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1. Introduction

    For most immigrant children and adolescents, school and other education settings are the major arenas for intergroup contact and acculturation. School adjustment can be seen as a primary task, and as a highly important outcome, of the cultural transition process. Schools represent and introduce the new culture to immigrant children. Within many immigrant communities, thus, the importance attributed to school adjustment is particularly high (Horenczyk & Ben-Shalom, 2001): Newcomers tend to see schools as welcome avenues to participation and mobility (Gibson, 1991). And indeed, many succeed in establishing a better life in their new societies than they had in their societies of origin. Nevertheless, for many of them, the process of acculturation is a painful one due to the loss of personal relationships and of the culturally known. Although they succeed in acquiring new competencies, many immigrants do not reach levels of social participation that they – and members of the national society – consider satisfactory. An abundance of studies shows that immigrant youth in the Western world insufficiently benefit from schools (Glenn & De Jong, 1996). Too many of these youth leave schools without the necessary certificates and qualifications (cf. Eldering & Kloprogge, 1989).
    This contribution aims at exploring possible explanations for both successful and unsuccessful schooling trajectories and in doing so it describes educational strategies that may benefit immigrant youth. The last three decades of scientific enquiry of school adjustment in multicultural societies have resulted in a proliferation of theoretical models (e.g., Cushner, 1998; Korn & Bursztyn, 2002; May, 1999; Troyna & Carrington, 1990; Hagendoorn & Nekuee, 1999). We will not present a review of these models, but instead opt for describing two broad theoretical approaches. After the presentation of these approaches we will focus on school adjustment in the multicultural society from two perspectives: the school system, and the broader acculturation context.

2. Two broad theoretical approaches

    The first approach describes immigrant youth's socialization in terms of a combination of enculturation and acculturation. From this perspective school is seen as a setting aiming at socializing students towards the national culture. The second perspective views school as a setting that functions as a representative of a predominantly global culture, not a national culture. The contrast is then between global and local cultures.

    2.1 Enculturation and acculturation
    Enculturation is the process of becoming skillful in using tools, learning behaviors, knowledge, and values that are part of the culture of the own group. It is a learning process that takes place in the context of a partly school bound process of intergenerational transmission of culture. Schools, however, likely support the enculturation process of majority children more than that of minority children (cf. Boekaerts, 1998). Curricula, assessment instruments, and instructional methods tend to reflect and focus on – the cultural and educational requirements of the majority society (Banks, 1994; Vedder, 1994). These instruments of schooling are rarely

adapted to the variety of students' cultural backgrounds. The distance between the school standards and children's socialization experiences is likely to be larger for immigrant children than for national children. Hence, for students with a cultural minority background, schools take less responsibility in terms of enculturation and tend to serve more acculturation functions. Acculturation refers to changes in the course of the development of a cultural group due to contact with other cultural groups. Acculturation at the individual level requires adaptation to behaviors, customs, values, and tasks that are typical of another cultural group – for the immigrant, these are those of the majority society. Both enculturation and acculturation are considered to be learning processes that are likely to facilitate future professional and social adaptation. But the challenge of simultaneous enculturation and acculturation which immigrant children face is very demanding. Both the enculturation and the acculturation trajectories can lead to disappointing outcomes. In the enculturation process they may fail in becoming sufficiently proficient in their own language and in acquiring culture specific skills, knowledge and attitudes which are deemed very important by their parents or by other group members. A failed acculturation in school will result in relatively poor academic achievements, in low levels of well being and eventually in dropout.

Enculturation and acculturation are not absolutely separate routes. The ease and success of the immigrant's learning process depends on a variety of factors like motivation, cognitive competences, support from parents, kin and other relatives, actual learning time, but also the distance between ones home culture and the national culture. This distance is determined by a myriad of cultural elements (Extra & Vallen, 1989; Mumford & Babiker, 1998), e.g., linguistic, educational, religious, economic and legal differences. Structural linguistic differences, for example, have to do with questions like: "Does English have the same sounds and sound combinations than for instance Turkish, and is the relationship between morphemes and graphemes comparable between these two languages?" Cultural differences also impinge on the actual opportunities for oral and written contacts between members of two ethnic groups. Such opportunities are important for second language acquisition (Bialystok, 2001). Many studies that examined differences in value orientations and interaction patterns between home and school or between immigrant and national families tend to attribute differences between children as regards school adjustment to the distance between immigrant and national cultures (Heath, 1983; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991; Zentella, 1997). Acculturation is assumed to proceed more smoothly when the difference between two cultures is smaller. If the differences are small earlier acquired skills and knowledge related to ones first culture may be useful in contexts typical of the other culture as well. Moreover, when the cultural distance is relatively short, opportunities for learning about the other culture or in settings representing the other culture will be more readily available or accessible to the immigrants and their families.

The first approach, thus, will usually predict that immigrant students will exhibit more school adjustment problems than national students. Support is found in many studies (Glenn & De Jong, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Vedder & Virta, submitted). At the same time it is not difficult to show that the rule does not hold for all countries and groups. In the case that immigrant students have successful school careers and even outperform national students, such students are likely to be referred to as "model minorities" (Lee, 2001; Ying, Lee, Tsai, Hung, Lin, & Wan, 2001). Motivation, support from home and actual learning time are used to explain their school adjustment. But still the primary contrast or comparison remains between nationals and immigrants or ethnic minorities.

2.2 The school as a global stage

The second approach is also concerned with cultural distance or cultural differences, but the primary focus is not on groups, but rather on settings. Within this broad framework, studies typically explore how students deal with task demands, norms and communication styles characteristic of the school and the home situation. An exemplary and frequently cited work is Phelan, Davidson, and Cao's (1991) study entitled "Students' multiple worlds: Negotiating the boundaries of family, peer, and school cultures." Findings show that students with a minority cultural background widely differ in the extent to which they are able to adapt to culture specific requirements for social participation within the family, in school, and with peers. Each setting requires different patterns of adaptation. Most students have no problems at all, but some show severe problems of adaptation and become isolated or marginalized at school.

This second approach draws together studies that show that many students are incapable to experience learning in school as learning for life outside school, as learning that is useful for knowing how to accomplish tasks that make sense (Resnick, 1987) and studies that show that schools all over the world are involved in a process of an increasing globalization of education (Plomp & Loxley, 1992; Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Vedder, 1994). Suarez-Orozco describes globalization as a process of change that transcends or supersedes national borders and is characterized by powers that detach important economic, social and cultural practices from the region or location in which they originated and originally were conducted. Financial capital, human resources and information are no longer bound to particular countries they can and actually move around. He also describes schools as an important power in this process and suggests that in adapting to this global institution immigrant children actually do have a head start. After all, they already experienced and learned about the importance of crossing borders in order to improve the availability and accessibility of resources that warrant a better future. This notion of immigrant children's head start has clearly found a lift in the repeatedly reported finding in studies in the USA as well as in Western Europe that immigrant students outperform national children even when their parents have a lower educational background (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Tesser & Iedema, 2001). This is seen as an indication that schools basically have an alienating effect to all students. Schools require acculturation from all students. Purves (1990) even suggested that all over the world education leads students away from their past and family. The strength of this second approach also lays in the possibility to use it for comparing a much broader range of groups than just immigrants versus nationals. For instance, it may be used as well to explain why subgroups of national youth do have a more positive school adjustment than other subgroups.

Most studies dealing with multicultural education can be categorized as representing one of these two approaches. Of course there are also studies drawing on both approaches. Although these studies contrast national and immigrant students they clarify that students have to cope with setting specific task requirements. Portes' (1995) study of segmented assimilation is an example as well as studies exemplifying a contextual approach to acculturation. The process of adaptation to a new society involves intricate communication transactions, in which immigrants try to make sense of what they expect and what is expected from them in new settings (Horenczyk, 1996; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). For example, students respond differently to particular school environments. Birman, Trickett, and Vinokurov (2000) examined the adaptation of Soviet Jewish refugee adolescents to a school in the U.S. characterized by strong assimilationist pressures. In this setting national identity predicted better grades, whereas in other settings adolescents' bicultural orientation and language competencies were more important.

3. The school system

Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni and Maynard (2003) contend that children – irrespective of their cultural background – face three major developmental tasks: establish, maintain and end social relationships; acquire new knowledge and skills; and achieve autonomy while maintaining social relationships (Greenfield et al., 2003). Along similar lines, it has been suggested that schools should strengthen three basic qualities or values: relatedness, competence, and autonomy (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). These qualities will allow students to experience a strong feeling of the availability of social support, which allows them to feel well and cope with both task demands and emotional stress (Boekaerts, 1992; 1998). In this section we will have a closer look at each of these tasks.

3.1 Relatedness
Youngsters grow up in a mosaic of social settings, and their cognitions, feelings, and behaviors are shaped to a great extent by their perceptions and interpretations of these settings. They have had many favorable and some also many unfavorable experiences in terms of the role of family members, teachers and peers in their learning and development, which have created diverse mindsets that continue to influence their learning and development. They may either feel secure or insecure in terms of the availability of support from others, or they may feel surrounded by persons who provide for a cognitively and linguistically stimulating environment or by persons who do not care about their cognitive and linguistic competencies. Helgeson (1993), Van der Zee, Buunk, and Sanderman (1997) and Wethington and Kessler (1986) showed that perceived availability of social support is a better predictor of well-being than actual support given. Generally, young adolescents see parents as more important providers of social support than either peers or teachers (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Adan, & Evans, 1992). In the context of school and well-being in school, however, the teachers' role is important, both with respect to achieving academic goals (instructional support) and with regard to the regulation of emotional and social processes (emotional support) (Berndt, 1999; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Tatar & Horenczyk, 1996; Wentzel, 1998).
Little is known about the role of ethnicity or culture in experiencing or perceiving the availability of social support. A recent study by Vedder, Boekaerts, and Seegers (in press) showed that Turkish and Moroccan youngsters perceive lower levels of availability of parental instructional support than their Dutch peers do, whereas no such difference was found with respect to the availability of parental emotional support. The Dutch students view instructional support from teacher and parents as being about equal, whereas there is a marked contrast in level for the Turkish and Moroccan students. They perceive more support from teachers. Interestingly, Dutch students link school problems more frequently with instructional support from parents than immigrant students do. No differences were found between immigrant and national students with respect to support from peers. In their study conducted among Israeli adolescents, however, Horenczyk and Tatar (1998) reported that immigrants assign greater importance to their friendship expectations than their national peers. They seem to perceive of friends as helpers in their struggle to find their position in the new social and cultural environment. To immigrant youth there is clearly more at stake than just sharing a fun time.

The interest in students' relationships, their sense of belongingness and their feelings of security has increased considerably in recent years due to an increase in the number of serious incidences of violence in schools, both in the USA and in Western European countries. In

reaction to these developments, more security measures were implemented, but at the same time many schools have intensified their efforts to strengthen relationships between school staff and students, and amongst students themselves. The improvement of these relationships should serve two purposes. A strong sense of bonding should prevent potential perpetrators from reaching an emotional state in which they become violent. The second purpose is to create a sense of common responsibility for a positive school climate in which both staff and students are willing to discuss problems and report information or incidences that might help in preventing outburst of violence (Haselton, 1999).

Wentzel and Asher (1995) concluded that students' lack of a sense of relatedness or bonding is likely to lead to aggressive behavior, which in turns negatively affects peer relationships and wellbeing in school. Hofman and Vonkeman's study in the Netherlands (1995) shows that a strong bond with school and with classmates is more important for the immigrants' well being and for preventing drop-out, as compared to national students.

Peer relationships

Peer relationships serve as a source of social and emotional support, and as a context for learning and practicing social, cognitive and language skills (Berndt & Ladd, 1989; Hartup, 1992; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). Ample evidence (e.g., Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993; Inderbitzen, Walters & Bukowski, 1997) showed that children's social status (as popular, rejected, neglected, controversial or average) has predictive value for their psychological adaptation and behavior. The rejected and neglected children are emotionally and cognitively at risk, whereas the popular children are generally resourceful and well adapted (Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993). More specifically, several studies show that children's sociometric status is related to their school adjustment and academic achievement (Tuma & Hallinan, 1979; Wentzel, 1994; Wentzel & Asher, 1995).

Kistner, Metzler, Gatlin, and Risi (1993) summarized findings from studies that focused on the relationship between children's sociometric status and ethnicity, and concluded that ethnicity has a minor impact on children's sociometric status. Coie, Dodge, and Coppotelli (1982) showed that African-American children, as compared to Caucasian children, were classified less often as popular and more often as controversial. No difference was found for the category rejected. Studies using other measures of social competence more convincingly showed that ethnicity is a group defining characteristic leading to ethnicity based in-group preferences (cf. Hamm, 2000; Schofield & Whitley, 1983; Vedder & O'Dowd, 1999). A few studies in the last decade that used a peer nomination procedure in ethnically mixed classes confirm this in-group preference, whereas at the same time these studies showed a stronger influence of gender than of ethnicity (Graham & Cohen, 1997; Kupersmidt, DeRosier, & Patterson, 1995; Rican, 1996).

3.2 Competence

Pursuit of social goals, such as helping classmates with their tasks, and helping each other to learn contributes significantly to the quality of the learning, mainly because these goals promote group cohesion and positive interpersonal interactions (Wentzel, 1994; Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998). Pro-social and academic learning goals are closely linked (Covington, 2000). For example, explaining a problem to another student facilitates deeper understanding and consequently promotes competence. The experience of competence is important to students' self-

esteem and their willingness to explore new knowledge and skill domains (Hollins & Oliver, 1999). This is especially true for students who experience in schools a denial of their competence, or who have to cope with low grades and decreased support for learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998), which is the case for many immigrant and ethnic minority students, both in North America and in Western Europe (Glenn & De Jong, 1996; Ogbu, 1992; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Vedder & Virta, submitted). Some scholars (Jordan, 1985; Ogbu, 1992; Greenfield & Cocking, 1994) suggest that this can only be overcome when schools' curricula are changed drastically; when knowledge and skills that are important within students' culture specific arenas of social participation are included in the curriculum and when the attention would shift from self-directed learning, individual initiative and autonomy to positive interdependence amongst students and between students and staff (Campbell, 1997). This is in line with the notion presented earlier that immigrant students have a heavier load in school – as compared to national students – due to the fact that they have to combine enculturation and acculturation tasks. Making schools more culture sensitive and culture responsive would mean that schools would invest more in immigrant students' enculturation.

Language

In the remainder of this section we will deal with one particular content or competency domain, namely, language. Language competence is essential for social participation in all kinds of social settings. It may be a marker of difference that determines the quality of interethnic relationships in a community (Vedder & O'Dowd, 1999). Language carries information and is an instrument for structuring thinking processes. As such its role for learning and development is evident and indisputable. Furthermore, language is instrumental to satisfying basic needs for bonding and security and as such also impacts a person's identity development. The relationship between language and cultural identity is a highly debated topic. A clear but extreme position in this discussion is that a person's ethnic identity is largely defined by culture, which includes language, and even more specifically the language in which it is transmitted between generations. This position corresponds to strong pleas for language maintenance or language revitalization (Chiang & Schmida, 1999; Henze & Davis, 1999; Fishman, 1996).

Other scholars (Genesee, 1987; Glenn & De Jong, 1996) are more hesitant in assigning language such a prominent role in ethnic identity. They suggest that culture specific knowledge, skills, and feelings can be transmitted through a newly acquired language as well. They base their argument on evidence showing that language loss is not synonymous to a loss of group membership, solidarity, and a sense of belonging. Ethnic language loss may occur without ethnic identity being weakened (Bentahila & Davies, 1992). On the other hand, a number of studies show that ethnic language is strongly associated with identity (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1990; Hurtado & Gurin, 1995). Other studies (cf. Cameron & Lalonde, 1994) suggest that ethnic language maintenance is important for second and later generation immigrants, but not for the first generation. Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang (2001) conclude that research has yielded conflicting findings about the relationship between language maintenance and ethnic identity. However, they found that adolescents from three American ethnic groups who have higher ethnic language proficiency and usage report stronger levels of cultural identity (Phinney, et al., 2001). The same positive relationship was reported in a large survey comparing more than thirty different immigrant groups from thirteen different immigrant receiving countries (Australia,

Canada, England, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and the USA; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2005).

Language competence also plays an important role in explaining immigrant students' educational performance. Several models guide research and interpretations. An influential one is the ethnic identity model (Alkan, 1998). It assumes that immigrant youth grow up between cultures, which leads to identity confusion and adaptation problems if the children experience a lack of appreciation for the skills, knowledge and feelings that are typical of their cultural background. The model proposes that a strong ethnic identity is important for immigrants' healthy integration and well being in the new society.

The model, albeit not necessarily under this name, has had a clear impact on the school curriculum for ethno-cultural minority students in countries like the Netherlands and Sweden (Alkan, 1998; Viberg, 1994). Lessons in students' first language and classes on students' cultural heritage are seen as important for preventing or overcoming adaptation problems. Such lessons are deemed to allow immigrant youth to experience appreciation for their parents' language and culture. The assumptions are that language maintenance and a good knowledge of one's own culture should contribute to adolescents' ethnic identity, and a strong ethnic identity should function as a support for a healthy psychological adaptation.

Some studies confirmed the expectation that a strong ethnic identity is related to a positive adaptation of minority youth (Horenczyk & Ben-Shalom. 2001; Liebkind, 1996; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Virta & Westin, 1999; Virta, Sam, & Westin, 2004). The relationship with ethnic language proficiency was confirmed in a study with Turkish adolescents in Sweden (Vedder & Virta, submitted).

In the ethnic identity model the ethnic language is seen as a symbol of tradition, heritage and ethnicity (cf. Fishman, 1989, 1996). This function of language is especially important in relation to ethnic identity, since it mostly serves as a criterion for distinguishing between in-group and out-group. When a language is given high significance, it is likely to be a defining aspect of a person's or a group's ethnic identity. In the ethnic identity model ethnic language proficiency is assumed to have an indirect effect on adolescents' learning and development.

Language proficiency in either the first or second language also may have a direct impact on adolescents' learning and development due to its instrumental value for the transmission of information and for regulating cognitive processes (cf. Baker, 2001). When focusing on this direct relationship between language proficiency and adolescents' learning and development we emphasize the communicative function of language. This communicative function is central to the second model, the language assimilation model. This model suggests that immigrant youth's proficiency in the national language (L2) is a better predictor of academic performance and social participation than either proficiency in the ethnic language (L1) or measures of ethnic identity (cf. Driessen, 2000).

The third model to be mentioned here is the language integration model. It is inspired by research on bilingualism showing that children who acquired high levels of proficiency in more than one language developed extra cognitive resources as compared to children who grew up with one language (for an overview of research, see Baker, 2001). In line with this notion we would expect immigrant students who are proficient in both their ethnic and the national language to report higher well being and more positive social adjustment scores than students who are less balanced in their bilingualism or who lack proficiency in either language. In a

sample of Turkish adolescents living in Sweden we found support for the language integration model (Vedder & Virta, submitted).

3.3 Autonomy

Autonomy is considered an important personal drive towards exploring new areas of learning and development and new social relationships. Autonomy is central to students' motivation and their willingness to invest in learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Guthrie, 2001). Moreover, autonomy is important for preventing or avoiding negative consequences of being part of a social network that is too tight, such as: not being critical, not knowing how to be critical and not daring to be critical, being susceptible to authoritarian behaviors of leaders, and being indifferent towards injustice incurred by group members. This is a phenomenon that was discussed by Portes (1998) who showed that in the context of immigrants' acculturation a strong in-group preference based on a common ethnic background or religious affiliation may lead to the exclusion or rejection of persons who do not share the ethnic background or religious affiliation and it may even lead to limiting group members, e.g. all women, opportunities to express their own opinion and to denying them access to learning opportunities.

Benson (1997) made the distinction between technical, psychological, and political versions of student's autonomy. The technical version refers to the aim of equipping students with skills for unsupervised learning. The psychological version refers to fostering attitudes and skills that allow students to take responsibility for their own learning. The political version aims at the learning context and students' possibilities to control the contents and interactions in this context. All three meanings of autonomy are included in social constructivist notions of learning which stress that learning is a social activity that draws its meaning and significance from the learners' experiences, the directly present social and cultural context in which it takes place, and the anticipated functionality for future social participation (Hickey & McCaslin, 2001). Within this framework neither learning, nor skills, knowledge or motivation, are seen as individualistic and culture free, but as cooperative, culture loaded processes and products. It includes a responsibility for classmates and teachers (Boekaerts, 1998; May, 1994).

The definition of autonomy, however, is problematic, particularly in the context of multicultural education. In a review of studies about learner autonomy, Palfreyman (2001) clarifies that autonomy was defined in opposition to other concepts such as tradition, authority and non-Western culture. It was suggested that autonomy is something that students need for doing well in school. Non-Western students do not sufficiently avail of this quality and therefore have problems in school and society. Parallel to these conceptual conflicts there are very real conflicts about learning and teaching practices in which the autonomy concept plays a role. For instance, Tesser (Tesser & Iedema, 2001) addressing the primary school situation in the Netherlands and inspired by Chall (2000) who refers to the situation in the USA, warns of a possible conflict between teacher-initiated and teacher-guided attempts to strengthen students' learning and attempts to give students more autonomy by leaving it up to the students how they solve problems and complete tasks. He points out that particularly ethnic minority students perform better is schools that grant them less autonomy in this respect. However, the concept of autonomy used in this argument is somewhat akin to teacher negligence. Another study in the Netherlands (Eldering & Vedder, 1999) showed that the notion of children's autonomy held by immigrant parents conflicts with the significance they attach to children's respect for and

obedience to adults. Immigrant parents, more than national parents, express worries about the way schools deal with the notions of autonomy, respect and obedience.

4. The broader acculturation context

Societal factors affecting the experience of immigrants and members of minority groups, such as discrimination and group-based inequalities, are undeniable realities that multicultural education has to seriously confront and address. We will briefly discuss the three factors, which according to Portes (1995) determine immigrants' vulnerability for negative adaptation processes and outcomes in the new society: color, location, and the absence of mobility ladders.

Individual's physical characteristics – like skin color and hair type – serve as important markers of ethnicity. Both in the USA and in West-European countries, ethnicity has and continues to be an important reason for (when a quest for belongingness and security is involved; Massey & Espinoza, 1997; Portes, 1998) or cause (when having to deal with prejudice and discrimination; Kromhout & Vedder, 1995; Sellers & Shelton, 2003) of separation and segregation. In many societies, immigrant and minority youth experience discrimination, often linked with – or attributed to – physical characteristics. Results of the international study exploring the acculturation experiences of immigrant youth in thirteen different Western countries cited above suggest that adolescents' subjective experience of discrimination has a strong impact on their well being and social adjustment (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Horenczyk, & Schmitz, 2003; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001).

Providing children with opportunities for positive intergroup and intercultural contact, and exposing them to instances and examples of good interethnic relationships in schools and other contexts are two important means for reducing prejudice and discrimination. These notions are based on the well-known contact hypothesis. Elaborated versions of this hypothesis have received ample empirical support (cf. Liebkind & McAlister, 1999; McClenahan, Cairns, Dunn, & Morgan, 1996; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). It is thus tempting to rely on the contact hypothesis in order to promote the improvement of interethnic relationships. A major obstacle, however, is that both in the USA and in Western European countries a large proportion of schools have ethnically segregated populations. Parental choice together with particular contextual and demographic factors have caused an increasing number of schools with a student body consisting of only or predominantly immigrant or ethnic minority children. One of the additional factors is a housing policy in cities that is incapable of avoiding a high concentration of migrants in particular neighborhoods and cities. A second is a comparatively higher birth rate in immigrant families than in National families. A third is a common sense notion of many white parents that immigrant children jeopardize the quality of their children's school career. They therefore prefer to find schools for their children with no or low levels of ethnic mixing (white flight) (cf. Massey & Espinoza, 1997; Reardon & Yun, 2002; Suarez, 1999; Vermeulen, 2001). The resulting schools generally have an ethnically mixed immigrant population, although some may have students of one particular ethnic or cultural background, e.g. Turkish students. Attempts to promote dispersal of students in order to avoid ethnic segregation in schools were largely unsuccessful, not only in the USA (Kahlenberg, 2002; Orfield, 2001) but also in for instance, the Netherlands (Rutten, 2004; Vermeulen, 2001).

School adjustment depends on schools, but also on the broader context in which schools function and students grow up. We already pointed out that some parents choose to leave a neighborhood, because they think that available schools, but also the broader living area does not meet with the

standards of quality which they think are desirable for their children's development. This has become a problem in terms of neighborhood development and quality in inner cities (suburban migration), due to an accumulation of problems (Larsen, Harlan, Bolin, Hackett, Hope, Kirby, Nelson, Rex, & Wolf, 2004): the average income of the people in such neighborhoods is generally low as is the general level of schooling, a lack of constancy or continuity of people living in the neighborhood and a related experience of an increasing sense of insecurity, and a deterioration of the quality of housing due to lacking maintenance and a lack of new investments in the neighborhood. The lacking constancy and continuity of inhabitants is caused, as stated before, by families leaving the neighborhood, but also by newcomers. In immigrant neighborhoods this are likely to be other immigrants having strong ties with those living already in the neighborhood (Massey & Espinoza, 1997). Such neighborhoods lack activities and relationships with economical and political institutions that benefit both individual inhabitants as well as the neighborhood as a whole (Hero, 2003; Larsen, et al., 2004). In such neighborhoods were children experience hunger, violence, neglect and a lack of challenges for social participation, even good schools will have a hard time to function as a mobility ladder for their students.

5. Discussion

This chapter is about conceptual models and empirical studies explaining school adjustment in the context of acculturation. Two of the notions presented in the preceding sections will be highlighted here with a focus on the challenges they entail for further studies and the improvement of educational practices.

We discussed two broad conceptual approaches of school adjustment in a multicultural context. The second one, in which schools are seen as global cultural arenas, lacks a clear empirical basis. Suarez-Orozco (2001) suggests that immigrant students are in a beneficial position if indeed the school is a global arena, since they already experienced processes of loosening strong bonds with their primary local and group-bound culture. Although, indeed, there is increasing evidence that immigrant students outperform their national classmates who have a comparable socio-economic background, we need studies analyzing the processes involved in the acculturation processes of immigrant as well as national students. Only further studies can clarify whether students' school adjustment is based on the processes described by Suarez-Orozco. Such studies also should clarify the conditions under which the advantageous outcomes will occur. After all, a strong commitment towards the global school culture may be combined with loosening or even losing social relationships anchored in the immigrant culture. Studies (Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997; Phinney, Vedder, & Kwak, 2005) show that this may correspond to lower levels of well-being and more social adjustment problems.
More in general we may contend that theory and research is needed in order to better understand the delicate balance between enculturation and acculturation – the expectations of students, school staff, minority communities, and the larger society with regards to the school's enculturating and acculturating roles, and the strategies and techniques for maximizing the benefits of each and both of these processes. Horenczyk and Tatar (2002), for example, showed that Israeli teachers hold highly assimilationist attitudes toward the integration of immigrants in schools; in other words, they emphasize their acculturating roles and almost neglect any enculturating function of the schools.

Peer relationships are important for the school adjustment of immigrant and minority students. As pointed out earlier extensive literature has shown social support to be positively correlated with psychological well-being. Searle and Ward (1990) and Ward and Searle (1991), qualified this by showing that this is particularly the case for immigrants during cultural transitions. The formation of strong relationships may function as an entree to the majority society; friends from the majority group are able to provide the immigrants with the information as well as the social and institutional contacts which may help to alleviate their sense of estrangement and cultural shock and improve their personal, social, and academic adjustment. For schools and for education in general the important question is how this function can be optimized. What does bring immigrant and national youth together in the first place? What can be done to facilitate that youth from a variety of cultural backgrounds find a common ground for common activities, and what makes them stay together while facilitating the cultural transition?

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