

Adaptation Problems among Adolescent Immigrants from Korea, Mexico and Poland

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ABSTRACT. The objective of this study was to explore the adaptation problems of Korean, Mexican, and Polish first and one-and-a-half generation adolescent immigrants residing in Midwestern U.S. The study was based on 16 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with teenagers and young adults from the metro Chicago and Champaign-Urbana, IL areas. Three main themes were identified with respect to adaptation problems among adolescent immigrants. First, the interviewees spoke of problems they experienced in their schools, including lack of English fluency, negative interactions with teachers and other school personnel, and drawbacks of bi-lingual education. Second, they discussed issues surrounding their family relations after immigration. Family separation, inadequate interactions with parents following arrival, and intergenerational conflict were the main problems identified by the interviewees. Lastly, adolescents commented on their peer relationships that hindered their adaptation, including discrimination by the mainstream youth and divisions within ethnic groups based on the teens' acculturation level.

KEYWORDS. Adaptation problems, adolescents, immigration

Immigration is a phenomenon that affects many countries around the globe, including Europe, Australia, Canada, and the United States. In 2005,

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the number of immigrants in the U.S. has reached 35,689,467 people, which is equivalent to 12.4% of the American population (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005a). In the Chicago Metropolitan Area alone, where part of this research was conducted, in 2005 there were 671,890 first generation immigrants from Mexico, 44,345 first generation immigrants from Korea, and 150,211 first generation immigrants from Poland (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005b). Regardless of their reasons for immigration, groups of immigrants who arrive each year to Chicago or other cities and small communities across the U.S. include significant numbers of children and teenagers. For instance, between 1990 and 2000, the six magnet states of the Southeast have witnessed a 382% increase in the population of Latino immigrant preschoolers (age 4 and younger) and a 322% increase in the population of Latino immigrant children 5–17 years of age (Kochhar, Suro, & Tafoya, 2005). In 2000, there were 3,169,096 foreign born children and adolescents younger than 18 years of age residing in the U.S. Out of these children, 1,709,103 (53.9%) were Latino (of any race), 647,746 were Asian (20.4%), and 1,227,901 (38.8%) were White (U.S. Census, 2000). At the turn of the century, one in every five children in American public schools was either a child of immigrants or an immigrant itself. This proportion is expected to increase to one in three by the year 2020 (Williams, Alvarez, & Hauck, 2002).

Young immigrants are faced with the new physical, social, and cultural environment of the host country, they have to rebuild their social networks, and very often deal with long-term separation from their families. Immigrant children and adolescents constitute the backbone of the growing ethnic population in the U.S. and will represent a crucial component of the future American society (Zhou, 1997a). Thus, it is of critical importance to identify, examine, and understand problems that young immigrants might have with their social and psychological adjustment after immigration.

The majority of past research on young immigrants' adaptation focused on the "new second-generation youth," combining first generation, one-and-a-half generation (children who immigrated at a very young age and were raised in the country of settlement), and children of immigrants (second generation) under one investigation (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Rumbaut, 1994; Zhou & Bankston, 1994; Zhou & Xiong, 2005). Studies in this area can be broadly divided into two groups—those conducted from the sociological perspective and those taking more of a psychological or socio-psychological approach to the issue (Stodolska, 2008). Sociology-centered research generally measured level of adaptation among young immigrants with their educational attainment—academic

orientation, aspiration and performance (Zhou, 1997a). As Zhou noted, "Attending school—attaining knowledge and skills that may be capitalized upon in future labor markets—is a crucial first step toward successful adaptation to American society for immigrant children and children of immigrants" (p. 75). This line of enquiry examined the effects of structural conditions in the host society on the adaptational outcomes among young immigrants (Hirschman, 2001; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Zhou, 1997a, 1999; Zhou & Bankston, 1994), and how various aspects of social class, racial and ethnic background, residential location, and adherence to traditional values affected their process of adaptation (Pong & Hao, 2007; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997a).

Studies conducted from the psychological and socio-psychological perspective equated adaptation with the psychological well-being of young immigrants, often conceptualized as lack of depressive symptoms, high levels of self-esteem, positive feelings and expectations, general happiness, excitement, and satisfaction with life (Harker, 2001). Such studies examined whether young newcomers experience higher rates of social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment problems than the native-born population and what factors contribute to these differences. The majority of early studies on the subject conducted from the psychological perspective have suggested that immigrant children are at risk for delinquency, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol and drug dependency, and sleep and eating disorders (Jacob & Blais, 1991; Williams & Berry, 1991). They are also prone to developing fears, anxiety, aggression, learning difficulties, low self esteem, and identity problems (Ashworth, 1975; Bagley, 1972; Gaertner-Harnach, 1981; Goldenberg, 1973). More recent literature on the subject, however, have pointed out that there also exist certain "protective factors" associated with immigration status that shield children and adolescents from the negative effects of the immigration experience on their mental well-being (Harker, 2001). Such protective factors may include lack of conflict with parents, religious practices, parental supervision, and higher levels of social support among immigrants (Bankston & Zhou, 1995; García Coll & Szalacha, 2004; Harker; Hovey, & King, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Similar to psychological literature, studies conducted from the sociological perspective have also raised an issue of substantial resiliency among many young immigrants to negative factors conditioning their adaptation such as low socio-economic status, poorly educated parents, and nonwhite ethnic background. For instance, familial social capital was cited by White and Glick (2000) as the reason for recent immigrants' higher likelihood of

remaining in school in comparison to the U.S. born students. Exceptional success of some, mostly Asian, immigrant children have been attributed to the support they had from their families and ethnic communities, strong cultural identity, cultural values that emphasize education as means to mobility, and beliefs in diligence, persistence, obedience, and hard work reinforced by their families (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1989, 1991; Feliciano, 2005; Gibson, 1989; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Ogbu, 1989; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 1994).

There have been many different theoretical perspectives employed in studies on adolescent immigrants' adaptation. They included classical approaches such as the assimilation perspective (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1928; Park & Burges, 1921; Warner & Srole, 1945), multiculturalism (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970), or segmented assimilation (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1994), just to name the few. These models have been described in detail by Zhou (1997a), Harker (2001), and Stodolska (2008).

This particular study emerged as a part of a bigger project conducted in 2001. Its objective was to explore the adaptation problems of Korean, Mexican, and Polish adolescents residing in Midwestern U.S. The focus of the research project presented in this paper was less on the outcomes of adaptation of adolescent immigrants, and more on the factors that conditioned such adaptation and, specifically, on the problems that young immigrants experienced during their adaptation process. In this study, a qualitative, inductive approach was used in which we did not specify possible adaptation challenges, but rather encouraged participants to identify factors that *they felt* were salient in their adaptation process. Interviewing adolescents from three ethnic minorities allowed for identifying factors that were common across ethnic and racial groups, versus those that were limited to specific populations.

METHODS

The analysis presented in this study is based on a research project that employed semi-structured, in-depth interviews with adolescents and young adults of Korean, Mexican, and Polish descent. Three major criteria guided the selection of the interviewees. Participants had to be between 14 and 22 years of age (high school or college age), they had to be first or one-and-a-half generation immigrants (born outside the U.S.), and they had to immigrate to the United States either as young school-age children or teenagers. Respondents were selected with the help of key informants from

each of the three ethnic communities. Key informants were asked to select individuals meeting the three major selection criteria and representing a variety of socio-economic backgrounds.

Interviews were conducted with 16 teenagers and young adults. Five of them were of Mexican descent, five of Korean descent, and six of Polish descent. The interviewees included 10 males and 6 females between 16 and 22 years of age, whose length of stay in the U.S. ranged from 5 months to 15 years (in the case of the oldest interviewee). The majority of the interviewees (11) were high school students. Two of the interviewees were college freshmen and three were employed full-time, including an office assistant, an employee of a local youth radio station, and a restaurant worker. The interviewee selection process was intended to ensure that a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds was represented. Although this goal had been accomplished in case of Korean and Polish interviewees who represented both working-class and middle-class families, the majority of Mexican interviewees were of working-class background. Moreover, while Polish interviewees came from both urban and rural environments, the majority of Korean adolescents grew up in big cities, while Mexicans were generally from small towns. The interviews were conducted between June and October 2001 in the metro Chicago and Champaign-Urbana, IL areas in the homes of the interviewees, in their places of employment, at an ESL school, in coffee shops, and in student lounges.

Korean and Polish interviewers and interviewees were matched in terms of their ethnicity. Interviews with Mexican subjects were conducted by the author of the article with the help of a research assistant of Latin American descent or an outside interpreter. Interviewees were offered a choice of questions being asked either in English or in their native language. Since the majority of interviewees had settled in the U.S. quite recently, they chose to be interviewed in their native language. Only five interviews were conducted in English. Interviews lasted between 25 minutes (in one case) and 2.5 hours. Before each interview, participants were informed about the general purpose of the study, the format of the interview, and the topics that the questions would cover. Interviewees were queried about changes in their lifestyle following immigration, problems with the establishment in the U.S. (including problems at school, with their peers and parents), views on their place in American society, and their leisure behavior before and after immigration. The exact sequence and wording of the questions varied depending on respondents' personal opinions and characteristics. Additional probes regarding particular subjects were introduced as new topics emerged from the interviews already completed. By allowing

respondents to express their personal views freely, we were able to learn about new phenomena, discuss their significance with interviewees, and address them in subsequent interviews. The majority of interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. In the case of two interviews that were not taped recorded, detailed contemporaneous notes were taken. These notes were subsequently sent to interviewees for verification and feedback. Besides transcribing the exact content of all taped interviews, notes were kept on everything that we believed to be relevant to the topic of the study, as well as on other contextual factors.

The analysis of the collected data was performed by employing constant comparative method (Galser & Strauss, 1967). Once the interview sessions had been transcribed, major themes regarding adolescents' adjustment problems (including problems they experienced at school, with their peers and parents), and their views on and evaluation of their new life in the United States, were noted. During the following stage of the analysis, the transcripts were re-read and common themes and categories were isolated. Finally, after all the relevant points had been synthesized from the data, the transcripts were read to ensure that all the important aspects of the phenomena had been accounted for. In order to obtain information useful in assessing reliability of the data, informal conversations with other Korean, Mexican, and Polish immigrants, including individuals actively involved in the respective ethnic communities were conducted.

It needs to be acknowledged that by investigating representatives of three ethnic groups in a single research project conducted within the interpretive paradigm, the study had some inherent limitations. First, by focusing on members of three ethnic communities, significant heterogeneity was introduced into the sample population, not only in terms of its ethnic and racial background, but also age, socio-economic status, length of stay in the U.S., and assimilation level of young immigrants. Second, as with any qualitative research project, the goal of the study was not to generalize experiences of the interviewed adolescents to all members of their ethnic or racial group, but to present and analyze lived experiences of a group of young people following their settlement in the U.S.

FINDINGS

Three main themes were identified with respect to adaptation problems among interviewed adolescent immigrants. First, the interviewees spoke of problems they experienced in their new schools. Second, they discussed

issues surrounding their family relations after immigration. Lastly, they commented on their peer relationships that hindered their adaptation after arrival.

Problems at School

Language Problems

One of the most pressing issues identified by the immigrants from all three ethnic groups interviewed in this study was their lack of English language skills, which was particularly stressful during their first years after arrival. It created problems with understanding school material and forced teenagers to "translate" their existing knowledge. Due to their young age and to the fact that they had moved to a new country, the interviewees were acquiring a lot of information on a daily basis. They commented that while their "existing knowledge" was in Korean, Spanish, or Polish, the newly acquired one was in English. It forced the adolescents to be bi-lingual and often communicate in a mix of two languages, particularly when making references to their prior experiences and everyday matters (in their native tongue) and to the new information they had acquired (in English). A Polish teenager commented,

Marek: Now I have a problem. I have a class "machine tools." We use lathes and milling machines and, for example, I know all those things in English and if I had to translate it into Polish I would not know the equivalents for all these words. Same thing with computer programs. For example, we have a Polish version of Corel and we use it for studying and I know all the words in Polish and if I had to use the English version, I wouldn't know how to do things.

A Korean interviewee had similar experiences:

Soo-Min: Now I take math and for some concepts I try to find Korean equivalents. Because I took advanced math in my Korean high school. If I can't find an equivalent [word], it is difficult for me to understand. Then I have to find some alternative ways to understand it.

A 17 year-old Mexican female (Maria), who immigrated eight months prior to the interview, added, "I catch myself . . . for example, when I study history, I understand everything, but I still translate everything to Spanish. If I had to say it in English, I would still have problems."

Language problems caused a lot of stress for the interviewed teenagers which, in turn, affected their adaptation. Lack of English fluency not only hindered their scholastic achievements, but also their personal relationships. A Polish 16 year-old girl (Kasia) commented, "The better your language the less they tease you. It lasts the first couple of years." A 19 year-old Mexican adolescent added,

Miguel: The first two years I was in ESL. During that time the only contact I had with mainstream Americans was through sport. And everybody was prejudiced because I didn't speak good English. But then it changed, people warmed up to me and it changed.

A 17 year-old Mexican interviewee described her life in the first two years after arrival:

Lourdes: I mean, the first two years what I had? Nothing. All day in my house. Wake up early in the morning, go to school at 8:00 AM, I will be at home at 3 PM and then, cry because I didn't know how to do my homework, I could not understand any of it, and I didn't know anybody and I stayed at home, in los apartamentos, all day long.

It seems that Lourdes and Miguel were not only affected by their lack of English skills, which decreased their school performance, but also by isolation related to their lack of language fluency and problems in re-establishing their social networks following immigration.

Interactions with Teachers and Other School Personnel

The opinions regarding teachers who the interviewed Korean, Mexican, and Polish youth came in contact with differed. For instance, some of the Korean participants complained about not knowing the expectations of their American instructors. The reward—punishment system in Korea was swifter and students were disciplined (often physically) immediately after they transgressed the rules (e.g., failed to do homework, did poorly on tests, were caught skipping classes, or smoking) (Young, 2007). Interestingly, some of them enjoyed such arrangements and complained that: "Here [in the U.S.] you will find out [that you did something wrong] only on the midterm." Conversely, two of the Korean interviewees felt that the American school system was better because of the smaller class sizes, lower pressure, and the fact that teachers spent more time with the students.

Poles and Mexicans also recalled positive experiences with their teachers. They felt that their American instructors were more approachable, more understanding of their problems, more progressive, and that the classes were much more interesting than the ones they had taken back home in Poland and Mexico.

The newly arriving Polish and Mexican teenagers who were interviewed in this study were unfamiliar with the American school system and, thus, they relied heavily on the advice of others, at least in the immediate period after arrival. The people they first came in contact with were usually school counselors, whose job was to assign them to classes and advise them on the intricacies of the American high school education. While the adolescents' interactions with American teachers were generally positive, Polish and Mexican interviewees commented on problems they had experienced with counselors in their suburban Chicago schools. They perceived the counselors to be insensitive to their needs or outright prejudiced toward the immigrant youth. As a 19 year-old from Mexico recalled,

Miguel: When I came to the U.S. I was completely unfamiliar with how things work in high school. When I came they [the counselors] told me to pick any schedule I wanted. And I had no clue of how things work, what classes are offered, what I will need in the future, so I asked them to choose for me and . . . they gave me some courses that count for nothing.

A Polish 19 year-old had more serious accusations against his school counselor:

Michal: Because of the counselor I didn't get into college! There was this meeting before the end of the year when they discussed the classes I needed to take next year. And he told me that I need to take four: "health," "consumer," "driver's ed," and "history." And I thought this is all I needed to graduate and then I will take summer school after my senior year and I will be done. It was not until later that they told me that on top of this I have to take "senior survey" and I ended up staying a whole year longer in school!

Polish interviewees also believed that they were being channeled into easy classes (e.g., choir, art education) and not into more demanding and useful courses. By doing so, counselors not only made adolescents stay longer in the school system, but also showed immigrants that they lacked

confidence in their abilities. An 18 year-old Polish interviewee who immigrated when he was 16.5 years-old, reminisced about his first year in an American high school:

Marek: They came and they gave us a timetable. And I look and there is "choir." I went there for two days . . . The next day I went to the counselor and asked her "why did you give me this choir, while I wanted to learn something, get some 'good' credit? I only get a credit for it, but it doesn't teach me anything. And, besides, I don't like to sing!" And she said "you won't make it in any other [serious] course" and I replied "just give me and I'll make it." And what happened? I got an A+ from this class that she gave me instead.

Differential treatment by the school personnel was something that surfaced in many interviews. It forced young immigrants to see themselves as people of lesser value and of lesser capabilities than their mainstream counterparts. Many interviewed Polish and Mexican teenagers believed they were being "pushed around" because of their lack of English skills and assigned to classes not based on their needs and abilities, but on seats availability. As one 17 year-old Mexican interviewee poignantly commented, "Patterns of discrimination against immigrants start at the school level." Another 19 year-old Polish teenager recalled his first semester in an American school:

Waldek: I was in a math class, my freshmen year. I was in a regular [non-ESL] math class – 118. One day two American students showed up. They [the teacher] told me and my friend [also a Polish immigrant] "we are transferring you to another class" and in the middle of the lecture they sent us to another classroom so to make room for those two other students. There was a test that day in that other class. I looked at the test and thought "this is too easy for me." I looked at the top of the test and there it stands "114" instead of "118." I didn't know what was going on and I immediately went back to the other class. But, you know they just came, in the middle of the class and gave me a new timetable and moved me to a lower class so to make room for these two Americans. Especially that this was my first year and I didn't speak English very well at that time so I didn't know how to react.

Interestingly, the issue of differential treatment by the school personnel did not surface in interviews with Korean teens who appeared generally satisfied with the treatment they received from school counselors.

Bi-Lingual Education

The issue of bi-lingual education turned out to be quite controversial among the interviewees and, in some cases, seemed to negatively affect the successful adaptation of the newcomers. All interviewed Polish teenagers held very negative views of the English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and complained that they hindered their scholastic advancement. First, they were discouraged by the fact that their education from the home country was improperly evaluated or, as they said, "didn't count," when they were placed in classes in their new American schools. Second, they resented the fact that they had to take bi-lingual classes (e.g., ESL math, ESL biology) in which the quality of instruction was substandard. Most of the interviewed Polish teenagers complained that ESL teachers treated them in a condescending manner and that they lowered the standards of education to the level *they believed* would better suit immigrants coming from inferior education systems. Such treatment was particularly distressing for 17–19 year-olds who considered their prior education superior to the standards they had encountered in the United States. Marek and Gosia, two 18 year-olds from Poland gave examples of what they had experienced in their suburban Chicago high school. As Marek recalled, "They gave us candy for every correct answer! Can you imagine—they were giving us candy and we were all 17- and 18 year-old people and they treated us like we were in the kindergarten!" Gosia mentioned being given children's fables to read. When asked whether only the Poles were treated like this, she replied "yes, they treat us all the same, like we can't learn anything." Later she recalled one of her ESL classes:

Gosia: One day the teacher brought her deodorant, soap, perfumes, lipsticks, nail polish and other stuff with her to class. And then she started showing us and explaining, one by one, what the soap, the deodorant, and the hand lotion are for. And she said "Americans like it when people smell good." We were all stunned! What was she thinking—that we are from where?! It was like she was telling us "all you immigrants stink, get yourself a bar of soap, this is how to use it."

Polish teens interviewed in this research project complained that bilingual education made them stay behind their peers by "wasting years" and, subsequently, lowered their chances for admission to the university. They believed that people responsible for admissions at the university level considered ESL credits as inferior to "normal" classes. Thus, ESL education retarded their assimilation process and lowered their chances for success in the new country.

Such strong anti-bi-lingual education feelings found among interviewed Polish students were not present among their Korean and Mexican counterparts, who considered ESL classes as helpful in learning the language and lowering the post-arrival stress. Similarly to Poles, however, they complained that because of the ESL education they had to stay longer in the school system.

Education Prospects Among Undocumented Immigrants

Many Mexican and Polish teenagers interviewed in this study were also concerned about the fact that their undocumented status negatively affected their future prospects in the United States. Those who resided in the U.S. illegally were allowed to enter universities, but were not eligible for many student loans and scholarships. Moreover, such students had to pay out-of-state tuition, which significantly increased the costs of their education. Since many immigrants (particularly Mexican and Polish) came from poor families who often had to support not only themselves, but their kin in the home country, it put them at a significant disadvantage and lowered their chances for success in the new country. Thus, although many spoke of their dreams of entering college, they knew that their chances of doing so were quite low. As 17 year-old Lourdes, one of the Mexican interviewees, commented,

Lourdes: I was lucky because my brother came [to the U.S.] first, and then, when he became legal he brought my father and then, us. So now I have a green card and I can get to college and when I graduate [from high school] I will try to get to the U of I. But I have two friends, and they don't have papers [they reside in the U.S. illegally] and they just can't go with me. (...) They can attend high school without papers; there are actually many people like that in our school, but not college. They have no chance for any scholarships, and the out-of-state tuition is simply ... it's way, WAY too much for their parents.

Such problems were not reported among the Korean interviewees, all of whom resided in the U.S. legally.

Family Problems

Family Separation

Many of the interviewed adolescents of Korean, Mexican, and Polish descent pointed out to problems related to their family life after immigration. Most of them had experienced some degree of family separation. Some of the adolescents were separated from one of their parents for less than two years, while others had not seen both their mothers and fathers for as long as 17 years. Having to deal with broken families and the need to re-adjust to living with their parents were mentioned as some of the important problems affecting adolescents' adaptation. These problems were partially caused by the undocumented, semi-temporary, and transnational nature of much of the migration from Mexico and Poland. While parents of many of the interviewed Mexican and Polish teenagers arrived to the U.S. with a goal of saving enough money to build a house or start a new business upon their return (for a thorough discussion of migrants' transnational networks see Portes, 1997, Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1997, and Vertovec, 2004), their children were left behind in the care of grandparents or extended family members. In many instances, the necessity to remit money back home made the parents stay in the U.S. in an excess of 10 or 15 years, while their undocumented status prevented them from visiting their children back home. This problem was particularly pronounced among Polish immigrants, most of whom overstayed their tourist visas and, unlike Mexican migrants, could not illegally re-enter the U.S. through a land border in the South (Morawska, 2004). When they were finally in the position to legally sponsor their children or, in the case of some Mexicans, smuggle them through the border, they were reunited with teens whom they barely knew and who had developed strong emotional ties to their guardians in the home country. The newly arriving adolescents often questioned their parents' authority and had to address the mental anguish of being separated from their "real" families back home (e.g., grandparents, cousins). As one Polish 18 year-old who was separated from his father for more than 15 years commented, "When we [his sister and him] lived with our mother in Poland she always yelled at us to study. And now we also have a father . . . and when he says something . . . we always look at it differently

... because we don't know him." Adrian, a Polish 17 year-old commented on his family situation in these words:

Adrian: I didn't see my parents for eight years. Well, I mean, I spent one and a half years with my mother because, when my sister was born, she came to Poland and stayed with us for one and a half years, but I didn't see my father for eight years. At first [after coming to the U.S.] my relationship with my father was like this "Hi, hi, by, by" and that's it Well . . . it still is the same, I guess.

The experiences of many of the Mexican interviewees seemed to be quite similar. In the words of Carlos, who immigrated to the U.S. with his family when he was six years old:

Carlos: Yeah, I have a friend who came here to work, but his family stayed in Mexico, and then he had problems with his child because his child was missing him. . . . Finally he brought them in because the child was having problems. He was missing the father, he was used to him and he was getting in trouble when his father was away. When he [the child] came to live with him, it didn't get better, though. They were strangers, you know, the father and son.

In many cases, when only one parent immigrated to the U.S. and the other one stayed behind with the children, significant hardships and long-term separation led to dissolution of marriages. Those teenagers who ended up coming to the U.S. were reunited with the parent they had not seen for years, and often with his or her new spouse, and new half- or step-siblings. Thus, the intended family reunification was equivalent to teens joining entirely new family units and having to adapt to life with people they perceived as strangers.

Broken family ties affected adaptation of not only interviewed Mexican and Polish teenagers. Similar problems were reported by the Korean interviewees, as many Korean men sent their families to the U.S. in search of quality education for their children. In such "astronaut" family arrangements, it was the father who stayed behind in the home country and provided for the family abroad (Waters, 2002). In rare instances (only one of the interviewees fell into this category), children were raised by their relatives in Korea, while both mother and father resided in the U.S. Prolonged separation often weakened marital ties between spouses, led to extramarital affairs among men living in Korea, and to the emancipation of

wives who had to survive in the new environment of the adopted country (Waters). Among those families who were eventually reunited in the U.S., the teenagers often witnessed fathers losing much of their socio-economic status (a significant downwards mobility was observable among this population), but still attempting to maintain authority within the family. It led to some degree of resentment among interviewed teens who perceived their fathers as embittered strangers who tried to impose a rule on their wives and children. Doohyun was separated from his father since he was seven years old. His sister and him were raised by their mother in a middle class suburban Chicago neighborhood. The family was reunited when Doohyun was 17. Although, at the beginning, things seemed to be fine, the situation deteriorated with time. As the Korean teen described,

Doohyun: My sister and I grew up here, in America. At first we struggled because the money that my father was sending us was not enough, but then things got better. My mother started working, she got her driver's license and we were happy here. My father came to live with us two years ago. I knew my mother was happy to see him, but then he couldn't find a good job, and he would come home angry and he would always expect to have a five dish meal at dinner time, and he was telling us what to do. And what right does he have to run our lives? We were happy without him and my mother works long hours so she is not his slave anymore. He thinks she is, though.

Parent-Child Interactions after Arrival

Most of the Polish interviewees complained about the insufficient amount of time they spent with their parents. The family structure in Poland was significantly different than in the U.S. Parents (or fathers only) would go to work, return home after 4 PM and spend time with their children. In the U.S., as some adolescents commented, "we don't see our parents anymore." In the words of Michal, a 19 year-old teen:

Michal: In Poland we would come back home, after school, and we could always spend time with our parents at home. Here, for example, . . . I work the second shift and go to school in the morning, so I can see my parents sometimes in the morning for a brief moment and sometimes on Saturdays and Sundays when I wake up early enough. In Poland you had much more contact with your parents. In Poland they would work eight hours at the maximum and then they would

be home, all of us, in the evening, we would sit and you could be together for two hours. Only then we would all go our way. Here you don't spend this time together.

Interviewed adolescents seemed to be negatively affected by this daily separation from their loved ones. They missed conversations they used to have with their parents, and help and guidance they used to receive. It was particularly hard on them in the period following immigration when they felt lost and vulnerable, and could benefit from the support of their parents. In their view, such lack of parental supervision led to many problems among immigrant youth, including drug abuse and involvement in crime. As 19 year-old Waldek commented,

Waldek: Since they work themselves to death for 62 hours a week, they don't see their children anymore. And these children... later... end up on the streets.... and situation is not very pleasant. Since he is at work 62 hours a week, it means that he is not at home 12 hours a day. And he [the child] leaves the school and they don't see each other at all, and the parent doesn't know what his kid is doing after school and who he is spending his time with. And many children simply f... [expletive] up their lives.

Conversely, most of the interviewed adolescents from Mexico commented that the amount of time they spent with their parents had actually increased and that they had become closer to their mothers and fathers after settling in the U.S. They attributed it to the fact that they lacked the extended family networks and friends from their home country and that, at least in the immediate period after arrival, their parents were their only confidants and companions. The interviewed teenagers even speculated that their ties to their parents had strengthened due to the common struggles families had to go through after arrival to the U.S. Asked whether she noticed that she spent less free time with her parents following immigration a 17 year-old female Mexican interviewee replied,

Maria: We actually spend more time (...) because in México, you know, you see your mom, your dad, your cousins, your friends, your neighbors. ... When you come here [to the U.S.] you don't have friends, you don't have neighbors, you don't have anything ... only your family, so ... you get involved with them.

The issue of post-immigration relations within Mexican families, however, remains open, as there is a significant amount of literature that suggests that long work hours among many Mexican parents prevent them from adequately supervising their children, which leads to school absenteeism and high crime rates among this population (Fry, 2003).

The situation among interviewed adolescents from Korean families seemed to depend on their social class. Among middle class families in Korea fathers spent very little time with their children. They worked long hours and the remainder of the day spent in bars socializing with their co-workers and cultivating business relationships. Raising children was almost solely the domain of the mothers. Such traditional family relations often changed after arrival to the U.S., where middle class fathers enjoyed 9 AM–5 PM work schedules, and where the tradition of after-hour socializing with male co-workers was not nearly as pronounced as in Korea. Many interviewed Korean adolescents enjoyed these new family relations and were glad that they could spend more time with their parents. A 21 year-old Korean undergraduate student who had immigrated to the U.S. at the age of nine summarized it this way:

June-Ho: Everything came to be difficult after immigration; our family came to stick together more than before. (...) In Korea, only my mother and sister cared about me and my father worked very late everyday, so he did not have time for me. Even Sundays he just slept because of fatigue. But here he changed. My father became a Christian after immigration and every Sunday our family has to go to church together and spend time together. After worship, I spend time with my friends until 4 PM, but after that my family is home together.

The situation seemed to be reversed among the interviewed teens from working class Korean families. It is common for many Korean immigrants to establish small convenience stores or dry cleaning businesses after settling in the U.S. (Abelman & Lie, 1997; Jo, 1999). In order to maintain a successful business in a competitive American environment they often have to stay open seven days a week, 11 hours a day. Teenagers who came from such families expressed a concern about not being able to connect with parents who were too preoccupied with their daily survival needs and establishment-related problems to provide a meaningful support to their children. Some of the interviewed teens remarked that the "only time when

they got the attention of their parents" was when they discussed with them their school performance and education prospects.

Intergenerational Conflict

Intergenerational conflict seemed to be most pronounced among the Korean interviewees. It was sparked by the parents' concern for their children's choice of friends, which brought fears of the loss of traditional cultural traits and potential intermarriage. Many of the interviewed Korean adolescents commented on the strong preference among their parents for their marrying other Koreans. Those who contemplated marrying people of different race risked exclusion from the family and the community. A preference for sons to marry Korean women was particularly strong. It was related to traditional expectation that the daughter in law will join the family of her husband and provide care and support to her in-laws in their old age. Ability to converse with daughter in law in the Korean language was critical; however, her cultural and family background, and whether she "grew up in Korean values" was also an important consideration. As one of the Korean teenagers commented, "It is not two people that marry, but two families." As a result of that, association with people of the same ethnic background among interviewed Korean adolescents was strongly promoted by their parents. A 21 year-old Korean male participant recounted that his father threatened to stop paying for his college after he saw a young Caucasian girl in his son's dorm room during a 6 AM unannounced visit. Another young interviewee reported that her parents even went as far as forcibly removing her from school in which she had established too many personal contacts with mainstream American children.

Heejun: When I was in junior high school, I had only American friends and no Korean friends. At that time, my mother was very worried about me. She said, "Your American friends cannot understand you. Korean friends can understand you much better. Korean friends are from the similar culture as yours, their parents have similar jobs to us, they eat Korean food as you do." So, my parents moved to a neighbourhood where lots of Korean people lived and I enrolled in high school where there were many Korean students. As a result, since high school I made more Korean than American friends.

Such incidents were not recalled by either Polish or Mexican interviewees. Polish parents seemed to be much less interfering in their children's

choice of a partner. When asked how their parents would react to the possibility of their children intermarrying, one of the Polish adolescents replied, "My parents would want me to be happy. It wouldn't matter for them whom I would marry as long as it would be a good man. It's my choice." Another one commented that his parents gave him a free choice of dating/marriage partners, but said "I will pray that you choose a wife of the same race." Other teenagers commented that their parents were a bit concerned about possible cultural differences and the fact they would not be happy in mixed ethnic/racial unions. They left their children a lot of freedom regarding with whom they associated, though.

Time spent studying seemed to be a very important consideration for parents of both Korean and Polish teenagers, but did not surface in interviews with Mexican participants. Korean teenage interviewees complained that their parents expected them to study as many hours as they did in Korea, restricted time they could spend playing on their computers and visiting PC-rooms, limited their money allowance on leisure, and did not allow them to take up summer jobs as this could create a distraction to their educational pursuits. Polish teenagers also reminisced about strong pressures they received from their parents to study. Asked if they felt they were pressured to study more in the U.S. or back in Poland, one female interviewee replied, "I think more here. Because they want us to get somewhere, to be successful. They don't want us to struggle as much as they do."

Peer Relationships

Discrimination by the Mainstream Youth

Discrimination by their mainstream peers constituted an important problem that affected adaptation of interviewed Mexican and Polish immigrants. Mexicans mentioned frequent fights with White and Black students. A 22 year-old man who went to high school in a predominantly Mexican neighborhood of Pilsen recalled his teenage years:

Juan: When I was in high school we were often jumped by Black guys, there would be constant fights after school between Mexican and Black kids. One time a riot almost broke out. With Whites . . . no there was no open conflict . . . they called us names, they called us "spikes" and "wetbacks" but there were no open fights.

Both Mexican and Polish adolescent interviewees commented that American students often teased and ridiculed them, used ethnic/racial slurs and refused to engage in personal contacts with the immigrant youth. One of the Polish interviewees mentioned, "In Poland when a new kid came to school everybody tried to be friendly. Here it's different . . . Americans don't have a very friendly attitude." Americans, in general, were described as bossy, uptight, and unfriendly. A Polish 18 year-old (Gosia) commented, "They are all so important. . . that everybody should be afraid of them because they are American. They are the most important people in the world." Another 18 year-old male Polish teenager observed,

Marek: In our school bus there is this one short guy. I lost my nerves because of him. He would always tease me and laughed at me, you know, say nasty stuff because I speak funny English. First I didn't pay any attention, now I can't stand it anymore.

Miguel, a Mexican 19 year-old had similar experiences:

Miguel: It will happen from time to time that they [American students] will approach you and say that you are such and such because you can't speak English well. I know they were talking behind my back one time and they were saying bad things about me because they thought I wouldn't understand, but I did understand and . . . damn, I felt so hurt, so hurt . . .

Such discriminatory behaviors led to segregation in and after school, divisions within class, alienation of recent immigrants, and creation of ethnically enclosed groups of students. As a Polish 17 year-old (Adrian) commented, "There are 'Polish tables,' 'Indian tables,' 'Korean tables,' or 'Japanese tables' in our school cafeteria." Isolation and the resulting loneliness seemed to be a particularly important problem for the recently arrived interviewees. Adolescent participants who settled in the U.S. within the two years prior to the interview divided other students into those who would "speak to them" and those who would not. They were acutely aware of the fact that they were being ostracized and pushed away, which deepened their adjustment problems. Moreover, they were not at ease in the school system where they felt they were being overly scrutinized, unfairly treated by the personnel, and where they could not retaliate to the discriminatory attacks of others. One of the 19 year-old interviewees complained that he could not respond to the mistreatment he had received

from Mexican students as he was afraid he would be expelled from school. In his own words:

Waldek: When we [he and his sister] came to school it was February. We had some problems with Mexican kids because they teased us constantly. They called us all to the Principal's office and told us that if we didn't stop fighting they would kick us all out from school. If a mainstream kid gets into a fight he will get a warning or five days of suspension. And we didn't even touch each other. So how fair is that? What are we supposed to do? Just take it like that?

He later added that his poor English prevented him from "talking back," and that he was not isolated in his problems as other recent immigrants were also shy and had difficulties resolving their conflicts by verbal communication alone.

Interestingly, the interviewed Korean adolescents did not consider discrimination to be a particularly important problem. Even though they recalled some conflicts between different ethnic/racial groups in their schools, they treated them as personal matters between individual students, rather than as incidents of anti-immigrant discrimination. As one of the 18 year-old male interviewees who came from a family of shop owners mentioned,

Soo-Min: The Syrian students were very often teasing Korean students and calling them "Chinks." So, sometimes, there were fights between two groups of students. You know . . . high school students sometimes fight each other, same as in Korea. But, other than that, I think, Korean students have good relationship with other students.

Another Korean interviewee from the same school as Soo-Min explained that one of the reasons they did not experience any mistreatment from Whites was the fact that their school was "multi-ethnic" and only five mainstream Anglo-American students attended it.

Divisions among Teens of the Same Ethnicity

Significant divisions among students from the same ethnic group, based on their assimilation level and English proficiency, were observed among Korean, Mexican, and Polish interviewees. More assimilated teens looked down on the new arrivals who spoke poor English, wore unfashionable

clothes, and did not mingle with mainstream Americans. They were embarrassed by the behavior of the newcomers (FOBs or "fresh off the boat" in the slang of Koreans), whom they believed to be cliquish, "less civilized," and purposely avoiding assimilation. Better established teens were proud of their newly gained acceptance into the American peer group and tried to disassociate themselves from the new immigrants. A 21 year-old Korean woman recalled her high school years this way:

Heejun: When I was in high school, there was a complete separation among Korean students between those who spoke primarily Korean and those who spoke primarily English. My brother was in the former group and I was in the latter group. His friends were completely different from mine. . . . At his graduation ceremony, my friends were surprised when they found out he was my brother and they laughed at his awkward English. My friends and I did not want to hang out with those Koreans who just arrived [to the U.S.] When we heard they spoke Korean loudly in the hallway, we were so embarrassed and said, 'why don't they speak Korean in a low tone? Why don't they speak English?'

Similarly, better established Polish teenagers interviewed in this study sometimes referred to recent immigrants as "Poles" or even "Polacks" and contrasted them with more assimilated and more affluent "Polish-Americans." A 16-year old Polish girl from a middle-class family who emigrated to the U.S. at 8.5 years of age recalled why she was embarrassed to speak Polish at school:

Kasia: I was ashamed of being different. I was ashamed that other kids will think I'm a Polack. Because, you know, they don't understand that there are Polish immigrants and Polacks. That is, there are people who came here, who got jobs and who are assimilating and living as everyone else and there are those . . . Polish people [with disapproval] who think that they are still living in Poland. They . . . they are not assimilating. They refuse to speak English, they speak Polish all the time, they look different, they behave different. Some of them lived here for 10-20 years and they don't speak English at all. But people don't know that, they think we are all like that.

On the other hand, the newly arrived students were quite aware of the divisions within their own ethnic group and perceived better assimilated teens

as snobbish, arrogant, and pretentious in their displays of "Americanness." As a 17 year-old Polish teenager who emigrated only nine months prior to the interview said about more assimilated Polish adolescents: "There are people like this . . . they speak Polish but they won't speak Polish with you. They won't talk to you at all Because they are 'Americans' now." Another one added, "They will say 'Hi' or 'What's up' in English. It's like they've forgotten of how to say 'Hello' in Polish." A Mexican 17 year-old described a scene from a bus-stop where she met one of her neighbor's sons:

Lourdes: I have a friend, she is an older woman, she has three children, one is in high school, and two of them are in middle school. One of them is at middle school and he is always saying that he doesn't speak Spanish. [Interviewer's question: He doesn't *want to* speak Spanish?] Yeah. Because his friends wouldn't talk to him. Because. . . ok, his friends are Black and he, like, once I met him at the bus stop and I was like: "Hey donde esta tu mama, como estas?" And he was like: "What? Do I know you?" "Donde esta tu mama?"... "Oh... she is fine" . . . "OK, bueno, adios." And he was with his friends . . . And his friends started laughing. And I was like "OK, I don't care . . . It doesn't matter."

Although some of the less assimilated Korean teens interviewed in this study praised their more established counterparts for occasional help with their homework, an underlying resentment toward those whom they called "Twinkies" was also easy to detect. Twinkies were Koreans or Korean-Americans who spoke good English and who were more affluent; they had money for showing off, and they owned their own cars—a luxury most recent immigrants could not afford. Twinkies were also "not polite the Korean way," meaning they lost their traditional respect for elders, were individualistic, and did not pay appropriate attention to rules governing behavior within the group. As one of the female Korean interviewees recalled,

Sunny: When I go to a restaurant with Korean friends, we always ask each other what to eat, decide on the menu together, stand in the [order] line together, and eat together. One day I went to a restaurant with Korean friends. One of them was a 2nd generation Korean American. As soon as we entered the restaurant, he went to the order line, pick up his food and began to eat without asking other people

what to eat, or paying attention to what they had. After that, all other Korean people criticized him by saying that he was rude and he was such an individualist.

Unlike many previous sub-themes, divisions within teens of the same ethnicity were easy to detect among interviewees from all three ethnic groups represented in this study.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study showed that despite their varying backgrounds, the interviewed young people shared a plethora of similar adaptation problems brought about by the process of immigration. The obstacles they had to negotiate included new environment of the host country (new culture, school, and language), issues related to peer group acceptance, and a changed family situation (prolonged separation, intergenerational conflict, and often absent parents). Interviewees from all three ethnic groups had to face the challenge of learning the new language, adapting to the new school system, and renegotiating or reestablishing their relationships with family members and friends. Moreover, the study revealed that even the programs designed with the goal of helping young immigrants ease their transition, such as ESL education, were marred by the challenges that negatively affected psychological well-being, educational outcomes, and possibly future prospects of the young newcomers.

The qualitative design of this study and the small sample size preclude the possibility of making generalizations to other members of ethnic populations represented in this research project. However, certain trends that were discovered are clearly confirmed in the existing literature on the topic, while others offer useful additions to the discourse on adolescent immigrants' adaptation. The young people who participated in this study came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and from racially and ethnically distinct groups who differed with respect to their histories of settlement in the U.S. and modes of incorporation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). This baggage, augmented by the stereotypes pervasive in the American society, likely contributed to different treatment Mexican, Korean, and Polish adolescent interviewees received from the school personnel and from their peers of other ethnic groups. Most likely, high expectations on the part of the school personnel for the Asian students contributed to better treatment Korean adolescents experienced at school (Matute-Bianchi, 1986).

Mexicans, on the other hand, perceived as lacking in scholastic aptitude and ambitions were treated with more scrutiny, given less attention, and often allowed to "fall through the cracks" in the system. Interestingly, as Matute-Bianchi commented, "The observed pattern of school failure among many Mexican-descent students suggest a reactive process and an intensive intragroup reliance in developing a collective identity as a disadvantaged, disparaged minority group" (p. 255). In light of this, it would be interesting to conduct a follow-up study on the recently arrived Poles to determine whether they, with time, also developed similar oppositional identity and whether their negative experiences in school and perception of discrimination from the school personnel had any long-lasting effect on their success in America.

One of the main problems identified by young people interviewed in this study was the language barrier. ESL classes were designed to help students overcome language problems and ease their transition to the American school system. For some of our Polish interviewees, however, ESL education seemed to have had the opposite effect on their adaptation outcomes, as it created a whole array of problems, and led to disillusionment with the school system. Interestingly, our study did not find similar patterns among Mexican or Korean interviewees. We may argue that the situation of Korean teenagers might have been different, as they were able to better navigate the American school environment and to get out of the ESL system sooner. The Mexican interviewees, on the other hand, were of lower socio-economic status and might have had different educational and professional aspirations (Williams et al., 2002).

Differences between interviewees from three ethnic/racial groups were also observed in their perception of education prospects in America. In this case, their immigration status and legality of stay in the U.S. were of critical importance. Thus, while most of the interviewed Korean adolescents looked forward to continuing their education in college, many Mexican and Polish interviewees who resided in the U.S. illegally were resigned that their education will have to end at the high school level, as they will be unable to pay full college tuition required of undocumented immigrants.

Many of the family problems related to immigration identified in this study were experienced by the interviewees from all three ethnic/racial groups. They have also been previously recognized in the existing literature (e.g., Zhou, 1997a; Waters, 1996; Sung, 1987). For instance, the results of this study revealed numerous scenarios of family separation that interviewed teenagers had to negotiate. Regardless of the arrangement, however, family disruption had a traumatic effect on the psyche of

adolescents, many of whom had to deal with the emotions of being first separated from their mothers and/or fathers and then having to abandon their relatives who had raised them in the home country. Not surprisingly, they often questioned the authority of parents who suddenly appeared in their lives, and who had to, themselves, renegotiate their spousal arrangements. Noteworthy ethnic/racial differences in the perceptions of family interactions were identified among the interviewed Korean, Mexican, and Polish adolescents. For example, while interviewed Mexicans revealed that they spent more time with their parents after arrival, the opposite was true for Poles, who complained that the amount of time they spent with their parents had actually decreased after immigration, that they lacked their parents' support and advice, and that lack of parental supervision might have been responsible for delinquency among some immigrant youth. Situation among the interviewed Korean adolescents seemed to depend on their socio-economic status. As it has been mentioned, however, findings of this study cannot be generalized, and it is likely that increased amount of family interactions observed among Mexican interviewees will not translate to other migrants from this ethnic group.

Intergenerational conflict between immigrant parents and their offspring identified in this study has been previously documented by Patel, Power, and Bhavnagri (1996), Rumbaut (1994), and Suarez-Orozco and Qin (2006). Our research has indicated that issues of adolescents' interracial contacts and potential intermarriage were the main contributors to intergenerational tensions and that they were particularly salient among the interviewed Korean immigrants. Korean parents scrutinized free-time associations of their children and even tried to manage them by moving their children to schools with higher proportion of students from the same ethnic group. Moreover, stress associated with living up to the stereotype of over-achieving Asian students and parental pressures to perform well in school were shown to be somewhat responsible for adaptation problems among the interviewed Korean youth (Nagata, 1989). Intergenerational conflicts could be potentially alleviated or prevented if children and parents were brought closer together by their struggles of post-immigration adaptation. Such cases, for example, were evident among Mexican interviewees who reported relying more on their parents' advice and companionship in the wake of their other social networks being disrupted by immigration. Intergenerational conflict on the scale observed among Korean interviewees was not recorded among Polish or Mexican participants. Although Poles indicated their mothers and fathers pressured them to study, they seemed to understand and justify these efforts as their parents' attempt to afford

them a better life and shield them from hardships they had to experience after immigration. Moreover, despite the fact that both Mexican and Polish parents revealed a preference for their children marrying within the ethnic group, in general, they left the choice of their partner to their sons and daughters. These two reasons for the existence of intergenerational conflict among Koreans (fear of intermarriage and importance placed on education) can be attributed to strong Confucian values among this group that stress children's obedience, respect for elders, collectivism, and importance of continuing family bloodline (Creel, 1960; Fingarette, 1998; Nivison, 1996). Such principles run contrary to more mainstream American values of individualism and family partnership that Asian immigrant children learn from their peers and the American media. The clash of traditional East Asian values adhered to by the parents and modern, American traits assimilated by the children leads to tensions within Korean families that are less observable among Mexicans and Poles. Similarly, high value placed on education typical to Confucianism and promoted by Asian parents is less present within Mexican and Polish families.

The results of this study indicate that adaptation of interviewed Mexican and Polish adolescent immigrants was negatively affected by the discrimination they had experienced from the mainstream youth. Moreover, interviewees from all three ethnic groups reported significant divisions among the teens of the same ethnicity and often mistreatment they had received from their better assimilated counterparts (Beale-Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Williams et al., 2002; Zhou & Xiong, 2005). The Mexican and Polish interviewees seemed to experience more inter-group discrimination than the Koreans. Discrimination brought tension to their lives, and often resulted in alienation and segregation in and after school (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997a, b; Waters, 1994; Zhou & Xiong). According to Zhou (1997b) and Waters, discrimination particularly negatively affected young immigrants whose phenotype resembled African Americans and who had never previously experienced prejudice associated with their skin color. The fact that Koreans in our study did not report discrimination is quite surprising in light of findings of other studies on the school experiences of Asian youth (e.g., Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Ying & Han, 2006). It might have been explained by the fact that most of the Korean students attended multi-ethnic schools, were of relatively higher socio-economic status, and were so ethnically enclosed that they were shielded from the contacts with mainstream Americans.

Existing research has assumed that, unlike their parents, immigrant children lack meaningful connections to their home countries and, thus, are

unlikely to consider their places of origin as a point of reference (Zhou, 1997a, 1999). Unlike in Zhou's studies, many immigrant adolescents in this research project remembered their home country well, they have received large portion of their education back there, and, thus, were in the constant process of comparing and contrasting their lives prior to and post-immigration. Thus, it would be advisable that future research on the subject considers adolescents' adaptation in light of their experiences from the home country and acknowledges the role of their cultural heritage. Children and adolescents may deal with their past differently than adult immigrants, and their adaptation trajectories may differ; however, they are not "blank slates" when they cross the American border.

The results of this study on adaptation problems experienced by youth from three ethnic groups can have some practical and policy implications. First, certain changes can be adopted at the school level to alleviate the challenges faced by young newcomers. Their education preparation obtained in their home country should be more closely evaluated so as to best utilize the human capital they bring with themselves to the United States and to minimize the unnecessary use of resources in cases where young immigrants are made to repeat the material they had already mastered. School counselors should be better trained to recognize the unique needs, aspirations, and backgrounds of the immigrant youth and their work should be closely monitored to ensure they pursue the goals of maximizing educational outcomes and realizing individual goals of each minority student. Moreover, discrimination by the school personnel and among the students themselves should not be tolerated and teachers and other school personnel should be sensitized to detecting instances of mistreatment. Lastly, English as a Second Language program should be utilized taking into account individual needs and capabilities of each student. Bi-lingual education should promote the success of immigrant children and adolescents and not held them back from the timely graduation or minimize their chances for college admission.

At the individual, family, and community level, mental counseling should be made available and encouraged for youth who are struggling with issues of family separation, discrimination, and other adjustment-related problems. Counseling services in their native language should also be made available to immigrant parents dealing with issues of intergenerational conflict or school problems of their children. Ethnic organizations, on the other hand, should recognize the existence of divisions among the youth of the same ethnicity and should undertake activities aimed at minimizing conflicts among children and teens of different generational status

or assimilation level. For instance, mentorship groups in which more established teens would provide help and guidance to the new arrivals and activities that would bring together adolescents of different socio-economic status and assimilation level, and, at the same time foster the retention of ethnic traits could prove to be quite beneficial.

Changes at the government level would probably be the most difficult to accomplish given the heated debate over the status of millions of undocumented immigrants that is currently taking place in this country. However, it is likely that a significant portion of challenges faced by young immigrants would be alleviated if their undocumented status was addressed, thus, improving their chances for obtaining much needed post-secondary education, and if the socio-economic status of their families was improved.

Although the study offered some interesting insights into the adaptation processes of young immigrants, it also had some limitations that need to be acknowledged. The major limitation of this study was its small sample size and the heterogeneity among members of three ethnic and racial groups investigated in this study. Small sample sizes are generally typical to research projects conducted within the interpretive paradigm and generalizability of findings is not the goal of such studies. However, it would be desirable if future research projects on this subject, and survey research in particular, employed larger samples and, thus, allowed for generalizing their findings to other young immigrants from countries such as Mexico, Korea, and Poland. Moreover, this study did not examine in detail protective factors associated with young respondents' immigration status, their ethnic heritage, and their family characteristics (Harker, 2001). Traits such as strong family values and family support among Mexican interviewees, importance placed on education by the Korean youth, and the independence and resourcefulness among adolescent Poles have undoubtedly built up their resiliency to the experienced problems and fostered their adaptation to life in America. The role of such protective factors in adolescents' adaptation would constitute a fascinating topic of future research.

The study's advantage, on the other hand was inclusion of three ethnic groups under one investigation, focus on first generation immigrants only (and not mixing adolescents of different generational status), and an analysis of adaptation problems from the interviewees point of view. While previous research did an excellent job of differentiating within ethnic populations based on immigrants' social status, age, educational background, or family contexts (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006), more qualitative studies are needed to provide in-depth examination of adaptation experiences of young, first generation immigrants. It would also be desirable

that more panel studies, such as CILS, are conducted that focus on first-generation youth in the periods immediately following their arrival to the host country and in the subsequent years after the settlement.

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