



Introduction

Intergenerational Relations in Immigrant Families

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Immigration is one of the most pressing issues in the United States. The foreign-born now represent about 13 percent of the nation's population. Together with their American-born children, this group constitutes nearly a quarter of the United States—more than 65 million people. This is an astonishing figure. If today's foreign-born and their children were to form a country, it would have approximately twice the population of Canada and slightly more than that of France or Italy.

The numbers are critical, but their implications are even more significant. Much has been written about immigrants in the labor market, in the educational system, and in neighborhoods in the United States. Much less scholarly attention has been paid to what happens in the privacy of their families, although understanding family dynamics is essential for appreciating the first- and second-generation immigrant experience. This volume puts the spotlight on a key aspect of immigrant family life: intergenerational relations. The primary concern is relations between immigrant parents and their children, many of whom were born or largely raised in the United States, although relations between immigrant grandparents and their grandchildren are also investigated. Intergenerational relations—so central in immigrant families—are characterized by an intricate tangle of attachments and divisions. Intergenerational dynamics in immigrant families help shape the contours and trajectories of individual lives and also affect involvements outside the confines of the family.

It has become a cliché to talk about immigrant children in pitched battles against tradition-bound parents from the old country, but the essays

in this book offer a more nuanced and complex view of intergenerational relations. As one might expect, one major theme is the sources of tensions and conflicts—for example, about parental discipline, children's marriage choices, and educational and occupational expectations for children. But intergenerational relations are not just about strife and strain. The essays also point to the ties that bond and bind immigrants and their children, and the way they work out accommodations and compromises.

Immigrants often leave children behind in the home country when they head for the United States, and a central theme of several of the chapters is relations in transnational families—when parents and children are apart, when they see each other on visits, and when, as happens in many cases, they reunite in the United States. Even when children are not left behind, intergenerational relationships, as many of the chapters make clear, are often embedded in transnational extended-family networks. Indeed, in some cases, separation involves parents or grandparents who return to the country or community of origin while children or grandchildren remain in the United States.

While the essays are concerned with intergenerational relations as they develop and play out within immigrants' families and households, these relations have an impact well beyond the household and family arena. Among other things, family intergenerational dynamics can affect how the children of immigrants fare at school and at work and their experiences in a host of other institutional settings. By the same token, what goes on at work, at school, and in the wider immigrant community—and in the home country—can have consequences for relations within the immigrant family in the United States. As several of the authors emphasize, U.S. immigration policy also affects family dynamics, particularly as it determines whether—and how—immigrants can establish authorized or legal status. Moreover, U.S. policies with regard to welfare benefits provide economic and other resources that can affect intergenerational relations. The immigrant family, in short, cannot be viewed in isolation.

In exploring these themes, the eight chapters in this volume draw on in-depth ethnographic research that captures the complexities of interactions between immigrant parents and their children and gives a flavor for the everyday lives of immigrant families. The broad range of national-origin groups represented—Latin American (Mexicans, Guatemalans, and Salvadorans), Asian (Bangladeshis, Chinese, and Filipinos), African (Sierra Leoneans), and Caribbean (Dominicans and West Indians)—provides a window into the dynamics of intergenerational relations in immigrant

families from different regions, countries, and cultures. Moreover, the studies are based on research in a variety of settings in the United States, from New York City and Washington, DC, to Los Angeles and Phoenix.

The inclusion of chapters on diverse immigrant populations underscores the role of home-country cultural and social patterns—and migration pathways of national-origin groups—in shaping intergenerational relations. Within an immigrant group, as the case studies show, gender, class, race, and legal status also have an important impact. Moreover, intergenerational relations are not fixed or static; they undergo shifts over time, as parents and children move through the life course into new life stages and as family and household arrangements—and in some cases the very country of residence—change.

The book begins with chapters primarily focused on intergenerational relations among family members living in the United States (Zhou, Espiritu, Waters and Sykes), continues with cases that look at the impact of transnational ties and orientations on intergenerational relations (Kibria, D'Alisera, Gilbertson), and concludes with analyses that explore parent-child relations across borders when migration leads to the separation of parents and children and relations must be managed from a distance (Menjívar and Abrego, Dreby).

In general, the chapters use “generation” in two interrelated ways. One meaning refers to genealogical rank in a kinship system—for example, the relationship of individuals to persons in the generation before or children in the generation after. Generation also is used as a measure of distance from the country of origin, so that people who move to the United States from another society as adults are often referred to as “first-generation” immigrants, their American-born children as the “second generation,” and their children in turn as the “third generation.”¹ Also implicit throughout is a distinction between household and family; the household is a residential unit made up of kin and sometimes non-kin, whereas the family is a kinship grouping, including people related by blood and marriage, that may not be tied to a residential unit.

Intergenerational Strains and Conflicts

The tale of the conflict between immigrant parents steeped in old-country traditions and values and their children who have grown up in the American social and cultural world is an old one.² Indeed, it forms the basis

for many novels and memoirs about contemporary immigrants, typically from the point of view of aggrieved children.³

Intergenerational conflict, of course, is not unique to immigrant families. Adolescents in American society typically seek greater independence and autonomy while parents seek to assert their authority. Young people adopt styles of dress, decoration, music, and dance that their parents do not understand—and often cannot stand. Yet the strains resulting from “normal” teenage rebelliousness or lifestyles often become intensified when the parents come from another country and culture and are unfamiliar with or disapprove of dominant American values and practices. The parents may even hold up an idealized version of traditional values and customs as a model for their children, even though these values and traditions have undergone considerable change since they left their home country.⁴ The key point is that rebelliousness among American adolescents represents a conflict between an adolescent world and an adult world, whereas the children of immigrants, as Min Zhou notes, also have to struggle to make sense of the inconsistencies between *two* adult worlds: that of the immigrant community or family and that of the larger society.⁵ Intergenerational conflicts may be especially acute in groups whose cultural patterns and practices differ radically from those of the broader American culture.

As the essays in this book demonstrate, intergenerational conflicts in immigrant families have many sources. One is issues of discipline and respect. In many immigrant cultures children are supposed to show parents and their elders a level of respect and deference far greater than expected in American families—and parents are permitted, even encouraged, to discipline their children in ways that Americans, and the American legal system, deem abusive. In their chapter, Mary Waters and Jennifer Sykes discuss how corporal punishment was an accepted—indeed, taken-for-granted—aspect of child-rearing in the West Indies, and cultural attitudes about parenting techniques rooted there continue to have a strong impact when West Indians move to the United States. West Indian immigrant parents believe that sparing the rod is a recipe for disaster, leading to behavioral problems and delinquency. They are outraged that if they discipline children the way they think best, they can be reported to the police or state agencies for child abuse.⁶ Just how common such reports are is an open question, yet even the possibility that children might appeal to U.S. legal authorities can be a flashpoint for tensions between the generations in many immigrant groups, giving children added leverage in relations

with their parents and bringing to the fore the conflict between U.S. and home-country behavioral norms.

For their part, members of the second generation, reared in an America culture where early independence for children is encouraged and child-rearing norms are generally more permissive than in the country of origin, often view their parents as authoritarian and domineering. The parents, with their (sometimes idealized) old world standards, often think their children are rude and disrespectful. Chinese immigrant parents, as Min Zhou reports in her essay, feel that their children owe them filial piety and are horrified when their Americanized children are disrespectful and disobey.⁷ Grandparents, too, as Greta Gilbertson indicates in her study of a Dominican extended family, may have similar complaints. She cites one older Dominican woman who objects that her grandchildren in New York call her by her nickname instead of *abuela* (grandmother). When parents feel frustrated and threatened by the new values and behaviors to which their children are exposed, they may attempt to tighten the reins, which, in turn, heightens children's resentment and desire to flout parental controls.

Sexual relations are often a source of conflict, particularly when it comes to daughters. Immigrants from cultures where dating is frowned upon or forbidden can be frightened and appalled by their daughters' desire to go out on dates and "hang out" with their friends. One of the second-generation West Indian women in Waters and Sykes's chapter said her parents restricted her dating until she was twenty-two. In general, immigrant parents are stricter with daughters than sons, seeking to keep daughters home or close to home and heavily monitoring and controlling their social activities. In Filipino families, as Yen Le Espiritu reports, parental control over daughters' movements and actions begins the moment they are perceived as young adults and sexually vulnerable. The parents Espiritu interviewed seldom allowed their daughters to date, to stay out late, to spend the night at friends' houses, or to take out-of-town trips. Daughters railed against parents' constant surveillance, which placed greater restrictions on them than on their brothers—a key source of frustration and even intense anger. "I always had to fight long, drawn-out arguments with my parents just to move two feet from the house," one daughter complained. Espiritu argues that Filipino immigrant parents' emotional hold over their daughters strengthens the parents' power as they attempt to regulate daughters' independent choices by branding disobedient young women as "nonethnic" or "untraditional," thereby striking at the children's sense of ethnic identity.

A further source of conflict is parental pressure to marry within the ethnic group, which second-generation young people may resent—and resist.⁸ Additional problems arise in immigrant groups where arranged marriage is commonly practiced. Arranged marriages, needless to say, conflict sharply with the emphasis on romantic love in American culture. Indeed, American society—and, in some cases, its legal institutions—may encourage young people to reject traditional arranged marriages. Increasingly, young people in these families are given some element of choice; for example, they may have veto power over parental choices, or, in a “semi-arranged marriage,” they may be introduced to acceptable partners and then allowed a brief courtship in which they decide whether or not they wish to marry. Even with these changes, many second-generation youth bristle at parental pressure, as Nazli Kibria’s chapter on Bangladeshis indicates. Bangladeshis born and raised in the United States were opposed to the idea of arranged marriages and, to a lesser degree, semi-arranged marriages, as well as their parents’ desire to see them marry someone of Bangali origin.

Intense, and often high, parental expectations for children are also a point of contention, as the chapters on Chinese and Filipino immigrants emphasize. “We did it for the children,” is a common refrain among Filipino immigrants, who feel that their children’s educational and occupational success will validate their move to the United States and the sacrifices they have made along the way. Young people in Filipino and Chinese families are under tremendous pressure from their parents to get good grades, to graduate from college, and to pursue “practical” careers such as law, medicine, or engineering.⁹ Zhou describes the Chinese immigrant family as a pressure cooker in which parents are demanding and unyielding about their children’s educational achievements. If their children work hard, they believe, they can get A’s; those who fail to achieve bring shame to the family. The result, she says, is that children often find themselves working at least twice as hard as their American peers while feeling that their parents never think they work hard enough. As Espiritu points out, in the case of Filipinos, this is aggravated by the fact that parents who are overburdened by demanding work schedules and unfamiliar with the requirements of American schools are unable to offer their children much assistance.

Parents who don’t speak English often depend on their children to translate, mediate, and interpret, which can also cause difficulties. As Zhou indicates in her chapter, this reversal of roles can give children power over

their parents, which may exacerbate conflict and accentuate the gulfs between them. Parents understandably feel frustrated by having to depend on children for translating government documents and other material and for communicating with English-speaking officials, professionals, and merchants. Parents may worry, in fact, that their children are not translating correctly—and a number of studies note instances where children deliberately mistranslate reports from teachers, saying that a grade of *F* means “fine,” for example. For their part, young people may be embarrassed by their parents’ inability to fill out forms, make appointments, or conduct business on their own, be annoyed by this encroachment on their time, and feel uncomfortable about learning family secrets—or intervening and mediating—in the process of translating in medical, legal, and other social settings.¹⁰

Two additional sources of tension between the generations are highlighted in the chapters by D’Alisera and Kibria: different relations and reactions to the homeland. Many Sierra Leonean children in JoAnn D’Alisera’s study, influenced by mainstream American values and images of Africa, felt ashamed of their parents’ home country and the customs practiced there; sometimes they held up their parents to ridicule, causing distress to parents who were trying to connect the children to the homeland culture. Trips to the country of origin can also create strains. Bangladeshi parents were eager for their children to become acquainted with family in Bangladesh and establish a sense of connection there, but the children were often reluctant and uneasy about going to visit, complaining, for example, about the heat, the food, and the poverty.

Gender clearly affects tensions and conflicts between the generations in a powerful way, if only because daughters nearly always experience greater strictures on their freedom outside the household than sons. Class, race, and ethnicity figure in as well. Zhou observes, for example, that middle-class Chinese immigrant parents are more willing to accept “American” behavior and are less strict with their children. In the West African case, negative images of Africa that affect Sierra Leonean children are related to long-held racial constructions in the United States. Espiritu suggests that one reason Filipino parents have such a strong emotional hold on their daughters is that accusations that children are “not Filipina enough” have a bitter sting when children are trying to establish a positive ethnic identity in the U.S. context. Legal status also needs to be considered, and Cecilia Menjívar and Leisy Abrego indicate that the advantages of American-born children over their unauthorized siblings—when

it comes, for example, to access to health care or easier ability to travel to the home community—can lead to resentments that impinge on relations with parents.

Although the immigrant family can become a battlefield between the generations,¹¹ this characterization is too sharp and one-sided. Relations between the generations are filled with inconsistencies and contradictions and shift in different contexts and over time. In many, probably most, cases, conflict is mixed with cooperation and caring, and rejection of some parental standards and practices is coupled with acceptance of others.

As is evident in this volume's case studies, even when young people chafe under parental constraints and obligations, the vast majority feel deep affection for and loyalty to their parents and grandparents and recognize the importance of family and the need to assist and support family members. Families create strong emotional ties that bond members together. Moreover, parents and children often work out compromises as a way to get along. Far from being inflexible traditionalists, many immigrant parents adapt and change in the new context. This can mean giving children more say in marriage arrangements, for example, extending the evening curfew hour, or permitting dating earlier than some parents would like.¹² Although Waters and Sykes emphasize the persistence of old-country parenting practices among West Indian immigrants, they note that some parents are trying to learn new ways to discipline their children; some are learning new techniques from their children, who explain how American or Americanized friends are disciplined. Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut suggest that when parents and children acculturate at the same time—what they call 'consonant acculturation'—children are less prone to feel embarrassed by their parents and more willing to accept parental guidance, thereby reducing the likelihood of intergenerational conflict.¹³

As for the children of immigrants, they are not inevitably rebels, nor do they necessarily reject or entirely abandon their parents' ways. Not all Sierra Leonean young people are ashamed of their parents' homeland; many, D'Alisera points out, develop a sense of cultural pride and a link to Sierra Leone and try their best to "accommodate their parents' desire for them to stay connected to a place they have never seen." Bangladeshi young people may not want to go "home" to visit and may reject the notion of arranged marriage, but they understand their parents' desire to see them married endogamously to other Muslims and Bangalis. As Waters

and Sykes report, many West Indian teenagers defend their parents' disciplinary practices and said that when they had children they would try to combine West Indian strictness with American freedoms and openness. Whatever young people think about their parents' standards, they often try to conceal their behavior from parents in order to avoid clashes, and they may simply go along with parental expectations to keep the peace.

Transnational Dynamics

Intergenerational relations in immigrant families are not just about what happens among those living in the United States. Many of the chapters demonstrate the critical significance of transnational ties and obligations: immigrants and their children and grandchildren in the United States often maintain active and ongoing involvements with close relatives in the home country and are part of what have been conceptualized as transnational families.¹⁴ Intergenerational relations that span national borders are, as one would expect, complicated by the realities and difficulties of physical separation.

This comes out dramatically in the chapters by Joanna Dreby and Menjívar and Abrego, who discuss the dynamics in Mexican, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran families when parents leave their children with relatives in the home community—or in some cases send them back—when they go to the United States to work. Parent-child separations, as both chapters show, are linked to the demands of labor migration for those facing limited opportunities in their home countries and restrictive U.S. policies that, among other things, have recently made border crossing more difficult, dangerous, and expensive. It is an old, familiar immigrant story for fathers to migrate without wives and children. What is new, as Dreby emphasizes, is the growing number of mothers from poorer countries who are leaving their children to work abroad, a phenomenon that has been called transnational motherhood.¹⁵

Whatever the reason for leaving children in the home community, the separation takes a toll on the children—and their parents—and obviously affects their relations. “When parents and children do not live in the same country,” Dreby writes, “share in the same routines, or experience similar opportunities and constraints, intergenerational relations are constantly in flux. During periods of separation, parents and children must constantly adapt to each other’s changing needs. They do so based on the

little information they can glean through weekly conversations, second-hand accounts from caregivers, and neighbors' gossip. Lack of contact increases insecurity and intensifies emotions. The effects of changes in family composition are harder to adjust to." The Mexican mothers and fathers in Dreby's study struggled to exert authority from a distance over children who were dubious and at times resentful of their parents' decisions to migrate. Mothers and fathers often felt jealous of their children's primary caregivers in Mexico. Further complications ensued when children in Mexico had to share their parents, especially mothers, with siblings who were born and lived with parents abroad and thus were in competition for parents' love, attention, and resources.

The burden of separation in Mexican as well as Guatemalan and Salvadoran families fell more heavily on mothers than fathers since mothers were expected to provide more emotional care. Menjívar and Abrego report that children used more emotional language and expressed greater suffering when it was their mother who migrated. Although both parents of one teenage boy in El Salvador lived in the United States, he directed his anger and resentment only toward his mother, saying that "the man can do as he pleases." Mexican fathers, as Dreby notes, were evaluated as family providers, and their economic support was enough to demonstrate love; mothers were expected to show greater concern and devotion. As a result of this gendered double standard, mothers felt much guiltier than fathers when they left children behind—and the children judged them more harshly for having gone. Many mothers she interviewed said they cried for months when they arrived in the United States; the fathers were relatively guilt-free, feeling that they were fulfilling their paternal responsibilities by working and sending money home.

When children are reunited with their parents in the United States, different sets of problems arise. The reunions, as Menjívar and Abrego put it, can be bittersweet, leading to great joy and renewed intimacy as well as tension and disappointment. Among other things, parents and children must become reacquainted and get used to living together again in a situation in which both may have unrealistic expectations of each other. The children's separation from grandmothers or other close kin who cared for them in the home community for much of their childhood is often wrenching. Not only do children have to adjust to new living arrangements in an unfamiliar country, but also new schools and a new cultural, social, and physical environment. In some cases, they also have to adjust to a new step-parent and new siblings as well.¹⁶ That parents are often

working long hours and have little time to spend with their children adds difficulties.

For their part, parents may be disappointed if their children are confused, resentful, or withdrawn instead of grateful for the reunion, which usually entailed great financial sacrifices. Trying to establish discipline over children they have spent little time with or may not have seen for several years poses another frustrating challenge. Still, as Menjívar and Abrego remind us, reunifications in the United States also offer new opportunities for parents and children to recognize each other's sacrifices and to build closer relationships with each other.

In unusual instances, it is parents who stay behind while their children migrate to the United States—as Zhou describes in her discussion of “parachute kids,” the term used for young people, from the age of about eight to seventeen, who are sent to California to attend school (so they will gain entry to prestigious colleges and jobs) while their parents remain in Taiwan, Hong Kong, or mainland China. Usually, these children see their parents only two or three times a year, leading to emotional distance and greater independence from them and their controls.

Another transnational permutation occurs when parents or grandparents return to the home community while maintaining close relations with their children or grandchildren in the United States through visits, phone calls, and other means of communication. In portraying the complex dynamics of the Castillo's extended family, Gilbertson indicates that family members who have remained in or returned to the Dominican Republic are still often pivotal figures for those who reside in the United States and continue to interject their opinions in the affairs of their children and grandchildren there.¹⁷ When older women go back to the Dominican Republic, this may give their adult daughters more scope in being able to assume leadership positions in the extended family in the United States, but it can create problems in that the daughters cannot rely on the older women for day-to-day support the way they did when their mothers were always around. On return to the Dominican Republic, the older women may also seek to pull back some of their children and grandchildren to join them, which obviously influences the shape of intergenerational relations and no doubt, on occasion, sparks tensions and conflicts.

A study of Mexican New Yorkers indicates that many second-generation adult Mexican women sent their pre-school-aged children back to rural Mexico to be cared for by grandmothers who had gone home to retire, thereby forging and fortifying relations between three generations

in a transnational field. Second-generation Mexican teenagers were sometimes sent back, too, often because parents felt they showed signs of trouble in the United States.¹⁸ In my research on Jamaican migrants in New York, parents often tried to keep wayward teenagers in line by threatening to send them to Jamaica; such threats sometimes heightened intergenerational conflicts—although, if carried out, the separation itself might eventually heal the breach. Whether teenagers are sent home as punishment, protection from the dangers of American urban life, or in response to changing family needs and dynamics, a large-scale survey of second-generation New Yorkers found that a surprising number of West Indians and Latinos were sent back home to live with relatives at some point in their teen years.¹⁹ This back-and-forth movement among young people—as well as among their parents and grandparents—often reflects and has reverberations for intergenerational relations in immigrant families.

Intergenerational Relations: Beyond the Family and Household

Families and households do not exist in isolation. An analysis of intergenerational relations within immigrant families must inevitably take into account broader social, economic, political, and cultural institutions and practices. State policies, for instance, have an impact on how relations develop between immigrant parents and their children and grandchildren because, as the chapters by Gilbertson and Menjivar and Abrego highlight, they shape, among other things, people's ability to move to and remain legally in the United States as well as access to social welfare benefits. What happens at school has implications for family dynamics at home. To give just one example, when children are struggling or get into difficulties at school this can lead to conflicts with immigrant parents and, in some cases as just mentioned, sending children to grandparents in the home country. In her chapter, Espiritu points to another dynamic, arguing that the pervasive sexualization of Filipinas and other Asian women in the United States helps explain why Filipino immigrants have such inflexible expectations of their daughters' chastity—a common cause of intergenerational clashes in Filipino families.

Work life also influences intergenerational relations because it affects the economic resources available to family members and creates strains that can carry over into the family. When the children of immigrants spend time working in a family business, the boundaries between family

and work are blurred and other tensions arise. A recent study of Korean American and Chinese American children of entrepreneurial immigrants describes the anger and resentment of adolescents who had to work in the family business, which, they felt, robbed them of a “normal” childhood. Role reversals were magnified since the young people found themselves translating and mediating, often in times of stress, with customers on a daily basis as well as with professionals such as lawyers on vital business matters.²⁰

Involvement in the ethnic community may also have consequences for intergenerational relations in the family, in some cases serving to reduce tensions and conflicts. Zhou argues that Chinese language schools help the second generation deal with the pressures they face and provide a socially acceptable setting where they can let off steam. When they socialize with young people like themselves in the Chinese language schools and other ethnic institutions catering to Chinese American adolescents, they come to understand that the problems they have with their parents are common to other Chinese families. In the Chinese language schools, they can commiserate with their peers, share their feelings, and develop strategies to cope with parental constraints. At the same time, ethnic institutions reinforce parental norms and values regarding the importance of schooling, showing respect to parents, and feeling proud of Chinese culture and being Chinese. In a variation on the same theme, Sierra Leonean parents described by D’Alisera try to counter negative images of African cultural practices that many children have imbibed in America by seeking to instill a sense of pride and involvement in culture and traditions through various community activities and organizations (such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and fundraising events), although how successful such efforts are is unclear.

As these comments suggest, various institutions and organizations outside the family are influenced by the contours of intergenerational dynamics within it. In the Sierra Leonean case, parents consciously shaped community events to convey positive sentiments about the home country to children who were ashamed of their parents’ culture. Chinese language schools were designed for educational purposes, but as a result of intergenerational strains they also ended up as places where young people could vent their frustrations.

Resentments that build up in the family spill over into other arenas as well, school being especially noteworthy in this regard. Troubles at home may lead to trouble at school. When children and grandchildren are sent

back and forth between the home community and the United States, their educational progress may suffer.²¹ Not that this is inevitable; indeed, some members of the second generation in a large-scale New York study who had been sent home and gone to school there were in a better position than their cousins who remained in the New York City public schools in terms of getting into U.S. colleges and being hired for U.S. jobs.²² With regard to gender, second-generation daughters may resent that they face greater restrictions than their brothers on their freedom of movement, yet, paradoxically, their more highly structured and monitored lives can have positive effects on their educational achievement because they are kept closer to home and away from the temptations of the street.²³ Less happily, the double standard for daughters can lead immigrant families to cut short daughters' educational pursuits or pressure them to attend less prestigious institutions closer to home.²⁴

Young people's activities in religious institutions and politics may also be affected by, or at least parallel, the generational divide in immigrant families. Studies indicate that members of the second generation may segregate themselves from the immigrant generation in religious congregations because they feel estranged from the ethnic ambience there, and sometimes they complain that the religious services are too rigid or old-fashioned.²⁵ In political organizations and community groups, the second generation may have a different perspective on ethnic group identity as well as a different style of political expression from those whose early political experience was in another country.²⁶ For example, a study of Dominican activists in New York shows that the American civil rights movement had a far greater influence on the style and substance of political expression among the second generation, whose members were more willing to work closely with African Americans and other Latinos.²⁷ Among Asian Americans, there is a greater panethnic consciousness of "Asian" (as opposed to Chinese, Korean, or Vietnamese) identity among the second than the first generation.²⁸

Conclusion: Looking Ahead

Most of the chapters in this volume explore relations between children in adolescence or young adulthood and their middle-aged immigrant parents. However, relations change as both children and their parents grow older. Children form families of their own—and become parents

themselves. Parents become grandparents. Members of both generations often shift residences within or outside the United States. At the same time, the societies in which families and households are embedded also change. Individuals respond to a multiplicity of changing social, economic, and political conditions, all of which affect the shape and form of families and the relations within them.

Gilbertson's twelve-year longitudinal study of the Castillo extended family brings out many of these dynamics, as she shows how relations among family members continually took new twists and turns and tensions rose and fell. There were moves back and forth between the Dominican Republic and New York, or to other parts of the United States; marriages split up and new unions were constituted; children went from being toddlers to teenagers or from teenagers to young adults; and middle-aged women turned into grandmothers.

While relations between the generations in immigrant families may be severely strained at one point in the children's, and parents', life course, later on they may become less conflictual. A theme in many novels and memoirs is how members of the second generation who were deeply divided from and involved in intense conflicts with parents in their youth work out rapprochements when they become adults and strike out on their own. An ethnographic study by Lisa Park describes how the anger and resentment that Chinese American and Korean American daughters felt toward parents in their teenage years when they worked in the family business tended to subside when they moved away from home for college.²⁹ In another study, Vivian Louie notes that second-generation Chinese American college students who balked at parental pressure when they were younger thought during their college years that it stimulated them to do well in school.³⁰ In many cases, when daughters become mothers, a new closeness develops between them as they turn to their own mothers for advice and support. They may also reevaluate their own earlier critical approaches in light of their experiences as parents.

As members of the second generation grow older and establish families of their own, they may end up acting more like their own parents than they would ever have imagined and sharing many of their parents' attitudes toward child-rearing. The young adult second-generation West Indians described by Waters and Sykes often said they resented their parents' harsh parenting styles when they were young, but now attributed their success to their parents' strict control and discipline. Many saw corporal punishment as a positive way to keep their own children in line—and like their parents,

complained about interventions from state agencies. At the same time, cultural innovation was taking place as many sought to combine the best of West Indian and American methods and said they would try to communicate more with their children than their parents had with them.

If the passage of time, and movement through the life course, have the potential to reduce strains between immigrant parents and their children, by the same token, new sources of conflict can emerge—or old ones may, at times, be heightened. Adult children, for example, who have been significantly upwardly mobile may be embarrassed by their poorer, less educated, and old-fashioned immigrant parents. To the extent that adult children adopt middle-class American ideas and parenting practices, there may be tensions with immigrant parents about these practices or other household matters. Gilbertson describes how older Dominican women criticized their Americanized daughters and daughters-in-law for insufficient dedication to their children and their family—for buying meals from restaurants or stores rather than cooking at home or paying strangers to care for their children.

Because most members of the contemporary second generation are still young children, teenagers, or young adults, we have little research on the dynamics of their relations with their immigrant parents or third-generation children when they set up households and families of their own or, in some cases, continue as adults to live with parents in extended family households.³¹ Relations between immigrant grandparents and their American-born grandchildren are also still largely unexplored. Among the many intriguing questions is how members of the third generation will relate to their immigrant heritage and their grandparents' countries of origin. Kibria brings up another issue in her chapter regarding changes over time in the Bangladeshi community. At the time of her research, the Bangladeshi community was a relatively new one in the United States, with most immigrants having arrived in the last ten or fifteen years. The second generation, she notes, therefore generally grew up in the context of a "sparse transnational sphere," and the question arises as to whether and how transnational connections—and family relations—among the second generation will change as the Bangladeshi community becomes larger, more settled, and older.

Whether considering transnational links and obligations or U.S.-based institutions and practices, the case studies in this volume provide rich and detailed analyses of the intricate relations between the generations in

immigrant families, including the factors that shape these relations as well as their consequences. Because immigrants and their descendants live out a good part of their lives and often develop their most meaningful relationships in families, what happens in the family arena has enormous significance. Indeed, in analyzing the complexities of family life, the chapters that follow offer insights and raise questions that go beyond the family and household to enrich our general understanding of the immigrant and second-generation experience. It is hoped that they will inspire additional research that will lead to further advances in appreciating the complex and multifaceted dynamics of intergenerational relations in immigrant families.

NOTES

1. Foner and Kasinitz 2007: 270.
2. This section on intergenerational strains and conflicts draws on Foner and Kasinitz 2007.
3. To name just a few: Diaz 2007; Fong-Torres 1994; Lahiri 2003; Lee 2007; Mar 2000; Ng 1994.
4. Foner 1997.
5. Zhou 2001: 214.
6. See also Kibria 1993; Pessar 2003; Stepick and Stepick 2003; and Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 2001.
7. Also see Zhou and Bankston 1998 on the high value on parental authority and respect for parents and elders.
8. In a large-scale study of the second generation in New York, a majority in almost every group rejected the notion that it was important to marry someone in the same ethnic group, a view that was not often shared by their parents (Kasinitz et al. 2008).
9. See, for example, Kim 2004 and Min 1998 on similar pressures in Korean immigrant families.
10. See also Valenzuela 1999; Menjivar 2000: 214–16.
11. Lessinger 1995: 97.
12. Lessinger 1995; Zephir 2001.
13. Portes and Rumbaut 2001.
14. On transnational families, see, for example, Foner 2005; Gardner and Grillo 2002; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Parreñas 2005; and Schmalzbauer 2008.
15. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997.
16. See Levitt 2001: 79–80; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2008: 63–67.

17. The notion that older relatives in the home country can be a source of support comes out in Junot Diaz's (2007) recent novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, in which the American-born Oscar and his sister return for lengthy stays with their grandmother (who never left the Dominican Republic) when they are experiencing serious difficulties in the United States.

18. Smith 2006: 196–202.
19. Kasinitz et al. 2002.
20. Park 2005.
21. Levitt 2001: 79–80.
22. Kasinitz et al. 2002: 115.
23. See Lopez 2003; Smith 2006.
24. See Wolf 1997.
25. Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000: 129–33.
26. Foner and Kasinitz 2007.
27. Marwell 2004. I am grateful to Philip Kasinitz for bringing this point to my attention.
28. Espiritu 1992.
29. Park 2005: 58–60.
30. Louie 2004: 42–47.
31. More than one in five children of immigrants aged twenty-eight to thirty-two in the New York second-generation study were still living with a parent (Kasinitz et al. 2008: 212–19).

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