimilation model nor the segmented assimilation alternative easily captures the complex ways in which groups have combined economic, political, and cultural incorporation.

### Why Are Our Results Different?

Many scholars have speculated that the larger patterns of racial inequality and discrimination in America will force those children of immigrants who are not classified as white into the ranks of persistently poor native minorities. Gans (1992), for example, worried that labeling dark-skinned children of immigrants as black would trump their aspirations for upward mobility. Mary Waters's (1999) ethnography of Afro-Caribbeans in New York City gave support for that position.

The notion that racial and other forms of inequality in host societies will create socioeconomic exclusion for large portions of the second generation has motivated an intense debate in the United States and Europe (Perlmann and Waldinger 1997; Waldinger and Perlmann 1998; Alba and Nee 2003; Smith 2003; Waldinger and Feliciano 2004; Perlmann 2005; Rumbaut 2005a, 2005b).

The segmented assimilation hypothesis posits three alternative paths for the second generation: upward assimilation, downward assimilation, and upward assimilation combined with biculturalism. These paths correspond to three types of relationships among the children of immigrants, their parents, and the wider ethnic community. Consonant acculturation occurs when the children and the parents both gradually learn American culture and abandon their home language and culture at about the same

pace. As children enter the mainstream, they not only achieve upward mobility, but they do so with the support of their parents. This path is most open to those who are most similar to, or most likely to be accepted by, the white majority.

Dissonant acculturation occurs when children learn English faster and accept American ways more readily than do their parents, who are more likely to cling to immigrant identities. Portes and Rumbaut argue that this process often leads to downward assimilation, as young people face racial discrimination, bifurcated labor markets, and an often nihilistic inner city youth subculture on their own, without strong parental authority and resources and with few community resources and supports. This path is most open to those who are most similar to, or most likely to be classified alongside, native minority groups, especially African Americans.

The third process, selective acculturation, leads to economic upward mobility alongside continued attachment to home country cultures and biculturalism. Selective acculturation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:52) occurs when "parents and children learn English and American customs at the same rate, where parents and children are inserted into the ethnic community. It is characterized by preservation of parental authority, little or no intergenerational conflict, and fluent bilingualism among children." As such, it forms the "strongest bulwark against effects of external discrimination" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:54).

Segmented assimilation also takes into account background factors such as parental human capital (including parents' education and income), modes of incorporation (state definitions of immigrant groups, eligibility for welfare, and the degree of social prejudice or discrimination facing immigrant groups in the receiving society), and family structure (single versus married couple families as well as multigenerational versus nuclear family living arrangements). The model points (we believe correctly) to the varying degrees of transnational connection among immigrant groups as an important element of the context of reception.

The most striking innovation in this model lies in two of its predictions. The first is that downward assimilation does *not* occur because the children of immigrants fail to Americanize. It occurs, rather, because they do so too quickly, relative to their parents, or assimilate into the "wrong" segments of American society. The second is that those children whose immigrant parents do not have particularly high educations or incomes can achieve upward mobility through a strategy of selective acculturation—staying at least partially ethnic and embedded in ethnic

communities. In making these two predictions, the segmented assimilation model stands the standard assimilation model on its head. For at least some immigrants, the argument goes, coming quickly and easily to share American (or at least lower class American) ways is bad for the second generation. Holding on to immigrant distinctiveness can be an advantage.

This model has proven extraordinarily useful in focusing our attention on how differences in parental human capital, contexts of reception, and ethnic community structure influence second generation outcomes and how the highly segmented nature of American society presents native and immigrant racial and ethnic groups with very different life chances and opportunity structures (Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller 2005:1004):

If it is true that most descendants of today's immigrants will eventually assimilate to American society, it still makes a great deal of difference whether they do so by ascending into the ranks of a prosperous middle class or join in large numbers the ranks of a racialized, permanently impoverished population at the bottom of society.

Few of our respondents followed either of the two most theoretically innovative predictions of the model. Few experienced downward assimilation resulting from overly rapid Americanization, and few also experienced upward mobility by maintaining their place in an ethnic enclave. Indeed, any sort of second generation downward mobility relative to their immigrant parents is rare. When downward mobility does occur, it is not correlated with rapid differential loss of the parents' ethnic language or culture. (We find no correlation between the ability to understand or speak an ethnic language and educational attainment among our second generation respondents from non-English-speaking backgrounds.) To the contrary, upward mobility is associated with the use of English, employment outside of an ethnic enclave, and learning American ways faster than one's parents. Indeed, joining the mainstream is the most common route to success in this study (Alba and Nee 2003).

Our most successful second generation group, the Chinese, is the least likely to retain the parental language. The Chinese are also among the least likely to participate in ethnic organizations and the most likely to use the public schools. While a minority among the Chinese participates in religious activities, they are generally not connecting to their parents' ethnic ways but often become more religious than their parents in ways that can be a source of tension with them (Chai-Kim 2004). Although the dense social networks of New York's Chinese immigrant community have

helped the second generation, this relationship has little to do with maintaining home country traditions or smooth relations with parents. Chinese respondents actually often report difficult, strained, and sometimes unhappy relationships with their parents, despite the fact (or perhaps *because* of the fact) that they tend to live with parents longer than do members of other groups. Finally, whereas first generation Chinese New Yorkers have gone the farthest in establishing a thriving economic ethnic enclave (Zhou 1992), the upwardly mobile majority of the second generation avoids it. Only a downwardly mobile minority of the Chinese second generation has resorted to enclave employment, with its poor wages and working conditions. Enclave employment may well be preferable to unemployment, but it is a safety net, not a springboard.

Why has the experience of New York's second generation been inconsistent with the predictions of the segmented assimilation model? Our data offer several possible answers. First, members of the second generation have found a way around the "hourglass" model of the U.S. labor market presented by the segmented assimilation model. As Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller (2005:1005) put it:

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

Most of the second generation young people with whom we spoke are not affluent professionals, but neither are they perennially unemployed nor part of a "permanently impoverished" underclass. Instead, they are working members of the lower middle class service economy, employed as white collar clerical or service workers in retail or financial services. Their labor market position resembles that of other New Yorkers their age more than it does that of their parents. They rarely drop out of the labor force or become criminals. Most have achieved real, if modest, progress over their parents' generation. They have more education, earn more money, and work in more "mainstream" occupations and sectors.

Second, the studies developing the segmented assimilation model have rarely paid much attention to native youth culture beyond documenting the understandable contempt in which immigrant parents hold it. Without including native born comparison groups, however, it is often hard to sort out what aspects of young people's behavior stem from having immigrant parents and what simply reflect being a young person in urban America today. The model posits downward assimilation for those children of immigrants who adopt an "adversarial stance" or "reactive ethnicity" as a result of the experience of prejudice and discrimination. It argues that the emergence of reactive ethnicity reflects the "value contagion" of attending school with members of native minority groups and lacking family and community resources for dealing with ethnic and racial discrimination. Portes and Rumbaut (2001:61) underscore the conflict between parental values of hard work and upward mobility and inner city subcultures:

Because of their poverty, many immigrants settle in close proximity to urban ghetto areas. In this environment, they and their families are often exposed to norms of behavior inimical to upward mobility as well as to an adversarial stance that justifies these behaviors. For second generation youths, the clash of expectations is particularly poignant when the messages that education does not pay and that discrimination prevents people of color from ever succeeding are conveyed by native peers of the same race or ethnic origin.

Without a native comparison group, however, it is easy to confuse the style with the substance of such an "oppositional" identity, as a quick look at the baggy pants and backward baseball caps worn by students on any Ivy League campus will attest. It is worth noting that the features of "ghetto culture" that most alarm these scholars (and immigrant parents!) actually resemble the broader youth culture in America, albeit in a form made more intense by poverty. There is nothing particularly "ghetto" about drug use, materialism, nihilism, and anti-intellectualism. With slight differences in style, these traits are as easy to see in any suburban mall as on inner city street corners.

Drawing on our native white comparison group, we can see that native white males are just as likely to engage in rebellious behaviors as the second generation groups. A comparison of arrest rates among the males in our survey shows that 23 percent of native born white males report having been arrested, compared with 24 percent of West Indian males, 22

percent of Dominican males, and 20 percent of South American males. White males who grew up in New York City get in trouble at even higher rates. Only native born blacks and Puerto Ricans have higher arrest rates than native born whites.

What differs between the native whites and the second generation groups is not the adversarial behaviors but how the larger society reacts to them. Whites who take drugs or get in trouble with the law often have more family resources and face a more lenient criminal justice system (Sullivan 1989). Second generation respondents often face harsher penalties and have fewer resources to deal with the repercussions of the same youthful indiscretions, although a well-networked ethnic group can sometimes provide support for its most troubled young members. Still, second generation youth are less likely to find themselves permanently derailed by youthful missteps than are the Puerto Ricans and native blacks who have fewer economic and family resources and even less societal good will to draw upon when they get into trouble. Indeed, whereas "social capital" helps better-off groups cope with many types of trouble, being heavily "embedded" in networks of reciprocal obligation among the worst off can be a real disadvantage. In such groups, many of the most successful members describe themselves as "loners."

Most standard accounts of second generation incorporation also present a one-dimensional view of how people experience and respond to racial domination. As we argued in Chapter 10, prejudice and discrimination can mean very different phenomena. Discrimination in impersonal sites where the only thing known about a person is his or her race leads to the development of strong feelings of exclusion and reactive ethnicity. This is especially true when the discrimination comes from the police. But this discrimination has implications very different than discrimination that occurs in institutional settings where an individual can signal other nonracial characteristics to would-be discriminators. A young dark-skinned man stopped by the police while walking on the street may reasonably conclude that the officers are responding to his skin color. The same can be said about a dark-skinned young woman who is followed in a store while she looks at clothing. Both individuals get the message that their skin color signals criminal behavior to authority figures. Obviously, they have little individual control in these situations. In this context their race is a "master status," sociologist Robert Merton's (1967) term for a characteristic that trumps all other personal characteristics.

A college student who questions whether his professor has low expectations of him or a young associate in a law firm who wonders if it will treat black or Hispanic associates as well as whites, however, can draw on a wider repertoire of coping skills. Our respondents often told about such situations in which they felt they had indeed experienced racial prejudice and discrimination. Yet instead of just getting angry and discouraged, they learned to develop strategies to overcome such discrimination. The most common strategy was to try to outperform others to disprove negative racial or ethnic stereotypes, something they had within their power to at least try to do. We found that Chinese and light-skinned Hispanics are most likely to report this kind of discrimination. By contrast, people with dark skin who can be coded as black in American racial terms are most likely to experience the more virulent impersonal discrimination from authority figures in anonymous public spaces, an experience that individuals have little real power to overcome (Anderson 1990). Many people experience discrimination, but what it means to them, and how they react to it, depends on social sphere and context.

Finally, previous accounts of second generation incorporation often overlook the possibility that identifying with African Americans or adopting African American-inspired models of racial difference and racial politics can have benefits as well as costs. The claim that the second generation may experience downward assimilation when mainstream American society categorizes them as nonwhite underestimates the extent to which the civil rights movement has changed the meaning of race since the 1960s. However partial its victories or unfulfilled its promise, that movement did delegitimize de jure segregation and overt white supremacy. It also created a repertoire of ideas, institutions, and organizational forms for challenging racial subordination. Affirmative action and other programs designed to promote upward mobility among members of native minority groups are now available to the children of nonwhite immigrants. The emergence of Ethnic Studies programs on American university campuses and the use of blanket categories like "black" or "Hispanic" to enforce the Voting Rights Act and other civil rights era legislation mean that immigrants and their children have access to institutions facilitating social mobility precisely *because* they are considered non-white. Assimilating into "black America" or "Latino America" thus does not have universally negative consequences for the contemporary second generation.

## Explaining Second Generation Progress

If previous models do not explain the experience of today's second generation New Yorkers, what does? We conclude by answering this question and speculating about what contemporary patterns of second generation integration mean for American public policy and society.

New York City can be tough on any young person, regardless of where his or her parents were born. The children of immigrants face extra difficulties. Only a third of New York City's 3 million households are families with related children under 18. In other words, two-thirds of the households are not currently facing the burdens of rearing children. Among families with children, immigrant parents are much less likely to speak English at home (only 19 percent compared with 60 percent of native parents), and they may not even understand English at all (about a quarter of immigrant parents as compared with only 4 percent of the native parents). Moreover, only half of immigrant parents in New York families are citizens, which gives them far less political influence than native parents.

Most crucially, immigrant parents are less likely to be well educated than native parents: a third lack a high school degree compared with one-fifth of native parents, and only a fifth have college degrees, compared with a quarter of the native parents. As a consequence, they have less income. Immigrant parents had a mean household income of \$54,404 in 1999, compared with \$73,983 for the native parents. Thus young people growing up in immigrant families have parents with less English facility, less education, less political clout, and less income than those growing up in native families. It would be surprising if these factors did not constitute barriers to progress.

Yet we find that the second generation is generally doing better than natives of comparable racial backgrounds despite these barriers. Why is this so?

The first reason is an obvious factor that is nevertheless consistently overlooked in comparisons between immigrants and natives. Immigrants are a highly selected group. Even when they have relatively modest educations and few financial resources, they have shown that they have the drive, ambition, courage, and strength to move from one nation to another. Their second generation offspring are, therefore, the children of exceptional parents. Although parents may have measurable characteristics that put their children at risk—low education, low incomes, poor language skills, and so on—they have unmeasured characteristics that make

them different kinds of parents, mostly in ways that are advantageous for their children.

At first glance a Dominican father who does not speak English and has only a second grade education may appear to have characteristics similar to those of the least well-off New York-born Puerto Rican father, and even fewer resources. Yet as an immigrant parent he has other qualities that separate him from most uneducated Dominican men who stayed at home on the island, qualities that contributed to his success in migrating to New York. His lack of education may not have a negative effect on his ability to instill a desire for education in his son or daughter. So too, a poorly educated Chinese waiter in New York City is quite different from the many comparable men in China who did not make the journey to New York, for he has overcome extraordinary obstacles to change his lot in life. That drive to better his situation is something he is likely to transmit to his children. Thus, when comparing children of natives to the children of immigrants, it is important to remember that while the second generation is not technically a "selected" population, the parents who raised them surely were.

Second, many members of the second generation are well positioned to take advantage of civil rights era institutions and policies for promoting diversity. Indeed, the very presence of many members of the second generation in this country was in large part the result of one important piece of civil rights legislation, the 1965 Hart Celler immigration reforms, which ended national origin quotas in U.S. immigration policy. As the children of parents who come from societies where they typically formed the racial majority, the second generation is far less encumbered by the residue of past discriminatory practices. *diff pt*

Although covert racist practices and assumptions obviously do affect the lives of the second generation today—for example, when the second, third or fourth generation Asian American professional is complimented on his command of English or asked when she is "going home"—we showed in Chapter 10 that such practices and assumptions are less pernicious and less pervasive for many second generation youth than for native minorities whose caste-like subordination has been central to the formation of American identity. Many second generation respondents believed that they had benefitted by being characterized as nonwhite and thus recruited to universities and jobs in order to increase diversity in these institutions. Although nonwhite second generation young adults must cope with racial discrimination, they also profit from a post-civil rights world in

which they are able to inherit some of the positive as well as the negative results of America's long, troubled history of race relations.

Finally, the children of immigrants are in a good position to develop their own creative strategies for living their lives. Children of immigrants are often described as being "torn between two worlds" (Child 1943). Social scientists and immigrant parents alike often worry that in navigating between two cultural systems and two languages, their children may never be completely competent in either. It is often feared that growing up in a world where parents who have come of age in a different culture have a hard time guiding their children into adulthood can lead to confusion, alienation, and reversal of authority roles within the family. In the early twentieth century, many children of European immigrants coped with this challenge by rejecting their parents' embarrassing "foreign ways" and trying to become "American." Although our respondents occasionally felt that their parents' cultures were at odds with the American worldview, they rarely saw this as a real problem. Perhaps because of today's ethos of multiculturalism, most of our respondents believe they can choose which aspects of a given cultural model to adopt.

Traditional, straight line assimilation theory implies that the children of immigrants, torn between two worlds, will do best when they assimilate. Doing this may have emotional and psychic costs, but in the end the children of immigrants will come to share the "native advantages" over their immigrant parents (Warner and Srole 1945). Alba and Nee's (2003) contemporary reworking of this notion greatly improved the model by excising its prescriptive aspects, emphasizing that assimilation does not preclude retaining elements of ethnic culture and stressing how assimilation also remakes U.S. culture. Yet they too see the second generation as sharing advantages that come from joining the increasingly multicultural mainstream. By contrast, segmented assimilation theory posits that resisting Americanization can be helpful for the second generation. This theory argues that members of the second generation who assimilate into disadvantaged segments of the native population will suffer, whereas those who partially keep assimilation at bay can continue to share the "immigrant advantages" of relatively better-positioned immigrant communities.

Clearly, today's second generation provides examples of all these paths. However, our study also underscores the importance of a distinct second generation advantage: its location between two different social systems allows for creative and selective combinations of the two that can be highly conducive to success. In developing a strategy for navigating chal-

lenges, second generation youngsters do not have to choose whether being foreign or being American is "better." They can draw on both cultures. Members of the groups we have studied clearly have different options depending on their parents' position and their own position in a segmented social structure. Sometimes none of the available choices are particularly conducive to upward mobility. Other things being equal, however, seeing choices where others see constraints is in itself a significant advantage. Further, whereas puritans of various stripes are generally more comfortable with the coherence of traditional cultural systems, New York, more than most places, has historically honored hybridity and rewarded innovation.

In the mid-twentieth century, New York became one of the world's greatest centers of cultural creativity. While American economic ascendancy helped, it is probably not coincidental that the previous second generation came of age in this intensely creative period in American music, art, letters, theater, and criticism. Immigrants and their children played a cultural role far out of proportion to their numbers (Hirschman 2005), and New York, where so much of the second generation was concentrated, became a hothouse for intellectual "scenes" and cultural movements, both mainstream and avant garde. New York gave the children of immigrants the cosmopolitan space in which to make these innovations. And despite the nativists' worries that New York was becoming a place apart, the second generation repaid America with a new, broader, and, we think, better vision of itself. It was Irving Berlin, a 1.5 generation New Yorker, who penned "God Bless America" (a Russian Jew, he also wrote "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas").

It is too early to say whether New York is experiencing something like this today. The second generation is still young, the world is a different place, and history never quite repeats itself. Yet social scientists may have exaggerated the differences between past experiences of immigrant incorporation and those of the present. The creative mixing of immigrant and native minority cultures, already clearly evident in the music, art, dance, and poetry being produced in hyperdiverse cities like New York and Los Angeles, is in many ways reminiscent of the best of New York's past. Here we see the second generation advantage most clearly. The greatest spur to creativity in multicultural cities is neither the continuation of immigrant traditions nor the headlong rush to become similar to the host society, but the innovation that occurs when different traditions come together, where no one way of doing things can be taken for granted. For all their prob-

lems, the increasingly diverse working class neighborhoods of New York exhibit an undeniable innovative energy.

This creativity is evident in the everyday decisions and behaviors of young people who are growing up with a dual frame of reference. These young people can be, and perhaps must be, creative in their reactions to their environments. For many situations, second generation members cannot blindly repeat the received wisdom of their parents, which is best suited to a different society. More than most of us, members of the second generation know that their parents' ways cannot always be their ways. Nor can they unreflectively take up an American culture they are only beginning to understand. Instead, they must choose among the ways of their parents, of broader American society, and of their native minority peers or, perhaps, create something altogether new and different.

We often attribute drive and creativity to the self-selection of immigrants or to ethnicity itself, but the real second generation advantage comes from being located between two cultures. The creativity inherent in occupying a position at the crossroads of two groups has been widely recognized in a variety of situations, but we believe it has been insufficiently recognized with respect to the second generation. Sociologist Ron Burt describes the situation of being between two social networks as being in a "structural hole." He notes that

opinion and behavior are more homogeneous within than between groups, so people connected across groups are more familiar with alternative ways of thinking and behaving which give them more options to select from and synthesize. New ideas emerge from selection and synthesis across the structural holes between groups. (Burt 2004:349–350)

This insight is not new. At the beginning of the last century Georg Simmel (1922) recorded it in his classic discussion of conflicting group affiliations and the role of the stranger. Burt (2004:350) goes back even further, quoting John Stuart Mill:

It is hardly possible to overrate the value . . . of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves, and with modes of thought and action unlike those with which they are familiar . . . Such communication has always been, and is particularly in the present age, one of the primary sources of progress.

Yet, if anything, this has become more true for today's second generation than it was for the children of immigrants in the past. The ethos of multiculturalism and the reality of globalization and the unprecedented diversity that characterizes cities like New York multiply the second generation advantage. The contemporary second generation does not feel undue pressure to reject the languages, beliefs, and behaviors of its immigrant forebears. Nor do its members feel the need to cling to them to keep the dangers of assimilation at bay. They are individuals who grew up in a world in which being different can be "cool," and they insist that they are free to assert certain aspects of their parents' ways and to reject others—thus allowing this cultural creativity to flower.

Consider an example of how this can work. When we asked about the age at which young people were expected to leave home, there was widespread agreement among native white, native black, and Puerto Rican respondents that living with your parents after age 21 was difficult at best, and definitely not conducive to "being an adult." By contrast, most of our second generation respondents in every group grew up with a different norm transmitted to them by their parents and their ethnic group—that living with parents and other extended family members until marriage and maybe even after was normal and did not have to be fraught with conflict and angst. In many cases living in the parental home was a sign of responsibility and maturity and thus completely compatible with being an adult. Further, while the decision to leave home at an early age allowed many of the natives to see themselves as adults, this individualism came at a price, as this 32 year old Puerto Rican woman makes clear:

*I:* Would you have done anything differently if you had the chance?

*R:* Maybe I would have waited a little before leaving the house at age nineteen. I think I could have waited two or three years. . . . Maybe by then I would have finished college.

*I:* Is there anything that may have helped you make a better decision?

*R:* No, because it was my choice. I'm an adult, that's a choice I decided to make, so no, I think it was all up to me.

On the other hand, our native born respondents also grew up with an expectation that men and women would receive the same amount of education and that there was no reason that women should not expect to get as much education as men. Many of our Hispanic and Chinese respondents received messages from their parents that girls did not need as much education as boys.

These two sets of ideas, the first about the timing of establishing one's own household and the second about the length of education, interact with the structure of the New York City housing market, one of the most expensive in the world. While many native white families had the financial resources to help their children attain independent living or owned homes that they could give to their offspring when they retired, the black and Puerto Rican families had far less ability to support their children in their desire to live independently. Regardless of race, however, most of our native respondents expected that they should strike out on their own and have their own apartments, if not by age 18, then certainly by their early twenties. They struggled to do so and often felt like failures when they could not. The second generation respondents, by contrast, often continued to live with their parents until they felt able to afford to live on their own. This allowed many second generation women to continue their schooling, even if they had children, because their parents could help with child care or because they did not have to work full time to support high rents.

Thus a second generation young woman is able to combine the norm of education and career ambitions that pushes her toward college and the norm of multigenerational living that allows her to live at home while she attains that goal. Most CUNY schools and other low cost New York colleges have no dormitories; those that do charge far more for them than the cost of living "at home." (Once again, this is not so different than in times past. In the "glory days" of the City College in the 1930s, its mostly second generation student body lived at home with immigrant parents. A generation later, how many of their thoroughly Americanized children would have done the same?)

A young second generation woman may not be aware that she is choosing to maintain one norm and shed another. These are simply norms that fit with the realities of a labor market that rewards education, a primary education system that has equal expectations of men and women, and a housing market that makes it hard for a young single woman attending college to find an apartment. Her ability to combine an American norm about education with an immigrant norm about living with parents nevertheless means that she is better off than her native minority neighbor who cannot conceive of living with her parents at age 25, even though she would like to finish college. It also makes her better off than her first generation counterpart who has just arrived at age 18 believing that her brother should finish college but that she can be suc-

cessful if she can just get a high school degree and a job. The creativity of this second generation comes from its members' ability to meet their needs with a wider repertoire of options about beliefs and behaviors than is available to people who have grown up in the same society as their parents and who consequently have only a single frame of reference.

Being located between two or more cultural systems can, of course, sometimes have negative consequences. The Dominican American student attending Fordham whom we quoted in Chapter 7 about the inadequacy of the guidance Dominican parents gave their children in sexual matters and the problems this had caused her peers presents a good example. Of course, the extent of the advantage derived from combining two sets of norms does depend on which immigrant norms the second generation person draws upon and which segment of U.S. society the person is being incorporated into. We are not suggesting that the positive side of being between cultural systems always outweighs the limitations and constraints faced by the most disadvantaged of the second generation. This second generation advantage is but one factor among many shaping young people's lives today. Most of the time, however, we suspect it is on the positive side of the balance sheet, and that too often previous observers have ignored its impact or have been too quick to see combining two sets of norms as negative.

The creativity that comes from being between cultural systems was clearly evident among earlier generations of European immigrants as well. Yet even while they remade America on their own "ethnic" terms, they often did so in the face of very real pressures to assimilate that left them profoundly aware of their outsider status and embarrassed, or at least ambivalent, about their parents' "foreign" ways (see Hansen 1938; Gordon 1964). In part because of their successful integration into U.S. society, and in part because of changes in American attitudes about difference in the wake of the civil rights movement, today's second generation members live in an America in which the pressures for cultural conformity have lessened substantially. Far from being embarrassed, many of our informants felt proud of the ways in which they bridged two worlds in what Monica Boyd and Elizabeth Grieco have called their "triumphant transitions" (1998). We saw this in the pride with which young people described using their ability to translate to help their parents or other people with limited English, in the easy ways in which young people described their multiethnic friendship networks, and in the extensive use of ethnic music and media, especially among the Spanish speakers. Indeed, our

respondents were more likely to be embarrassed that they had too rapidly assimilated into American society—a number described how bad they felt about losing their parents' language. This reflects the stronger appreciation of diversity in America in general as well as the particularly cosmopolitan ethos of New York.

In New York City the second generation inherits an environment where the second generation advantages work to particularly good effect. While these young people feel the sting of disadvantage and discrimination, they move in a world where being from somewhere else has long been the norm. For them being a New Yorker means being both ethnic and American, being different both from native whites and from their immigrant parents. In this feeling they are reaping the benefits of New York's long history of absorbing new immigrants. As Glazer and Moynihan put it in *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1963/1970:xiii):

New York is not Chicago, Detroit or Los Angeles. It is a city in which the dominant racial group has been marked by ethnic variety and all ethnic groups have experienced ethnic diversity. Any one ethnic group can count on seeing its position and power wax and wane and none has become accustomed to long term domination, though each may be influential in a given area or domain. None can find challenges from new groups unexpected or outrageous . . . The evolving system of inter-group relations permits accommodation, change and the rise of new groups.

This situation has persisted despite the nonwhite origins of most new immigrant groups. No doubt New York City still has an entrenched white establishment that can trace its roots in the United States back many generations. But the new second generation rarely encounters such people on the job, in the unions, or around the neighborhoods, schools, and subways of New York. Instead, the children of immigrants see a continuum of "whites" who trace their origins to Italy, Ireland, Germany, Russia, Poland, Greece, or Israel. If Italians are yesterday's newcomers and today's establishment, then perhaps Colombians are the new Italians and, potentially, tomorrow's establishment. New Yorkers, old and new, are happy to tell themselves this story. It may not be completely true. But the fact they tell it, and believe it, is significant and may serve to help make it come true.

## Why Do Some Groups Do Better Than Others?

Why do some of our groups do so much better than others? Members of the second generation, as we outlined, are creative partly because of the variety of strategies they have available for how to be in the world. A logical extension of this is that different groups have different strategies or concepts that they have brought with them, and as we have tried to make clear throughout the book, these groups face different structural realities once they get to the United States.

As argued earlier, the groups differ in terms of parental human capital, reasons for migration, and the contexts of reception they encounter. Thus, the relative success of the Russian Jewish second generation respondents is not unexpected—their parents had high levels of education, they came as refugees, and while they were getting established and retrained in the United States, a large percentage of the families took advantage of welfare, food stamps, and other government programs. Indeed, in contrast to native minority groups, it is striking how little stigma was attached to the Russians' use of widespread public assistance, either within the group or from other New Yorkers. As Jews, the Russian immigrants were also given special attention and aid from established Jewish organizations that helped them with everything from housing to job referrals and English-language lessons. As whites the Russians found housing in better neighborhoods with less crime, better schools, and better stores and services. It is no surprise, then, that their children have done well.

Obvious factors do less to explain the success of our Chinese respondents. Twenty-two percent of our Chinese respondents are from families with highly educated parents, and one would expect these respondents to do well. But 67 percent of our Chinese parents have very low levels of education. Unlike the Russians, few entered the country as refugees, and thus they did not initially qualify for welfare or other government programs. In addition, the Chinese sometimes faced racial and ethnic discrimination in schools and the labor market. But the Chinese in our study are doing exceptionally well, better, by most measures, than groups in which parental education is, on average, considerably higher.

Explaining the relative success of the Chinese suggests that what we might call “family strategies for the accumulation and intergenerational transfer of capital” may be more important than race or parents’ nativity. The most successful children come from groups that are more likely to have two parents and even other adult wage earners and caretakers in the

household supporting relatively few children. The Chinese have a high ratio of working adults to children in the household. While it is true that Chinese parents relentlessly expect their children to perform well in schools, they also provide the means for them to do so in the form of higher *household* incomes (even when individual incomes are modest), living in neighborhoods with better schools, keeping their children out of the labor force while they pursue higher education, and navigating the bureaucratic pathways toward the best schools in the New York City public school system. It is worth noting that unlike native whites or better-off African Americans, the Chinese rarely turn to private schools as an alternative, although they do spend money on supplemental educational and exam preparation, often in weekend "Chinese schools."

The Chinese are able to provide the means for their children to do well because of several other important factors. First, while the group has low median parental education and income, the first generation is marked by a great diversity of class origins. Despite this class diversity, the group is very much a cohesive group, with a high degree of social connection between its better- and worse-off members. Perhaps because of language barriers, perhaps because of race, many Chinese professionals continue to inhabit the same social world as their poorer compatriots; whereas South American professionals—particularly if they are light skinned—often leave the community and become functionally white.

Social networks link middle and working class Chinese immigrants, and all the Chinese share ethnic newspapers, ethnic churches, and ethnic broadcast media. Guides to the New York City public school system published in the Chinese-language newspapers pass on information provided by the middle class immigrants who have used their own education and class-based cultural capital to figure out how the system works and how to navigate it. This knowledge is shared with working class immigrants. In this way the Chinese respondent who told us that her barely literate mother who worked in a garment factory but who "somehow" knew her daughter should go to Stuyvesant (the premier public high school in the city, accessible only by test) is a beneficiary of both the class heterogeneity and ethnic solidarity of the Chinese ethnic group.

As Burt (2004:351) defines it, "Social capital exists where people have an advantage because of their location in a social structure." Working class Chinese second generation youth acquire social capital because they are embedded in a social structure—the networks encompassing their immigrant parents—with educational and class diversity. This social capital is

not available to Dominican youth, whose parents' community is homogeneously poor, nor to South American youth, whose group exhibits less ethnic solidarity.

At the same time, the context of reception by the wider society also shapes group experience. One reason the Chinese are able to take advantage of the islands of excellence in New York's public school system is that, despite their racial distinctiveness, they face little discrimination in the housing market. Chinese immigrants can move into white neighborhoods without causing rapid white out-migration. By contrast, West Indians or Dominicans, regardless of income, face much higher levels of discrimination in housing. They are less able to move into white neighborhoods in search of better schools or safer streets. When they do, "white flight" often leads to declines in school quality and public safety, much as it would if the newcomers were native African Americans or Puerto Ricans. Added to these advantages is the stereotype of the Chinese as successful students. One of the strongest findings in educational research is that high expectations from teachers have a positive effect on student outcomes (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968). Unlike Hispanic and black students, who often have to overcome low expectations, the Chinese enter schools that expect them to do well.

Finally, cultural factors are at play in the success of the Chinese. The pattern of obligations that keeps working class mothers and fathers from divorcing even when they are miserable together and that keeps young adults living at home and supporting their parents even when they do not communicate with them promotes socioeconomic mobility for the Chinese second generation. Second generation Chinese put off marriage and childbearing until they have finished school and established themselves in their careers. This does not necessarily make them happier than others their age—we interviewed a lot of lonely and bitter Chinese young adults. But it does facilitate academic and career success. While they may not always be having a good time, they are experiencing very high rates of upward social mobility.

The other groups we studied have different mixes of behaviors and beliefs and face different structures of barriers and opportunities. The Dominicans probably present the clearest cause for concern. With a comparatively high level of African ancestry, Dominicans face high levels of discrimination, both in public space and in the housing market. Unlike the parents of West Indians, few of their parents spoke English on arrival. They arrived in the United States with very low levels of education and

continue to have low incomes. Their nearest "proximal host" population, Puerto Ricans, are also quite poor, and the neighborhoods they share have some of New York's worst schools.

It is not clear whether Dominicans, caught between remaining in one of the poorest immigrant communities and assimilating into the poorest of the native communities, enjoy much second generation advantage. Many have formed single-parent households, and the ratio of children to working adults in the household is low. By New York standards, many of the Dominican first generation arrived in the United States undocumented, and their high level of remittances to and investments in the Dominican Republic drains capital out of the community.

Nevertheless, despite these disadvantages, members of the Dominican second generation are in many respects doing at least marginally better than their Puerto Rican counterparts and even native born African Americans. They are much better educated than their parents, although less well educated than most other New Yorkers their age. Finally, those Dominicans who do achieve high levels of education show little evidence of disadvantage relative to native whites, something that is not true for the native minorities.

### **Immigration, Race, and Public Policy: Looking into the Future**

While our story is cautiously optimistic, we must underscore several caveats. First, our study began at an auspicious time—from 1999 to early 2001. The labor market was tight, unemployment was low, and the financial services industry in New York was pumping money into the local economy. After decades of rising income inequality and stagnant median wages, the local and national economy experienced some good years at the end of the 1990s. Our young respondents reaped the benefits of that particular time and place, even though they generally held entry-level jobs without much security. Most of our respondents could find work, and most were optimistic about their own futures.

The collapse of the dot-com boom and the economic shock of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in September 2001 shook that confidence. When we reinterviewed many of our in-depth respondents in 2002 and 2003, some had lost their jobs and had not been able to replace them. Given that most of our respondents were working and lower middle class people with some college education and relatively low-paying

jobs, severe economic downturns like the one in 2001–2003 could change stories of modest upward mobility and rosy outlooks into stories of stagnation, pessimism, and worry about the future.

We can also ask whether the social mobility and general optimism we found will carry over to the third and fourth generation or whether the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the immigrants will experience a reversal of fortune, as seems to be true of the Puerto Ricans. Academics and policymakers have not paid nearly enough attention to Puerto Ricans in recent decades. Dwarfed by the arrival of new immigrant groups, Puerto Ricans have often disappeared statistically into the broader Hispanic category. Neither immigrants nor natives, they have a special political status that also allowed them to fall through the cracks. Even the rediscovery of urban poverty in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s has focused almost exclusively on African Americans, and the new immigration literature has left Puerto Ricans out of the picture entirely.

While “off stage,” in New York, at least, the Puerto Ricans’ situation has deteriorated. The poorest group in our sample, the Puerto Ricans show distressing evidence of persistent poverty and intergenerational socioeconomic decline. Perhaps this is because the special selectivity of immigrants does not apply to the third generation families our respondents grew up in. It is also possible that there is a reverse selectivity effect, with the more successful Puerto Ricans moving to other parts of the country or even out-marrying and losing their identity as Puerto Rican. Nonetheless, the New York-based sample we spoke with is doing poorly. Racial discrimination, poor urban schools, language issues, and dysfunctional families all play a part.

Another clear pattern in our findings is deeply troubling. Race and racial discrimination continue to shape the life chances of second generation respondents with dark skin, who can be confused or associated with, or who see themselves as becoming, African Americans. Although we find little evidence of second generation decline, the continuing disadvantages faced by native African Americans, the status of the New York-born Puerto Ricans, the poverty and incarceration of many second generation Dominicans, and the high levels of discrimination reported by even the relatively well-off West Indians clearly point to the possibility of third generation decline. Because race encapsulates a complex dynamic of scarce family resources, high obstacles to success, and a risky environment, it still counts very much in New York City. That many children of immigrant minority parents manage to avoid racism’s worst impacts does not lessen the

sting for those who cannot. There is a distinct possibility that some portion of Dominicans and West Indians experience marked downward mobility as they become less distinguishable from African Americans over time and as residual immigrant and second generation advantages fade into the third or fourth generation. West Indians, despite relatively high incomes and levels of education, are the most likely of our second generation groups to report experiencing discrimination from the police and in public places, where their interactions with whites seem little different from those of African Americans.

Several public policies can make a difference in continuing second generation integration and preventing third generation decline. The shameful inequality in the educational system has to be lessened. The New York City public schools vary so much in quality that it is difficult to imagine they are part of the same system. The variation begins at the very earliest grades, and the effects of attending a substandard school are compounded and reinforced year after year until it is too late to undo the damage by the time students enter high school. At the other end of the spectrum are students who enter some of the best elementary schools and can navigate the system. They end up in one of the magnet schools and achieve an education as good as any obtainable in private school. This inequality maps onto racial and income disparities and is inexcusable. In order to ensure continued positive integration of generations of immigrants, we must make good on America's promise of equality of opportunity.

Affirmative action in higher education, while intended primarily to address the long-standing grievances of native minority groups, especially African Americans, is in fact a policy that has worked well for the children of immigrants and should be supported. Hampered by racial discrimination, some substandard schools, and a lack of knowledge about the American educational system, yet ambitious and coming from families who invest a great deal in the success of the next generation, the children of nonwhite immigrants are perhaps best suited to a program designed to locate and help qualified but disadvantaged youth. Affirmative action and other programs that seek to facilitate the upward mobility of minority youth have, in fact, served us well in integrating the children of nonwhite immigrants. That this was not their original intention should not obscure this important success.

In addition, the government should continue to monitor and fight both overt and subtle racial discrimination in housing, jobs, and schools and by the police. Discrimination is a fact of life for dark-skinned young people, but

how that discrimination feels is very different if they know that the law will protect them and that their society does not countenance such behavior.

We began this study worried about downward mobility of some of the children of immigrants. We now feel that it is, in some ways, the opposite problem that is actually a greater cause for concern. It has become clear that the relative success of the children of immigrants is now obscuring the depth of continuing poverty and discrimination, limited opportunities, staggering rates of incarceration, and the general social exclusion of large segments of the native minority youth population. When elite colleges point with pride to their increasing "diversity" and to the growing numbers of "blacks" and "Latinos" among their students and faculty, it is easy to overlook how much of that diversity is provided by the growing numbers of immigrants and their children, and how little by the descendants of American slaves or by long-present Puerto Ricans or Mexican Americans. When institutions like the CUNY colleges or New York's selective public magnet schools express concern over their declining "black" and "Latino" enrollments, it is easy to miss how much more dramatic those declines would be if it were not for the children of West Indian, Dominican, and South American immigrants.

Let us be clear. The increasing diversity of American institutions and of American society is a good thing. The reduction of racial barriers, initiated by the civil rights movement, however partial, has created a fairer and thus better society. In fact, the use of affirmative action and the active pursuit of diversity have facilitated the incorporation of the children of immigrants. However unintentionally, such policies and practices have helped members of the second generation find their place in American society. They are part of the reason the situation in New York and other American cities looks so different than that in Europe. Good for the immigrants and their children, this unintended incorporation policy has also been good for the United States. In an era of globalization, it has brought new and different skills, fresh talent, and extraordinary drive to an America that needs them now as much as ever. At the same time, such policies and practices have been less successful in addressing the problems of the very populations they were originally designed for, and whose struggles for justice brought them about in the first place. This is a fact that must be faced squarely. When, out of ignorance or misguided notions of solidarity, politicians and social scientists lump native and immigrant minorities together under rubrics such as "Hispanic," or worse, "people of color," they make such issues more difficult to talk about, much less address.

Further, for the children of non-black, non-white immigrants it is important to remember that race is mutable and that the color line may be moving. The central cleavage in American life was once clearly between whites and non-whites. Today there is mounting evidence that it is between blacks and non-blacks. This has tremendous salience for much of the second generation. The changing position of Asian Americans—once as racially excluded as anyone—on most indicators of acculturation and assimilation in the last two decades should remind us that there is nothing permanent about what we call race. Perhaps the ties of language will, in the next century, make of the children of Colombians, Ecuadorans, Cubans, and Mexicans (along with the grandchildren of Puerto Ricans and the great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren of southwestern “Hispanos”) a single “Latino” race. But this is hardly the only possible outcome, or even the most likely one, given the consistent finding that many of the second generation children of Latino immigrants prefer to use English anyway.

Finally, we must remember that incorporation is a two-way street. The second generation has been successful partly because New York, compared to many other places, has put few barriers in their way. In this regard it is important to remember that the number of undocumented immigrants among our 1.5 generation respondents was relatively low. Indeed, most of our respondents’ parents entered the country legally; and of those who did not enter legally, most eventually managed to regularize their status. Few of our respondents reported that their own legal status or that of their parents had posed a major problem as they were growing up in the 1980s and 1990s. This finding presents a sharp contrast to cities in which more of the immigrant population is undocumented. It is also a contrast to the situation of the children of today’s newest immigrants, since even in New York the proportion of undocumented immigrants has risen and legalization has become more difficult. While efforts to “get tough” on undocumented immigrants and plug the various loopholes used to legalize an immigrant’s status have been singularly unsuccessful in keeping undocumented immigrants out of the country, they do keep immigrants undocumented longer. As a result many immigrants are now permanently locked out of meaningful participation in American civic life. Whatever one thinks of the situation that created today’s large undocumented population, one can easily see how much the presence of such a large, permanent population who are part of our nation economically, socially, and culturally, but not politically, ill serves a democratic society. The

situation is bad for the immigrants, bad for America, and particularly bad for the immigrants' American children. This, far more than downward assimilation, is where we feel the true danger of creating an underclass lies. If we are truly concerned about the integration of the children of immigrants into American society, policies that keep their parents undocumented can only be judged highly counterproductive.

The elements of the civic culture of New York and America that welcome and celebrate immigration and ethnic diversity should be maintained and reinforced. The history of America's treatment of immigrants has many shameful aspects—forced assimilation, forced repatriation, imprisonment in concentration camps, blatant prejudice, discrimination, violence, and exclusion. Through it all, however, America has also maintained an ideology of equality and openness to immigrants and a bedrock rule that anyone born in the United States is a citizen. We can see this ideology as a hypocritical story we have told ourselves, and sometimes it is. But it has also been a resource for the immigrants, for their children, and for members of native minority groups fighting for inclusion and fair treatment.

One need only look at the continued exclusion of the second and third generation of post-World War II immigrants in Western Europe to see how much worse the situation could have been. Every year for the last few decades some misguided lawmaker proposes to deny birthright citizenship to the children of undocumented migrants or even to the children of immigrants more generally. This would be a terrible mistake. Not only would it create a permanently excluded but permanently present class of noncitizens in our midst, it would send a terrible message to our newcomers.

America can be proud of its ideology of inclusion, and New York, on its best days, can be proud of the reality of inclusion it offers to the second generation. The hold that members of the second generation have on that promise of a better life may be precarious, but, combined with their youthful optimism, it leaves us hopeful about their future and about the future of the city that they inherit.