

Mary Amanda Stewart, *Understanding Adolescent Immigrants: Moving Toward an Extraordinary Discourse for Extraordinary Youth*, Philadelphia, Rowman & Littlefield, 978-1-4985-4493-1, February 2017; 978-1-4985-4495-5, Paperback • October 2018, 978-1-4985-4494-8, eBook • February 2017.

The primary drawback with the concept of potential in youth is the fact that a young person's skills and talents must be adequately developed to ensure that they will manifest to their maximum potential later on. Immigrant youth make up a sizable percentage of the population of the United States, but their potential is being limited by a lack of resources necessary for them to achieve such an ambition. Mary Amanda Stewart's *Understanding Adolescent Immigrants: Moving Toward an Extraordinary Discourse for Extraordinary Youth* explores the K-12 education system as it relates to experiences faced by immigrant youth. Stewart follows seven immigrant students (who range in age from 13 to 20 years old) as they attempt to maneuver through the American education system. Each student's appearance in the book highlights a particular phenomenon that is timely and pertinent to understanding the modern adolescent immigrant experience, including: the concept and the proliferation of unaccompanied immigrant minors, family separation and unification, and students who have endured interruptions in their formal education. Each student selected had been in America for less than 2 years and was in the early stages of the process of learning English as a 2nd language (see introduction xvi). The value in this book is directly attributable to learning the stories that each student has to share and seeing the glaringly obvious holes in the resources that they currently have. Educators and immigrant youth advocates should read Stewart's book and use its teachings to improve the quality of education and resources used to provide students the best opportunity to become maximally productive in our modern society.

The most interesting idea formulated by Stewart is made in chapter one as she suggests that societies' perception of immigrant youth should be altered to embrace their multilingual speaking abilities and multi-national backgrounds, because these qualities give them a perspective that will become increasingly valuable as the world becomes more global. By highlighting the strengths and skills of adolescent immigrants, Stewart seeks to create an incentive for educators and the administrations to provide immigrant students additional resources to aid them in their development. Having immigrant students enriches the educational experience for students in their classrooms because their worldviews provide fresh insight to issues. Chapter one concludes with an introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of class domination, which Stewart uses as an analytical tool for understanding the youths' literacy levels and lived experiences in light of their present circumstances in society. Chapter 1 sets the tone for the remainder of the book by setting forth theories and ideas for which they are expected to link with the stories of the immigrant youth.

Chapter 2 follows the story of a 20-year-old named Miguel who emigrated to the United States from Guatemala. He is seen as an admirable kid because he is both likable and driven to succeed. His major hurdle, however, is that in order for him to graduate from high school, he has to learn English and pass the necessary standardized tests. Stewart does a great job of telling Miguel's story in a way that garners sympathy without coming off as patronizing. That's important for this story because, while his story has moments of sadness, there is a sense that permeates throughout the chapter that one day Miguel will rise up and productively contribute to society. Stewart uses Miguel's story to tell the story about family separation and unification, and so includes a narrative about parental abandonment and familial reconciliation that's told in a manner that makes it representative of other stories about immigrants who are forced to move due to adverse circumstances.

Chapter 3 follows the story of a 17-year-old named Alejandra who emigrated to the United States from El Salvador. She is a happy teenager whose journey from El Salvador was anything but happy, and Stewart relates the challenges of traveling to the United States as an unaccompanied minor. She was captured en route, and only liberated when her sister who lived legally in the United States, was able to adopt her (see pg. 25). When describing the journey faced by Alejandra to get to the United States, it becomes clear that there are facts about the journey that Alejandra finds too difficult to face. Her reluctance is insinuated to be connected with the fact that young unaccompanied female minors are often the victims of sexual violence. Alejandra is ultimately able to gain employment by working under an assumed name, a situation that was almost jeopardized by Stewart in her contact with Alejandra at work, providing an insight into the secret lives that undocumented people have to live in order to survive.

Chapter 4 follows the story of a 13-year-old named Lay who emigrated to the United States from Burma, Myanmar. Officially, Lay is 15 years old, because she assumed the identity of her older disabled sister in order to ease her ability to obtain a UN card for which to engage in international travel. As such, she is in grade 10, which is challenging, and another side to the issue of immigrant students with interrupted formal educations (SIFEs). Lay is illiterate in her first language due to a limited formal education, but she is apparently very intelligent. Stewart does a good job of analyzing this conundrum in a way that adequately acknowledges the importance of education and how its lack, combined with poor circumstances, can potentially limit immigrants from achieving their true potential.

Chapter 5 follows the story of a 17-year-old Aisha who emigrated to the United States from Uganda. Aisha doesn't have a background of formal education and is new to the English language. She struggles to learn her first language (Luganda), English, and Spanish (as part of a foreign language requirement). Stewart included this segment in the book to note the importance of language skills in the student's first language, and to show that a lack of an opportunity to learn should not be misconstrued as the affected students having a learning disability. The goal of this story was to differentiate between those two diametrically opposed concepts.

Chapter 6 follows the story of a 16-year-old named Nathan, who emigrated to the United States from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Nathan's role in this book is to show what talented immigrant students are capable of and the impact of their history. Nathan is loosely described as the best student at whatever school he attends due to his aptitude and competitive nature. Although he's from the DRC, he is of Rwandan descent, a fact which was instrumental to him having to flee. Stewart did a good job of being very detailed with her reporting on Nathan's thinking patterns as he relayed his experiences as an immigrant to her.

Chapter 7 follows the story of a 15-year-old named Andrés, who is an American citizen by birth but was raised in Mexico. Andrés represents the transnational youth who spend their formative years traveling between countries and internalizing the different cultures that permeate each country. He made the decision to attend high school in the United States because he feels that he is capable of accomplishing more in America, and even though he travels between countries, his English level remains low because he rarely uses it at home, but nevertheless has enormous potential to contribute to US society.

Chapter 8 follows the story of an 18-year old names Sara who emigrated to the United States from Colombia. Her story demonstrates how some immigrant students are forced to work full time in order to survive, which of course impedes their ability to develop all of their potential talents. Chapter 9 draws all of the stories together and presents commonalities in the youth's lived experiences as newcomers learning English. Each of the themes listed is one that has been tackled in the preceding chapters and served as an adequate summation of the areas in which educators

can step in to provide support to the affected students. Chapter 10 suggests that educators should respond to this information through purposeful practice. This was an odd chapter because it largely went back to the theories spoken about in chapter 1 and reiterated them with slightly more substance, suggesting that chapters 1 and 10 could have been combined, and that the insights of chapter 9 could have been the concluding one.

A hallmark of a great writer is the ability to make complexities appear simple. *Understanding Adolescent Immigrants* is marketed as an academic text, but reads with a simplistic vibrancy that is rare amongst most academic books. The greatest fault in Stewart's writing style is that she is more of a writer with momentary spurts of conceptual clarity rather than sustained clarity. I liken this book to the proverbial story of a beautiful house being built on a sandy beach; the end result looks great, but the foundation is weak. Stewart does a great job of explaining the difficulties faced by each student using crisp, descriptive language, and her writing reads so smoothly that some readers would be inclined to forgive the rather poor job she does of explaining concepts, definitions, and ideas in a way that concisely links with the overarching themes of the book. Stewart did many of the translations in the text, allowing reader's a glimpse at the subtleties of the languages and dialects as experienced by the students. Stewart also exhibited excellent speed and tempo with her writings; no story lingered on too long, or overstayed its welcome. I liked the inclusion of the appendices at the end of the book that compile the research used to create the book as well as the detailed questions asked of each of the children interviewed for the book because it helps the reader to enter the mind of the author as you examine the questions and the information gained.

While it was clear that the was written with the purpose of reaching educators specifically involved in middle and high school education with immigrant students, I feel that Stewart could have done more to advance this cause. I view the stories of the seven students as parables designed to teach an educational story while allowing the reader to imply the moral of the story. While that type of story is typically great for impressionable children, I'm not certain that it was the best idea for a book aimed at college educated teachers. I might add that I was surprised that to encounter mistakes and typos in the book, reflecting what seems to have been rather weak editorial work.

On the theory side, I found the inclusion of the theories of class domination created by French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu to be intriguing; however, the book would have been more impactful if it used a second theoretical force as a complement or as a contrast. The failure to do either made the theory appear lifeless during its inclusion in the book. The most disappointing element of the entire book was the inclusion of chapter 10, which should have been included primarily in Chapter 1, with the rest of its insights sprinkled in intermittently throughout the rest of the text.

I left this book feeling quite impressed with its depth and scope. For a relatively short book, it is ambitious and achieves enough to leave the targeted audience satisfied. While I do have some quibbles with some of the elements of the book's structure and execution, there is enough substance in the text that is quality enough to warrant its recommendation to teachers who are likely to benefit from information conveyed within its pages.

Terence Theus, Vanderbilt Law School