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Educational Attainment of Immigrant Students in the United States: Generational Struggle Towards Success

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Educational Attainment of Immigrant Students in the United States:
Generational Struggle Towards Success

by

Robin Das

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2018

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Educational Attainment of Immigrant Students in the United States: Generational Struggle Towards Success

by

Robin Das

Advisor: David Halle

Known as the land of opportunities, United States has always been a key attraction to outside world as the place where people can live up to their potential dreams. People migrate from far lands to settle down and find the missing link that was absent in their native country. Among numerous reasons, financial inefficiency and social and political insecurity at homeland, new immigration policies in the US, expectation of a better socio-economic lifestyle and a secure and prosperous future for their children are some key reasons why immigrants move out of their motherland and travel to America. They hope and pray for a prosperous educational career for their children who can grab onto the opportunities provided for students and accomplish the “American Dream”. However, their scholastic journey in the US is not as pleasant as they would have expected considering all the obstacles they must face during this journey. Various socioeconomic and political factors such as language inefficiency, difference in cultural and education system, financial instability and their illegal immigrant status are primary barriers that immigrant students face as they enter American schools and colleges. Nonetheless, positive factors such as higher parental education and cultural expectation on education, constructive modes of incorporation and academic preparation are key determinants as to figure out why some immigrant groups are succeeding more than others. For example, Asian immigrant students fare much better than their native counterparts and other immigrant students because of the strong cultural emphasis on education, parental education and social networks and how these factors motivate them to attain better grades and higher education. However, across multiple immigrant generations, educational achievements and socioeconomic mobility seems to follow a downward trajectory in the United States.

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Most importantly, I am indebted to my family for always standing by my side even when I was not doing so well academically and constantly encouraging to push beyond the obstacles. I do not think I would become this person that I am today without my parents and my sister who are the core source of my energy and motivation. A big thanks to my friends (brothers) from Shiri Public as well who have always been on my side and energizing me to be the best person of my ability.

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INTRODUCTION

Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” There is no doubt that the demand for higher education is growing rapidly in our modern world. Unfortunately, the education system is not at the same standard all over the world. The United States of America has been a role model for other countries around the globe in regard to the educational facilities it provides to its students. Thus, many students from the other countries, mostly third world countries, come to America with a dream in their hearts to attain better education. However, their scholastic journey in the US is not as pleasant as they would have expected regarding all the obstacles they have to face. There are various socioeconomic factors that become thorns on their path of higher education. On the other hand, these immigrant students are also motivated and well supported to overcome those complications via other socioeconomic factors such as parental and cultural influence, social network, well-organized and equipped institutions and friendly legislative policies towards immigration.

One of the largest criticisms of immigration in the United States is that they take away jobs and destroy American economy. This conundrum mainly arose after the second wave of immigration brought highly educated and skilled migrants from Asia, Latin America and Caribbean countries. Because of their high standard of education level and skillset, many natives feel threatened about their own position in the society. Instead of raising their own academic level and professional achievement, many Americans suggest that immigration is diminishing our education and economy as well as sociocultural traditions. However, what they forget to mention is that immigrant students actually raise the bar via their cultural experiences and diversity. Immigrants’ higher educational attainment represents their socioeconomic lifestyle which is clearly visible in most groups, especially in Asian immigrant communities.

CHAPTER 1: SEGMENTED ASSIMILATION THEORY

In modern literature, segmented assimilation is viewed as a middle-range theory that entails different patterns of adaptation emerge among contemporary immigrants and how these patterns necessarily lead to the conclusion of convergence or divergence. It contradicts previous social studies' assumption about a straight-line assimilation which indicated immigrant groups' fully incorporation into American society. Portes and Zhou (1993) highlights on several aspects of current immigrant groups that would reflect on multiple ways they try to adjust to the host society. Whereas earlier social literature mostly talked about first generation immigrants and their lifestyles, our authors reflect on second generation immigrants and their ways of selectively adapting to the United States. By using surveys from the project Children of Immigrants, the authors illustrated how there are a number of ways second generation immigrants can adjust their lifestyle incorporation with the host nation.

Segmented assimilation refers to a variety of adaptive experiences immigrants may have as they become part of a host society; the first generation and the following generations ahead of them. The phases that immigrants go through thought to be common experiences for all immigrants to a new host society. Using surveys of children of immigrants, Portes and Zhou (1993) portrays how segmented assimilation includes many ways that a new immigrant may adapt to a new society. They may follow the traditional model and assimilate into the white middle class. Alternatively, they might follow a less prosperous path and assimilate into the underclass which would indicate their downward mobility. Finally, they might also keep strong ties within their own ethnic community and use those social capitals in order to attain upward mobility in the socioeconomic ladder.

In the United States, two prominent immigration waves have taken place that has changed the surface of US immigration and population policies forever. The first wave that occurred between the late 1800s to early 1900s consisted of mostly European white immigrants who assimilated more comfortably due to their refugee or religious status. However, the current immigration wave from the 1960s till now brought many Latino, Asian and Caribbean migrants in America who face challenges and social prejudices regarding color, immigration status, fluency etc. As Portes and Zhou (1993) stated, “By Contrast, approximately 77 percent of post-1960 immigrants are non-Europeans.” (77). In addition, the economic structure of this country has changed from industrialization to mostly service sector jobs which have left many unskilled immigrants into desolation.

One of the biggest problems as a second-generation immigrant is the conflict between retaining their ethnic and cultural identity or to assimilate into the mainstream culture of the host nation. In the case Haitian second generation immigrants and many other black migrants described in this article, assimilation would mean that they may have to settle down in the inner-city neighborhoods and adopt to “street” values which may lead them towards downward assimilation. For example, second generation black migrants can easily assimilate into the inner-city culture and start to devalue education system as a way to show solidarity with their peers since attaining education sometimes means to “act white” in many inner-city groups. Three possible social contexts that are vulnerable to downward assimilation are color, location and lack of mobility ladders. Many first and second-generation immigrants, mostly of color, have faced prejudices based on their skin color in the social, political and economic sector in the US. Also, as described above, immigrants who locate in close proximity with native minorities might also face social injustices and inherit negative conceptions about assimilation that leads to failure in economic

ladder. Furthermore, economic changes in the host society can also make migrants vulnerable towards downward assimilation if they do not have any particular expertise or skills.

Hence, the modes of incorporation are very important in understanding how well or poorly an individual or a group of migrants can fit in to the new society. It consists of three significant factors and they are the policies of the host society, values and prejudices of the host nation and structures of coethnic communities (Portes and Zhou 1993). These three factors allow access to resources that are available to many immigrant groups which help them settle down and assimilate into the host culture. First of all, certain groups that consist of political refugees such as the Cubans receive governmental aid such as educational loans which helped the second-generation youth to attain college education with more comfort. Secondly, some “fortunate” immigrant groups have been exempted from the racial and religious discriminations that other immigrant groups face during their stay in America. The Cubans and the Jews are primary examples for these fortunate migrant populations. The third and most important resources available for migrants are through their social network in the preexisting communities. Many recent and second-generation immigrants receive moral and material capitals within those networks that help them establish and maintain a proper social and economic lifestyle. However, I do not think these resources obtained through ethnic networks would influence immigrants to assimilate into the American culture; rather, it might encourage them to retain their ethnic identity and stay in close proximity to those networks. Immigrant youth are most likely to be helped from these networks where they can obtain information about college and job opportunities. The amount of assistance from these ethnic networks might encourage them to retain their ethnic identity and stay near those affiliations.

Portes and Zhou (1993) provided examples of three ethnic immigrant groups to show how segmented assimilation works even within these groups. The first group was the Mexican second-

generation youth in a school where some of them retained their cultural identity and a very strong ethnic tie with Mexico rather than highly incorporating with the American culture. Some of the more successful students within this category wear strictly Mexican outfits and are known to be very courageous and active in school. Another group would be called Mexican-oriented students who were aware of their Mexican roots and but had different approach towards ethnic network than their ancestors. The last and most well-known Mexican category in the United States is the Chicanos. “To be a Chicano meant in practice to hand out by the science wing... not eating lunch in the quad where all the “gringos” and “schoolboys” hang out... cutting classes by faking a call slip so you can be your friends at the 7-11...” (Portes and Zhou 1993:89). Chicanos and Cholos are most likely to involve in gang activities and show hatred towards the mainstream society due to previous discrimination against their ancestors and economic desolation.

The next group that is mentioned in this article is the Punjabi Sikhs in a community where farming is a very crucial economic factor. They too face prejudice in school and community due to their origin status and lifestyle. However, it is widely visible how successful the second-generation Punjabi youth are considering that they outperform the native whites in schools. They are more likely to be enrolled in advanced science and math classes to be more successful in future. Their approach towards success has a lot to do with how their cultural and parental influences restrict them within their own ethnic ideals rather than fully incorporating into American culture. Their ideology behind selectively choosing what is best for them and their children are correlated with two crucial characteristics. First, their parents did not settle in the inner-city neighborhoods or did not let their children in near proximity with the native minority youths which avoided their downward assimilation. Secondly, these parents showed efficient economic progress while maintain strong tie with their ethnic community which encouraged the second-generation youth continue following their footsteps.

The third group cited is the Caribbean immigrants consisting of Cubans, West Indians, Haitians and Nicaraguans. Most of these group members have faced racial discrimination in socioeconomic and political sectors to convince them on keeping their own ethnic identity stronger. However, it varies between the West Indians who face harsher prejudice due to their skin color than the Cubans. While some of them have failed to enter the upper-middle class quota, most of them have aspirations of achieving higher education degree and a professional occupation that entails prestige in society. All of these factors accumulate how second-generation Caribbean youth, depending on where they are from and the context of racial prejudice towards them, perceive assimilation and their approach towards it.

These three examples of immigrant groups provide a vivid display of how segmented assimilation operates for any particular group. In contrast to earlier assumption in social literature about straight-line assimilation which mandates immigrant groups' complete incorporation into mainstream culture, this ideology reveals various ways of adopting to a new society. The authors concluded that through the strategy of selective assimilation, an individual or a migrant group can succeed and move towards upward mobility and as we go through this paper, we will examine how immigrant students use that notion to its proper use.

CHAPTER 2: RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND IMMIGRANTS

A general perception about religion is that of peace, love and unity that should be shared among everyone. Unfortunately, in some parts of the world, a particular religion can also be regarded as an opposing stance that stands against the mainstream culture. In comparison with the United States and Western Europe, Foner and Alba walk us through two completely different standpoints on immigrant religion (2008). According to their research, while immigrant religion in the US can facilitate the integration progress, in Europe, it is often seen as an obstacle to the conventional society. Three main factors that can explain these differences are the religious backgrounds of immigrants and the natives, religiosity of the native population and historically rooted institutional structure.

The first component is the religious backgrounds of immigrants in both settings. In the United States, most of the migrant population is Christians and therefore, they have lesser problems in adapting to the new society. On the other hand, in Europe, most of the migrants are Muslims which automatically put them in disadvantage. Secondly, it is profoundly emphasized in social studies that America is a more religious place than Europe which is worryingly secular. Thus, most migrants find the United States more welcoming than Europe even if not all of them are Christians. The third and arguably, the most important aspect are the government structures and arrangements for new immigrants. In the US, immigrants receive freedom of religion from its constitution which gives them a right to exercise their religion without any hassle. Nonetheless, in many European countries, Muslims face institutional discrimination that can make them appear as inferiors to others in the society. Consequently, these religious dynamics can prove to be beneficial for the immigrants in the US but disadvantageous for the immigrants in Europe.

In cooperation with the ideology that migrant religions are depicted as mediums of integration into the mainstream American society, there are multiple significant factors that can

establish this dogma. First of all, the functionality of religion in the United States has three specific virtues which are refuge, respectability and resources that help to meet the social needs of these immigrant groups. Immigrants who have difficult time getting in touch with their families back home or adjusting to a new culture, religious institutions and practices can provide refuge which gives them a sense of belonging in the new country. These religious organizations, in numerous ways, provide psychological support to overcome distresses and encounter discrimination that they face due to their racial or ethnic background. Another function of religion is respect which immigrants receive from the fellow members of their religious groups. In addition, the third component of religion that is vital for the survival of immigrant groups is the resources they receive from religious institutions. Churches, mosques, temples provide followers with information about jobs and educational opportunities as well as housing facilities in some cases. Alba and Foner mentioned, “Pyong Gap Min refers to Korean Christian churches as the most important social service agencies in the New York Korean community. Among the services they offer are immigrant orientation, job referral, business information, Korean language and after-school programs for children, educational counselling, filial trips for elder, and even marriage counseling.” (2008: 363)

Migrant religion has notable importance in case of shaping individual identity which can be considered as one of the most valuable aspect of ethnic identity in the United States. It is very common within an ethnic enclave to observe people who belong to a specific religion to follow certain practices and values which can strengthen their ethnic identity. This association of religion and ethnic self may reinforce their integration into the mainstream American society since they would more likely to be involved in community affairs. Furthermore, these religious establishments can definitely expedite upward mobility for the new immigrants, and most importantly, the second generation. Some religious groups provide educational assistance such as SAT classes or English

language classes in order to emphasize the importance of education. These classes usually take place within that specific ethnic community that may, in a way, reinforce cultural pride and identity. Some scholarly studies also suggest that these establishments engage students with basic civic skills that may keep them off the streets. Some of the services may include public speaking; organize meetings, and community service which play enormous roles in incorporating migrants into American society.

Therefore, the literature proposes that immigrant religions, in many ways help them to fit into the American society which eventually gives them a sense of rightful existence. One of the easiest ways that this Americanization process happens is by converting to Christianity. Since Christianity is still the predominant religion in the US, many migrants who did not have a strong religious background in their native country become followers of this religion. For this reason, among some Asian migrant groups, there is a higher percentage of Asian Christians in the United States than it is in those countries. In addition, some scholars have argued that reasserting their own religious and ethnic identity, many immigrants fit right into American multicultural phenomenon. Foner and Alba stated, “Indeed, asserting a religious identity in public, even bragging about it, can be viewed as an indication of Americanization or assimilation to American norms.” (2008: 378) Many immigrant groups have also adapted to certain “American practices” in following their own religious rituals such as weekly services, usage of English language etc. All of these features attribute to a common impression that most immigrant religions play positive roles in incorporating people to American society and culture.

On the other hand, migrant religions, especially Islam, are viewed as a barrier to integration and a source of conflict with mainstream institutions and practices in Western Europe. Social studies suggest that the culture of Islam is analyzed as ways of life that are far from similar to European lifestyles. Therefore, the assumption is that instead of guiding their people into the

mainstream culture like in the United States, Islam prohibits its followers from adapting European secular beliefs. Many of these conflicts and prejudices arise because of the fact that most European countries are more secular and do not emphasize heavily on religion, especially Islam. One very important criticism of Islam is its subordination of women. Literature in Europe points out to several factors such as importing young girls as brides in Germany, domestic violence, forced marriages and honor killings of women. (Foner and Alba 2008) Honor killings are described as physical and psychological tortures that are carried out by brothers against the female figures who have sinned and deserved death. These accusations clearly oppose the liberated views of Europe and sometimes lead to prejudice and discrimination.

Muslim immigrants in Europe face hatred and ridicule which Foner and Alba named cultural racism. "...cultural racism, in which culture or religion are essentialized to the point that they become the functional equivalent of biological racism and groups are seen as inherently inferior on the basis of their culture or religion." (2008: 370) The fear of Islam in the hearts of contemporary Europeans leads to prejudice and socio-political inequalities. For instance, in France, wearing headscarf is banned in public settings although it is required by religious law for Muslim women to wear them. The irony behind this proposition is to "protect Muslim girls who do not wish to wear the headscarf from social pressures." There are also conflicts regarding building new mosques or enlarging the old ones, especially because of the sound of "Azan" (electronically amplified call for prayer).

Muslim communities in Europe also face discrimination in education system and labor market. Studies show that Europeans governments are reluctant to fund Islamic schools but have no problem supporting Protestant or Catholic institutions. Second generations Muslim students also face injustice in public schools and universities; both from other students and the institutional structure. In addition, research emphasizes that many Muslim immigrant groups in Europe deal

with harsh treatment in the labor market system. For example, in France, many African and Middle-Eastern Muslims are unemployed due to structural racism rather than their educational attainment. Surprisingly, even if they have higher educational background, they are employed in low level positions and upward mobility seems like a hard struggle for them,

Hence, many Muslim immigrants, especially the second-generation youth have created an oppositional identity that reject the mainstream culture and values. By doing so, they try to establish their strong ethnic identity and ignore the society that marked them as inferiors. This process has both positive and negative effects on the Muslim community. It will help to keep the youth from committing crimes or felonies and enforce education on them. Oppositional identity does not necessarily involve educational failure, criminal activity or drug use. However, many Europeans might see it as cultural isolation and blame the religion for halting the natural process of integration. In conclusion, it would be evident to mention that immigrant religions in America can play significant roles in adapting to a new culture, but we shall see if this is truly the case for immigrants across generations.

CHAPTER 3: IMMIGRANT STUDENTS AND THEIR STRUGGLES

One of the first and most troublesome barrier that immigrant students face as they enter American schools is their lack of fluency in English; both reading and writing. Since immigrants migrate from various parts of the world, most of them never spoke English in their motherland as it was not required of them. However, after entering this new country, they realize how tough it is for them in comparison to other native-born students to cope with the academic pressure. It is almost a burden for these students who are still suffering from the emotional stress of leaving their native country and now they must learn this new language and communicate through it. Proficiency in English language, both reading and writing, is seen almost as a determinant to academic success which adds more pressure on immigrant students. Due to these differences with the fluent English-speaking students, their confidence level goes down. It also leads to mental depression, fear of failure and parental pessimism which eventually causes poor academic performance in school as well as incidents such as skipping classes and school dropouts. Garrett and Holcomb stated, “Many immigrant students become highly frustrated because their learning needs are not being met due to language barriers. Anxiety levels are exacerbated by unreasonable expectations, and these expectations explain why dropout rates among immigrant students have increased concomitantly with declines in academic achievement.” (2005: 49).

Besides being a key element of scholastic success in a country, fluency in English has other significance to an immigrant student who came from a very different culture. Because of their inability to speak like native-born students, immigrants face constant discrimination that directly discourage their academic progress. In the case study of Tennessee, Cornfield and Arzubiaga (2004) showed how students are harassed by their native-born peers for their speaking ability, looks, dresses and behavioral patterns. One Vietnamese parent complained that her children used the school bus where they were constantly insulted by other students because they had an accent

and could not speak English properly. Other students would pull their hair and spit on them and hit them. Once, her son reacted to this and threw a punch to one of the bullies and got expelled from school. They were unable to explain what exactly had been happening because of their language issue and the bus driver hesitated to tell the truth. A similar complaint came from a Somalian parent whose children were made fun of due to their “Muslim” outfits and their religious practices. Her children were even asked by other native-born students if they were related to Osama Bin Laden. “One of my girls always tells me that she is afraid that of the boys is going to kill her because they think I’m related to him when she doesn’t even know whom he is. If the girls finally want to tell the teacher they don’t because they are afraid because if they do they might get beaten after school so they feel helpless and they can’t speak out” (Cornfield and Arzubagi 2004:172).

In addition, there are several cultural differences between the host and native country that become extremely difficult for a young child to break free of. To understand these differences that eventually influence student’s academic success, it is very important to distinguish a few main characteristics that separate the two cultures. Khandokar (2007) mentioned that in Bangladesh, parents could keep a strict supervision on their children’s whereabouts. It was important for them to know where their children are at certain time of the day and whether they are attending schools or skipping classes. Also, in Bangladesh, students received physical punishment for not completing assignments from both parents and teachers. In most Asian countries, not completing one’s assignment shows signs of failure which brings shame to that students and his family and therefore, punishment was visible. (Kim and Zhou 2006). However, in the United States, many immigrant students find it easier and less stressful than their native country. Here, teachers or parents are not allowed to punish students in any physical or verbal manner that could ruin their career. As a consequence, many students stray from the academic path which eventually affects their socioeconomic mobility.

In addition to that, there are some important differences in educational patterns and classroom settings that can make immigrant students and their parents uncomfortable. For example, making eye contact while talking to teachers is a sign of paying attention in the United States. It signifies respect as they are speaking to each other. Nonetheless, in many countries, especially in South East Asian regions, it is a sign of disobedience which deserves punishment. If the student is directly looking at the eye of his teacher with a stern voice or showing disagreement, it shows disrespect towards the teacher which is not tolerable (Khandokar 2007). Also, co-ed is a big concern for Muslim immigrants who are not comfortable sending their children in a classroom where boys and girls sit next to each other. In the case study of Tennessee, one Kurdish woman showed concern and anger when she found out that her son was sitting next to another girl while they were watching a movie in their class. It is against their religious principles which is why in their native country, most of the boys and girls had different schools and colleges. (Cornfield and Arzubaiaga 2004).

One key problem that most immigrants face entering a new country is the idea of “assimilation”. Constant and Zimmermann (2008) clarified the distinction between assimilation and integration by stating that those who comply with the host nation completely are assimilated whereas those, who identify strongly with both host and origin country are integrated (Hatton and Leigh 2009). This complex identity is a serious threat to immigrants’ success and how they fit in to this new society. Many immigrant students might feel that their parents and cultural burden are stopping them from assimilating into the mainstream American culture. In these situations, many young immigrants stray from the proper track and start skipping classes and getting involved in drugs, gangs and other activities that their parents would be ashamed of (Chowdhury 2005). This notion of assimilation can sometimes work as a trap for many young immigrants. While most of the parents want their children to strictly follow the traditional values of their native country,

sometimes these students are compelled to inherit few characteristics of social life in America. In order for them to create a network outside of their enclaves, it is very important for them to integrate with students from other cultures. This change is often seen by their parents as assimilation towards the host society which in their view is a path headed for losing their ethnic identity and move towards downward assimilation. (Portes and Zhou 1993).

Another important barrier that immigrant students and parents face in their everyday life is their economic struggle. Most of the families that travel to the United States do so in order to make a better living and support themselves financially. Hence, their financial status is quite shaky in the beginning unless they are well supported by their relatives. Lower economic capitals automatically put the family, especially the children, in a disadvantageous dilemma where it negatively affects their continuation of high school or college education (Georges and Allan 1996). Unskilled migrants are forced to do long hour labor jobs that pays very little but are very overloading. In the case of Mexican parents, due to their lower educational background and lower earning capacity, they are exploited in the labor market where their work is used restlessly with very little reward that could support their families. This results in a much lower educational attainment rate for Mexicans in comparison to other immigrant groups. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, in 2009, 55% first generation Mexican immigrants did not have high school diploma whereas only 6% obtained bachelor's degree or higher. (Baum and Flores 2011). In these scenarios, students are forced to enter the job market at a very early age which distracts them and pushes them away from higher education.

Immigrant status is another factor that can be proven problematic for those who are either undocumented or refugee. In his report on immigrants in the United States, Camarota stated, "We estimated that 54 percent of adult illegal immigrants (25 to 65 years of age) have not completed high school, 25 percent have only a high school degree, and 21 percent have education beyond high

school.” (2012: 69). Although the process of enrolling in high schools are much simpler for these students, undocumented students face severe economic struggles as they do not receive federal and some state financial aid. For this reason, many of these students are forced to move out and attend out of state, less expensive colleges where the quality of education is lower than their expectation. Refugees also experience problems regarding their legal status and their psychological conditions as they enter a new realm. They carry emotional pressure to the classroom, and many teachers and counselors do not have the resources available to assist these students because of the cultural and language barrier. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a common problem found in refugee students and it affects the student's performance in school (Cornfield and Arzubiaga 2004). Unfortunately, due to their residency status, many are unable to receive treatment for this disorder. Some of them are so afraid of being deported that they keep all the emotions to themselves which is even worse for young children.

Structural deficiency such as poor communication between parents and teachers, teacher's inability to teach immigrant students and insufficient programs for immigrant students are also key factors that determines whether that student succeeds or not in school. In the Tennessee case study, parents have complained about the lack of effort from the school to communicate properly and inform them about their children's academic situation. Because of their own inability to speak or understand English, most of these parents felt helpless in parents-teachers' conferences (Cornfield and Arzubiaga 2004). In addition, some teachers and schools are not properly equipped for immigrant students who have different cultural background. Garrett and Holcomb (2005) mentioned that teachers must be prepared to welcome students with open, warm hearts and make sure they “fit in” to their new classroom. Unfortunately, many instructors and states are not openminded and prepared to welcome students who may not share the mainstream values and principles. Consequently, these students will most likely fall behind not only in schools but also emotionally.

CHAPTER 4: DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESS/FAILURE

How particular groups of immigrants are received in the United States have strong influence in figuring out why some immigrant students are attending higher education institutes more than others. Portes and Zhou (1993) revealed Sikh students who faced prejudice in school and community due to their origin status and lifestyle. However, it is quite visible how successfully the second-generation Punjabi youth outperform their native counterparts in schools. They are more likely to be enrolled in advanced science and math classes to be more successful in future. Their approach towards success has a lot to do with how their cultural and parental influences restrict them within their own ethnic ideals rather than fully incorporating into American culture. This type of segmented assimilation is called positive selection (Baum and Flores 2011) where the immigrant students are using their social and human capitals and optimism to obtain better scores. Their ideology behind selectively choosing what is best for them and their children are correlated with two crucial characteristics. First, their parents did not settle in the inner-city neighborhoods or did not let their children in near proximity with the native minority youths which avoided their downward assimilation. Secondly, the parents showed efficient economic progress while maintain strong tie with their ethnic community which encouraged their children to continue working hard in schools. (Portes and Zhou 1993).

Cultural background of a student doesn't always make it harder for him to achieve his goal. Sometimes it can work as an inspiration and motivate a student to go further ahead to fulfill his parents' expectations. That's why different cultural groups of students have different academic accomplishments; even when it comes to various ethnic immigrant groups in the US. Adebowale (2010) investigates that the educational difference between the native and immigrants among various ethnic groups. One of the criteria for this study is to determine the causes in regard to the development of educational achievement in other countries compared to the United States. The

factors that decide the disproportion between native and immigrant students are migrant status, educational family background and expectations, English language proficiency and duration of residence in the country. The researcher builds her study on three hypotheses and used his methods to prove them right. The article used data from the United States Census Bureau of 2000 to analyze the levels of education attainment between different ethnic groups in the US. The first hypothesis stated that immigrant Asians have higher educational attainment than other ethnic groups which was proven to be true. The second one stated that Hispanic immigrants will have the lowest educational achievement which was partially incorrect because not only the Hispanic immigrants but also the native Hispanics had low educational accomplishment. Finally, the third one mentioned that there are no disparities between native Asians and native whites, but it was proven false since native Asians has higher graduate degree percentage than the native whites. All of these data were taken from the Census Bureau to illustrate that educational achievement vary in different ethnic groups. From this article, it is quite clear that how cultural background plays a huge role in the academic accomplishment of many immigrant students.

Arguably the biggest proponent of immigrant success or failure is determined by parental education. "...young people whose parents have no college experience are much less likely than others to enroll and succeed in postsecondary education." (Baum and Flores 2011:174). Immigrant youth whose parents are highly educated are most likely to continue their journey towards higher education due to an automatic expectancy placed upon them. They are given the responsibility to carry out their family honor and at least complete equivalent educational degree as their parents if not more. Their parents' educational achievement is often tied with their own ethnic and cultural emphasis on education. For instance, Georges and Allan revealed that children of parents who had better information about their children's academic situation are mostly to enroll in colleges and universities (1996). This concern and expectation are strongly connected with their country of

Table 1: Educational Attainment by Country and Origin

	Less than High School	High School Only	Some College	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Mexico	57.3%	26.4%	10.6%	5.7%
Honduras	52.8%	26.7%	11.6%	8.8%
El Salvador	52.5%	30.1%	10.9%	6.6%
Guatemala	48.6%	30.4%	13.2%	7.8%
Ecuador	34.2%	30.9%	19.8%	15.0%
Vietnam	24.7%	31.4%	19.8%	24.0%
Dominican Republic	24.2%	33.5%	23.5%	18.8%
Laos	18.8%	43.1%	26.6%	11.5%
Haiti	18.1%	28.9%	31.3%	21.7%
Jamaica	14.2%	32.7%	30.4%	22.7%
Cuba	13.8%	39.7%	20.1%	26.4%
Pakistan	12.2%	20.7%	16.5%	50.6%
Colombia	11.0%	30.4%	21.7%	36.8%
China	8.4%	26.5%	10.8%	54.3%
Poland	6.2%	41.3%	22.2%	30.3%
Peru	5.7%	37.7%	31.6%	25.0%
Canada	3.8%	19.6%	24.9%	51.7%
Russia	3.8%	14.2%	27.2%	54.7%
Iran	3.8%	22.7%	19.3%	54.2%
Korea	3.6%	28.3%	14.7%	53.4%
India	3.4%	9.8%	6.8%	80.0%
Philippines	3.2%	15.9%	23.4%	57.5%
Japan	2.5%	21.7%	28.7%	47.1%
United Kingdom	1.8%	17.7%	23.0%	57.6%
Germany	1.1%	27.3%	23.0%	48.6%
Central America (Excludes Mexico)	46.4%	30.6%	13.8%	9.2%
Caribbean	16.0%	33.2%	27.2%	23.5%
South America	14.3%	29.9%	23.9%	31.8%
Middle East	12.9%	25.7%	20.3%	41.1%
Sub-Saharan Africa	11.9%	20.7%	25.7%	41.8%
East Asia	10.9%	24.7%	17.2%	47.2%
Europe	5.7%	25.2%	22.3%	46.8%
South Asia	5.6%	12.2%	8.6%	73.6%
All Immigrants	28.1%	26.0%	16.9%	29.0%
Hispanic	47.3%	28.2%	13.7%	10.7%
White	7.9%	25.3%	21.2%	45.5%
Black	13.0%	26.6%	29.9%	30.5%
Asian	10.0%	21.6%	15.3%	53.1%
All Natives	7.2%	30.1%	29.8%	32.8%
Hispanic	16.0%	33.5%	31.2%	19.2%
White	5.5%	29.0%	29.3%	36.2%
Black	12.1%	36.1%	31.8%	20.0%
Asian	4.5%	16.2%	22.2%	57.2%

Source: Center for Immigration Studies analysis of the March 2011 Current Population Survey (CPS) public-use file. Figures for blacks, Asians, and whites are for those who chose only one race. Hispanics can be of any race and are excluded from other categories. Figures for educational attainment are for persons 25 to 65. Regions are defined in end note 11.

origin and the educational emphasis in that culture. For example, Asian immigrants' educational success is strongly affiliated with their parental education background as well as the heavy

emphasis on education in their ethnic culture. The opposite can be said about the Hispanic immigrants whose parents have lower educational attainment and socioeconomic status (Kao and Tienda 1995). Table 1 displays such drastic differences in educational attainment among immigrant groups based on their country origin. For example, among all immigrant groups in that study, only 10.7 percent Hispanics had bachelor's degree or higher education compared to 53.1 percent Asian immigrants. Coincidentally, this gap remains vigilant for natives also where only 19.2 percent Hispanic natives had bachelor's degree or higher compared to 57.2 percent of Asian natives.

Academic preparation is another key determinant in explaining why certain immigrant groups who have higher number of college participants compared to others. How students are taught in schools and what types of resources they have access to are important characteristics of structural factors in immigrant education. The quality of their teachers, types of programs schools have, availability of bilingual education, access to computers and the mass composition of student bodies are few of these characteristics of academic readiness in schools. A positive and well-supported relationship between student and school can promote more engagement and academic excellence.

In their study on children in immigrant families, Hernandez and Cervantes (2011) proposed,

Furthermore, emerging research demonstrates the significant benefits that high quality early education programs can provide children of immigrants, particularly those that are English Language Learners (ELLs). In addition to providing an array of comprehensive supports, early education programs can also help ELLs advance their English language skills prior to entering kindergarten as well as provide an early introduction for immigrant families to the American education system. (8).

Another interesting determining factor of educational attainment amongst immigrant youth is their age at arrival. Baum and Flores (2011) discovered that immigrant students who enter the country before the age of thirteen are more likely to continue the path of higher education than those who

arrive at a later age. They cited that it is easier for students who are below the age of thirteen to learn the new language and adapt efficiently. On the other hand, students who arrive between the ages of thirteen to nineteen are least likely to attain college degree. “In 2005 only 26 percent of immigrants aged eighteen to twenty-four who arrived in the United States between the ages of thirteen and nineteen had enrolled in college, compared with 42 percent of those immigrated before age thirteen.” (175). Most young students cannot grasp their native language at this early age which helps them to easily integrate in the American education system once they migrate and keep up in the competition.

CHAPTER 5: INSTITUTIONAL PREDICAMENT AND SOLUTIONS

With the influx of immigrants in the education system, it is becoming imperative for the administrators and the teachers to ensure the safety and successful completion of immigrant and refugee students. Since these immigrants and their parents migrated to the United States for a better socioeconomic life, education usually becomes no.1 priority for most of them. Because of the diversity amongst immigrant population, teachers face difficult challenges in today's classroom than their predecessors. The culture and the context of student body changes every year which makes it even harder for the educators to provide necessary help to accomplish their goals. Due to the new wave of immigration, the amount of foreign language speaking students in public schools have increased tremendously. With that said, it is immensely important that educators understand the challenges these students face on a daily basis before teaching immigrants and non-immigrants on the same level.

Immigrant students have various needs and requirements that must be met in order for them to achieve highest level of education possible. These needs vary due to cultural and educational differences that are based on students' background and their expectations. Besides being foreign to the English language, there are examples of many immigrant students who have difficulty reading and communicating. This particular problem gets worse when they are asked to read and communicate through another language that they are not particularly familiar with, in this case, it is English. Erisman and Looney (2007) suggested that immigrant students who learn to read in their mother language are more effective at grasping English language and the new educational curriculum than those with reading and learning issues. Therefore, it is extremely important that teachers should be sensitive to specific cases and are properly prepared for their students. In some

cases, if these students are being corrected too often or judged based on their abilities, they might be discouraged from giving their efforts into learning this new language.

One of the biggest challenges that one educator and the school system might face is to tackle mental care of some of the students, especially those who are refugees. These refugee students bring emotional baggage with them which might disrupt the classroom environment. Unfortunately, many teachers are not equipped with skillset and resources that are helpful for these students. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a common problem found among these students which will most certainly affect their academic performances (Nguyen and Kebede 2017). Because of their residency status, many of these students and their families are even scared to ask for help in case their information might leak which might provoke their deportation. Their psychological vulnerability as well as lack of resources available to them makes it even harder for these students to cope with the new language and education system. Because of their status, it becomes problematic for some families to provide proper documentation for schools to accept their children. Those who do not have a strong social network and relatives supporting them, these students and their families suffers a lot in regard to educational access (Liscow and Woolston 2017).

Another challenge that immigrants and refugee students face is their roles in this new society. In their native country, they are accustomed to their culture and had some understanding of the expectation of their families. However, coming into this new country, there is some confusion as to how they should fit in to this new society and their roles in the classroom and home. Because immigrant students grasp the new language faster than their parents and other adult family members, they start taking on responsibilities that might be harder and more intense for their age. In a way, it matures them faster and help them face the reality of the world. However, those who cannot keep up with this pace might fall behind their counterparts which will definitely reduce their

educational progress. For this reason, educators must not keep them in ELL classes and shelter them from the mainstream classroom (Hunt 2011). Rather, they should steadily guide them towards core curriculum and help them acquire necessary skills and resources to keep up with the rest of the students.

In order to help immigrant students, adapt to the new system and learn a new language, teachers and administrators must incorporate effective management skills and resources. They must be able to change their traditional method of teaching and learn how to communicate with their new students and understand their cultural and educational background (Breiseth and Robertson 2009). It is very crucial for educators to include activities that inspire immigrants to not only learn based on the new curriculum but also rely on their previous knowledge and style of learning that they are familiar with. Once these students are able to connect their prior knowledge and understanding with the education system of their host society, it will become easier for them to integrate and learn faster.

With the arrival of new immigrants from all over the world, teachers are facing hardships in terms of giving proper education services that will satisfy the entire classroom. “Some schools and districts are struggling to meet the needs of immigrant students simply because there is an absence of personnel who possess the language and cultural skills to communicate effectively with students or their parents. Miscommunication and cultural conflict are more likely when school personnel lack the linguistic and cultural expertise to communicate with parents.” (Cherng et al. 2017:11). Since, the number of immigrants arriving in the United States is only increasing, it is getting harder for them to educate all types of students. Another issue that can be problematic is the process of English only learning system in many schools across the country. Many states do not offer other language courses which might help immigrant students during the beginning of their academic

journey. It limits their learning abilities and reduces their chances of promoting academic success as well as other non-immigrants who might be interested in learning other languages in school (Barrett et al 2012). Another challenge that immigrant students and refugees face is the restriction to enroll in charter schools. In many occasions, these students live closer to charter schools which might have well trained teachers and more resources available for the students but due to their language proficiency and residency status, they struggle to find a place in those schools. In a study conducted by the United Federation of Teachers in 2010, only 4 percent ELL students receive enrollment in charter schools within their neighborhood compared to citywide average of 14 percent (Enchautegui 2014).

When teachers help the immigrants and refugee students with their education, they are not only influencing in their classroom setting but also their lives outside of the school as well. By incorporating community resources that are available to the schools, teachers can help their students and the families feel welcome to this new society. Breiseth and Robertson (2009) listed the followings as strategies for teachers to use when dealing with immigrant and refugee students: a) learn about your students through interaction, b) help students and their families find the resources that they need, c) involve the family members and try to learn their background as well, d) be cordial with each new student as they might be traumatized from previous experiences, e) incorporate students' native culture and educational method into their learning process and f) keep the students involved with other students as buddies and with communal services.

CHAPTER 6: GENERATIONAL DECLINE?

A common conception in America is that succeeding generations of immigrants are always improving than their previous generations. According to the Pew Research Center study (2013) on second generation immigrants, “Adults in the second generation are doing better than those in the first generation in median household income (\$58,000 versus \$46,000); college degrees (36% versus 29%); and homeownership (64% versus 51%). They are less likely to be in poverty (11% versus 18%) and less likely to have not finished high school (10% versus 28%).” (9) Even though second generation immigrants achieve higher academic success and social mobility than their previous generations, in a long run, studies have shown decline in academics and socioeconomic status across generations amongst immigrants. Surprisingly, the longer immigrant children live in any country, they integrate more with the host society which reduces their chances of going up the ladder. This decline is clearly visible from third generations and afterwards where even for some Asian-Americans, the most successful immigrant group, educational attainment decreases over time. The Consensus study report edited by Waters and Pineau (2015) stated that,

Among all groups, the data show generational progress between the first and second generations, but the data suggest little progress and even some decline between the second and third+ generations. For instance, among non-Hispanic white men, average education declines from 14.4 to 13.8 between the second and third+ generations, among blacks it declines from 13.9 years to 12.9, and for Asians it declines from 15.0 to 14.3 years. (257)

One of the most obvious causes that scholars suggests for this decline is the influence of peer groups. Becoming Americanized is a significant factor that has a negative impact on immigrant children across generations (Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2010). As immigrant children prefer hanging out with their non-immigrant peers and socialize with them more than their immigrant network, they start to resemble as typical American teenagers which, according to scholars, discourages academics and disengage themselves from their heritage and tradition. Peer influences

also drive them to dropping out, crimes, drugs, abuse and other harmful characteristics that become thorns on their way of achieving academic success. As time progresses, many of these third-generation immigrants spend more time with their non-immigrant friends and distance themselves from their kinship which is a strong motivator for immigrant success.

Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2010) in their study on immigrant students mentioned that immigrant children pick up American youth culture at a fast rate. While it is very important, as the authors suggested, for these students to balance an equilibrium between their immigrant and American identity, they also mention that to fit in with the native students, they are more likely to behave and act in an unfamiliar manner to their own culture. One of the biggest challenges that comes from this issue is detachment from their family and immigrant network. The more mature children are, they are less likely to be negatively impacted by the peer influence and this maturity and confidence comes from their relationship within the family. Immigrant students who do not have a strong familiar bond will eventually look for confidence and attention somewhere else, hence their peers. For this reason, these young children need assistance from family members who will guide them with hope about their future, advise them with social and cultural expectations and try to understand their situations.

Immigration scholars suggest that Americanization destroys critical aspects of parenting (Alba et al 2002). Immigrant parents, in most cases, tend to have a stricter and more disciplined path of motivating their children as there are very high hopes when it comes to their offspring. These disciplinary ideologies are sometimes mixed with punishments that are not allowed in this country. Hence, those parents are often trapped with this dilemma as how to properly guide their children who are not behaving suitably according to their cultural norms and traditions which will only

distract them from their path of socioeconomic success. This fear starts off with young children speaking only English at home and start distancing themselves from their parent’s language.

Table 2: Percentage of Children who speak English only at home by Generation

Table 1. Percentage of Children (Age 6–15) Who Speak Only English at Home, by Generation

Ethnicity	Second Generation		Third Generation		Mother-Tongue Homes: Third Generation	
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>
Chinese	29.4	6,130	91.4	1,494	69.4	330
Japanese	67.7	1,701	97.4	3,066	79.5	283
Korean	42.5	3,272	90.4	153	66.4	31
Filipino	79.3	7,108	95.7	1,759	73.1	247
Cuban	19.1	4,159	78.4	577	52.4	231
Dominican	8.4	2,489	51.5	109	26.5	70
Mexican	12.3	53,459	64.1	56,113	48.9	39,199

In their report of grandchildren of recent immigrants speaking English only at home, Alba and her colleagues (2002) suggests that majority of third generation and forwards will grow up to be monolinguals and will barely have any knowledge of their mother tongue. Table 2 suggests that compared to 29.4 percent Chinese second generation immigrants speaking English at home, the rate goes up to 91.4 percent for their following generations. These numbers are quite significant for all the groups in that study which reveals the fear of losing ethnic identity across generations. This constant pressure of speaking English outside has immense effect on their daily life and eventually they will speak the same language at home as well. One exceptional factor for this hypothesis is that many immigrants move away from their ethnic enclaves and reside in major cities and suburbs where there are very few people from their home country. Although it may put them in a higher socioeconomic status to move in with other non-immigrant neighborhood, it provokes negative influences for upcoming generations. Therefore, if immigrant families reside in ethnic enclaves or

at least in a neighborhood where their mother language are spoken on a regular basis, it is more likely that their grandchildren will not forget their language that easily. “Thus, third-generation Cuban children growing up in or near Miami and similar Mexican children growing up near the U.S.-Mexican border are considerably more likely than their peers elsewhere to speak Spanish at home.” (Alba et al. 2002: 480).

An interesting aspect of immigration that is usually neglected by scholars is to consider single immigrant parents and their children. In their study, Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2010) found out that due to migration process, most of these single parents are forced to work multiple jobs which keeps them away from spending a lot of time with their children. Even when they spend time with their children and grandchildren, they barely get their high regard and respect. It is commonly known that American teenagers see their parents as out of touch with mainstream American culture. It affects mostly third-generation immigrants who tend to follow that path and do not properly value their parents’ effort and cultural views and see their parents as obstacles towards becoming American. They start questioning their parents’ work and values and constantly disregards cultural traditions and norms which mandates utmost respect for parents. This trend is exacerbated by the fact that new wave of immigration brought people from Asian and Latin American countries who are culturally dissonant from previous European immigrants. This new batch of immigrant parents who value collective responsibility and loyalty and respect to parental authority and cultural expectation can be seen as “enemies” to many young children who are trying to embrace American notion of individuality (Barrett et al. 2012).

Another unfortunate factor that plays a negative role in determining why some immigrant children do not respect their parents is the low-status service jobs that parents are currently doing. Due to the misconception of glamour and wealth amongst teenagers today, it is commonly visible

in many families that children do not fully appreciate the types of work that their parents have to do in order to bring food to the table and nurture them. A common example of fear that is placed in front of many students is that if they do not do well in school, they will end up flipping burgers at McDonalds or Burger King. Unfortunately, for many immigrant families, either one or both parents, are working these jobs in fast-food restaurants, driving cabs or working in deli or gas stations. While these people are working harder than anyone else to ensure a safe access to education and better future for their children, those young immigrant students who are influenced by their peers whose parents might have higher-status jobs will see their own parents and their jobs as failures and degrading (Waters and Pineau 2015).

One of the biggest studies on educational outcomes across immigrant generations was conducted by Ozek and Figlio (2016) where they looked at Asian and Hispanic students. This study was based on Florida where they gathered data on thousands of immigrant students and their families and examined disparities in FCAT scores in reading and math, disciplinary incidents, attendance, on-time high school graduation and college readiness across first, second and third generations of immigrants. One advantage from this data was that Florida is a major destination among immigrants. Almost 80-85% immigrant population are from Asian and Latin-American countries which, according to the authors, is how future demographics of public education system would look like. Although their report on third generation educational and socioeconomic decline is similar to other studies, they also mentioned that this decline starts from second generation who do not perform well compare to their first generations. This ideology is quite opposite of other immigrant scholars who suggest that second generation immigrants are more successful than their previous and future generations. Authors stated,

We find a general pattern of deteriorating educational outcomes across successive immigrant generations. In particular, we find that first generation immigrants –

beyond a transition period - perform better in reading and math tests than do second generation immigrants, and second generation immigrants perform better than third generation immigrants. We also find that recent immigrants are significantly more likely to graduate from high school than more established generations, and are better prepared for college upon high school graduation. This pattern also holds true for student misbehavior and truancy, and for both Asian and Hispanic immigrants, and remain unchanged even after controlling for observed student, family and school attributes, or whether we use the student's or the mother's reported racial/ethnic identity. (2016:8-9)

Ozek and Figlio (2016) finds that first generation immigrants, those who arrive early, are the most successful students who achieve highest educational attainment across generations and it keeps declining from there on. For example, for Asian immigrants, reading scores drop from 75th percentile for the early arriving first generation students to 64th percentile for the third generations. In addition, the math scores also dropped from 80th percentile to 65th percentile for respective generations. They also found similar pattern for Hispanic students although the disparities are not that profound for this group. Even though these points are tremendously horrifying, there are noticeable downwards trajectory among these two groups which can be caused by negative selection and other social factors from the successive generations.

One of the central finding from this report is that third generation immigrants usually come from wealthier and highly educated families and have better English-speaking skills than their previous generations. The authors stated, “84 percent of the early entering first generation Hispanics have been categorized as limited English proficient at least once since they entered the public-school system, in stark contrast to 60 percent for second generation, and 27 percent for third generation Hispanics.” (2016:17) In the case of Asian students, compared to 47 percent of early entering first generation immigrant with limited English-speaking proficiency, only 5 percent third generation immigrants had similar issue. In terms of disciplinary incidents and number of being absent in the classroom, table 3 and 4 reveals that the numbers went high from first generation to third generations for both groups. On the other hand, taking number of advanced classes and on-

time graduation rates dropped across generations which clearly shows decline in regard to educational achievement for both groups.

Table 3: Cross-generational differences in Eighth grade student outcomes and characteristics - Hispanic Immigrants

	1 st Generation	2 nd Generation	3 rd Generation
FCAT Reading scores	0.0750	-0.0118	-0.0159
FCAT Math scores	0.0865	0.0159	-0.0117
Disciplinary incidents	0.200	0.204	0.246
% of absent days	0.0545	0.0562	0.0676
Graduated from HS	0.535	0.562	0.522
Took an advanced class in HS	0.532	0.483	0.470

Table 4: Cross-generational differences in Eighth grade student outcomes and characteristics - Asian Immigrants

	1 st Generation	2 nd Generation	3 rd Generation
FCAT Reading scores	0.674	0.593	0.363
FCAT Math scores	0.837	0.780	0.396
Disciplinary incidents	0.0825	0.0859	0.151
% of absent days	0.0311	0.0291	0.0513
Graduated from HS	0.708	0.758	0.628
Took an advanced class in HS	0.811	0.805	0.602

CHAPTER 7: IMMIGRANT STUDENTS AND THEIR STORIES

For this part of the project, I have conducted interviews and surveys to gather more data on this question and figure out some recent experiences from immigrant students across first and second generations. For the interview phase, I have spoken with 10 students whose real names would be evaded and they are from various ethnic backgrounds: Asian, Hispanic and African. I have surrounded the questions into six different themes so that I can have a comprehensive acquaintance on my project. The first theme is related to the reasons behind their migration from their native country to America. In response to this question, most of them mentioned America being a resourceful country where they can make their lives better by getting fair worth of the hard work they are ready to do. For example, Momo and Shaon with Bangladeshi origin stated that the political system made lives miserable back in their native country and the danger of getting killed was increasing day by day. Corruption and self-indulgence have killed people's instinct where a girl can barely go outside at night time in a suburb or village. As Momo said, "My parents told me not to go outside during the night time because I could easily be a victim of rape or at most, be dead. I was too afraid of this life and wanted to live without any fear". In addition to them, Jose and Diego who came from a Hispanic background also wanted to avoid political exploitation; thus, coming to the US was their first and main intention. Both of them had heard about various opportunities in the United States and moved here with their family to fulfill their American dream. However, the scenario for Clover was completely different. Coming from a wealthy and established family back in China, her main reason for moving out was to experience dorm life in the United States. She wanted to live without her parents and figure out how responsible and mature she can become by living alone in the US and studying sensibly. These are some central motives for participants to migrate to America and establish their lives productively.

My second theme was correlated with the education system in their native country in comparison to the system in America. I wanted to discover what makes our education structure better or worse than in other country. In reply to this question, both Momo and Shaon described their schooling system as “Memorization place”. According to them, in Bangladesh, most of the school work needed to be memorized for the sake of good grades. Both their teachers and parents encouraged them to commit to memory rather than trying to understand so that they can good scores in their exams without any hassle. In addition to that, teachers in Bangladesh were allowed to “beat up” students as a form of punishment if students failed to finish their work. Clover, Jose and Diego had also been victims of this type of punishments back in their native countries which they felt very embarrassing. This type of punishment not only hurt them physically, but also left a sign of fear and anger inside them. Clover described the education structure of China as a “relentless workload”. She mentioned that in China, she had to study till 2 in the morning just to finish her homework for next day and then wake up at 6am to go to school. As she said, “If you’re to do good at school, you had to boycott the social life and just focus on textbooks. Since I was in top ten, I made love with my books”. For this reason, she finds our education comparatively easy and more relaxing than China. In her perspective, a student can live freely and study well to become successful in the USA. Similar to what she stated, all the other participants put importance on efficiency and comfortableness in our teaching methods. In addition to various opportunities after graduation, patience and generosity of the teachers in the USA will only motivate a student to achieve higher goals and work harder to become a great person in future. Likewise, they felt that the advisors and counselors here in the US guide you to make right decisions about college and future goals where back in their country; they had to make these choices by themselves. For these reasons, they feel fortunate enough to be a part of our education system and intend to build their academic career on the basis of hard work.

The next two themes of my interview reveal the main concept of my entire research which is to figure out the obstacles of an immigrant student in the US and how were they affected by them. During my interview, this particular question brought huge importance on the participants answering to all my questions. These five students felt freer answering this question compared to any other query in my entire interview. The main issues that came up as answers are speaking ability, language incapability, cultural and schooling differences and influence of family. None of the participants were used to speaking English in school back in their countries. That's why when they first attended school in the US; the pressure of not knowing what is going on around them got them easily. As Jose said, "I never spoke English in DR, but when I came here, I knew I had to speak English. This fear got me, and I was freaking out for the first few months in high school. I didn't have any friends here and I couldn't even ask teacher because of shame. It was embarrassing".

Most of these students felt embarrassed and neglected thinking they lack the language capability and there is something wrong with them. This fear and shame were killing them inside and stopped them from growing up as a fluent English speaker and learner. Watching other students communicating fluently with each other, they felt heartbroken and saw no hope of learning English easily. Because of this language issue, their family lives were being affected as some of them started to blame their family to bring them in the United States. In addition to that, the cultural and educational differences have played huge roles for these immigrant students. They had experienced huge contrast in schools here in the USA where teacher and students have a very friendly relationship. As Shaon stated, "In Bangladesh, I wasn't allowed to look at my teacher's eyes when I'm talking to them because it's a sign of disrespect. Also I wasn't allowed to argue with them or find their mistakes if they're wrong". However, in the United States, they had to make eye contact with the teacher which is the sign of respect in this culture. Furthermore, taking care of

their family was a big issue for most of them. Except Clover, everyone had their family in the United States and it was really hard to maintain the economic balance for their families. Most of their parents or guardians were not getting any high paid jobs which made them to start working at an early age instead of putting more time to learn English properly. As Diego said, “I started working with my father in the gas station to get my family going and missed few days at school for that. I didn’t have any choice”. These socio-economic issues in addition to the language problem made their lives miserable and put them on the dark side where they barely saw the light of hope.

Because of their incapability and social class at that time, most of these students were discriminated by other students in their classes. For example, Clover mentioned that she was being made fun of her accent and to not bother studying English just because she was Chinese. Her classmates told her to stay with math since she is an Asian and not worry about English because she would never be able to speak like them. Also, both Jose and Diego were told that studying is not an option for them. As Diego remembered his classmate said, “If you’re gonna be studying here, who’s gonna clean up my car at gas station?” Furthermore, when Shaon showed his interest in learning English, his classmates cursed him and made fun of him. According to his classmates, he was a member of those Islamic terrorist groups and came into this country to learn about USA and plan an explosion. Shaon was stunned when he finally came to understand what they meant but he was unable to response back because of his language inability. That’s how most of these immigrant students were being segregated daily by their classmates but they never replied back harshly; they were patiently studying and moving their marks forward to the ultimate goal of succeeding in the United States.

At the last phase of my interview, I tried to grasp various influences that affected them to overcome those obstacles and help them fir in to this society. In addition to that, the last question

dealt with the influence of those obstacles on the students and if they're positively affected by them. All of the participants mentioned that their teachers played important roles for them to upheaval the fear of English. Most of them attended ESL (English as a Second Language) classes in order to get ready for regular English courses in high schools. However, there was a decent contrast in regard to the family and cultural influence between Asian background of Momo, Shaon and Clover versus the Hispanic background of Jose and Diego. The first group indicated that their family had always inspired them to focus on study rather than trying to work at the same time. They were told to get better grades so that they don't have to work in odd jobs like their parents. This parental pressure and positivity influence them to get involve in education rather than trying to help out their families financially. In contrast to them, Jose and Diego were not pressurized by their parents to go to school or finish up their homework for the following day. Instead their parents were happy if they would miss school and went to work to benefit the family financially. This idea of helping out your family economically brings out a huge distinction between the parental influences via different ethnic groups. Furthermore, in regard to the question about the effect of obstacles themselves, most of the participants saw them as a positive influence. According to them, those difficulties made them realize how hard reality is and what it takes to achieve your goal at the highest level. These complications made them mentally tough enough to battle with the problems coming up in their near future. As Momo said, "They made me realize that I wasn't gifted the right to be successful just because I was in America. I had to earn it the tough way which I will". Their determination for higher education went up high which just motivates them to move forward and use the past as a lesson, not as a regretful story.

The second part of the project is done as a survey design where I created several close-ended questions and conducted a hypothetical survey research based on them. The main three reasons for conducting a survey are its versatility, efficiency and generalizability. Survey design is

extremely versatile since they have wide range of uses such as election campaign, opinion polls, health surveys etc. In addition to that, surveys are used mostly because of its efficiency in price and time. Since it doesn't require high cost or longer period of time, I decided that it would be easier for me to conduct a survey. Another point that caught my attention is the wide range of generalizability of survey designs. Because survey designs are relatively cheap, they can be used in various places so that I can generalize the data from all the samples of my population. However, survey research does not bring out detailed information about a question in comparison to in-person interviews. Whereas interviews can go in depth about a person, surveys are mostly answered from the given choices.

Since, I have done few interviews already and received information in regard to my interview questions; it was comparatively an easy task to create survey questions. These questions that were asked roughly to 50 students through social media were,

- 1) What is (are) the main reason(s) to migrate into the United States of America?
 - a) Political Corruption
 - b) Security
 - c) Better Education
 - d) Money
 - e) All of the above

This question is very useful to identify the key motives for many immigrant students to move into the USA; either single or with their family. It is extremely important to know whether that student came to this country to achieve higher education or for any other reasons such as political corruption, security, wealth etc.

- 2) These immigrant students receive all facilities that they should be given as minority students.
Strongly agree – Agree – Moderate – Disagree – Strongly disagree

This particular question brings light onto the truth about various facilities provided for immigrant students. As an answer to this question, student will agree which shows us how much help these students are receiving from the educational policies of the USA.

- 3) How long should the immigrant students receive ESL (English as a Secondary Language) courses for?
- a) One semester
 - b) One-year
 - c) Two years
 - d) Till they graduate

Many immigrant students receive ESL courses to improve their English language skills as long as they need it depending on their capability of learning. However, providing them with this course for the rest of school years might make them unprepared for their college life.

- 4) In some places, these immigrant students are taught differently because of their incapability in English language.
- a) True or b) False

This question will help us understand whether the teachers treat students differently because of their inabilities in English language. Some public-school teachers might be kind enough to acknowledge the difficulties of an immigrant student and ease their workload in that class.

- 5) Differences in Educational System have huge impact on how they perceive the goal of higher education in the USA.
- Strongly Agree – Agree – Neutral—Disagree – Strongly Disagree

There are several differences in the educational structure in different countries around the world.

Thus, coming to the United States and experiencing a focused and promising system will definitely have a huge impact on how the immigrant student perceive the goal of higher education.

- 6) How much the educational background of their parents affects their learning process?
- a) Heavily, since parents are the main influence in a person's life.
 - b) Moderately, since the students' might have a different "American Goal".
 - c) Moderately, since the financial issue might be a big factor.
 - d) Not at all, it's totally up to the students.

For most of the immigrant students, family is a very important factor in their lives. In fact, if their parents had received higher education, this parental background can be used as a strong motivation for them to push forward in achieving higher education.

7) Should the students concentrate less on study in order to help their family financially?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Depends on the student entirely
- d) Depends on the family pressure

Entering a new nation with little or no financial support can break down a family's dream of a beautiful life in America. For this reason, most of the family members who are eligible to work put maximum of their time in any jobs depending on their financial pressure. Because of that, many immigrant students might feel obliged to work to sustain financial balance in their families.

8) What are the three main motivations for overcoming those obstacles?

- a) Ambition, family and obstacles
- b) Personal interest, wealth and prestige
- c) Teaching facilities, Financial growth and Parental Pressure
- d) Social Status, family and ambition

This question deals with various choices that can work together to motivate a student to do well in his academic career. Different students might be driven by different factors depending on their identity and interests.

9) Do these obstacles have any positive inspiration on your future?

- a) Yes b) No c) Depends on student's perspective

This question will help us discover how immigrant students view the obstacles they face in the beginning of their journey in the USA. As few scholars stated that these obstacles can be seen either inspirational or those students might be shattered by their harshness.

After analyzing the answers for the questions above, it would be ok to generalize that learning process for any immigrant students is not an easy task in the United States. Their language incompetence along with other social and economic factors can let them down in the beginning.

Nevertheless, the determination, family influence and the will to become someone important in the

society will motivate them to push forward against all odds. In comparison to my interviews, the results from these surveys we get do not give us detailed information about how these obstacles and motivations affected those students, both positively and negatively. This limitation of survey research keeps us bounded to only acknowledge the problems of these students which are exactly what I read in various articles on this topic. These articles or survey questions are merely the outlines of the difficulties; whereas the interviews will lead us through the path and show us the ways that immigrant students use to guide them to attain higher education.

CHAPTER 8: ARE ASIANS TRULY A “MODEL MINORITY”?

Among all the immigrant groups who have migrated from different parts of the world in pursuit of a better socioeconomic lifestyle, Asian Americans have bested them all, especially in education and employment sector. Asian immigrants in United States not only show impressive socioeconomic index compared to other immigrant groups but in many cases, they are surpassing the native-born white Americans (Macias 1993). Starting from standardized test scores and college enrollment rate to the job market and median family income, Asian immigrants are leaving other ethnic minority groups behind. According to the SAT report in 2009, Asian students have higher math scores than other student groups in the country. Asian Americans also have the highest percentage of college graduation rate in the country. (Baum and Flores 2011). According to table 5, 63 percent Asian immigrants acquired bachelors’ degree compared to only 9 percent of their Hispanic counterparts. Even though across generations, this gap seems to reduce, there is still a significant gap in educational attainment and socioeconomic mobility between Asian immigrants and the rest. Macias mentioned, “With apparently good reason Asians have been characterized since the 1960s as a successful and model ethnic minority group that, through its own hard work and cultural heritage that emphasizes education, thrift, and the work ethic, achieves success in the United States.” (1993: 410).

This concept of cultural heritage that emphasizes education, family honor, discipline and respect for authority is the principles of Confucianism. (Zhou and Kim 2006). This ideology suggests that there is a greater connotation on education that helps students prosper and attain higher socioeconomic status through educational means. This philosophy is embedded in Asian countries where emphasis on educational is extremely high and people’s prestige and social status depends heavily on their educational attainment and types of profession they possess. Education in

these countries offers opportunities for comprehensive study and students are schooled in all subjects and have opportunities to study in any discipline or profession at the university. For this reason, there is a heavy concentration of Asian immigrants working in science and technology, math, healthcare and business and managements positions since it assures them higher stature in society. According to Batalova and Zong (2016), in 2014-15 school year, 76% of the international student population enrolled in US higher education institutions arrived from Asia. It clearly signifies the importance of education to Asian culture and how it brings prestige and social mobility in their lives.

Table 5: Immigrant aged between 25-34 with a bachelor’s Degree by Race and Ethnicity, 2009. US Bureau of Census, Current Population Survey

Generation	Hispanic	Black	Asian	White
First	9	30	63	54
Second	19	42	57	48
Third	16	18	33	37

Zhou and Kim (2006) also argue that besides the cultural aspect of Asian student’s success in the United States, immigration selectivity, parent’s educational background and community factors play important roles explaining how Asian immigrants are achieving success in this country. Baum and Flores discovered, “50 to 80 percent of foreign-born fathers from Africa, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iran were college graduates.....” (2011: 173). These parents highlight substantial importance on their children’s educational attainment and inquire about their schools and colleges. One key proponent of Asian immigrants’ success is their efficient community forces and social network which helps them fit in and obtain information on US schools and colleges. In the cases of Chinese and Korean immigrants, their language media, language schools and religious institutions aid and serve the educational needs of

their immigrant youth. Their core curriculum is not to replace public schooling system but works as a supplementary force which helps the immigrant students to keep up with their assignments and offer news and information on schools and college applications. Through this manner, not only the students but their parents gain knowledge of the schooling system and college admission policies which obviously helps them determine the best fit education for their children. (Zhou and Kim 2006).

CONCLUSION

Traditionally, United States had always been a welcoming immigrant-receiving country where policies were made to ease the transition from their native country to this new society. Social and political agendas were created that leaned toward supportive integration and equitable access for all, especially for the immigrant students. Contrary to these popular beliefs, in today's America, immigrants are not that welcome by a large part of Americans and most importantly, by the President of the United States himself and his administration. As mentioned before, a significant mode of incorporation for immigrants arriving in a new country is how the host society accepts them and allows them to integrate into this new environment. However, this administration has never been a supporter of immigrants and refugees who flee from their homeland to survive and build a better life for their families. Nguyen and Kebede (2017) stated, "Immigrants have been argued to contribute to the complex, problematic ethnic and race relations in the United States; they have also been accused of taking jobs from U.S.-born citizens." (720)

One striking attack on the education system by this new administration was by cutting down the budget which impacted school choice and voucher programs. School choice refers to provision of alternative means of schooling choices by parents who had the privilege of selecting a school for their children that were not restricted by their residential location. These provisions included voucher programs, charter schools and magnet schools where parents had significant influences on their children's education. However, all of these programs can be in jeopardy under this administration that disregards underrepresented groups such as the blacks, the Hispanics and immigrants (Nguyen and Kebede 2017). Another horrifying example of how current government is trying to diminish immigrant success is the abolishment of the DACA program which served the understated groups. This program provided a safe environment where undocumented immigrants

could study and pursue a stable career without being in fear of getting deported. They had access to social security, driver licenses and bank accounts which ease their transition in to this new society. It also motivated immigrant students to stay in school and completed their education and perhaps, pursue higher education which eventually would keep them out of troubles such as drugs and gang violence. Since the beginning of DACA in 2012, it provided the most hardworking and skilled undocumented immigrants who were contributing their services to this nation's benefit. Unfortunately, as president Trump ended this program, millions of undocumented students and their families are being harmed and in danger of being deported back to their homeland. It will undeniably impact immigrant population educational access and their ability to move up the socioeconomic ladder compared to other immigrant or native students.

Although it is quite safe to say that immigrant students are faring decently compared to their native-born peers, their educational journey could be improved to inspire towards higher education which will eventually place them with better socioeconomic status. First, the structural barriers must be broken by improving legal policies towards undocumented students and having better communication system between schools, students and their parents. Schools must welcome immigrants and help them adjust to this style of education where these students are given extra support to fit in. Traditional bias towards one group over another must be shattered in order for well-trained instructors to provide fair education. Furthermore, by creating a more affordable higher education system, we can reduce school dropout rates and increase college enrollment rates. If a family with very low human and social capital cannot manage to survive in this country, then their hopes of educating their children go to disarray. Therefore, sufficient federal and state financial support and a just and efficient educational structure is needed to improve immigrants' educational attainment in United States.

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