

Issue Introduction

By Rashmi Kumar and Sonia M. Rosen, Editors

We are pleased to present Volume 6, Issue 1, in which we explore the theme of immigration issues in urban schools. Throughout the last decade, the topic of immigration has generated contentious political debate, often dominating local and national news broadcasts and taking center stage in legislative sessions. Discussions of immigration have commonly overlapped with concerns about national security, and, as a result, a myriad of political and social restrictions have been placed on immigrants and their communities. At the same time, patterns of immigration have changed. Although New York and Los Angeles continue to attract the highest overall number of immigrants, more small and medium sized cities in the South, North, and Midwest are experiencing significant increases in immigration (Office of Immigration Studies, 2007). Immigrants in these newer destinations are often assumed to have low incomes and limited educational backgrounds, and, when this is the case, their access to health and social services may be compromised (NCLR, 2007). Offering the potential for social mobility (Labaree, 1997) and the chance to learn how to navigate a new social and political world (Olsen, 1997), public schooling represents one of the most vital social services for immigrant communities. In recent decades, the increase in minority students in K-12 U.S. public schools – from 22.2% in 1972 to 43.1% in 2006 – has been almost entirely due to an increase in the immigrant student population (Planty et al., 2008), and in 2007 almost 20% of all K-12 school students came from immigrant families (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). Central to this story, then, are the experiences of students from immigrant communities in K-12 schools and higher education institutions and the impact these students have on the institutions themselves.

In this issue, the authors engage a number of interrelated themes, including the impact of bilingualism

on schools and classrooms, the significance and perceptions of cultural difference for schools, students, and families, and the consequences of federal legislation and policy on local educational contexts. Several articles in this issue have used Latinos to frame broader issues concerning the effect of immigration with regards to cultural and social differences, the pedagogical needs of immigrants, and various organizations through which educational services are provided for K-16 students. Although we recognize that immigrants come from a variety of backgrounds and that researchers cannot extrapolate the needs and experiences of all immigrants by considering primarily Latino groups, there is much to be gained from the thematic framing offered by these authors. To further broaden and enrich the journal's discussion of the themes listed above, we made the decision to extend our selections to include critical ideas that resonate and explicate many of the social, political, economic, and organizational ramifications of how urban educational institutions serve and are enriched by immigrant communities.

In *Home-School Conflicts and Barriers to the Academic Achievement of Children of Latin American Immigrants*, Carolyn Sattin Bajaj brings attention to the gaps that often exist between schools and Latino immigrant communities within the context of policies and pedagogical norms that dominate the great majority of American schools. Nola Butler Byrd's article, *Historical Identity Development Patterns and Contemporary Multicultural Identity in First, Second, and Third Generation Counseling Students*, also reflects the above theme by exploring the significance of cultural and social differences. She uses a mixed-methods approach to analyze concepts of culture, race and ethnicity among first, second, and third generation students and school counselors from multicultural backgrounds. Building on Bajaj's

call to reassess the impact of pedagogy on immigrant students, H. Elizabeth Smith examines the role of pedagogy in helping immigrant students from diverse backgrounds navigate the new cultural and social contexts in *On Fostering a Pedagogy of Transparency in an Urban Community College Developmental Writing Classroom*. She advocates for the clarification of instructors' expectations as an instructional strategy aimed at assisting newly arrived immigrants in developing academic skills and cultural familiarity, and she shares insight into the various social and economic factors that shape the experiences of these students both in and outside of the classroom.

Of course, this discussion of immigrants' experiences in and with schools cannot be divorced from a conversation about the impact of legislation and social policy on immigrants themselves, especially the recent wave of legislation making it easier for the Department of Homeland Security to arrest and deport undocumented immigrants with the cooperation of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and local authorities. *Undocumented Immigrants: A Teacher Remembers a Raid* by Darrel Hoagland is a poignant and intimate account of the U.S. government's "crack down" on undocumented immigrants. Hoagland illustrates the profound effect these policies have on immigrant youth and families across the U.S., many of whom have limited access to legal help or mediation.

Policies directly aimed at shaping the services schools offer to students also have an important effect on immigrants. David Nieto's article, *A Brief History of Bilingual Education in the United States*, delves into the way policies around bilingualism have constrained school instruction. Nieto discusses how public discourse around immigration, assimilation, and difference has created pedagogical and curricular constraints regarding bilingual instruction for teachers and schools.

More than a Least Restrictive Environment: Living up to the Civil Covenant in *Building Inclusive Schools* by Ellen Skilton-Sylvester and Graciela Slesarsansky-Poe offers a framework for considering how schools' understandings of the concepts of difference and inclusion may function to restrict or to broaden students' access to a range of experiences. The authors bring attention to the challenges and inequities faced by students with disabilities because of the way in which their learning environments are conceived of and structured within schools. They point out that the constraints faced by immigrant students are not widely discrepant from the experiences of students with disabilities, and the parallels they identify raise some critical questions. What are the different lenses through which immigrant students are viewed within public schools? How do perceptions about their abilities influence the goals that are established for their learning experiences? What would be the effect of thinking about immigrant students in terms of their strengths and contributions to the school community?

Embedded in all of these issues is a reconsideration of the roles teachers, researchers, and other allies play in working towards social justice and equity for all marginalized people. Three articles in this issue analyze these constructs explicitly. *Pathways to Social Justice: Urban Teachers' Uses of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as a Conduit for Teaching for Social Justice* by Jennifer Esposito and Ayanna Swain examines the relationship between culturally relevant and social justice pedagogies. This qualitative study considers how teachers can work around the structural and curricular constraints of the school to respond to the racism that is entrenched in schooling in the U.S. Eduardo Junqueira offers a researcher's perspective in *Feminist Ethnography in Education and the Challenges of Conducting Fieldwork: Critically Examining Reciprocity and Relationships between Academic and Public Interests*, in which he unpacks concepts of representation and exchange in ethnographic research. He uses examples from his own research in an urban

school in northeastern Brazil to consider tensions associated with reciprocity between researchers and research participants. Finally, in *Becoming an Anti-Racist White Ally: How a White Affinity Group Can Help*, Ali Michael and Mary C. Conger reflect on the process of supporting the struggles of marginalized communities from a position of racial privilege and urge White educators to examine their own racism in order to become effective allies for people of color. These articles are valuable not only for the explicit themes that they address but also for their theoretical framing of race, power, and the concept of difference, all of which can broadly inform discussions of immigration.

We are delighted to include two reviews of recently published and highly acclaimed books. Jeremy Cutler reviews *The Trouble with Black Boys* by Pedro Noguera, highlighting the author's contention with a society that, on one hand, is able to utilize the societal and monetary contributions of immigrants and, on the other hand, prevents them from moving beyond the "lower rungs of the American society" (Noguera, 2008, p. 59). Zaynab Baalbaki reviews *Learning a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society* by Carola Suarez-Orozco, Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco, and Irina Todorova. Winner of the annual prize for outstanding publications from Harvard University Press, this book uses interdisciplinary studies to document the lives of immigrant youth on macro as well as micro levels to emphasize the differences that emerge due to racial and cultural attributes among immigrant youth from the same zip codes and similar SES. We are pleased to recognize that this review continues the mission of the Penn GSE Perspectives on Urban Education Writers Circle established in 2008, and our thanks go out to Writers Circle member Tanya Maloney for her excellent assistance and guidance to the author in crafting this review.

We hope that this issue provides a framework that allows readers to explore the multi-layered and complex ideas associated with immigration and to understand their relevance within the context of urban education. Immigration must be examined in relation-

ship to legislation and policy, schools and classrooms, and students and their communities in order to begin considering its cumulative impact on education. Such an investigation raises a number of questions for further inquiry. For instance: Who has the power to shape how immigrants are defined and treated in schools? How might schools and teachers respond differently to local, state, and national policies towards new and existing immigrant communities? How might educators and policy makers broaden the reach of successful practices that acknowledge the cultural resources, community obligations, and academic and social needs of immigrant students and their families? With this issue, we have only begun to discuss these questions.

We have redesigned our journal website to allow our readers easier and more streamlined access to PDF copies of individual articles, as well as to be able to download the entire issue. We owe our sincere thanks to Editorial Board member David Soo for his important contributions and for the creative genius that made this new format possible. We hope that our new webpage and download format will make the Journal easier to use.

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