

# *Educational Attainments of Immigrant Offspring: Success or Segmented Assimilation?*<sup>1</sup>

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In this article, I study the educational attainments of the adult offspring of immigrants, analyzing data from the 1996 panel of the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID). Fielded annually since 1993 by Statistics Canada, respondents are asked for the first time in 1996 to report the birthplaces of their parents, making it possible to define and study not only the foreign-born population (the first generation), but also the second generation (Canadian born to foreign-born parents) and the third-plus generation (Canadian born to Canadian-born parents). The survey also asked respondents to indicate if they are members of a visible minority group, thus permitting a limited assessment of whether or not color conditions educational achievements of immigrant offspring. I find that “1.5” and second generation adults, age 20–64 have more years of schooling and higher percentages completing high school compared with the third-plus generation. Contrary to the segmented “underclass” assimilation model found in the United States, adult visible minority immigrant offspring in Canada exceed the educational attainments of other not-visible-minority groups. Although the analysis is hampered by small sample numbers, the results point to country differences in historical and contemporary race relations, and call for additional national and cross-national research.

Nearly 100 years ago, North American scholars, policy makers and the lay public were mindful of the numbers and consequences associated with the great migrations from Europe. Today, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, renewed interest exists, stimulated both by the large volume of immigration today and the changing source countries from which migrants now come. The result has been an outpouring of research on immigration flows, policy, and immigrant integration. Although attention is mostly given to foreign-born migrants, scholars also have recently renewed their interest in

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the experiences of the offspring of foreign-born parents. This focus acknowledges that the time span of immigrant integration and/or assimilation extends beyond that of the first generation of migrants.

American integration models suggest three possible outcomes for immigrant offspring. The straight line or "linear" assimilation model implies that usually after two to three generations in the host society, the descendants of immigrants are virtually indistinguishable from the rest of society in their behaviors and socioeconomic characteristics (Gans, 1992:174; 1997). In the second model, some groups will experience inter-generational socioeconomic improvements, but such improvements will be accompanied by deliberate preservation of ethnic membership and values and with continued economic attachment to ethnic communities. Immigrant offspring most likely to display this pattern of segmented assimilation are members of immigrant groups that have well-developed ethnic economies such as the Chinese or Cuban origin groups (Portes, 1995; Portes and Zhou, 1993; *see also* Waters, 1994, 1997). The third model implies socioeconomic disadvantages, particularly for groups that are visibly distinctive from the (white) majority and where parental and community-based resources are low. Caribbean youths – whose ethnicity is synonymous with skin color – are examples of this type of segmented, or truncated, assimilation (Portes, 1995; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997a, 1997b).

Recent investigations associated with these new theoretical revisions have three characteristics: 1) they study groups in the United States; 2) the focus is primarily on immigrant offspring still living at home; and 3) the research design is an in-depth study of selected ethnic or racial groups (*see* studies in *International Migration Review*, 1994, 1997; Waters, 1994, 1997; Zhou and Bankston, 1994, 1998). Although such studies are exceptionally innovative and have both revitalized and redirected research on the second generation, they are not without critics. Boyd (2000) suggests that the third model of marginalization rests on the unique history of race relations in the United States, and may not hold elsewhere (*see also* Boyd and Grieco, 1998; Reitz, 1998). Alba and Nee (1997) note that childhood circumstances for young immigrant offspring are not necessarily identical to, or predictive of, experiences in adulthood. Such observations point to the need for additional studies that extend the U.S. focus to other countries and that assess the socioeconomic situations of the second generation in adulthood.

This article undertakes these tasks by investigating the educational attainments of the second generation population age 20–64 in Canada.

Analysis of a 1996 survey show that “1.5” and second generation adults, age 20–64 have more years of schooling and higher percentages completing high school compared with the third-plus generation. Contrary to the “second-generation decline” thesis or the segmented “underclass” assimilation model found in the United States, adult immigrant offspring in Canada who are “people of color” (visible minorities) exceed the educational attainments of other not-visible-minority groups. Although the analysis is hampered by small sample numbers, the results are consistent with country differences in historical and contemporary race relations.

### *INTEGRATING IMMIGRANT OFFSPRING: DOES COUNTRY CONTEXT MATTER?*

In the United States, renewed interest in the fortunes of immigrant offspring coincides with revisions to existing theoretical models. The orthodox “linear” or “straight-line” scenario, firmly embedded in the “classical” model of acculturation and assimilation, was articulated first by academics headquartered at the University of Chicago during the early 1900s and subsequently embellished by successive generations of American scholars (*see* Alba and Nee, 1997; Driedger, 1996:23–37; Gans, 1992). According to this approach, with increasing length of time spent by immigrants in the host society, or with each generation further removed from foreign-born predecessors, the behaviors and socioeconomic characteristics of “newcomer” groups would become similar to those of the American born. One variant of this approach suggests that the children of American-born parents (the third-plus generation) would out-perform the American-born offspring of foreign-born parents (the second generation) who in turn would out-perform the foreign born (the first generation).

By the 1990s this script had been rewritten, infused by new empirically and theoretically relevant insights. Empirically, the ethnic and racial characteristics of immigrants altered as a consequence of new immigration policies.<sup>2</sup> Starting in the 1960s, barriers to migration from non-European areas

<sup>2</sup>Other empirical-based motivators for new assimilation models derived from the neglect by straight-line or linear model of factors that alter the context within which the assimilation of immigrant offspring occurred. These factors included shifts from an industrial to a service-based economy; economic booms and busts; changing residential patterns in the context of post-World War II metropolitan growth and suburbanization; and the cessation of immigration flows between World War I and II (Alba and Nee, 1997; Gans, 1992; Massey, 1995; Zhou, 1997a, 1997b).

were dismantled though new immigration acts and legislative changes in both the United States and in Canada. In the United States, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (effective in 1967) abolished the national origins quota system which had severely restricted non-European permanent migration. Canada modified immigration regulations in 1962 and in 1967, and formally included the changes in the Immigration Act of 1976, which legally went into effect in 1978. These regulatory and legislative changes removed national origins as the basis of admissions, substituting family ties, humanitarian concerns, and economic contributions as criteria of admissibility (Boyd, 1976; Hawkins, 1988)

Coupled with improved post-war economies in Europe, increasing economic and cultural globalization, and geopolitical events that included the disengagement of the United States from Vietnam, one consequence of new North American regulations and acts was a shift in the source countries of immigrants. By the 1980s and 1990s, immigrants to the United States primarily came from Mexico and Latin America, including the Caribbean basin, and Asia (Zlotnik, 1996:Table 1). Reflecting the absence of a contiguous border with a less developed region and greater physical distance from such an area, Canada did not receive large numbers of Mexican migrants but instead experienced substantial immigration from Asia and to a lesser extent from Caribbean countries (Boyd and Vickers, 2000).

The imprint of changing flows for Canada is easily seen with the 1996 census data in Table 1. Among those immigrants admitted prior to 1961, 95 percent were born in the United States or in European countries. These percentages steadily declined with each decade, such that after 1990 only one in five persons (21.5 percent) admitted and resident in 1996 came from the United States or Europe. Whereas immigrants born in Asia represented less than 5 percent of those admitted prior to 1961, they were over half of all those entering Canada after 1990. Altogether, close to 80 percent of those who arrived after 1990 and were enumerated in the May 1996 census were from countries outside Europe and the United States.

The color composition of the immigrant population also changed. Prior to regulation changes in the early 1960s, it was extremely difficult for persons from non-European countries to enter Canada. Preference was given to immigrants from the United States and Europe, and annual quotas ranging from 50 to 300 existed for India, Japan, and China (*see* Boyd and Vickers, 2000; Henry *et al.*, 2000; Kelley and Trebilcock, 1998). Not surprisingly, less than three percent of the 1996 immigrant stock who entered Canada

**TABLE 1**  
**REGION OF BIRTHPLACE AND VISIBLE MINORITY STATUS, BY PERIOD OF IMMIGRATION, CANADA, 1996**

	Total	<1961	1961-70	1971-80	1981-90	1991-96
Column Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
United States, U.K., Europe	51.7	94.8	75.2	43.0	29.6	21.5
United States	4.9	4.1	6.5	7.3	4.5	2.8
Europe, incl. U.K	46.8	90.7	68.7	35.8	25.1	18.7
All Other Areas	48.3	5.2	24.8	57.0	70.4	78.5
Asia	31.6	3.0	12.3	32.9	47.3	57.5
Africa	4.5	0.6	3.4	5.6	5.6	7.1
Latin America & Carriibbean	11.2	1.3	8.1	16.8	16.5	12.7
All Other Areas	1.0	0.3	1.1	1.6	1.0	1.1
Member of a Visible						
Minority Group	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No	56.0	97.1	80.4	48.3	34.6	25.6
Yes	44.0	2.9	19.6	51.7	65.4	74.4

Source: Statistics Canada. Public Use Micro-Data File, Individual Sample.

before 1960 were persons of color (visible minorities). This jumped to over half of those entering Canada during the 1970s, reflecting the regulation changes of the 1960s and the new Immigration Act of 1976 (*see* Table 1). The pendulum swing continued throughout the remainder of the century. Of those who entered Canada after 1990 and were enumerated in the 1996 census, three quarters were members of visible minorities. This latter term, "visible minority," denotes groups that are distinctive by virtue of their race, color or "visibility" and it includes ten subgroups: Black, South Asian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, South East Asian, Filipino, Other Pacific Islanders, West Asian and Arab, and Latin American. It is a socially constructed term, developed by the federal government to meet data needs of federal employment equity legislation and program requirements during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

Country of origin shifts and the altered racial and ethnic composition of immigration flows stimulated a rethinking of the orthodox model of assimilation, which had largely ignored long term impediments arising from race and ethnicity. American scholars noted the possibility of "second-generation decline" (Gans, 1992) or "second-generation revolt" (Perlmann and Waldinger, 1997) in which immigrant offspring would have lower achievements than their parents or the third generation. In a separate but related ini-

<sup>3</sup>Why the term "visible minority" was constructed to depict color differentials invites speculation. Part of the answer may lie in the studied avoidance of the term "race" by Canadian governments since World War II (*see* Boyd, Goldman and White, 2000; Wargon, 2000). In the 1996 census questionnaire, data on the visible minority groups were collected by a question that asked "Is this person. . ." and provided categories of "white" along with the designated visible minority groups. No mention was made of "race."

tiative, Portes and others advanced two models of segmented assimilation. These models build on the U.S. experience, highlighting how race and ethnicity intersects with parental and community based resources to shape the experiences of immigrant offspring (Portes, 1995; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Zhou and Bankston, 1998). One model of segmented assimilation posits economic advancement for the second generation but with deliberate preservation of ethnic membership and values and with continued economic attachment to ethnic communities. The second model depicts immigrant offspring who are racialized on the basis of their origins and color, as acculturated into a primarily black inner city underclass. In contradiction to the imagery of attaining the American dream, the assimilation of immigrant youth into an inner-city, largely black, underclass with its implied low school attainments and downward mobility conveys a highly problematic outcome.

Left relatively unexplored, however, is the applicability of these segmented assimilation models to other countries and the conditions under which immigrant offspring in other societies might follow the models of ethnic incorporation or underclass assimilation. At least three factors appear necessary for the segmented model of socioeconomic success but continued ethnic group attachment: 1) high volume of migration from a given area; 2) sustained flows of large numbers over time; and 3) residential concentration. Even here, two caveats must be noted. First, this model assumes a relatively low level of institutional barriers to participation in core societal institutions such as education and the economy. Second, the strong version of the model assumes the existence of an ethnic economy that is large enough to absorb successive generations of offspring. In their critique of the ethnic enclave concept, Alba and Nee (1997) suggest that ethnic economies have not been large enough to offer much employment for subsequent generations. They note that most immigrants and their offspring work in the "open" or non-ethnic American economy.

The segmented assimilation model that emphasizes downward mobility into an underclass assumes low levels of parental and community resources. It also assumes a highly racialized population (Miles, 1989) with structural barriers curbing the life chances of groups differentiated from the majority on the basis of phenotypical characteristics. In the United States, the history and political economy of colonial and post-colonial settlement fostered a process of racialization in which immigrant arrivals were defined as members of the white or non-white and black groups. These distinctions were integral components of key institutions ranging from the polity (the right to vote and Jim

Crow), to education (racially segregated) and housing, as well as to the economy (no blacks need apply) (Omi and Winant, 1994; Small, 1994, 1998).

As a result, a large “involuntary minority” population of blacks is a key feature of contemporary American society. Defined as people who were brought into their present society through slavery, conquest or colonization, involuntary minorities after arrival may develop their own oppositional cultural frames of reference and identity, including an anti-academic-success orientation and peer pressure not to use education as route to socioeconomic success (Gibson, 1991; Ogbu, 1991). Clearly, this depiction is an over-simplification of the experiences and identities of black Americans. However, along with existence of structural barriers, the segmented assimilation model of underclass assimilation in the United States also demands the existence of a large involuntary minority population, characterized by an oppositional culture and identity, living in close propinquity to recently arrived immigrant minorities.

Given these assumptions for segmented assimilation into the underclass, I argue that the “underclass” scenario for immigrant offspring is less likely to be observed in Canada for two reasons. First the historical context that fueled the development of institutional barriers differs in degree from that of the United States. To be sure, racialization and discrimination along color lines existed throughout Canada’s history and continues into the present day (Henry *et al.*, 1998; Kelley and Trebilcock, 1998; Li, 1999; Satzewich, 1998). However, slavery was outlawed in Britain and in the dominions in 1834. Canada did not experience a war of succession over slavery. In all, the particular configuration of forces shaping race relations in the United States – reliance on slavery to maintain the plantation economy, a civil war rooted in a pervasive and pernicious system of black exploitation, and subsequent actions by the white majority to maintain power over blacks in the South – were not replicated to the same extent in Canada.<sup>4</sup>

Second, and equally important, Canada’s black population was small in contrast to a larger American black population and it never dominated a geographical area. Notwithstanding the formation of a black community in Nova

<sup>4</sup>A large number of studies have documented the existence of prejudicial beliefs and attitudes in Canada (Berry and Kalin, 2000; Driedger and Reid, 2000). However, almost none compare the degree of prejudicial attitudes held by Canadians with those observed in the United States. In a rare study that compares different surveys in both countries, Reitz and Breton (1994) suggest that country differences in prejudicial attitudes, social distance and in acceptance of intermarriage are not large although they concede that on some dimensions Canadians may be more accepting of diversity than Americans.

Scotia in the aftermath of the American Revolution, numbers were more dispersed across Canada in comparison to the heavy concentration of the American black population in the South. Further, the Canadian black population is internally diverse in history, origins, and arrival dates. In addition to those arriving after the American Revolution, United States blacks also came in the 1800s while other black peoples have immigrated primarily since World War II from the Caribbean, Latin America and, to a much lesser extent, from Africa. The resulting small and heterogeneous black population casts doubt on the black population in Canada acting as a reference group for segmented assimilation. Other possible groups also are not large in size, suggesting that Canada currently lacks a readily identifiable racial group that acts as a reference group for the segmented assimilation of immigrant offspring (Boyd, 2000).

Taken together, the Canadian absence of the major fault line associated with the American experience with race and the lack of a clearly discernible underclass reference group implies that an anti-school stance and downward mobility depicted in the second segmented assimilation model will not be observed in Canada. Alternative scenarios may be more likely. In their analysis of men and women age 25–64, Boyd and Grieco (1998) find that educational and socioeconomic attainments of the second generation are equal to or exceed those of the first and third generations. These findings support the “straight line” assimilation model as well as a “success orientation” model (Boyd and Grieco, 1998). This latter model, also labeled “the immigrant optimism hypothesis” (Kao and Tienda, 1995) stresses the relative over-achievements of the second generation. Such over-achievements are attributed to the success orientation of the foreign-born family of origin which communicates high aspirations and expectations to its offspring.

Informed largely by the U.S. context, models of “second-generation decline” and segmented “underclass” assimilation hold for certain ethnic and racial groups and not for others. The 1994 survey analyzed by Boyd and Grieco (1998) lacked both the sample numbers and the racial and detailed birthplace data need to study the experiences of specific immigrant offspring groups. As a result, Boyd and Grieco could not determine if the more negative outcomes observed in the United States held in Canada. In the analysis that follows, I return to this issue, arguing that an anti-school stance and downward mobility depicted in the second segmented assimilation model will not be observed in Canada. I use data from a 1996 Canadian survey, separating generation groups into visible minorities (persons of color) and the remainder of the population, hereafter referred to as “not-visible-minorities.”



## *DATA AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES*

In Canada, as in the United States, research on the second generation is handicapped by the failure of censuses to ask questions on birthplace of parents. The last Canadian census to do so was conducted in 1971. As a result, analysts rely on specific case studies or on smaller surveys. Data analyzed in this paper are from the second panel of the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), fielded in 1996 by Statistics Canada. This national survey is a household survey, with the sample drawn from that of the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the latter being the main source of monthly employment data and comparable to the U.S. Current Population survey. The analysis reported below uses the master database available at Statistics Canada.

Respondents to SLID were asked to indicate if they belonged to one of the ten visible minority groups specified in federal government programs. Unlike the first (1993) panel of SLID, the second 1996 panel of SLID also asked respondents to indicate if parents were born in Canada or outside Canada. In comparison to previous 1994 General Social Survey of approximately 10,000 respondents (Boyd and Grieco, 1998), the second panel of SLID is considerably bigger, including approximately 30,000 adults age 16 and older. Even so, sample numbers are not large, particularly when multiple generation groups are considered. Numbers become even more attenuated when generation categories are separated into visible minority groups or further refined by any other variable of interest such as sex. Small sample numbers for major categories of interest are problematic in analyses for at least two reasons. First, small sample numbers raise the possibility that respondents in any given category are not representative of the underlying population they represent. Second, because of such fluctuation, statistical results are often insignificant.

The numbers problems have two research design consequences. First, careful inspection of sample numbers reveals that the analysis would not be supported for sub-populations defined by cross-tabulating specific visible minority groups with gender and with generation status.<sup>5</sup> The resolution for

<sup>5</sup>Blacks and Chinese were the two major groups of visible minorities found in panel 2 of the 1996 SLID survey, with the remainder consisting of the other eight designated groups or those with multiple visible minority members. Although these percentages rest on very small sample numbers, black visible minorities were 32, 16, 20 and 14 percent of the respective third-plus, second, 1.5 and other foreign-born generation groups. Chinese visible minorities were 14, 32, 31 and 28 percent of the respective third-plus, second, 1.5 and other foreign-born generation groups.

this dilemma was to create eight groups of interest, consisting of four generation groups each for those respondents who indicated visible minority status and for those who were not members of a visible minority. The four generation groups consisted of: 1) the third-plus generation, consisting of respondents who were born in Canada and had Canadian-born parents; 2) the second generation, consisting of respondents who were born in Canada and who had one or more parents born in Canada; 3) the 1.5 generation, comprising respondents who were foreign born but who immigrated to Canada before age 15; and 4) the remainder of the foreign born, consisting of those who were foreign born but immigrated at age 15 or later.

Second, the problem of small numbers affects the selection of the outcome variable used to depict the experience of immigrant offspring. Attenuated sample numbers become even more severe when respondents fail to give information on variables usually included in multivariate analysis. This is particularly true when the dependent variable is the occupational status or employment earnings of the eight generation groups, partly because not all respondents in SLID are in the labor force and partly because even those in the labor force do not always provide information on relevant labor market characteristics. Selecting educational attainment as indicating immigrant offspring success or decline resolves this dilemma. Empirically, educational attainment permits included respondents who were not in the labor force, thereby keeping the sub-population sample numbers as large as possible. Conceptually, educational attainment also taps directly into the second-generation decline and segmented assimilation models, both of which emphasize rejection of education-based mobility by racialized immigrant offspring.

Numerous American studies exist on the educational performance of the 1.5 and second generation youth, in part because few national surveys contain data on adult immigrant offspring (*but see* Farley, 1999) and in part because the educational needs of immigrant children are highly visible locally and constitute a major policy challenge in the educational field (Board on Children and Families, 1995; Dentler and Hafner, 1997; Gibson, 1991; Glick and White, 2000; McDonnell and Hill, 1993; Portes and MacLeod, 1996, 1999; Kao and Tienda, 1995; Rumbaut, 1997; Rumbaut and Cornelius, 1995; Stewart, 1993; Vernez, Abrahamse and Quigly, 1996; White and Glick, 2000). Mindful of the caveat that education in process may not be equivalent to final educational achievements (Alba and Nee, 1997), one advantage of the SLID survey is that it provides data on educational attainments of adults.

The population aged 20–64 is selected for analysis since younger respondents may not have completed high school and selective mortality could affect the educational patterns of elderly respondents. Even here, the underlying sample numbers are not large (Table 2). The distribution of visible minority and not-visible-minority groups across the four generation groups mirrors the pattern observed earlier with period of arrival using census data (Table 2, panel 1). Nearly three quarters of the not-visible-minority population in the 1996 SLID second panel are third generation compared to less than five percent for the visible minority population (Table 2, panel 1).<sup>6</sup> Fewer than 70 actual cases exist for the third generation visible minority population in the multivariate analyses, and although the results are presented for comparative purposes, the potential for non-representativeness should be kept in mind.

### *A MAPLE LEAF IS READ ALL OVER*

Several different educational measures and a multivariate analysis offer no support for the “second-generation decline” argument that the 1.5 or second generation will have lower educational attainments than the first or third-plus generations. The measures and analysis also are not consistent with the patterns expected from a segmented-underclass model. Indeed, the findings are closer to the “success” or “immigrant optimism model” in which the achievements of the 1.5 and second generation exceed those of their parents and the third-plus generation. Educational attainments of visible minority immigrant offspring are the highest of all generation groups, and exceed those of their not-visible-minority counterparts.

These conclusions rest on the following educational measures: highest educational level attained; receipt or nonreceipt of a high school diploma or certificate; and average years of education (Table 2). In all these measures, the 1.5 and second generations have higher attainments than do the first and third-plus generations. In contrast to the “downward mobility” motif, visible minority immigrant offspring display the highest educational attainments (Table 2, panel 2, columns 3 and 4).

Part of the explanation for the visible minority “success” may be the propensity to remain in school into the university years. On average, this group is young, and the percentage who have been students during the past

<sup>6</sup>The distributions and summary statistics that are presented in Tables 2–4 are based on weighted data. Logistic and OLS regression estimates in Tables 4 and 5 are calculated from data that is first weighted to approximate population estimates and then downweighted so that statistical tests of significance reflect the approximate sample size.

TABLE 2  
 DEMOGRAPHIC AND EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CANADIAN POPULATION, AGE 20-64 BY VISIBLE  
 MINORITY STATUS, AND GENERATIONAL STATUS

	Visible Minority				Not Visible Minority			
	Total	Third Gen.	Second Gen.	Immig. < age 15	Third Gen.	Second Gen.	Immig. < age 15	First Generation Immig. age 15+
PANEL ONE: Demographic Characteristics								
Total Population, 20-64								
Sample N	24,189	85	134	151	865	16,644	2,824	687
Population	16,550,900	69,700	149,100	212,100	1,270,700	10,758,100	2,320,300	622,700
Total Population, 20-64 in Analysis <sup>a</sup>								
Sample N	19,742	65	118	127	722	14,763	2,366	583
Population	14,461,000	53,700	131,600	173,600	1,070,400	9,526,500	1,958,300	529,300
Percent Total	100.0	0.4	0.9	1.2	7.4	65.9	13.5	3.7
Percent Vis. Minority	100.0	3.8	9.2	12.1	74.9	(na) <sup>b</sup>	15.0	4.1
Percent Other	100.0	(na) <sup>b</sup>	(na) <sup>b</sup>	(na) <sup>b</sup>	(na) <sup>b</sup>	73.1	100.0	(na) <sup>b</sup>
Sex								
Females	50.9	58.7	46.7	42.8	54.9	50.4	51.7	46.8
Males	49.1	41.3	53.3	57.2	45.1	49.6	48.3	53.2
Average Age	39.7	36.2	29.1	28.4	40.2	39.2	39.4	38.6
PANEL TWO: Respondent's Education								
Level of Education	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
< Grade 9	8.4	2.4	0.3	2.8	13.0	8.1	4.1	5.0
H.S., no degree	11.9	20.3	4.0	1.3	10.6	12.9	10.9	9.7
H.S., degree	32.6	39.0	46.9	37.5	31.6	33.0	33.1	33.6
Post-secondary	28.6	21.9	24.6	33.0	22.6	29.4	29.8	25.3
Univ. and higher	18.5	16.6	24.1	25.5	22.2	16.6	22.2	23.4
H.S. Diploma, Certificate	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No	20.3	22.6	4.4	4.1	23.6	21.0	14.9	14.7
Yes	79.7	77.4	95.6	95.9	76.4	79.0	85.1	85.3
Student Status	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Yes	14.3	18.6	44.8	42.5	15.5	13.6	16.8	14.1
No	85.7	81.4	55.2	57.5	84.5	86.4	83.2	85.9
Average Years of Education	13.3	13.1	14.8	14.9	12.8	13.2	14.0	13.8
Age Standardized	(rg) <sup>c</sup>	13.0	14.2	15.4	14.8	14.7	15.4	15.7
Difference		-0.2	-0.7	0.4	2.0	1.4	1.4	1.9

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), panel 2.

Notes: <sup>a</sup>Listwise population in Table 4.

<sup>b</sup>(na) Not applicable.

<sup>c</sup>(rg) Reference group. Age distribution of the entire population used to standardized for age, using the direct age standardization technique (Shryock and Siegel, 1971: 289-290).

12 months is high.<sup>7</sup> However, the pattern remains even after age differences are taken into account through standardization techniques (the one exception is that there is virtually no difference between the 1.5 generation and the remainder of the foreign born not-visible-minority population). An equal, if not more plausible, explanation is that visible minority immigrant offspring are likely to have parents who are themselves well educated, and thus influence the attainments of their offspring (Table 3). Such influence occurs because parents communicate their academic expectations to offspring and/or have resources that facilitate higher educational attainments of the 1.5 and second generation groups. The transmission of educational attainment across generations is well documented in both the general social stratification literature and in specific studies of the educational achievement of school-age children, differentiated by ethnic status and race (*see* Fejgin, 1995; Portes and MacLeod, 1996). It also is supported by SLID data which show that by any measure – educational levels, the percentages having a high school diploma or certificate, or years of schooling – parents of the visible minority 1.5 or second generations have the highest attainments of all parents (Table 3, columns 3 and 4).

### *SUSTAINED ACHIEVEMENTS*

To what extent do higher educational attainments of visible minority offspring in Canada simply reflect the higher education of their parents? This question is answered with two multivariate analyses which include parental levels of education along with demographic controls for age and sex composition differences among generation groups. Despite their extensive use in models of occupational status or earnings, province or city of residence are not included as control variables. When using census data or labor force surveys, analysts assume a close temporal correspondence between occupations, earnings and current residence. However, because geographical movement often occurs after the completion of schooling and throughout the life cycle, there is no necessary correspondence between where education was received and the current place of residence for many older adults included in this

<sup>7</sup>The question on attending school is a general one and could include short sessions. However, the overall pattern of school attendance reaffirms the need for caution when examining occupational or earnings differentials for generation groups and visible minority status using the SLID data. If they are in school and employed part-year or part-time, visible minority immigrant offspring may have lower earnings relative to other generation and not-visible-minority groups.

**TABLE 3**  
**PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS FOR THE CANADIAN POPULATION, AGE 20-64 BY VISIBLE**  
**MINORITY STATUS, AND GENERATIONAL STATUS**

	Visible Minority				Not Visible Minority				
	Total	First Generation			Third Gen.	First Generation			Immig. age 15+
		Second Gen.	Immig. < age 15	Immig. age 15+		Second Gen.	Immig. < age 15	Immig. age 15+	
<b>FATHER'S EDUCATION</b>									
Level of Education	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
< Grade 9	44.2	38.6	24.6	26.9	53.5	44.1	41.2	43.4	48.0
H.S., no degree	19.6	18.9	20.7	12.2	10.0	21.8	18.8	15.2	13.5
H.S., degree	19.8	24.3	19.7	25.3	19.8	19.9	20.0	16.5	19.3
Post-secondary	7.2	9.1	9.9	8.6	4.6	6.8	9.2	10.8	6.9
Univ. and higher	9.2	9.2	25.2	27.0	12.1	7.4	10.8	14.0	12.2
H.S. Diploma, Certificate	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No	63.8	57.4	45.3	39.0	63.5	65.9	60.0	58.7	61.6
Yes	36.2	42.6	54.7	61.0	36.5	34.1	40.0	41.3	38.4
Average Years Education	10.1	10.5	12.1	12.1	9.8	9.9	10.4	10.5	10.2
Age Standardized (rg) <sup>a</sup>		10.9	11.7	12.6	12.3	12.2	12.5	12.8	13.7
<b>MOTHER'S EDUCATION</b>									
Level of Education	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
< Grade 9	41.6	24.6	31.8	28.5	65.8	38.8	39.1	43.8	50.8
H.S., no degree	19.9	31.1	8.9	17.3	7.7	22.4	19.0	15.3	14.2
H.S., degree	24.2	30.8	31.1	22.3	16.4	24.6	26.2	22.6	23.9
Post-secondary	9.4	9.6	18.6	17.0	4.7	10.0	9.8	9.8	5.4
Univ. and higher	5.0	3.9	9.6	14.9	5.5	4.1	6.0	8.5	5.6
H.S. Diploma, Certificate									
No	61.5	55.7	40.7	45.8	73.5	61.2	58.1	59.0	65.0
Yes	38.5	44.3	59.3	54.2	26.5	38.8	41.9	41.0	35.0
Average Years Education	10.0	10.8	11.2	11.4	8.7	10.1	10.3	10.2	9.6
Age Standardized (rg) <sup>a</sup>		10.5	10.6	10.8	9.6	9.6	9.8	9.8	10.2

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), panel 2.  
 Note: <sup>a</sup>(rg) Reference group. Age distribution of the entire population used to standardized for age, using the direct age standardization technique (Shryock and Siegel, 1971: 289-290).

analysis. Indeed, controlling for age may be a better indirect measure of where schooling is completed simply because place of residence and place of schooling are the most likely to be the same for those who are still in school or young.

The dependent variable in the first model is attaining a high school degree or higher. This variable was selected for two reasons. First, much of the American research that focuses on immigrant youth emphasizes the importance of high school completion in post-industrial economies that emphasize credentials. Second, because the lower age limit of the population under analysis was age 20, some respondents were still in the process of completing their post-secondary education. This was particularly true for visible minority 1.5 and second generation offspring, who were young and more likely to be still attending school (Table 1, panel 2). This censoring affected multivariate analyses of university degree receipt.

Logistic regression analysis confirms the importance of parental educational achievements for attaining a high school degree and beyond. Three other conclusions exist with respect to the educational attainments of the generation groups. First, the odds of attaining a high school degree or higher are below that of the general population for persons who immigrated at age 15 or later. This is true for both the visible and not-visible-minority foreign born. Many possible explanations exist for these lower educational achievements, such as a decline in the quality of immigrants as a result of family based immigration and refugee flows. None can be tested with the data at hand.

Second, and most importantly for this study, even after the effects of parental education are taken into account, the educational achievements of visible minority immigrant offspring remain ahead of other groups. The first eight rows of figures in Table 4 indicate that the odds of attaining at least a high school degree were almost three times higher for the 1.5 and second generation visible minorities compared to the entire population age 20–64 (Table 4, column 2). In contrast, the log odds of at least a high school degree or certificate are not significantly different from the overall average for the not-visible-minority immigrant youth (Table 4, column 1), and by implication neither are the odds.

Reflecting Canada's colonization history and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century migration from the British Isles and Ireland, the third-plus not-visible-minority generation primarily consists of Canada's two charter groups: the French and the "British," and it is the largest of all generation

**TABLE 4**  
**LOGITS AND ODDS RATIOS FOR ATTAINING A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE OR HIGHER,**  
**BY GENERATION AND VISIBLE MINORITY STATUS, POPULATION AGE 20-64, CANADA, 1996**

	Logits <sup>a</sup>	Odds Ratio Relative to:	
		Overall Population	3rd Gen., Not Vis. Minority
<b>Generation</b>			
<b>Member, Visible Minority Group</b>			
3rd+ Generation	-0.809 <sup>c</sup>	0.4	0.7
2nd Generation	1.064 <sup>c</sup>	2.9	4.5
F.B., Immigrated Age <15	1.023 <sup>d</sup>	2.8	4.3
F.B., Immigrated Age 15+	-0.373 <sup>d</sup>	0.7	1.1
<b>Not Visible Minority</b>			
3rd+ Generation	-0.445 <sup>d</sup>	0.6	(rg)
2nd Generation	0.071 ns	1.1	1.7
F.B., Immigrated Age <15	-0.020 ns	1.0	1.5
F.B., Immigrated Age 15+	-0.512 <sup>d</sup>	0.6	0.9
<b>Sex</b>			
Females	0.079 <sup>d</sup>	1.1	
Males	-0.079 <sup>d</sup>	0.9	
<b>Age group</b>			
20-24	0.042 ns	1.0	
25-34	0.334 <sup>d</sup>	1.4	
35-44	0.383 <sup>d</sup>	1.5	
45-54	0.061 ns	1.1	
55-64	-0.820 <sup>d</sup>	0.4	
<b>Father's Education</b>			
< Grade 9	-1.229 <sup>d</sup>	0.3	
H.S., no degree	-0.534 <sup>d</sup>	0.6	
H.S., degree	-0.199 <sup>b</sup>	0.8	
Post-secondary	0.118 ns	1.1	
University	0.446 <sup>c</sup>	1.6	
Beyond B.A.	1.398 <sup>d</sup>	4.0	
<b>Mother's Education</b>			
< Grade 9	-1.311 <sup>d</sup>	0.3	
H.S., no degree	-0.757 <sup>d</sup>	0.5	
H.S., degree	-0.165 ns	0.8	
Post-secondary	0.116 ns	1.1	
University	0.213 ns	1.2	
Beyond B.A.	1.903 <sup>b</sup>	6.7	
Constant	3.339 <sup>d</sup>		

Source: Statistics Canada. 1996 Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, Panel 2.

Notes: <sup>a</sup>Deviation coding

<sup>b</sup>p<.05

<sup>c</sup>p<.01

<sup>d</sup>p<.001

groups, accounting for nearly two thirds of the population under analysis (Table 1, panel 1). If this generation group is taken as the reference group, a third conclusion is that the odds of attaining a high school degree or more are greater for all 1.5 and second generation groups, regardless of color. However, the "success" story of those who are visible minorities continues. Compared to the not-visible-minority third-plus generation, the odds of attaining



at least a high school certificate or degree are over 4 times greater for the visible minority 1.5 and second generations.

The second multivariate analysis uses ordinary least squares regression to assess the effects of visible minority status and generational status on years of education, net of other factors. The regression model repeats the variables found in the logistic regression analysis and the second model adds whether or not respondents attended school, either full time or part time, during the preceding 12 months. In the regressions, the third-plus not-visible-minority population is the reference group. The results for immigrant offspring are remarkably consistent with those observed for receipt of at least a high school degree or certificate. Compared to the years of education for third-plus not-visible-minority generation, educational attainments are significantly greater for the 1.5 and second generation (Table 5). Relative to the reference group, immigrant offspring who are members of visible minority groups have close to a year more of schooling, net of age, sex, and parental education. The gap drops somewhat when being a student is factored in, simply because being a student is associated with higher education and thus more years of education.

Transforming regression coefficients into deviations from the overall average years of schooling for the entire population age 20–64 also highlights the higher educational achievements of visible minority immigrant offspring. Again, the findings are consistent with previous conclusions. When compared to the overall average of 13.3 years of education for persons age 20–64, 1.5 and second generation visible minorities have more education. Compared to other groups, their average years of education (obtained by adding the deviations to the mean of 13.3) also are higher.

## *CONCLUSIONS*

Contrary to the “second generation decline” and segmented “underclass” assimilation models found in the United States, adult visible minority immigrant offspring in Canada do not have lower educational attainments than their parents or their not-visible-minority counterparts. In fact, the 1.5 and second generations who are visible minorities exceed the educational attainments of other not-visible-minority groups. How are these results to be understood, and what are the implications for future studies of the second generation in post-industrial economies? Three possible answers exist. First, the failure to find evidence consistent with “second generation decline” or “segmented assimilation” returns us to the earlier argument that the history of race relations in Canada differs from that in the United States, and that a

**TABLE 5**  
**REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS FOR YEARS OF EDUCATION, FOR POPULATION AGE**  
**20-64, BY GENERATION AND VISIBLE MINORITY STATUS, CANADA, 1996**

Variable	OLS Regression b's		Deviations from Grand Mean of 13.31	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Generation and Visible Minority				
Visible Minority				
Third Plus	-0.370 ns	-0.430 ns	-0.48	-0.52
Second	1.090 <sup>c</sup>	0.883 <sup>c</sup>	0.98	0.79
FB, Immig. <15	0.998 <sup>c</sup>	0.770 <sup>c</sup>	0.89	0.68
FB, Immig. 15+	-0.141 ns	-0.209 <sup>a</sup>	-0.25	-0.30
Not Visible Minority				
Not Vismin, 3rd	(rg)	(rg)	-0.11	-0.09
Not Vismin, 2nd	0.692 <sup>c</sup>	0.661 <sup>c</sup>	0.59	0.57
Not Vismin, 1.5 gen.	0.339 <sup>b</sup>	0.342 <sup>b</sup>	0.23	0.25
Not Vismin, Other FB	-0.146 ns	-0.123 ns	-0.25	-0.22
Age group				
20-24	-0.926 <sup>c</sup>	-1.641 <sup>c</sup>		
25-34	0.116 ns	-0.046 ns		
35-44	0.241 <sup>c</sup>	0.201 <sup>b</sup>		
45-54	(rg)	(rg)		
55-64	-1.519 <sup>c</sup>	-1.468 <sup>c</sup>		
Sex				
Male	(rg)	(rg)		
Female	-0.104 <sup>a</sup>	-0.123 <sup>b</sup>		
Father's Education				
< Grade 9	-1.910 <sup>c</sup>	-1.794 <sup>c</sup>		
H.S., no degree	-0.955 <sup>c</sup>	-0.878 <sup>c</sup>		
H.S., degree	-0.479 <sup>c</sup>	-0.397 <sup>c</sup>		
Post-second.	(rg)	(rg)		
University	0.555 <sup>c</sup>	0.507 <sup>c</sup>		
Beyond B.A.	1.281 <sup>c</sup>	1.239 <sup>c</sup>		
Mother's Education				
< Grade 9	-1.797 <sup>c</sup>	-1.746 <sup>c</sup>		
H.S., no degree	-1.025 <sup>c</sup>	-0.987 <sup>c</sup>		
H.S., degree	-0.473 <sup>c</sup>	-0.430 <sup>c</sup>		
Post-second.	(rg)	(rg)		
University	-0.014 ns	-0.107 ns		
Beyond B.A.	0.825 <sup>c</sup>	0.675 <sup>b</sup>		
Student				
No		(rg)		
Yes		1.656 <sup>c</sup>		
(Constant)	15.551 <sup>c</sup>	15.354 <sup>c</sup>		
Multiple R	0.44	0.47		
R Square	0.20	0.22		

Source: Statistics Canada. 1996 Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, Panel 2.

Notes: <sup>a</sup>p<.05  
<sup>b</sup>p<.01  
<sup>c</sup>p<.001

large and racially identifiable underclass is absent in Canada. Although this argument may have contemporary validity, it needs to be re-examined in future research. As discussed in Boyd (2000), the aboriginal population comes closest to the American black population in terms of historically rooted marginalization. Within the recent past, the size of this group in off-

reserve areas has not been enough to influence immigrant youth. However, off-reserve migration to cities is high in some areas of Canada as are fertility rates. Whether or not a sizable aboriginal youth population in urban areas will emerge over the next two decades and whether or not such youth will become an oppositional reference group for immigrant offspring are questions to be answered in future studies.

A second possible explanation rests on country differences in the demographics of immigration. Canada has a population approximately one tenth that of the United States, but a far higher proportion are foreign born (17% in 1996). In some cities, particularly Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, nearly one half of the population is foreign born, many having arrived after changes in immigration policies during the 1960s and 1970s. American scholars argue that heavy and unrelenting immigration flows throttle integration into mainstream American institutions (*see* Massey, 1995). However, one possibility is that sustained immigration into post-industrial societies can create and perpetuate a strong advocacy for educational attainment among the immigrants and their children. Rather than acting as a damper, large numbers of immigrants may create a critical mass supporting education and the role of the schools in the lives of their children. Since most recent immigrants are visible minorities, this could influence the educational outcomes of visible minority offspring.

Finally, findings in this article rest on aggregations of the educational attainments of diverse groups. It is possible that greater stratification, and even educational decline would be observed if information on specific racial groups was available. However, other Canadian studies have observed findings that are consistent with those found in this article. Most of these investigations focus on a limited number of groups (blacks or Chinese), and at most they employ a Canadian-born versus foreign-born distinction (*see* Davies and Guppy, 1998; Simmons and Plaza, 1998). The most comprehensive analysis to date is conducted by Guppy and Davies (1998). Using 1991 census data, they find that virtually all of the visible minority groups have high school graduation rates that are superior to other Canadians. Both foreign-born and Canadian-born blacks have graduation rates that exceed those of other Canadians. Similar patterns of educational over-achievements are reached with years of schooling and with data from a 1994 Statistics Canada survey. Davies and Guppy (1998) and Guppy and Davies (1998) suggest there is no evidence of blocked educational mobility for many visible minority groups in Canada.

Nevertheless, American research, which primarily focuses on adolescents and young adults, offers findings that suggest the desirability of focusing on specific ethnic and racial groups in future studies of immigrant offspring in Canada. For example, among Asian American students, researchers observe differences in the levels of performances by Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Japanese, South Asian, Southeast Asian students (Louie, 2001). In their study, Rong and Brown (2001) observe that the Caribbean second generation black youth share similar educational patterns of achievement with European white immigrant youth, whereas African youth show declining educational attainment with each generation. Although these studies emphasize the performances of students and/or youth in the school-to-work transition stages, the broad message is one which emphasizes the need for future investigations to focus on specific groups when examining the educational attainments of adult immigrant offspring.

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