IMAGINING MEXICAN EDUCATIONAL FUTURES IN NEW YORK*

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SUMMARY: I. *Mexican Migration to New York and the East Coast*. II. *History of Mexican Migration to New York City*. III. *Social and Economic Futures of Mexicans in New York City*. IV. *Alternative Educational Futures of Mexicans in New York*. V. *What Can Be Done? Policy Reflections and an Invitation to Action*. VI. *Outreach for Immigrants who have Never Been in School. "Outreach for Immigrants who have Never Been in School"*. VII. *Outreach for those who have Been in School in New York, but have Dropped out*. VIII. *Outreach for Immigrants currently in School*. IX. *Cuny's Recent Policy Change on Undocumented Immigrants*. X. *Epilogue, July 2002*. XI. *Coda, June 2003*. XII. *References*.

This paper offers a brief overview of the history of Mexican migration to and settlement in New York City and analyzes the variety of educational futures for Mexicans here. I use the plural *futures* in the title both to describe the current variation in educational outcomes among the Mexican and Mexican American students here, and to underline the fact that we as a society can affect the kinds of possible futures that these students will have. I discuss both students who are doing well and those who are having trouble with or leaving school. The chapter attempts to challenge all of us to imagine alternative educational futures for Mexican and Mexican American students and to offer some suggestions on how they might be helped to realize their dreams. I begin below with a summary of the history of Mexican migration to New York City and the East Coast, and some reflections on the economic, educational, and social locations of Mexicans in New York. In addition to making an academic contribution,

* This chapter was originally published in Cortina, Regina and Gendreau, Monica (eds.), *Mexicans and Schooling in New York*, Staten Island, NY, Center for Migration Studies, 2003.
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I also attempt to speak directly to the audience of the conference out of which this paper came, mainly public school teachers, administrators, and community leaders. This paper draws broadly on the author's fifteen years of experience as a researcher and teacher with a deep involvement with and commitment to the Mexican community in New York City and the surrounding region, and Mexico, especially in the state of Puebla.[1]

I. Mexican Migration to New York and the East Coast[2]

The Mexican origin population in New York City, including both immigrants and native-born Mexican Americans, was somewhere around 250,000 to 275,000 in 2000, with about half between the ages of 12 and 24. This figure represents an incredible increase from the approximately 35,000 to 40,000 Mexicans in 1980 and the 100,000 in 1990.[3] Moreover, there was a 232% increase in births to Mexican mothers in New York City between 1988 and 1996, according to the New York City Department of Health. "Little Mexicos" have sprung up in several places in New York: Jackson Heights in Queens; El Barrio, or Spanish Harlem, in Manhattan; Sunset Park and Williams-

[1] This paper draws on research and writing done with the support of the following institutions: the Spencer Foundation-National Academy of Education Postdoctoral Fellow Program; the Social Science Research Council, Program in International Migration, with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the National Science Foundation, Sociology Program; the Oral History Research Office at Columbia University, with funds from the Rockefeller Foundation; and the Barnard College Project on Migration and Diasporas and the Barnard College Small Grants Program. Excellent research on the projects funded by NSF, Barnard, and SSRC was done by three graduate students, Sandra Lara, Sara Guerrero-Rippberger, and Antonio Moreno, and several undergraduates, Agustín Vecino, Griselda Pérez, Carolina Pérez, Lisa Peterson, Sandra Sandoval, Linda Rodríguez, and Katie Graves. Errors of fact or interpretation in this article are mine alone. I also thank Regina Cortina for inviting me to contribute to this volume, NYU for hosting the conference, and John Mollenkopf of CUNY and Joseph Salvo of the New York City Planning Department for help in getting some of the Census and Current Population Survey figures.

[2] This section and the next on the social and economic status of Mexicans are taken from my chapter "Mexicans: Social, Educational, Economic and Political Problems and Prospects in New York", in Foner, Nancy (ed.), *New Immigrants in New York*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2001. My thanks to Nancy and Columbia University Press for permission to use them here.

[3] These estimates are from the New York City Planning Department Census Expert, Joseph Salvo. I have taken a somewhat higher estimate than his for the Mexican population to bring current analysis in line with the average figure derived from the 1998 and 1999 CPS, as are his estimates for Puerto Ricans and Dominicans.

burg in Brooklyn; and in the South Bronx. Even Staten Island now has its complement of Mexican sports leagues and settlers. Outside the city, in the wider metropolitan area, Mexicans have become a presence in Hudson Valley towns like Newburgh and Mt. Kisco and in New Jersey cities like Paterson and Passaic in the north and Bridgeton and Hammonton in the south. Mexican consular officials offer a "soft estimate" that another 300,000 Mexicans reside outside the city in New Jersey, Connecticut, and suburbs of New York. Moreover, the East Coast agricultural industries —from Pennsylvania mushroom fields, to Delmarva Peninsula chicken processing plants, to tomato picking near the Canadian border, to peach picking in Athens, Georgia— now rely mainly on Mexican labor. Census experts estimate that Mexicans will soon become the largest Latino minority on the East Coast, and in some of the places named above, they already are.

The potential for growth in the Mexican population in and around New York City is tremendous. By 2000, an estimated 2.2 million Latinos lived in New York City, and while Puerto Ricans are a declining proportion of the Latino population, other groups —including Mexicans— are increasing. Mexican population growth in New York is astounding —the fastest of any group in the city— and several factors point to continued growth. Mexico has a huge population: 95 million in 1998, as compared to about 8 million for the Dominican Republic. Moreover, two trends in Mexican population dynamics and migration suggest continued high levels of migration to the U.S. and New York in particular. Mexico, at least through the medium term, will have new annual labor market entrants of between 800,000 and 1,000,000, far in excess of its economy's ability to produce jobs. Also, migration is likely to increase from nontraditional sending regions, thereby initiating new migration chains and networks. In addition, there is a growing tendency for migrants, including first timers, to stay for a longer time and to eventually settle in the United States.[4]

[4] See Durand, Jorge *et al*., "The New Era of Mexican Migration to the United States", *The Journal of American History*, 1999, 86, 518-536. Also see Cornelius, Wayne, "Los migrantes de la crisis: The Changing Profile of Mexican Migration to the U.S.", in González de la Rocha, M.

The tremendous potential for growth in New York's Mexican population makes the future of Mexicans and their children extremely important to the city's future. There are causes both for optimism and concern —optimism because of the success of some Mexicans, but concern because of a mismatch between mechanisms of integration in New York and the demographic and settlement characteristics of the Mexican population—. In short, while many Mexicans have experienced upward mobility in the first and second generations, more have not. Challenges to Mexican incorporation in New York stem from that population's geographical dispersal and resulting problems in political mobilization, their non-niched insertion into the economy, and the uneven educational settings into which they move and from which they come. The educational futures of the Mexican population, including both Mexican immigrant students and Mexican Americans, is of particular concern.

II. History of Mexican Migration to New York City[5]

"We opened the road", said Don Pedro, in 1992, sitting at his kitchen table in a town I call Ticuani, in the State of Puebla, and looking back at the fifty years of Mexican migration from the Mixteca to New York City that started when he and his brother Fermin crossed the U.S.-Mexico border on July 6, 1943. Indeed, most Mexican migration to New York can be traced to a historical accident. Don Pedro and his brother and cousin had been unsuccessful in bribing their way into a *bracero* contract, that is, a contract in the-government-to government labor program that recruited Mexicans to work in U.S. agriculture between 1942 and 1964 (*Brazo* means "arm"). Getting a *bracero* contract would probably have brought Don Pedro

and Escobar Lapati, Agustín (eds.), *Social Responses to Mexico's Economic Crisis of the 1980's*, La Jolla, C.A., Center for U.S.-Mexico Studies, 1994.

[5] This section draws on a previous brief history in Smith, Robert, "Mexicans in New York City: Membership and Incorporation of New Immigrant Group", in Baver, S. and Haslip Viera, G. (eds.), *Latinos in New York*, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996, and a longer history in Smith, Robert, "Los ausentes siempre presentes: The Imagining, Making and Politics of a Transnational Migrant Community Between Ticuani, Puebla, Mexico and New York City", Doctoral Dissertation, Political Science Department, Columbia University, 1995.

and his relatives to the southwestern U.S., and the history of Mexican migration in New York would have been quite different. Instead, Don Pedro and his brother hitched a ride with a New Yorker named Montesinos who vacationed in Mexico City every summer. Montesinos brought them to New York and put them up in a hotel for two days until they found work. Work was easy to get. "There was a war on, so they were happy to have us working", said Don Pedro. He worked in restaurants, factories, and later as a mechanic. In the nearly sixty years since that first migration, the Mixteca region from which Don Pedro comes has been the origin of approximately two-thirds of New York's Mexican population.

Don Pedro was not the first Mexican labor migrant to come to New York. In fact, during the 1920s, migrants from the Mexican state of Yucatan came to New York in small numbers and established a social club at the 23rd Street YMCA. Why this migration from the Yucatan dried up is not known, though Yucatecans and their children still live in New York. More interesting is how the migration from the Mixteca and now other regions has reflected larger trends. We can separate the migration from Mexico to New York into four phases, all of which implicate different processes pushing and pulling at each end of the migration route. The first two phases mainly involve migration from the Mixteca region, a cultural and ecological zone that includes the contiguous parts of three states —southern Puebla, northern Oaxaca, and eastern Guerrero—. In 1992, the Mixteca accounted for two-thirds of Mexican migrants to New York, with 47% coming from Puebla alone.

The first phase of migration from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s involved small numbers of individuals, from a few families and towns in southern Puebla, who had re-relatives in New York. In the second phase, from the mid-1960s to mid-1980s, this tightly networked dynamic was maintained but increasing numbers of people, including the first appreciable number of women, began to come to the U.S. to seek their fortunes. The attraction of the U.S. in those days would have been obvious: much higher wages than in Puebla and modern conveniences that most people could not even imagine. Indeed, most of the Mixteca did not get electricity until the mid-1960s, and this improvement was resisted by *caciques* (political

bosses) who did not want outside influences, such as radio and electric lights, intruding upon their control over their local populations. Flight from political violence also features prominently in the histories of many of the pioneer migrants from Puebla, including Don Pedro, who was living in Mexico City to escape his hometown's political violence when he met Montesinos.

The third stage of migration runs lasted from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s and can be characterized as an explosion. Three factors combined to create this explosion. First, by the late-1980s, Mexico had been in the grips of a profound economic crisis since 1981-1982, and conditions in many places were still dire. Indeed, poor states were especially hard hit, and Puebla experienced a net contraction of its economy between 1981 and 1985.[6] Within Puebla, the Mixteca was one of the worst-off regions; in fact, it was and is one of the most marginalized areas in the entire country. Even worse, the "lost decade" of the 1980s stretched through the 1990s and into the new century for most Mixtecos and many Poblanos. Severe economic conditions and the loss of faith in a Mexican future combined to create very serious push pressures in the Mixteca. These push pressures were matched by a second factor —the demand side in the U.S., with Mexicans becoming identified in New York during the 1980s as a highly available and compliant labor force—.[7] Also, New York's Mexican population had reached a critical mass by the mid-1980s, such that the costs of migration for many people from the Mixteca region had been lowered a great deal by the presence of relatives and friends in the U.S.[8]

The key factor in catalyzing the explosion of migration in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the Amnesty program of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, or IRCA. The Amnesty provision enabled immigrants to apply for temporary, then permanent, residency if they had been continuously in the U.S. since 1981, or if

6 See Cornelius, Wayne, *De la Madrid: The Crisis Continues*, La Jolla, C.A., Center for U.S.-Mexico Studies, 1986.

7 See Smith, *supra* note 5. Also see Young Kim, Dae, "Beyond Co-Ethnic Solidarity: Mexican and Ecuadorian Employment in Korean Owned Businesses in New York City", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22, May 3 1999.

8 See Massey, Douglas *et al*., *Return to Aztlán: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico*, Berkeley, University of California, 1987.

they had worked in agriculture for ninety days during the past year. Mexicans surprised many by accounting for the second highest number of amnesty applications in New York City, with about 9,000, behind Dominicans' roughly 12,000.[9] The amnesty program profoundly changed the nature of Mexicans' relationship to their hometowns. Migrants who had been caught in a holding pattern for years or even decades suddenly found that they could return home when they wanted. More importantly, they now had a legal right to reunite their families in the U.S. Between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s, tens of thousands of wives and children left the Mixteca region and moved to New York to be with their families. The suddenness of this impact is reflected in an anecdote told by one school official in Puebla. On being investigated because his school reported only half as many students in 1993 as it did in 1992, he told officials that the explanation was simple: The students had all gone to New York to be with their parents. Similar stories repeated themselves throughout the Mixteca. One corollary was the 232% increase in the Mexican birthrate in New York in the mid-1990s.

The last phase of migration, which began in the late 1990s, involves changes in the larger process of migration to the U.S. The story has several parts. First, by now, many towns in the Mixteca region have reached an "asymptotic stability" wherein most people there who want to leave have already done so, and those who remain behind are unlikely to migrate soon in large numbers.[10] At the same time, on the U.S. end, the number of settled Mexican migrants, both legal and undocumented, who plan to remain permanently in New York has increased. Hence, a first part of the story is that the internal process of migration from the Mixteca has reached a kind of consolidated stability, in which new migrants will continue to leave the Mixteca but the number will decrease from its former highs.

9 See Perdy Kraly, Eller and Miyares, Inés, "Immigration to New York: Policy, Population, and Patterns", 33-80, in Foner, Nancy (ed.), *New Immigrants in New York*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2001.

10 Massey *et al*., "Continuities in Transnational Migration: An Analysis of Nineteen Mexican Communities", *American Journal of Sociology*, 1994, 99, 1492-1533; Durand *et al*., *supra* note 4; Smith, *supra* note 5, 1995; Massey and Espinoza, "What's Driving Mexico-US Migration? A Theoretical, Empirical and Policy Analysis", *American Journal of Sociology*, 1997, 102 (4), 939-999.

A second part of the story is that the process of migrating to and settling in the U.S. has changed. Migrants crossing illegally are now less likely to engage in circular migration, in which the family stays at home and the migrant returns. An important factor in producing this change has been the tightened enforcement at the U.S.-Mexico border, which has had the ironic but predictable effect of causing increased settlement among migrants. The logic of family reunification fostered by IRCA has also reinforced this trend, even among the undocumented. In effect, the pattern now is what sociologist Leigh Binford calls "accelerated migration", in which new migrant towns pass through the stages of migration —from solo migrant to family reunification in the U.S.— much more quickly than before or even skip stages and just go straight to settlement.[11] Accelerated migration also includes a great increase in the medium-term to semi-permanent migration of adolescents without their parents, as a by-product of the acceleration and subsequent disorganization of the migration process. In another paper, I argue that this change in the processes of migration has produced an experience of adolescence —are-socialization— among teen migrants that has complicated their settlement experience and one that poses profound challenges to educators in New York.

A third part of the story is that migration has returned to an earlier, pre-*bracero* program pattern of wider dispersal in the U.S. The *bracero* program funneled nearly five million Mexicans to work mainly in southwestern agriculture between 1942 and 1964, and this geographical pattern still largely persists. But in the 1990s, migration to varied U.S. destinations —including the northeast and southeast— boomed. Corresponding with this increased number of U.S. destinations is the increase in the variety of Mexican sending origins. During the 1990s, New York became an important site for migration from a variety of nontraditional origins, including the states of Tlaxcala, Tabasco, Morelos, and perhaps most importantly, from Mexico City and its huge slum in the state of Mexico, Ciudad Nezahualcoyotl (or "Neza", as it is called). In 1992 about 15% of the *new* immi-

[11] Durand *et al*., *supra* note 4; Binford, Leigh, "Accelerated Migration from Puebla", Paper presented at the Conference "Mexicans in New York and Mexico: New Analytical Perspectives on Migration, Transnationalization, and Immigrant Incorporation", at Barnard College and the New School University, October 14-16, 1998; Cornelius, *supra* note 4.

grants in New York City were from Mexico City, and Mexico City continues today to be the second largest sender behind Puebla, according to data from the Mexican Consulate from the year 2000. Indeed, migration from Neza has become so common that migrants now say that they live in "Neza York". This change towards more urban origin and younger migrants is likely to have important implications for the future of Mexicans in New York.[12]

III. Social and Economic Futures of Mexicans in New York City

Mexican social and economic life in New York shows contradictory tendencies, which are likely to persist. On the one hand, the Mexican origin population showed alarming signs of social distress in the 1990 compared to the 1980 Census, and my current ethnographic and interview work confirms that these trends continue. For example, Mexicans in New York went from having one of the highest incomes among Latinos in New York in 1980, nearly equivalent to Cubans, to among the lowest in 1990. The decline is particularly pronounced for those without a high school education, from $17,495 in 1980 to $13,537 in 1990, a net drop in nominal dollars of 22.6%, constituting a more than 50% drop in per capita income for this group. The only other Latino group to have a nominal drop were Colombians, whose per capita incomes dropped 3.4%; Dominicans increased 11.7%; Puerto Ricans, 6.4%; and Ecuadorians, 14.5%.

It is not just a tale of decline, however. In large part, these distressing trends are artifacts of the high levels of Mexican immigration, especially teen immigration, during the 1980s, which continued in the 1990s and into the new millennium. The influx of young Mexican immigrants with low levels of education masks the progress that a significant minority of Mexicans and Mexican Americans has been making in New York. A cohort analysis[13] of Mexican Americans bet-

12 Vecino, 1999, on "Gangs and Crews"; Valdés de Montaño, Luz María and Smith, Robert, "Mexicans in New York: Final Report to the Tinker Foundation", 1994.

13 Cohort analysis considers the same category of people in two different Census data sets, here 1980 and 1990. As developed by Dowell Myers, it also offers useful ways to disaggregate between Mexican American and Mexican populations. While certain things (excessive mobility

ween 1980 and 1990 shows that their levels of education were improving steadily, though not dramatically (and more so for women), and that 19% of men and 30% of women were upwardly mobile in terms of occupational prestige and associated pay and conditions.[14] An important path for mobility in the 1990s, especially for women, has been through semiprofessional, skilled secretarial niches and in retail. These jobs —such as legal or medical secretary, travel agent, sales agent— require the completion of high school and either a short-term technical training program or an associate's degree. Our informants and their immigrant parents understand these jobs as a significant advance —they are "clean" jobs "in an office", with health insurance, paid vacations, and other benefits—. A fuller explication of these developments goes beyond the scope of this article.[15]

Still, I must emphasize that the upwardly mobile are a minority —fully 81% of men and 70% of Mexican American women were not upwardly mobile in the 1980s—. Moreover, the nature of Mexicans' insertion into the economy does not bode well. To simplify somewhat, a major thrust of research on immigrants and labor markets indicates that the more "niched"—concentrated in specific industries and jobs— an ethnic group is, the better that group's collective futures will be because being niched gives members access to resources such as opportunities for jobs and for training. Being in a growing niche enables the group to pull itself up; even being in a shrinking niche allows at least a part of the group to use ethnic ties to move up

or morbidity among the population) will affect the validity of the assumptions underlying cohort analysis, I agree with Myers, Dowerl, "Dimensions of Economic Adaptation by Mexican Origin Men", in Suárez Orozco, M. (ed.), *Crossings*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999, 157-200; and Myers, Dowell and Cranford, Cynthia, "Temporal Differences in the Occupational Mobility of Immigrant and Native Born Latina Workers", *American Sociological Review*, 1998, 63, 68-93, that it offers a superior alternative to the static analysis of comparing the gross data included among the entire population labeled as Mexican in each Census.

14 Social Mobility is measured in two ways here. First, it is measured through examination of the occupation prestige and income of the occupations in which men and women work, using PUMS (PUMS=Public Use Microdata Sample of the Census) data. Second, there is a more qualitative measure based on the perceptions of the informants in this project. For example, becoming a medical secretary or travel agent is considered significant upward mobility, more so than a job in a restaurant making a similar income, because the latter is still immigrant work in important ways, and the former is an "office job". The comparison is both to what their parents did and to what some of their peers are doing.

15 Smith, in progress, will discuss it more fully; Robert Smith, 1998a and b, Robert Smith 2001a and 2001b and 2002; Myers and Cranford, 1998 on cohort analysis.

or maintain its position.[16] Mexicans in New York —like those in California— are among the least niched of all immigrants.[17] Indeed, while they were more niched in 1990 than in 1980, the highest concentration in the job/industry category in 1990 was for 10% of Mexican men in restaurants. Most of the other niches each had only about 2% of the population. My current ethnographic research suggests that this has changed somewhat since 1990, especially for Mexican American women, who are more likely to finish school and get good service sector jobs.[18]

The fact is that such dispersion across industries and jobs has negative long-term consequences for the group's collective advancement and development of both human and social capital. Immigrant parents of Mexican Americans have few resources to help their children move up within their own industries and in many cases cannot get their children jobs in their own firms. In fact, many second-generation Mexican Americans whom we interviewed ended up getting their first work experience in the same industry or kind of industry as their parents, but often not in the same firm as their parents. When the parents can help their children get jobs, they are the kinds of entry-level jobs that undocumented immigrants typically occupy.

16 See especially Waldinger, Roger, *Still the Promised City? African Americans and New Immigrants in Post-Industrial New York*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1996, but also much of the ethnicity and work literature, including Portes, Alejandro and Bach, Robert, *Latin Journey*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985; Portes, Alejandro and Zhou, Min, "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and its Variants", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 1993, 530, 74-93; Nee, Victor *et al*., "Job Transitions in an Immigrant Metropolis: Ethnic Boundaries and the Mixed Economy", *American Sociological Review*, 1994, 59, 849-72.

17 Waldinger, Roger and Bezorgmehr, Medhi, *Ethnic Los Angeles*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1997.

18 See Smith, 1998a and b, 2001a and 2001b; Smith, Robert and Lara, Sandra, "Concrete Talk, Acquired Knowledge and Gendered Pathways: Why and How Second Generation Mexican Americans Girls are doing Better than their Male Counterparts", Paper presented at the American Sociological Association, Chicago, IL, August 6-10, 1999; Lara, Sandra and Smith, Robert, "Gendered Talk and Gender Mobility and School Outcomes", Notes for paper, 2000.

IV. Alternative Educational Futures of Mexicans in New York

The educational futures of Mexicans and Mexican Americans appear bright for some and grim for many. While increasing percentages of Mexicans Americans in New York finished high school and some college in the 1980s, most still had not done so by 1990. The statistics from the 1990 Census were startling. Mexicans had the highest percentage of 16-to-19-year-olds who were not in high school and had not graduated —47%— versus 22% for Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, who are the next highest, and about 18% and 7% for African Americans and white non-Hispanics, respectively. I predict that this number will be between 50-60% in the 2000 Census numbers. In discussing the alternate educational futures of Mexicans in New York, we must keep in mind that there are at least four different segments of this "Mexican" population that have had different experiences, and that the experiences within this group also differ by gender and other factors, such as family composition and income and parents' education: 1) U.S.-born, second-generation children of immigrants; 2) 1.5 generation children of immigrants who were born in Mexico but raised in the U.S. from before the age of about 10 or 12; and "teen migrants" who come to the U.S. from about age 12 or 13 and either 3) entered school, or 4) did not. Teen migrants in particular undergo very difficult adolescent re-socialization in New York.

The alarming percentage of 16-to-19-year-olds who are not in school and have not graduated is in large part a result of the huge increase in Mexican migration during the 1980s and 1990s. First, many of these youth never actually entered school in New York. They came here at school age but never entered school; calling them "dropouts" would not be accurate. Second, this immigration dramatically increased the size of the Mexican population at risk for leaving school before graduation. The early to mid-1990s saw a significant increase in the number of pre-adolescent and teen immigrants being reunited with their families and entering school in New York. Before 1990, young people generally stayed in Mexico until they were 17 or 18 and then came to New York, where they entered the labor force

directly and did not go to school. Under the old scenario, most entered low-wage labor markets and essentially thought of themselves as having entered the next, adult stage of their lives. Under the new scenario, Mexican young people enter the schools, the *sonidos* (dance parties), and other arenas as adolescents and undergo a secondary socialization that subjects them to varied pressures from inside and outside the Mexican community. Third, Mexicans' dramatic influx into New York City's schools in the last decade has suddenly made this group a population with a public presence, which in many cases, has led to abuse from other groups. This abuse is especially experienced by young men, who report that they increasingly join gangs or less formally organized "crews" —or negotiate a looser association known as "hangin" with gangs— for their own protection. Rising dropout rates for Mexicans and the Mexican Americans who hang with them are at least partly attributable to these dynamics.

The presence of a growing percentage of urban migrants, especially from Mexico City, could have contradictory effects. One the one hand, young migrants from Mexico City tend to be more educated (with eight or nine years of education instead of five or six for rural immigrants) and more accustomed to an urban environment, which should make it easier for them to adapt and do well in school. But larger numbers of the urban teen migrants move to New York without their parents. They are also immigrating from Mexico City and Neza, where immigration is much newer, and hence are coming into less tightly organized networks and communities in New York, with fewer resources and less adult supervision and social control. On top of this, some of the teen immigrants have prior experience in Mexico with drugs or gangs. The increase in gang activity among many Mexican youth in New York also raises the possibility that the public perception of Mexicans in New York as diligent workers and conscientious students could change, thereby affecting the opportunities they are afforded in schools and labor markets in that state.

There are a variety of other issues that will affect the educational futures of Mexicans in New York. One is gender and its relationship to larger institutional contexts. A trend is emerging in which Mexican girls do better in school and are more likely than Mexican boys

to graduate from high school. This is partly because of gender roles in the home, which have a variety of effects; partly because of the ways boys and girls feel they must project their image and defend their pride in the schools and the kinds of challenges boys often face that girls do not; and because of the way gender interacts with the labor market. On gender roles, girls often do better in school and do more of their homework, precisely because and not in spite of the fact that their after-school lives are more regulated, and they must stay at home more than boys. On the school dynamics, girls often feel as if their ethnicity, their Mexican-ness, does not play as a big a role (as it does for boys) in their relations with other students or with teachers. Finally, with respect to the labor market, girls are more likely to move into the "pink collar" sector of the growing service economy (*e. g.*, taking jobs as secretaries, administrative assistants, and beauticians), while boys, especially teen migrant boys, tend to go into the "immigrant economy" (*e. g.*, factories and restaurants), which both offers less opportunity for well-paid jobs and does not require a high school diploma. For the girls going into the pink collar economy, a high school diploma and a few months or a year of training after high school will get them a good job, while for the boys, the jobs that they want either require a college degree, which they feel is beyond their reach, or do not require high school (*e. g.*, factory work). These different labor market contexts give the girls and boys different incentives to finish high school.

There is another dimension to the experience of immigration and settlement that leads to pressures on the youth. Teen migrants and 1.5 and second-generation youth all face the pressure of carrying their own and their parents' dreams. They feel that they must redeem the sacrifices their parents made in coming to the U.S. by doing well in school and getting a real "career", but at the same time they feel that they must also help their families realize their immigrant dreams by making money. This is especially so for the boys, who see making money now as a key dimension in their emerging concept of adult masculinity. Hence, many of the boys who have dropped out of high school, especially teen migrants, have done so in order to get full-time jobs. Some do this even though their parents tell them to stay in school. But their families' economic conditions are hard, and they

want to help their parents and feel their role as young men demands that they do this. For young women, such conflicts between second-generation dreams of college and career and first generation dreams of helping with the family sometimes cause girls to drop out to help care for younger siblings or to get pregnant.[19] These conflicting demands of the immigrant dreams and second-generation dreams of themselves and their parents will be discussed more later.

The prevalent belief that "college is not for people like me" is another profound problem. In the many years of research I have done in the Mexican community, especially with youth, I have heard countless times from students that college is a great thing, it helps people get ahead in life, but "I don't know any Mexicans who go to college", and "I don't think it is for people like me". I have even known students who seemed destined for college in their first year of high school —entering as honors students, doing well— who ended up leaving high school without graduating, feeling pushed and pulled out by other pressures in their lives and in the schools. The problem is especially acute among teen migrants and the first generation, and especially those who are undocumented. Often, the undocumented students mistakenly believe that they are not legally entitled to go to college in the U.S., in fact, that they are prohibited from attending. This is not the case, as I shall subsequently discuss. More broadly, we must change the perception and belief that "college is not for people like me", which exists among many Mexican Americans by providing mechanisms that not only change their academic aspirations, but also provide support for realizing these goals.

V. What Can Be Done? Policy Reflections and an Invitation to Action

Where does this analysis, and the other analyses in this book, leave us? What should we do about the educational successes and challenges facing Mexican and Mexican American students? Here I ma-

[19] On the dynamics of gender for women, see the fascinating analysis in Sara Guerrero-Rippberger's senior thesis at Barnard College, Sociology Department, 1999, "'But for the Day of Tomorrow': Negotiating Femininity in New York-Mex Identity".

ke some concrete recommendations, and also speculate on issues for which a deeper understanding is needed.

My first recommendation is that the school system acknowledges its growing Mexican and Mexican American population and seeks to gain more understanding of its situation. This might involve a gathering of administrators, teachers, and researchers to plan out what kind of information and knowledge would be useful, and how it could be obtained; the NYU conference out of which this book comes is a useful first step. A related step would be to open the schools to researchers in a systematic way. I have been welcomed warmly in some schools, and been able to do work that I hope has helped them, but I have also been refused entry to others, despite the promise of confidentiality for all students, teachers, and the schools themselves. One of these was a school in which my researchers and I had interviewed and done ethnographic research outside the school with a large number of the Mexican students who attended this school. The students had described to us many of the dynamics I previously analyzed in this paper. Had we been allowed access to the school, we would probably have had suggestions for how the principal could further help the Mexican students who were dropping out.

A second recommendation is to focus on developing the community-school nexus. Such work could take a variety of forms. One would be to create in the schools stronger links with parents and Mexican community organizations in New York. The Mexican community in New York is very organized in dense webs of networks, including sports leagues, religious organizations, and civic or educational organizations. But, with certain exceptions, almost none of these organizations are linked up with larger American institutions in New York, least of all the schools. Developing these links and getting the parents into the schools would do a lot to help these students succeed in school.

This second recommendation draws on the larger analysis of changes in migration and settlement outlined above. The position of teen migrants is especially difficult. Imagine this: You grow up to early adolescence knowing that you will migrate to New York; you look forward to being reunited with your parents and think that all

you need to do in New York is to "sweep the gold up with a broom in the streets", as the popular saying goes in Mexico (the equivalent in English of "the streets are paved with gold"). Yet when you are finally reunited with your parents, they are both working very long hours and have limited time to spend with you, and you feel overwhelmed or even sometimes unsafe in school and do not know the language. Moreover, you see your family's great economic need and know that your parents by their midteens had started working full time. The pressure you feel to leave school and work will be quite strong, even if it also may bring on a feeling that you have betrayed your parents' dreams of educational success for their children. Were there stronger links between the schools and community, it would be possible to help the parents and their student children negotiate many of these issues. After-school programs in the schools and in the community would be one way to build such links and address such needs. These programs could also help those youths who are coming into the country (via a less organized migration than did their predecessors) to negotiate better in their new world. Such programs would also help to channel the energies of young men and women who in many cases do not have community-based institutions to help guide them.

Another imperative is that we move against the notion that college is "not for people like me". We need to promote the belief that college *is* for Mexican and Mexican American students. There are a variety of organizations that are working on this project, including a non-profit organization, the Mexican Educational Foundation of New York, Inc., that was co-founded a couple of years ago by Sandra Lara and me. MexEd attempts to first disseminate information about how to apply for college, and then to raise funds for scholarships. It has plans to use the arts, professional and business internships, and other kinds of programming to involve both parents and students in changing their life chances. MexEd is also beginning a program that offers scholarships to attend Mexican universities. Additional efforts like these will be needed to irradicate the notion among Mexican American youth that "college is not for people like me".

Creating outreach and after-school programs for the Mexican community is not a "pie in the sky" idea. Such an effort is feasible if

we targeted the ten or so high schools that comprise the most Mexican students in New York City. The Mexican Consulate of New York and the President's Advisor on Mexicans Abroad, Juan Hernandez, and the Governor of the state of Puebla, Melquiades Morales Flores, have all expressed interest in sending Mexican teachers and other support staff to help in such efforts. What would be needed would be coordination between the New York City and other local school systems and these Mexican programs. The City University of New York (CUNY) has a potentially influential role to play in this effort, despite what I hope will end up becoming nothing more than a temporary setback by its change in policy on undocumented students, as I will discuss later. CUNY's previous policy was to offer in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants who could document a year of working and living in New York State, thus giving them New York State residence. This policy, in effect since an executive order signed by Mayor Koch in 1989, made CUNY a vital institution in helping undocumented immigrants to realize their dreams, despite the obstacles that their status places on them. CUNY changed this policy because the Chancellors' office believes that the policy runs afoul of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). I will discuss this topic further in the final section, but turn now to three different kinds of outreach that CUNY and other institutions might provide, on the assumption that some way will be found to again make the in-state tuition rate available to undocumented workers.

VI. Outreach for Immigrants who have Never Been in School. "Outreach for Immigrants who have Never Been in School"

Many immigrants in their teens or early twenties entered the labor market in the U.S. after having left school in Mexico at a young age, perhaps after sixth grade, which is the dominant pattern in the Mixteca region of Puebla, especially if they are from a more recent migrant family. For CUNY, outreach to this group would require helping these youth to obtain GEDs (Graduate Equivalency Diploma) or further remedial training. This is a worthwhile goal, given that this

group constitutes such a large percentage of the population, but I do not know CUNY's system well enough to say how feasible the task is.

A second group of Mexicans who have never been in school in the U.S. are those who have finished all or most of high school in Mexico, and perhaps have even started college in Mexico, but who have had to come to the U.S. for economic reasons. They have never sought to enter CUNY or other colleges because they did not know either that it was so affordable or that they could enter despite having no papers. This group seems to be "easy pickin's" for CUNY —highly motivated students who are, on the whole, fairly well prepared academically, but need to get their English language skills up to speed and complete other requirements—. For this group, intensive outreach through community organizations such as sports leagues; religious societies and the Catholic Church; and mass media, especially radio and TV stations seems most appropriate. It also seems as if CUNY has most of the programs for this group in place already and the work at hand is to link these programs up with the community.

VII. Outreach for Those who have Been in School in New York, but have Dropped Out

Dropouts include both first generation immigrants and teen migrants and Mexican Americans born in New York. Of these, I believe that those presenting the hardest challenges are the teen migrants, whose English language skills need the greatest amount of improvement when they get here, and who, as I discussed earlier, face the double burden of having to fulfill the immigrant dream of making money right now and the second-generation dream of educational success. Members of this group often go into bilingual education and many do well, but they often drop out because they do not see role models, because they feel that they must make money to help their families or for themselves, or because (if they are male) really "being a man" requires making money now, not later. The pressures on young men in this group seem especially high. Second and first generation young men also experience these pressures, though to a lesser extent. The belief that an undocumented person cannot attend college in the U.S. is another very important problem here. Why

expend all that effort to finish high school if you are prohibited from going to college? This perception needs to change, so that the incentive to finish high school will be greater.

The question here is how to reach the dropouts? My suggestion would be through the mass media and through community organizations, though with a message tailored to this group's particular needs: a message that says that even if you have dropped out of school, we can help you go to a two —or four— year college. Very often these kids believe that they dropped out because that is what society expected and really wanted from them. If we challenge that, and say that we want them to go to school, we may increase their chances of success.

VIII. Outreach for Immigrants currently in School

Mexicans and Mexican Americans currently in school experience many of the same problems as do natives who have never been in school or have dropped out. In particular, both immigrants and natives suffer from a belief that while college helps people, it is not for people like them. They do not know anyone who has gone to college, and most of their friends have not attended such institutions. What is different about those still in school is that it should be easier to do outreach with them in some ways, and to do strategic interventions that will help them stay in and finish high school and go to college. Those in school include teen migrants and first and second-generation-students.

When students are still in school, it is easier to implement a number of strategies that should both increase the numbers going to college and to enhance their chances of success. One of the things that could be done is to form MexEd chapters in the ten high schools with the most Mexicans in New York City and to have these chapters work closely with various CUNY programs such as College Now. Several advantages could come out of this work. Because the students are still in school, it is easier to get their parents involved. By getting information about college and financial aid applications to the parents —as well as explaining to parents that their children can

in fact apply and attend even though they may have no documents and limited economic resources— can help stop these students from dropping out. Armed with this information, parents will in fact have a greater ability to guide their children and direct them to concrete ways of getting help. When students are still in school they can also form student groups that will have an esprit de corps within Mex-Ed, which will exert positive social pressure to attend college. Once teachers and community leaders know what the idea is here, there are concrete ways that they can help, thus channeling unfocused goodwill in the community into concrete activities. For example, one of the things that Mex-Ed has become good at doing is planning internships and mentoring networks for our students so that they will have people —both current but more advanced students, and professionals or entrepreneurs— who can advise them of the next step to take.

IX. CUNY'S RECENT POLICY CHANGE ON UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

A recent policy change by CUNY changes the landscape significantly, and not for the better. Shortly after the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center, CUNY changed its twelve-year-old policy of allowing undocumented students to pay in-state tuition once they had established New York state residency by documenting that they have lived and worked here for a year. This policy was a great boon to undocumented students in the city and has enabled many thousands of them to pursue careers and make contributions to the city and state of New York, instead of being stuck in low wage jobs.

CUNY changed its policy in response to the 1996 IIRA which came into effect in 1998, which says, among other things, that states may not give benefits to undocumented aliens that any U.S. citizen would not also enjoy. Hence, the problem here is that a U.S. citizen living in New Jersey could not get in-state tuition at CUNY, while an undocumented immigrant living in New York who had established residency could. According to Chancellor Goldstein's testimony before the City Council on the February 18, 2002, CUNY's change was not a response to September 11th, but a response to the discovery by CUNY's new General Counsel that the old General Counsel had ne-

ver responded to CUNY's seeming failure to comply with the 1996 law. Most people interpreted CUNY's past policy to have been that since there were no federal regulations in place, CUNY could not technically be out of compliance with the law. Once regulations would be issued, CUNY would study them and come into compliance. The Chancellor's office has adopted a new stance, which is that as the "CEO of CUNY", the Chancellor has a duty to make sure it is in compliance with all federal laws.

This sudden change has caught students and professors by surprise, and it has come into effect for the spring 2002 semester. Students and professors staged a three-day hunger strike and larger rallies during winter 2002, and Councilman Charles Barron held hearings on the issue, criticizing the suddenness of the decision.

CUNY's policy change raises several problems for the education of Mexican and other immigrant students in New York. First, increasing the tuition from $1800 per semester to the out-of-state rate of $3400 puts a college education beyond the effective reach of most immigrants. Consider the following: Under the previous policy, a student netted $5 from working, he or she would have to work the equivalent of 8 full-time, 40-hour weeks in the semester to pay for tuition, leaving him or her 6 full-time weeks of work to pay for food, rent, books, etc. Under the new policy, the same worker has to work 17 full-time workweeks just to pay for tuition, without paying for living expenses. The semester has 14 weeks in it. The change makes it extremely difficult for most undocumented students to continue their college education.

A second problem is that this higher economic bar makes the message that "college is not for people like me" one that is closer to the reality than it had been before. CUNY's previous policy meant that CUNY had made an institutional commitment to make people believe that CUNY is for people like me. The new change —which the Chancellor has stated, earnestly I think, is contrary to what he would like to do— in fact means that people who make very little money and get no other economic support (*e. g*. undocumented students) are much less likely to be able to attend and finish school. It also por-

tends compromised futures for the U.S.-born children of these immigrants.[20]

The changed economic reality that CUNY's policy creates will have negative effects on the academic aspirations of undocumented immigrants and their U.S.-born second-generation friends. Mixed immigrant-U.S.-citizen friendship groups constitute much of the youth population in New York. As the obstacles to attending school increase for many in this group, there will be pressure for none of them to attend school. In one case I know well, an U.S.-born youth told me that he had started cutting school and had decided college was not for him because none of his friends (which included many teen migrants) were going. When he said that his teachers had told him he could go, his friends challenged him by saying that no one wanted Mexicans to go to college. Such dynamics are nothing short of tragic and cruelly ironic, given CUNY's understanding of its mission as an institution that has provided the opportunity for upward mobility to immigrants. This new policy will also have long-term negative economic consequences for New York City, New York State, and the U.S. because of lost tax revenue of up to a billion dollars over the working lives of these roughly 3000 undocumented CUNY students.[21]

[20] Sociological studies for the last several decades have shown that children who grow up in households with higher income and education levels usually end up with higher incomes, educational levels, and better health and life chances than do those from poorer families. It seems to me incredible that the U.S. would want to hobble such energetic bearers of the American Dream as are these undocumented students. Moreover, these students embody the principles of "immigrant responsibility", which the 1996 law demands (though with a different conception of it) and American individualism. For many, they have graduated from New York City high schools where only a third of the entering class is able to do so, and are then part of the roughly 15% who go on to college. After making it through this, they then work long hours at low wages to be able to study. They get no federal or state aid, and often have little in the way of family aid, and often in fact help support their parents' families while going to school. I ask the federal lawmakers who passed this law-*How many of you would have been so responsible at this age?*

[21] Because people with a college degree make more money than those with only a high school diploma, they also pay more in taxes. If CUNY keeps these undocumented students out of school, they will pay an estimated $230,000 less in taxes over their 40-year long working lifetimes (using 1992 dollars, and data the 1992 Current Population Survey, done by the U.S. Census). Multiply this $230,000 by 3,000 students (CUNY announced a number of about 2,600 last summer, which I think is a little low, so I have rounded up to 3,000), and the U.S. loses $690 million in tax revenue from these 3,000 students. Using the year 2000 dollars, the loss is more like a billion dollars over the course of the working lives of these 3,000 students! And these lost economic revenues must be added to the increased outlays that will come in addition

There are alternative possibilities, one requiring federal action, and the other action by New York State. The federal change would be to implement a policy of "academic adjustment" by which undocumented immigrant children would automatically earn a green card when they graduated from high school. Such a bill would offer a very powerful incentive for academic success and would be infinitely better than the present policy. It would ride on the back of the 1982 ruling in *Plyler v. Doe*, in which the U.S. Supreme ruled that undocumented children have the right to go to U.S. public schools. This would extend this right in a reasonable way, by enabling students who have exercised their constitutional right to attend school through high school to have the chance to pursue a college education. The current policy has awful contradictions: it tells these students to work hard to graduate from high school, but then says that college is not for them.

The state-level measures have similar orientations. The first would change the New York State law on CUNY admissions to be similar to the changes in Texas and California State laws. A bill proposed by Assemblyman Peter Rivera seems to be the best bet. It provides for in-state tuition for anyone who has either graduated from a New York City or New York State high school or attended such a school for a year and been issued a GED by an institution in New York State.[22] I strongly endorse this law, because, by most readings, it safely brings CUNY into compliance with the federal law. Students living in New Jersey could get the same benefit as undocumented immigrants, for example, if they take a GED course in New York State. The benefit is not based on residency. This law could go a long way towards restoring CUNY's relationship with its own image of its past, as an institution promoting immigrant educational success. New York City, New York State and the entire country will benefit by

to those that will need to be spent on the children of these young students, whose children will no longer grow up in households with college educated parents, but rather with low-wage parents employed in the secondary labor market, where they are often laid off and where educational aspirations of children are normally lower. The cheaper, smarter policy would seem to be to enable the students to study now, and pay for their children's education and pay more taxes on their higher incomes, later.

22 A similar bill by Adriano Espaillat has similar provisions, but it imposes a three-year residency requirement, which seems unnecessary and conflicts with the federal law regarding the prohibition on state-residency-based benefits for undocumented immigrants.

allowing opportunity to be given to these hard-working, driven, and courageous undocumented students.[23]

X. Epilogue, July 2002

The New York State Assembly and Senate both passed this bill in the legislative session ending in June. It was sponsored by Assemblyman Peter Rivera and State Senator Pedro Espada. As of this writing in July 2002, the bill sits on Governor Pataki's desk, awaiting his signature, which he had promised is forthcoming.

XI. Coda, June 2003

My chapter, written during February 2002, ends with a call for CUNY's policy to be changed back to allow undocumented students living in New York to attend at in-state tuition rates. I am happy to report this call has been largely overtaken by events. At a ceremony at City College during summer 2002, Governor Pataki signed into law, as part of the Governor's Program bill, identical bills in the New York State Assembly (# 9612, first proposed by Peter Rivera and then by Adriano Espaillat) and Senate (#7784, then proposed by Pedro Espada), a law addressing this problem. The new law is among the best of these laws in the country —Texas and California have similar laws— and offers in-state tuition eligibility at CUNY and SUNY to any undocumented student who has attended a New York state high school for two years and graduated or gotten a GED. While the law is less inclusive than the old CUNY policy of giving in-state tuition eligibility to all undocumented students who could establish New York state residency, it offers firmer protection because it is less likely to be challenged under IIRAIRA, and does help a lar-

[23] A potentially interesting wrinkle to the case could result if the City Council —which controls the funding for the community colleges but not the senior colleges, which are funded by the state— were to pass a resolution providing, for example, in-state tuition to everyone. This would do several things, but in particular it would open up legal arguments invoking the equal protection clause and other state and U.S. constitutional issues because some U.S. citizen CUNY students would get benefits that others did not get. It will be interesting to see how these issues develop.

ge percentage of affected undocumented immigrants. I see Pataki's support of this bill —which goes against his party's dominant line nationally— as part of his longer term strategy of gaining Latino support by paying attention to Latino, including immigrant issues. The other most important manifestation of this strategy is the Child Health Plus program, which offers health insurance to all uninsured New York children under age twenty one, and has dramatically increased access to medical care for undocumented children. There still exists the need to help those who have not attended high school here, but who are making their lives here and want to go to college.

There is another measure on the national horizon that could help even more than this law. The bill, known as the "Dream Act" (as in the American Dream, not, I hope, the impossible dream), would offer the chance to gain legal residency and ultimately US citizenship to undocumented students who graduate from American high schools. The rationale is similar to that advanced for the New York state law: that there are large numbers of undocumented students who graduate from US high schools each year —Michael Fix of the Urban Institute estimates that some 55,000-65,000 per year do so, about 10% of these in New York— and then cannot go onto college. Such an opportunity will also spur aspirations and motivation among undocumented students, with the large reward of legalization awaiting them after graduation. I estimate the costs in lost tax revenue to the US of *not* doing this (using the same method as above for New York), assuming 60,000 students annually, to be nearly $15 billion per class, and nearly $60 billion dollars for each four year grouping of high school students over their forty year working lives. This measure is not only morally right and in line with America's tradition as a country built by immigrants, it makes fiscal sense too.

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