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The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 2008; 620; 37
DOI: 10.1177/0002716208322586

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Success Attained, Deterred, and Denied: Divergent Pathways to Social Mobility in Los Angeles's New Second Generation

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This article highlights divergent pathways to mobility among members of the new second generation, identifies key mechanisms affecting the choices they make in their pursuit of success, and explains how specific choices were pivotal in determining outcomes of segmented assimilation. First, the authors evaluate definitions of success and pathways to social mobility, advancing a *subject-centered approach* to study second-generation mobility. Second, the article turns to the results from the authors' ongoing qualitative study of the new second generation in Los Angeles to examine cases that exemplify predictable and anomalous outcomes. Third, the authors zoom in on patterns that emerge from real-life histories to clarify key mechanisms affecting the decisions made by members of the second generation that are consequential in shaping their paths to mobility. The study dispels some enduring myths about group-based cultures, stereotypes, and processes of assimilation. It also advances theoretical debates about intergenerational mobility and immigrant incorporation.

Keywords: immigration; the new second generation; assimilation; success; mobility; Chinese; Mexican; Vietnamese

The new second generation—children of post-1965 immigrants—has come of age in the twenty-first century. In 2005, their numbers reached more than 30 million with a median age of eighteen (Rumbaut 2006).¹ Diverse in national and class origins, the members of this new second generation are following routes to social mobility that are as variegated as their backgrounds. Some take the normative course and achieve predictable levels of educational and occupational attainment. Others choose alternative pathways that defy convention, yet achieve success. Still others find their journey to upward mobility hampered or blocked altogether. Our main goal in this article is to highlight some of the divergent pathways to mobility among members of the new second generation, to identify key mechanisms that affect the choices they make in their pursuit of success, and to explain how specific choices were pivotal in determining particular outcomes of segmented assimilation.

DOI: 10.1177/0002716208322586

We first evaluate existing definitions of success and pathways to social mobility. We question the validity and reliability of measures of “success” and “assimilation” and advance a “subject-centered approach” to examine how members of the second generation define success and perceive progress. Second, we turn to the results from our ongoing qualitative study of Los Angeles’s new second generation to illustrate the divergent pathways that lead to both predictable and anomalous outcomes.² Third, we zoom in on a few significant patterns that emerge from

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NOTE: An earlier version of this article was presented at the conference, titled “No Margin for Error: Educational and Occupational Achievement among Immigrant Children,” at Princeton University, May 11–12, 2007. The authors thank the Russell Sage Foundation for generously providing the research funding (#88–06–04) on which this study is based. This article was completed while Jennifer Lee was a fellow at the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture and a visiting associate professor of sociology at the University of Chicago. We thank Frank D. Bean, Leo Chavez, Patricia Fernández-Kelly, and Alejandro Portes for their insightful comments and suggestions. We also thank Mark Leach for his invaluable assistance. Direct all correspondence to Min Zhou, Department of Sociology, UCLA, 264 Haines Hall, Box 951551, Los Angeles, CA 90095–1551.

respondents' life histories to more closely examine the key mechanisms that affect certain choices that members of the second generation made (or were forced to make) that were particularly consequential in shaping their paths to mobility.

Immigrant Incorporation and Segmented Assimilation³

The question of assimilation

The issue of assimilation (or immigrant incorporation) has always attracted much scholarly attention. The central question, nearly a century old, is whether America's newest immigrants and their children are incorporating into the host society. Some scholars worry about the "unassimilability" of today's newcomers, pointing to their non-European origins, their third world cultural and behavioral patterns, their low level of education and job skills, and their seeming unwillingness to merge into the American mainstream. There are fears—real or imagined—that today's newcomers and their children may form a new underclass and become a burden on America's society and economy (Borjas 1999; Huntington 2004).

Of special concern are Mexican immigrants, not only because many arrive with very low levels of education but also because many enter the United States without authorization. For example, 11 percent of foreign-born Mexicans have no formal education, and another 60 percent had not completed high school (compared to 1 and 18 percent, respectively, of the U.S. adult population). Mexican immigrants exhibit rates of educational attainment that are far below the U.S. mean. Compounding this disadvantage is their legal status; about half of all foreign-born Mexicans in the United States entered the country illegally, and among the estimated 12 million unauthorized migrants in the country, nearly three-quarters hail from Mexico. Legal status has profound implications for social mobility, not only for immigrants but also for their offspring, whose educational and occupational trajectories are closely tied to parental citizenship status (Bean, Brown, and Rumbaut 2006; Chavez 1998; Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002). Given that Mexican immigrants constitute nearly 30 percent of America's foreign-born population, the question of immigrant incorporation is inextricably linked with this national-origin group (Bean and Stevens 2003).

While some scholars fear that low-skilled and/or undocumented immigrants may never be able to catch up to Americans, others suggest that such fears are premature since many recent immigrants have not yet had sufficient time to complete their incorporation processes. Because low-skilled immigrants start so much further behind native-born Americans, it may take more than two or three generations until they become full Americans.

Empirical research has consistently shown that most newcomers and their children not only successfully incorporate into their host society but also achieve rates of social and economic mobility that are comparable to—if not better than—those of earlier waves of European immigrants (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003; Lee 2005; Perlmann and Waldinger 1997; Waldinger and

Reichl 2006). For example, recent longitudinal evidence indicates that Mexican immigrants have made considerable gains in three generations, narrowing educational and income gaps with native-born whites (Perlmann and Waldinger 1997; Smith 2003). Moreover, results from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey (CILS) and the Immigrant Second Generation in New York Study (ISGNY) reveal that the second generation is generally doing better than both the parent generation and their native-born counterparts (Kasinitz et al. 2006; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). In addition, results from the Immigrant Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles Study (IIMMLA) consistently reveal patterns of intergenerational mobility with respect to education, median family income, and neighborhood socioeconomic status in all immigrant groups and, most notably, among Mexicans (Brown 2007; Rumbaut 2005; Rumbaut et al. 2003).⁴ Significant intergenerational progress indicates that immigrants are contributing to the wellsprings of dynamism that enrich America.

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Intergenerational progress should not overshadow, however, the signs of downward mobility—including high school abandonment, unemployment or underemployment, poverty, premature childbearing, and incarceration—that are noticeable in all immigrant groups but are disproportionately present in some. Findings from CILS show that in the Southern California sample of young adults, 38 percent of Mexicans had a high school education or less, compared to 13 percent of Vietnamese and 6 percent of Chinese. Variations also emerged with respect to average family income; among Mexicans, the average was \$38,000, compared to \$45,000 for Vietnamese and \$58,000 for Chinese. Also striking are the differences in the rates of early childbearing; while 41 percent of Mexicans had children in their early adulthood years, the comparable figures for Vietnamese and Chinese were 9 and 0 percent, respectively. Rates of incarceration also varied widely by national origin, with 20 percent of Mexican males, 15 percent of Vietnamese males, and 0 percent of Chinese males having been arrested or incarcerated (Haller and Portes 2007; Rumbaut 2006). National-origin differences reflect the lasting effects of low parental human capital, family disruption, and a negative mode of incorporation—which entails a history of racial discrimination, a high proportion of unauthorized immigrants, and the prevalence of negative group-based stereotypes.

While previous studies provide ample evidence of segmented, rather than straight-line, assimilation, they have paid insufficient attention to group-specific mechanisms involved in the processes of incorporation and to anomalous outcomes. As this article shows, second-generation incorporation entails unexpected turns leading to divergent and even contradictory conclusions about second-generation progress.

Measuring incorporation—Convergence to the mean versus intergenerational mobility

Scholars almost uniformly assess immigrant and second-generation incorporation by using conventional measures of socioeconomic status (SES) attainment such as education, income, occupation, and home ownership, and then draw conclusions about the degree of incorporation based on the extent to which newcomers *converge to the mean* for native-born Americans. This approach stems in part from the assimilationist expectation that immigrants will eventually become indistinguishably American and also from the fear that contemporary immigrants are of “declining quality” compared to earlier European arrivals (Borjas 1999). However, relying on convergence to the mean as the sole or primary measure of mobility produces an incomplete portrait of the process of incorporation.

We argue that to reach a fuller assessment, we must also measure the extent to which immigrant groups demonstrate *intergenerational progress*, that is, the extent to which the descendants of immigrants move beyond the SES measures of their parents’ generation. For example, second-generation Filipinos exhibit significantly *lower* levels of educational and occupational achievement compared to their parents, but their levels of SES attainment are similar to those of non-Hispanic whites and higher than those of the American adult population. Although they are moving in a downward direction vis-à-vis the first generation, second-generation Filipinos benefit from their parents’ exceptionally high level of human capital (Zhou and Xiong 2005). By contrast, second-generation Mexicans evince significantly higher levels of educational and occupational attainment compared to parents who arrive with such low SES levels that it is nearly impossible to drop any further. Even while they achieve upward mobility vis-à-vis their parents, second-generation Mexicans still trail well behind the mean of the American population. While second-generation Filipinos may have achieved a higher degree of convergence to the native-born mean, second-generation Mexicans have achieved a much higher degree of intergenerational mobility, based on traditional SES indicators.

The subject-centered approach

Casual observers and researchers alike often take normative positions, suggesting that immigrants *should* become more like native-born, middle-class, non-Hispanic white Americans. A group’s success is often evaluated by the degree to which immigrants and their offspring become more like non-Hispanic whites. Studies of the second generation, including CILS, ISGNY, and IIMMLA, have

defined and measured socioeconomic incorporation by the convergence (or lack thereof) of immigrants and the native-born (non-Hispanics, in particular) in education, occupational status, and earnings. While such approaches offer statistically significant conclusions about mobility outcomes, they tell us little about the intricacies of the process leading to upward mobility.

In the existing literature, very little research has focused on the way that members of the second generation define, experience, and perceive mobility and success. Previous research has failed to even raise the question of whether second-generation outcomes are seen and characterized differently by the people who are the subjects of study. In other words, is the way that we, as scholars, define “mobility” and “success” analogous to the way that members of the second generation define those experiences?

To answer this question, we take a subject-centered approach, by which we refer not only to the way members of the second generation perceive, define, and measure mobility and success, but also to the way their lived experiences are placed at the center of our analysis. We argue that the process of social mobility is complex and multifaceted and that mechanisms leading to divergent outcomes depend largely upon how structural and cultural exigencies affect subjects and how subjects respond or react to those exigencies. A subject-centered approach allows for micro-level analysis within the macro-structural framework and enables us to look beyond predictable patterns. By adopting the subject-centered approach, we are able to understand both the obvious and subtle reasons members of the second generation make certain choices and pursue particular pathways. We may also find surprising results that lead us to reevaluate premature conclusions about the way success or failure are defined, a point underscored by the recent findings of Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Lisa Konczal (2005).

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In their study of second-generation Cubans, West Indians, and Central Americans in Miami, Fernández-Kelly and Konczal (2005) detail the creative ways in which children of immigrants circumvent the traditional labor market in their pursuit of economic mobility. While the first generation toils in factories, grocery stores, and construction sites to secure a better future for their families, their children aim to escape labor market constraints, seeking meaningful forms

TABLE 1
SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF LOS ANGELES'S NEW SECOND GENERATION (IN PERCENTAGES)

Characteristics	1.5 and Second Generation			Third-Plus Generation		
	Chinese	Vietnamese	Mexican	Mexican	Black	White
Demographic characteristics						
Female	43.5	49.9	49.7	52.0	53.7	50.6
Median age	27.0	25.0	28.0	29.0	31.0	30.0
Generation						
1.5 generation	54.7	70.6	34.4	—	—	—
Second generation	45.3	29.4	65.6	—	—	—
Citizenship status						
Citizen by birth	45.3	29.4	65.6	100.0	100.0	100.0
Citizen through naturalization	49.8	64.3	15.1	—	—	—
Permanent resident	4.4	6.1	11.8	—	—	—
Undocumented status	0.5	0.2	7.5	—	—	—
Key determinants						
Parental SES						
Father with no English proficiency	7.0	7.9	15.2	—	—	—
Mother with no English proficiency	7.8	12.0	19.1	—	—	—
Father with no high school diploma	7.5	15.6	54.5	17.2	10.9	3.5
Mother with no high school diploma	12.2	30.5	58.0	22.4	9.0	4.4
Father with a bachelor's degree or more	61.3	31.9	7.3	14.7	35.0	46.5
Mother with a bachelor's degree or more	42.3	16.1	5.3	11.3	28.0	36.3
Parent ever been undocumented	1.0	0.6	10.4	—	—	—
Parent owning a home	86.5	58.8	62.8	73.1	67.5	89.2
Family situation						
Both parents married	85.5	83.6	72.0	53.8	43.3	51.9
Grew up living with both parents	85.6	83.1	72.2	62.2	45.4	64.8
Modes of incorporation^a						
	Neutral	Positive	Negative	—	—	—
Total in sample (<i>n</i>)	400	401	844	400	401	402

SOURCE: Immigrant Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles Study (IIMMLA) (see note 4).

Note: SES = socioeconomic status.

a. According to Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller (2005), modes of incorporation are defined as follows: Positive: refugees and asylees receiving government resettlement assistance. Neutral: nonblack immigrants admitted for legal permanent residence. Negative: black immigrants and those nationalities with large proportions of unauthorized entrants.

of self-employment in the arts, entertainment, and even crime. Employing the concept “expressive entrepreneurship,” Fernández-Kelly and Konczal illustrate how class, race, national origin, and generational status interact to give rise to new modes and pathways of incorporation that diverge from the parental generation and from native-born, middle-class whites. They find that the second generation defines success by degrees of dignity, respect, independence, and economic self-sufficiency rather than by traditional middle-class American values and norms or conventional SES measures employed by most researchers.

If we were to step back and trace how members of the second generation go from one point to another in their pursuits and then inquire how they make certain choices or change their course along the way, we might reach different conclusions about the level of success they have achieved. In the process, we might gain a better understanding of why certain groups pursue particular pathways over others.

Los Angeles’s Second Generation at a Glance: Chinese, Vietnamese, and Mexicans

Intergroup differences in family SES and modes of incorporation

Descriptive statistics from IIMMLA show discernible patterns of social mobility in Los Angeles’s new second generation across national-origin groups. While differences emerge among second-generation Chinese, Vietnamese, and Mexicans, the findings are consistent with those from CILS and ISGNY. Table 1 provides a glimpse of some demographic and family characteristics of 1.5- and second-generation Chinese, Vietnamese, and Mexicans (along with those of third-plus-generation Mexicans, non-Hispanic blacks, and non-Hispanic whites for reference).

Three intergroup differences are notable. First, the Vietnamese are relatively young compared to the Chinese and Mexicans and have a higher percentage of 1.5-generation members in their population. Both of these characteristics reflect the relatively recent inception of Vietnamese migration to the United States. Second, Chinese immigrant parents exhibit the highest levels of English-language proficiency, educational attainment (even compared to non-Hispanic whites), and rates of home ownership, compared to Vietnamese and Mexican immigrant parents, illustrating drastic differences in parental human capital and financial resources in the three groups. Third, both Chinese and Vietnamese were more likely to grow up in two-parent, married households, compared to their Mexican counterparts. The three groups also encountered varied contexts of reception: Chinese, neutral; Vietnamese, positive (mainly because of favorable state policies toward refugee resettlement); and Mexicans, negative (mainly because of the undocumented status of many) (Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller 2005).

As predicted by the theory of segmented assimilation, differences in parental human and economic capital, family structure, and modes of incorporation help to explain intergroup variations in mobility outcomes among the second generation (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Portes, Fernández-Kelly,

TABLE 2
 DIVERGENT OUTCOMES OF LOS ANGELES'S NEW SECOND GENERATION (IN PERCENTAGES)

Outcomes	1.5 and Second Generation			Third-Plus Generation		
	Chinese	Vietnamese	Mexican	Mexican	Black	White
Education						
No high school diploma	0.0	1.0	13.8	9.5	6.7	3.7
High school diploma	4.5	6.7	32.7	30.3	24.2	17.7
Some college	32.4	44.1	35.9	41.4	45.1	32.5
Bachelor's degree	41.5	37.7	12.6	14.5	18.8	31.8
Graduate degrees	21.6	10.5	5.0	4.3	5.2	14.3
Labor market status ^a						
Professional occupations	17.9	14.0	3.6	5.9	4.6	9.6
Unemployment	8.9	10.6	8.4	6.9	12.1	4.7
Earnings						
\$20,000 or less	43.6	53.3	76.7	70.4	73.7	60.2
\$20,001 to \$30,000	21.8	20.5	15.2	20.5	17.8	21.7
\$30,001 to \$50,000	26.6	18.5	7.3	7.8	6.9	12.2
Over \$50,000	8.0	7.7	0.8	1.3	1.7	5.9
Home ownership	27.6	24.3	27.4	29.3	18.0	35.6
Family situation						
Married	26.0	24.4	39.5	41.0	25.9	44.6
Mean age when first child was born	30.2	27.5	22.0	22.7	22.3	25.4
Having children at teen age	0.0	2.2	12.5	12.8	12.0	2.9
Incarceration	1.8	3.2	9.8	15.0	19.3	10.6
Total in sample (<i>n</i>)	400	401	844	400	401	402

SOURCE: Immigrant Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles Study (IIMMLA) (see note 4).

a. Among those who are in the labor force.

and Haller 2005). Table 2 illustrates some outcomes based on the intergenerational transmission of advantage, with 1.5- and second-generation Chinese exhibiting higher levels of education, occupational status, and earnings compared to their Vietnamese and Mexican counterparts. They also have a slight edge over Mexicans with respect to their rates of home ownership. Although parental human capital for the Vietnamese is relatively weak compared to that of the Chinese, it appears to be partially offset by their favorable context of reception.⁵

Especially noteworthy is that mobility patterns among the Vietnamese tend to more closely resemble those of the Chinese than other groups. This suggests a distinctive pattern of second-generation Asian incorporation that not only diverges from other national-origin groups but also does *not* refer to non-Hispanic whites as the reference group for incorporation. The unique pattern among Asians is reflected in their marital and childbearing decisions; neither the Chinese nor the Vietnamese appear to be in a rush to get married and have children, and few have children in their teenage years. These trends contrast with those found among Mexicans and native-born white and black populations.

Like early childbearing, incarceration rates vary widely across groups and confirm the results from CILS, with the Chinese and Vietnamese displaying the lowest rates of incarceration of all groups. While the rate of incarceration among the 1.5- and second-generation Mexicans closely resembles that of native-born whites, it climbs higher in the third-plus generation and approaches that of native-born blacks. We find wide group variations along these measures. They come as little surprise, however, because they can be explained by the theory of segmented assimilation. In fact, our ongoing qualitative study reveals life histories that reflect those predictable patterns. We present two life histories from that study to illustrate how parental resources (or lack thereof) produce predictable outcomes in the second generation.

Reproducing advantage: Sarah's success. Sarah is a thirty-five-year-old 1.5-generation Chinese who came to the United States with her family at the age of six. Her parents are highly educated and held professional jobs in China; her father was a college math professor and her mother was a medical doctor. Like many high-skilled immigrants, Sarah's parents were unable to translate their preimmigrant human capital into commensurate jobs in the United States. Hence, her father worked a series of menial jobs before settling into a low-skilled position at an aircraft company. Her mother opened a small business in a middle-class suburb in Los Angeles and worked as an acupuncturist for a primarily Asian and Latino clientele. Sarah's family first settled in an ethnically mixed community but soon moved to a predominantly white suburb where it was able to leave behind gangs and violence.

Sarah did well in high school; she took mostly advanced placement (AP) courses, earned a 3.5 grade point average (GPA), and was a member of the high school debate team. However, she never felt that she was doing well enough because she always compared herself to her older sister and to her Asian friends

in high school, all of whom earned GPAs of 4.0 or even higher. In her senior year of high school, Sarah applied to a University of California (UC) school and a prestigious private university in Los Angeles and was accepted by both. She chose the UC school for two reasons. First, she just knew “that if you are Chinese, you go to UC.” Second, because of her family’s limited financial resources, she saw no point in attending a private university unless it was an Ivy League institution. At the time her parents were fully covering her sister’s law school tuition and had told Sarah that she should not expect the same level of financial support unless she was accepted at an Ivy League school.

After graduating, Sarah worked for a software company, then for a bank. Later she decided to acquire a contractor’s license and opened her own business because she saw firsthand that the way to “get rich” in this country was to become an entrepreneur. While her parents worked full-time in regular jobs, they also invested in real estate, which enabled them to accumulate wealth and purchase a house. Sarah took the lessons from her parents (especially from her mother, who is a business owner) and applied them to her life. She currently owns a contracting and design company, which she started seven years ago. While her earnings vary, she typically makes about \$160,000 a year, enough to afford a comfortable home and middle-class lifestyle in an affluent Los Angeles suburb.

Sarah has undoubtedly worked hard to achieve all that she has, but her success is a predictable effect of normative class reproduction. While her parents may have experienced downward mobility upon immigrating to the United States, Sarah benefited from their high level of preimmigrant human capital, which paved the way for her to earn a B.A., to run her own profitable business, and to purchase a home. Sarah is economically independent, and now that she is in her midthirties, she is thinking more seriously about her personal life. Still single, she wonders whether she will marry and have children in the near future.

Reproducing disadvantage: Rodolfo’s entrapped destiny. In stark contrast to Sarah’s path to mobility, Rodolfo’s current situation and prospects are dismal yet unsurprising. Unlike Sarah, Rodolfo’s initial entry into the United States began with disadvantage—a position that he inherited from his parents—and hardships soon followed. His parents immigrated to the United States from rural Mexico in the late 1980s. Desperately wanting to provide better opportunities for their three children (Rodolfo being the youngest), his parents chose to enter the United States illegally. Once here, the couple had two more children. With five youngsters to support, both parents had to work more than fifty-hour weeks—tolling in low-paying service jobs just to keep their family afloat—leaving little time to supervise their children.

Rodolfo’s family settled in a working-class community in Orange County where he began elementary school. He was immediately placed in an English Learner class because of his underdeveloped reading and writing skills. Starting so much behind his classmates, Rodolfo had a difficult time adjusting and making friends. Having less than a grammar school education, his parents were unable to help him

adapt or help with his schoolwork. Searching for personal strength, Rodolfo found some reprieve in soccer, which brought out his confident, skillful, and competitive edge. He wanted to join the school's soccer team, but his parents could not afford the fees to cover the uniform, equipment, and transportation to compete with other teams. Yet, so strong were his soccer skills that, as a young teen, Rodolfo was invited to play for a league in a neighboring town. The team even offered to waive all fees so that Rodolfo could join. However, after attending only one practice session, he decided against joining because he was embarrassed by his outdated soccer attire, which set him apart from the rest of his teammates (all of whom were middle-class and white). Rodolfo's shame grew when his father arrived to pick him up from practice in the family's old car.

Alienated and seeking a sense of belonging, Rodolfo turned to the streets and joined a gang. Before long, he found himself entangled with the law. At the age of fourteen, Rodolfo was charged with attempted murder and terrorizing the streets; he was found guilty by association and was sentenced to six months in juvenile hall. After his release, he was no longer permitted to attend regular high school and was required to attend remedial school instead. Although his parents severely punished him, they were unable to closely monitor him given their long work hours. Lacking supervision and direction after his stint in juvenile hall, Rodolfo soon rejoined his gang and stopped attending school altogether.

When Rodolfo became seventeen, his father (whose status was legalized through the Immigration and Reform Control Act [IRCA]), petitioned for his son's legal permanent residency. While Rodolfo's green card application was being processed, he was granted a work permit. He immediately took a job alongside his father as a machine operator making aluminum parts. Employed for the first time in his life, Rodolfo began to understand the value of work and began planning to secure a better job. His plans came to a halt, however, when his juvenile record became a roadblock to his legalization. He was arrested by U.S. customs and security officials and forced to sign paperwork for his voluntary deportation to Mexico. He spent two months in immigration detention and was denied bail on two occasions before he was finally granted bail on his third attempt. What was most surprising for Rodolfo was that the district attorney posted the \$3,500 bail on Rodolfo's behalf, an act of generosity that the young man will never forget. Armed with a new sense of optimism, Rodolfo vowed to turn his life around. The presiding judge, however, was unwilling to grant Rodolfo legal status until he reached the age of twenty-one, at which time his juvenile record will clear and he will be off probation, assuming that he stays out of trouble.

Rodolfo has since continued working and earns approximately \$2,500 a month by clocking more than sixty hours a week in a factory. His hard-earned dollars not only help to pay for his lawyer, his car, and his medical expenses, but also for his family's mortgage, his younger siblings' school clothes, and his older sister's college expenses. At the tender age of twenty, Rodolfo has many regrets and says that if he could turn back time, he would have stayed in school and away from gangs—a path adopted by his older sister, who is now in college and aspires to become an immigration lawyer.

At the time of the interview (in the spring of 2007), Rodolfo was desperately waiting for his twenty-first birthday so that his juvenile record would clear, allowing his green card application to be processed. His unauthorized status and juvenile record have set him far “behind the starting line” and hindered his path to mobility. He wishes he could go back to school and earn a GED, after which he would like to open his own business, or perhaps even follow in his sister’s footsteps and study to become an immigration lawyer.

Although his parents migrated to the United States to give Rodolfo opportunities for “a better life,” he has not yet been able to realize those aspirations. From the very start, he had numerous odds stacked against him—low parental human and economic capital and unauthorized migration status. While he faults himself for his current position, he does not recognize just how disadvantaged he was before he even set foot in this country. Unlike Sarah, Rodolfo was not shielded by his parents’ human capital, legal status, and positive mode of entry. Yet, even now, Rodolfo remains resilient and hopeful that he will be able to change the course of his life once he is granted legal permanent residency.

Charting anomalies and divergent pathways

Predictable cases, such as Sarah’s and Rodolfo’s, are not necessarily a constant for respondents in our study of Los Angeles’s new second generation. We find a significant number whose mobility trajectories deviate from that which would be expected given their background. Of the seventy-five respondents we have interviewed to date, we find life histories that are more complex, outcomes that are more irregular, and pathways that are more variegated.

Statistical models often overlook the anomalous cases or exclude outliers in their analyses. We have chosen a different route for two reasons. First, there are simply too many anomalous cases to ignore. Second, by studying the anomalous cases, we can better identify mechanisms that lead to particular outcomes. Moreover, by adopting a subject-centered approach, we can understand how individuals make particular choices within cultural and structural contexts that sometimes lead to outcomes impossible to understand through traditional statistical models. Some respondents attain success despite severe disadvantage. Others find success difficult to reach despite the advantages they garner from parental resources and favorable contexts of reception. Like Portes and Fernández-Kelly (2008 [this volume]), we find that outliers are important insofar as they point to alternative social processes obscured by sample averages. To illustrate our point, we present an example of some anomalies in the sample.

Success attained despite disadvantages: Alberto. Alberto was born to a very poor family in rural Mexico, the third eldest of fourteen children. As one of the oldest siblings in his large family, Alberto began working at the age of eleven as a cattle herder in the *rancho* to help support his family. Alberto never complained about working at such a young age, nor did he believe that hard work was unusual since he witnessed his father work even harder as a *Bracero* who

routinely shuffled back and forth between his rural village in Mexico and Los Angeles. After years of enduring the physically grueling work and low wages, Alberto's father decided to apply for permanent residency in the United States, which was granted in the mid-1960s. With his green card in hand, Alberto's father sponsored his entire family to come to the United States. They settled in a working-class neighborhood in Los Angeles.

Arriving in the United States at the age of twelve, Alberto knew that he had to work especially hard to catch up to his native-born peers and decided to make school a priority—a message that his parents instilled in him from a very young age. Given the family's poverty, Alberto also had to continue working to help supplement the household income. So after school and on weekends, Alberto worked alongside his father picking oranges, cutting lawns, and making tortillas for a small restaurant. Alberto was not bitter; he saw work as a natural part of daily life. Moreover, in his and his father's view, working hard meant being able to support a family.

Like work, school was another nonnegotiable task. Alberto recalls being so poor while growing up that he had to walk six miles every morning to go to school because his family could not afford the city bus fare. While balancing the demands of school and work was no easy feat, he excelled in high school and dreamt of becoming an astronaut. When he relayed his ambition to his high school guidance counselor, the counselor discouraged him and suggested that Alberto become a Spanish teacher since he was fluent in Spanish. Refusing to be dissuaded, Alberto enrolled in the local community college where he could complete his general education. After Alberto earned his associate's degree, he transferred to a four-year college, where he learned that he could not become an astronaut because he was not a U.S. citizen. Alberto then shifted his professional ambition and decided to pursue a career in aerospace engineering. He pursued and earned a bachelor's degree in engineering from a local public university and, shortly after, earned a master's degree in the same field, all while working to support himself and his education.

Recognizing that his permanent resident status may hamper his professional pursuits, Alberto applied for naturalization and became a naturalized U.S. citizen. With his citizenship and advanced degree in hand, Alberto secured his first professional job as an aerospace engineer for a large company but still chose to acquire more education. He earned an MBA, as well as a professional engineering license from the state of California, a real estate license, and a pilot's license. He has purchased and leased a set of apartment units and also operates a consulting business. Currently, Alberto earns well over \$300,000 a year. Alberto has been married and divorced three times and has eight children. His oldest child was born when Alberto was only a teenager, but he refused to allow this to deter his educational and career pursuits.

Alberto's life history is remarkable in many respects, especially because it defies the conventional model of mobility. He did not grow up enjoying the advantages of middle-class living; his origins were humble, and the odds were stacked high against him. Despite disadvantages, Alberto has become a well-educated professional with several advanced degrees, a successful entrepreneur, a father who supports his children, a son who cares for his elderly parent, and

the family's financial safety net. He attributes his success to the individualistic formula of hard work and determination. Such traits undoubtedly helped him achieve mobility, but Alberto also benefited from his unusual maturity due to his early and persistent need to work. In addition, because he lived in Mexico until the age of twelve, he developed a "dual frame of reference," in which he compared the opportunities for mobility in the United States to those in Mexico where they were far more limited. Finally, unlike Rodolfo's parents, Alberto's father had a green card upon migrating to the United States and therefore never suffered the stigma and difficulties associated with unauthorized status. The combination of these factors has allowed Alberto to trump the odds and to attain success despite obstacles.

Road Blocks in the Pathway to Mobility

The chokehold of unauthorized status

The cases of Rodolfo and Alberto show that legal status upon migration is perhaps the single most powerful structural difference that separated their mobility paths from the outset. Both Rodolfo and Alberto arrived in the United States with their families from rural Mexico, both sets of parents had little formal education, and both parents worked long hours in low-paying jobs upon arrival. The one critical difference was that Alberto entered the United States legally and Rodolfo illegally. That set the stage for differing aspirations and avenues for mobility.

Like Rodolfo, many children of unauthorized immigrants find themselves hitting one roadblock after another as they attempt to move ahead. In school, they are often tracked into low-level or remedial classes because of their poor English-language skills. Those who graduate from high school soon give up their dream of attending college because they do not have access to financial aid or other loan programs designed to assist disadvantaged, native-born students. If they graduate from school, they face roadblocks in the labor market because they are unable to supply the proper identification such as a passport, social security card, or driver's license to secure a job.

For the unauthorized, there are no second chances or safety nets, and one single mistake can have disastrous consequences. Rodolfo is still paying dearly for his gang involvement as a teen. Other unauthorized respondents had similar experiences. Isabel, for example, is a thirty-two-year-old Mexican woman who migrated to the United States as a young child with her family. Unfortunately, neither Isabel nor her siblings were able to take advantage of IRCA, and to this day, she remains an unauthorized migrant, cautious not to let anybody know her secret.

A bright high school student, Isabel never entertained the possibility of going to college because she realized that she did not have the appropriate paperwork to apply. Simple things like getting a driver's license are impossible for her, and her lack of identification hampers her ability to secure a good apartment. At the moment, Isabel feels relatively fortunate because she has landed a job as an

account manager using a fake birth certificate and social security number. She pays taxes and contributes to Social Security, although she will never be able to claim benefits from the program.

Work—Inspiration or deterrent to mobility?

For the new second generation, having to work to support oneself and one's family while attending school appears to be a double-edged sword. As we noted, Alberto's success can be attributed, in part, to his extraordinary commitment to work to support his family; work served as a source of identity that helped him achieve upward mobility, structure his daily life, keep him focused in school, and keep any potentially negative distractions at bay. More often than not, however, working while in school can have negative consequences, detracting from studies and, in extreme cases, derailing education. Based on preliminary analysis of our qualitative interviews, we find consistent ways in which premature employment deters mobility. For example, some respondents forgo or delay college because they and their parents expect them to work to help support their families immediately after graduating from high school. Others attend college only part-time, extend their years in college, or drop out of college altogether to work full-time for the same purpose. The following life histories illustrate the effects of work while in school.

Veered off-course: Armando. Armando, a 1.5-generation Mexican, attended high school in a low-income neighborhood of Los Angeles. He fared exceptionally well and was placed into the college track, taking mostly AP courses. He received several awards for his academic achievement, and his grades earned him admission into several top colleges, including an Ivy League university and a high-ranking UC school. However, Armando's parents never pushed him to attend college. They were delighted that he graduated from high school—a feat that neither of the two accomplished. Armando, on the other hand, always knew that he would go to college, because he dreamt of becoming a doctor. He chose to attend a UC school because it was the only affordable option given his family's limited financial resources and he would be able to live at home while advancing his education. During his first two years of college, Armando majored in biology and worked part-time to pay for his tuition, which he fully covered by himself.

While Armando aptly juggled the demands of work and school during his first two years of college, he veered off-course during the third. In his junior year, his parents decided to start their own business, and they expected Armando to do the books and taxes and his sisters to answer phones and deal with customers. The demands on Armando's time increased as his parents' business grew, and because he was optimistic about the prospects of his family's business, he decided to limit college to part-time. Armando poured his days and energy into the family business, gave up his dream of becoming a doctor, and switched to what he felt was a less demanding major, art history. In his and his parents' view, because the business was growing and profitable, a college degree became secondary.

Unfortunately, things did not turn out as Armando had hoped. After a few years, his father and mother separated. His father took control of the business, which was in his name, and left nothing to his family. With the family business gone, Armando decided to return to school full-time, but found the transition far more difficult than he had anticipated. It took Armando eight years to graduate from college. Moreover, with his major in art history, Armando had a difficult time landing a job. Eventually he was hired as a bus driver for the Los Angeles MTA but recently learned that he has a heart condition that makes him ineligible to drive a city bus. As a result, he is currently unemployed and receives support through disability and Social Security. At the age of forty-two, Armando lives with his mother and is now taking some accounting classes at a local community college, with the hope that someday he may find work as an accountant.

Reflecting on his college years, Armando wishes he had chosen to attend the Ivy League school and lived on the East Coast where he would not have felt such a strong obligation to help his family with their business.

Onward and upward: David. Like Armando, David dreamed of becoming a doctor. His parents did whatever they could to support his goals, which was not always easy given their meager resources. David's parents migrated from Vietnam to the United States in 1990 when David was seven years old, and like other highly-educated professionals, they experienced downward mobility upon arrival. His father—once an officer in the military—worked in a manufacturing plant, and his mother—once a nurse—stayed at home to care for her two children. David's parents settled in a low-income neighborhood in south Los Angeles riddled with Asian and Latino gangs. Given the neighborhood environment, David's parents insisted that he come directly home after school and focus on his homework. His mother, in particular, closely monitored all of David's activities, including how much television he watched.

Like Armando, David was in the college preparatory track and took AP classes in high school. His strong academic record earned him admission into several UC schools, and he chose to attend the one that was closest to his parents' home so that he could live with them and save money. David's parents paid for all of his college expenses including his tuition, books, and personal expenses. They had even saved money to buy David a car—no easy feat on a factory worker's salary. Despite their meager income, David's parents insisted that he not work during high school or college because they did not want him to be “distracted” from his studies. They had high hopes, fully expecting him to go to medical school or, at least, earn a master's degree.

In college, David majored in computer engineering, earned a 3.8 GPA, and graduated in four years. He landed a job as a computer engineer, earning a salary of \$65,000 a year. He worked at this job for a year while he studied for the MCAT exams, while continuing to live at home with his parents. Although David was earning a hefty paycheck that far exceeded his father's earnings, his parents never asked him to contribute to the family household. Instead, they insisted that he

save his money for medical school. Without the pressure of having to help support his parents, David had the luxury of focusing on the MCAT exam. His high MCAT score and stellar college record earned him a place in a competitive medical school, where he is now completing his first year.

David benefited from his parents' decision to keep him focused on school, but his older sister was not as fortunate. She graduated from the same college as David but after she graduated, her parents asked her to help contribute to the household income so that they could purchase the home they now own. As a result, David's sister was unable to pursue an advanced degree, as she had hoped. David's parents favored his postcollege education over his sister's for practical and cultural reasons. David migrated to the United States at a much younger age than his sister, who was thought by her parents to have more English-language difficulties that would possibly hamper her occupational attainment. In addition, Vietnamese parents, by tradition, favor their sons. In this case, birth order and gender interacted to prioritize one sibling over another with differing educational results.

Unexpected family disruption

Comparing Armando's experience to David's, one might jump to the conclusion that the difference in their educational and career trajectories is solely attributed to cultural differences. Both grew up in low-income neighborhoods yet excelled in high school and gained admission to prestigious universities. However, David is on his way to realizing his dream while Armando is unemployed and unsure about his future. One of the starkest differences between the two men is that Armando was bound by strong family and economic obligations to work while in school to help his parents while David was free of any such obligations, even after he graduated from college. On the basis of the seventy-five interviews we have conducted, we find that 1.5- and second-generation Mexicans begin working at a much earlier age, and they are more likely to work to contribute to their family households than their Chinese and Vietnamese counterparts. Nevertheless, we also find cases that contradict those patterns, especially when families experience sudden and unexpected disruptions. Natalie's case illustrates how parental occupational failure can cause a detour from a promising path.

Making compromises: Natalie. Natalie is a thirty-year-old second-generation Chinese woman who grew up in a middle-class community in Orange County with hopes of becoming an orthopedic surgeon. Her parents encouraged this goal and instilled in her the belief that academic achievement is paramount. Her parents were so strict that they would not allow her to participate in any extracurricular activities, nor would they let her partake in social activities like sleepovers because they feared that they would detract from her schoolwork. Like Armando and David, Natalie was placed in the AP track and did well in school, earning a 3.6 GPA. However, she did not fare as well when it came to college admissions. She believes that her lack of extracurricular activities made her appear less well-rounded than many of her classmates. She was not admitted to her UC school of choice. Disappointed, Natalie soon reoriented her plans. She decided to attend a

local community college for a few years and then transfer to the UC school. Unlike David, Natalie had to work part-time throughout college to support herself.

Natalie's educational plans went drastically awry in her third year of community college, when her parents' retail business went under and the family home went into foreclosure. With family conditions so dire, both Natalie and her sister felt they had no choice but to drop out of college and work full-time to help cover family necessities such as food and household bills.

Natalie now holds a well-paying job and enjoys her work as an orthopedic technician, but she regrets not being able to achieve her dream of becoming an orthopedic surgeon. Sometimes, she fantasizes about returning to school, but she realizes that this would be difficult now that she is older, married, and with a new set of priorities, including purchasing a home and having children.

The Mechanisms behind Success Attained, Deterred, or Denied

The theory of segmented assimilation explains why different patterns of adaptation exist among contemporary immigrants and their children and how these patterns necessarily engender divergent destinies (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). The diverse outcomes of second-generation incorporation can be explained by three sets of key determinants—parental human capital (education and job skills), family situation (two-parent household, parental legal status, and parental expectation and investment priorities) and modes of incorporation (positive, negative, or neutral regarding state, public, and ethnic community receptions) (Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller 2005).

The preliminary analysis of our seventy-five life histories and the illustrative cases presented above generally confirm the known patterns of segmented assimilation as summarized in Table 3. We find discernible pathways of second-generation incorporation among our Chinese, Vietnamese, and Mexican respondents. Despite very different contexts of exit, the Chinese and Vietnamese tend to converge toward a distinctly Asian pattern, and the Mexicans toward a distinctly Latino pattern. What is novel about the findings of our study is that neither converges toward the norms of non-Hispanic whites (see Table 2).

National origin matters. The Chinese arrive in the United States with strong parental human capital and advantageous family situations in terms of a two-parent family, high educational expectations for children, and prioritized investment in children's education. Vietnamese arrive as refugees with relatively weak human capital, but this disadvantage is offset by their strong family situations and favorable state and public receptions. Mexicans, in contrast, arrive as low-skilled labor migrants and face a disadvantaged family situation (e.g., the excessive burden of work to make ends meet, comparatively lower educational expectations of children, and lack of resources for their children's education). These initial

TABLE 3
 DIVERGENT PATHWAYS AND SEGMENTED ASSIMILATION IN THE NEW SECOND GENERATION

	Pathways	Education and Occupation	Intergenerational Outcomes	Significant Mechanisms
Advantaged background: High parental human capital, stable family structure, neutral or positive modes of incorporation	The normative	Bachelor's degree or higher; professional occupations; skilled entrepreneurship	Sustained upward mobility	Middle-class cultural capital offsetting initial parental downward mobility
	The anomalous	Some college and/or vocational training; petty entrepreneurship	Limited or no mobility above parental SES	Parental career failures; sibling order and gender; excessive family expectations leading to partial downward cycle
	The exceptional	High school diploma or less; unskilled jobs or unemployment	Downward mobility into lower-class	Early childbearing; excessive family expectations leading to full downward cycle
Disadvantaged background: Low parental human capital, unstable/broken families, negative modes of incorporation	The normative	High school diploma or less; unskilled jobs or unemployment	Stagnation in lower-class	Early childbearing; undocumented immigrant status exacerbating low parental human capital
	The anomalous	Community college and/or vocational training; skilled trades or petty entrepreneurship	Limited upward mobility above parental SES	Legal status; family expectations; cultural memory from home country; external assistance
	The exceptional	Bachelor's degree or higher; professional occupations; high-tech entrepreneurship	Upward mobility well above parental SES	Legal status; family ambition, commitment, and expectations; cultural memory from home country; external assistance

NOTE: SES = socioeconomic status.

disadvantages are exacerbated by their mode of incorporation, especially for undocumented immigrants.

As Table 3 shows, the interaction of these three sets of determinants largely explains the normative pathways toward upward mobility among 1.5- and second-generation Chinese and Vietnamese Americans, as in the cases of Sarah and David; and normative pathways toward stagnation in the lower class or downward mobility among 1.5- and second-generation Mexican Americans, as in the cases of Rodolfo and Isabel. There are exceptions, however, among Chinese, Vietnamese, and Mexicans. Some of these exceptions even defy the rules, especially among Mexicans. For example, anomalous pathways have been traveled by some 1.5- and second-generation Mexican Americans, with Alberto being the most exceptional.

By employing what we refer to as the subject-centered approach, we have been able to understand the unique challenges that members of the new second generation face and the reasons that they make certain choices and embark on different pathways in their pursuit of mobility and success. Our analysis reveals some significant mechanisms that serve to neutralize advantages or overcome disadvantages.

First, legal status is essential for social mobility among children of immigrants. Both Rodolfo's and Isabel's situations illuminate how undocumented status exacerbates low parental human capital and seriously handicaps immigrant children's ability to pursue even simple educational goals. If she were able to legalize, Isabel would feel more secure, return to college, and begin mapping out a competitive career path. In contrast to Isabel, Alberto was in a much stronger position to overcome formidable obstacles because he and his parents entered the United States as legal immigrants. Even when he learned that he would not be able to realize his early dreams because he was not an American citizen, he reoriented himself, chose to pursue a career as an engineer, and took steps to regularize his immigrant status.

Second, middle-class cultural capital brought from the home country can offset initial parental downward mobility by creating additional family resources for educational and occupational achievements. Cultural capital entails three main components: motivation for maintaining or reclaiming middle-class status upon arriving in a new country, cultural skills (the "know-how") for navigating new environments, and ethnic resources for promoting mobility goals (Portes and Fernández-Kelly 2008; Zhou and Kim 2006). Like Sarah's and David's parents, many highly educated first-generation Asian immigrants experience significant downward mobility upon arriving in the United States because of their lack of English-language proficiency. However, the cultural memory of middle-class life in the homeland becomes a powerful motivating force in reclaiming middle-class status. Because of their educational advantages prior to immigrating to the United States, high-SES Asian immigrants are also equipped with the know-how to navigate the host educational system on their own terms, tightly controlling their children's curricula, study habits, and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, Asian immigrant communities provide tangible resources to supplement U.S. education. These ethnic systems of supplementary education

emerge because Asian ethnic groups have higher proportions of high-SES coethnics compared to other immigrant nationalities (Zhou and Kim 2006).

Third, family educational expectations can have varied effects on children's outcomes. On the positive side, high family educational expectations generate motivating forces that contribute to desirable academic outcomes. Almost all of our respondents reported that their parents valued education and, moreover, expected that they would attain levels of education that exceeded their own. Nevertheless, family educational expectations can be at odds with other family obligations, such as the need to work to supplement the family income. In low-SES families, in particular, economic survival often stands in the way of laying a strong foundation for economic mobility, creating a tension between work and school.

As our study reveals, the burden of work at an earlier age often impedes or stalls educational achievement. Among the children of Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants, work while in school was uncommon except in the case of Natalie, who had to quit college to come to the rescue of her parents after an unexpected business failure. Among children of Mexican immigrants, in contrast, work during school was more frequent. One of our female Mexican respondents, Danielle, advanced her "theory of Hispanics" to explain that work should not take precedent over school. As she put it, "A lot of [Mexicans] come here for a better life. Some come to make money and go back. And I wonder how we can make immigrant parents realize the benefit of letting kids go to college. They want their kids to go to high school, but then they want them to work right after to help." However, excessive educational expectations can be harmful as well and lead to a downward educational cycle; research shows that excessive pressure to achieve and excel is common in Asian immigrant families (Zhou 2006).

While family expectations influence behavioral patterns regarding work and education, they are not intrinsic to Asian or Mexican culture; rather, they emerge from interactions with structural circumstances, including favorable (or unfavorable) contexts of reception, the group's own orientation toward the host society, and its ability to muster moral and instrumental support systems. In other words, family expectations do not exist in a vacuum; they interact with various structural factors that work to mediate the role of the family and affect educational attainment.

Fourth, cultural memory from the home country plays a critical role. Having experienced or being told of economic hardships in the homeland, traumatic escape from war, hunger, and political/religious persecution, and parental toil and sacrifice, many children of immigrants, regardless of national origin, can become self-motivated and resilient.

Last but not least, access to public resources is of paramount significance, especially for national-origin groups who are disadvantaged by low parental SES and negative modes of incorporation. Our study confirms two major findings from existing research. First, while most immigrant children from low-income families attend urban public schools, those who have access to more competitive academic tracks, AP courses, and quality after-school programs tend to fare much better than others. Second, community colleges serve as "bridging mechanisms" for upward social

mobility (Portes and Fernández-Kelly 2008). Many of our respondents, Asians and Mexicans alike, reported having taken the route of community colleges, either as stepping stones to four-year colleges or universities or to earn certificates and licenses that enable them to seek jobs in skilled trades (e.g., teacher's assistants, lab technicians, paramedics, and paralegals) or to develop their businesses.

One final note about how our respondents view their success: one of the most prominent patterns to emerge from our study is that Asians are less likely to report feeling successful than their Mexican counterparts. Many of our high-achieving Chinese and Vietnamese respondents felt unsuccessful regardless of how much education they attained or how much they earned. They compared their accomplishments to those of even higher-achieving Asians—including their siblings and coethnics (Zhou 2004). Furthermore, because of the pervasive image of Asians as “the model minority,” those who have not graduated from college, have not graduated from an elite university, or have not secured high-salaried professional jobs feel constrained by the stereotype and are often embarrassed by their “failure.”

Conclusion

As the children of post-1965 immigrants come of age, they are making indelible imprints in cities across the United States. While we are just beginning to unravel the patterns of mobility among members of the new second generation, it is clear that multiple pathways defy convention. Like other native-born Americans who follow multiple paths to mobility, we find that Los Angeles's 1.5- and second-generation Chinese, Vietnamese, and Mexican Americans are pursuing routes that are varied but generally in correspondence with those predicted by segmented assimilation theory. On the other hand, we also witness cases that deviate from the normative pathways, especially among Mexicans. It is important to reiterate two points illustrated in Table 3. Among those of relatively advantaged backgrounds, sustained upward social mobility, or even stagnant intergenerational mobility, is as much the norm as a matter of class reproduction. Among those from disadvantaged backgrounds, the achievement of upward social mobility is an uphill battle that requires not merely individual will power and ethnic, cultural, and social resources but also external support.

By adopting a subject-centered approach, we are able to show the intricacies in the process of second-generation mobility through the detailed life histories of our respondents and to identify some of the key mechanisms that facilitate or impede mobility, including citizenship status, family expectations, cultural memory, and external assistance. To conclude, the term *path dependence* is perhaps a useful metaphor for describing second-generation progress. The metaphor focuses attention on how contexts of exit and reception in the first generation determine what courses are available to the second generation and what costs are entailed in choosing one feasible course over another.

To advance our argument, we underscored four critical points. First, we need to problematize conventional notions of “assimilation” and “success,” paying special attention to how members of the 1.5 and second generation conceptualize those notions. Second, we should revisit the commonly held assumptions underlying conventional models of intergenerational mobility and investigate why even normative pathways can lead to divergent outcomes. Third, we should critically examine how unconventional pathways may lead to positive mobility outcomes. Finally, by problematizing the definitions about success and the pathways leading to it, we can gain a better understanding of the reasons behind educational and occupational choices made by members of the 1.5 and second generation. A subject-centered approach helps to further the theoretical debate about pathways to intergenerational mobility and immigrant incorporation.

Notes

1. The figure refers to foreign-born persons who arrived in the United States since 1960 at or under the age of thirteen and U.S.-born persons with either one or two foreign-born parents who arrived in the United States since 1960. Cited from Table 1 in Rumbaut (2006).

2. The data from the article are drawn from the ongoing study, “Becoming ‘Ethnic,’ Becoming ‘Angeleno,’ and/or Becoming ‘American’: The Multi-faceted Experiences of Immigrant Children and the Children of Immigrants in Los Angeles,” by Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou (principal investigators). The qualitative study examines in depth how members of today’s 1.5 and second generation define “success”; how their prospects and outcomes of “success” are affected by national origin, class, immigration status, and gender; and how they come to identify themselves. Supported by the Russell Sage Foundation (#88–06–04), the study draws on a sample of 140 1.5- or second-generation Chinese (40), Vietnamese (40), and Mexicans (60), and it also includes native-born blacks (10), and native-born whites (10) from the larger Immigrant Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles Study (IIMMLA) sample for face-to-face in-depth interviews lasting a minimum of 60 minutes. The data collection began in the fall of 2006 and is ongoing. As of April 30, 2007, we conducted 75 taped interviews (22 Chinese, 16 Vietnamese, and 37 Mexicans) with interview times ranging from 60 to 150 minutes. Following institutional review board guidelines, we use pseudonyms throughout the article to protect the privacy of our respondents.

3. Much of the theoretical insight and discussion is drawn from Zhou and Lee (2007).

4. The IIMMLA is a multi-investigator study funded by the Russell Sage Foundation that focuses on patterns of intragenerational and intergenerational mobility among the adult children of immigrants in the greater Los Angeles area. IIMMLA includes a telephone survey of forty-eight hundred randomly selected respondents in five counties of metropolitan Los Angeles (Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Ventura). The survey (2004–2005) targeted young adults of Mexican, Guatemalan, Salvadoran, Filipino, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean origins, ages twenty to forty, in the 1.5 and second generation, examining sociocultural and political factors such as language, ethnic and racial identities, intermarriage and family formation, voter registration, party affiliation and voting behavior, and patterns of residential settlement. The survey also included comparable samples of native-born non-Hispanic blacks and whites and of third and subsequent generations of Mexican Americans (Rumbaut et al. 2003).

5. We examined these measures based on the 2000 U.S. Census data for the Los Angeles region and found similar trends regarding intergroup differences.

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