

Latino Immigrant Students' School Experiences in the United States: The Importance of Family–School–Community Collaborations

Erin Sibley and Kalina Brabeck

Abstract

This paper reviews the literature on the educational experiences of Latino immigrant students in the United States, from early childhood through postsecondary educational attainment. Utilizing a developmental–contextual perspective, we explain the various environmental, political, structural, and psychological challenges these students face, while also highlighting protective factors in the school and family. We highlight how schools, communities, and families can work together to improve the educational chances of these students. These students are less likely to receive high-quality early childhood education and care before the age of five, setting the stage for potential academic disadvantage later on. Parental premigration characteristics play an important role in children's achievement during elementary and middle school, a time when parent educational involvement is important but often difficult for immigrant families. Immigrant students are less likely to graduate high school compared to children of native-born parents and during adolescence may experience isolation from U.S. peer groups. These findings are discussed in light of the additional risks carried by unauthorized status, as well as immigration and acculturation-related stressors. Given that these children are a growing segment of the U.S. population and will soon comprise a large portion of the nation's workforce, we argue that educating them effectively should be of utmost importance. We conclude with policy recommendations, practice recommendations for schools, and important directions for future research.

Key Words: immigration, parent educational involvement, school achievement, educational aspirations, Latino immigrant students, family–school–community collaboration, English language learners (ELLs), acculturation

Introduction

There are currently 41.3 million immigrants living in the United States (U.S.), 11.7 million of whom are unauthorized (Passel, Cohn, & Gonzales-Barrera, 2013; Zong & Batalova, 2015). Latino immigrants make up 47% of the foreign-born population (Motel & Patten, 2011), and demographers predict that by 2020, 30% of all U.S. children will be children of immigrants (Capps, Fix, Ost, Reardon-Anderson, & Passel, 2004; Note: Throughout this article, “immigrant” refers to first-generation immigrant youth and children of immigrants.) This article will summarize the literature on perhaps the most important setting outside the family that will influence the development of these youngest members of immigrant families—school, and it will address the ways in which schools can be places of connection and belonging for immigrant children and youth, particularly when those schools effectively partner with families and the community. This article (a) reviews risk and protective factors for immigrant youth; (b) explains the social ecological model of immigrant child development, which underscores the impact of various levels of context (including school and family) in influencing developmental trajectories; (c) summarizes research on immigrant students’ educational experiences from preschool through secondary school; and (d) offers recommendations for building strong family–school–community partnerships for immigrant students. Throughout the article, the heterogeneity in school experiences among immigrant students of different legal statuses (their own and their parents) will be highlighted.

Protective and Risk Factors for Immigrant Children

Despite significant obstacles experienced by many immigrants, and notwithstanding the vast heterogeneity across and within Latino immigrant groups, newcomer parents often bring strengths that are conveyed to their children in ways that can positively affect school performance and can be harnessed in developing partnerships among schools, families, and communities. For example, many Latino immigrant parents, families, and children demonstrate considerable resilience, that is, the capacity to survive physically and psychologically in circumstances requiring strengths and determination, and to possess the psychological flexibility to adapt to a new lifestyle (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Trueba, 1999). In Latino families, cultural norms and values that

emphasize family obligations, warmth, and reciprocity (*familismo*) and strong connections with others (*personalismo*) may provide Latino immigrant children with an abundance of high-quality relationships with immediate and extended family and friends; such relationships can act as a buffer to the negative effects of poverty (Lansdale, Hardie, Oropesa, & Hillemeier, 2015). Children in Latino immigrant families are more likely to live in two-parent households, which has positive effects on children's educational outcomes (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2008). Research has also highlighted cognitive benefits of multilingualism, such as higher levels of executive functioning, including attentional control and cognitive flexibility (Bialystok, 1999).

Despite these individual and environment-level protective factors, Latino immigrant children are more likely to experience several risk factors when compared with nonimmigrant children, and these risk factors put them in jeopardy of poor academic performance (Lahaie, 2006). For example, children in immigrant families are 1.5 times more likely than children in U.S.-born families to grow up poor; 26% live in a linguistically isolated household, where no adult speaks English well (Hernandez & Cervantes, 2011); and nearly one-third of children in immigrant families have a mother who has not graduated from high school (Hernandez & Napierala, 2012). Children in immigrant families are generally more likely to attend underresourced schools (Suárez-Orozco, Bang, & Onaga, 2010), and immigrant youth are also more likely than nonimmigrant youth to attend larger, more segregated schools, with a higher proportion of students in poverty and with more safety problems at the school (Crosnoe, 2005). As a result of these risk factors, and in spite of their high academic aspirations and strengths, immigrant children are less likely to be proficient in reading and math, attend prekindergarten, and graduate from high school (Hernandez & Napierala, 2012). Given their particular strengths (e.g., family relationships) and sources of risk (e.g., poverty), effective partnerships among schools, families, and communities are especially critical for these students.

A Social Ecological Frame for Immigrant Children's Experiences

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, originally published as ecological theory in the 1970s, posits that children are embedded within multiple contexts that interact with each other to affect the child's development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Through this lens, the contexts of the family, school, and community influence child development and are interactive sites where various processes (e.g., parenting styles, teacher perceptions), influence the child's development. Moreover, this theory stresses the influence of the interactions among layers of context on child development, such as the communication between parents and teachers or the follow-through at home with school-assigned tasks.

As members of underrepresented and oppressed groups, additional ecological constructs are important to Latino immigrant children's development. Extending Bronfenbrenner's work and recognizing the limitations of traditional developmental models for understanding the unique experiences and environments of children of color, Garcia Coll and colleagues (1996) developed the integrative model for the study of developmental competencies in minority children. This model includes a greater emphasis on social position, racism, and segregation, since these constructs may influence the inhibiting or promoting environments in which children live. The integrative model further considers that different racial and ethnic groups have different adaptive cultures, depending on the migration patterns of the group, level of acculturation, and cultural values and traditions.

In line with these ideas, school, home, and community environments can act as inhibiting or promoting settings for the optimal development of immigrant children. As argued by Ungar and colleagues (2012), children exist within environments that either support and buffer them from risk factors or heighten those risk factors. According to the Ungar (2012) model, resilience should be understood as both the quality of the interaction between the child and his or her environment, as well as the individual competence of both the child and the environment, separately. In this view, a well-resourced, stable environment, such as a high-quality school, allows the child's internal strengths and talents to contribute to positive educational outcomes. Importantly, Ungar and colleagues also argue that "the more a child is exposed to adversity...the more the child's resilience depends on the quality of the environment (rather than individual qualities)" to ensure his or her well-being (Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013, p. 350). Consequently, an underresourced environment may inhibit the expression of a child's internal resources. Given the many risk factors immigrant children may face, it is paramount that educational settings partner with families and communities to promote environments that support the children's development.

Differences in Student Experiences Based on Legal Status

The current U.S. legal and political climate acts as an inhibiting environment for many Latino immigrant children, in particular for those whose lives are constrained by their own or their parents' liminal legal status. It is estimated that 4.5 million U.S.-born children live in mixed-status families, consisting of at least one unauthorized parent and a U.S.-born citizen child (Taylor, Lopez, Passel, & Motel, 2011). These children live within the context of social exclusion that dominates the lives of their unauthorized parents (Brabeck, Sibley, & Lykes, 2016; Capps, Bachmeier, Fix, & Van Hook, 2013; Suárez-Orozco,

Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). For example, unauthorized immigrants are less likely than authorized immigrants to access social services (Xu & Brabeck, 2012), partly due to their ineligibility to access services for themselves, but also explained by a reluctance to access services for their U.S. citizen children due to fear, mistrust, and misunderstanding of social services (Viladrich, 2012). Fear and stigma characterize the everyday lives of unauthorized immigrants (Abrego, 2011), and the combination of minority status, potentially traumatic premigration experiences, poverty, and lack of legal status pose significant mental health risks to this population (Perez & Fortuna, 2005). There are also one million unauthorized children under the age of 18 living in the U.S.; these children experience educational and employment constraints and the risk of their own deportation and subsequent separation from their families (Passel & Cohn, 2011).

Parents' documentation status can affect their children both directly (such as in the case of a parent who is deported) and indirectly through their premigration characteristics, postmigration experiences, and every day social settings (Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011). Some immigrant parents, for example, incur high levels of migratory debt after paying smugglers to help them to come to the U.S. and are forced to take on multiple inflexible jobs, which can limit the time they have to invest in their children's educational pursuits (Yoshikawa, 2011). The pervasive stress of unauthorized status can create immense parental distress, which may affect children through harsher parenting and less parental warmth and authoritative parenting (Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011). Research that explores how legal status influences immigrant students' experiences in school will be integrated into the summaries that follow.

Early Childhood

Many children in Latino immigrant families begin kindergarten at a disadvantage due to their lower rates of enrollment in center-based child care (Brandon, 2004). High-quality, center-based care—including daycare centers, Head Start programs, and other prekindergarten programs—are generally regarded as optimal to promote child social/emotional well-being and cognitive development. Unlike some other childcare options (e.g., home daycare, relative care), quality center-based care settings have trained staff, varied educational curricula, daily structure, and peers with whom children can engage in learning. Researchers have found that quality center-based care, compared to parent or informal home-based care, supports early reading and numeracy skills (Gormley, Gayer, Phillips, & Dawson, 2005; Loeb, Bridges, Bassok, Fuller, & Rumberger, 2007) as well executive functioning (Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013).

Research indicates that children of immigrants are less likely to be enrolled in high-quality early care and preschool compared to children of U.S.-born citizens (Brandon, 2004; Crosnoe, 2007; Magnuson, Lahaie, & Waldfogel, 2006). The majority of immigrant children under age three are either in parental care or have no regular care arrangement (60% compared to 40% of children of U.S. citizens), and only 5% are enrolled in center-based care (Matthews & Ewen, 2006). This may be in part due to the findings that children of immigrants are more likely to live in low-income households, have parents with less formal education, and be less likely to have two working parents, all factors associated with lower enrollment in preschool and center-based care (Capps et al., 2004). Additionally, Latino immigrant parents working low-wage jobs are more likely to work nontraditional shifts, such as night shifts, and do not have high-quality childcare options available during those hours (Matthews & Ewen, 2006).

Recent research indicates that home-visiting programs for families with young children may be effective with immigrant populations. For example, Nievar and colleagues (2011) found that the Home Instruction of Parents and Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI) program increased immigrant parents' efficacy and contributed to richer home learning environments. Positive effects on math achievement were observed through third grade. Other scholars have also encouraged the use of two-generation strategies with immigrant parents and their children through programs such as HIPPI and Abriendo Puertas (Moore et al., 2014) because they help parents learn how to become teachers at home, bridge home and school, and often build stronger connections between families and communities (Crosnoe, 2010).

Upon entering kindergarten, disparities in school readiness also exist between children in immigrant and nonimmigrant families. Crosnoe (2007) found that lower center-based care usage by Mexican immigrant families partially explained their lower rates of math achievement in kindergarten. Using a national sample, Koury and Votruba-Drzal (2014) found that children of Mexican, Central American, and Spanish Caribbean parents performed worse than other immigrant groups and worse than native-born White students in math and reading skills at age five; these differences were primarily driven by socioeconomic factors. At kindergarten entry, children of foreign-born parents also have significantly lower expressive language scores compared to U.S.-born parents (W. Han, Lee, & Waldfogel, 2012). Research indicates that when children of immigrants attend center-based preschool programs, they have better reading and math scores at kindergarten entry and higher English-language proficiency (Magnuson et al., 2006), lending credence to the importance of preschool enrollment.

Research provides evidence of the role of parent legal status in partly accounting for the early childhood disparities reviewed. In a study of families with children up to 24 months old, Yoshikawa, Godfrey, and Rivera (2008) found that immigrant groups with the highest proportion of unauthorized parents (Mexican and Dominican immigrants) had the least access to institutional resources such as checking accounts, savings accounts, credit cards, and driver's licenses. Low levels of access to these resources predicted more economic hardship and more parental psychological distress, which in turn were associated with lower scores on child cognitive outcomes. Additionally, Mexican immigrant parents, who were most likely to be unauthorized, reported the lowest levels of cognitively stimulating activities at home.

Elementary and Middle School

Middle childhood (ages 6–12), beginning in the elementary school years, marks the first time that some children spend significant time outside of the immediate family context (García Coll & Marks, 2009). There is some evidence that although children of Latino immigrants enter school with lower levels of academic skills, they make up some ground over time; however, the gap between third-plus generation students and children of immigrants does not disappear (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011). Research with a national sample indicates that at third grade, children of immigrants still underperform in math compared to children of U.S.-born parents, despite heterogeneity depending on country of origin (Glick & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007).

Among children of documented immigrants, parental premigration characteristics are strongly correlated with children's achievement, more so than any other pre- or postmigration characteristic. Using data from the New Immigrant Survey, Pong and Landale (2012) found that for children of immigrants ages 6–12, premigration parental education and parental English proficiency upon arrival in the U.S. were strongly predictive of children's achievement. One recent study found that children of unauthorized parents who were enrolled in Grades 2–4 scored significantly worse than children of authorized immigrants in reading, spelling, and math (Brabeck, Sibley, Taubin, & Murcia, 2016). Social service use moderated this relationship, acting as a protective buffer against the academic risks associated with having an unauthorized parent.

During elementary school, parents are typically expected—by the school and larger society—to be involved in their children's education. There has been a renewed interest in family educational involvement since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, which mandated increased parental involvement in schools receiving Title I funding, which was reiterated in the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015. Family educational involvement can be

defined as school-based involvement (e.g., volunteering in the classroom, attending PTO meetings) and home-based involvement (e.g., helping children with homework, family meals, provision of cognitively stimulating activities at home). Generally, family educational involvement has been found to be positively associated with child achievement, with small to moderate effect sizes (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003). Given the evidence of benefits of family educational involvement during elementary school, it is a potential way to buffer immigrant children from some of the disadvantages they face, thus improving their academic performance. Indeed, family educational involvement has been shown to be beneficial for other disadvantaged groups, such as children in poverty (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006).

Until recently, little empirical work investigated the family educational involvement practices of immigrant versus nonimmigrant parents. In one recent study, Sibley and Dearing (2014) found that the domain of greatest difference between immigrant and nonimmigrant parents was school-based involvement, with immigrant parents lagging behind. However, immigrant parents were highly involved outside of school and also had the highest levels of educational expectations for their children. Thus, immigrant parents care deeply about their children's education and want to be involved in their education, but likely face barriers to school involvement, such as language, transportation, racism, childcare, or intimidation, often based on legal status. Immigrant parents who are unauthorized may face the greatest barriers to family educational involvement, and some data support this assertion. For example, ethnographic research demonstrated legal status as a pervasive source of stress that infiltrated all aspects of participants' lives, including involvement in children's schools (Carreón et al., 2005). Schools should also understand that Latino immigrant parents may be highly involved in their children's education in ways that are not typically considered to be "parent involvement" from a White, American perspective. For example, a qualitative study of Latino immigrants found that these parents were highly involved in their children's education through asking questions to others in their community about how to navigate the school system and through attending events and activities that they believed would have indirect positive effects on their children's learning. As an example, some cited attending adult English classes so that they could demonstrate the importance of education to their children (Poza, Brooks, & Valdés, 2014).

During elementary school, some immigrant children experience unintentional bias and discrimination from their classroom teachers (Brown, 2015). This can be potentially problematic, given the association between teacher expectations and achievement for children at risk (Hinnant, O'Brien, & Ghazarian, 2009). In addition to being linked to poorer social/emotional and

academic outcomes, students' perceived discrimination is linked to higher risk of dropout, lower academic motivation, and decreased self-efficacy (Brown, 2015). Discrimination can manifest itself in many ways; for example, in one study, immigrant elementary school students reported that teachers did not call on them because of their ethnicity (Brown & Chu, 2012). Students also report that teachers assume their English is poor when they are in fact English proficient, and some report that they are stereotyped as problematic students with behavior problems (Katz, 1999). Fortunately, students in classrooms where teachers understood diverse students to be a benefit rather than a burden reported less perceived discrimination and more positive ethnic self-identities (Brown & Chu, 2012).

Thus, while findings are somewhat mixed, the general consensus is that the academic disadvantage experienced by immigrant children in preschool and at school entry is carried into their elementary school years and that this disadvantage is mostly explained by socioeconomic and sociostructural factors, notably legal status and teacher prejudice that leads to low expectations. Protective factors such as parental involvement, high teacher expectations, and access to quality preschool can be buffers and enhance the academic trajectories for some elementary-aged Latino immigrant children.

Immigrant Students in Secondary School

Immigrant children are less likely to graduate from high school when compared with children of native-born parents (Hernandez & Napierala, 2012). Suárez-Orozco and colleague's (2008) longitudinal data of immigrant students revealed that many immigrant groups (including Latino immigrant students from the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Central America) showed a downward trend in GPA across grades in adolescence. Adolescence is a period rife with important social, emotional, cognitive, and biological developmental changes. These changes are complicated by and take on particular meaning in the context of immigrant youths' lives in ways that can affect their experiences in school. For example, adolescence is marked by the importance of social relationships, particularly with peers. Adolescents seek connection with and belonging to groups, even as they assert their unique and distinct identities (Newman, Lohman, & Newman, 2007). Within this developmental context, the social losses experienced by first-generation immigrant students who have been separated from their peer groups in countries of origin may be particularly difficult (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Moreover, immigrant high school students may experience isolation from U.S. peer groups who are different culturally and linguistically (García Coll & Marks, 2009; Suárez Orozco et al., 2008). The unique stressors associated with acculturation (e.g., learning the

language, feeling different from peers, experiences of discrimination, lacking a sense of belonging) and acculturative stress (i.e., difficulty adjusting to new culture, Berry, 2006) can be particularly challenging for immigrant adolescents during a developmental period when peer relationships, “fitting in,” and social connection are important.

Immigration-related stressors among adolescents, including acculturation and acculturative stress, have been linked to internalizing symptoms (i.e., depression, anxiety, somatic symptoms) and externalizing behaviors (i.e., negative behaviors directed toward the external environment) among immigrant adolescents (Alegria, Sribney, Woo, Torres, & Guarnaccia, 2007). Sirin et al. (2013) recently reported longitudinal data that demonstrated that greater exposure to acculturative stress among immigrant high school students—regardless of generation status—predicted significant internalizing symptoms, including depression, anxiety, and somatization. These internalizing symptoms are associated with impaired executive functioning skills in adolescents, which in turn affect performance in school (G. Han et al., 2016). Additionally, during a developmental period when family relationships can already be tumultuous, acculturative family distancing, that is, the more rapid adjustment to a new culture of the youth vis-à-vis the parent, can add stress to family relationships and affect youths’ mental health and well-being in ways that compromise their executive functioning skills that are required for success in school (Hwang & Wood, 2009).

As in their younger years, immigrant high school students also disproportionately contend with structural challenges to their schooling. When compared to their nonimmigrant peers, they are more likely to live in urban areas where they face additional challenges such as underresourced schools, underprepared teachers, violence, segregation, poverty, parental unemployment, and crowded housing (Reardon-Anderson, Capps, & Fix, 2002). English-language learning students—typically first- and sometimes second-generation immigrants—are underrepresented in high-track courses in high school (Callahan, Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010; Kanno & Cromley, 2013) and have limited access to advanced-level classes such as honors and advanced placement (AP) courses (Callahan, 2005; Callahan et al., 2010). Similar to students in the general population, the consequences of low tracking for ELLs include low academic outcomes (Calla al., 2010), lack of opportunity for developing critical thinking skills, and disruptive classroom climates (Harklau, 1994a, 1994b). Because they are segregated, high school ELLs may also be hampered by the inhibition of second-language development (Kanno & Kangas, 2014).

As with other developmental stages, one important structural disadvantage for some immigrant high school students is legal status. Unauthorized high

school students face significant legal, financial, and policy barriers to pursuing education beyond high school, which can lead them to academically disengage and underperform (Contreras, 2009; Olivos & Mendoza, 2009; Pérez, Cortés, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010; Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortés, 2009; Roth & Grace, 2015). Nationally, 40% of unauthorized adults ages 18–24 do not complete high school, and only 49% of unauthorized high school graduates go to college (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Among the small percentage of unauthorized immigrant students who pursue higher education, most attend community colleges, and many of those do not finish (Flores, 2010).

Adolescence marks a period when individuals assert independence, define identity, and begin to develop a life course through acts such as obtaining a driver's license, applying to college, and developing a vocational path (Erikson, 1963; Gonzalez, Suarez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013). For unauthorized students, these acts may be impossible because their options for work and education are limited by state laws (Abrego, 2006; Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). As described by Gonzalez (2011), high school is often a time of “discovery” for unauthorized students who for the first time may confront the crippling implications of their status and the extinction of their hopes and dreams; such realizations can lead to depression, anger, and even thoughts of suicide. While no federal law prohibits unauthorized students from obtaining a college education, most states do not offer them in-state tuition, and some states deny them financial assistance (Díaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners, 2011). Thus, while immigrant students in general may hold higher academic aspirations than their peers (García Coll & Marks, 2009), unauthorized high school students, faced with multiple structural barriers, hold lower aspirations. McWhirtley, Ramos, and Medina (2013) found that high school immigrant students who anticipated immigration status problems had lower vocational outcome expectations and anticipated more external barriers to pursuing their postsecondary plans.

While research has documented the challenges Latino immigrant high school students face, it has also revealed protective factors that underscore the importance of strong connections with family and community. One important protective factor for Latino immigrant students in high school is social relationships. For example, Sirin et al. (2013) found that social support moderated the relationship between acculturative stress and anxious/depressed symptoms for immigrant high school students. Similarly, Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) found that social support was particularly important for first-generation immigrant high school students who need help navigating new linguistic and cultural environments, achieving financial stability, and receiving emotional and practical support. One concrete action that can lead to social support for high

school students is participation in afterschool activities. Camacho and Fuligni (2015) found that participation in such activities was beneficial with regards to academic achievement and engagement for immigrant high school students across generation statuses and that it was most beneficial for first-generation students. Strong family relationships and parental involvement can also be protective factors for high school students; for example, Mena (2011) found that home-based monitoring and discussion of educational experiences improved immigrant high school students' intentions to complete the school year. Opportunities for mentorship (Gonzales, 2010) and financial assistance (Flores, 2010) can further minimize the disadvantage of unauthorized immigrant students. Finally, given the multiple structural barriers they face, sociopolitical development and fostering critical consciousness can be particularly protective for immigrant youth and can contribute to academic achievement and post-secondary expectations (Abrego, 2006; Abrego & Gonzalez, 2010; Luginbuhl, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2006; Perez et al., 2010).

Discussion

Latino immigrant children are a growing segment of the U.S. population, and understanding how to educate them effectively should be a top priority for the nation. As young children, Latino immigrant students often start at a disadvantage in part due to their lower rates of enrollment in early education (associated with their parents' socioeconomic status and, for some, legal status). They may face disadvantages throughout elementary and middle school related to cultural barriers between the school and home as well as teacher bias and low expectations. They further experience social barriers and immigration-related stressors in high school that can affect their mental health, cognitive functioning, and academic performance. Despite holding high educational aspirations and expectations, structural barriers due to their own or their parents' unauthorized status, economic resources, or racism may hinder their path toward postsecondary education.

Strong partnerships among schools, families, and communities are vital to the success of immigrant students. The family-school-community systems model proposed by Dearing, Sibley, and Nguyen (2015) emphasized that these connections require investments from all three agents in the system. Communities and schools play a key role in determining the extent to which families are aware of opportunities to be involved at the school and can take advantage of educational opportunities for their children. For example, schools should be proactive in providing outreach to immigrant families. An action research project with teachers in primarily immigrant school districts found that holding

parent–teacher conferences in parents’ neighborhoods (such as in a church hall) or extending hours for parents to meet with teachers helped eliminate many of the barriers facing immigrant parents (e.g., intimidation, inflexible employment hours; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003). Thus, schools in communities with high immigrant concentrations can serve their community in many ways and adapt as the community’s needs change. Importantly, school staff should approach family–school partnerships with Latino immigrant parents from a strengths-based perspective, recognizing that their language and cultural values will contribute positively to their children’s development. When families feel that their culture is valued and teachers reach out to them for input, parents often become more involved at the school and in their children’s education (Orozco, 2008).

When designing classroom practices, school staff should pay particular attention to the cultural values of their students’ families. For example, the value of collectivism, which is important in Latino culture, is defined as the centrality of the interrelatedness of the self to others, with family considered to be an important social resource and interdependency among family members viewed as paramount (Chang, 2015; Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Trumbull, 1999). When raising children with collectivist values, parents teach them to help others and contribute to the success of the group (Rothstein-Fisch et al., 1999). Because U.S. teachers and schools tend to be individualistic, they are likely to value and reward students for individual accomplishments and the ability to focus on their own work (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). Some strategies to foster collectivism in the classroom setting include placing struggling and advanced readers within the same reading groups and encouraging them to help each other (rather than placing all struggling students in one group and advanced readers in another) and encouraging students to use personal and family anecdotes in class discussions (Rothstein-Fisch et al., 1999; Trumbull et al., 2001).

Specific case management for high-needs students, including Latino immigrant students, should also be a priority, so that both mental health and academic needs can be addressed. Community school models and integrated student supports (see Moore et al., 2014, for a review) can be an effective way to ensure that students’ academic and out-of-school needs are appropriately met. For example, full-service community school models that provide health care, academic support, mental health, and material support for families help to ensure that academic and nonacademic challenges (that may be caused in part due to out-of-school factors such as those related to poverty) can be addressed simultaneously. School social workers can help connect families to resources they are entitled to but may not know how to access. Schools should also work

directly with families when immigrant students are struggling. For example, for immigrant students struggling with adjustment, the Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC) intervention is a potential resource. CBC is a partnership model between parents, teachers, and a school consultant (e.g., a psychologist) to address students' social/emotional needs through a collaboratively constructed plan with methods to measure the child's progress over time. Randomized trials have shown the CBC to be effective in improving home–school communication (Sheridan et al., 2013) and parent–teacher relationships (Sheridan et al., 2012). This exemplary program affords immigrant parents an opportunity to share their culture-specific childrearing goals and methods.

School engagement is an important predictor of achievement but has been found to be low among Latino youth (Brewster & Bowen, 2004). Mentoring programs for students have been shown to help prevent declines in school engagement (Holt, Bry, & Johnson, 2008). Additionally, smaller schools and high expectation schools have been shown to promote student engagement (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Teachers should also be trained to understand the important role that their support of students plays given strong research linking teacher–child relationship and positive behavioral engagement (Valeski & Stipek, 2001). This is particularly important for immigrant students who may be subject to teacher biases and prejudice based on students' language, race, and socioeconomic status (Brown, 2015).

Although much work has focused on the importance of school–family connections, fewer scholars have focused on the third critical factor: communities (Dearing et al., 2015). Community agencies can provide material and social supports to schools and families, which may be especially useful to disadvantaged students and their families. City Connects (Walsh et al., 2014) is an example of a whole–child intervention that leverages both school and community supports. Site coordinators placed in each school assess the strengths and needs of every child across four domains: academics, health, family, and behavior–social/emotional. Using this information, the coordinators then match each child with a unique set of school- and community-provided supports. For example, a child may receive a referral to an afterschool sports or art program; the family may receive a referral to an organization that provides basic needs (e.g., food, diapers); or the child may be set up with additional academic supports in school. A recent study (Dearing et al., 2016) found positive effects of City Connects on the academic outcomes of first-generation immigrant students in urban elementary schools. This intervention may have been particularly useful because it addressed the full set of needs facing each immigrant student in both the school and home context (i.e., provided medical care for students with health issues, provided food assistance for families and

mental health counseling for parents and children, etc.). Other whole-child interventions that approach student outcomes from a contextual perspective, addressing the family, school, and community, may be likely to have similarly positive outcomes.

Future Research Directions

There is still much that we do not know about the educational experiences of immigrant youth. One subset of undocumented youth—unaccompanied immigrant youth—have been the focus of very little research, so their academic outcomes remain largely unknown. These children present a very difficult challenge to schools as these students often come without strong familial connections to ease the transition into school, high rates of exposure to stressful and traumatic events, complicated legal cases, low levels of English proficiency, and varying completion levels of formal schooling. In districts with high concentrations of unaccompanied immigrant youth, case studies examining how schools and community-based organizations deal with this influx and support children on an individual basis would add useful data to literature at the intersection of research and practice.

Much more work is needed to determine specific interventions that may be effective for immigrant children's achievement and growth. From a theoretical and empirical perspective, approaches that maximize the relationships between schools, families, and communities are likely to have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of this population.

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Erin Sibley is a postdoctoral research associate at the Center for Optimized Student Support at Boston College. Her research interests include immigrant student achievement as well as parent educational involvement among immigrant families. Correspondence concerning this article may be addressed to Dr. Erin Sibley, Boston College, Center for Optimized Student Support, Campion 305, 140 Commonwealth Avenue, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, or email erin.sibley@bc.edu

Kalina Brabeck is an associate professor in the Department of Counseling, Educational Leadership, and School Psychology at Rhode Island College. Her research interests include immigrant children and youth, the effects of immigration policies on immigrants, and the influence of sociostructural challenges on individual mental health and well-being.