



## Dialogforum – Summer School 2010



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# Integrating Immigrants: Education and Work

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## Highlights

- US foreign-born: 39 million, including 12 million born in Mexico, 10 mil Caribbean & Lat America, 10 mil Asia
- W. Hemisphere: negative selection = immigrants with less education than stay at home people; Asia, positive selection
- US: integration via private-sector labor market
- Theory: immigration generation adjusts, K-12 schools make 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation like native born

## Negative & Positive Selection

- Over 55% of immigrants from Mexico and Latin America; high inequality; migrants to US have LESS education than those who stay at home (exceptions-Cuba)
- 25% of immigrants from Asia—Asians barred 1880s-1965; Asian migrants have more education than stay-at-homes (exceptions-Vietnamese refugees); also European, African migrants
- Typical Mexican migrant adult: 7 years schooling when average Mexican has 9 years schooling

## US Integration Policy: None

- Integration via private-sector employers
- Advantages:
  - Gives migrants what most want, jobs at higher wages
  - Makes employers powerful advocates of migrants
  - Reduces anti-migrant arguments (US welcomes those seeking a hand up the economic ladder, not those who have a hand out for welfare)
  - Shows children the importance of work and (perhaps) inspires children to get education and better jobs
- So, #1 integration policy = full employment—gives migrants jobs they want, reduces discrimination etc

## US: Working Poor Immigrants

- Flexible labor market gets migrants into jobs, but many are working poor—migrants work, but have low incomes
- Federal minimum wage: \$7.25/hour—work 50 weeks x 40 hours = 2,000 hours or \$14,500/year—Poverty line = \$10,830 for one, \$22,050 for family of 4
- Result: working poor immigrant families; low incomes and few work-related benefits such as health insurance

## Effects on Families

- Horatio Alger myth: arrive in US with little and work up the job ladder
- Models:
  - Asian model migrant—parents are relatively well educated, and children are pushed to do very well in school—Indian-Americans—very well educated and highest family income in US
  - Hispanics: over 50% do not complete secondary school—stay in ghetto and join gangs vs. join the military for education and training
- Employer-provided education is generally English-language education, e.g. Marriott and I-pods for English-language teaching

## Comparisons with Europe

- US: gets most immigrants into jobs, but has many working poor immigrant families
  - Education of immigrant adults depends on employers and self-motivation—generally hard given long hours or work
  - Education of children depends more on parents' education than income—Asians vs Hispanics
- Europe: fewer immigrant working poor, but generally lower labor force participation, esp for women and 2<sup>nd</sup> and third generation
- Summary: US has a working poor immigrant problem, Europe a non-working immigrant problem

## Education Options

- Years of schooling = best single predictor of earnings (Bill Gates exception)
- Need for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> chances to get schooling plus employer incentives
- Adult immigrants: English-language training via NGOs in meatpacking plants, GED at community colleges etc
- Children of immigrants: more controversial
  - \*bilingual vs English instruction in K-12 schools
  - \*youthful enthusiasm vs. experience in teaching in inner city schools
  - \*can military fill in for schools?

## #1 second-change = comm colleges

- 60 million pupils in K-12 schools; 20 million college & university students
- 3 million graduates a year from secondary school (HS diploma); 2/3 begin college, but only 2/3 at 4-year colleges
- Almost 10% of college students in for-profit colleges that have very high drop-out rates
  - esp immigrant students take out federal loans for career-oriented programs, and do not complete or do not get jobs
  - University of Phoenix—700,000+ students, one of top stocks
  - Selling the American dream or profits?

## Conclusions

- Two major models: US gets better-educated Asians and less-educated Latin Americans
- Immigrant integration is via private-sector employment—employers-what education to helps prody (English)
- Immigrant youth—uneven progress in K-12 schools, with military training option for some immigrant youth (but usually need secondary school)
- Issue: working poor













