



BECOMING NEW YORKERS

ETHNOGRAPHIES OF THE NEW
SECOND GENERATION

PHILIP KASINITZ,
JOHN H. MOLLENKOPF,
AND
MARY C. WATERS,
EDITORS

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CHAPTER 1

WORLDS OF THE SECOND GENERATION

PHILIP KASINITZ, JOHN H. MOLLENKOPF, AND MARY C. WATERS

IMMIGRATION has reshaped America since the mid-1960s. Today immigrants make up one-tenth of the U.S. population. Their U.S.-born children constitute nearly another tenth. In the nation's two largest cities, New York and Los Angeles, more than half of the population is now of immigrant stock. The number of immigrants in the country now rivals the number at any point in American history, and the diversity of contemporary immigration is unprecedented.

This dramatic demographic change has produced intense debate. Analysts, journalists, and politicians argue over whether immigration is having a positive or negative impact on the U.S. economy, the quality of neighborhood life, the labor market prospects of the native poor, intergroup relations, the cost of government services, the integrity of our civic culture, and even our national security. Yet ultimately these questions will be answered not by the immigrants themselves but by their ambivalently American children. This “second generation,” now coming of age, is negotiating new and different ways of “being American.” In so doing, they are reshaping American culture, economics, politics, and racial and ethnic relations—indeed, the character of American society.

This book is a collection of qualitative case studies about second- and “1.5”-generation immigrants in New York City—that is, people whose parents were immigrants but who themselves were born or substantially raised in the United States. The people in these studies come from a wide variety of backgrounds and now find themselves in a variety of circumstances. Yet they are all now young adults making their way in a complex and often very tough city. Most see themselves as very different from their immigrant parents. By and large they work in different types of jobs and have had different educa-

tional opportunities. They tend to think about race and ethnicity differently from their parents, and they often have very different ideas about love and marriage, relations with kin, and how to raise children. At the same time few of these young people truly see themselves as “mainstream” Americans. In their daily lives they balance notions of foreign-ness and native-born entitlement, of “insider” and “outsider” status—a tension that, as they often point out, makes them very much “New Yorkers.”

And indeed, within their age group, their experience is, to a considerable degree, the quintessential New York experience. Together, the second and 1.5 generations make up over 29 percent of eighteen- to thirty-two-year-old New Yorkers—in contrast to only 14 percent of New Yorkers over thirty-two (many of whom are the now elderly children of pre-1924 immigrants). Another almost 29 percent of New Yorkers age eighteen to thirty-two are immigrants who arrived after age twelve. Of the city’s native-stock population in this age group, 13.1 percent are African American and 6.6 percent Puerto Rican. So in the age group with which today’s second generation generally goes to school, competes for jobs, recreates, and looks for love, only one New Yorker in five is a native white of native parentage. This is, however, only a preview of things to come: among New Yorkers under age eighteen, 62.4 percent are second- or 1.5-generation immigrants!

Of course, it would be wrong to glibly suggest that New York’s future is America’s future. In some ways the studies presented here are very much New York stories, reflecting the unique role that immigration and second-generation incorporation have historically played in the shaping of the city’s institutions and political culture. In other respects the situations here may closely echo those of other “gateway cities” with similar numbers of immigrants. Although the ethnic particularities may be different, there is much here that is clearly comparable to Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, and other major American cities. Twenty years ago these immigrant-receiving gateway cities seemed quite distinct from the rest of the country, but the out-migration of immigrants—and perhaps of natives fleeing immigrants—has now left few places in the country unaffected. If the incorporation of the second generation looks increasingly like the story of the coming decades in New York, it is also one of the most important stories to be told about early-twenty-first-century America.

This book is part of the Immigrant Second Generation in Metropolitan New York Study, a larger study of second- and 1.5-generation New Yorkers that we have been directing since 1998.¹ The project has had three stages. The first was a telephone survey of approximately four hundred eighteen- to thirty-two-year-olds from each of five of the largest second-generation groups: Chinese, Dominicans, Russian Jews, West Indians, and a synthetic

South American category of Colombians, Ecuadoreans, and Peruvians. All had at least one immigrant parent, and all were born in the United States or had arrived before age twelve. In addition, we surveyed equal numbers of native whites of native parentage, African Americans of native parentage, and mainland-born Puerto Ricans. These comparison groups proved vital in sorting out the second-generation experience from the experience of simply being a young New Yorker at this historical moment. In the second phase of the study we conducted loosely structured in-depth interviews with a 10 percent subsample of the original survey group. These interviews, which served as a basis for several of the chapters in this book, were wide-ranging and lasted two to four hours.²

The third phase was a series of ethnographic field projects that make up the bulk of the contributions to the present volume.³ Although the case studies were all shaped and informed by the interests and questions posed by the project directors, each study was created by the individual researcher. The choice of field sites was the result of extensive discussions between the ethnographers—Alex Trillo, Victoria Malkin, Amy Foerster, Nicole Marwell, and Karen Chai Kim—and the project directors. In choosing the research sites, we deliberately avoided case studies of specific ethnic groups.⁴ Although certain groups were likely to be more present in certain sites, our goal was to get a fuller picture of how second-generation young adults function in the contexts in which they live their lives. Sometimes these settings are mono-ethnic, and often, as the chapters make clear, they are not. Although the ethnographers faced different questions in their different research sites, they were also guided (or so the project directors flatter themselves in thinking) by the general questions underlying the project and by the discussions that took place at biweekly meetings.

We supplemented these case studies with related projects. Dae Young Kim, who had been an interviewer and project manager in an early phase of the project, undertook a parallel study of second-generation Koreans using instruments based in part on ours but using a different sampling method (see chapter 6). Since we had originally wanted to include Koreans for a variety of theoretical reasons, we supported this effort, and he worked closely with the group. We thus have comparable data for Koreans on many, but not all, survey items and in-depth interview topics, although the differences in sampling method require that we use caution when making direct comparisons. Nancy López and Aviva Zeltzer-Zubida, both of whom had worked as interviewers, wrote chapters for this volume based on the interviews they had done for the project, supplemented with their own ethnographic work.⁵ Sherri-Ann Butterfield, Vivian Louie, Sara Lee, and Natasha Warwick, all of whom had also worked as interviewers on the project, each contributed a chapter based on

her own related work. Through extensive discussions, the insights gleaned from all of these projects has proved to be of invaluable help to the project directors in making sense of the survey and the in-depth interview data. However, we also feel that these chapters stand on their own as fascinating accounts of what it means to be a second-generation young adult in New York today.

What sort of Americans will these children of immigrants become? This question lurks just beneath the surface of the contemporary debate over immigration. There is a widely felt anxiety in many quarters, even among many of those who take a positive view of the economic effects of immigration, that this latest generation of huddled masses will not "assimilate" as the pre-1924 European immigrants are supposed to have done (and for the most part did). The question of what constitutes "American culture" and the role of immigrants in that culture are issues now being debated publicly in a way that has not happened since the Progressive Era.

These debates, whether it is explicitly stated or not, are always comparative. This is unfair, of course, but also probably inevitable. For Americans, and particularly for New Yorkers, the incorporation of immigrants from around the world has been one of our most celebrated achievements, and justifiably so. The Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island have become shrines to what makes America unique. More and more in the decades since World War II they have come to eclipse images of the Revolutionary War in American patriotic iconography. At the same time America's (and especially New York's) proud history of incorporating immigrants stands in sharp contrast to the more troubled history of America's native, racial minorities. This paradox is particularly stark for today's newcomers, most of whom are both immigrants and nonwhite.

Social scientific observers of the last great wave of immigrants to the United States, the largely European migration between the mid-nineteenth century and 1924, tended to assume that assimilation was both desirable and inevitable. Indeed, social scientists of the mid-twentieth century, writing at the height of American self-confidence, saw assimilation as closely tied to upward mobility, and they often wrote as if assimilation, acculturation, and upward mobility were virtually the same thing. In the late 1960s, not surprisingly, these notions came under attack. This challenge was closely associated with a loss of confidence in America's ability to overcome its racial and ethnic problems with the waning of the civil rights movement. "Assimilation," we were reminded, had historically been for "whites only."¹

A key issue on which these debates turns is the extent to which "becoming American" means giving up ties to one's country of origin. During the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, nativist opponents of im-

migration frequently invoked the specter of "dual loyalties": Catholic schools, German American bilingualism, and Jewish distinctive dress, for instance, were all seen by some as threats to the unity of American society. On the other hand, those who welcomed immigration, as well as most social scientists, assumed that with time home-country ties would fade or at least mutate into an "ethnic" culture—one different from the mainstream perhaps, but nonetheless a distinctly American creation with less and less relationship to the cultural and political life of the home country. By and large, these predictions were borne out. By the mid-twentieth century fears that the children of European immigrants would be anything less than 100 percent American seemed overblown, if not silly. To be sure, Irish immigrants and their American-born children remained concerned about Irish independence, and Jews remained active in efforts to create a Zionist homeland in Palestine. Yet efforts such as these were rarely seen as being at odds with loyalty to the United States.

When immigrant and American identities *did* come into sharp conflict—as happened with German Americans when the United States entered World War I—it was almost always the ethnic identity that disappeared. Thus, German American bilingualism, which had flourished for three generations, was dropped almost overnight as German newspapers shut their doors and thriving German American organizations were suddenly disbanded. By the Second World War few questioned the fact—or even noticed its irony—that the war against Germany was led by a general named Eisenhower. Of course, things were, to say the least, very different for the children of Japanese immigrants, who were suspected of congenial loyalty to Japan even after three generations. Assimilation meant becoming a *white* American, and those who could not do so remained in some ways "forever foreign" (Tuan 1999). Yet for the Europeans, who constituted the overwhelming majority of immigrants before the 1960s, ties to ancestral lands, while not forgotten, rarely played a central role in their daily lives after a generation or two.

Many argue that today's second generation will not follow this path. And they may have a point: low-cost travel and communication certainly make it possible for today's "transnational" immigrants and their children to remain active in more than one society, perhaps never fully committing to one or the other (Levitt and Waters 2002). Countless immigrants maintain social and political ties in anticipation of eventual return. New York's immigrant neighborhoods are jammed with businesses selling low-cost phone calls and instant money transfers to some of the most remote parts of the globe. Video- and audiotapes allow people in Brooklyn or Queens to "participate" vicariously in weddings and village festivals in the Andes, Iran, or West Africa only a few days after they take place. The Internet increasingly makes it possible to do so in "real time!"¹

In every group we talked to, there are at least some second-generation people who are strongly tied to their parents' homelands. They visit annually, send money, and even contemplate settling there. A surprising number of West Indians and Latinos are sent "back home" to live with relatives at some point during their teen years by parents who are terrified by the dangers of the New York streets or who suddenly experience a disruption of their child care arrangements. The governments of the sending societies have begun to recognize these realities. Until a few years ago most tended to ignore their communities abroad. Now they encourage them to participate socially and sometimes politically. Many grant dual citizenship rights to people living in the United States, and in a few cases to people *born* in the United States! Candidates for office in the Dominican Republic campaign on upper Broadway, and no Colombian presidential aspirant would neglect to put in an appearance on Roosevelt Avenue in Queens. South Korea and the People's Republic of China target cultural awareness tourism programs at second-generation youth, and Taiwan subsidizes tours for single young adults to visit Taiwan and get in touch with Taiwan's version of their Chinese heritage.

Yet the nickname this tour has acquired—"the love boat"—should caution against making too much of this new globalism. Most parents who send their children on the tour are probably less concerned about fostering ties to Taiwan than they are about making sure their single sons and daughters have the opportunity to meet eligible, middle-class Chinese Americans. While it no doubt helps foster ethnic ties, the "love boat" is likely to prove no greater a threat to assimilation than singles weekends at Grossingers'. In fact, the out-marriage rate for second-generation Chinese Americans is already higher than it was for Jews a generation ago.

It is by no means obvious, then, that transnational parents will produce transnational children. In their groundbreaking study of second-generation immigrants in San Diego and Miami, Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut (2001a) found that most young people prefer English to their parents' native languages, although they voice strong ethnic identities, which often intensify as they get older. Many are losing their parents' language altogether, particularly Asians, for whom fluent bilingualism appears extremely hard to sustain. Although most of the adult New Yorkers we surveyed report being able to *speak* their parents' language, far fewer report that they can read or write that language fluently. The drop-off, while particularly dramatic for the Asian groups, is seen across the board. The distinctions that members of the second generation make when describing themselves also tacitly concede the power of the American environment. Chinese young people are quick to differentiate between the "ABCs" (American-Born Chinese), the "ARCs" (American-Raised Chinese), and the much-maligned "FOBs" (Fresh Off the Boat). Ko-

reans speak of the first, second, and "one-and-a-half" generations, which attests to the profound sense of "in-between-ness" of those "born there and raised here." Dominicans distinguish between young people raised on the island and the "Dominicanyorks" (New York-raised Dominicans), and Puerto Ricans between islanders and "Nuyoricans" (New York-raised Puerto Ricans).

Yet even if second-generation immigrants are, by and large, becoming ethnic Americans, many have asked whether this will be a good thing for them, and for the United States. In 1992 sociologist Herbert Gans (1992) turned traditional assimilation theory on its head by proposing what he termed the "second-generation decline" scenario. Gans speculates that those second-generation immigrants who are restricted by a lack of economic opportunities and by racial discrimination to poor inner-city schools, bad jobs, and shrinking economic niches will experience *downward* mobility relative to their immigrant parents. Like traditional observers of assimilation, Gans argues that substantial acculturation is taking place—the children of immigrants are indeed coming to share many of the values and outlooks of their American peers. Yet, lacking the economic opportunities of earlier immigrants, this outcome is often less than desirable. Further, if assimilation means joining the street culture of the urban ghetto, "becoming American" can be every immigrant parent's worst nightmare. Gans suggests that those children of immigrants who refuse to accept the low-level, poorly paid jobs that their parents hold will thus experience downward mobility. The other possibility is that the children of immigrants will refuse to "become American" and stay tied to their parents' ethnic community. This might lead to better economic outcomes, but less assimilation. Gans (1992, 188) writes: "The people who have secured an economically viable ethnic niche are acculturating less than did the European 2nd and 3rd generation and those without such a niche escaping condemnation to dead end immigrant and other jobs mainly by becoming very poor and persistently jobless Americans."

Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1993) make a similar argument in their frequently cited article on "segmented assimilation," a notion further elaborated by Portes and Rumbaut in *Legacies* (2001a). Perhaps the most influential of these "revisionist" perspectives, segmented assimilation describes the various outcomes of different groups of second-generation youth and argues that the mode of incorporation for the first generation gives the second generation access to different types of opportunities and social networks. Those groups who come with strong ethnic networks, access to capital, and fewer ties to U.S. minorities experience an ethnicity that creates networks of social ties and may provide access to job opportunities while reinforcing parental authority. Those who are socially closest to American minorities may adopt an "oppositional" or reactive ethnicity. They may become skeptical about the possibility

of upward mobility and particularly about the value of education. No one feels these paradoxes more acutely than black immigrants, for whom assimilation means, literally, joining the ranks of America's most consistently down-trodden racial minority. As one West Indian young man we spoke to put it: "You can go to school for years to get your Ph.D., and after you graduate you'll come out with a regular job, probably in a supermarket or something. . . . A lot of people I've heard of, they went to school and got their master's, their Ph.D., whatever, and they are still working regular jobs just to survive. [Education] matters, but I think sometimes it is the connections. Who you know. . . . You see white people, they get hooked up like that because of their parents, who they know and how much money they have" (see also Kasinitz 1992, Vickerman 1999, Waters 1999).

Of course, the idea that assimilation has costs and "paradoxes" is hardly unprecedented, as Rumbaut has taken care to note (1999). Early-twentieth-century immigrants and those who wrote about them often expressed concern about intergenerational conflict and the heartache it produced (see in particular Thomas and Znaniecki 1927). Leonard Covello, a leading educator in New York's Italian American community in the midtwentieth century, famously recalled of his own second-generation childhood: "We were becoming Americans by learning how to be ashamed of our parents" (quoted in Luzzo and Mondello 1980, 118). Years later, as principal of an East Harlem high school, Covello introduced the Italian language into the New York City public schools curriculum, specifically as a means of preserving ethnic heritage and keeping assimilation partially at bay. Nor is there anything new about the complaint that the children of immigrants become the "wrong kind" of Americans. As Bonnie Kahn (1987, 244) notes, as early as 1906, *The Outlook* magazine warned "against rushing Italian children into the 'streetiness' and 'cheap Americanism' which 'so overwhelms Italian youngsters in the cities.'" Even the notion that a dense "ethnic enclave" can provide a bulwark against the worst effects of the American street, a case made forcefully in Min Zhou and Carl Bankston's study of a Vietnamese community, *Growing Up American* (1998), is foreshadowed in studies of early-twentieth-century New York's Jewish community. These studies often made the case that juvenile delinquency among boys and sexual promiscuity among girls were both a direct result of Americanization and most common among the most assimilated youth in the community (for examples, see Landesman 1969; Prell 1999).

Yet if most of the arguments that would be made in the "segmented assimilation" literature were present as the last great migration produced New York's last large second generation, voices skeptical of the promise of assimilation were at that time still very much in the minority among intellectuals and social scientists and in the immigrant communities themselves. It was

still, as Kahn (1987, 244) notes, "an age when people believed they could successfully become American." And it was a promise by and large made good in the mass upward mobility of postwar America. Today, against a background of falling real wages, rising income inequality, and continuing racial conflict, belief in both the possibility and value of assimilation seems considerably less pervasive.⁶

In contrast to these views of the corrosive side of incorporation into U.S. society, others have taken up the rattered banner of assimilation as an avenue of upward mobility. Richard Alba and Victor Nee (1999, 145) argue that "there is abundant evidence that assimilation is a process of major import, perhaps the master trend in fact, among whites in the U.S." (see also Alba and Nee 2003). They also argue that there is considerable reason to think that the factors working against assimilation among contemporary nonwhite immigrants have been exaggerated. Although they do not ignore the large volume of scholarship on the retention, resurgence, and even occasional wholesale revival of ethnicity among U.S. whites, they argue that, in retrospect, ethnicity researchers of the past several decades have often missed the forest for the trees. Ethnic occupational niches tend to diminish over time. Ethnic neighborhoods survive in some regions, but they account for a smaller and smaller portion of the population. Inter-marriage continues to erode ethnic boundaries, not only among whites but increasingly among Asians and some Latino groups as well.

It is probably too early to say definitively whether the new second generation will assimilate—especially since it is not clear what "assimilation" means in today's world. After all, the "new immigration" is still less than four decades old. By the turn-of-the-century Russian-Jewish time clock, it is now about 1925. Yet this much seems clear: even if the new second generation lives in a world shaped by old and new ethnic and racial divisions, there is another, more creative side to what is going on among them. As in the past, assimilation surely means not only cultural loss but also cultural gains. It implies the reshuffling of boundaries and the making of connections across boundaries in new and complex ways. If at times this leads to conflict, it also creates new spheres of cooperation. The emergence of "Asian" identity symbolizes this process of invention and enrichment. In recent years churches catering specifically to the second generation have sprung up in both the Chinese and Korean communities: Chinese and Korean second-generation young people sometimes now worship together, live near each other, and join the same political groups. In fact, becoming an Asian (as opposed to Chinese, Filipino, or Korean) may be the most profound form of assimilation. To become Asian, in effect, is to internalize the racial definitions of the dominant society, to see oneself through the eyes of that society. Many Asian (and some Latino) re-

spondents report that they first took up a pan-ethnic identity in college—another sign of its “made in America” quality. In groups like the New York Committee on Anti-Asian Violence, highly politicized, largely Korean American recent college graduates take up the cause of downtrodden Chinese factory workers and South Asian cab drivers. Of course, the “Asian” solidarity that underlies this stance often mystifies immigrant parents, for whom “Asian” is often a meaningless category.

Spending time with today’s second-generation New Yorkers, one cannot help but be impressed by the sheer complexity of the business of constructing racial and ethnic identities. The second generation lives in a world of new and shifting ethnic divisions of which outsiders may be only barely aware. Latinos and Asians, whose swelling numbers and high rates of out-marriage are now complicating America’s traditionally bimodal concept of race, are constructing new notions of ethnic identity, often influenced at least in part by the broader, hip-hop-influenced urban youth culture. Where the ethnic boundaries for these groups will be a few decades hence is impossible to predict. Recalling their experiences of discrimination in the multi-ethnic worlds in which they grew up, our respondents report that the greatest hostility occurs between groups that are relatively close to each other in residential space and the labor market. The narcissism of small differences abounds. One “Mountain Jew” from Central Asia reports the terrible discrimination he endured at the hands of Russian Jews and the pain he suffered when he was expelled from Yeshiva because his father became involved with “Jews for Jesus.” English-speaking West Indians report conflicts with Haitians and African Americans; South Americans collide with Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. As one young West Indian man recalled of his high school days: “See, in Canarsie High School you had the [people from the] private houses, they was Caribbean, and the public housing, that was black Americans. And they used to have fights, on the bus and in the school and everywhere. People was getting hurt, getting stabbed, getting shot and stuff like that.”

Chinese young people were quick to tell us of the tensions between the Cantonese (stereotyped as “rude” but also as simple, straightforward, and “open”) and the Taiwanese (stereotyped as “polite” but also as officious and “wanting to have the upper hand”). Some Chinese respondents also resented what they saw as the chauvinistic style of Koreans: “Some Koreans, you know, act like they are a little bit higher than what you are.” Others, particularly the upwardly mobile, voiced an admiration of Koreans that sometimes spilled over into identification. At least one second-generation Chinese respondent, married to an immigrant Korean woman, described himself as a “North East Asian.” Sometimes ethnicity and class seemed to cross-cut: college-educated Chinese respondents had often gone to school with Koreans and now could

be found in pan-Asian churches. Working-class Chinese respondents, by contrast, were less likely to be in pan-Asian institutions or neighborhoods and more likely to have ties to Chinatown. To the extent that they had contacts outside the ethnic enclave, it was more likely to be with Latinos.

As our respondents grew older, they often found themselves more likely to come into contact with—and sometimes conflict with—native whites. This had been particularly important for black and Latino youth. The most common encounters of this type were with store owners. A West Indian woman complained: “When you go to department stores to buy stuff, they constantly have people watching you. No matter what store you go to. . . . All of a sudden they have to fix what is in your aisle. I love that one. Sometimes we will make jokes. ‘Did you put it in your pocket?’ Jokes like that. It’s not funny, but it is so true.” Another middle-class West Indian woman recounted that “usually, if I go into a store in Jersey, they follow you around. One time we went into a store and it was owned by white people, so they didn’t want to serve us. It turned into a big thing. . . . They were real rude. . . . I know I could not [live there], I probably would have been arrested because they discriminate against you a lot.”

Ironically, this sort of experience of face-to-face prejudice seemed to be more common among better-off respondents, who shopped in more expensive stores, left their neighborhood more frequently, and were more likely to meet (and compete with) native whites on the job and in public. We were initially surprised at how few of the poorer and younger respondents, particularly the male respondents, reported having been the victims of discrimination. But as the interviews made clear, lack of discrimination was sometimes due to isolation from whites. For example, one nineteen-year-old West Indian reported that he had never felt discriminated against by taxi drivers, but he added that this was probably because he had never tried to hail a cab.

Asian respondents were less likely to report having experienced discrimination personally, although many believed that substantial anti-Asian discrimination existed. A few Chinese young men reported verbal encounters and sometimes fights with other ethnic groups: “Some teenagers, they curse at you in Spanish, and I understand a little Spanish—ethnic curses—like ‘Chinos.’” While Asian respondents who had spent time outside of the New York metropolitan area sometimes reported having been discriminated against by whites, in the city they tended to be more concerned with discrimination at the hands of blacks and Latinos, particularly in school. On the other hand, some Chinese young people reported having benefited from the “positive stereotypes” of Asians, and one woman contrasted her experience to what she saw as the racism confronted by blacks. Some lighter-skinned Latinos may, in effect, stop being Latino, particularly if they marry whites or

move to the suburbs. One fair-skinned Puerto Rican office worker made a point of removing stereotypically "ethnic" ornaments from his car when he moved to Long Island. While he had never lied about his origins, he said of his new suburban neighbors, "If they want to think I am Italian, I don't correct them."

The case studies in this book explore this complex and shifting terrain. Although the parts of the social world they explore are highly varied and distinct, the essays are linked by a number of themes that can be seen across the different settings. The first might be termed "the second generation between two worlds." This is perhaps obvious, but it nonetheless merits some examination. One of the things that defines the second- and 1.5-generation experience is growing up and becoming adult in a culture and social setting that is vastly different from the one in which their parents came of age. Of course, all modern people face something like this. The complaint that parents simply do not understand "things today" is the *cri de coeur* of teenagers the world over. Yet, for the children of immigrants, this is particularly true and often particularly poignant. The young people presented in this book do not share their immigrant parents' world or their worldview. But neither do they really share those of "mainstream" Americans. Some are self-consciously leaving their parents' world—sometimes over their parents' objections, sometimes with their blessing (for example, the young Korean Americans we meet in Dae Young Kim's chapter who were deliberately leaving the "ethnic economy"). Others are struggling with parental expectations that make little sense in their own lives. The outcomes of these situations are not always predictable. In Karen Chai Kim's chapter on Chinese American religious groups, we see young people who were on average more religious than their parents. For them, the embrace of conservative religious traditions became a source of autonomy from, and perhaps rebellion against, their secular families of origin.

It is often the members of the second generation, who have most successfully navigated the institutions of "mainstream" American society, who become the most acutely aware of their own marginality within that society. Yet when this realization leads them to seek stronger connections to their parents' community, they may, in turn, discover how "American" they truly are. The young, elite, college-educated activists studied by Nicole Marwell had chosen to "return" to the ethnic community and make it the site of their political work. Yet for all of their identification with the "authentic voices" of that community, they often found the endless speech-making, the elaborate rituals of deference, and the unconscious sexism of many of the veteran Dominican politicians tough to take. Similarly, several of Dae Young Kim's respondents had gone to work for South Korean companies only to be shocked by the bla-

tant patriarchy and clannishness of Korean corporate life. In the end, having a foot in two worlds may make one unable to sit comfortably in either.

A second important theme is the fact that in most of these settings class and gender shape young people's lives at least as much as ethnicity. Indeed, class, gender, and ethnicity may cross-cut in unpredictable ways. Sara Lee, for example, examines what happens when a community, Korean Americans, is so heavily invested in defining itself as middle-class and upwardly mobile that the relatively worse-off members are virtually defined out of the group. Of course, Koreans *have* been highly successful in the United States. Even the least successful segments of the community (usually those of working-class origins in Korea) still show relatively high educational attainment and income compared to other immigrant groups. Yet Lee reminds us of the cost of being seen, and of seeing oneself, as a failure relative to other Koreans. The role of class and gender in shaping the educational expectations of Chinese college students and their parents is also clear in Louie's study of two four-year colleges, one public and working-class and one "Ivy League" and elite. The graduates of both institutions are well educated compared to most New Yorkers their age, yet the experiences of these college students seem worlds apart. Both kinds of graduates contrast sharply in turn with the South American community college students studied by Alex Trillo. The interaction of gender, education, and upward mobility is also a key factor in Nancy López's study of Dominican, West Indian, and Haitian high school students. Here we see partially Americanized girls chafing at the double standards that keep them at home, helping with housework and caring for younger siblings, while their brothers enjoy far greater freedom. Yet in the end, López argues, being shielded from the "freedom" to "sow some wild oats" on the streets of New York may turn out to be a blessing, as girls avoid many of the traps that ensnare the boys. What is more, the embrace of traditional notions of femininity may end up facilitating success in high school and beyond (despite the fact that in the Dominican case educational attainment is not traditionally seen as a female characteristic). Traditionally masculine behavior, by contrast, serves boys less well in American high schools. What teachers in a white middle-class setting might see as healthy, masculine, autonomous behavior is often perceived as aggressive, rebellious, and threatening coming from dark-skinned Caribbean students.

Finally, in Victoria Malkin's study of retail workers, we see workplace identities partially transcending ethnic ones. Many of these young people attended racially and ethnically segregated schools and were continuing to live in segregated neighborhoods. Working in midtown Manhattan, they found themselves in ethnically diverse settings, often for the first time in their lives. Of course, with only a few exceptions, the whites they encountered were et-

their bosses or customers. Yet equally important is the fact that these Latino, West Indian, African American, Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Asian young workers were also encountering *each other*. The ethnically mixed workplace provided possibilities for acquaintance, friendship, romance, common conversation (often built around youth culture and popular music), and definitions of who “we” are that cut across ethnic lines in ways that residentially based notions of community usually do not. Yet this workplace identity will probably not create the type of class solidarity that an earlier “second generation” created on the shop floors of the mid-twentieth century (Montgomery 1989, Freeman 2000) or even that we see among the unionized professional workers in Amy Foerster’s chapter. For the young workers Malkin studies, work was a problematic basis for an adult identity. Earning low wages and working erratic “part-time” schedules (even those who wanted to work full-time), few earned enough to form an independent household or even support themselves, in marked contrast to the largely unionized New York retail workers of earlier times.⁷ Poised on the edge of adulthood, often living in their parents’ households, many sought further training or education but had no clear direction or saw much real promise of improvement. Thus, Malkin argues, they sought an adult identity from the other side of the counter—as consumers. This common culture of consumption raises a number of issues: For young adults today, is it true that “you are what you buy”? (Or what you *can* buy?) Is “assimilation” today largely a marketplace transaction? And what does it mean that these young people are being socialized into adult roles primarily as consumers rather than as workers or citizens? (Zukin 2003).

A further theme we see clearly in many of the chapters is the role of educational institutions and other formal bureaucracies as sorting mechanisms. New York confronts the children of immigrants with a variety of large, impersonal bureaucratic institutions. Many of the young people we studied have ended up bitter and feeling that they have no control over their lives and that the game of opportunity is “fixed.” Yet others manage to navigate this complex world by taking advantage of the substantial islands of excellence in a generally problematic public school system and by using New York’s system of public colleges to seize “second chances.” Part of the difference clearly comes down to differences in parental social capital and networks. Part of it may also be accounted for by differences in political strategies or by the existence of ethnic institutions. Russian Jewish immigrants, for example, clearly benefited from a well-financed network of Jewish social service agencies, and the advantages of this “helping hand” can still be seen in the second generation, even as many come to resent some of the attitudes that come with the help, as Aviva Zeltzer-Zubida’s chapter shows. In a different way, the remarkably old-fashioned political machine in North Brooklyn that Marwell de-

scribes turns out to be at least arguably as effective at reaching out to the Dominican second generation as are the more self-consciously ethnic community organizations of Washington Heights.

It is also important to note that many of the institutions encountered by today’s children of immigrants were in fact reshaped by the historical context of their parents’ arrival after the civil rights movement and the increased legitimation of ethnic difference in American society since the 1960s. In contrast to earlier “second generations,” the people this book is about encounter institutions and a political culture in which the ways of negotiating difference were reshaped by the struggles of African Americans and (to an extent) Latinos during this period (Kasinitz 2004). The meaning of being a “minority” is now different than it was when the children of the early-twentieth-century European immigrants came of age. The struggles of the 1960s and 1970s also established institutions that sought to speak to the minority experience. Although the victories of the civil rights movement were partial at best, they did put a generation of Latino and African American leaders in the strange position of trying to manage ethnic succession in colleges, labor unions, political groups, and so on, while still seeing themselves as fundamentally outsiders to the larger power structures. Consider the situation faced by the predominantly African American leadership of the now largely West Indian labor union, as studied by Foerster, or the Cuban American instructor teaching “Puerto Rican studies” to a community college class made up largely of South Americans, as described by Trillo.

This is further complicated by the fact that second-generation racial and ethnic identities are themselves in flux. As Sherri-Ann Butterfield’s chapter demonstrates, the children of West Indians *are* African Americans (to take perhaps the most extreme example) in some, perhaps most, contexts. Indeed, for the children of West Indians, Dominicans, Ecuadorians, or Chinese, becoming American may mean becoming “black” or “Latino” or “Asian.” And ironically, for the children of Russian Jews—a distinctly racialized minority in their homeland—becoming American may also entail becoming “white.” Finally, as Natasha Warwick demonstrates, some groups, like Indo-Caribbeans, may be poised between different ethnic identities. It is thus up to the second generation to figure out where they fit in the U.S. racial classification scheme.

Finally, many of the studies presented here come back to the question of the New York City context—many of the children of immigrants, whether or not they see themselves as becoming “American,” are clearly already very much New Yorkers. Ironically, the children of immigrants, for all their transnational ties, are often more locally “attached” than the natives. In our larger survey, over one-third of the whites of native parentage had grown up outside the New York metropolitan area. Many had come to New York after

college, often unattached, striking out on their own. About 8.5 percent of the African Americans of native parentage followed the same pattern. Yet, among the children of immigrants, only a handful—7 percent of the Chinese, fewer than 5 percent of the South Americans, 3.5 percent of the Russian Jews, 2.5 percent of the West Indians, and fewer than 1 percent of the Dominicans—had spent any significant amount of time growing up in a part of the United States outside of New York. Indeed, many continue to live in the neighborhoods where they grew up. The most internationally connected of New Yorkers are also the most locally attached, which perhaps accounts for some of the city's fabled combination of cosmopolitanism and parochialism.

Further, many of the children of immigrants in New York today interact with each other and native minorities far more than they do with native whites. This has important consequences, of course, for the patterns of prejudice and intergroup conflict experienced by different groups. But this intergroup contact also has positive dimensions. As the essays in this book make clear, the children of immigrants are creating a new kind of multiculturalism—not of balkanized groups huddled within their own enclaves but of hybrids and fluid exchanges across group boundaries. And the real cultural “action” may not be in the interplay of immigrant cultures with a homogenous and dominant American culture but in the interactions between first- and second-generation immigrant groups and native minorities. Today African American New Yorkers dance to Jamaican dance hall and imitate Jamaican patois, even as West Indian youngsters learn African American slang. Puerto Ricans can meringue and Dominicans can play salsa and rap in two languages, to say nothing of the second-generation youth growing up in an Indian–South American–Irish–Pakistani neighborhood like Jackson Heights, Queens, or in a Puerto Rican–Mexican–Chinese–Arabic neighborhood like Sunset Park (where the aging population of “real Americans” is Norwegian). Whether one looks at the music in the dance halls, the eclectic menus in the restaurants, or the inventive slang on the streets, one cannot help but be impressed by the creative contributions to New York of second-generation and minority young people.

In our larger study, we have seen this reflected in how respondents identify themselves. They use the term “American” in two different ways. One way is to describe themselves as American compared to the culture, values, and behaviors of their parents. They are not inclined, for example, to endorse the corporeal punishment of children, a practice, they often report, that their parents believe in and, according to some respondents, have enthusiastically practiced. They definitely think that the United States has influenced them to approach the world differently than their parents. But they also use “American” to refer to the native white Americans whom they sometimes encounter

at the office or in public places but whom they know far better from television and the movies. They see these “Americans” as part of a different world that will never include them because of their race-ethnicity. As one of Butterfield's West Indian respondents noted:

Do you know my cousins still had the nerve to call me an American?! I used to get so mad! I mean, now I sort of understand it, but they could never understand why I would get so angry. They meant that I lived here, and did and said things that were American, which was technically true . . . [but] somehow I always knew that the word “American” did not apply to me. I knew that my parents weren't American because they were not from here, but I was born here and still feel like I didn't belong. “American” was for the kids we used to see on TV, the little blond-haired, blue-eyed white girls playing with their Barbie and their Barbie playhouse in their big houses, not the little dark-skinned girl playing with some old doll in a small house while her parents are struggling to make it.

Many respondents sidestepped this ambivalent understanding of the meaning of being American by describing themselves as “New Yorkers.” This term is open to them even as blacks or Hispanics or Asians, and it embraces them as second-generation immigrants. A New York identity reflects the dynamic cultural creativity familiar to them, but not necessarily the larger white society. “New Yorkers,” for our respondents, can come from immigrant groups, native minority groups, and they can be Italians, Irish, Jews, and the like. The changes necessary to become a “New Yorker” are not nearly so large as those required to become an “American.” And yet, as immigration continues to transform our nation, New York may serve as a positive model of creative multiculturalism and inclusion. Some skeptics might argue that New York is unique and not likely to be replicated other places, but we would counterargue that New York, being the quintessential immigrant city, is in fact at its core very American.

NOTES

1. The project has been supported by the Russell Sage Foundation, the Andrew J. Mellon Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Institute of Child Health and Welfare, and the UJA-Federation of Greater New York. All have our gratitude.
2. For further details on the sampling and methodology of the other phases of the project, see Kasnitz, Waters, and Mollenkopf (2002).
3. A fourth phase, reinterviewing selected respondents in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, is under way as of this writing.

4. This approach had already been undertaken very successfully by Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut (2001b).
5. Nancy López's project, which was based on our pilot data—thus the inclusion of Haitians, who do not appear in the later study—and her own extensive fieldwork in upper Manhattan, has already appeared in book form (López 2003).
6. Although not necessarily among the immigrants themselves. See the strikingly optimistic results of the *New York Times*—CBS poll of Hispanic Americans, reported in the *New York Times*, August 6, 2003.
7. For a study of similar issues among New York fast-food workers, see Newman (1999).

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