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Invited Article

The Changing Face of Immigrants in the U.S.: Implications for Adult Educators

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Abstract

As the native-born population in the U.S. slows, new and existing immigrants will comprise a larger percentage of the population. Immigrants and refugees are predicted to fill roughly half of new jobs, skilled and unskilled, created over the next ten years. Adult education, as a system that provides immigrants with a variety of educational opportunities—language, work-skills, literacy, civics—will play a key role in facilitating their transition to these jobs and integration into the fabric of U.S. society. This article provides an overview of different immigrant populations in the United States and the implications for adult educators.

Over the past decade, immigration has begun to recede from the peak experienced between 1990 and 2000 (Migration Policy Institute [MPI], 2010; Papademetriou & Terrazas, 2009).[1] The growing anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States, restrictive immigration legislation, and changing economies—in the U.S. and sending countries alike—have decreased the number of people immigrating to the U.S. Despite the perception of heightened illegal immigration, those numbers

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have decreased and the number of legal immigrants greatly outnumbers those who are undocumented (Jones-Correa, 2012). Notwithstanding the slowing of immigration overall, it is projected that by 2050 the immigrant population will represent one-fifth of the U.S. population (Passel & Cohn, 2008). Although immigrants are diverse in ethnicity, educational attainment, and work experience, a higher share of immigrants have lower levels of educational attainment, higher rates of poverty, and lower levels of workforce integration than native-born populations (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2009). Yet, they will shape the workforce and social and political structures in the U.S. over the next decades (Passel, 2011). The successes and benefits from these newcomers will be influenced by the ways in which they are integrated into the fabric of the U.S. society, including political and social institutions such as schools (Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010). Adult education, as a system that provides immigrants with a variety of educational opportunities—language, work-skills, literacy, civics—will play a key role in facilitating their inclusion. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of different immigrant populations in the United States and the implications for adult educators.

Language

Command of English is considered an indicator of immigrant integration, employment and earnings, and children's academic success (Jímenez, 2011). The Pew Hispanic Center (Patten, 2012) reports that 34% of immigrants under the age of 18 who arrived in 2000 or later speak English "less than very well," and 17% report English as the only language spoken in the home (Table 22). Roughly 10% of adult immigrants say they speak no English, compared to 53% of those who describe themselves as not speaking English very well. Notably, the number of people who speak English "very well" has decreased over the past decade (33.6% to 26.2%). These figures indicate that proportionally more immigrants and refugees lack adequate language skills and need English as a second language (ESL) services. However, recent immigrants learn English more quickly than their earlier counterparts (Jímenez, 2011) and place a high value on learning English, undermining the notion that Latino immigrants resist acquiring English (Dowling, Ellison, & Leal, 2012). Interestingly, as language proficiency increases immigrants can become more aware of prejudice and discrimination (Oropesa & Jensen, 2010). Nevertheless, since mother language, educational attainment, age at time of arrival, and exposure to English influence the rate of second language learning, we must understand the diversity existing within immigrant populations.

Immigrant Populations: The Myth of Homogeneity

It is well known that the number of Latinos in the United States has climbed and will continue to do so (Passel & Cohn, 2008). Less well-known is that immigrants from Mexico and Central and South America are no longer the fastest-growing immigrant group in the U.S. The number of people emigrating from Mexico is declining (Passel, 2012, May 3); Census data indicates that the foreign-born Mexican population stayed stagnant at roughly 30% (29.4) of all immigrants. Latino immigrants accounted for 31% of the immigrant population, compared to 36% for Asians (Pew Social and Demographic Trends, 2012). Disaggregating the data on foreign-born populations reveals the diversity that underlies monolithic categories such as Latino or Asian (Pew Social and Demographic Trends, 2012). For example, the U.S. Latino population—undifferentiated in the minds of many non-Latinos and frequently presumed to be Mexican (Prins & Toso, 2012)—continues to diversify (Fraga et al., 2012). Latinos arrive from Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, in other words, from myriad countries with disparate histories, languages, dialects, and national identities. Teachers should be able to distinguish among different nationalities not only to validate each student's national identity or ethnicity, but also to recognize and diffuse possible conflicts in the classroom (see Prins, 2009). This becomes especially pertinent when classrooms include students from countries that have experienced or are experiencing civil war or ethnic conflict (e.g., Eretria and Ethiopia). The following is a look at established categories of foreign-born populations in the U.S. Within each group, we note distinctions that can inform adult educators about variations among students from a particular region. This summary depends on available published materials, which provides more information on Latino immigrants than on Middle Eastern or African immigrants, for example.

Asian Immigrants

The fastest growing immigrant population in the U.S. is from Asia showing an increase of 43% in the last decade (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Asian immigrants settle primarily in the West; however, more Asian immigrants are moving to southern states (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, March-a). Notably, Philadelphia was ranked as having the tenth largest Asian population in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, March-a). The largest entering nationalities in 2010 were Indian (4.5%), Filipino (4.4%), Chinese (4.0%), and Vietnamese (3.1%). These immigrants represent a significant diversity of linguistic, political and ethnic characteristics, all of which affect integration into their new communities.

The model minority myth, which portrays Asians as successful high achievers, tends to obscure differences within Asian populations. This myth perpetuates the idea that Asian immigrants are more economically and academically successful and thus need fewer services than other immigrant groups (Lee, 1994; Yang, 2004). Over 36% of Asian immigrants earn more than $50,000 a year, yet nearly 30% earn less than $20,000 and 18% of children live in poverty (Patten, 2012, February, Table 37). Educational disparities reveal a similar pattern. Although Asians ages 25 and older have higher post-secondary educational attainment than do native-born Americans (50% versus 28%, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, March-b), nearly 36% of the Hmong population, for example, does not have a high school degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a). Yang's (2004) research illuminates discrepancies in educational attainment; Southeast Asian children (e.g., from Vietnam or Thailand) lag well-behind other Asian immigrants, Pacific Islanders, Blacks, and Hispanics, for reasons that include "limited English language skills; discrimination; systematic miscommunication between students, parents, and teachers; and widespread alienation from mainstream schools" (p. 128). Southeast Asian parents and their children, whether native-born or not, struggle with English and school integration (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2008; Yang, 2004). Yang's research undermines the model minority myth and indicates the role that adult education can play in helping adults obtain linguistic, academic, and parenting support.

Black African Immigrants

Voluntary Black African[2] immigrants are a fairly recent group to arrive in the U.S. (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011), the vast majority arriving after 2000 (McCabe, 2011). Similar to Asian immigrants, this category belies a wealth of differences. For example, Black African immigrants tend to be more highly educated (23% are college graduates) than most other native- and foreign-born populations (18% and 16%, respectively), yet African *refugees* tend to demonstrate lower educational attainment (Capps et al., 2011). Over one-third of adult immigrants from

Cape Verde, Somalia, and Guinea lacked a high-school degree (McCabe, 2011). It is predicted that the U.S. will become the main recipient for sub-Saharan refugees (Capps et al., 2011), indicating a high need for basic skills classes.

Black Africans tend to have high employment rates but lower earning power, attributed to underemployment despite higher skills and educational levels (Capps et al., 2011). In addition, Black African immigrants report encountering racism when seeking employment (Capps et al., 2011). This is not uncommon for immigrants that do not look like mainstream (Western European) society (Oropesa & Jensen, 2010; Prins & Toso, 2012; Yang, 2004). Citizenship classes and credentialing pathways might be particularly relevant to this group of highly skilled immigrants. A majority of Black Africans have not become citizens, a restrictive factor for accessing better jobs (Capps et al., 2011); civics classes may help Black Africans achieve citizenship—if that is their goal—and may provide a forum for them to explore and give voice to their experiences of racism. Establishing credentialing pathways, such as credit-based courses that fulfill licensing requirements, for highly skilled immigrants would assist Black Africans in gaining U.S.-recognized equivalents for their past education and work experience (Batalova, Fix, & Creticos, 2008; Capps et al., 2011).

Black Caribbean Immigrants

Little information is available for immigrants from the Caribbean. This may be in part, because distinctions are erased when immigrant groups are collapsed by racial categories, for example, African Black and Caribbean Black. Voluntary Black Caribbean immigrants have a longer immigration history to the U.S. than Black African immigrants (Thomas, 2012a); however, Black Caribbean immigration has dwindled (Capps et al., 2011). Top settling states for Caribbean immigrants are New York and Florida. Although Black Caribbean populations have lower formal education than Black African immigrants, they have a higher median income (Thomas, 2012a), partly because of their longer presence in the U.S. and stronger English language skills (with the exception of Cubans, Haitians, and Dominicans).[3] Immigrants from Cuba and the Dominican Republic represent a large share of the Caribbean populations, although they are often counted as Latin American immigrants due to their language. These non-native English speaking immigrants may rely more highly on ESL services, whereas native English speaking immigrants are more likely to enroll in ABE classes. Children of Black

Caribbean immigrants are considered most vulnerable regarding health issues, educational attainment, and subsequent employment due to their skin color, higher incidence of single-parent households (atypically, this group has much higher rates of immigration for women than men), poverty, and lower educational attainment (Landale, Thomas, & Van Hook, 2011; Thomas, 2012b). These characteristics indicate a role for adult and family literacy programs; they can support parents in accessing social services and relevant educational opportunities.

Middle Eastern and North African Immigrants

Similar to other immigrant groups, Middle Eastern and North African immigrants continue to immigrate in increasing numbers to the U.S., despite heightened anti-Arab sentiment after September 11 (Cainkar, 2002). Some of the faster growing nationalities are Saudi, Yemeni, Sudanese, and Iraqi (Terrazas, 2011, March). While, rates of Muslim immigration have grown, prior to 2000 the majority of immigrants from this region were Christian (Camarota, 2002). Primary sending countries are not considered "Arab;" some of the largest groups come from Iran, Pakistan, Israel, Bangladesh, and Turkey, many of whom are not Muslim (Camarota, 2002). Middle Eastern and North African immigrants have primarily settled in California and Michigan, but are branching out to other locales.

Despite Middle Eastern immigrants' higher median income, over 47% of these immigrant children are estimated to live in poverty, a rate higher than Mexican children (Patten, 2012, February, Table 37). Household income may be lower for a variety of reasons: women's lesser levels of employment (Capps et al., 2011; Terrazas, 2011, March); a high number of undocumented immigrants (Camarota, 2002) and refugees; and a lower level of integration into the labor force (Terrazas, 2011, March). As with other immigrant groups, adult education can play a key function for Middle Eastern and North African immigrants by supporting their need to better understand the workplace and labor trends. Over one-third of these immigrants, in 2008, had limited English skills indicating a great need for adult ESL classes (Terrazas, 2011, March). Given these linguistic, employment, and cultural constraints, adult education classes can enable women, in particular, to learn about and negotiate their new culture. However, when exploring such topics providers should examine their perceptions about race, religion, and women's rights. For instance, Buck and Silver (2012) found that Muslim Somali women encountered resistance to their culture and religion and felt increasingly pressured to westernize in their new community and adult education classes. Adult educators can also serve as liaisons between communities that have little experience in welcoming Middle Eastern and North African immigrants, thereby mitigating prejudice and alienation.

Latino Immigrants

Despite slowing immigration rates, immigrants from Mexico and Central and South America garner the most media coverage in the U.S., primarily because Latinos[4] constitute the largest minority group (16.3%) (Fraga et al., 2012; Lichter, 2012; Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Latino immigrants, while heavily concentrated in urban areas, are also the most dispersed throughout the U.S. (Lichter, 2012). Mexico sends the majority of immigrants, followed by Central American countries, but Ecuador and Peru are among the top ten sending countries (Motel & Patten, 2010). Central Americans are the most likely to be living in the U.S. for humanitarian reasons (Terrazas, 2011, January). Making such distinctions can help educators better understand students' particular needs. For example, immigrants entering for humanitarian reasons may have experienced trauma, which can affect learning, focus, and attendance. Moreover, because many Latino immigrants are perceived as Mexican (Prins & Toso, 2012), recognizing individual identities may humanize their experience in the U.S. and assist practitioners in identifying tensions that can exist between different Latino nationalities (Prins, 2009).

Latinos' prominent presence in the U.S. does not necessarily translate into successful integration. Anti-Latino sentiment, as evidenced by increased anti-immigration legislation and violence, is high in the U.S., partly due to the size of the Latino population and the perception that most Latinos are illegal (Casas & Cabrera, 2011). Hostile perceptions and legislation hinder Latinos from obtaining work and needed educational and social services (Lichter, 2012). Fifty-three percent of the Mexican foreign-born population earns below $20,000 per year (Patten, 2012, Table 31), and their median annual household income is $18,000, compared to $20,000 for Central American immigrants. However, Central Americans have experienced more job loss in the recent economy (Terrazas, 2011, January), demonstrating a need for education and job skills training. High school graduation rates for Latino children lag behind most other immigrant populations (Fraga et al., 2012), as does their GED attainment (Fry, 2010). Mexican foreign-born children are the least likely to live in an English-only household, and nearly 75% of adults from Mexico report speaking English "less than very well." These statistics indicate that this population has survival English skills, but may not be adequately prepared for more highly-skilled employment requiring strong English. Given the lower levels of educational attainment and need for ESL, this population will continue to be a presence in adult education classes.

Western & Eastern European Immigrants

European immigration has dwindled and is often invisible because these immigrants tend to look like mainstream Americans, have greater facility with language, and higher levels of education, employment (Dixon, 2005; Russell & Batalova, 2012), and income (Jímenez, 2011). In the past decade, immigration from Eastern European countries has increased, while other European regions have sent fewer immigrants (Dixon, 2005). Although integration may seem easier for Europeans, these immigrants also experience difficulties. For example, the skills of educated Eastern Europeans do not transfer well to the U.S. workplace, resulting in underemployment (Mattoo, Neagu, & Ozden, 2008). Little is known about contemporary European immigrants, indicating that it is a fertile topic for researchers and adult educators to explore.

Changes in Settlement Patterns

The largest number of immigrants continues to live in the four traditional receiving states: California, New York, Texas, and Florida. However, over the past two decades immigrants have been settling in different regions, to the extent that the immigrant population in some states has increased by over 200% (MPI Data Hub, 2012). From 1990 to 2000, the states with the highest increase in immigration were Georgia (233.4%), North Carolina (273.7%), Nevada (202%), Nebraska (164.7%), and Minnesota (130.4%) (MPI Data Hub, 2012). Since 2000, immigration patterns have swung more heavily to southern states such as Alabama (92% increase), South Carolina (88.4%), Tennessee (81.8%), Arkansas (78.7%), and Kentucky (75.1%) (MPI Data Hub, 2012). Other states have received a comparatively small number of immigrants, but the *percentage* increase of foreign-born residents is higher than traditional destination states. For example, between 2000 and 2010, Pennsylvania ranked 20th in immigrant growth, but the foreign-born population increased by over 45%, a rate greater than California, New York, Texas, or Florida (Batalova, 2011).

Immigrants are also moving beyond traditional destinations, large metropolitan cities, and are instead settling in more rural areas that were previously insulated from changes in the ethnic population (Jensen, 2006; Lichter & Johnson, 2006). Rural immigrants differ in important ways from their metropolitan counterparts: they tend to have lower educational attainment (as many as half have not received a high school diploma or equivalent) are more likely to be married, own a home, work in low-skilled jobs, and be Latino (Jensen, 2006). Newer receiving communities such as those in southern states appear to draw immigrants from sending communities that do not have a history of immigration, meaning new immigrants have fewer social networks to rely upon (Farmer & Moon, 2011). Adult education programs can fill the supportive role generally provided by a co-ethnic network by offering access to social services, local employment opportunities, and social interactions to alleviate immigrants' isolation and acculturative stress (Caplan, 2007).

Settling in rural areas shapes employment for many immigrants. Although they are able to gain employment, they are generally underemployed (Jensen, 2006) and poorer than their urban counterparts (Farmer & Moon, 2011). Jobs have become more stable with the shift from seasonal to year-round agricultural work and stable industries such as food processing plants (Lichter, 2012), allowing immigrants to settle more permanently in areas accustomed to cyclical immigration (Jensen, 2006). Native-born populations, therefore, see a more lasting and encroaching effect of immigration, a change that is not always viewed positively (Fennelly & Federico, 2008; Jensen, 2006). Furthermore, a stable population requires more year-round services such as ESL classes. Rural areas are typically unprepared for this change; they have fewer services available (Jensen, 2006; Prins & Toso, 2012) and are less able to provide linguistic or cultural services (Lichter, 2012).

Although immigrants are often key to the revitalization of rural towns, they are frequently met with suspicion and racism (Lichter, 2012; Oropesa & Jensen, 2010). National surveys demonstrate that:

> "a significant number of respondents believe that immigrants negatively affect the job opportunities of native-born Americans[,]… make the economy worse off in general[,]…increase crime rates, drive up tax burdens, and encourage the deterioration of social and moral values." (Jones-Correa, 2012, p. 6).

Evidence contradicts each of these beliefs, but does little to dispel native-born residents' perceptions of immigrants as undermining their communities (Lichter, 2012). These sentiments are heightened in rural locations that have only recently been exposed to non-European immigrants (Fennelly & Federico, 2008). Increased segregation and poverty among minority populations and between minority and mainstream populations does little to facilitate community integration or acceptance (Lichter, Parisi, & Taquino, 2012).

Despite increased immigration to rural areas, larger metropolitan cities continue to receive the majority of immigrants (Lichter, 2012). Urban areas may feel less impact on educational and social services than rural areas because they have more, and better established, services, cultural resources, and co-ethnic social networks that support immigrants. However, a new phenomenon in some urban areas is the growth of segregated suburban communities, known as "ethno-burbs" (Wen, Lauderddale, & Kandula, 2009). Although suburban settlement patterns may indicate that immigrants are acquiring more economic capital (Wen, Lauderdale, & Kandula, 2009), these ethno-burbs could also signal the isolation or separation of immigrants into ethnic enclaves, belying the assumption that suburban settlement aids integration (Lichter & Johnson, 2006). As immigrants move into areas of cities that have not traditionally served adult immigrant populations, similar burdens may be placed on providers as those in the rural areas.

A Note About Gender

Over the past two decades, the number of women who emigrate with or without their families has slightly outpaced that of men. Currently, foreign-born women and men number 18.96 million and 18.21 million, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). Immigrant children are more likely than native-born children to live in two-parent households (41.4 % vs. 26.5%), (Patten, 2012, Table 16), but the number living in single-parent households is growing. The median income for female-headed households is 27.3% lower than male-headed households (Batalova, 2009). Although women typically head single-parent households, the number of single male households is increasing. A striking example is that Central American and Mexican men headed only a slightly smaller share of single-parent households than women (15.7% vs. 20%, respectively, for Central Americans and 12.5% vs. 15.9% for Mexicans) (Patten, 2012, p. Table 17). These statistics indicate that family and educational services must consider the growing number of single-parent fathers, disabusing the notion that family literacy services are primarily for women or that male students do not have childcare responsibilities.

Over half (52%) of foreign-born women state that they speak English "less than very well" (Batalova, 2009). They are less likely than men to be employed (54.6% vs. 79.5%) (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2012a). Taken together, these factors increase the risk of social isolation. As such, adult education programs can provide a place to meet educational goals, receive parental support, form social networks, and mitigate feelings of isolation (Prins, Toso, & Schafft, 2009). As women migrate to the U.S., services such as adult education and family literacy, gain importance. In a study of immigrants in rural Pennsylvania, adult ESL providers perceived that involvement in their children's public schools provided immigrants entrée into the local community (Prins & Toso, 2012); for parents who struggle with literacy or are unfamiliar with the U.S. school system, adult education programs can provide literacy skills and vital cultural information about school structure and expectations regarding parental roles and academic support.

The Role of Adult Education Programs and Adult Educators

Adult education funding continues to decline, service providers are being required to do more with less, and immigrants continue to wait for classes to open up. In a recent study, 72% of adult education programs reported having waiting lists—double the number since the 2008 survey (National Council of State Directors of Adult Education, 2012). Despite the high demand, adult ESL funding has decreased (Foster, 2012). The U.S. Department of Education's National Reporting System for federally funded adult education programs (2006-2010) indicates that after ABE classes, ESL classes enroll the second largest number of students (42% of all learners, down from 47%), (Research Allies in Lifelong Learning, 2012). We can surmise, that the largest group of underserved adults may well be immigrants. If we include undocumented immigrants, who have much more restricted access to ESL classes, the number of adults needing educational services increases further (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Leitsinger, 2012).

A combination of adult education programs—ESL, literacy, family literacy, GED, workplace education, and citizenship—is extremely important to the foreign-born population. Immigrants are expected to fill the majority of job openings over the next 40 years. Currently, most immigrants are employed in low-wage occupations such as the service sector (BLS, 2012a). Nationally, low-wage jobs accounted for most of the post-2008 recession employment gains (National Employment Law Project, 2012), and they are also projected to account for most of the fastest-growing occupations in the next decade (BLS, 2012b). Adult educators need to prepare immigrants to meet the requirements of tomorrow's labor market by integrating technology and focusing on educational and vocational opportunities beyond adult education. For skilled immigrants this entails creating language and certificate programs that will enable them to obtain jobs that match their education and experience. Other immigrants will need to focus on building language, literacy, and workplace skills while exploring and planning for living-wage careers. There is a need for transitional courses that support enrollment in postsecondary education, a prerequisite for higher-paying jobs. Pennsylvania's Division of Adult Education has launched a Career Pathways initiative for adults demonstrating the trend toward curricula that integrate basic skills, career exploration, and vocational and academic skills that facilitate transition to postsecondary education. These programs may be particularly useful for skilled immigrants because they support access to certificate programs or other routes into skilled positions.

Early school departure among immigrant youth or non-enrollment for older immigrant youth (17-19 year olds) is common (Crosnoe & Turley, 2011). They may transition into ESL, ABE, or GED classes, creating a wider range of ages in these classrooms. In addition to struggling with academics, other factors drive early school departure for this population. Lukes (2012) describes the role of school administrators, under pressure to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress, in creating pushouts—high school students advised by school personnel to leave school and seek other educational routes—and *shutouts*—youths eligible for high school enrollment who are not given access due to reasons such as age or lack of transcripts. A third group of young immigrants, *holdouts*, entered the U.S. planning to work but are instead enrolling in the adult education system in order to increase their employment potential by strengthening their literacy and work-related skills (Lukes, 2012). The variety of factors impacting reasons behind enrollment indicates the breadth of programming necessary to meet student needs. Furthermore, younger immigrants may need different teaching methods to keep them interested (Hayes, 1999) and a stronger focus on GED and academic content so that they may transition to higher education. As nationalities and ages diversify in the classroom, teachers will need to be attentive to student dynamics such as the need to negotiate differences between younger and older students concerning familiarity with technology, attitudes, and class pacing (Hayes, 1999).

The use of distance education (DE), particularly online classes, offers possibilities to engage students, provide employment skills, diversify instruction and content, reach dispersed populations, and increase the number of students enrolled in ABE and ESL classes. Adult learners are eager to use online learning, seeing it as a way to increase technology-related employment skills (McCain, 2009; Silva-Pacuila, 2008). ESL distance programs need to select the distance education model and curricula that best fit students' needs, whether "'pure distance' (no face-to-face contact), 'supported distance' (face-to-face contact for intake, assessment, orientation), [or] 'blended distance' (limited face-to-face interaction, including some instruction; (Petty 2005), which is useful for supplementing classroom-based instruction (Porter & Sturm 2006)" (Prins, Kassab, Drayton, & Gungor, in press, p. 2). McCain's (2009) report indicates that low-level literacy and language proficient students can take advantage of online learning and that using technology can boost literacy skills, particularly if students have a teacher to assist them. Several states, including North Carolina, Texas, and Missouri, offer online DE for ESL learners (Gungor & Prins, 2011). The limited research on effectiveness is promising. "For instance, distance ESL learners in California's [distance learning] initiative had similar retention rates, as traditional learners were more likely to complete the course and showed substantial learning gains (Porter, 2004); the reading gains of blended learners surpassed those of face-to-face and pure distance learners (Stiles & Porter, 2007)" (Prins et al., in press, p. 3).

Programs also need to consider teachers' professional development needs so that DE opportunities are productive (Silva-Pacuila, 2008), and determine how their DE offerings fit the demands of current policies and program accountability standards (Gungor & Prins, 2011). Lastly, although students may not need particular language or literacy skills, they often require an orientation on how to use the technology and financial or material support to access the appropriate tools (computer, Internet access).

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) continues to highlight civics education (OVAE, 2012). Citizenship classes are useful to aid immigrants in passing the citizenship exam. Research indicates that citizenship can offer marginalized immigrants, such as more highly-educated Black Africans, entry to jobs that better match their skills (Capps et al., 2011). Civics classes can provide immigrants with opportunities to explore and question U.S. institutions, systems, and policies, such as affordable pathways to education for children of immigrants and routes to citizenship. These classes offer adult educators ample opportunities to create student-driven curricula that address student concerns and promote their voice, self-efficacy, and community and political engagement.

Although Even Start, the primary federally-funded family literacy program, was eliminated in 2011, some family literacy programs continue to operate under other funding streams (e.g., Toyota Family Literacy Program), and immigrants constitute a high proportion of participants in many such programs. Family literacy programs aid parents in learning about U.S. school systems and expectations of parents, ways to support and communicate with their children about school and school work, and other social aspects of raising a child in a foreign country (e.g., clash of cultures). Adult education programs that do not have family literacy funding but wish to meet the needs of immigrant families with young or school-age children can incorporate topics such as understanding children's social and cognitive development in the U.S. context, and interacting with children's teachers and school culture.

Adult educators are accustomed to assisting adult learners with supportive services related to poverty, trauma, adjustment, and isolation. This role is heightened for programs that serve immigrants and that are located in rural areas where fewer services exist. The negative perception of immigrants as outsiders or as a threat to core American values (Fennelley, 2008) shapes the role of adult educators in several ways. Integration into local society is facilitated both symbolically and materially by immigrants' demonstrated desire and ability to use English (Batalova et al., 2008; Fennelly, 2008). Adult educators customarily provide ESL services and will need to increase services and outreach to this population. Adult educators are often in the unique position of getting to know immigrants, their families, and their home culture. Programs can serve as liaisons or cultural brokers between immigrants and the local community by matching students with community members and hosting cultural or informational events. As ABE, adult secondary education (ASE), and GED classes become increasingly diverse, program personnel will need to remain attentive to tensions that could arise among students. For example, native-born students could express resentment toward immigrant students on a variety of topics.

The Socio-Political Context of Adult Education for Immigrants

Negative attitudes toward immigrants are not a new phenomenon; however, raids by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) have become more targeted, focusing on employment sites such as poultry and meat processing plants where Latinos are known to work, rather than focusing broadly on the southwestern U.S. border (Jones-Correa, 2012). Recently, local, state, and federal legislation has attempted to restrict undocumented workers from entering, living, and working in the U.S. (Casas & Cabrera, 2011). Many of these widely publicized laws are punitive and highly contested (e.g., Hazelton, Pennsylvania's housing laws, Alabama's employment and education laws). They have altered life for documented and undocumented immigrants alike, even if they are subsequently overturned. For example, adult ESL administrators in several rural Pennsylvania counties attributed declining ESL enrollment to INS raids and the Hazelton legislation (Prins & Toso, 2012). Increased oversight, raids, and deportations (Detlaff, 2012; Jones-Correa, 2012) have been especially devastating for mixed-status families (Detlaff, 2012), whose members include a mixture of U.S. citizens, legal residents, and undocumented persons. Children who are U.S. citizens are eligible for benefits such as food stamps or financial aid. Nevertheless, parents in mixed-status families often fear that using these services could place them or their other children at risk for deportation (Detlaff, 2012; Landale et al., 2011; Passel, 2011). Immigrant parents encounter barriers when children are removed from their families or are put under notice by child welfare staff. Often the parents do not understand the process because of limited language and literacy skills, poverty, or cultural norms, thus inhibiting their ability to comply with immigration or child welfare requests or rules (Detlaff, 2012; Lichter, 2012). Adult educators are often placed at the delicate intersection between immigrant adults and the U.S. system as an entry point to providing education, services, and information to adult immigrants. This position requires sensitivity to the precarious position in which some students find themselves. Adult educators can assist students by providing specific lessons on institutions such as schools and human services and how to navigate them. ESL classrooms offer opportunities to examine societal issues such as discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment as they are manifested in the classroom and beyond (see Prins, 2009 for examples).

Conclusion

As this article demonstrates, the rise in immigration to rural and metropolitan areas, coupled with immigrants' often precarious socioeconomic position, heightens the need for an array of adult education services, including support beyond language, literacy, and citizenship classes. The need for adult education and the benefits it affords is especially pronounced in new settlement areas such as southern states and rural communities, where local residents are unaccustomed to immigrants and where services may be limited or difficult to access. As immigrants continue to disperse geographically and as budget cuts decrease the number of programs, adult educators may need to rely more heavily on mechanisms such as distance education. Finally, the growing diversity of immigrants underscores the need for adult educators to understand the distinctive national, linguistic, political, economic, and other characteristics of immigrants in their communities and programs. For many immigrant adult learners, teachers and other staff members serve as cultural brokers and a vital link to local community members and social and educational services for both adults and children. By providing ESL, basic skills, family literacy, citizenship, and work-based classes, adult education programs can foster immigrants' integration into the social and economic fabric of their new communities.

Endnotes

[1] Immigration during 1990-2000 did not surpass the influx of immigrants received in 1910 (Jones-Correa, 2012).

[2] We use "voluntary" to describe two distinct periods of immigration history. Earlier immigration, "forced," was driven by slave trade; current immigration, "voluntary," is driven by the volition of the immigrant.

[3] Regional histories of colonization influence immigrants' English language facility.

[4] The term Latino(s) includes native- and non-native-born persons of Hispanic origins.

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