



## Introduction to the Special Issue on Immigration: Expanding Definitions and Examining New Contexts

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## Introduction to the Special Issue on Immigration: Expanding Definitions and Examining New Contexts

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Despite being a nation of immigrants, the United States has long struggled with the issue of immigration. Since before the nation's founding, the country's immigration policies and practices have been, and continue to be, riddled with contradictions. Close to the center of this sometimes bloody and always controversial issue is a fundamental, indeed enduring, question: Who is an American and what sorts of education should all Americans enjoy?

Answers will vary depending on where and when you look. In the 19th century, 250 years after the first forced migration of African slaves to British North America, the American Civil War began to settle this question for African Americans—one that took another 100 years to finally, if imperfectly, resolve. For most of the 20th century, national policymakers focused on restricting immigration. The first indication of this occurred with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which bottlenecked Chinese immigration until the mid-1940s. By that point, of course, the United States had all but cut off immigration flows from everywhere but Western Europe. The 1924 Immigration Act created quotas that remained in place until the passage of the groundbreaking 1965 Immigration Act. What followed was truly remarkable: After nearly a century of exclusion, the United States witnessed a period of incredible ethno-racial inclusion. After 1965 and the end of the discriminatory quota system, an estimated 28 million immigrants—a majority of whom derived from Latin America (46%) and Asia (26%)—arrived in the United States. The rest, as they say, is history.

Yet that history remains vitally important to the immigration debates of our own time, and it is for this reason that we present this special edition of the *Peabody Journal of Education*. Building on a growing body of scholarship on immigration, this collection offers a new view of the myriad ways in which immigration and education intersect across a spectrum of different policy contexts—from language policy to disaster relief, from public high schools in Los Angeles to selective public universities in Texas, to workforce development in the United States and around the world. Not surprisingly, the authors in this collection populate an array of disciplines and the work they have produced reflects their diverse training in education, sociology, demography, history, law, anthropology, and psychology. By tackling the issue of immigration and education using historical, qualitative, quantitative, and case study approaches, we hope this collection will help clarify issues and present possible solutions to some of the most pressing immigration-related education problems in this country.

The collection starts off by looking back to the origins and outcomes of the federal Bilingual Education Act of 1968. Mehlman Petrzela's deft article reveals how state and local initiatives in California shaped the emergent legislation and, in turn, how that legislation spurred additional policy actions at the federal level. As Mehlman Petrzela explains, federal involvement in this contentious realm turned out to be a mixed bag. It deepened the federal government's commitment to limited-English-speaking students but also squelched some promising local innovations in bilingual education. Mehlman Petrzela's article is of particular significance to current discussions over so-called Limited English Proficient students and recent efforts to legislate English-only classroom instructions in California, Massachusetts, and Arizona.

The next article examines the role of the popular arts as a pedagogical construct in the current immigration debates in the United States. Dipti Desai's article probes how artistic productions serve as key pedagogical interventions that both shape and are shaped by the immigration issue. Drawing on critical race theory and her own innovative analysis of artwork by and about immigrants, Desai argues that art is a powerful tool for the exploration and study of the immigration issue because it provides immigrants with access to "embodied knowledge" firmly grounded in their own experiences as immigrants.

Augustina H. Reyes's work looks at the racial non- or misidentification of Latino students and Latino immigrant students in New Orleans, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Reyes specifically explores the role of a Black and White political structure and the provisions (or lack thereof) made for Latinos classified as White residents. At the heart of Reyes's article is an examination of why undocumented families responded, failed to respond, or were discouraged from responding to federal relief efforts. No doubt, this issue is of growing importance in the U.S. South where communities are experiencing unprecedented immigration "integration" but the policies and protocols around this new integration remain poorly understood, and in many cases nonexistent.

Roberto G. Gonzales's article builds upon the theme of undocumented immigrants—this time from the vantage point of those that are not likely to attend college. Where most studies focus on (and often celebrate) high-achieving immigrants, Gonzales instead focuses on their underperforming and undocumented peers. He offers a new contribution to this literature by focusing on how access to resources leading to postsecondary matriculation for poor performing, undocumented high school students is shaped by tracking and school-based networks. Using original qualitative data, Gonzales finds that particular school structures, empathic teaching, and guidance from adults can help even the most vulnerable of students go to college.

Owens's article probes the admission of foreign students to two leading public universities in Texas. Using a census of all applicants to the University of Texas—Austin and Texas A&M from 1992 to 2002, Owens examines how Texas's implementation of a race-neutral percentage plan influenced admission opportunities for two understudied groups: foreign students and in-state Black and Hispanic immigrants. The analysis uncovers several important differences in selectivity for foreign applicants during a period of great controversy in higher education admissions for underrepresented minority students. The article also presents important implications for majors associated with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Batalova and Fix's article examines the role of English proficiency on immigrant employment patterns and educational outcomes. Building upon a literature that has privileged parental educational attainment and income as predictors of immigrant children's educational success, Batalova and Fix add a new variable: language ability. Mining the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, the authors examine the education levels, workforce involvement, incomes, use of public

benefits, participation in English as a Second Language instruction, and English literacy levels of immigrant adults with varying levels of oral English proficiency. The analysis offers a richer understanding of the importance of parental achievement as it relates to the educational outcomes of children.

The concluding article by Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Sattin-Bajaj places the immigration issue into a truly global frame. They explore the global migration flow of the fastest growing segment of the immigrant population: youth. The authors identify and examine some of the most innovative educational programs for immigrant integration not only in the United States but in countries around the world. The authors provide a fascinating discussion of best practices regarding immigrant integration-via-education in countries with profoundly distinct immigration histories to say nothing of very different cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic traditions. To be sure, this article reminds us not only of the utter value of comparative work in immigration studies, but also of how much comparative research there is left to do.

It is for this reason that organizing a special issue on immigration is such a humbling task. This collection only skims the surface of the topic. We therefore encourage you to approach this collection with the same adventuresome spirit that animates the articles that compose it. After all, one of the main purposes of good scholarship should be to open new vistas and encourage further exploration; it should be a point of departure, not a final destination. After engaging the work included in this volume, we hope you agree.

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Stella M. Flores is an assistant professor of Public Policy and Higher Education at Vanderbilt University with a secondary appointment in the Department of Sociology. She holds an Ed.D. and an Ed.M. from Harvard University, an M.P.Aff. from The University of Texas at Austin, and a B.A. from Rice University. She has published in the areas of immigration, higher education policies regarding admissions and financial aid, and community colleges.

Christopher P. Loss is an assistant professor of Public Policy and Higher Education at Vanderbilt University. His forthcoming book, *Between Citizens and the State: The Politics of American Higher Education in the Twentieth Century*, will be published by Princeton University Press in 2011. He is a fellow on the Teagle Foundation's National Forum on the Future of the Liberal Arts and the recipient of the 2010 Peabody College Award for Excellence in Classroom Teaching.