

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG CHILDREN

The National Household Education Survey (NHES) provides assessments of important aspects of family and school support for educational success among children ages 3 to 8 years in immigrant families for Hispanics, Asians, and whites and for the foreign-born and native-born (Nord and Griffin, 1999). Estimates for specific countries of origin are not possible because of the limited sample size and lack of information on countries of origin.

Family members can foster school success by engaging in various activities with their young child, including teaching them letters and numbers, reading to them, and working on projects with them (Table 6). For seven different activities of this type in 1996, among third- and later-generation children who were non-Hispanic white, the proportion of children with parents engaged in such activities during the past week ranged from 75 to 93 percent, and the proportions for children in immigrant families were about the same to no more than 11 percentage points smaller. Among children in immigrant families, the proportions were usually higher for second-generation children than for the first generation, and the proportions tended to be 10 to 15 percentage points lower for Hispanic children than for Asians (Nord and Griffin, 1999).

Table 6 (Part 1)

Percent with Parents Reporting Selected Family Educational and School Experiences for Children Ages 3 to 8 Years by Generation and for Third- and-Later-Generation Children by Race and Ethnicity: 1996

Characteristic	Children 3-8 years	1st & 2nd Generations						3rd and Later Generations			
		Total	Second Gen.	First Gen.	Hispanic	Asian	White	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
Total(thousands)	22,959	3,213	2,782	430	1,734	239	837	19,746	14,166	3,326	1,652
Family Involvement at Home											
In the past week, someone in family...											
Taught child letters, words, or numbers ^a	93%	92%	93%	86%	90%	97%	94%	94%	93%	96%	91%
Taught child songs or music ^a	76	73	73	68	70	72	78	76	76	83	69
Took child along while doing errands ^a	95	91	90	97	88	79	99	95	96	94	94
Number of times read to child^b											
Not at all	7	11	11	13	14	6	7	7	6	8	8
Once or twice	20	26	25	34	32	18	17	19	17	25	24
3 or more times	28	25	26	23	25	25	24	29	28	30	29
Every day	44	37	38	31	29	51	51	45	48	37	39
Told child a story	77	76	77	74	71	83	84	77	78	73	79
Worked on arts and crafts project with child	72	65	66	59	59	74	74	73	75	66	72
Played a game, sport, or exercised with child	92	86	87	82	81	92	94	93	94	92	87
Involved child in household chores	95	86	86	83	84	74	90	96	97	95	92
Worked on a project with child like building, making or fixing something^c	67	56	58	51	47	59	69	68	70	63	67

Footnotes are located on following page

Table 6 (Part 2)

Percent with Parents Reporting Selected Family Educational and School Experiences for Children Ages 3 to 8 Years by Generation and for Third- and-Later-Generation Children by Race and Ethnicity: 1996 (Part 1)

Characteristic	Children 3-8 years	Total	1st & 2nd Generations				3rd and Later Generations				
			Second Gen.	First Gen.	Hispanic	Asian	White	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
In the past month, someone in the family....											
Visited the library with child	44	38	38	32	27	54	51	45	47	40	39
Went to a play, concert, or other live show with child	30	26	27	21	21	34	33	30	29	36	27
Visited an art gallery, museum, or historical attraction with child	20	20	20	17	15	24	27	20	19	22	20
Visited a zoo or aquarium with child	17	23	23	21	20	32	26	16	14	23	21
Talked with child about family history or ethnic heritage	52	55	54	60	52	50	61	51	47	65	54
Attended an event with child sponsored by a community, ethnic, or religious group	50	41	41	39	35	38	51	51	52	52	43
Attended an athletic or sporting event in which child was not a player	33	22	24	12	18	19	30	35	36	33	27
Family Involvement at School											
Parents' involvement in school^d											
Low	15	17	17	17	21	13	10	15	13	21	17
Moderate	21	26	25	33	30	30	20	20	19	23	24
High	64	57	58	50	49	57	70	65	68	56	59
Parent attended a general school meeting	83	82	83	78	79	81	87	84	84	81	82
Parent attended class or school event	67	61	61	60	54	56	73	68	71	57	64
Parent volunteered at school	51	38	41	24	29	36	54	53	56	42	46
Parent attended parent-teacher conference	79	82	81	84	83	88	86	79	79	76	78

^aApplies only to children not yet in first grade.

^bApplies to children age 3 years through grade 3.

^cApplies to children in grades 1 and above.

^dApplies to children enrolled in preschool programs or regular school.

NOTE: Hispanic children are designated as such. They are not included in any of the other racial or ethnic categories. The Total columns include children of other races and ethnicities. Because of rounding, percents may not sum to 100.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National center for Education Statistics, 1996 National Household Education Survey. Nord and Griffin, 1999.

Parents also can foster school achievement by taking their children on a variety of educational outings (Table 6). Estimates of the proportion with parents taking them on six different types of outings in 1996 ranged widely from 12 to 65 percent, and did not vary systematically between first-, second-, and third- and later-generation children, or between Hispanic and Asian children in immigrant families (Nord and Griffin, 1999).

Parental involvement in their children's schools is a third set of activities that foster school achievement (Table 6). Among third- and later-generation children in 1996, 68 percent of non-Hispanic whites had parents highly involved in school, somewhat more than the 59 percent for Hispanics and 56 percent for

non-Hispanic blacks. Among children in immigrant families, the proportion with parents highly involved in school was 57 percent, although most of the difference between these children and third- and later-generation non-Hispanic white children was accounted for by the higher proportion with a moderate level of parental involvement. Parental involvement was greater for the second generation than the first (58 versus 50 percent highly involved). Among children in immigrant families, Hispanics were less likely than Asians to have highly involved parents (49 versus 57 percent) (Nord and Griffin, 1998).

Early childhood programs prior to kindergarten help children prepare for school. The proportions attending early childhood programs among third- and later-generation children were 58, 66, and 47 percent, respectively, for non-Hispanic whites, blacks, and Hispanics, compared to 42 percent for children in immigrant families. The second generation was more likely than the first to attend such programs and Hispanic children in immigrant families were slightly less likely than Asians to attend such programs (Nord and Griffin, 1998).

Children are able to learn better if the schools they attend are well-disciplined and parental participation may be encouraged by a variety of school practices that foster such involvement. Parental ratings of children's schools are available along 10 dimensions, including the school environment (teachers maintain classroom discipline; principal maintains school discipline; teachers and students respect each other), and school practices (school welcomes family involvement and makes it easy; school lets parent know how child is doing in school/program; school helps parents understand developmental stages of children; school lets parent know about volunteer opportunities at school; school provides information about how to help child with homework; and school provides information about why child is placed in particular groups or classes).

The proportion with favorable or very favorable parental responses was 45 to 67 percent for non-Hispanic white children. The proportions with favorable ratings were 2 to 10 percentage points lower along most dimensions for third- and later-generation non-Hispanic blacks and Hispanics. These proportions varied between about 15 percentage points less and 15 percentage points more for third- and later-generation children. They also varied substantially but in no specific direction for first- and second-generation children in immigrant families and for Hispanic and Asian children in immigrant families (Nord and Griffin, 1998).

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Children from immigrant families face many potential challenges to their educational success. Many of them come from homes in which English is not the main spoken language. Parents may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with avenues for participation in their children's schooling, and many have received little formal education. Immigrant families tend to settle in large urban areas that have troubled school systems (Fuligni, 1998). It follows that these children may experience difficulties at school. Yet, recent studies suggest that adolescents from immigrant families perform just as well if not better in school than their third- and later-generation peers (Fuligni, 1997; Kao and Tienda, 1995; Fletcher and Steinberg, 1994; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1991; Rumbaut, 1995.)

First- and second-generation adolescents in immigrant families nationally have slightly higher grades and math test scores than third- and later-generation adolescents, but the reading test scores of the first generation are somewhat lower than those of third- and later-generation adolescents (Kao, 1999). The relationship is not uniform for adolescents in immigrant families but varies with country of origin.

First-, second-, and third- and later-generation Mexican adolescents are similar in grades and in math test scores, although there is a tendency, especially for reading test scores, toward improvement across the generations. Mexican adolescents of all generations have substantially lower educational achievements than third- and later-generation non-Hispanic white adolescents; most of the difference for each generation is explained by lower parent education and family income among Mexican adolescents (Kao, 1999).

Chinese adolescents in immigrant families, especially the second generation, exceed third- and later-generation Chinese adolescents in grades and math test scores; however, only the second generation exceeds the third- and higher-generations in reading test scores. Chinese first- and second-generation adolescents also exceed third- and later-generation non-Hispanic white adolescents in grades and math test scores. The second generation has higher reading scores as well. The superior grades and math test scores of first-generation Chinese are not explained by socioeconomic status, psychological well-being, or other school experience. For the second generation, however, a third to a half of the superior performance is explained by these factors, particularly parent education and family income (Kao, 1999).

Among Filipino adolescents, the second generation also achieves better grades and math and reading test scores than the first or third and higher generations. Compared to third- and later-generation non-Hispanic white adolescents, first and second generation Filipino adolescents achieve higher grades. The second generation achieves higher grades, and math and reading test scores (Kao, 1999). One-half to three-fourths of the Filipino advantage in math and reading test scores, compared to third- and later-generation non-Hispanic white adolescents, is accounted for by differences in parent's education and family income.

In the San Diego study, adolescents of immigrants at every grade level had higher grades than the district-wide average, and the school dropout rate was lower among the adolescents in immigrant families, even among Mexican-origin adolescents, despite significant socioeconomic and linguistic handicaps (Rumbaut, 1999). Factors contributing to these outcomes are the amount of time spent doing homework, time spent watching television, and the educational aspirations of the adolescents and their parents (Rumbaut, 1999; Fuligni, 1997).

YOUTH NOT IN SCHOOL AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS

The greater the number of years of schooling completed by youth, the more likely they are to obtain well-paid jobs during adulthood. In 1990, first generation youth were substantially more likely than second- and third- and later-generation youth to not be enrolled in school and to have limited educational attainments (Table 7). But most of the difference is accounted for by youth from Mexico, from 5 war-torn countries (Laos, Vietnam, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua), and from 3 impoverished countries (Honduras, Haiti, and Dominican Republic), all with very high U.S. child poverty rates.

At age 12, the proportions not enrolled in school were essentially identical at 3-4 percent for the second and third and later generations overall, and the third and later generations of whites, blacks, American Indians, and Hispanics, and for second- and third-generation youth of Mexican origin. The proportion was slightly higher for the first generation, but most of this small difference is accounted for by the high proportion (7 percent) of Mexican-origin youth not in school.

Important differences emerge at older ages, however. By age 17 in 1990, 7-9 percent of second- and third- and later-generation youth were not enrolled in school, and among the third and later generations, the proportion rises from 8 percent for non-Hispanic whites to 11 percent for blacks, and 13 to 14 percent for Hispanics and American Indians (Figure 41). Among Mexican-origin youth age 17, 10-11 percent of the second and third and later generations were not enrolled in school, a level similar to third- and later-generation blacks and somewhat higher than corresponding non-Hispanic whites. But among the first generation age 17, 20 percent were not enrolled in school, and this increased to 38 percent for Mexican-origin youth. In fact, Mexico and the other 8 impoverished and war-torn countries of origin listed above account for 92 percent of all the first-generation youth age 17 who not enrolled in school; 29 percent of all the first-generation youth age 17 from these 9 countries were not enrolled in school. Among other countries of origin, excluding these 9, 10 percent are not enrolled in school, only 1.5 percentage points more than among third- and later-generation non-Hispanic whites.

Table 7

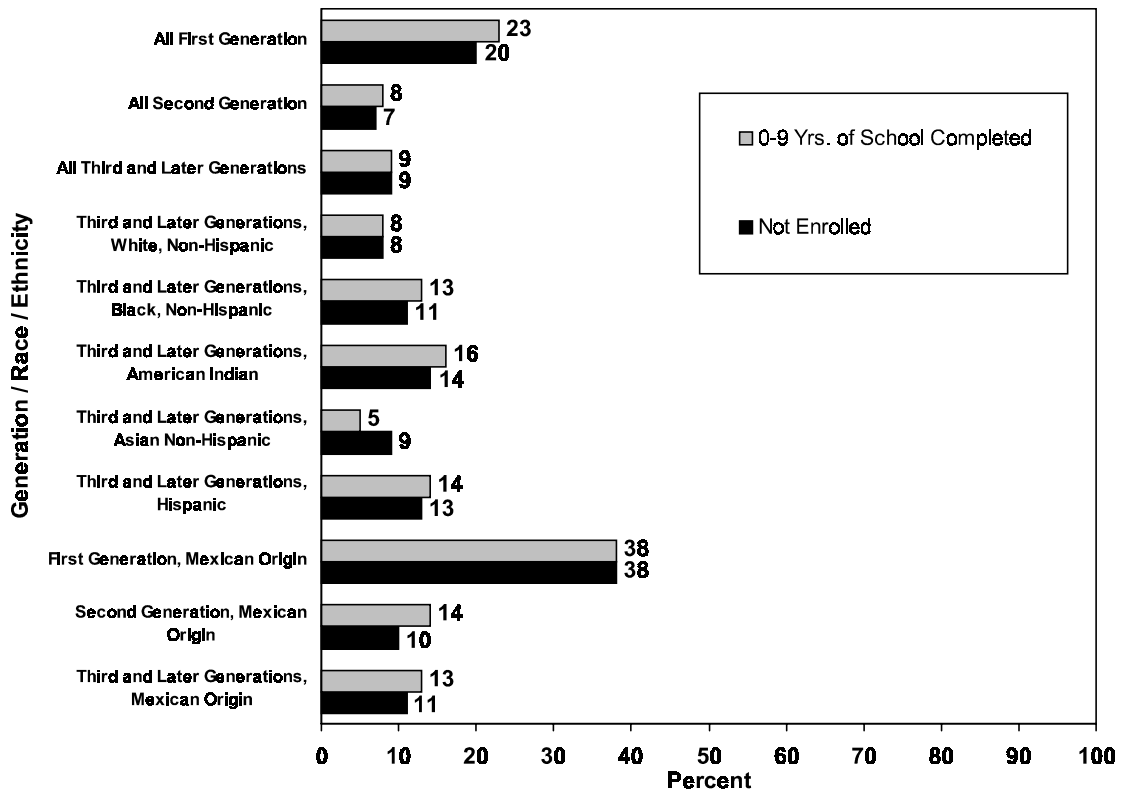
Percent Not Enrolled in School, Completing 0-9 Years of Education, and Neither Enrolled in School Nor Working for Selected Ages of First- and Second-Generation Adolescents by Generation and Third-and-Later-Generation Adolescents by Race and Ethnicity and Mexican Origin: 1990

<u>Generation, Race, and Ethnicity</u>	<u>Not Enrolled in School</u>			<u>Completed 0-9</u>	<u>Not Enrolled</u>
	<u>Age 12</u>	<u>Age 16</u>	<u>Age 17</u>	<u>Years of School Age 17</u>	<u>in School or Working Age 17</u>
First Generation	5.4	12	20.4	22.7	12
Second Generation	3.4	4.4	7	8.1	4.2
Third and Later Generations	3.5	5.6	9.1	9.3	5.8
White, Non-Hispanic	3.3	5.2	8.3	8.2	4.8
Black, Non-Hispanic	4.2	6.9	11.3	12.5	9.2
Asian, Non-Hispanic	4.8	4.4	8.7	5.2	4.6
American Indian	3.2	8.4	14.3	16.2	10.7
Hispanic	3.5	7.4	12.6	14.1	9.1
Mexican Origin					
First Generation	7.4	22.2	37.8	38.3	21.2
Second Generation	3.4	6.4	10.3	13.8	6.7
Third and Later Generations	3.4	6.7	11.3	13.4	7.8

Source: Calculated from 1990 5% PUMS file.

Figure 41

Percent Not Enrolled in School and Percent with 0-9 Years of Education at Age 17 by Generation, Race, Ethnicity, and Mexican Origin: 1990



Note: See Technical Appendix for description of variables.

Source: Calculated from 1990 5% PUMS file.

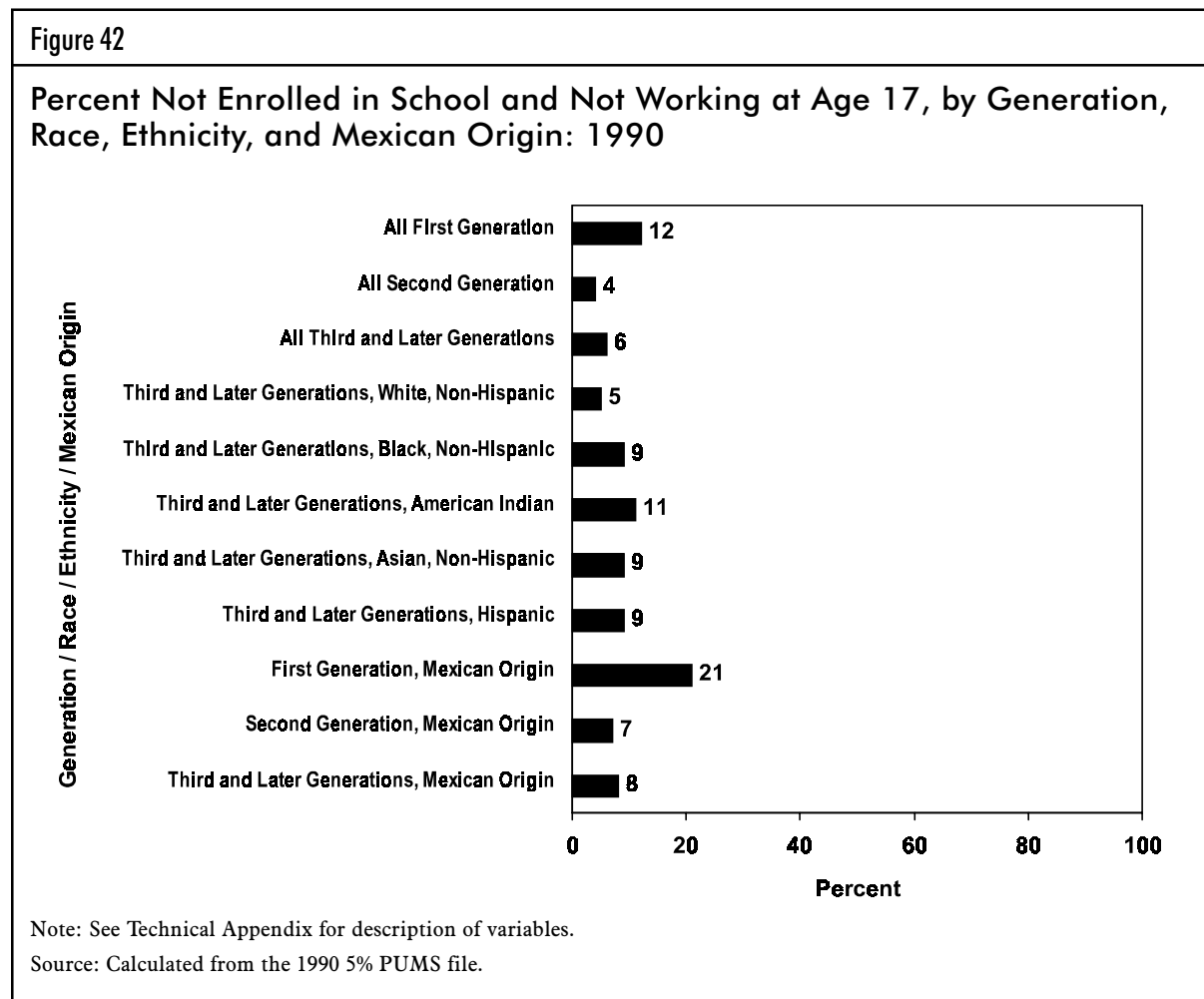
Not only were many of the children from these 9 countries not enrolled in school, many had extremely low educational attainments, having completed no more than 9 years of school (Table 7). Among second- and third- and later-generation children as a whole, 8 to 9 percent at age 17 had completed no more than 9 years of school, the same as third- and later-generation non-Hispanic whites. This increased to 14 to 16 percent for third- and later-generation youth age 17 who were black, American Indian, or Hispanic. Among both second- and third- and later-generation Mexican-origin youth age 17, 13-14 percent had completed no more than 9 years of education; but 23 percent of all first-generation youth had completed so little school, and this jumped to 38 percent for first-generation Mexican-origin youth. In fact, Mexican-origin youth age 17 accounted for 59 percent of all first-generation children at this age who had completed no more than 9 years of schooling, and 79 percent of these children were born in Mexico or one of the other 8 countries with high proportions not enrolled in school.

Thus, among youth age 17 from these 9 countries, not only were 29 percent not enrolled in school, but a nearly identical 32 percent had completed no more than 9 years of education. The very limited educational attainments of many of these children no doubt reflects the limited educational opportunities available to them in their countries of birth, and the recency of their migration to the U.S., since school enrollment rates among the first generation at age 12 are much more similar to second- and third- and later-generation children.

In fact, most of the enormous disadvantage of Mexican-origin youth as a whole (23 percent completing no more than 9 years of schooling) is accounted for by the first generation, and no doubt by first-generation youth who are very recent immigrants; thus, insofar as Mexican-origin youth, and more generally Hispanic youth, have comparatively high proportions not attending school and low educational attainments, much the disadvantage resides among recent immigrants from Mexico who enter the U.S. with very low educational attainments. These youth may have educational and related needs that are quite different from children who immigrate at earlier ages, and from second- and third- and later-generation youth.

YOUTH NOT IN SCHOOL AND NOT WORKING

Youth who are neither in school nor working for pay are at risk of lower earnings and less stable employment than peers who stay in school and/or secure jobs (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1997). Only 4-6 percent of all second- and third- and later-generation adolescents age 17 were neither in school nor working in 1990, compared to 7-8 percent for second- and third- and later-generation Mexican-origin youth, and 9-11 percent for third- and later-generation Black, American Indian, and Hispanic youth (Figure 42 and Table 7).



Among first-generation youth age 17, 12 percent were neither in school nor working, but this high level is accounted for by the very high proportion (21 percent) among first-generation Mexican-origin youth. Excluding Mexican origin, only 7 percent of first-generation adolescents age 17 were neither working nor in school; thus, among third- and later-generation youth age 17, blacks, American Indians, and Hispanics were about twice as likely as corresponding non-Hispanic whites to be neither in school nor working, and second- and third- and later-generation Mexican-origin adolescents lie between the two. But first-generation Mexican-origin adolescents about twice as likely as the third and later generations of other racial and ethnic minorities to not be engaged in school or work, mainly because many of these youth are not enrolled in school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are indebted to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) for providing funds to prepare this essay, and to the other agencies and foundations which provided support for the Committee on the Health and Adjustment of Immigrant Children and Families of the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine, including the U.S. Public Health Service, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (OASPE) in the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) in the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education in the Department of Education, the Rockefeller Foundation, the W.T. Grant Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the California Wellness Foundation. We also want to thank the Population Studies Center at the University of Michigan for providing access to computing facilities and to PUMS and IPUMS data sets without which this research would not have been possible, and Lisa Neidert of the Population Studies Center for providing invaluable technical assistance in conducting the analyses for this study. Finally, we wish to thank Rose Li and David Nielsen, our program officers at NICHD and OASPE, respectively, for their careful reading and helpful comments on an earlier draft, Deborah A. Phillips, Director of the Board on Children, Youth, and Families, for her many comments and the supportive environment in which we conducted this research, and Nichole Tillman for project assistance. The authors bear sole responsibility for the opinions and conclusions presented in this essay, and the views presented here do not necessarily reflect those of the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine, or any other agencies, foundations, or persons.