Second-Generation Immigrants? The "2.5 Generation" in the United States*

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Objective. This article takes issue with the way that second-generation immigrants have been traditionally defined. In most studies, respondents are considered to be "second generation" if they are born in the United States and if at least one of their parents was born outside the United States. This article considers whether the experiences and outcomes of those with one U.S.-born parent and one foreign-born parent (the "2.5 generation") are different from those with no U.S.-born parents (the "2.0 generation") and those with two native-born parents (the "third generation"). *Methods.* The article analyzes data from the March Current Population Survey (CPS) from 1999 to 2001. *Results.* The evidence indicates that the 2.5 generation is a numerically significant population, and that it varies from other groups in age structure, racial identification, educational attainment, and income. *Conclusions.* In studying the U.S.-born children of immigrants, scholars should avoid lumping together the 2.5 generation with those who have no native-born parents. The members of the 2.5 generation also should be treated as distinct from those born in the United States to two native-born parents.

There is now a rich and growing scholarly tradition in the study of second-generation immigrants in the United States. From historical treatments of the early waves of European immigrants (Hansen, 1938; Handlin, 1951; Gordon, 1964) to contemporary research into the "new" second generation (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Perlmann and Waldinger, 1997; Waters, 1999; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001), scholars have viewed second-generation outcomes as central to the understanding of immigrant adaptation and progress. The second generation figures prominently in standard accounts of immigrant assimilation, in which outcomes such as educational attainment, earnings, and English-language ability improve markedly between the foreign born and their native-born children. The second generation has also received considerable attention from contemporary accounts of segmented assimilation, where socioeconomic

outcomes diverge by national origin, and can even decline between the first and second immigrant generations.

This article takes issue with the way that second-generation immigrants have been defined, in both the standard models of immigrant assimilation and contemporary accounts of segmented assimilation. With few exceptions, the scholarship on immigrant adaptation has defined the immigrant second generation as native-born residents who have *at least* one foreign-born parent (Borjas, 1999; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Such a formulation is problematic because it conflates the experiences and outcomes of those who have one native-born parent and one foreign-born parent (the ''2.5 generation'') with those who have two foreign-born parents (the ''2.0 generation''). The aggregation of 2.5-generation respondents with 2.0-generation respondents may be warranted if the size of the former is negligible when compared to the size of the latter, or if the demographic characteristics and socioeconomic outcomes of the two groups are indistinguishable. This study of immigrant descendants in the United States finds none of these assertions to be true. Furthermore, the 2.5 generation also differs in significant ways from those with two native-born parents (the third generation and higher). This analysis therefore indicates that studies of immigrant adaptation in the United States should avoid lumping together members of the 2.5 generation with those in the second generation who have no native-born parents, and should also treat members of the 2.5 generation as distinct from those in the native-born population with two native-born parents.

Theoretical Background

For several decades, scholars of immigrant adaptation have been interested in studying the U.S.-born children of immigrants, commonly referred to as second-generation immigrants. The early historical and sociological treatments on immigration considered the experiences and outcomes of the second generation as key to understanding the long-term acculturation of immigrants and their economic progress in the United States (Handlin, 1951; Gordon, 1964). In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the second generation, as children of the post-1965 wave of immigration begin to reach their twenties and thirties (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Perlmann and Waldinger, 1997; Waters, 1999; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Just as before, scholars now focus on the experiences and outcomes of the second generation in order to gain insights about the long-term adaptation and progress of immigrants in the United States. Some studies have shown that the children of immigrants still fare better than their first-generation parents (Perlmann and Waldinger, 1997), and that they have better socio-economic outcomes than those in higher-immigrant generations (Chiswick, 1977). Other studies point to a more worrying scenario: the persistence of

country-of-origin differences in socioeconomic outcomes (Borjas, 1999; Portes and Zhou, 1993), and even stagnation and decline in measures such as educational attainment and earnings (Gans, 1992; Borjas, 1999).

Although these various studies differ in their assessments of intergenerational mobility, they do share one fundamental feature: the way they define second-generation immigrants. In most cases, respondents are considered to be "second generation" if they are born in the United States and if at least one of their parents was born outside the United States. This formulation conflates the experiences and outcomes of those who have two foreign-born parents (the "2.0 generation") versus those who have one U.S.-born parent and one foreign-born parent (the "2.5 generation"). Furthermore, this lumping of the 2.0 and 2.5 generations is done without any theoretical justification as to why those in the second generation who have no native-born parents should be treated the same as those who have one native-born parent.[1]

There are good reasons to think that the presence of a native-born parent makes a difference with respect to the experiences and outcomes of the second generation. Here, I shall briefly introduce some possible sources of variation and elaborate them further in the analysis that follows. First, native-born individuals are more likely than immigrants to participate in social networks that are composed of other native-born individuals (Alba, 1985). The lower level of participation of immigrants in social networks composed of native-born individuals can be traced to factors such as residential segregation, lower English-language proficiency, and lack of participation in mainstream politics. Access and exposure to these networks of the native born, in turn, can have significant effects on the socioeconomic outcomes of children, as well as on their self-identification as immigrants and ethnics.

The presence of a native-born parent can make a difference in other ways. For example, couples made up of a native-born parent and a foreign-born parent may have higher levels of educational attainment than couples made up of two foreign-born parents. This is because native-born individuals tend to have higher levels of education than most first-generation immigrants, especially with regards to high school graduation.[2] Furthermore, immigrants who marry the native born tend to have higher levels of education and English literacy than immigrants who marry other immigrants. Finally, the presence of a native-born parent can signal differences in the racial identification of children, with the 2.5 generation more likely to have

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[1]The lumping of the two groups may have been done because of concerns about sample size, although this analysis indicates that the 2.5 generation constitutes a sizable proportion of what has traditionally been termed the second generation.

[2]Although it is generally true that the native born have levels of educational attainment that are higher than those of the foreign born, immigrants from particular waves and certain countries of origin (Cubans in the 1950s, Indians in the 1960s, etc.) possess higher levels of educational attainment than the native born.

parents of different racial or ethnic groups than those in the 2.0 generation.[3] Thus, parents of the 2.0 and 2.5 generations vary in important respects, all of which may have significant implications for outcomes among the children of immigrants, such as racial identity, educational attainment, and earnings.

As we shall discover shortly, those who have one native-born parent constitute a large share of what has generally been defined as the second generation. Yet, very few studies have separated the 2.5 generation from those who have two foreign-born parents. A review of articles and books on second-generation immigrants in the United States reveals only three instances in the past few decades where scholars have separated out those with a native-born parent from the rest of the second-generation population. In a 1977 article in *International Migration Review*, Walter Martin and Dudley Poston examine the extent to which European immigrant males are able to convert their educational attainment into income. The authors posit that the presence of a native-born parent should lead to higher returns to education, although they do not speculate on the micro-level processes that may be responsible for such differences. In their analysis of the Public Use Sample of the 1970 Census, the authors find that those with a native-born parent do indeed have higher returns to education, with the results strongest among those with a native-born mother. Although Martin and Poston's study is an important first step in accounting for the effects of having a native-born parent, it also has several limitations. First, the authors focus exclusively on one relationship (the ability to convert education into income) without paying attention to any of the other ways the presence of a native-born parent may lead to different experiences and outcomes among the children of immigrants. For instance, they do not explore any differences in the demographic characteristics of the various populations. Nor do they discuss differences in education levels, a factor that has direct bearing on their outcome of interest. Finally, given that their study is based on males in the 1970 Census, the authors' findings may have limited applicability today, not only with respect to the children of the post-1965 wave of immigrants, but also to the men and women from the pre-1965 wave who are considerably older today than they were in 1970.

There are two more recent studies of immigrant adaptation that differentiate the U.S.-born children of immigrants based on the presence of a native-born parent. In *Ethnicities*, an edited volume on the "new" second generation, Leif Jensen (2001) examines outcomes across immigrant generations for various national-origin groups using data from the Current Population Survey. As part of his bivariate analysis, Jensen separates out those in the second generation with one foreign-born parent from those who have two foreign-born parents. He finds that, for various outcomes such as

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[3]This is because immigrants who are married to other immigrants are likely to be from the same country as their spouse, and are therefore more likely to share the same racial identification than are couples in mixed-nativity marriages.

earnings, educational attainment, and poverty status, those who have one native-born parent are better off than those with no native-born parents. Jensen's study is limited, however, in that it does not control for other demographic factors, such as age and gender, that may account for some of the socioeconomic differences, nor does it provide any significance levels for the bivariate relationships presented. Furthermore, there is no distinction made in the gender of the native-born parent, nor is there a detailed accounting of the demographic differences between the two populations. Similar limitations can be found in Portes and Rumbaut's *Legacies* (2001), which shows that children with one native-born parent are less likely than those with no native-born parents to speak a language other than English, and are less likely to identify as ethnics or "hyphenated" Americans. Here, too, however, the authors do not engage in a more comprehensive analysis of how the 2.5 generation may differ from the 2.0 generation, and how the presence of a native-born parent may affect outcomes such as education and income.

This study seeks to provide a more detailed examination of the demographic characteristics and socioeconomic outcomes of the 2.5 generation, especially as it compares to the 2.0 generation. There are a few possible standards by which to judge whether those with one native-born parent should be treated separately from those with no native-born parents. One standard is the relative size of the two populations. If the size of the 2.5 generation is trivial when compared to the size of the 2.0 generation, it becomes difficult to justify the separation of the two groups because of the inability to obtain reliable estimates of differences between the two populations. Another standard to judge whether the two populations should be separated or lumped together is whether they share similar demographic characteristics such as age structure and racial composition. Finally, we can also base our decisions on whether to separate out the 2.5 generation by examining group differences in outcomes such as educational attainment and earnings. As the following analysis demonstrates, the 2.5 generation is distinct from the 2.0 generation in all three respects—relative size, demographic characteristics, and socioeconomic outcomes.

Before proceeding with the analysis, however, it is important to note that the term 2.5 generation is used as a convenient shorthand, much like the term "third generation" has been used to refer to everyone born in the United States to native-born parents (Borjas, 1999; Zhou, 2001). To the extent that the labels "second generation" and "third generation" provide meaningful ways to convey the presence of foreign-born parents and native-born parents, respectively, this study uses the term "2.5 generation" to signify those who have one foreign-born parent and one native-born parent. It should also be noted that the term 2.5 generation used here is different from the familiar distinction in historical Census data between the native born of foreign parentage and the native born of mixed parentage (Perlmann, 2001b). The Census definition of mixed parentage includes

those with one foreign-born parent and one native-born parent, but it also includes those who have foreign-born parents from two different countries. This latter group, which is included in this definition of the "2.0 generation," accounts for about 6 percent of the entire second-generation population. As we shall soon see, the 2.5 generation accounts for a much greater proportion of the U.S.-born children of immigrants. Given that the 2.5 generation has received little scholarly attention so far, I set aside the question of country-of-origin variation within the 2.0 generation and focus instead on differences between these three major population groups: those in the native-born population with no native-born parents, those with one native-born parent, and those with two native-born parents.

Analysis and Results

For this analysis, I rely on the March Current Population Survey (1999–2001) as the primary data source to examine group differences based on the nativity of parents. The March CPS was chosen for several reasons. First, the data set contains questions that are relevant for ascertaining the nativity of respondents, as well as the nativity of their mothers and fathers. These questions are important because they enable researchers to separate out respondents in the 2.5 generation from those in the 2.0 generation. Furthermore, they also make it possible to determine whether respondents in the 2.5 generation have a native-born father or a native-born mother. Another advantage of the Current Population Survey is that it is the only data set with sample sizes large enough to account for the experiences and outcomes of various racial groups and national origins. Finally, the CPS also has the advantage of being a nationally representative sample with a methodology that is relatively stable from year to year and that serves as the central source of information regarding employment and income among U.S. residents.

Group Size

As indicated earlier, it would not be necessary to disaggregate the 2.5 generation from the 2.0 generation if the former accounted for only a small portion of the U.S.-born children of immigrants and if there were no substantial differences in characteristics or outcomes between the two groups. As Table 1 indicates, however, the first condition does not hold: respondents with one native-born parent account for a large portion of what has traditionally been defined as the second generation (i.e., those born in the United States to at least one foreign-born parent). Overall, those with one native-born parent account for nearly one-half of the second-generation population. Indeed, when the analysis is limited to the "old" second

TABLE 1

U.S.-Born Children of Immigrants by Nativity of Parents and Birth Era
(Weighted Tabulations)

		Birth Era	
	All	Pre-1965	Post-1965
2.0 generation	53.7%	46.2%	58.8%
2.5 generation	46.3%	53.8%	41.2%
N	45,024	17,160	27,864

SOURCE: March Current Population Survey 1999–2001.

TABLE 2

U.S.-Born Children of Immigrants by National Origin of Parents
(Weighted Tabulations)

	Latin Am.	Mexico	Asia	Middle East
2.0 generation	62.5%	65.1%	68.3%	52.6%
2.5 generation	37.5%	34.9%	31.7%	47.4%
N	20,389	13,942	3,764	1,259

	Europe	Canada	Australia/NZ	Caribbean	Africa
2.0 generation	45.2%	20.3%	10.8%	61.1%	57.8%
2.5 generation	54.8%	79.7%	89.2%	38.9%	42.2%
N	14,611	2,815	74	544	339

SOURCE: March Current Population Survey 1999–2001.

generation (those born before 1965), the 2.5 generation accounts for a larger proportion of the population than those with two foreign-born parents.

Even among the children of immigrants born after 1965, those with one native-born parent account for a substantial portion of those traditionally defined as second-generation immigrants (41 percent). Thus, the initial condition for separating respondents in the 2.5 generation from those in the 2.0 generation (nontrivial group size) is clearly met, both with respect to overall population as well as within the old and new waves of second-generation immigrants.

It is still possible, however, that children of mixed-nativity marriages may account for a small proportion of respondents among particular national-origin groups. Table 2 presents the proportion of 2.0- and 2.5-generation respondents by the national origin of their parents.[4] As the figures indicate,

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[4]In the next section, the issue of racial identification of the 2.0 and 2.5 generations, as well as patterns of interracial marriage among immigrants, will be considered in greater detail.

respondents in the 2.5 generation account for a significant proportion of the children of immigrants from different regions of the world. They account for about 38 percent of those with parents from Latin America and 32 percent of those with parents from Asia. Those in the 2.5 generation also constitute over one-half of the children of immigrants from Europe, and over three-quarters of those with at least one parent from Canada. Thus, respondents with mixed-nativity origins constitute a sizable proportion of the second generation, not only in the general population but also with respect to particular subgroups, whether they be defined by birth eras or national origin.

Demographic Characteristics

The fact that the 2.5 generation is of comparable size to the 2.0 generation may not be interesting to scholars of immigrant adaptation if the two groups were indistinguishable, either in terms of their demographic profile or in outcomes such as educational attainment and earnings. In this section, I examine the demographic characteristics of the 2.5 generation in greater detail and compare them to those of the 2.0 generation. In particular, I expect to find significant differences in the age structure and racial composition of the two populations. We have already seen that second-generation children with a native-born parent are more prevalent among those born prior to 1965 than those born afterward. Differences in the proportion of 2.5-generation respondents can also be found in more detailed breakdowns of second-generation immigrants by birth cohorts. The highest proportion of 2.5-generation births occurs between 1935 and 1960, roughly corresponding to the periods of relatively low immigration to the United States. This period spans the end of the early European wave and the beginning of the contemporary wave of immigration to the United States. As Joel Perlmann (2001a) has noted, those entering the United States in the latter part of an immigrant wave are more likely to find native-born spouses of the same national-origin group and are less likely to experience discrimination from the host society. This analysis of CPS data indicates that a high proportion of marriages between the native born and foreign born also tends to occur in the early parts of an immigrant wave. This pattern may be the result of gender disparities among the early entrants in an immigrant wave and the concomitant scarcity of other immigrants available for marriage. A small proportion of these mixed-nativity marriages may also be due to the entry of foreign-born spouses of U.S. veterans after the end of World War II.[5] Whatever the reason, these differences in the proportion of 2.0- and 2.5-generation immigrants by birth cohort can, in turn, be

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[5]However, the number of war brides did not total more than 50,000 between 1945 and 1965 (Reimers, 2001).

FIGURE 1

Age Structure of U.S.-Born Children of Immigrants, by Nativity of Parents
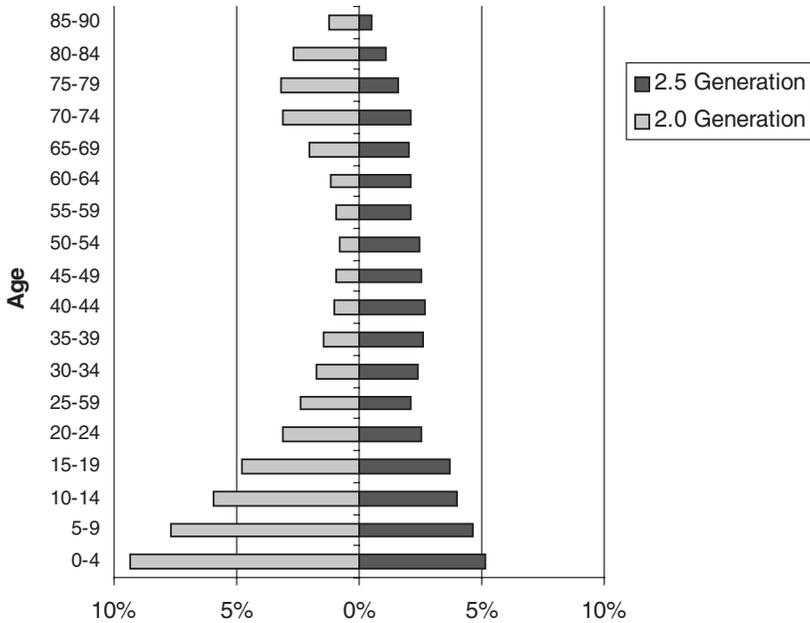
SOURCE: March Current Population Survey 1999–2001.

expected to produce significant variation in the age structures of the two populations. In particular, we can expect the 2.5 generation to be older, on average, than the 2.0 generation and to predominate the ranks of second-generation immigrants who are between the ages of 40 and 65.

Figure 1 presents the age structure of second-generation immigrants based on the nativity of their parents. As expected, those in the 2.5 generation are older than those in the 2.0 generation (34.6 vs. 31.3), a difference that is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.[6] Another pattern emerges, however, when the groups are divided between those born before 1965 and afterward. Among those born before 1965, the 2.5 generation actually has a younger age structure than the 2.0 generation (an average of 57.5 vs. 67.4) because most 2.5-generation children in this era were born after 1935. By contrast, among those born after 1965, the 2.5 generation has a slightly older age structure (an average of 14.0 vs. 11.7). Since the 2.0 generation is more predominant among children of immigrants born after 1965 (see Table 1), the overall age structure of the 2.0 generation is still younger than the age

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[6]The statistical significance of differences in demographic characteristics is determined by *t*-tests. All the demographic differences noted in this analysis are significant at the 0.01 level unless noted otherwise in the text.

structure of the 2.5 generation. Finally, it should be noted that even though the 2.0 generation predominates the ranks of more recent children of immigrants, the two populations do share one similarity: respondents under the age of 30 account for about one-half of their total respective populations (60 percent in the case of the 2.0 generation; 40 percent in the case of the 2.5 generation).

While considering the demographic profile of the 2.0 and 2.5 generations, it is also important to take into account differences in racial and ethnic composition. Figure 2 presents the racial/ethnic profile of the two populations for those born before 1965 and afterward. This study follows the convention of many racial/ethnic classifications found in many other studies that use CPS data. The term "Latino" refers to Hispanics of any race since the CPS asks questions about race and Hispanic origin separately. Furthermore, the term "white" refers only to non-Hispanic whites, "black" to non-Hispanic blacks, and "Asian" to non-Hispanic Asians. As Figure 2 indicates, there is virtually no difference in the racial composition of the 2.0 and 2.5 generations among those born before 1965. Asian Americans and Latinos constitute only a slightly larger proportion of the 2.0 generation than the 2.5 generation, with differences that are not statistically significant. Blacks, however, do form a larger share of those who have one native-born parent than those who have no native-born parents. Thus, with the exception of blacks, differences in the racial composition of the 2.0 and 2.5 generations in the pre-1965 wave are neither substantial nor statistically significant.

In the post-1965 wave, however, there are remarkable differences in the racial composition of second-generation immigrants based on whether or not they have a native-born parent. Second-generation blacks are the only ones that make up a roughly equal proportion of the 2.0 and 2.5 generations among respondents born after 1965. Whites account for only 15 percent of the 2.0 generation, but they constitute a majority of those in the 2.5 generation. By contrast, Latinos and Asian Americans make up a much larger proportion of those who have two foreign-born parents than those who have one foreign-born parent and one native-born parent. The difference in racial composition is especially strong in the case of Asian Americans, who constitute over 20 percent of the 2.0 generation, but only 8 percent of the 2.5 generation.

There are at least two reasons why the proportion of 2.5-generation immigrants is higher for white respondents than for those in other racial groups. First, those with an immigrant parent from Europe, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand are more likely to be in the 2.5 generation than those with an immigrant parent from another part of the world. Thus, the children of non-Hispanic white immigrants have a higher likelihood of being in the 2.5 generation than the children of immigrants from Latin America and Asia. Another reason for the higher proportion of whites in the 2.5 generation is that those who have exactly one immigrant parent from

FIGURE 2

Racial Composition of the 2.0 and 2.5 Generations by Birth Era
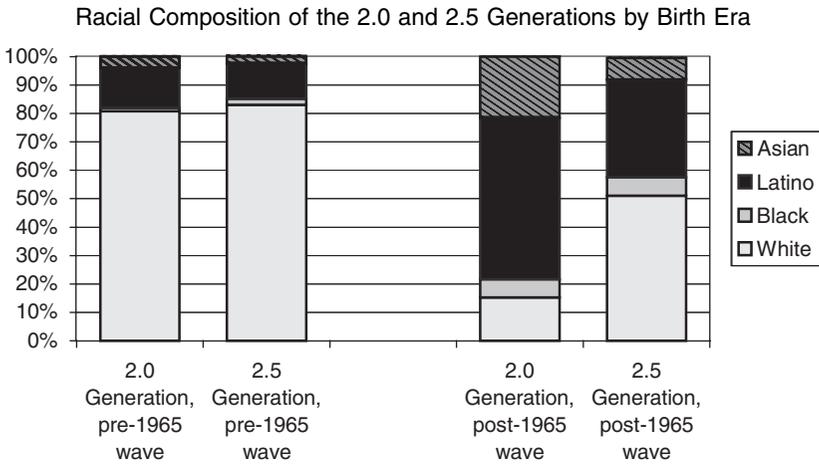
SOURCE: March Current Population Survey 1999–2001.

Asia or Latin America are more likely to have a native-born parent who is white than a native-born parent of another race.[7] So, we see that the demographic profile of the 2.0 and 2.5 generations differ based on whether we are referring to children of immigrants born before 1965 or afterward. Among the old second generation, the primary difference between the two populations is in their age structures—those in the 2.5 generation are younger than those in the 2.0 generation. In the new second generation, variations in age structure are still present, but stronger differences lie in the racial composition of the U.S.-born children of immigrants.[8]

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[7]Although the CPS does not include measures on the racial identification of the parents of respondents for those who do not live in the same household as their parents, it is possible to gauge the white bias in interracial marriages of mixed-nativity couples using two methods. First, we can examine the racial identification of couples in the Current Population Survey whose households contain one immigrant spouse and one native-born spouse. An examination of *interracial marriages* among Asian and Latino immigrant respondents in the Current Population Survey who are married to native-born spouses indicates that the race of the native-born spouse is white greater than 75 percent of the time. We can also surmise the white bias in racial intermarriage among the parents of the 2.5 generation by examining the racial and ethnic identification of those in the 2.5 generation with a parent from Asia (42 percent white, 49 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 9 percent other), Latin America (19 percent white, 78 percent Latino, 3 percent other), and Africa or the Caribbean (33 percent white, 57 percent black, 10 percent other).

[8]Admittedly, part of the reason why whites are more common among 2.5-generation respondents is also due to the design of the CPS, which does not allow for multiple racial identifications. Thus, to the extent that respondents with one white parent would have chosen Asian or black in addition to white, the differences in racial composition between the 2.0 and 2.5 generations would diminish accordingly. Unfortunately, other data sets, such as the 2000 Census, that contain data on multiple racial identifications do not also contain information on parents' nativity.

There is one final aspect of racial identification that merits attention when considering differences in the demographic profile of the 2.0 and 2.5 generations: the extent to which members of each group are the children of interracial marriages. As indicated earlier, we might expect those in the second generation with one native-born parent to be more likely to have parents of different races than those in the second generation with two foreign-born parents. This is because immigrants who are married to other immigrants are likely to be from the same country as their spouse, either because the two are married before entering the United States or because unmarried immigrants often return to the home country within a relatively short period to find a spouse. The Current Population Survey does not provide information on the racial identification of the parents of respondents, unless they happen to live in the same household as the respondent. Using data from parents and children in the same household may suffice for second-generation respondents under the age of 18, but it does not cover the overwhelming majority of adult second-generation immigrants. However, it is still possible to approximate the relative likelihood of respondents in the 2.0 and 2.5 generations to have parents of different races by examining the marital patterns of first-generation immigrant adults. Figure 3 presents the rates of interracial marriage among first-generation immigrants who identify as white, black, Latino, or Asian/ Pacific Islander. The results are divided between those immigrants with native-born spouses and foreign-born spouses, as well as those immigrants arriving before 1965 and thereafter.[9]

For both pre-1965 and post-1965 immigrants, there are strong differences in the likelihood of interracial marriage between those immigrants who have a native-born spouse and those who have a foreign-born spouse. Among Asian immigrants, for instance, the rate of interracial marriage is over 80 percent among those who have a native-born spouse, but is only 13 percent for those who have a foreign-born spouse. Similarly among Latinos, the rate of interracial marriage is about 65 percent for immigrants with a native-born spouse, but is less than 20 percent for those with an immigrant spouse. These differences in the rates of intermarriage between immigrants with native-born spouses and foreign-born spouses hold in both the pre-1965 and post-1965 waves of immigration. So, even though we do not have data on the racial identification of the parents of second-generation respondents in the CPS, data on marriage patterns among first-generation immigrants suggests that children in the 2.5 generation are much more likely to have parents of different races than children in the 2.0 generation. At the same time, internativity marriages are not synonymous with interracial marriages.

[9]Using contemporary data on immigrants is probably less reliable among children of the pre-1965 waves of immigrants because of the greater likelihood that their parents are censored from the sample because of death. Problems of inaccuracy also creep in when considering those in the second generation whose parents are either divorced or who have remarried someone of a different immigrant generation than the child's biological father.

FIGURE 3

Proportion of Married Immigrants with Spouse of Another Race, by Race
of Immigrant
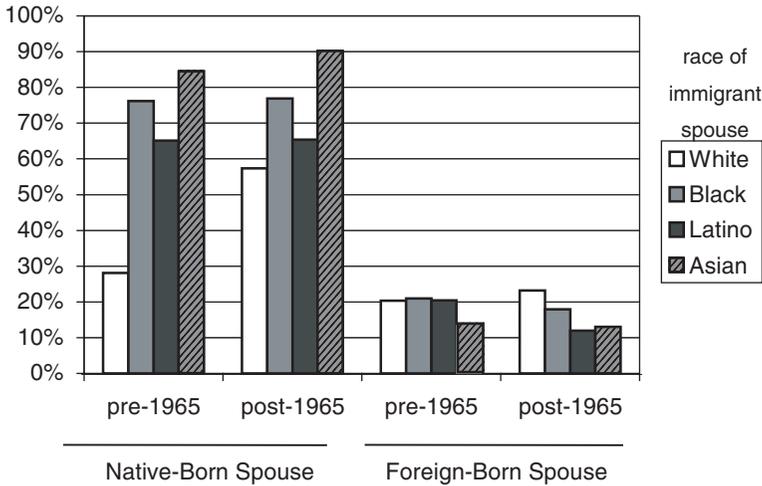
Thus, for instance, over 30 percent of internativity marriages among Latino immigrants involve a native-born Latino, and the figure for whites is 40 percent. Still, it is important to note that racial composition of respondents and their parents vary significantly between those in the 2.0 and 2.5 generations.

Socioeconomic Outcomes in the 2.0 and 2.5 Generations

To summarize the findings so far, we have seen that the 2.5 generation constitutes a large share of the U.S.-born children of immigrants, and that they vary from the 2.0 generation in important demographic characteristics such as age structure and racial composition. Now, I investigate whether there are significant differences in socioeconomic outcomes associated with the presence or absence of a native-born parent. Among the more important indicators of socioeconomic status, I consider personal income and educational attainment, the latter measured as the likelihood of dropping out of high school or of graduating from a four-year college, and also as the total years of schooling. As indicated previously, we can expect the 2.5 generation to fare better than the 2.0 generation in both educational attainment and earnings. This expectation is based on the premise that having a native-born parent affords children with greater knowledge about

TABLE 3

Educational Attainment and Personal Income
Among Second-Generation Immigrants, Age 25 and Higher

	High School Dropout	p-Value	College Graduate	p-Value	Education (Years)	p-Value	Personal Income	p-Value
2.0 generation	22.5%		23.5%		12.3		$28,625	
2.5 generation	12.0%	0.001	30.0%	0.001	13.1	0.001	$36,301	0.001
—Native-born father	10.6%	0.001	30.3%	0.001	13.1	0.001	$36,727	0.001
—Native-born mother	13.2%	0.001	29.9%	0.001	13.1	0.001	$35,947	0.001
N	21,417		21,417		21,417		21,417	

SOURCE: March Current Population Survey 1999–2001.

opportunities in the mainstream economy, as well as greater access to pathways that lead to higher education and higher income.

In Table 3, I present differences in various socioeconomic outcomes between those in the 2.0 and 2.5 generations, first as a set of bivariate relationships and then as coefficients in multivariate regressions. The results conform to expectations regarding the advantages associated with having one native-born parent versus having no native-born parents. The presence of a native-born father is associated with a 29 percent increase in the rate of college education. Similarly, those with a native-born mother are 27 percent more likely to have a college degree than those who have two immigrant parents. It should be noted that both these differences between the 2.0 and 2.5 generations are significant at the 0.001 level.

The data from the March CPS also indicate that those in the 2.5 generation are less likely to have dropped out of high school than those in the 2.0 generation. Indeed, the rate of high school dropouts among respondents with two immigrant parents is nearly twice as high as among those respondents with an immigrant mother and a native-born father. Similar results hold when educational attainment is operationalized as a continuous variable, with those in the 2.5 generation having nearly one additional year of schooling than those in the 2.0 generation. Finally, given the differences in educational attainment among the various groups, it is not surprising to find that there are also significant group differences in earnings, with those in the 2.5 generation earning 26 to 28 percent more than those in the second generation with no native-born parents.

It is possible, however, that the divergence in socioeconomic outcomes between the groups considered are due entirely to differences in age structure and racial composition noted in the previous section. Thus, it is important to control for factors such as age and race while trying to determine whether

TABLE 4

Educational Attainment and Personal Income
Among Second-Generation Immigrants

	High School Dropout		College Graduate		Education (Years)		Personal Income	
	β	p-Value	β	p-Value	β	p-Value	β	p-Value
Native-born father	− 0.315	0.001	− 0.047	0.265	0.135	0.005	1,222.29	0.050
Native-born mother	− 0.252	0.001	0.117	0.003	0.262	0.001	2,287.65	0.001
Age	0.053	0.001	− 0.031	0.001	− 0.058	0.001	− 98.88	0.001
Black	0.272	0.172	0.008	0.944	− 0.120	0.434	− 7,615.00	0.001
Latino	1.689	0.000	− 1.283	0.001	− 2.150	0.001	− 4,606.98	0.001
Asian	0.018	0.870	0.162	0.026	− 0.107	0.245	− 3,707.89	0.002
Female	0.010	0.796	− 0.397	0.001	− 0.388	0.001	− 17,942.82	0.001
Education (years)							4,238.00	0.001
Constant	− 5.032	0.001	1.031	0.001	16.811	0.001	− 8,281.71	0.001
N	21,417		21,417		21,417		21,417	
R^2	0.03		0.07		0.16		0.20	

SOURCE: March Current Population Survey 1999–2001.

there are systematic differences in outcomes between those in the 2.0 generation and the 2.5 generation. Table 4 presents differences in educational outcomes between the various groups after controlling for age, race, and gender. In the case of dropping out of high school and attaining a college degree, the results are presented as logit coefficients because the outcomes of interest are dichotomous variables. When analyzing group differences in earnings and years of schooling, I use linear OLS regressions that control for the same set of factors. In all instances, the reference group is the 2.0 generation and the sample is confined to those who have traditionally been defined as second generation (i.e., the native born who have at least one foreign-born parent).

The results from the multivariate regressions indicate that there are still significant differences in the likelihood of graduating from high school and completing a four-year college degree, even after controlling for factors such as age, race, and gender. The odds of dropping out of high school are 27 percent lower among those in the 2.5 generation with a native-born father, and 22 percent lower among those with a native-born mother. Both these relationships are statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Turning next to the attainment of a four-year college degree, we see that controlling for other demographic factors does wipe out the significance and magnitude of the educational advantage among those in the 2.5 generation with a native-born

father. However, those with an immigrant father and a native-born mother are still more likely to have a college degree than those in the 2.0 generation. Finally, the higher level of educational attainment among 2.5-generation respondents is also evident in the number of years of schooling. Using this measure, those with a native-born mother have the greatest advantage with respect to the 2.0 generation, although even those with a native-born father have a statistically significant advantage. So, we see that most of the differences in educational attainment between those in the 2.0 and 2.5 generations cannot simply be attributed to differences in demographic characteristics such as age structure and racial composition. The presence of a native-born parent, especially of a native-born mother, makes a significant difference in the likelihood that the children of immigrants graduate from high school and obtain college degrees.

Given that education is still significantly related to generational status in the multivariate context, it is possible that controlling for education will render insignificant the differences in income between those in the 2.0 and 2.5 generations. As Table 4 indicates, however, group differences in personal income still remain. Those with an immigrant father and a native-born mother have incomes that are about $2,300 higher than those with two foreign-born parents, a difference that is significant at the 0.001 level. Finally, even though respondents in the 2.5 generation with a native-born father are not significantly more likely to have college degrees, they still earn about $1,200 more than respondents in the 2.0 generation. Thus, there are enduring differences in personal income that are not solely due to differences in age structure, racial composition, or educational attainment.[10]

Comparisons to the Third Generation

So far, we have seen that the 2.5 generation is distinct from the 2.0 generation in terms of important demographic characteristics and socio-economic outcomes. The question still remains, however, as to whether those with one native-born parent and one foreign-born parent should be lumped together with those who have two native-born parents (i.e., the "third generation"). Based on what we already know about the 2.5 generation, we can expect to find differences with the third generation in demographic characteristics such as age structure and racial composition, and perhaps even in socioeconomic outcomes. First, the age structures of the two populations are likely to be different because the size of 2.5-generation birth cohorts is sensitive to immigration flows, whereas the size of

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[10]Having parents of different races may account for some of this residual difference. Although these models control for the racial identification of respondents, this information does not adequately identify the racial identification of each parent.

third-generation birth cohorts is not. The racial composition of the two groups will also be different because of the greater predominance of blacks and whites in the native-born population. Finally, the two groups may also vary in socioeconomic outcomes, although it is unclear whether those with two native-born parents will have higher levels of education and earnings than those with one native-born parent and one foreign-born parent. Although the presence of an additional native-born parent may increase the level of access to mainstream social networks, those in the 2.5 generation may also be advantaged by having parents with higher levels of educational attainment.

A separate analysis of the March CPS data set indicates that the 2.5 generation is distinct from the third generation in several respects. As expected, the age structures of the two groups are different, with the 2.5 generation slightly older than the third generation (34.6 vs. 35.1), a difference that is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Stronger differences emerge when the populations are divided between those born before 1965 and afterward. Among those born before 1965, the 2.5 generation is substantially older than the third generation (57.5 vs. 53.2). Among those born after 1965, however, the 2.5 generation is actually younger than the third generation (14.0 vs. 16.7). In both cases, the group differences are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. As indicated earlier, the size of the 2.5 generation is sensitive to immigration flows in ways that the third generation is not. Thus, many 2.5-generation births occurred prior to the baby boom, accounting for the older age structure among those born before 1965. Finally, the younger age structure among the 2.5 generation after 1965 is most likely due to the fact that most immigrants to the United States in the contemporary wave have arrived in the last 15 years.

There are also considerable differences in the racial composition of the two groups. Among both pre-1965 and post-1965 birth cohorts, the 2.5 generation has a greater proportion of Latinos and Asians, and a smaller proportion of blacks, than the third-generation population. Differences in the proportion of whites are found only among post-1965 waves, with whites accounting for 74 percent of the third generation but only 51 percent of the 2.5-generation population. Finally, there are significant differences in educational attainment and earnings between the two groups in both bivariate and multivariate contexts. In the bivariate context, 2.5-generation immigrants earn 14 percent more than those in the third generation, are less likely to have dropped out of high school (12 percent vs. 13 percent), and more likely to have completed college (30 percent vs. 25 percent). Even after controlling for the effects of age, racial composition, and gender, these differences in outcomes remain statistically significant at the 0.001 level. So, we see that 2.5-generation immigrants have demographic characteristics and socioeconomic outcomes that are distinct, not only from those in the second generation with no native-born parents, but also from those in the third generation with two native-born parents.

Conclusions

This study has provided compelling reasons as to why those who have one native-born parent (or the "2.5 generation") should be analyzed separately from those in the second generation who have no native-born parent (the "2.0 generation"). First, the 2.5 generation accounts for a large proportion of the children of immigrants; indeed, among those born before 1965, the members of this generation constitute a majority of the children of immigrants born in the United States. Even among particular national-origin groups, those who have one native-born parent constitute a sizable proportion of the second-generation population. Another reason the 2.5 generation should be separated from the 2.0 generation is that the two groups differ considerably in their demographic characteristics. Among children of immigrants born before 1965, the biggest difference is found in the age structure of the two populations, whereas the most noticeable demographic difference among post-1965 cohorts is in the racial composition of the two groups. Finally, as this analysis has shown, the two groups also have significant differences in socioeconomic outcomes. In most cases, the presence of a native-born parent affords children with greater chances at higher education and more success in the mainstream economy. Finally, the 2.5 generation is also distinct from the third generation in terms of the various measures used in this analysis—age structure, racial composition, educational attainment, and earnings.

There are still several unanswered questions and areas for further research in the study of the 2.5 generation. First, we need a better explanation of why the presence of a native-born father leads to the best socioeconomic outcomes in some instances (high school completion), but not so in others, where the highest outcomes are found among those who have a native-born mother (earnings and the attainment of a college degree). We also need a more detailed examination into why those with one native-born parent and one foreign-born parent are advantaged relative to those with two native-born parents. Comparisons between the 2.0, 2.5, and third generations would also benefit from data sources that provide more detailed information on respondents' parents, including their individual racial identification and educational attainment. Finally, we need to have a better comprehension of the circumstances under which children in the 2.5 generation identify with the immigrant parent versus the native-born parent. One could imagine that this latter question will depend on factors such as the father's involvement in the child's upbringing, as well as patterns of divorce and remarriage among immigrant men and women who have native-born spouses. To answer all these questions, we need not only longitudinal surveys with information on the nativity of parents and other parent characteristics, but also more qualitative studies of children with exactly one native-born parent.

There are many other aspects of immigrant adaptation that could be related to the presence or absence of a native-born parent. For instance, an

analysis of the two-city Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) indicates that English-language proficiency is higher among the 2.5 generation, and other studies have shown that bilingual proficiency is higher among those in the 2.0 generation (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Furthermore, we can expect processes of political socialization and the acquisition of party identification to proceed along different paths for those in the 2.0 and 2.5 generations. Other questions related to immigrant adaptation, such as participation in transnational activities, may also be implicated in differences between the 2.0 and 2.5 generations. For instance, one would expect that the extent to which second-generation children visit their immigrant parent's country of origin will depend on factors such as the proximity of extended families affiliated with each parent, as well as the involvement of each extended family in the upbringing of these mixed-nativity children.

Some of these questions may require the collection of new data; others will simply involve the recoding of existing data to take into account the nativity of the respondent's mother and father separately. By consistently disaggregating those in the second generation with a native-born parent from those who have no native-born parents, we can gain a better understanding of the divergent experiences and outcomes among the U.S.-born children of immigrants.

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