

Generation Status, Social Capital, and the Routes Out of High School¹

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This study investigates immigrant-native differences in the activities of adolescents 2 years after their sophomore year of high school. We employ longitudinal data for the modeling of duration, nativity and generation differences in education and employment activities during late adolescence. We ask if the same human and social capital characteristics employed as explanations for nativity differences in achievement are predictive of high school participation versus other activities such as labor force participation within a cohort of adolescents. Despite their lower levels of human capital and lower previous academic performance, recent immigrants who arrive in the United States as adolescents are more likely than those who arrive earlier or those born in the United States to persevere in high school. Access to familial social capital and attitudinal measures help explain some of this effect. As for those who do leave school early, socioeconomic status and language background play a role in the activities respondents pursue. While recent immigrants are more likely to persevere in high school, once they leave they are no more likely to pursue additional education than their US. born counterparts.

KEY WORDS: immigrants; schooling; adolescents; labor force participation.

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