Globalization, Immigrant-Origin Students & the Quest for Educational Equity

Carola Suárez-Orozco & Marcelo Suárez-Orozco

Globalization has come to define the modern world. Originally venerated as a force that would bring humanity to the peak of its flourishing through economic integration and positive cross-cultural exchange, globalization has deepened economic inequities, driven the dangerous degradation of the environment, and destabilized regions over fights for resources. Migration, a natural response to this precarity, has swelled, making the children of immigrants a growing, key demographic in schools across many high- and middle-income countries. The resilience, flexible thinking, and multilingualism of immigrant-origin students make them valuable community members in our globalized world. However, their schools are not always equipped to meet their psychosocial needs. While the current primary focus on language acquisition is an important foundation for supporting these students, an equitable whole-child approach is necessary to address their unique challenges and create an environment in which they can flourish.

Globalization defines an ever more interconnected, miniaturized, and fragile world. It flows from the growing movement of peoples, goods, services, and social practices among countries and regions. Migration is the human face of globalization; it is the sounds, colors, and aromas enveloping major cities today. For the first time in history, all continents are involved in the massive movement of people: as areas of immigration, emigration, transit, and return–and often as all four at once.

Over the last four decades, new information-communication and media technologies, the integration and disintegration of markets, and the movement of people globally have transformed countries and continents the world over. Globalization's three Ms–markets, media, and migration–are the synergetic vectors of change shaping and reshaping the economy and society. New communication and media technologies have enabled the de-territorialization of labor, and, concurrently, the increasing global coordination of markets has stimulated significant new waves of migrant labor–internal and international. Immigrants, in

© 2024 by Carola Suárez-Orozco & Marcelo Suárez-Orozco
Published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) license
https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_02102

turn, spur further globalization. As migration scholars David Leblang and Margaret E. Peters write, “migrants are an engine of globalization, especially for countries in the Global South. Migration and migrant networks serve to expand economic markets, distribute information across national borders, and diffuse democratic norms and practices throughout the world, increasing trade and investment ows.”[1] In our research, we have argued that globalization’s new economies, technologies, and demographic changes are signi cant challenges for education systems the world over. In this essay, we focus on the human face of globalization by examining the journeys of immigrants and their children and the quest for educational equity.

To contextualize these journeys, we must rst trace the current arc of globalization over the last four decades: from its initial triumphalist exuberance to the current age of global fragility. In its most recent wave, globalization’s promise rested on the claim that economic integration among nations would bring about unprecedented bene ts for both individuals and societies. Its advocates argued that the free market would accelerate the ow of goods, services, and capital across borders, encouraging specialization, competition, and economic growth. The global exchange of ideas, knowledge, and technology across nations would foster innovation and facilitate cultural understanding and interactions among people from different backgrounds. Actors in the emerging global stage would learn about and come to appreciate diverse cultures, traditions, and perspectives. Cross-cultural understandings would promote tolerance, empathy, and mutual respect. In its utopic form, globalization would promote peace and geopolitical stability by fostering socioeconomic interdependence among nations.[2] Economically connected countries would have a vested interest in maintaining peaceful relations. In sum, globalization would boost wealth creation and further human ourishing by increasing economic and sociocultural exchanges, expanding markets, and creating new opportunities.

By the 1990s and the rst decade of the twenty- rst century, a “triumphalist globalization” had captured the imagination of its advocates. We saw the dawn of an era of neoliberal euphoria, with the dei cation of the free market and a deep suspicion and even outright rejection of market controls and regulations paving the way to the “hyperglobalist path.”[3] A devotion to the supremacy of the market economy over all other possible arrangements for economic prosperity saw its purest form in the so-called Washington consensus: exuberantly embracing unfettered trade, oating exchange rates, and free markets. At their most inebriated moment, globalization’s viziers saw “the end of history,” when late capitalism at the turn of the century came to represent the summit of all possible human arrangements in the pursuit of wealth, human ourishing, and eudaemonia.[4]

Globalization has had its bene ts, but also some unequivocal and entirely negative consequences.[5] First, globalization’s outsized bene ts have gone mostly to

the wealthy and to multinational corporations. Second, globalization has created new unsustainable levels of income and wealth inequality both within and between nations.[6] Third, high-income countries saw signi cant job losses in sectors that could not compete with cheaper overseas labor as entire industries and manufacturing sectors disappeared, migrating to countries with lower labor costs, lax regulations, and weak workers' rights. Fourth, globalization has contributed to economic instability, as interconnected markets came to amplify nancial crises and contagion.[7] Fifth, the dominance of globalized media, the ascendency of consumerism, and the spread of Western ideologies came to erode cultural traditions, challenge local values, and degrade local identities.[8] Globalization puts traditional societies on a pathway for what sociologist Anthony Giddens has termed detraditionalization. He claims that "tradition provides a framework for action that can go largely unquestioned. . . . Tradition gives stability, and the ability to construct a self-identity against a stable background."[9] Globalization, however, erodes

Who are our immigrant-origin students?[17] They include both first-generation and second-generation youth. (The first generation are foreign-born, and the

curring in societies that had previously been both predominantly Judeo-Christian and increasingly secular.[24]

Children in immigrant families come with a diverse range of skills and resources, and their experiences differ signi cantly based on the speci c combination of these resources and their contexts of reception.[25] Some are refugees (or asylum seekers) escaping political, religious, and social strife or environmental catastrophes. Others are motivated by the promise of better jobs, while still others frame their migration as an opportunity to provide better education for their children. Most are documented migrants, though millions are undocumented. Some join well-established communities with robust social supports, others settle in under-resourced high-poverty neighborhoods, and still others move from one migrant setting to another. Some receive excellent schooling in their countries of origin, while others leave educational systems that are in shambles. Some are the children of educated professionals, others have illiterate parents.

Both rst- and second-generation students share the experience of having immigrant parents and are less likely than nonimmigrant students to speak the language of the new country at home or share the cultural practices taken for granted in schools. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that the rst and second generations face distinct experiences.[26] The rst generation makes the transition to the new land within their own lifetime. Depending upon their age of arrival, navigating the losses of relationships, memories, and linguistic and cultural ties to their sending country and adjusting to their host society are among their personal challenges. For the rst generation, key challenges often include adapting to a new culture and overcoming the traumas related to migration, particularly for refugees and asylum seekers. In contrast, the second generation more commonly faces the challenge of developing a complex ethnic-racial identity. For the second generation, the attachments to the sending country may be more abstract and are often ltered through parental/caregiver narratives.

Notably, "contexts of reception" (as coined by sociologists Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut) play an important role in adaptation and integration. Contexts of reception encompass the social policies, prevailing societal attitudes, and economic conditions in the host country.[27] When these contexts are welcoming and inclusive, offering equitable access to resources and opportunities, immigrant youth are more likely to experience positive adaptation (including academic success, robust identity formation, and social integration). Conversely, if the contexts are characterized by hostility, discrimination, and structural barriers, the adaptation process can be adversely affected, leading to marginalization, identity struggles, and socioeconomic challenges. These contexts not only in uence immediate adaptation, but also have long-term implications on the life trajectories of the immigrant-origin youth, ultimately affecting their ability to contribute to and participate in their new societies.

Despite these diversities of cultural origins, circumstances for migration, and contexts of reception, there is an array of shared experiences that can in uence immigrant-origin students' educational trajectories across contexts. In the face of adversity, immigrant-origin students demonstrate-a rep ertoire of strengths and resiliencies that are often underrecognized. Key among

what he calls "cognitive academic language pro ciency" comparable to that of native-born peers.[36] Complicating matters, these students frequently struggle to access quality second-language programs due to underresourced schools and a dearth of adequately trained or supported educators.[37] Standardized assessments, typically developed and normed for native-born speakers, pose additional chal lenges for these students; scores may not accurately re ect their academic under standing or skills, resulting in inappropriate instructional planning, misplace ments, and gatekeeping.[38] Further, the stress and stigma associated with the pro longed new academic language acquisition process can undermine self-esteem, motivation, and school engagement.[39]

First-generation immigrant students with limited or interrupted formal edu cation constitute a growing segment of students in host language programs of in struction. Interruptions in schooling may occur for a variety of reasons, includ ing displacements due to con ict or natural disasters, as well as complications in the migration journey; in some cases, students may have missed a few years, and in others, they may have never attended formal schooling at all.[40] These in terruptions pose substantiuudents mET EMC ae(en-engageme)L

celerated cascading anti-immigrant sentiments, making migrants vulnerable to hate crimes and social exclusion. Millions of Asian immigrants became targets of xenophobic violence and denigration as the former president of the United States and others framed the COVID-19 pandemic using vulgar terms like "the Chinese virus" and "kung flu." According to FBI data, U.S. hate crimes against Asian Americans rose about 76 percent in 2020 amid the pandemic.[62]

Following the emergency phase of the pandemic, job-related stresses posed a distinct threat: a thin supply of teachers, especially among faculty of color.[63] Further, exceptionally high learning losses were reported in school districts serving immigrant-origin students and students of color.[64] This situation has made it even more difficult for immigrant-origin children to access equitable education and achieve academic success.

However, the educational challenges that immigrant-origin students face are not unique to the United States. Similar concerns permeate school systems in other post-industrial countries. In Canada, for instance, schools often struggle to adequately meet the diverse linguistic and cultural needs of students, despite the country's long-standing commitment to multiculturalism and inclusion.[65] Similarly, in Germany, Sweden, and Australia, a strong focus on language acquisition can overshadow the broader social-emotional needs of students; teacher education programs rarely include training about immigration-related issues or culturally responsive pedagogy, nor are trauma-informed care supports provided.[66] The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified these preexisting disparities across these nations as well, often resulting in higher learning losses among immigrant-origin students and students of color than their white/nonimmigrant peers.[67] Moreover, much like the United States, these countries have faced a sociopolitical climate increasingly hostile to immigration, which further complicates the educational experiences of immigrant-origin students.[68]

As such, immigrant-origin children globally face a strong undertow. Given the high proportions of students of immigrant origin, providing them with adequate and equitable educational opportunities is not simply ethical and just, but also an economic and societal imperative. Without a sharp educational focus, immigrant-

the economic competitiveness and innovation potential of society. Last, as many countries face aging populations, immigrant-origin students represent an important demographic critical for sustaining economic growth; failing to invest in their education is a missed opportunity to address these challenges.[71]

Beyond economic arguments, there are socioemotional and social cohesion arguments for providing equitable, welcoming, and inclusive education to immigrant-origin students. When students do not see their cultural backgrounds represented and valued in their education, it can impact their self-esteem and sense of belonging, leading to alienation and identity conflicts.[72] If inadequately supported, immigrant-origin students may struggle to integrate fully into society, with potential implications for broader social divisions and a lack of social cohesion. Conversely, providing these supports has the potential to lead not just to higher levels of personal well-being, but also to greater intercultural understanding.[73]

How, then, should host societies shoulder their responsibility in the quest to provide equitable educational opportunities for their youngest members? What educational policies and practices across postindustrial nations are required to better serve this significant and growing sector of the student population? Most data, practice, and funding for immigrant-origin students in education have focused on the domain of language learning.[74] While language acquisition is clearly linked to both cognitive and academic development, a narrow focus on language development has tended to neglect many of the other critical domains of a whole-child approach.[75]

A whole-child approach is child-centered and considers several domains of child development. These include the classic foci of schooling: the *academic* (attainment of core literacy, math, science, and social science skills and knowledge) and *cognitive* (related to attention, perception, and memory) domains. However, the whole-child approach also encompasses the *mental* (a state of well-being to cope with the stresses of life and attain potential), *social-emotional* (skills and mindsets related to self-regulation, stress management, social interactions, and resilience), and *physical* (such as wellness, nutrition, and sleep) domains. Last, it recognizes the central role of *identity* (including personal, cultural, racial, and ethnic identities) and *belonging*. Each of these domains of development are interrelated and must be addressed for children to thrive.[76]

A guiding principle of an *equitable* whole-child approach specifies providing care within transformative settings.[77] Such settings begin with a focus on developing positive relationships between educators and students, between students, and be-

re ected in the curriculum while learning perspectives across cultures and histo ry.[78]

struction and an intentional focus on literacy, providing differentiation and scaffolding for language and content learning. Last, checking for understanding and attainment of learning goals should occur throughout the year. It should be incorporated holistically across all domains of development using various strategies, including portfolios (a collection of student work that demonstrates their efforts, progress, and achievements across various areas of the curriculum over time).

The quality of the school climate has implications for school belonging, academic achievement, and healthy developmental outcomes.[85] Evidence, however, suggests that students from marginalized immigrant backgrounds experience worse school climates than their white and more privileged peers, reporting more bullying, less interpersonal safety, and less connection with their teachers.[86]

Further, xenophobic and exclusionary attitudes and policies have increased over the past decade and have trickled into school settings.[87] To better promote healthy school climates for all students, we must begin by accurately understanding how students are experiencing their schools. Thus, schools should comprehensively assess school climates by intentionally soliciting perspectives directly from all students, including their students of immigrant origin. This process should seek to understand the role of students' distinct social identities in shaping their school experience through both close- and open-ended response options. This should include a careful examination and response to reports of bullying and discrimination, recognizing that students, faculty, and staff all can act as bullies. The quality of interpersonal relationships is fundamental for the school climate. Positive student-teacher and peer relationships are protective buffers that promote a positive school climate and must be intentionally cultivated. Thus, establishing school and class norms that include intergroup respect and antibullying, as well as advisory groups, may enhance relationships.[88]

A whole-child approach attends to well-being and social-emotional development for all students to reach their potential. This is especially essential for immigrant-origin students, given that immigration involves managing losses of relationships and family separations, negotiating acculturation and hybrid identities, and forging pathways to belonging, among many other complex facets.

Many immigrants have experienced a variety of traumas. A trauma-informed lens of practice attending to social, emotional, and mental health domains is essential for learning and thriving.[89] A whole-student approach takes a resilience- and asset-based perspective and a trauma-informed approach while explicitly providing instruction around transformative social-emotional skill supports.[90] It also requires centering culturally responsive learning communities where students see themselves re ected in the curriculum and where they see that their caregivers are welcomed and respected.[91]

As a last recommendation, we focus on teacher preparation programs. A foundational premise of culturally responsive and culturally sustaining practice is a

baseline understanding of the experiences and assets of the students and families being served.[92] However, there is a large gap between most educational preparation programs and the realities of the lives of immigrant students attending schools across high-income countries. In 2002, teacher education scholar A. Lin Goodwin scanned the research literature to examine how teacher preparation addressed immigrant children.[93] She identified a significant gap beyond address

His research ... ultural psychology and p...
an emphasis ... n, globalization, and mig...
Suárez-Oroz... dren of Immigration (2001), ... ew Land: Immigrant
Students in A... sity with Irina Todorova, ... ucation: A Global
Compact for ... 022).

endnotes

[1] David Leblan... t E. Peters, "Immigration and ... nd Deglobalization)," Ann... Political Science 25 (1) (2022): 377.

[2] Ju Hyun Pyun... obalization Promotes ...
2009, https://ce... obalisation-promotes-p...

[3] See Dani Rodrik, ... Turn and How It Hurt America...

[15] Rodrik, "Globalization's Wrong Turn and How It Hurt America."

[16] International Organization for Migration and United Nations Migration, *World Migration Report 2022* (International Organization for Migration, 2022), https://worldmigration report.iom.int/wmr-2022-interactive/#:~:text=The%20current%20global%20 estimate%20is,over%20the%20past%20 ve%20decade

[17] Note that OECD, in its PISA data, describes these same students as having an "immigrant background." See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)," https://www.oecd.org/en /about/programmes/pisa.html .

[18] Carola Suárez-Orozco and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, *Children of Immigration* (Harvard University Press, 2001); Carola Suárez-Orozco, Mona M. Abo-Zena, and Amy K. Marks, eds., *Transitions: The Development of Children of Immigrants* (NYU Press, 2015); Migration Policy Institute, "Children in U.S. Immigrant Families (By Age Group and State, 1990 versus 2022)," https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/children -immigrant-families?width=1000&height=850&iframe=true; and United Nations Development Programme,

[26] Rubén G. Rumbaut, "Ages, Life Stages, and Generational Cohorts: Decomposing the Immigrant First and Second Generations in the United States," International Migration Review 38 (3) (2004): 1160–1205; and Carola Suárez-Orozco, Mona M. Abo-Zena, and Amy K. Marks, eds., Transitions: The Development of Children of Immigrants (NYU Press, 2015).

[27] Portes and Rumbaut, Immigrant America; and Carola Suárez-Orozco, Frosso Motti-Stefandi, Amy Marks, and Dala Katsiacas, "An Integrative Risk and Resilience Model for Understanding the Adaptation of Immigrant-Origin Children and Youth," American Psychologist 73 (6) (2018): 781.

[28] Vivian Louie, Keeping the Immigrant Bargain: The Costs and Rewards of Success in America (Russell Sage Foundation, 2012), 8; Muhammad Syed, "Hope and Optimism as Basic Human Strengths in the Face of Adversity: A Positive Psychology Perspective," International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology 1 (2016): 41–53; and Min Zhou, "Growing Up American: The Challenge Confronting Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants," Annual Review of Sociology 23 (1) (1997): 63–95.

[29] Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, Central American Refugees and U.S. High Schools: A Psychosocial Study of Motivation and Achievement (Stanford University Press, 1989); Louie, Keeping the Immigrant Bargain; and Portes and Rumbaut, Immigrant America.

[30] Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, Children of Immigration.

[37] Kate Menken and Tatyana Kleyn, "The Long-Term Impact of Subtractive Schooling in the Educational Experiences of Secondary English Language Learners," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 13 (4) (2010): 399–417.

[38] Jamal Abedi, "The No Child Left Behind Act and English Language Learners: Assessment and Accountability Issues," *Educational Researcher* 33 (1) (2004): 4–14.

[39] Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova, *Learning a New Land*.

[40] Andrea DeCapua and Helaine W. Marshall, *Breaking New Ground: Teaching Students With Limited or Interrupted Formal Education in U.S. Secondary Schools* (University of Michigan

[52] Roberto G. Gonzales, Carola Suárez-Orozco, and Maria Cecilia Dedios-Sanguineti, "No Place to Belong: Contextualizing Concepts of Mental Health Among Undocumented Immigrant Youth in the United States," American Behavioral Scientist 57 (8) (2013): 1174–1199.

[53] Veronica Terriquez, "Dreams Delayed: Barriers to Degree Completion Among Undocumented Community College Students," Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 41 (8) (2015): 1302–1323.

[54] Sean F. Reardon, Ericka Weathers, Erin Fahle, et al., "Is Separate Still Unequal? New Evidence on School Segregation and Racial Academic Achievement Gaps" (Stanford Center for Policy Analysis, 2019), https://cepa.stanford.edu/content/separate-still-unequal-new-evidence-school-segregation-and-racial-academic-achievement-gaps; and Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova, Learning a New Land.

[55] Carola Suárez-Orozco, "A Whole Child Approach: The Key to Immigrant Student Thriving," Immigrant Initiative at Harvard Education Brief (Immigration Initiative at Harvard, 2023), https://immigrationinitiative.harvard.edu/brief/a-whole-child-approach-the-key-to-immigrant-origin-student-thriving.

[56] Crosnoe and Lopez Turley, "K–12 Educational Outcomes of Immigrant Youth."

[57] A. Lin Goodwin, "Teacher Preparation and the Education of Immigrant Children," Education and Urban Society 34 (2) (2002): 156–172; A. Lin Goodwin, "Who is in the Classroom Now? Teacher Preparation and the Education of Immigrant Children," Educational Studies 53 (5) (2017): 433–449; Louie, Keeping the Immigrant Bargain; and Django Paris, "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice," Educational Researcher 41 (3) (2012): 93–97.

[58] Tamara Lucas and Ana María Villegas, "A Framework for Preparing Linguistically Responsive Teachers," in Teacher Preparation for Linguistically Diverse Classrooms, ed. Tamara Lucas (Routledge, 2010), 75–92.

[59] Adam Voight, Thomas Hanson, Meagan O'Malley, and Latifah Adekanye, "The Racial School Climate Gap: Within-School Disparities in Students' Experiences of Safety, Support, and Connectedness," American Journal of Community Psychology 56 (3–4) (2015): 252–267.

[60] John Rogers, Michael Ishimoto, Alexander Kwako, et al., "School and Society in the Age of Trump," UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access, March 13, 2019, https://idea.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/school-and-society-in-age-of-trump; and Reardon, Weathers, Fahle, et al., "Is Separate Still Unequal?"

[61] International Organization for Migration and United Nations Migration, World Migration Report 2022.

[62] Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, California State University, San Bernardino, "Anti-Asian Hate Crime Reported to Police in Large U.S. Cities: 2021 & 2020," June 1, 2021, https://www.csusb.edu/sites/default/ les/ AAPI%20C15.2183 154.5072 Tm (%20)Tj ET EMC

Soland, Beth Tarasawa, et al., “Projecting the Potential Impact of COVID-19 School Closures on Academic Achievement,” Educational Researcher 49 (8) (2020): 549–565.

[65] James Cummins, “Multiliteracies and Equity: How Do Canadian Schools Measure Up?” Education Canada 46 (2) (2006): 4–7.

[66] Frauke Miera, “German Education Policy and the Challenge of Migration,” paper prepared for the EMILIE project, WP3, Deliverable D4, European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder), 2008, https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/ les/2009-01/docl_6975_328629276.pdf; Nihad Bunar, Nyanlända Och Lärande: en Forskningsöversikt Om Nyanlända Elever i Den Svenska Skolan [New Arrivals and Learning: A Research Over

[78] Ibid.; and Django Paris and H. Samy Alim, eds., Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World (Teachers College Press, 2017).

[79] Robert J. Jagers, Deborah Rivas-Drake, and Teresa Borowski, "Equity and Social and Emotional Learning: A Cultural Analysis" (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2018).

[80] Darling-Hammond, Cantor, Hernández, et al., Design Principles for Schools.

[81] Monisah Bajaj, Daniel Walsh, Lesley Bartlett, and Gabriela Martínez, Humanizing Education for Immigra64Tw 9.5 0 0 9.4tion for I5nezçation(Teac.S 77.6 0 0 7.6 72 622.4376127EMC

88 Bajaj, Walsh, Bartlett, and Martínez, Humanizing Education for Immigrant and Refugee Youth.

89 Todd I. Herrenkohl, Sunghyun Hong, and Bethany Verbrugge, “Trauma-Informed Programs Based in Schools: Linking Concepts to Practices and Assessing the Evidence,” American Journal of Community Psychology 64 (3–4) (2019): 373–388.

90 Jagers, Rivas-Drake, and Borowski, “Equity and Social and Emotional Learning.”

91 Jessika H. Bottiani, Kristine E. Larson, Katrina J. Debnam, et al., “Promoting Educators’ Use of Culturally Responsive Practices: A Systematic Review of Inservice Interventions,” Journal of Teacher Education 69 (4) (2018): 367–385; and Paris and Alim, eds., Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies.

92 Geneva Gay, Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice (Teachers College Press, 2018); and Paris and Alim, eds., Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies.

93 Goodwin, “Teacher Preparation and the Education of Immigrant Children.”

94 Goodwin, “Who is in the Classroom Now?”

95 Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj, Juan Barrera Alcazar, Damhee Dee Dee Hong, and Maria Romo-González, “An Expanded Framework for Preparing Teachers to Educate Children of Immigrant Backgrounds,” Teaching and Teacher Education 129 (2023): 9.

96 Nel Noddings, “Care Ethics and ‘Caring’ Organizations,” Care Ethics and Political Theory (2015): 72–84.