## Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age

by P. Kasinitz, J.H. Mollenkopf, M.C. Waters, and J. Holdaway New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009 ISBN 978-0-87154-478-0 Softcover, \$19.95, 420 pp.

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In the introduction to *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age*, the authors inform the readers that large-scale, long-term immigration generates many fundamental questions for scholars, politicians, and the general public about citizenship and the future of North American society. One persistent query is: To what extent can North American society "deliver" its promise to provide upward mobility to newcomers and their children? The authors also highlight how this topic instigates important scholarly and theoretical debates on the processes and outcome of immigration patterns, debates that are usually framed in terms of economic and demographic impacts. As such, this book provides a timely and significant contribution to our understanding of how the latest immigration flows shape and re-shape racial and ethnic relations and define lives and identities through sociocultural processes.

Funded by the Russell Sage Foundation (at an impressive \$2 million), the research presented in the book entailed a decade-long, mixed-method data collection strategy that was conducted by a large team of researchers. The targeted ethnic groups of interest on which the authors focus includes the lives of young adults of Chinese, Dominican, Russian Jewish, West Indian (from the English-speaking Caribbean, including Belize and Guyana), and South American (Columbian, Ecuoadorean, and Peruvian) origins. Their lives are compared to the native-born populations of whites, blacks, and Puerto Ricans (those born on the Mainland). Selected participants were 18 to 32 at the time of the initial interviews, and were either born in the United States to at least one immigrant parent, or arrived in the United States by age 12.

The first part of the extensive three-phase data collection strategy (from 1998 to 2000) involved a random telephone survey of 3,415 young adults from 10 counties of metropolitan New York, a city well-known for its long history of immigration. The second phase entailed two rounds of detailed, open-ended, face to face interviews with 333 of the original telephone respondents. Finally, six ethnographies of sites were undertaken in order to observe the interactions between young second generation and native groups (e.g., at schools, workplaces, unions, community organizations, and churches). These ethnographies were also published in a companion volume entitled *Becoming New Yorkers*. Despite the exclusion of some ethnic groups (e.g., Mexican immigrants), this data collection technique produced a wealth of quantitative and contextual qualitative data. Notably, it is chock full of personal stories that vividly and effectively anchor statistical trends and illuminate multifaceted experiences.

The book is organized into 11 chapters covering a comprehensive list of topic areas. These include: parental, family and neighbourhood origins, ethnic identities and culture, school and work issues, the formation of new families, civic and political engagement, and race, prejudice, and discrimination. Many broad themes of similarity are identified throughout these chapters. For example, most of the second generation young adults were fluent in English and lived at home with their parents longer than native-born Americans. These young people were also less occupationally segregated than their parents and had fewer personal and financial ties to their homelands than did their parents. The authors also offer the general conclusion that second-generation immigrants are more upwardly mobile both in comparison to its first-generation parents and to its native-born reference group of the same race—a finding deemed "the second-generation advantage."

In addition to presenting broad areas of similarity, areas of diversity (mainly across but also within each ethnic group) are also meticulously described and analyzed. For instance, the researchers find that family life varied considerably, with Dominican and South Americans tending to marry young, whereas the Chinese young people post-poned marriage and children until later age. The highest rate of single-parent families were found among Caribbean immigrants. However, Caribbean immigrants also benefitted from the strong support they received from extended family members (e.g., assistance from grandparents in childcare), who sometimes lived in the same household.

A particular strength of the book lies in its optimistic message about the fluid and innovative capacities of immigrant young people as they transition to adulthood and assimilate into American society. This view bodes well for the future of immigrant groups since the increasing diversity of American society is seen as "a good thing." Indeed, the authors argue that "in an era of globalization, it has brought skills, fresh talent, and extraordinary drive to an America that needs them now as much as ever" (p. 367). Yet, the authors also add a realistic and cautious tone to this message by pointing out some of the problems inherent in particular policy and practices, which ironically, were designed to create better conditions and justice for immigrants. In this vein, they re-emphasize the highly complex nature of the interrelationships among culture, structural, and historical conditions and the need to link these processes to the policy arena.

In summary, this engaging, well-written book debunks many popular myths and stereotypes about immigration as represented in popular discourse and media. Although it is confined to New York City, and the presentation of some of the statistical analyses and findings could be improved (e.g., some of the summary data charts are difficult to read), it is without a doubt a ground-breaking book. It makes a superb contribution to the literature with its critical focus on themes of diversity and the need to disentangle the complexity of this social issue. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the intersections of immigration and race/ethnicity, with culture, family, urbanizations and community development, education, work, and labour market conditions facing young adults. It could also be used as a supplementary reading in both undergraduate and undergraduate courses. Moreover, the conclusions gleaned from this impressive study also suggest important recommendations that can positively improve, inform, and shape public policy and service delivery in order to fulfill the promise of a better life for all.