Disrupting Narratives of Social Exclusion for Immigrant Children & Youth

Carola Suárez-Orozco
Marcelo Suárez-Orozco
Robert Teranishi
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Framing Immigration in a Global Perspective

All continents are involved in the mass movement of people: as areas of immigration, emigration, or transit, and often, as all three at once. In the 21st century, immigration is the human face of globalization: the sounds, colors, and aromas of a miniaturized, interconnected, and fragile world. During the second decade of the 21st century, 244 million people are international migrants (or 3.3% of the world’s population),\(^1\) approximately 750 million are internal migrants,\(^2\) and millions more are immediate relatives left behind.\(^3\) Only China (1.36 billion) and India (1.28 billion) have larger populations than today’s “immigration nation.”\(^4\)

Since the dawn of the millennium, the world has been witnessing a rapid rise in the numbers of a plurality of migrants—involuntary, internal or international, authorized or unauthorized, environmental refugees, and victims of human trafficking. These flows have intensified under the ascendancy of globalization, growing inequality, rachitic and collapsing states, war and terror, and climate change. Catastrophic migrations pose new international risks to millions of migrants and challenge the institutions of sending, transiting, and receiving nations. Although immigration is normative, it has taken a dystopic turn. Worldwide, civil and ethnic wars, structural violence, environmental cataclysms, and growing inequality are behind the largest displacement of people since World War II. Of the over 60 million forcefully displaced, half are children.

The United States (U.S.), much of Western Europe, as well as newly industrialized countries such as Russia, India, China, South Africa, Turkey, and others\(^5\) are being changed and challenged by mass migration. The U.S. leads the world in the number of immigrants. Currently, 45.0 million people (or approximately 14%) residing in the U.S., are foreign born.\(^6\) In the year 2065, the U.S. is projected to have an estimated 78 million immigrants. Immigrants in the U.S. today arrive from every continent on earth. The latest data tell a dynamic story: Asians now surpass Latinos among those who have been in the U.S. for five years or less. After peaking in the early 2000s, Latino immigration is now at its lowest level in 50 years. New immigration from the Caribbean now exceeds all new immigration from Europe. The number of new immigrants from “Africa grew 41% from 2000 to 2013, a sharper rise than for other major groups.”\(^6\) Demographic projections suggest that by 2065, the U.S. will be the first major advanced post-industrial society in history to become minority-majority – already a demographic reality in many states including California.\(^6\)
Immigrant Children and Youth

In the U.S., immigration is both history and destiny: it is how the country came to be in its present form and it is the future. The children of immigrants are the fruit borne of immigration. Twenty-five percent of children under the age of 18, a total of 18.7 million children, have an immigrant parent. Their growth has been rapid—in 1970 the population of immigrant origin children stood at 6% of the total population of children. It reached 20% by 2000, and is projected to increase to 33% by 2050. The transition of these children to citizenship, to the labor market, and to the narrative of the nation will deeply shape the future of our nation.

The majority of the children of immigrants are born in the U.S. of foreign-born parents. They are U.S. citizens; though approximately a quarter are growing up in the shadows of sanctioned immigration status. The most recent estimates suggest that 4.5 million U.S.-born children younger than 18 years old are living in the U.S. with at least one parent who is an unauthorized migrant. Altogether, about 7% of all school-aged children in the U.S. have at least one parent who is in the U.S. without authorization. Though many of these children demonstrate extraordinary resilience in the face of exceptional odds, they also face particular challenges and risks.

Immigrant Narratives across Time and Space

Immigration engenders ambivalence. The memes embodied in cognitive schemas, socio-emotional concerns, and cultural beliefs, shape attitudes towards immigration. So do the state of the economy, perceptions about crime and terror, and ideas (and ideals) about acculturation. Likewise, the deep historical echo that immigration has in the U.S., shapes our attitudes about current migrations.

In contemporary society, particularly in the aftermath of Brussels, Paris, San Bernardino, Boston, and 9/11, immigration has for some become associated with dysfunction, balkanization, and terror. In a culture of fear, facts are high-jacked and stereotypes can take center stage. The anti-immigrant meme lives in full daylight and is found in quotidian full-throated pronouncements by the political class, in the press, and in social media. The ambivalence and worries about immigration is notably less acute in public opinion data than in the headlines, radio programming, and political debates. A 2015 survey suggests that half of Americans believe that immigrants strengthen our society. Nonetheless, 34% worry that
immigrants are a threat to our customs and values, whereas the remaining 16% are undecided on this issue. There are deep divisions beneath the surface by age, race, and ethnicity. More than two-thirds of young adults (18-29) think that new immigrants strengthen the country, whereas close to half of seniors (65 and older) believe that immigrants represent a threat to our society. Further deep divisions occur by race and ethnicity, with 70% of Asian-Pacific Islanders, 67% of Latinos and 56% of Black Americans believing that new immigrants have a positive influence on American society. On the other hand, 40% of White Americans believe that newcomers are a threat.\textsuperscript{13}

Putting things into perspective, when it comes to immigration, Americans have always been of two minds: while we tend to romanticize it looking backwards, we are ambivalent about it in the here and now. Contemporary concerns resonate diachronically with sentiments in earlier anti-immigration eras such as with growth of the Know-Nothing Party in the late 1840s and 1850s, at the turn of the 19th century during the great migration wave, and in the 1990s.\textsuperscript{14,15,16,17} During the late 19th century and the early 20th century, Eastern European and Italian immigrants were feared for bringing their anarchist and communist struggles to the American homeland. In other eras, there were deep concerns about immigrant acculturation and loyalty to the homeland. In WWI, German immigrants were forced to “bury” their language, and WWII led to the internment of Japanese Americans.\textsuperscript{14} Similarly, characterizations of immigrants align synchronically with sentiments now found throughout Europe, including the U.K., France, Germany, Sweden, as well as South Africa and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{5,18,19}

Further, while some immigrant groups are favored, others are disparaged or feared. That is true today and was true in the metaphorical yesterday. In the past, we feared Irish and Italian immigrants and favored English.\textsuperscript{14} Today, Americans tend to hold more positive views of Asians than of Latin Americans or immigrants from the Middle East: whereas 47% and 44% report that Asian and European immigrants have a mostly positive impact on American society, respectively, 37% and 39% report that immigrants from Latin America and the Middle East have mostly a negative impact.\textsuperscript{6} Americans are particularly concerned with unauthorized immigration and the perceived nexus between “illegal immigration” and terrorism, for example. In February 2016, a Rasmussen poll found that 59% of likely voters believed that stricter border controls should be the priority when it comes to immigration.\textsuperscript{20}
What are the Predominant Concerns about Immigrants Today?

**Immigration, “Illegality,” Crime, and Terror**

As foreshadowed above, the most serious concern about immigration today is the fear that immigrants are bringing crime and terror to the new country. Recent anti-immigrant rhetoric by politicians has added fervor to this meme. Immigrants in general, and undocumented immigrants, particularly those from Latin America, are depicted as “rapists” and “violent criminals and murders,” whereas immigrants from the Middle East have been demonized as “terrorists.” Donald Trump, for example, has called for a forced registry of Muslims in the U.S. and for an immediate ban of further immigration of Muslims to the U.S. Similar anti-immigrant sentiments are found throughout Europe and Africa. The recent explosive growth in the numbers of new refugees flowing into Europe coupled with the Paris – Brussels terrorist attacks have stoked anti-immigrant sentiments on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the U.S., immigration is routinely re-casted as “illegal immigration.” When adults were asked what word came to mind when thinking about immigrants, about 12% used the word, “illegal.” A recent Gallup poll revealed that unauthorized immigration ranks in the top dozen major national concerns. Indeed, the idea of “illegal” immigration seems incommensurable with our national secular religion revering the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the rule of law. Framing immigration along the legal-illegal axis recasts many immigrants as inherent criminals whose very presence affronts basic American values of individual responsibility and the rule of law.

The propagation of the anti-immigrant meme, and the concurring increase in hate speech and violence towards immigrants are a part and parcel of a new culture of intolerance and prejudice, now living in full daylight on both sides of the Atlantic. Dehumanizing immigrants and stigmatizing the children of immigrants threatens and further tears the fabric of the nation. Anti-immigrant narratives depicting new arrivals as criminals, drug dealers, human traffickers, and terrorists are also on the rise in Europe, South Africa, and elsewhere. While the power of this meme is extraordinary, it is largely data free: the preponderance of evidence suggests that immigrants are significantly less likely to commit crimes than comparable samples of non-immigrants.
Economic Malaise

Opinion polls demonstrate that immigrants are now viewed as an economic burden. They are said to take jobs away from their native-born counterparts, depress wages, and exhaust social services. In the U.S., 50% of adults recently reported that immigrants are making the economy worse. Immigration is blamed for either causing or aggravating the unemployment problem. In the U.S., a common charge is that immigrants do not pay taxes and do not contribute to Social Security; yet they benefit from public services such as public education, welfare, food stamps, and Medicaid. The charge that immigrants hurt the economy, depress wages and abuse basic social services is, again, contrary to the empirical evidence. Indeed, the preponderance of evidence suggests that immigrants represent a moderate net surplus in a variety of economic indicators. What is historically true is the tight correlation between economic downturns and anti-immigrant sentiments; when there is a difficult economic situation, immigrants serve as ready scapegoats in times of crisis. Similar economic concerns are echoed in France and much of the rest of Western Europe, in Australia, South Africa and elsewhere. The high rates of unemployment among the second generation across the globe, especially in Europe, add concerns about the long-term prospects of new immigrants.

Concerns about Integration

On both sides of the Atlantic, immigrants are feared for weakening social cohesion, diluting cultural mores, self-segregation, worsening economic woes, and for disloyalty and terror. In the U.S. a recent survey found that 34% of American adults reported that immigrants are making social and moral values worse. In Europe, there are growing concerns over so-called "no-go zones," such as the infamous banlieues in Paris, and the ghettos in Brussels, where youth alienation, unemployment, crime, and self-radicalization are creating new pipelines to global and domestic terror. In the U.S., there are isomorphic concerns that immigrants, from Latin America in particular, refuse to learn English and self-segregate in co-ethnic ghettos where the second generation gravitate towards the underground economy, drug trafficking, and gang culture. Similar anti-immigrant narratives centering on self-segregation, lack of English language acquisition, and the flourishing of countercultural criminal gangs are echoed in the U.K.

Yet, other concerns center on questions of transnational ties and the unwillingness to fully invest and integrate into the new society. Many immigrants are said to fail to become fully
engaged citizens. When they become citizens, they are accused of taking on citizenship for mere instrumental purposes (e.g. for economic benefits or welfare). Accusations of divided loyalties also center on the practice of sending remittances to family members remaining in the home country. These fears over divided loyalties are reminiscent of the fretting of the Know-Nothing Party in the 1850s over the untrustworthiness of Irish, German, and Italian immigrants said to follow slavishly the commands of their Roman Pope.

In the U.S., there has been a deep and reoccurring concern with every wave of non-English speaking immigrants about linguistic integration. Benjamin Franklin famously ruminated that Germans would “never adopt our Language or Customs” and similar concerns were voiced during the last great wave of migration about Eastern Europeans and Italians. Yet, at every turn, while immigrants initially maintained their home language, their children inevitably gravitated to English, and over time, gave up the language of their parents turning the U.S. into a “cemetery for languages.” Over the last quarter century, there is a palpable concern about the flourishing of the Spanish language in the U.S.; leading to a number of English-Only ballot initiatives in several states. Yet again, these concerns are empirically misplaced. Furthermore, they ignore the considerable linguistic, cognitive, and cultural advantages of bilingualism.

While language in the U.S. has been a primary symbolic integration preoccupation, in Europe, the overarching concern involves religion (specifically Islam) and social practices (such as arranged marriages, female genital cutting, and headscarves)—all said to be incommensurable with European ideals of gender equality, autonomy, and individual choice. In the aftermath of the London, Paris, and Brussels attacks, the aforementioned concerns pale in comparison to the worries of the descendants of immigrants reeking jihadist havoc throughout Europe.

In short order, on both sides of the Atlantic, immigration has gone from a state of “benign neglect” to mild annoyance, to intense concern and apprehension, and, more recently, to panic. Growing inequality and economic stagnation along with the crisis of unauthorized immigration and home-grown terrorism have aligned into a perfect storm. The long-term demographic changes add to these deepening concerns. In an experimental study comprised of 98 White Americans from all regions of the country, researchers found that when participants were told that White Americans would no longer be the majority in the U.S., they became more reluctant to embrace diversity.

At a time when nearly all demographic growth moving forward will be via the children of
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immigrants, both in the U.S. and throughout Europe, the current immigration malaise threatens the fabric of the nation, subverts the remaking of the social contract, undermines economic vitality, puts millions of immigrant-origin children at risk, and is antithetical to fundamental democratic ideals and elemental notions of social justice. Immigrants and their children are here – on both sides of the Atlantic – to stay. Their future is our future. Thus, changing minds about immigration is an urgent exigency of our times.

We next, turn to considering the role of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination in shaping opinions, its implications on immigrant-origin children and youth, as well as its consequences for civic society. We also discuss what we can do to change hearts and minds and public discourse in this area.

Stereotyping, Prejudice, & Discrimination

Social science has established that stereotyping and categorization are normative, inborn automatic processes. These automatic processes are further driven by socialization and cultural memes. Stereotyping and categorization serve as short-hand strategies to simplify complex and frequent social encounters. These cognitive strategies can “apportion both opportunity and privilege [to in-groups] and cruelty and misery [to out-groups].” Prejudice is an unfavorable, biased attitude based on “prejudgment and minimal information.”

Stereotypes are often made up of quick appraisals based on minimal knowledge that exaggerate group differences. How out-groups are perceived is in large part driven by two dimensions—the warmth one feels towards a particular group and the perceived competence of its members. These stereotypes in turn lead to forms of emotional appraisals (prejudice). The Figure below illustrates these concepts, well developed by Susan Fiske and colleagues.
Stereotyping (cognitive) and prejudice (evaluative) are distinct from discrimination, which is an acted upon behavior.\textsuperscript{44} Biases can be explicit and conscious, but are also implicit and below conscious thought.\textsuperscript{40} Implicit bias is widespread and is both cognitively and quantitatively measurable; this form of bias can be difficult to change simply because people are unaware of these biases and tend to disassociate from them.\textsuperscript{44} Bias, stereotyping cognitions and prejudicial attitudes are related, and can lead to discriminatory and exclusionary acts towards marginalized out-groups.

Every society, across history, stigmatizes designated groups, separating “us” from “them.”\textsuperscript{45} As the anthropologist Boas has observed, “a stratification of society in social groups that are racial in character will always lead to racial discrimination”.\textsuperscript{46} As in all other “sharp social groupings the individual is not judged as an individual but as a member of his class.”\textsuperscript{46} Racialized hierarchies cluster people of “purer” origin to avoid the danger of contamination by outsiders.\textsuperscript{47} As applied to immigrants, “racialization” is an appropriate construct foregrounding the socio-historical processes of segregation, marginalization, micro- and macro-aggressions, and collective disenfranchisement.\textsuperscript{48,49,50} In countries such as the U.S., large and growing numbers of poor immigrants of color and the undocumented, are \textit{de facto} and \textit{de jure} relegated to spaces where socially constructed phenotype\textsuperscript{51,52} aligns with entrenched patterns of segregation and marginalization of native minorities.\textsuperscript{53,54,55} Portes and Zhou have termed this dynamic as “segmented assimilation” wherein certain immigrants join the marginalized space of native minorities creating what they term a new “rainbow underclass.”\textsuperscript{56} Other countries also experience the complex interweaving of factors racializing immigrants and other minorities. These can include religion (Europe and its North African minorities), country of origin (Japan and its Korean and other minorities), and social class (Spain and its Roma minority).

In every such context, majority group members, as well as members of the society who do
not belong to the stigmatized group, may share negative stereotypes about the stigmatized
group. These are typically linked to prejudicial attitudes. These attitudes and biases have
historically legitimized discriminatory practices related to employment, education, and
housing; in addition to highly constrained life chances and segregation.\textsuperscript{40, 41, 43, 45} In most
societies, over the past few decades, there has been a movement against blatant and active
forms of exclusionary discrimination and some pro-active legislative protections have been
put into place.\textsuperscript{40, 57} Nonetheless, more passive and subtle forms of implicit bias have remained
stubbornly intractable.\textsuperscript{57} For example, some groups, like African American men in the U.S.
and Muslim men in Europe have continued to be marginalized in the labor market and in the
criminal justice system. Further, in recent months, with the growing refugee crisis in Europe
and the political season in the U.S., we have seen an increase in vitriolic, overtly stated biased
rhetoric against immigrants.\textsuperscript{58, 59}

The consequences of exclusion for those who are targeted include the obvious loss of
opportunity that has lifelong consequences not only to the individual but also to their
children.\textsuperscript{60, 61} There are also well-documented implications for compromised health.\textsuperscript{40, 43, 45, 62} The
ongoing stress of discrimination and social exclusion is also linked to anxiety, depression,
trauma, and anger.\textsuperscript{40, 43, 45, 63} There are also worrisome implications of the “burgeoning
inequality gap for the cultural fabric.”\textsuperscript{40}

Implications for Immigrant Origin Children & Youth

When large swaths of our society begin to loudly and proudly proclaim exclusionary
messages, this creates a climate of national hatred and xenophobia. While our national
creation myth is one of immigrant travails and triumphs, we are currently facing a social
climate where many quickly forget their grandparents’ experience, feel no compunction
about pulling up the ladder behind them, and demonize those who are newly arrived.\textsuperscript{58}

Exclusionary messages towards immigrant-origin children and youth matter for several
reasons. First, it matters because it is linked to poor psychological and physical outcomes.\textsuperscript{40}
Being a member of a disparaged group is simply bad for mental and physical well-being.
Second, it creates a context of development where parents and families can be expelled, and
when even the most basic of services can be self-righteously denied, which contributes to a
growing opportunity gap. Third, it sends clear signals of who belongs and who does not,
undermining our youngest new-Americans’ sense of social belonging and identity. Given that
currently a quarter of all children growing up in the U.S. are the children of immigrants (and
that is projected to be a third by 2050) this is a not an inconsequential number of young children and youth to consider.

Lastly, this kind of public climate has serious ramifications for our own sense of national unity. At a time of extraordinary demographic shift, our society needs to foster cohesive social relations, strengthening the bonds of solidarity between new and more established Americans. We need to disrupt the narratives of exclusion and division, and nurture practices of inclusion and shared membership in the family of the nation.

**Striving to Influence the “Persuadables”**

The public mind can be quite fickle—particularly for those who have not given much thought to an issue. There are always, of course, individuals who are strongly decided one way or another on an issue and are unlikely to shift opinion through the introduction of rhetoric or popular discourse. Many “persuadables,” however, will change opinion according to exposure to public discourse or convincing rhetoric.

The topic of immigration “sits at the edge of [most Americans’] peripheral vision;” it comes in and out of focus. When in focus, it is obscure at best, and is often contentious, with 51% of Americans reporting that immigration strengthens the nation, and 41% saying that it hurts it. The question is how to reach the “moveable middle” or unentrenched persuadables, who may not have reflected much on the topic of immigration because of lack of exposure, information, or deep reflection about the issue. How do we reach these persuadables with counter-narratives that present a compelling account?
How are Minds Changed?

To change minds (and in turn behaviors), research by Stanford and Duke professors, Chip and Dan Heath suggests several important strategies. Messages are more likely to “stick” in the minds of audiences when they are **understandable and memorable**.\(^{68}\) Providing too much information and complexity in the delivery of the message impedes its delivery.\(^{68}\) Messages should be kept **clear**; relatedly, they should be **tangible and concrete**.\(^{68}\) Secondly, they should be **delivered in an unexpected manner** that takes the audience somewhat by **surprise**; this will create interest and hold attention.\(^{68}\) Providing credible information by a **convincing expert** is also important; the audience must believe the raconteur delivering the information.\(^{65,69}\) Using **narrative storytelling devices** is especially effective. Additionally, drawing upon **emotional appeals** that make people care, drawing upon **self-interest**, and appealing to **identity** are particularly effective.\(^{68}\) In turn, if the messages stick in people’s minds, they will be more likely to change their behaviors.\(^{68}\)

**Speaking to Both “Brains”**

In order to change minds, especially when an issue is a difficult one, it is important to engage both the emotional and rational sides of our brains.\(^{70}\)

In *Thinking Fast & Slow*, Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman speaks of two brains that are often in conflict with one another.\(^{71}\) “System 1” is the automatic, intuitive, emotional brain, while “System 2” is the deliberative, reasoning brain.\(^{71}\) Kahneman suggests that most people think quickly, allowing their emotional brain to guide them.\(^{71}\) The intuitive emotional brain tends to be gullible, suppresses ambiguity, and is over-confident in its assessments.\(^{71}\) He proposes that it is important to slow down and use the more deliberative reasoning brain to fully assess issues in making important decisions.\(^{71}\)

Relatedly, Chip and Dan Heath suggest that in order to “switch” opinions and behaviors under difficult circumstances, it is important to **engage both the heart and the mind**.\(^{70}\) The “heart” serves to motivate change. It is essential to provide a narrative that emotionally resonates and points to why change is essential and worthwhile. It is vital for individuals to **feel motivated** and it is helpful for them to feel part of a **collective identity**. To engage the mind several strategies are effective. “**Bright spots**” that have been effective and can be replicated provide hope and strategies for change. Breaking down the steps to change into small concrete steps makes the process logical and attainable. Explaining the whys behind
the specific strategies also engages the mind in the process.

It is important to note that all humans have both intuitive and rational minds. Some tend to be swayed more consistently by one approach over another, while others are engaged by different strategies at different times. An effective strategy to change attitudes on a widespread basis therefore should engage both “facts” and appeal to “emotions” in order to have the broadest possible reach.

**Bridging the Empathy Gap**

A potential way to break the pattern of stereotyping and prejudice is to minimize the distance across perceived difference. A way to do this is by bridging the so called “empathy gap” between “others” perceived to be substantively more different than they really are. J.D. Trout, who has written extensively about bridging the empathy gap, defines empathy as the capacity to accurately understand the position of others and to “feel this could happen to me.”

Daniel Goleman describes three variations of empathy. The first cognitive form is the ability to understand another’s point of view. This perspective taking capacity is important for understanding but can be disconnected from an emotional or sympathetic link to the other (as in the case of sociopaths). The next form of empathy is emotional—the kinesthetic attunement to another’s emotional world or pain. This form of empathy is inborn in most children across cultures (the so called Dali Llama neurons), but can be subject to sensory overload or burnout. Lastly, there is “compassionate empathy” or “empathic concern” which is linked to mobilization to do something constructive to help.

There are a number of obstacles that impede tendencies concerning empathy towards others different than us. One cultural obstacle that Trout describes is the American cultural myth of “free will” and its corollaries: a) we get what we deserve and b) we have the power to overcome all circumstances. In the U.S., wealth or poverty are explained by a cultural narrative of rugged individualistic character rather than by luck as it is more likely to be in Europe. In the U.S. context, therefore, it can be difficult to empathetically enact constructive social policies that bridge across that difference.

Those who are in positions of greater power and privilege typically are less attuned to social pain than those of lower status. Further, social empathy is state dependent such that those who are psychologically aroused to anger tend to be less empathic. People are also less
readily able to empathize with groups that are significantly different than themselves, whom they have placed in the “them” category. They are also more able to empathize with individuals (even if they are members of a disparaged group) than they are with groups.

Psychologically, it is critical that individuals are able to identify with the pain of the suffering of the other. Typically, people underestimate social pain like ostracism and shame experienced by others. In order to have people accurately assess interpersonal and intrapersonal social pain, they need to have experienced some sort of social discomfort themselves. The actual event of recalling having undergone a previous experience of social pain can act as an empathetic bridge of understanding others’ experiences.

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**Activating the Empathy Gap**
- Cognitive Empathy/perspective taking
- Emotional attunement
- Empathic Concern/Behavioral Empathy
- Own experience with social pain

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**Impediments to Bridging Empathy Gap**
- The cultural myth of free will
- Power & privilege; increasing social inequality
- Anger
- Groups that are perceived as different than ourselves

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**Effective Counter-Narrative Strategies**

**Aimed at Anti-Immigrant Sentiment**

The Framework Institute has made a conscious effort to articulate the classic faulty patterns of public thinking about immigrants in the U.S. A general unawareness about specificities is
clearly apparent as immigration is viewed as a “black box.” The Frameworks Institute notes how immigrants are typically framed as “them” and rarely recognized as part of our shared legacy as a “nation of immigrants.” Furthermore, the complexity of immigration policy and the politics of gridlock have led to a sense of helplessness and fatalism about resolving these issues.77

Frameworks suggests several key domains that should be a focus of efforts at effectively changing the immigration narrative:

- **Humanizing immigrants** so they become recognized as more like “us” and less like “them.”
- Articulating the credible evidence that immigration provides an **economic opportunity** rather than an economic threat.
- Reframing the broken immigration system as one that is not solely a border problem. In the old narrative, building a wall sounds like a sensible simple solution; in the new narrative, streamlining and clarifying an outdated and ineffective immigration processing system becomes the logical solution.

Frameworks suggests that narratives should lead with more humanistic rather than contentious approaches; framing a **moral argument** emphasizing **basic respect**, treating people with dignity and compassion, as well as highlighting shared histories. Proposed solutions should be **pragmatic and aimed at fixing a broken system** to finally **treat people fairly**. They also recommend framing a narrative that would result in a **shared prosperity** story not a zero sum story.

The Frameworks Institute boils its message down to three basic messages. It focuses on humanizing immigrants by reminding us that we are a nation of immigrants. It provides counter-factuals around the “economic costs” of immigration highlighting the significant shared benefits immigrants generate for our country. Lastly, the message makes a moral argument around a broken immigration system that needs to be fixed in order to treat people fairly. Thus, the Frameworks Institute template for changing the narrative about immigrants incorporates many of the strategies for changing minds discussed above. Its message is sticky in that it is clear, tangible and solutions oriented, and draws upon messages of self-interest. As such, it has potential for a broad reach by engaging both facts and appealing to our moral intuition and basic sense of fairness.
Educating Against Racism and Prejudice

Over the last forty years, Facing History and Ourselves has been providing professional development to individual teachers, public, parochial, and private schools, as well as school districts. This non-profit international educational organization’s mission is “to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry.”

Through rigorous historical analysis combined with the study of human behavior, Facing History’s approach heightens students’ understanding of racism, antisemitism, religious intolerance, and prejudice; increases students’ ability to relate history to their own lives; and promotes greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities in a democracy. Over time, the organization has developed many training modules from the rise of the Nazis and the Holocaust as well as other examples of genocide and other examples of social dilemmas to help “students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives.” Their approach is evidence-based; demonstrating impact on teachers’ capacity to create inclusive, respectful learning environments and to make the curriculum relevant and engaging for students from diverse backgrounds; and impact on students’ empathy, student engagement, critical thinking skills, as well as civic responsibility. Facing History has been named by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as only one of nine programs in the U.S. with proven positive effect on academics, increased empathy, and on other prosocial behavior.

In recent years, Facing History and Ourselves has devoted attention to issues of contemporary immigration, Islamophobia and increasing tolerance and understanding in Europe through a project led by Adam Strom. The project produced resource materials and professional development experiences for educators exploring what Facing History calls “civic dilemmas”, including: Stories of Identity: Religion, Migration and Belonging in a Changing World and What do we do with a Difference: France and the Debate over Headscarves in Schools. Last year, Facing History produced a teaching guide for the film “I Learn America” in collaboration with New York public schools (see below). Increasing understanding, as well as providing a historical perspective and response to newcomers, is a topic to which the organization is turning increasing energies – domestically and internationally.

Changing Minds with the Power of Media

There are myriad ways in which media or mass communication molds signs to convey a message that may change the minds of a constituency. Visual images such as photography
or film transmit culture by what they show, how they show it, and the emotions they stir. Interactive media or interactivity (i.e., the interaction of two or more parties communicating through an ongoing give and take of messages) affords audiences a certain degree of control over online and offline content. And, social media (i.e., the intersection of technology, social interaction, and information sharing) employs a dialogic model of many-to-many communication that involves participatory production (i.e., data anyone can access and curate). These forms of communication convey what people think, feel, and like and dislike and as such may be used to know and understand what different groups of people may think about a given subject. The cultural collage of imagery, frames the way messages are communicated and can influence producers and consumers’ attitudes and actions.\(^8^5\)

**Film.** Film can be a very powerful vehicle to shift perspectives. There are numerous examples of films that bring the experience of immigrants into the gaze of those who have not had that experience or who have had the experience a generation ago, or from a place of privilege or from a distinct cultural vantage point. An inclusive list is beyond the scope of this report but include: *El Norte; The Namesake; Dirty Pretty Things; The Joy Luck Club; Under the Same Moon; Documented; The Visitor;* among many others.

The film, *I Learn America,\(^8^6\)* directed and produced by Jean Michel-Dissard and Gitte Peng, is not only a powerful empathic vehicle for understanding newly arrived immigrant adolescents and their experiences, but also an exemplar of how film can be used to foster meaningful community dialogues. Filmed in one of the International Schools in Brooklyn, it follows five very different newcomer youth over the course of a year as they transition into their new school and new land.

Youth who immigrate in early adolescence face particular challenges, as they must contend with coping with **two sets of transitions**—those of adolescence along with those of migration. They must figure out who they are, who they love, and how they fit in, all the while learning a new language and adapting to the social expectations of the new society. And, they must do this with parents who, while bringing their own strengths, often do not have social compasses that are calibrated to the new land, creating extra sets of tensions.

There are so many ways to view, experience, and interpret *I Learn America.* At its core, the film is a narrative about relationships and growth. It can be taken as a lesson in how to viscerally begin to understand the frustration, disempowerment, and even anger that come with an inability to speak English and express oneself, and in contrast, the freedom that
comes with the eventual gift of newfound communication. The viewer can learn about the multiple concurrent roles that newcomers must juggle—student, worker, and responsible family caretaker. It bears witness to two very different forms of undocumented status and how it complicates the lives of students in immeasurable ways.

It is also a film that has lessons to teach us about an exemplary model of teaching and learning (at one of the International Schools), and epitomizes strategic ways to welcome newcomers and ready them to enter colleges in their new society.

While the story is a quintessential New York immigrant story, the relevance for other contexts is obvious. The film was developed into a viewer’s guide with consultation by Carola Suárez-Orozco and by Facing History and Ourselves and has been adopted by New York public schools as part of its professional development training. Further, Jean Michel-Dissard has taken the film all over the country and the world to stimulate inter-group community conversations between student groups and teachers as well as administrators and their students as a way to bridge the empathy gap.\textsuperscript{87} Below is one of many examples of a class project, from a Los Angeles classroom, that was inspired after viewing the film:

\begin{quote}
2016 Living History
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQky_y45pp0
\end{quote}

\textbf{Short Videos.} Short videos have become a new norm, particularly on the Internet. They are brief yet informative, and can be powerful (see Ilhaam Awes story).\textsuperscript{88} The average length of Facebook videos, for example, range from 24 seconds to 90 seconds.\textsuperscript{89} It serves as a reminder that individuals interested in shifting perspectives on social issues need to communicate their message quickly and with the use of the Internet. A recent Pew report indicated that about 56\% of Internet users either create or post original photos or videos online, or curate or take photos/videos that they have found online and share them with many people. The creators tend to be younger whereas the curators tend to be women and younger adults.\textsuperscript{90} A popular online platform for short videos is YouTube as it enables users to easily find, upload, and share videos. YouTube is particularly popular among Blacks and Latinos.\textsuperscript{91} In general, people are increasingly using YouTube to share news-related videos and other content relating to social issues—for example, perceptions about race and ethnicity,\textsuperscript{92,93} and terrorism.\textsuperscript{94} These short videos are effective ways to communicate between the like-minded and provide effective pathways to bridge the empathy gap. Examples include:
Photos. Visual images evoke powerful emotions in viewers. The unimaginable suddenly enters the realm of reality. From an anthropological perspective, visual images, elements of visual ethnography, help to understand the nuanced experiences of people’s lived experience – particularly relevant to issues surrounding immigrants and refugees. Two examples of a particularly powerful body of photographic work in this area is that of Sebastião Salgado entitled, The Children: Refugees as well as The Migrants. One cannot help but to be moved by looking into the eyes of these children from all over the world. Additionally, photo journalists with their professional cameras as well as ordinary people with their mobile devices across the world continue to document events and, at times, stream them live online with the affordances of social media. Evocative images like the ones above, both move both hearts and minds in highly effective ways.
Social Media. Social media have become ubiquitous in children’s and young adults’ lives. As of 2015, 90% of U.S. young adults between the ages of 18-29 years and 71% of adolescents ages 13-17 years use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. Much of this use is facilitated by having access to social media via mobile devices – including mobile phones, laptops, and tablets. In fact, 73% of 13- to 17-year olds have access to a smartphone and 58% have access to a tablet; more than half of adolescents (56%) report using mobile devices daily to go online. Young people are not merely influenced by their digital world; they are the creators – actively and interactively constructing and reconstructing their identities and often challenging and transforming cultural norms via the use of such digital technologies and media such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and blogs.

As young people master these digital tools and features, many harness their enthusiasm for using social media in the service of civic participation. Participatory politics via social media may be a central and complementary means via which young people are interactively exerting voice and influence on social and political issues. For instance, young people may be using digital tools such as social media to blog, share political news and perspectives, or create and mobilize their peers for a political or social cause. There are numerous models that exemplify how young people use online platforms to participate, contribute, challenge, and disrupt the national ethos about immigration, multiculturalism, and diversity. Two recent and notable examples from recent social media campaigns include:

- **DefineAmerican.com** Using the power of stories, Define American calls on Americans – undocumented and allies – to shift dialogue around immigrants, identity, and citizenship in America.
- **#EmergingUS** Similarly, #EmergingUS is a medium with compilations of original videos, essays, articles, and infographics that bring to life the very stories that have, for too often, been ignored, dismissed, and demeaned in the mainstream media.
- **FWD.us** is a technology-based community that allows individuals such as engineers, entrepreneurs, and others to come together to tell their stories and mobilize in an effort to create meaningful political reform. It is a platform that recognizes that immigrants contribute to our communities and economy.
- **Immigrant Voter** is a grassroots organization online platform that calls on voters and allies from diverse backgrounds to stand with political candidates who recognize the contributions of immigrants to the economy, culture, and
other domains of society, and stand against mass deportation. Voters pledge
their support by including their email and zip code.

In the age of hyperconnectivity and instant communication, young people are consuming
messages and exerting voice via status updates (comments that express one’s thoughts and
feelings), wall posts (comments or messages posted on people’s social media profile), tweets
(publically visible messages delivered to followers; often using a hashtag “#”), and memes
(visuo-textual messages that capture an idea), to name a few.

- For instance, BuzzFeed has become one of the most popular digital platforms in
  2015 with over 81% of users between the ages 18-34.\textsuperscript{108} BuzzFeed produces daily
  content, often including brief videos of breaking news, entertainment, and videos
  that often go “viral” circulating rapidly and widely. Sharing brief but personal
  videos to a large audience is well suited for youth who want relevant and instant
  information.\textsuperscript{109} This instant consumption and circulation is also reflected in memes
  people create and share on social media. These can be short, yet powerful images
  with texts. Here are examples of BuzzFeed stories\textsuperscript{110} and memes related to
  immigration (see examples below).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example_images}
\caption{Examples of Buzzfeed stories and memes related to immigration}
\end{figure}

\section*{In Summary}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Immigration engenders ambivalence. This has been the case historically. It is also true
        cross-culturally, especially in times of economic crisis, and when there are deep
        cultural divisions. Across time, contexts, and groups, stereotypes about crime and
        terror, burdens to economic wellbeing, and unwillingness or inability to integrate are
        recurring themes despite prevailing evidence to the contrary.
  \item Shared negative stereotypes about the stigmatized groups are linked to prejudicial
        attitudes. These attitudes and biases have historically legitimized discriminatory acts
        related to employment, education, and housing and highly constrained life chances. In
        addition, more subtle forms of implicit bias remain particularly intractable. Further,
with the growing refugee crisis in Europe and the electoral campaign cycle in the U.S., hyperbolic forms of xenophobia have been on the rise.

♦ Exclusionary messages towards immigrant-origin children and youth matter for several reasons. They are linked to poor psychological and physical outcomes and contribute to a growing opportunity gap. It sends clear signals of who belongs and who does not, undermining our youngest new-Americans’ sense of social belonging and identity. When a quarter of all children growing up in the U.S. are of immigrant origin, the costs of such exclusion are high. Lastly, this kind of public climate has serious ramifications for our own sense of national unity and destiny.

♦ We must strive to change minds of the “unentrenched persuadables”. Effective strategies should include:
  ○ Developing “sticky” messages that are clear, tangible, credible, and draw upon narratives as well as self interest;
  ○ Speaking to “both sides of the brain” by engaging both facts and appealing to emotions will have the broadest reach;
  ○ Working to reach across the empathy gap by minimizing the differences between “them and us” is an important strategy. Cognitive approaches that develop perspective-taking capacities are one step. Another works on the emotional side that develops kinesthetic attunement. To avoid sensory overload it is important to provide strategies for mobilization in which to harness the energies of compassionate empathy. At the end the message should be: “We have met the immigrant – it is us.”

♦ Harnessing the power of new media in its myriad forms – from film, to photography, to social media, and even videogames, has extraordinary potential to bridge the empathy gap and change minds. These are modalities that should be thoughtfully engaged and carefully curated across educational venues, after-school programs, community based organizations, religious organizations, and civic engagement programs. New media, thoughtfully curated and well harnessed, has the potential to bring change to scale.

♦ Community partnerships, bringing together a range of promising practices and actors can serve as models for how active community members can be agents for change and leaders in developing strategies for strong, inclusive communities. While every setting will need to be locally adapted, these “bright spots” can serve as models for change and hope across spaces facing similar changes.
A Call to Action

There are 18.7 million children born to immigrant parents, representing 25 percent of the U.S. population under the age of 18. The children of immigrants are central to how we must think about our nation’s future. The pathways to success for immigrant origin youth, their psychosocial flourishing, their civic engagement, their connection to the labor market, and their identification with the narrative of the nation will profoundly shape the remaking of the social contract. These pathways will be critical to the trajectory of our nation’s democracy for generations to come.

In this report, we offer a framework for disrupting narratives of social exclusion for immigrant youth. We are hopeful that this framing can be used to build evidence that can initiate new, positive, and forward-looking perspectives on the potential of immigrant youth. Moving forward, UCLA in partnership with the Ford Foundation endeavors to build and sustain local networks of community based groups; schools, universities, NGOs, and others committed to addressing the economic, educational, and political needs of immigrant communities, to strengthen capacity for youth engagement and align their efforts with other social movements that resonate with immigrant youth. With no clear pathway to immigration reform, the time is now to develop a sustainable effort to place immigrant youth at the center of how we think about the future of our nation.

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Disrupting Narratives of Social Exclusion for Immigrant Children & Youth


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