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**Crossing Borders in the School Yard: The Formation
of Transnational Social Spaces among Chinese and
Mexican Immigrant Students**

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Crossing Borders in the School Yard: The Formation of Transnational Social Spaces among Chinese and Mexican Immigrant Students¹

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Abstract. This presentation analyzes how first generation immigrant students from China and Mexico experience American schooling within a transnational social space that is formed as immigrant children receive and share information about U.S. schools with their co-national (individuals born in their country of origin who reside in multiple localities across borders). This socialization with co-nationals crosses and overlaps boundaries in important and symbolic ways, establishing transnational social spaces in American schools. Framed as advice to immigrant children received from their co-nationals at three specific points in time: prior to immigrating, upon arrival to the U.S., and after a few years of living in the U.S. and attending American schools. Issues related to academic demands, teachers' and culture emerged as the "do's and don'ts" for immigrant children. This presentation concludes by arguing that immigrant children's adaptation to American schools is not only influenced by experiences localized in the United States, but also by experiences that link immigrants with their countries of origin.

The long history of immigration to the U.S. has witnessed the influx of major waves of immigration at different points in history (Joppke, 1999; Rose, 1997). While the first major wave of immigrants at the turn of the 20th century came from Europe, in the last 50 years, the United States "has experienced large-scale immigration from new source areas, particularly from Asia as well as from Latin America" (Castles & Miller, 1998, p. 6). The assimilation model emerged as a construct that explained the way European immigrants of the early 20th century lived their lives in their new locality, the United States (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). Assimilation assumed that as different cultural groups became in contact with one another, the immigrant group would learn and adopt the culture of the majority group in the receiving country

¹ Some of the material in this paper has been previously published in Carmina Brittain's *Transnational Messages: Experiences of Chinese and Mexican Immigrants in American Schools* ©2002 LFB Scholarly, LTD. Reprinted with permission from LFB Scholarly, LTD.

in order to become participants in the new locality (Spindler & Spindler, 1990). Further, early 20th century social theories (as cited in Keefe & Padilla, 1987) suggested that immigrants living in urban, industrial societies would eventually assimilate into the culture of the receiving country because urbanization would lead to the decline of meaningful ties to any particular ethnic group. However, some critics of assimilation suggest that this model fails to represent the experience of non-White immigrants that have arrived during the second half of the 20th century (Castles & Miller, 1998; Schuck & Münz, 1998).

Most immigration after 1945 was comprised of non-white groups, increasing ethnic diversity in most receiving countries (Castles & Miller, 1998). Transportation and communication advances have contributed to the formation of a new global economic order, where intercultural and international encounters are more prevalent than before (Appadurai, 1996). These changes in diversity, technology, and communication have contributed to the globalization of migration, "the tendency for more and more countries to be affected by migration movements at the same time" (Castles & Miller, 1998, p. 8). Departing from the traditional model of assimilation that suggests that immigrants become assimilated into their new locality and lose contact with their country of origin (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998), scholars have argued that immigrants present more complex patterns of social interaction within their new localities (Itzigsohn et al., 1999; Rose, 1997). Transnational theory recognizes that some immigrant groups continue to have strong ties with their countries of origin once they reside in their receiving community. These ties direct their socialization patterns and delineate their social spaces across transnational lines (Mahler, 1998; Portes, 1999; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). That is, some immigrant children may not only be influenced by experiences localized in the United States, but also by experiences that link them with their countries of origin.

This paper is based on the data collected from the qualitative study entitled “*Transnational Messages and the Role of Co-Nationals in the Experiences of Immigrant Children*” (Brittain, 2002). This study documented how immigrant children interacted with co-nationals (individuals born in their countries of origin) and exchanged information about their experiences in American schools. Co-nationals can be immigrants from the country of origin who reside in the U.S. or individuals born in the country of origin who still reside there. The study constructed that the exchange of information across borders constituted a transnational activity (Portes, 1999; Faist, 1998) that positioned these immigrant children in social spaces that transcended borders. Most children (over 60%) in this study stated that co-national peers were the most important source of friendships in the school context, indicating some significant socialization with co-nationals in the schools.

These immigrant children received information (Transnational Messages) from their co-nationals (both in their countries of origin and in the U.S.) that shaped their expectations and perceptions of American public schools in terms of academic standards, teachers’ personalities and pedagogical styles, struggles with the English barrier, racial conflicts with peers, and social services provided in U.S. schools. Some children were well aware of this information before migrating to the United States and the information was repetitively reproduced over time as children experienced American schools. Using Alejandro Portes’ (1995) segmented assimilation model as a framework, I argue that these Transnational Messages reveal vulnerabilities and resources in the school contexts that may influence the paths of participation that immigrant children may choose in American schools. Furthermore, the messages themselves may also constitute a resource or vulnerability for immigrant children.

Most of the current empirical investigations of transnational experiences of immigrants have address the participation of adults in labor markets, community advocacy, and the political arena, but have not significantly addressed the participation of children and its impact on education. The *Transnational Messages* study contributes to this gap in the literature by investigating whether first-generation immigrant children were also part of these transnational connections.

Segmented Assimilation and Transnational Social Spaces: Beyond the Ethnic Enclave

One of the most salient contributions of the theorizing different paths of assimilation by diverse immigrant groups is Alejandro Portes' notion of "segmented assimilation." According to Portes (1995), immigrants' social participation and potential for social mobility depends on the specific segment of American society they participate in as newcomers (e.g., the receiving community where they settled in). One option for some immigrants is to acculturate and assimilate into the mainstream social space of the receiving community, which in the U.S. case would be the White middle class, and this will provide opportunities for social mobility. A second option is assimilation into the underclass, which will lead immigrants to experience serious economic disadvantages. The third path is to assimilate into immigrant communities (ethnic enclaves) as a resource to achieve economic capital (social mobility) and the preservation of the home culture.

Portes argues that while individual and family resources play a role in the patterns of assimilation, a number of *vulnerabilities* and *resources* in the receiving community also have a significant effect. Portes identified three major vulnerabilities: color, location, and absence of mobility ladders. Portes suggested that immigrant children's assimilation into different segments of American society depends in part on the children's racial background, the relationships and resources within the community where they reside in the U.S., and the presence of macro-

economic factors that block opportunities for upward social mobility, especially for immigrants. Portes also identified three kinds of resources that are present for certain immigrant groups: the availability of government programs for immigrant groups, the absence of prejudice towards certain immigrant groups, and resources made available via networks in the ethnic community. Portes argued that if these resources were available, immigrant children and their families would have greater opportunities to achieve social mobility.

In interpreting segmented assimilation, I was particularly interested in the notion of the ethnic enclave and its relation to transnational social spaces. Portes' notions of *location and ethnic community resources* are linked to the concentration of immigrant households in the receiving community. His discussion focuses on the relationship and socialization between immigrants and native-born minorities (e.g., children of immigrants born in the U.S.). However, these concepts of locality and ethnic enclave resources can be expanded to include the assimilation of immigrants into human collectivities that include not only individuals living in the ethnic enclave in the U.S., but also individuals living in their community of origin. Some scholars (Glick-Schiller, Basch, & Szanton, 1994; Portes, 1996a; 1996b; Faist, 1998; Smith, 1998; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998) have recognized the existence of transnational social spaces where immigrants interact with each other. The notion of transnational social spaces (Faist, 1998) suggests that immigrants in fact create social spaces that allow them to establish and maintain productive ties between their country of origin and their receiving country (Besserer, 1998; Portes, 1996a; 1996b; Smith, 1998). By participating in social interactions across borders, immigrants operate in a *transnational social space* as they engage in activities that link them with two localities—the sending and the receiving communities (Faist, 1998; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Portes, 1996b). Faist (1998) defines a transnational social space as a human collectivity

(e.g., a group of co-nationals) whose actions crosses and overlaps boundaries between nation-states. The crossing takes the form of exchanges of capital (e.g., economic, social, and/or cultural) between the immigrants and their co-nationals. The overlapping refers to the re-configuration of social units (e.g., a family) to include individuals who are localized across nation-state borders.

Social and cultural studies in education have argued that important influences in the adaptation, participation, and transformation of children in school settings are rooted in the cultural and social aspects embedded in these children's lives (Heath, 1986; Valdes, 1996). That is, family, community, and peers influence students' experiences in school. Some of these social circles are established when children socialize with people in their homes and communities. However, for some immigrant children, the construction of family and community may not only include socialization with individuals residing in the receiving community where immigrant children are localized, but also include relationships with relatives and community members in their communities of origin. This arrangement contributes to the re-configuration of social units such as family and community to include people residing in multiple nation-states, which leads to the formation of a transnational social space.

Concentration of co-nationals in the school context also contribute to the formation of a transnational social space if the actions of the students serve to keep ties with the country of origin (Brittain, 2002). According to Orfield and Yun, (1999) we are living a *decade of re-segregation* in American schools, especially in urban areas where public schools are becoming predominantly minority. Given that most minority children often attend schools that are highly segregated by race, ethnicity, and language (Orfield & Yun, 1999), it is pivotal to consider how interactions with co-nationals in the school could lead to the formation of transnational social

spaces in the school context as immigrant children socialize with their co-nationals in their schools. In many instances, co-nationals constitute the major peer group in school that becomes the main source of friendships for the newcomers, making human collectivities of co-nationals available in American schools (Brittain, 2002).

Research Questions and Methodology

Expanding the notion of Portes' segmented assimilation, I propose that the *location and ethnic community resources* factors might emerge within the context of transnationalism. That is, these factors can be localized not only in terms of experiences that immigrants have in the receiving community, but also in the influences (e.g., resources and vulnerabilities) that their sending communities have as immigrants continue to nurture relationships with their communities of origin. Further, just like the receiving community may provide vulnerabilities and resources to the immigrants, I suggest that participation in transnational social spaces may also bring a mix of vulnerabilities and resources to the immigrants and their co-nationals. In order to assess the participation of immigrant children in transnational social spaces, I investigated the kinds of information (Transnational Messages) that immigrant students received from their co-nationals about American schools at three specific points in time—prior to immigration, upon entry to the U.S., and after a few years of living in the U.S. and attending U.S. schools. I focused on information exchanges because the literature on transnational social spaces (Portes, 1996b) has identified information as one of the most important kinds of social capital that is exchanged among immigrants and their co-nationals. I theorized that if immigrant children received information about U.S. schools via their socialization with co-nationals across borders, a transnational social space was formed. I identified this information as *Transnational*

Messages. Transnational Messages represented exchanges of social capital that influenced these immigrant children's perceptions of U.S. schools. The major research questions of this study were conceptualized as follows:

1. What kind of information about U.S. schools did co-nationals share with these immigrant children in both the country of origin and the new locality in the United States?
2. What were the messages that these immigrant children constructed about U.S. schools after living in the U.S. that could be transmitted to potential new immigrants?

I was interested in investigating whether these Chinese and Mexican immigrant children, who currently lived in the United States, had pre-conceived notions about American schools before they migrated to the United States that were based on the kind of information they received from co-nationals both in their countries of origin and the U.S. I considered important to investigate these preconceptions because they could relate to students' expectations about the cultural models of schooling in the U.S. I was also interested in documenting whether this information remained constant or changed over time. I decided to focus on Chinese and Mexican immigrant students because China and Mexico are the two largest sources of immigrants to the United States since 1994 (<http://www.ins.gov>).

My definition of *Chinese* or *Mexican* in the context of this paper is based on the place of birth of the children—China or Mexico. By describing the children as Mexican or Chinese, I do not intend to imply that the main difference of their views of American schools are based on cultural explanations due to the national origin of the children. As the reader will discover later in this paper, important differences in the communities of settlement, school characteristics, and parental educational backgrounds between the two samples bring our attention to contextual

factors (e.g., class) that influence these children's views. In addition, the American education system is closely linked to the communities they serve. Therefore, the location of the schools clearly influenced these immigrant children's views of the *U.S. schools*.

The *Transnational Messages* study shares the same sample as the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation Project (LISA), a five-year longitudinal study of immigrant children conducted by the Harvard Immigration Project. For the LISA's Year 3 Student Interview, I contributed a 12-item, open-ended questionnaire that was identified as the *Transnational Messages Interview* and it was the main data collection instrument for the study. A team of research assistants who are proficient in the culture and language of the participant students administered this questionnaire, which was carefully translated into Cantonese, Mandarin, and Spanish. An English version was also available for those students who had experienced first language attrition. Because this study was incorporated in the third year of an on-going five-year longitudinal study, I had little control over the composition of the sample. However, I had collaborated with the LISA project since its inception and I was familiar with the theoretical and methodological parameters of the study. I found that the LISA sample was a suitable sample to investigate the formation of transnational social spaces among immigrant children because the LISA sample documented the participation and adaptation of first generation-immigrant students in American schools. Since transnational social spaces are defined as human collectivities of co-nationals, the LISA project provided the opportunity to assess the socialization of first generation immigrant students with their co-nationals.

The LISA sample was generated by identifying school districts that had high concentrations of recent immigrant children in the San Francisco Bay area (Mexican sample) and the city of Boston (Chinese sample). School administrators were contacted and families within the schools

were identified and invited to participate. LISA had specific inclusion criteria for students to be recruited in the study, including:

1. Both parents and children being born in the target country (e.g., Mexico)
2. Children participants had to be 9-14 years of age by the time of recruitment
3. Children participants had been residing in the United States for less than five years by the time of recruitment
4. The family had a commitment to stay in the United States for the next five years

The sample included 78 Mexican and 74 Chinese immigrant children, age 11-17, residing in the San Francisco Bay and Boston area respectively. In the Chinese sample, 61% were females and 39% were males. In the Mexican sample, 44% were females and 56% were males. Most of the children in both groups (about 75% of each sample) had lived in the country for less than five years and immigrated between ages 7-10 (73% of the Chinese sample and 90% of the Mexican sample). Because of the LISA's inclusion criteria, which restricted the pool of participants, and the bi-coastal recruitment (San Francisco and Boston), the LISA Chinese and Mexican samples showed some variations in terms of parental education, communities of settlement in the United States, and school characteristics. For example, while most of the children in both groups had parents with less than a high school education, the Mexican sample showed higher proportions of parents without a high school diploma (77% of the Mexican mothers and 67% of the Mexican fathers) than the Chinese group, where 50% of the fathers and 54% of the mothers did not complete high school. Also, 10% of the Chinese sample had parents with professional or graduate degrees. . Some of these characteristics reflect issues of class differences between Mexican and Chinese children.

Some important differences between the Chinese and Mexican samples were also found in terms of school characteristics, which are also related to issues of socio-economic status of immigrant families and the communities they live in. The Mexican sample (58%) was predominantly attending schools with larger numbers of students classified as English language learners (ELL) with limited English proficiency (40-50% of the school population classified as such). In contrast, over half of the Chinese sample (58%) attended schools where the ELL population was less than 20%. In addition, the Chinese students attended a wide range of schools in terms of students' participation in free/reduce lunch programs. For example, 23% of the sample attended schools with 80-100% participation, but the largest group (35%) attended schools with 40-59% participation in free/reduced lunch programs. However, a significant 24% of the participants attended schools where the free/reduced lunch participation was less than 20%. Many of these schools (specially those with low free/reduced lunch participation) were located in neighboring suburbs in the Boston area, rather than in the city of Boston. On the other hand, one third of the Mexican sample attended schools with 80-100% participation in free/reduced lunch programs. Another significant 31% attended schools with 60-79% participation, followed by 21% of the sample in schools with 40-59% participation, and 13% of the sample in schools with 20-39% participation. Only two students in the Mexican sample attended schools where the proportion of children in free/reduced lunch programs was less than 20%.

Finally, most of the Chinese children (52% of the sample) attended schools where the predominant racial group was White. The rest of the sample attended either diverse schools where no ethnic group was a majority group (26%), or predominantly Black and Asian schools (10% respectively). No school data was available for 2% of the sample. In contrast, the

Mexican sample showed a higher concentration of school attendance in predominantly Hispanic schools (59%), followed by predominantly Black (13%), White (12%), Asian (10%), and diverse schools (6%). Hispanic is the term used by the California Department of Education to describe “a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.” (<http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us>). While these difference in parental educational background and school characteristics may impose limitations in sample comparability, they also provide us with an understanding of contextual factors in the receiving communities of origin that are important to take into consideration in order to differentiate between the effects of individual and contextual characteristics in the experiences of immigrant students. For this purpose, I am still gathering and organizing data about communities of settlement (e.g., San Francisco v. Boston) and selected schools for both samples. The presentation of the findings in this paper will be primarily descriptive of the themes that emerged as Transnational Messages. Another level of analysis of contextual factors will be available in future publications where I will expand on how contextual factors (based on ethnographic data of schools) may influence the content of these Transnational Messages. However, the themes included in the discussion are those that were identified as common across all categories of student and school characteristics (e.g., across all age groups or parental education background groups).

Data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively, including descriptive statistics and content analysis respectively. The descriptive statistics served as a road map to understand the data in order to identify general patterns and trends in the data. For the qualitative analysis, I followed an interpretative approach to content analysis, which involved several waves of coding from codes derived from the data. In order to strengthen the interpretation of findings, I worked

in collaboration with research assistants that collected the data as well as scholars that have done research in this area.

Students' responses were categorized under three major labels according to the time period where the messages were received: prior to immigrating (Prior Messages), upon arrival to the United States (Welcoming Messages), and after living in the United States for a few years (Current Messages). From the qualitative analysis of interview data, six major categories of Transnational Messages were formed:

Academic: Messages about curriculum, instruction, and educational opportunities.

English: Messages about English learning and need for proficiency.

Peers: Messages about peer relations and perceptions of peers.

School: Messages about the school infrastructure, organization, and services.

Social: Messages about social issues in society at large but reflected in the school context such as racial discrimination, female emancipation, liberalism, and freedom.

Teachers: Messages about students' perceptions of teachers' abilities, personality, and student-teacher relationships.

Because of the small frequencies in the Social Message category, this paper will not include them in the discussion.

Learning about American Schools in Transnational Social Spaces

In order to establish the formation of transnational social spaces, I used Thomas Faist (1998) definition of a transnational social space as a human collectivity of co-nationals whose actions cross and/or overlap boundaries. First, I needed to establish the creation of human collectivities of co-nationals in the school. Theoretically, research has shown that many minority children

(including immigrants) attend schools where the population of co-ethnics is considerably high (Orfield and Yun, 1999). Therefore, there is the potential that a transnational social space could be formed in American schools, as the demographic concentration of co-national peers may be high in some of these schools. Empirically, LISA data collected over a three-year period on both samples (Chinese and Mexican) showed that regardless of the ethnic composition of the schools, over 60% of the participants in the study stated that their friends were co-nationals. This finding indicated that the immigrant children in this study did belong to human collectivities of co-nationals. But, did their actions cross and overlap boundaries?

Faist (1998) suggests that transnational social spaces are instrumental in nature and that the crossing of boundaries occur as the participants exchange economic, social, and cultural capital. Immigrants receive information from their co-nationals that can help them secure jobs, find social services, etc. Portes (1999) suggest that information is one of the major sources of social capital available to immigrants in transnational social spaces. Given these theoretical parameters, I asked the participant children if they have received or shared information (Transnational Messages) about American schools from their co-nationals at three particular points in time—before coming to the U.S. (Prior Messages); upon arrival to the United States (Welcoming Messages); and after living in the U.S. and experiencing U.S. schools (Current Messages). Current Messages were not messages from co-nationals, but they represented the children’s current perception of American schools that they would be willing to share with potential newcomers from their countries of origin. The data showed that both Chinese and Mexican immigrant participants did receive information about American schools from their co-nationals, establishing some symbolic “crossing” of borders as social capital was exchanged. Table 1 shows the proportion distribution of these messages over time. Note that the percentages

significantly rose in the Current Messages category since these responses related to the children's own construction of U.S. schools rather than messages received from co-nationals. Table 1 shows that most children over time received Transnational Messages prior to immigrating to the U.S. (Prior Messages) and upon arrival to the U.S.(Welcoming Message). The only exception was Welcoming Messages in the Chinese sample, where only 40% of the children received messages from their co-national peers. In fact, 8% of the Chinese children stated that they did not received messages from co-nationals upon arrival to the United States because there were no co-nationals in the schools they attended when they first moved to the United States. These findings need to be understood within the context of the communities of settlement for the two groups in two distinctive areas of the United States. Most of the Chinese children attended schools that were predominantly White. On the other hand, Mexican children in the sample attended schools where the concentration of co-nationals was higher and they had more opportunities to interact and exchange information with co-nationals in the school. The size of the co-national population in the school context may be an important factor in the formation of transnational social spaces in American schools, as more co-nationals are in the school, there may be more opportunities for immigrant children to socialize within these human collectivities of co-nationals. Because Current Messages depicted the children's personal views on American schools, the majority of the participants shared their opinion. Only one Chinese child and eight Mexican children in the sample did not respond to the question addressing this issue.

Table 1. Transnational Messages over Time

Messages	Prior Immigration		Welcoming		Current	
	Chinese	Mexican	Chinese	Mexican	Chinese	Mexican
Academic	24%	14%	11%	21%	24%	21%
English	3%	7%	2%	4%	5%	8%
General	5%	14%	3%	12%	9%	17%
No answer	39%	32%	52%	23%	1%	4%
Peers	5%	12%	10%	18%	15%	10%
School	14%	16%	8%	14%	20%	15%
Social	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	10%
Teachers	10%	5%	6%	8%	17%	15%
No co-nationals	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Brittain, C (2002). Transnational Messages: Experiences of Chinese and Mexican

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The sources of Prior Messages for both groups (90% of the Chinese and 94% of the Mexican) were interpersonal communications with co-nationals both in the United States and in the countries of origin. Only 10% of both samples received them from media sources, mostly television. More than half of the Chinese students who reported interpersonal communications as the source of messages indicated that it was relatives who shared these messages with them, mostly uncles, aunts, and cousins who have lived or visited the United States and communicated their experiences via telephone, mail, or in person when they returned to China. An interesting source of messages about U.S. schools for Chinese children was their teachers and their peers in their schools in China. Chinese children stated that many peers in Chinese schools shared what

their parents (who had lived in the U.S.) told them about the U.S. For the Mexican group, the main sources of messages were parents and relatives (adults and children) who resided in the United States but visited the children in Mexico. Sources of Welcoming Messages for both groups were co-national peers in the school when children started their school experience in the U.S. In conclusion, the study confirmed that based on the exchanges of information between immigrant children and their co-nationals who reside in multiple localities, a crossing of borders occurred and transnational social space was constructed.

The overlapping of boundaries is an area that is still under analysis. However, some preliminary ethnographic data seem to indicate that these children used national and regional labels as identifiers to select or exclude peers in social circles within the school context. That is, children used national and regional identities to redefine themselves as the “Mexicans” or the “Chinese” in the school. Also, I am analyzing some data on how transnational families may influence the reconfiguration of family to include members who reside across borders. For example, over time I have seen how some Mexican children still have siblings or cousins abroad who eventually immigrate and attend the same schools their relatives. This phenomenon seems to strengthen family relations and loyalty in the school context. However, because of the preliminary nature of these findings, the main focus of the following discussion will be on the “crossing” of boundaries as it relates to the information that immigrant children received from co-nationals.

Transnational Messages: Resources and Vulnerabilities for Immigrant Children in American Schools

Based on Portes' idea of vulnerabilities and resources in the receiving community (1995), my argument has been to expand this notion to include how transnational social spaces (via the interaction with co-nationals across multiple localities) can also be a source of vulnerabilities and resources. I would like to present the findings of my study in the context of Portes' notion of vulnerabilities and resources. While the messages revealed resources and vulnerabilities available in the receiving communities, they also illustrated how the transnational social space promoted resources and vulnerabilities by transmitting information that could be used to enhance or hinder the participation of immigrant students in the U.S. school. Due to space limitations, only a few selected quotes that represent the main content of the messages are included. These resources and vulnerabilities were identified from the messages that were consistent over time. That is, the discussion mostly focuses on those messages that revealed the same content in Prior, Welcoming, and Current Messages. Two of the categories--Academic and Teachers—did change over time. Academic and Teachers messages were mostly positive in Prior and Welcoming Messages but became negative in Current Messages (especially in the Chinese sample). Because of the significance of this shift, these two categories (Academic and Teachers Messages) are discussed as both vulnerabilities and resources.

Transnational Resources

Based on the analysis of Transnational Messages, some data revealed how immigrant children were aware of some resources in the school context and in their relationships with co-nationals. One of the common resources for both groups was the availability of co-nationals in

the school. For the Chinese students, the co-national peers were identified as helpful friends who provided support not only academically but also in terms of orientation to the school routines and rules.

“In general, people don’t know Chinese. [But] there are quite a number of Chinese in the schools. They will play with you. If you don’t know something in the school, the Chinese friends will help you. You can call your Chinese friends and ask questions.”

—Current Message, 15 year-old boy from Guangdong

Chinese Messages emphasized the need to make friends in order to obtain information that could help the newcomers to participate in the academic and social aspects of school.

“Friends are nice to you. They listen to your problems and try to help you. Classmates are very nice if you have questions about the class. They can help you answer the questions.”

—Current Message, 13 year-old boy from Guangdong

Likewise, Mexican children expressed that the co-nationals in the school were a source of guidance and information.

“They told me where everything was. When we changed reading classes, they would tell me where to go. They would take me where the cafeteria was and library.”

—Welcoming Message, 11 year-old boy from Baja California Norte

“[Co-nationals] showed me around school. My cousin went to the same school and he stayed with me. He showed me the school. He was in the same class.”

—Welcoming Message, 14 year-old girl from Michoacan

Because of the instrumental nature of the socialization with co-nationals, the findings indicate the formation of a transnational social space as these immigrant children relied on their

co-national peers for guidance and information about U.S. schools. Given that most of the children in the sample (over 60%) consistently socialized with co-national friends, I concluded that the assimilation of immigrant children into school life is influenced by the participation of children in these transnational social spaces. That is, as co-nationals share information about U.S. schools, newcomers rely on this information to construct their views of American schools, becoming aware of the resources and vulnerabilities in the school.

Chinese Resources

In the Chinese sample, three main resources were identified in the Transnational Messages:

1. The perception of attainability of academic excellence and Chinese students' academic abilities
2. Confidence in learning English
3. "Nice" teachers who establish positive student-teacher relations

Chinese children expressed enthusiasm about the possibility of attaining academic excellence in the American school. The less demanding academic nature of the American school provided Chinese children with an optimistic perspective about their ability to achieve academic excellence. Prior to immigrating and upon arrival to the United States, Chinese students heard about that their opportunities to get good grades without too much effort were enhanced in the American education system. Therefore, Chinese children believed that academic excellence in the United States was more attainable than in China.

“[I heard that] the subjects are more diverse and the study in the U.S. is much easier than China.”

—Prior Message, 13 year-old boy from Guangdong

“It is easy to study in the U.S. You will be find if you pay attention in class.”

—Welcoming Message, 15 year-old boy from Hong Kong

“American schools are easier. Teachers are less stern, strict. Homework is easier.

School curriculum here is slower than in Hong Kong.”

—Current Message, 13 year-old girl from Hong Kong

Because academic standards were less demanding in the U.S. than in China, children perceived that they could enjoy a less stressful academic life in the United States. On the other hand, some Academic Messages showed some concerns about being able to meet the academic demands of U.S. schools because the subjects were in English. However, despite of their awareness of struggling with the English language, co-nationals often advised newcomers of how advanced they were in terms of subject matter content, compared to American peers. Chinese children expressed some sense of academic superiority over their American educated peers.

“[Co-nationals told me that] language arts would be hard for me because you have to learn English, but Math would be easier for me.”

—Prior Message, 14 year-old girl from Guangdong

By becoming aware of their “competitive edge” in some content areas (e.g., Math) because they were educated in schools with more rigorous academic standards, Chinese children were presented with a source of pride and self-esteem.

Another source of self-assurance for the Chinese newcomers was the confidence on learning English. While only a few children received information from their co-nationals about learning English, this information provided positive expectations that the newcomers would learn the new language. Some messages refer to the availability of ESL (English as a Second Language)

programs where the newcomers could learn English. These messages were predominant in the Current Message category, after the children themselves have lived in the United States for a few years.

“You can learn English. You can earn money and send money to China.”

- Prior Message, 13 year-old boy from Guangdong

“[Co-nationals] told me that there were ESL programs here. I was in ESL.”

- Welcoming Message, 14 year-old girl from Guangdong

“Your only real problem would be if you couldn’t understand English, but they have ESL, so there is no real problem.”

—Current Message, 15 year-old girl from Shanghai

“At the very first, [in the] beginning, you may not know English. But there are ESL classes and teachers will help you.”

—Current Message, 11 year-old girl from Macau

Chinese children were not overly concerned about their performance in English, in part because they perceived academic standards to be less rigorous in the U.S. than in China. Chinese children still felt they would be doing well while they took time to learn English.

“To learn English is enough. To have good command of English is enough, because if your English is not good, you can [still] catch up here with things and rules. You [the co-national cousin] also studied in China, so your standards will not be particularly low compared to other students in the U.S.”

—Current Message, 17 year-old boy from Guangdong

The messages about English language provide two sources of self-assurance about achieving success in American schools for Chinese immigrants. First, the process of learning English is a

temporary obstacle that will be overcome in time with the help of English language classes. Second, even if the English barrier presents some limitations to Chinese students, their perception is that the competitive edge in academic subjects that are not totally language dependent (e.g., Math) provides these Chinese students with some sort of self-assurance that they will succeed academically.

Finally, Chinese students overall received and articulated positive perceptions of teachers. While some were critical of the academic preparation of American teachers and instruction styles, most Chinese children appreciated the nice and relaxed personalities of teachers in U.S. In accord with the Academic Messages about an easier, less demanding curriculum, Chinese students seemed to have a hopeful and optimistic view of coming to American schools and meeting nicer, less demanding, and less strict teachers. These children appreciated the fact that corporal punishment was not allowed in American schools and that also teachers were nice.

“Nothing, they just said it was very comfortable here. That is, you have no homework to do, teachers won't scold you and won't beat you up.”

—Prior Message, 16 year-old girl from Fujian

“Sometimes we talk about the teachers, whether they are nice or not. They are mostly nice, except for two teachers.”

—Welcoming Message, 15 year-old girl from Guangdong

“Teachers are much nicer than in China. They treat everyone equally. Teachers won't punish you if you don't finish homework. They will just tell you to finish your homework. You can go to the bathroom between classes. They give you less homework than in China.”

—Current Message, 13 year-old girl from Fujian

Most children framed this positive perception in terms of the improved teacher-student relations with American teachers because they were “liberal, not very strict and usually sympathetic.” The fact that Chinese children perceived teachers as respectful of the students may reinforce positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Mexican Resources

In the Mexican sample, two major resources are identified in the transnational messages:

1. The free services and materials offered in the U.S. school that can contribute to the lowering of the cost of education
2. Nice and caring teachers.

Among Mexican children, Transnational Messages created awareness of services and materials offered in the U.S. school and how these contributed to the lowering of the cost of education because children and/or their families did not have to buy these supplies and materials.

“That it was better, it was easier to get books and other resources.”

—Prior Message, 16 year-old boy from Veracruz

“That middle schools had programs like the private schools in Mexico.”

—Prior Message, 14 year-old girl from Hidalgo

“That you got free food, that the lunches were free.”

—Welcoming Message, 11 year-old boy from the State of Mexico

Some children described these resources and services as “opportunities” for children to have access to educational services.

“If you put your part, put in effort, it is a good school. There are more opportunities. Here the teachers lend books but in Mexico you have to buy them. Here you can take books out of the library.”

—Current Message, Mexican girl from Colima (no age data)

Another resource for Mexican children were teachers. While over time Mexican children in this study had mixed views towards teachers, the majority spoke of teachers as being nice and caring.

“That they were very good that teachers helped students.”

—Prior Message, 13 year-old boy from Michoacan

“[Co-nationals told me] that teachers were very nice and that they knew how to explain things well. [Co-nationals told me] that they were very good teachers.”

- Welcoming Message, 14 year-old girl from Jalisco

“It was a good opportunity. He will enjoy school. The teachers are caring.”

—Current Message, 17 year-old boy from Colima

“[I would tell my co-national cousin] that it is pretty with good teachers that care about us. That they dedicate a lot of time to them”

—Current Messages, 11 year-old boy from the State of Mexico

The construction of Mexican Messages about teachers as a resource was slightly different from the Chinese sample. While Chinese children emphasized the teacher-student relation and the nice personality of teachers, Mexican students emphasize the “caring” nature of teachers. Teachers were not only nice, but also supportive and caring of their students. This indicates that Mexican children perceived teachers as adults that “care for them”. This raises important issues about the enormous potential that teachers have in the Mexican children to become significant

adults in the lives of these immigrant children. The fact that over time, most Mexican children had positive attitudes toward teachers indicate that these can be considered a “resource” for Mexican children in the school—somebody who cares and is nice to them.

Transnational Vulnerabilities

The transnational messages also revealed vulnerabilities in the school context. Moreover, transnational messages can potentially be a source of vulnerabilities for immigrant students as the content of this information from co-nationals lead them to a marginalized participation in the school that include expectations of racial conflicts, limitations in attaining English proficiency, and low quality academic instruction.

One of the interesting findings about the transnational messages is that overall, most of the messages were positive, indicating that immigrant children viewed the American school with appreciative lenses. However, some of the negative messages indeed revealed some factors that can be considered vulnerabilities. Even though some of these vulnerabilities may reveal the voice of the minority, they are important to discuss because of the impact that these messages may eventually have in the socialization of future generations of immigrants. In contrast to resources, which differ between the Mexican and Chinese sample, some of the vulnerabilities were common for both groups.

Chinese Vulnerabilities

The transnational messages revealed three main vulnerabilities that the Chinese group:

1. Negative perceptions of peers that reproduce negative racial attitudes towards other student groups in the school in terms of behavior and academic performance.

2. Fewer academic demands that may translate into low quality education
3. Negative perceptions of teachers as lacking academic preparation and classroom management skills.

The most significant vulnerability—because it prevailed across time—was the negative perception of peers along racial and ethnic lines. Chinese students often had positive perceptions of co-national peers, but negative perceptions of peers from other racial and ethnic groups. Negative perceptions towards non-Chinese peers mainly implied some bullying behaviors and classroom disruptions. Welcoming Messages did not include identification of peers along racial lines, but they still showed some awareness of conflictive peer relations.

“[I heard that] those little devils are annoying. They are disruptive all the time. They fight all the time. I am talking about White ghosts. I am not talking about Black ghosts.”

— Prior Message, 13 year-old boy from Hong Kong

“American students are very noisy in class, making the teachers unable to teach.”

—Prior Message, 17 year-old girl from Guangdong

“[Co-nationals] told me that people [peers] were mean. People beat other people up [in school].”

- Welcoming Message, 13 year-old boy from Inner Mongolia

“I would tell them [co-nationals] that they will get along with many people very easily. But if you don’t treat them well, they will not treat you well. I would tell them to be extra careful because the Black students might beat them.”

—Current Message, 11 year-old girl from Guangdong

Some children expressed concern about being bullied because of how differently they looked or dressed. This prompted some children to advise the potential newcomer about “changing” their look and behaviors to fit in.

“Change the fashion style. If you dress too backwards or unfashionably, the Black students will tease you or bully you. Don’t speak too directly or honestly. For example, if somebody looks ugly, you can’t say he or she is ugly.”

- Current Message, 16 year-old girl from Guanxi

Another vulnerability reflected in the Chinese Messages was the awareness of the negative impact of the lower academic demands in American schools. This negative impact was reflected in the children’s realization of lack of learning opportunities. Some Current Messages (after living in the United States) about academic issues were negative and revealed an interesting shift in the students' reaction towards the less demanding nature of American academic content from enthusiasm to disappointment. Before migrating, the "easy American school" was something to be enthusiastic about, the opportunity for academic excellence without too much stress or work. After a few years living in the United States (2-5 years), some Chinese children question the quality of education in America.

“If possible, do not come to this country. In terms of study, it is not very good here. The curriculum is easy here. The things I am learning now are like things Hong Kong people learn in Primary 5 or Primary 6. Those who study here in the U.S. could not catch up with the curriculum in Hong Kong. I used to take science classes in Hong Kong. Those were much harder. Students who attend elementary or middle schools here, they look like they have learned nothing in elementary [or in] middle schools.”

—Current Messages, 16 year-old girl from Hong Kong

“They are so bad. Don’t come here. The education is too easy.”

—Current Message, 13 year-old girl from Hong Kong

Teachers Messages also experienced a shift from positive to negative in Current Messages. Chinese children became aware of the lack of preparation of teachers because of their inability to teach or control the classroom or provide quality instruction.

“In some public schools some teachers can’t control the students, can’t manage the students.”

—Current Message, 15 year-old girl from Guangdong

“Teachers use many lessons to teach one thing. One topic is taught for several days. [It is] just a waste of time. Teachers, then just try to get by in school. If they can’t finish the topic today, they will simply leave that for tomorrow. They don’t lose anything for teaching slow. Just the students suffer for learning fewer things.”

—Current Message, 16 year-old girl from Hong Kong

Some Chinese children gave specific advice about teacher choice, suggesting that becoming aware of “teacher quality” was important.

“Teachers. Always at the end of the year, always call or write to the school, asking about nice and good teachers for the next year. Otherwise they will give you any teacher. We did that for 5th grade. I got an extremely good teacher.”

—Current Message, 13 year-old boy from Inner Mongolia

Both Academic and Teachers Messages became sources of vulnerabilities over time. The positive perceptions towards a less demanding academic content and teachers were no longer as strong after the Chinese children experienced American schools for a few years.

Mexican Vulnerabilities

From the Mexican responses, the Transnational Messages also revealed three vulnerabilities. These are the same as the Chinese vulnerabilities 1 and 2 (negative racial attitudes and lower academic demands), but the construction of the messages was a little bit different. Further, the Mexican children had another vulnerability not present in the Chinese sample—the issue of learning English. The vulnerabilities identified in the Mexican Transnational Messages include:

1. Negative perceptions of peers that reproduce negative racial attitudes towards other student groups in the school and threaten children’s perception of safety in the school (e.g., gangs)
2. Fewer academic demands that translate into low-quality education and dissolution of aspirations to achieve an education in the U.S.
3. Negative perceptions towards English language acquisition that promotes frustration towards the process.

As in the Chinese sample, the most significant vulnerability reflected in the transnational messages (consistent over time) is the negative perceptions towards peer groups. However, there are some important differences in the way Mexican children constructed these perceptions. First, they included one issue that the Chinese children did not articulate—gangs. Over time, Mexican children expressed concern about the existence of gangs in the school, making these children feel unsafe in the school. That is, while negative peer perceptions in the Chinese group usually referred to bullying and classroom disruptions, Mexican children are aware of the danger of gangs in the school, threatening the sense of well being and safety of immigrant children in American public schools.

“On movies, I saw gangs and how they beat others in schools...My dad also told me there were gangs. There are also gangs in Mexico, but not so many. Where I lived, there were no gangs.”

- Prior Message, 13 year-old girl from Sinaloa

“There are a lot of gangs. Don’t get involved with them.”

- Welcoming Message, 17 year-old boy from Jalisco

“Schools are good. Some peers are nice but others play too much. I would tell him to study. I would tell him not to hang out with Cholos, gang members.”

- Current Message, 15 year-old boy from Guerrero

Second, the negative perceptions in the Mexican group were mostly about one particular group—the African American peers. The message was consistent—avoid African American peers.

“[I heard] that they [schools] were dangerous when the Blacks fight”

—Prior Message, 16 year-old girl from Veracruz

“That they [co-nationals] told me I had to be careful with African Americans because they would rob me. That they [African American peers] would invite me to cut classes.”

—Welcoming Message, 17 year-old girl from Jalisco

“Hang out with Mexicans, so he can understand better. Teachers get angry, so he needs to listen. Pay attention. Don’t cut classes. Don’t fight. Run when he sees Blacks. Stay away from Blacks.”

—Current Message, 13 year-old boy from Guerrero

Third, in the Mexican group, avoidance rather than integration was the strategy to cope with conflictive inter-racial interactions. While the Chinese children opted to learn about cultural

differences and adopt some of the majority school culture (e.g., change the fashion style), Mexican children opted to advise co-nationals just to avoid African Americans and “Cholos” (gang members). One of my main concerns about these messages is that the reproduction of negative images about African American seems to be the product of word-of-mouth, rather than of actual interactions with African Americans. Because Transnational Messages sometimes suggested to co-nationals not to socialize with African Americans, these negative perceptions were not the result of direct interaction with this group, but of stereotypical constructions about African Americans.

It is important to understand that this isolation may not be the result of personal choice in the Mexican immigrant children. Indeed, many of the participants in this study attended schools that place them in bilingual cohorts that limit their interactions with other non-Latino, non-English language learners within an academic context. Most of the Chinese participants attended predominantly White schools and might have felt the need to integrate, not only because of their minority status in the school, but also in the recognition of the instrumentality of assimilating into the White, middle-class culture.

Just like the Chinese group, the Current Messages that Mexican immigrant children reflected negative perceptions about the quality of education in the United States. For some Mexican children, frustration built up when they realized they learned from co-nationals that in American schools, they would not learn anything new beyond what they already knew in Mexico.

“[In American schools] they didn't teach right and very little [few things]”

—Current Message, 14 year-old girl from Baja California Norte

“[Co-nationals told me] that everything was easy. That [schools] were lower [in what they teach], more behind here than in Mexico.”

—Current Message, 11 year-old boy from the State of Mexico

“I remember than in Mexico they told me that supposedly here I had more possibilities to study, to learn more. The truth is that you don’t learn here. Here what you see in social sciences, you already saw that in Mexico. The science stuff, you already saw it in Mexico. Here everything you are seeing right now, you already saw it in Mexico.”

—Current Message, 15 year-old girl from the State of Mexico

This student’s disappointment with the “easy” curriculum is based on her belief that what she already learned in Mexico is being taught in the U.S. This implies that the student felt that she was not learning new content, and her opportunities for learning and acquiring a high quality education were limited. As the Chinese did, Mexican children also expressed that a less advanced curriculum implied limited learning opportunities for them in the U.S.

“The schools are not good. They take everything very superficially. They don’t have materials. Schools in Mexico are better. They gave you seven books. Here we only use one.”

—Current Message, 15 year-old boy from Jalisco

“Here [U.S.] you learn in a week what you learn there [Mexico] in a day.”

—Current Message, 12 year-old from Jalisco

This could be a serious vulnerability that can translate into apathy and negative attitudes towards school. It may also create frustration about the possibilities of higher education that these children may have when they feel unprepared academically.

Finally, one kind of vulnerability in the Mexican sample (not dominant in the Chinese sample) was the perception of Mexican children towards English language acquisition. While English Messages were not very dominant in either sample, in the Mexican case, more children

expressed negative perceptions about the English language. Mexican immigrant children were told by co-nationals how difficult English language acquisition could be.

“[Co-nationals told me] that I was not going to understand because they speak English.”

—Prior Messages, 13 year-old boy from Guerrero

“[Co-nationals told me that] learning English would be difficult because I didn’t know anything of English.”

—Welcoming Message, 14 year-old boy from the State of Mexico

“Teachers speak English only but they are nice. Learning English is difficult to learn.”

—Current Message, 13 year-old boy from Mexico City

The consistent reminder from co-nationals about how hard it was to learn the English language may promote pessimistic attitudes towards the process. Perhaps these pessimistic perspectives result in low self-efficacy among Mexican children in the language domain. However, these messages also speak of the potential low quality of instruction in English language development programs available to these language learners.

The Balance of Transnational Resources and Vulnerabilities

Alejandro Portes (1995) suggested that different mixes of resources and vulnerabilities created the necessary structures for specific paths of assimilation and participation among different groups. Portes listed resources as the availability of an ethnic enclave, government resources, and lack of prejudice against the immigrant groups. The Transnational Resources did reflect some elements of this typology. First, both groups viewed the availability of co-nationals in the school as something positive and resourceful. Also, Mexican children appreciated some of the government resources placed in schools such as free meals and educational materials.

However, in both samples, absence of racial prejudice against Chinese and Mexicans was not a resource reflected in Transnational Messages.

One important finding in this paper is the perceived opportunities that immigrant children have of achieving school success. For example, Chinese Transnational Messages reveal some resources that are linked to the opportunity that immigrant children may have in American schools to achieve academic achievement. A less stressful and more liberated academic environment, confidence in learning English, a nice and supportive teachers are some of the ideas that are promoted in Transnational Messages. According to Ogbu and Matute Bianchi (1986) school success for some immigrant groups does not necessarily depend on the cultural or language comparability between home and schools, but it depends “more on how the immigrants perceive and respond to schooling in relation to their perceptions of opportunity structure (Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986, pg. 105) that is available to them. That is, Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi argue that Chinese immigrant children succeed in school because they perceive success is attainable to them. The resources emphasized in Transnational Messages are perceptions of assured success (e.g., you will learn English, your math skills are higher). The Mexican resources emphasized material resources and teachers. While these may be linked to academic achievement (e.g., books, teachers’ assistance in learning), the resources did not necessarily provide the same positive assurance that academic success was possible in the United States.

Portes also identified three vulnerabilities—color, location, and absence of mobility ladders. The Transnational Messages clearly identified that the issue of color was present in the communities and schools these children participated in. However, for both groups the issue of racial prejudice was present not only in the form of discrimination against the immigrants, but also in terms of the racial prejudice that the immigrants had towards other student groups in the

school. Immigrant children came to the U.S. and continued to transmit to others negative perceptions of other ethnic and majority groups in the school. That is, these students participated in the reproduction of negative racial attitudes and stereotypes within the transnational social space.

The literature has identified that the issue of racism may negatively affect the self-confidence and self-efficacy of minority students, resulting in the students' withdrawal from academic participation (Gandara, 2001). This study has found that co-national peers communicated messages that indeed promoted and reinforced negative racial views of different ethnic groups in the U.S. This finding needs to be considered because if negative racial attitudes hinder the academic achievement of minorities, it is clear that some Transnational Messages may adversely affect the academic achievement of immigrant children and others.

The issue of location is not clearly established from the Transnational Messages data, since I still need to contextualize some of these responses to specific neighborhoods and school characteristics. The absence of mobility ladders may be related to the quality of instruction and academic services (e.g., education as a route to social mobility) available in the schools. For both Chinese and Mexicans, disappointment with the quality of academic preparation was present. That is, the fact that children become aware that they are "not learning" in American schools may point out to the lack of high quality instructional programs, which may impose restrictions to mobility ladders available to immigrant students. The perceptions of low quality of instruction in both groups (and teachers for the Chinese), as well as the Mexicans' concerns about learning English seem to indicate that inadequate academic programs may create some absence of mobility ladders as children do not receive high quality education in these programs. Clearly, the difference in schools characteristics between the two groups come into play and as in the case

of location, I am still analyzing data on school ethnographies that could provide more detail on whether different schools provide different mobility ladders in terms of education programs.

Conclusions

My findings indicate that indeed co-national peers are a source of information for immigrant children, a guiding agent that helps newcomers to participate in unique ways in American schools. These immigrant children do experience American school in the context of a transnational social space—a human collectivity of co-nationals in the school—rather than in the social space of the mainstream group in school. This means that, depending upon the academic and social position of the co-national group within the school context, the co-national peers and the messages they share can foster or hinder academic engagement in newcomers. It is important that educators are aware of the balance between the resources and vulnerabilities that the socialization with co-nationals in the school, in the community, and even in the countries of origin, presents to the immigrant children.

The results of the study indicate that most immigrant children indeed communicate positive messages about school. Even when these messages promote positive attitudes towards academic engagement, obviously this may not be enough to ensure an adequate academic and personal development in immigrant children. The agency that immigrants may have in transnational social spaces may not be sufficient to overcome contextual factors that marginalize immigrants in society (e.g., prejudice or disadvantaged school and community contexts). Further, the socialization with co-nationals may also lead to added vulnerabilities when the co-national group lacks the social capital to share information that can help immigrant students to succeed in school. In fact, some of the information that transnational messages promote can actually

perpetuate the marginalized experiences of the co-national group in the school (e.g., promoting inter-cultural conflict).

While both Chinese and Mexican children have expressed that their co-nationals can provide support, this support may not compensate for the vulnerabilities that the school context and the co-national group present to newcomers. Moreover, different immigrant groups experience different mixes of vulnerabilities and resources. For example, it is clear that for the Chinese group, most of the resources facilitate academic engagement. On the other hand, the resources that the co-nationals and their messages provide to the Mexican group relate more to social support from peers, appreciation for positive social relations with peers and teachers, and services received in the American schools.

The differences in the constructions of Transnational Messages in the Chinese and the Mexican sample seem to be the result not only of cultural differences. They are also the products of the context in which these children experience the American school. This study has established some ground in the study of immigrant students' participation in American school in relation to the influence of transnational social spaces when children socialize with co-nationals. One of the interesting findings of this study is that children received some messages about American schools that tended to be consistent over time. While the transnational social spaces provide comfort and a form of social capital for immigrant children, their benefits alone are not sufficient to ensure that these children achieve academically, unless some of the vulnerabilities within the school and community contexts are eliminated.

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